

# Reflective Knowledge

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## 1. Introduction

In this chapter, I first revisit Spinoza's obscure "ideas of ideas" doctrine and his claim that "as soon as one knows something, one knows that one knows it, and simultaneously knows that one knows that one knows, and so on, to infinity" (E2p21s). In my view, Spinoza, like Descartes, holds that a given idea can be conceived either in terms of what it represents or as a formally real act of thinking: as I read the propositions, E2p7 (in which Spinoza presents his doctrine of the "parallelism" of minds and bodies) primarily concerns the former way of conceiving of an idea while E2p21 primarily concerns the latter. I propose that in E2p21, Spinoza makes a few crucial points about an *adequate* idea conceived as the "idea of the idea," or as the activity of thinking: when one has an adequate representation of *p*, one automatically knows that one is thinking that adequate representation, and this reflective knowledge cannot be improved.

I then turn to E2p43, "he who has a true idea at the same time knows that he has a true idea and cannot doubt the truth of the thing." Descartes had held that an atheist geometer *has* clear and distinct ideas that are, in fact, true. However, because the atheist does not know that a non-deceiving God exists and created his nature, his otherwise faultless ideas can be rendered doubtful; the geometer's cognition is thus not perfect knowledge deserving the title '*scientia*' (AT VII 141). In E2p43, Spinoza seems to say that Descartes's atheist geometer's clear and distinct (adequate) ideas are not actually dubitable: the reasoning geometer *has* a true idea and so "cannot doubt the truth of the thing." For Spinoza, both reason and the best kind of cognition, '*scientia intuitiva*,' concern adequate ideas (E2p40s2) that are necessarily true (E2p41). Both "teach us to distinguish the true from the false" (E2p42). It seems that, despite the connotations of its label, Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva* is not special because it insulates a thinker from doubt in a way reason cannot.

I do not think this common take on E2p43 (or *scientia intuitiva*) is quite right. I will make three points. First, I suggest E2p21 and E2p43 rule out the most hyperbolic doubts (cf. the Third Meditation (AT VII 36)), so thinkers need no additional validation for the "adequate ideas of properties of things" and "common notions" employed in reasoning. However, reasoners can nevertheless be troubled by doubt about the existence of the extra-mental

world. Second, despite their differences, Spinoza follows Descartes at least this far: once one comes to adequate ideas of God and God's relation to things, one's ideas cannot be rendered doubtful. I concede that because one can *reason* to these adequate ideas, *scientia intuitiva* is not the only way to remove doubt. I conclude by briefly making a third point: there may still be something special about the way *scientia intuitiva* removes doubt.

## 2. What Is an Idea of an Idea?

Spinoza holds that *one and the same thing* can be considered under *different* attributes: "a circle existing in nature and the idea of the existing circle, which is also in God, are one and the same thing, which is explicated through different attributes" (E2p7s. Cf. AT VII 102–3). This is controversial, but I understand the "one and the sameness" here to be the "one and the sameness" of (1) an adequate *representation* in thought of some circle and (2) that circle enjoying extra-mental extended reality (cf. Hübner 2019). To use the terminology of the time, an idea represents something *S* when *S* is *objectively real* in thought. Spinoza's point is that when it comes to an adequate idea of a body, what is in thought, the *objectively real* body, perfectly corresponds to the *formally real* body in extension: the "order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (E2p7). *One and the same* essence, or ratio of motion and rest (E2p13s), can be conceived either as enjoying *objective reality* in thought or as enjoying *formal reality* in extension.

Spinoza holds that the human mind is a representation of the body: the "*objectum* of the idea constituting the human mind" is the human body (E2p13). The *objectively real* body in thought (call this *M*) and the *formally real* body in extension (call this *B*) are one and the same essence conceived under different attributes (the human mind represents other bodies besides *B* by representing affections of *B*. See Della Rocca 1996; D. Garrett 2017). But there is also "in God an idea, or cognition, of the human mind" (E2p20). This brings us to the "idea of ideas" doctrine. Spinoza begins by saying that the "union" of the "idea of the mind" (call this idea *I*) and "the mind itself" (i.e. *M*) is to be understood "in the same way" as *M* is united to *B* (E2p21d). Spinoza elaborates:

the idea of the mind and the mind itself are one and the same thing, which is conceived under one and the same attribute, namely, thought. The idea of the mind, I say, and the mind itself follow in God from the same power of thinking and by the same necessity. For the idea of the mind, or the idea of the idea, is nothing but the form of the idea [*forma ideae*] insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object [*objectum*]. (E2p21s)

"The idea constituting the human mind," *M*, is the *objectively-real body*. Now, the "idea of the mind," *I*, is united to *M* because *I* represents *M*. Again, an idea represents something *S* when *S* is *objectively real* in thought; that *I* represents *M* is explained by the fact that *M* itself is objectively real. If *M* is the objectively-real body, then *objectively-real M* is the *objectively-real* [objectively-real body]. In other words, where *M* represents the body *as* something enjoying extended formal reality, *I* represents the body *as* an *objectively-real* body.

I think it is likely that Spinoza is recasting the Cartesian view that an idea can be conceived in terms of what it represents or in terms of what it has in common with all other ideas (see AT VII 8, 40–41). *M* is an idea conceived in terms of what it represents, its object, which is what distinguishes it from other ideas: my mind represents one particular ratio of motion and rest in extension; your mind represents another. *I* is the idea conceived in terms

of what is distinctive about the formal reality of all ideas: *I* is “nothing but the form of the idea, insofar as this is considered as a mode of thought considered without relation to the *objectum*.” What is essential to ideas, regardless of their *objecta*? If the idea conceived as *M* represents a body as a *formally real* body, and the idea conceived as *I* represents the body as an *objectively-real* body, then it seems we can say this: necessarily, ideas represent other things as well as represent their representational contents (whatever they may be) as in thought (cf. AT VII 160).

If the “idea of the mind” and the “mind itself” are one and the same thing conceived in different ways within the attribute of thought, and if the idea of the mind *represents* the mind itself, then we may read Spinoza as in broad agreement with some Cartesians like de la Forge and Arnauld (and, according to Simmons 2012, Descartes himself) on another point: namely, that an idea, by nature, does not just represent something else – a body or bodily affection (or another idea) – it also represents *itself*, where we can understand this reflexive representation as the idea’s immediate self-awareness, or what Simmons calls “brute consciousness” (2012; cf. Nadler 2008, pp. 582–583).

### 3. *Knowing that One Knows*

Suppose ideas are essentially self-reflexive, and that this reflexive awareness, the “idea of the idea,” makes the objectively-real representational content present to mind. According to E1a6, a true idea’s representational content agrees with its *ideatum*. The idea of an idea is thus true: there is no mismatch between the content present to mind and the content.

We may be tempted to think that an idea’s veridical reflexive awareness need not come with any *reflective* awareness, even when it comes to adequate ideas. It is one thing for the adequate idea *a triangle’s interior angles sum to 180 degrees* to be something I am aware of, as something present to my mind (where this representation is adequate because it can be fully explained by other (also non-imagistic) ideas of geometrical objects, e.g. *line, plane, point*, and Euclidean axioms, within my mind). It is another thing to also be thinking that I am thinking this idea, and perhaps yet another thing to be aware of the adequacy of the idea (whether or not I am in a position to describe the representation as ‘adequate’).

I *could* have a true reflective idea that I am thinking some adequate idea when I am thinking it, but it seems this is not an idea that is formed automatically. I think the penultimate sentence of E2p21s contests this tempting thought. “As soon as one knows [*scit*] something, one thereby [*eo ipso*] knows [*scit*] that one knows [*scire*] it . . .” As soon as one has an adequate idea of a circle, one cognizes the circle adequately (i.e. “one knows”). But that adequate content is not merely present to mind – one also *knows* that the content is adequate and that one is thinking that content (i.e. “one knows that one knows”). Importantly, we need not understand this knowledge of one’s knowledge in terms of a higher-order idea (an *idea* of the idea of the idea). In E2p21s, the statement about knowing that one knows comes immediately after Spinoza’s discussion of the idea of the idea, the “form” of the idea. This suggests that here Spinoza is emphasizing something about that very form, not making an additional point that there is, in addition to an idea of the idea, some *other* idea of the idea of the idea (and so on).

Read as a contestation of the tempting thought mentioned above, Spinoza’s view diverges from Descartes’s in a way we could have expected. Descartes thought that having an idea puts a person *in a position* to have reflective knowledge, to know, for example, that one is thinking some idea (Broughton 2008; Alanen 2016). However, for Descartes, the

mere presence to mind of a clear and distinct idea is not enough for even a belief about that idea: in order to have belief, there must also be an affirmation, an additional act of the will; if knowledge presupposes belief, then there will also be an act of will involved in reflective knowledge of a clear and distinct idea (Radner 1988; Simmons 2012). Spinoza, however, does not think an additional thought, a separate act of will, is needed: *all* ideas are affirmations (E2p49; see Della Rocca 2003). We can, I think, understand Spinoza's view as follows. Take the adequate idea that a triangle's interior angles sum to 180 degrees. Conceived in terms of its representational content, the idea is an affirmation of properties of a triangle (here the triangle is conceived *sub specie aeternitatis*, or as what a Cartesian would call a "true and immutable nature" (cf. E2p44, E5p29s, AT VII 64)). Conceived in terms of what is present to mind, the veridical idea of the idea, the affirmation is that one is thinking the adequate idea. At least when it comes to adequate ideas, reflexive awareness is also reflective awareness.

Yet Spinoza does not just say, "as soon as one knows something, one thereby knows that one knows it" – he also says that one "*simultaneously knows that one knows that one knows [scit se scire quod scit], and so on, in infinitum.*" Hobbes thought Descartes had committed himself to the supposedly absurd position that every thought comes with a thought of that thought, and a thought of *that* thought, and so on, *ad infinitum* (AT VII 173). It looks like Spinoza avows this position (Curley 1969, pp. 144–150 and 1988, p. 64; Bolton 1985, p. 389; Melamed 2013, p. 154; Morrison 2017, pp. 66–68).

I think we can read the passage with a different emphasis: in saying that as soon as one knows something, one simultaneously has knowledge of that knowledge (and so on), Spinoza is underscoring that the reflective knowledge is perfect or complete. In order to know that one knows (and *what* one knows), one does not need some further, higher-order idea (an *idea* of the idea of the idea). There is not more one could do, or anything else that could happen, that would improve the reflective knowledge one automatically has as soon as one has an adequate idea. In knowing that one knows something, one already has all possible reflective knowledge.

But if this reflective knowledge is *knowledge*, which kind of veridical cognition is it? It does not seem to be reason: one has knowledge of one's own adequate ideas not because one has grasped why some conclusion follows from adequate ideas of properties and common notions (E2p40s2). It does not seem to be *scientia intuitiva* either. That cognition proceeds "from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate cognition of the [NS: formal] essence of things" (E2p40s2). *Scientia intuitiva* hinges on having an adequate idea of the "*formal essence of certain attributes of God*"; the reflective knowledge under discussion here is of *any* adequate idea.

It does seem to be *intuitive*, however. It happens in a flash: as soon as one has an adequate idea, one knows that one has that adequate idea. Furthermore, if the Cartesian *cogito* is intuitive, then Spinoza's reflective knowledge is intuitive too. For Descartes, a thinker can reflect on an idea and immediately know that he thinks and exists insofar as he is thinking (AT VII 140). Some hold that the *cogito* has an inferential structure but is nevertheless intuitive (Kenny 1968; Wilson 1978; Curley 1978). Spinoza's reflective knowledge, as I have described it, does not have this much structure, and so seems even more apt to be called *intuitive*. Again, the reflective knowledge that one is thinking an adequate idea is the "idea of the idea" which necessarily accompanies an adequate idea: they follow "in God from the same power of thinking and by the same necessity," and are indeed just one and the same mode conceived in different ways within thought (E2p21s). Although an adequate idea might represent an inference, and so the idea of this idea would be reflec-

tive knowledge of an inference, one does not *infer* an idea of the idea from an idea. As soon as one has an adequate idea, the knowledge that one has an adequate idea comes immediately, for free.

I have suggested that Spinoza holds that *adequate* ideas come, by nature, with reflective knowledge. But this is not to say that he thinks effortful introspection and reflection – or higher-order ideas – are impossible. Indeed, such activity is arguably integral to a lot of thought: for example, the discernment of properties that are “equally in the part and the whole” of one’s representations of perceived bodies (see E2p37–39) plausibly requires reflection on the bodies as presented in imaginative and perceptual ideas. Yet these representations are confused to some degree (see E2p24–31). I read Spinoza as simply saying that as soon as one does come to have an adequate representation of, say, a property of a triangle, one knows that one is thinking that adequate idea, that there is no further introspection needed to determine what exactly one thinks about the triangle, and that what one does think cannot be made clearer or more distinct. To have an adequate idea is to understand (E2p43s); Spinoza’s point, I take it, is that one is not really understanding *p* unless one also knows, or understands, that one is understanding *p* (cf. Carriero 2020).

#### 4. Knowing That One Knows

There are two kinds of cognition that concern adequate, true ideas, reason and *scientia intuitiva* (E2p40s2, E2p41–E2p42), and in E2p43, Spinoza says that whoever has an adequate, true idea “knows that one has a true idea and cannot doubt the truth of the thing” (E2p43). This is clearly rejection of skepticism, but we must be careful: as I explain, despite reasoners having true ideas they know are *true*, they may nevertheless wonder whether their adequate ideas of bodies agree with anything formally real outside the mind.

Reason is presented thus: “it is clear that we perceive many things and form universal notions . . . from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of properties of things” (E2p40s2). One reasons when one understands why some property necessarily follows from another: when one reasons through, say, a geometric proof, one sees why, given some axioms and a property that is “equally in the part and the whole” of extension, extension (or some body) must also necessarily have some other property. It is, Spinoza adds, the “nature of reason to contemplate things as necessary” (E2p44) and *sub specie aeternitatis*, or conceived without relation to time (E2p44c2d); when one reasons about the properties of a triangle, one’s ideas are representations of the properties triangles must have whenever and wherever.

An adequate representation of a triangle conceived *sub specie aeternitatis* is an objectively-real *eternally real triangle* (cf. AT VII 64; Primus 2019). On the view I offered in Section 2, once one has an idea that, conceived as a representation, is adequate, that idea, conceived as an act of thinking (the “idea of the idea”), is an act of reflective knowledge. Yet when one has an adequate idea of a property of a triangle, one does not just know (and know that one knows) what all triangles must be like if they are; one also knows that there is a triangle that is – the objectively-real eternally real triangle that is present to mind in one’s thought. One knows that the adequate idea of the necessary property of the triangle is *true* of that triangle (cf. TIE §69, G II/26). Once one has the adequate idea, “one knows [*scit*] one has a true idea and cannot doubt the truth of the thing” (E2p43); one knows that one has “an idea which agrees with its object [*ideato*]” because one *has* an idea which does so agree (E2p43s).

In the First Meditation, the Meditator says that arithmetic and geometry “contain something certain and indubitable,” regardless of whether the things studied “really exist in nature or not.” Indeed, “it seems impossible that such transparent truths should incur any suspicion of being false” (AT VII 20). I think Spinoza agrees: a geometer does have true ideas that are known to be true. In the Third Meditation, the Meditator allows that even those “transparent truths” that seem like they could not be false could indeed be false: unless the Meditator knows that a non-deceiving God created his nature, he cannot be certain of even  $2+3=5$  (AT VII 35–36). Readers of the *Meditations* have debated the scope and power of such doubt for centuries, as the questions it raises are central. Most famously, there is a worry about circularity: is Descartes saying that one cannot be certain of an argument’s premises until one has proven God’s existence? But then how can one demonstrate God’s existence?

I think Spinoza denies the possibility of hyperbolic doubts: when one has an adequate representation of a property of a triangle, one knows that such a “transparent truth” is true – at least of the triangle present in one’s thought. But is one thereby certain that those ideas are true of extra-mental reality? We might take Spinoza to answer in the affirmative: in reasoning about bodies, one is automatically certain that one’s adequate ideas are true of bodies that are formally real *in extension*. One could hold that a commitment to the PSR leads Spinoza to reject an inexplicable bifurcation of the representational character of an idea (its clarity and distinctness, or adequacy) and its epistemic status (its truth or falsity) (Della Rocca 2007). As Perler (2017) puts it,

Whenever someone has an idea, he or she can be certain about the existence of his or her own body. It simply makes no sense to conceive of an idea as something detachable from a bodily state. Doing so would amount to introducing an inexplicable gap between two different realms. (pp. 229–230)

I would agree that one sort of detachment does not make sense. One cannot “detach” the awareness of one’s body (the “idea of the idea”) from the representation of one’s body (the idea, or the objectively-real body). An “affect itself,” an idea considered as a representation of a bodily affection (i.e. the objectively real bodily affection) cannot be coherently conceived apart from the idea of this idea, the “affect itself, insofar as we are conscious of it” (E4p8, cf. E5p3). I take Spinoza’s position to be relatively simple: whether ideas are adequate or inadequate, when there is thinking, there is always something that is thought. One may conceive a mode of thought either as objectively real, as a representation, or as the activity of thinking, but neither way of conceiving suffices, by itself, to characterize the mode understood under the attribute of thought.

However, I think the claim that it makes no sense to conceive of an idea as something detachable from a bodily state needs qualification. Suppose one has an adequate idea of a property of one’s body (cf. E5p4). Whether this idea is conceived as representational content or as an act of thinking, the idea can be fully explained by other ideas within one’s mind: the content – an adequate idea of a bodily property – is explained by other ideas’ contents (e.g. common notions and other adequate ideas of properties of bodies); the act of understanding is explained by other acts of understanding (i.e. the acts of understanding those common notions and other adequate ideas of properties). When one has an adequate idea, one can completely account for the idea by appealing only to what is in thought.

In this case as I have described it, I think one can conceive of the idea of the body as “detachable” from the *formally* real body in extension. If one realizes that one’s idea is

explained completely within thought, without any appeal to the existence of bodies in extension, then one can legitimately wonder (especially if one sees that the essence of any body does not include existence) whether an extra-mental world of bodies exists. One may be certain that one's body is objectively real in thought but nevertheless unsure of whether there is any formally real body in extension. The question of whether one's ideas of bodies agree with anything extra-mental is, for all I have said so far, a question one can entertain.

It is only *given* other adequate ideas, beyond adequate ideas of properties of bodies, that one is certain of the existence of one's body in extension (and that one's adequate ideas of properties are true of that extra-mental formal reality). *Given* an adequate idea of substance under the attribute of extension, one will see that extended (extra-mental) substance is necessarily formally real. *Given* an adequate idea that all things are modes that can be conceived under different attributes, one will see that a necessary property of extension and one's adequate representation of that property of extension are one and the same thing conceived under different attributes.

If Spinoza holds, as I think he does, that one can have adequate ideas of necessary properties of things without having adequate ideas of what, in all metaphysical rigor, those things are (i.e. necessary modes of the one and only necessarily-existing substance), then he can allow that one can have adequate cognitions that are not immune from all possible doubts. That is, Spinoza can agree with Descartes that the "atheist geometer" is doing something right – reasoning – but is nevertheless not in an epistemically optimal situation. Spinoza can also agree with Descartes that it is only once that geometer is certain that God is, what God is, what bodies and minds are, and how God is the cause of things, that his ideas will be immune from all doubt – Spinoza would insist that *Descartes's* ideas on such foundational metaphysical matters simply were not adequate (cf. Ep. 2, G IV/8).

## 5. Reasoning to Metaphysical Foundations

Reasoning through the *Ethics* is one way to come to the adequate ideas that silence doubts about the veridicality of one's adequate ideas of bodies. By reasoning through the *Ethics*, one comes to know that there is just the one substance and its necessarily-caused modes and that substance and modes can be considered under different attributes. One comes to know that *one and the same essence* (or one and the same necessary property) can be considered either as *objectively real* in thought or as *formally real* outside of thought (E2p7), and either as eternal or as something existing "in relation to a certain time and place" (E5p29s). From this knowledge, one can infer that if one has an adequate idea of a necessary property of a cube in thought, then one can be sure that any extra-mental cube must have that property. One can also infer that if one has an adequate idea of a true and immutable cube, then one can be sure that actual, enduring extension also has that property, insofar as that extended reality is cubical. (For readings according to which Spinoza denies that we can have such mathematical knowledge of nature, see Melamed 2000; Peterman 2018; Schliesser 2018).

Before one has reasoned to adequate ideas of what God and things are, one cannot remove *all* doubts: one cannot be sure that adequate ideas of bodies are true of extra-mental bodies. But one can still be certain of the premises in the demonstrations of what God and things are: the premises are known to be true in thought – and thought is an attribute of God. From reflection on one's own thinking, one can recognize the truth of axioms

and demonstrations. By reasoning, one can come to have adequate ideas of very basic truths: e.g. that a substance is prior in nature to its affections (E1p1), or that two or more distinct things are distinguished either by a difference in attribute or a difference in mode (E1p4). On the basis of these adequate ideas, one can deduce adequate ideas of other truths, like that there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute (E1p5), that there is just *one* necessarily-existing, infinite substance, God (E1p7, E1p11, E1p14), that in nature there is nothing contingent (E1p29), and that an idea of a body and a body are one and the same mode conceived under different attributes (E2p7).

Again, in order to be sure that one's adequate idea Z of a necessary property of extension is true of formally real extension, one must also have the adequate idea A that one and the same necessarily-existing mode of the one and only necessarily-existing substance can be conceived under either the attribute of thought or under the attribute of extension. But *reasoning* to the adequate idea A has its drawbacks.

If one reasons to A, one cognizes it as produced by adequate ideas of axioms and adequate ideas of many other intermediate conclusions or propositions. One is certain of the conclusion *when* one is "seeing the force" of those demonstrations (cf. the first reply Spinoza gives to the Cartesian Circle objection in the DPP (GI 146–147)). But it is not easy for a human mind to cognize A as caused by this long, complex series of demonstrations. One cannot insulate oneself from the impingements of nature and only think adequately (E4p4), so there will always be distractions and diversions. It is likely that one will rely on memory, both to keep track of premises when one reasons and to retain the conclusion once one's attention is drawn to other things. But memory is fallible (E2p40s2). Even if one had the certainty that one's adequate idea Z is true of extra-mental reality *when* one cognizes A as necessitated by other adequate ideas within one's mind, retrospective doubt is possible (cf. Della Rocca's 2005 reading of Descartes). If one only manages to remember the conclusion A but not exactly why A must follow from axioms and other propositions, then one may doubt A, which in turn may prompt one to doubt whether one's adequate idea Z is true of anything outside of thought.

## 6. Intuiting Metaphysical Foundations

Reasoning's shortcomings do not lie with reasoning itself, but rather with finitude. As finite things, human beings have limited ability to control what they think about: even if they sometimes reason impeccably, they cannot – as Spinoza makes clear in *Ethics* Parts 3 and 4 – *always* reason. Human minds thus often rely on memory, but memory can fail; if one relies on memory, it is possible to lose sight of (or perhaps just lose) the ideas that secure the greatest certainty.

We can begin to see why a temporally immediate apprehension of these adequate ideas would be preferable. I develop the details elsewhere, but I think *scientia intuitiva* – cognition which proceeds from "an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate cognition of the [NS: formal] essence of things" (E2p40s2) – is such an apprehension (Primus 2017 and forthcoming). For other views, see A. Garrett (2003), D. Garrett (2009), Alanen (2011), Soyarslan (2016), LeBuffe (2017), and Carriero (2019).

The "human mind has an adequate cognition of God's eternal and infinite essence" (E2p47). What is "equally in the part and whole" can only be conceived adequately (E2p38), and *thought* is equally in the part and whole of any idea (*mutatis mutandis* for extension): every human mind has adequate ideas of the attributes of extension and

thought. Furthermore, every human mind has reflective knowledge of these attributes. This is not as absurd as it sounds. However confused the representational contents of my ideas may be (and however I might label them), I invariably know that I am thinking about extension when I am thinking about extension. I also know that my idea of extension is adequate (although I may not label it as such). I might not know much about properties of extension, but I know that more investigation and introspection will not improve the fundamental idea of extension I already have. Even as a toddler, I just *knew* what makes all bodies *bodies*, even if that knowledge was not something I could articulate. Same goes for my idea of thought: I just *knew* what makes all my feelings, sensations, and ideas *thoughts* (cf. Melamed forthcoming).

This is delicate, but I think this common reflective knowledge of the attributes is compatible with not every human mind appreciating what it has. Not everyone has realized that their adequate ideas of extension and thought are two ways of conceiving *God*, the *one and only infinite, eternal substance in which all things inhere as modes*. But everyone has the right starting materials: we can deduce from the common reflective knowledge of thinking and extension “a great many things which we can know adequately” (E2p47), like the foundational monist thesis that the one and only necessarily-existing substance – God – can be conceived under either the attribute of extension and thought (or an infinity of other attributes). We can, Spinoza continues in E2p47, “form the third kind of cognition,” or *scientia intuitiva* (E2p47).

Cognition of the third kind begins with the adequate idea I just called the “foundational monist thesis,” which is an adequate idea of *God* as the one and only necessarily-existing substance that can be conceived as a formally real *thinking* substance or a formally real *extended* substance. Importantly, this is not an adequate idea that must be cognized as the conclusion of a series of demonstrations, even if we may have initially relied on demonstrations to absorb our common reflective knowledge of thinking and extension into our conception of a necessarily-existing, infinite, eternal God. Once one has the correct conception of God, one can see, without working through any demonstration, that such a God must exist. Furthermore, if one is attending to this adequate idea, it seems one can see, *in uno intuitu*, that things are modes necessarily caused by and inhering in the necessarily-existing substance, and which can, like substance, be conceived under different attributes. In apprehending God as the *one and only substance*, one immediately sees that everything that is not substance must be necessary modes of substance.

We can understand *scientia intuitiva* as a confluence of several necessarily veridical intuitions. Like Descartes’s Fifth Meditation ontological proof, it is an intuition of the necessary existence of God (cf. AT VII 66–67). Yet it is not *just* an intuition of God’s necessary existence; given what Spinoza’s God is – a necessarily-existing substance that necessarily causes its own modes – it is also an intuition of the necessitated existence of all modes, as well as an intuition that all things, including one’s *own* mind and body, are *modes* (see Primus forthcoming). It is also intuitive in the sense described in Section 3. As soon as one understands what God and things really are, one knows that one understands this. Given this immediate apprehension of what God and things are, one can know that one’s adequate idea Z of a property of a body is an adequate idea of a mode necessarily caused by the necessarily-existing God, considered under the attribute of extension. One knows that Z must be true – not just of what is real in thought, but of extra-mental extended formal reality (cf. the second reply to the Cartesian Circle in the DPP (G I 148. Cf. TIE §79)). One is also certain that one’s adequate ideas of properties of things are not just true of properties of reality *sub specie aeternitatis*, but are also true of properties of reality *sub specie durationis*.

We can see one important difference between reason and *scientia intuitiva*. As I suggested in Section 5, reason can remove the possibility of doubt, but reasoning is only guaranteed to remove doubt if one can retreat from other concerns to adequately cognize demonstrations; whether one succeeds in removing doubt depends on whether one has power over other finite things (i.e. over distractions). In contrast, *scientia intuitiva* does not presuppose the same control over the world: provided one attends to the right conception of God (which may, admittedly, be exceedingly hard to do), one can remove doubt in a flash, anytime and anywhere.

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