

Philosophy 203
History of Modern Western Philosophy

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Class #11 - Spinoza's *Ethics*
More Monism
Determinism
Parallelism
Knowledge

Business

- Papers
 - The lower end was better than ever.
 - Grade distributions
 - Not a WI class
 - Lots of Cogito and causal argument
 - Acknowledgments
 - What is philosophy?
 - Argument?
 - Truth?
 - Textual analysis
- Today: Finish Monism (Spinoza)
 - 31 slides
- Thursday
 - RAT 3 (Locke)
 - Prep for End-of-Unit 2 Writing Assignment
- Next Tuesday
 - End-of-Unit 2 Writing Assignment is due.
- Then Peer Evaluations
- Then Midterm Course Evaluations
- Midterm is Thursday after we get back
 - End of Unit 3

Today's Topics

Finish Spinoza's Monist Metaphysics

Property Dualism

Parallelism

Determinism

Knowledge and Truth

Monism - The Dirty Work

- Three steps:
 - ▶ **Substance exists.**
 - ▶ It is infinite.
 - ▶ It is unique.

Substance Exists

E1. Substance is independent.

E2. Whatever has an external cause can not be independent.

E3. So, substance has no external cause, and must be its own cause.

E4. Anything which is its own cause must exist.

EC. So substance exists.

The Uncaused, or Self-Caused, Cause (*causa sui*)

E1. Substance is independent.
E2. Whatever has an external cause can not be independent.
E3. So, substance has no external cause, and must be its own cause.
E4. Anything which is its own cause must exist.
EC. So substance exists.

- “By that which is self-caused I mean that whose essence involves existence; or that whose nature can be conceived only as existing” (*Ethics* 1D1, AW 144).
- The notion of an uncaused cause is pretty much unintelligible, now.
 - Causation = efficient causation
 - A cause must be temporally prior to its effect.
- Spinoza’s notion of ‘cause’ is related to explanation.
- A cause of something explains its existence.
- An unexplained cause, or an unexplained explanation, or a phenomenon which explains itself, is not so repugnant.
- ‘God is an unexplained cause’ becomes ‘God’s existence needs no explanation’ becomes ‘something which is self-caused could not be conceived of as not existing’.

The Infinitude of Substance

- I1. Substance exists and is its own cause.
- I2. No finite thing is its own cause.
- I3. An infinite substance must have all attributes.
- IC. So, substance must be infinite, and have all attributes

Spinoza on the Infinite

- I1. Substance exists and is its own cause.
- I2. No finite thing is its own cause.
- I3. An infinite substance must have all attributes.
- IC. So, substance must be infinite, and have all attributes.

- “A thing is said to be finite in its own kind when it can be limited by another thing of the same nature. For example, a body is said to be finite because we can always conceive of another body greater than it “(1D2, AW 144).
 - ▶ If a thing is finite, then there are other things that limit it.
 - ▶ Explanations about the first thing are going to appeal to its relations to other things.
 - ▶ If we want to explain why I am typing, we have to appeal to the keyboard, the computer, my students, parents, my family, and more.
 - ▶ Since explanations about any finite thing will depend on other things, finite things can not be their own causes.
- But I3 is implausible.
 - ▶ Some infinite collections omit some things.
 - ▶ A line can travel in one direction without containing all points.
- Spinoza thinks of God as not just infinite, but as encompassing everything.
 - ▶ A better term might be ‘complete’.

The Uniqueness of Substance

U1. Substance is infinite, and has all attributes

U2. There can not be two substances with the same attribute.

U3. So, at most one substance exists.

U4. Substance exists.

UC. So, there is exactly one substance; we can call it God, or Nature.

- ▶ U1 and U2 come from the argument for infinitude.
- ▶ U3 follows from them.
- ▶ U4 is the conclusion of the argument for existence.

Explanatory Rationalism

everything is explicable

- Spinoza assumes that there are explanations/causes.
- God could not be separate and isolated from the world.
 - ▶ That would limit God's power.
 - ▶ Explanation would cease to be possible.
 - ▶ If God interacted with the world, we would have to impute will and desire to God.
 - Will and desire are properties of finite beings.
 - They are only anthropomorphically ascribed to God.
- One should not think of God in the image of a human being.
 - ▶ "He who loves God will not try to get God to love him back" (*Ethics* 5P19).
 - ▶ The Sanctuary of Ignorance

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Mind and Body

- Hobbes tried to explain everything with just bodies
 - ▶ materialist monist
- Material monism appears insufficient.
 - ▶ Descartes's dualism
 - “It is for all practical purposes impossible for there to be enough different organs in a machine to make it act in all the contingencies of life in the same ways as our reason makes us act” (*Discourse* Part Five, AW 33a).
 - ▶ The number of thoughts that we have could not be instantiated in a physical body.
 - ▶ Like trying to run Windows 10 on a 1960s mainframe computer
 - ▶ Leibniz's mill
- Spinoza claims that the one substance is both mind and body.
 - ▶ Hobbes denies that there is a problem of consciousness.
 - ▶ Spinoza takes the problem seriously.
 - ▶ What we ordinarily think of as objects are properties, or attributes, of God.
 - ▶ There are mental properties, and there are physical properties.
 - ▶ Substance monism; property dualism

Team Activity

Spinoza's Property Dualism

- “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).
- Which of the following interpretations best captures Spinoza's view about why minds and bodies can not interact?
 - A. Minds and bodies are isolated, and so do not interact, because they are distinct substances.
 - B. Only God causes thoughts or physical events, so minds and bodies can't cause anything.
 - C. Minds and bodies are isolated because only thoughts cause thoughts; only bodies affect bodies.
 - D. Mental aspects of the world and physical aspects of the world are just different expressions of the same phenomenon.
 - E. Bodies and minds are merely attributes, not substances, and attributes can not be causes of anything.

An Argument for Property Dualism

- Recall Descartes's master argument for substance dualism.
 - D1. I have a clear and distinct understanding of my mind, independent of my body.
 - D2. I have a clear and distinct understanding of my body, independent of my mind.
 - D3. Whatever I can clearly and distinctly conceive of as separate, can be separated by God, and so are really distinct.
 - DC. So, my mind is distinct from my body.
- If we are unconvinced by D3, we can weaken it, and the conclusion.
 - PD1. I have a clear and distinct understanding of my mind, independent of my body.
 - PD2. I have a clear and distinct understanding of my body, independent of my mind.
 - PD3. Whatever I can clearly and distinctly conceive of as separate, are really distinct concepts.
 - PDC. So, my mind is conceptually distinct from my body.
 - i.e. mental properties are distinct from physical properties.

Substance Monism and Property Dualism

Compatible

- Hobbes's anemic account of consciousness shows that a rejection of Descartes's dualism is trickier than it looks.
 - We can not simply say mental states are physical states.
 - The deep question is how to take what look to be two things and make them one.
- Spinoza's monism is precedental for contemporary monists.
- Contemporary substance monism (i.e. materialism)/property dualism:
 - Everything is physical.
 - Mental properties aren't explicable in physical terms.
 - But they are fully accountable, in some perhaps causal sense, by interactions in the material world.
 - Mary, the color scientist
- Note: Some contemporary materialists think that property dualism is a joke.

A Diversity of Attributes!

This is not a central claim and affects little in the rest of Spinoza's work

- “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).
- An analogy: we have no idea what it would be like to have a sixth sense, 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 other aspects of nature hidden from us.
- The infinitude of God

Revenge of the Problem of Interaction

- Spinoza rejects Descartes's claim that there is an ultimate incompatibility between minds and bodies.
- Spinoza's monism is supposed to solve the problem of interaction.
- Hobbes's monism solved the problem by denying that there are mental substances.
- Spinoza can not invoke that solution since he believes that there are mental attributes of substance and there are physical attributes of substance.
- The problem of interaction seems to reappear at the level of properties.
 - "The body cannot determine the mind to thinking, and the mind cannot determine the body to motion, to rest, or to anything else."
- Spinoza has a unique and fascinating solution, called parallelism.
 - "The order and connection of ideas is the same as order and connection of things" (*Ethics* 2P7, AW 166).

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- ✓ Finish Spinoza's Monist Metaphysics
- ✓ Property Dualism
- Parallelism
- Determinism
- Knowledge and Truth

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.
- On Spinoza's parallelism, there are two independent causal sequences.
 - ▶ The physical chain:
 - the kiss, p_1 , causes a second physical event, p_2 , which causes the hug, p_3 .
 - ▶ 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.
 - Talk of interaction between the body and mind should be understood as talk about different properties of the same substance.
 - Like the difference between perceiving an object with two different sense modalities.
 - the taste and the look of the apple
- That solution comes at a cost of positing extra mental and physical states.
- There is a mental state corresponding to every physical state, and a physical state corresponding to every mental state.
 - The latter claim seems reasonable.
 - The former claim is more 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.

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Freedom and Error - An Overview

- Descartes confronted a 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.
 - His solution was constrained by his desire 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.
 - Perfectly free will
- For Spinoza, the problem of error appears intractable.
 - Not only are we created and preserved by God, we are God!
 - We lack the freedom of independence.
- Descartes can sneak out the window to go to the party.
- Spinoza is stuck inside the house.



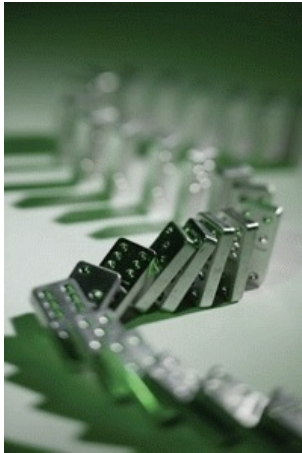
Doxastic Involuntarism

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 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).

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All Ideas are True

- Descartes claimed that ideas, in themselves, could not be false.
 - An idea is a representation, either sensory or pure.
 - 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.
- As there is no Cartesian (libertarian) freedom, so there can be no false ideas.
 - All ideas are true insofar as they are related to God (*Ethics* 2P32).
 - There is nothing positive in ideas whereby they can be said to be false (*Ethics* 2P33).
 - Every idea which in us is absolute, that is adequate and perfect, is true (*Ethics* 2P34).
- There are clearer ideas and more confused ideas.
 - The clearer ones are closest to the truth.
 - At a limit, there are even adequate ideas.
 - “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, pure geometry, philosophy, and knowledge of God.
- 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.

Error?



- Descartes considered two ideas we have of the sun.
 - ▶ The sensory idea is false.
 - ▶ The idea derived from reason is true.
- Spinoza thinks that both are true, to different degrees.
 - ▶ “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).
 - ▶ We 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).

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.
- 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.
- 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 physical objects prevents us from excluding those overriding ideas which block them out.
 - ▶ The inadequate ideas are not false; how could they be?
 - ▶ They are just 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.

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