

# **Philosophy 203**

## ***History of Modern Western Philosophy***

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**Class 9 - Spinoza's *Ethics***

# Business

- Van Halen's Brown M&Ms
- ✓1. Monist metaphysics;
  - Substance exists.
  - It is infinite.
  - It is unique.
- 2. The relationship between mind and body;
- 3. Freedom of the will and the problem of error.

# Revenge of the Problem of Interaction

- Talk of minds and bodies is misleading, since they are not individual, independent substances.
- Still, it will be easier to talk like normal people.
  - Remember that we are referring to attributes, rather than things.
- Spinoza rejects Descartes's substance dualism, as we have seen.
- He maintains a dualism among attributes.
  - There are mental attributes of the one substance.
  - There are physical attributes of the substance.
- Since everything is God, and there are minds and bodies, these must be properties of God.
  - Notice that Spinoza's view of God is, at least in one attribute, as material.
  - Hobbes
- Descartes's argument that bodies are insufficient to support minds is thus moot; these are properties of an infinite substance.
- Nevertheless, the argument for property dualism still holds, so that there is a problem of interaction between these properties.

# Toward Parallelism

- “The body cannot determine the mind to thinking, and the mind cannot determine the body to motion, to rest, or to anything else (if there is anything else). Proof: All modes of thinking have God for a cause, insofar as he is a thinking thing, and not insofar as he is explained by another attribute (by 2P6). So what determines the mind to thinking is a mode of thinking and not of extension, that is (by 2D1), it is not the body. This was the first thing. Next, the motion and rest of a body must arise from another body... whatever arises in the body must have arisen from God insofar as he is considered to be affected by some mode of extension, and not insofar as he is considered to be affected by some mode of thinking (also 2P6), that is, it cannot arise from the mind, which (by 2P11) is a mode of thinking. This was the second point. Therefore, the body cannot determine the mind, and so on” (*Ethics* 3P2).
- Given that a monist metaphysics might be motivated by the problem of interaction, it is disappointing that the problem reappears for Spinoza at the level of properties.
- Spinoza claims that though the mind and body do not interact, they move parallel to each other in such a way as to give the appearance of interaction.
  - ▶ “The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (2P7).

# How Many Attributes? (An Aside)

- “Each entity must be conceived under some attribute, and the more reality or being it has, the more are its attributes which express necessity, or eternity, and infinity. Consequently, nothing can be clearer than this, too, that an absolutely infinite entity must necessarily be defined (Def. 6) as an entity consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses a definite essence” (*Ethics* 1P10, AW 147b).
- Imagine that there were aliens with an extra capacity for sense perception.
  - We perceive the world in five modalities
  - The aliens perceive the world in six.
  - We have absolutely no idea what it would be like to have a sixth sense, like this, but there is no reason to think that there couldn't be such a thing.
- So it is with the attributes of God, for Spinoza.
- We only know the worlds of minds and bodies, but there could be additional attributes perceivable by God, other aspects of nature hidden from us.
- In fact, since God is infinite, there is some reason to believe that there are other such attributes.

# Parallelism Explained



- Let's say your sweetheart gives you a kiss, which makes you feel happy, which in turn makes you hug your sweetie back.
  - ▶ It looks like a physical event caused a mental event which in turn caused another physical event.
  - ▶ Whether these events are made of interacting substances or properties is immaterial.
- What is really happening, according to Spinoza's parallelism, is that there are two independent causal sequences.
  - ▶ In the physical chain, the kiss,  $p_1$ , causes a second physical event,  $p_2$ , which causes the hug,  $p_3$ .
  - ▶ In the mental chain, a mental event,  $m_1$  causes the happiness,  $m_2$ , which causes a third mental event,  $m_3$ .
  - ▶  $m_1$  is the mental correlate of the kiss, and  $m_3$  is the mental correlate of the hug; we are unaware of those ideas.
  - ▶ Similarly, there is a physical correlate,  $p_2$ , of the mental state of happiness.
  - ▶ There is no interaction between the  $p_i$ s and the  $m_i$ s.
  - ▶ But, it appears as if there is, since the two chains are aligned just right.

# The Costs of Parallelism

- Spinoza's parallelism solves the problem of interaction by explaining how the appearance of interaction can arise from a system in which there is no interaction.
- That solution comes at a cost of positing extra mental and physical states.
- There must be a mental state corresponding to every physical state, and a physical state corresponding to every mental state.
- The contemporary defender of supervenience might subscribe to the latter claim.
- The former claim is much more foreign, and difficult to understand.
- There seem to be lots of physical states with no corresponding mental state.
- What mental state is the correlate of, say, the tree falling in the forest with no one to hear it?
- Still, the cost of his profligacy is small, since Spinoza is already committed to the broadest possible infinity of states, in God.

# Monism and Parallelism

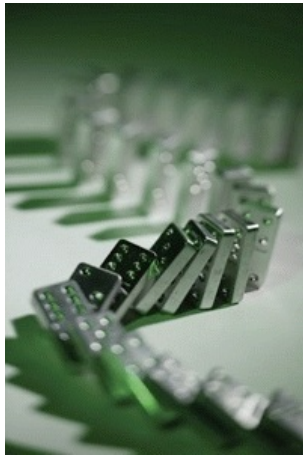
- Talk of interaction between the body and mind should, strictly speaking, be understood more like talk about different properties of the same substance.
- The difference between the mind and the body is more like the difference between perceiving an object with two different sense modalities.
  - the taste and the look of the apple
  - We can perceive the wax with our different senses, so we have mental and physical aspects of ourselves.
- The mind is always thinking about the body.
  - “That which constitutes the actual being of the human mind is basically nothing else but the idea of an individual actually existing thing” (*Ethics* 2P11, AW 168b).
  - “Whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human mind is bound to be perceived by the human mind; i.e., the idea of that thing will necessarily be in the human mind. That is to say, if the object of the idea constituting the human mind is a body, nothing can happen in that body without its being perceived by the mind” (*Ethics* 2P12, AW 169a).
  - “The object of the idea constituting the human mind is a body - i.e., a definite mode of extension actually existing, and nothing else” (*Ethics* 2P13, AW 169b).
- Spinoza is claiming that the wax and one’s body and mind are all part of the same whole.
  - “The human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God; and therefore when we say that the human mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing else but this: that God...has this or that idea” (*Ethics* 2P11 corollary, AW 169a).



# Motion and Spinoza's Physics

- Bodies are not independent, and self-subsisting.
  - Of course.
- The very notion of motion has to be altered.
- We ordinarily think of motion in terms of objects changing their places.
- The relations among attributes does not seem to follow directly from our ordinary conception of the relations among bodies.
  - Bodies can move relative to one another.
  - The relative motion of attributes is less clear.
- “We have conceived an individual thing composed solely of bodies distinguished from one another only by motion-and-rest and speed of movement; that is, an individual thing composed of the simplest bodies. If we now conceive another individual thing composed of several individual things of different natures, we shall find that this can be affected in many other ways while still preserving its nature. For since each one of its parts is composed of several bodies, each single part can...without any change in its nature, move with varying degrees of speed and consequently communicate its own motion to other parts with varying degrees of speed. Now if we go on to conceive a third kind of individual thing composed of this second kind, we shall find that it can be affected in many other ways without any change in its form. If we thus continue to infinity, we shall readily conceive the whole of Nature as one individual whose parts - that is, all the constituent bodies - vary in infinite ways without any change in the individual whole” (*Ethics* 2P13 Lemma 7 Scholium, AW 171-2).
- Bennett: consider how a thaw might, in a sense, move across a region.

# Determinism



- The interactions of bodies, however conceived, are governed by laws, and appeals to final causes and purposes are banished.
- These laws govern the behavior of both bodies and mind, making all of our decisions determined.
- “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” (*Ethics* 1P29, AW 156).
- “Everything is determined, the beginning as well as the end, by forces over which we have no control. It is determined for the insect as well as the star. Human beings, vegetables, or cosmic dust, we all dance to a mysterious tune, intoned in the distance by an invisible piper” (Einstein).

# Three Aspects of Spinoza's Philosophy

- ✓1. Monist metaphysics;
- ✓2. The relationship between mind and body; and
- 3. Freedom of the will and the problem of error.

# Freedom and Error - An Overview

- Descartes confronted a serious puzzle in the problem of error.
  - Once he had established that we are both created and preserved by an infinitely good God, the possibility of error, despite appearances, seemed unlikely.
  - Descartes's solution was constrained by the need to avoid ascribing imperfections to God, while admitting that God's creation was imperfect and prone to error.
  - Descartes solved that problem by showing how we could act independently of God.
- For Spinoza, the problem of error appears even more intractable.
  - Not only are we created and preserved by God, we are God!
  - Descartes availed himself of some sort of independence from God: our free will.
  - Spinoza denies that we have such freedom.
- Descartes can sneak out the window to go to the party.
- Spinoza is stuck inside the house.



# All Ideas are True

- Since we are, in substance, God, it seems that there can be no false ideas; all ideas are true.
  - All ideas are true insofar as they are related to God (*Ethics* 2P32, AW 178a).
  - There is nothing positive in ideas whereby they can be said to be false (*Ethics* 2P33, AW 178a).
  - Every idea which in us is absolute, that is adequate and perfect, is true (*Ethics* 2P34, AW 178a).
- There are clearer ideas and more confused ideas, and the clearer ones are closest to the truth.
- At a limit, there are even adequate ideas.
- But, since we are just one attribute of God, we only have ideas from a particular perspective, and this limitation prevents full apprehension of truth, generally.

# Descartes and Spinoza on Ideas

- Descartes claimed that ideas, in themselves, could not be false.
  - An idea is like a picture.
  - For sensory ideas, we have an image.
  - For non-sensory ideas, we have a non-sensory representation.
  - We can either affirm or deny that our representation holds in reality.
  - Truth and falsity do not apply to ideas; they are matters of judgment.
- Spinoza argues that every idea contains within itself an affirmation.
  - Ideas are not mere representations
  - They carry beliefs with them.
- Spinoza's claim that all our ideas are true is thus not Descartes's claim that they can not be false.

# Doxastic involuntarism

we can not choose what to believe

- Descartes's assumption that we can separate ideas from judgments appears uncontroversial.
- But it leads to the odd claim that we are free to choose whether or not to affirm a given belief.
- Try to believe that, say, your roommate is an alien from Venus.



# Spinoza's Built-In Beliefs



- “I deny that a man makes no affirmation insofar as he has a perception. For what else is perceiving a winged horse than affirming wings of a horse? For if the mind should perceive nothing apart from the winged horse, it would regard the horse as present to it, and would have no cause to doubt its existence nor any faculty of dissenting, unless the imagining of the winged horse were to be connected to an idea which annuls the existence of the said horse, or he perceives that the idea which he has of the winged horse is inadequate” (*Ethics* 2P49 Scholium, AW 186b-187a).
- The default belief attached to any idea is an affirmation.
- To deny that there is a winged horse, there must be another positive idea which crowds it out, which overrides our initial affirmation.
- Even the most confused and inadequate idea has some measure of truth in it.
  - A chimera or a hallucination at least reflects a change in a mode of the one true substance.
- Truth comes in degrees.
- Our less-true ideas are, ideally, over-ridden by the more-true ones.
  - “To begin my analysis of error, I should like you to note that the imaginations of the mind, looked at in themselves, contain no error; i.e., the mind does not err from the fact that it imagines, but only insofar as it is considered to lack the idea which excludes the existence of those things which it imagines to be present to itself” (*Ethics* 2P17 Scholium, AW 173b).
- Spinoza has recast the problem from one of accounting for how we make mistakes to one of describing why some ideas are more true than others.



# Passive and Active Ideas

- As long as we are passive, we are receiving ideas from outside of us.
- Those ideas are of bodies.
- Ideas of bodies are inadequate, or mutilated, or confused.
  - They are caused by the interaction of my body and other bodies.
  - Recall Descartes's claim that the wax brought him more knowledge about himself than it did about the wax.
- The inadequacy of our understanding of wax and other objects outside of ourselves prevents us from excluding those overriding ideas which block them out.
  - The inadequate ideas are not false, exactly; how could they be?
  - But, they are less true than the adequate ones.
  - They are governed by psychological associations, rather than by logical ones.

# ***Natura naturans* and *natura naturata***

- *Natura naturans* is active nature, as God conceives herself.
- *Natura naturata* is passive or generated nature, God as conceived through modes.
- Spinoza has removed as much of the anthropocentric view of God as he could from Descartes's metaphysics.
- But, there are limits.
- We are finite, and any account of the world and its structure will have to include us.
- Spinoza includes us by making us part of God, considered in a finite mode.

# Error?



- Descartes considered two ideas we have of the sun: a sense idea and one derived from reason.
  - The former is false, and the latter is true.
- Spinoza thinks that both are true, to different degrees.
  - We do make an error, when we affirm that the sun is small, or not so far away, as it appears.
  - But that error is, properly speaking, just inadequacy, not falsity.
- “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” (*Ethics* 2P35 Scholium, AW 178b).

# Adequate Ideas

- “Those things that are common to all things and are equally in the part as in the whole can be conceived only adequately” (*Ethics* 2P38, AW 179a).
- Common ideas are those that come from the use of reason, which is one of three kinds of knowledge Spinoza describes in 2P40 Scholium 2.
- The other kinds are sensory, which Spinoza calls opinion or imagination, and intuition, which Spinoza says is the highest kind of knowledge.
- The common ideas are the result of reasoning, which does not rely on inadequate ideas received passively from outside of us but, rather, on active ideas we discover ourselves.
- Those active ideas are the ones that are most secure.
- They are governed by logical necessity, and they allow us to engage God.
- “The human mind, insofar as it perceives things truly, is part of the infinite intellect of God...and thus it is as inevitable that the clear and distinct ideas of the mind are true as that God’s ideas are true” (*Ethics* 2P43 Scholium, AW 182).
- Primarily, the common notions concern pure geometry and philosophy, and knowledge of God.

# Is There a Counsel Here?

- We should spend our time focusing on the adequate ideas?
- The situation can not be quite that simple.
- We lack the freedom to choose other than the way in which one chooses.
  - Everything is determined.
  - Descartes's doubt is impossible.
  - No counsel against it could be effective or even appropriate.
- Still, Spinoza defends a kind of freedom which arises from focusing on the active ideas.

# Freedom

- Freedom is having a greater proportion of adequate ideas, so that one is more fully self-determining.
- Since we can never have only active ideas, purely adequate, freedom, like truth, is a matter of degrees.
- Even though our actions are determined, we can still strive (in some sense) to be free of our passions, our base desires.
- Such striving leads us to a kind of eternity.
- We can strive to be free by contemplating ourselves as finite modes in Nature.
- “The mind’s intellectual love towards God is the love of God wherewith God loves himself not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explicated through the essence of the human mind considered under a form of eternity. That is, the mind’s intellectual love towards God is part of the infinite love wherewith God loves himself... From this we clearly understand in what our salvation or blessedness or freedom consists, namely, in the constant and eternal love towards God “(*Ethics* 5P36, and Scholium, AW 191-2).

# Leibniz, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza

- All four philosophers provide responses to Descartes, who attempted to accommodate the new science and the orthodox, theological world view.
- Hobbes and Spinoza were eager to dismiss the religious orthodoxy.
- Leibniz rejects:
  - Hobbes's materialism
  - atheism (or at least naturalism) of both Hobbes and Spinoza
  - the view, found in both Hobbes and Spinoza, that everything is necessary

# On Bodies

- Leibniz also rejects Descartes's account of bodies
- Descartes had argued that bodies are essentially extended, unthinking, divisible, individual substances.
  - Leibniz rejects infinite divisibility.
- He argues that the claim that bodies are unthinking leads to the impossibility of thought.
  - He believes that the ultimate constituents of the material world have within them a source of action.
  - For Leibniz, the fundamental components of the world are not inert divisible matter, but active, mind-like substances.
- “Each portion of matter can be conceived as a garden full of plants, and as a pond full of fish. But each branch of a plant, each limb of an animal, each drop of its humors, is still another such garden or pond” (M67, AW 281b).



# Rehabilitating Final Causes

- According to Aristotle, there are four different kinds of causes:
  - C1. Efficient cause: the source of a change (basically our contemporary notion)
  - C2. Final cause: the goal, or telos, of an object or event
  - C3. Material cause: the constituent matter of the object
  - C4. Formal cause: what it is to be an object
- Galilean physics denigrated C2-C4, focusing on C1 alone.
- Leibniz, seeking a return to an anthropocentric view of God's role in the universe, looked to rehabilitate the notion of a final cause.
- Bodies act according to laws of efficient causation, but souls act, like God, according to laws of final causes.
- “It would be best to join together both considerations, for if it is permitted to use a humble comparison, I recognize and praise the skill of a worker not only by showing his designs in making the parts of his machine, but also by explaining the instruments he used in making each part, especially when these instruments are simple and cleverly contrived. *And God is skillful enough artisan* to produce a machine which is a thousand times more ingenious than that of our body, while using only some very simple fluids...” (D22, AW 237b-238a)

# Motivating Leibniz from Spinoza

- Leibniz accepts Spinoza's demand for explanatory completeness.
  - Corollary: the Principle of Sufficient Reason
- But Leibniz believes that Spinoza's view cedes too many intuitive phenomena.
- Leibniz wants to reclaim free will.
  - Spinoza relied on God's foreknowledge to establish determinism.
  - Leibniz attempts to rectify God's foreknowledge with freedom.
- And, he wants to solve the problem of interaction while maintaining multiplicity.
  - Spinoza posited parallelism to avoid interaction, but invoked a dual-aspect theory (property dualism) to explain the parallels.
  - Leibniz accepts that the body is another perspective on the mind.
  - But, he denies the singularity of substance.

# Leibniz and God

Leibniz invokes God in many aspects of his work.

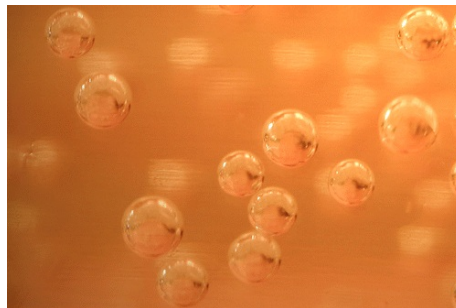
- The Super-Monad (creator)
- Guides the (teleological) changes in monadic perceptions
- Foretells the future states
- Infinite Analysis
- Protector of the Principle of Sufficient Reason
- Elector of the best world (divine benevolence)
- It would be good to have an argument.

# Leibniz's Cosmological Argument

- “There must be a *sufficient reason* in *contingent truths*, or *truths of fact*, that is, in the series of things distributed throughout the universe of creatures, where the resolution into particular reasons could proceed into unlimited detail...And since all of this *detail* involves nothing but other prior and or more detailed contingents, each of which needs a similar analysis in order to give its reason...It must be the case that the sufficient or ultimate reason is outside the sequence or *series* of this multiplicity of contingencies, however infinite it may be...The ultimate reason of things must be in a necessary substance in which the diversity of changes is only eminent, as in its source. This is what we call *God*”(M336-8, AW 278b).
- From the mere existence of this world, and the principle of sufficient reason (PSR), Leibniz thus derives the standard characteristics of God.
- PSR follows from Leibniz's conception of truth as a claim in which a predicate is contained in a subject.
  - If some effect did not have a cause, if some truth had no reason, then there would be a claim whose subject did not contain its predicate.
  - Analysis is the foundation of twentieth-century analytic philosophy.

# Multiplicity or Completeness?

- So far, so Spinoza.
- Spinoza insists on the completeness of substance, and concludes that there is just one.
- Leibniz insists on the multiplicity of substance, concludes that individual substances must be complete in themselves.
- Since there are composites, these must be made of parts.
- Thus, there must be some basic elements.



# Our Approach to Leibniz's Work

The *Monadology* and the *Discourse on Metaphysics*.

1. Monads;
2. The Complete-World View of Substance;
3. The Mind/Body Distinction;
4. Theodicy;
5. Freedom and Harmony;
6. The controversy with Newton over space and time.



# GOTTFRIED Leibniz

AT **LAST**—MY COMPUTATIONAL MACHINE IS FINALLY FINISHED — IT'S THE FIRST OF ITS KIND ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT!

I'D LIKE TO SEE THAT THIEVING BASTARD NEWTON TRY TO TOP **THIS!**

☹sigh☹ AH WELL... EVERYTHING IS A PART OF GOD'S PLAN, SUFFERING AND ENVY SIMPLY A PHENOMENON OF PERCIPIENT BEINGS...IT CAN ONLY BE THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS, AS SUCH...



THOUGH IT'D BE A HELLUVA LOT BETTER WITHOUT DIRTY PLAGIARIZING ENGLISH SCIENTISTS