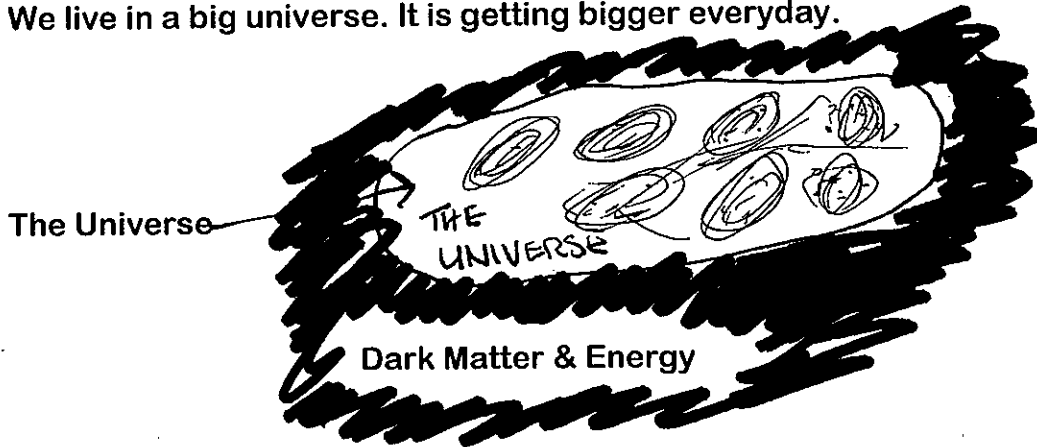


A VASTLY SIMPLIFIED HISTORY OF  
A HIGHER POWER  
By Dick DeShaw

We live in a big universe. It is getting bigger everyday.



But the universe is only about a fourth of the size of the dark matter and energy that surrounds it.

Nobody knows if that is all there is. We did not even know about dark matter and energy till recently.

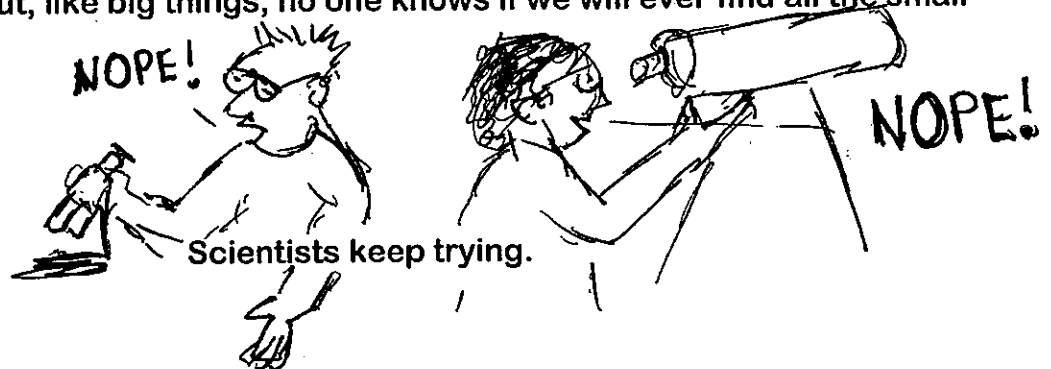
Our planet is small. Humans are very, very small. Billions of us crowd upon the surface of our earth. Of course, there are much smaller things, like bugs.



There are even much smaller things in our universe, like atoms.



Recently, scientists have discovered smaller things, like quarks. And even smaller things. But, like big things, no one knows if we will ever find all the small things.

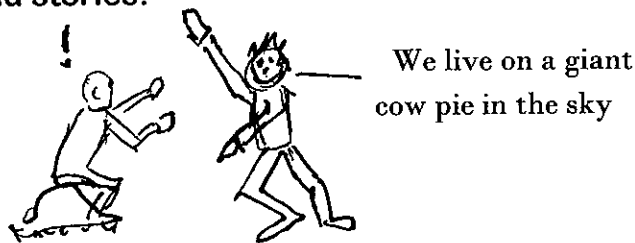


Humans have always been curious about where we come from and why we are here.

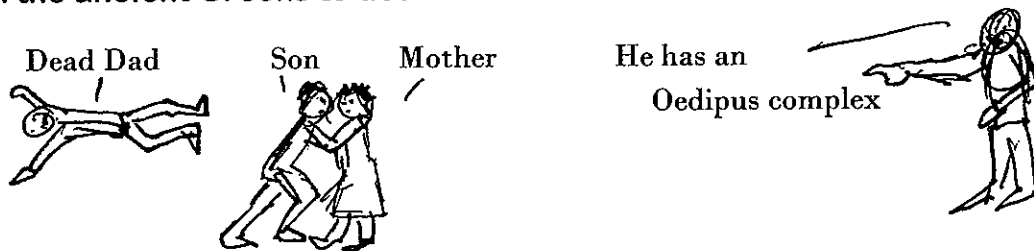


Something much more powerful than humans must've made things.

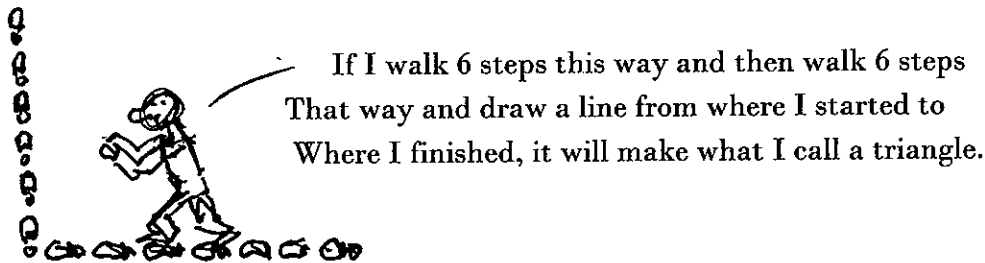
So they told stories:



Some of these stories had lots of imagination. We still use stories from the ancient Greeks to describe human behavior:

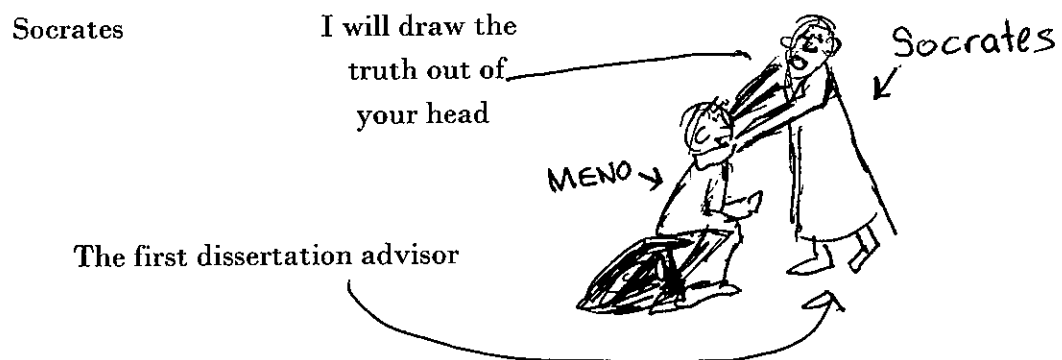


Some of the Greek stories began to describe events and things that humans experience.



Out of these stories, the Greeks discovered mathematics and logic, which are the languages of science. Of course, the same discoveries evolved in other

countries from other people. We just have a more complete history of the Greeks who also discovered philosophy – the search for wisdom.

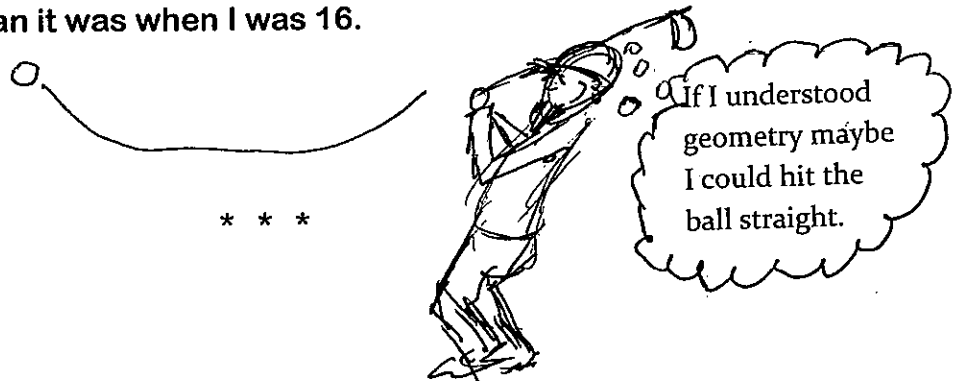


Two of these Greeks wrote books that changed how humans think. Aristotle described a system of how people used language in thinking – which is called logic.

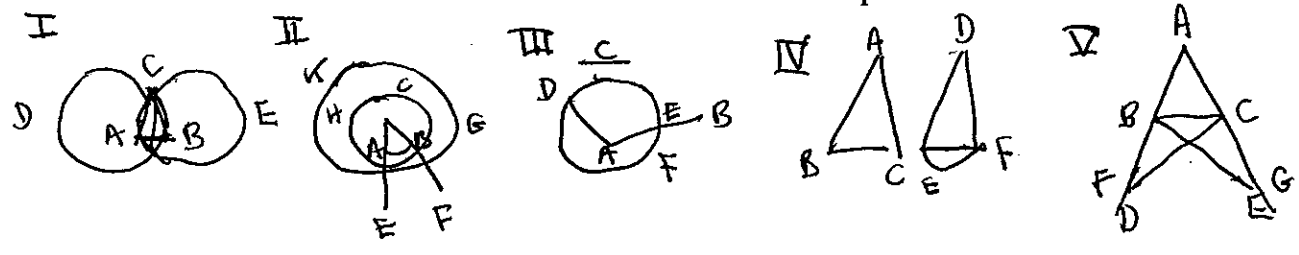


Euclid put together the mathematics of the thinkers of his day. He wrote one of the most important books in human history – *The Elements*. His book developed the mathematics of space that we call geometry.

When I went to high school, 54 years ago, this was the geometry I was taught. Much to my regret now, golf was more important to me in those days. So I skipped most of my classes to play. It is much harder to learn Euclid's geometry when I am 70 than it was when I was 16.



An 1 \*My drawings of the first 5 propositions of Euclid show how little I attended class. I did not learn to use a compass.



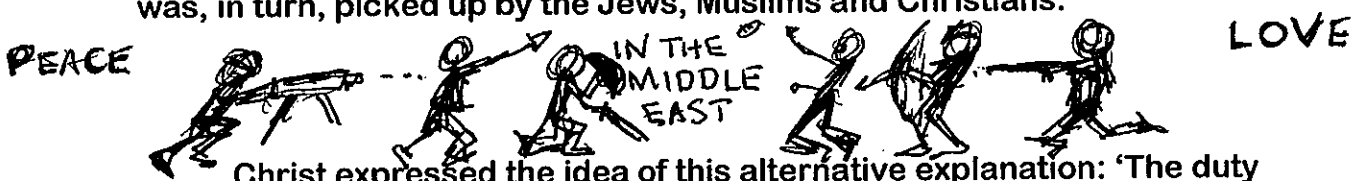
Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Aristotle's logic and Euclid's geometry were the only way these subjects were understood. Then, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, G. Boole combined logic and mathematics. At around the same time, mathematicians discovered Euclid's 5<sup>th</sup> postulate had alternative interpretations.

Since then, both geometry and logic have developed in the weird and wonderful ways that make a 'science fiction' outcome possible in modern science.

While the Greeks were discovering science, an alternative way of explaining our place and purpose in the world, developed in that hotbed of human unrest, the Middle East.

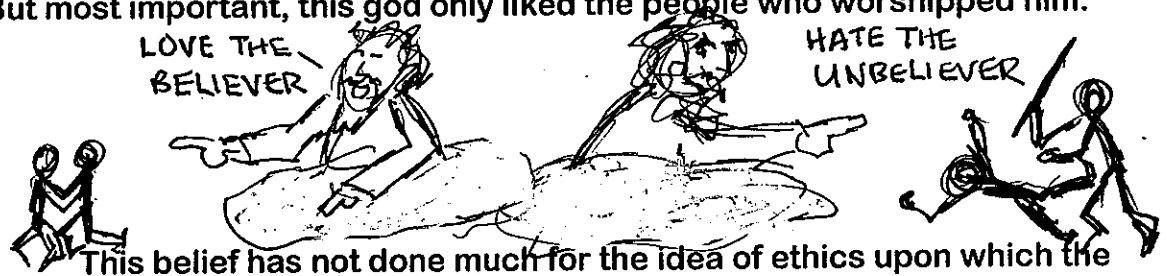
What now seems ironic, considering the history of that part of the world is that this alternate explanation was developed around the value of the individual person and our decent treatment of him or her, that is called, 'ethics.'

The Zoroastrians led the way in the development of this idea and it was, in turn, picked up by the Jews, Muslims and Christians.



Christ expressed the idea of this alternative explanation: 'The duty of humans is to love the Higher Power with all their heart, mind, and soul and to love their neighbor as themselves.' (a paraphrase). There has not been a day of peace in that area since Zoroaster died.

Zoroaster, Moses, Christ and Mohammed, turned from stories like cow pie in the sky to a god like them, only much bigger and more powerful. This god could be a loving father but he also could be a vengeful king. He could be loving but he also could be angry and mean. But most important, this god only liked the people who worshipped him.

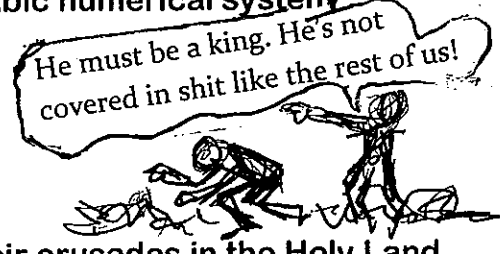


This belief has not done much for the idea of ethics upon which the religions were founded. Moreover, this god, unlike some in earlier religions, was always a man. This was interpreted to mean that believers could treat women badly.



Belief became more important than logic, mathematics or science. Especially for Christians who went into the dark age of the intellect. The Muslims who kept the Christian beliefs from invading them by force, kept Greek science and philosophy alive. They developed their own and gave humanity one of its greatest gifts in the Arabic numerical system.

Apologies to  
Monty Python  
The Dark Ages



Some Christians came back from their crusades in the Holy Land with Arabic numbers and Greek philosophy. Using mathematics, (they were probably the first successful accountants), these templars became very successful and rich. So the French King killed or exiled the templars by declaring them sinners and lovers of false gods and took their riches.



The damage was done. Greek science and philosophy crept into the belief systems of Christians and changed them. Christianity took on Plato's idealism and Aristotle's logic, but still filtered them through the idea of a super human in the sky. The renaissance had begun in the Christian world.

During all this time, the Jewish people had bounced from one persecution and exile, to another. Persecuted in Spain and Portugal, some of them landed in Holland, which was one of the freest countries at that time, in the world. Some of them were scholars.

The Synagogue

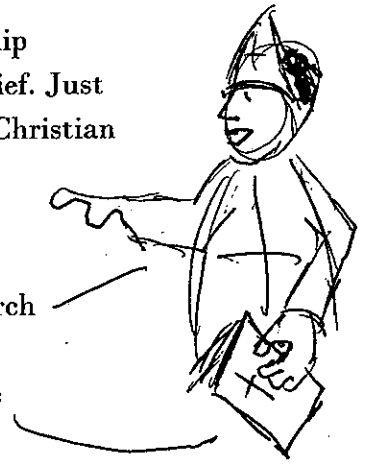


The Torah

You are free to worship  
With your own belief. Just  
Don't contradict Christian  
Beliefs.

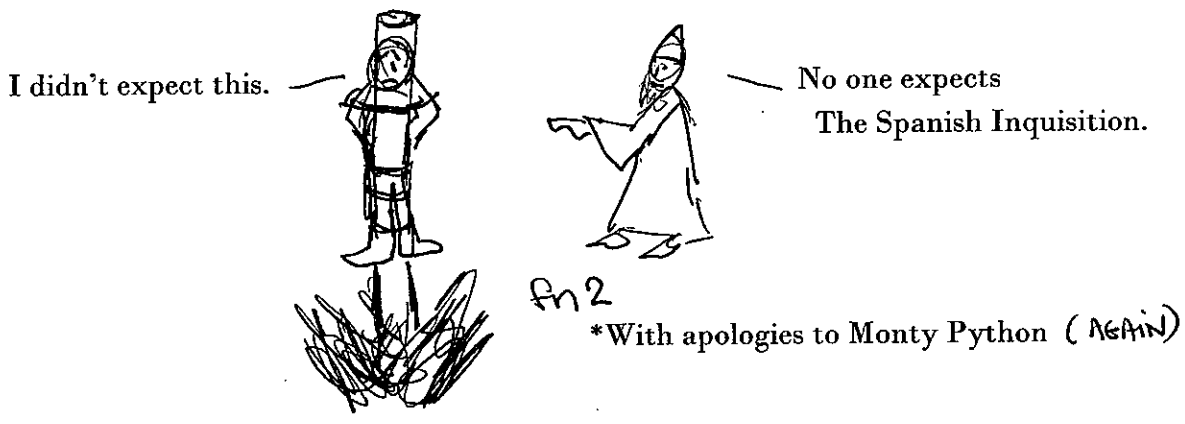
The Church

The Bible



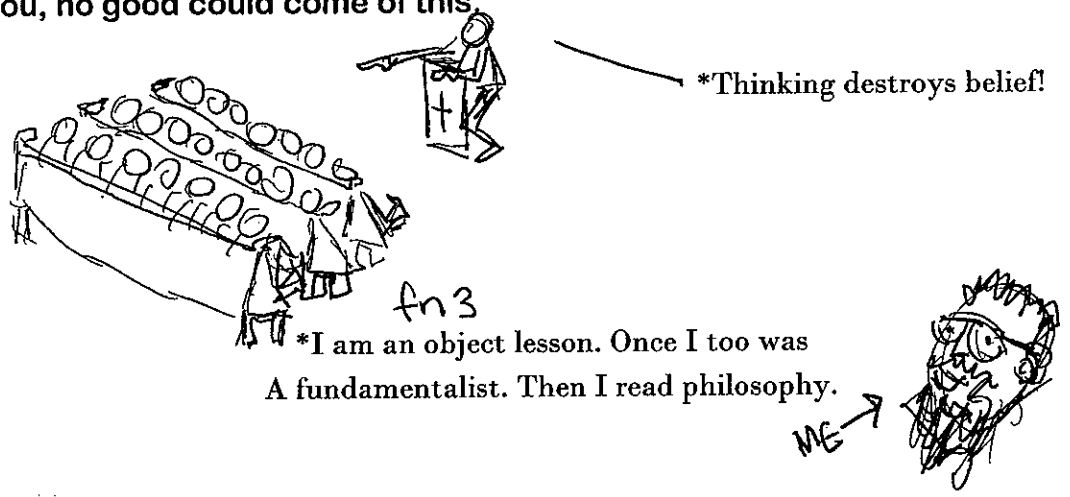
At one time, Portugal was the learning centre of the world. Jews, Muslims, Christians and Asians all brought their scholarship to this area. The Muslims ruled Portugal and Spain but then Catholic countries conquered them. The Catholic church had an especially nasty organization called, 'The Inquisition.'

Soon everyone who did not believe what the Catholic church believed was persecuted. Burning unbelievers at the stake was especially popular.



Jews were forced to convert to Christianity or face the wrath of the Inquisition. When the Jews fled to Holland, they brought their books and acquired knowledge with them.

One young Jewish student, who was going to be a rabbi, read Greek and oriental books on philosophy and poetry. As any Christian fundamentalist can tell you, no good could come of this.



This young student, whose name was Baruch Spinoza, especially liked Euclid. He said Euclid taught him how to think. (there's that dangerous word again). He said Euclid was a model of what a thinker and writer should be. While he was also influenced by modern writers at that time, who were exploring ideas

In science and philosophy, like Bacon, Hobbes and Descartes; Euclid was Spinoza's mentor. Spinoza found his idea of the Higher Power and ethics in Euclid's 'Common Notions' in *The Elements*.

Things which are equal to the same thing  
Are also equal to one another. That is the  
Foundation of ethics and mathematics.

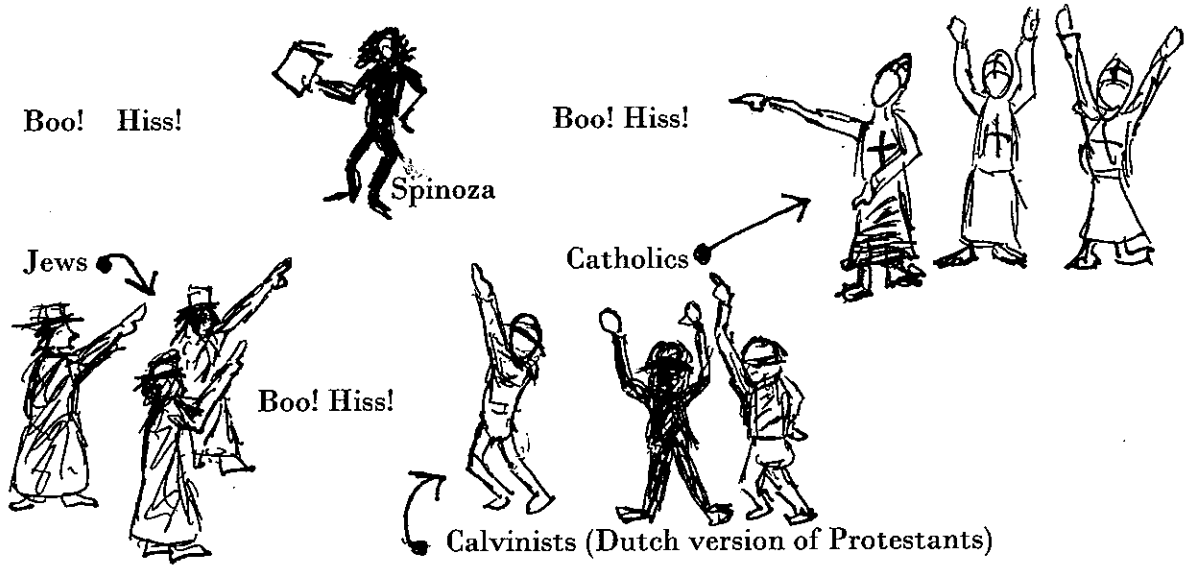


Spinoza

The whole is greater than the part. That  
Is the foundation truth of God."

Needless to say, the churches did not like this. None of them did.

Spinoza was able to unite Catholics, Jews and Protestants, something no one else had been able to do. He united them in their hatred of him!

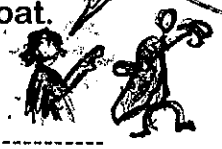


fn 4 "There goes that filthy atheist," they said. \*An atheist is a person who does not believe in God. (See fn  $x^2 = x$ )

The Jews kicked Spinoza out of their church. The Catholics tried to destroy his books. (Since they did not control Holland, they could not burn him at the stake, much to their chagrin). The Calvinists were just plain nasty, and killed the political leader who protected Spinoza.

I'd wear the coat more but the knife scratches my back.

There is a story that the Jews sent a hit man to kill Spinoza. The hit man tried to stab Spinoza but the knife did not go through Spinoza's thick coat. Spinoza kept that coat the rest of his life.<sup>6</sup>



ME



Where did footnote 5 go? I dunno. Guess it got lost in translation.

Fn <sup>6</sup>. I identify with Spinoza. When I was a prison guard, a prisoner tried to stick a shiv in my gut. I caught it with my hand. But I was able to keep my hand. Fortunately, the knife did not stay in it.



See all the footnotes. You can take the person out of academia but not the academic out of the person.



fn ( $x^2 = x$ ) Hah! I finally got back to this footnote. I used the special symbol:  $x^2 = x$  for this footnote because it is important. If you want to know why  $x^2 = x$  is special, read George Boole's, *Law of Thought*.

Way back I said "An atheist is a person who does not believe in God and that the Catholic, Protestants and Jews all called Spinoza an atheist. A modern humanist, (Interlude while fingers rest... Okay, back to text)

Richard Dawkins also calls Spinoza that but he means it in a positive way. They are wrong. Probably no one has ever lived who had a larger God than Spinoza. After all, his God is the 'whole' of everything.

The reason we call all the other churches by specific names, like Jewish, Catholic, Protestant and so forth, is that they are all part of humanities attempt to understand the higher power. They think they are the whole, but the strife and disharmony they have created, says otherwise.

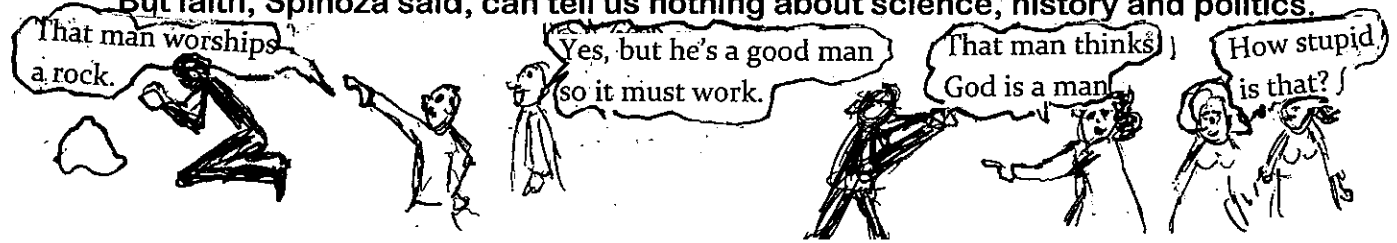
Whew! Finally, end of footnote ( $x^2 = x$ ).

Spinoza realized that the whole of nature is a higher power, one we know through science and worship when we obey the laws of nature in our life. However, unlike religious people, Spinoza did not say his definition of a higher power was the only one.

His is a definition we know through reason. It is okay to have a definition that leaves reason and uses faith instead. Faith, he said, can tell us two things about the higher power, as Jesus Christ remarked:<sup>7</sup>

- 1) You should love the higher power with all your heart, mind and soul.
- 2) You should love your neighbor as yourself.

But faith, Spinoza said, can tell us nothing about science, history and politics.





Fn 7 (Okay, footnotes should be at the bottom of the page, but I ran out of space. Maybe that's why I never got my PhD. I never got my dissertation approved. For years I put, ABD on my resume till I realized most people thought it meant, 'All But Dead.')

Anyway, Spinoza was very fond of Jesus and the apostle Paul.

Maybe we should claim Spinoza as a disciple of Jesus for Jesus?



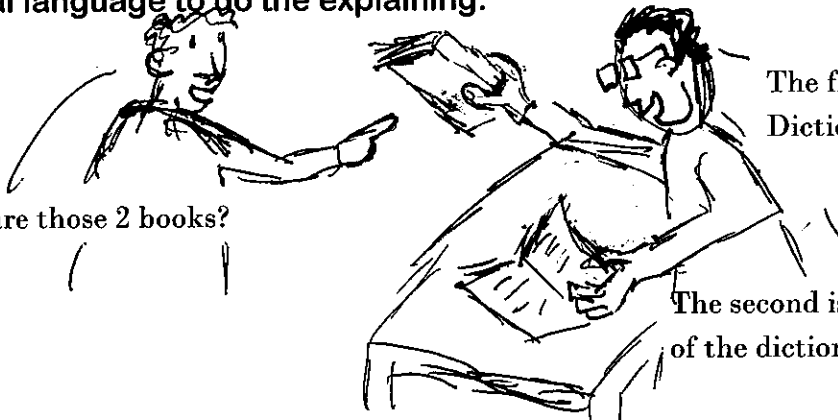
It's worth a try.

Now that we have identified Spinoza's rational definition of a higher power as the whole of nature, what good does that do us?

Spinoza also had a philosophical definition of God as substance. Part I of the *Ethics* develops this definition. Philosophers have a virus in their thinking that does much what a virus does in a computer.

I call this virus; trying to explain too much. Spinoza called it an idea of an idea of an idea. Philosophers do so much explaining that they develop their own special language to do the explaining.

What are those 2 books?



The first is my Dictionary of Kant

The second is my dictionary of the dictionary of Kant.

Anyone who has read Spinoza, knows that even though he wanted to be like Euclid and write in a clear, simple way, he suffered from the philosopher's virus.

Emulating Euclid's geometric method did not help. However, by the end of the *Ethics* (Part V), Spinoza admitted he had the virus, in Part I of the *Ethics* and that his true definition of the higher power was caught in the whole/part discussions.

Good thing, as George Boole demonstrated, in the *Law of Thought*, Spinoza's philosophical discussion of God in Part I, is not very logical.

There! I have spit out my philosophical virus



Me

So what good for us is Spinoza's definition of the higher power as the whole of nature?

Well, as Spinoza says, we can stop thinking that nature is for our use. We can realize we are only a part of the whole of nature. We can stop our 'silly scolds,' because everything does not work out for us as we like it to.

Why does it always rain when I want to play golf?



You're so selfish.

God is letting innocent babies die and all you care about is golf!



Two examples of people who do not understand nature.

When Spinoza was a young man, things did not work out the way he wanted them to. He discovered wonderful truths in Euclid, but when he shared them, he lost his church, his business, family and friends.

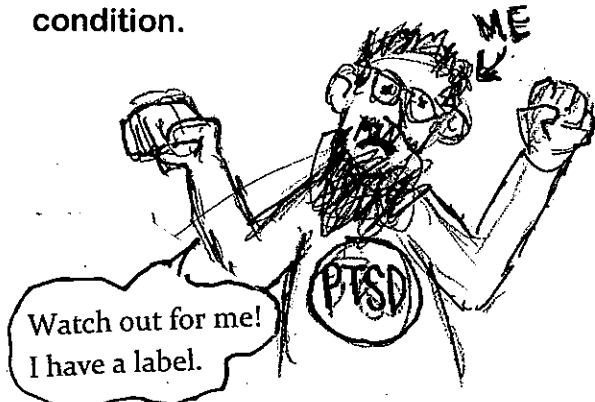
Then someone tried to kill him. Today we would give Spinoza the PTSD label (Post Trauma Stress Disorder) that I was given when someone tried to kill me. I got angry. Spinoza could have gotten angry and been a danger to others. Or he could have tried to kill himself as I did.

Footnote <sup>8</sup> Spinoza got labels – Atheist, Unbeliever and some not fit for polite society.

But rather than use what happened to him as an excuse, he tried to understand it. He said he was, 'like a man suffering from a fatal illness' unless he could find a good that could help him live in this mixed up world.

The good he found in Euclid: "...it is the knowledge of the union that the mind has with the whole of nature."

Spinoza realized he was sick, (as I was). So he spent his life writing about a cure for sick thinking while living a life that showed there is a victory over the condition.



My emotions are out of control. I must understand why.

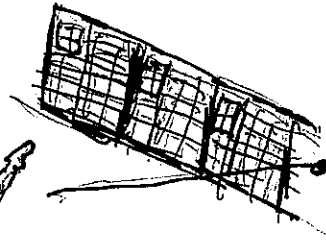


When my job got so bad that I wanted to kill myself, I returned to Spinoza, not as an academic philosopher, but as a sick man. Like Bill Wilson who started Alcoholics Anonymous, I needed help.

Rose  
(my wife)



Dick needs help!



Maybe the convicts in the prison where I work, will kill me.

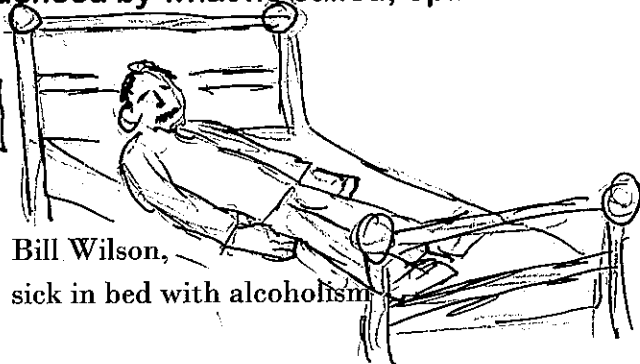
Spinoza says our lives are like a ship tossed in a storm at sea. We lose our natural desire to survive when we do not know who we really are and our place in the higher power or the whole of nature. We need our thinking cured.

Bill Wilson, of A.A., like Spinoza, realized he had a sickness that was going to kill him. A friend gave him William James' book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James was strongly influenced by what he called, Spinoza's healthy mindedness.

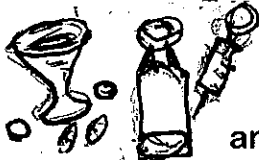
Here is a book you should read



Bill Wilson,  
sick in bed with alcoholism



DRUGS IN OUR LIFE



FAME

RICHES

PLEASURE



Bill Wilson's *Twelve Steps* of AA were the result. He started an organization that has been a blessing to many sick lives.

Here are his first three steps.

- 1) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2) Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could Restore us to sanity.
- 3) Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

The success of Alcoholics Anonymous is a result of Bill's healthy mindedness. We can substitute any circumstance of life that affects our emotions and lives. Understanding is the key to Spinoza's healthy mindedness. We can ignore the anthropomorphism.

This is a vastly simplified history of a higher power, one that Spinoza defined. I have suggested some uses it can have for our lives.

