

Handout II: Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind

Philosophy 322: Modern Philosophy
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PARALLELISM

1. "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (2p7, Bennett, 25). What does this mean?
 - (a) The network of extended modes is paralleled by the network of modes of thought (i.e., the network of ideas):
$$\begin{array}{l} [\dots] \rightarrow m_e1 \rightarrow m_e2 \rightarrow m_e3 \rightarrow m_e4 \rightarrow [\dots] \\ [\dots] \rightarrow m_t1 \rightarrow m_t2 \rightarrow m_t3 \rightarrow m_t4 \rightarrow [\dots] \end{array}$$
 - (b) m_t1 = the idea of m_e1 ; m_t2 = the idea of m_e2 ; etc.
 - (c) m_e1 causes/explains $m_e w$ iff:
the idea of m_e1 causes/explains the idea of m_e2 , i.e., iff:
 m_t1 causes/explains m_t2
2. What is the argument?
 - (a) God has an idea of everything that necessarily follows from his essence (2p3).
 - (b) Every mode of extension follows necessarily from God's essence (1p16).
 - (c) So, there is an idea of every mode of extension.
 - (d) The idea of X depends on the idea of X's cause (1ax4).
 - (e) So, for every mode of extension, there is an idea of that mode which depends upon the ideas of that mode's causes (2p7).
3. Evaluating the premises:
 - (a) 2p3 is pretty plausible. If there's something about God's essence which God doesn't have an idea of, then, insofar as he's a thinking substance, he lacks something.
 - (b) We considered 1p16 in the last handout.
 - (c) That leaves us with 1ax4: "The knowledge of an effect depends upon and involves the knowledge of the cause."
 - i. To know a thing involves knowing the explanation for its existence.
 - ii. Whatever explains a thing's existence is that thing's cause.
 - iii. So, to know a thing involves knowing its cause.

MIND AND BODY

1. Dualism: mind \neq body. Descartes's view.
2. Monism: mind = body (or part of the body). This is Spinoza's view.¹ But it's an unusual form of monism. Compare to two more common versions:
 - (a) Materialism: mind *reduces to* body; i.e., mind fully explained in terms of body.
 - (b) Idealism: body *reduces to* mind; i.e., body fully explained in terms of mind.
 - (c) Spinoza: mind and body *not reducible* to each other; i.e., mind cannot be explained in terms of body and body cannot be explained in terms of mind
3. Spinoza's monism.
 - (a) Body and mind are the same substance conceived in different ways
 - i. Body = substance conceived through attribute of extension
 - ii. Mind = substance conceived through attribute of thought
 - (b) Same goes for modes. For every extended mode m_e there is a thinking mode m_t such that $m_e = m_t$; m_e is that mode conceived through attribute of extension, and m_t is that mode conceived through attribute of thought
 - (c) Motivation: suppose that body were reducible to mind (or vice versa). Then body could be explained in terms of mind. But this violates the idea that the attributes are conceptually / explanatorily distinct:

“So long as things are considered as modes of thinking, we must explain the order of the whole of Nature—the entire connection of causes—through the attribute of thought alone. And insofar as they are considered as modes of extension, the order of the whole of Nature must be explained through the attribute of extension alone” (2p7s, Bennett, 26).
 - (d) Same line of thought means that mental events and bodily events are not causally connected. Why? If m_e was caused by m_t , then m_e would be explained by m_t . But m_e can only be explained in terms of extension. So Spinoza denies both Descartes's dualism *and* his interactionism. (Note that there's a *sense* in which m_t1 causes m_e2 : m_t1 causes m_t2 , and $m_t2 = m_e2$. But Spinoza would say we can't conceive of m_t1 *as* m_e2 's cause, and since causation = explanation = conceiving as depending upon, Spinoza would deny, strictly speaking, that m_t1 causes m_e2 .)

¹Note that Spinoza is a monist in two senses: he thinks both that there is *only one substance* (that's the view discussed on Handout 9), and he thinks *minds are not distinct from bodies* (that's the view being discussed here). Very few people have been substance monists; i.e., very few people have agreed with Spinoza that there's only one substance. But many people have been (and are) monists in the second sense.