

# Part II. Of the Nature and Origin of the Mind

A presentation on Baruch Spinoza by  
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# Intention

- Part II of Spinoza's Ethics follows his previous section, entitled, "Concerning God."
- He writes that this section concerns matters which "must necessarily have followed from the essence of God... not indeed all of them... but only those things that can lead us as it were by the hand to the knowledge of the human mind and its utmost blessedness."



# Definitions

- Body- a mode expressing god's essence as an extended thing in a definite and determinate way
- Essence- "that which the thing is necessarily posited, and by the annulling of which the thing is necessarily annulled; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and, vice versa, that which cannot be or be conceived without the thing."
- Idea- "a conception of the Mind which the Mind forms because it is a thinking thing." Here, the term conception, rather than perception, expresses the active nature of an idea.

# Definitions (cont.)

- Adequate Idea- an idea that possesses the properties, or intrinsic characteristics, of a true idea, but considered in itself as opposed to its object (hence intrinsic).
- Duration- “the indefinite continuance of existing.”
- Reality and Perfection- “by reality and perfection I mean the same thing”
- Individual things: “by individual things I mean things that are finite and have a determinate existence. If several individual things concur in one act in such a way as to be all together the simultaneous cause of one effect, I consider them all, in that respect, as one individual.”

# Axioms

- “The essence of man does not involve necessary existence; that is, from the order of nature it is equally possible that a certain man exists or does not exist.”
- “Man thinks.”
- “Modes of thinking such as love, desire, or whatever emotions are designated by name, do not occur unless there is in the same individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. But the idea can be without any other mode of thinking.”
- “We feel a certain body to be affected in many ways.”
- “We do not feel or perceive any individual things except bodies and modes of thinking.”

# Mind and Body

- Spinoza's idea of mind and body rests on his assertion that all substance is God
- Descartes claims that mind and body are distinct – dualism
- Hobbes claims that there is only body (substance) – monism

# Mind and Body (cont.)

- As we already know, Spinoza believes there is only one substance (monism)
- Nonetheless, he also claims that mind and body are, in a way, distinct
- As Descartes says, one can conceive of mind and body separately
- Each are in actuality part of the same thing (god/nature), but conceptually, they remain distinct as different attributes of the one substance
- Thus we can call him a “substance monist” and a “property dualist”

# Mind and Body (cont.)

- This explains the nature of mind and body, but how do they function?
- All thinking things have God as their cause, as do all bodies
- These chains of causes are separate, but parallel: physical/mental
- The interaction of our bodies and minds is then only an illusion
- The mind cannot affect the body and vice versa, although the body remains the object of ideas within the mind

# Mind and Body (cont.)

- Spinoza continues to explain the nature of thought in relation to god, the body, etc., with a variety of obscure claims, such as:
- “All ideas are true insofar as they are related to god”
- “Inadequate or confused ideas follow by the same necessity as adequate, or clear and distinct, ideas.”
- “Whatever ideas follow in the mind from ideas that are adequate in it are also adequate.”
- In addition, Spinoza distinguishes 3 types of knowledge, “universal notions” formed by the mind

# Kinds of Knowledge

- Knowledge from casual experience: perception of individual objects through the senses without any intellectual order > ONLY CAUSE OF FALSITY
- Knowledge from symbols: “having heard or read certain words we call things to mind and we form certain ideas of them similar to those through which we imagine things.” > NECESSARILY TRUE
- “Intuition:” “proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things.” > NECESSARILY TRUE

# Spinoza's "Final Task"

- 1. "It teaches that we act only by God's will."
- 2. "It teaches us what attitude we should adopt regarding fortune, that is, the things that do not follow from our nature."
- 3. It "assists us in our social relations."
- 4. "It teaches the manner in which citizens should be governed and led; namely, not so as to be slaves, but so as to do freely what is best."