

6 P.M., Mon., June 12, 2017

Why was Spinoza Excommunicated?

*"All things noble
are as difficult
as they are
rare."*

Baruch Spinoza

1632-1677

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Bolz A**

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*A free, public lecture by
Steven Nadler, Professor of
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*This "Humanities in Community" series continues monthly – 2nd Mondays –
during Spring-Fall semesters. Updates at www.uproar21.us/lectures*



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IN JULY, 1656, BARUCH SPINOZA WAS PERMANENTLY banned by the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam with the harshest writ of excommunication ever issued by that community. Why was this young man ostracized with such prejudice by the community within which he had been raised and educated?

Spinoza would go on to become perhaps the most radical philosopher of his time, but at the time of his ban he had not yet written anything.

In this lecture, we will examine the circumstances of Spinoza's excommunication and consider some of the ideas that would later appear in his philosophical writings.

Quoting Spinoza

- a) *Happiness is not the reward of virtue but virtue itself.*
- b) *For peace is not mere absence of war, but is a virtue that springs from a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice.*
- c) *Only that thing is free which exists by the necessities of its own nature, and is determined in its actions by itself alone.*
- d) *I have striven not to laugh at human actions, not to weep at them, nor to hate them, but to understand them.*
- e) *It may easily come to pass that a vain man may become proud and imagine himself pleasing to all when he is in reality a universal nuisance.*
- f) *He alone is free who lives with free consent under the entire guidance of reason.*
- h) *All happiness or unhappiness solely depends upon the quality of the object to which we are attached by love.*
- i) *Whatsoever is contrary to nature is contrary to reason, and whatsoever is contrary to reason is absurd.*
- j) *If you want the present to be different from the past, study the past.*
- k) *Those who are believed to be most abject and humble are usually most ambitious and envious.*
- l) *Nothing in the universe is contingent, but all things are conditioned to exist and operate in a particular manner by the necessity of the divine nature.*