

SAÚDE, ESPIRITUALIDADE E O DEUS DE ESPINOSA

HEALTH, SPIRITUALITY AND SPINOZA'S GOD.

SALUD, ESPIRITUALIDAD Y EL DIOS DE ESPINOSA

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RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo desta reflexão teórica é analisar a aproximação da definição que se tem atualmente de Espiritualidade e a definição de Deus para o filósofo Espinosa. **Método:** Trata-se de uma reflexão teórica em que, seguindo o conceito de Deus, trazido por Espinosa em sua obra *Ética*, foi realizada uma aproximação deste conceito com a Espiritualidade e seus impactos para a saúde da população. **Resultados:** O conceito de espiritualidade vem se modificando ao longo da história, sendo, nos dias atuais, defendido como uma dimensão inerente ao ser que se manifesta na forma em que ele se relaciona consigo mesmo, com o outro e com a natureza. As questões relacionadas à dimensão espiritual e religiosa sempre fizeram parte dos questionamentos dos filósofos que, ao longo dos tempos, tentaram explicar a existência de Deus e de que modo a relação com o sagrado influenciava o modo de vida das pessoas. Espinosa se destaca, nesse cenário, ao trazer uma definição de Deus que se contrapõe à defendida pela teologia judaico-cristã de sua época. Ele traz uma concepção de Deus imanente, infinito e é causa, não transitiva, de todas as coisas. Assim, Deus é natureza e tudo o que existe está em Deus e Deus está em tudo. **Conclusão:** Sendo parte da substância infinita de Deus, somos compostos de atributos, como extensão (corpo) e pensamento (alma), sendo assim constituídos de corpo e alma que são inseparáveis, ambos são parte de uma mesma e única substância. Dessa forma, a vivência da espiritualidade pode afetar positivamente o corpo que, em consequência, influenciará a alma. A partir dessa aproximação mente e corpo, Espinosa demonstra a potência pensante da alma, que percebe a existência de seu corpo pela compreensão de suas afecções.

Descritores: Espiritualidade. Religião. Natureza. Filosofia.

ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this theoretical reflection is to analyze the approximation of the current definition of Spirituality and the definition of God according to the philosopher Spinoza. **Methods:** It is a theoretical reflection that, starting from the concept of God brought by Spinoza in his work *Ethics*, sought an approximation of this concept with Spirituality and its impacts on the health of the population. **Results:** The concept of spirituality has been changing throughout history and is nowadays defended as an inherent dimension to being manifested in the way in which it relates to itself, to the other and to nature. Questions concerning the spiritual and religious dimension have always been part of the questions of philosophers who have tried over time to explain the existence of God and how the relationship with the sacred influenced people's way of life. Spinoza stands out, in this scenario, for bringing a definition of God that contrasts with that defended by the Judeo-Christian theology of his time. It bears an immanent, infinite conception of God and is the cause, not transitive, of all things. So God is nature and everything that exists is in God and God is in everything. **Conclusion:** Being part of the infinite substance of God, we are composed of attributes such as extension (body) and thought (soul), and, thus, constituted of body and soul that are inseparable; both are part of one and the same substance. Thus, the experience of spirituality can positively affect the body and the latter will, consequently, influence the soul. From this approximation of mind and body, Spinoza demonstrates the rational power of the soul, which perceives the existence of its body by understanding its affections.

Descriptors: Spirituality; Religion; Nature; Philosophy.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El objetivo de esta reflexión teórica es analizar la aproximación de la definición que se tiene actualmente de Espiritualidad y la definición de Dios para el filósofo Espinosa. **Método:** Se trata de una reflexión teórica en que, partiendo del concepto de Dios traído por Espinosa en su obra *Ética*, fue realizada una aproximación de este concepto con la Espiritualidad y sus impactos para la salud de la población. **Resultados:** La espiritualidad ha sido relacionada con el bienestar físico, la calidad de vida y ha sido considerada un factor de enfrentamiento de enfermedades. El concepto de espiritualidad ha estado sufriendo modificaciones desde el siglo XX, siendo actualmente defendida como una dimensión inherente al ser que se manifiesta en la forma en que este se relaciona consigo mismo, con el otro y con la naturaleza. Las cuestiones relacionadas a la dimensión espiritual y religiosa siempre fueron parte de los cuestionamientos de los filósofos que a lo largo de la historia intentaron explicar la existencia de Dios y de qué modo la relación con lo sagrado influenciaba el modo de vida de las personas. Espinosa se destaca en ese escenario al traer una definición de Dios que se contrapone a la defendida por la teología judaico-cristiana de su época. Trae una concepción de Dios immanente, infinito y causa no transitiva de todas las cosas. Así, Dios es naturaleza y todo lo que existe está en Dios y Dios está en todo. **Conclusión:** Siendo parte de la substancia infinita de Dios, somos compuestos de atributos como extensión (cuerpo) y pensamiento (alma), siendo así constituidos de cuerpo y alma que son inseparables, ambas son parte de una misma y única substancia. De esta forma, la vivencia de la espiritualidad puede afectar positivamente al cuerpo y ese, consecuentemente, influenciará al alma. A partir de esta aproximación, mente y cuerpo, Espinosa demuestra la potencia pensante del alma, que percibe la existencia de su cuerpo por la comprensión de sus afeciones.

Descriptor: Espiritualidad; Religión; Naturaleza; Filosofía.

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INTRODUCTION

Spirituality has been studied worldwide and its recognition as a factor that influences people's health, well-being and quality of life has been the subject of numerous research and scientific publications in recent years.

Health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being, which excludes the idea that health is just the absence of disease. For a long time, medicine valued health care only from the point of view of the physical body, dissociated from the social, psychic and spiritual dimension. But nowadays, it has been directed to the recognition that man is not only body, matter, but must be understood, in its multiple dimensions, and dealing with his health includes considering his integrality, including his spirituality.

Recent studies indicate that the spiritual dimension of the individual has a great impact on disease prevention, health recovery⁽¹⁾, coping with serious illnesses and has a positive impact on the survival of people suffering from these diseases⁽²⁾. This recognition, in the different areas of health, has increased the number of studies carried out worldwide and there are several scientific evidences that prove its importance for the quality of life and for the physical and mental well-being⁽³⁾.

The spirituality of patients has been mentioned as an important factor to be stimulated during health care, because the being is multidimensional and its spiritual dimension must be considered in its therapeutic plan, as it can influence the way the individual faces the process of illness, treatment and recovery.

The link between medicine and religion has been around since the earliest times, when the onset of disease and its cure were attributed to deities or spiritual beings as a form of punishment or benefit to humans. From the Renaissance, however, there was a separation between science and religion that remained until the twentieth century⁽⁴⁾.

Until the nineteenth century, religion and spirituality were considered synonymous, but from that time a distinction was gradually made between them. Thus, religion came to be understood as an institutionalized practice of a system of beliefs, rituals and symbols shared by a community. On the other hand, spirituality was understood as a personal search for meaning and

meaning in existence and its relationship with the sacred, whether or not linked to a religion⁽⁵⁾.

However, the scientific community has not yet reached consensus on the concept of spirituality. For many, spirituality and religion are often considered synonymous, and in some scientific studies this differentiation does not occur clearly. It is a challenge to find a definition for spirituality, as none of the existing meanings can fully comprehend its meaning. However it can be said that it is formed by different interconnected concepts⁽⁶⁾.

Studies that seek to reflect on issues that go beyond the biological being, that recognize the individual as a being that has multiple dimensions, which are interconnected and impact this being are important, especially when seeking to talk with reflections of scholars and other sciences such as the philosophy. Thus, reflections on the duality of body and mind and the influence of the spiritual dimension on the physical body can broaden the concept of health and the way health promotion, prevention and treatment are perceived.

Questions related to spirituality, religion and Being have always been discussions present in the history of humanity. From ancient times, philosophers have been interested in explaining God's conception and what it meant to people and how it interfered with their lives. Thus, these concepts pervaded the common understanding each time, and at times their definition was quite different from the theological understanding of God. In this sense, Espinosa stood out in bringing a different conception of God from that which existed until the seventeenth century - that of a transcendent God, separated from man, sitting on a throne, to judge people and punish them for their acts.

Thus, the aim of this theoretical reflection is to analyze the approximation of the current definition of Spirituality and the definition of God of the philosopher Spinoza.

METHOD

Spinoza's definition of God differs from the Judeo-Christian concept that prevailed in his day. For him, God is an infinite power to exist and everything in nature must be thought of from his existence. Therefore "God is an immanent, not transitive cause of all things."⁽⁷⁾ God is nature, and in this view there is no separation between every existing thing and a transcendent God who is separate, superior, and creator of every

creature, who observes, judges, and decides all things as conceived by the Judeo-Christian religion.

In his posthumously published book *Ethics* in 1677, Espinosa describes his ideas on the most fundamental questions of metaphysics. In Part I, the book discusses God, his definition, axioms and various propositions as to his definition. The book also provides, in the second part, information on the origin and nature of the mind, origin and nature of affections (third part) and about human servitude or the force of affections (fourth part).

The conception of God understood and defended by Spinoza is a concept that closely resembles the conception of spirituality that has been discussed, and the most accepted today by the scientific community. Therefore, this study is a theoretical reflection in which Part I of the book *Ethics*, by Baruch de Espinosa, was used to understand his definition of God and, from there, an analysis of his approach to the concept of Spirituality, brought by today's scholars, still relating to the issue of health.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For Spinoza, God and nature are the same, nature is contained in God as part of Him, and nature must be known if we are to know God, for everything comes from God and everything is in God. According to Espinosa, "Because of you I understand that whose essence involves existence"⁽⁷⁾. Therefore God is infinite substance and therefore nothing can exist outside of Him. And that substance exists on its own, depending on nothing else to exist, exists only for the need to exist and is determined by nothing, besides containing attributes and modes that contribute to the aspect of substance. And we are all modes of divine substance.

God, being nature, everything that exists is an immanent part of God, "Everything that exists, exists in God, and without God nothing can exist or be conceived."⁽⁷⁾. Thus part of God's potency manifests itself in us, and all action in nature is exclusively God's action by the laws of nature, without being coerced by anyone, everything stems from the essence of God⁽⁷⁾.

Being part of the divine cause, living according to the potency in us, we act according to the laws of nature contained in God. This thought makes us believe that there are no errors in events, there is no good or evil, sin or imperfection, because everything that exists,

exists from God's need to exist, all of which are two faces of the same Being, since everything it comes from its essence and everything that exists is part of that substance.

"By God I mean the absolutely infinite being, that is, a substance that consists of infinite attributes, each of which expresses an eternal and infinite essence."⁽⁷⁾. Substance is that which needs nothing but itself to exist, whose concept needs no other concept to exist and which expresses its essence in different attributes. By attribute is meant those elements which the intellect perceives as part which constitute the essence of substance - and these are infinite and conceived in themselves (thought and extension). Besides the attributes and the substance, the modes are also the affections of the substance, that is, what exists, in something else, is through which it is also conceived. The modes only exist because there is substance and its attributes, and the mode proceeds and is determined by the attributes⁽⁷⁾.

In Spinoza God represents the idea of wholeness as the only existing substance as he claims that God is that which exists on its own and that everything that exists in God is an essential part of God, thus everything is God and God is everything, "God is nature". God is the human being, the animals, the plants, the sky and the moon. God is everything that exists and everything exists as an immanent part of God, nature is not separated from God, but intimately linked, forming the same thing. Everything that exists is a product of God, a necessary expression of God's power and not a creation of the divine. This pantheistic idea (everything is God or necessary manifestation of God), espoused by Spinoza, expands God to all things and conceives God intimately present in everything.

Spinoza's position broke with any interpretation of God held by the religions of his day. The concept of God for the major western religions is that of an immaterial person, a being transcendent to nature, who is separated from the universe, all nature being his creation, which he controls according to his own will and there is a creator domination over the creature. The God defended by religions is an anthropomorphic God, an imitation of man, even with human attributes, endowed with personality⁽⁸⁾.

By breaking with this conception of God of the major religions, Espinoza brings an ethical relevance to the concept of well-being in the face of everyday things. In concluding part of his book,

Ethics, he points out four uses of this conception. When we allow ourselves to act according to God's need out of love and godliness, we will have a calm spirit and find our supreme happiness and freedom, as we are part of the divine nature and our actions must have their reward in themselves.

For him, this doctrine is also ethically useful in guiding us in the face of things that are not in our power not in our nature, understanding that we should accept and wait with good spirits, trusting that everything comes from God and his need to exist. It also facilitates social life as it teaches not to hate, despise, envy or conflict with others, accepting events and always helping others under the guidance of reason. And, finally, Espinosa attributes to this doctrine the usefulness of facilitating the understanding of how society should be governed, not so that it serves but that the best is freely realized.

Spinoza brings this dimension of God, being explained philosophically as truth and refers the concept of God of religions to imagination, fantasy, in order to obtain obedience. Thus the aim of religion would be for him to lead the people to obey God, to honor him, and to serve him⁽⁹⁾. And this conception is still very close to what we currently have about religion.

Religion is now considered a system of beliefs, practices, rituals that facilitate access to the sacred, linked to an institution, with similar and specific behavioral, social and doctrinal characteristics that are shared by a group but practiced individually⁽⁴⁾. It can also be understood as the extent to which the individual engages with a system of beliefs and practices shared by a community, aimed at approaching the sacred or the transcendent, involving a doctrine, rules of conduct, organized rituals and always linked to an institution⁽¹⁰⁾.

On the other hand, the conception of God, understood and defended by Spinoza, is a concept that closely resembles the conception of spirituality that has been discussed, being the most accepted today by the scientific community.

Spirituality is defended as an essential and inherent dimension to the human being, being present in the daily life and intimacy of all people, from atheists to religious, in an intimate and constant way. Spirituality is the human essence for the search for meaning and the purpose of life, including the relationship with

oneself, with the other, with nature and with the sacred, allowing to reach an intimacy with something bigger and an understanding of the universe besides being part of the existential dimension of being⁽⁵⁾.

To have spirituality is to be in connection with oneself, it is a sense of responsibility with the other and with nature, it is an ethical living, respecting everything that exists, not needing religion to exist, because it is an intimate and inherent characteristic of being. It is something that is beyond religion and is not understood as its synonym.

Spirituality is related to inner values of harmony and inner completeness, connection with others, stimulating interest in others and for oneself, a unity with life and nature, with the universe. It can also be understood as a personal search to understand the meaning of life, the relationship with the sacred⁽¹¹⁾.

Thus spirituality is much more than religious manifestation. It is an instrument that makes man more and more human, creating bonds of brotherhood and strengthening ethics, in the relationship that man develops with everything that exists, as he seeks within himself a divine presence, giving him conditions to be ethical, human, fraternal, to the extent recognized as inseparable from all that exists.

Spinoza's thought reflects exactly the way man looks at the world, seeing God from within, as opposed to theology that sees him from the inside out as a transcendent being. Therefore consider that whatever is inseparable unity with God, everything is in God and God is in everything⁽¹²⁾.

CONCLUSION

Many aspects of spirituality are contained in the meaning of God in Spinoza, especially regarding the ethical relationship of man with himself, with the other and with nature, recognizing themselves as an integral part of the universe and recognizing that his actions have an impact on the human being as a whole and the whole interferes with the part where the man is contained.

Thus, several scientific studies have proven that working spirituality, recognizing it as a dimension that cannot be dissociated from being, reconnects us with our essence and, consequently, brings us physical and mental well-being, significantly improving our quality of life. Perhaps this is precisely because this dimension is

the possibility of recognizing oneself as a whole, acting with compassion and conscience, doing good and having in these actions the supreme happiness in oneself and, in our Beatitudes, as we act, according to our nature which is part of the divine nature and its need to exist.

Being part of God's infinite substance, we are composed of attributes such as extension (body) and thought (soul), and thus are constituted of body and soul which are inseparable, both are part of the same and only substance. Therefore it is in the nature of the mind to have a connection with the body and vice versa, and any impact on one will also be an impact on the other. In this way, the experience of spirituality can positively affect the body which, consequently, will influence the soul. From this approach mind and body, Espinosa demonstrates the thinking power of the soul, which perceives the existence of its body by understanding its affections⁽¹³⁾.

Considering this, we can recognize that our body's power of action can be stimulated and increased when the mind positively affects the body. Similarly, when the mind imagines things that diminish the body's power of action, both mind and body power diminish. The way in which body and mind are linked and mutually affected can interfere with people's health condition.

This recognition that body and mind should not be treated separately, as one affects positively or negatively the other, has made the spirituality of the individual included in the curriculum of health professionals. In Brazil, this reality has still been incipient, but in the United States, approximately 90% of medical schools address this theme during undergraduate studies⁽¹⁴⁾.

When we experience our spirituality, we act as part of God, who is immanent in nature, and we are led to act in an ethical, universal manner, preserving life as a whole. Thus our spirit will better produce nature since it is its essence, order and union.

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