

**Philosophy 203**  
***History of Modern Western Philosophy***

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**Hamilton College**  
**Spring 2016**

Class #8  
Introduction to Monism

# Business

- Concentration declarations are due tomorrow.
  - See your advisers!
- Papers are due on Tuesday, 9am
  - hard copy
  - Interpretation (~75%), Evaluation (~20%), Signage (~5%)
  - Questions?
- Individual Meetings?
- Today:
  - Intro to Monism
  - RAT in a moment
- Hobbes on Tuesday
- More Spinoza to follow

# Topics for Today

- Spinoza RATs
- Monism and the Problem of Interaction
- The Problems of Consciousness and Mental Causation

# Spinoza iRAT

- 8 minutes

# Team Activity

## Spinoza tRAT

- 9 minutes
- If you want to write an appeal, you can come get a form at any time.
- No opening your textbooks or notes until after the RAT is done!

# **Monism and the Problem of Interaction**

# Dualism and Monism

- Descartes is a dualist: minds and bodies are distinct kinds of substances.
- Two monists are on our schedule.
  - ▶ Thomas Hobbes
  - ▶ Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza.
- Monism is motivated largely by the dualist's problem of interaction.
  - ▶ How do our bodies and minds interact if they are two independent substances?
  - ▶ “Theoretical shuttlecocks” - Ryle
  - ▶ “Why does the mind get drunk when the body does the drinking?” -Twain (I think)

# Team Activity

## Descartes, Interaction, and the Pineal Gland

- Descartes argues that the soul is seated in the pineal gland.

“My view is that [the pineal] gland is the principal seat of the soul, and the place in which all our thoughts are formed. The reason I believe this is that I cannot find any part of the brain, except this, which is not double. Since we see only one thing with two eyes, and hear only one voice with two ears, and in short never have more than one thought at a time, it must necessarily be the case that the impressions which enter by the two eyes or by the two ears, and so on, unite with each other in some part of the body before being considered by the soul. Now it is impossible to find any such place in the whole head except this gland. Moreover it is situated in the most suitable possible place for this purpose, in the middle of all the concavities; and it is supported and surrounded by the little branches of the carotid arteries which bring the spirits into the brain.”
- Which of the following assessments best captures Descartes’s response here, and elsewhere, to the problem of interaction?
  - A. Descartes solves the problem of interaction with his observations about the pineal gland.
  - B. Descartes does not solve the problem of interaction because the soul is located elsewhere in the body.
  - C. Descartes does not solve the problem of interaction because the soul can not be physically located; there is no solution to the problem of interaction.
  - D. Descartes does not solve the problem of interaction, here, but there is another solution.
  - E. Descartes does not solve the problem of interaction because there is no problem of interaction; there is no problem to solve.

# Monist Solutions

Deny the claim that the mind and body are distinct substances

- Two obvious monist options.
  - ▶ The materialist claims that the mind is really just the body.
  - ▶ The idealist claims that there are no bodies; there are only minds.



# Hobbes is a Materialist Monist

The world (I mean not the earth only, that denominates the lovers of it *worldly men*, but the *universe*, that is, the whole mass of all things that are) is corporeal, that is to say, body, and has the dimensions of magnitude, namely, length, breadth, and depth. Also every part of body is likewise body, and has the like dimensions, and consequently every part of the universe is body; and that which is not body is no part of the universe. And because the universe is all, that which is no part of it is nothing, and consequently nowhere (*Leviathan* §1.46, AW 133b).



# Idealism

- Berkeley: there is no material world



# Spinoza

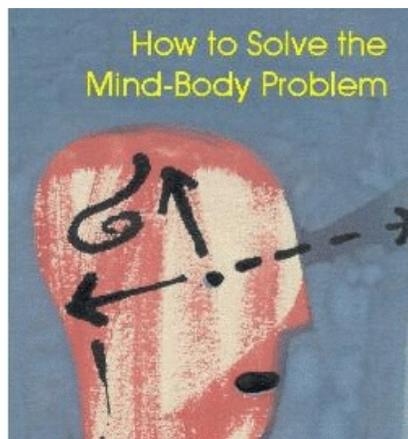
## Neither a Materialist Monist Nor an Idealist Monist

- For Spinoza, there is only one substance, which he calls God.
- You might prefer to think of that one substance as nature, or Nature.
- Spinoza's one substance, God, has many attributes, both mental and physical (and others!).
- So, there is just one kind of thing (monism), but it has many aspects, or properties.
- Most philosophers take minds and bodies to be substances.
- Spinoza takes them to be properties of a single substance called God, or Nature.

# The Problem of Interaction: No Problem

## My View

- The problem of interaction seems to require magic, which appears to debar a solution.
- But positing a non-corporeal soul already commits you to a kind of magic.
- Once you are committed to magic, the problem of interaction just requires more of the same.
- The problem seems to be with the dualism, not with explaining the interaction between the body and mind.



# Topics for Today

- ✓ Spinoza RATs
  - ✓ Monism and the Problem of Interaction
- The Problems of Consciousness and Mental Causation

# Next Week

- We'll look at Hobbes's view of language and his solution (?) to the problem of consciousness.