

Philosophy 203
History of Modern Western Philosophy

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Hamilton College
Spring 2016



Class #10
Finish Hobbes
Spinoza's Substance
Property Dualism

Business

- RAT2 Appeals forms
 - CABAM?
- Team Behavior Task Results
 - 2. Communicates constructively
 - 3. Actively participates
 - 6. Treats others respectfully
 - 8. Remains positive
 - I might add '11. Solicits input from team members' which had some support.
- Upcoming Assignments
 - RAT 3 next Thursday, on Locke
 - End of Unit 2 Writing Assignment
 - Your writing assignment for the end of Unit 2 is a 500–700 word answer to one of the following six questions. In teams, on February 25, you will have the opportunity to talk about how to answer each of the questions. At the end of class, each student will draw one question number at random. A hard copy of the writing assignment is due at the beginning of our next class, Tuesday, March 1.
 - Peer Evals
 - After break:
 - Midterm on March 31
 - Paper Assignment #2 due on April 18 (Optional: You may take the final exam instead.)

Today's Topics

Finish Hobbes

Spinoza's Monist Metaphysics

Property Dualism

Finishing Hobbes

Team Activity

Hobbes on Mind and Memory

For each of the following four categories of phenomena, rank Hobbes's accounts from 1 (utterly plausible) to 5 (utterly implausible).

- A. Physical interactions of macroscopic objects, like the analysis of a car accident.
- B. Mathematical knowledge, like a proof that the tangent to a circle intersects the radius of that circle at a right angle.
- C. My sense experiences, like smelling soup cooking or seeing a red robin.
- D. Memory, like recalling the name of your first grade teacher or your first romantic kiss.

Assessing Hobbes's Materialist Monism

- In order to justify beliefs about God, mathematics, and physics, Descartes distinguishes between thought and sensation, denigrating the latter.
- Hobbes rejects Descartes's opposition of sensing and thinking.
 - Hobbes wants to return to the materialism of Aristotle while accommodating the mechanics of the new science.
 - An Unhappy Marriage
- Hobbes's materialism has parsimony in its favor.
 - Ockham's Razor: Do not multiply entities beyond necessity.
 - William of Okham (1287-1347)
- He provides a plausible account of mental causation.
 - Since all mental phenomena are physical phenomena, the laws of mental causation are the same as the laws of physics.
- His account of consciousness seems more problematic.

Hobbes on Consciousness

- Hobbes's account is most plausible for occurrent mental states.
- But even the claim that conscious states are just motions of particles seems nearly incomprehensible and impossible to take seriously.
 - ▶ Why do we see yellow lemons, instead of just extensions in motion?
 - ▶ How could the sound of the concerto just be the motion of air, or the vibration of the tympanic membrane?
 - ▶ What could be more different than motion of air and sound?
- 'p causes q' \neq 'p = q'
- When we consider memory and fantasy, Hobbes's account of mental phenomena is even less compelling.
 - ▶ It is true that our memories fade.
 - ▶ But it does not seem that they do so in proportion to time, alone.
 - ▶ Still, no one really understands how memory works.

Materialist Alternatives

■ Dispositions

- ▶ We might say that the lemon has a dispositional property which makes us see it as yellow.
- ▶ Behaviorism in the twentieth century
- ▶ The dispositional property is not yellowness, which is a property only of my experience.
- ▶ But I'm just particles in motion.
- ▶ So, where's the yellow?

■ Mysterianism

- ▶ Locke remains mysterian about conscious experience.
- ▶ It is equally a mystery why conscious experiences should attach to minds or to bodies.
- ▶ Berkeley is unsatisfied with this kind of giving-up on the problem.

Hobbes's Science

- Hobbes's work is precedential for contemporary scientific theories of mind.
 - ▶ Much of Descartes's work on the mind appears untestable.
 - ▶ Hobbes provides a scientifically testable theory, a research program.
 - "The longer the time is, after the sight or sense of any object, the weaker is the imagination" (*Leviathan* §1.2, AW 117b).
- The central problem with Hobbes's account of mental phenomena is that it is tied too closely to an outdated physical theory (i.e. Galileo's).
- Hobbes's empiricism relies on the claim that we passively receive and orderly manifold.
 - ▶ The stamp theory of perception?
 - ▶ But no.
- We pick out items based on our desires and preconceptions.
 - ▶ Attention blindness
 - ▶ Change blindness
 - ▶ False memory

Today's Topics

✓Finish Hobbes

Spinoza's Monist Metaphysics

Property Dualism

Spinoza

Spinoza

- *The Ethics* is difficult, written in the synthetic method; take your time.
- Focus on the propositions and the scholia.
 - “The deductive apparatus masks Spinoza’s philosophy. For certain of his deepest and most central doctrines he offers ‘demonstrations’ that are unsalvageably invalid and of *no philosophical use or interest*; it is not credible that he accepts those doctrines because he thinks they follow from the premisses of those arguments” (Jonathan Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers*, vol. 1: 113, emphasis added).
- Nietzsche on Spinoza:
 - Not to speak of that hocus-pocus of mathematical form in which, as if in iron, Spinoza encased and masked his philosophy...so as to strike terror into the heart of any assailant who should happen to glance at that invincible maiden and Pallas Athene -how much personal timidity and vulnerability this masquerade of a sick recluse betrays (*Beyond Good and Evil*, §5).
- And Nietzsche *liked* Spinoza.
 - “I am utterly amazed, utterly enchanted. I have a *predecessor*, and what a predecessor! I hardly knew Spinoza: that I should have turned to him just *now* was inspired by “instinct.” Not only is his overall tendency like mine -making knowledge the *most powerful* affect -but in five main points of his doctrine I recognize myself; this most unusual and loneliest thinker is closest to me precisely in these matters: he denies the freedom of the will, teleology, the moral world order, the unegoistic, and evil. Even though the divergences are admittedly tremendous, they are due more to the differences in time, culture, and science. *In summa*: my solitude, which, as on very high mountains, often made it hard for me to breathe and made my blood rush out, is at least a dualitude” (Letter to Franz Overbeck, 30 July 1881).
- See also: Isaac Bashevis Singer’s “The Spinoza of Market Street”

Spinoza's Monism - An Overview

- There is just one thing: the most real being.
- Mostly, he calls this thing God, though one also can call it nature, or Nature.
- 'Deus sive Natura': God, in other words Nature.
- Individual bodies and minds are attributes of this single substance.
- We, and all the things around us, are ways of God/Nature to be.



A Spinozistic Argument for Metaphysical Monism

From Jonathan Bennett

- “If there are two Gods, then either God A knows about God B or he does not. If he does not, he is not omniscient and so is not a God (in the Christian sense). If he does, then he is partly passive - acted upon - because he is in a state of knowledge of God B which must be caused in him by God B - and so again he is not a Christian God” (Bennett).
- If we think of ourselves as individuals separate from God, we are limiting an infinite God.
 - God would not be omnipresent.
- So God just is the world, and we are not individuals separate from God.
- We are part of God, modes or attributes of God, ways for God to be.
- Atheism? Pantheism? Panentheism?

Team Activity

Substance, Attributes, Modes

Spinoza's Characterizations of Substance

- *Definitions*

3. By 'substance' I mean that which is in itself, and is conceived through itself: in other words, that of which a conception can be formed independently of any other conception.
4. By 'attribute' I mean that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance.
5. By 'mode' I mean the modifications of substance, or that which exists in, and is conceived through, something other than itself.

- *Propositions 1-7*

1. Substance is by nature prior to its modifications.
2. Two substances, whose attributes are different, have nothing in common.
3. Things which have nothing in common cannot be one the cause of the other.
4. Two or more distinct things are distinguished one from the other, either by the difference of the attributes of the substances, or by the difference of their modifications.
5. There cannot exist in the universe two or more substances having the same nature or attribute.
6. One substance cannot be produced by another substance.
7. Existence belongs to the nature of substances.