

Spinoza

Mind and Body – Parallelism

Zane Glauber and Simon Judd

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Things to do:

- A quick review of Descartes' position on body and mind
- Look at Spinoza's crack at the mind/body issue
- An introduction to parallelism
- A discussion of the ramifications of Spinoza's views

Remember this?

- Try to remember Descartes' views on the mind/body problem:
 - Both the mind and the body exist; Descartes is a *substance dualist*
 - The mind is distinct from the body.
 - The mind also controls the body:
 - "...nature also teaches that I am present to my body not merely in the way a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am most tightly joined and, so to speak, commingled with it, so much so that I and the body constitute one single thing" (AW 65).
 - The mind and body are distinct and influence each other.

Not so fast...

- Spinoza isn't entirely happy with Descartes' claim.
- There is *one substance* that is both mind and body
 - Call it "Nature" or "God"
 - (In the words of Professor Marcus, Spinoza is a "weirdo monist")
 - All "things" in this world is God: the projector, this table, the image on this screen, as well as the ideas in my head.
- But there are mental properties and physical properties
 - Spinoza is not only a substance monist, but also a property dualist! (mental properties can not necessarily be explained in terms of physical properties)

Parallelism

- Descartes: our bodies are like machines, they cannot “think.” Minds, therefore, must be independent of bodies
- Spinoza, on the other hand...
 - “The order and connection of ideas is the same as order and connection of things” (AW 166).
- There is one substance, just different attributes (mental and physical) of the same substance.
- But there is the issue of interaction between the two:
- **THE SOLUTION IS PARALLELISM!**
 - Though the mind and body are separate and do **not** interact, they move parallel to each other. In other words, it only appears that they interact.

A Quick Scenario:

- Simon throws me a baseball.
- 1) I understand that a baseball is coming at me. I anticipate it arriving.
- 2) I reach out and catch the ball.
- It would seem that a mental event causes a physical event (the reaction).
- This is not the case!
- There are two separate linear chains at play: a mental chain of events, and a physical chain flowing in parallel.
- The chains are perfectly aligned!

What do you think?

- Do you think that parallelism is a legitimate concept?
 - What of the fact that there must be a mental state corresponding to every physical state, and a physical state corresponding to every mental state?
- What are some implications of parallelism?

Determinism

- What about this:
- “Nothing in nature is contingent, but all things are from the necessity of the divine nature determined to exist and to act in a definite way” (AW 156).
 - All things operate under laws determined by God
 - This affects not only bodies, but minds as well!
(A little food for thought).

Questions?