THE ETHICAL DIMENSION IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPINOZA

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By

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Abstract

There are very few studies devoted specifically to the ethical teaching of Spinoza's Ethics. Instead, commentators have focussed their attention mainly on the metaphysical and epistemological doctrines found chiefly in Parts I and II. Nevertheless, ethics was Spinoza's primary concern and the metaphysical and epistemological doctrines were intended by him to support and culminate in a practical doctrine of the best way of life. Despite its title, however, the Ethics is silent about what Spinoza means by ethics; indeed, nowhere in this work does he define or explain what ethics is. With this in mind, my chief objective will be to determine what Spinoza himself means by ethics and the significance of this for an understanding of both his ethics and his philosophy as a whole.

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Chapter One

Being and Knowledge in Spinoza

It is important to our understanding of Spinoza's ethical ideas that we see them as a part of his whole thought, as part of an intellectual sequence. Although much analytic philosophy is carried on in the belief that the most effective way of dealing with issues or problems is to isolate them as far as possible, and then to solve each one separately, this procedure rests on a metaphysical assumption that Spinoza would deny. Spinoza, to be sure, did not believe that we could speak intelligibly about any subject matter without some grasp of its relation to the rest of reality. Accordingly, in the Ethics (Ethica)[1], he gives us a rather fully-developed metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology, in what is supposed to be a work on ethics. Consequently, if we are to understand his ethical doctrine as he might wish it understood, we must place it in the context of his metaphysical system. It seems to me profitable, therefore, to offer some discussion of the metaphysical and epistemological doctrines that provide a context in which his ethics can be understood, and of certain terminology that will be indispensable later on. This is the purpose of the present chapter. I do not intend to give a comprehensive account of Spinoza's metaphysics and theory

of knowledge; there are important issues that I shall not even mention. Nevertheless, I shall try to describe the issues that I do treat in a manner that does not presuppose extensive knowledge of Spinoza. In addition to giving the necessary preparation for understanding his ethical teaching, the ensuing discussion of his general orientation will, I trust, provide a context in terms of which we can afterwards describe the position and importance of the ethical doctrine in Spinoza's philosophy. That position is, I believe, logically much more central than it has usually been made out to be.

Chapter One: Part One

Substance, Mode, and Attribute

The concept of substance, which is central in Spinoza's metaphysics, has had a long and continuous history in philosophy from Aristotle to Descartes. For the Greeks, the concept arose in connection with their attempt to resolve a fundamental problem regarding the universe—namely, the problem of change. The problem is as follows: Everyone experiences change, and everyone too has at least a vague, implicit understanding of what it means to change: for a thing to change means that the thing becomes "different" from what it was before. Thus, the plant that was once a tiny seedling is now full-grown. What is true of this example is true of any other kind of change: that is, whenever a thing changes it always becomes (in some sense) other than what it was before. On the other hand, we must also admit that the thing which changes must somehow also remain the same. In our example two things are evident: the plant is not the same yet it is the same plant. Even if the plant turns to ashes (a more dramatic change), the ashes themselves are the very same matter that once had the form of a plant. To deny this would be tantamount to denying either the reality of the change or admitting total annihilation, and both these suppositions are contrary to experience.

On this common-sense reading, then, to change, means to be different—never totally different—yet somehow the same. Thus the problem with which any genuine analysis of change must concern itself, is to explain or account for the sameness and difference that is present in any and every change.

Now the concept of substance was introduced to refer to the permanent or abiding element, or elements, in the universe (the constant substratum), whereas the changing features of experience were viewed as its states, or qualities. Thus, for Aristotle, who provided the first systematic treatment of the concept of substance, states that "the mark most proper to a substance is thought to be that, while remaining numerically one and the same, it admits of contraries."[2] Aristotle, however, not only claimed that substances are the substrata of change, he also insisted that they are the subjects of predication.[3] Having said that, it follows that meaningful talk about the universe seems to require expressions both for qualities and for things, or subjects, that have these qualities. Moreover, since we can conceive of a thing, or subject, without at least some of its qualities, which are therefore called "accidents", but cannot conceive of a quality except in relation to a thing, or a subject, it follows that the latter is more fundamental. The various subjects of predication—that is, the particular things in the

universe, such as plants, animals, and human beings—were thus viewed by Aristotle as substances in the primary sense.[4] These were the fundamental elements in the universe in terms of which everything else was to be understood.

Closer to Spinoza's time, the concept of substance had changed in a way that accords with the development of a mathematical science of the universe. Descartes defined "substance" primarily in terms of "independent existence", as "a thing which so exists that it needs no other thing in order to exist."[5] Each substance, so conceived, has one basic attribute, or property, that constitutes its nature and through which it is known. The essential property of material substance is extension, and it is on this basis that Descartes argued for the possibility of a completely geometrical science of the universe. Descartes, like Aristotle, used the concept of substance to refer to what is elementary in nature, that in terms of which all else is to be explained and understood (this is carried out by defining it in terms of independent, self-sufficient, existence); but, it must suffice to note that, in keeping with his radically different view of scientific explanation, Descartes conceived of what is "substantial" in a very different manner.[6] Nevertheless, there are traces of Aristotelianism in Descartes' theory, for in addition to the well-known account we have just considered, he pro-

vides another account in which substance is defined as "everything in which there resides immediately, as in a subject, or by means of which there exists anything that we perceive, i.e., any property, quality, or attribute, of which we have a real idea."[7] Like Aristotle, therefore, Descartes conceived of substance as a subject of predication, as something that has properties and is, in fact, only known in terms of these properties. Moreover, it is on the basis of this conception that he used the term "attribute", to designate the essence, or essential property, through which each substance is known,[8] and "mode", to refer to the nonessential properties, which cannot be conceived without substance, but without which substance, or its essential property, can be conceived.[9]

One way of arriving at an understanding of Spinoza's definitions[10] of substance, attribute, and mode, is to compare and contrast them with those of Descartes. Spinoza defines substance as "that which is in itself, and is conceived through itself: in other words, that of which a conception can be formed independently of any other conception" (EI, dfn.3). So defined, it is then distinguished both from attribute, by which Spinoza means "that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance" (EI, dfn.4), and from modes, by which he means "the modifications of substance, or that which exists in, and is conceived through, something other than itself" (EI, dfn.5).

Leaving aside for the moment the definitions of attribute and mode, the most striking way in which this definition (of substance) differs from the Cartesian one is that Spinoza includes conceptual, as well as ontological, independence, in his account. According to Spinoza, then, a substance must not only "exist in itself", but must also be "conceived through itself". Correlatively, the modes or modifications (affectiones) are dependent in both senses (compare EI, dfn.5).

The definitional differences between Spinoza and Descartes become much more striking particularly if, as seems reasonable, we construe conceptual independence to mean explanatory independence. So construed, Spinoza's definition of substance, in effect, denies that Cartesian substances (obviously of the finite variety) are really substances; for they are conceived, it will be recalled, through their attribute, and not through themselves. Also, ontological and conceptual independence are not contingently conjoined characteristics of substance for Spinoza; strictly speaking, only that which can also be conceived through itself can also exist in itself, and vice versa. Consequently, since Cartesian substances are not conceived through themselves—that is, explained through themselves—it follows that they do not have the ontological independence claimed for them by the Cartesian doctrine.[11]

The preceding argument, I believe, rests on the force of Spinoza's principles. Its starting point is the axiom that "that which cannot be conceived through anything else must be conceived through itself" (EI, ax.2), which amounts to the claim that everything is explicable. Given this axiom, together with the principle that whatever exists in itself—that is, is ontologically independent—cannot be conceived through or explained in terms of something else, it follows that whatever genuinely exists in itself must also be conceived through itself. By the same token, whatever can be conceived through itself must also exist in itself. Since, according to Spinoza, "the knowledge of an effect depends on and involves the knowledge of a cause" (EI, ax.4), if something existed in something else—that is, if it were causally dependent on something else—then it would likewise have to be conceived in terms of this cause, which undermines the original assumption. However, by EI, ax.2, if it does not exist in another, it must exist in itself—that is, it must be self-caused.

Moreover, by making conceptual or explanatory independence a criterion of substance, Spinoza makes it possible for substance to serve the function that it is intended to, but does not actually, serve in the Cartesian system—namely, that of providing an <u>arche</u>, or logical

ground, of the intelligibility of things. Spinoza's basic premise, once again, is that only that which is conceived through itself can serve this function, because nothing else is capable of providing an ultimate ground of explanation. The Cartesian conception of extended substance cannot serve this function because of its dependence on God, a dependence that, for Descartes at least, leads, in the end, to an identification of the basic laws of nature with the will of God.[12]

Also, in light of the aforesaid, it appears that Spinoza has cleared the last trace of Aristotelianism in the Cartesian theory—namely, the conception of substance as the subject of predication, or the bearer of properties.[13] Any such subject must be conceived in either of two ways: (1) as a bare substratum, or a Lockean, indeterminate, "something I know not what", in which case its explanatory function is nil, or, (2), as something having a determinate character in terms of which its properties, predicates, or states, can be understood, i.e., Aristotle's primary substances, in which case this character itself requires explanation. The point can be expressed in the phraseology of traditional ontology by saying that Spinoza replaces the conception of substance as "a" being with the conception of it as "being" itself. In other words, when we apply Spinoza's definition of substance to an essential-

ly Aristotelian investigation of being, we soon discover that nothing satisfies the definition except "being" understood in its totality, or the universe taken as a whole.

A physical object can be used to illustrate what this means (without suggesting that for Aristotle "substance" and "physical object" are synonymous). It always makes sense to look for the cause of a physical object, but if we tried to give a complete causal explanation we could not stop short of a description of the entire system of physical existence. Consequently, the Spinozist will argue, as seems reasonable, that only the universe (taken as a whole) can exist "independently" or "in itself". And, strictly speaking, what is independent could not depend on any cause and still be independent. Expressed differently, it does not make sense to look for the cause of the universe, again understood as the "totality of what exists", because the cause of the universe would have to exist, in which case the cause itself would be included under the "totality of what exists". For Spinoza, there can be nothing on which the totality could depend—nothing, therefore, could be called its cause: "This (the first principle of nature) is...the sum total of being, beyond which there is no being found" (TdIE, II, 29).

For Spinoza, then, there can be only one substance,

which, as we have seen, is to be identified with the logically necessary, and hence, self-explanatory, order of the universe taken as a whole. According to Spinoza, this is the order of the universe conceived as the ultimate source (what he calls, in EI, 29, sch., natura naturans) of things and their intelligibility. On the other hand, the system of individual things (physical as well as nonphysical) that depend on and are conceived through this order, Spinoza calls natura naturata (EI, 29, sch.). Although causally and conceptually dependent on it, these individual things are not properties, predicates, or states, of substance.[14]

Before we turn to Spinoza's definition of a "mode" it should be noted that what he understands by substance, or natura naturans, is God; that is, God, conceived in and through himself, complete, self-contained, self-caused, and self-sufficient. Spinoza calls natura naturata "all that which follows from the necessity of the nature of God, that is, all the modes of the attributes of God, and which without God cannot exist or be conceived" (EI, 29, sch.). Obviously, if the word "God" refers to the substance we have been describing, then Spinoza's conception of God must be different from the one normally encountered in Christian and Jewish theology. Now whether some of the characteristics traditionally assigned to God can be given interpretations in Spinoza's system is open to question,

but need not concern us here. For the moment, it is worth emphasizing Spinoza's conception of the unity of substance; that is, his identification of God-or-substance-or-nature with the "sum total of being".

We can expand, now, on one of the fundamental distinctions in Spinoza's metaphysics—namely, the distinction between what is in itself and what is not in itself. We have observed that Spinoza's term for what is in itself is "substance"; what is not in itself he calls "mode" or "modification":

> By mode, I mean the modifications of substance, or that which exists in, and is conceived through, something other than itself (EI, dfn.6).

Individual physical objects are modes for Spinoza (as are nonphysical objects, which shall be considered shortly). We have seen above that the causal explanation of a physical object cannot be anything less than the complete description of physical reality, thus every physical object "exists in, and is conceived through, something other than itself". Everything, therefore, is either a substance or a mode: "Everything which exists, exists either in itself or in something else" (EI, ax.1).

At first glance the relation between substance and mode may appear to be simply another version of the Aristotelian distinction between a substance and its accidents; however, that is not an altogether sufficient

explanation. In one sense, modes are accidents of substance inasmuch as they are not part of its definition; that is, they do not constitute the essence of substance (indeed, their definition is exactly the opposite of the definition of substance), and so they are "accidents of substance". But in another sense they are not accidents at all. Substance, it will be remembered, can be identified with the "totality of what is/exists" or the "sum total of being". Now clearly if this totality were altered in any respect, it would no longer be exactly the same totality that it is. In other words, the universe or God's nature would be altered: God, strictly speaking, would not be God. But for Spinoza, such a thing is obviously impossible, and so in this sense there is nothing "accidental" about the modes or modifications of substance. They must be what they are if substance is to be what it is.

Spinoza's definition of a mode can be clarified by comparing it with what Descartes says about a "modal distinction"—i.e., the distinction obtaining between a mode and a substance of which it is a mode. Descartes says that we recognize such a distinction "from the fact that we can clearly perceive a substance apart from the mode which we say differs from it, whereas we cannot, conversely, understand the mode apart from the substance". So, for example, "There is a modal distinction between shape or motion and

the corporeal substance in which they inhere; and similarly, there is a modal distinction between affirmation or recollection and the mind."[15] In Spinoza's terminology, Descartes is saying that a mode is in a substance, and cannot be understood without the substance.

A second important distinction in Spinoza is the one between substance and attribute. We can bring this out as follows. Instead of portraying Spinoza asking "What is substance?" and proceeding from a definition to search for examples, we can present him asking a different sort of question: "What are the most comprehensive characteristics of being?" That is, "What are the most inclusive terms, or categories, that can be used to describe what is?" In the case of physical objects, we can talk about the properties that they have in common, or rather, we can talk about the properties of physical existence as such. Physical existence is characterized by existence in space: that is, it presents itself as spatial, three-dimensional existence. One "comprehensive characteristic of being", therefore, is physical existence in space.

Obviously not all being is in space, which means that not all being is physical. We talk of ideas or concepts, and they do not enter into spatial relations. Thus it is as good a use of the word "is" to say that an idea or concept is as to say that a body is; "being", then, can be understood in either way, and each is as much a

characterization of what being is as the other. Hence we find ourselves presented with two fundamental sorts of things, which we call "ideas" and "bodies", and, what is more, the two sorts of things do not appear to be reducible one to the other. So under the heading "Everything that is", we must include both ideas and bodies.

Spinoza's way of expressing this is to say that substance has two "attributes", the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension. Accordingly, bodies, or physical existence, represent being "conceived under the attribute of Extension", and ideas, or mental existence, represent being "conceived under the attribute of Thought". "Being", then, is expressed in each case, but it is expressed in a different way. It should be noted that this language—"thought" and "extension"—is Cartesian, but whereas Descartes speaks of "thinking substance" and "extended substance", Spinoza does not consider Thought and Extension to be substances.

For Spinoza, in addition, neither Thought nor Extension is prior to the other. That is to say, ideas are not reflections of bodies, with a kind of secondary and dependent existence, nor are bodies reflections of ideas in any sense that would make them subsidiary to ideas. Spinoza, to be sure, is neither a materialist nor an idealist, despite the fact that he has been interpreted

in both ways.[16] According to Spinoza, Thought and Extension are basically the two ways in which we can talk about reality. That is to say, we think of things as being either ideas or bodies; their status as idea or physical body appears to us to be the most elementary feature of their being at all. That said, we can make no more general classification of a thing, except simply to say "it is". Thus, "By attribute", says Spinoza, "I mean that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance" (EI, dfn.4).

This brings us to deal with the contentious issue of the interpretation of the Spinozistic conception of an attribute. According to some commentators, EI, dfn.4 seems to indicate that the attributes are subjective—that they are ways in which substance appears to us. On this view, the notion that substance contains a number of distinct attributes is merely a consequence of the way in which the finite intellect "perceives" substance and does not express a truth about substance as it is "in itself". But if this is so, then substance must forever remain unknown and unknowable, and our cognitive limits be set a knowledge of the attributes. There is, fortunately, another possible interpretation—namely, that the diversity of attributes reflects a real, or "objective", diversity in the nature of substance. Although we can hardly go into the details of this seemingly endless controversy here,[17] it does seem that

the bulk of the evidence supports the objectivist interpretation. First, Spinoza's God is, as he says, "a substance consisting in infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality" (EI, dfn.6). Second, and perhaps most important, is that Spinoza's whole orientation culminates in a knowledge of substance, or God, who, as we have already observed, functions as the very principle of intelligibility. Moreover, as EI, dfn.4 makes clear, it is through these attributes that the intellect understands substance. If this account is reasonable, it would seem to follow, therefore, that if this knowledge is to be adequate[18]—and Spinoza claims that it is—then these attributes must really pertain to the nature of God. Indeed, to deny this would lead us to the paradoxical conclusion that the source of the intelligibility of things is itself unintelligible. Expressed differently, if the attributes are not imposed by the human mind on something which, in its own nature, is attribute-less, it follows that they really belong to substance, and that they are essential properties of substance—that is, properties through which it is conceived.

The doctrine of infinite attributes, as alluded to above, raises other problems of interpretation which, fortunately, need not concern us here. Suffice it to say, however, that although we can discriminate two attributes of

God, or substance, it does not follow that there are no other ways in which being could be expressed—for God, to reiterate, has infinitely many attributes. But despite our ignorance of some attributes, it is important to remember that those that we know do, by definition, constitute the essence of God. Insofar as substance is defined as that which is in itself, if we conceive the essence of substance, then it is precisely this "in itselfness" that we should conceive. If, therefore, an attribute expresses the essence of God, it follows that we can conceive a complete and self-sufficient being under that attribute; so we can conceive, for example, physical existence that is perfectly complete, self-contained, and autonomous. But, again, there is nothing in Spinoza's definition of substance—being-in-itself—that limits its instantiation to physical or nonphysical being. It is just that humans, in their status as finite modes, happen to think of being in only two ways.

Spinoza's distinction between substance and attribute is not the same as his distinction between substance and mode. Modes, as we have seen, are ordinarily finite expressions of substance.[19] Modes exist in substance, representing a distinct, limited portion of the infinite complexity of what completely is. They are not, strictly speaking, modifications of attributes, although

Spinoza does speak of modes of Thought and modes of Extension. It would be more accurate to speak, as he also does, of modes of substance conceived under the attribute of Thought, or, rather, Extension. That said, individual ideas are modes of substance conceived under the attribute of Thought, whereas bodies are modes of substance conceived under the attribute of Extension.

In addition, ideas and bodies, as expressions of the same reality, do not enter into causal relations with one another. According to Spinoza, bodies are caused by other bodies, and ideas are caused by other ideas, but it would be nonsensical to talk of a cause and effect relation between ideas and bodies: "Body cannot determine mind to think, neither can mind determine body to motion or rest or any state different from these, if such there be" (EIII, 2). Spinoza's point is that God, or being, is a single reality, which can be conceived or expressed in a number of different ways, but it is unintelligible to jump from one form of expression to another. "So long as we consider things as modes of thinking," writes Spinoza, "we must explain the order of the whole of nature, or the whole chain of causes, through the attribute of thought only. And, in so far as we consider things as modes of extension, we must explain the order of the whole of nature through the attribute of extension only; and so on, in the case of other attributes" (EII, 7, sch.). Spinoza appears

to be saying that each conception, or each form of expression, is complete; that reality, in other words, can be articulated under any attribute. For the attributes are basically equivalent ways of expressing "Everything that is," and there are indefinitely many of them. In addition to the infinitely many attributes, there are also infinitely many modifications of substance. Spinoza puts this by saying that "From the necessity of the divine nature must follow an infinite number of things in infinite ways..." (EI, 16).

Chapter One: Part Two

Human Knowledge

Having outlined Spinoza's account of the nature of substance, attributes, and modes, and their relationship to each other, we can elaborate now on his analysis of the intellect and of the nature and extent of human knowledge, as presented in part two of the Ethics. Spinoza begins a brief, yet significant, account of this topic in the preface to part two. There, he writes: "I now pass on to explaining the results, which must necessarily follow from the essence of God, or of the eternal and infinite being; not, indeed, all of them (for we proved in Part i., Prop. xvi., that an infinite number must follow in an infinite number of ways), but only those which are able to lead us, as it were by the hand, to the knowledge of the human mind and its highest blessedness" (EII, preface). The passage is significant for several reasons. First, Spinoza here underscores the fact that his metaphysical analysis of part one was not presented as an end in itself, but rather as a necessary first step in the acquisition of knowledge regarding the nature of the human mind. In this respect, then, his account of the mind will necessarily involve an application of his general metaphysical principles, i.e., his claims about substance, God, and so on. What is more, even this project, as the preface makes clear, is not undertaken as an end in itself, but as a

necessary prelude to the determination of the nature of what Spinoza calls "human blessedness," and the means to attain it. That said, it is important to keep in mind that Spinoza's epistemological claims, to the extent that they enter into his philosophy, are deduced from metaphysical first principles and are formulated with a view to their practical implications. Leaving to the side Spinoza's practical orientation, which we will take up in the following chapters, we can turn now to his theory of knowledge. The theory, as we shall observe, presupposes some discussion of Spinoza's "idea-ideatum" distinction, and, his conception of "adequacy."

From what has been said in part one of this chapter, everything, according to Spinoza, can be conceived either as idea or as extended thing; and yet there is no causal relation (in any sense) between mind and body. Indeed, a causal relation exists between two things only if the conception of one involves the conception of the other. To be more precise, an idea may depend upon another idea for its conception, and a body likewise on another body, but at no point in the unfolding of the network of ideas can intelligible reference be made to a physical mode, nor, in the unfolding of the science of extension, can intelligible reference be made to the mental. The two networks are parallel, but incommensurable, expressions of a single reality. In Spinoza's words, "The order and connection of

ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (EII, 7). There is no difficulty, therefore, in relating the mind to things outside it, or in displaying its position in the elaborative sequence of natura naturata:

> Thus it follows that the order or concatenation of things is identical, whether nature be conceived under the one attribute or the other; consequently the order of states of activity and passivity in our body is simultaneous in nature with the order of states of activity and passivity in the mind...All these considerations clearly show that a mental decision and a bodily appetite, or determined state, are simultaneous, or rather are one and the same thing, which we call decision, when it is regarded under and explained through the attribute of thought, and a conditioned state, when it is regarded under the attribute of extension, and deduced from the laws of motion and rest (EIII, 2, sch.).

In light of this , the same holds for relations between ideas and relations between bodies: they are, in a strict sense, different expressions, or articulations, of the same thing. Thus, a series of ideas, or modes of Thought, in which each idea is logically entailed by the preceding ideas, could be expressed under the attribute of Extension as a series of modes of Extension, each one being caused by the preceding members of the series. Logical relations are, for Spinoza, metaphysically the same as causal relations. That is to say, we have two different aspects of a single series, not two altogether separate series of which one could be subordinated to the other.

The terms in this series between idea and body are

called idea and ideatum by Spinoza (EII, dfn.4, explanation). An idea, then, is a mode of Thought, and it is the correlate in Thought of a mode of Extension, its ideatum, which is a physical body. If both attributes are complete, and Spinoza says that they are (EII, 7, cor.), then every idea must have an ideatum, and vice versa. The "ideatum" is the object (objectum) of its idea.

Spinoza offers another way of describing the idea-ideatum distinction. He talks of the "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" marks of truth of ideas. According to Spinoza, the claim that every idea is "of" its ideatum is tantamount to the claim that every idea displays an "extrinsic" mark of truth; namely, an exact and necessary correspondence to its ideatum (EII, dfn.4). Spinoza designates the "intrinsic" marks of truth by the term "adequate," and in particular his conception of an "adequate idea." "By an adequate idea," says Spinoza, "I mean an idea which, in so far as it is considered in itself, without relation to the object, has all the properties or intrinsic marks of a true idea" (EII, dfn. 4). In the explanation that follows this definition, he further notes, "I say intrinsic, in order to exclude that mark which is extrinsic, namely, the agreement between the idea and its object (ideatum)." Much the same point is made in response to Tschirnhausen's query concerning the relationship between truth and adequacy, where Spinoza writes: "Between a true and an adequate idea, I recognize no difference

except that the epithet true only has regard to the agreement between the idea and its object, whereas the epithet adequate has regard to the nature of the idea in itself; so that in reality there is no difference between a true and an adequate idea beyond this extrinsic relation" (Ep., II, LXIV, 395).

These statements indicate that truth and adequacy are reciprocal notions. All true ideas are adequate, and vice versa. They differ only in that truth is defined in terms of the agreement of the idea with its object, or ideatum (these terms are equivalent). Because of this definition, Spinoza is usually regarded as advocating a version of the Correspondence theory of truth—the view that construes truth with, or agreement between, beliefs or propositions and states of affairs or facts. A major difference between Spinoza's view and the Correspondence theory as traditionally construed is that for Spinoza, idea and ideatum are not regarded as distinct entities, but as one and the same thing expressed in two ways. In part for this reason and in part because of his conception of the attribute of thought as a self-contained system, which, as such, does not involve reference to any extrinsic reality, Spinoza is sometimes thought to hold a Coherence theory of truth. Reduced to its simplest terms, this theory claims that the truth of a belief or proposition is a function of its place within the total system of

true beliefs or propositions. Such a conception is usually associated with certain forms of Idealism, wherein it is maintained that in some sense the structure of reality reflects the structure of thought (rather than vice versa). But, just as Spinoza's view differs from the Correspondence theory (as commonly understood) in that he regards idea and ideatum as one and the same thing, so too, it differs from the Coherence theory in that he insists that the order of true thoughts (the content of infinite intellect) reflects the order of reality (as expressed in extension and the other attributes).

In light of this, it seems more fruitful to approach Spinoza's account of truth by way of his conception of adequacy. And as the passages cited above suggest, adequacy is an inner characteristic of an idea by virtue of which it is judged to be true. This can also be expressed by saying that adequacy functions as the criterion of truth. The basic feature of an adequate idea is its completeness. For example, the mathematician's idea of a triangle is adequate because all the mathematically relevant properties of the figure can be derived from it. Conversely, the conception of a triangle possessed by someone ignorant of geometry is inadequate because this cannot be done. Such a person may have a vague idea of a triangle, which includes an awareness that it is a figure with three sides; but since he does not know what follows from this,

he does not possess the true concept, or adequate idea, of a triangle.

The conception of adequacy and its function as the criterion of truth provide the basis for Spinoza's construction of a theory of knowledge (which, as I will attempt to show, is in fact a theory of error). "Falsity," Spinoza argues, "consists in the privation of knowledge, which inadequate, fragmentary, or confused ideas involve" (EII, 35). A prime candidate of inadequacy for Spinoza is sensory-perception. He illustrates his conception of error with the following example, which is worth quoting in full:

> So, again, when we look at the sun, we imagine that it is distant from us about two hundred feet; this error does not lie solely in this fancy. For although we afterwards learn, that the sun is distant from us more than six hundred of the earth's diameters, we none the less shall fancy it to be near; for we do not imagine the sun as near us, because we are ignorant of its true distance, but because the modification of our body involves the essence of the sun, in so far as our said body is affected thereby (EII, 35, sch.).

Spinoza's example here is quite telling. The image which constitutes the perception of the sun is in fact an idea. However, the ideatum of that idea is not what the perceiver takes it to be. In other words, it is not the sun, which is represented falsely as something two hundred feet away. Rather, the true ideatum of this idea is the

modification in the body of which it is the mental correlate. But being inadequate, the idea is referred not to the bodily process which is its material correlate, but to the sun, of which it presents only "fragmentary or confused" knowledge.

For Spinoza all knowledge gained through sense-perception is of this sort, and it is assigned in the Ethics to the lowest of three levels of knowledge.[20] Spinoza calls knowledge of the first kind, opinion or imagination (imaginatio). Such knowledge, in his opinion, can never reach adequacy, since the ideas of imagination come to us, not in their intrinsic logical order, but in the order of our bodily processes, i.e., the way in which our body is affected and how the effect is registered as sensation. The ideas of imagination, then, are the illogical reflections of processes that are inadequately understood; namely, the conditions under which the effect is brought about, i.e., the laws of optics and perspective which determine the relative size of retinal images, and the like. It follows that once we understand the reasons for the appearance, the error is dispelled. The inadequacy of sensuous knowledge is, in short, the supposition that images can provide the basis for rational understanding.

In contradistinction to this first kind of knowledge, Spinoza introduces a second kind, termed "reason"

or ratio. To return to his example about the sun: the sun cannot be adequately known through modifications of our body, but only through the science which aims to provide an adequate idea of the sun. This kind of science, proceeding by reasoned reflection from first principles, involves Spinoza's "common notions" (notiones communes), or properties, of which we can form adequate ideas. These common notions would include, presumably, the spatial and numerical properties of all bodies which are common to the whole of Extension, and everything that follows from them by strict deduction.

But nothing deduced in the sciences constitutes the essence of any singular, finite entity. Hence, for the adequate knowledge of concrete entities and their mutual relations the only form of knowledge Spinoza finds suitable is the third kind, which he calls intuition or scientia intuitiva. "This kind of knowledge," he explains, "proceeds from the adequate idea of the absolute essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (EII, 40, sch.2). He then proceeds to illustrate all three kinds of knowledge by a mathematical example:

> Three numbers are given for finding a fourth, which shall be to the third as the second is to the first. Tradesmen without hesitation multiply the second by the third, and divide the product by the first; either because they have not forgotten the rule which they received from a master without any proof, or because they have often made trial of it with simple numbers, or by virtue of the proof of

> the nineteenth proposition of the seventh book of Euclid, in virtue of the general property of proportionals. But with very simple numbers there is no need of this. For instance, one, two, three, being given, everyone can see that the fourth proportional is six; and this is much clearer because we infer the fourth number from an intuitive grasping of the ratio, which the first bears to the second (EII, 40, sch.2).

As the example suggests, the basic difference between ratio and scientia intuitiva is that the former deduces its conclusions from previously given general principles, i.e., Euclid's theorem, whereas the latter grasps the truth by direct insight, without having to appeal to any such principles. In contrast to imaginatio (illustrated in the example by the procedure of the tradesmen who rely on memory and hearsay), both ratio and scientia intuitiva, Spinoza maintains, are sources of adequate knowledge.

Nevertheless, for Spinoza, intuition, unlike reason, is able to arrive at knowledge of the essence of things. Such knowledge clearly is not the result of the collection of particular instances and of inductive generalizations from these. It is not concerned, as is reason, with general truths, which hold abstractly and universally and do not pertain to any individuals in particular. It is, rather, the concrete knowledge of things in their total setting. To return to Spinoza's example, then, we may infer that with a thorough understanding of the principles involved, it is possible to grasp, at once and without transition, the

fourth proportional, in a single and immediate apprehension. In saying this, intuition may be described as the ideal of rational knowledge; that is, as a conception that is inextricably joined to its own valid proof; or better still, as a conception of the essence of the idea as identical with its ideatum.[21]

But to conceive things in this way is to conceive them in relation to substance and its attributes, in particular the attribute appropriate to the thing under investigation, in light of which, and in its proper place in the total system, the object is adequately understood. Consequently, insofar as God is identified with the universal and necessary order of nature, it is clear that the adequate idea of anything must presuppose a knowledge of God. With this in mind, Spinoza declares that every single thing that exists in actuality necessarily involves the "infinite essence of God" (EII, 35), and, therefore, because ideas of what is common to all things, both whole and part, are adequate, our conception (cognitio) of God's eternal and infinite essence, which every idea must involve, is "adequate and perfect" (EII, 36 and 37). It follows, therefore, that if we have adequate ideas of substance, or God, and his attributes, we can proceed from these to adequate ideas of things as essentially related to them and to one another in the system of nature. This is how scientia intuitiva is defined. Such knowledge implies, of course, that the more

adequate our conceptions, the more we reach beyond our finite condition to the divine essence of which we are modes. This, apparently, is what Spinoza means by the mind's "highest blessedness" (EII, preface).

Spinoza's theory of knowledge can now be briefly stated. "Knowledge of the first kind," he argues, "is the only source of falsity," whereas "knowledge of the second and third kinds is necessarily true" (EII, 41). The truth of an idea, as we have already observed, is given in its logical connectedness to the system of "adequate" ideas, and not solely in its extrinsic correspondence with its object or ideatum. The advancement of knowledge consists ultimately in the steady replacement of our confused and inadequate ideas with adequate conceptions, until, in the last analysis, all that we know follows inexorably from an adequate idea of the essence of God. The central tenet of Spinoza's epistemology, therefore, is that the knowledge of anything in nature depends ultimately on the knowledge of God. This is simply a consequence of his metaphysical principle that each and every finite thing is part of that infinite system (natura naturata) that is governed and grounded in God (natura naturans). Consequently, it follows that the adequate idea of anything involves the idea of the whole, or of God.

Chapter One: Part Three

Knowledge and Causation

That "the knowledge of anything in nature depends ultimately on the knowledge of God is simply a consequence of Spinoza's principle that "the knowledge of an effect depends on and involves the knowledge of a cause" (EI, ax. 4). To ask, then, what is Spinoza's concept of "cause" is much the same as asking "what does Spinoza say it means to 'know' something?" Still another way of saying this is to say that for Spinoza reality and conception coincide, so that relations between ideas correspond exactly to relations in reality. This seems to me an important conclusion in Spinoza's philosophy, and I shall try to develop it further.

According to Spinoza, to say that X causes Y is to say that Y is dependent on X for its existence and nature. This dependence between things is "expressed in" or "conceived through" a dependence between ideas. The idea of Y is dependent on the idea of X if its truth must be determined by reference to the idea of X. The conclusions of a mathematical argument are therefore dependent on the premises. Mathematical reasoning, as we have already seen in Spinoza's example of the fourth proportional, is indeed a paradigm of the relation of "rational dependence" between ideas. It is also a paradigm of "causality," which, in

our example, is the relation that exists between X and Y when the existence and nature of Y must be explained in terms of X. Through proof we explain a conclusion, and if the premises are self-evident, we explain it completely.

An explanation of this kind would be described as giving the "cause" of what it explains; we have seen that for Spinoza logical relations and causal relations come to the same thing—that relations of dependence in the world are all intelligible as logical relations between ideas. The cause of something, then, is its logically necessary and sufficient condition. Expressed differently, "cause" for Spinoza means that in terms of which a thing is intelligible—its logical ground, its arche, its principle of intelligibility.

Given his conception of cause it makes sense for Spinoza to look for the cause of many things that we might think do not lend themselves to causal explanation; witness his defense, for example, in the preface to Part III of the Ethics, of his use of the same kind of explanation in discussing human emotions as he used in discussing God: "I shall consider human actions and desires in exactly the same manner," he writes, "as though I were concerned with lines, planes, and solids." Although we might maintain that a different model of explanation is involved here than we have in physics, Spinoza does not

admit different kinds of explanation. All things, he insists, can be explained in terms of a single conception of explanation; that is, anything that is to count as an explanation must be a deductive argument such as we have described. "For nature," says Spinoza,

> is always the same, and everywhere one and the same in her efficacy and power of action; that is, nature's laws and ordinances, whereby all things come to pass and change from one form to another, are everywhere and always the same, so that there should be one and the same method of understanding the nature of all things whatsoever, namely, through nature's universal laws and rules (EIII, preface).

In saying that all explanation must take a particular form, Spinoza is saying that not only are all explanations of the same kind, but also that anything whatever can be explained. What this amounts to is an insistence on the uniformity of nature and the unity of science. Spinoza steadfastly believes that nature is so structured and unified that anything at all can be presented as the logical conclusion of a deductive argument proceeding from self-evident premises. This amounts to the claim that there are no a priori limits to knowledge. Although we may—and we do, as a matter of fact—have satisfactory explanations of very few things, there is nothing, according to Spinoza, of which it is impossible in principle to give an explanation.

The doctrine that everything can be explained is

one way of expressing Spinoza's determinism,[22] since it amounts to the claim that everything has a cause, taking "cause" to mean "that in terms of which a thing is intelligible." For Spinoza there can be no effect without a cause, for if something had no cause it could not be understood, which means that it could not be given an explanation (EII, ax.4). Thus the claim that everything can be explained amounts to the claim that there is nothing without a cause.

But Spinoza's brand of determinism should be distinguished from other forms of determinism. His view could be called a "rationalist determinism" in that it is based on the rationalist's belief in the possibility of rational explanation. As Roth points out, Spinoza's determinism should not be confused with, say, a mechanistic determinism, which claims that everything can be explained according to the laws of mechanics. Although Spinoza might accept mechanics as a means of explaining all physical events, understood as modifications of Extension, that would still be an account of substance under only one of its infinite attributes. Therefore, Spinoza's determinism is not, strictly speaking, mechanistic determinism. Roth writes that "To Spinoza the mechanistic account of things, although valid, is not complete. It is true within its sphere..."[23]

Spinoza's doctrine of knowledge follows directly

from what has been said. Knowing something means having an account or explanation of it, which is the same as knowing its cause. "For, in reality," says Spinoza, "the knowledge of an effect is nothing else than the acquisition of more perfect knowledge of its cause" (TdIE, II, 34).[24] Since there is nothing that cannot be explained according to the Spinozistic model, then there is nothing that is unknowable in principle. It follows also that knowledge is certain. For if the premises are self-evident, and the deduction is correct, there can be no room for doubt.

The key to all of this is that reality and conception coincide insofar as there exists a definite affinity between Spinoza's conceptions of determinism and knowledge. Indeed, if there is to be knowledge in Spinoza's sense, then determinism, in the sense we have just discussed, is required. To deny determinism would be to deny the possibility of rational explanation, which would be to rule out knowledge. It follows that something which is not determined—which cannot be explained—cannot be known. There may, of course, be things that we do not know; but the deficiency of our knowledge, Spinoza believes, comes about because of our status as finite modes, and not because nature is ordered in some way that makes explanation impossible. Just what things he believes that we know will emerge in subsequent discussion. The point so far has been to indicate Spinoza's general orientation. It remains for

us to discuss the relation of Spinoza's views on being and knowledge to the specifically ethical portions of his philosophy.

Chapter Two

Bondage, Virtue, and Freedom

> Man is part of Nature, and therefore the moralist must be a naturalist; no moral philosopher has stated this principle of method more clearly, or adhered to it more ruthlessly, than Spinoza. The actual servitude and unhappiness of man, and his ideally possible freedom and happiness, are both to be impartially deduced and explained as the necessary consequences of his status as a finite mode in Nature; exhortation and appeals to emotion and desire are as useless and as irrelevant in moral as in natural philosophy. We must first understand the causes of our passions; our whole duty and wisdom is to understand fully our position in Nature and the causes of our imperfections, and, by understanding, to free ourselves from them; man's greatest happiness and peace of mind (*acquiescentia animi*) comes only from this full philosophical understanding of himself.[1]

To paraphrase Stuart Hampshire, Spinoza's *Ethics* is an attempt to construct a moral philosophy on the basis of a metaphysical theory. More precisely, Spinoza aims at showing the way in which human beings can "emend" their passions (and therefore cease to be subject to them) and can be genuinely free. As we shall observe shortly, the so-called "emendation" of the passions consists precisely in the transition from passion to action, in which the intellect gains ascendancy over the confused ideas of the imagination. According to Spinoza, we approximate to this higher state to the extent that our mind possesses only

adequate ideas of our motives and actions. The very same "emendation of the passions," that leads us to an adequate conception of ourselves and the world, leads us also to freedom.

The last three parts of the Ethics form a unity, and together they contain what can be characterized as Spinoza's moral philosophy. This unity comprises an investigation of the human emotions and how human beings are subject to them (Part 3); an account of the nature of human virtue, which includes both the introduction of rational rules for living and an analysis of the "good life" (Part 4); and a theory of human blessedness, which provides a philosophical alternative to the traditional religious doctrine of salvation (Part 5). These, then, are the main consequences that Spinoza derives from the metaphysical and epistemological considerations of the first two parts, and they form the subject matter of the present chapter. The present chapter, like the first, is primarily expository. Here the exposition of Spinoza's moral theory is offered less as a "proof" of the analysis than as a guide to what can be found in his writings. Later (cf. Chapter Three) I will attempt to analyze the significance of Spinoza's ethics with repect to some of these topics.

At the beginning of the third part of the Ethics Spinoza sets out to give a naturalistic account[2] of human

emotions and human comportment. At the same time, however, he intends to show how freedom from the bondage of the passions can be achieved.

Every individual thing (and so not merely man) endeavours to persist in its own being; and this endeavour Spinoza calls conatus.[3] According to Spinoza, nothing can do anything else but that which follows from its nature: its nature or essence determines its activity. The power or "endeavour," then, by which a thing does what it does is identical with its essence: "The endeavour, wherewith everything endeavours to persist in its own being, is nothing else but the actual essence of the thing in question" (EIII, 7). When, therefore, Spinoza says that the fundamental impulse in man is the endeavour to persist in his own being, he is not simply making a psychological observation or generalization. He is, to be sure, applying a statement which allegedly holds good of every finite mode, and the truth of the statement is, in his view, logically demonstrable.[4]

This "endeavour" or conatus is called by Spinoza "appetite" (appetitus) when it refers simultaneously to mind and body. However in man there is consciousness of conatus, i.e., of his power of self-preservation, and conscious appetite is called "desire" (cupiditas). Moreover, just as the power of self-preservation and self-perfection is reflected in consciousness as desire, so also is the

transition to a higher or lower state of vitality or perfection reflected in consciousness. Accordingly, the reflection in consciousness of the transition to a state of greater perfection is called "pleasure" (laetitia), while the reflection in consciousness of the transition to a state of lower perfection is called "pain" (tristitia). On Spinoza's general principles an increase in the mind's perfection must be an increase in the body's perfection, and vice versa. "Whatsoever increases or diminishes, helps or hinders the power of activity in our body," says Spinoza, "the idea thereof increases or diminishes, helps or hinders the power of thought in our mind" (EIII, 11). According to his line of reasoning, the perfection of the mind increases commensurately with the mind's activity, or, more precisely, increases in proportion as the mind is active; that is to say, in proportion as the ideas of which it consists are logically connected with one another and are not simply reflections of changing states produced by the influence of external causes on the body. It is not at all clear, however, how this is to be reconciled with Spinoza's general doctrine that the mind is the idea of the body,[5] nor is it clear what is the condition of the body which is reflected in the activity of the mind. It is noteworthy, however, that it follows from Spinoza's definitions that everyone necessarily pursues

pleasure. This, to be sure, does not mean that everyone takes pleasure as the consciously conceived end or purpose of all his actions. It means rather that one necessarily strives to preserve and perfect one's being—and this perfecting of one's being/conatus, when regarded in its mental aspect, is pleasure.[6]

Of course there are as many species of pleasure and pain "as there are kinds of objects whereby we are affected" (EIII, 56). And having explained the basic emotions of pleasure and pain in terms of conatus, which is identical with the determined essence of a thing, Spinoza proceeds to derive other emotions from these primary forms. Love (amor), for example, is, in Spinoza's words, "nothing else but pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause," while hate (odium) is nothing else but "pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause" (EIII, sch.).[7] So, for example, if I imagine another human being, say, Paul, whom I have not hitherto regarded with any emotion, as being affected by an emotion, I am affected with a similar emotion. The image of Paul's external body is a modification of my own body, and the idea of this modification involves the nature of my own body, as well as the nature of Paul's body as present. If, then, the nature of Paul's body is similar to the nature of my own body, the idea of Paul's external body involves a modification of my own body similar to the modification of Paul's body. Thus

if I imagine Paul to be affected by an emotion, this imagination involves a modification of my own body corresponding to this emotion, with the result that I too am affected by this emotion. In this way, for example, both compassion and emulation can be explained: "This imitation of emotions," says Spinoza, "when it is referred to pain, is called compassion; when it is referred to desire, it is called emulation..." (EIII, 27, sch.).

Having derived the various emotions from the fundamental passions or emotions of desire, pleasure and pain, Spinoza proceeds to define good (bonus) and bad (malus) in terms of the three basic emotions. In EIII, 39, sch., Spinoza writes: "By good I here mean every kind of pleasure, and all that conduces thereto, especially that which satisfies our longings, whatsoever they may be" and "by evil...every kind of pain, especially that which frustrates our longings." These remarks are quite in keeping with what Spinoza says earlier in EIII, 9. There he contends "...that in no case do we strive for, wish for, long for, or desire anything, because we deem it to be good, but on the other hand we deem a thing to be good, because we strive for it, wish for it, long for it, or desire it." These definitions, it should be noted, are not hedonistic in the sense that good means pleasure or only pleasurable things are good; for Spinoza says that good

also means whatever satisfies desire. They are rather naturalistic definitions inasmuch as good is defined in terms of empirical objects (pleasure and desire). These definitions seem to differ from the later definitions of bonus and malus in Part Four of the Ethics. There Spinoza defines good and bad in terms of knowledge and utility (not pleasure, pain, and desire): "By good I mean that which we certainly know to be useful to us" and "by evil...that which we certainly know to be a hindrance to us in the attainment of any good" (EIV, dfns. 1 and 2). However, as I intend to argue in Chapter Three, both (EIII, 39, sch. and EIV, defns. 1 and 2) definitions ultimately coincide, because what we do desire is what we know causes us pleasure, and what we do in fact avoid is what we know causes us pain. For the moment suffice it to say that Spinoza is not a psychological hedonist in the sense that he believes that pleasure is the only direct object of desire; for we also desire things that cause pleasure.

It is now necessary to draw a distinction which is important for Spinoza's moral doctrine. Until now we have observed that all emotions are derived from the fundamental passions of desire, pleasure and pain. Furthermore, we have seen that they are normally explicable in terms of association. For instance, when the idea of an external thing becomes associated in my mind with, say, pleasure, that is,

with the heightening of my vitality or endeavour to self-preservation and increase of power, I can be said to "love" that thing. And I call it "good." Moreover, anything, according to Spinoza, "can, accidentally, be the cause of pleasure, pain, or desire" (EIII, 15). In other words, this possibility depends on my psycho-physical, i.e., what at any given time causes me pleasure or pain, and once the association between a given thing and the cause of pleasure or pain has been established, I necessarily strive to love or hate that thing and to call it "good" or "bad." So understood, the emotions are passive; they are, strictly speaking, "passions." And I am subject to them. "Different men," says Spinoza, "may be differently affected by the same object, and the same man may be differently affected at different times by the same object" (EIII, 51). Thus what one man loves another hates, and what one man calls "good" another man may call "bad." Chapter Three will undertake to show that, although we can distinguish different men according to their different emotions, there is no place for moral judgements/ epithets of any kind, inasmuch as these imply that a man is free to feel as he so desires and to determine freely his judgements of good and evil.

But although "all emotions can be referred to desire, pleasure, or pain" (EIII, 59), not all emotions are

passive. Spinoza explains that there are active emotions which are not merely passive reflections of bdily modifications, but which follow from the mind insofar as it is active, i.e., insofar as it understands. He points out, however, that these emotions cannot have reference to pain, since "in so far as the mind feels pain, its power of understanding, that is, of activity, is diminished or checked" (EIII, 59). Hence it is only emotions of pleasure and desire which can be active emotions. And epistemologically speaking, these active emotions will be "adequate ideas," derived from the mind, in contrast with the passive emotions which are confused or inadequate ideas.

All actions following from emotions, which are attributable to the mind insofar as it is active or understands, Spinoza refers to as "strength of character" or "fortitude" (fortitudo), which he divides into two parts. The first he calls "courage" (animositas) and the second "highmindedness" (generositas). "By courage I mean the desire whereby every man strives to preserve his own being in accordance solely with the dictates of reason" (EIII, 59, sch.). Thus under the general heading of courage Spinoza lists temperance, sobriety, and presence of mind in danger, together with the rest of those actions which promote the good of the agent in accordance with the dictates of reason. By "highmindedness" Spinoza means "the desire whereby every man endeavours solely under the dic-

tates of reason, to aid other men and to unite them to himself in friendship" (Ibid.). Courtesy, mercy and so on are varieties of "highmindedness."

Keeping in mind the active and passive emotions distinction, it would appear that moral progress consists for Spinoza in a liberation from the bondage of passive emotions and in a transformation of passive emotions, so far as this is possible, into active emotions. Expressed differently, the formal basis of Spinoza's ethics indicates that morality is grounded in the process of intellectual development, that is, the maximizing of control over the emotions or inadequate ideas.

Opposed to the liberation of the active emotions is the life of bondage or servitude, the life of the slave. In the Preface to Part Four of the Ethics Spinoza writes: "Human infirmity in moderating and checking the emotions I name bondage: for, when a man is a prey to his emotions, he is not his own master, but lies at the mercy of fortune: so much so, that he is often compelled, while seeing that which is better for him, to follow that which is worse." The last statement here may appear to be at variance with Spinoza's earlier explanation of the terms "good" and "bad." In fact, he reiterates his belief that "as for the terms 'good' and 'bad', they indicate no positive qualities in things regarded in themselves, but are merely modes of thinking, or notions which we form from the comparison of

things one with another" (EIII, Preface). But he will go on to explain that we can and do form a general idea of man, or, more accurately, an ideal of human nature. With this in mind, the term "good" can be construed as meaning "that which we certainly know to be a means of approaching more nearly to the type of human nature, which we have set before ourselves," while the term "bad" can be used to mean "that which we certainly know to be a hindrance to us in approaching the said type" (Ibid.). This being the case, we can speak of men as more or less perfect in proportion as they endeavour towards or are distant from the attainment of this ideal. So understood, we can then say that it is possible for men to do what is good, or, more precisely, what will certainly help them to attain this ideal of human nature, and yet to do what is bad, or, what will certainly frustrate them from attaining this recognized standard.[8] The reason why this can and does occur is, according to Spinoza, that the desires which arise from passive emotions, depending on external causes, can be stronger than the desire which arises from "the true knowledge of good and evil," insofar as this is an emotion (EIV, 15). For instance, desire for the attainment of an ideal, which we conceive as a future goal, tends to be weaker than desire for a thing which is present and causes pleasure.[9]

In opposition to the bondage of the passive emotions is the life of reason, the life of the wise man.

This is essentially the life of virtue. For, as Spinoza explains, "To act absolutely in obedience to virtue is in us the same thing as to act, to live, or to preserve one's being (these three terms are identical in meaning) in accordance with the dictates of reason on the basis of seeking what is useful to one's self" (EIV, 24). This claim is hardly surprising, given the conatus doctrine and what we have already learned about the knowledge of good and evil.[10] Since virtue has been equated with the power to act according to the laws of one's own nature, it follows that the more one is able to seek and obtain what is useful to oneself—that is, to preserve one's being—the more virtue one possesses. On the other hand, the more one disregards or neglects one's own true interests, the more one is subject to external forces rather than to the laws of one's own nature. According to this principle of self-preservation, Spinoza argues that, the mind, like everything else, endeavours to persist in its being and engage in those activities which follow from the laws of its own nature. The principle holds whether a person lives under the guidance of reason or in bondage to the passions. But the essential activity of reason is clear and distinct conception or understanding. Consequently, the fundamental endeavour of the mind under the guidance of reason will be to understand, and hence it will necessarily regard as useful only those things which are conducive to its under-

standing. And for Spinoza to understand is to be freed from the bondage of the passions: "An emotion, which is a passion, ceases to be a passion, as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea thereof" (EV, 3). In other words, the emotion becomes an expression of the mind's activity rather than of its passivity. Hatred (odium), for example, cannot become an active emotion in Spinoza's sense, since it is essentially a passive emotion or passion. However, Spinoza seems to be saying that once we understand that men act from a necessity of nature we shall put aside the hatred which we feel for anyone because he has caused us harm. Furthermore, the moment we understand that hatred depends upon the failure to recognize that men are similar in nature and share a common good, we shall cease to wish harm to one another. For Spinoza to wish harm to another is irrational insofar as hatred is experienced by those who are enslaved by confused and inadequate ideas. That said, if we understand the relation of all men to God, we should not feel hatred for any of them.

Understanding, therefore, represents the way to liberation from the bondage of the passions. And since the highest object of understanding is God, the very source of of intelligibility, Spinoza can conclude that "the mind's highest good is the knowledge of God, and the mind's highest virtue is to know God" (EIV, 28). For Spinoza, then, a person cannot understand anything greater than God, the

infinite and all-inclusive being, which exists and acts of necessity. Moreover, so far as we conceive things as contained in God and as following from the necessity of God's nature, that is, so far as we conceive them in their relation to the infinite causal system of nature, we conceive them "under the species of eternity" (sub specie aeternitas).[11] And insofar as we conceive ourselves and others in this way we know God. It should also be emphasized that since this knowledge is the highest conceivable level of understanding, it must also be the source of the greatest intellectual satisfaction. And since this satisfaction is accompanied by the idea of God as its cause, Spinoza calls it the "intellectual love of God" (amor intellectualis Dei) [EV, 32, cor.]. Although this a form of love, and therefore an emotion, it is not a passion; rather it is a form of pleasure which is related to us insofar as we act. It is also an intellectual love; that is, it is a pleasure that arises from understanding. Also, given what we know about Spinoza's theory of knowledge,[12] we can surmise that this understanding is not the abstract sort that is characteristic of the second kind of knowledge, but is the more concrete form that Spinoza calls scientia intuitiva or "intuitive knowledge."[13]

The connection between the third kind of knowledge and the "intellectual love of God" is quite direct. To reiterate, the main point is that the understanding of any-

thing in this manner is intrinsically satisfying, and since this understanding involves grasping the thing in question in relation to God, this satisfaction is accompanied by the idea of God as its cause (EV, 32). The equation of the satisfaction connected with such a cognitive state with the "love of God" depends upon Spinoza's peculiar conception of love as pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause. Anything that can serve as a cause of pleasure can be an object of love. Once again, the pleasure—or, more precisely, mental satisfaction—associated with intuitive knowledge is the pure joy of understanding. God, as we know, is the direct cause of this joy in that He is both the ultimate object of knowledge and the source of the very intelligibility of things. In the final analysis, then, the concept of amor intellectualis Dei is tantamount to the joy that accompanies the mind's satisfaction with its own cognitive powers, upon recognizing the intelligibility of things.

This same satisfaction also constitutes what Spinoza calls "human blessedness," which he identifies with man's salvation and freedom (cf. EV, 36, sch.). How so? For Spinoza understanding/knowledge does in a certain sense allow men to control their emotions: "The mind has greater power over the emotions and is less subject thereto, in so far as it understands all things as neces-

sary" (EV, 6). Therefore, the more one is determined by such knowledge, i.e., understands things as they are, the less one is affected by external things and the more free one is taken to be. "And so I am altogether for calling a man so far free," says Spinoza, "as he is led by reason; because so far he is determined to action by such causes, as can be adequately understood by his unassisted nature, although by these causes he be necessarily determined to action" (TP, Chap. 2, Sect. 11). Freedom then as self-determination rather than the indeterminism of uncaused actions is possible only to man among finite entities inasmuch as he makes use of reason. For Spinoza freedom is a freedom from external compulsion or coercion, that is, impulses alien to man's essential nature, but not from the necessities of human nature, the laws governing man. These laws comprise the conditions in terms of which men must live and function, and if removed, would leave them powerless, without the necessary causality which characterizes all power as stemming from God. The man who understands his true good or advantage is able to live accordingly. He will, Spinoza explains, live freely in the sense that his conatus will be directed to the proper development of his power (or virtue) which makes him more effective and thus better to achieve fulfillment. For the most part it is these cognitive powers rather than those of the body that are of highest value to man, both in ruling his own life

and in his relation with other men. Again, "Human infirmity in moderating and checking the emotions I name bondage... (EIV, Preface). Although the wise man is stronger and freer than the ignorant, it can never be the case that his reason has absolute control over the emotions or passions. Man, as a finite mode, is limited in his powers with respect to the infinite power of nature as derived from God, and therefore he inevitably suffers changes of which he is not the adequate cause.

From what has been said we can reasonably affirm that Spinoza's theory of freedom in no way implies that human action is divorced from necessity. More precisely, Spinoza argues that we must rid ourselves of the popular conception of freedom which claims that human actions are free because contingent and/or possible. The ideas of contingency and possibility, Spinoza contends, signify, not real aspects of the world, but only "deficiencies" or "imperfections" of our knowledge (EI, 33, sch.1). In fact, according to Spinoza, the more we know of the causality of our motives and actions, the less need do we have for ideas of possibility and contingency. Our "bondage" or "enslavement" is the result of this mistaken, albeit popular, idea of freedom, arising from "knowledge of the first kind," or imagination, which alone can be mistaken (EII, 41); for we believe in the contingency of things only insofar as our mind is passive. The more we see things as necessary, that

is, the more we possess only adequate ideas of our motives and actions, the more do we increase our power over them, and so the more are we free (EV, 6). Chapter Three (Part Three) of the present study will undertake to determine the value and significance of Spinoza's theory of freedom.

Ultimately man's quest for knowledge ought to bring him to the knowledge of God and of all finite things as related to God as the immanent cause. Knowledge of reality is the knowledge of the different ways in which individual things express God under the form of eternity. It is this knowledge which leads to what Spinoza has called the "intellectual love of God," wich is identical with the love which God has towards men. "From what has been said we clearly understand," writes Spinoza, "wherein our salvation, or blessedness,[14] or freedom, consists: namely, in the constant and eternal love towards God, or in God's love towards men" (EV, 36, sch.). In order to understand this fully, we must distinguish Spinozistic love from the kind of love usually associated with the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition. The decisive characteristic of Spinoza's conception of love is its unrequited character. Spinoza writes: "He, who loves God, cannot endeavour that God should love him in return" (EV, 19). This comes as no surprise provided that we remember that for Spinoza God is nature, so that the love in question is more like the joy or mental satisfaction accompanying the physicist's vision

of a complete explanation of nature, rather than the love in the sense of love between persons. Also, given Spinoza's conception of God, his God is without emotions; consequently, He can neither love nor hate (cf. EV, 17). Thus one who "loves" God in the manner recommended by Spinoza, unlike the religious person, does not expect to be loved in return. In fact, Spinoza's declaration that God should love him in return would be to desire that "that God, whom he loves, should not be God" (EV, 19, dem.).

Spinoza's whole philosophy is epitomized in the final proposition: "Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself; neither do we rejoice therein, because we control our lusts, but, contrariwise, because we rejoice therein, we are able to control our lusts" (EV, 41). In order to understand this proposition, we need only remember the connection between blessedness and knowledge on the one hand and knowledge and power on the other. Spinoza's point is that we do not acquire this knowledge by first moderating our passions, but that we have the power to moderate them only to the extent to which we already possess adequate knowledge. So, whereas the ignorant are perpetually plagued by their passions and seldom attain self-contentment, "the wise man, in so far as he is regarded as such, is scarcely at all disturbed in spirit, but, being conscious of himself, and of God, and of

things, by a certain eternal necessity, never ceases to be, but always possesses true acquiescence of his spirit" (EV, 42, sch.). Such, then, is the good, that is, the particular path of human existence to which the Ethics attempts to point the way. This path is certainly no small feat, but as Spinoza remarks in his closing words: "Needs must it be hard, since it is so seldom found. How would it be possible, if salvation were ready to our hand, and could without great labour be found, that it should be by almost all men neglected? But all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare" (Ibid.).

Chapter Three

The Ethical Dimension in Spinoza

> This way of life, then, agrees best with our principles, and also with general practice; therefore, if there be any question of another plan, the plan we have mentioned is the best, and in every way to be commended—Spinoza, EIV, 45, cor.2, sch.

Despite the fact that the title of Spinoza's major work is Ethics, the secondary literature on Spinoza's moral philosophy is very sparse indeed and not altogether satisfactory in the depth of its analysis.[1] Instead, attention has been focussed mainly on the metaphysical and epistemological doctrines found chiefly in Parts I and II.[2] Nevertheless, ethics was Spinoza's principal concern and (as we have seen) the theoretical doctrines of the Ethics were intended by him to support and culminate in a practical doctrine of the good life and the means in attaining it.[3] Armed with the exegetical preliminaries of Chapters One and Two, the central theme here is Spinoza's conception of the "ethical dimension," i.e., what Spinoza himself means by ethics and the significance of this in the final version of his philosophy.[4] The following discussion is based largely on Spinoza's views as we have them in the Ethics, since it is there that we have an authoritative statement of his philosophy, and, to a lesser extent, as we have them in the Tractatus Politicus (TP), the Tractatus Theologico-Poli-

ticus (TTP), and the Epistolae (Ep.).

Oddly enough, the term "ethics" (ethica, ethices),[5] with one exception, never occurs in the Ethics itself, but only in the main title and the titles of the five Parts. The single occurrence in the text, namely, the first sentence of the Preface to Part V, is incidental, for it simply refers to an earlier part of the Ethics proper. Thus, Spinoza nowhere in the Ethics defines or explains what ethics is. As for his other writings, the term occurs once in the TP, twice in the TTP, and twice in the Ep. In his introduction to Chapter One of the TP, Spinoza bemoans the fact that "philosophers" have hitherto regarded human emotions as blameworthy vices and have treated men "not as they are, but as they themselves would like them to be." As a result, he says, they (the philosophers) "have generally written satire, instead of ethics" (TP, I, 287). In one of the two references in the TTP, Spinoza extols Solomon's teaching about "wisdom" which, he says, "contains and involves the true principles of ethics and politics." This passage mentions three characteristics which Spinoza ascribes to ethics: ethics or ethical knowledge, he says, is "natural," it involves "true virtue," and it is derived from an "understanding of things" or "science" (TTP, I, 67). Unfortunately, no explanation of these remarks is given. The other occurrence of ethica in the TTP is relatively more specific about the nature of ethics.

According to this passage "universal ethics" (universalem Ethicam) consists of two main components: the true or highest good (verum bonum or summum bonum) and the best form of government. Ethics, then, which Spinoza says is "universal to all men," for it "renders [them] truly blessed, and teaches them the true life," includes politics as a part; but the question whether all or only a part of politics falls under ethics is not clear, at least not here.[6] More precisely, ethics deals with men as they are, true virtue, the means for achieving the true/highest good and therefore happiness/blessedness, and the foundations for the best form of political society. Moreover, ethical understanding is "derived from" an understanding of something else (TTP, I, 66-69). But again, Spinoza does not here go on to explain any of this in more detail. In one of the two references to ethica in the Ep.,[7] Spinoza addresses the question, "Whether stealing is as good in relation to God as honesty?" (Ep. XXXVI, II, 348). Spinoza answers that what can compel someone to virtuous rather than bad action—for example—loving God and mankind as oneself—depends on one's "frame of mind." This question belongs to the "foundations of ethics," about which here no explanation is given (Ep. XXXVI, II, 349). The other occurrence of "ethics" in the Ep. is significant because it sheds light on Spinoza's other question in the TTP of the relation between ethics and other kinds of knowledge. Spinoza writes that "ethics,...

as everyone knows, ought to be based on physics and metaphysics" (Ep. XXXVIII, II, 350).[8] It is reasonable to assume that "based on" here means that the truths of ethics are deducible from the axioms and propositions of metaphysics and physics. However, Spinoza does not explicitly say this. As regards metaphysics and physics, he here leaves open the question of how they themselves are related.[9] At the conclusion of Ep. XXXVIII Spinoza asserts that "metaphysics" involves the "necessity of things," and that knowledge of this is prior to ethical knowledge. The general point here is that ethics does not presuppose for its possibility free will or contingency, and that freedom is consistent with everything existing necessarily. Thus, any reasonable discussion about the nature of virtuous and vicious actions presupposes metaphysical confirmation that all things are caused, i.e., either by themselves or by something else, and that the cause necessitates the effect (compare EIII, ax.1 and ax.3). But this, to be sure, is not the same as saying that ethics is based on metaphysics and physics in the sense of deducible from them alone.[10]

Chapter Three: Part One

Bonus and Malus, Virtus and Vitium

Although Part III of the Ethics (the bulk of Spinoza's psychology) contains the first definitions of good (bonus and its inflections) and bad/evil (malus and its inflections), these are stated in a scholium and are introduced only to clarify a psychological proposition about human behavior (compare EIII, 39, sch.). The official definitions of good and bad are offered later in EIV, dfns. 1 and 2. Also, the definitions seem quite different. That is to say, the essential feature of Spinoza's theory of good and bad in EIII, 39, sch. is its connection with pleasure (and desire) and pain (namely, the three basic emotions): "By good I here mean every kind of pleasure, and all that conduces thereto, especially that which satisfies our longings, whatsoever they may be," and "by evil...every kind of pain, especially that which frustrates our longings." In EIV, dfns. 1 and 2, however, Spinoza tells the reader that "by good I mean that which we certainly know to be useful to us" (dfn. 1), and "by evil...that which we certainly know to be a hindrance to us in the attainment of any good" (dfn. 2). Thus, the first definition is hedonistic, the second utilitarian.[11] Also, it is noteworthy that there are no axioms, postulates, or lemmas about good or bad. Since an axiom is a self-evident truth (what Spinoza calls a per

se nota), there are no self-evident judgements about good or bad. And although Spinoza sometimes asserts that a propositio, though demonstrable, is also per se nota, he never asserts this for any proposition about good or bad. Also, no proposition about good or bad occurs in EIII or earlier. In fact, the first proposition about good or bad occurs in EIV, 8, but this, strictly speaking, is a claim about our knowledge (cognitio), of good and bad, not about good and bad themselves. It thus belongs to the epistemology of ethics, rather than ethics itself.[12] As for good and bad themselves, the first proposition about good arises in EIV, 28. This proposition is about the mind's "highest good," which Spinoza says is the "knowledge of God" and the mind's "highest virtue," which he says is "to know God." This proposition also represents the first judgement about good and bad that Spinoza tries to demonstrate.[13] The way in which it is demonstrated is worth outlining, since it is typical of Spinoza's general procedure in ethics. The argument is as follows:

(1) "The mind is not capable of understanding anything higher than God, that is (I. Def. vi.), than a Being absolutely infinite..." (EIV, 28, dem.).[14]

(2) "...and without which (I. xv.) nothing can either be or be conceived" (Ibid.).

(3) "Neither does the mind, in so far as it

makes use of reason, judge anything to be useful to it, save such things as are conducive to understanding" (EIV, 26).

(4) "We know nothing to be certainly good or evil, save such things as really conduce to understanding, or such as are able to hinder us from understanding" (EIV, 27).

(5) "By good I mean that which we certainly know to be useful to us" (EIV, dfn. 1).

(6) Therefore, the mind's highest good is the knowledge of God, and the mind's highest virtue is to know God (EIV, 28, dem.).

The argument is based on three non-ethical propositions (EI, 15, EIV, 26 and 27) and two definitions, one of which is non-ethical (EI, dfn. 6), the other (EIV, dfn. 1) ethical. Proposition EIV, 26 is about the mind; EIV, 27 is about our knowledge of good and bad, and EI, 15 is about God. EI, dfn. 6 is of God, and EIV, dfn. 1 is of good. The latter definition identifies good with the concepts of knowledge and utility. Thus, Spinoza's strategy, it would seem, is to attempt to deduce an ethical conclusion from five premises, of which only one, that is, the definition of good, is an ethical judgement.

The definitions of virtue (virtus) and vice (vitium) are found in EIV, dfn. 8: "By virtue (virtus) and power," writes Spinoza, "I mean the same thing; that is (III. vii.),

virtue, in so far as it is referred to man, is a man's nature or essence, in so far as it has the power of effecting what can only be understood by the laws of that nature." It is interesting to note that Spinoza's equation of virtue with power here reflects the original meaning of the Latin term virtus, according to which, virtue is not altruism or disinterested behavior, but rather nothing more than the ability to act according to one's nature, to be self-determined, to be oneself the source or adequate cause of one's states. In effect this means that for Spinoza, the virtuous person is one who has power over his emotions, while the vicious person is one who is merely a slave to his passions. That said, there are no axioms, postulates, or lemmas about virtus and vitium. Thus there are no self-evident truths about them. Proposition EIV, 20 is the first judgement about virtue that Spinoza tries to demonstrate.[15] It thus occurs eight propositions before the first demonstration about good and bad (EIV, 28). The gist of the argument is that the more a man strives to preserve his being, the more virtue he has, while the more he neglects to preserve his being, the less power he has. EIV, 20, dem. can be reconstructed as follows:

(1) Virtue is human power (EIV, dfn. 8).

(2) Human power is man's essence, i.e., the endeavour (conatus) to self-preservation (EIV, dfn. 9).

> (3) Therefore, the more a man is able to preserve his own being, the more he is "endowed" with virtue; and, consequently, in so far as a man neglects to preserve his own being, he is "wanting" in power (EIV, 20, dem.).

This demonstration is based on two definitions, one of which is (arguably) ethical, the other non-ethical. The ethical definition (premise 1) is of virtue; it identifies virtue with a non-ethical concept: power. Thus, Spinoza's procedure is to attempt to deduce an ethical conclusion about virtue from two premises, both of which are definitions, and only one of which is an ethical judgement.

If Spinoza's ethical judgements about good and bad, virtue and vice, are in fact characteristic of his general method in ethics, then they are characteristic also of the argument of the Ethics as a whole. This requires some explanation. The axioms and propositions, to be sure, represent the main premises in Spinoza's deductive system. But, as we have observed, there are no ethical premises until Part IV; and there they are introduced into the system by means of definitions (namely, EIV, dfns. 1 and 2).[16] The argument of the Ethics as a whole is directed to an end, insofar as the earlier arguments are intended to establish truths which will serve as the basis for later truths. In Spinoza's deductive system/method, there are entailments

running downwards, so to speak, and confirmation relations running upwards. The earlier arguments are stages in this upward climb, which peaks with the doctrine of the power of the intellect and of freedom in Part V.[17] Part V, which contains the bulk of the ethical teaching, is the last stage before the peak.

Now in the case of ethical judgements, Spinoza's general procedure is the same. As we have seen, Spinoza introduces ethical content into his general philosophical teaching about nature by means of definitions of ethical terms. These definitions, to reiterate, explain the ethical terms by means of non-ethical terms, namely psychological ones (pleasure, pain, and desire in EIV, 39, sch.), and epistemological ones (knowledge in EIV, dfns. 1 and 2) for good and bad, and metaphysical ones (power in EIV, dfn. 8) for virtue. What purpose then do these definitions serve in Spinoza's general method and in his particular ethical demonstrations? It seems reasonable to suggest that Spinoza utilizes these definitions in order to fill the logical gap, so to speak, between what is (nature) and what is good or virtuous (ethics). Whether or not he succeeds in doing so is a question which desrves careful attention. We have seen that the definitions bridge this gap not by introducing a tertium quid over it, but rather by closing the gap, for they are reductive definitions which identify good, bad, and virtue with something else. This, in turn,

provides Spinoza with a basis for the transition from what is to what ought to be: namely, from the general philosophical teaching about nature to the specific teaching of how we ought to act. This gap exists, and therefore has to be closed, for basically two interconnected reasons which we have hitherto discussed. The first is that, for Spinoza, all that is, is a substance or mode (cf. EI, ax. 1). All that is, therefore, is nature, either natura naturans or natura naturata (cf. EI, 29, sch.). The second reason has to do with Spinoza's claim that there are no real ethical characteristics: "As for the terms good and bad," says Spinoza, "they indicate no positive quality in themselves, but are merely modes of thinking, or notions which we form from the comparison of things one with another" (EIV, Preface). In other words, it is only presumption and ignorance which allows men to think and act as if their judgement is an actual description of the true good of nature. In fact, however, nature and its constituents are value-neutral, neither good nor bad in themselves (in esse). Thus the value judgements that men make cannot be based on criteria of absolute or intrinsic value. As for the terms virtue and vice, Spinoza has said that they are, respectively, simply power or lack of power (EIV, dfn. 8). The general point in all this is that good and bad, virtue and vice, are real only to the ex-

tent that they are reducible to something natural, which alone is real. And it is precisely this reduction which is carried out by the ethical definitions. These definitions refer back to real facts about nature and thereby serve as the necessary preconditions for validating propositions, that is, for introducing ethical content into the deductive system.

It still remains to consider the validity both of Spinoza's general method and of his particular ethical demonstrations. In light of the aforesaid, it would seem that the validity of both depends on the legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of defining ethical terms by means of non-ethical ones. In short, it depends on the possibility of naturalistic definitions of ethical terms. [18] If Spinoza's method is legitimate, then he can demonstrate the truth of ethical judgements about bonus and malus, virtus and vitium, on the basis of non-ethical ones. On the other hand, if it is indeed not legitimate, then he cannot demonstrate the truth of any ethical judgements without employing among his premises at least one irreducible ethical judgement which is not a definition. In other words, this judgement would have to be either an ethical axiom, postulate, or lemma. However, there are no ethical axioms, postulates or lemmas in the Ethics.[19]

Chapter Three: Part Two

Dictates, Precepts, Rules or Reason

One of the pillars of Spinoza's ethical system is the claim that "everything, in so far as it is in itself, endeavours to persist in its own being" (EIII, 6), that everything whatever "is opposed to all that could take away its existence" (EIII, 6, dem.). Man, like every other thing, is subject to the tendency towards self-preservation (suum esse conservandi). The tendency to persist in his own being follows from man's very nature. That is, it is a consequence of several universal natural dictates:

> As reason makes no demands contrary to nature, it demands, that every man should love himself, should seek that which is useful to him—I mean, that which is really useful to him, should desire everything which really brings man to greater perfection, and should, each for himself, endeavour as far as he can to preserve his own being (EIV, 18, sch.).

These, then, are the fundamental precepts which Spinoza offers as rules to moral improvement—what he later calls the "foundation of virtue" (EIV, 18, sch.)—and together they provide the basis for his theory of obligation (obligatio). Although Spinoza never uses obligatio or obligare, he uses other equivalents to what is generally meant by obligation. These include debere, which can mean "must" as well as "should" or "ought," "dictate" (dictamen), "precept" (praecepta), and "rule of reason" (rationis regulis or rationis praecepta). In what follows we shall equate an ethical obligation with all these expressions, and use the term "what

reason demands/prescribes" or "rational precept" as a generic term for all of them. This, it seems, is the only sense that ethical obligation can have for Spinoza. An ethical obligation, i.e., what a rational man would do, or the rational thing to do, is thus basically a rational action.[20]

The first reference in the Ethics to a specific rational precept occurs in EIII, 59, sch. The general context is a discussion of the emotions, specifically, of the active emotions as opposed to the passive ones.[21] Spinoza asserts that every active emotion (i.e., one which involves an increase in the mind's power of understanding), reflects strength of character or will (fortitudo), which he divides into two parts, depending on whether only oneself or also others are involved. The former case he calls "courage" (animositas) and the latter "highmindedness" (generositas). Generositas[22] he defines as "the desire whereby every man endeavours solely under the dictates of reason, to aid other men and to unite them to himself in friendship" (EIII, 59, sch.). Strictly speaking, this is not a definition of a "precept of reason," but rather a definition of an emotion (affectûs). In fact, Spinoza never explicitly defines or explains what a rationis praecepta is. Thus his procedure in the case of obligation is not in keeping with his procedure in the cases of bonus and malus, virtus and vitium. In the case of the latter ethical concepts, we saw that they required explicit introduction into Spinoza's

deductive system by means of equally explicit reductive naturalistic definitions. In the case of obligation, however, Spinoza simply accepts reason as a given fact.[23] It is also a given fact that reason makes demands or prescriptions, that is, tells us what ought or ought not to be done. This fact is apparent to reason when it reflects on itself. In other words, a rational man can know by reflection that some actions are rational and some are not, that is, that some ought to be done and some ought not to be done.

Spinoza's account of *obligatio* begins in EIV, 18, sch., to which we referred at the outset.[24] There Spinoza deduces the fundamental or primary obligation which will provide the basis for further deductions of secondary derivative obligations. The primary obligation is the "foundation of virtue" (*fundamentum virtutatis*) and is, as we have seen, variously formulated: love oneself, seek what is really useful to oneself, seek whatever leads one to greater perfection/happiness, seek to preserve one's being as much as possible (EIV, 18, sch.). The primary obligation, therefore, and the basis of all the rest, is an egoistic obligation to oneself. The last formulation is perhaps the most revealing, since it emphasizes the connection between Spinoza's metaphysical theory of *conatus* and the specific ethical doctrine. Examples of secondary derivative obligations are: aid others and help to unite

them to oneself in friendship (EIII, 59, sch.), help others live in obedience to reason (EIV, 37, dem.), never act fraudulently, but always in good faith (EIV, 72), desire for others what one desires as good for oneself (EIV, 37). These obligations are derivative from the primary obligation of self-preservation in the sense that they are necessary prerequisites for achieving that end. Thus, Spinoza's general line of reasoning is as follows. Given the fundamental drive of each individual—which is a fact about the nature of all things, human and non-human—we can, by using our reason, determine which actions are necessary and/or useful for achieving this end. Moreover, each derivative obligation—for example, one ought to aid others—may be regarded as an imperative—aid others—which in turn may be regarded as a hypothetical imperative: if one desires to preserve one's being, then one ought to aid others. But since the antecedent of this hypothetical is itself a universal and necessary fact (cf. Spinoza's statement that the precepts of reason are necessary truths in EIV, 18, sch.), each derivative obligation may be regarded as a universal affirmative categorical imperative: one ought always to aid others or always aid others. In view of the fact that, for Spinoza, the primary obligation of self-preservation is the ultimate end of all our actions, it itself is not expressible as a disguised hypothetical imperative, but only as a categorical one. That is, always seek to preserve one's be-

ing as much as possible. For it is not derived from any other obligations but from metaphysical judgements about the nature of reality and its constituents (compare EIII, 5). Thus, descriptive facts about the nature of human beings, including what humans by nature desire, ultimately coincide with rational prescriptions about what humans ought or ought not to do. Having said that, what we ought to do—say, aid others—is ultimately nothing but what in fact we really desire to do—preserve ourselves—and all that is a means thereto. In this way Spinoza derives a doctrine of obligation from a doctrine of what is. If the former doctrine be called ethical egoism psychological egoism, Spinoza tries to derive ethical egoism from the latter psychological egoism. Jonathan Bennett seems to concur, for he writes that "Spinoza's substantive morality will be based on a strong individual egoism: 'Each thing...tries to stay in existence'" (EIII, 6). "Since the only possible value system is egoism, the only rational value system is informed egoism." "That move," he continues, "from psychological necessity to value judgement can be seen in the scholium which heralds this segment of Part IV..." (i.e., EIV, 18, sch.).[25] However, it is a further question whether Spinoza is entitled to regard this so-called "move" as a valid one. In light of the aforesaid, the move can be valid only if there is

something one ought to do. That is, only if reason does make prescriptions. Without this additional qualifier, the derivation is invalid. Expressed differently, from the simple fact that one always does act in conformity with one's desire for self-preservation, it does not follow that one ought to act in any way at all.

To clarify what is meant by Spinoza's theory of obligation and to show its relevance to our present concerns, we need to consider his arguments for it. If reason does in fact make "demands" or prescriptions, then what it demands or prescribes is what we really desire. We really desire, as much as possible, to preserve our being (cf. EIV, 18, sch.). We do necessarily desire to preserve our being (cf. EI, 8, sch. 2 and EI, 11, dfn. 2). This is our ultimate desire or end (cf. EIV, 21 and 22). But desire for the end presupposes desire for the means or preconditions necessary to achieve the end. Therefore reason prescribes that we do everthing which is necessary to preserve our being. Despite the fact that we all necessarily desire self-preservation and the means necessary for this, there exists the possibility that we can be and sometimes are ignorant both about the end and the means thereto. And as we have observed, being ignorant for Spinoza means that we sometimes act on the basis of false beliefs about our end and the means thereto. Hence, we sometimes act contrary to

reason and its prescriptions. According to Spinoza, to act contrary to reason is either to do what one ought not to do or not to do what one ought to do. In short, to act contrary to reason is to act from emotion (ex affectu).[26] So we act ex affectu when we are ignorant of what we desire. Knowing what we desire, however, does not by itself ensure that we shall actually do what we ought to do or what reason demands of us (cf. EIV, 17, sch.). Spinoza in fact emphasizes in EIV, 7 and 14 that reason alone cannot restrain the emotions. Indeed, to restrain the emotions reason must ally itself with an emotion. And this alliance means acting from active rather than passive emotions (cf. EIII, 58). And acting from active emotions means understanding the emotions, that is, knowing their causes. This knowledge is reason's power over the emotions, that is, freedom or virtue (cf. EV, 3 and 6).[27]

Given all this, there is a sense in which, for Spinoza, ought implies can,[28] since whatever reason prescribes must be possible, and whatever reason presribes is what we ought to do. This requires some explanation. First, for Spinoza, ought does not imply can in the sense that, given the same set of circumstances (or antecedent causal conditions), an action other than the one which actually occurred is possible. On the contrary, ought implies can only in the sense that, given different circum-

stances (or antecedent causal conditions) we could have done otherwise. This means, however, that, given different circumstances, a different action would necessarily occur. But since a cause always necessitates an effect, and every conditionally necessary event is ultimately derived from something unconditionally necessary, given any circumstances, an action necessarily occurs. Hence, given different circumstances, a different action would necessarily occur.

Admittedly, this does not imply that we are ever obligated to do something contrary to our real desire. For rational dictates or precepts presuppose only that sometimes we do in fact act contrary to what we really desire and that this results from our ignorance about what we really desire. Nor does this imply that, if we did know what we really desire, we would always act rationally, that is, do what we ought to do. To be sure, not even an omniscient being would always act rationally, for knowledge is not a sufficient condition for ethical perfection, but only a necessary one. Since we always ought to do what we really desire—ultimately self-preservation—and since reason prescribes nothing impossible, reason can only prescribe what we do desire; no one, in other words, can be obligated to do what he cannot do. Thus, ought implies can only in the sense that one can do something given the appropriate circumstances, i.e., given

the causal conditions from which this act would necessarily follow. This is why Spinoza maintains that obligation is consistent with determinism, just as freedom is (compare EI, dfn. 7 and Ep. LXII, II, 389-92). Neither presupposes contingency, if the latter means either that the action was uncaused or that, given the same causes, a different action might have occurred.[29]

Chapter Three: Part Three

Freedom

I postponed discussion of Spinoza's doctrine of freedom, despite its appearance in Chapter Two, because any earlier attempt to determine the validity and significance of it would have impeded and confused the exposition. Having now defined Spinoza's principal moral concepts and determined their consequences, I would like to return to Spinoza's account of freedom. In what follows my objectives will be two-fold: (1) I shall address the charge that Spinoza is inconsistent in proclaiming both determinism and freedom (sometimes called compatibilism or soft determinism), and also try to clarify in what sense he is a compatibilist, and in what sense he is not; and (2) I shall examine Spinoza's account of "freedom" against the background of "freedom" understood as "self-determination." The latter concept, most would agree, is the kind of freedom most proper to a human being and, therefore, most closely related to the concerns of ethics. Generally speaking, freedom in this sense of self-determination implies that, to the extent that we can determine for ourselves who we shall be, we are responsible for our lives. It means that despite all external pressures and prior causes, which can and do influence our choices, we retain at least some options, that is, of choosing one particular course of action over another. Of course,

this also means that in cases where there is no such option, there is no real choice and no real self-determination. In such cases there is no question of "moral" action at all, for when a man does something without having chosen to do it, he is not acting either morally or immorally. That is to say, his action simply has no moral quality or significance.

To bring out the relation between determinism and freedom in Spinoza, a few preliminary points about compatibilism seem in order. Generally speaking, to say that it is, in a given instance, up to me what I do, is to say that I am in that instance free with respect to what I then do. So I am sometimes free to move my foot this way and that, but not, certainly, to bend it far backward or forward. Now what this means in the present context is that there are sometimes no obstacles to my moving my foot this way and that, though there are obvious obstacles to my moving it far backward or forward. For example, if my foot is being forcibly bent to the left—by another person, or by anything that I cannot overcome—then I am not free to move it as I wish. Those things, accordingly, that pose obstacles to my motions, or that constrain or force me to do one thing rather than another, limit my freedom. To say I am free to perform some action thus means at least that there is no obstacle to my doing it, and that nothing constrains me to do otherwise.

Now if we accept this observation, and construe free activity simply as activity that is unimpeded and unconstrained, there is evidently no inconsistency in proclaiming both the thesis of determinism and the claim that I am sometimes free. In other words, to say that some action is neither impeded nor constrained does not by itself imply that it is not causally determined. It might seem, then, that we can say of some of my actions that there are conditions antecedent to their performance so that no other actions were possible, and also that these actions were unimpeded and unconstrained. And to say that would logically entail that such actions were both causally determined and free.

All versions of compatibilism have in common three claims, by means of which, it is supposed, a reconciliation is achieved between determinism and freedom; namely, (1) that the thesis of determinism, i.e., for every event E there is a set of conditions or causes, C1..., Cn, such that if C1..., Cn hold, E occurs, is true, and that accordingly all human behavior, voluntary or other, like the behavior of all things, stems from prior conditions, given which no other behavior is possible—in short, that all human behavior is caused and determined; (2) that voluntary behavior is nonetheless free provided that it is not externally constrained or obstructed; and (3) that, in the absence of such obstacles and impediments, the causes of

voluntary behavior are certain states or conditions within the agent himself; namely, his own volitions, decisions, desires, and so on. Thus, on this view, there are two things (call them "facts") about himself of which the compatibilist feels quite certain. The first is that he deliberates, with the view to making a decision, i.e., to do this or that. And the second is that, whether or not he deliberates about what to do, it is sometimes up to him what he does.

This conception of freedom coincides with Spinoza's, as we have it in the Ethics. According to Spinoza, something is "free" if it is unconditioned by anything outside itself: "That thing is called free, which exists solely by the necessity of its own nature, and of which the action is determined by itself alone. On the other hand, that thing is necessary, or rather constrained, which is determined by something external to itself to a fixed and definite method of existence or action" (EI, dfn. 7).[30] In keeping with the compatibilist theory, Spinoza's distinction between "free" and "not free" does not hinge on whether there is a cause, but, rather, on what the cause is. According to his definition, if the cause is external to the agent, then the agent cannot be called free. A free action thus would be one in which the agent himself is the adequate cause, i.e., a cause through which its effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived (as opposed to an inadequate or partial cause, through which, by itself, its effect cannot be un-

derstood): "I say that we act when anything takes place, either within us or externally to us, whereof we are the adequate cause...." (EIII, dfn. 2). For Spinoza, then, an action is free[31] to the extent that its immediate cause is an internal state of the agent, i.e., to the extent, in effect, that the agent himself is the adequate cause of his own action(s). That said, Spinoza's compatibilism can be summarized as follows: For every action there is a set of sufficient conditions, but for some actions (those which are free) one of the members of this set of sufficient conditions will be both the immediate cause of the action and an internal state of the agent.

Despite its seductive character, Spinoza's compatibilism is vulnerable at more than one place. First, suppose that among the sufficient conditions for an action E there is one, C, which is the immediate cause of E and is an internal state of the agent. Not only will the event E be determined given the sufficient conditions, but the the presence of condition C will itself be determined by a set of further sufficient conditions. Now one of these may be an internal state of the agent, but there is no necessity for this and ultimately, as sufficient conditions are chained back, a set will be arrived at which is entirely external to the agent. On Spinoza's position, once this set of external sufficient conditions obtains, nothing can prevent the occurrence of all the intermediate sets of

sufficient conditions and of E itself. In other words, it is not unreasonable to ask whether the causes of my actions—my own inner volitions, decisions, desires—are themselves caused. And of course they are, if Spinoza's determinism is true, for on that thesis everything is caused and determined. In view of this, we must concede that, given the causal conditions of those inner states, I could not have decided or desired otherwise than I in fact did, for this is a logical consequence of the very definition of determinism. Perhaps the easiest way to see the dialectic of this problem is by means of an example. It is generally agreed that one can, for instance, be given a compulsive desire for certain drugs, simply by having them administered to him over a period of time. Let us suppose, then, that I do, with neither my knowledge nor consent, thus become a victim of such a desire and act upon it. Do I act freely, merely by virtue of the fact that I am unimpeded in my search for drugs? In a sense I do—according to Spinoza's conception of free—but I am hardly free with respect to whether or not I shall use drugs. For I never decided to have the desire for them inflicted upon me. This, it seems to me, is the fundamental difficulty of Spinoza's thesis, and any reformulation which evades this difficulty will result in a theory other than Spinoza's compatibilism. What the objection amounts to, basically, is the claim that

Spinoza's reconciliation of freedom with determinism omits the most essential feature of free actions: namely, that they could have been otherwise. If this is admitted then it follows that no free action has a set of sufficient conditions: for a set of conditions is sufficient for an action provided that the action could not have been avoided once the conditions obtained. For an action to be free it seems to me necessary, however, not just that the action could have been different if the prior conditions were different (this is true of physically determined systems), but that the action could have been different, even though the prior conditions remained the same.

Furthermore, Spinoza's compatibilism, as applied to human behavior, has certain implications which, as I intend to show, no modification of the theory can efface. It was said at the outset that there are at least two "facts" about which compatibilists feel quite certain: (1) that they do sometimes deliberate before acting, and (2) that when they do, they presuppose among other things that it is up to them what they do.

As regards (1), deliberation for Spinoza is something that is not only possible but quite rational, for it does make sense to deliberate about activity that is truly my own, and, that depends in its outcome upon me as its author, and not merely upon someone or something outside myself (cf. EI, dfn. 7). Now, strictly speaking, I (or any-

body else) can deliberate only about my own future actions, and then only if I do not already know what I am going to do. For example, if a certain feeling of nausea warns me that I am about to feel sick to my stomach, then I cannot deliberate whether to feel sick or not; I can only prepare for the impending convulsion. But if Spinoza is right, that is, if compatibilism is true, then there are always conditions existing antecedently to everything I do, sufficient for my doing just that, and such as to render it unavoidable. If I can know what these conditions are and what behavior they are sufficient to produce, then I can in every such case know what I am going to do and cannot then deliberate about it.

By itself this only shows, of course, that I can deliberate only in ignorance of the causal conditions of my behavior; it does not show that such conditions cannot exist. It is unusual, however, to suppose that deliberation should be a mere substitute for clear knowledge. Ignorance is a condition of speculation and conjecture, which have nothing whatever to do with deliberation. A POW may not know when he is going to be released by his captors, and he may even fear the worst, but he cannot deliberate about this. He can only speculate and wait.

If compatibilism is true, moreover, then I cannot deliberate about what I am going to do if it is even pos-

sible for me to find out in advance, whether I do in fact find out in advance or not. This means, of course, that I can deliberate only with the view to deciding what to do; but this is impossible if I believe that it could be inferred what I am going to do from conditions already existing, even though I have not made that inference myself. To put it another way, if I believe that what I am going to do will eventuate anyway (determined by conditions already existing, and ascertainable by anyone having the requisite knowledge), then I cannot decide whether to do it or not, for there is simply nothing left to decide. I can at best only guess or speculate, but I cannot deliberate. For I deliberate in order to decide what to do, not to discover what it is that I will do. But, again, if Spinoza is correct, then there are always prior conditions sufficient for everything that I do, and this, presumably, can always be inferred by anyone having the necessary knowledge (for Spinoza knowledge of the second kind or reason), that is, by anyone having a knowledge of what those conditions are and what behavior(s) they are sufficient to produce.

If Spinoza's compatibilism (or compatibilism in general) cannot be logically reconciled with (1), then it is doubtful whether it can be reconciled with (2). For if it is ever really "up to me" whether to do this or that, then, as we have seen, each alternative course of action

must be such that I can do it, i.e., in the sense that it is then and there within my power to do it. But if compatibilism is true, this is never the case, for compatibilism says that whatever happens at any time is the only thing that can happen, given all that precedes it. It follows that whatever I do at any time is the only thing I can then do, given the causes that precede my doing it. Also, it makes little difference to include, among the prior causes of my behavior, my own inner states, such as my volitions, decisions, desires and so on. Even if we suppose these to be always involved in voluntary behavior, determinism says that these states, whatever they are at any time, can never be other than what they then are.

Spinoza's compatibilism, therefore, is vulnerable at more than one place. As we have seen, it is not nonsense to ask (the compatibilist) whether the causes of my actions—my own inner desires, volitions, decisions, and the like—are themselves caused. And it is simply a logical consequence of determinism (which the compatibilist accepts, in its strict interpretation, as true) that they are caused. This means that I could not have decided or desired otherwise than I in fact did. What is more, Spinoza's theory appears logically irreconcilable to the two so-called "facts" set forth by compatibilists. Of course, Spinoza might contend that these facts are nothing more than illusions, that no man ever deliberates, but

only imagines that he does, and that from pure arrogance he supposes himself to be the author of his acts. All this, however, is very different from the way in which we now hold our fellow human beings free; at least with respect to most of their actions most of the time, and also responsible.

In what follows my objective will be to explore further how Spinoza's notion of freedom diverges from the more popular notion of freedom as self-determination (as set forth at the outset).

In addition to EI, dfn. 7, Spinoza speaks of freedom in various passages in Parts IV and V of the Ethics. In EIV, 54, sch., he says that the man who lives under the guidance of reason is "free" and enjoys the life of the "blessed." On the other hand, the man who is led solely by "emotion" or "opinion" is a "slave" (EV, 66, sch.). Thus, to the extent that Spinoza builds on a metaphysical determinism, both the "freedom" and "servitude" of man can be regarded as the necessary consequences of his status as a finite mode. In other words, to the extent that there are certain fundamental laws governing the behavior of all finite beings, i.e., the primary and secondary derivative obligations, a man's responsibility would involve understanding his peculiar place in nature. In short, Spinoza's ethicist must be a metaphysician.

From all this it follows that we, as finite beings,

cannot be other than what we are. Regarded as physical beings, our overriding duty or obligation is to preserve our own stability as distinct things in relation to external environmental causes. Regarded as thinking beings, our overriding duty is to preserve the cohesiveness and continuity of our own thoughts against the flow of unconnected ideas which are our sensations and imaginations.[32] In short, a human being's "actual" identity is his conatus (EII, 7). Furthermore, Spinoza contends that the more active and self-determining a thing is in the face of external causes, the more clearly it can be distinguished as having a distinct nature or individuality. The doctrine of conatus, therefore, is intrinsically related to Spinoza's account of what it means for an individual to be free, and real, and distinct.

Other finite modes, besides human beings, will have less individuality as distinct things because they will be susceptible to fewer changes and/or modifications in interaction with their environment. In the case of human beings, these changes can be conceived either under the attribute of Extension or under the attribute of Thought. In other words, these changes can be described in physical terms as "peaks" and "valleys" in the vitality of the person, or in psychological terms as pleasure and pain. That then which increases activity is by definition a pleasure—"a passive state wherin the mind passes to a greater perfection"—and every

diminution of activity is necessarily a pain—"a passive state wherein the mind passes to a lesser perfection" (EIII, 11, sch.).

The degree of "wholeness" or "perfection" of any finite mode depends, therefore, on the degree to which it is active, and not passive, in relation to other things or in relation to things other than itself. As we have noted, it is important to Spinoza's ethical teaching that pleasure and pain always represent changes in the psycho-physical state, for these changes represent the potential acretion or diminution in the person's power of activity. In turn, the person's capacity to "pass" from a lesser state of perfection to a greater state of perfection (conatus) will depend on his understanding of the natural laws governing all modes. Thus, the role of Spinoza's theory of conatus will be to show the full implications of admitting a complete science of human behavior. As regards pleasures, therefore, a person will pursue his own pleasure in accordance with these natural laws. That is, he will strive to become more "whole" or "perfect," not in the sense that he will always deliberate about what will give him the most pleasure and then act accordingly, but in the sense that his pleasure can always be explained as arising from living in accordance with the laws governing all finite modes.

Spinoza asserts that anyone or anything may accidentally be the object of pleasure and heightened activity, or, contrarily, of pain and diminished activity. The person's reaction will depend on his psycho-physical state. For example, I love that thing which is taken to be the external cause, X, if I feel pleasure and if I believe that X is indeed the cause of my pleasure. To the extent that the idea of external cause X comes to be associated in my mind with a sense of pleasure or heightened activity, I can be said to love X. Conversely, to the extent that an idea of a particular cause Y comes to be associated in my mind with a sense of pain or diminished activity, I can be said to hate Y. These ideas of pleasure and pain will in turn form a complete system of our desires and aversions. In other words, whatever I believe to be the cause of my pleasure becomes an object of desire and vice versa.

As we have seen, laetitia, tristitia, and cupiditas are understood by Spinoza as the primary emotions in terms of which all other emotions are defined. They are passive states arising from a passive association of ideas with things. They are passive to the extent that, I, for example, do not understand the cause(s) of why X comes to be associated in my mind with a sense of pleasure—instead I merely believe that X is the cause of my pleasure; just as I merely believe that Y is the cause of my pain. In experiencing these emotions we are reacting to external

causes on the basis of our confused perceptions. In other words, we cannot establish (at least not necessarily) the truth of our beliefs. These are the grounds for Spinoza's distinction between active and passive émotions. And as we know, the distinction is also directly derived from his epistemological distinction between adequate and inadequate ideas (cf. EII, dfn. 4). Accordingly, we experience an active emotion when, and only when, the idea, which is the mental accompaniment of emotion, is deducible from the previous ideas constituting our mind; only in this sense, then, can we be said to have "adequate" knowledge of the cause of our emotion. On the other hand, we are passive if the idea, which is annexed to our passive emotion, is the effect of an external cause, which we do not know adequately. As the ideas constituting one's mind are the psychical equivalents of the modifications of one's body, one could only have adequate knowledge of the causes of those emotions which are not the effects of external things.

We are now in a position to bring out the relation between Spinoza's psychology and his theory of freedom. According to Spinoza, a human being is "free" to the extent that he remains unaffected by external causes—and in this sense he can be said to be the adequate cause of everything that happens to him. But, strictly speaking,

only God can be said to be completely free and unaffected by external causes, since only God is, by definition, self-caused (causa sui). Human freedom, therefore, must be a matter of degree. And psychologically speaking, the human being must make the transition from the ordinary life of passive emotions and inadequate ideas to the free man's life of active emotions and adequate ideas. This would suggest that only the rational man is free, and only the free man is rational.

It remains for us to discuss how Spinoza's picture of the free and wise man as self-directing and self-determining relates to the fundamental concerns of ethics: How, in other words, does Spinoza's homo liber deal with those (moral) epithets of "good" or "bad" and "morally good" or "morally bad"?[33] Inasmuch as Spinoza's code of behavior is entailed by and deducible from the necessary ordinances of his constructive metaphysics, it would be unreasonable to condone the use of such phrases as "good" or "bad" and "perfect" or "imperfect" to describe someone or something. This requires some explanation. The properties or characteristics of everything within nature, Spinoza believes, are deducible from the necessary laws of self-preservation and self-development of nature as a whole; if something, then, appears to us "bad" or "imperfect," in the sense of "not what it should be" or "falling short of what it

should be," this only goes to show our ignorance of these necessary laws. However, if we understood the necessary principles on which the individual nature of particular things depends, we would indeed understand the role that various things play in the whole system. Strictly speaking, all finite things within nature are imperfect, simply because they are finite things within nature, which alone is complete and perfect; but they all fit perfectly into the system, and could not possibly be other than they are.[34]

The phrases "morally good" and "morally bad" and their equivalents implicitly distinguish humans from animals and inanimate objects, for only humans can significantly be judged as morally good or bad, since only they can be said to deliberate and to choose. According to the popular conception of freedom as self-determination (as outlined at the outset), a person is "free" to the extent that he is able to shape his own life through his choices. According to Spinoza's conception of freedom as self-determination, a man is "free" to the extent that he recognizes his rightful place in nature, which means recognizing the necessary natural laws governing all particular things, which in turn means having adequate knowledge of the behavior of all things, which ultimately means living in accordance with that knowledge. In view of all this, Spinoza seems to be saying that we, as finite modes, will necessarily abandon freedom of choice as our knowledge of

nature increases. Surprisingly enough, the goal of Spinoza's free man will be to limit those options available to him, thereby minimizing his power to choose. In fact, as our knowledge of the laws governing human behavior increases, the bulk of those actions of which we can say "X could have acted otherwise" or "an alternative course of action was possible," necessarily decreases.

Spinoza's determinism, so stated, implies that, as we progressively acquire more and more systematic knowledge of the behavior and reactions of human beings, more and more of their actions can be shown to be entailed by laws of nature. If a human action, then, is shown to be deducible from a law of nature, that is, is exhibited as the effect of a cause, there is at least one sense in which we must say that the agent could not in this case have acted otherwise, or that no alternative action was possible; and if no alternative action was in this sense possible for him, it seems unreasonable to allow a sense to saying that he could have acted otherwise if he had chosen.

All this is indeed a far cry from the popular conception of freedom as self-determination. That theory, we will recall, made two additional points: (1) that in cases where there is no option of choosing there is no real self-determination; and (2) in such cases there is no real question of "moral" action at all because the person is not acting either morally or immorally. How, then, would

Spinoza deal with these two objections? Spinoza, I think, would not consider (2) a serious objection for the following reason: As soon as we do come to understand the cause of a particular kind of behavior, we do in fact cease to regard persons as "morally" responsible for the type of behavior now causally explained. That is, we cease to apply moral epithets to them as responsible agents. Spinoza's free man, therefore, will feel morally (and emotionally) neutral towards those particular things around him, for he understands why they are what they are and why they could not be otherwise.[35] As for objection (1) let us remember that Spinoza's conception of self-determination does not presuppose choice. Nor is his theory of conatus relative to choice.[36] It is instead a necessary feature of all particular things in nature. Spinoza's theory of self-preservation is simply a necessary and natural consequence of his metaphysical determinism. So understood, to deny the notion of conatus would be tantamount to denying the Spinozistic view of nature as a completely intelligible and self-contained causal system.

As a philosopher, Spinoza is aware of our actual present state of relative ignorance, and he can envisage the possibility of an indefinite advance in our understanding of the causes of human behavior. But equally we know a priori what ignorance is and what complete know-

ledge would be (for we could not otherwise distinguish, as we do, between adequate and inadequate knowledge), and we too can envisage the possibility of our knowledge becoming progressively less inadequate. "For, in so far as we are intelligent beings," writes Spinoza in the Appendix of EIV, 32, "we cannot desire anything save that which is necessary, nor yield absolute acquiescence to anything, save to that which is true." Indeed, both the wisdom and the life of the homo liber are characterized by a real and immediate desire to live "in harmony with the order of nature as a whole" (Ibid.). And it is this desire which distinguishes them, as true philosophers, from ordinary people.

Chapter Three: Part Four

Conventional and Exemplary Ethics[37]

Spinoza distinguishes between what may be called "conventional ethics" (i.e., the ethics of ordinary people) and "exemplary ethics" (i.e., the ethics of genuine philosophers). Since, according to Spinoza, "theologians" share the same "opinions" as ordinary people—principally the belief in final causes (causas finales)—theological and conventional ethics ultimately coincide. According to Spinoza, the fundamental flaw of conventional ethics is that it is based on an inadequate conception of the nature of things. This conception is shared by ordinary people, theologians, and even some philosophers. In fact in a letter to Hugo Boxel Spinoza distinguishes between those philosophers who share the ethical beliefs of theologians and ordinary people from those philosophers in the strict sense. The former would include Plato, Aristotle, Socrates and the Schoolmen; the latter the Stoics, the Atomists, and Descartes (cf. Ep. LX, II, 387-88). In the opening pages of the Appendix of EI Spinoza explains the genesis of these "opinions" or "prejudices": "All such opinions spring from the notion commonly entertained, that all things in nature act as men themselves act, namely, with an end in view." "It is accepted as certain," Spinoza continues, "that God himself directs all things to a definite goal (for it is said that God made all things for man, and

man that he might worship him)." This is the belief in causas finales. These "prejudices" about good and bad, right and wrong, praise and blame, and all their equivalents, are direct consequences of the popular (primarily the Biblical) view that God made all things for man, and that God, like man, acts for an end (Ibid.). Consequently, "everything which conduces to health and the worship of God they have called good," and "everything which hinders these objects they have styled bad" (EI, Appendix, 79). This, Spinoza adds, is the "conventional" meaning of good and bad and their equivalents: For "inasmuch as those who do not understand the nature of things do not verify phenomena in any way, but merely imagine them after a fashion, and mistake their imagination for understanding, such persons firmly believe that there is an order in things, being really ignorant both of things and their own nature" (Ibid.). Their concepts of good and bad, and the like, are therefore merely "modes of imagining" (modos imaginandi), even though they are considered by the "ignorant" as the principal attributes of things. This is indeed reminiscent of a passage in EIII, 39, sch. There Spinoza says that "we in no case desire a thing because we deem it good, but, contrariwise, we deem a thing good because we desire it: consequently we deem evil that which we shrink from; everyone, therefore, according to his particular

emotions, judges or estimates what is good, what is bad, ..."

These claims regarding the inadequacy and undesirability of "conventional ethics" provide the basis for Spinoza's account of the character and the manner of living of the "philosopher." In his quasi-autobiographical Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione Spinoza reveals that "experience" taught him that the "ordinary sorroundings of life which are esteemed by men to be the highest good"—wealth, fame, and sensual pleasures—are not really such (TdIE, II, 3). The problem here is not that these goods are only "apparent" ones (or not really goods at all), but rather that they have been treated by some as ends. According to Spinoza, these goods should be sought in moderation and as a "means" to some other end (presumably to what is really good in itself). For only in this sense can these goods be regarded as "good." "If they be sought as means," Spinoza declares, "they will be under restraint, and, far from being hindrances, will further not a little the end for which they are sought" (TdIE, II, 6).

In the opening pages of Part IV of Ethics Spinoza offers an account of what good and bad ordinarily mean. These terms, he says, are actually nothing but "modes of thinking, or notions which we form from the comparison of things one with another" (EIV, Preface, 189). These "com-

mon notions" (notiones communes) or "universal ideas" (cf. Chapter One, Part Two of this study) have no correlates in nature other than the more or less similar particulars of which they are predicated. All comparisons of good and bad and their equivalents, presuppose universal ideas. Also, in order to determine that one man is better than another, or worse than another, we must first have a universal idea of man as a standard or exemplar. This in turn presupposes the conception of an end or goal which the "better" approximates more closely than the "worse." The point here is that determinations or judgements of the form, "x is better" or "x is worse," are open-ended, and therefore must be closed. They must be closed by reference to a type: x is a better man or better music. In other words, the question, "Is x good?" is insufficient. We must also ask, "A good what?" ("A good man?" "A good piece of music?") And this of course requires the notiones communes "man" and "music," which, in turn, presupposes a conception of the end or goal of a man or piece of music. Thus Spinoza's point here is two-fold. First, to know what a good x is we must first know what x is or what type of thing x is. And secondly, to say, as Spinoza says, that good and bad are merely "modes of thinking," or "common notions," or "universal ideas" formed by the imagination, implies that they are not real predicates (of things).

This means then that the same thing may be good, bad, better, or worse, or neither, depending on how it is related to and how it affects the individual. "For instance," Spinoza writes, "music is good for him that is melancholy, bad for him that mourns; for him that is deaf, it is neither good nor bad" (EIV, Preface, 189). For Spinoza, then, to say "x is good" and "x is not good" is not contradictory, since x may be good and not good to A at different times, or good to A but not good to B or C at the same time; or x may be neither good nor not-good to A, B, or C at a given time. Thus Spinozistic judgements about good and bad (and their inflections) carry out a dual function. On the one hand, they function on a subjective level inasmuch as they are based on the emotional effect the thing has on us. And, on the other hand, they are relative both to us and to one another.[38] For example, I judge that x is better than y both because of how x and y affect me and how I compare x and y in relation to a given standard. If x neither affects me nor is compared with y, then x is neither good nor bad.

In addition to what we have called "conventional" and "exemplary" ethics, there is what may be called "conditional ethics." It is not "exemplary" because it is not based on knowledge, and it is not "conventional" because it is not shared by ordinary people. It is deliberately "presumed" by someone who aspires to become a genuine

philosopher, namely, to discover the true exemplary ethics. For during the interim when one is seeking to discover the knowledge of the true and highest good, i.e., exemplary ethics, one must continue to live among ordinary people. One thus needs to "presume" or "lay down" certain "conditions" or "rules of life" as provisionally good (cf. TdIE, II, 7).[39] In contradistinction both to conventional and exemplary ethics, there is no question of whether conditional ethics is true or false. Strictly speaking, the only relevant question is whether it is effective or useful as a means for achieving the end, that is, the true or exemplary ethics.

It remains for us to indicate the exemplary principles of Spinoza's genuine philosopher. To do this, however, we need to recall some of his ethical definitions in Parts III and IV of the Ethics. The first definition of an ethical term, as we have seen, occurs in EIII, 39, sch. It states what Spinoza himself means by good and bad. "By good I here mean every kind of pleasure, and all that conduces thereto, especially that which satisfies our longings, whatsoever they may be," and "by evil...every kind of pain, especially that which frustrates our longings." The definition is not hedonistic in the sense that good means pleasure or only pleasurable things are good, since Spinoza claims that good also means whatever satisfies our

longings. It is rather a naturalistic definition in the sense that good is defined in terms of empirical objects, namely, pleasure and desire. This definition "appears" to differ from Spinoza's later definition of good and bad in EIV, dfns. 1 and 2. There good and bad are defined in terms of knowledge and utility and not pleasure and pain. "By good I mean that which we certainly know to be useful to us" and "by evil...that which we certainly know to be a hindrance to us in the attainment of any good." But, for Spinoza, both definitions ultimately coincide, because what we do desire is what we know causes us pleasure;[40] and, conversely, what we do avoid is what we know "frustrates" our desires or causes us pain. Thus Spinoza claims that the "knowledge of good and evil" is simply the "emotions of pleasure and pain, in so far as we are conscious thereof" (EIV, 8). In other words, the consciousness of pleasure is the source of our knowledge that something is good because pleasure necessarily results from an increase in activity and pain from a decrease in activity (cf. EIV, 8, dem.). In this sense, ethical knowledge is based on the emotions. However the emotions themselves are not "cognitive" in the sense that they are "mental acts" or states by which ethical objects are known; for there are no such objects. Thus the emotions can provide us ethical knowledge because of the causal relationship between the emotions and the varying

state of activity or passivity of the individual. Also, to the extent that the increase in the activity of the individual is ultimately an increase in his power of understanding, we "certainly know" that something is good or bad when we know that it really increases or diminishes our understanding (cf. EIV, 27). If, therefore, we can know what exactly increases our activity, that is, causes pleasure, we can know what is really good (cf. EIV, 35, dem.). Thus ethical knowledge about good and bad involves two phases: the immediate awareness of pleasure and pain and an inference to their cause. From this it follows that someone who did not experience pleasure and pain could not have ethical knowledge; for a purely rational or intuitive[41] being would have only adequate ideas, and emotions are inadequate ideas; for such a being judgements about good and bad would be meaningless because he would not even have a "notion" of good and bad (compare EIV, 64, cor. and EIV, 68).

For Spinoza, then, ethical judgements are either true or false and can be known to be true or false. Indeed, they are false when they are based only on "knowledge of the first kind," that is, emotion or imagination, which alone can be mistaken (EII, 41); mistakes occur when we are unclear about what we really desire or what will cause us pleasure. Ethical judgements are "emended" by improving our knowledge of these things. This entails ac-

quiring knowledge of what we desire and what causes us pleasure, that is, self-knowledge. Hence Spinoza is neither an ethical non-cognitivist nor an ethical sceptic.

According to Spinoza, reason or _ratio_ is the key to self-knowledge, since "that which we, in accordance with reason, deem good or bad, necessarily is good or bad" (EIV, 35, dem.). Also, ethical judgements based on reason must be true because reason is never mistaken (cf. EII, 41). What is more, since reason is the same in all men, all rational individuals make the same ethical judgements. For, from what has been said, it is true or false that x is good if it is true or false that A experiences pleasure and x is the cause of the pleasure; or conversely, it is true or false that x is good if it is true or false that A knows x is useful. So understood, these judgements would be both true and applicable to anyone else in A's place. The operative thesis in all this is that, in spite of individual differences, we all share a common end or objective. That is, reason tells each individual to seek to preserve his own being, but it says this to each and every individual. And to the extent that reason is common to all men and always makes the same judgement to all, there is only one good for all men.[42] This means, then, that the goods based on reason can be enjoyed in common because the possession of them

by, say, me or you, does not exclude their possession by all men (EIV, 37, cor. 1).[43] As regards the goods based on emotion, however, they cannot be possessed without depriving others of them (EIV, 37, sch. 1).[44] The crux of ethical knowledge is thus knowledge of what we really desire, that is, self-preservation (EIII, 6). Self-preservation (suum esse conservandi) is desired as an end in itself, since we do not desire to live for the sake of anything else (EIV, 25). And preserving our being means preserving ourselves as distinct individuals. This, apparently, is the gist of Spinoza's remark that dying does not imply becoming a corpse: "But I would here remark that I consider that a body undergoes death, when the proportion of motion and rest which obtained mutually among its several parts is changed. For I do not venture to deny that a human body, while keeping the circulation of blood and other properties, wherein the life of a body is thought to consist, may none the less be changed into another nature totally different from its own" (EIV, 39, sch.). Notice that, for Spinoza, the "proportion" of motion and rest explains or defines the identity of the individual's body, which in turn is a necessary condition for the identity of the individual. Spinoza is able to conclude, therefore, that whatever in fact maintains this proportion is really good and whatever destroys it is really bad (EIV, 39). Or, expressed differently, what is really good is simply what

really does preserve the being or self-identity of the individual, and what really is bad is what frustrates or destroys this.

We are finally in a position to indicate the exemplary principles of the rational guidance of life for a man conceived as a model of human nature. The role of Spinoza's "exemplar" is in fact essentially the conception of success at attaining the ultimate end which we all desire, namely, the preservation of our being and/or individuality. Moreover, the function of ratio is to discover the means for attaining this end.[45] Reason, therefore, is the key to self-preservation.[46] And, as we have seen, self-preservation means activity and/or power, which is identical with virtue (EIV, dfn. 6). And since activity/power is also identical with freedom, virtue and freedom ultimately coincide. Reason, therefore, is the key to freedom or self-liberation: the rational man is the powerful man, the virtuous man, the free man (cf. EIV, 67, 68, 73, sch.). Reason, power, virtue, and freedom all ultimately coincide.

Chapter Three: Part Five

Concluding Observations

The "foundation of virtue" (fundamentum virtuatis) is for Spinoza the desire for self-preservation. This desire is vital to all things. His ethical doctrine is therefore based on his general theory of the nature of things. Since the nature of all things is their desire to preserve themselves, the "good" can only be understood as "success in the endeavour (conatus) for self-preservation." Metaphysical egoism is therefore the basis of ethical egoism. And this is the basis of Spinoza's "ethical dimension." It follows from this that it is meaningless to exhort others to do something for a reason other than their desire for self-preservation or contrary to this desire. Also, since one's obligations are identical with rational dictates or prescriptions, it is never rational for anyone to do something only because it is good for someone else or because it is contrary to one's own good. This means that one is obligated to do something different from or contrary to one's own apparent good only when this coincides with one's own real good. For example, Peter is never obligated to do x only because x is really good for Paul or if x is not really good for Peter; and Peter is obligated to do x only when x is really, but perhaps not apparently, good for Peter. That something can be good for one individual but not good for another follows from

Spinoza's denial that good is a real characteristic of things together with the doctrine that good is subjective and relative. The drift of all this is that, for Spinoza, there are no purely altruistic or self-sacrificing obligations. Many commentators have arrived at this same conclusion. "Deliberate self-sacrifice is literally impossible," writes C.D. Broad, "and, since it is impossible, it can be neither right nor a duty."[47] "Egoism is necessary," Bennett agrees, "so it is no use advocating any mode of life which is not egoistic; and all that is left is to set oneself and perhaps others to seek what is really useful, what leads to greater perfection."[48] The general line of thought therefore is clear enough. One is never under an obligation, nor is it ever rational, to sacrifice one's life for someone or something else. The same holds true for happiness (beatitudo). That one is never obligated to sacrifice one's happiness for someone or something else follows from the fact that happiness is a necessary consequence of success in preserving one's being; and, alternately, that loss of happiness implies failure to preserve one's being. This is borne out by the fact that all obligations derive solely from the primary obligation to preserve one's being. It follows therefore that one is obligated to others only when this coincides with one's obligation to oneself. As Broad puts it, Spinoza's "egoism" implies that each per-

son regards others solely as "a means to his own intellectual development."[49]

Spinoza's ethical dimension shows itself, upon examination, to be therefore extremely uncompromising and myopic.[50] For his ethics, which he defines and explains in terms of the desire for self-preservation, fails to accommodate precisely those motives and actions which we regard as quintessentially ethical and as constituting the very best of which we are capable, namely, sacrificing one's life and happiness for someone else's. By defining the "ethical" as "rational self-interest"—or more precisely, by reducing virtue to egoism[51]—Spinoza has in effect separated the good from the noble. This separation parallels, and is perhaps ultimately based on, his separation of the good from being. For, given Spinoza's emphasis on the primacy of self-preservation, the belief that sometimes one ought to place the life and happiness of others above one's own is not only unjustifiable by reason but antithetical to reason. It is therefore basically an illusion.

Whether one accepts this conclusion depends ultimately on how one evaluates Spinoza's arguments, both ethical and non-ethical. For the weight of his proofs for rational egoism must be convincing enough to outweigh the paradoxes they generate for our basic ethical beliefs. And, to be sure, our "ordinary" thinking about morality

is full of beliefs that we almost never question. We believe, for example, that we have an obligation to consider the welfare of other people when we decide what actions to perform or what rules to obey; we believe that we must refrain from acting in ways injurious to others, and that we must respect their rights and interests as well as our own. We also believe that people are in fact capable of being motivated by such considerations, that is, that people are not entirely selfish and that they do sometimes act in the interests of others. But Spinoza, as we have seen, puts forward two views attacking these beliefs, the first of which is psychological egoism, the second, ethical egoism. Psychological egoism (in all its forms and manifestations) is the view that all men are selfish in everything that they do, i.e., that the only rationale from which anyone ever acts is self-interest; which, for Spinoza, is ultimately the desire for self-preservation. On this view, even when men are acting in ways apparently calculated to benefit others, they are actually (really) motivated by the belief that acting in this way is to their own advantage—and if they did not believe this, they would not be doing that action. Ethical egoism, unlike psychological egoism, is a normative view about how men ought to act. It is the view that, regardless of how men do in fact behave, they have no obligation to do

anything except what is in their own interests. And according to the ethical egoist, a person is always justified in doing whatever is in his own interest(s), regardless of the effect on others.

Clearly, if Spinoza is right, that is, if either of these views is tenable, then the majority of mankind is grossly mistaken about what is, or ought to be, the case, where morals are concerned. It remains, then, to evaluate, however briefly, the tenability (or untenability) of both views.

As regards psychological egoism, while it is true that a great many human actions are motivated entirely or in part by self-interest, it does not follow that all conduct is so motivated, unless, of course, by a deliberate distortion of the "facts" of our day-to-day living. Obviously, it is not difficult to think of cases of unselfish conduct. For example, A gives up his desire to stay in bed, despite his being exhausted from lack of sleep, in order to help a friend, B, repair her stalled car. This is a perfectly clear case of unselfish behavior, for it seems obvious that what A wants more than anything else is to stay in bed and that by going to help B he is acting against his strongest desire. What could the psychological egoist say to this? There are at least two general arguments by which the egoist (or the Spinozist) might try to show that all actions, including those such as the one

just outlined, are in fact motivated by self-interest. (1) Spinoza might contend that if we describe one person's action as selfish, and another person's action as unselfish, we are overlooking the basic fact that in both cases, assuming that the action is done freely or voluntarily, the agent is simply doing what he most wants to do. So, if A sacrifices his sleep to help B, that only shows that he wanted to help his friend more than he wanted to stay in bed. Why, then, Spinoza might ask, should A be praised for his unselfishness when he is only doing what he most wants to do? Since A, therefore, is only doing what he wants to do, he cannot (according to this argument) be said to be acting unselfishly or altruistically.

What, then, are we to make of this argument? First of all, the argument rests on the premise that people never voluntarily do anything except what they want to do. But this, of course, is patently false. There are at least two kinds of actions that are exceptions to this sort of generalization. One is the type of actions which we may not want to do (or have an aversion to doing), but which we do anyway as a means to an end which we want to achieve: going to the dentist in order to stop a toothache, or going to work everyday to be able to pay our bills at the end of the month. These cases may be regarded as consistent with the point of psychological egoism, how-

ever, since the ends mentioned are desired by the agent. But the other type of actions are those which we do, not because we want to, nor even because there is an end which we want to achieve, but because we feel ourselves under an obligation to do them. For example, I may do x (an action) because I promised to do it, and thus I feel obligated, even though I do not want to do it. Now the egoist might argue that in such cases we do x because, in the end, we want to keep our promises; so, even here, we are doing what we want. But even this line of reasoning is objectionable: If I have promised to do x, and if I do not want to do it, then it is simply wrong to say that I want to keep my promise. In such cases we experience a dilemma precisely because we do not want to do what we feel obligated to do. And it is reasonable to think that A's action falls into this second category; that is, he might get out of bed, not because he wants to, but because he feels that his friend needs help.

But suppose we were to concede, for the sake of the egoist argument, that all voluntary action is in fact motivated by the agent's desires, or at least that A (returning to our example) is so motivated. Now even if these were granted, it would not follow that A is acting selfishly or from self-interest. For if A wants to do something that will help B, even it means forgoing his own desires, that is precisely what makes him unselfish. This

is tantamount to saying that it is the object of a desire that determines whether it (the action) is selfish or not. For the mere fact that I am acting on my desires does not imply that I am acting selfishly; that depends on what it is that I desire. In other words, if I want only my own good or happiness, and care nothing for the good or happiness of others, then I am selfish; however, if I also want others to be well-off and happy, and if I act on that desire, then my action is not selfish.

(2) There is another argument by which the psychological egoist might try to show that all actions are in fact motivated by self-interest. The argument is as follows: Since altruistic or unselfish actions (almost) always produce a sense of self-gratification in the agent, and since this sense of gratification is a pleasant state of consciousness, it follows that the end or purpose of the action is really to achieve a pleasant state of consciousness, rather than to bring about any good for others. It might be argued, then, that the action is unselfish only at a superficial level of analysis. So, to return to our example, A will feel much better with himself for having gone to help B, whereas if he had stayed in bed, he would have felt terrible about it—and that is the real point of the action.

This view seems to me mistaken. The argument rests on the premise that because someone derives pleasure or

happiness from helping others that this makes him selfish. Why should we think this the case? Isn't the altruist precisely the one who does derive satisfaction from helping others, while the selfish man does not? Moreover, suppose we ask why A (in our example) derives happiness from helping B. Clearly it is because A cares for B and wants B to be well-off and happy. If A did not have these concerns, then he would derive no pleasure in helping B; and these concerns, as I have tried to show, are the signs of unselfishness, not selfishness. Generally speaking, if we have a positive attitude towards the realization of some goal, then we may derive satisfaction from realizing that goal. But the object of our attitude is the realization of that goal; and we must want to realize that goal before we can derive any satisfaction from it. In other words, we do not desire "peace of mind" and then try to figure out how to achieve it; rather, we desire all sorts of different things and because we desire these things, we derive satisfaction from attaining them. Thus, if A desires the safety and happiness of B, he will derive happiness or satisfaction from that; but this does not mean that this happiness/satisfaction is the object of his desire, or that he is selfish on account of it.

Spinoza, I believe, would refer to such cases of unselfish behavior as merely "modes of imagining" (<u>modos</u>

imaginandi), and, as such, he would insist that they are based on mistakes about what we really desire or what will cause us pleasure (cf, EI, Appendix). As I have attempted to show, however, the fact that self-interest and self-regard are important factors in human conduct/motivation (and psychological egoism is a theory of motivation) does not mean that all conduct is so motivated. To insist, as Spinoza does, that cases of unselfish conduct do not occur, or are merely illusory, is simply a distortion of the facts, or of what is the case, where morals are concerned.

Closely related to psychological egoism is the doctrine of ethical egoism. In the spirit of ethical egoism, Spinoza would say that individuals should act in their own self-interest—that the only reason people should do something is to promote their own good—and what is really good is what really does preserve the being or self-identity of the individual. That said, there is a sense in which Spinoza might concede that it is possible for people to act altruistically, and perhaps many people do act that way, particularly those who act from emotion or imagination, i.e., "perception of the first kind," which alone can be mistaken (cf. EII, 41)—but there is no reason, he would add, why they should do so. For, according to Spinoza, a person is under no obligation to do anything except what is in his own interests, and all other

obligations derive solely from the primary obligation to oneself, that is, one's self-preservation.

Upon reflection, this is really quite a radical doctrine. For instance, suppose that A and B are business competitors, and that it is in A's interest to compete successfully with B, even perhaps to do so well that B is forced into bankruptcy; and the same with B. On this view, the fact that either of the two might be forced into bankruptcy (by the other) provides no reason whatever why they should not compete "successfully"; for this only concerns their own welfare, not the other's, and according to the ethical egoist the only person they need think of is themselves.

Spinoza might deny at this point that ethical egoism has any such ignoble consequences. He might argue that it is in the interest of each just to run a successful and profitable business without knocking the other out at all, or that it is in the interest of each to live in a society in which people's rights and interests are respected. He might conclude, therefore, that the egoist would not be such a bad person, that is, that he would be as respectful and considerate as anyone else, because he would see that it is to his own advantage to be respectful and considerate.

This is a persuasive line of reasoning, but it seems to me mistaken. Clearly it is to everyone's advan-

tage (including the egoist's) to preserve and secure a stable society where people's interests are generally protected. However, there is no reason for the egoist to think that merely because he will not obey the rules of society, that society, as we know it, will collapse. Assuming that the vast majority of people are not egoists, there is no reason to think that they will be converted by the egoist's example. What this argument shows is not that the egoist himself must act benevolently, but that he must encourage others to do so. In other words, the ethical egoist cannot advocate that egoism be universally accepted by everyone; he himself will be an egoist, but he will want others to be altruists. That is to say, he wants a society in which his own interests are maximized, and if others adopted the egoistic position of pursuing their own interests to the exclusion of his interest, just as he pursues his interests to the exclusion of theirs, then such a society would be chaotic and impossible.

If this argument is correct, then Spinoza might be committed to giving inconsistent advice when he says in EIV, 45, cor. 2, sch.: "[That] this way of life, then, agrees best with our principles, and also with general practice; therefore, if there be any question of another plan, the plan we have mentioned is the best, and in every way to be commended." I say "might" here because there is

a sense in which Spinoza can (reasonably) maintain the doctrine of ethical egoism as a consistent view about how we ought to live. We need only to interpret the egoist's position in the following way: We should say that what Spinoza has in mind is a certain kind of world which he would prefer over all others; obviously it would be a world in which his own interests were maximized, regardless of the effects on other people. Now regardless of however morally reprehensible we might find it, there is nothing inconsistent in the egoist's adopting this as his ideal and acting in a way calculated to bring it about. But if someone did adopt this as his ideal, then he would not advocate universal egoism; rather, as I have attempted to show, he would want others to be altruists. This line of thought, I believe, would not be inconsistent: it would be perfectly consistent with the egoist's goal of creating a world in which his own interests, i.e., his self-preservation and all that is conducive to it, are maximized.[52]

Although the theory of ethical egoism can be maintained consistently, there is, I believe, something more that can be said against it. The egoist's/Spinoza's challenge to our ordinary moral convictions amounts to a demand for an explanation of why we should adopt certain codes of action, namely codes in which the good of others

is given importance. We can respond to this demand, albeit in an indirect manner. Put simply, the reason we ought not to do actions that would hurt others is: Others would be hurt. The reason we ought to do actions that would benefit others is: Others would be benefited. The upshot of this is that the welfare of other people is something that most of us value for its own sake, and not merely for the sake of something else, such as our own self-preservation or self-development. Thus, when further reasons are demanded for valuing the welfare of other people, we find ourselves hardpressed to point to anything further to satisfy this demand. To put the point another way, it is not that we have no reason for pursuing these (altruistic) actions, but that our reason is that these actions are for the good of others.

So if we are asked, "Why shouldn't A compete successfully with B, even if this means doing so well that B is driven to bankruptcy?" one answer would be, "Because if A does so, B will lose his livelihood." (Of course, I am operating on the assumption that both A and B cannot cooperate with one another to their mutual advantage). If we are pressed further and asked, "But why shouldn't we do actions that will hurt others?" we may not know what to say—but this is because the questioner has included in this question the answer we would like to give: "Why shouldn't we do actions that will harm others? Because

doing those actions would harm others."

So a nonegoist will accept "It would harm another person" as a reason not to do an action simply because he cares about what happens to that other person. The egoist, no doubt, will not be happy with this. However, when the egoist says that he does not accept that as a reason, he is saying something quite extraordinary (and disquieting). And if he uses such reasoning, the egoist can hardly claim (I believe) to be taking the moral point of view. This is not to say that egoistic theories are immoral, but that they are nonmoral.[53] For, though they take the promotion of good seriously, they do not, it would appear, take other people seriously enough.

In light of the foregoing remarks, those who believe that psychological and ethical egoism—not to mention naturalism and determinism—undermine the role of ethics by denying the basic facts of our ethical consciousness, may surmise that Spinoza's real intention—manifest once the implications of his arguments are drawn out—is to replace ethics by something quite different. From this point of view, Spinoza's "model" of human nature (naturae humanae exemplar), namely, "exemplary ethics," presents merely the guise of virtue and goodness, just as Spinozistic "high-mindedness" (generositas) presents merely the shadow of the Aristotelian megalopsychia and Biblical caritas.

Notes
Chapter One

1. In this paper references to the Ethics are indicated by "E" followed by a capital Roman numeral designating the appropriate part of that work. Following this, an Arabic numeral standing alone designates a proposition, "dem." stands for "demonstration," "dfn." for "definition," "ax." for "axiom," "cor." for "corollary," "lem." for "lemma," "post." for "postulate," and "sch." for "scholium." All references are to The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza, 2 vols., trans. R.H.M. Elwes (1883; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1955). References to other works by Spinoza, namely, the Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione (TdIE), the Tractatus Politicus (TP), the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (TTP), and the Epistolae (Ep.), will be to this edition according to volume and page number. In what follows, however, I shall regard the Ethics (Ethices) as the authoritative source for Spinoza's ethical, as well as his other philosophical, teachings.

2. Aristotle, Categories, chap. 5, 4a, in Aristotle: Selected Works, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle and Lloyd P. Gerson (Grinnell, Iowa: The Peripatetic Press, 1982), p. 34.

3. Ibid., chap. 5.

4. We must remember that, for Aristotle, the term "substance" has two different meanings. In one sense "substance" means a principle by which something exists as a thing, and in the other sense it signifies the thing itself. If we keep this distinction in mind, we should have little difficulty in understanding his distinction between "primary" and "secondary" substance. (1) "Primary" substance means the individual thing itself with all of its real determinations. It is, so to speak, the individual thing considered as a whole or a unit. Also, because "primary" substance is an individual thing, it cannot be shared by many (as a universal nature can). (2) By contrast, "secondary" substance signifies, not a thing which exists, but a principle by which something must exist as a thing and as a thing of a definite kind. Because secondary substance is universal, it can (unlike primary substance) be shared by and predicated of many in a class. Hence "man" (which is reducible to the category of substance) can be predicated of individual men (primary substances) [Cf. Aristotle, Categories, chap. 5].

5. René Descartes, Principles of Philosophy, pt. 1, principle 51, in The Philosophical Works of Descartes, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), I, 239.

6. Descartes' "modern" scientific conception of nature can be best understood by contrasting it with what it replaced. According to the Aristotelian view, the world of nature was a cosmos in the original sense, that is, a finite ordered whole, in which everything had its determinate place and particular function. Aristotle conceived of nature as composed of distinct types of substances (cf. note #4), falling into fixed genera, or "natural kinds," each obeying its own set laws. The laws in accordance with which each substance behaved were dependent on its particular function. This function was characterized by Aristotle as the "final cause" in his analysis of the four causes. And these causes, to be sure, played a very significant role in scientific explanation. In more modern terms, the prime manner of explaining an event for Aristotle was teleological—that is, in terms of the end or telos achieved. Consequently, the basic scientific question was "Why did X do something?" and the first place one looked for an answer was the peculiar nature or function of X. This would provide the final cause of the action in question. It was only if the action did not accord with X's function—that is, was "accidental" rather than "essential" or "natural" —that one looked for an external cause.

Descartes' conception of nature (like Kepler's, Galileo's, and Newton's) differs in almost every respect from Aristotle's. Whereas the older universe was finite, teleologically and hierarchically ordered, with each kind of substance obeying its own unique set of laws, the modern universe was infinite, mechanically ordered, and governed by a single set of universal laws that apply to all phenomena, celestial and terrestrial alike. The key to this new conception was the role given to mathematics in scientific explanation. The real world was quite simply the geometrical, quantitative world of the physicist. It consisted solely of bodies moving in space and interacting with each other according to precise, mathematically expressible laws. Not only was a teleological explanation thus rejected as "unscientific," but final causes were themselves banished from nature and placed in either the inscrutable will of God or the imagination of man.

7. René Descartes, Reply to the Second Set of Objections, Philosophical Works, II, 53.

8. René Descartes, Principles of Philosophy, pt. 1, principle 53.

9. Ibid., principles 56, 61, 64, and 65.

10. Spinoza's definitions are of the sort now commonly called "stipulative"; that is, they tell the reader how Spinoza intends to use certain words. Spinoza is not concerned (as a dictionary is concerned) to describe the conventional uses of words. His objective, as he observes in (EIII, Dfns. of the Emotions, #20), is to explain, not the meaning of words, but the nature of things.

11. This analysis of the Spinozistic critique of the Cartesian theory of substance, as well as the arguments outlined in the next paragraph, are based largely on the account of Edwin M. Curley, Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 14-20.

12. For the best recent discussions of this aspect of Descartes' thought, see Margaret Wilson, Descartes (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), esp. pp. 120-131, and 136, and Curley, "Descartes on the Creation of Eternal Truths," in Philosophical Review, 93 (1984), 569-97.

13. This stance is also taken by Curley, Spinoza's Metaphysics, pp. 36f. Another commentator who denies, albeit on somewhat different grounds, the Cartesian basis of the Spinozistic critique of substance is H.F. Hallett, Creation, Emanation, Salvation: A Spinozistic Study (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1962), esp. pp. 44-48. According to Hallett, Spinoza did not regard substance as a thing, but as an "infinite potency-in-act" (cf. p. 46).

14. In the account of individual things, or finite modes, I am again following Curley, Spinoza's Metaphysics, chap. 1.

15. René Descartes, Principles of Philosophy, Philosophical Works, I, 214.

16. H.H. Joachim and Raphäel Lévêque, among others, treat him as an idealist. Soviet commentators, on the other hand, praise Spinoza for being a materialist and an atheist. Examples of Soviet views of Spinoza may be found in George L. Kline, ed., Spinoza in Soviet Philosophy (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952).

17. A good overall account of this controversy is by R.J. Delahunty, Spinoza, The Arguments of the Philosophers (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

18. Spinoza's conception of "adequacy" and its relation

to his theory of knowledge is treated in part two of this chapter.

19. It is worthy to note that Spinoza does distinguish "finite" from "infinite" modes, the latter being modifications of substance which are manifest in every finite mode. Spinoza's two examples—"motion and rest" and "the face of the whole universe"—form the basis of his physics.

20. Spinoza describes four such levels in the TdIE and again three in the Short Treatise. Nevertheless, the inspiration is in both cases classical, Aristotle having argued for four levels, Plato for three.

21. In other words, an intuition comes to us only when we grasp the relation between the subject under examination and the "adequate idea of the absolute essence of God," for nothing else, according to Spinoza, can serve as the premise of a self-validating deduction. By "absolute essence" Spinoza means the real and independent nature of God. He distinguishes the "absolute essence of God" from the "essence of things": from the representation of something as an "object" of thought, rather than as it is in itself (cf. EI, dfn. 6).

22. A fuller account of Spinoza's determinism may be found in Stuart Hampshire, "Spinoza and the Idea of Freedom," in Studies in Spinoza, ed. S.P. Kashap (Berkeley: University of Calfornia Press, 1972), see especially pp.208f.

23. Leon Roth, Spinoza (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954), p. 84.

24. The context in which this comes up is: that we cannot understand anything of nature without at the same time increasing our knowledge of the first cause or God.

Chapter Two

1. Stuart Hampshire, Spinoza (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1951), p. 121.

2. Spinoza constructs his moral philosophy on the basis of a "natural history" of man. However, it is a special kind of natural history, derived entirely deductively, from premises believed to be necessarily true. In the Preface to Part Three of the Ethics Spinoza comments on the originality of such an attempt:

> Most writers on the emotions and on human conduct seem to be treating rather of matters outside nature than of natural phenomena following nature's general laws. They appear to conceive man to be situated in nature as a kingdom within a kingdom....Such persons will, doubtless, think it strange that I should attempt to treat of human vice and folly geometrically, and should wish to set forth with rigid reasoning those matters which they cry out against as repugnant to reason, frivolous, absurd, and dreadful... [However] the passions of hatred, anger, envy, and so on, considered in themselves, follow from this same necessity and efficacy of nature; they answer to certain definite causes, through which they are understood, and possess certain properties as worthy of being known as the properties of anything else...(EIII, Preface).

If Spinoza's metaphysics is true, it follows that a "geometry of the emotions" is possible, and that no other study of them will lead us to self-knowledge. Spinoza therefore proposes to treat of the emotions exactly as he had treated of God, regarding "human actions and desires in exactly the same manner, as though I were concerned with lines, planes, and solids" (Ibid.).

3. The conatus of man is, in the final analysis, grounded in reason—and this determines the particular form of the conatus as distinct from the characteristic impulse or drive of any other entity. The conatus, having to do with the preservation of the self, is involved ultimately with the power of the self, which in the case of man, is reason. Spinoza acknowledges that there are many who do not understand this, being concerned mainly with preservation and continuance on the lower levels of self-development, but the Spinozist must recognize this fact of human nature insofar as it must embody man's truest good and/or advantage. If the conatus of man were not directed towards self-preservation, but, for example, gratification of sensual desires, the good for man or his truest profit might not be the development of his reason; but then, according to Spinoza, we would not be speaking about man as he actually is.

4. For Spinoza the identity of any particular thing in nature depends on its power of self-preservation. The "actual essence" of any particular thing simply is this drive to self-maintenance which, in spite of external

causes, makes it the particular thing that it is. Hence, the greater the power of self-preservation of the particular thing in the face of external causes, the greater reality it has, and the more clearly it can be distinguished as having a definite nature and/or individuality. Within Spinoza's definitions, therefore, it is necessarily true that every finite thing endeavours to preserve itself and increase its power of self-preservation, because this endeavour is involved in the definition of what it is to be a distinct and identifiable thing (cf. EIII, 7, dem.). Consider animals for example: unlike inanimate things they avoid injury, resist it when it is threatened, and even restore themselves when it is inflicted—unless of course the injury is so grave as to destroy conatus altogether. For this reason we attribute to animals a self-identity and self-dependence that we rarely accord to inanimate things.

5. Spinoza's doctrine that "the object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body" (cf. EII, 12) is a culmination of a line of argument that begins in EII, 11. Spinoza is in effect saying that the mind and body are expressions, in different attributes, of one and the same state of substance. Compare the preceding to Spinoza's example of "a circle existing in nature" (EII, 7, sch.). By a "circle existing in nature" Spinoza does not mean the mathematical concept of a circle; that would be what he calls elsewhere an "entity of reason" (ens rationis)—basically, a concept that we use in our explanation of what exists. Rather, he means some physical object which is circular in shape. In the context of the present passage, Spinoza must mean that the idea of the circle is the one that corresponds to the physical circle, in the sense that it is the expression, in the attribute of thought, of that of which the physical circle is the expression, in the attribute of extension.

6. As regards the "emendation of the passions," pleasure par excellence consists precisely in the consciousness of the transition from passion to action, rather than in the "striving" or transition itself (though this, too, may be pleasurable). Much the same point is made by Spinoza in EV, 15 with regard to the "intellectual love of God" (amor intellectualis Dei). There he says that "he who clearly and distinctly understands himself and his emotions loves God, and so much the more in proportion as he more understands himself and his emotions." And in the proof that follows this proposition he further notes: "He who clearly and distinctly understands himself and his emotions feels pleasure, and this pleasure is accompanied by the idea of

God." So, for Spinoza, pleasure ultimately consists in the possession of knowledge (about one's self and emotions), rather than in the means thereto.

7. Spinoza's definition of love may well seem to be thin and inadequate. But he would not claim, I believe, that it covers, say, all the complexities of human love; he would say, presumably, that it is the emotion of which human love is a highly complex form (On some of the different kinds of love, see EIII, 56, sch., near end).

8. The term "certainly" here refers to "knowledge of the second kind," or reason, which alone must be true because reason is never false (cf. EII, 41).

9. Again, Spinoza is saying that to know that X is good is not to have some kind of intellectual vision of "the good"; rather, to know that X is good is to feel pleasure. However, it should be emphasized that for Spinoza pleasure is more than a feeling; it is an indication that our power of action is increased or diminished. One might expect from Spinoza a distinction between thinking and feeling; but he could make no fast distinction between them because, given his general principles, every conscious state, including the "enjoyment" of an emotion, involves having an idea. And, of course, the more the idea proceeds from the mind itself as it thinks logically, the more "active" the emotion will be.

10. Cf. the definitions of good and bad/evil on pp. 44-45 of this chapter.

11. It is not easy to understand precisely what Spinoza intended by this. However, we might be able to gain some understanding from looking at his definition of eternity. "By eternity," Spinoza writes in EI, dfn. 8, "I mean existence itself, in so far as it is conceived necessarily to follow solely from the definition of that which is eternal." Spinoza then explains that "existence of this kind is conceived as an eternal truth, like the essence of a thing." We can say, then, that the human mind is "eternal" insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the nature of substance or God. Since relations in nature are akin to logical relations, we can regard the infinite system of nature as a logical and timeless system, and in that system each human mind, reflecting and expressing the idea of a mode of extension, is a necessary moment. In the infinite system we have an inalienable place. In this sense every human mind is "eternal." And further, inasmuch as a given mind rises to the third level of knowledge and

regards things as sub specie aeternitas, it is conscious of its eternity.

12. Spinoza's explanation of the three kinds of knowledge, as we have it in the Ethics, is worth quoting in full:

> ...we perceive and form our general notions: (1) From particular things represented to our intellect fragmentarily, confusedly, and without order through our senses (II.xxxix. Coroll.); I have settled to call such perceptions by the name of knowledge from the mere suggestions of experience. (2) From symbols, e.g., from the fact of having read or heard certain words we remember things and form certain ideas concerning them, similar to those through which we imagine things (II.xviii,note). I shall call both these ways of regarding things knowledge of the first kind, opinion, or imagination. (3) From the fact we have notions common to all men, and adequate ideas of the properties of things (II.xxxviii.Coroll.xxxix. and Coroll. xl.); this I call reason andknowledge of the second kind. Besides these two kinds of knowledge, there is, as I will hereafter show, a third kind of knowledge, which we will call intuition. This kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of the absolute essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things (EII, 40, sch. 2).

For an analysis of the above see Chap. One, Pt. Two of the present study.

13. This begins a series of propositions (EV, 25-33) which show the importance that the third level of knowledge has for Spinoza's moral philosophy.

14. Ethical perfection is for Spinoza the most essential and total achievement of human endeavour. For Spinoza, as for the classical Greek philosophers, all men strive towards perfection, which is identical with "blessedness," or, in the more secular language of the Greeks, identical with happiness. To give an adequate account of men, and their behavior and relations with other men, it will always be necessary to refer to their inevitable, albeit indirect, striving after perfection.

Chapter Three

1. Cf., for example, Marjorie Grene's bibliography of works published between 1901 and 1972 in Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 389-90. One important exception, however, is Jonathan Bennett's latest commentary, A Study of Spinoza's Ethics (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1984), which contains substantial sections devoted to Spinoza's psychology and ethics (cf. especially Chapter 1, ##2-3 and Chapters 11-15).

2. Spinoza's extensive discussion of the emotions in Parts III and IV has also been overlooked by most commentators. Although Spinoza himself conceived of ethics and psychology as forming one compound subject/subject-matter, nowadays they are usually treated separately. This is due partly to a different understanding of what ethics is. In recent years emphasis has been placed on the analysis of ethical terms and arguments (i.e., "metaethics"), about which Spinoza says little.

3. Bennett agrees with Roth's claim that, whereas Descartes was primarily interested in "the True," Spinoza was primarily concerned with "the Good." Bennett writes: "But Spinoza seems to value knowledge and understanding less for themselves than for their effects. In the Ethics as in the Emendation the centre of the target is not knowledge but happiness" (Ibid., 12-13).

4. Bennett regards this issue as irrelevant and unimportant. "It is a further question whether Spinoza is entitled to regard the dictates of reason as moral principles. I think he is, because I count as morality any set of universal principles offered as something to live one's life by. Those who have a stricter concept of morality than that may deny that Spinoza has a morality at all; but that difference has no effect on any of the details, and I shall not discuss it" (Op. cit., 307-08). In Chap. 1, #2, entitled "Why is it called 'Ethics'?," Bennett's own answer is that Spinoza provides us "three elements that belong to 'ethics' in some normal sense of that term," namely, "the metaphysics of morals" (e.g., whether goodness and badness are "properties" that "states of affairs inherently possess"), an account of "when the plain man judges things to be good or bad," and a "substantive morality" (i.e., "his own sort of value judgements")(Ibid., 9-11).—Two other recent works should be noted: William K. Frankena, "Spinoza on the Knowledge of Good and Evil," Philosophia, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 1977), 15-44, and Stuart Hampshire, Two Theories of Morality (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). Neither

of these addresses the main issue of the present study, although Frankena's earlier essay, "Spinoza's 'New Morality': Notes on Book IV," in Spinoza: Essays in Interpretation, ed. M. Mandelbaum and E. Freeman (LaSalle, 1971), op. cit., 85-100, and E.M. Curley, "Spinoza's Moral Philosophy," in Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays (Notre Dame, 1973), 354-376, are pertinent.

5. Cf. Lexicon Spinozanum, 2 vols., ed. E.G. Boscherini (The Hague, 1970). The term "moral philosophy" (morali philosophiae) occurs once, in the TdIE. There Spinoza is examining the various means for achieving the "true good" (verum bonum) and the "highest good" (summum bonum). He mentions several disciplines—moral philosophy, the education of children, medicine, and the doctrine of the proper method for the intellect—which are useful for this endeavour. However it is not clear whether morali philosophiae and ethica are the same, and if not, how they differ. Since Spinoza himself makes no important distinction between ethics and morality, I shall treat the term "ethical" as synonymous with "moral."

6. Since the question of the exact relation between ethics and politics lies beyond our present study, we shall not discuss the doctrines of natural right and justice, which Spinoza clearly regards as political. Leo Strauss contends that Spinoza went beyond Hobbes by separating ethics from politics in that he (Spinoza) sought a non-moral basis for his political teaching. Cf. The Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes (Chicago, 1963), 28-29.

7. Almost all of Spinoza's ethical remarks in the Epistolae are found in his correspondence with Blyenberg (Ep. XXXI-XXXVIII).

8. "As everyone knows" likely refers to the Cartesians, who base morality on physics, which in turn is based on metaphysics. It cannot refer to scholastics or theologians, since the latter base ethics on divine revelation and the will of God.

9. Spinoza's physics is introduced in Part III of the Ethics (which deals with "the nature and origin of the mind") as a kind of digression to the main argument (cf. EII, 13ff.). The physics (or "science of bodies") begins with a new set of axioms, lemmas, and definitions, which implies that it is not simply a direct deductive consequence from metaphysical truths. Cf. David Lachterman, "The Physics of Spinoza's Ethics," in Spinoza: New Perspectives, ed. R.W. Shanan and J.I. Biro (Norman, 1978), 71-112.

10. According to Frankena, the relationship between the ethical and other doctrines of the Ethics (i.e., metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology, or "MEP") is not strictly deductive. For he regards Spinoza's ethical doctrines as being only "reasonable" ones, given the truth of the MEP. Cf. "Spinoza's 'New Morality'" in Spinoza: Essays, op. cit., 87.

11. Both definitions ultimately coincide for Spinoza (as I will argue in Chap. Three, Pt. Four, of the present study), because what we do desire is what we know causes us pleasure; and what we do avoid is what we know causes us pain.

12. EIV, 14-17 and 27 are also about our knowledge of good and bad.

13. However it is not the first ethical judgement he tries to demonstrate; this is a judgement about virtue (EIV, 20).

14. The definition of God in EI, dfn. 6 neither asserts nor implies that God is the highest object of the understanding. Strictly speaking, therefore, this judgement is an unproved premise (at least in EIV, 28, dem.).

15. EIV, 18, sch. contains the first judgements about the "foundation of virtue" (fundamentum virtutatis).

16. The first, albeit unofficial, definition of good and bad plays no role in the initial introduction of an ethical proposition into the main argument. Since it is stated in a scholium (EIII, 39, sch.) and is not in fact used in the proof of the first ethical proposition about good and bad (EIV, 28).

17. The opening sentence of the Preface to Part V implies that the main division of the Ethics is into Parts I-IV and Part V.

18. A fuller account of Spinoza's naturalism may be found in Paul Eisenberg, "Is Spinoza an Ethical Naturalist?" in Speculum Spinozanum, ed. S. Hessing (London, 1977), 145-64.

19. In the Ethics the postulates all concern the "human body" (cf. EII and III), and the lemmas all concern "bodies" (cf. EIII).

20. A.G. Wernham argues that "the dictates of reason are thus identified with the laws of the rational man's nature," but denies that these dictates can be equated with prescriptions, i.e., "ought," "imperatives," or "duty": they are only "eternal truths." Cf. The Political Works of Spinoza (Ox-

ford, 1965), 10; 20. Cf. also the criticism of Wernham in Curley, "Spinoza's Moral Philosophy," op. cit., 370ff.

21. The end of the scholium to EIII, 59 marks the transition from servitude to freedom, i.e., from the account of the passions to that of the actions.

22. Generosus in classical Latin means noble, well-bred, magnanimous. Spinozistic generositas is perhaps the equivalent of the Aristotelian megalopsychia (lit. "greatness of soul"). [Cf. Aristotle, Nic. Ethics, Bk. IV, chap. 2].

23. It is one kind of perceptio (cf. EII, 40, sch. 2).

24. The following account of the Spinozistic theory of obligation is based to some extent on that of E.M. Curley, "Spinoza's Moral Philosophy," 354-87.

25. Cf. Bennett, op. cit., 231 and 298.

26. This does not imply a hard and fast distinction between reason and emotion (or thought & feeling), for Spinoza is committed to both being merely aspects of ideas.

27. Cf. Curley, op. cit., 367.

28. Cf. Curley, op. cit., 370-73 and Wernham, op. cit., 10, 19-20.

29. Both of these doctrines define "free will," which Spinoza vigorously attacks (cf. Chap. Three, Pt. Four of the present study).

30. To the extent that Spinoza equates "freedom" with "self-causedness" in EI, dfn. 7, he is speaking not of the freedom of man, but of the freedom of causa sui (i.e., that which exists solely by the necessity of its own nature) which, strictly speaking, is only peculiar to God. This implies that insofar as human beings are finite modes and therefore, determined to exist by something other than themselves (i.e., something uncaused or unconditional), they are "unfree." [Spinoza's equation of "freedom" with "causa sui" is repeated in EI, 17, cor. 2 and EII, 49, dem.] However, to the extent that EI, dfn. 7 equates "freedom" with the "freedom from external compulsion or constraint," the definition can apply to both God and man.

31. For Spinoza there could be no action, in the sense of EI, dfn. 7, that was not free. For he defines "action" in

opposition to "being acted upon," or "passion," so that anything he calls "action" is "free action."

32. Again, experientia vaga is one kind of perceptio (cf. EII, 40, sch. 2).

33. This brings to mind the different definitions of good and bad/evil at the beginning of Part IV. "Good" there is defined as "that which we certainly know to be useful to us," and it may seem that "evil" ought to be the opposite, namely, "that which we certainly know is not useful to us." But Spinoza asserts that we cannot have adequate knowledge of evil (cf. EIV, 64). So his definition takes a different wording: "By evil I mean that which we certainly know to be a hindrance to us in the attainment of any good" (cf. EIV, dfn. 2). This is borne out by EIV, 63, cor.: "We seek good directly, and shun evil indirectly."

34. Hampshire emphasizes this point. "When the behavior now causally explained is what was formerly regarded as morally wicked, we come to regard it as the symptom of a disease, curable, if at all, by the removal of its causes; expressions of moral disapproval come to seem useless and irrelevant."For instance, Hampshire continues, "as psychology in its various branches progresses, the sins and wickedness of free agents come to be regarded as the diseases of patients; the line drawn in our common-sense speech and thought between a disease and pathological condition, for which the sufferer is not responsible, and wickedness, which the agent could have avoided, is gradually effaced in one case after another." Cf. Stuart Hamshire, Spinoza, op. cit., 158.

35. This argument rests on the force of Spinoza's repudiation of the conception of final causality. According to Spinoza, to think of things or persons as fulfilling, or failing to fulfill, a purpose or end, is to imply the existence of a creator distinct from his creation. In ordinary praise and condemnation, we necessarily imply a reference to some standard or ideal of what a person should be, or assume some end or purpose in human existence. According to Spinoza, however, popular morality is largely founded on such pre-scientific and confused ideas. But considered scientifically/adequately, nothing (Spinoza believes) can be said to be in itself morally good or bad, morally perfect or imperfect; for Spinoza everything is what it is as the consequence of necessary laws.

36. Spinoza contends that, in giving a coherent, rational account of human actions in terms of their causes, "choice"

and "will," as psychological phenomena, have no special place; they are just one mode of consciousness among others, one set of ideas among others in the sequence which constitutes our mind. Yet, at the common-sense level of knowledge (experientia vaga), we talk as if conscious acts of will or deliberate choice in themselves constitute adequate explanations of human action, because we are conscious of acts of will and choice, but not of their causes.

37. The inspiration for the distinction comes from H.F. Hallett, Benedict de Spinoza: The Elements of His Philosophy (London: Athlone Press, 1957), especially 120-128.

38. This relativity also applies to actions (actiones); the goodness and badness of an action depends on whether it arises from a good or bad emotion (EIV, 49, dem. 2).

39. The TdIE is the only work in which Spinoza explicitly discusses a "conditional ethics." There he lists three such rules, the first of which prescribes "speaking in a manner intelligible to the multitude"; the second, "indulging ourselves with pleasures only in so far as they are necessary for preserving health"; and the third, "endeavouring to obtain only sufficient commodities to enable us to preserve our life and health" (op. cit., TdIE, II, 7).

40. Spinoza is not a psychological hedonist in the sense that he believes that pleasure is the only direct object of desire; for we desire the things that cause pleasure.

41. The meaning of "intuitive" here should not be confused with that of Spinoza's "intuitive science" (scientia intuitiva); for the latter provides knowledge of "the essence of things" (EII, 40, sch. 2), whereas ethical terms do not denote things (i.e., individuals) or real characteristics of things (cf. Preface to Part IV). Nor can there be "intuitive knowledge" in the sense of an immediate realization of general ethical truths.

42. The summum bonum or highest good of the virtuous is common to all insofar as man is essentially a rational being (EIV, 36, sch.).

43. The paradigm case of this for Spinoza is knowledge.

44. Wealth and sexual love are paradigm cases for Spinoza.

45. In the TTP Spinoza describes the summum bonum as "knowledge and love of God" (TTP, I, 62) and in the Ethics as "love of God" (EV, 20, dem.; EIV, 28, dem.).

46. The fundamentum virtutatis is to "seek what is useful for oneself" (EIV, 20 and 22, cor.).

47. C.D. Broad, Five Types of Ethical Theory (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1930), op. cit., 35.

48. Cf. Bennett, op. cit., 298.

49. Cf. Broad, op. cit., 47.

50. According to Wernham, Spinoza, unlike Hobbes, "had kept the right of nature intact because he had insisted that men are individualists of the most ruthless and uncompromising kind" (op. cit., 36).

51. To this D.P. Gauthier has remarked that the fundamental difference between the "moral man" and the "prudent man" consists in the fact that the former is "trustworthy" because he believes that "sometimes he ought to adhere, to a commitment which he has made, without regard to considerations of advantage." "Morality," unlike "advantage," implies a "willingness to make sacrifices" and a "concern with fairness." Cf. "Is Morality Advantageous?" in Morality and Rational Self-Interest, ed. D.P. Gauthier (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1970), 176-77.

52. To be sure, the egoist would have to be deceitful; he would have to pretend that he was himself prepared to accept altruistic principles, but from his point of view, this would be merely a matter of adopting the necessary means in the attainment of his own good.

53. As Butler said, and as Kant would have agreed, prudentialism is "by no means...the moral institution of life," even though it is a much better guide than "passion." "Moral considerations," according to Butler, are not the same as those of "self-love." Therefore, the prudential point of view is not the moral one. Cf. J. Butler, Five Sermons (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1950), 16.

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