

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
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Week-03
Lecture 13: Benedict Spinoza

Welcome in lecture 13. Today, we will be discussing the other philosopher from Western philosophy, Spinoza. Today, we will be discussing the idea of substance from Spinoza philosophical idea and again the God or nature.

The timing of Spinoza was 1623 to 1677. Spinoza was influenced by his predecessor, Rene Descartes and therefore Spinoza accept the Descartes' method of philosophy. In last three classes where we have talked about the Descartes method, Descartes idea of self and then also we have discussed how the critical argument against the Cartesian philosophy of body and mind. Spinoza was interested and accepted Cartesian method. Just to recall, Cartesian method was as mathematical method. In mathematics, what we do, we start with the simple proposition which is accepted by all and then we deduct this the complex proposition. So, this method was so strong that in mathematical conclusion is in a beyond any controversy, beyond any discussion. So, everyone is accepting for example two plus two equal to four. So, there is a no discussion and everyone is accepting two plus two equal to four. Spinoza was very much impressed with this idea and that is why this Spinoza accept the Descartes' method of philosophy and argues that the goal of philosophy is the complete knowledge of thing and this can be reached by clear and distinct thinking. This is what even Descartes argued that clear and distinct thinking is a very important. So, when you have this clear and distinct thinking, when you are there is one simple proposition and you are deducting a next proposition without making any error and you have very clear and distinct thinking. So, it will be a complete knowledge of thing or proper claim. Now, he in his work, Spinoza, he followed the Cartesian method. He was interested in the same problem as his predecessor, but seek to solve them in a more consistent and systematic way. The Descartes idea of mind and body where Descartes struggle with the how the mind interact with the body. Now, Spinoza wants to develop this idea with more logical or consistent and systematic way. So, is therefore Spinoza take the idea of substance and works out any implication with logical consistency. Spinoza argued that if substance is that needs other than itself in or to exist or to be conceived, if God is the substance and everything else dependent on him, then obviously there can be no substance outside of God. Let us understand this argument. Spinoza argued that if there is substance, now we have discussed in the last many classes that of what is substance and how the philosopher were interested to know about the substance and they have given, they have claimed a very differently and arguing that X is substance, Y is substance and so on. In order to explain this world, it is very important to know the substance. Now, in Descartes, we have seen how Descartes had defined the idea of substance. In Spinoza, he is presenting an argument.

For example, there is an X and what we are arguing that X is dependent on something called Y and Y everything is dependent on Y. So, what does it mean that X is not beyond this Y? What I mean is Spinoza argued that if there is substance and it needs other than itself to know how to exist or to be conceived and if God is substance and everything else dependent on him, then obviously there can be no substance outside the God. By substance, what Spinoza argued that I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself. Like for example, we are making a statement that or we are saying that there is X is blue. Now, idea of blue, but we are comparing that okay, even Y is blue, T is blue and so on. What Spinoza is arguing that substance should be conceived through itself, not from other. It should not be dependent on other. Now, what are the attributes? So, for Spinoza attribute, what he claimed that I mean that which intellect perceive as constituting the essence of substance. So, that is called attribute. So, is there a substance and what we can perceive, we can understand a belief that as a constituting the essence of the substance that is called attribute. And Spinoza argued that there can be no substance without attributes. Now, Spinoza again argued that in a substance, have a two kind of attributes. One is essential attributes, it defined as substance and without these essential attributes, substance would cease to be substance. So, there is an object and there is an attribute. And if you remove this attribute, the substance will not be substance. For example, suppose there is fire and for us, we have an idea that fire can burn at least piece of paper. And this is what I believe this is one of the attributes where it can do that, can burn dry grass. Now, if someone suppose I claim that look this is fire, you checked, if it is not able to do that, if it is not hot, for you, oh, it looks like fire, but it is not fire. Suppose there is a pen or pencil or eraser, but when you are using this one and it is not working this, essence is not there, then it looks like for us it is real, but it is not real, it is fake. So, if attributes, this essential attribute is not there, what we believe that this object is not object, it is not real, it is a fake one. So, this is what we in day to day life we can understand that how we are trying to understand an object and then essence. Now, there are other kind of attributes is called accidental attributes. So, the accidental attributes are those variable character which is a substance can lose without ceasing to be what it is. So, accidental attributes are coming and going, can come and go, but substance is there. The substance of Spinoza has an infinite number of attributes in each of which expresses the essence of substance infinitely. Now, what we are going to do, we are going to understand his proposition in his work and using this Cartesian method, how Spinoza concluded that there is a substance and I talked about the idea of substance. So, we will see this proposition and the development of this proposition and it will be easy to understand his argument. So, in first proposition, he argued a substance is prior in nature to its effect. So, there is a substance even as I said in the last class that substance is an important the sense that if you see this in a world, this world is in a chain of cause and effect. So, there is an idea, we have supposed an idea and there is a cause of this idea and so on. Now, if we want to explain this world, for example, the X that the cause of X is Y, cause of Y is T, cause of T is P and so on. So, it is go on. But if you

want to explain something, we have to stop. I mean, this is a very basic in philosophy and if we can explain this P, this substance, this idea, this thing which is in a primary cause of everything, then we will be able to explain everything. So, this substance is important. But this substance, there is a no cause of this substance and if you are going to use, if you are going to argue that there is a cause of this substance, then we may not be able to again explain the world and we cannot, may not be able to stop anywhere. So, therefore, this substance is in a very important in the sense that we have to explain in terms of substance in every world, in every reality. And therefore, not only the Western philosophy, even the Indian philosophy, they talk a lot about and they have argued for the primary substance. What is the primary substance? What is the first cause of this universe? If the first cause of universe is the first cause of this everything is explained and you are arguing for the first cause of the nature of the first cause, then it will be easy to explain this world as in reality.

In Indian system, we also have the many schools of philosophical thought where they have talked about a different kind of this first substance. Someone is saying this is infinite, someone is saying this is infinite. We will be discussing that. But my point is here that this primary substance, this primary cause is a very important part. And then when we are arguing for this substance, this primary substance, it also means that there is no cause of the substance. You take it in the material form or non-material form, immaterial form. So that is the reason that the primary substance is an important concept in Western philosophy as well in Indian philosophy. So, primary cause is explained. It means this is everything, this reality has been explained. So, if there is a substance, it is prior to it is in the affection of its, it is prior in nature to its affection. Now, second proposition is the two-substance having different attributes have nothing in common with one another. If you are going to accept that two substances, for example, we are arguing that, let us take in the same example that is X, cause of Y, P, P and go on. And finally, we found that there are two things which is an ultimately real is the or let us say, primary cause, S1 and S2. And we are going to accept that there are two substances. What does it mean? It means that they do not have anything in common. Like for example, Rene Descartes idea of body and mind. So, body is in a different kind, logical type and mind is in a different logical type. Nothing is common. Mind is a thinking thing, body cannot think. It has extension, it does not have any. We cannot locate in the space, we can locate in the space. There is nothing in the substance which is in common. So, if you are accepting that there are two substances S1 and S2, then we cannot argue that there is something which is common in S1 and S2. Proposition three says, if things have nothing in common with one another, so one of them cannot be cause of other. Now, there is a substance one and substance two. And both of the substance is a different. Nothing is common. For example, the Cartesian idea of body and mind. So, there is a body and there is a mind. There are two different substances. Now, what Spinoza is arguing that if there are two different things, the substance, body and mind, and there is nothing is common with one another, it means that this S cannot be a cause of S2. You cannot argue that mind is a cause of any bodily change, a change in the body. So,

we cannot argue that mind and there is no possibility of establishing a relation between this cause and effect between S and S2. So, saying that the body is a cause of this change in a body, a mind is the cause of the change in a body, it is not possible. Reason is, mind cannot be cause of that. Reason is, because body is different from mind, mind is different from body. Proposition four says that Spinoza argued in proposition four, two or more distinct things are distinguished from one another, either by differences, a difference in attributes of the substances or by a difference in their effect. This is clear? Proposition five says in nature, they cannot be two or more substances of the same nature of attributes. If you are going to accept that there is more than one substance, then it only means that both of them cannot have a same nature. If it is true, if there are same nature, then it will be one, not two. Proposition six says the one substance cannot be produced by another substance. Now, again there is an argument that if you are arguing that there is a substance one and substance two, because this is in a substance, we cannot argue or this is an argument, at least it is wrong that saying that S one is producing S two. Yeah. Proposition says in proposition seven, Spinoza argued that it pertains to nature of substance to exist. Proposition eight, every substance is a necessary infinite. So, if there any substance S, he is arguing that this necessarily is an infinite. It is not finite. Now, why there is an argument that it cannot be finite? Because if this is an finite, then it is an unlimited. And then in that case, we have to talk about the cause of this substance. And in that way, it will not be a substance. And therefore, this is a necessarily is infinite. Proposition nine, Spinoza argued the more reality or being is thing has, the more attributes belong to it. In proposition 10, he argued each attributes of substance must be conceived through itself. As I argued that if there is a substance, S and we are saying that S has an attribute, for example, T. So, it is a very important that it must be convinced through itself. Let me tell you, the Spinoza was very much impressed by the geometrical theories. And this is what he applied this idea, the mathematical knowledge, and the philosophical knowledge, where he is arguing that the substance, the attributes of a substance, suppose there are T is an attribute of the substance S. So, T must be conceived through itself. When I am saying X is blue, now we are trying to conceive this idea blue maybe with the comparison with other X, Y and Z object. This was not the right. So, they are saying that if there are T is an attribute, it must be conceived through itself. In proposition eleven, he writes, God or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists. In two, he argued, no attribute of substance can be truly conceived from which it follows that the substance can be divided. Substance 13, a substance which is absolutely infinite is indivisible. Something is infinite is an, we have said this many times. In 14, he argued that except God, no substance can be or be conceived. So, this is how he arguing that only God is a substance and other than God, nothing can be conceived as a substance. Now, let us understand.

He argued that everything in this universe is dependent on God. Now, God is the cause and bearer of all qualities and events. The one principle in which all things find their being. A

substance is absolutely independent being, it must be infinite. As I argued that, if there is an independent being, it is only the infinite. If there is a finite, then there is a problem, then we have to talk about the cause. Reason is that all determination is negation. So, when you are going to say that the X is blue, you are also saying that it is not white, it is not pink. So, it is not determination, it is negation. So, when you are going to say that X has this T attributes and P attributes, there are also there are lot of negation. And that is the reason that Spinoza argued that God is an infinite with infinite attributes. Now, this also says that when you are negating something, it is also an affirmation. And that is, I believe that Spinoza is a very important philosopher, even for the Indian philosopher. So, in even Indian system, there is an argument that negation is an affirmation. For example, when you are saying that, oh, look, this is not mobile. It only means that you have idea of mobile. That is why you are saying this is not mobile. If you do not have an idea of mobile, for you it is difficult to claim that this is not mobile. Since you are saying this is not mobile, it only means that there is mobile. There is mobile means the existence of mobile. For example, I am saying that, oh, there is a no soul. I am just rejecting the idea of soul. So, when I am saying that there is a no soul, what does it mean? It means I have an idea of soul. And that is the why I am claiming that there is a no soul. Because without an idea of soul, one cannot negate that there is no soul. So, if you have an idea of soul, it only means that there is a soul. So, when you are saying, you are negating there is no soul, you also claim that there is no soul. So, negation is also affirmation. Spinoza, however, argued that determination is negation. So, when you are going to determine anything, for example, there is an argument that X is the substance, then the primary cause. If you are going to determine it, you are also going to negate many things. So, if you are going to do that, it means there is a limited object and then you have to talk about the cause of this. So, thus, therefore, it is a very important and necessary that the substance is an infinite. And again, he argued that God is in the world and then world in him. This is what we call Pantheism. Everything is in God. In even an Indian system, we have this an idea when we start talking about the reality of this world. Whether we are real and we are not real and so on. This world is real and not real. So, there is saying that there is, for example, the Siva who is sitting somewhere and thinking of this world. So, what we are just thought of the God. So, let us say that everything inside the God is in God and God is where in the world. Spinoza arguing that this world is where is the world in God and where is a God in the world. He argued that God is so great that he is conceived of producing infinite attributes in an infinite degree. Nature itself expresses itself in an infinite number of ways of which only extension and thought are knowable by man. So, if you see the Descartes, Descartes argued that how only extension and thought is again two substances which are dependent on God. What Spinoza is arguing that this God has an infinite number of attributes and in infinite degree, but the only extension and then thought is knowable by us. God or nature, therefore, is at least both bodily and mental. So, when we are arguing that there is something called mind and something called body which is two different thing. There is an extension and thought

what Spinoza is arguing that look this everything is in God. So, even you are talking about this mind and body. So, this is in a God. God or nature is at least both. So, he is both, God is both, mind and body. He argued wherever there is a space or matter, there is soul of mind and vice versa. The two attributes being essential to nature of substance must be present wherever substance is found and that is everywhere. There is no absolutely infinite attribute. Again, he argued that these attributes are absolutely independent of one another and cannot influence each other. So, if even you are talking about the thought and extension, they are the independent and therefore, the mind cannot influence the body and body cannot influence the mind and therefore, mind is no cause of changes in body. He is rejecting this idea of mind is a cause of this changes in body. One cannot elucidate the mental by physical and physical by mental. We have discussed an idea of the idealism, the realism where we are saying that there is a world is real and we are experiencing it and then there is an abstraction of knowledge, therefore, we have an idea of an object. Through this physical, we are also explaining this mind. Again, there is an argument that we have an idea of this object and therefore, there is an object or if you take the platonic idea of idea, this object is a poor copies of this idea. What Spinoza is arguing that both way is not possible. So, through idea, you cannot explain this world, this physical world and through this physical world, you cannot explain our mental world. So, both are effect of the same cause. So, here for Spinoza, the God is the cause of everything. Even you are talking about the thought and extension body and mind, body and mind, this is an effect of same thing, that is God and flow from the same substance. Again, Spinoza argued the modes are defined as an affection or modification of substance. So, individual mind and individual bodies are finite temporal modes of substance, the former under the attribute of thought and the later under the attribute of extension. Motion and rest are the modes of extension. Since there can be no motion without extension, the infinite intellect of God and system of motion and rest together constitute the face of whole universe.

Now, again, Spinoza argued that in the idea of God that the teleological conception of God makes him finite and he argued that if God works for a sake of an end and there is something intention to get, that is why if you are going to say that if that is why God is creating this world, if you are going to argue like this, it only means that he necessarily seeks something of which he stands in need and this necessarily makes God imperfect. So, God's idea of God in Spinoza, he is a perfect being. He does not need anything and therefore, he does not work in terms of achieving something for any end and if you are going to say that God is looking for something and doing for something, it means that he seeks something which he stands in need, which he does not have, that is why he needs something. So, Spinoza argued that if you are going to argue like this, it means that God is imperfect, but in the substance, God is a perfect thing. Again, Spinoza as we have discussed that Spinoza's, God and nature is one. It is not two different things. Now, again, there is no question is still there that is their body and mind is two different things. Look, for example, the attributes of the God, then how this interaction is possible because Spinoza

in one of the propositions argue that if this is two things and two different, distinct from each other, then obviously they cannot influence each other. So, in that sense, the interaction between this body and mind will not be possible. It will not take place. Spinoza arguing that God intervened at such occasion in causing change in mind and body. So, this is how Spinoza explained the idea of body and mind through the substance of God. So, thank you so much for your kind attention.

This lecture was based on these two books and then this is a Stanford Encyclopedia. Thank you so much for your attention.