

Knowledge and Freedom Spinoza, *The Ethics*

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- **UNIVERSE A (pre-determined)**

- Everything that happens is caused by whatever happened before it. This is true from the beginning of the universe, so whatever happens has already been decided.
- Example: This morning I decided to wear jeans because it had already been decided that I would wear jeans today since it was determined by everything that happened before it.

- **UNIVERSE B (not pre-determined)**

- *ALMOST* everything that happens is completely caused by what happened before it. The one exception is human decision making.
- Example: Alex decided to eat Lucky Charms for breakfast since a person's decision is not caused by everything that has already happened. Alex's choice of Lucky Charms did not have to happen because she could have decided to have something different.

IN UNIVERSE A,

- A bro named Brad finds a slam piece named Sally. He believes that the only way to get with Sally is by killing his girlfriend and her three roommates. He knows it is impossible to escape Bundy Dining Hall in the case of a fire. Before he leaves the party, he sets up a device that will light it on fire to kill his girlfriend and her roommates.
- Is Brad fully morally responsible for killing his girlfriend and her three roommates?

YES

NO

IN UNIVERSE A,

- Is it possible for a person to be fully morally responsible for their actions?

NO

YES

IN UNIVERSE A,

- Brad drowns his girlfriend and her roommates in the KJ water feature so he can get with another girl.
- Is it possible that Brad is fully morally responsible for killing his girlfriend and her roommates?

YES

NO

University of Utah- Experimental Philosophy

- Concrete long story- 72% said YES
- Abstract- 86% said NO
- Simple Scenario- 50/50
- Concrete stories trigger affective responses
- Interesting application of psychology to philosophy

Spinoza: To review...

- 1. “Weirdo Monist”
- 2. Relationship between mind and body = parallelism
- 3. Since God is within all matter... why is there evil?
- Is there free will.... NOPE.

DETERMINISM

- Everything that happens (including human decision-making) has already been preplanned, predetermined.
- There is no free will, according to Spinoza

Problem of Error

Descartes:

- We are independent of God... FREE WILL-Y.



Spinoza:

- We are God.. so there is no error (but there is!)
- We are just one attribute of God, thus we have a limited perspective and cannot fully understand certain things.
- There is a continuum of falsity, but nothing is truly false

Passive vs. Active Ideas

Passive

- We receive ideas outside of ourselves
- Inadequate ideas are confused, they don't allow us to understand the true ideas that should block them out.
- How is this possible if we are all part of the same substance??

Active

- We have more freedom in our active minds.
- Ideas from inside of us.

No False Ideas

- All ideas are true insofar as they are related to God (Ethics AW 178)
- Proposition 35. *Falsity consists in the privation of knowledge which inadequate ideas, that is, fragmentary and confused ideas, involve.*
- Proposition 36. *Inadequate and confused ideas follow by the same necessity as adequate, or clear and distinct, ideas.*



Inadequate Ideas

- When we gaze at the sun, we see it as some two hundred feet distant from us. The error does not consist in simply seeing the sun in this way but in the fact that while we do so we are not aware of the true distance and the cause of our seeing it so. For although we may later become aware that the sun is more than six hundred times the diameter of the earth distant from us, we shall nevertheless continue to see it as close at hand. For it is not our ignorance of its true distance that causes us to see the sun to be so near; it is that the affection of our body involves the essence of the sun only to the extent that the body is affected by it (AW 178)

Inadequate and Adequate Ideas

Descartes

- The sensory idea of the sun is false while the idea derived from reason is true



Spinoza

- The sensory and reason ideas are BOTH true, just to different degrees
- Sensory idea is not as adequate as the reason one. This does not make it FALSE

More Adequate Ideas

- 1st kind of knowledge: Casual, sensory knowledge
- 2nd kind of knowledge: Reason
- 3rd kind of knowledge: Inference/Intuition; beyond logic
 - Highest kind of knowledge
 - More adequate ideas

Why the 3rd kind of knowledge is the BEST kind of knowledge

- A greater proportion of adequate ideas provides a greater sense of freedom
- Focus on active ideas (within your control)
- Makes you less impaired by passions and base desires

Freedom and the Eternal

- Since everything is determined, the best thing to do is move up in knowledge
- Contemplation of the eternal brings you closer to happiness
- Similar to Descartes, he moves away from sensory beliefs



Up for Debate:

- Passive v. Active Ideas: If we are one substance, how can an idea come from something outside of ourselves?
- Inadequate Ideas: Is this so crazy? Are there continuums of truth in fiction writing? Are there continuums of morality for lies and white lies?
- The Eternal: Why does Spinoza tell us how to live our life (title of work is *Ethics*), when everything is predetermined?