C. I
SPINOZA AND HUMAN FREEDOM

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a critical account of Spinoza's philosophy of human freedom as presented in his ETHICS. Rather than being a scholarly work on Spinoza, this essay uses Spinoza as a vehicle for shedding light on problems regarding the nature of human freedom, and its attainability and desirability.

After the introduction, the thesis begins with an introductory sketch of Spinoza's metaphysics. This sketch is designed to acquaint the reader with Spinoza's terminology, and to lay out the framework into which his philosophy of freedom was squeezed.

Chapter Two and Three present Spinoza's theories of human bondage and human freedom, which, it is maintained, are in many respects, just one theory. These chapters take the form, almost of a commentary on Parts Four and Five of ETHICS. The criticisms of Spinoza which are introduced here are, on the whole, specific criticisms of arguments used by him, rather than broad criticisms of his whole enterprise.

The last chapter discusses a recent attack on the desirability and rationality of pursuing a Spinozist path to freedom. The attack is a general attack on Spinozism about freedom as such. It is argued that the attack does contain valid criticisms of Spinozism as expounded by Spinoza in ETHICS. However, a truncated form of Spinoza's prescription for freedom is defended, albeit rather tentatively, from this attack.
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INTRODUCTION

The great Seventeenth Century Rationalist philosophers, Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza, were all devoted system-builders. They were epistemological optimists, and firmly believed, as the name 'Rationalist' suggests, that the basis for this optimism lay in reason itself. Each tried to construct a deductively interrelated metaphysical edifice. This makes it very difficult to discuss just one aspect of the work of any of these philosophers. The problem is even more acute on account of the use of an unfamiliar terminology in many of their writings. Wittgentein said that philosophy, far from changing anything, leaves everything as it is. In the face of apparently wild and implausible claims about the world made by Rationalists, one must be particularly careful to make sure that the author was not making a familiar claim about the world, using unfamiliar language. There is thus a more pressing need for cross-references to other parts of the author's work than is required in studies of English-speaking philosophers.

Of the great Rationalists Spinoza made the most remorseless attempt to erect a unified metaphysical system. His major work, ETHICS, was written in 'geometrical order'. This device was adopted mainly for its heuristic value, but has actually deterred many from even reading Spinoza's philosophy. When a reader, who is used to interpreting prose is confronted with ETHICS, set out in geometrical order, with definitions, axioms and propositions, he can easily be overawed, and even more easily discouraged. The different aspects of Spinoza's philosophy seem to be even more inextricably connected than those of his two Rationalist rivals.
In view of these facts, it might appear bold, or just foolhardy, to attempt a relatively short work on Spinoza's theory of human freedom. This suspicion could easily be reinforced by the fact that the sections on human bondage and freedom occur in ETHICS at the end of what is supposed to be a giant deduction, embracing a vast metaphysic, the discussion of which would lie well beyond the scope of an essay such as this. There are two things I would like to say in this connection to justify my study; one is about Spinoza, and the other is about my approach to his philosophy.

Spinoza pursued philosophy with the prime aim of discovering a way of life which would accord anyone who followed it, true and lasting happiness, leaving aside for now what that state might be. Thus the title of his major work is no coincidence. One can perhaps get one of the best insights into Spinoza's interests from looking at the beginning of the fragment DE INTELLECTUS EMENDATIONE.

After experience has taught me that all the usual surroundings of social life are vain and futile; seeing that none of the objects of my fears contained in themselves anything either good or bad, except in so far as the mind is affected by them, I finally resolved to inquire whether there might be some real good having power to communicate itself, which would affect the mind singly, to the exclusion of all else; whether, in fact, there might be anything of which the discovery and attainment would enable me to enjoy continuous, supreme, and unending happiness.


This 'unending happiness' is the final achievement of someone who understands and acts on ETHICS - at least according to Spinoza. What the earlier sections of ETHICS, which supposedly entail the theory of freedom, actually do, apart from anything else, is to justify Spinoza's insightful views about
freedom. It is not simply that these latter views stem from the former. One should not assume that the theory of freedom arose for Spinoza out of an independently conceived metaphysics. It is quite possible for a modern reader to accept much of the theory of freedom whilst rejecting a lot of the metaphysical doctrines of the earlier parts of ETHICS.

Spinoza's giant edifice is not as monolithic as it at first appears, or as it was intended to be. It is supported by several towers, which have their own foundations, some more shaky than others. In short one does not, despite appearances which were deliberately generated by Spinoza, have to accept or reject his philosophy in its entirety.

There are two distinct, though overlapping approaches to the history of philosophy, which reflect differences of emphasis.

The first approach is the more purely historical. It involves finding out as much as possible about the ideas of the author in question. One would typically try to connect up all the ideas of the philosopher with each other and with those of other thinkers, and then to put him or her on the historico-philosophical map. One's prime concern would be with what the author actually said, irrespective of its philosophical importance. It is a prerequisite for this scholarly approach that one be able and prepared to go back to multifarious original documents, including the lesser works of the author, and the works of his contemporaries and philosophical ancestors.

The other approach concentrates on a philosophical problem, and uses an historical figure to shed light on the discussion. Here one's prime concern is with the philosopher's work as an attempt to answer a problem or problems
with which one is independently interested.

Whilst stressing the differences between these approaches to history of philosophy, I want to emphasize that the two concerns are not fundamentally opposed. Indeed one could hardly use a philosopher to shed light on a philosophical problem without finding out what he said. Similarly, one who sought to understand what a philosopher was really saying, could not succeed without having a grasp of the problems which the philosopher was trying to solve.

For the purposes of this essay I shall be adopting the second approach. I enter the discussion not primarily as a Spinoza scholar, but as a philosopher concerned with problems about the nature and possibility of human freedom, who believes that Spinoza said much of these matters which is particularly thought-provoking, penetrating, and surprisingly insightful.

Notwithstanding my primary interest in the problems with which Spinoza's ethical writings deal, I now confess that a study of Spinoza's philosophy of freedom ought to include at least some consideration of his metaphysical views. In order to understand the latter sections of ETHICS one must have some familiarity and understanding of the earlier ones, apart from anything else, to familiarise oneself with the terminology.

After writing a familiarising sketch we shall investigate and criticize Spinoza's ideas about human bondage and freedom. Finally a modified Spinozist view about human freedom will be defended against one line of attack from the Twentieth Century.
CHAPTER ONE

SPINOZA'S METAPHYSICS - A SKETCH

In a work of this magnitude it will be impossible to expound fully Spinoza's extremely elaborate and obscure metaphysics, let alone to provide a critical account of it. In this Chapter I shall attempt nothing so bold. What I shall try to do is to set the scene, so to speak, for my discussion of Spinoza's account of human freedom by presenting a sketch of the sort of world view which accompanied, and, in Spinoza's view, led to his theory of freedom.

1. SPINOZA'S ONTOLOGY

Rationalism is in its nature given to extremes. As Rationalists permit themselves to use only reason for the establishment of their metaphysics, they make the most of it by constructing systems which follow one line of reasoning to its logical conclusion. To the extent that a philosopher wavers from this he ceases to be rationalistic. Descartes, for example, who was the least consistently rationalistic of the three great Rationalists was the one who pursued the most lines of reasoning the shortest distance along the way to their logical conclusions. Leibniz took his line of reasoning to the extreme of believing that reality consisted ultimately of an infinity of non-extended 'monads'; Spinoza took his to the opposite extreme, and held that reality consisted ultimately of a single infinitely extended 'substance' - he was a monist.
It is interesting that Leibniz's monadism and Spinoza's monism should have followed from their respective definitions of 'substance'.

Spinoza's basic way of dividing up reality was into the substantial and the modal. Thus at the very beginning of ETHICS we find the following:

   By substance, I understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; in other words, that, the conception of which does not need the conception of another thing from which it must be formed.

   By mode, I understand the affections of substance, or that which is in another thing through which also it is conceived.

   Everything which is, is either in itself or in another.

   That which cannot be conceived through another must be conceived through itself.

   E.I. DEF. III. § V., § AXIOMS I., § II.

The common-sense view of what is really real, if there be such a view at all, is that there are a lot of substances, such as tables and chairs, animals, plants, people, bicycles, etc., and that connected with these fundamentally real substances, are their states, affections, or modes. To take a human example, let us consider a blush. Should we include in our description of what is really real in the world, blushes? The line of reasoning which inclines us to say 'No' in answer to this question begins with the recognition that one could give a complete list of the contents of the world, without making any reference to blushes at all. Suppose that Tom is blushing. To say, awkward though it may sound, that Tom has a blush on his face, is not to make any existence claims for some thing on Tom's face, as to say that Tom had a fly on his face would be. In the former case one is merely describing Tom. In this
sense the blush is a state, affection, or mode of Tom, and cannot be conceived without him. If Tom ceased to be, so would his blush, just as one would have expected the Cheshire cat's grin to have disappeared with the cat.

This view of the relation between substances and modes is quite handy for everyday purposes. Substances exist, so to speak, in their own right, and modes have merely a secondary, or quasi-existence, as the states or affections of substances. We can 'muddle through' our daily routine with these concepts. The difficulties arise as soon as we start to lean at all heavily on the concept of 'substance'. Both Leibniz and Spinoza believed that 'substance' was the term by which to characterize the fundamental unit of reality. Our notion of 'substantial' is roughly equivalent to 'not adjectival on anything'. Spinoza and Leibniz both accepted this, but pushed their respective equivalents of 'not adjectival on anything' to their logical extremities.

Leibniz believed that to be not adjectival on anything entailed being absolutely simple, that is indivisible. For if anything is divisible it is possible to describe the world without reference to the thing, talking only about the parts. As a Rationalist he was not content with there being something merely physically indivisible as the basis of the reality of divisible things. Rather he sought something which was conceptually indivisible, and believed that there must be such things, as there are obviously non-simple things, which are, necessarily, aggregates of simple things. As anything extended is at least conceptually divisible, Leibniz held that the really real things were non-extended, and that all extended things were ultimately adjectival on these non-extended 'monads', or simple substances. He believed that there were infinitely many monads. This seems to be one extreme result of
trying to push the notion of 'substance' to a logical conclusion.

Spinoza defined 'substance' as 'that which is in itself and is conceived through itself'. 'Being in itself' means something like 'existing completely independently of everything else'. So if something is in itself its existence necessarily could not be threatened by anything outside itself. As long as there is something outside or other than a substance candidate, the candidate is not a substance, for it would be logically possible for this external thing to destroy the candidate. God or Nature is the only being which can pass these extremely rigorous tests for substantiality. God or Nature is equivalent to the Universe - all that there is. This alone has nothing other than it, and thus alone is 'in itself'.

The trick for both Leibniz and Spinoza lay in stretching, in the one case 'simple', and in the other 'being in itself' to their logical conclusions, that is, pushing a line of reasoning as far as it will go.

Spinoza believed that substance was 'absolutely infinite', a Spinozist notion which is contrasted with 'infinite in its own kind'. Space is infinite in its own kind, since there is nothing spatial beyond (the whole of) space. On the other hand it is not absolutely infinite, because there are things other than the whole of space, which 'limit' it, such as thoughts.

As Spinoza believed that there is only one substance, and God is defined as:

Being absolutely infinite, that is to say, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each one of which expresses eternal and infinite essence.

E.I. DEF. VI.
God and Substance must be identical. So one could characterize Spinoza as a pantheist. In a sense he believed that God is in everything all the time, more specifically that God is the whole of reality, that is, Nature. The doctrine which is laid out in Part One of ETHICS, however, seems to have much more in common with atheism than with any kind of theism whatsoever; it is only towards the end of his magnum opus that Spinoza's latent mystical strain is rendered explicit. Nevertheless, as far as Part One of ETHICS is concerned it is to all intents and purposes irrelevant whether or not we construe Spinoza as a pantheist or an atheist. One thing he is absolutely clear on, though, is that the universe was not created by something or somebody outside it, and most emphatically, that it was not created by someone in whose image human beings have been fashioned.

Probably the most fundamental distinction between things in Spinoza is that between the absolutely infinite and the rest. This coincides with the distinction between substance and the rest. I stress the notion of absolute infinity, because it is this that distinguishes substance from 'attributes' which do share with substance the property of being conceived through themselves.

Bearing in mind the logical connexion between 'substance' and 'absolute non-adjectivalness', we can construe Spinoza as maintaining that in a subject-predicate sentence anything which qualifies for the characterization 'substance' must appear on the 'subject' side of the sentence. We cannot predicate 'substance' of anything.

After substance in the hierarchy of reality, come the 'attributes'. He
defines 'attribute' as follows:

By attribute, I understand that which the intellect perceives of substance, as (if) constituting its essence.

E.I. DEF. IV.

There is some controversy regarding Spinoza's use of each of the terms 'substance', 'attribute' and 'mode'. It is, however, at its height in connexion with the second of these. This is for a number of reasons, not least of which is that Spinoza does not use the term consistently, or should we say that he altered its meaning. In a letter to De Vries he writes:

By substance I mean that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, whose conception does not involve the conception of some other thing. I mean the same by attribute with respect to the intellect, which attributes such and such a nature to substance.

SPINOZA.: LETTER IX.

This suggests strongly that substance and attribute are identical. However, in other places he talks of substance as 'consisting of infinite attributes', which suggests that substance is the sum total of the attributes. The two examples of attributes which Spinoza gives are thought and extension. So he believed that both thought and extension express infinite and eternal essence, and, it appears, that thought plus extension plus the other attributes whatever they might be, add up to God or substance. Perhaps the best clue as to what Spinoza probably meant most of the time, throughout ETHICS at any rate, comes from his distinction between 'absolutely infinite' and 'infinite in suo genere'. He says that the attributes are infinite in suo genere. The best way of interpreting this is to conceive of attributes as being the 'summa genera' on the predicative side. Everything can be predicated of the attributes, except of course substance. However, only mental predicates can be predicated
of the attribute of thought, and only physical ones of that of extension. This is the best way of construing the notion that the attributes are infinite merely 'in suo genere'. They are the fundamental categories in which substance expresses itself, and it is only through these categories that substance can be described, since to characterize it in any other way would involve predicating it of something, which is impossible. This provides an explanation of Spinoza's saying words to the effect that substance is nothing over and above its attributes.

The third member of Spinoza's ontological trilogy is the mode. A mode is an 'affection' of substance, or 'that which is in another thing through which also it is conceived'. Thus, to revert to our common-sense example, modes stand to substance, for Spinoza, as blushes, grins, etc., stand, for us, to people. Spinoza is maintaining in ETHICS that all the things in the world are modes. Modes are 'in' substance, and through it are conceived. To say this is to deny the independent reality of such 'substantial' things as people, tables, chairs and the like. These things are all just 'expressions' of substance, and have their existence solely as such.

There is another important distinction, however, which cuts across the substance-mode boundary, and this is the distinction between infinite and finite. Substance consists of:

... infinite attributes, each one of which expresses eternal and infinite essence ...

E.i.11.

but among the modes there are infinite and finite modes. The infinite modes are not, of course, absolutely infinite, but merely infinite in their own kinds, and:
That thing is called finite in its own kind (in suo genere) which can be limited by another thing of the same nature. For example, a body is called finite, because we always conceive another which is greater. So a thought is limited by another thought; ...

E.i.D.3.

Modes such as ordinary bodies, and thoughts more puzzlingly, are said to be finite, because they can be limited by another thing of the same category. I take this to mean in the case of bodies that no matter what body we conceive we could always conceive of another body, which would be either larger than it, or if not that, at least outside it, and which would therefore 'limit' it in the relevant sense.

Between the attributes, which jointly constitute substance, and these finite modes are the so-called infinite modes. The two of the allegedly infinite numbers of attributes which constitute substance, of which we, finite modes as we are, can conceive, are Thought and Extension. According to Spinoza these attributes are expressed in a number of ways, giving rise to the finite modes, which are the expressions. There are certain rules for the expression of these attributes, which in the case of the attribute of extension, we would call the basic laws of science. One such rule is that everything extended must be either in motion or at rest. In Spinoza's terminology Motion and Rest is an infinite and eternal mode of the attribute of extension. Not only this, but it is an immediate infinite and eternal mode, because it follows directly from the attribute of extension. There are other infinite modes, which are rather mysterious - the so-called mediate infinite modes, which one for the attribute of extension is 'the face of the whole universe'. Spinoza gives examples of these two types of mode in the following letter to Schuller:
Lastly, the examples for which you ask are; of the first kind, in Thought, absolutely infinite understanding, but in Extension, motion and rest; of the second kind, the face of the whole Universe which although it varies in infinite modes, yet remains always the same; ...

LETTER LXIV to G.H. Schuller.

Spinoza does not say much to clarify his notion of 'the face of the whole Universe'. Stuart Hampshire goes some way to explaining it in his book on Spinoza.

We may ..., if we go on ad infinitum, conceive the whole of nature as one individual, the parts of which (that is to say all bodies) change in infinite ways without any change of the whole individual.

(E.ii. LEM. VII. Note) This highest-order individual Spinoza calls 'the face of the whole Universe' ...; in the hierarchy of his system of modes, it has the title of 'a mediate infinite and eternal mode' under the attribute of extension. It is 'mediate' because it is logically dependent on the immediate mode of motion and rest, which is the primary, or logically prior, feature of extension; it is 'infinite' and 'eternal' because the fact that Nature as a whole, conceived as a spatial system, remains thus self-identical follows directly from the conception of motion-and-rest as the necessary feature of the extended world.

STUART HAMPSHIRE: SPINOZA p.74.

I think that 'the face of the whole Universe' refers to the whole of physics. Probably Spinoza believed that all the laws of physics followed from the basic laws of motion. There is a further element in 'the face of the whole Universe' which is worth mentioning briefly. Spinoza believed that the unchangeableness of the whole Universe followed from the laws of motion and rest. This is connected with the view that all motion and rest is relative. I think that one of the reasons why Spinoza believed that the universe is wholly unchangeable is that he believed that all change was
relative to something other than the thing that is said to change. It is easy to infer erroneously from this belief, that the universe as a whole cannot change. There is no doubt that a lot of work needs to be done to clarify the relations between the infinite modes, particularly the mediate ones, and attributes, and finite modes, but I cannot here undertake this probably arduous task.

So to summarize, in Spinoza's ontology there is one substance, God or Nature, which is absolutely independent, and can never be predicated of anything. This substance consists of infinite attributes, each one of which expresses infinite and eternal essence, and is infinite in suo genere. The attributes are the summa genera on the predicative side. Finally there are the modes, the infinite of which follow logically from their own attribute, and share most of the features of attributes, except that they cannot be conceived through themselves alone; the finite modes are such things as thoughts, feelings, individual minds, bodies and people. These last are completely dependent entities. I shall say a little more about the relation between modes, attributes and substance in the next section.

2. SPINOZA'S THEORY OF CAUSATION. ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT.

Spinoza as perhaps the most rationalistic Rationalist of all, was a firm believer in a principle of sufficient reason. He did not share with Leibniz the belief that everything that happens must happen for a reason because God is the supremely rational person. He took it as being just an obvious principle that relies on nothing else for its truth. This principle that everything has an explanation is one of the bastions of Rationalism. Although the most eminent Empiricist once wrote: "I never asserted so absurd
a proposition as that any thing might arise without a cause", one of the marks which distinguish Rationalists from Empiricists is the Rationalists' belief that there is a sufficient reason for everything. When Hume says that he wouldn't hold such an absurd belief as that something might arise without a cause, he has something different in mind from Spinoza when he says, expressing his causal maxim:

In nature there is nothing contingent, but all things are determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and act in a certain manner.

E.i.22.

Although Hume might have believed that everything has a cause, despite knocking down arguments in favour of the proposition, he certainly rejected the claim that in nature there is nothing contingent. His criteria for something being a cause of something else explicitly rule out the possibility of cause and effect being logically connected.

... as all distinct ideas are separable from each other, and as the ideas of cause and effect are evidently distinct, 'twill be easy for us to conceive any object to be non-existent this moment, and existent the next, without conjoining to it the distinct idea of a cause or productive principle.

HUME: TREATISE I. II. iii.

This passage seems to contain a non-sequitur which arises out of an ambiguity, for when Hume says that the ideas of cause and effect are evidently distinct he is talking about the concept of cause and that of effect, but when he writes that any object may exist at one moment, having been non-existent the previous one, without there being a relevant productive principle, he is maintaining that causes are distinct from effects, not just that the concepts are separable concepts. What I mean by the latter remark is that Hume believed that it is quite possible to conceive of any given effect without conceiving of its cause.
There is no necessary connexion between a cause and its effect. This is because the cause and the effect are for Hume just 'brute facts'. The ideas of causes and effect are sensory states which occur at separate times, and different times are distinct, inasmuch as what happens at one time is logically independent of what happens at any other time.

Let us now compare this with Spinoza on cause and effect.

From a given determinate cause an effect necessarily follows; and, on the other hand, if no determinate cause be given, it is impossible that an effect can follow.

The knowledge of an effect depends upon and involves the knowledge of the cause.

E.I. A.1 & 3.

These two axioms suggest that the relation between cause and effect is far from contingent. Spinoza as a Rationalist believed not just that everything has an explanation in some weak sense, such as being caused in a Humean sense. He believed that everything could ultimately be understood, and his notion of understanding incorporates gaining knowledge of that through which the thing to be understood has to be conceived.

Those things which have nothing mutually in common with one another cannot through one another be mutually understood, that is to say, the conception of the one does not involve the conception of the other.

E.i.A.5.

He uses this axiom in his proof of E.i.3.

If two things have nothing in common with one another, one cannot be the cause of the other.

If they have nothing mutually in common with one another, they cannot (Ax.5) through one another be mutually understood, and therefore (Ax.4) one
To give a Spinozist cause of something one must give the thing through which the problematic item has to be conceived. This involves as a necessary condition giving something which entails the existence of the item in question. Only thus will one be able to understand why the thing exists. But the Rationalist mind is not satisfied with just this, for the question will inevitably arise, or at least could always arise, about the thing which is the cause of the first 'effect'. If one had a Humean theory of causation, where the causal relation is transitive and irreflexive, this chain of causes could never be completed, for one could never reach anything which was self-explanatory, or self-caused. This consequence of irreflexive theories of causation, namely that there cannot be an ultimate or self-explanatory explanation of why things happen in the way they do puts strong pressure on a Rationalist to produce some alternative.

There is another feature of Humean theories of causation which cannot be acceptable to a Rationalist mind, and that is to do with the causal relation itself. Humean causes do not provide the right kind of explanation for a Rationalist, since it is always logically possible, and is thus possible as far as the understanding is concerned, that given a cause any of a number of effects might follow.

Hume did not seek, when looking for the cause of something, for an ultimate or logically perfect explanation of why that thing occurred, and I think that he was right in so not doing. Spinoza, however, would certainly have disagreed with this markedly empiricist view, and this is at least partly because he had
a markedly different view of the nature of explanation from Hume. I don't think that his belief that there are sufficient reasons for everything had to lead him to the belief that all events in the world are logically connected in that they are all part of one giant causal nexus; for Leibniz believed that there was an ultimate explanation for everything that happens, but he shared Hume's scepticism about there being a logical connexion between events. In Monadology Section 7 Leibniz suggests very strongly that there is no causal interaction in the monadic realm, basically because of the contingency of events. From this it is clear that he had a notion of cause which is much stronger than Hume's, and that for this reason, given fairly obvious facts about the world he admitted that there is no genuine causal interaction. In the draft of a letter to Arnauld he actually talks of cause and effect as being merely an ideal relation between phenomena. In this sense of cause there are of course causal interactions between things, but for Leibniz these 'causes' are not genuine causes since they do not provide a sufficient reason for the occurrence of the 'effect'. Causation as an ideal relation is in fact very similar to Hume's notion of causation. How can this view of events and the denial of genuine causal interactions be squared with Leibniz's Rationalism?

Leibniz believed that underlying everything there is the supreme all-wise, benevolent, all-powerful, anthropomorphically-conceived God. Everything that happens in the world is in a sense contingent, as resting on the will of God. But the nature of God is such that the only world He, being all wise, benevolent, and all-powerful, would create, is the best of all possible worlds. Furthermore, He, being the supremely rational being always acts rationally, and thus had to (at least in Leibniz's eyes) have a rational motive for doing
anything. Thus the 'true cause' of anything happening, and of anything that happens is, according to Leibniz, God's reason for bringing about the particular thing. Leibniz's God is such that given His nature and certain facts, it follows that A rather than B will occur. He denies that there is any entailment relation linking cause and effect in the vulgar notion of causation. He is certainly not denying that there are ultimate explanations for the occurrence of things. He is simply denying that they can be given in terms of (efficient or logical) causality.

Descartes was really very confused about cause and effect. He adhered to some form of the 'transfer' theory of causation. Thus, for him, if A caused B then A must have transferred some of itself to something to produce B. For instance, if a fire is the cause of a kettle's heating up, then, on Descartes' view the fire must have transferred some of its heat to the kettle, thus bringing it about that the kettle is heated up. The transfer theory is unacceptable as an account of causation, even leaving theological issues out of the picture, but it faces insuperable problems regarding the existence and origin of God. Like Hume's theory of causation the transfer theory has causation as an irreflexive relation. With this theory problems arise for any Rationalist who seeks an explanation for everything, as Descartes does.

Nothing exists concerning which the question may not be raised: - what is the cause of its existence? For the question may be asked even concerning God.

DESCARTES: REPLY TO OBJECTIONS II, HALDANE & ROSS VOL. II p.55.

Since Descartes, unlike Leibniz and like Spinoza, rejected explanations in terms of final causes, he was presented with a problem in the form of a dilemma. He would have either to abandon the Rationalist dogma that everything has a cause, or to admit that there was something, other than God, who transferred
some of His power to another source to create God, for it would surely be absurd to say that God brought about His own existence, as this would have involved Him doing something before He existed, a feat which a Rationalist ought to believe is beyond even the ability of the Gods. In fact it would involve the contradiction of God being separate from Himself. Descartes not surprisingly fails to provide an adequate reply to this objection which was brought to his attention by Arnauld. He replied to Arnauld that it is useful to talk of God in language which suggests that He is the efficient cause of His own existence, but that this is not strictly true. It is necessary to talk as if it were, because otherwise, frail souls that we are, we wouldn't understand why God exists. I think one could hardly be blamed for still not knowing why, even after reading Descartes' reply. A little later on in this reply to Arnauld he even writes calamatosuly:

... thus although we do not enquire for an efficient cause with respect to a thing's essence, nevertheless we can do so with respect to its existence; but in God essence and existence are not distinguished; hence we may enquire about the efficient cause of God.

H. & R. VOL. II. p.113.

At this point the reader might well wonder what all this had to do with Spinoza, especially in a work that does not profess to be a study of the views of his near contemporaries. My justification for discussing briefly Descartes' views on causation is that Spinoza's theory can be seen as an attempt to overcome some of the difficulties encountered by the Cartesian theory. It is perhaps a little easier to understand Spinoza's motivation for developing his rather bizarre theory if we see it in this light. Spinoza was very much influenced by the writing of Descartes, and he has on occasion been called the philosopher who had the courage to take Cartesianism to its logical conclusion.
Others, such as Leon Roth have argued a contrary thesis on this matter, namely that the mature philosophy of Spinoza is a reaction against Cartesianism. What is indisputable is that Spinoza, who was steeped in Descartes at an early age, was at least as aware of the shortcomings of the first great Rationalist's work as was any of his contemporaries.

Spinoza, who believed that the vehicle for explanation was cause, was committed to the view that everything that exists has a cause, for to deny this would be to admit that there is something in the universe which is inexplicable - a belief which is anathema to any Rationalist.

Given any notion of causation where the relation of cause and effect is irreflexive, such as Hume's or that of Descartes, it is difficult to maintain the Rationalist dogma that everything has an explanation, if by this one means that it is in principle possible to answer all "why" questions about the universe. This is because everything that is given as an explanatory cause, itself stands in need of explanation, and not just that, but explanation by something else, not already explained, and so on ad infinitum.

One route taken by philosophers is to put God at the end of the causal chain, and to admit that God's existence is uncaused, and that God can, through His infinite power set off the entire chain of causation. Of course this is to admit that there is at least one mystery about the universe which cannot, in principle be solved by rational inquiry. In order to preserve his Christian creator-God Descartes was prepared to concede, in a very humble manner, that the human intellect, being merely finite, just couldn't really grasp some of the mysteries of God, and that this was why explanations about
the infinite nature of God seemed to defy reason, or at least much of Cartesian philosophy. Spinoza was completely uncompromising on this matter, and was certainly prepared to stick by reason even if the price was to abandon the Judaeo-Christian God. In fact he did not consider that this abandonment was really a price to pay at all, since he rejected this kind of a God for a number of reasons, just one of which was that such a God seemed to him to be counter to reason. Along with the Judaeo-Christian God Spinoza abandoned the Cartesian irreflexive relation of cause and effect as his vehicle for explanation.

3. SPINOZA'S THEORY OF CAUSATION. THE THEORY ITSELF.

The very first definition in ETHICS is as follows:

By cause of itself, I understand that whose essence involves existence; or that, whose nature cannot be conceived unless existing.

E.I. DEF. 1.

What Spinoza means by 'cause of itself' is really 'something whose existence is entailed, in a logical sense, by its very nature'. Just as a triangle cannot be conceived with more or less than three sides, so something that is a 'cause of itself' cannot be conceived as not existing. In more familiar language, a triangle necessarily has three sides, and in the same sense of 'necessarily', a self-caused thing necessarily exists. The existence of a self-caused thing needs no more explanation than the three-sidedness of a triangle.

Spinoza uses this notion of cause of itself in one of his more lamentable demonstrations, in this case regarding the existence of Substance.
It pertains to the nature of substance to exist.

There is nothing by which substance can be produced (Corol. Prop. 6). It will therefore be the cause of itself, that is to say (Def. 1), its essence necessarily involves existence, or in other words it pertains to its nature to exist.

E.i.7 § its Dem.

The conclusion of this demonstration, that the essence of substance involves existence, is used by Spinoza in his ontological argument for God's existence in E.i.12. What is wrong with the demonstration above quoted is that it does not follow from the proposition that there is nothing by which substance can be produced that it is the cause of itself in the required sense. All that it shows is that if substance exists its existence is attributable solely to its own nature. Apart from this there is another mistake made by Spinoza in connexion with the reflexive 'self-caused' which should be mentioned now.

Spinoza moved from the proposition that something's existence is not restricted by space and time, to the proposition that the thing's existence is a logical necessity. He uses this move in his proof of the existence of substance, which is equated with the universe. His reasoning is as follows: The universe as a whole cannot enter into any causal relation with anything else, since, necessarily, it is all that there is. As nothing could have any causal commerce with the universe, the universe's existence must be independent of everything else, and therefore it must be self-caused, and so, from E.i.7. Dem., must necessarily exist. This is simply a confusion between 'unbounded by space and time' and 'logically necessary'. The mistake crops up again when Spinoza is discussing the 'infinite and eternal laws of the universe', where he goes through the following steps: As there is nothing which can have any effect on the universe, so nothing can affect its governing
principles, or laws. Therefore these laws are infinite and eternal. Therefore they necessarily (logically) hold. I shall leave this matter here, whilst acknowledging that quite a lot more could be said about it.

The problem about asking a series of "why?" questions is similar to that of the series of questions put to Locke's unfortunate Indian.

The Indian ... who, saying that the world was supported by a great elephant, was asked what the elephant rested on; to which his answer was - a great tortoise: but being pressed to know what gave support to the broad-backed tortoise, replied - something, he knew not what.

LOCKE: ESSAY BK. II. CH.23.

In important respects Empiricists are like the Indian, in particular with respect to providing 'ultimate' explanations of why things are the way they are. First of all an Empiricist cannot explain why a particular causal relation holds, except by introducing another cause - the cause of the first causal relation's holding. The same question can now be asked about the new causal relation, and so on. Secondly, the Empiricist causal relation itself is simply a particular kind of regularity, which inevitably leaves a dangling question, which it cannot answer 'Why is there any regularity?' By this question I mean 'Why is it that certain events always occur only after certain other events?' It seems that at some stage, given an obsessive asker of "Why?" questions, that an Empiricist would be driven to saying something like 'That's just the way things are, and that's the end of the matter'.

Spinoza believed that there is a logical end to the series of "Why?" questions, and that this end comes when one reaches substance, whose nature provides the answer to the question concerning its existence. Of any thing
in the world we might ask: 'Why does this exist?' and so on. Our answer will be in terms of other things, about which the same question might be asked. However, if we could eventually trace everything back to substance we would be able to put an end to the series of questions, because substance requires no explanation beyond its own nature - given its nature, its existence is self-explanatory. Spinoza indeed does trace everything back to substance:

From the necessity of the divine nature infinite numbers of things in infinite ways (that is to say, all things which can be conceived by the infinite intellect) must follow.

Hence it follows that God is the efficient cause of all things which can fall under the infinite intellect.

E.i.16 § Corol.

In order to curl the tail of the seemingly endless enquiry into why things exist, so that the enquiry doesn't rely on a dangling and unexplained infinite chain, Spinoza equates the notion of entailment with that of causation. In the proposition just quoted he is saying simply that, just as God's existence follows from His nature, so the existence of everything that can be conceived follows from His nature as well. God is the cause of Himself, and also the cause of everything that exists, for all things which exist must fall under the infinite intellect, since 'falling under the infinite intellect' means 'being conceivable by an infinite intellect'.

Spinoza has taken the paradigm of a rational explanation - a logical argument - to its logical conclusion. Every truth is a necessary truth. Everything that happens has to happen in precisely the way it does happen.

Things could have been produced by God in no
other manner and in no other order than that in which they have been produced.

E.i.23.

This radical form of determinism stems from Spinoza's entailment theory of causation, which is required to provide the epistemological foundation sought by his rationalist mind. For if everything follows logically from the given nature of God, then, according to Spinoza, if anything was in any way different from the way it is, then that from which it follows, namely God would have to be different, but this is absurd, since God's nature is self-evidently necessary. It would be a straightforward contradiction to give God a nature different from the one He has, and so it is, in a strong sense, impossible that things should have been produced in a different manner or order. Spinoza sees all the events in the world as being related as steps in an argument, or rather he sees the statements describing events as being the statements of steps in an argument. The argument has only one assumption and this assumption cannot be altered, and everything in the argument follows from this assumption. Spinoza believed that if the steps in the argument were in any way different, and the argument was to remain valid, the assumption would have to change. But this is, by hypothesis impossible. Therefore the steps have to be just the way they are.

The line of reasoning is invalid, for one can derive a conclusion from an assumption in a number of ways. When one is trying to prove something from a given premise, there are a number of different ways one can set about proving whatever it is. Furthermore, one could derive a statement or set of statements from any of a number of premises. The series might remain the same, although the initiating premise might change, and the premise might change leaving the series the same as it would have been had the original
premise remained. When we are engaging in logical arguments, we are selective in what we take for our argument from the original premise - there is no best order, or only possible order which follows from a given premise. Spinoza thought there was, and used this to produce his determinism, which is the way he expresses his Rationalism about everything having an explanation. As well as not generating the requisite determinism, the entailment theory has other intrinsic demerits. One might, with justification, accuse Spinoza of trying to cast out the speck of sawdust in other theories of causation, only to ignore the plank in what he substitutes for them.

The main problem about the entailment theory is that it makes the possibility of changing incomprehensible, at least if the theory is taken literally. For if everything that 'happens' is entailed by the 'infinite and eternal essence of God', then it doesn't happen at all, for happenings occur at times, whereas entailments are eternal, or perhaps atemporal. At least Descartes' theory of causal transfers allows for changes in time, as does Hume's, and this is more important than being able to accommodate an explanation for the existence of God. Spinoza was able to push his Rationalism so far in the direction of logical explanations for everything that he failed to recognize the contingency of events in the world. Leibniz, although he didn't take time very seriously, managed to recognize the contingency of happenings. Spinoza also ignored analysing time, perhaps because of the obvious embarrassment it creates for his radical causal rationalism. Fortunately he often doesn't take the causal rationalism absolutely literally, and sometimes he pretends it isn't there at all.

1. By 'causal rationalism' I mean the doctrine that to say 'A is the cause of B' is to say 'A logically entails B'.
4. SPINOZA'S THEORY OF CAUSATION. THE THEORY AT WORK

In fact Spinoza does attempt to deal with one of the problems he has created for himself with his causal rationalism. The problem can be stated in the following terms. If everything follows logically from the infinite and eternal essence or nature of substance, then why are there, as there obviously are, transient and finite things, the finite modes? Spinoza admits that everything which follows from the absolute nature of God must be infinite.

All things which follow from the absolute nature of any attribute of God must for ever exist, and must be infinite; that is to say, through that same attribute they are eternal and infinite.

E.i.21.

If we combine this proposition with E.i.16., we should get the conclusion that everything there is is infinite and eternal. This conclusion is, however, in obvious direct contradiction to the Spinozist doctrine that human beings are just some of a whole lot of finite modes. Also, E.i.28. is in direct contradiction to E.i.16.

An individual thing, or a thing which is finite and which has a determinate existence, cannot exist nor be determined to action unless it be determined to existence and action by another cause which is also finite and has a determinate existence; and again, this cause cannot exist nor be determined to action unless by another cause which is also finite and determined to existence and action, and so on ad infinitum.

E.i.28.

Leibniz, who was not noted for his generosity to Spinoza or his philosophy, was quick to come up with a very cogent objection to Spinoza's theory of causation, which arises out of there obviously being finite things in the world.
(Spinoza) maintains ... that finite and temporal things cannot be produced immediately by an infinite cause, but that they are produced by other causes, individual and finite. But how will they finally then spring from God? For they cannot come from him mediately in this case, since we could never reach in this way things which are not similarly produced by another finite thing. It cannot, therefore, be said that God acts by mediating secondary causes, unless he produces secondary causes.


In fact Spinoza's position isn't quite as bad as it seems. First of all, in answer to the claim that E.i.16 and E.i.21 are simply inconsistent with the existence of finite and temporal modes, one could say the following. When Spinoza says, in E.i.16, that everything follows from 'the necessity of the divine nature' he means something different by 'the necessity of the divine nature' from what he means by 'the absolute nature of any attribute of God' in E.i.21. The significant difference lies in the word 'absolute', which occurs only in the latter proposition. One might then read E.i.21 in the following way. 'All things which follow from the absolute nature of any attribute of God must ...'. One could then interpret the proposition as asserting that everything that follows immediately from the definition of, or at least from the essence of, God, is infinite and eternal. This would leave one room for the finite and temporal, by admitting the existence of things which did ultimately follow from God, but didn't follow immediately from His definition or essence. But this escape from the frying pan of self-contradiction seems to lead straight to the fire of Leibniz's objection. Spinoza has equated the entailment relation with the causal relation. Everything is caused by God. Therefore everything is entailed by God. What Spinoza appears to be striving for is to be able to say the following. The infinite and eternal follow directly from the nature of God. The finite and temporal also
follow from God's nature, but only indirectly. The problem is: 'How can the existence of finite things, and especially temporal things, be logically inferred from the existence of an infinite and eternal thing?'.

E.M. Curley in his book SPINOZA'S METAPHYSICS, and Peter Remnant in a recent graduate seminar at the University of British Columbia, have independently provided similar accounts of Spinoza's views on the causality of God in relation to the world. The Curley-Remnant interpretation effects a partial salvage of Spinoza's ultimately untenable position. The interpretation which follows is essentially a hybrid of the views of Remnant and Curley, which, on this matter, are very similar.

Let us, for the sake of simplicity, concentrate on the attribute of extension. We shall first of all take Spinoza's remarks on this subject as being really statements about facts rather than things. We can then take it that the divine attribute of extension is a manifestation of an ultimate law, or 'basic nomological' law, of reality. One could characterize the attribute of extension by saying 'Every substance must be extended'.

The immediate infinite mode under the attribute of extension, the mode of motion-and-rest, follows logically from the attribute of extension. This mode can be characterized thus: 'Everything is either in motion or at rest'. It follows from the attribute of extension, since the existence of this attribute entails that everything, that is 'substance', is extended. But anything that is extended is, as a matter of logic either in motion or at rest. Therefore everything is either in motion or at rest.
The mediate infinite mode under the attribute of extension, 'the face of the whole universe', which for all intents and purposes, can be equated with physics, in turn follows from the laws of motion and rest.

One should note at this juncture that so far all the statements which are in the deduction are universal statements of the form 'All x is ...'. We start off with something which resembles an eternal truth, and was certainly regarded as such by Spinoza, and we end up with another seeming eternal truth. Before going further, it might be worth noting that already we can see Spinoza's confusion between 'unbounded by spatiotemporal restrictions' and 'necessary'. If it is true that any substance must be extended, it is true without reference to any time or to any place. I am not sure whether one ought to say that it is necessarily true that any substance must be extended. I suppose that given Spinoza's definition of substance, it is so. It also seems reasonable to say that 'anything extended must be either in motion or at rest' is necessarily true. It is a similar kind of truth to 'nothing can be red and green all over at the same time'. The laws of physics share with the above two statements, that they are not limited by time and space. By this I mean that the basic laws of physics are true for all times and all places. However it is not the case that these laws are necessarily true. It would not involve a contradiction to deny, say Archimedes' principle, or other basic laws of physics. Spinoza, however, thought it would, and to think so is quite understandable.

This all fits in well with the entailment theory of causation. The 'cause' of the attribute of extension is 'substance' itself. The nature of substance explains why all substances must be extended. The 'cause' of the
plus certain facts about the finite thing in question and other finite things. This is rather similar to the familiar causal picture, where for instance the causal law that people who fall out of the topmost window of a one hundred storey building, if their fall is unimpeded, will die, plus the fact that I am in an unimpeded fall from the top of a hundred storey building only \textit{jointly} entail that I will die.

E.i.16 is stressing that eternal laws cannot be left out of any explanation. E.i.28 is stressing that when one is talking about finite things, one cannot leave finite things out of one's explanation. Although the two propositions \textit{literally} do conflict, we can reinterpret them and provide a constructive suggestion as to what Spinoza had in mind in asserting them.

I would like to say three things about this way of reading Spinoza.

First of all, the idea that the occurrence of an event is entailed not solely by a causal law nor by the occurrence of a prior event, but only by a combination of the two, is not merely true, but trivially so. This, however, is not in itself too bad, since it is one of the tasks of an innovative metaphysician to convince his attentive readers that his system can account for the everyday facts.

The second point is more important, and is as follows. Spinoza held it to be axiomatic that:

\begin{quote}
The knowledge of an effect depends upon and involves the knowledge of the cause.
\end{quote}

E.i.Ax.4.
If I am not mistaken, this would leave Spinoza open to the charge that his theory does not enable us to have knowledge of anything except eternal and infinite truths. For of any two finite things, A and B, B being the partial cause of A, I cannot know A unless I know B; but I cannot know B unless I know its cause, part of which will be the finite C, and so on ad infinitum. This is certainly entailed by the Curley-Remnant interpretation, and it seems, at the very least, to have an air of paradox about it. However, to this I would say that it is a bad reflection on Spinoza rather than on the Curley-Remnant view of his theory.

In fact Spinoza did believe that we could not have adequate knowledge of finite things. So an interpretation which implies this is not to be rejected on the grounds that it saddles Spinoza with this view. As a Rationalist who unequivocally scorned the senses, it is not surprising that Spinoza should have held this view that we could not have adequate knowledge of finite and transient things, as such knowledge would have to come via the senses. It is actually part of his later theory of freedom that we become free as we cease filling our heads with 'inadequate' ideas of finite things. I shall leave discussion of this matter until a later chapter.

The third point really arises out of the second one, and is this. Spinoza is not able to answer Leibniz's objection satisfactorily. His causal rationalism forces him to admit that the ordinary everyday world is not real, since the ordinary world is temporal, and the causal theory cannot accommodate time. Nevertheless, Spinoza does not abandon his causal rationalism, which reappears in the later part of ETHICS Part Five. Instead he 'forgets' it whilst giving his account of the human condition of bondage to the 'affects'.
We can be thankful that he does.

Although there is obviously much more work which could usefully be done on the topic of Spinoza's metaphysics, I shall now turn to my main concern in this essay - Spinoza's theory of human freedom. If I have provided something like the requisite metaphysical background for at least understanding the context in which Spinoza's work about human beings was written, then this chapter will have achieved its purpose.
5. THE SOURCE OF SPINOZA'S DETERMINISM.

In many of the debates about the freedom of human beings, the main argument against their freedom has been that everything is causally determined, and as this is so, there is no room for freedom. Therefore no human beings are free, and the belief that they are stems from romantic muddle-headedness. Spinoza is famous for being a determinist; he is also well-known, not entirely on account of the work of Somerset Maugham, for believing that human-beings are not free, but in bondage. However, his belief that people are not free does not stem from his determinism, but from a different, thought not entirely unconnected source.

As a Rationalist Spinoza was deeply committed to the view that everything has an explanation or cause. But so were the other Rationalists, and they certainly did believe that people are at least free enough to deserve moral blame for their misdeeds. I readily concede that Descartes' account of human freedom was particularly misguided, but I would like to stress that there is an important kind of freedom which is not incompatible with determinism, despite being incompatible with any just ascriptions of responsibility to anything. That Spinoza believed in some such sort of freedom despite his rationalistic determinism is evident from the following.

That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its own nature alone, and is determined to action by itself alone. That thing, on the other hand, is called necessary, or rather
compelled, which by another is determined to existence in a fixed and prescribed manner.

E.i. Def. 7.

On this view it is quite all right to admit that something is both causally determined and free, provided of course that the cause of the free thing's existence and action is its own nature and not anything else. As substance is the only thing that is completely self-caused, it is the only thing that can be said to be truly free.

On the other hand, a human being is not self-caused. For Spinoza, in order to be free, something has to be completely independent of anything else. That is to say, the existence, and action of a free thing depends exclusively on its own nature or essence. What defines a human being, or constitutes its 'essence' does not entail the existence of any human beings. In E.i.8.Sch., Spinoza argues that

Whenever it is possible for several individuals of the same nature to exist, there must necessarily be an external cause for their existence.

He proves this, taking man as a paradigm case of the possibility for several individuals of the same nature to exist. He assumes that there are just twenty men in existence. If there are just twenty men in existence, there must be a cause or reason why there are neither more nor less. This cause cannot lie in human nature itself:

... since the true definition of a man does not involve the number twenty, and therefore ... the cause why these twenty men exist, and consequently the cause why each exists, must necessarily lie outside each one; ...

E.i.8.Sch.

Thus according to the definition given above of what it is to be free, man is necessarily unfree. Again, at the beginning of Part Four of ETHICS - that
entitled OF HUMAN BONDAGE, Spinoza writes:

There is no individual thing in nature which is not surpassed in strength by some other thing, but any individual thing being given, another and stronger is also given, by which the former can be destroyed.

E.iv.Axiom.

In Part One of ETHICS Spinoza launched a frontal assault on anthropocentrism and on orthodox Judaeo-Christian theology. His determinism is, apart from anything else, part of this frontal assault.

Many people, including Christians and Jews believe that human beings are importantly unique in the universe. They maintain that people are special in the world, because they can transcend nature. They believe we possess something which is loosely called 'free-will'. Such a view of mankind was to the Rationalist, scientific-minded Spinoza, prejudiced and irrational. His main distinction between things was the 'infinite and eternal' versus the 'finite and temporal'. Clearly, on this count, people have the relevant things in common with plants, animals, tables and chairs, and lack the features of God or Nature. It is not a bit surprising therefore, that Spinoza has it as an axiom at the start of his discussion of human bondage that any individual thing in nature is surpassed in strength, and can be destroyed by, another. I shall come back to Spinoza's anti-anthropocentrism in the next section.

Although anthropocentrism can be maintained by atheists, such as the Humanist group, it goes hand in hand with the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity. For the sake of brevity I shall discuss the Spinozist criticisms only of Christianity. There is a pressure from orthodox Christianity to accept libertarianism, which is the belief that human beings act in ways which are
not subject to determining laws. What Spinoza does is to reject orthodox Christianity, and thereby remove one of the main bases for the belief in libertarianism. He also has independent reasons for rejecting libertarianism, which doctrine he regards as thoroughly incoherent.

The first reason for believing in libertarianism which stems from orthodox Christianity, is that it seems to be a necessary condition for God's having to do anything in order to create the world in the first place. There would simply be nothing for God to have done unless the creation had something independent of Him in it, for otherwise, it would all be part of Himself. The obvious candidate for something independent of God is mankind with the God-given gift of free-will.

The second pressure from Christianity for believing in libertarianism arises out of the Christian notion of desert. Admittedly there are some Christians who believe that we are such miserable creatures that we don't deserve anything. These people believe that we can attain salvation by God's grace alone, which seems to be little more discriminating than a lottery. However the majority of Christians believe that the way to salvation is through freely deciding to do the right thing, or adopt the right way of life, namely the Christian way. Christians seek to explain the existence of evil in the world, by attributing it to people's freely rejecting God's commandments, although this attempt cannot succeed. The whole notion of guilt and deservingness which lies so near the heart of Christian theology hardly makes sense unless people have real freedom of choice.

Much of ETHICS Part One is devoted to showing that the idea of a creator-God separate from the creation, is absurd. Spinoza's main argument is that no
substance can either be or be conceived besides God, since God is a being of which no attribute can be denied. If there were a substance existing besides God, this would 'limit' God, but this is impossible, since God is an 'absolutely infinite' being. Quite a lot can be said about Spinoza's attack on the rationality of believing in a Christian God, but to get into a discussion of this would take us rather too far afield. What is important is that Spinoza absolutely rejected the view of the world which presents a creator and a separate creation which is dependent on the creator.

The rejection of the Christian God removed important reasons for believing in libertarianism. As implied above Spinoza also had reasons of a positive nature for believing in determinism. He was very against the notion of 'free-will' even for God. He writes:

The will cannot be called a free cause, but can only be called necessary.

E.i.28.

His argument for this is based on the statement that the will is only a certain mode of thought, and as all modes are determined by external causes, the will is so determined, and hence is not free. As a corollary to this we find:

Hence it follows ... that God does not act from freedom of the will.

E.i.33.

When Spinoza says this he really means it and he doesn't attempt to grant God the freedom of choice accorded to the Christian God by introducing it under a different name. For

Things could have been produced by God in no other manner and in no other order than that in which they have been produced.

E.i.33.
We have already come across this proposition in connection with the discussion of Spinoza's causal rationalism. His argument for the proposition, as we have seen, is not a good one, since it involves ignoring the possibility of selecting any of a number of conclusions from a given premise. For more discussion of this proposition and the argument for it I refer the reader to 6. THE SCIENTIFIC VIEW.

Spinoza's attack on anthropocentrism is part of his avid insistence upon being objective and 'scientific' in his writings. The 'scientific' is in inverted commas because Spinoza's philosophy has been criticised for being unscientific. We must remember that Spinoza and the other Rationalists believed that the most respectable scientific enquiry was a priori. It stems from his taking his Rationalism very seriously that Spinoza writes at the beginning of ETHICS Part Three, about those who regard man in nature as a kingdom within a kingdom, that they:

... proceed to attribute the cause of human weakness and changeableness, not to the common power of nature, but to some vice of human nature, which they therefore bewail, laugh at, mock, or as is more generally the case, detest;

E.iii.Intro.

His intention, he tells us, is not to scoff at the 'affects', but rather to understand them, by applying to their study the geometrical method. 'Understanding' is the key word here. His reason for using the geometrical method for analyzing human 'affects' is that:

Nothing happens in nature which can be attributed to any vice of nature, for she is always the same, and her power everywhere one. Her virtue is always the same, and her power of acting; that is to say, her laws and rules, according to which all things are and are changed from form to form, are everywhere and
always the same; so that there must also be one and the same method of understanding the nature of all things whatsoever, that is to say by the universal laws and rules of nature.

E.iii.Intro.

Spinoza, then, had a very deep-seated belief in the unity of science.

The affects are roughly equivalent to what we would call emotions, and include hatred, anger and envy amongst other things. The affects, which are partial causes of what we would call actions, are themselves normally caused by the same necessity as that which necessitates any natural phenomenon. Thus Spinoza treats human beings as simply being one group amongst many, of finite modes. For him there is no essential difference between people and other bodies, which would justify us in giving a special 'moral' treatment of the study of man. Thus he writes at the conclusion to the introduction to E.iii:

I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if I were considering lines, planes or bodies.

E.iii.Intro.

7. THE SPECIAL TREATMENT OF HUMAN BEINGS.

Having made all these disclaimers about the non-speciality of human beings in the study of nature, Spinoza proceeds with what must be one of the most insightful and sympathetic accounts of the human condition. Before embarking on the discussion of his detailed account of human bondage I would like to recapitulate the metaphysical basis for his claim that human beings are inevitably in bondage. There are two meanings to 'free' - one of them is in distinction to 'caused'. In this sense of 'free', freedom is impossible, even for an infinite, or even absolutely infinite being, since 'everything has
a cause' is, for any good Rationalist, a necessary truth. According to the other sense of 'free', the Spinozist sense, 'being free' is in contradistinction to 'having an external cause'. Substance is the only free thing in this sense. People are not free, since they depend for their existence on the co-operation of other things - they are not self-caused. In this respect they are not different from anything else in the world.

When Spinoza discusses human bondage it is significant that he emphasizes the mental manifestations of this condition. This is interesting because although he doesn't actually attribute minds to the things in nature apart from human beings, it is one of his fairly fundamental tenets that:

The order and connexion of ideas is the same as the order and connexion of things.

E.ii.7.

Many of the propositions of ETHICS express this parallelism between the world of ideas and the world of extended things. As the mind is on the 'idea' side of things, and the body is its analogue on the 'extension' side, one would expect that an understanding of human beings would involve knowledge of the human body no less than of the human mind.

Early on in Part One of ETHICS, Spinoza talks of the connexion between finitude and lack of freedom. The notion of finitude is fairly easily understood when applied to physical objects, but less so when applied to minds. Spinoza writes the following on the subject.

... For example, a body is called finite, because we always conceive another which is greater. So a thought is limited by another thought.

E.i.DEF.2.

It is easy to understand how a body can be limited by another body, but much
less so, how a thought, or a mind is limited by another mind. Of course we can talk of having finite minds, meaning by this that we cannot, for example, conceive an infinity of things at the same time, but the problem still remains that we don't have a metric for size of minds, as we do for size of bodies.

If human beings were not regarded as special by Spinoza we could have expected him to have produced a study of 'the order and connexion' of the human body, or human bodies, in their commerce with the rest of the extended world, and then to invoke E.ii.7. to justify his claim that the mind is in bondage too. The point I am trying to make is that Spinoza is really doing himself an injustice, though he apparently would not have thought so, when he says that he is going to consider human actions and appetites as if he were studying lines, planes or bodies. If he really followed this through he would have concentrated on the physical movements of the bodies of human beings, and would have then added the specifically mental content at the end via E.ii.7. Of course he does try to maintain the objectivity with which one would normally study lines, planes and the like, but one can detect throughout the latter parts of ETHICS a profound sympathy for the human condition, and in particular for the mental anguish suffered by most human beings.

8. THE NATURE OF HUMAN BONDAGE.

The kernel of Spinoza's theory of human bondage is this. People are nearly always at the mercy of their affects. This is made quite explicit not only by the title of Part Four of ETHICS, which in its complete form reads: "Of Human Bondage or of the Strength of the Affects", but also by the opening words of the introduction to that part.
The impotence of man to govern or restrain the affects I call bondage, for a man who is under their control is not his own master, but is mastered by fortune, in whose power he is, so that he is often forced to follow the worse, although he sees the better before him ...

E.iv.Preface.

The theory is basically that, as most people are fairly weak they are nearly always at the mercy of their affects. When one is at the mercy of an affect, one is not at the helm in determining one's course of action. Affects come over one, whether or not one asks them to, and it is a matter of chance whether or not they impel one to do what one really wants to do, or what it is in one's true interest to do. I shall amplify this point later, when I discuss the theory of the affects in detail.

Despite the seeming inevitability of our being unfree for the reasons adduced earlier, Spinoza does talk of there being a distinction within the behaviour of human beings between activity and passivity, which suggests that our plight may be not quite as gloomy as at first appeared.

I say that we act when anything is done, either within us or without us, of which we are the adequate cause, that is to say (by preceding def.), when from our nature anything follows, either within or without us, which by that nature alone can be clearly and distinctly understood. On the other hand I say that we suffer when anything is done within us, or when anything follows from our nature, of which we are not the cause except partially.

E.iii.Def.3.

In more modern language one might translate the above definition into something like the following: Whenever the occurrence of an event can be explained solely by reference to the fundamental desire of a person that person is active - or perhaps better is: We are active when we do something because
that is what we, namely our true selves, want to do. On the other hand we suffer, or are passive, to the extent that what we do is determined by anything other than our true selves. The question will now, I suspect, arise in the reader's mind as to what is this 'true self'. This might well be coupled with the question 'What is the connexion between 'fundamental desire' and 'true self'? They both seem extremely nebulous expressions which call for explication, and they aren't obviously connected.

9. ESSENCES AND INNER DRIVES.

Spinoza, as I think has been said earlier, distinguishes 'existence' from 'essence'. In connexion with his arguments about God, he says that God's essence involves existence, just as the essence of a triangle involves the triangle's having three sides. According to this notion of essence, an object's essence may be equated roughly with its definition. We know that a triangle will have three sides as this fact is contained in the definition or 'essence' of a triangle. Similarly, the argument goes, with God - that God exists is part of the definition or 'essence' of God. It would be self-contradictory to deny existence to God, just as it would be self-contradictory to deny three-sidedness to a triangle.

Notwithstanding all this, Spinoza has something else in mind when he talks of essences other than a simple equation of 'essence' and 'definition'. He does have a distinction between 'essence' and 'actual essence', which is not specifically acknowledged by him, but is nonetheless important.

He defines 'essence' in the following way at the beginning of ETHICS Part Two:
I say that to the essence of anything pertains that, which being given, the thing itself is necessarily posited, and being taken away, the thing is necessarily taken; or, in other words, that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which in its turn cannot be nor be conceived without the thing.

E.ii.Def.2.

Here 'essence' is defined as something similar to what we might call 'defining characteristics'. This was a fairly common interpretation of 'essence'. The essence of a thing consists of its essential properties. So, for any thing, if its essential properties are instantiated the thing is said to exist. Similarly, if the thing exists the essential properties must be instantiated, and so on.

This definition does not, as might appear on a first reading, commit Spinoza to an ontological argument for the existence of all things, for it does not assert that the essence of a thing causes its existence. However, it is true that the instantiation of the essential properties of a thing 'causes' its existence, as this instantiation entails the existence of the thing. In order to get the ontological argument out of E.ii.Def.2., one would need the premise that 'existence' is a defining or essential property of everything, which Spinoza does not accept.

The definition above is slightly puzzling because Spinoza implies in it that the essence of a thing is responsible for two activities. It first of all enables the thing to exist, and secondly enables it to be conceived, as if these were two separate feats. They are actually intimately related, for if something is inconceivable it could not exist, whereas the definition suggests, by the words "neither be nor be conceived", that something could be, and yet not be conceivable. Perhaps one should not make too much of this.
Spinoza had two different things in mind when he talked of essences, even though he might have been misled by his causal rationalism into equating them. The second type of 'essence' has much more to do with an inner dynamic force which keeps things going, than with the defining or essential properties of the original definition. In the part of ETHICS which is devoted to explaining the nature and origin of the affects Spinoza says the following:

The effort by which each thing endeavours to persevere in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself.

E.iii.7

The 'actual essence' of a thing is here something like the inner drive which holds it together, or, in the case of people, the basic motivational force. This is a far cry from the rather abstract essential properties of the original account of 'essence', although the word 'essential' could justifiably be applied to both sets of properties. More will be said on this controversial subject of drives, when I talk in more detail about motivation.

So I contend that in E.ii.Def.2., Spinoza is confused between 'formal' essences or definitions and 'actual' essences, or inner-driving forces, and his confusion stems directly from his causal rationalism.

What interests me here is the second sense of 'essence'. Spinoza believes that human beings are passive or in bondage when what they do does not follow from their drive for self-preservation. The actual essence of each person is something very akin to the Freudian notion of the 'id'. The main difference is that Spinoza rather implausibly attributes this fundamental endeavour for self-preservation, or 'conatus' as it is commonly called, to all things, animate or inanimate. This 'conatus' doctrine is fairly well-known, not least for its being very difficult to defend, especially in the face of
such self-destructive 'things' as activated time bombs.

I shall not try to defend the 'conatus' doctrine, but would like to say that it is a doctrine which has far more plausibility when applied to human beings and other animate objects, than when applied to lifeless things. This is a feature common to many of Spinoza's doctrines despite his vehement anti-anthropocentrism.

His anti-anthropocentrism came from two directions. He tried to close the gap between people and things first of all by saying that people are far more like things than they think. He also maintained that things are far more like people than we think. Thus he demotes human beings and elevates non-human beings. These two strains in Spinoza's anti-anthropocentrism are closely paralleled by his wavering between a cold scientific view of the universe, and a reverent pantheism. Despite this he never manages quite to escape his deep commitment to understanding the human condition.

In fact Spinoza does, whilst discussing the 'conatus' doctrine make relevant distinction between people and, say, inanimate objects. He makes the distinction as if it is not particularly important, although it turns out to have great significance. Talking of the effort or endeavour of anything to persevere in its own being he writes:

This effort, when it is related to the mind alone, is called will, but when it is related at the same time both to the mind and the body, is called appetite, which is therefore nothing but the very essence of man, from the nature of which necessarily follow those things which promote his preservation, and thus he is determined to do those things. Hence there is no difference between appetite and desire, unless in this particular, that desire is generally related to men and it may therefore be defined as
appetite of which we are conscious.

E.iii.9.Sch.

Human beings are different from ordinary things, because we have consciousness of our desires. Spinoza acknowledged this, but he could not adequately accommodate it into his theory of psycho-physical parallelism, for he maintained that the:

... idea of the mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind itself is united to the body.

E.ii.21.

According to his original theory every physical state has its mental counterpart. He is now asserting that in the same way every mental state has, besides a physical counterpart, a higher order mental state, which it is difficult to see as other than something like our notion of self-consciousness. The problem with this is that, along with the original parallelism, it would entail that everything is self-conscious, or that there are ideas of the ideas of say stones. Yet clearly there are mental states without self-consciousness, even if one were to grant that all things have mental states. Moreover it is obvious, amongst other things, from E.iii.9.Sch., that Spinoza realized this. In fact, in his theory of human freedom, our capacity for reflective awareness, something not attributed to things other than people, is crucial for the escape from bondage.

It seems fairly clear from this why Spinoza, in his talk about human beings is far more concerned with their mental aspect. Thoughts were somewhat of an embarrassment to him in his metaphysical talk about finite and infinite; bodies are the embarrassment when he talks about the possibility of human freedom, since we have such obviously finite bodies.
I pass now to a discussion of the stumbling blocks to human freedom, the affects.

10. THE AFFECTS. PART ONE.

'Affection' is defined in the following way:

By affection I understand the affections of the body, by which the power of acting of the body itself is increased, diminished, helped, or hindered, together with the ideas of these affections.

E.iii.Def.3.

One has affects only when there is some change in the 'power of acting of the body itself'. The nearest equivalent in our language to an affect is, I think, an emotion, although this is not more than an approximation. The main difference may stem less from Spinoza meaning something different by 'affect' from what we mean by 'emotion', and more from the fact that he held unfamiliar views about our familiar emotions.

Affects are a species of 'affection' of the body plus the idea of that affection. An affection is a change in the state of a body. Some affections leave the body's power of acting unchanged, whilst others constitute a change in power. An affect is an affection which constitutes a change in a body's power of acting plus the corresponding idea of this change. When Spinoza talks of our bondage to the affects he is concerned mainly with affects such as sorrow, rage, joy and so on, rather than with the changes which occur in one's power of acting when one suffers direct physical affronts such as being hit on the head by a stone and the corresponding pain, although this would technically-speaking be an affect.
Spinoza does sometimes talk as if the affects cause rises and falls in the power of bodies. What one might say to explain this is that an affect not only constitutes a change in the power of acting of a body, but also causes a further rise or fall.

Activity was believed by Spinoza to be more desirable than passivity. In fact he equated 'power' with 'virtue'. 'Power' in this context means 'power of activity', 'activity' here being a technical term to be explained later.

The affects of sorrow mark a change from the more to the less active. These affects are therefore in themselves bad. For these negative affects constitute and bring about a diminution in the power of the body. They also diminish the power of the mind, for:

If anything increases, diminishes, helps, or limits our body's power of action, the idea of that thing increases, diminishes, helps, or limits our body's power of thought.

E.iii.11.

These, as I call them, 'negative' affects, cannot stem from our own nature or actual essence, since our own nature is constantly striving for self-realization which is equated with activity. Our minds are, for instance, described in the following way:

The mind endeavours as much as possible to imagine those things which increase or assist the body's power of acting.

E.iii.12.

When one is having a negative affect, one's mind is not imagining that which will increase the body's power of action, but on the contrary, is dwelling on the loss of power of the body. These thoughts cannot stem from our own nature,
then. Therefore, to the extent that we have such affects we are not active, according to the definition given above.

In ETHICS Part Three Spinoza says that there are three primary affects, which are joy, sorrow, and desire. The last of these causes problems of interpretation, since 'desire' is not only associated with the already alluded to 'conatus', but is reintroduced as something which arises from joys and sorrows. Spinoza even writes:

There are as many kinds of desires, ... as there are kinds of joy, sorrow, love &c....

E.iii.56.Dem.

These individual desires can increase or diminish the power of acting of their possessors, whereas the conatus inevitably involves an increase. Spinoza certainly ought to have distinguished the 'conatus-desire' from the 'affect-desire', as these are, although related, different. The desires which arise out of joys and sorrows are affects from which a free person will be free, whereas a free person will have an extremely powerful conatus.

The other two primary affects are defined in the following way:

By joy, ... I shall understand the passion by which the mind passes to a greater perfection; by sorrow, ... the passion by which it passes to a less perfection.

E.iii.11.Sch.

Sorrow and joy are called 'passions' because they do not, typically, arise simply from the essence of the joyful or sorrowful person. These affects, along with 'desire' are the basic ones. Affects typically involve joy, sorrow, or desire, plus the accompanying idea of some external thing, that is, of something other than the owner of the affect. For instance the affect of hatred is defined as:
Sorrow, with the accompanying idea of an external cause.

E. Def. 8. of the Affects.

Joy and the affects of joy are in themselves good, whereas sorrow and its affects are in themselves bad, for:

Joy ... is an affect by which the body's power of action is increased or assisted. Sorrow on the other hand, is an affect by which the body's power of action is lessened or restrained.

E. iv. 41. Dem.

In more familiar language one might say that feeling sorrowful is a bad thing, since when one feels like that one is severely limited from doing things. Spinoza believed that sorrow was a psycho-physical condition which constitutes both a physical and a psychological diminution of power of the sorrowful person. This is true of all the affects of sorrow. Consider, for instance, someone who feels extremely jealous. If one feels extremely jealous of somebody, then it is likely that one will be severely inhibited from doing the things which one really wants to do. Often when one feels jealous, remorseful, resentful, or any of a host of other things, one is not only somehow 'taken over' by feelings which one did not invite to come upon one, but also one would very much like it if the feelings would go away. Many of these feelings simply interfere with one's purposes when one is subject to them. The most obvious area where this is the case is in the field of concentration. One just cannot seem to concentrate on anything, except of course one's sorrow, if one is in subjection to a sorrow. On the other hand, if one is feeling full of joy, one is very often able to do a lot of things get a lot done. Feelings of joy are not typically inhibiting. Moreover, people do not, as a rule, wish that they did not have the feelings of joy to which they are subject. So, although both joy and sorrow are passions in the
sense that they typically come upon us through causes external to ourselves, we are in less bondage if we are subject to the emotions of joy than if we are subject to sorrows.

Spinoza writes in a note at the bottom of the definition of 'affect':

If ... we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand the affect to be an action, otherwise it is a passion.

E.iii.Def.3.

So Spinoza does allow the possibility of having affects, and being active in so doing. In as much as the affects we have constitute activities rather than passivities, they must be affects of either joy or desire, although clearly, being such an affect is not a sufficient condition for being an 'active' one. Nevertheless I would like to say that it is not at all clear that the passions of sorrow, as they are called, universally make us unfree to a greater extent than some of the passions of joy. Sometimes people keep going in the depths of adversity, driven on by a hatred of their oppressors. I have heard of people who survived the most terrible ordeals in the Nazi concentration camps, driven on by a hatred of the Nazis, which helped to give them the single-mindedness to put up with the most appalling hardships, which broke many people, who had, perhaps, less strong emotions, and were, hence more 'free'. If bondage is the lack of self-determination, and if self-determination is acting solely from the motive of self-preservation, then Spinoza's claim about the extremity of bondage to the affects of sorrow would seem at most true as a rule, and not a universal truth.

I shall now pass on, for the time being, from the affects as such, although there is quite a lot more to be said by way of elucidation, expansion and criticism. I shall resume this discussion in my next chapter.
11. ADEQUACY.

There is one crucial aspect of Spinoza's account of the bondage of human beings which I have so far left completely alone, and this is his notion of adequacy. Adequacy crops up in two guises. Spinoza talks of 'adequate causes' and of 'adequate ideas'.

In E.iii.Def.3., above quoted, Spinoza is saying that we are active if we are the 'adequate cause' of an affect. He defines 'adequate cause' as follows:

I call that an adequate cause whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived by means of the cause. I call that an inadequate or partial cause whose effect cannot be understood by means of the cause alone.

E.iii.Def.1.

As is strongly implied by the note at the end of E.iii.Def.3., Spinoza certainly believed that it is possible for us to be active, some of the time, at any rate. This immediately generates problems for him, given his theory that we are active inasmuch as we are the adequate cause of how we feel, and of what we do. The most natural way to interpret 'adequate cause', in the light of Spinoza's causal rationalism is to take it that adequacy is an all or nothing matter. Either a cause is completely adequate, or it is completely inadequate. What E.iii.Def.1. appears to be saying is that a cause is adequate if and only if it entails its effect no matter what else is the cause. Thus God can be described as the adequate cause of all conceivable things, since all things follow from the nature of God. An adequate cause, then, is something like a logically sufficient condition. The problem with this interpretation of 'adequate cause' is that it would render our bondage or passivity absolutely irremediable which is certainly not what Spinoza intended. It
would make our passivity absolutely incurable because we are individual things in nature, and:

There is no individual thing in nature which is not surpassed in strength and power by some other thing, but any individual thing being given, another and a stronger is also given, by which the former can be destroyed.

E.iv.Axiom.

As I could be destroyed at any time by a number of things outside of myself, every time I do anything or feel anything part of the cause of my feeling the thing I feel or of my doing the thing I do is that I am being enabled to do or feel whatever it is by the suitable interaction of the things that could destroy me, of which there are an infinite number. Fully to understand why I do what I do, or feel the way I feel, it is necessary to understand, amongst other things, why I exist. As I am not the adequate cause of my own existence I could not be the adequate cause of what presupposes it, namely my feelings and actions and so on.

So it seems that we are forced to construe 'adequate causation as being a matter of degree. If we give it this interpretation then we can at least allow there to be degrees of activity. We might wish to say that someone who is doing something because that is what he really wants to do, and not because he is, say, suffering from a compulsion, or because someone else is making him, is more of an adequate cause of his action than the slave and the kleptomaniac. This would yield the right answer as far as our intuitions are concerned with regard to the relative freedom or degree of activity of the various people. The slave and the kleptomaniac are paradigm examples of people who are relatively speaking very unfree, and passive, at least with regard to their slaving and stealing.
However, this escape doesn't let Spinoza off the hook, at least if he is to maintain his causal rationalism. The problem is that of establishing a scale for degrees of adequacy. If adequacy is a matter of degree one would have to make comparisons between inadequate causes in order to say which is the more adequate. Given a causal rationalist idea of 'cause' this would amount to having to make statements of the following form. 'X is a more adequate cause of Y than P is of Q. For X comes nearer to entailing Y than P does to entailing Q.' But the only sense in which there can be these 'degrees of entailment' yields only three 'degrees'. Either A entails B, or it is consistent with, but doesn't, by itself entail B, or it is inconsistent with B. The 'degrees of adequacy' would have to be developed within the second of my three categories, and in this context there is simply no room there for such a development. As far as the entailment of events is concerned a miss is as good as a mile.

If he gave up the causal rationalism there would be hope of at least some salvage. When we talk of the cause of a happening we aren't usually concerned with all the things which had to conspire in order for the event to have occurred. For instance if a car crashes, and we want to find out the cause we don't say that it was caused by gravity, although the law of gravity's holding at the time of the crash would have been a necessary condition of the accident. We would also not be particularly interested in some of the particular facts of the situation which might have been necessary conditions for the crash having occurred, such as the fact that the road was less than fifty yards wide, or the fact that the wind was blowing at a rate of less than two hundred miles per hour. When we are looking for the cause of something's happening we assume that something unusual happened, and was a factor in the happening. To pursue the 'crash' story further, we would probably assume
that the accident would not have happened if the driver had not been negligent, or if the car's tyres had not been bald, or if the camber of the road had been normal, or ... . When we pick out the cause of an event we pick out the thing of all the causes which seems to be special to the particular case. In the crash case we wouldn't say that the cause of the crash was the force of gravity, since the force of gravity is present on the roads at all times, and yet crashes happen fairly infrequently. One might say to this that people's cars often have bald tyres etc. I quite agree that none of the causes is logically sufficient to guarantee the event. However, we do, with some justification talk of important and less important factors in something's happening. The most important cause is the one which is regarded as being particularly special to the case. We might say that the most important factor in, or cause of, the crash was the driver's negligence, since the road was normal, the car's tyres were in good condition ... .

We can relate this to human beings and their actions and psychic states. When we explain the occurrence of something we pick out that of the causally relevant factors which are special to the case. So we could easily say of a human being that he or she was the cause of an action. This would be tantamount to saying that in the action, what was special to the case was the person's real desires, as opposed to the will of another, or a compulsion, or a number of things external to the agent's 'essence'. Of the things one does, one is really the driving force behind some, though not others. Also a person might be one of the most important, though not the most important factor behind a certain thing taking place. According to this model there is some hope of establishing a scale. We can talk of being a more or less special causal factor in our actions, as the actions emanate to a large extent from our own selves, or from extraneous factors.
This interpretation is, I think, in the spirit of Spinoza's account of freedom. It is clear at this point just how much the causal rationalism is an embarrassment to Spinoza's philosophy. I shall take up the discussion of 'being the cause of our psychic states' in the next chapter.

The other role in which 'adequacy' appears is in the notion of 'adequate ideas'. That the distinction between adequate and inadequate ideas is important for Spinoza's theory of human bondage is suggested right at the beginning of ETHICS Part Three.

Our mind acts and at times suffers: in so far as it has adequate ideas, it necessarily acts, and in so far as it has inadequate ideas, it necessarily suffers.

E.iii.1.

I wrote earlier that Spinoza's theory of human bondage and freedom was essentially about mental bondage and freedom. Here he is saying that we are free, or at least our mind acts, to the extent that we have adequate ideas. What then is an 'adequate idea'? Spinoza's definition at the beginning of Part Two is not in itself very helpful.

By adequate idea, I understand an idea which in so far as it is considered in itself, without reference to the object, has all the properties or internal signs of a true idea.

EXPLANATION: I say internal, so as to exclude that which is external, the agreement, namely, of the idea with its object.

E.ii.Def.4.

According to this definition and its explanation, then, an adequate idea is one which has the properties of a true idea, whatever that may be, without any reference to the agreement of the idea with its object, whatever that may mean. Spinoza wishes to exclude 'the agreement of the idea with its object', because according to his theory of truth and falsity, all ideas agree with
their objects. But this, for anyone with a correspondence theory of truth, is to admit that there is no such thing as falsity. In the definition Spinoza implies that there is such a thing as a false idea, but he is never able to say exactly how something can be false. In the definition he implies that an adequate idea is one which can be seen to be true without having to rely on knowledge about the world - it can be known to be true from its own internal structure alone. But he cannot say in what falsity consists, and without this he cannot explain what truth or any species of truth might be. He does define 'falsity', in the following way:

Falsity consists in the privation of knowledge, which inadequate, that is to say, mutilated and confused ideas involve.

E.ii.35.

Any account of what falsity is must be in terms of what it is to make a false judgement. It must be able to explain what it is for someone to believe that something is the case which isn't in fact the case. Spinoza does not have any adequate account of judgement or of belief, and so cannot give an adequate account of falsity. There is in fact strong evidence to suggest that what Spinoza calls 'falsity' and 'truth' is a completely different thing from what we mean by the terms. What he cannot do is to explain the possibility of having false beliefs on our notion of falsity. There is obviously much more to be said about Spinoza's theory of falsity which one cannot discuss in a work of this scope and subject-matter. Any account of falsity must be in terms of 'false judgments'. Spinoza's account being just in terms of ideas cannot yield an adequate account of what a false judgment, or indeed of what a judgment, may be.

Despite their theoretic unsatisfactoriness Spinoza's definitions of 'adequate idea' and of 'falsity' do contain interesting elements, which can
be extracted from the unsalvageable wreck of the theory of falsity.

There is some sense in which we can talk of ideas as being 'inadequate' or 'mutilated'. In this sense an 'inadequate' idea is one which gives a distorted picture of what it is supposedly an idea of. One analogy which might elucidate this is that of a camera and its photographs. Cameras always tell the truth, for they take pictures only of what is actually before them. However photographs are notorious for giving distorted views of the facts of a situation. Sometimes the impression one gets from a photograph is very misleading vis-a-vis what actually occurred when the photo was taken. At best one gets a camera-eye view of what went on, and there is always a bit of reading into the photo which has to be done if one is to get an accurate idea of what really happened, was really like.

Another analogy which helps explain what an 'inadequate idea' might be is one I heard from Jonathan Bennett. Let us consider someone watching a cricket match through a narrow vertical slit. What the observer will perceive is a series of rather disconnected people and ball movements. What he sees will be seen out of context, and could not enable him to understand exactly what was going on, at least unless he could connect up what he saw with other cricket matches which he had seen, and understood, under more favourable conditions. Suppose that the slit enables the observer to see only the line across the middle of the pitch. Then all he will see is the ball coming through his field of vision every so often, and people periodically running towards him or away from him. In this case the observer cannot discover from his looking what the causes of his perceptions are, or rather what the causes of the ball-movements are, and he therefore cannot understand them. Similarly Spinoza believed that we could not properly understand an inadequate idea.
In illustrating this feature this analogy is of more help than the other.

What Spinoza is trying to get out of the notion of 'adequate idea' is something propositional, such as 'a sentence which is true in virtue of its internal construction or logical form'. He believed that to have an adequate idea was to have in one's mind a necessary truth. Of course his theory didn't allow him to say this, but it is fairly clear that this is what he had in mind.

Spinoza, then, believed that all ideas represented reality in some way. Some ideas, however, give an incomplete, or distorted picture of what the nature of reality is like. These are the so-called 'false ideas', and they include the ideas we have of ordinary particular things. In contrast with these ideas are the 'adequate ideas' which provide an accurate, non-subjective picture of reality. Spinoza believed that in reality the connexions between things were logical, and that the only real knowledge there is is 'adequate knowledge'. To have an adequate idea is to perceive something in its true light, under the aspect of eternity.

We can now link Spinoza's statement that we are in bondage to our passions with his statement that we are passive to the extent that we have inadequate ideas, where passivity is tantamount to bondage. According to Spinoza when we suffer a passion we necessarily have an inadequate, or distorted idea of the cause of our own sorrow or joy.

There is one more feature of an adequate idea which might be worth mentioning briefly, and that is the following. Adequate ideas are something like Descartes' 'clear and distinct' ideas. They differ from them in this respect. According to Spinoza one can never be deceived into thinking that one has an
adequate idea when one doesn't actually have one.

He who has a true idea knows at the same time that he has a true idea, nor can he doubt the truth of the thing.

E.ii.43.

Then he writes, more poetically in E.ii.43.Sch.:

Just as light reveals both itself and the darkness, so truth is the standard of itself and of the false.

E.ii.43.Sch.

This provides an answer, at least to those critics of Cartesian 'clear and distinct' ideas, who maintain that we can be duped into thinking a non-clear-and-distinct idea is such.

It is also interesting in the light of Spinoza's believing that vacillation is one of the important ingredients of human bondage. What he is saying is that when one is on the right path, so to speak, one certainly knows one is, and will not have any doubts about the matter.

Spinoza's account of human freedom is, as one might expect, intimately connected with the theory of bondage. I have tried up till now to concentrate on the 'bondage' side of his account. I realize that in elucidating human bondage, one has to contrast it with human freedom, and vice versa. There are some aspects, however, of the theory of freedom which can be rejected whilst the basic account of bondage is accepted. Although the theories are two sides of the same coin, one side of the coin has more designs on it than the other. The next chapter will be ostensibly on the freedom of human beings. I would just like to make it clear that the division of the account of the
human condition into chapters on bondage and freedom is rather artificial, given the content of each chapter. In dividing the chapters up in this way I am following Spinoza, and also acknowledging that there are aspects of the account of freedom which are independent of the account of bondage, or at least deserve an independent treatment. In any event the next chapter will tie up a number of loose ends remaining out of the discussion of human bondage.
CHAPTER THREE

THE FREEDOM OF HUMAN BEINGS

12. INTELLECT AND REASON.

Although Spinoza's account of human liberty doesn't officially begin until ETHICS Part Five, he talks about it at some length in the section on human bondage. In the ensuing discussion I shall draw on both Parts. Just as Part Four is called 'Of Human Bondage OR THE STRENGTH OF THE AFFECTS' so Part Five is called 'Of THE POWER OF THE INTELLECT, or of Human Liberty' (my capitals). In the Preface to Part Five Spinoza tells us how he is going to show us the 'method or way which leads to liberty'. He says that in order to do this he will:

... treat of the power of reason, showing how much reason itself can control the affects, and then what is freedom of mind or blessedness.

It is interesting that already his account of human liberty is in terms of 'freedom of mind', rather than 'freedom of body and mind', or some such thing. I have already mentioned my conjecture as to why, when he is talking about human beings and their liberty, Spinoza is so shy of the body. The main reason for this is that as Spinoza has defined freedom so that finitude rules out freedom, it would be absurd to suggest that one could make one's body free. We should take Spinoza's official reason for ignoring the body in the discussion of freedom, or rather, for not working out in detail the body's freedom, with a pinch of salt. He says that he won't occupy himself with how the body can best perform its functions, as this is a task for medicine.
He also says that he is not going to concern himself with how to render the intellect perfect, despite the title of Part Five, for this is a matter for logic. This is puzzling to say the least. What is relevant here is the distinction between the second and third kinds of knowledge which are somewhat obscurely introduced in Part Two. I shall now turn to a brief discussion of the kinds of knowledge as they are brought in in Part Two.

Spinoza does not mean by 'knowledge' ('scientia') what we mean by the term, for according to him, conferring the title of knowledge upon something is not to give it an epistemic certificate. Thus he talks of uncertain or inadequate knowledge, whereas we would not call anything 'knowledge' which was epistemically inadequate, or about whose truth we were uncertain.

The first kind of knowledge corresponds more or less to our ordinary empirical knowledge, and includes what we 'know' from having been told, and what we 'know' from making sensory observations. The second kind of knowledge is supposed to derive from our 'possessing common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things'. What I think he means here is something like 'knowledge of the kind which comes via logical deduction'. The third kind of knowledge, the famous 'scientifia intuitiva', is described in the following manner:

This kind of knowing advances from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things.

E.ii.40 (Schol.2)

This is really rather mysterious, and is 'explained' by the notoriously unhelpful example of different ways of finding the fourth proportional. Spinoza has already said that one might find the fourth proportional, given three numbers, because one remembers, in the particular case, that the fourth
proportional of, for instance, 2, 4 and 6, is 12, in which case one's knowledge is of the first kind; or one might find it by applying the relevant rule from 'Euclid', understanding the rule for deducing proportionals, in which case one's knowledge would be of the second kind. He continues:

But with the simplest numbers there is no need of all this. If the numbers 1, 2, 3, for instance be given, every one can see that the fourth proportional is 6 much more clearly than by any demonstration, because from the ratio in which we see by one intuition that the first stands to the second we conclude the fourth.

E.ii. (Schol.2)

Both knowledge of the third and of the second kind are epistemically guaranteed by Spinoza, since both involve 'adequate ideas', which are meant to be the ideas of what we would call 'necessary truths'. There is, however, a difference between the two kinds of knowledge, which is reminiscent of a distinction of Descartes. Both philosophers distinguished intuitive from deductive knowledge. The latter involves a chain of reasoning. Thus in a piece of deductive reasoning one passes from the premise or premises to the conclusion, as it were step by step, for instance by applying a rule to the original premise. In intuitive reasoning on the other hand, one sees it all at one go. In Spinoza's example one does not reach the conclusion that the fourth proportional of 1, 2, 3, is 6 by applying any rules. One passes straight from the original premise to the conclusion. There is in this latter case no movement from premises to conclusion, as is required in a deduction. Descartes, writing of the distinction between intuition and deduction says:

Hence we distinguish this mental intuition from deduction by the fact that into the conception of the latter there enters a certain movement or succession, into that of the former there does not.


We can thus link Spinoza's example quite well with the Cartesian distinction.
The problem now remains of interpreting the characterization of the third kind of knowledge which occurs before the example, and has already been quoted here. There is an important clue in E.ii.47. (Schol.), which casts rather a new light on the whole matter, despite its obscurity.

Hence we see that the infinite essence and the eternity of God are known to all; and since all things are in God and are conceived through Him, it follows that we can deduce from this knowledge many things which we can know adequately, and that we can thus form that third sort of knowledge mentioned in E.ii.40. (Schol.2), of whose excellence and value the Fifth Part will be the place to speak.

F.ii.47.

The interpretation here put upon Spinoza's 'scientia intuitiva' must remain somewhat tentative. It is a fundamental belief of Spinoza that we cannot have adequate knowledge of ordinary empirical objects. However we can, it now appears, get knowledge of something particular, in virtue of our knowledge of the infinite essence of (some of the attributes of) God. This something particular is the essence of individual things. The knowledge is the true knowledge of reason, the knowledge of the third kind, 'scientia intuitiva'.

There are some truths which we know to be true intuitively, for instance the truth that one plus one equals two. We cannot explain why this is so in terms of something simpler, but must remain content with saying something like: 'If you know what is meant by "one" and "two", then it's just obvious, that is it's indubitable'. One might be able to do slightly better than that, but to do so is not the present concern. It is just worth considering the sort of feeling one has about such statements as 'One plus one is two'. If we combine Spinoza's illustration of 'scientia intuitiva' with its definition and what is said about it in E.ii.47. (Schol.), it emerges that Spinoza believed it to be in principle possible to have knowledge about individual
essences which is qualitatively similar to the sort of knowledge we have of the simplest mathematical truths.

Knowledge of both the third and the second kinds is adequate, unlike the knowledge of the first kind. However Spinoza is primarily concerned with that of the third kind. This, I believe, is because knowledge of the third kind is involved in the attainment of that of the second kind. This is, admittedly, in apparent conflict with the way Spinoza sets up his distinctions between kinds of knowledge, which implies that the third kind is something which only a few people attain, although many attain that of the second kind. In reply to this one could say that really Spinoza has two things going at the same time, and refers to them both as 'scientia intuitiva', for the obvious reason that they involve immediate intuitions. The two things are the straightforward obvious necessary truths such as 'one plus equals two', and the rather mysterious knowledge of the essence of individual things. One could then say that the first of these is required in any deduction, that is any deduction has to include some intuitive jump. For instance any logical argument requires the use of 'intuitive' logical laws. The other kind of 'scientia intuitiva' is something which is elusive, to be revered and is not presupposed by knowledge of the second kind. The argument here offered is that Spinoza rather misleadingly calls these two species of 'scientia intuitiva' 'knowledge of the third kind'.

13. SELF-PRESERVATION

There are many facets to Spinoza's notion of what constitutes activity. Many of them have to do with the 'conatus' doctrine which was introduced into the discussion in the previous chapter. The ensuing discussion is basically an extension of that discussion. The 'conatus' doctrine is stated briefly as
Each thing, in so far as it is in itself, endeavours to persevere in its being.

E.ii.6.

Human beings, as things, endeavour to persevere in their own being. From E.iii.6., one can infer that if something is not persevering in its own being, whatever that may mean, it is, in virtue of that, not 'in itself'. If something is not 'in itself', Spinoza would say, I believe, that it is neither self-determined, nor active, nor free. Although the implication arrow goes only from 'being in itself' to 'endeavouring to persevere in its being', there is no reason to believe that Spinoza would object to its going the other way as well - 'If something is endeavouring to persevere in its being, it is, in virtue of that, 'in itself'. If this were so we could find out what human freedom consists of by discovering what it is for a human being to endeavour to persevere in its being. When we are talking about human beings we could translate 'endeavouring to persevere in its own being' as acting out of the motive of self-preservation'. The question now is 'What is the motive of self-preservation?'.

The first impression one gets from reading Spinoza on this subject is that he means something which resembles a common sense notion of self-preservation by 'endeavour to persevere in its own being'. He not only says that a person who commits suicide is, in virtue of this, obviously not active or free, but governed by external factors; he also writes the following:

... a free man avoids danger by the same virtue as that by which he seeks to overcome it.

... By danger, I understand anything which may be the cause of sorrow, hatred, discord, or any other evil like them.

E.iv.49 (Dem. 6 Corol.)
This notion of self-preservation doesn't seem different from our ordinary notion of keeping out of trouble, and doesn't appear to have anything particularly Spinozist about it. The notion of 'self-preservation' in this context is remarkably similar to any common or garden concept of 'self-interest'. Spinoza is, in effect, saying that a free man is one who is self-interested.

He also equates virtue and power, and in its turn, power and freedom. So a powerful person is one who is free, and a free person is one who is virtuous. If virtue, power and freedom are the same thing, and if freedom is acting out of the motive of self-interest, then it follows that it is virtuous to act out of self-interest. But isn't this quite contrary to what we understand by virtue? For we frequently distinguish virtuous people from non-virtuous people on the grounds that the former and not the latter are prepared to sacrifice their own self-interest for other people. Being self-interested is not only not the criterion of virtue, it seems to be fundamentally opposed to it. Isn't Spinoza, then, hopelessly wrong on this matter? How can we take at all seriously any moral theory which advocates universal selfishness?

Although Spinoza is vehemently against much of the psychology behind fundamental Christian ethics, he is not in fact, advocating that we should never care about anybody or anything other than ourselves. Much of ETHICS Part Four is actually devoted to showing how acting in one's real self-interest involves abiding by most of the principles of a morality of mutual caring for people, such as that advocated by Christianity. What he is attempting to do is to free people from the bondage of not really understanding why they do what they do. He is particularly concerned with why people do what they do, rather than with the content of their actions, although the two are obviously interrelated. His basic strategy begins by defining 'good' and 'evil' in a
technical way for the purposes of ETHICS Part Four. The definitions are quite revealing.

    By good, I understand that which we certainly know is useful to us.

    By evil, on the contrary, I understand that which we certainly know hinders us from possessing anything that is good.


Having defined as 'good' that which we know to be useful to us, one might think that he would naturally take it to be evil to make any sacrifices for anyone else. In particular, it would seem to be the height of evil to lay down one's life for anyone or anything. However, this view is not held even by Spinoza.

There is in Spinoza's work the basis for a distinction between what in more recent discussions would be called 'crude self-interest' and 'enlightened self-interest', although this distinction is not made explicit by him, and is in fact sometimes belied by the text. If we are not guided by reason we might well think that our best interest would be served by trying to get one up on our fellow human beings, or at least by rarely considering the needs of others, except where some direct benefit would accrue to one through one's 'benevolence'. For instance we would think that our self-interest would be better served by listening to an enjoyable opera, than by looking after an ailing grandmother. One might think it would be virtuous to look after the grandmother, but it would certainly not be in one's self-interest to do so, unless one was anticipating being left a lot of money by her, or if, for some reason, one found looking after her more enjoyable than listening to opera. Spinoza might well agree that looking after the grandmother would be virtuous, and we should not forget that he believed acting virtuously and
acting out of self-interest to be the same thing. How does he come to such a position on the grandmother case?

His first move is to assert that nothing can be evil in so far as it is similar to our nature. But nothing is more similar to each of our natures than another person. As anything that is not evil is good, from the last two sentences it follows that for any person another person is good. Other people are, in the special Spinozist sense of 'useful', very useful to us. He writes:

There is no single thing in nature which is more profitable to man than a man who lives according to the guidance of reason. For that is most profitable to man which most agrees with his own nature ...

E.iv.35. (Coroll.1)

The Latin word 'convenire' means 'to agree' both in the sense of 'to have things in common with' and that of 'to be suitable', so one might accuse Spinoza of either deliberately or inadvertently punning on the word 'convenit' to establish his conclusion, for it is almost a tautology that those things which agree with us in the latter sense of 'agree with' are 'profitable' to us. However, whether or not there is some punning going on here, it is clear that Spinoza would have stuck to E.iv.35. (Coroll.1) even with the former interpretation of 'convenit'.

According to this doctrine people are more profitable to a person than any other thing is profitable, because they have more in common with each other than they have with other things. However, when people are not governed by reason, what they do does not follow from their essence or nature, and what they have in common with each other becomes obscured. When people are not guided by reason they are ruled by their passions, and:
In so far as men are agitated by affects which are passions can they be contrary to one another.

E.iv.34.

It is quite clear that Spinoza has to struggle to reconcile his theory that power and virtue are the same with something which resembles a humanistic morality. This is because of the rather glaring fact that people do have genuine conflicts of interest, and that one person's power, or well-being at any rate, seems to be attainable sometimes only at the cost of another's. Furthermore this is not simply because of people's not being governed by reason. Suppose, for example that we are back in ancient Rome at the time of the gladiators. If two men had been ordered to fight to the death, or else both be killed by being fed to the lions, and if the victor of the fight would certainly be freed, then the two combatants would have a genuine conflict of interest, and it would be unquestionably false to say that they could seek their own self-preservation, that is act rationally, and not try to kill the other person in combat. This is so even though the two people would probably have more in common than most people. But one doesn't have to go to bizarre examples to see the conflict that inevitably arises from one strand of Spinoza's philosophy of freedom. He equates the 'good' with 'that which we certainly know is useful to us', as we have seen. He then writes:

Whatever is effective to preserve the proportion of motion and rest which the parts of the human body bear to each other is good, and, on the contrary, that is evil which causes the parts of the human body to have a different proportion of motion and rest to each other.

and:

Whatever conduces to the universal fellowship of men, that is to say, whatever causes men to live in harmony with one another, is useful, and, on the contrary,
whatever brings discord into the State is evil.

E.iv.39, § E.iv.40.

From the definitions of 'good' and 'evil' and E.iv.39, it follows that whatever causes the parts of the human body to have a different proportion of motion and rest to each other is harmful to us, for if this proportion is not preserved the body will, on Spinoza's theory of bodies, be destroyed. On the other hand, 'whatever conduces to the universal fellowship of men' is useful to us. But it is quite clear that in some circumstances it might well serve the 'universal fellowship of men' to lay down one's life, that is to see to it, or at least not trying to stop it from happening, that the parts of one's body do not maintain the same proportions of motion and rest. An example of this would be the case of Socrates, who let us suppose, rationally gave up his life for the benefit of his fellow human beings. Someone who died as a result of resisting the Nazi oppression might well have been serving the universal fellowship of mankind. Yet such people would certainly be doing something 'harmful' at the same time - namely bringing about their own deaths.

There are several ways in which Spinoza might explain away the apparently contradictory consequences of his theory. The first would be to say that he is really talking about tendencies. This would amount to a sort of 'rule Spinozism'. Such a version would say that giving up one's life is always harmful, whilst serving the universal fellowship of mankind only tends to be useful. Then one could admit that in certain circumstances it would not be useful to serve the universal fellowship of mankind. On this account many of the statements about the utility and disutility of various things or actions, are meant only as guidelines for action. As it is not always possible to know the true consequences of a particular course of action, we have these
secondary principles to guide us. We could accept the principle 'Do always that which is useful', and when there is a conflict between helping humanity and saving our lives, we just choose to save our life. The trouble with this interpretation is that it quite against the spirit of Spinoza's writing. Spinoza laid out his propositions as an archetypal Rationalist. He did not believe that his statements about people being useful to one another etc., were of the order of secondary principles; he saw them as being necessary consequences of necessary and eternal truths. He just would not have allowed for exceptions.

We could then help Spinoza out here by saying that he actually slipped up on his statement about that which conduces to the universal fellowship of man. We could perhaps persuade a spokesman for Spinoza to drop the 'universal fellowship' principle, and to substitute something more complex. It is useful on the whole to an individual to act in a way which promotes the universal fellowship of mankind, as doing so helps people, including the agent, to live in accordance with reason, that is, to be free or active. This is not always the case, however, and when it isn't the case, e.g. because acting in such a way would cause the agent's death, then it would not be rational or useful to act thus. If one adopted this strategy one would have to relegate E.iv.39., to a scholium. One might think that this would at least preserve most of Spinoza's doctrine about power and virtue. However, this line is blocked by Spinoza himself. We find him saying:

If it be asked whether, if a man by breach of faith could escape from the danger of instant death, reason does not counsel him, for the preservation of his being, to break faith; I reply in the same way, that if reason gives such counsel she gives it to all men, and reason therefore counsels men to make no agreements for uniting their strength and possessing laws in common except deceitfully, that
is to say, to have in reality no common laws, which is absurd.
E.iv.72. (Schol.)

This statement seems to be very near something like one of Kantian universalisability. On the face of it what is recommended to the person in the dilemma is to give up his life - to abandon his self-preservation, and moreover, to do it whilst acting in accordance with reason, that is, freely. Spinoza's argument involves the unfair adoption of a more extreme principle than is required to justify the agent in saving his own life. The principle which Spinoza adopts, as being necessary for justifying the escape is 'Never make any agreements for uniting your strength and for having common laws except deceitfully.' In fact no such principle is required to justify the escape; all that would be needed would be something like: 'When an agreement has been made it is all right to break it if not doing so would cost you your life.' The adoption of this principle is certainly not inconsistent with keeping all kinds of agreements.

The other point that needs making about Spinoza's Kantian move is that what he is saying is that breaking the agreement to save one's life could not be recommended to a person governed by reason, because acting in this way would commit the person to the acceptance of a principle which would have disastrous consequences. But, if we return to the "'good' equals 'useful' (to the agent)" doctrine we can clearly see that what is here recommended is in direct conflict with this earlier doctrine. It could hardly be more useful to the potential escaper to keep the agreement under those circumstances, unless he would be better off destroyed, a supposition which Spinoza could not allow. The course of action recommended by Spinoza in E.iv.72. (Schol.) is certainly commendable, but it certainly doesn't seem to be at all
a rational thing to do on Spinoza's central notion of rationality.

This is at any rate the way it first appears. However Spinoza was very keen to maintain both of these aspects of his moral philosophy - that it is always rational to serve one's fellow human beings, on account of this being 'useful', and that it is always irrational to do something which leads to one's self-destruction, or in fact, anything which harms one. The only way he could maintain both of these doctrines in the light of the conflicts which arise between looking after oneself and serving the interests of others would be to deny the psycho-physical parallelism which plays such a prominent part in the earlier sections of ETHICS. If he were to do this he could say that when we are talking of self-preservation we are really interested in something psychological rather than physical. To act rationally one has to preserve one's essence, or rather, to be trying to do so. If one's essence is a psychical entity then the fact that helping one's fellow human beings might result in physical harm or even physical death for the agent is strictly irrelevant to the rationality of the action. It is clear that Spinoza did move towards abandoning his parallelism in the last Part of ETHICS, although of course he would never admit it. Thus we find him writing revealingly:

The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal.

... this something which pertains to the essence of the mind will necessarily be eternal.

E.v.23. § its Dem.

Certainly when Socrates did not prevent his death he was quite convinced that physical death would not destroy his essence; in fact he went rejoicing to his death, for he believed that his spirit would, at death, finally be liberated, though it must be stressed that he did not die in order to reach
this state of spiritual liberation. However this line of defence is really
not a let-out for Spinoza's moral theory. For one thing, this new view
cannot be reconciled with the parallelism, which states explicitly that:

If anything increases, diminishes, helps, or limits
our body's power of action, the idea of that thing
increases, diminishes, helps, or limits our mind's
power of thought.

E.iii.11.

There is also another difficulty. If the parallelism is rejected then
Spinoza might argue that it can be psychologically beneficial to someone to
lose a limb, or give up his or her life for the fellowship of mankind; but
sometimes the call of service to humanity might lead to one's psychic de­
struction as well. Suppose one was being tortured, and that by holding out
one would not merely not betray the vital secrets, but would also go com­
pletely insane so that one could not longer form 'adequate ideas'. Someone
who held out in these circumstances would certainly be harming his 'mental'
as well as his physical self. If this would not be harming his essence
then it is difficult to see just what would. If the essence of a person can
not be harmed then it seems to be pointless to spend one's time trying to
preserve it or prevent it from coming to harm.

The rejection of parallelism seems to be a good way of justifying
Spinoza's belief that altruism and self-preservation don't conflict, but it
is ultimately unsatisfactory. Apart from the reasons we have given, concern­
ing the continuance of counter-examples even if the parallelism is abandoned,
Spinoza quite adamantly sticks to his parallelism. It is reaffirmed in one
of its forms after the controversial E.v.23.

He who possesses a body fit for many things possesses
a mind of which the greater part is eternal.

E.v.39.
Spinoza's theory that one is active, free or virtuous, if one is acting from the motive of self-preservation is not as straightforwardly incompatible with altruism as it at first appears, for according to the theory, a free person will behave in an altruistic fashion, where 'altruistic' is taken to mean something like 'giving up one's own pleasure for the sake of someone else'. He can admit this because there is a difference between crudely selfish behaviour, which usually is actually against the true interests of the agent, and enlightened selfish behaviour, which involves the recognition that the best chance a person has of fulfilling himself is through 'unselfish' relationships with other people, in particular people with whom one has a lot in common. The pursuing of such relationships often requires the forfeiting of one's apparent interests. One can then, rationally decide to restrict some of one's motivating desires, for the sake of true realisation or fulfillment. Notwithstanding all this the doctrine cannot be defended to its logical conclusion. We have already seen that serving the interests of humanity might actually be against one's self-interest, even if 'self-interest' is construed very broadly; it is also surely the case that two rational individuals might have a genuine conflict of interest. This is not allowed for by Spinoza's theory of rationality and self-preservation.

We can now recognize one of the fundamental tensions in the philosophy of Spinoza. It seems to be of the same genus as one which confronted Kant in his struggle for a theory of human freedom against a fundamental theory that we could have knowledge only of the phenomenal world which is thoroughly deterministic in a sense which rules out the possibility of freedom. He had a fundamental respect for the dignity of man, but allowed no room for it in his metaphysics, and so ended up with a painful attempt to incorporate human freedom which was bound to fail. Spinoza likewise, in fact more explicitly,
and more radically, argued against the special dignity of human beings. In his metaphysics, as we have seen, human beings are nothing special in the universe, and we should study them with the precision and detachment with which we study lines, planes and bodies. However it is obvious that Spinoza was a deeply humanistic person. It is perhaps ironical that a philosopher who went so far out of his way to attack anthropocentrism should have written in such depth about the human mind and its liberation. Spinoza, in ETHICS Part Five, transgresses his own metaphysical principles in an attempt to justify crediting at least some people with the dignity of freedom; for it is quite clear that the body can in no way be rendered free. Thus we can understand why, as Parts Four and Five progress, Spinoza talks ever increasingly about the human mind. At the end of E.v.20., he writes;

It is time ... that I should pass to the consideration of those matters which appertain to the duration of the mind without the body.

There is a further motivation for this concentration on the mental aspect of human beings to the neglect of the physical, which will be discussed later. This further motivation arises out of Spinoza's undoubted mysticism. The mystical strain reaches its peak, and Spinoza's writing is its most obscure, when he is talking of the blessedness of the intellectual love of God. An essay of this nature is probably not the place to write a critique of this aspect of Spinoza's work. Fortunately one can discuss much of his theory of freedom without bringing in his mystical doctrines, whose value I do not here call into question, but whose susceptibility to discussion I do.

14. FREEDOM THROUGH ADEQUATE IDEAS.

I turn now to a more direct discussion of Spinoza's views about freeing
the mind of its bondage to the emotions. In the previous chapter in the dis­
cussion of 'adequacy', it was asserted that Spinoza believed that we are un­
free to the extent that we have inadequate ideas in our minds. Inadequate
ideas include all our ideas about individual bodies, though not about their
essences, all our ideas about anything temporal, and in particular, all our
ideas which we would characterize as emotions. What does all this amount to
in practice?

There is an uncharitable interpretation of E.iii.1., which makes Spinoza's
theory of freedom through adequate ideas seem thoroughly misguided, and there
is another which makes it interesting though highly problematic and mysterious.
E.iii.1., as we have seen, states that:

Our mind acts at times and at times suffers: in so far as it
has adequate ideas, it necessarily acts; and in so far as it
has inadequate ideas, it necessarily suffers.

E.iii.1.

An adequate idea is strictly speaking defined as one which involves knowledge
of an eternal and necessary truth. So, on a literal interpretation of the
above proposition it follows that the mind's activity follows from its hav­
ing ideas of necessary and eternal truths. But what are the paradigm examples
of eternal and necessary truths? Likely candidates are the laws of logic and
the tautologies which follow from them. This doctrine appears to lead rapidly
to the absurdity that one becomes increasingly active as one's head becomes
filled up with tautologies. A person would be quite active if he or she
could constantly be thinking 'A black cat is black', 'A black cat is a cat',
'A white cat is a cat' ..., and so on ad nauseam. It is clear that on any
reasonable theory of freedom such a fate as that of endless tautology-repeat­
ing could not be the paradigm of freedom, and certainly not of activity. Any
theory which affirms that such a person would be active, or one which entails
it, ought to be rejected on that ground alone. One might argue that this interpretation is unduly harsh on Spinoza, as it is quite clearly not what he had in mind when he propounded his theory of mental activity and passivity. It certainly doesn't do justice to Spinoza's intentions on the subject, but it does follow from what he actually said. What then were his intentions here?

To answer this question it is necessary to return to Spinoza's deterministic causal rationalism. He believed that everything that happens has a cause, and that the causal relation is one of entailment. It follows from these beliefs that knowledge of reality, or 'true knowledge', involves knowledge of a series of entailments. If we can get an objective perspective on the world, we shall see everything as being necessarily connected, that the statement describing any state of affairs is entailed by another statement, and so on, as was shown in Chapter One of the present essay. Now in the case of ordinary physical objects in the world, the series of entailments is infinite, and so we can never have complete knowledge of the series, and so our ideas of ordinary physical things must be inadequate, since one cannot have an adequate idea of something unless one has an adequate idea of its cause. Spinoza then certainly does intend to say at any rate that we cannot be active and therefore cannot be free, as long as our mind contains ideas of ordinary physical things, that is, as long as we are thinking about particular physical objects.

This corresponds with what he says about the three kinds of knowledge. Our ordinary empirical knowledge - that of the first kind - is necessarily inadequate. On the other hand, our knowledge of the second and third kinds is necessarily adequate.
The knowledge of the second kind is the knowledge which we get from doing syllogisms, and in fact from engaging in any deductive reasoning. The knowledge that all black cats are black is of this kind since it can be deduced from the intuitive fundamental law of logic, which can be expressed as 'A & B entails A'. Clearly going around with such tautologies in one's head is not the path to freedom. There is, however, a further aspect to the knowledge of the second kind, and this would be the sort of knowledge one gets when one solves a chess problem. One would be active, because one would have adequate ideas in one's mind, if one were doing a chess problem. Similarly if one were following any mathematical series, such as counting sheep, one would be active. In both of these activities, though not in the constant repetition of trivial tautologies, one is, in a legitimate sense, active. One's mind is not allowed to wander, and is kept by one from the external distractions of the world.

The third kind of knowledge involves intuitions into reality, which are immediate in the sense that one can 'see' the objects of this knowledge directly, quite clearly, and without carrying out any deductions. This kind of knowledge involves such things as simple mathematical intuitions, and knowledge of the fundamental laws of logic which are presupposed in thinking, such as the law of non-contradiction. Although having such knowledge in one's mind seems to be a little more active than having knowledge of what can be immediately derived from it, this is certainly not what one would think a mentally active person would have his mind full of. There is, however, more to the third kind of knowledge than merely knowledge of these fundamental logical and mathematical truths. Spinoza, as we saw in the previous chapter, believed that we could attain knowledge of the essences of ordinary empirical objects, and that this knowledge would be knowledge of the third kind. The
bulk of ETHICS Part Five is concerned with this particular kind of knowledge and its accompanying adequate ideas. What is meant by the obscure notion of 'knowledge of the individual essences of things' will be discussed shortly.

When Spinoza is discussing the nature of human freedom in ETHICS Part Five, he deliberately does not discuss 'in what manner and in what way the intellect should be rendered perfect', as this is simply a matter for logic. We can then exonerate Spinoza from the charge that he believed that the path to freedom lies in doing syllogisms and in enumerating logical truths, although this is actually entailed by his theory. This leaves us with such adequate ideas as one might have whilst doing chess problems and the like, and with the adequate ideas which yield knowledge of the essences of individual things. It is with the latter that Spinoza concerned himself, and it is to them that we now turn.

Spinoza, as a Seventeenth Century Rationalist believed not only that the intellect or understanding and the senses constitute two faculties, but that the former is active and the latter passive. In his opinion the understanding deals solely with eternal and necessary truths. He subscribed, however, to the view that not all necessary truths are essentially contentless. This is captured partly by his distinction already alluded to, between formal essences, which are something like definitions, and actual essences which constitute the conatus of individual things. The knowledge of the third kind involves, amongst other things, intuitive knowledge of the actual essences of individuals. Spinoza is extremely unclear about exactly what he means by 'essence'. He uses the term without prefixing it with 'formal' or 'actual', and slips and slides between the two uses. What he seems to be trying to say is that the self-preserving tendency of all things is really the essence of God or Nature.
This needs a lot of explaining, which will be attempted presently. In this explanation the language will sometimes be rather metaphorical. This is deemed necessary because of the obscurity of the doctrine to be explained.

Many people have believed that the universe is inhabited by some spiritual force - a life-giving force. Certain Christians would subscribe to this doctrine, and would contend that the life-giving force which permeates the universe is the force of love. Some Eastern religions and philosophies, maintain that there is an infinite source of energy which actually constitutes the universe. This might be best summarized by the slogan: 'One light, but many lamps'. On this view there is one supreme essence which pervades the universe. Everything which exists would not exist if it was not pervaded by this force. This essence is a creative force. It is likely that Spinoza was very much influenced in this matter by the mystical Neo-platonists such as Bruno, although Bruno himself opened the way more for Leibnizian monads than for Spinozist monism. In view of his not having been directly influenced by Buddhist writings, it is interesting to mention in passing the striking similarities between their belief that all dualities represent illusion and Spinoza's own monism - that there is really just one infinite and eternal essence, and that everything there is follows from this essence, and partakes of it. That Spinoza seriously believed such a view can be seen in Part Five of ETHICS, and by reading Part One in the light of Part Five.

It fits in well with his view that everything that can be conceived by an infinite intellect follows from the necessity of the divine nature. Remember that Spinoza maintained from the beginning of ETHICS that a cause
must have something in common with its effect. The power of God, or God's essence has caused my existence and, in fact has caused the existence of everything. Therefore all things have something in common with God. This thing in common is their 'conatus' or 'actual essence'. This conatus, as Spinoza writes, 'does not involve finite but indefinite time'. The essence of God 'involves indefinite time', and so does that which we have in common with it. What is meant by 'All dualities are fundamentally unreal' is that although we can see the universe in a number of ways, that is divide it up conceptually in a number of ways, the correct way of viewing it is as one homogeneous, indivisible whole.

One could go on for a very long time trying to make clear what 'essences' really are, but to do so would be to wander off the track of this essay, so it won't be attempted here. However, the brief sketch just given provides us with an important clue for the interpretation of Spinoza's statement that the mind is active in so far as it has adequate ideas, and passive in so far as it has inadequate ones. Let us consider the following proposition in the light of the above exposition.

The more we understand individual objects, the more we understand God.

E.v.24.

In ETHICS Part Five, Spinoza says that the ultimate state of liberation for a human being is one where the person has an 'intellectual love of God'. This love is tantamount to an 'intuitive' understanding of the nature of the universe. The Latin verb 'intellegere' means 'to understand', and so the 'intellectual love of God' is one which comes through understanding, and should not be confused with something like 'love which only intellectuals have'.
If the essences of individual things all are a manifestation of the nature or essence of God, then the more one understands this thing in each object the more one will understand God's essence. This is not altogether without plausibility.

It is not at all easy to characterize the third kind of knowledge, and the following should be regarded as an attempt which may appear as abject nonsense to some readers, but be interestingly suggestive to others.

This kind of knowledge - of essences - is not ordinary perceptual knowledge, for essences are not visible, tangible, or odorous, and so on. It is also not the knowledge one gets from doing syllogisms, chess problems, or mathematics. The knowledge is of what 'makes things tick', can only be attained 'intuitively', and is really more akin to what we would call 'understanding'. To attain this sort of understanding about things is precisely what the religions of the East would call 'enlightenment'. If we have such an understanding we are truly free, and have reached a state of peace of mind. This involves simply regarding things in their 'true' light, that is 'sub specie aeternitas', and therefore having 'adequate ideas'. This interpretation of Spinoza is supported quite strongly by the text, for instance in the following propositions:

The highest effort of the mind and its highest virtue is to understand things by the third kind of knowledge.

E.v.25.

From this third kind of knowledge arises the highest possible peace of mind.

E.v.27.

It is not easy to know quite what to say in criticism of this doctrine
about the third kind of knowledge. The main problem seems to be that concerning the doctrine's verifiability. According to our ordinary empiricist criteria for verifiability, assuming that there are any such, the claim that there are in all things imperceptible, though real 'essences' which manifest the life-force of the universe, is not subject to verification or falsification, and so is apparently untestable. If a theory is untestable it is usually summarily dismissed as 'unscientific'. The case of Spinoza's theory of essences, and the third kind of knowledge is, however, a difficult case, since there are people who certainly would claim to have something like an 'intuitive understanding' of the true nature of the universe.

Moreover, these people very often have a serenity which would undoubtedly lead one to say that they have achieved 'the highest possible peace of mind'. They can explain why most people haven't reached this state of enlightenment or highest consciousness, by arguing that to reach these levels requires a very arduous training of the mind, which only a few people are able or willing to undertake. Spinoza obviously believed something similar to this.

If the way which, as I have shown, leads hither (to eternal peace of mind), seem very difficult, it can nevertheless be found. It must indeed be difficult since it is so seldom discovered; for if salvation lay ready to hand and could be discovered without great labour, how could it be possible that it should be neglected almost by everybody? But all noble things are as difficult as they are rare.

E.v.42. (Schol.)

There are undoubtedly severe epistemological problems with this view of human freedom, and although the theory is very interesting and suggestive, there will be no arguments produced here which purport to prove that it is true; for if the doctrine is true its truth could be understood only by someone who had already had this kind of experience to believe in its value; it is
probably impossible so to persuade a rational person by rational arguments alone. A fortiori it is an enterprise totally unsuited to demonstration 'more geometrico'. We shall now descend from these lofty metaphysical heights to the more mundane area of the affects.

15. THE AFFECTS PART TWO.

Before proceeding further, a few remarks about the picture being offered here of the interconnections between the various parts of Spinoza's theory of freedom would be appropriate. Spinoza believed that he had essentially one theory which had different mutually supporting pillars. In his opinion these pillars did more than simply add extra support to the anyway reasonably self-sufficient, self-supporting doctrines; he believed that no part of the edifice could stand up independently of the other parts - the system had to be rejected or accepted as a whole. We have already shown that one aspect of his theory of freedom cannot be defended by rational argument. What will be attempted here is an examination of the other aspects of the theory on their own merits. We can do this partly because these psychological views about human bondage and freedom are really views on how to prepare for the ultimate state of 'blessedness'. If the arguments about freedom are seen as forming a pyramid, what has been done so far is to remove the top of the pyramid. Spinoza would not have had it that the top could have been removed without shaking the foundations, for he believed that the 'blessedness' theory was entailed by the psychological theory. If one accepted this one could not reject the 'blessedness' theory, or withhold judgment on it without doing so to the psychological theory. The entailment claim is here rejected, and so we proceed to a discussion of the psychological theory on its own merits.
Spinoza, we recall, believed that we are active inasmuch as we have adequate ideas, and passive inasmuch as we have inadequate ones. From this alone, one might think that it wouldn't make any difference to our activity, and therefore to our 'power' or 'virtue', whether the inadequate ideas are inadequate for one reason or for quite different ones. There isn't apparently much room for concern for distinctions within the realm of inadequate ideas. In actual fact there are crucial distinctions to be made within this realm. Spinoza does make some of these distinctions, the first of which is made within the area of passions. He says that we suffer passions to the extent that the ideas in our mind which are the mental aspect of our affects, are not adequate. However passions are many-edged.

There are several Spinozist reasons why passions such as hatred cannot be good. Spinoza offers the following reason:

The man whom we hate we endeavour to destroy ... that is to say ... we endeavour to do something which is evil.

E.iv.45. (Dem.)

The reason given for the evil of destroying another human being is that nothing is more useful to one person than another person. We can interpret the demonstration as saying that hating someone has bad effects inasmuch as it leads one to desire, or rather involves desiring, certain things to befall the person, the occurrence of which would be harmful to the hater.

The second reason for saying that hatred is evil is that it necessarily involves sorrow. Sorrow is evil because it constitutes apart from anything else, a diminution in the power of action of the mind and body. This, at any rate is a Spinozist view of the emotion. It is, as it stands, literally false; for if we count hatred as a species of sorrow, it is not the case that
'sorrow' inevitably diminishes its possessor's power of action. Sometimes, as we stated earlier, people are motivated to relinquish their inertia by the hatred of someone or something. However Spinoza does have an interesting and important insight here, even though it is not explicitly made on this subject. It is quite true that there are emotions which do seem to constitute an inhibition on one's activities. There are two basic forms of these. The first is where one is, say feeling resentful towards somebody, and consequently just cannot concentrate on what one is doing, because the object of one's passion is ever-present to one in an offensive and intruding manner. Such a 'sufferer' may find himself constantly dwelling on the injuries which have been inflicted on him, and thus not be able to concentrate fully on any one thing. The second form of 'inhibiting' emotion is the one where one just feels, so to speak, deadened. This usually involves, at some level, self-hatred, and is often caused by the suppression of the expression of hostile feelings to somebody who has caused one pain. These emotions, if one wants to call them that, tend towards depression, and could well be named 'depressive emotions'. The emotions which are included in this category are just those which lead to or encompass the state of depression; which involves feeling so awful that one cannot summon up the energy to do anything, even those things which the depressed person most wants to do. For example, someone who really wants to write a book may, if he is in the grip of a 'depressive' emotion, be unable to face working on the project. The current conjecture is that there is a group of emotions which actually do inhibit one's activity, either by scattering one's concentration or by deadening one's vitality. Of course the former might well lead to the latter, and the latter would almost certainly involve one's ability to concentrate being broken. These emotions, which I shall hereafter call 'depressive', are harmful to their bearers because they limit their activity in the more familiar sense of 'activity' as well as in
Spinoza's rather esoteric sense.

The third reason for regarding the emotions of sorrow as being, at least not untarnished by evil, is that they are all necessarily passions. All emotions of sorrow are passions, because they constitute restrictions of activity for their bearers, and therefore mark the overpowering of the bearer's conatus by external factors, which is an undesirable state for someone to be in.

This is closely linked to the fourth reason for saying that the emotions of sorrow are evil, and that is that they involve inadequate ideas of a particular kind. Inadequate ideas include not merely those ideas which we would say were ideas of contingent truths, but also of falsehoods. The passions involve inadequate ideas of the 'falsehood' type. For instance, if one hates someone, one will, according to Spinoza's theory, feel sorrow with the accompanying idea of the object of hatred as the true cause of the sorrow.

Suppose someone stole one's favourite record - just before some friends were coming over for the evening to listen to it. Let us also suppose that the culprit is found, and that he just doesn't care at all about causing trouble to people, and in particular to oneself. It is quite likely that one would feel hatred towards such a person. According to Spinoza this would involve the primary sorrow of having one's evening ruined, with the accompanying idea of an 'external cause' - namely the thief. This belief about the cause of the sorrow must be mistaken, given Spinoza's view, much discussed above, of a causally rationalistic determinist universe. There is an infinitely long series of causes for the occurrence of anything in the world of finite modes. When we regard someone as the cause of our sorrow we are not simply viewing the person as something which is, along with infinitely many other things,
causally relevant to the occurrence of the state; rather, what we are doing is regarding the object of hatred as a self-caused cause of our sorrow. This is to have a false, inadequate idea, and is therefore 'evil'.

As well as passions of sorrow, there are passions which arise in us out of desire and those which arise out of joy. The following discussion will be restricted essentially to the passions of joy. The passions of joy share some relevant features with those of sorrow, and differ in important ways too.

The passions of joy are different from at least some of those of sorrow in that they do not involve destructiveness. When one has a joyous passion, such as unselfish love, one tends, in virtue of the feeling, to be well-disposed towards one's fellow human-beings. As the well-being of one's fellow human beings is good, so is that which promotes it, for instance a passion of joy, for this promotes our true self-interest.

Secondly, the passions of joy do not, unlike some of their counterparts on the sorrow side, lead to the inhibition of one's power of acting, but rather have the reverse tendency. Spinoza has the following to say on this matter:

Joy is not directly evil, but good; sorrow, on the other hand, is directly evil.

Joy ... is an affect by which the body's power of action is increased or assisted. Sorrow, on the other hand, is an affect by which the body's power of action is lessened, and, therefore joy is directly good ...

E.iv.41 & Dem.

It might be worth noting here that Spinoza specifically talks in terms of the body's power of action. I take him, in doing so, to be talking about something
rather like what we would describe as 'ability to do a wide range of things'. We would then be able to say that the affects of joy are directly good because their possession enables their possessor to do a wide range of things, that is, to be more active.

On this matter, Spinoza is, as in the case of the passions of sorrow, literally wrong. It is not true that all emotions of joy do increase our body's power of action in any sense that is not purely tautological. For instance the feeling of joy which one might get from lazing in a deck chair on a warm summer's afternoon, is certainly not a feeling which either constitutes or directly leads to an increase in the body's power of action. On the contrary, if one feels really pleasant in such a situation, one's power of action is certainly diminished, for one would almost certainly want to do as near to nothing as possible.

Nevertheless, as before with the sorrows, Spinoza does have a point. When one is feeling cheerful or joyous, one is far more able to do what one wants to do than if one is feeling depressed or sorrowful. It is difficult to find a word which encapsulates this kind of feeling. The closest approximation is probably 'cheerfulness'. 'Cheerfulness' is not completely accurate. What is being sought is the opposite of 'depression'. The distinction in question is fairly well described as that between feeling optimistic, and feeling pessimistic. The affects of joy have a logical connexion with feeling, broadly speaking, optimistic. When one feels optimistic about one's existence, it is much easier for one to get down to doing things, thus increasing 'the body's power of action'. The nearest Spinoza actually comes to spelling this out is in his distinction between 'cheerfulness' and 'melancholy'. 
Cheerfulness ... is joy, which, in so far as it is related to the body, consists in this, that all the parts of the body are equally affected, that is to say ... the body's power of action is increased or assisted, so that all the parts acquire the same proportion of motion and rest to each other. Cheerfulness, therefore ... is always good, and can never be excessive. But melancholy ... is sorrow, which in so far as it is related to the body, consists in this, that the body's power of action is absolutely lessened or restrained, and melancholy, therefore ... is always evil.

E.iv.42. (Dem)

If we don't take too literally the talk about imbalances in the proportions of motion and rest in the body, we are left with the basic 'feeling good', and 'feeling bad', which we were looking for. Although Spinoza's talking about proportions of motion and rest in the body leaves much to be desired as an account of how different emotions affect us, he does have a point when he talks of the excesses of joy. If, for instance, one absolutely adored someone, the love one had for the person might be excessive, for it would, as it were, throw one completely out of equilibrium, and cause one to have a fixation on the person loved which would inhibit one's overall power of action. 'Cheerfulness' and 'melancholy' are overall emotional states of a person, and thus have a more direct relation to the actual power of action of a person, than do emotions such as anger.

The passions of joy do share in common with those of sorrow their not being cause solely by the essence of the bearer of the passion. Also they do not involve adequate ideas. If one loves someone in an ordinary way, one is, on Spinoza's view, feeling joy with the accompanying idea of the person loved as the cause of the joy. This, as we saw in the case of the passions of sorrow, involves having a distorted or incomplete way of seeing things.
Anyway, we can say this, that even though all the passions are manifestations of a person's unfreedom, which is a bad state, some of them are not as harmful as others, and are in fact, in the Spinozist sense, 'useful' to us. He gives several reasons as to why the passions of sorrow are 'harmful' to us, and several why those of joy are 'useful'. However, it is not the case that all the passions of sorrow are harmful in the same ways, or at least in all the same ways. For instance the passion of hatred is harmful because it leads to destructive tendencies which are against the true self-interest of the person who hates. Sadness is harmful because it makes it difficult for one to do what one might otherwise be able to do. But hatred often raises one's power of activity, and sadness does not have an inbuilt element of destructiveness. One could produce a similar account of the passions of joy. The point which is being made here is that Spinoza's account of the passions of joy and sorrow, although containing valuable insights, is an oversimplification. It is not true that all the passions of joy are 'good' in his sense of the word, just as it isn't true that all those of sorrow are 'evil', and this is something more than simply a matter of the possible excesses of joy, which Spinoza talks of.

Pleasurable excitement may be excessive and an evil, and pain be good in so far as pleasurable excitement or joy is evil.

E.iv.43.

Spinoza does acknowledge that some passions are more harmful than others. However, all the passions are ultimately undesirable, for it is a necessary truth that having a passion involves having inadequate ideas in one's mind, and that having such ideas constitutes being unfree mentally, and that being mentally unfree is harmful. It follows from this that it is ultimately useful or virtuous for us to give up our passions, or at least to take steps
which enable us to cease being subject to them. Does this mean that it is ultimately useful to do without emotions altogether? It is difficult to say exactly what Spinoza thought on this matter, because on it he is not only obscure, but also says things which imply contrary positions.

In the next chapter there will be a discussion of Spinoza's views on the dispensability of emotions, and of the necessity of dispensing with them, for the free life of reason. In a modified and truncated form the main Spinozist position will be defended from what could be a serious challenge from the Twentieth Century.
16. **To what extent should we abandon our emotions?**

The nearest thing to an emotion which Spinoza talks about is 'affect'. Part Four of *ETHICS* is called 'Of Human Bondage or of the strength of the Affects'. This implies that our bondage consists in having affects, and that liberation would inevitably involve no longer being subject to them. Furthermore, the life that Spinoza advocates is a life of reason. He constantly talks about what someone who lived in accordance with reason would do. He equates acting in accordance with reason with acting virtuously, or being free. People often oppose reason to, amongst other things, emotions. If one is acting 'emotionally', one is not acting 'reasonably'. The radical interpretation of Spinoza's views about the dispensability of emotions would be the one which has him advocating a complete abandonment of all emotions. Despite the attractions of this way of interpreting Spinoza, there are better reasons for rejecting the interpretation as not doing justice to his main theory.

One of the reasons for believing that the emotions ought to be given up is that we seem to be passive whenever we have an emotion. However, if Spinoza did mean by 'affect' what we mean by emotion, he did not believe this, for he writes:

> Besides the joys and desires which are passions, there are other affects of joy and desire which are related to us in so far as we act.

*E.iii.58.*
The argument for the possibility of 'active' joys is that the mind rejoices when it conceives its power of acting, and that when it has adequate ideas it conceives itself and its power of acting, and so it rejoices when it is active. Moreover, the having of adequate ideas is caused by one's own essence alone, and so one is, when one has adequate ideas, the cause of the ensuing rejoicing, since it follows from something of which one is the cause oneself. This argument is not used by Spinoza in his demonstration of the proposition, but it easily could have been.

In the final paragraph of ETHICS Part Four there is more evidence for rejecting the radical view. Talking about 'the brave man', whom one can take as being someone who is free or governed by reason, Spinoza writes:

... his chief effort is to conceive things as they are in themselves, and to remove the hindrances to true knowledge such as hatred, anger, envy, derision and pride, and other of this kind, which we have before noticed; and so he endeavours, as we have said, as much as possible to do well and rejoice.

E.iv.73. (Schol.)

This is particularly interesting because the examples which are given, of the hindrances to knowledge, are all emotions which lead to what we would call wrongdoing; at least they are all emotions or attitudes which most people discourage. Such affects as 'pity', 'hope', 'confidence' and 'gladness' are not included; and this is significant, for according to Spinoza's criteria, those affects are obstacles to true knowledge, and involve passivity in the same way as do the other less reputable affects.

Spinoza's rigid causal rationalism did not allow him to have a theory of how we might progress from our state of confused, passive, unfreedom into the state of freedom or blessedness, for he couldn't have an adequate theory of
change. However, a close reading of Spinoza will reveal that he did believe there was a path from bondage to freedom.

There are some emotions which are especially harmful, as they not only involve the bearer of the emotion being in bondage, but they also promote the continuing bondage of that person and others. Such emotions are pride, anger, derision, and others of the same ilk, as mentioned in E.iv.73. (Schol.). Spinoza urges anybody who is seeking freedom to give up, as a matter of immediate priority, such negative and destructive emotions.

Although Spinoza is against such feelings as pity, remorse, and other 'softnesses', because they do not stem from reason, but run counter to it, he does grant that they have their purposes.

... like pity, so shame, although it is not a virtue, is nevertheless good, in so far as it shows that a desire of living uprightly is present in the man who is possessed with shame ...

E.iv.58. (Schol.)

... he who is moved neither by reason nor pity to be of any service to others is properly called inhuman.

E.iv.50.

These 'soft' emotions, then are intermediately 'useful', for in our 'unliberated' state, if we did not have them we would be 'inhuman', and would be in an extremely 'primitive' state of development.

'Pity' is also not too good, because it is a 'sorrow'; this distinguishes it from the passions of joy, passions though even these latter be. Passions of joy are regarded as reasonably all right in as much as they involve a tendency to increased activity or virtue on the part of the bearer. However, even these ultimately should go, for:
All of these (desires from affects of joy and sorrow) ... in so far as they are begotten in us of affects which are passions, are blind ... nor would they be of any use if men could be easily persuaded to live according to the dictates of reason alone ...

E.iv.58. (Schol.)
The trouble with all the passions, whether they are 'positive' or 'negative' is that we have them whether or not we want to, and also whether or not it is in our interest to have the particular passion at a particular time. In respect to our passions, when we are in a state of unfreedom, we have no more control than leaves in the wind have over their location - both are determined by external factors.

If we are feeling particularly good on account of something pleasant that has happened to us, it is quite on the cards that this will turn to feeling rotten if the circumstances change. What Spinoza means by 'freedom' in its human context entails 'feeling good in any circumstance'. This involves looking at the world, including oneself and one's position in the world 'under the aspect of eternity'. This is certainly what Spinoza thought freedom consisted of, but it is not clear whether or not he thought it attainable.

Early in ETHICS Part Four Spinoza asserts what implies that freedom is unattainable for human beings.

We suffer in so far as we are a part of nature, which part cannot be conceived by itself nor without the other parts.

E.iv.2.

It is impossible that a man should not be a part of nature ... 

E.iv.4.

However, in Part Five he certainly suggests that it is possible, though
admittedly difficult, to reach the state of freedom, that is the life of reason.

In summary, then, the doctrine which will be discussed here is the following. The state of freedom is one which it would be ultimately desirable to attain, although it is extremely unlikely that it can be achieved by any given human being. In order to achieve complete freedom, one would have to be completely unmoved by what was going on around one, that is, one would never feel things about what was happening, except what is truly appropriate. The same feeling is always appropriate to a free person, because, in reality nothing actually changes. This feeling is a feeling of bliss, joy, or a special kind of love or reverence. There is a graduated series of barriers to the attainment of this state. These barriers are the things which cause us to see the world in other than its true light. The source of the failure to see things accurately is our having inadequate ideas, a sub-species of which are the ideas contained in passions. In order, then, to attain freedom, we must set about eliminating these passions. Within the realm of passions there are some which must be eliminated if the pursuer of freedom is to make any headway at all; these emotions are the ones which involve hatred, envy, and the like - the emotions which have an inbuilt tendency to destruction and those which tend towards 'depression' as it was explicated earlier. These emotions get in the way of any further development, and that is why they must be eliminated early. The emotions which tend towards cheerfulness are much better. The main problems with at least most of them are that one has no control over whether or not one has them, at least when one is an ordinary 'unfree' human being. The state of freedom involves being free of them too. It is ambiguous just what is involved in being free of these 'positive' attitudes and feelings. The ambiguity can be expressed as follows.
If one is free of the affect of 'gladness' is it the case that one never feels 'glad', or that one can control whether or not one feels 'glad'? It is assumed that Spinoza is here really concerned with having control over one's affects - that is the control of being able to decide whether or not one is going to have a particular feeling. For after all he does maintain that there are affects which are actions. After a person has finally conquered the passions, he or she will also have an 'objective' view of the universe, and will possess 'the intellectual love of God'.

17. REACTIVITY.

This section will deal with an objection to the Spinozist programme for freedom which comes from Professor P.F. Strawson in his British Academy lecture "Freedom and Resentment". This lecture is a contribution to the debate between the hard and soft determinists. Hart determinists believe that an acceptance of the truth of determinism would force us to give up our belief that it is sometimes justified to hold a person morally responsible for an action. The soft determinists believe that justified ascriptions of moral responsibility are quite compatible with an acceptance of the truth of determinism.

Strawson believes that the acceptance of hard determinism as above ascribed would force us to adopt 'the obscure and panicky metaphysics of libertarianism', for it is in some sense inconceivable that we should abandon our belief that sometimes people are morally responsible for their actions. So the issue becomes one between soft determinism with the possibility of accepting the truth of determinism, and libertarianism, which appears to be counter-intuitive or at any rate unscientific. What Strawson does is to examine the
source of our ascriptions of moral responsibility, and in so doing to attempt to show that our notion of moral responsibility stems from roots quite other than a belief that some people are sometimes free in a sense of 'free' which is incompatible with 'determined'. This is in direct conflict with Spinoza's view on this matter.

... and because (man) supposes himself to be free, notions like those of praise and blame, sin and merit have arisen.

E.i. Appendix.

It is quite common for a correct philosophical position to be rejected because the arguments which are adduced in its favour are poor. This is what, according to Strawson, has happened to the doctrine of soft determinism. One such argument is that put forward by, amongst others, Moritz Schlick, who writes about the related notion of punishment:

Punishment is concerned only with the institution of causes, of motives of conduct, and this alone is its meaning. Punishment is an educative measure, and as such is a means to the formation of motives, which are in part to prevent the wrongdoer from repeating the act (reformation) and in part to prevent others from committing a similar act (intimidation). Analogously, in the case of reward we are concerned with an incentive.

M. Schlick. PROBLEMS OF ETHICS, p.152.

What is objectionable to this sort of justification for punishment or reward is that it ignores one very important component of our punishing or rewarding someone, and that is the element of resentment or hurt in the former, and that of gratitude in the latter. If it did not matter whether or not these elements were present, there would be no distinction between 'corrective therapy' and punishment.

Strawson sheds light on this problem in an interesting way through a distinction he makes, which is not always clear, between 'reactive attitudes'
and 'the objective attitude'. He writes of the latter:

To adopt the objective attitude to another human being is to see him, perhaps, as an object of social policy; as a subject for what, in a wide range of sense, might be called treatment; as something certainly to be taken account of, perhaps precautionary account, of; to be managed or handled or cured or trained; ...

P.79.

This is to be contrasted with reactive attitudes.

... it cannot include the range of reactive feelings and attitudes which belong to involvement or participation with others in inter-personal human relationships; it cannot include resentment, gratitude, forgiveness, anger, or the sort of love which two adults can sometimes be said to feel reciprocally, for each other.

P.79.¹

Strawson argues that it is these reactive attitudes which provide the basis for our notions of moral responsibility and so on. He says that the personal reactive attitudes have a vicarious analogue; for instance the reactive attitude of resentment has its vicarious analogue in 'moral indignation', or 'resentment on behalf of another'. This is slightly misleading, since one of the features of the personal reactive attitudes was simply the fact that they were reactions to the good or ill-will of somebody to oneself. It is an important feature of these attitudes that one sees the object of the attitude as having done something for or against one personally. It is possible to feel this so-called 'resentment on behalf of another' without it mattering who the victim of the moral outrage might be. Anyway, this is a parenthetical remark, as I shall not question Strawson's claim that these two kinds of reactive attitude and a third kind, which is the analogue of the other two which is held towards oneself, and includes remorse, are all 'humanly' connected.

¹ P.F. Strawson (ed.) Studies In The Philosophy of Thought and Action.
It is maintained in "Freedom and Resentment" that anyone who questions, after reading the early parts of the paper, the rationality of maintaining the reactive attitudes in the face of a belief in the truth of determinism 'has wholly failed to grasp' what Strawson has said on the subject. The argument Strawson has for this is twofold. The first argument is that when we decide to suspend our reactive attitudes towards somebody this is not because we see their behaviour as caused in a way in which other people's is not caused, so what attitudes we take up are taken up independently of beliefs about the truth of determinism. The second argument is that it is impossible for us to give up on a relatively permanent basis our reactive attitudes. If this were so, and as 'ought' implies 'can', it would be inappropriate to question the rationality of continuing these practices, since to do so would be to imply that we, perhaps ought to do what, ex hypothesi, we can't.

It is precisely these two statements of Strawson's position which are in direct conflict with Spinoza's programme for human liberty. Spinoza believed that if we could really see people's behaviour as being causally determined, we would no longer have these feelings of resentment, gratitude, Strawson's special kind of love between adults, hatred, anger, jealousy, envy, etc. Secondly Spinoza, as we have seen, believed that it is possible for people to give up their passions, which are very close to Strawson's 'reactive attitudes'. All the reactive attitudes would be called 'passions' by Spinoza, though some of the 'passions' would not be called 'reactive attitudes or feelings' by Strawson.

Let us now investigate Strawson's claim that the rationality of our continuing to have reactive attitudes cannot justifiably be questioned because
having them is an inevitable, and desirable part of the human condition. Strawson equates 'ordinary inter-personal relationship' with 'relationship where the people involved are prone to having reactive attitudes towards one another'. Words like 'ordinary' are dangerous in contexts such as these, as they are ambiguous. Does 'ordinary' mean 'statistically likely', or 'normal-in-the-sense-of-functioning-as-it-should'? If the latter, it is pretty-well tautologous that we ought not to give up our reactive attitudes, as this would involve our never having the kind of relationships which we should have, and it is very strange indeed to tell someone that he ought to adopt a style of life which would preclude him having the kind of relationships he ought to have. It is undoubtedly true that relationships which involve the range of reactive attitudes are statistically normal, but it is not at all as obvious that they are a manifestation of well-functioning human beings. If they are this latter, an argument is certainly required to show it. It is notoriously difficult to produce an argument that is anything like plausible about such a fundamental aspect of 'human nature'. Strawson doesn't really provide a satisfactory one. What he does is to try to show how a world where we did not feel reactive attitudes would be somewhat inhuman, and thus undesirable. This will be discussed shortly. In the meantime let us pass to Strawson's more radical claim - that we could not give up having reactive attitudes.

Strawson leans rather heavily on the 'normality' of relationships, with reactive attitudes being the order of the day, or at least of most days. He writes:

But it cannot be consequence of any thesis which is not self-contradictory, that abnormality is the universal condition.²

² Ibid. p.81.
He then asks whether the acceptance of determinism could lead us to look at one another in this way: 'Could the acceptance of the truth of determinism lead to the "decay or repudiation of participant reactive attitudes"?' From the way this question has been set up by Strawson the odds are stacked against an affirmative answer being given, and it is not surprising that he writes:

> It does not seem to be self-contradictory to suppose that this (the repudiation of participant reactive attitudes) might happen. So I suppose we must say that it is not absolutely inconceivable that it should happen. But I am strongly inclined to think that it is, for us as we are, practically inconceivable that it should happen.3

This is Strawson at his most elusive. He has two things going on at once here. The first is that he has some argument which has purported to show that determinism is irrelevant to our adoption of objective or reactive attitudes to one another. It is not clear whether he means above that what is not quite self-contradictory, but 'practically inconceivable' is that we should give up reactive attitudes simply because we had a theoretical conviction that determinism was true, or that we should relinquish them for good under any circumstances. If he means the former one might say that although the belief in determinism would not on its own alter our reactive attitudes, it would help us to become free of some of them. It is certainly true that if we consciously regard someone's adverse behaviour as being the upshot of a series of causes which were not subject to his control, it is much easier for us not to feel anger towards him. If we can view our sorrows as having an infinite number of causes we are likely to be less fixated on a single 'cause'. Believing in determinism is a way of ceasing to regard one person or thing as the cause of one's pain or pleasure. This certainly helps

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3 Ibid. p.82.
to reduce one's proneness to at least certain reactive attitudes. This is a fact about human psychology.

If Strawson is making the more radical of the two claims - that it is 'practically inconceivable' that we should give up our reactive attitudes for any reason, then this requires much more justification than is given. It seems to be the case that Strawson is making the bolder claim. For later in the lecture he says of the commitment to 'inter-personal attitudes', which I take to be 'reactive attitudes':

This commitment is part of the general framework of human life, not something that can come up for review within this general framework.4

Strawson is well-known for his use of the transcendental form of argument with respect to our knowledge of what the world is like. Instead of trying to prove directly that the sceptic is contradicting himself, for it isn't obvious that he must be, what Strawson does is to show that what the sceptic must say describes a situation which is unintelligible. We can be reasonably sure that we shan't give up our belief that we are in a world of objective particulars, for we cannot really conceive of a world where we could judge that there weren't any. In connection with this type of dispute one would have expected a remark from Strawson similar to that made in the above quotation. He certainly is basing his claim that we could not give up our reactive attitudes on a moral analogue of the epistemological transcendental argument. This explains his curious use of 'practically inconceivable', which I, rather speculatively, take to be in contrast with the Kantian 'theoretically' inconceivable. In his book INDIVIDUALS Strawson characterizes what he is going to be doing

4 Ibid. p. 84.
in the book in the following way:

... there is a massive central core of human thinking which has no history - or none recorded in histories of thought; there are categories and concepts which, in their most fundamental character, change not at all; and are yet the indispensable core of the conceptual equipment of the most sophisticated human beings. It is with these, their interconnexions, and the structure that they form, that descriptive metaphysics will be primarily concerned.

Strawson implies that he believes that our having reactive attitudes is a moral analogue of our having concepts of objective particulars in our understanding of reality. This is an extremely dubious claim to make, particularly in view of it being possible to describe without any inconsistency what it would be like to know that one was living in a world where there was an absence of reactive attitudes amongst the people, including oneself. One can reduce a sceptic who is prepared to listen to one's arguments to give up his position or to remain silent about it, but there is no such channel available to one to dispose of someone who disagrees with one's views about what attitudes people can or cannot adopt to one another. There is little pressure on the Spinozist to accept Strawson's 'descriptive metaphysical' claim that:

The existence of the general framework of attitudes itself is something we are given with the fact of human society. As a whole it neither calls for, nor permits an essential 'rational' justification.6

If the Spinozist is going to deny that the matter of what attitudes one can have can be settled a priori, which is in effect the assertion made here, then he must accept that this undercuts his own enterprise. Both Strawson and Spinoza were wrong in attempting, to varying degrees, a priori psychology.

5 P.F. Strawson, INDIVIDUALS, p.10.
6 P.F. Strawson, STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF THOUGHT AND ACTION, p.94.
Spinoza is arguing that it is necessarily desirable to give up one's reactive attitudes, and therefore that it is conceivable that one should do so; Strawson is saying that it is inconceivable that one should do so, or at least 'practically inconceivable', and that if one could do so, it would be an undesirable thing to do anyway. How is such a dispute to be settled? Spinoza and Strawson both retreat towards the priori, but this is misguided, as what people want, or the sort of life that is good for them, is something which it is possible to ascertain only by self-observation and the sensitive observation of others. It is an empirical issue. What is available to Spinozists and to Strawson is to shed more light on what the alternative views entail. In doing this one can try to persuade the listener that one or the other view is more attractive. What it is possible for human beings to feel or not feel towards one another is in this instance a matter of empirical psychology. What the philosopher can do is to show what the alternative views really are, and to provide reasons for believing that one of the styles of life is preferable to the other, whilst conceding that these reasons will not have the compelling nature of logical reasons for believing something. If we can focus attention away from the arguments for the necessity of one view or the other we can then see where the real interest of the debate lies.

The basic dichotomy seems to be this. Spinoza believed that emotions are a stumbling block to people in their quest for true happiness, which is what people really want. He saw a life of reason as the ultimate goal which people ought to pursue. Strawson, on the contrary, believes that the reactive attitudes are a natural expression of our humanity, and that even if we could give them up, this would not be desirable, as it would mean that all personal relationships would break down, these being an extremely important part of our lives without which life would really be not worth living.
Spinoza, we recall, believed that there are distinctions to be made within the realm of the passions. The most important of these is that between the passions of joy and those of sorrow. The latter are in themselves harmful, the former, useful. This is basically because the former heighten our level of activity and also lead us to do things which will have consequences conducive to heightened activity. Other things being equal, even if one is not a Spinozist, it is clear that the feelings of joy are better than those of sorrow. When one is feeling 'negative' emotion, it hurts, and, if one is reflective, one would almost certainly wish to be free of the emotion. Spinoza had special Spinozist reasons for recommending the abandonment of the feelings or rather passions of joy - to do with his rather esoteric notion of activity. He also had more down to earth arguments for the desirability of becoming free of the 'negative' emotions.

The position to be taken up here is one which defends the desirability of continued proneness to positive reactive attitudes, whilst rejecting that of susceptibility to the negative ones. It is to be contended that this position is able to cope with the main point made by Strawson in defence of both kinds of reactive attitude. It is essentially a modified Spinozist position.

Strawson's main argument in defence of the desirability of being subject to reactive attitudes is that they are somehow required for genuine human relationships. In a world where, for example, nothing one could do could ever cause anyone to feel resentful one would be starved, it is alleged, of real human contact. As human contact is what makes life worthwhile, a world which did not allow for this would be horrible, and without any worth. If one could not have genuine human contact one would be leading an empty life.
In fact all that is needed is the weaker claim, that a life with human contact is likely to be more worthwhile than a life without it, or rather at least sufficiently more worthwhile to outweigh the pain that is caused by human contact.

The argument is not stated in this form by Strawson, but it is clear that this is the argument which underlies the Strawsonian position on reactive attitudes. The mistake occurs when one passes from 'Reactive attitudes are required for genuine human contact, which is obviously desirable' to 'The complete range of reactive attitudes is required for genuine human contact ...'. When he is setting up the problem about the relation between the acceptance of determinism and reactive attitudes, Strawson writes:

What effect would, or should, the acceptance of the truth of a general thesis of determinism have upon these reactive attitudes? More specifically, would, or should, the acceptance of the truth of the thesis lead to the decay or the repudiation of all such attitudes? Would, or should, it mean the end of gratitude, resentment, and forgiveness; of all reciprocated adult loves; of all the essentially personal antagonisms?

The argument Strawson uses is that we hold each other morally responsible for our actions because we feel, in certain circumstances offended by, or grateful for, the actions of people towards us. He argues that moral accountability comes directly from feelings of resentment towards anyone who displays ill-will towards the person who, as a result of this display, feels resentful. Strawson implies that if the truth of determinism is going to have an inhibiting effect on our reactive attitudes towards each other, it must do so to all of them or to none at all. This is a mistake.

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7 Ibid. p.80.
It is not controversial to say that the negative reactive attitudes such as resentment are in themselves unpleasant. When one feels resentful it is uncomfortable and nearly always inhibiting. One way of getting over one's feelings of resentment towards someone is by seeing the person's behaviour as being the outcome of a long series of causes. The main reason for hanging on to resentment stems from people's fears about what it would be like if one's nearest and dearest would never feel resentment towards oneself. One has the impression that if, no matter what one did or said to someone, the person would never feel resentment, then the person would not really care about one. The basic attraction of maintaining the 'institution' of feelings of resentment and jealousy and a host of other unpleasant feelings is that we see them as being the inevitable accompaniments of genuine positive feelings for someone. There is a tendency to believe, for example, that if a husband cannot be made jealous by his wife's sleeping with another man, then he cannot really love her. What is really important to human relationships is the ability of the parties to feel for each other's position. What we seek is to be loved and understood in a way other than a purely intellectual one. We have a very profound tendency to believe that it is impossible to have these positive aspects of a human relationship without the accompanying negative ones. Let us examine this belief briefly.

The two paradigm cases of reactive attitudes which will be discussed now are resentment and gratitude. The claim tacitly made by Strawson is that it is impossible that we could be prone to feelings of gratitude without being prone to those of resentment. It is admittedly impossible to prove that this is incorrect; by the same token it is impossible to prove that it is correct. All that can be done is to try to explain why we feel these things when we do, and thereby to spell out what either answer to the problem of their
independence entails. Feelings of resentment usually occur when one's self-esteem is offended by someone. It is when one has expectations of someone which are not realized, that one feels resentful. When does one feel gratitude? It is usually when someone has done more for one than one expected. To feel resentful, it is necessary that one see one's feelings of 'self-specialness' injured; however, in the case of gratitude, it is not necessary that one should have these feelings at all. The essential asymmetry between resentment and gratitude is that the former, though not the latter presupposes expectations of the other person. Although it is quite true that gratitude is appropriate where expectations are exceeded, and resentment where they are fallen short of, there is the following difference between them, which I shall repeat for emphasis - namely that one can feel gratitude towards somebody even though one had no expectations about that person, whereas without expectations one could not feel resentful.

Let us suppose that we manage to keep our expectations about people down to a minimum. This would involve not expecting, or taking it for granted, though the two are not quite the same thing, that even those we love will show especial concern about our well-being. If we could do this, then it would be possible for us to be prone to feelings of gratitude, whilst not being similarly prone to resentment. Could we ever achieve this state?

One reason for answering this question in the negative stems from the belief, held by Spinoza as well as Strawson, that the passions either stand or fall together. Spinoza certainly believed that it is possible, though very difficult, for a person to attain a state where he had no expectations about the good or ill will of others towards himself, and it does seem to be right that we could, at least minimize our expectations in this respect.
However, Spinoza believed that the state one has to reach if one is to be free is one where one is independent of the ill and good will of others towards oneself. In this state one would not be subject to negative feelings which are unpleasant, certainly destructive and often inhibiting, but one would also not feel the positive human emotions. This is seen by Spinoza as an automatic accompaniment of seeing things 'under the aspect of eternity'.

The apparent inevitability of giving up one's positive emotions in the face of seeing things 'sub specie aeternitas' turns many people away from accepting Spinozism, for we are very reluctant to countenance a theory which advocates the abandonment of human sympathy, or human love, which most people do feel to be an essential part of the human situation.

The following plausible argument for this radical Spinozism might lead a reader to reject the whole enterprise and revert to a Strawsonian acceptance of all reactive attitudes. If one should (rationally) give up feeling resentful towards others when they injure one, because being resentful implies that one thinks they were causally special in one's being injured, when nothing ever is, in the infinite causal chain which precedes any event, then it would be equally irrational for one to feel grateful when someone does something for one. Spinoza could have gladly accepted this argument, as he advocated the abandonment of all reactive attitudes, but most people feel that any belief which makes it irrational to continue feeling positive reactive attitudes must be wrong. So perhaps we should just reject the antecedent of the argument, as Strawson would do. In any event, the argument requires some examination.

Strawson would reject the antecedent of the above on the grounds that
feeling resentful is quite appropriate in situations where someone has demonstrated his ill will towards oneself, provided the person is not, say, a small child or a mentally ill individual, and that the truth or falsity of determinism is irrelevant to this. Spinoza believed that the truth of determinism logically commits one to accepting that having passions is irrational. Strawson believes that the truth of determinism is irrelevant to the appropriacy of having reactive attitudes; he does not allow for questions to arise concerning the actual rationality of having such attitudes. They seem to be both wrong in their views of the connection between the truth of determinism and our having reactive attitudes, which, we recall, are a sub-species of passion.

If one does believe in the truth of determinism, then it is that much easier for one to avoid feeling the negative reactive attitudes. However, a belief in determinism in no way warrants that one will be less prone to any feelings. What is required, if one is to become free of certain negative reactive attitudes to people who have injured one is that one understand the causes of one's injury. If one is able to discover the causes of the offending person's behaviour, then it is very likely that one's negative reactive attitudes towards the person would be either eliminated, or at least reduced in their intensity. It is certainly rational to seek to understand the causes of people's behaviour when they do things to hurt one. There are two reasons for this. The first is that doing so is therapeutically beneficial, as it helps one to escape the inhibiting and destructive influence of these feelings - it helps one to get on with what one wants to do. Secondly, there is a sense in which it is always rational to seek out the reasons and causes of events. In this sense of 'rational' it is almost tautologous that it is rational to increase one's understanding of what goes on.
As far as the positive reactive attitudes are concerned, there is certainly not the same 'therapeutic' pressure for seeking out the causes, of really understanding, why someone has done something kind for us. This is basically because the positive reactive attitudes are, as a rule, pleasant and uninhibiting. Of course, in the other sense of 'rational', it is obvious that it would be irrational for us not to seek out the causes of people's amicable behaviour towards us, no less than it is rational to seek to understand hostile behaviour.

These remarks can be connected up with Strawson's 'objective attitude'. When one is seeking to understand the causes of someone's adverse behaviour, one is not, typically, reacting to the behaviour. Although believing in the truth of determinism does not mean that one will never react to one's being injured by someone, it does make it easier not to do so, as it is a prerequisite for seeking to understand the causes of the behaviour in question. But what is really important here is that one appreciate what the causes are, rather than simply to acknowledge that there are causes.

It isn't the truth of determinism alone which makes having negative reactive attitudes irrational, although believing in determinism could certainly make it easier for one to overcome one's bondage to negative reactive attitudes. As believing in determinism is not by itself sufficient to help limit one's negative reactive attitudes, so it isn't vis-a-vis the positive ones.

What is suggested here is trying to see the hostile things people do to one in their broadest perspective. It is desirable to do this, because doing so enables one to shake off the undesirable burden of certain negative reactive
attitudes. Insofar as one is able to control how broad a perspective one sees things in, there is not the same incentive to see the pleasant things people do for one in this perspective, although this is certainly what a Spinozistically free person would undoubtedly do.

As there are very few people who are, could be, or would want to be, completely free in this sense, an intermediate proposal, between Strawsonian abandonment to the complete range of reactive attitudes and Spinozist complete abandonment of them, has been tentatively suggested.  

In propounding this hypothesis about the rationality of rejecting or accepting the desirability of having certain reactive attitudes, one must not forget the Strawsonian point that deciding to abandon or have reactive attitudes is not just a straightforward decision about what one is going to do, where one has two choices, for the reactive attitudes are reactions. One can, however, through time, work to change the way one is going to react to situations of all sorts, including to the good or ill-will of one's fellow human-beings. To undertake this is, nevertheless, a very radical activity, which can be achieved, if at all, only with difficulty.

A problem with pursuing this approach to one's life is that it is very easy to confuse not having the negative reactive attitudes with suppressing them. One of the reasons for feeling rather sceptical about people who talk of not feeling resentful when someone close lets them down is that we automatically suspect that the person who is claiming not to feel resentment is really biting his or her lip and is simply suppressing negative feelings.

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8 The above argument raises a number of deep issues which time and space do not permit the author to discuss fully in this essay.
All that can be said here is that the two are different, and should not be confused, for the suppression of one's feelings is certainly one of the main causes of people's feeling depressed.

Spinoza advocated the total abandonment of passions as a prerequisite for human freedom. Strawson has argued that we are inevitably subject to some passions, namely the reactive attitudes. In this chapter we have investigated the rival claims and have produced a proposal for people for whom complete 'freedom' is out of range. The substance of the compromise is to acknowledge the Strawsonian point that our feelings are of great importance to us, and that giving them up is not a matter to be taken lightly. On the other hand, the suggestion that we cannot give up at least some of them, and moreover that it would not be reasonable to do so, is rejected. If one accepts the Spinozist point that some of our emotions are harmful because they hurt us and others, then there is a good prima facie case for trying to avoid our subjection to them. It has also been argued, though somewhat tentatively, that it is possible but very difficult, to achieve this, without at the same time renouncing the positive reactive attitudes, which are in themselves 'useful' to us and others. There has deliberately been no discussion of the further step advocated by Spinoza, of giving up even one's positive passions. This can be avoided, without jeopardy to the rest of the discussion, because it is, as it were, the final jewel on the crown of Spinoza's philosophy, and involves the radically altered state of consciousness which is called 'the intellectual love of God', which is not a subject for critical discussion in an essay such as this, mainly because of the difficulty of understanding what such a state would be like.
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