Chapter II

A CRITICAL EXPOSITION OF SPINOZA'S EPISTEMOLOGY
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Epistemology of Spinoza provides the key to understand many other issues related with his concept of knowledge. Method, theory of truth, concept of freedom, passion and emotion, appetite and desire, categories, intellectual love of God, reason and experience etc. come as integral parts of the theory of knowledge in Spinoza. In fact, the issues of ethics, psychology, and epistemology are inseparably linked with his ontology as well. So, further clarity on Spinoza's ontology is possible epistemologically. And in epistemology, the question how far it is justified to call him a rationalist becomes a pertinent one.

The three levels of knowledge in their development form the major part of this chapter. Four kinds of perceptions, adequate and inadequate ideas, and experience, reason and intuition come within this development itself. From the passive state of mind where only passions and appetites rule, the first level of knowledge develops. The first two types of perceptions from 'hearsay' and unclassified raw experience are involved here. The second and third levels are that of adequate ideas different from the first level of inadequate ideas. If experience is involved in the first, in the second, reason and in the third, intuition are involved. The third type of perception, i.e., inference of essence from things or
causes or general propositions, is the level of reason, i.e., the second level of knowledge. Third and last level of knowledge is that of intuition where the essence is immediately perceived or grasped through its proximate cause.

The whole development of knowledge itself shows the development of the mind, mind in the modern psychological sense as the totality of ideas. The question of innate ideas, i.e., whether the mind has clear and distinct ideas or not before it is affected by experience, is a hotly contested one. Usually, almost all interpreters treat Spinoza as a rationalist, which we think is off the truth. We would refute this commonplace belief in this chapter.

The issues of freedom, truth etc. would also be discussed along with the third level of knowledge because they are closely related to that stage. Since categories like cause and effect, essence and existence, and whole and part did not get attention in Spinoza, they would be dealt in detail, in the last chapter, in comparison with the Marxist categories.

Concretely, this chapter includes (1) the development of knowledge, (2) method and (3) the question of innate ideas. The Development of Knowledge comprises of (1.1) four basic modes of perception, (1.2) opinion, (1.3) reason, (1.4) intuition, (1.5) intellectual love of God, (1.6) truth and (1.7) freedom. The Third and last section where the question of innate ideas is reviewed would situate Spinoza as different from rationalists and as a latent
precursor of the trends of Lockean empiricism and Kantian reconciliation of empiricism and rationalism.

1. The Development of Knowledge in Spinoza

On the Improvement of Understanding, Spinoza's work that is earlier to Ethics, talks of four modes of knowledge. Spinoza uses the terms 'modes of perception' and 'modes of perception or knowledge' in the same sense.(1) In Ethics, these four modes of perception are integrated with the three levels of knowledge he talks of there. Perception is used in the sense of knowledge as well as in the sense of percepts arising out of cognition. Let us start from the perception arising out of cognition.

1.1 Four Basic Modes of Perception

The human body is affected by external bodies and it affects the external bodies in turn. These developments and movements are reflected in human mind as it perceives these. In Ethics, Spinoza says:

The human body... is affected in very many ways by external bodies, and is capable in very many ways of affecting external bodies. But... the

human mind must perceive all that takes place in the human body. The human mind is, therefore, capable of perceiving a great number of things, and is so in proportion...

In Spinoza, man is the subject of knowledge, external things, object of knowledge, and motion (affection) is the source of knowledge. He explains two different states of subject, i.e., passive and active. In passive state, man's body feels passions and mind forms inadequate ideas, and in the active state body feels emotions and mind forms adequate ideas. In the passive state, mind perceives partial cause and in the active state, mind perceives adequate cause.

We should keep in mind that in Spinoza, the two states of mind are also stages in the development of knowledge. In the process itself, the mind gets activated. From minor modes and concrete things, this process of knowledge starts. The activity of mind is necessarily connected with adequate ideas while the passivity with inadequate ones, as he said:

Our mind is in certain cases active, and in certain cases passive. In so far as it has

2. Ibid. p. 97.
And in adequate ideas, we know adequate cause. Thus, in inadequate ideas, we get the partial cause only.

By an adequate cause, I mean a cause through which its effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived. By an inadequate or partial cause, I mean a cause through which, by itself, its effect cannot be understood.(4)

We are active "when anything takes place, either within us or externally to us, whereof we are the adequate cause,... We are passive as regards something when that something takes place within us, or follows from our nature externally, we being only the partial cause".(5)

No matter where the mind is active or passive, the causation is adequate or partial, the idea is adequate or inadequate, perception takes place. Spinoza classifies perceptions into four modes. They are:

3. Ibid., p. 130.
4. Ibid., p. 129.
5. Ibid.
I. Perception arising from hearsay or from some sign which every one may name as he pleases.

II. Perception arising from mere experience that is, from experience not yet classified by the intellect, and only so called because the given event has happened to take place, and we have no contradictory fact to set against it, so that it therefore remains unassailed in our mind.

III. Perception arising when the essence of one thing is inferred from another thing, but not adequately; this comes when from some effect we gather its cause, or when it is inferred from some general proposition that some property is always present.

IV. Lastly, there is the perception arising when a thing is perceived solely through its essence, or through the knowledge of its proximate cause.(6)

Of these four kinds of perceptions, the first two are associated with the first level of knowledge, third with the second, and the fourth with the third.

6. Ibid., p. 8.
To illustrate with examples, by hearsay (first kind) one knows about his birth day, parentage etc. By mere experience (second type), he knows that we shall die like others, or water extinguishes fire and oil feeds it. By deduction (third mode), we find that mind is united to the body and this union is behind a given sensation, though we don't understand the nature of the sensation and the union; i.e., we don't understand beyond this sensation or effect though we infer its cause without understanding the cause properly. By perception of essence (fourth kind), we know that mind is united to body from the essence of the mind itself, or that the process of knowledge is from the fact of knowing something, or that two and three together make five, or that two lines each parallel to a third one are parallel to one another.(7)

Within these four modes of perception, we can see a development towards more and more clarity and certainty. We will find this also in the development of knowledge from first level to third level. The movement is from partial causes to adequate causes, from inadequate ideas to adequate ideas.

1.2 Opinion

The first two modes of perception that we saw in the previous subsection (1.1) are grouped together by

7. Ibid., pp. 8-9.
Spinoza, and he regards it as "knowledge of the first kind, opinion, or imagination" (8) Spinoza includes all practical knowledge of life in this kind. Opinion comes from "mere suggestions of experience" and from "symbols" as well. (9)

The general inadequate notions we form are opinions or imaginations. Spinoza:

... we, in many cases, perceive and form our general notions... (1) From particular things represented to our intellect fragmentarily, confusedly, and without order through our senses... I have settled to call such perceptions by the names of knowledge from the mere suggestions of experience. (2) From symbols, e.g., from the fact of having read or heard certain words we remember things and form certain ideas concerning them, similar to those through which we imagine things... I shall call both these ways of regarding things knowledge of the first kind, opinion or imagination. (10)
Spinoza considers opinion or imagination as the only source of falsity. And only the knowledge at the second and third level that we could see soon can teach us to distinguish the true from the false. (11)

Falsity consists in the "privation of knowledge" where inadequate, fragmentary, or confused ideas are involved, because "falsity cannot consist in simple privation" or error, and "neither can it consist in absolute ignorance". (12) Spinoza gives us an example to throw more light on the question of falsity and error:

For instance, men are mistaken in thinking themselves free; their opinion is made up of consciousness of their own actions, and ignorance of the causes by which they are conditioned. Their idea of freedom, therefore, is simply their ignorance of any cause for their actions. As for their saying that human actions depend on the will, this is a mere phrase without any idea to correspond thereto. (13)

11. Ibid., p. 114.
12. Ibid., p. 108.
13. Ibid., pp. 108-49.
The veracity of the content of the example is not the matter here. But, how is the falsity caused is the point. False ideas do not have any corresponding reality.

Spinoza says that there is "nothing positive" in these false ideas. (14) But, they do form a necessary part of knowledge. "Inadequate and confused ideas follow by the same necessity, as adequate or clear and distinct ideas". (15) Because all ideas are in God, and they are confused or inadequate in respect to a particular mind. Spinoza:

All ideas are in God..., and in so far as they are referred to God are true... and... adequate; therefore there are no ideas confused or inadequate, except in respect to a particular mind...; therefore all ideas, whether adequate or inadequate, follow by the same necessity... (16)

Emile Brehier explains Spinoza's point when he says that the inadequacy lies in the very limitation of finite modes being perceived as such unrelated to its ultimate cause, i.e., God. The

15. Ibid., p. 109.
16. Ibid.
inadequate idea implies the existence of its object unless refuted by an adequate idea. He says:

... any idea of a finite mode, limited to this mode, will of necessity be inadequate since the finite mode is essentially the mode that has its cause outside itself; the idea that the mind has of itself is therefore inadequate since, as a finite mode of thought, it has its cause in another finite mode;...(17)

1.3 Reason

In the second level, the inadequacy of the first kind of knowledge gets removed. Here, man lives active; and through the bodily emotions, mind forms adequate ideas. This kind of knowledge originates when external bodies affect and activate the human body, or through the desire of man, or through reason which is acquired. In this stage we know the objects with adequate cause. Many philosophers have said that the reason (knowledge of second kind) in Spinoza's philosophy is the innate capacity of mankind. But, contrary to this, Spinoza takes the generalisation

process as leading to reason because in his view men are born ignorant. He says "that all men are born ignorant of the causes of things, that all have the desire to seek for what is useful to them and that they are conscious of such desire".(18)

Spinoza calls the "notions common to all men, and adequate ideas of the properties of things" as reason and the knowledge of the second kind.(19) Spinoza thinks that there are certain notions which are perceived by all men adequately, and they are thus common. He says:

... there are certain ideas or notions common to all men; for... all bodies agree in certain respects, which... must be adequately or clearly and distinctly perceived by all.(20)

Spinoza clearly shows that second kind of knowledge is a development over the first; it is a generalisation of the first kind of knowledge. How do the general ideas emerge? Spinoza answers:

They arise, to wit, from the fact that so many images, for instance, of men, are formed simultaneously in the human mind, that the powers of imagination break down,
not indeed utterly, but to the extent of the mind losing count of small differences between individuals (e.g., colour, size, etc) and their definite number, and only distinctly imagining that, in which all the individuals, in so far as the body is affected by them, agree; for that is the point, in which each of the said individuals chiefly affected the body; this the mind expresses by the name man, and this it predicates of an infinite number of particular individuals. (21)

Spinoza does not discount the differences among men in the way they generalise things.

However, one thing becomes very clear here, that it is from particular things that generalisations are reached. And the generalisations are arrived at by means of continuous perceptions arising out of external and the resultant internal influence on the human body. As we have already found in the chapter on ontology, mind receives proportionately more, higher and complex ideas if the body gets enough nourishment in this regard. So, knowledge starts from particular modes of perception and from the external and empirical impact on the body and thus on the mind. Except the

21. Ibid., p. 112.
original awareness of the mind, i.e., itself as an idea of the body, an ontological beginning, mind with its faculty of reason is a result of an epistemic process and development. This development is but a necessary development and a common one because of the ontological commonness of all human beings, the common essence in all.

The elements different from our essence that activate human body and mind are external. Spinoza's treatment of passions and emotions makes this clear. He says:

The essence of a passion cannot be explained through our essence alone, that is..., the power of a passion cannot be defined by the power, whereby we ourselves endeavour to persist in existing, but... must necessarily be defined by the power of an external cause compared with our own. (22)

Here, he explains that man is originally passive and hence unable to know the power of passion or emotion through himself alone. Affected by the external bodies and external causes, he starts comparing his own power with the powers of external cause, and in this process, he forms general notions or reason to know emotion (power of passion). Spinoza further says that the force of any

22. Ibid., p. 144.
passion or emotion can overcome the rest of a man's activities so that "the emotion becomes obstinately fixed to him."(23)

Spinoza shows that the origin of power of passion (or emotion) or reason is not an end. Emotions can be destroyed or controlled. He says:

When the mind is assailed by an emotion, the body is at the same time affected with a modification whereby its power of activity is increased or diminished. Now this modification of the body... receives from its cause the force for persistence in its being: which force can only be checked or destroyed by a bodily cause..., in virtue of the body being affected with a modification contrary to... and stronger than itself...; wherefore the mind is affected by the idea of a modification contrary to, and stronger than the former modification, in other words, ... the mind will be affected by an emotion contrary to and stronger than the former emotion, which will exclude or destroy the existence of the former emotion; thus an emotion cannot be destroyed nor controlled except by a contrary and stronger emotion.(24)
From this ability of mind to control one emotion by another, Spinoza goes to the remedies of emotion. Actual knowledge of emotions and an ordering of these by mind are two remedies in the list of five suggested by Spinoza.(25) Adequate ideas and reason control emotions. The necessity of reason does not go against the nature of man. Rather, it leads to greater perception and self-preservation. Thus, Spinoza brings in the question of virtues.

As reason makes no demands contrary to nature, it demands, that every man should love himself, should seek that which is useful to him... should desire everything which really brings man to greater perfection,... Again, as virtue is nothing else but action in accordance with the laws of one's own nature... and as no one endeavours to preserve his own being, except in accordance with the laws of his own nature, it follows,... that the foundation of virtue is the endeavour to preserve one's own being, and that happiness consists in man's power of preserving his own being;... to man there is nothing useful than man... all should, with one consent, as far as they are able, endeavour to preserve their being, and all with one consent seek what is useful to them all. Hence men who are governed by reason - that is, who seek what is useful to them in

25. Ibid., p. 257.
in accordance with reason, - desire for themselves nothing, which they do not also desire for the rest of mankind... (26)

Self-preservation is the foundation of virtues, and it is the first virtue without which nothing can be conceived, and no other virtue can be conceived. Spinoza takes us from this self preservation to 'preservation of all' and 'no desire for oneself and all.' In this process, man conceives the highest virtue in the end, that is, to "know God". (27) He says that "mind's highest good is the knowledge of God, and the mind's highest virtue is to know God." (28) Spinoza considers conceiving of this highest virtue of mind as the third kind of knowledge. Before going to that level let us once again point out that the idea becomes adequate here. Cause is fully grasped here. Categories like part and whole, cause and effect also make their appearance here.

1.4 Intuition

Spinoza calls the third kind of knowledge intuition. His intuition is not the supernatural gift for man. But this is the highest possible knowledge that man should aim at. Highest virtue

26. Ibid., pp. 201-2.
27. Ibid., pp. 201-5.
28. Ibid., p. 205.
is also identified with this. (29) Where Spinoza talks of the three kinds of knowledge in his *Ethics*, intuition is taken as the kind of knowledge that "proceeds from an adequate idea of the absolute essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things." (30)

In both reason and intuition, the idea formed is adequate. The movement of knowledge from the first to third level is stressed by Spinoza when he says that the third kind of knowledge arises from the second and not from the first.

... whatsoever we understand clearly and distinctly, we understand either through itself, or through that which is conceived through itself; that is, ideas which are clear and distinct in us, or which are referred to the third kind of knowledge... cannot follow from ideas that are fragmentary and confused, and are referred to knowledge of the first kind, but must follow from adequate ideas, or ideas of the second and third kind of knowledge; therefore..., the desire of knowing things by the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first, but from the second kind. (31)

29. Ibid., p. 260.
30. Ibid., p. 113.
31. Ibid., p. 261.
Here, it is clear, that the adequate idea is a common thing in the second and third kinds of knowledge. Hence the states of body and mind must be similar, i.e., active in both these kinds of knowledge. Actually, intuition proceeds from the cause of things to the essence of things. It is complete knowledge of things and so Spinoza declares it as the highest endeavour of the mind.

The third kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things...; and, in proportion as we understand things more in this way, we better understand God...; therefore... the highest virtue of the mind, that is... the power, or nature, or... highest endeavour of the mind, is to understand things by the third kind of knowledge.(32)

The perfection of reason leads to intuitive knowledge. This is to understand God.

Thus in life it is before all things useful to perfect the understanding, or reason, as far as we can, and in this alone man's highest happiness or blessedness consists, indeed blessedness is nothing else but the contentment of

32. Ibid., p. 260.
spirit, which arises from the intuitive knowledge of God: now, to perfect the understanding is nothing else but to understand God, God's attributes, and the actions which follow from the necessity of his nature. (33)

Knowledge, virtue, happiness and God converge in the third kind of knowledge. Spinoza consummates his analysis with the intellectual love of God.

From the third kind of knowledge necessarily arises the intellectual love of God. From this kind of knowledge arises pleasure accompanied by the idea of God as cause, that is..., the love of God; not in so far as we imagine him as present..., but in so far as we understand him to be eternal; this is what I call the intellectual love of God. (34)

The view of Spinoza on third kind of knowledge clearly denotes that the knowledge does not come in a vacuum, and it is not any innate idea of man behind this knowledge.

33. Ibid., p. 237.
34. Ibid., p. 263.
The highest goal of human life, the highest virtue of human mind, is shown as developing completely out of a materialist process by Spinoza. Emile Brehier summarises this process:

By the first kind of knowledge we were able to imagine ourselves as finite individuals, inexplicable in our isolation, besieged by insurmountable and unexplained forces; by the second kind of knowledge we know the universal laws of which we are the expression; but by the third kind of knowledge we are able to consider our individual being and to see that its uniqueness derives from the nature of God.(35)

1.5 Intellectual Love of God

As we have seen in the third level of knowledge, Spinoza's monist philosophy converges the realms of knowledge, virtue and God. Through depicting the process of the development of knowledge, Spinoza has shown us that mind develops, understanding and reason perfects, virtues develop, emotions get controlled, we understand what is freedom, and the method as a tool gets projected. Altogether we get a this-worldly analysis of knowledge and its goal.

By understanding the particulars, we understand God. "The more we understand particular things, the more do we understand God." (36) How is this possible? When the human modes are subjected to duration, when body and mind are finite modes, this seems difficult. "Yet, as there is something, notwithstanding, which is conceived by a certain eternal necessity through the very essence of God..., this something, which appertains to the essence of the mind, will necessarily be eternal." (37) Spinoza says that "our mind, in so far as it involves the essence of the body, under the form of eternity, is eternal." (38) This is the ontological basis that enables our mind to know the essence of things and thus God.

In so far as the mind is eternal, as we noted above, it possesses the knowledge of God. And this knowledge is necessarily adequate. This is the third kind of knowledge. As one is more potent in this kind of knowledge, he will be more completely conscious of himself and of God; he will be more perfect and blessed. (39)

37. Ibid., p. 259.
38. Ibid., p. 260.
39. Ibid., pp. 262-3.
"The intellectual love of God, which arises from the third kind of knowledge, is eternal." (40) We take "delight" in this and our delight is accompanied by the "idea of God as cause." In fact, this awareness is "the highest possible mental acquiescence", "pleasure", "the love of God", and "the idea of mind itself". (41)

As Spinoza identifies the "idea of mind itself" with the "idea of God as cause", he identifies also the intellectual love of mind towards God with God's love towards men. (42) Freedom or salvation consists in the intellectual love of God. In so far as it is referred to God or to mind, it is pleasure, or acquiescence of spirit, or glory as it is in the Bible. (43) This intellectual love follows necessarily from the nature of mind.

1.6 Truth

The most essential aspect of theory of knowledge is the question of conceiving the truth. In

40. Ibid., 263.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., pp. 264-5.
43. Ibid., p. 265.
Spinoza, truth is manifested in the second and third kinds of knowledge where adequate idea of a thing reflects the cause or essence of a thing. According to Spinoza, the objective reality is subjectively reflected; and certainty is identical with the subjective essence of a thing.

... certainty is nothing else than the subjective essence of a thing: in other words, the mode in which we perceive an actual reality is certainty. Further, it is also evident that, for the certitude of truth, no further sign is necessary beyond the possession of a true idea;... Hence, again, it is clear that no one can know the nature of the highest certainty, unless he possesses an adequate idea, or the subjective essence of a thing: for certainty is identical with such subjective essence.(44)

In his view, every idea represents the objective reality; "subjective essences" represent their "objective realities"; "an idea must, in all respects, correspond to its correlate in the world of reality."(45) A true image

44. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
45. Ibid., p. 15.
of nature is possible only in a true idea which itself can be the source of other ideas. In a way truth is both the beginning and the end. Spinoza writes:

... in order to reproduce in every respect the faithful image of nature, our mind must deduce all its ideas from the idea which represents the origin and source of the whole of nature, so that it may itself become the source of other ideas. (46)

In the first kind of knowledge, i.e., in the inadequate ideas, we encounter falsity. We have earlier seen that falsity is due to privation. For inadequate ideas, this knowledge is true, and necessary. Only adequate ideas can distinguish truth from falsity.

So, Spinoza considers only second and third kinds of knowledge as true. He says: "Knowledge of the first kind is the only source of falsity, knowledge of the second and third kinds is necessarily true." (47)

46. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
47. Ibid., p. 114.
knowledge of the first kind, teaches us to distinguish the true from the false." (48) He stressed that the true idea involves the highest certainty. Spinoza:

No one, who has a true idea, is ignorant that a true idea involves the highest certainty. (49)

We have already discussed that the highest certainty is the subjective essence of a thing. In other words, "Every idea, which in us is absolute or adequate and perfect, is true." (50)

Spinoza talks of the criterion of truth. How can one be sure that his ideas are true? that his ideas agree with their objects? Spinoza says that "truth is its own standard." (51)

The definition of adequate idea, i.e., truth, in other words, contains this aspect. He defines adequate

48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., p. 115.
50. Ibid., p. 108.
51. Ibid., p. 115.
idea as

an idea which, in so far as it is considered in itself, without relation to the object, has all the properties or intrinsic marks of a true idea.(52)

That is, the idea should be true in itself, without being related to the object, to be an adequate and true one. Though Spinoza does not deal with the difference in levels of truth in the level of reason and in the level of intuition, a gradation of truth is obvious. The highest truth coincides with freedom and the intellectual love of God.

Even though in many places Spinoza explicitly says that a true idea must agree with its ideatum or object, his is not the usual variety of correspondence theory of truth because, for him, truth itself is its standard or criterion. His theory of truth cannot be called a coherent theory also, because truth is the highest certainty. Though we find coherence in the causally connected things of the nature, truth is the adequate idea which knows God as cause, and as such truth coincides with freedom, blessedness, pleasure and love of

52. Ibid., p. 82.
God. Mind's highest virtue is to know God, and it is identified with truth and freedom. So truth is not something just consistent and coherent. We can agree with Mark who excludes Spinoza from both the correspondence and coherence versions of truth. (53)

1.7 Freedom

Spinoza finds freedom, as a stage in life and knowledge, in taming the emotions and perfecting the mind. Mind's highest virtue is to know God, and it is truth, the highest certainty. Spinoza's conception of overcoming the external hindrances, of moving from inadequate to adequate ideas, of controlling the emotions through reason, of reaching to blessedness or freedom, is within the overall frame of necessity from which even God has no escape. These developments are necessary developments and are in conformity with nature. Spinoza does not resort to teleology or idealism to explain freedom. This freedom is a development of necessity. We should not forget that even the inadequate ideas in Spinoza follow as necessity. Everything follows as necessity, as the properties of triangle follow from the nature of a triangle.

Those who accuse Spinoza of determinism should also keep in mind that freedom in Spinoza develops from necessity, from nature; freedom is not contingent. It is the nature of reason not to find contingency in things. Circumstantial factors necessitate one's actions. In a letter to G.H. Schaller referring to the views of Tschirnhausen, Spinoza conceded that he does not place freedom in "free decision, but in free necessity". (54) Spinoza denies any "absolute power of thought" in us which facilitates a "complete freedom", an absolute employment of our reason. (55) Those who understand freedom as contingency and arbitrariness, and those who ignorantly think that he is absolutely free and not at all hindered by anything else other than himself or some power in himself claim freedom of will, of decision and of choice.

Spinoza is of the opinion that when one removes one's ignorance, that he himself is the cause of himself and he is not part of a causal chain in nature, he understands, knows the necessity. And freedom lies in knowing this necessity and in taming and perfecting

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54. R.H.M. Elwes (Tr.), op.cit., p. 390.
55. Ibid., p. 391.
oneself to know, pursue and identify with itself. When one becomes free this way through acquiring knowledge, the knowledge of the third kind, he enjoys freedom, and is powerful too. In the beginning of Part V of Ethics, where Spinoza presents the synopsis of what he is going to treat further, we find his ideas clear:

At length I pass to the remaining portion of my Ethics, which is concerned with the way leading to freedom. I shall therefore treat therein of the power of the reason, showing how far the reason can control the emotions, and what is the nature of Mental Freedom or Blessedness; we shall then be able to see, how much more powerful the wiseman is than the ignorant... I shall treat only of the power of the mind, or of reason; and I shall mainly show the extent and nature of its domination over the emotions, for their control and moderation. That we do not possess absolute dominion over them, I have already shown.(56)

56. Ibid., p. 244.
Spinoza's path to freedom is one of knowledge. The end of this consists in the love of God, as noted earlier. In last portion of Part V, he writes:

Blessedness consists in love towards God..., which love springs from the third kind of knowledge...; therefore this love... must be referred to the mind, in so far as the latter is active; therefore... it is virtue itself...

Again, in proportion as the mind rejoices more in this divine love or blessedness, so does it the more understand...: that is..., so much the more power has it over the emotions, and... so has it the power of controlling lusts. And, since human power in controlling the emotions consists solely in the understanding, it follows that no one rejoices in blessedness, because he has controlled his lusts, but, contrariwise, his power of controlling his lusts arises from this blessedness itself... the wise man, in so far as he is regarded as such, is scarcely at all disturbed in spirit, but, being conscious of himself, and of God, and of things, by a certain eternal necessity, never ceases to be, but
always possesses true acquiescence of his spirit. (57)

Spinoza nowhere defines 'freedom' as he does it with other concepts; but he talks about free things. We attain freedom to the extent that our actions can be understood by reference to our desire that are related to adequate and true ideas in our minds.

2. Method

In explaining reality, in knowing the reality, knowingly or otherwise, philosophers follow or employ method. In the modern philosophy, philosophers themselves devote much on method. Descartes called his method 'demonstrative' Marx, 'dialectical materialist' and Husserl, 'Phenomenological'. What is method?

As Suman Gupta explains, a method is the procedure or the way of acquiring knowledge...

Knowledge, in its turn, presupposes a certain

57. Ibid., p. 270.
logico-linguistic or conceptual apparatus...
Knowledge is acquired in the framework of a conceptual apparatus by following a procedure which is based on certain general principles.(58)

Spinoza also followed certain principles; he used the geometrical method. Rather than detailing his method, what we are going to deal with here is his understanding of method, what he means by method.

Spinoza considers method as an instrument of intellect. He compares it with man's other instruments and tools:

... as men at first made use of the instruments supplied by nature to accomplish very easy pieces of workmanship, laboriously and imperfectly, and then, when these were finished, wrought other things more difficult with less labour and greater perfection; and so gradually

mounted from the simplest operations to the making of tools, and from the making of tools to the making of more complex tools, and fresh feats of workmanship, till they arrived at making, with small expenditure of labour, the vast number of complicated mechanisms which they now possess. So, in like manner, the intellect, by its native strength, makes for itself intellectual instruments, whereby it acquires strength for performing other intellectual operations, and from these operations gets again fresh instruments, or the power of pushing its investigations further, and thus gradually proceeds till it reaches the summit of wisdom. (59)

So, method is a tool by which the perfection of tools and development of new instruments are possible. This way, the employment of the initial natural tool, i.e., method, strengthens the tool, i.e., method again. In fact, if truth that we saw earlier is the end, method is the means. But, we know that truth is the

foundation also; and so, method, as we just noted is an end too. Method develops as truth also develops; it is an explication of an implicit reality. The oneness of method and truth, knowledge and idea, is evident when Spinoza says:

... in order to know, there is no need to know that we know, much less to know that we know that we know... for the certitude of truth, no further sign is necessary beyond the possession of a true idea... the true method teaches us the order in which we should seek for truth itself, or the subjective essences of things, or ideas, for all these expressions are synonymous. (60)

Method is nothing else than "reflective knowledge, or the idea of an idea". As there can be no idea of an idea unless an idea exists previously, "there can be no method without a pre-existent idea." A good method shows us how the mind should be directed, according to the standard of a given true idea. (61) So, the necessary existence of a

60. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
true idea as a "natural instrument" is the starting point of method, and when mind differentiates with the help of this idea, between the true idea and other perceptions, the process of knowledge and the process of perfecting the method start. As we know more things, the mind itself starts laying down rules for its own guidance. (62) Reason, control of emotions, love of God etc. result out of this process. The process of method is summed up by Spinoza:

... our method must furnish us, first, with a means of distinguishing a true idea from all other perceptions, and enabling the mind to avoid the latter; secondly, with rules for perceiving unknown things according to the standard of the true idea; thirdly, with an order which enables us to avoid useless labour. When we became acquainted with this method, we saw that, fourthly, it would be perfect when we had attained to the idea of the absolutely perfect Being. (63)

63. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
The end of method is truth, freedom and the third kind of knowledge.

3. The Question of Innate Ideas

In the modern Western philosophy, with Descartes, a new polemic on the questions of the origin of knowledge and the abilities and content of the knowledge, i.e., the mind and its faculties has started. Locke was the counterposition of Descartes. Descartes advocated clear and distinct ideas that are self evident as belonging to mind by birth. Descartes started his metaphysics from these ideas. Locke goes to the extent of saying that mind is a clean slate, tabula rasa; ideas originate from experience and there are no apriori, innate ideas.

Spinoza stands in between Descartes' rationalism and Locke's empiricism. Placing Spinoza this way is against the commonplace belief that Spinoza is a rationalist. Usually he is grouped along with Descartes and Leibniz who together are considered the trio of rationalism. A careful reading of Spinoza, especially of his epistemology that we have seen, would show that
Spinoza is neither a rationalist nor an empiricist like Hume or Berkeley. Spinoza does not accept innate ideas; Spinoza does accept innate capacities. As Locke believes, Spinoza even before Locke, thought that all men are born ignorant. Mind in Spinoza develops and becomes active through the continuous perceptions; reason and other abilities get perfected through the development of knowledge; and knowledge develops through more and more perceptions.

In fact, premises of Locke can be traced to Spinoza. When Marx and Engels raised the question in The Holy Family whether Locke can be taken a "disciple of Spinoza", they might not have been that serious, because Marx and Engels were then analysing Locke's Essay in the context of the need of an anti-metaphysical system.(64) Later, Marx had opportunity to appreciate Spinoza as one can see from his letter of 1858 to Ferdinand Lassalle.(65) The point is that there is nothing wrong in considering Locke as a disciple of Spinoza because Spinoza departs considerably from Descartes to the extent of giving experience, external bodies acting on human body,


65. Karl Marx, 'Letter to Ferdinand Lassalle, 31 May 1858'.
inadequate modes of perception etc., an important role in building up the adequate knowledge. As Marx had later remarked, Spinoza's inner structure, different from the form of its presentation, is less metaphysical.

On the question of the source of knowledge, Descartes' answer is reason and Locke's experience. Spinoza gives a processual explanation of starting from experience to intuition through reason. On the question of organising the knowledge, the scope of will is wider than that of intellect in Descartes. Desire, aversion, assertion, denial and doubt are various modes of willing.\(^{66}\) In Locke, the operations of the mind like thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing and willing help the sensation, i.e., the ideas from experience, to be arranged in mind. First, mind is able to receive the sensations, then simple ideas received are repeated, compared and united to form complex ideas. Mind observes its own operations. Here, we find Spinoza very close to Locke. At the same time, Spinoza cannot be considered an empiricist, because the reason that is

developed through the generalisation of inadequate ideas out of mere experiences - hearsay and signs - also play an important role as an acquired capacity or faculty in arriving at adequate ideas. We should remember that this reason is different from the reasoning accepted as a reflective ability by Locke. Reason in Spinoza deduces cause from effect. Locke does not deduce simple ideas from complex ones; his move is onesidedly in the opposite direction; he only does abstraction of ideas which do not correspond to particular things. In Spinoza, we find both induction and deduction.

Deduction in Spinoza would be accepted without being questioned because he is usually considered a rationalist; in rationalism we deduce ideas from the self evident, clear and distinct, innate, apriori ideas. What is questionable is induction. We would try to show here that Spinoza is not a rationalist with the tradition of innate ideas. Let us do this by reminding or projecting certain aspects of his theory of knowledge.

(i) Man is born ignorant with passive mind

Spinoza tells us that men are not born with innate ideas from which knowledge can be derived. The initial idea is the mind itself which is passive in the beginning. This original mind is only the idea of the human body. Human being, being a unique combined mode out of the two attributes, mind denotes the human body in another attribute. So, idea of the body is the mind. Action of external bodies on the human body makes the human mind active in observing what is happening; the passive mind becomes emotional; the inadequate ideas are transformed into adequate and in the process reason comes into being. Active mind is the totality of ideas developed later. The original idea of the body, i.e., mind is the only apparatus to start with.

(ii) No absolute faculties in mind

In Kant, we get the faculties of understanding, reason etc. In Spinoza, we do not find any such faculty. Intellect, will and understanding are the terms, besides mind, that come to our mind as more or less equal to a receptive apparatus of knowledge. So, it is natural that we either take them as faculties or capacities. According to Spinoza, intellect is not an absolute thought, but only a certain "mode of thinking"
different from other modes like love, desire etc. (68)
"Will is only a particular mode of thinking like intellect" (69) "Will and understanding are one and the same". (70) So, all these are just finite modes of thought involved in the epistemic process. Spinoza does not consider these as faculties; they are just "general notions, which cannot be distinguished from the particular instances on which they are based". (71) This he makes very specific in the case of will and volition. He says that "there is in the mind no absolute faculty of understanding, desiring, loving etc." (72) From the point of view of faculties also, Spinoza cannot, thus, be a rationalist.

(iii) Experience contributes to the formation of reason

In the development of knowledge, we saw that inadequate ideas emerge out of mere experience. And the second kind of knowledge, i.e., reason - notions common to

68. R.H.M. Elwes (Tr.), op.cit., p. 69.
69. Ibid., p. 70.
70. Ibid., p. 121.
71. Ibid., p. 120.
72. Ibid., p. 119.
all men(73) - is arrived at through a process of notion formation where particular images, and differences are broken down and general, common idea is formed which can be rightly predicated to particular members belonging to that common idea.(74) Thus reason becomes an adequate concept from the raw materials of uncritical experience or sensations, as inadequate ideas become adequate. This adequate idea of reason works as the major premise from which individual cases can be deduced. Reason deduces cause from the effect, and as adequate idea develops out of inadequate idea, i.e., as clear and distinct ideas come up as a result of the process, Spinoza is not the rationalist in the sense Descartes is. Like Descartes, Spinoza deduces ideas but from the adequate idea thus formed.

We feel that a large number of authors are still in the dark when they call Spinoza a rationalist. Falckenberg is a typical case in point who said that the "rationalism of Descartes is heightened by Spinoza into the imposing confidence that absolutely everything is

73. Ibid., p. 113.
74. Ibid., p. 112.
cognizable by the reason, that the intellect is able by its pure concepts and intuitions entirely to exhaust the multiform world of reality, to follow it with its light into its last refuge." (75)

(iv) **Method develops itself from a natural instrument to further perfection and to more tools through the knowledge process**

Method is the initial true idea with which understanding distinguished the truth or falsity of newer perceptions. Through this process, the instrument developed further, perfecting itself and creating newer tools as well. This we have noticed in the section(2) where we dealt with the method. One can see that the knowledge is not derived from this original true idea; but it worked as an instrument only for developing further adequate ideas from which various conclusions are arrived at. From grasping the nature of triangle, we can arrive at the properties of it as it is in the geometrical method of Spinoza. Here also, we should not get confused with

rationalism. The nature of triangle, for instance, is not an innate idea, but an idea arrived at through modes of perceptions.

(v) No innate ideas, but innate capacities

Roger Scruton puts it that "Spinoza's theory of knowledge arises directly from his account of the nature of mind".(76) This would be a onesided picture, because mind is only one part of the knowledge process. External influences on the body and the resultant bodily changes are observed by the mind. Spinoza makes this clear, and so we think it is right to consider his as a reflection theory of cognition.

Mark also considers Spinoza more or less in the same mistaken way as Scruton does.(77) But Rupert Lodge(78) takes the three levels of knowledge as three

levels of experience. To make it once again clear, let us point out that Spinoza talks only of powers and properties of understanding or of "the intellectual powers" which are innate, and not of innate ideas from which all knowledge can be deduced. (79) For instance, understanding forms the idea of quantity absolutely without reference to any other thoughts. (80)

All these points we noted so far clearly establish that Spinoza is not a rationalist. At the same time, he could combine elements of empiricism that Locke develops afterwards. In fact, in a different way, even before the origin of modern empiricism, and even before Kant, we could see a reconciliation of these two approaches (rationalism and empiricism) of epistemology in Spinoza. That Spinoza's is a reflection theory of knowledge would be taken up for further discussion when we would compare Spinoza and Marxism.

80. ibid., p. 39.