

Teleology and Human Action in Spinoza

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Spinoza enjoys a widespread reputation as the early modern philosopher who makes the most thoroughgoing and principled attack on teleology. Descartes, for example, limits his attack on final causation to the question of its usefulness in physics.¹ Spinoza, according to the standard story, accepts Descartes's rejection of teleological explanation in physics, but he also boldly pushes further and denies the legitimacy of teleological explanation even with respect to God. That is, he denies divine providence. This standard picture, Jonathan Bennett has notoriously argued, does not go far enough. Not only, according to Bennett, does Spinoza reject final causation in physics and theology, but he also rejects—or at least is committed to rejecting, whether or not he lives up to this commitment—teleological explanations of human actions. That is, he is committed to denying that human actions are goal directed. According to Bennett, Spinoza is committed to holding that if content-bearing states—for example, beliefs and desires—explain human actions, they do not do so in virtue of their content. On a commonly accepted account of the goal-directedness of human action, the exclusion of mental content from psychological explanation would entail that psychological explanations are not teleological. Of course, Bennett admits, Spinoza frequently

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1. See, for example, René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, 1, sec. 28, in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, rev. ed., ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1964–76), vol. 8, pt. 1, pp. 15–16; John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, trans., *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

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does talk as if human action can be understood teleologically, but he is inconsistent to do so. What is more, Bennett claims that in talking this way he is disloyal to some of his most important insights into the nature of thought—insights that are both largely correct and incompatible with teleological explanations of human action.²

Bennett's interpretation, if correct, would expose a serious flaw in Spinoza's system. Much of the moral psychology that Spinoza develops and applies to the explanation of human bondage to the passions in parts 3 and 4 of the *Ethics* presumes that human action is goal directed. Thus, on Bennett's account, Spinoza's moral philosophy would be undercut by his metaphysics and philosophy of mind. For a thinker such as Spinoza, who aspires to a thoroughly systematic philosophy in which ethical conclusions are supported by metaphysical and psychological considerations, such a conflict would represent a profound failure.

I believe, however, that Bennett has misread Spinoza. There is nothing in his metaphysics or philosophy of mind that forbids teleological explanations of human actions. In fact, there is good reason to think that his account of mental content commits him to them. Or so I shall argue.

Before proceeding, it might be worthwhile to situate the debate on human teleology with respect to other forms of teleology. There are at least three kinds of teleology at issue in Spinoza: (1) divine providence, (2) goal-directed human action, and (3) what we might call "unthoughtful teleology." Both divine providence and goal-directed human action are commonly understood as involving thought. When God creates the world, according to an influential tradition, he does so by selecting among alternatives that are represented to him by ideas in the divine mind. That is, God's creation of the world is providential. And human action is typically directed toward some goal because of the agent's beliefs and desires about the future. Many philosophers have thought that all teleology must ultimately involve some thought. But others, notably Aristotle, believe that some teleology is independent of thought. Such teleology is sometimes called "unthoughtful teleology." It is uncontroversial that Spinoza denied divine providence. Don Garrett has persuasively argued that, contrary to the received interpretation,

2. Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's "Ethics"* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1984), chap. 9, and "Spinoza and Teleology: A Reply to Curley," in *Spinoza: Issues and Directions*, ed. Edwin Curley and Pierre-François Moreau (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990).

Spinoza accepts unthoughtful teleology.³ Many commentators, including Garrett and Michael Della Rocca,⁴ have tried to show that, *contra* Bennett, Spinoza accepts thoughtful human teleology. I believe, however, that no one has yet successfully answered Bennett's arguments against thoughtful human teleology in Spinoza. So by showing that Bennett's arguments can be answered, I hope to help complete the picture advanced by Garrett according to which Spinoza accepts both unthoughtful teleology and thoughtful human teleology, but not divine teleology. Moreover, I shall argue that a correct understanding of Spinoza's views on goal-directed human action sheds light on important features of Spinoza's account of mental content and causality more generally.

1. *Prima Facie* Textual Evidence

There is substantial textual evidence that Spinoza believes that human action is often goal directed. This evidence has three main sources: (1) Spinoza's informal discussions of human action; (2) Spinoza's explanation of the prevalence of belief in divine teleology; and (3) the psychological principles stated in parts 3 and 4 of the *Ethics*.

As Garrett points out, Spinoza frequently uses teleological explanations when informally discussing human action.⁵ For example, he begins the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* with the observation that most human action is directed toward "wealth, honor, or sensual pleasure."⁶ He contrasts to these his own aim, namely, "love toward the

3. Don Garrett, "Teleology in Spinoza and Early Modern Philosophy," in *New Essays on the Rationalists*, ed. Rocco J. Gennaro and Charles Huenemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 310–35.

4. Garrett, "Teleology," and Michael Della Rocca, "Spinoza's Metaphysical Psychology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. Don Garrett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 192–226. Other authors that have argued that Spinoza accepts the goal-directedness of human action include Edwin Curley, in "On Bennett's Spinoza: The Issue of Teleology," in Curley and Moreau, *Spinoza: Issues and Directions*, 46–50, and Richard Manning, "Spinoza, Thoughtful Teleology, and the Causal Significance of Content," in *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes*, ed. Olli Koistinen and John Biro (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 182–209.

5. Garrett, "Teleology," 312.

6. TdIE, section 3, G 2/6. All citations from Spinoza are from *Spinoza Opera*, ed. C. Gebhardt, 4 vols. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925) (G hereafter). Most English translations are from Edwin Curley, ed. and trans., *The Complete Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985) with occasional modifications. References to the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*, *Descartes' "Principles of Philosophy"* and the *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being* are abbreviated TdIE, DPP, and

eternal and infinite thing,” which “feeds the mind with a joy entirely exempt from sadness.” Such joy “is greatly to be desired, and to be sought with all our strength.”⁷ These remarks would make no sense if human action were not goal directed.

In the appendix to part 1 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza attempts to explain why what he takes to be a mere prejudice—that God acts for the sake of some end—is so commonly believed. On a very natural reading of the text, his explanation presupposes, as Edwin Curley has noted, that human action is teleological.⁸ He writes:

All the prejudices I here undertake to expose depend on this one: that men commonly suppose that all natural things act, *as men do*, on account of an end. (my emphasis)

This claim appears to imply that human beings act for the sake of an end. Moreover, his account of how this prejudice arises presupposes that human action is goal directed. First, he claims that human beings always act for the sake of some end and they are directly aware of this fact. Next, he points out that many natural phenomena conduce to human survival. For example, plants and animals provide nutritious food; human teeth are useful for eating. The true causes of these phenomena are frequently beyond our ken, but, accustomed as we are to accepting teleological explanations in one domain of inquiry (namely, psychology), we readily adopt spurious teleological explanations of these nonpsychological phenomena.

Last, and perhaps most important, the psychological principles that Spinoza offers in the *Ethics* are often teleological. Here are some examples:

As far as we can, we strive to free a thing we pity from its suffering. (3p27c3)

We strive to further the occurrence of whatever we imagine will lead to joy, and to avert or destroy what we imagine is contrary to it, or will lead to sadness. (3p28)

KV, respectively. In citations from the *Ethics*, I use the following abbreviations: the first numeral refers to parts; ‘p’ means proposition; ‘c’ means corollary; ‘s’ means scholium; for example, 4p37s means *Ethics*, part 4, proposition 37, scholium.

7. TdIE, section 10, G 2/24–26.

8. Curley, “On Bennett’s Spinoza: The Issue of Teleology,” 41. It should be noted that it is also possible to read the claim that man acts on account of an end as part of the prejudice that Spinoza is criticizing. (I owe this point to an anonymous referee.)

He who lives according to the guidance of reason strives, as far as he can, to repay the other's hate, anger, and disdain toward him, with love, or nobility. (4p46)

Psychological principles such as these form the heart of Spinoza's moral psychology and normative ethics. If they were inconsistent with some of Spinoza's core commitments, then both his moral psychology and his ethical theory would be severely compromised.

Taken together, this evidence constitutes a strong *prima facie* case that Spinoza countenances teleological explanations of human action. Bennett is aware of these texts, and he concedes that Spinoza sometimes attributed goal-directed action to human beings. Bennett, however, thinks that such attributions are inconsistent with other parts of Spinoza's philosophy, some of which are among the best and most interesting parts. That is, in attributing goal-directedness to human action, Spinoza betrays some of his most penetrating insights. Bennett conjectures that these inconsistencies are the product of a number of factors. First, Spinoza might have written his attack on divine teleology before discovering the case against all teleology but may have neglected to revise the appendix to part 1 in light of that discovery. Secondly, Spinoza may have had himself only a partial or inconstant grasp of the case against all teleology and so not all that he wrote consistently manifested his antiteleological views.

Bennett's latter claim in particular is not implausible in itself. Great innovators are not always in total control of their innovations. So if there are parts of Spinoza's philosophy that entail that human action is not goal directed, it is nevertheless possible that Spinoza did not see—or at least did not consistently see—that entailment.

The parts of Spinoza's philosophy that are supposed to entail the denial of teleological explanations of human action are (1) the arguments against divine teleology (as opposed to his explanation of the prevalence of its acceptance), which, Bennett notes, are easily adapted to attack human teleology; and (2) his account of mental content. Bennett expresses doubts about the cogency of Spinoza's arguments against divine teleology, but he claims that they tell against human action if they are any good at all. Spinoza's account of mental content Bennett judges to be some of the best and most interesting parts of Spinoza's philosophy. I will consider each in turn.

2. Divine Teleology

The appendix to part 1 of the *Ethics* is, in large part, the basis for Spinoza's reputation as a staunch critic of teleological explanation. For example, he writes:

Not many words will be required now to show that Nature has no end set before it, and that all final causes are nothing but human fictions. For I believe I have already established this, both by the foundations and causes from which I have shown this prejudice to have had its origin, and also by p16, p32c1, and c2, and all those [propositions] by which I have shown that all things proceed by a certain eternal necessity of nature, and with the greatest perfection. I shall, however, add this: this doctrine concerning the end turns nature completely upside down. For what is really a cause, it considers as an effect, and conversely. What is prior by nature, it makes posterior. And finally, what is supreme and most perfect, it makes imperfect.

Spinoza's arguments here might appear to tell against the goal-directedness of human action. First, the phrase "Nature has no end set before it," is easily read as meaning that natural phenomena are not teleological or goal directed, or alternatively, if some process is teleological then it is nonnatural. Since, according to Spinoza, human actions are natural phenomena, they must not be goal directed.⁹ Second, Spinoza seems to view necessity as incompatible with teleology so that if x happened necessarily, then it did not happen for the sake of any end. Spinoza arguably believes that all things happen necessarily, and, consequently, that human actions happen necessarily.¹⁰ He would thus be committed to holding that human actions do not happen for the sake of an end. Third, Spinoza appears to accuse teleological explanation of treating effects as causes. What is really an efficient cause is seen by teleology as an effect of a final cause. All natural phenomena have, according to Spinoza, causal consequences.¹¹ Human actions are natural phenomena

9. See the preface to part 3 of the *Ethics*.

10. Don Garrett, for example, argues that Spinoza believes that all truths are necessary in "Spinoza's Necessitarianism," in *God and Nature*, ed. Yirmiyahu Yovel (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 191–92. For an alternative view according to which Spinoza only thinks that the existence of God and the laws of nature are necessary, see Edwin M. Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), chap. 3., and Edwin Curley and Greg Walski, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism Reconsidered," in Gennaro and Huenemann, *New Essays on the Rationalists*, 241–62.

11. Ip28 says that all things have a cause. The way in which Ip28d relies on Ip25 makes it clear that the cause is an efficient cause.

and hence have causal consequences. Some of these consequences are identified as the end or goal of the action. But actions are the efficient causes of these consequences, and so the direction of determination runs from the action to the consequence. Therefore, human actions are not goal directed.

But the interpretation of this passage is not so straightforward as that. As Curley has pointed out, it must be understood as an attack on a very definite conception of divine providence.¹² Spinoza describes this conception just before the passage from the appendix to part 1 quoted above:

All the prejudices I here undertake to expose depend on this one: that men commonly suppose that all natural things act, as men do, on account of an end; or rather, more precisely [*immo*], they maintain as certain that God himself directs all things to some certain end, for they say that God has made all things for man, and man that he might worship God.

In other words, the picture of divine providence that Spinoza undertakes to expose is that God creates the world with a certain objective in mind—he wants to be worshiped by human beings. That Spinoza rejects this picture of divine providence is not surprising. The picture of God that emerges from part 1 of the *Ethics* is a far cry from the personal God of Judeo-Christian scripture in all his anthropomorphic benevolence, wrath, jealousy, and so forth. Yet when Spinoza states his reasons for rejecting this picture, he says something rather surprising. He cites Ip16, which says that God produces the modes from the necessity of his nature, and Ip32c1 and c2 which say that God does not produce the modes freely. How does a denial of freedom entail the denial of teleology? There is no obvious connection between freedom and teleology.¹³

If Spinoza is less than perfectly explicit about his thinking here, it's because, I think, he is guided by a thought that he doesn't fully develop until part 2 of the *Ethics*. Spinoza's target is the idea, which was very common among scholastic Aristotelians, that God's creative act is free because it is caused by an antecedent act of will that selects from a range of alternatives represented by ideas in the divine mind. Before God creates the world, on that view, he considers all the different ways he might create it. These different possibilities are contained in the

12. Curley, "On Bennett's Spinoza," 41.

13. This point is made by Bennett, *Study*, 216; Curley, "On Bennett's Spinoza," 43; and Garrett, "Teleology," 315.

divine mind as ideas. God selects from the things represented by his ideas and creates them through an act of will. That is to say, God deliberates.¹⁴ “Out of natural necessity” means, in the scholastic idiom, not deliberately; so when Spinoza says that God acts out of natural necessity, he means that God’s action is not deliberate. We already have a hint of Spinoza’s critique of this picture of divine action in 1p31:

The actual intellect, whether finite or infinite, like will, desire, love, etc. must be referred to *Natura naturata*, not to *Natura naturans*.

By “*Natura naturans*,” Spinoza means God’s productive power by means of which he produces all things.¹⁵ By “*Natura naturata*,” Spinoza means all the modes that follow from God’s productive power.¹⁶ 1p32, which Spinoza cites in the appendix by way of its corollaries, says that “the will, like the intellect, is only a certain mode of thinking . . . even if the will be supposed to be infinite.” That is, the divine will and intellect belong to *Natura naturata*; they are the effects of God’s productive power. This is just the opposite of what the traditional view of divine providence holds. It says that God’s will and intellect preexist the creation of the world—the intellect providing the model for creation, and the will selecting between the alternatives presented by the intellect. That is, on the scholastic picture, the divine will and intellect belong to *Natura naturans*.

The defender of divine teleology might object that Spinoza’s arguments have not ruled out the possibility that God first creates his ideas and volitions and then creates everything else by selecting among his ideas by means of his volitions. So, whereas the first stage of creation would not be teleological, the second would be. Indeed, according to Spinoza, God’s production of any finite mode is mediated by other modes. So there are many things (considered under the attribute of thought) that God creates in virtue of possessing certain ideas and volitions.¹⁷

But Spinoza has a better reason to deny the traditional picture of divine action: it conflicts with 2p7s. According to that text, the idea of each thing doesn’t preexist it and serve as its model. Rather, the idea and the thing are one and the same, now conceived under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension. Something cannot be

14. See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1, Article 19, Question 3 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964–66).

15. 1p29s and KV 8.

16. 1p29 and KV 1, 9.

17. I owe this point to Michael Della Rocca.

the template or exemplar of itself. So the divine ideas cannot be the templates or exemplars of what they represent.

Note that none of this appears to tell against human teleology. Human will and intellect can be involved in human causality because the human being already stands on the modal side of the mode-substance divide. The individual modes of thought and will, which constitute the human mind, are unproblematically involved in causing (the ideas parallel to) human action. And, according to Spinoza, ideas in the human mind often represent things to which they are not identical.¹⁸ This is enough to show that Spinoza's argument here does not obviously tell against human teleology, but I shall consider the issue more fully in section 6.

The last part of Spinoza's attack on divine providence is directed at the idea that God creates the world for the benefit of human beings so that they will worship him. He argues that this can't be the goal of God's creation of the world for two reasons: (1) that this would make certain finite mediate modes (that is, human beings) more perfect than immediate modes, and (2) that this would imply that God wants something that he lacks, namely, human worship.

The first point is somewhat obscure. Spinoza seems to assume that if an agent brings about ϕ that has an effect ψ , then ψ is the end or goal of the agent's action only if ψ is more perfect than ϕ . While it's not obvious why he holds this, perhaps he thinks that when an agent acts so as to bring about ϕ and ϕ causes ψ , we need a way of distinguishing two cases: it might be the case that ϕ was the agent's end and that ψ is a by-product of ϕ , or it might be the case that the agent's end is ψ and ϕ is a means to ψ . Now, agents act for the sake of perceived goodness or perfection, but the means to some good might itself be good. For example, one might drive in order to get where one is going but still enjoy the drive. Similarly, by-products can be good. For example, one might play tennis for its own sake, while also enjoying the by-product of good health. Spinoza seems to be proposing the following principle: when an agent does ϕ with the result that ψ , and ϕ is better than ψ , ϕ is the goal and ψ is the by-product, otherwise ϕ is the means. So if the goal of God's creation of the world is to be worshiped by human beings, then that state of affairs must be more perfect than the other things that God brings about and that serve as intermediate causes for it—for example, all the causal precedents for the existence of human beings

18. 2p16.

and the laws of nature that govern those causal processes. The laws of nature are infinite modes that follow immediately from God.¹⁹ As such, they are infinite and eternal.²⁰ That is, on Spinoza's understanding of those terms, their existence in space and time is not limited by external causes.²¹ Perfection, for Spinoza, is freedom from limitation by external causes.²² So infinite modes enjoy a high degree of perfection. Human beings are subject to many limitations by external causes and are consequently much less perfect than infinite modes.²³ Therefore human worship of God cannot be God's goal in creating the world. If it were, then an end would be less perfect than its means.

The second point is more straightforward. Spinoza finds the idea of God wanting something he lacks incompatible with his perfection. One acts for the sake of a goal only if one wants it. One wants only what one lacks. Something can be improved if it acquires something that it lacks. Something is perfect only if it can't be improved. A perfect thing cannot, therefore, lack anything and so cannot want anything. Hence, God cannot want anything or act for the sake of any end, much less human worship.

Once again, neither of these lines of criticism is relevant to the idea of human purposes. The objection from the greater perfection of

19. Edwin Curley has argued convincingly that the infinite modes should be understood as very general facts about the natural world, that is, as laws of nature. See Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 54–79, and *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza's Metaphysics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 45–47.

20. 1p21.

21. 1d2 and 1d8. In 1d8, Spinoza defines eternity in terms of self-causation, which implies the absence of external causes. How then can infinite modes be eternal since they have an external cause? I think that the best we can say here on Spinoza's behalf is that although infinite modes have an external cause, they are subject to no causal limitation. That is, their duration is not determined or limited by the influence of an external cause.

22. This follows from Spinoza's identification of perfection with power of acting (see the preface to part 4, G 2/209). Something acts, for Spinoza, insofar as it is the adequate cause of its effects (3d2). It is an adequate cause insofar as its effect can be understood through it alone (3d1). Since things are understood through their causes (1a4), if x can be understood through y alone, then y alone is the cause of x . But when things are subject to external causes, their effects must be understood in terms of their powers in conjunction with the powers of those external causes (4p5). Power of acting can thus be understood as admitting of degrees. The more the power or essence of a thing explains its effects, the more power of acting it possesses. The more external causes help determine its effects, the less power of acting it has. Since power of acting is perfection, the more perfect a thing is, the less external causes determine its effects.

23. 4p3.

the immediate modes clearly has no bearing on human action since there is no reason to think that the immediate effects of human action will be more perfect than their mediate effects. And it is obvious that imperfect human agents want things they lack. I think we can conclude on the basis of these considerations that Spinoza says nothing in the appendix of part 1 that entails a denial of human teleology.

3. The Impotence of Content

Let us now turn to Bennett's claim that Spinoza's account of mental content precludes teleological explanations of human action. It's often thought that teleological explanations are flawed because they explain some event by referring to what the event aims to bring about, that is, a goal or purpose. Such explanations would have the following form: event x occurs because x causes y . But y must be some event or state of affairs subsequent to x , so it can't explain why x occurs. If it could, then that would mean that the future could somehow influence the present, which is, it is claimed, absurd. The world operates by means of pushes, not pulls.

Folk-psychological explanations of human action are teleological because they explain action in terms of, among other things, goals or desires. We might, for example, explain a man's behavior by saying that his cutting remark was made in order to humiliate his rival. A certain event, the humiliation of his rival, was the goal or purpose of his action, his cutting remark. But there is no mystery here as to how some future state of affairs could influence the present. A thought about the future, the desire that his rival be humiliated, caused his action. Since the thought that represents this future event precedes the action, it can act as an efficient cause. In this way, teleological explanations of human action are compatible with universal efficient-cause determinism. We need not postulate any obscure pull on the part of the future. Spinoza's explanation of human action in terms of goals and purposes would thus not conflict with his denial of divine providence or his commitment to mechanistic physics.

But is this sort of teleological explanation consistent with Spinoza's denial of mind-body interaction? Thought and extension, according to Spinoza, are two distinct attributes. As such, they have nothing in common.²⁴ Things with nothing in common, Spinoza believes, cannot caus-

24. 1p2.

ally interact.²⁵ Thus neither distinct attributes nor modes of distinct attributes can causally interact, and so minds and bodies can't causally interact.²⁶ If explanations of the sort "She raised her hand to deflect the stone" are understood to mean that an idea that represents not being hit by a stone as a good thing and an idea that represents hand raising as a way of bringing that about jointly cause the bodily event of her hand being raised, then a bodily event is caused by two mental events (a belief-desire pair). Such explanations would obviously violate the causal barrier that Spinoza thinks separates distinct attributes.

But even the strongest opponents of teleological explanation in Spinoza recognize that bodily events can legitimately figure into psychological explanations so long as they do so not as modes of extension but as objects of thought or *ideata*. We can therefore understand "she raised her hand to deflect the stone" to mean: an idea that represents not getting hit by a stone as a good thing and an idea that represents hand raising as a way of bringing that about cause an idea the object of which is her hand being raised. Thus teleological explanations of human action, suitably framed, do not violate Spinoza's parallelism.

Bennett concedes the above points, but still argues that Spinoza is committed to a number of theses that jointly imply that mental content can't be causally efficacious and hence the illegitimacy of this form of teleological explanation. First, he says that, for Spinoza, the content of an idea is determined by its causal history, citing 2p16 and 2p40s in support of this claim. Causal history is an extrinsic property, not an intrinsic property. If we elucidate the notion of an intrinsic property by saying that intrinsic properties are those properties that a thing and its perfect duplicate share, then it is easy to see that causal history is not intrinsic.²⁷ Imagine a machine capable of creating the perfect duplicate of anything whatsoever. If I duplicate a wristwatch the crystal of which was scratched against a brick wall last July, then the duplicate will have a scratch identical to the scratch of the original wristwatch, but it will not have been scratched against a brick wall last July. Its causal history will be different despite being identical to the original in every intrinsic respect.

25. 1p3.

26. 2p4 and 2p5.

27. This is only an elucidation, not an analysis. For, we might ask, what features must one thing share with another in order to be its duplicate? The intrinsic features, of course. Despite this circularity, the notion of duplication can help us refine our intuitions about intrinsicness.

The next move in Bennett's argument is to claim that, for Spinoza, only size, shape, and motion are relevant to the causal powers of a body. Size, shape, and motion are intrinsic properties. This is supposed to be implied by Spinoza's commitment to the mechanical philosophy as evidenced by the "Short Physical Treatise" of part 2 of the *Ethics* and the correspondence with Oldenburgh, particularly Ep. 6, 13, and 30a.

Bennett next claims that together with Spinoza's parallelism, the putative fact that all causally efficacious properties are intrinsic and all representational features of thought are extrinsic has important consequences for the question of the causal efficacy of representational features of thought. According to Spinoza's parallelism, the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.²⁸ That is, for every mode of extension, there is a mode of thought, and vice versa, and if body x causally influences body y , then idea a (the idea parallel to body x) causally influences idea b (the idea parallel to body y): thought and extension are isomorphic. It follows from this that if the causal powers of bodies depend on intrinsic features, then the causal powers of ideas must depend on intrinsic features. And since representational content depends on extrinsic features (causal history), the causal powers of an idea do not depend on their representational content. Thus, although it may be true that a man's cutting remark was caused by a desire to humiliate his rival, it is not because the thought represents his rival's humiliation that it causes it. Content, on this view, is as irrelevant to explaining the power of thought to cause action as, to borrow Fred Dretske's famous example, the meaning of the words of a libretto are to the power of an opera singer's voice to shatter a wine glass.²⁹ No doubt the causes of the wine glass's shattering have content, but it's not in virtue of their representational properties that they cause the shattering. It is, rather, a matter of the frequency and amplitude of the sounds. The words of the libretto when sung have both content on the one hand and frequency and amplitude on the other. But whereas the latter determine their causal powers, the former does not. So too with the desire to humiliate a rival. This thought no doubt has content, but it also has other, intrinsic, properties. If the content depends on relational properties, then it can't be causally relevant. To put the point in a Cartesian idiom that Spinoza himself sometimes uses, it's the formal reality and not the objective reality of an idea that determines its causal powers.

28. 2p7.

29. Fred Dretske, "Reasons and Causes," *Philosophical Perspectives* 3 (1989): 1–15.

We can summarize this argument as follows:

1. The causal powers of bodies depend on intrinsic properties such as size, shape, and motion.
2. There is a parallelism between bodies and their properties and relations on the one hand and ideas and their properties and relations on the other. (2p7)
3. The causal powers of ideas depend on intrinsic properties. (1 and 2)
4. The representational properties of ideas depend upon their causal history. (2p16d and c1)
5. Causal history is an extrinsic property.
6. Therefore, the causal powers of ideas do not depend upon their representational properties. (3, 4, and 5)

Bennett believes that Spinoza is committed to, and at some level, aware of, this argument so that when he explains human actions by reference to human goals and purposes, he is being inconsistent.³⁰ But I think that if we examine the premises of this argument more carefully, it ceases to be clear that all of them have a genuinely Spinozistic basis.

Della Rocca has claimed that there is no textual evidence to suggest that Spinoza ever makes the distinction between the thing that has causal power and the properties in virtue of which it has it.³¹ But Spinoza distinguishes between a mode and its affections, which he seems to think of as the properties of a mode. And Spinoza frequently says things that imply that the causal powers of things derive from their properties. For example, he says in the course of offering a mechanical explanation of a certain chemical reaction: “since the particles are of unequal thickness . . . , they first bent the rigid walls of the passages like a bow and then broke them.”³² Here he clearly says that the particles bent and broke the walls of the passages in virtue of their thickness. Consider also the following text:

Let A be that which is common to, and peculiar to, the human body and certain external bodies. . . . Let it be posited now that the human body is affected by an external body through what it has in common with it, i.e., by A.

30. Bennett, *Study*, 220.

31. Michael Della Rocca, “Spinoza’s Metaphysical Psychology,” 252.

32. Ep. 6 to Oldenburg, 1662.

In this passage, it is clear that A is a property of an external body, and that the external body causally interacts with the human body in virtue of possessing A. So we must admit that, *pace* Della Rocca, Spinoza both distinguishes things from their properties and explains the causal powers of things by reference to their properties.

The next premise that we might question is that the content of an idea is determined by its causal history. According to Spinoza's parallelism, for every body there is a parallel idea and vice versa. The human body is a complex body the parts of which are themselves bodies. The human mind is a complex idea the parts of which are the ideas parallel to the parts of the body. Each idea represents the body to which it is parallel.³³ The ideas that are parts of the human mind represent the parts of the body to which they are parallel. The complex idea that constitutes the human mind represents the complex body that constitutes the human body. The considerations that lead Spinoza to believe that the human mind represents the human body are obscure, but it is clear that they cannot be causal. My mind represents my body irrespective of the causal relations that my mind or body enters into. Thus, in this case, causal history does not determine content.

The body, however, is not the only thing represented by the mind or the ideas that constitute it. When the human body or parts of the human body are in states that have external causes, the idea or ideas that represent the body or its parts represent the external causes of those states.³⁴ Thus, a great many of our ideas have representational properties that are determined by the causal relations entered into by the bodies parallel to them. This suggests that Spinoza accepts Bennett's fourth premise. Nevertheless, some commentators have denied that Spinoza accepts it. In the next two sections, I shall consider one important challenge to the claim that Spinoza accepts Bennett's fourth premise, and I shall argue that the challenge fails.³⁵

33. 2p12 and 2p17d.

34. 2p16.

35. It is worth noting that Spinoza's claims about mental content—that the mind contains representations of every part of the body, every bodily event, and every external cause that affects the body—have seemingly implausible consequences. For example, they entail that my mind contains a representation of the chemical reactions that are currently taking place in my liver, to borrow Della Rocca's striking example. They also entail that my mind contains a representation of each of the particles that constitute the largest moon of Jupiter since they causally influence—by means of gravitational force—the parts of my body. Showing that these consequences are not as implausible

3.1 *Narrow Content?*

Spinoza's claim that the content of an idea is individuated by the causal history of the idea is similar in certain respects to contemporary externalist theories of content according to which content supervenes on the extrinsic features of the bearers of content. This kind of content externalism is often arrived at by consideration of the kind of thought experiments made famous by Hilary Putnam.³⁶ Suppose that Jones, who inhabits Earth, has a twin, Smith. (By "a twin of Jones," I mean a person who is qualitatively identical to Jones in every intrinsic respect.) Smith inhabits Twin Earth, a planet on which the substance that plays the water-role (that is, is a colorless, odorless liquid that falls from the sky, fills the lakes and oceans, and so on) is not H₂O, but rather XYZ. When Jones sincerely utters the sentence "There is water in the basement," he expresses a belief that is true just in case there is H₂O in the basement. But when Smith sincerely utters the sentence "There is water in the basement," he expresses a belief that is true just in case there is XYZ in the basement. Since Jones and Smith have different mental contents despite being twins, content, the externalist claims, cannot supervene on intrinsic features. What extrinsic properties determine content is a matter of controversy, but one prominent proposal is that, in order to have a concept the referent of which is an object or substance *x*, it is necessary to be causally connected (in the right way) to *x*. Content that supervenes on extrinsic properties is often termed "wide content."

Despite the intuitive appeal of Twin-Earth-style thought experiments, externalism nevertheless appears to have some paradoxical consequences. First of all, something like content seems to be introspectively available. How can I think a thought without knowing what its content is? And yet if content is a matter of external relations, then such transparency cannot be guaranteed. Moreover, the content of belief seems to depict an agent's subjective perspective on the world—how an agent conceives of the world. But conceivings look to be the sorts of things that are in the head. And most relevant to the present discussion, it is natural to suppose that an agent's reasons for acting, say taking a drink of water,

as they may appear falls outside of the scope of this article, but for a persuasive defense of Spinoza's philosophy of mind as concerns these claims, see Don Garrett's "Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza's Naturalistic Theory of the Imagination," in *Necessity and Nature in Spinoza's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

36. Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning,'" in *Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2: Mind, Language, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

are the same as her twin's reasons for acting, even if her desire refers to H₂O and her twin's refers to XYZ.

In response to these worries, some philosophers have tried to characterize a kind of content that is determined exclusively by the intrinsic state of the bearer of content. Such content is often termed "narrow content."³⁷ Don Garrett has recently proposed that Spinoza is entitled to teleological explanations of human action because he has an appropriate notion of narrow content.³⁸ Garrett points out that our perception of external causes operates, on Spinoza's account, by way of images. Images, for Spinoza, are bodily affections that result from the causal impact of external objects. These images resemble and even reproduce particular features of the objects that cause them. The idea parallel to the body that contains the image represents the body directly. In directly representing this body, it represents the image contained in it. In representing the image, it represents the cause of the image because the image resembles its cause.

This seems to do the trick because resemblance is an internal relation; it's a relation that's fully explained by reference to the intrinsic properties of things. That a certain woman physically resembles her sister is purely a matter of her intrinsic attributes such as her height, the color of her hair, the shape of her nose, and so forth. So if a certain image, which is an affection of Paul's body, resembles and hence represents Peter's body because of a resemblance relation that obtains between the size, texture, and arrangement of the image's parts and the size, texture, and arrangement of the parts of Peter's body, then it does so because of its intrinsic features—features that can be legitimately involved in mechanistic causal explanations. And if a certain idea represents Peter's body by representing Paul's body and the image that it contains, then it does so because of features that are parallel to the intrinsic features of Paul's body, so they can factor into mechanistically respectable psychological explanations.

This interpretation, unfortunately, does not succeed in getting Spinoza out of trouble. Resemblance may be an internal relation, but it's a relation all the same. That is, the property things have in virtue of resembling something else are extrinsic properties. It is determined by the way two things are. If there were only one thing, it would resemble

37. Various candidates have been proposed to play the role of narrow content. Among the most influential are descriptions, conceptual roles, and functions from environments to wide contents (characters).

38. Garrett, "Teleology," 321.

nothing but itself. So if causal powers must be determined by intrinsic properties, then resemblance can never determine causal powers. One billiard ball may resemble another, but its causal powers are indifferent to that fact. Likewise, I may have an idea of an image that resembles Peter's body, and that idea has causal outputs, but those outputs will not be affected by the resemblance between the image it represents and Peter's body, but rather by the purely mechanical properties of size, shape, texture, arrangement, motion, and so on.

3.2 Spinoza's Account of Mental Representation of External Objects

I propose that at this point we take a closer look at Spinoza's reasons for thinking that an idea represents the external causes of the state of the body to which it's parallel. In the demonstration of 2p16 Spinoza argues as follows:

1. The state in which a body is affected by an external cause is determined both by the nature of the affected body and the external cause. (by 2A")
2. The idea of the state of the body involves the nature of its external causes. (by 1a4)
3. Therefore, the human mind perceives the external causes of the states of its body.

The first premise claims that if individual x causally affects individual y , the resulting state of y will be a function of both the nature of x and of y .³⁹ The second claim is more obscure because it is not clear what Spinoza means by the predicate 'involves'. The demonstration seems to require that 'involves' denotes a relation such that if y involves x , then if some idea represents y , then it represents x as well. I think that Spinoza believes that he's entitled to claim that such a relation holds between states of the body and its causes because of the way (2) is supposed to be derived from 1a4 which reads: "The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause." This axiom might sound as if Spinoza is merely affirming the old Aristotelian doctrine that knowledge is knowledge of causes. What Spinoza has in mind, however, is both more and less demanding than the Aristotelian doctrine. To see this, we need to look at the way he uses this axiom in trying to prove propositions.

39. As we shall see later, the reference to the natures of the causes is part of a commitment to a number of controversial theses about causation. But we shall ignore these for the present.

One of the more revealing uses of 1a4 comes at 1p25, where Spinoza argues that God is the cause of both the existence and essence of things. A mode is something which, by definition, can only be conceived through a substance.⁴⁰ There are no other categories of being besides those of substance and mode.⁴¹ Apart from God there is no other substance.⁴² So the essence and existence of modes must be conceived through God. Spinoza concludes that if modes are conceived through God, then they are caused by God in virtue of 1a4. 1a4 must then be equivalent to the following: the concept of an effect depends on, and involves, the concept of its cause. That is to say, I can't have the concept of *e* without also having the concept of its cause *c*. This goes far beyond the Aristotelian dictum that knowledge is knowledge of causes. Here, it's not that I can't know *e* without knowing *c*, but rather that I can't even think about *e* at all unless I also have the concept of *c*. Someone might object that understood in this way, this condition is not more demanding than the Aristotelian dictum; rather, it is trivial. For any effect *e*, I can easily form an idea the content of which is the same as the content of the description 'the cause of *e*'.⁴³ However, Spinoza infers from this condition that in perceiving the effect we also *perceive* the nature of the cause. This strongly suggests that the cognition of the nature of the cause is somehow substantial. After all, this cognition provides the basis of Spinoza's account of perception, and sense perception is not as trivial as conceiving something merely as the cause of something else.⁴⁴ But now 1a4 might seem implausibly strong. A doctor may have the idea of the state of a patient's body without having a sense perception of the nature of the disease that put the patient in that state or a detective may have the idea of the state of a murder victim's body without having a sense perception of the nature of its cause.⁴⁵ If that weren't the case, their jobs would be considerably easier (or harder) than they in fact are.

The air of implausibility surrounding this claim can be partially dispelled by noting that Spinoza does not mean that one needs to have an *adequate* idea of the cause in order to have an idea of the effect. How

40. 1d5.

41. This follows from 1d3, 1d5, and 1a1.

42. 1p14.

43. I owe this point to an anonymous referee.

44. I owe this suggestion to Michael Della Rocca.

45. The examples of the doctor and the detective are borrowed from Olli Koistinen, "Causation in Spinoza," in Koistinen and Biro, *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes*, 60–73.

should we understand the idea of an inadequate sense perception of the nature of a cause?

A clearer idea of how Spinoza understands the sort of confusion characteristic of inadequate ideas can help us understand what an inadequate sense perception amounts to in this context. Della Rocca has shown that, for Spinoza, the confusion characteristic of inadequate ideas results from the fact that such ideas have dual contents.⁴⁶ Every idea that is parallel to a bodily state with external causes has two representational contents. First, it represents the bodily state to which it is parallel. Second, it represents the external causes of that state. Such ideas are confused. The confusion resides in the fact that each of them represents two objects, and each idea does so in such a way that the mind cannot distinguish the two objects represented from each other. In order to distinguish two objects x and y , Della Rocca notes, it is necessary to have an idea that only represents x and an idea that only represents y . To see this, suppose that some mind did not have an idea only of x . Of any putative act of distinguishing x from y , we could ask whether it was x that was thereby distinguished from y and not some other object. When the body is in a state with an external cause, there is no idea in the mind parallel to the body that just represents the state but not its cause and no idea that just represents the cause but not the state. So, such ideas are confused. This helps minimize the apparent implausibility of Spinoza's claim that we have a sense perception of every cause of every state of our body that has an external cause. Those ideas are mutilated and confused, and the mind invariably confuses the external causes with the states of the body that they cause. (I shall have more to say about why Spinoza thinks that those ideas must represent the *nature* of those external causes later on.) In this respect, 1a4 might be less demanding than the Aristotelian dictum, according to which to know an effect you must know the cause, if knowing the cause is understood in such a way that knowing the cause implies being able to distinguish the cause. Since the idea of the cause when the cause is external is always, according to Spinoza, mutilated and confused when it is possessed by a human mind, the human mind cannot distinguish the cause.⁴⁷

Thus we see that, in 2p16d and 2p16c1, Spinoza claims that every idea parallel to a state of the body with external causes represents those

46. Michael Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 57–64.

47. Another question that might arise concerning my interpretation of 1a4 is how can a mutilated and confused idea constitute knowledge. The answer lies in the dif-

causes because, as 1a4 states, the concept of an effect involves the concept of its cause. Bedrock lies exactly where Bennett claimed it did. It's because a particular state of the body was caused by particular external causes that the idea that represents that body also represents those causes. 1a4 says something about causation, not about resemblance. It's true that Spinoza often talks about the mind's ability to represent indirectly in terms of images, just as Garrett claims. But it seems clear from the way that Spinoza argues in the demonstration of 2p16 and its corollary that Spinoza thinks that the ultimate reason why images represent their causes is 1a4: you can't have the idea of an effect without some idea of its cause. So I think we have to admit that Bennett's fourth premise is safe.

4. Wide Causation

And yet, no matter how extrinsic representational properties are, the causal powers of ideas can still, on Spinoza's account, depend upon them. In this section, I shall argue as follows. First I shall aim to establish that, for Spinoza, the causal powers of passive affects are individuated widely. That is, the causal powers of passive affects are at least partially individuated by extrinsic properties of those affects. This alone suffices to block Bennett's argument by showing that Spinoza does not hold premise (3). But I think it is possible to go further and show that not only does Bennett's argument fail to show that Spinoza is not entitled to teleological explanations of human actions, but also that Spinoza's account of mental content commits him to such explanations. In order to show this, I shall argue that many of the ideas that motivate and guide action are passive affects on Spinoza's account. Therefore, the causal powers of many of the ideas that motivate and guide action are individuated widely. Moreover, there are good reasons to believe that the factors that serve to individuate the causal powers of ideas are the very same factors that individuate the contents of ideas. That is, what makes it the case that a given idea has the content that it does is the very same thing that makes it the case that it has the causal powers that it does. If this is correct, then the content of an idea is relevant to its causal powers.

ference between '*scientia*' and '*cognitio*'. '*Scientia*' implies certainty and justification, whereas '*cognitio*' only implies acquaintance and awareness. 1a4 only states that *cognitio* of an effect involves *cognitione* of the cause, not *scientia*. Although it might sound incongruous to say that one can have mutilated and confused knowledge, it is less incongruous to say that one can have mutilated and confused acquaintance or awareness.

In order to see why Spinoza thinks that the causal powers of the passive affects are individuated widely, we need first to understand why he believes that the passive affects themselves are individuated widely. He writes in 4p33:

The nature, or essence, of the affects cannot be explained through our essence, or nature alone (by 3d1 and 3d2), but must be defined by the power, i.e., (by 3p7), by the nature of external causes paired with our own. That is why there are as many species of each affect as there are species of objects by which we are affected (see 3p56).

In other words, there are as many kinds of passive affects as there are kinds of external objects by which we are affected: affects are individuated by their external causes. His argument for this claim comes in the following text:

3p56: There are as many species of joy, sadness, and desire, and consequently of each affect composed of these . . . or derived from them [Spinoza thinks that joy, sadness, and desire are primitive passions and that all other passions are complexes made out of those three] . . . as there are species of objects by which we are affected.

Dem: [1] Joy and sadness—and consequently the affects composed of them or derived from them—are passions (by p11s). [2] But we are necessarily acted on (by p1) insofar as we have inadequate ideas, and only insofar as we have them (by p3) are we acted on, i.e. (see 2p40s), necessarily we are acted on only insofar as we imagine, or (see 2p17 and p17s) insofar as we are affected with an affect that involves both the nature of our Body and the nature of an external body. [3] Therefore, the nature of each passion must necessarily be so explained that the nature of the object by which we are affected is expressed. [4] For example, the joy arising from A involves the nature of object A, that arising for object B involves the nature of object B, and so these two affects of joy are by nature different. . . . [5] Therefore, there are as many species of joy, sadness, love, hate, etc., as there are species of objects by which we are affected.

Spinoza seems to argue here as follows (I take each of the premises below to be supported by the part of the text quoted above that follows the relevant number in brackets that I have interpolated):

1. If x has a passive affect, then x is acted on. (This follows from [1] above together with 3d1, d2, and d3.)
2. If x is acted on, then the mind of x has an inadequate idea of the nature of the external cause that acts on x .

3. The nature of each passive affect expresses the nature of the external cause that acts on its body. (2p16c1)
4. If affect *a* and affect *b* express different natures, then *a* and *b* are not the same kind of affect.
5. So, there are as many kinds of affects as there are kinds of external objects by which we are affected.

Just as passive affects are individuated widely, so too are their causal powers. He continues in 3p56d:

But desire is the very essence of, or nature, of each man insofar as it is conceived to be determined, by whatever constitution he has, to do something (see p9s). Therefore, as each man is affected by external causes with this or that species of joy, sadness, love, hate, etc.—i.e., as his nature is constituted in one way or the other, so his desires vary and the nature of one desire must differ from the nature of the other as much as the affects from which each arises from one another. Therefore, there are as many species of desire as there are species of joy, sadness, love, etc., and consequently . . . as there are species of objects by which we are affected.

To understand this passage, it is necessary to understand what Spinoza believes about desire. Roughly speaking, a man's desire is his striving for self-preservation, or *conatus*.⁴⁸ A thing's *conatus* is its nature or essence.⁴⁹ Effects follow from a thing's essence.⁵⁰ Hence, desire is the source of a man's causal power. Now Spinoza believes that if *c* causes *e*, then *e* expresses *c*'s nature. I will say more about what 'expresses' means presently. But Spinoza thinks that if something expresses something else's nature, then the source of its causal powers are its own nature and the nature of the other thing that it expresses. He writes:

4p5d: The essence of a passion cannot be explained through our essence alone (by 3d1 and 3d2), i.e., (by 3p7), the power of a passion cannot be defined by the power by which we strive to persevere in our being, but (as has been shown in 2p16) it must necessarily be defined by the power of an external cause paired [*comparata*] with our own.

So if two affects result from being affected by two different external causes with different natures, then the causal powers of the affects must

48. 3p9s.

49. 3p7.

50. 1p36.

differ since they express the natures of their different external causes. In other words:

- Affect *a* and affect *b* have different causal powers just in case *a* and *b* have different kinds of external causes.

We have thus succeeded in blocking Bennett's argument by showing that Spinoza does not believe premise (3) of my reconstruction of his argument.

Let's now turn our attention to the question of whether Spinoza's account of mental content commits him to teleological explanations of human action. The first step will be to show that many of the ideas that motivate and guide human action are passive affects. The ideas that motivate and guide human action often represent external objects. To take our previous example, the future state aimed at by the man who makes the cutting remark is the humiliation of his rival, who is external to him. Even where the future state aimed at is internal, for example, when I act so that my thirst will be quenched, my beliefs about what objects will achieve it typically involve external objects, for example, a glass of water. But our ideas of external objects are never adequate. Spinoza says:

The human mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing, except through the ideas of the affections of its own Body. (2p26)

The idea of any affection of the human Body does not involve adequate knowledge of an external body. (2p25)

The reasoning behind the second claim is that insofar as God has knowledge of the external body causally responsible for the particular affection of my body, he does so in virtue of possessing the idea parallel in thought to the external cause. That idea is not a constituent of my mind. And our adequate ideas can't be different from God's.⁵¹

Even if some piece of goal-directed behavior wasn't motivated by any thoughts about external objects, if the goal and the means to the goal were all somehow internal to the agent, they still couldn't be adequate because they refer to the future. Spinoza says that insofar as we have adequate ideas, we conceive of things *sub specie aeternitatis*.⁵² By eternity, Spinoza means not all time without beginning or end, but rather an

51. 2p25d.

52. 2p44c2.

atemporal timelessness.⁵³ Inadequate ideas represent things in relation to time—as existing in the past, present, or future.⁵⁴ Now to represent something as a goal is to represent some possible future event or state of affairs as good or desirable. So only an inadequate idea is capable of so representing such an event or state of affairs because only inadequate ideas can represent their objects in relation to time.

According to Spinoza, actions follow from adequate ideas and passions from inadequate ideas. He writes:

The actions of the mind arise from adequate ideas alone; the passions depend on inadequate ideas.⁵⁵

But Spinoza doesn't mean to suggest that only adequate ideas motivate behavior. In fact, much of part 3 of the *Ethics* concerns the kinds of behavior motivated by inadequate ideas or passions. Hence, we can conclude that to the extent to which our behavior is motivated by thoughts about the future and external objects, it is motivated by passions. If our behavior is motivated by passions, then it is motivated by ideas with wide causal powers.

We have now succeeded in establishing that Spinoza believes that many of the ideas that motivate and guide human action have wide causal powers. The final step to showing that Spinoza's account of mental content commits him to teleological explanations of human action is to show that the content of ideas that motivate and guide action has the same source as the causal powers of those ideas. I have shown that the causal powers of passive affects are individuated widely because they express the natures of their external causes. I have also shown that the mind perceives the external causes that affect it because its ideas express the nature of those external causes. That is, the source of the content of our ideas' content is the same as the source of our ideas' causal powers: the expressive relation that they bear to the nature of their external causes.

53. See Martha Kneal, "Eternity and Sempiternity," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 69 (1968): 223–38; and Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). For an alternative reading according to which Spinoza thinks that eternity is omnitemporality, see Alan Donagan, "Spinoza's Proof of Immortality," in *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Marjorie Greene (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1973).

54. Representing things in time is done by the imagination, which does not represent things adequately. 2p26, 2p26d, 2p26c, 2p26dc, 2p30, 2p30d, 2p31, 2p31d, 2p44s, 5p21, and 5p29.

55. 3p3.

This alone doesn't suffice to show that content can be causally relevant because the two might simply be effects of a common cause, the expression. If they were, there would be no reason to think that the content was relevant to the causal powers.

I claim, however, that, for Spinoza, the expression constitutes the perception. Here is evidence for this conjecture. Spinoza believes the following:

- a. The idea of an effect expresses the nature of the effect's cause.⁵⁶
- b. The perception of an effect involves perception of its cause.⁵⁷
- c. An attribute expresses the essence of a substance.⁵⁸
- d. An attribute is what an intellect perceives of the essence of a substance, that is, the intellect perceives the essence of a substance by having an idea of an attribute.⁵⁹
- e. An idea i expresses the nature of some x just in case i is a cognition of x .⁶⁰

I submit that a simple and natural way to unify and explain these beliefs is to suppose that Spinoza also believes that if an idea expresses something, then that expression constitutes a perception of that thing.⁶¹ If this were true, then (a) would entail (b) and (c) would entail (d). It would also explain why Spinoza believes (e)—because the expression constitutes a perception and perception is a form of cognition.

If this is true, then the content of our inadequate ideas partially determines the causal powers of those ideas. The expression relation partially determines the causal powers of inadequate ideas. The expres-

56. 3p56d.

57. 2p16c1.

58. 1d6.

59. 1d4.

60. In 2p29d, Spinoza says, "An idea of a state of the human body does not involve adequate cognition of that body, in other words, does not adequately express its nature." (my translation) In this passage, he treats "... involves cognition of ..." and "... expresses ..." as synonymous.

61. We can then say that a mind m perceives some x just in case there is an idea i that is a perception of x and m contains i . Note that, on my interpretation, the expression relation only constitutes the perception relation when the subject of the relation is an idea. Bodies express the natures of their causes just as much as ideas do. Perception, however, is a representational relation. It is in the nature of thought to represent but not in the nature of body. For this reason, the expression relation constitutes the perception relation only when its subject is a mode of thought, that is, an idea.

sion relation constitutes a representation relation. So, the representational properties of an idea partially determines its causal powers.

I have argued that Spinoza can allow that mental content is causally efficacious and hence that teleological explanations of human action are legitimate because he allows that ideas can have wide causal powers. Is this a credible doctrine? Spinoza's argument for it relies upon the idea that effects "express" or "involve" the natures of their causes. Spinoza never explains exactly what he means by this, but I think it is possible to discern here the influence of a view of efficient causation that was prevalent in the seventeenth century and that harks back to the Neoplatonists. The idea is that efficient causation is a kind of giving.⁶² Efficient causation brings about changes. Things change by acquiring qualities that they previously lacked. A cause brings about a change in the affected thing by giving it the quality that it previously lacked. Nothing comes from nothing. Thus, the cause of heating must itself be hot. The cause of motion must itself move. More schematically, c cannot bring about e 's becoming F unless c is itself F . We might state this thought by saying that the effect "expresses" and "involves" its cause's F -ness. Thus we might nail down the notion of expression in the following formula:

- e expresses c 's F -ness just in case both e and c are F and c caused e to be F .

According to the Neoplatonic view of efficient causation that Spinoza accepts, resemblance is a condition on causation. So, any effect must express some property of its cause.

But this brings us only partway to Spinoza's position. He does not merely say that an effect must express and involve *some* quality possessed by its cause, he says that it must express and involve its *nature*. This is because he thinks that things are causally efficacious only in virtue of their essences. His reasons for thinking so are as follows. We cannot conceive of something without conceiving of its cause.⁶³ To conceive something through x is to conceive of it through the essence of x .⁶⁴ So, when we conceive of something through its cause, we conceive of it through the essence of its cause. Because Spinoza identifies conception

62. This characterization is Bennett's. See his *Learning from Six Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

63. 1a4.

64. This is strongly suggested by 2d2. See Don Garrett, "Spinoza's Conatus Argument," in *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes*, ed. Olli Koistinen and John I. Biro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 137.

with explanation, it follows that we explain things through the essence of their causes.⁶⁵ This strongly suggests that things have the causal powers that they do only in virtue of their essences. Call this thesis Causation Through Essence (CTE). More schematically:

- x is F essentially just in case there is some effect that x causes in virtue of being F .

It follows from this that:

- If x is not F essentially, then there is nothing that x causes in virtue of being F .

CTE follows from Spinoza's views on causation, conception, and essence, but did Spinoza draw this conclusion himself? Many texts provide evidence that he did. For example, in 1p16c1, Spinoza argues that God is the efficient cause of everything that follows from his nature or essence. If some property is a consequence of his essence, then he causes it. This idea, that God's causal powers are determined by his nature or essence, is made into a general principle in 1p36 that says, "Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow," and then applied to modal causality in 3p7d, where Spinoza states:

From the given essence of each thing some things necessarily follow (by 1p36), and things are able [to produce] nothing but what follows necessarily from their determinate nature (by 1p29).

This last passage is crucially important because it contains a clear statement to the effect that not only do essences determine causal powers, but nothing else does either, which is equivalent to the right-to-left reading of CTE.

CTE is surprising and puzzling. This is because many of the causal powers of things appear to depend upon their nonessential features. For example, the following situation seems possible: the stone caused the window to shatter in virtue of its position and momentum. But no stone has its position and momentum essentially. Moreover, the position and momentum cannot be replaced by essential features of the stone in a correct causal explanation of the window's shattering. The stone's chemical composition,⁶⁶ for example, does not explain the win-

65. 2p7s, 1a5. See Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*, 3 for more on the equivalence of explanation and conception.

66. Or the pattern of motion and rest obtaining between its parts, a more properly Spinozistic characterization of a stone's essence (see the definition following a2" after 2p13s).

dow's shattering. Of course, Spinoza would not think that the nature of the stone alone explains the window's shattering, but rather, its nature in conjunction with all the natures of the external causes that help determine its causal powers. So, in addition to the nature of the rock and the window, the explanation must also include the nature of the boy who threw the stone. But this is still not enough, for the nature of the boy alone does not determine him to throw the stone. The explanation must also include the natures of the external causes that affect the boy's nature so that he becomes, for example, curious about what would happen if a stone struck the window. Very likely, the complete or sufficient explanation of this event will include an infinite chain branching out in many directions. Even still, one might doubt whether or not the conjunction of all the essences in the world could explain this event. Such doubts strike at the heart of the plausibility of CTE. The implausibility of CTE cuts against Spinoza's reasons for thinking that effects express the natures of their causes. And to this extent, Spinoza's reasons for thinking that the causal powers of passive affects are individuated widely are undercut. It also weakens his case for his account of the indirect representational properties of ideas.

What attracted Spinoza to CTE despite its shortcomings? I believe that Spinoza was pushed toward CTE by his fundamentally rationalistic cast of mind. CTE follows from another doctrine that I believe Spinoza, as a rationalist and a necessitarian, would have found attractive: the essential truths entail the accidental truths. Spinoza's metaphysical rationalism is constituted by his acceptance of the principle of sufficient reason: there is a cause or reason for everything.⁶⁷ If the essential truths didn't entail the accidental truths, then there would be brute contingencies. That is, if things like the stone's position and momentum did not follow from the essential features of the world, then their causes would ultimately bottom out at some contingent feature of the world; there would be a brute contingency. But such a state of affairs is ruled out by the principle of sufficient reason. So, things like the stone's position and momentum must derive from some essential feature of the world. Ultimately, the essences of things explain what happens.

We have seen that, although some of his assumptions are counterintuitive or otherwise implausible, Spinoza can consistently maintain both that mental content is partially determined by external factors and that human action is sometimes goal directed. Many philosophers

67. 1p11d.

today are attracted to both claims, but find it difficult to maintain both given their other philosophical commitments. Can Spinoza's success in consistently holding both help point the way to a solution to the problem of mental causation? Perhaps the role filled by Spinoza's implausible assumptions can be played by other acceptable propositions. Or perhaps there is a nearby theory that contains no implausible assumptions; and perhaps consideration of Spinoza's theory can help bring that nearby theory to our attention. I believe that the prospects of either alternative are dim. As we have seen, the features of Spinoza's system that underpin his solution pertain to his extreme metaphysical rationalism. Rationalism today is not a popular doctrine. It entails necessitarianism and pushes us toward CTE. Many philosophers find necessitarianism counterintuitive, and I suspect that those same philosophers would find CTE just as counterintuitive. Both rationalism and CTE lie at the very heart of Spinoza's theory. For this reason, there is no obvious way to salvage it, and consideration of it does not suggest (to me at least) any similar but unobjectionable theory.⁶⁸ Nothing, however, is more basic to Spinoza's philosophical outlook than his rationalism. Thus, it is worth emphasizing, Spinoza's acceptance of human teleology is coherent even if many philosophers would find his reasons for accepting it unattractive or unacceptable. Moreover, it must be conceded that Spinoza's con-

68. It should be noted that some contemporary externalists have also embraced wide causation as a way of avoiding epiphenomenalism. For example, Timothy Williamson believes that we are justified in believing that widely individuated features can be causally efficacious because correlation is defeasible evidence for causation and some wide states are more highly correlated with certain effects than any narrow competitors. See his *Knowledge and Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chaps. 2.4 and 3.4–3.7. And Stephen Yablo believes that widely individuated states are sometimes causally efficacious because causes must be proportional to their effects, and sometimes only wide states exhibit the right kind of proportionality. (See his "Wide Causation," in *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 11, *Mind, Causation, World*, ed. J. Tomberlin [Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997], 251–81.) Neither Williamson's nor Yablo's position is obviously committed to metaphysical rationalism as Spinoza's is. But perhaps Yablo's claim that causes must be proportional to their effects is motivated by a commitment to something like a principle of sufficient reason: *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. And Williamson's position follows from Yablo's: if causes must be proportional to their effects, then proportionality (or correlation—in Williamson and Yablo, it comes to the same thing) would be evidence for causation. I am, however, not entirely comfortable with this rationalistic interpretation of Williamson or Yablo because neither exhibits clear rationalistic tendencies throughout his work. In any event, I believe that neither Williamson's nor Yablo's arguments successfully shows that some causation is wide. See my unpublished manuscript, "Against Wide Causation," at individual.utoronto.ca/mlin/against.wide.causation.pdf.

sistent acceptance of both content externalism and human teleology constitutes one of the attractive features of his rationalism that must be weighed against its counterintuitive consequences in any fair assessment of it. What is more, a fair assessment of Spinoza's rationalism is, I believe, important. Spinoza's philosophy is perhaps the most well developed and consistent example of metaphysical rationalism that we have. Although most philosophers today are not rationalists, rationalism remains a very important position. If our antirationalism is to be reasoned, we must come to terms with the various theoretical costs and benefits of rationalism. Because of this, I think that getting clear on Spinoza's views here is philosophically valuable.

5. Wide Causation and the Mechanical Philosophy

We have seen that Spinoza rejects premise (3) of my reconstruction of Bennett's argument. But (3) follows from (1) and (2), and so Spinoza must reject one of them as well. Premise (2) is simply the parallelism doctrine that Spinoza advances in 2p7. So, Spinoza must reject premise (1). But how can Spinoza reject premise (1)? Spinoza is a partisan of the mechanical philosophy, and the mechanical philosophy includes (1).

Let's pretend for the sake of argument that the mechanical philosophy is a univocal and unambiguous theory of nature held by all progressive seventeenth-century philosophers that says that bodies have size, shape, and motion and that these alone are causally efficacious. What are the underlying motivations for such a view? One of the hallmarks of the mechanical philosophy, it might be argued, is its rejection of Aristotelian action at a distance and its holding, on the contrary, that all interaction is the result of contact or impact. If there is no action at a distance—if the source of all causal influence is here and now—then one might conclude that extrinsic properties cannot be the source of causal influence. Only intrinsic properties like size, shape, and motion, someone might argue, are really here and now, and so only they can do real causal work without postulating any action at a distance.

Ascribing wide causal powers to bodies does not, however, license action at a distance. The following two claims are consistent:

- The causal powers of a body x depend, in part, upon the essences of the causes of the particular state of x .
- If an event involving body x causes an event involving body y at t , then x must be in contact with y at t .

These two statements concern different topics. The first concerns what determines the causal powers of a body. The second concerns the conditions under which those powers may be exercised. If it is definitive of the mechanical philosophy that one body can affect another only if they are in contact, then that is a claim about the conditions under which the causal powers of bodies can be exercised. Spinoza's claim that causal powers themselves are determined by wide factors does not contradict this condition. Supposing then that the real key commitment of the mechanical philosophy is a rejection of action at a distance, Spinoza's account of wide causal powers does not run afoul of what is most central to the mechanical philosophy.

We can gain further evidence that the claim that what determines a body's causal powers need not be local features of the body does not conflict with the mechanical philosophy by considering the case of Descartes. There is no more clear-cut and uncontroversial example of a seventeenth-century mechanist than Descartes. And yet Descartes doesn't think that the causal powers of bodies depend upon their size, shape, and motion. In fact, he doesn't think that bodies have any causal powers at all and instead locates all causal power of bodies in God's continual recreation of the world.⁶⁹ To be sure, God imparts motions to bodies, at least in part, on account of their size, shape, and motion.⁷⁰ But it is only because these features are related in the right way to God's nature (more specifically, his immutability) that God imparts the motions to them that he does. And yet despite Descartes's denial that bodies have their causal powers in virtue of their intrinsic properties, he still holds a version of the contact thesis. God does not impart any motion to a body unless it comes into contact with another body possessing the right quantity of motion.⁷¹ I think that Spinoza's insistence that causal powers depend upon essences, and that the causal powers of affections (the states of modes that result from external causal influence) depend upon the essence of both the affected mode and the affecting modes is, in some sense, a descendant of this Cartesian view.

69. On Descartes's denial of the causal powers of body, see Daniel Garber, "How God Causes Motion: Descartes, Divine Sustenance, and Occasionalism," *Journal of Philosophy* 84 (1987): 567–80; and Gary Hatfield, "Force (God) in Descartes's Physics," *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 10 (1979): 113–49. For an alternative view, see Michael Della Rocca, "Descartes on Body-Body Causation," in Gennaro and Huenemann, *New Essays on the Rationalists*, 48–71.

70. I am indebted to an anonymous referee for emphasizing this point to me.

71. See *Principles* 2, 37.

Of course, Spinoza thinks, *contra* Descartes, that singular things, including bodies, have causal powers. But this is because he conceives of the relationship of singular things to God very differently than does Descartes. For Spinoza, each singular thing is itself a mode of God. That is to say that they are God insofar as he is affected in some way. Each mode is itself a *Deus quatenus*. So the power of each mode is the very power of God himself. This explains why modes have causal power in virtue of their essences. God's power is his essence. So the power of a *Deus quatenus* is its essence. But it also explains why the causal power of an affection is not determined exclusively by the essence of the affected mode. That affection is not a modification of God insofar as he is affected by the affected mode, but only insofar as he is affected by both the affecting and affected mode. The causal power of the affection is therefore the power of God insofar as he is affected by both the affected and affecting mode.

Thus we see that the claim that the causal powers of an affection depend upon both the essence of the affected mode itself and the essence of the affecting mode or modes is nothing more than the transposition of the Cartesian doctrine that the causal powers responsible for the motion of bodies reside in God into the register of Spinoza's monism and the associated claim that all singular things are modes of God. This claim does not conflict with the mechanistic claim that contact must occur in order that one body cause or be the occasion of the cause of motion in another body. Moreover, by rendering the causal powers of things wide, it allows Spinoza to find a place within his system for the goal-directedness of human action.

6. Teleology and Naturalism

As we have seen, Spinoza denies divine teleology and accepts human teleology. Is this consistent with Spinoza's naturalism? Spinoza advances what might be fairly called a naturalistic thesis when he says in the preface to part 3 of the *Ethics* that human beings are subject to the same laws that govern all natural things. Human beings are not "a kingdom within a kingdom," as Spinoza puts it. His reason for thinking so is that human affects and action manifest universal laws of nature. In this respect, human beings are not special. According to Spinoza, all events manifest universal laws. So we can conclude that no subset of creatures constitutes a kingdom within a kingdom. What is more, Spinoza is usually understood as denying that God is a supernatural being, that is, a being

whose nature is fundamentally discontinuous with the natures of other natural creatures. But if human action is goal directed and God's is not, then how can Spinoza maintain this continuity of natures, which defines his naturalism? Of course, God and man are different in many ways, and the idea of a fundamental discontinuity is vague. I believe, however, that when we identify those differences between human beings and God that account for their differences with respect to teleology, it will be clear that those differences are not such as to threaten Spinoza's naturalism.

As we saw in section 2, Spinoza has at least three good reasons to deny that God's action is goal directed: (1) God's ideas are identical to the things that they represent, and so they cannot stand as templates or exemplars for God's creative action; (2) if God created man in order that man might worship God, then a mediate effect of God's creative act (namely, man) would be more perfect than an immediate effect of that act (namely, any of the immediate infinite modes); and (3) God lacks nothing and so cannot want anything.

There is also a further reason why God's action is not goal directed that can be recovered from a consideration of what makes human action goal directed: (4) the ideas that motivate and guide human action are often inadequate. As such they can represent future states of affairs as desirable. God possesses no inadequate ideas and so views all things *sub specie aeternitatis*, that is, without relation to time. Because all of God's ideas are adequate, he cannot have thoughts about the future as future. Human action is goal directed because it is motivated and guided by thoughts about the future in virtue of their contents. So, God's action cannot be similarly goal directed.

(2) does not concern divine teleology as such, but the further claim that God creates the world for the sake of man and creates man so that he might worship God. There can be no suggestion that while God does not do those things, human beings do. So, (2) does not threaten Spinoza's naturalism.

(1), (3), and (4), however, might appear to threaten Spinoza's naturalism. If God's ideas are identical to the objects that they represent but human ideas are not, then divine ideas and human ideas might appear to be fundamentally different. If God is perfect and human beings are not, then there would seem to be a very significant gulf separating man and God. And if human thoughts can represent the future but God's thoughts can't, then human beings might appear to have *sui generis* powers not possessed by God.

Let us now turn to identifying the differences between God and human beings that account for their differences with respect to teleology. Human beings and God belong to different ontological categories. God is a substance and human beings are finite modes. Spinoza defines a substance as that which is in itself and conceived through itself.⁷² A mode is in, and conceived through, another.⁷³ Spinoza holds that both inherence and conception entail causation.⁷⁴ So, substances are self-caused and modes are caused by another.

The differences between substances and finite modes together with certain tenets of Spinoza's philosophy of mind entail (1). Each adequate idea represents only that object that is parallel to it under the attribute of extension. Adequate ideas are identical to the objects they represent.⁷⁵ The idea and the object are the same things conceived of under different attributes, namely, thought and extension. For all x and y , x can serve as the template or exemplar of y only if x and y are distinct. Since adequate ideas are identical to their objects, they cannot serve as their exemplars. Inadequate ideas have two contents. They represent both the body to which it is parallel and its external causes.⁷⁶ Nothing can be identical to two things. So inadequate ideas are not identical to some of the things they represent. There is thus no reason to deny that some inadequate ideas can serve as the templates or exemplars of what they bring about. Inadequate ideas are those ideas that have external causes. Human beings, as finite modes, are subject to the influence of external causes but God, as a substance, is not. And so many ideas in the human mind can serve as templates or exemplars for what they bring about, but none of God's can.

The differences between substances and finite modes also entail (3). The fact that substances are causally self-contained entail that they are both infinite and perfect. They are infinite because something is finite, according to Spinoza, only if it is limited by an external cause.⁷⁷ Substances are independent of external causes and thus cannot be limited in this way. They are perfect because Spinoza identifies perfec-

72. 1d3.

73. 1d5.

74. See Don Garrett, "Spinoza's Conatus Argument," 136–37.

75. 2p7s.

76. 2p16.

77. 1d2.

tion and reality.⁷⁸ According to the Cartesian conception that Spinoza employs, reality is ontological independence. So, something is perfect to the degree that it is independent. Substances are completely independent and thus absolutely perfect. Finite modes are by definition limited by external causes and hence imperfect. God is a substance. Hence, God is absolutely perfect and cannot want. Human beings are finite modes. Hence, human beings are imperfect and can want.

The differences between substances and finite modes together with certain tenets of Spinoza's philosophy of mind likewise entail (4). Thoughts about the future are inadequate ideas.⁷⁹ Ideas are inadequate only if they have external causes.⁸⁰ Substances cannot be influenced by external causes. So, none of God's ideas are inadequate. And so none of God's thoughts are about the future. Human beings are finite modes and so can be influenced by external causes and can have many thoughts about the future.

Thus we see that (1), (3), and (4) all have the same ultimate foundation: God is a substance and human beings are finite modes. The distinction between substance and mode is as central to Spinoza's metaphysics as anything. So, however we construe Spinoza's metaphysical naturalism, it must allow for such a distinction. That is, in developing the notion of a fundamental discontinuity such that God's nature is not fundamentally discontinuous with the rest of the natural world, we must develop it in such a way that the differences between substances and finite modes are not fundamental discontinuities in the relevant sense. We can thus conclude that the basis of Spinoza's denial of divine teleology and his acceptance of human teleology is consistent with his naturalism.

7. Conclusion

There can be little doubt that one of the most bold and provocative features of Spinoza's philosophy is its rejection of divine providence. But, perhaps because it is so bold and provocative, there has been an unfortunate tendency on the part of readers of Spinoza to infer from this rejection that Spinoza is hostile to teleology in general. In its most extreme form, this tendency has led some to wonder whether Spinoza

78. Preface, part 4 of the *Ethics*, G 2/209.

79. 2p44s.

80. 2p29s.

can consistently hold that human action is goal directed. But this picture of Spinoza as the sworn enemy of teleology in all its forms is a distortion. Spinoza's rejection of teleology is confined exclusively to a rejection of divine providence. In particular, Spinoza accepts human teleology and (although I have not argued for this conclusion here) unthoughtful teleology in nature. Moreover, Spinoza's moral psychology and ethical theory both assume that human action is goal-directed. According to him, human beings strive for self-preservation, pursue joy, shun sadness, and seek understanding and knowledge of God. These claims can only be understood on the assumption that human action is goal-directed. Fortunately, there is nothing in Spinoza's philosophy that is in tension with the goal-directedness of human action.

I have argued that *pace* Bennett, neither Spinoza's denial of divine providence nor his account of mental content and causation precludes teleological explanations of human action. On the contrary, they commit him to such explanations. Bennett claims that both Spinoza's attack on divine providence and his content externalism put pressure on Spinoza to deny the legitimacy of teleological explanations of human action. With respect to Spinoza's attack on divine providence, I showed that, properly understood, none of Spinoza's arguments tells against human teleology. All of the features of God that rule out divine teleology are specific to God and have no relevance to human psychology. With respect to the issue of content externalism, I began by conceding to Bennett that, according to Spinoza, mental content is widely individuated. But I then showed that, according to Spinoza, the causal powers of inadequate ideas are also widely individuated because the causal powers of inadequate ideas are a function of the natures of the ideas and the natures of the external causes that affect them. I then showed that, according to Spinoza, many of the ideas that motivate and guide human action are inadequate because only inadequate ideas represent external objects and future events and deliberation about action typically involves consideration of external objects and future events. Next, I argued that the very same features (namely, expressive relations to external causes) serve to individuate both causal powers and mental contents because the expressive relation that an idea stands in toward its external causes constitutes a perception of those causes. If this is correct, then the mental content of inadequate ideas must be relevant to its causal powers. I also suggested that the ultimate reasons why Spinoza holds these views derive from his extreme metaphysical rationalism, that is, from his commitment to the principle of sufficient reason. Thus, Spinoza's ability to

consistently hold both that mental content is widely individuated and relevant to the explanation of human action must be counted among the theoretical benefits of his rationalism. I further argued that Spinoza's acceptance of teleological explanations neither conflicts with his commitment to the mechanical philosophy (because wide causal powers are compatible with the rejection of action at a distance) nor conflicts with his naturalism (because the reasons why God does not act for the sake of an end ultimately derive from his substancehood, whereas the reasons why human action can be goal directed derive from the fact that human beings are finite modes). So we can conclude that not only is the goal-directedness of human action required by Spinoza's moral psychology and the ethical theory he derives from it, but it is also well supported by his metaphysics and philosophy of mind.