

THE CONCEPTION OF FREEDOM IN SPINOZA
AND ITS RELATION TO THE FILIPINO
MUSLIM CULTURE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Conceptual Framework:

Freedom versus determinism, an issue of never-ending significance, is the subject of this study. Theories about them are admittedly judged by contemporary philosophers as an issue of interest and relevance even to our age lost in the jungle of linguistic analysis and in battles waged against metaphysical systems.

One conception of freedom, which has remained in the interest of many, is that of Spinoza. In spite of the lapse of centuries since his lifetime, interest in Spinoza and his ideas has been retained. This retention of interest must be explained by the fact that Spinoza was one who truly dared - as only a few did - to explicitate the ground for his acceptance of the consequences of his paradoxical reasoning. Spinoza avers his special concept of freedom to spell genuine human dignity. His concept of freedom incites one through thought to arrive at the heights of true morality.

Shifting to another area, one finds that equally gaining the attention of many Christian Filipinos and

foreign Muslims alike is the culture of Filipino Muslims. The Filipino Muslim culture displays patterns of the traditional Filipino way of life characterized by values such as utang na loob and hiya. However, neither the intensive nor the extensive dimensions of these typical Filipino values among the Muslims are identical with those of the same values held by the Christian Filipino majority. Despite their certain basic cultural traits with fellowmen of the same race and nationality, the Muslims in the Philippines cannot be truly understood by one who is merely inferring judgments about them from statements one can state concerning the majority of the Filipino people. The inference presumably moves from the latter as the whole to a part of it, namely, the Muslim Filipinos. For one thing, the Muslim and Christian Filipinos do not have identical historical experiences, because they have been nourished by different religious doctrines and inspired by heroes of different epics. In addition, the Filipino heritage has included a series of violent encounters, including armed conflicts between the Christian majority and the Muslim minority groups.

B. Statement of the Problem and Review of the Literature

The subject-matter of the study is twofold, namely, the answers to the following questions: 1) In the philosophy

of Spinoza, what is the conception of freedom and its opposite, namely determinism? 2) Is Spinoza's peculiar conception of freedom in conformity with, or in opposition to, certain facts of the Filipino Muslim culture?

Because of Spinoza's well-known denial of freedom to man, he is commonly branded a determinist.¹ Determinism, in its classical sense, is a doctrine which proposes necessitation² and rejects the incidence of events that are undetermined.³ Determinists see a necessary connection between event

¹Cf. Vernon Bourke, Will in Western Thought (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), p. 37; C.D. Broad, Five Types of Ethical Theory (New York: The Humanities Press, Inc., 1950), p. 23; Robert Caponigri, A History of Western Philosophy (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), p. 215; Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy (7 vols.; London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1958-1963), IV, p. 248; R. L. Franklin, Freewill and Determinism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 49; B.A.G. Fuller, A History of Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1957), p. 78; Errol Harris, "Spinoza's Theory of Human Immortality," in The Monist, LV (1971), p. 668; W.T. Jones, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1952), p. 702; Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945), p. 574; S. Ya. Volfson, "Spinoza's Ethical Worldview," in Spinoza and Soviet Philosophy, trans. by George Kline (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), p. 143; and Alfred Weber, History of Philosophy (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), p. 340.

²Cf. William James, "The Dilemma of Determinism," in Philosophic Problems, ed. by Maurice Mandelbaum, Francis Gramlich and Alan Ross Anderson (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1957), p. 319.

³Cf. R.L. Franklin, Freewill and Determinism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 3.

X and event Y so that given X, Y has to occur.⁴ They maintain that "... every total situation is a sufficient condition for what follows it, that there is always some true propositions, even if unknown, which asserts or entails that, whenever this X, then this Y."⁵ Everything is totally governed by its antecedent cause. The earlier happenings absolutely fix the subsequent ones so that whatever is, is necessary; whatever is not, is impossible. Indeterminism, its opposite, rejects the alleged fixity of the world and its processes; instead, it espouses nature's pluralism, its looseness or its freedom from a thoroughly rigid fastening.⁶ Fuller defines indeterminism as the doctrine that "... indicates that the will exercises itself independently of all determination whatsoever, be it by instinct or impulse or passion or natural and moral motives or character or the self, and has no other cause than a blank, unmotivated power to decide and will, whose choices and volitions are explicable simply and solely by its mere existence and exercise, and require no other reason of any sort to account for them."⁷

⁴Cf. Sidney Hook, ed., Determinism and Freedom in the Age of Modern Science (New York: New York University Press, 1958), Introduction, p. 4.

⁵Franklin, Freewill and Determinism, pp. 13-14.

⁶Cf. James, "The Dilemma of Determinism," in Philosophic Problems, p. 319.

⁷B.A.G. Fuller, A History of Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1957), Appendix VI, Glossary xxxvi.

Yet, Spinoza who is considered by many as a determinist, is seen by some⁸ to be the champion of the libertarians. In writing the Ethics to convey to his readers the means to pursue the highest good that can insure the greatest lasting happiness, Spinoza introduces a new conception of freedom compatible with man's power of striving after happiness. For Spinoza, freedom is not the absence of necessity; rather, it is the power and the ability to keep away and to remove obstacles to the realization of man's natural end. Moreover, freedom does not reside exclusively in the will conceived as a faculty really distinct from the intellect.

The problem before us is to determine whether the seeming contradiction in Spinozism—in one breath, he denies freedom and asserts it—is resolvable by an analysis of the various conceptions of freedom. Jaspers tackles this problem concerning Spinoza by the following description: "On the

⁸Cf. Morris Cohen, "Amor Dei Intellectualis," in Chronikon Spinozarum, III (1923), pp. 11-12; Stuart Hampshire, "Spinoza's Theory of Human Freedom," in The Monist, LV (1971), p. 564; Hampshire, "Spinoza and the Idea of Freedom," in Studies in Spinoza, ed. by P. Kashap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 311; T.M. Forsyth, "Spinoza's Doctrine of God," in Studies in Spinoza, p. 14; G.H.R. Parkinson, "Spinoza On the Power and Freedom of Man," in The Monist, LV (1971), p. 547; Leo Strauss, Spinoza's Critique of Religion (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 111-112; and A. Wolf, "Spinoza's Conception of the Attributes of Substance," in Studies in Spinoza, p.22.

one hand, there is no freedom ... freedom is one with necessity ... Where the action results purely from the consequences of one's own essence, this necessity is at the same time the most perfect freedom."⁹

C. Objectives

In this study, the primary objective is to determine the Spinozistic conception of freedom. Despite many centuries and categories of philosophizing, the interest in and the significance of Spinoza's controversial freedom remain unabated. This inquiry's secondary objective is the comparison of Spinoza's insights with those embodied in some specific Filipino Muslim cultural facts; namely, the Maranao maratabat and the Tausug juramentado.

Muslim Filipinos are generally fatalistic people. This means that, for them, all things come from God and all events that happen are so because of God's will. Speaking of Filipino Muslims, Majul asserts that "... there is the widespread belief that the historical process is not, solely, the result of man's intentions and actions but there is also the

⁹Karl Jaspers, Spinoza, Vol. II of The Great Philosophers (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1966), pp. 51-52.