SPINOZA'S THEORY OF THE HUMAN MIND: CONSCIOUSNESS, MEMORY, AND REASON

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Spinoza's Theory of the Human Mind: Consciousness, Memory, and Reason

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Table of Abbreviations

Spinoza’s texts:

CM	*Metaphysical Thoughts*.
E	*Ethics*, followed by the Part number (in Arabic numerals) and the abbreviations hereunder:

a	Axiom
Ad	Definition of an affect
App	Appendix
c	Corollary
d	Definition / Demonstration, when it appears after a proposition number
exp	Explanation
lem	Lemma
p	Proposition
post	Postulate
Pref	Preface
s	Scholium

Ep	*Letters*, followed by the Letter number (in Arabic numerals). The numeration is the traditional one, also followed by Edwin Curley (Spinoza 1985-2016).
KV	*Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*, followed by the Part number (in Roman numerals), the Chapter number (in Arabic numerals), and the Section number (in Arabic numerals). The division into sections is that proposed by Christoph Sigwart (Spinoza 1870), also followed by Curley.

PPC	*Descartes's "Principles of Philosophy"*, followed by the Part number (in Arabic numerals). Further abbreviations are identical to those used for the *Ethics*.
TIE	*Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, followed by the Section number (in Arabic numerals). The division into sections is that proposed by Carl H. Bruder (Spinoza 1843-1846, vol. 2), also followed by Curley.
TP	*Political Treatise*, followed by the Chapter number (in Roman numerals) and the Section number (in Arabic numerals).
TTP	*Theological-Political Treatise*, followed by the Chapter number (in Roman numerals) and the Section number (in Arabic numerals). The division into sections is that proposed by Bruder (Spinoza 1843-1846, vol. 3), also followed by Curley.
ADN	*Adnotations* to the TTP, followed by the note number (in Roman numerals).

Spinoza's editions and translations:

C	*The Collected Works of Spinoza*, edited and translated by Edwin Curley, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985-2016).
G	*Spinoza Opera*, edited by Carl Gebhardt, 4 vols. (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1925).
NS	*De Nagelate Schriften van B. d. S.* (Amsterdam, 1677).
OP	*B. d. S. Opera Posthuma* (Amsterdam, 1677).

Other Authors' texts, editions and translations:

AG	Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, eds. *G. W. Leibniz. Philosophical Essays* (Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett, 1989).
AT	Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, eds. *Œuvres de Descartes*, 12 vols. (Paris: L. Cerf, 1897-1913).
CSM	John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, trans. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
CSMK	John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny, trans. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 3, *The Correspondence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
Ge	Carl I. Gerhardt, ed. *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, 7 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1875–1890).
L	Leroy E. Loemker, ed. and trans. *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2nd ed., (Dordrecht / Boston / London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989).
W	John Locke. *The Works of John Locke. A New Edition, Corrected.* 10 vols. (London: T. Tegg and others, 1823).

Editorial Note

All English quotations of Spinoza are from Curley (1985-2016). I have retained his use of the italics to indicate when "or" translates the Latin *sive* or *seu*. Generally, *sive* and *seu* mark an equivalence, rather than an alternative. I have omitted the use of capital letters for terms as "mind", "body", "thought", "extension" and "individual" (which, in Curley's edition, is meant to reproduce the capitalisation found in the OP, yet only inconsistently present in the NS), in all cases in which it did not appear necessary for the general comprehension of the text quoted. I have substituted personal pronouns and possessive determiners referring to God with the neuter "It" and "Its" (capitalised). All other departures from Curley's translation are specifically signalled. Corresponding terms or passages from the original Latin are inserted in the quotations between square brackets. All references to the Latin version of Spinoza's works are to Gebhardt (1925).

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Introduction

Spinoza famously contends that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (E2p7; C I, 451 / G II, 89). Based on this claim, he draws two consequences: that "nothing can happen in a body which is not perceived by the mind" (E2p12; C I, 457 / G II, 95), and that all things, "though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate" (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 96). It remains unclear, however, what it means for any existing thing to have a mind which perceives everything that happens in the relevant body. In particular, it is unclear what role is played by consciousness in the definition of an individual's mentality, since, against this panpsychist background, even simple things such as stones can be conceived of as being conscious of what happens in them (Ep 58; C II, 428 / G IV, 266).

In order for Spinoza's philosophy to be a credible theory that "can lead us [...] to the knowledge of the human mind and its highest blessedness" (E2Pref; C I, 446 / G II, 84), it is necessary therefore to provide answers to the following questions: what is consciousness, and what are the causes that determine the presence of consciousness in nature? How can human and non-human individuals be distinguished on account of their mentality, if the presence of mentality and consciousness is a feature that can extend to all existing entities? How can Spinoza conceive of the human mind as a network of ideas consisting entirely of conscious perceptions? And how, according to Spinoza's mind-body parallelism, is the content of consciousness determined so that it reflects in thought the order and connection of the actions and the passions of the body? By addressing these questions, this study is an inquiry into Spinoza's account of the conscious mind and its operations.

The research builds on the hypothesis that the implications of Spinoza's apparent panpsychism should not be dismissed, without further analysis, as "mere spin-offs of an overly optimistic pretension to argumentative rigor" (Wilson [1999] 1999c, 193, n. 23). Quite the opposite, I argue that Spinoza's panpsychism can be interpreted as a rigorous, self-consistent philosophical position. To demonstrate this hypothesis, I determine what Spinoza's notion of "consciousness" is and how he uses it. Then, I investigate whether Spinoza has a theory capable of accounting for specifically human behaviour and mentality. Further, I analyse Spinoza's description of the human mind as a network of conscious ideas and examine the role played by mnemonic content in shaping the framework of human conscious thought. Finally, I look for an account of discursive reasoning, capable of explaining the existence of activities of the mind that, by operating on the content provided by memory and accessible to consciousness, preserve themselves through time and change.

In interpreting Spinoza's texts and theories, I attend to a few fundamental premises, drawn from Spinoza himself, which thus determine the main features and limits of the theoretical framework explored by this research:

1. Spinoza's theory of thought-extension parallelism,[1] according to which "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (E2p7; C I, 451 / G II, 89) and "the order of actions and passions of our body is, by nature, at one with the order of actions and passions of the mind" (E3p2s; C I, 494 / G II, 141);
2. Spinoza's rejection of mind-body interactionism, such that "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)" (E3p2; C I, 494 / G II, 141).

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[1] In the following pages, I will use the expression "thought-extension parallelism" to generally refer to the correlation without causation that exists between ideas in thought and bodies in extension; by "mind-body parallelism", instead, I refer more specifically to the correlation without causation that exists between mental states in an individual's mind and corporeal states in the corresponding body of the individual.

To these two claims, commonly maintained by Spinoza scholars, I add a third one, which — as we have seen — seems to follow directly from Spinoza's thought-extension parallelism:

3. Spinoza's panpsychism, according to which all individuals existing in nature, "though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate" and possess a relevant mind (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 96).

I consider the validity of the interpretation offered by this research, therefore, to depend on its capacity to coherently explain Spinoza's account of the human mind in accordance with all of these three claims, without allowing for any conclusion to come into conflict with them.

Hence, within this framework, and compatible with these premises, through the analyses outlined above I aim at providing an interpretation of Spinoza's account of the human mind coherent with his panpsychism and capable, at the same time, of making sense of his explicit will to "conceive the soul [...] as acting according to certain laws, like a spiritual automaton [*concipere animam ... secundum certas leges agentem, et quasi aliquod automa spirituale*]" (TIE §85; C I, 37 / G II, 32). In other words, I aim at offering a faithful reading of Spinoza's theory of the human mind, by means of which the nature, functions, and specific behaviour of the human mind can be consistently conceived as entirely determined by the sum of its conscious perceptions and mental operations.

Methodological Note

In carrying out the research, I adopt three main strategies:

1. Lexical analysis: key terms are traced throughout Spinoza's texts and analysed[2] in both their textual and historical contexts;

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[2] By "analysis", I intend here the study aimed at ascertaining and isolating univocal meanings and consistent uses for given terms. The same is to be understood with regard to the analysis of concepts,

2. Conceptual analysis: complex concepts are unpacked and analysed, where useful by making use of contemporary distinctions — such as those between "physical", "intentional", and "phenomenal" stance (Dennett [1981] 1987; Robbins and Jack 2006), or those between "procedural", "episodic", and "semantic" memory (Tulving 1972; Cohen and Squire 1980; Squire 2009) — as heuristic devices;
3. Reconstruction of argument: Spinoza takes many of his assumptions as axiomatic or self-evident; sometimes, some of his claims are only justifiable with reference to premises or theories that are expounded or sketched in other texts; I therefore consider apparent missing steps in Spinoza's argumentations and proceed to lay theoretical grounds apt to make sense of his claims and presuppositions.

Outline of the Chapters

The text is dived into four chapters. Taken altogether, they are meant to describe central features of Spinoza's account of the conscious mind. Each chapter, however, can also be taken as a standalone study on its specific topic.

In the first chapter, entitled "Consciousness, Ideas of Ideas, and Animation in Spinoza's *Ethics*",[3] I focus on Spinoza's vocabulary related to "consciousness". I argue that, for Spinoza, the notion of "consciousness" amounts to the knowledge that we may have of our mind "as a mode of thinking without relation to its object" (E2p21s; C I, 468 / G II, 109) —

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mentioned in the following point: a basic concept is gained when its meaning appears univocal and its use consistent throughout the texts considered.

[3] The chapter is an extended version of an article published under the same title in the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 25, no. 3, 506-525 (Marrama 2017). Provisional versions of the article were presented at the University of Verona (2014, May 21, at the *Philosophy Postgraduate Seminars*), at the University Roma Tre (2014, December 22, at the *First Meeting* of the *Societas Spinozana*), at the University of Aberdeen (2015, March 4, at the *Philosophy Department PhD Seminars*), and at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (2015, April 11, at the *Colloque Fodar*).

considered, that is, as something which can be conceived separately from the body and independently of it. I show that this use of the notion of "consciousness" has two purposes: to explain our false belief in the existence of free will, and to refer to the knowledge that we have of our mind as something eternal. I distinguish between Spinoza's technical use of the notion of "consciousness" and the "different degrees of animation" that he also evokes in the *Ethics* (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 96). On these grounds, I argue that Spinoza's account of consciousness is not intended to differentiate kinds of minds in terms of awareness of their respective ideas.

In the second chapter, entitled "'A Thing Like Us': Human Minds and Deceitful Behaviour in Spinoza",[4] I question whether, despite his panpsychism, Spinoza allows for differences between human and non-human mentality. I analyse Spinoza's references to mindless automata and spiritual automata in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. I argue that Spinoza refers to individuals as "mindless" in order to capture a kind of mentality with which we cannot identify. I contend that, for Spinoza, the possibility or impossibility of recognising the presence of a similar mentality in others is grounded on behavioural bases and originates in the mechanism that he names "imitation of the affects" (E3p27s1; C I, 509 / G II, 160). I add that this could be one of the reasons for Spinoza's uncompromising position against deceitful behaviour.

In the third chapter, entitled "Networks of ideas: Spinoza's Conception of Memory",[5] I unpack his theory of memory and assess its function with respect to his account of the human mind. I analyse the definitions of memory that Spinoza provides in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and in the *Ethics*. I use the distinction between "episodic memory" and "semantic memory" (Tulving 1972) as a heuristic device. I demonstrate that, when Spinoza refers to cases of episodic memory — which involve a temporalization of their objects — he dismisses them as distinct from, and incompatible with, the intellect and its order and connection of ideas. Conversely, he seems to consider instances of semantic memory as cases which allow for a seeming interaction between intellect and memory. I show that Spinoza considers memory as a network of conscious synchronic ideas for two reasons: to explain the impact that memory has in determining our current appetites, and to define the spectrum of ideas to which the intellect can apply itself.

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[4] Elements of sections 3 and 7 of this chapter appeared in a blog post, under the title "If a robot lied to us", in the Blog of the *Groningen Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Thought* (Marrama 2018).

[5] Provisional versions of this chapter were presented at the University of Groningen (2017, July 13, at the *Sixth Berlin-Groningen-Harvard-Toronto Workshop on Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*), at the University of Durham (2018, April 14, at the *BSHP Annual Conference*), and at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (2018, May 31, at the *8th Quebec Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy*).

In the fourth chapter, entitled "'The Habit of Virtue': Spinoza on Reason and Memory",[6] I focus on the way in which memory interacts with reason, in Spinoza's system. I argue that this interaction gives rise to what we may call "discursive reasoning", that is, the unfolding in time of reasoning processes. In turn, reasoning is understood as a sort of habit, which generates virtuous behaviour. I clarify what the notion of "habit of virtue" (Ep 58; C II, 430 / G IV, 267; TTP III, 12; C II, 113 / G III, 46) signifies for Spinoza. I summarise his account of memory and show how reason can be understood as an activity by which mnemonic associations are reconfigured. I point out how this activity of the mind relies on memory to preserve itself in time, determining the virtuous habits, or "firm and constant disposition of the soul" (Ep 58; C II, 430 / G IV, 267), to which Spinoza alludes.

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[6] A provisional version of this chapter was presented at the Université du Québec à Montréal (2018, June 7, at the *CPA-ACP Annual Congress 2018*). The arguments in section 5 were separately presented at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (2016, February 19, at the *Journées d'étude sur la philosophie moderne*), at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (2016, March 24, at the *Dutch Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy III*), and at the University of Calgary (2016, June 1, at the *CPA-ACP Annual Congress 2016*).

Chapter 1

Consciousness, Ideas of Ideas, and Animation in Spinoza's *Ethics*

Chapter Abstract

In the following chapter, I aim to elucidate the meaning and scope of Spinoza's vocabulary related to "consciousness". I argue that Spinoza, at least in his *Ethics*, uses this notion consistently, although rarely. He introduces it to account for the knowledge that we may have of the mind considered alone – considered, that is, as something which can be conceived separately from the body and independently of it, as a mode of thinking without relation to its object. I show that this specific use of the notion of "consciousness" serves two purposes in Spinoza's *Ethics*: on the one hand, it is used to explain our false belief in the existence of free will; on the other hand, it is used to refer to the knowledge that we have of our mind as something eternal – that is, something which is not entirely destroyed with the death of the body. I contend, therefore, that we should not confuse Spinoza's technical use of the notion of "consciousness" with the "different degrees of animation" that he also evokes in the *Ethics*, and which are meant to characterise all different individuals existing in nature. Neither is consciousness, for Spinoza, a function or capacity resulting from a particular faculty of the human mind, nor is it a property specific only to certain minds or ideas. Furthermore, consciousness cannot be said to come in degrees. Indeed, Spinoza's account of consciousness is not intended to differentiate kinds of minds in terms of awareness of their respective ideas.

1. Introduction

The debate around Spinoza's understanding of consciousness has recently attracted a great deal of attention. The main questions raised by scholars concern how Spinoza justifies and explains the existence of conscious life in the world, whether he separates self-conscious entities from non-self-conscious entities, and, further, whether he acknowledges the existence of unconscious ideas within the human mind. The issues surrounding Spinoza's account of consciousness seem to follow from two fundamental principles of his metaphysics: namely, his theory of thought-extension parallelism and his definition of the human mind as the idea of the human body. By the combination of these theses, Spinoza seems to give shape to an account of nature which can be defined as a form of "panpsychism" — a view according to which all things are somehow animate and provided with a mind that must perceive everything that passes into the relevant body. This conception of nature seems to make it difficult — if not outright impossible — to distinguish between conscious and non-conscious beings, and to distinguish between conscious and non-conscious ideas in an individual's mind. The purpose of this chapter is to address these questions and solve many, if not all, of the issues related with Spinoza's panpsychist account of nature and his conception of consciousness.

I will begin the chapter by summarising some bedrocks of Spinoza's metaphysics — in section 2 — with the aim of highlighting the roots of the problem debated and its ramifications. Then, in section 3, I will provide an overview of the various positions held by scholars regarding the problem at stake, and suggest an alternative reading that hints to a possible solution. In section 4 I will explain the methodological guidelines that I will follow in my analysis of Spinoza's understanding and use of the notion of "consciousness", pointing out the lexical items, in Spinoza's *Ethics*, that will be specific objects of my enquiry. In sections 5 and 6 I will carry out my analysis of Spinoza's references to consciousness. Specifically, I will identify three sets of references to consciousness worth being analysed. I will analyse the first two sets in section 5, whereas the third will be approached in section 6. The ensuing results will allow me to outline my position as a defence of the coherence of Spinoza's panpsychism — at least as far as his treatment of consciousness is concerned. In section 7 I will defend my interpretation of Spinoza's account of consciousness from possible objections, addressing some of the most common criticisms moved against his panpsychism. I will wrap up and conclude the chapter in section 8.

2. Two issues concerning Spinoza's panpsychism

The problems surrounding Spinoza's account of consciousness can be seen as a consequence of his general conception of nature. This conception is based on a parallelistic conception of thought and extension — the former understood as the domain of mental events, and the latter as the domain of physical events — combined with his subsequent identification of the human mind with the idea of the human body. Spinoza defines "thought" and "extension" as attributes of God (in E2p1 and E2p2, respectively). God, in turn, is defined as "a being absolutely infinite, i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence" (E1d6; C I, 409 / G II, 45) and, eventually, is identified by Spinoza with the whole of existing nature.[1]

The metaphysical pillar underpinning Spinoza's identification of God with nature is Spinoza's so-called "substance monism", according to which "in nature there exists only one substance" (E1p10s; C I, 416 / G II, 52).[2] Indeed, Spinoza affirms that "[e]xcept God, no substance can be or be conceived" (E1p14; C I, 420 / G II, 56), and that "[w]hatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God" (E1p15; C I, 420 / G II, 56). Based on these premises, Spinoza concludes:

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[1] See also KV I, 2, 12: "From all of these it follows that of Nature all in all is predicated, and that thus Nature consists of infinite attributes, of which each is perfect in its kind. This agrees perfectly with the definition one gives of God" (C I, 68 / G I, 22). For Spinoza's distinction between God considered as *Natura naturans* and God as *Natura naturata*, see E1p29s. The Latin expression *Deus seu Natura* is found in E4Pref (G II, 206). This doctrine is sometimes referred to as Spinoza's "pantheism" (see, for example, Gueroult 1968, 64; Pauen 2011, 82-84). There is still discussion among scholars, however, concerning the exact terms in which Spinoza's identification of God and nature is to be understood (including its possible limitations and exceptions). Regarding this topic, see Gueroult 1968, 223, 295-299; Bennett 1984, 32-35; Curley 1988, 36-39; Nadler 2008b, 64-70.

[2] For some useful studies about Spinoza's demonstration of substance monism, see Charlton 1981; Kulstad 1996; Della Rocca 2002 and 2008, 46-58; Lærke 2012.

> Particular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, *or* modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way.
>
> (E1p25c; C I 431 / G II, 68)

It follows, therefore, that any thing existing in nature must be understood as a modification, or affection of God, conceived under one or another of Its infinite attributes. In particular, any possible mode of thinking — any conceivable idea, in other terms[3] — exists as a modification, or affection, of God, insofar as God is conceived under Its attribute of thought, as an infinitely thinking being.[4] Accordingly, all possibly existing bodies — all physical entities, that is, whose essence and behaviour are definable and describable through laws of movement and rest[5] — are nothing but modifications of God conceived under the attribute of extension, as an infinitely extended, corporeal being.[6]

Within this general framework, "thought-extension parallelism" can be considered a particular case of Spinoza's so-called "parallelism" theory,[7] which, in its broadest formulation, includes all of God's infinite attributes and their respective modes:

---

[3] According to Spinoza, the idea is "prior in nature" to all modes of thinking (E2p11d; C I, 456 / G II, 94).

[4] "For God", Spinoza writes, "can think infinitely many things in infinitely many modes" (E2p3d; C I, 449 / G II, 87).

[5] For an in-depth study concerning Spinoza's account of bodies, see Sangiacomo 2013a.

[6] Concerning the equivalence between the notions of "extended" and "corporeal" when referred to God's nature, see Curley's note to E1p15s (C I, 421, n. 36), where Spinoza defends the thesis that infinite extension pertains to God's essence.

[7] The term "parallelism" was never used by Spinoza himself; Martial Gueroult (1974, 64, n. 39) and Pierre Macherey (1997, 72, n. 1) refer the first use of this notion to Leibniz, specifically in his text — dated 1702 — *Considerations sur la doctrine d'un Esprit Universel Unique* (L 556 / Ge VI, 533). Chantal Jaquet has vigorously questioned the aptness of this label with regard to Spinoza's doctrines (2004, 9-16).

> [W]hether we conceive nature under the attribute of extension, or under the attribute of thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find one and the same order, *or* one and the same connection of causes, i.e., that the same things follow one another.
>
> (E2p7s; C I, 451 / G II, 90)

Restricting the case to the two attributes of thought and extension (and their relevant modes, or affections), however, is a mandatory step, since, according to Spinoza (E2a5; see also Ep 64), we only perceive modes of thinking (i.e., ideas) and modes of extension (i.e., bodies).[8]

In general, Spinoza contends that for each thing existing in nature there is in God's attribute of thought the corresponding idea (E2p3), and that "[t]he order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (E2p7; C I, 451 / G II, 89). He also argues that each idea includes knowledge of everything that happens in its object, mirroring the order and connection of the modifications by which its object is affected (E2p9c and E2p9d2), without allowing, however, for any causal interplay between ideas and their *ideata*.[9]

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[8] For discussions concerning the parallelism between modes of the attribute of thought and the rest of God's infinite attributes, see Pollock 1880, 171-173; Curley 1969, 145-149; Friedman 1983; Rice 1999, 49-51; Melamed 2013a. The claim according to which, for Spinoza, there would necessarily exist an infinite number of attributes of God, beyond thought and extension, unknown to humans, is questioned by some scholars; see, in this regard, Wolf (1927) 1972, 24-27; Kline 1977, 341-347; Donagan 1980, 93-94; Bennett 1984, 75-79.

[9] The so-called "causal barrier", which prevents any interaction between modes of different attributes, is a consequence of the "conceptual barrier" that separates God's attributes in the first place (see Della Rocca 1996a, 9-17), since Spinoza seems to equate causal relations with conceptual relations (as stressed, for example, by his use of the Latin formula *ratio seu causa* in E1p11d2; G II 52-53). In E1p10, Spinoza claims that "[e]ach attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself" (C I, 416 / G II, 51). Based on this, he concludes:

> The modes of each attribute have God for their cause only insofar as It is considered under the attribute of which they are modes, and not insofar as It is considered under any other attribute.
>
> (E2p6; C I, 450 / G II, 89)

It follows that only ideas can cause other ideas to exist in a mind (E2p9), and only bodies can cause other bodies to exist, or put other bodies into motion or to rest (E2lem3).

> Hence, so long as things are considered as modes of thinking, we must explain the order of the whole of nature, *or* the connection of causes, through the attribute of thought alone. And insofar as they are considered as modes of extension, the order of the whole of nature must be explained through the attribute of extension alone. I understand the same concerning the other attributes.
>
> (E2p7s; C I, 452 / G II, 90)

Spinoza also claims that, for any existing thing, the corresponding idea existing in God's attribute of thought can be regarded as its "mind" (E2p12d). In E2p12d, he writes:

> [W]hatever happens in the object of any idea the knowledge of that thing is necessarily in God, insofar as It is considered to be affected by the idea of the same object, i.e., insofar as It constitutes the mind of some thing.
>
> (E2p12d; C I, 457 / G II, 95)

Accordingly, the idea of an existing human body must include knowledge of everything that happens to its object. But the mind of a human individual is, in fact, nothing other than the idea of her human body – the former existing as a particular modification of God's attribute of thought, and the latter as a mode of God conceived under the attribute of extension.[10] On these grounds,

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[10] Spinoza identifies the human mind with an idea in E2p11, based on the axioms that "[m]an thinks" (E2a2; C I, 448 / G II, 85) and that there is no mode of thinking without first there being an idea (E2a3). Then, based on the axioms that "[w]e feel that a certain body is affected in many ways" (E2a4; C I, 448 / G II, 86), and that "[w]e neither feel nor perceive any singular things, except bodies and modes of thinking" (E2a5; C I, 448 / G II, 86), he claims:

> The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, *or* a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and nothing else.
>
> (E2p13; C I, 457 / G II, 96)

Spinoza concludes by affirming that "[f]rom this it follows that man consists of a mind and body, and that the human body exists, as we feel it [*prout ipsum sentimus*]" (E2p13c; C I, 457 / G II, 96. Translation modified). This demonstration seems intended to affirm that the existence of sense perception in the mind must refer, beyond any doubt (and *contra* Descartes), to an existing body, and to deny that the object of our perceptions may be anything different from that body that we seem to feel as ours. Spinoza also adds that the same demonstration should enable us to understand "not only that the human mind is united to the body, but also what should be understood by the

Spinoza draws the conclusion that the human mind "must perceive" everything that occurs to its object — i.e., the existing human body — according to the order and connection of the affections that actually involve the human body. That is to say, in Spinoza's terms, that in the human mind there must be ideas of everything that happens in the body. He writes:

> Whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human mind must be perceived by the human mind [*ab humana mente debet percipi*], *or* there will necessarily be an idea of that thing in the mind; i.e., if the object of the idea constituting a human mind is a body, nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by the mind.
>
> (E2p12; C I, 456-457 / G II, 95)

The same conclusion, Spinoza adds, can be drawn regarding all existing things. In E2p13s, he claims:

> The things we have shown so far are completely general [*admodum communia sunt*] and do not pertain more to man than to other individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate [*omnia, quamvis diversis gradibus, animata tamen sunt*]. For of each thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause in the same way as It is of the idea of the human body. And so, whatever we have said of the idea of the human body must also be said of the idea of any thing.
>
> (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 96)

In a nutshell, nothing can happen in a body that is not perceived by a corresponding mind, or idea. This thesis, sometimes dubbed Spinoza's

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union of mind and body" (E2p13s; C I, 457-458 / G II, 96). Ursula Renz argues that the aim of the set of propositions running from E2p11 to E2p13s is to explain "why we *perceive* ourselves as numerically different subjects" (Renz 2011, 110. Italics in original) — subjects, that is, whose experience of the world and themselves is necessarily separate and distinct from that of other individuals. Regarding this, see also Melamed 2013b, 168-170; Renz 2017, 211-215.

"panpsychism",[11] presents the readers with two different, albeit interrelated, conundrums. First, the claim that the human mind must perceive everything that happens in the human body is at odds with ordinary experience. Second, few scholars seem willing to concede that all bodies may have a mind and knowledge of their bodily states – especially if this knowledge is to be understood in terms of consciousness and self-awareness. The seeming lack of a "selective theory of conscious awareness" in Spinoza's philosophy of mind, to borrow Jonathan Bennett's words (1984, 181),[12] is therefore regarded as a serious, twofold problem.

Michael Della Rocca (1996a) provides clarificatory examples for each of the two aspects of the problem, highlighting why and how both cases seem to point to the absence of an account of selective consciousness as a "defect" (1996a, 9) in Spinoza's overall system. As to the first issue – that a mind must perceive everything that passes into an individual's body – Della Rocca writes:

> Spinoza says that human minds have ideas of, for example, *all* the changes that take place in the human body. [...] whatever the strength of Spinoza's reasons for this view, it is highly counterintuitive. It certainly seems that I have no idea of what chemical reactions are currently taking place in my pancreas, for example. One way to soften this intuitive reaction against Spinoza's position here might be for Spinoza to claim that my ideas of the changes in my pancreas are not conscious ones.
>
> (Della Rocca 1996a, 9)

Regarding the second issue, concerning Spinoza's doctrine of universal animation and the possibility that all entities may entertain a kind of conscious life, he exemplifies the problematic point as such:

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[11] See, for example, Bennett 1984, 137; Della Rocca 1996a, 7-9, and 2008, 110; Mascarenhas 1998, 98, n. 9; Wilson (1999) 1999c, 191; Miller 2007, 212; Pauen 2011, 84; Hübner 2014, 126; Jorgensen 2014; Perler 2014, 234; LeBuffe 2017, 94.

[12] See also LeBuffe 2010b, 532.

> Spinoza holds that such objects as rocks and hammers are, in some sense, animate and possess mental states. The counterintuitive force of this thesis might be lessened if Spinoza could explain why, although rocks have mental states, none of this mental state is conscious. On such an account, even if rocks do have thoughts, they would not have thoughts in the same, special way that we quite often do.
>
> (Della Rocca 1996a, 9)

The scholarly consensus is that a theory capable of distinguishing conscious minds and ideas from unconscious ones could help solve both these issues. However — as we will see in the following section — there is still no consensus among scholars as to whether a selective theory of conscious awareness can be coherently inferred from Spinoza's texts, based on his sparse remarks on human consciousness.

3. The current debate

To a good approximation, we may divide the participants in the current debate around Spinoza's account of consciousness into two main groups. The first group claims that Spinoza's system lacks the conceptual resources necessary to deliver a consistent theory of consciousness. Among them we may count Margaret Dauler Wilson, who, in a seminal article concerning this topic, concludes that "Spinoza's system provides no plausible, clear or reasoned view on this fundamental aspect of the traditional mind-body problem" ([1980] 1999a, 133). Along the same lines, Jonathan Bennett contends that Spinoza "urgently needs a theory of awareness, and unfortunately the *Ethics* does not contain one" (1984, 189). Michael Della Rocca's first take on the same issue was also quite sceptical: "despite the need for a coherent theory of consciousness in Spinoza", he writes, "he does not provide one. [...] Spinoza has no principled basis on which to claim that not all mental states are conscious ones" (1996a, 9). Similarly, Jon Miller writes: "I regard the prospects for a robust and coherent Spinozistic theory of consciousness as dim", even though, he also adds, "the coherency or at least the plausibility of his system demanded it" (2007, 203). We can include into this group also Michael LeBuffe, who argues that "the severity of the problem — together with other pressing concerns — pushes readers to find a direct account of selective consciousness in Spinoza's remarks about consciousness where there is none" (2010b, 533).

The target of LeBuffe's polemical remark are scholars of the second group — "sympathetic scholars", as he also dubs them (2010b, 532) — who instead argue for the presence of at least the sufficient elements, in Spinoza's philosophy, to account for the phenomenon of human consciousness and the difference between conscious and unconscious ideas. Advocates of this view are many. They have not reached uniform agreement, however, since they employ distinct arguments and reach conclusions that often seem to conflict with each other. So, for example, earlier in his career, Edwin Curley held that Spinoza's account of human consciousness was provided by his theory of the "ideas of ideas",[13] contending that "the existence of ideas of ideas is proven only for human minds" (1969, 126-128). He later refined his position and suggested that blurred perceptions of many bodily states could be accounted for by Spinoza's theory of confused knowledge (Curley 1988, 72-73). Lee Rice (1990) basically agrees with Curley's later position, whereas Christopher Martin (2007) proposes to emend Curley's first interpretation by considering the complexity of the human mind and body as the necessary condition required for having ideas of ideas. Étienne Balibar contends that "consciousness" in the *Ethics* has two different meanings: the first would belong to the first kind of knowledge "and it is practically identical with moral conscience", whereas the second would concern what Spinoza calls the "third kind of knowledge" ([1992] 2013, 138).[14] Moreover, and despite his initial scepticism, Della Rocca successively argues for a theory of degrees of consciousness in Spinoza, which would parallel degrees of "animation" and degrees of adequacy of ideas (2008, 115-116). Don Garrett contends that consciousness, for Spinoza, is equivalent to "degrees of power of thinking" (2008, 23). Steven Nadler, instead, argues that consciousness, in Spinoza, is to be regarded as "a function of (because identical with) a mind's internal complexity" (2008a, 592). For Andrea Sangiacomo (2011a) the conditions for having conscious activity, on Spinoza's account, are to be found in both the complexity of the body and the adequacy of the ideas. Syliane Malinowski-Charles (2004a) and Eugene Marshall (2014) tie Spinoza's conception of consciousness with his theory of human affectivity, arguing that, for Spinoza, the presence of consciousness depends on the existence of ideas that can generate affects of joy and sadness in the human individual.

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[13] I will better explain what this theory amounts to in section 5 of this chapter.

Among this group of commentators, a few also suggest that Spinoza's perspective on consciousness can inform theories and discussions peculiar to contemporary cognitive sciences and philosophy of mind. Frederick Mills (2001), for example, argues that Spinoza's metaphysics, based on substance monism and thought-extension parallelism, can lead to a solution to the so-called "hard problem" of consciousness — concerning the relationship between the conscious experience one may have of oneself and the world, on the one hand, and the physiological processes underlying such conscious events, on the other hand.[15] Heidi Ravven holds that many Spinozist claims concerning human psychology — including some theses about the scope and nature of human conscious life — "now seem to be supported by substantial evidence from the neurosciences" (2003, 259).[16] Steven Nadler envisages commonalities between Spinoza's "beginnings of an account of consciousness" and some of the current approaches to mental phenomena taken by studies in "embodied cognition" (2008a, 597).[17]

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[14] I will analyse Spinoza's account of the "third kind of knowledge" and its relationship with his understanding of consciousness in section 6 of this chapter.

[15] For a canonical formulation of the "hard problem of consciousness" see Chalmers 1995.

In the rest of this chapter, I aim to contribute to this rich and long-standing debate by elucidating the meaning and the scope of Spinoza's vocabulary related to "consciousness". To anticipate here the main points of my analysis, I will argue that Spinoza, at least in his *Ethics*, makes a limited, yet consistent use of some crucial Latin terms, broadly translatable as "consciousness" or "being conscious (of something)" — namely, the noun *conscientia* and its cognates, such as the verb *conscius esse*. As I will show, he introduces these terms to refer to the knowledge that we may have of our mind considered alone — considered, that is, as something that can be conceived separately from and independently of our extended body, "as a mode of thinking without relation to the object" (E2p21s; C I, 468 / G II, 109). Such a peculiar understanding of "consciousness" serves two purposes in Spinoza's *Ethics*. First, it is functional to explain our illusion of the existence of a free will, capable of acting upon the body and independently of the body. Second, it is used to refer to the knowledge that we have of our mind as something that is eternal and that "cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body" (E5p23; C I, 607 / G II, 295). In conclusion, I will contend that we should not confuse Spinoza's technical use of the notion of "consciousness" with the notion of

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[16] Ravven mainly refers her interpretation of Spinoza to the theories of Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Antonio Damasio (1994 and 1999), and Vittorio Gallese (2001).

[17] Regarding this, Nadler writes:

> Like Spinoza, embodied mind theorists reject what has been called 'body neutrality', or the idea that the nature of the mind and consciousness can be explained without any reference to the hardware with which it is connected.
>
> (Nadler 2008a, 598).

To support his claim, Nadler mentions the works of Lawrence Shapiro (2003), as well as Lakoff and Johnson (1999) and Damasio (1994 and 2003).

"animation" of a thing that he evokes in E2p13s – and that he ascribes, "though in different degrees", to all existing individuals. For the existence of consciousness in nature, according to Spinoza, is not determined by the supposed "degree of animation" of an individual, nor can the presence or absence of consciousness determine, in turn, any degree of animation of a body. On my reading, as we shall see, neither does the capacity to be conscious of one's own mental states result from a particular faculty or feature of the human mind, nor is it a property specific only to certain minds or ideas.[18] Further, consciousness is not something that comes in degrees. In fact, as I will demonstrate, Spinoza's account of consciousness and its relevant vocabulary are not intended to differentiate between kinds of minds in terms of awareness of their respective ideas.

4. The terminological gap: *conscientia* as "consciousness"

Many of the commentators who have looked for a theory of consciousness in Spinoza's *Ethics*, have also noted the scarcity of passages where the concept of "consciousness" seems to be brought up.[19] Disappointingly, in none of these places does Spinoza seem to provide a conclusive definition of what consciousness is, or an explanation of how it originates in nature. Part of the reasons for such a paucity of direct references to consciousness can be ascribed to some conceptual and terminological constraints, which concern the very object of our investigation. For, when Spinoza wrote the *Ethics*,[20] there was no specific Latin expression available to clearly denote what we might nowadays refer to by the term "consciousness".[21] As Marshall puts it, "no one term in Spinoza's writings can be easily equated with our concept or concepts of consciousness", since "[...] the terminology of consciousness as we know it had not really solidified in the philosophical discourse in Spinoza's time" (2014, 107).

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[18] Strictly speaking, consciousness cannot be considered function of a faculty of the human mind, since Spinoza's philosophy of mind does not seem to allow for faculties of the mind at all (see E2p48s). On the other hand, I do not exclude that the capability of being conscious of one's own mental states could be treated, in Spinoza's terms, as a property of the human mind, as long as this capability can be consistently deduced from the definition of the human mind as the idea of the human body. Yet, if it is a property, it is not specific to human minds only, since (as I argue in section 5 of this chapter) the argument by which Spinoza deduces the existence of consciousness in nature extends to all minds, or ideas of bodies.

[19] See Balibar (1992) 2013, 129; Jaquet 2005, 109-110; Martin 2007, 269; Miller 2007, 207; LeBuffe 2010b, 532; Marshall 2014, 106.

In this sense, the best candidate for a systematic enquiry into Spinoza's account of consciousness is represented by the rather limited and quite scattered use that he makes of some key terms: namely, the Latin noun *conscientia* and its cognates, such as the adjective *conscius* and the relevant verb *conscius esse*. Indeed, within a philosophical context which was being, by then, heavily influenced by the progressive spreading and establishing of Cartesianism, these terms were undergoing a semantic transformation which made them potential vehicles for referring to perceptions of one's thoughts or mental acts of any sort. Until then, the Latin notion of *conscientia* had traditionally been used to refer to a human agent's capacity to elaborate self-oriented normative and moral judgments — a faculty often associated with the scholastic notion of *synderesis*, and whose meaning is conveyed in English by the word "conscience".[22] In his Latin writings, however, Descartes seldom – albeit strategically – uses the noun *conscientia* and, more prominently, the relevant verb *conscius esse* to address the cognition that we have of all of our thoughts – including "all operations of the will, the intellect, the imagination and the senses" (CSM II, 113 / AT VII, 160).[23]

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[20] According to Mignini's chronology, Spinoza had already started to write a first version of the First Part of the *Ethics* by the spring of 1662 (Mignini 2007, XCII). In his Ep 68 to Henry Oldenburg, Spinoza reports that, by the summer of 1675, he was ready to commit a version of his masterpiece to the press, but he decided to halt the publication because of ever-increasing hostilities and suspicions towards the content of his text.

[21] See also Balibar ([1992] 2013, 127-129), Miller (2007, 204-207), and Marshall (2014, 106-108). It may be worth noting that the English word "consciousness" is a neologism, which was introduced in the philosophical vocabulary during the second half of the 17th century. The paternity of its philosophical use is usually ascribed to Ralph Cudworth (1678, in *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*); see, for example, Balibar (1992) 2013, 128; Heinämaa et al., 2007, 6; Miller 2007, 204; concerning the historical relevance of Cudworth's account of consciousness, see Thiel 1991. For an early modern definition of "consciousness", bearing a canonical use for such a new notion in its original language, the traditional reference is to the one provided by John Locke (1689, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II, 1, 19 / W I, 95): "Consciousness is the perception of what passes in a man's own mind".

There is textual evidence to suggest that Spinoza was acquainted with both ways of using the Latin expressions *conscientia* and *conscius esse*: on the one hand, the traditional scholastic use, related to moral introspection; on the other hand, the use that Descartes makes of these terms to refer to the cognition that we have of our thoughts, i.e., our mind and its ideas. Concerning the latter, in his treatise *Descartes's "Principles of Philosophy"* Spinoza provides an almost verbatim quotation of the definitions of "thought" and "idea", as they are originally found towards the end of Descartes's *Second Replies*.[24] Closely following Descartes's wording, Spinoza defines "thought" as "everything which is in us and of which we are immediately conscious [*conscii*

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[22] For an early modern scholastic definition of *conscientia* as "conscience" one can consult Goclenius's *Lexicon Philosophicum* (Göckel 1613, 447).

[23] Examples of this use of the Latin terms *conscientia* and *conscius esse* can be found in Descartes's *Meditations* and *Replies* (AT VII, 49, 107, 160, 176, 246-247, 352, 443), in his *Principles of Philosophy* (AT VIIIA, 7, 20, 41, 54), and in his correspondence (AT III, 429; AT V, 160, 221-222). For a recent study of Descartes's account of consciousness, see Simmons 2012: "in being conscious", she writes, "I am conscious of my thoughts and so of myself qua thinking thing" (2012, 5). Boris Hennig (2007), by contrast, contends that the occurrences above listed do not allow for any interpretation of Descartes's terminology in terms of "consciousness". The role that Descartes's texts may have had in suggesting a new use for the French word *conscience* is more controversial and, apparently, more limited (see Balibar [1992] 2013, 127-128, and 2000, 297). The introduction of the French *conscience* as an equivalent of "consciousness" was mostly prompted by Pierre Coste's influential French translation of Locke's *Essay* (1700, first edition; regarding the philosophical relevance of Coste's translation, see Balibar 2000 and Poggi 2012, 91-160). Cartesian philosophers, however, had already started to use a similar terminology, by often naming *conscience* an immediate, interior knowledge or feeling (*sentiment intérieur*) of everything which passes into ourselves. Instances of such a use can be found, for example, in Louis de La Forge's *Traité de l'esprit de l'homme* (1666, 54), in Malebranche's *De la recherche de la vérité* III, 2, 7 (1674-1675, I, 376-382), and in Pierre-Sylvain Régis's *Système de Philosophie* (1690, I, 68). For a study concerning the evolution of the use of the notion of *conscience* in France during the 17th and 18th centuries, see Glyn Davies 1990. With specific regard to its use in the Cartesian context, see Thiel 2011, 36-54.

[24] Specifically, in the short appendix entitled "Arguments proving the existence of God and the distinction between the soul and the body in geometric order" (CSM II, 113 / AT VII, 160).

sumus]", and "idea" as the "form of each thought through the immediate perception of which I am conscious [*conscius sum*] of the thought itself" (PPC1d1-2; C I, 238 / G I, 149).[25]

If we turn, now, to the Latin version of the *Ethics* (G II, 43-308), we can consider all passages that involve the expressions *conscientia* and *conscius esse*, and separate the occurrences that seem to display a purely psychological use of these terms – a use, that is, broadly hinting at one's capability of perceiving her mental states. For, in some cases, the word *conscientia* apparently retains its traditional moral and normative sense, and is thus correctly translated into English as "conscience".[26] The remaining occurrences, which seem instead to allow for a broad translation in terms of "consciousness" and "being conscious (of something)", can be grouped into three sets, according to the different contexts in which the terms appear. By looking for a systematic use of these notions, we can clarify whether there is a unified sense that can be ascribed to Spinoza's references to "consciousness" in the *Ethics*. By the same means, we can also verify whether any of the ways in which Spinoza addresses "consciousness" may relate to a theory accounting for the difference between conscious and non-conscious mental states, or for the existence of different degrees of consciousness in nature.

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[25] Malinowski-Charles (2004a, 126, n. 252) and Marshall (2014, 106, n. 10) notice this passage, but question its importance, based on its derivative nature. There may be, however, some interpretive suggestions that we can draw from Spinoza's faithful report of Descartes's definitions of "thought" and "idea". The most important, as I mentioned above, is that these quotations show that Spinoza was exposed to the peculiarities of Descartes's philosophical vocabulary and his terminological innovations. Now, if Spinoza (even partially) derived his own way of using the Latin references to "consciousness" from the technical usage displayed by Descartes's definitions, then we may expect this notion to retain at least part of its original Cartesian meaning in Spinoza too. I think that this is the case. For example, a common element that can be envisaged is that "consciousness", both in Spinoza and in Descartes, specifically denotes perceptions that take the thinking – i.e., our mind and ideas – as their proper object. I will provide arguments to support this claim (at least with regard to Spinoza's own use of the notion) in sections 5 and 6 of this chapter.

[26] See E3p18s2 (G II, 155), E3Ad17 (G II, 195), and E4p47s (G II, 246), where Spinoza addresses the affect of remorse by means of the Latin expression *conscientiæ morsus* (literally, the "bite of conscience"). E4App32, instead, presents us with a use of the verb *conscius esse* which is ambiguously interpretable in both a normative and a descriptive sense:

> [W]e shall bear calmly those things which happen to us contrary to what the principle of our advantage demands, if we are conscious that we have done our duty [*si conscii simus nos functos nostro officio fuisse*], [...].
>
> (E4App32; C I, 594 / G II, 276)

This occurrence can be excluded from a list of useful references, since it could easily be a crypto-quotation from Cicero, who indifferently uses the noun *conscientia* and the adjective *conscius* with reference to one's "duties" or "services" (*officia*). See, for example, *Epistulæ ad Familiares* V, 5, 1 (Cicero 2001, I, 54) and – with reference to the pleasure (*lætitia*) that accompanies Cicero's "consciousness" of his duties (*officiorum conscientia*) – *Epistulæ ad Familiares* V, 7, 2 (Cicero 2001, I, 50-51).

In the next section, I will analyse the references to consciousness included in the first two sets: respectively, those concerning Spinoza's argument against free will, and those concerning his explanation of why we conceive of our appetites in terms of volitions and decisions of our mind. In section 6, I will move on to analysing the third set of occurrences, which deal with Spinoza's theory of the eternity of the mind.

5. The illusion of free will and the theory of the "ideas of ideas"

In the first set of useful occurrences we can include all the references to consciousness that are found in passages concerning Spinoza's rebuttal of free will. In order to convincingly deny the existence of free will, Spinoza must provide a plausible explanation as to why human beings believe themselves to be free, and how they are led to erroneously ascribe to themselves a free faculty of will, capable of acting upon the body and independently of the body. As part of a reply addressed to those who affirm that "they know by experience, that it is in the mind's power alone both to speak and to be silent, and to do many other things which they therefore believe depend on the mind's decision" (E3p2s; C I, 495 / G II, 142), Spinoza writes:

> Experience itself, no less clearly than reason, teaches that men believe themselves free because they are conscious [*sunt conscii*] of their own actions, and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined, that the decisions of the mind are nothing but the

> appetites themselves, which therefore vary as the disposition of the body varies.
>
> (E3p2s; C I, 496-497 / G II, 143)

The same thesis, formulated with almost identical wording, can also be found in E1App (C I, 440 / G II, 78), E2p35s (C I, 473 / G II, 117), and E4Pref (C I, 545 / G II, 207). Spinoza's choice of words does not seem casual, since they involve the notion of someone "being conscious" of her actions, volitions, and appetites in each of these references.

As we have seen, the passage just quoted ends by establishing a correlation between decisions of the mind, appetites, and dispositions of the body. Spinoza stresses this correlation a few lines later in the same scholium:

> Both the decision of the mind and the appetite and the determination of the body by nature exist together — or rather are one and the same thing, which we call a decision when it is considered under, and explained through, the attribute of thought, and which we call a determination when it is considered under the attribute of extension and deduced from the laws of motion and rest.
>
> (E3p2s; C I, 497 / G II, 144)

With this remark, Spinoza is both restating a metaphysical thesis and making a terminological point. What we usually distinguish as decisions (or volitions) in our mind, and determinations (or dispositions) of the body, are really one and the same thing (human appetites, namely), although conceived and explained under different attributes — thought and extension, respectively. "By nature", Spinoza affirms, they "exist together" and follow the same order and connection of causes because, according to Spinoza's thought-extension parallelism, "the order of actions and passions of our body is, by nature, at one with the order of actions and passions of the mind" (E3p2s; C I, 494 / G II, 141).

This conclusion, however, poses an obvious problem. If our mind and our body are so closely joined to each other, how do we get to conceive of our appetites separately from and independently of our bodily drives — forming eventually the false idea of an autonomous and unconstrained spiritual faculty, namely our "will", capable of taking decisions that are independent from (and even opposed to) the determinations of the body?[27] Spinoza provides the answer in passages which are included in, or related to, the second set of occurrences.

These occurrences are from the Third and Fourth Parts of the *Ethics*. They can be grouped together since they all refer to a series of propositions in the Second Part (E2p20-23), where Spinoza expounds his so-called theory of the "ideas of ideas".[28]

To begin with, in E3p9, Spinoza affirms:

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[27] The quoted scholium follows a seminal proposition of the *Ethics* (E3p2), which marks one of the major points of dissent between Spinoza's philosophy and Descartes's theories of the freedom of the will and "the power of the soul with respect to the body" (see Descartes's *Passions of the Soul* I, 41; CSM 343 / AT XI, 359-360). In E3p2 Spinoza claims:

> 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).
>
> (E3p2; C I, 494 / G II, 141)

In this proposition, Spinoza explicitly puts forward his deterministic and parallelistic account of the mind-body relationship against Descartes's voluntarist and interactionist model. The reference to Descartes's philosophy is also evident from the Preface that introduces the Part of the *Ethics* where the proposition is found. Spinoza writes:

> [T]he celebrated Descartes, although he too believed that the mind has absolute power over its own actions, nevertheless sought to explain human affects through their first causes, and at the same time to show the way by which the mind can have absolute dominion over its affects. But in my opinion, he showed nothing but the cleverness of his understanding.
>
> (E3Pref; C I, 491-492 / G II, 137-138)

[28] As soon as the expression *conscius esse* is put forth, the demonstrations of both E3p9 and E3p30 refer to E2p23. The use of *conscientia* in E3Ad1exp explicitly mirrors E3p9s, and also refers to E2p23. The demonstration of E4p8 refers to both E2p21 and E2p22, with the purpose of addressing our knowledge of good and evil (such knowledge being, according to Spinoza, nothing other than our consciousness of the affects of joy and sadness), while E4p19d and E4p64d refer in turn to E4p8. E2p20 is never explicitly evoked, but it provides the grounds for E2p21-23.

> Both insofar as the mind has clear and distinct ideas, and insofar as it has confused ideas, it strives, for an indefinite duration, to persevere in its being and it is conscious of this striving it has [*hujus sui conatus est conscia*].
>
> (E3p9; C I 499 / G II, 147)

To better understand this reference, it may be useful to quickly recap the main passages that lead Spinoza to his final statement. "Each thing", according to Spinoza, "strives to persevere in its being" (E3p6; C I, 498 / G II, 146). This "striving" is identified by Spinoza with the power of the thing itself and its essence (E3p7).[29] Finally, in E3p9d, Spinoza asserts that the mind "is necessarily conscious of itself [*mens ... necessario sui sit conscia*]" and "conscious of its striving [*mens sui conatus conscia*]", through the "ideas of the body's affections" (C I, 499-500 / G II, 147). This conclusion, Spinoza notes, is entailed by E2p23, which states:

> The mind does not know itself, except insofar as it perceives the ideas of the affections of the body.
>
> (E2p23; C I, 468 / G II, 110)

What it means for the mind to know itself (E2p23) — or, even, to "be conscious of itself" (E3p9d) — by perceiving the ideas of the affections of the body is explained in the three preceding propositions (E2p20-22), where Spinoza introduces the notion of "idea of an idea" (*idea ideæ*).

As previously mentioned, Spinoza asserts that God must have ideas of all of its modes, or affections (E2p3) — including, therefore, the modes comprehended in the attribute of thought, i.e., all existing ideas. Hence, he concludes that in thought there must also exist the ideas of the ideas — among them, the idea of the human mind (E2p20d), since, as we have seen, the human mind is defined as the idea of the human body. In line with the general formulation of parallelism, according to which the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things, in E2p21 Spinoza maintains that "[t]his idea of the mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind is united to the body" (C I, 467 / G II, 109).

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[29] According to Spinoza, "[t]he power of each thing, *or* the striving [*potentia sive conatus*] by which it (either alone or with others) does anything [...], is nothing but the given, *or* actual, essence of the thing itself" (E3p7d; C I, 499 / G II, 146). Given both the centrality of this notion in Spinoza's philosophy, and the difficulty to find suitable translations, Spinoza scholars usually refer to such "striving" by retaining the original Latin term, *conatus*.

> [T]he mind is united to the body from the fact that the body is the object of the mind; and so by the same reasoning the idea of the mind must be united with its own object, i.e., with the mind itself, in the same way as the mind is united with the body.
>
> (E2p21d; C I, 467 / G II, 109)

The idea of the human mind, in other words, "exists together" with its object (namely, the mind), mirrors the same order of causes and effects of its object, and is related to the human mind in the same way as the latter is related to its own object (the human body). In E2p19, Spinoza demonstrates that the mind knows the body "through ideas of affections by which the body is affected" (C I, 466 / G II, 107). In an analogous manner, in E2p22 he demonstrates that the mind has "ideas of the ideas of the affections [*affectionum idearum ideæ*]" of the body (C I, 468 / G II, 109). These ideas of ideas account for our knowledge of our mind and its ideas (as per E2p23 and its demonstration, to which E3p9 refers). Along these lines, in the scholium of E2p21, Spinoza points out what it means to have an idea of one's own mind:

> 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, i.e., the idea of the idea [*idea ideæ*], is nothing but the form of the idea insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object.
>
> (E2p21s; C I, 467 / G II, 109)

This passage discloses the answer for which we have been looking. The "ideas of ideas" account for the possibility of conceiving of our mind, along with all the ideas by which it is affected, as "modes of thinking without relation to their object", in Spinoza's words. This explains, among other things, how humans can conceive of their wills as something distinct from the determinations of their bodies — although they, "by nature, exist together, or rather are one and the same thing" (E3p2s). This possibility, combined with our ignorance of the causes that necessarily determine our mind to will or do anything,[30] is the source of an error — i.e., the error of conceiving us as endowed with a *free* will, capable of acting upon the body and independently of the body.

As we have seen while analysing the first set of occurrences, Spinoza's goal is to defend some potentially controversial theses, stemming from his thought-extension parallelism theory: that the order of the decisions of the mind mirrors the same necessary order of the dispositions of the body, without allowing for any freedom of the will and without allowing for any causal interaction between the mind and the body. Therefore, as noted above, in E3p2s Spinoza clarifies that the decisions of the mind, the appetites, and the determinations of the body are one and the same thing, although called by different names according to the attribute through which they are conceived — whether as modes of thought or modes of extension. Indeed, Spinoza makes a similar point in E3p9s, after having demonstrated that the mind is conscious of its striving, or *conatus* (i.e., of its essence), through the ideas of the ideas of the affections of the body.[31] "When this striving is related only to the mind",

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[30] In E1p32, Spinoza affirms that "[t]he will cannot be called a free cause, but only a necessary one" (C I, 435 / G II, 72). In E2p48 he demonstrates that "[i]n the mind there is no absolute, *or* free, will, but the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another" (C I, 483 / G II, 129). For a recent analysis concerning Spinoza's overall explanation of our belief in free will, see Melamed 2017.

[31] To be sure, in E3p9d Spinoza writes that "the mind (by E2p23) is necessarily conscious of itself through ideas of the body's affections", without mentioning ideas of ideas. Spinoza's reference to E2p23 clarifies the meaning of this statement. The mind is "necessarily conscious of itself through ideas of the body's affections" (E3p9d) since the mind "perceives the ideas of the affections of the

Spinoza remarks, "it is called will" (C I, 500 / G II, 147). Conversely, when applied to both the mind and the body, it is called "appetite":

> This appetite, therefore, is nothing but the very essence of man, from whose nature there necessarily follow those things that promote his preservation. And so man is determined to do those things. Between appetite and desire there is no difference, except that desire is generally related to men insofar as they are conscious of their appetites. So *desire* can be defined as *appetite together with consciousness of the appetite* [*appetitus cum ejusdem conscientia*].
> (E3p9s; C I, 500 / G II, 147-148. Italics in original)

The meaning of the last definition is clarified in E3Ad1. First, Spinoza defines "desire" differently, as "man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something" (C I, 531 / G II, 190). Then, he provides an explanation as to why "desire" has replaced "appetite" in outlining a "human's very essence". Following the same scheme first envisaged in E3p2s, and then noted in E3p9s, he stresses how "impulse", "appetite", "will", and "desire" are only different names by which we address the same striving, or essence of a human being, conceived under different attributes:

> We said above, in E3p9s, that desire is appetite together with the consciousness of it [*cupiditatem esse appetitum cum ejusdem conscientia*]. And appetite is the very essence of man, insofar as it is determined to do what promotes his preservation.
>
> But in the same scholium I also warned that I really recognize no difference between human appetite and desire. For whether a man is conscious of his appetite or not, the appetite still remains one and the same. And so — not to seem to commit a tautology — I did not wish to explain desire by appetite, but was anxious to so

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body" (E2p23). As we have seen, however, "to perceive an idea", on Spinoza's account, means to have the idea of it, to have knowledge of it and, finally, to be "conscious" of it.

> define it that I would comprehend together all the strivings of human nature that we signify by the name of appetite [*appetitus*], will [*voluntas*], desire [*cupiditas*], or impulse [*impetus*].
>
> (E3Ad1exp; C I, 531 / G II, 190)

As we have seen, the name "appetite" refers to the human striving simultaneously conceived under the attribute of extension (as an "impulse" of the body) and under the attribute of thought (as our "will"). The definition of "desire" as "appetite *with* consciousness of it" [*appetitus cum ejusdem conscientia*], first found in E3p9s and then recalled in E3Ad1exp, is meant to include the striving of both the body and the mind *plus* the knowledge that the mind has of its own striving, as a mode of thinking, through the ideas of the ideas of the affections of the body.[32] This accounts, for example, for the fact that not only do we want something, or strive for it, but we also know that we want something or strive for it – in one word, we "desire" it.[33] Understood in this way, Spinoza concludes, the notion of "desire" involves all manners in which the human essence can be conceived.

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[32] Without reference to one's affections, Spinoza points out later in E3Ad1exp, "it would not follow that the mind could be conscious of its desire, *or* appetite [*suæ cupiditatis sive appetitus esse conscia*]" (C I, 531 / G II, 190), for there would be no idea at all that a mind could perceive. Spinoza recalls twice E2p23, according to which "[t]he mind does not know itself, except insofar as it perceives the ideas of the affections of the body". Spinoza's simultaneous reference to one's affections and E2p23, in order to "involve the cause of this consciousness [*hujus conscientiæ causam*]" (E3Ad1exp; C I, 531 / G II, 190), seems to mirror the demonstration of E3p9, where Spinoza also refers to E2p23 to claim that the mind is "necessarily conscious of itself" – hence, "conscious of its striving" – through the "ideas of the body's affections" (C I, 499-500 / G II, 147). In other words, E2p23 and the underpinning "ideas of ideas" theory ensure that, if a body is affected, the mind has ideas of which it is conscious, and through which it is conscious of itself *qua* mode of thinking. Lia Levy focuses on the role of the affections with respect to Spinoza's reference to "the cause of this consciousness", thereby claiming that "[c]onsciousness is thus, in Spinoza's view, a phenomenon strictly related to existence in duration" (2017, 199). It remains unclear, on her reading, the role of all of Spinoza's references to consciousness, insofar as consciousness is related to the knowledge that one individual has of the eternal part of her mind and its ideas. I will focus on these references in the next section of this chapter. An insightful commentary concerning these points can be found in Jaquet 2005, 109-125. See also Jaquet 2004, 113-119.

[33] See E2p21s and the use that Spinoza makes of E2p20 in E2p43d, to justify the fact that "he [...] who knows a thing truly, must at the same time have an adequate idea, *or* true knowledge, of his own knowledge" (C I, 479 / G II, 123-124).

On this reading, Spinoza's clarification that "desire is generally related to men insofar as they are conscious of their appetites", found in E3p9s, does not imply anything about the possible existence of unconscious states of mind or ideas.[34] Accordingly, Spinoza's claim that the appetite is still one and the same "whether a man is conscious of his appetite or not", in E3Ad1exp, cannot be taken as alluding to a difference between kinds of appetites — those that emerge to consciousness and those that do not.[35] Spinoza is only remarking that our "desire" — understood as the striving of both our body and mind, reflected into a second, parallel order of ideas of ideas — is only one way in which to conceive of one's appetite or essence.[36] Indeed, whether we conceive of an individual as being conscious of her striving, or whether we conceive of her as uniquely determined by her bodily impulses, "the appetite still remains one and the same", Spinoza asserts. Thus, the fact that we also conceive and have knowledge of our appetites in terms of desire and awareness of our will — as modes of thinking and affections of our mind — shall not lead us to believe that our will is free.

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[34] Miller (2007, 217) follows Wilson ([1980] 1999a, 134) in reading this statement as suggesting such a distinction. See also Shapiro 2017, 211.

[35] Balibar reads this passage as implying that consciousness is "the specific difference", or "the specific degree or quality which transforms appetite into desire", which also means that "some appetites are voluntary, others not" ([1992] 2013, 131-132). By contrast, I exclude the possibility that Spinoza is here reducing conscious or voluntary appetites to a subset of all appetites, for that seems to me the thesis that Spinoza intends to refute. Indeed, all of Spinoza's arguments analysed so far are aimed at demonstrating that, although we are conscious of our appetites and bodily impulses as volitions of the mind, there is nothing in nature like a free, voluntary appetite, governed by a conscious mind, which can act upon the body and independently of the body. Moreover, and more importantly, Spinoza is not contending that an appetite may "transform" itself into a voluntary one, by means of consciousness. Rather, it is true that for Spinoza all appetites are (also) volitions of the mind, and that the mind is necessarily conscious of its volitions by means of the ideas of the ideas of the affections of the body. Hence, the mind is also said to "desire", with respect to the objects of its will, of which it is conscious.

[36] Conversely, if desires, or conscious appetites, were only a subset of human appetites (as contended by Balibar [1992] 2013 and Levy 2017), we should also concede that Spinoza is inconsistently using the notion of "essence of man" in E3p9s and E3Ad1, respectively, by first defining it as human appetite, and then restricting it to human desire (or conscious appetites).

6. Animation, eternity of the mind, and the "third kind of knowledge"

The references to consciousness analysed so far do not seem to provide any criterion to distinguish between conscious and unconscious ideas. On the contrary, the universality of the demonstrations employed by Spinoza seems to entail that all bodies have a corresponding mind, along with the idea, or knowledge, of it[37] – that is, what Spinoza refers to as "consciousness". Having noted this, Spinoza commentators concerned about the ensuing paradoxes related to panpsychism have often dismissed the "ideas of ideas" theory as an unsuitable candidate for an account of human consciousness.[38] Either the theory of the ideas of ideas is not meant to provide a higher-order account of human consciousness, they maintain, or else it fails to reach its goal.[39] As a consequence, there have recently been some interesting attempts to look for a different understanding of "consciousness" in Spinoza's *Ethics*. These attempts have focused on passages included in our third, and last, set of occurrences.

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[37] See E2p13s, quoted in section 2, as well as E2p43d, where Spinoza characterises the demonstration of E2p20 as "universal [*universalis*]" (C I, 479 / G II, 123; the NS version explicitly adds that the demonstration of E2p20 "can be applied to all ideas"; see NS 90).

[38] Scholars who nevertheless have presented Spinoza's theory of "ideas of ideas" as a theory of selective consciousness are Curley (1969), Rice (1990), Martin (2007), and, more recently, Sangiacomo (2011a). He argues that ideas of ideas can only be adequate; hence, he writes, consciousness in Spinoza only refers to adequate knowledge (2011, 82-84; see also Sangiacomo 2010). Building on the same hypothesis – i.e., that ideas of ideas can only be adequate – Syliane Malinowski-Charles recently argued for the opposite conclusion, namely, that ideas of ideas cannot account for human consciousness (2016, June 17, "On the Difference between Consciousness and *Idea Ideæ* in Spinoza", paper presented at McGill University). I find both readings difficult to reconcile with Spinoza's parallelism. Since the order and connection of the ideas necessarily follows the order and connection of their objects, all the elements that account for the inadequacy of the ideas of my bodily affections (that is, incompleteness, partiality, and passivity) shall also be tracked in the order of the ideas of the ideas. Indeed, Spinoza's theory of the ideas of ideas seems also intended to support the claim that the awareness that one may have of her mind and its affections, through the ideas of the ideas of the body's affections, can deliver a great deal of (conscious) inadequate knowledge about its object – to the same extent and in the same way as ideas of bodily affections deliver inadequate knowledge about one's own body (see, in particular, E2p28s, E2p29, its demonstration and corollary).

[39] "If this were a theory of consciousness or awareness [...]", Bennett famously contends, "it would be absurdly excessive" (1984, 188). See also Wilson (1980) 1999a, 135; Nadler 2008a, 584-585; LeBuffe 2010b, 556; Marshall 2014, 111.

These occurrences are all given in the Fifth Part of the *Ethics*. Most of the references to consciousness included in the third set are related to Spinoza's account of the eternity of the mind and his theory of the "third kind of knowledge".[40] In not one of them does Spinoza mention or explicitly recall the "ideas of ideas" theory.

First, in E5p31s, he characterises the ability of the mind to attain knowledge of the third kind in terms of consciousness of the self and God. "The more each of us is able to achieve in this kind of knowledge", Spinoza writes, "the more he is conscious of himself and of God [*eo melius sui et Dei conscius est*]" (C I, 610 / G II, 300). Then, in E5p39, he relates the eternal part of a mind to the capabilities of the corresponding body. Spinoza affirms that "[h]e who has a body capable of a great many things has a mind whose greatest part is eternal" (C I, 614 / G II, 304). This correlation is rephrased, in the following scholium, in terms of a mind's capacity to be conscious of itself, God, and the things according to the capabilities of the body:

> He who, like an infant or child, has a body capable of very few things, and very heavily dependent on external causes, has a mind which considered solely in itself is conscious of almost nothing of

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[40] Spinoza provides a definition of the "third kind of knowledge", also named "intuitive knowledge" (*scientia intuitiva*), in E2p40s2:

> [T]his kind of knowing proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things
> (E2p40s2; C I, 478 / G II, 122)

Only the occurrences to consciousness found in E5p42s do not immediately refer to Spinoza's theories of intuitive knowledge and the eternity of the mind. They seem to do it mediately though, by referring first to blessedness [*beatitudo*], "which arises from the third kind of knowledge" (E5p42d; C I, 616 / G II, 307), then to the opposition between the "ignorant" and the "wise man" – whom "being, by a certain eternal necessity, conscious of himself, and of God, and of things [*sui et Dei et rerum æterna quadam necessitate conscius*]", Spinoza writes, "never ceases to be" and "always possesses true peace of mind [*animi acquiescentia*]" (E5p42s; C I, 617 / G II, 308). See also E4App4: "blessedness [*beatitudo*] is nothing but that peace of the mind [*animi acquiescentia*] that stems from the intuitive knowledge of God" (C I, 588 / G II, 267. Translation modified). The meaning of the expression "conscious of oneself, God and the things" – which, with some modifications, also appears in E5p31s and in E5p39s – and its reference to the ideas that an individual has of its mind, God, and singular things through knowledge of the third kind, is analysed below in this section.

> itself, or of God, or of things [*mentem habet, quæ in se sola considerata nihil fere sui nec Dei nec rerum sit conscia*]. On the other hand, he who has a body capable of a great many things, has a mind which considered only in itself is very much conscious of itself, and of God, and of things [*mentem habet, quæ in se sola considerata multum sui et Dei et rerum sit conscia*].
>
> (E5p39s; C I, 614 / G II, 305)

This last paragraph, in particular, has often been read in connection with Spinoza's controversial remarks on universal animation – found in E2p13s, and quoted above in this chapter – from which the whole problem of the status of consciousness in Spinoza's *Ethics* originates.

Indeed, in the second part of E2p13s, Spinoza proceeds to explain how we should understand his claim that all individuals are animate, "though in different degrees":

> We [...] cannot deny that ideas differ among themselves, as the objects themselves do, and that one is more excellent than the other, and contains more reality, just as the object of the one is more excellent than the object of the other and contains more reality. [...] I say this in general, that in proportion as a body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly.
>
> (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 97)

The similarity between E2p13s and E5p39s has prompted scholars to assimilate Spinoza's reference to "degrees of animation" to a theory implying the existence of different degrees of consciousness in nature.

Don Garrett, for example, equates degrees of consciousness with degrees of power of thinking expressed by different minds or ideas (understanding, by the "power of thinking" of an idea, its degree of perfection and reality,[41] and its effectiveness in determining an individual's striving). "This identification", Garrett argues, "is almost irresistibly implied by the conjunction of E2p13s with E5p39s" (2008, 23). Steven Nadler takes this proposal a step further, grounding the degrees of power of thinking entertained by an individual's mind and ideas into corresponding degrees of bodily complexity: "[c]onsciousness for Spinoza, [...] is a certain complexity in thinking that is the correlate of the complexity of a body" (2008a, 575). He thus concludes:

> [t]he more conscious a mind is, the more active and powerful it is, not because consciousness is identical with power but because both of these features of the mind are grounded [...] in the same fact about the body, namely, its complexity.
>
> (Nadler 2008a, 594)

Still with reference to E2p13s, Michael Della Rocca claims that "Spinoza's notion of degrees of animation can usefully be understood in terms of degrees of independence of outside causes and thus in terms of degrees of confusion and adequacy". He thereby affirms that "Spinoza similarly ties degrees of consciousness to a mind's degree of independence of outside causes in E5p39s" (2008, 115-116).

Unfortunately, such an "almost irresistible" connection between the two scholia, on which all these interpretations are based, is in fact unjustified, if this connection is meant to equate degrees of animation of individuals with corresponding degrees of awareness of their own mental states – whether such degrees are conceived of in terms of power of thinking, complexity of the body, or adequacy of ideas.[42] As we can see from E2p13s, Spinoza provides two different criteria on which the degree of animation of an individual is grounded. The first criterion refers to the general capability of the mind of "perceiving many things at once" – i.e., of having ideas of any kind – and it depends on the corresponding capability of the body "of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once". In other words, the first criterion depends on the general capability of a body of being affected and undergoing various modifications at one time, including all its actions and its interactions with external bodies. Since a mind must perceive everything that happens in its object, the more a body is affected and undergoes different modifications at one time, the more ideas of bodily affections, in parallel, must also exist at the same time in the corresponding mind. A healthy human body, which is capable of affecting, and being affected by, external bodies in many

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[41] "By reality and perfection", Spinoza writes, "I understand the same thing" (E2d6; C I, 447 / G II, 85).

[42] All these interpretations, moreover, seem to reveal some inner inconsistencies, or to encounter difficulties when confronted with other fundamental theses or passages taken from Spinoza's texts.

For example, Garrett's identification of degrees of consciousness with degrees of power of thinking presents problems which have been pointed out by LeBuffe:

> Without further qualifications on Spinoza's theory, what is to stop us from conceiving of a more powerful mind *all* of whose ideas are less conscious than those in a less powerful mind? In such a case, one might wonder what it means to say that the more powerful mind is more conscious.
>
> (LeBuffe 2010b, 557)

Furthermore, Garrett's interpretation seems to make inexplicable how the mind can be conscious of any affect of sadness and pain, which, according to Spinoza, are related to a diminishment of the mind's power of thinking and perfection (see E3p11 and the relevant scholium, as well as E3Ad3). Della Rocca's account (2008), instead, seems to entail that the more confused an idea is, the less the mind is conscious of it, which conclusion is at odds with Spinoza's claim that the human mind is conscious of its striving insofar as it has both adequate and inadequate ideas (E3p9d). Regarding Nadler's view, it cannot explain consciousness by suggesting that a certain complexity of the body is directly responsible for the emergence of conscious mental states in the mind (see also Bennett 1984, 136-139). This option, indeed, is correctly excluded by Nadler himself: "[t]his would violate the causal and explanatory separation that exists between the attributes of Thought and Extension in Spinoza's parallelism", he writes (2008a, 591). Yet, if consciousness was only the expression in thought of a certain bodily complexity – i.e., "a function of (because identical with) a mind's internal complexity" (2008a, 592) – it would, as a result, be impossible for a mind to isolate and be conscious of any idea conceived of as "simple", such as primitive, non-analysable notions. However, the capacity of the human mind to conceive and attend separately to simple ideas seems to have had an important role in Spinoza's early epistemology (see TIE §§63-65, §68, §72). Against other similar views, which more generally connect the existence of sentient life in animals with the existence of certain degrees of complexity in a body – such as Genevieve Lloyd's (1980, 295, and 1994, 45-46) – see also Wilson's insightful remarks ([1999] 1999c, 182-183), who correctly points out that "[Spinoza's] observations about relative 'excellence' and 'reality' evidently do not amount to, nor directly entail, an assertion that 'sentience' is correlative with 'requisite degree of complexity' in a given 'idea's' body" (Wilson [1999] 1999c, 182).

ways at one time (E2post3 and E2post6), will therefore entertain a very high degree of animation according to this first criterion — that is to say, that the corresponding mind will be populated by many perceptions and ideas, reflecting the order and connection of the affections involving the body.

The second criterion of an individual's degree of animation, instead, refers to the capability of a mind of "understanding distinctly" the things — that is, to its capability of having adequate ideas.[43] According to Spinoza, the more the affections and actions of a body depend on the nature of the body alone, the more its mind, in parallel, can be considered the "adequate, *or* formal, cause" (E5p31d; C I, 610 / G II, 299) of the corresponding ideas. Adequate ideas, therefore, are ideas in the mind that the mind can clearly and distinctly perceive as effects of its own nature,[44] rather than effects of external causes.[45] Hence, in E2p13s, Spinoza relates the capability of the mind of understanding distinctly and having more adequate ideas — i.e., of being more animated according to the second criterion — to bodies whose actions depend more on themselves, rather than on the influence of external bodies affecting them.

Regarding both criteria, however, degrees of consciousness of one's ideas — whether they are adequate or not — are not mentioned, nor is there anything in E2p13s which may suggest that the transparency of a mode of thinking actually constituting a mind may depend on, or be affected by, the same two parameters defining the degree of animation of that individual.

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[43] See E2p38c, where Spinoza equates adequate ideas with ideas that are "clearly and distinctly" perceived (C I, 474 / G II, 119). According to Spinoza (E2p40s2), adequate ideas can be either of properties of things (such as the ideas which constitute reason, or knowledge of the second kind), or of essences of singular things (as products of intuitive knowledge).

[44] See E3p1d; Spinoza defines the notion of "adequate cause" in E3d1:

> I call that cause adequate whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it. But I call it partial, or inadequate, if its effect cannot be understood through it alone.
> (E3d1; C I, 492 / G II, 139)

[45] Ideas depending on external causes are accordingly called "inadequate". Spinoza remarks in E3p1d that "[i]n each human mind some ideas are adequate, but others are mutilated and confused" (C I, 493 / G II, 140); he stresses the same concept in E3p3d and, in E3p9d, he describes the essence of the mind as "constituted by adequate and by inadequate ideas" (C I, 499 / G II, 147).

Why, then, does Spinoza adopt the terminology related to consciousness in the Fifth Part of the *Ethics*? I believe that the answer can be found at the end of E5p20s, where Spinoza declares that he will henceforth "pass to those things which pertain to the mind's duration without relation to the body" (C I, 606 / G II, 294). Since Spinoza is now focusing on the mind and the knowledge that we may have of its eternity, he turns to the vocabulary of consciousness, which he still uses to address the knowledge that we may have of the mind "insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object" (E2p21s).[46]

According to Spinoza, it is true that "[t]he human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal" (E5p23; C I, 607 / G II, 295). Indeed, Spinoza affirms that we "feel that our mind [...] is eternal" (E5p23s; C I, 608 / G II, 296). However, Spinoza also adds that we must not confuse what we feel as the eternity of our mind with the traditional account of the immortality of the soul – the latter being based, according to him, on the false belief in a prolonged duration of our memory and imagination after all corporeal activities have ceased.[47] For example, in E5p34s, Spinoza claims:

> If we attend to the common opinion of men, we shall see that they are indeed conscious of the eternity of their mind [*suæ mentis æternitatis esse quidem conscios*], but that they confuse it with duration, and attribute it to the imagination, *or* memory, which they believe remains after death.
>
> (E5p34s; C I, 611-612 / G II, 301-302).

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[46] Along the same lines, after his considerations on the knowledge that the mind has of its own eternity, Spinoza concludes, in E5p40s, by writing: "These are the things I have decided to show concerning the mind, insofar as it is considered without relation to the body's existence" (C I, 615 / G II, 306).

[47] In E5p21, Spinoza excludes the possibility that the mind can either imagine anything or recollect past things, except while the body endures (C I, 607 / G II, 294).

Once again, Spinoza seems to turn to the vocabulary of consciousness to address the cognition that we have of our mind, as a mode of thinking, independently of the body. And again, this "consciousness", or knowledge of our mind, seems to be the origin of some confusion: in this case, as we have seen, it may induce us to wrongly assume an indefinite duration of functions of the mind (such as those related to memory and imagination) that, by contrast, only depend on the capability of the body to be affected during its existence.

To prevent this confusion, which would contradict the thought-extension parallelism, Spinoza resorts to the same strategy that he also adopted to debunk the false belief in free will: he grounds the idea that constitutes the eternal part of our mind — of which "we are conscious" — in its corporeal counterpart. He argues that when "we feel and know by experience [*sentimus experimurque*] that we are eternal" (E5p23s; C I, 607-608 / G II, 296), what our mind really perceives as eternal is in fact the idea "that expresses the essence of the human body, under a species of eternity" (E5p22; C I, 607 / G II, 295).[48] Then, Spinoza proceeds to demonstrate that the mind is always conscious of this idea when it conceives of the things intuitively, or "by the third kind of knowledge".

If we turn to Spinoza's account of the third kind of knowledge, we can notice that, in E5p29, he affirms that "[w]hatever our mind understands under a species of eternity it understands [...] from the fact that it conceives the body's essence under a species of eternity" (C I, 609 / G II, 298). Then, in E5p31d, Spinoza defines the idea of the essence of the body conceived under a species of eternity — which idea, as we have just seen, is the eternal part of the mind — as "the adequate, *or* formal, cause of the third kind of knowledge" (C I, 610

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[48] In E5p23s Spinoza defines this idea as a "certain mode of thinking, which pertains to the essence of the mind, and which is necessarily eternal" (C I, 607 / G II, 295).

/ G II, 299). The third kind of knowledge is, in turn, defined by Spinoza as "adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (E5p25d; C I, 608 / G II, 296).[49] Based on the fact that "[p]articular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, *or* modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way" (E1p25c; C I, 431 / G II, 68), Spinoza assimilates adequate knowledge of particular things with knowing God itself. Hence, in E5p24, Spinoza writes that "[t]he more we understand singular things, the more we understand God" (C I, 608 / G II, 296). This assumption allows Spinoza to conclude, in E5p25d, that the more we adequately understand singular things through knowledge of the third kind, "the more we understand God" (C I, 608 / G II, 296).

To sum up, the knowledge of the third kind depends on the eternal part of the mind as its adequate cause, and it involves adequate knowledge (i.e., adequate ideas) of the mind itself, of the essences of singular things and, therefore, of God.[50] This is why Spinoza can affirm, in E5p31s, that "the more each of us is able to achieve in this kind of knowledge, the more he is conscious of himself and of God". For the same reason, I argue, in E5p39s he also affirms that "he who has a body capable of a great many things, has a mind which considered only in itself is very much conscious of itself, and of God, and of things". Spinoza's statements are not intended to refer to the overall degree of awareness of a mind with respect to its own mental states, nor do they concern the degree of transparency of any idea to the mind that perceives it. Rather, they concern the kind of ideas that a mind related to a very capable body (a body, that is, whose actions do not depend on external causes) can attain and be conscious of, through knowledge of the third kind: namely, adequate ideas of itself, of singular things and, therefore, of God.[51] And these are the ideas that the mind truly perceives whenever it is said to feel its own eternity (E5p23s) and be conscious of it (E5p34s).

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[49] Recall Spinoza's definition of the third kind of knowledge in E2p40s2; see also E5p36s: "the knowledge of singular things I have called intuitive, *or* knowledge of the third kind [*rerum singularium cognitio, quam intuitivam sive tertii generis appellavi*]" (C I, 613 / G II, 303).

[50] According to E5p30, the mind knows both itself and the body under a species of eternity. "Hence", Spinoza concludes, "insofar as our mind conceives itself and the body under a species of eternity it necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God" (E5p30d; C I, 610 / G II, 299).

Indeed, as we have seen, the more a body is capable of actions and modifications which depend only on its own nature, the more modifications in the mind can be conceived as depending on the nature of the mind alone, "considered only in itself" (E5p39s) — with the eternal part of the mind being the cause of its own adequate ideas of itself, of God, and of other singular things. Conversely, a body whose actions are heavily dependent on external causes must be related to a mind that only inadequately knows itself and the things, by perceiving ideas of affections of the body caused by "fortuitous encounters" with external things (E2p29s; C I, 471 / G II, 114) — ideas, that is, which, like "conclusions without premises" (E2p28d; C I, 470 / G II, 113), only represent the effects and modifications produced in one's body by the external objects, without explaining the nature or essence of any of the things responsible for these modifications.[52]

Still, we seemingly have no solid basis on which to claim that minds related to less capable, less powerful, or less complex bodies than the human body shall also necessarily be less conscious of the ideas that actually exist in them and constitute them. To be sure, if an individual's body can undergo only a few modifications, of which even fewer are determined by the sole nature of that body, the corresponding mind will have few ideas (or perceptions, in general) and, among these ideas, even fewer adequate (i.e., clear and distinct) ones. As a result, that individual can be said to possess a very low degree of "animation" according to both criteria expressed in E2p13s. Nevertheless, nothing prevents us from regarding such a scarcely animated individual as perfectly conscious of those few, very confused ideas of its bodily affections that actually constitute its mind.

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[51] This has been also pointed out by LeBuffe, who makes a similar remark:

> Spinoza does not write at E5p39s that more powerful minds have a higher degree of consciousness. He writes that such minds are more conscious *of themselves and of God and of things*. [...] Spinoza is characterizing a mind's conscious knowledge — understood on a correspondence theory of truth as in part a relation between its conscious ideas and their objects — and not a quality of experience, like intensity, that might plausibly be thought to indicate consciousness or degrees of consciousness without further discussion.
>
> (LeBuffe 2010b, 559)

[52] In this sense, I believe that it is appropriate to read Spinoza's remarks in E5p39s regarding consciousness of oneself, God, and things, as the counterpart of E2p29, its corollary and scholium, where Spinoza deals with the ideas of bodily affections, and the relevant ideas of ideas, insofar as they only deliver a mutilated and confused knowledge of our mind, our body, and the external things.

7. Two issues concerning Spinoza's panpsychism solved

Based on the elements put forth, I am convinced that Spinoza's way of accounting for consciousness in the *Ethics* is coherent. Yet, the limits of such an account are also evident, making Spinoza's theory barely palatable, if assumed outside its original context.[53] To reply to the questions raised at the beginning of the chapter, Spinoza explains the existence of consciousness in nature in the same way as he also explains the simultaneous existence of bodies and minds: for any existing thing, minds included, there must exist a corresponding idea in God's thought, which perceives everything that occurs to its object with the same order and connection of causes. On such grounds, Spinoza's theory does not allow for any distinction between human and non-human minds via their consciousness, as it does not distinguish between conscious and unconscious ideas or minds at all. What are we to do, then, about the paradoxes ensuing from panpsychism?

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[53] I consider, for example, that the way in which Spinoza seems to conflate basic distinctions which are nowadays commonly accepted — such as those between self-knowledge and consciousness, or between phenomenal and access consciousness (see Block 1995) — may represent an obstacle in this sense.

Regarding the problem of non-human minds, I am persuaded that Spinoza would concede consciousness to any individual body or singular thing that can be said to maintain an essential structure or unity between parts while performing a determinate action — according to his definitions of "singular thing" and "individual" (see E2d7, and E2d after E2p13).[54] In this regard, if we look outside the *Ethics*, we see Spinoza himself profiting from the universal applicability of his theory, with the purpose, once again, of demonstrating the origin of the human illusion of free will. In Ep 58, he asks his reader to conceive of something "very simple", such as a stone set in motion by an external cause. He states that what he is about to conclude about the stone must also be concluded about "any singular thing, however composite it is conceived to be, and however capable of doing many things", since everything in nature is causally determined to exist and produce effects in a fixed manner.

> Conceive now, if you will, that while the stone continues to move, it thinks, and knows that as far as it can, it strives to continue moving. Of course, since the stone is conscious only of its striving [*sui tantummodo conatus est conscious*], and not at all indifferent, it will believe that it is very free, and that it perseveres in motion for no other cause than because it wills to. This is that famous human freedom everyone brags of having, which consists only in this: that men are conscious of their appetite [*homines sui appetitus sint conscii*] and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined.
>
> (Ep 58; C II, 428 / G IV, 266)

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[54] In E2lem4-6 Spinoza calls such "essential structure" the "form" of the body (C I, 461 / G II, 100-101). We have also seen that Spinoza defines the idea of the mind as "the form of the idea, insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object" (E2p21s). We may therefore conclude that, as long as the body retains its form while striving to persevere in its being, the mind also retains its form, in parallel, which is in turn the object of the idea of the mind, or consciousness of such striving. Defining the exact terms in which Spinoza's notion of "form" is to be understood, both as a mode of thought and as a mode of extension, still remains a problematic task for Spinoza scholars. Regarding this, see for example Lærke 2016, 279.

One of the purposes of a theory of selective consciousness is to exclude the possibility, regarded as absurd, that bodies much simpler than humans may be somehow conscious of their (potentially very limited) corporeal affections and relevant mental states. For Spinoza, however, to hypothesise that non-human minds could be conscious of themselves, and to draw conclusions from such a hypothesis — conclusions that apply to all individuals, however composite and however capable of doing many things they may be, including humans — is apparently a viable option.[55]

The main concern that seems to prevent many scholars from ascribing such a radical view to Spinoza is, in Margaret Wilson's words, the common expectation "that mentality is recognizable from behavior of a certain sort, and the absence of mentality from 'behavior' of other sorts" ([1980] 1999a, 130). Spinoza explicitly argues for the opposite thesis. We shall not expect the actions of an individual to be different, whether we conceive it uniquely as a body — and explain its essence, appetites, and consequent behaviour through the laws of extension alone — or whether we conceive it as also provided with a striving mind, conscious of itself through the relevant ideas of its body's affections. For Spinoza, the presence of consciousness does not account for any specific difference in behaviour, since a body's way of behaving does not depend on the presence of consciousness at all.[56]

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[55] Concerning this point, see also Melamed 2011, 161-162.

[56] Regarding this, see again E2p7s:

> So long as things are considered as modes of thinking, we must explain the order of the whole of nature, or the connection of causes, through the attribute of thought alone. And insofar as they are considered as modes of extension, the order of the whole of nature must be explained through the attribute of extension alone.
>
> (C I, 452 / G II, 90)

To be precise, this is a feature of Spinoza's philosophical system that has been somehow noticed by Wilson herself, who — in spite of her criticism of Spinoza's accounts of mind and consciousness — in a later article writes:

> Spinoza maintains that all physical phenomena whatsoever, including (one must suppose) what we think of as 'intelligent behavior', are susceptible of explanation within the realm of physical causes exclusively. Mental 'determination' of anything

The second problem related to Spinoza's panpsychism is that the mind must perceive and be conscious of everything that happens in the body. Since we cannot rely on any distinction between conscious and unconscious perceptions of bodily states and affections, it follows that for a possible solution we may only turn to what is signified by "everything that happens in the body", in Spinoza's terms. This is also suggested by the fact that, in Spinoza's framework, both the limits and contents of our experience of ourselves and the external world are provided by the affections of our body. Solving this problem, therefore, requires explaining what accounts for an affection of the body and what constitutes the actual essence of a body, or its striving (E3p7).[57] This is not a problem related to Spinoza's philosophy of mind anymore, but to his account of bodily individuation.

> material is, according to his system, inconceivable. (And, likewise — and perhaps less attractively from a present day perspective — he holds that material explanation of mental occurrences is ruled out.)
>
> (Wilson [1999] 1999c, 178)

A consequence of this view is that, with the same legitimacy with which we can regard all minds as "spiritual automata", in Spinoza's terms (TIE §85; C I, 37 / G II, 32), their corporeal correlates can be coherently conceived of as "zombies" — to borrow a contemporary expression — capable of performing all actions and behaviours that their bodily functions allow, without having any conscious experience of themselves and the external world (see Chalmers 1996, 94-95).

[57] By referring to E3post1, Malinowski-Charles (2004a, 68-70) and Marshall (2014, 138-139) argue that, for Spinoza, only affects count as conscious ideas — assuming, by the notion of "affect", an idea corresponding to an affection involving an increase or a decrease in one's body's power of acting (E3d3) and, hence, a relevant sensation of joy or sadness in the mind (E3p11s). This interpretation correctly points at the spectrum of an individual's conative life to find the boundaries of her conscious life. Indeed, the striving which defines the actual essence of each thing — and of which the mind is said to be conscious — is defined by Spinoza as an affect, i.e., "desire" (E3p9s; E3Ad1exp). Hence, we can reasonably expect all affections of which the mind can be conscious at a certain time, to be related to a certain overall affective state, or desire, which defines the actual striving of the individual, "insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something" (E3Ad1; C I, 531 / G II, 190). Nevertheless, I also find this interpretation a bit reductive, as long as it is instead meant to straightforwardly identify each and all conscious ideas that can be simultaneously perceived by a mind with affections involving a decrease or increase in one's power of acting. I can conceive, for example, of many ways in which my body's actual striving or impulses can undergo changes that my mind can consciously perceive, without necessarily involving any affect of joy or sadness, or any apparent variation in my body's overall power of acting (e.g., I turn my head to the left, then to the right, in a dark room). In E3p15d, Spinoza himself concedes that ideas and affects that do not involve any change in one's power can nonetheless be conceived in association with other ideas involving affects of joy and sadness.

As far as I can infer from Spinoza's sketchy remarks on this topic, an individual, or any complex body, can be conceived of as a functional unity of parts, and it is defined each time by the way in which these parts cooperate in the production of a single effect (see again E2d7 and E2d after E2p13).[58] From this point of view, not everything that exists and occurs under the skin of a human body, so to speak, necessarily accounts for an affection or modification of the body's current striving, nor does the definition of the body's actual striving necessarily demand the simultaneous involvement of all the organic parts (and subparts) that we usually associate with our corporeal architecture.

For example, Spinoza regards memories as the mental correlate of corporeal "impressions, *or* traces [*impressiones seu vestigia*]" (E3post2; C I, 493 / G II, 139) of past affections that a body retains and carries along with itself, as it were.[59] Yet, the presence of such traces does not always concur in determining a body's current striving or impulses. In such cases, there is no compelling reason to consider them as characterising the actual essence of the body, since its definition does not depend on them or involve them. By contrast, when the body's current appetite and impulses are efficaciously modified through the mediation of past corporeal images, their corresponding ideas will also exist in the mind and will be perceived by it. In that case, the mind will be said to "recollect" past things (E2p18).[60] In short, Spinoza's functional account of the human body seems *prima facie* sufficiently flexible to adjust, at any time, the range of our essential bodily activities to those perceived by the mind, without needing to resort to the existence of unconscious ideas.[61]

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[58] For a similar characterisation of Spinoza's account of the body as a "functional unity", see Lenz 2012, 49.

[59] "The human body can undergo many changes", Spinoza writes, "and nevertheless retain impressions, *or* traces, of the objects, and consequently, the same images of things" (E3post2; C I, 493 / G II, 139). See also E2post5 (C I, 462 / G II, 102-103).

[60] In E2p17d2 Spinoza proposes a hypothetical outline of how the general process of impression and recollection of images may happen in human bodies. In E2p18, its demonstration and scholium, Spinoza describes the particular process of recollection by association of images that he calls "memory". Spinoza's account of memory will be analysed and discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, even though I hardly believe that we could ever succeed in tracking down an account of selective consciousness in Spinoza, I do not impute the reasons for such failure to the way in which Spinoza constructs his theory in the *Ethics*. Any difficulty found in this sense, rather, depends on the unjustified assumption, seconded by many scholars, that "without the ability to distinguish conscious from nonconscious individuals, Spinoza's theory cannot be a defensible account of consciousness" (Martin 2007, 270). As I hope to have sufficiently demonstrated, from Spinoza's point of view, and for the sake of his immediate purposes, not only did he not need to resort to a selective account of consciousness — he seemingly never intended to, either.

Seen under this light, panpsychism should not cause much concern for Spinoza readers. As I mentioned above, Spinoza's panpsychism is a consequence of some more fundamental theses, on which much of the Spinozist system is grounded: that for each existing thing there is in God's attribute of thought the corresponding idea, or mind, which mirrors in thought everything that happens in its object, and that everything is fully determined to exist and to act, in each of God's attributes, according to the eternal necessity of nature's laws. If we are willing to concede such atypical premises, then we can also accept the quite unusual conclusion that each finite being — as it may be figured within a Spinozist framework — can be consistently conceived of as a "spiritual automaton" (TIE §85; C I, 37 / G II, 32), endowed with a corresponding mind and relevant consciousness of itself.

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[61] Consequently, to the extent to which external objects become more and more instrumental in the way we perceive and act in the world, they can coherently be considered integral parts of our bodies. This account seems to have some affinity with the "extended mind" theory (see Clark and Chalmers 1998).

Chapter 2

“A Thing Like Us”: Human Minds and Deceitful Behaviour in Spinoza

Chapter Abstract

In the following chapter, I question whether, despite his panpsychism, Spinoza allows for differences between human and non-human mentality. In the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, Spinoza writes that radical sceptics, who persist in denying having any access to a true idea in their mind, shall be regarded as “automata, completely lacking a mind” (TIE §48). In the *Ethics*, Spinoza also refers to cases in which the nature of the internal, subjective point of view of another individual’s mind might appear utterly incomprehensible to us. Spinoza mentions brutes, animals (E3p57s), suicide victims, children, fools, and madmen (E2p49s) as individuals whose phenomenal experience of themselves and the world is completely impenetrable — although they must surely be regarded as having a mind, capable of sensations, desires and affects. I argue, therefore, that Spinoza refers to individuals as “mindless” in order to capture a kind of mentality with which we cannot identify. I contend that, for Spinoza, the possibility or impossibility of recognising the presence of a similar mentality in others is grounded in behaviour and originates in the mechanism that Spinoza names “imitation of the affects” (E3p27s1). I also argue that the dependence of this mechanism — by which we empathise with “things like us” — on specific behaviour that we recognise as typically human, and which we associate with the presence of mental states with which we are acquainted, could be one of the reasons for Spinoza’s uncompromising position against deceitful behaviour.

1. Introduction

Spinoza’s claim that “all individuals, though in different degrees, are animate” and the relevant demonstration are based on “completely general” premises (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 96). These premises follow from Spinoza’s thought-extension parallelism, according to which “[t]he order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (E2p7; C I, 451 / G II, 89), and from the identification that he makes between ideas of things and minds of things (E2p11-12). On this basis, he concludes, first, that the human mind is the idea of the human body (E2p13) and, second, that:

> For each thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause in the same way as It is of the idea of the human body.
> (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 96)

These theses commit Spinoza to a panpsychist account of nature: for each existing body there is also a corresponding mind, capable of mirroring in thought everything that passes into that body, according to the same order and connection of causes and effects. Moreover, Spinoza's account of consciousness – which is based on the existence of "ideas of ideas [*idearum ideæ*]" (E2p20-23; C I, 467-468 / G II, 108-110) – seems to commit him not only to the position that all things have a mind, but also to the position that all things are somehow conscious of the mental states that constitute and characterise their minds. For, again, of each thing – including, therefore, ideas and minds – God can form the corresponding idea, which involves knowledge of everything that passes into the corresponding object, according to the same order and connection of causes and effects.[1]

These claims, however, seem to conflict with other passages found in Spinoza's corpus of philosophical texts. So, for example, in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, Spinoza suggests treating radical sceptics as "automata, completely lacking a mind" (TIE §48; C I, 22 / G II, 18). Further, in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, he equates automata and beasts (TTP XX, 12), asserting that, when parrots imitate human language, they speak as automata – i.e., "without a mind" (TTP XIII, 17; C II, 261 / G III, 170). The latter claim, in particular, cannot but sound striking if we consider that, in the *Ethics*, Spinoza is adamant about beasts and lower animals having their own minds, capable of relevant sensations, affects, and appetites (E3p57s; E4p37s1). Yet, still in the *Ethics*, Spinoza also claims that animal sensations, affects, and appetites, differ from those of human beings, since animals "do not agree in nature with us" (E4p37s1; C I, 566 / G II, 237), and "[e]ach affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one from the essence of the other" (E3p57; C I, 528 / G II, 186).

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[1] In E2p43d, Spinoza stresses that the demonstration of E2p20, by which it is demonstrated that "[t]here is also in God an idea, *or* knowledge, of the human mind, which follows in God in the same way and is related to God in the same way as the idea, *or* knowledge, of the human body", is "universal [*universalis*]" (C I, 479 / G II, 123). The NS version of the *Ethics* also adds that the demonstration of E2p20 "can be applied to all ideas" (NS 90).

To make sense of these apparently contradictory claims — and reconcile Spinoza's panpsychism with his occasional equations between mindlessness, automata and beasts — I argue that we must start by considering Spinoza's further characterisation of radical sceptics, in the TIE, as systematic liars. According to Spinoza, sceptics of this sort "speak contrary to their own consciousness" (TIE §47; C I, 22 / G II, 18): the things that they say do not allow us to associate any of their words to what they may or may not think. The questions that we will have to address, therefore, are the following: on what basis, according to Spinoza, do the lies of the sceptics deserve the same treatment that we would give to inanimate objects? And, more importantly, what does it mean to treat someone or something as an inanimate object — and to regard it as an "automata, completely lacking a mind" — in a world where, according to Spinoza himself, all things "are nevertheless animate" and provided with a conscious mind?

The answer to these questions, I shall argue, is to be found in Spinoza's theory of the "imitation of the affects" (E3p27s1; C I, 509 / G II, 160), which also provides the grounds for a theory of human recognition. Absence of mentality, in Spinoza's terms, is to be interpreted as referring to our inability to empathise with other individuals, and to ascribe to them the kind of mental states, thoughts and feelings that we would ascribe to ourselves. Insofar as lies and deceitful behaviour aim at preventing us from understanding what may pass into someone else's mind, they may bring about an effective incapability to associate the exterior acts of an individual with corresponding feelings and thoughts with which we are acquainted on the basis of our own personal experience. In the most extreme scenario, lies and deceitful behaviour may result in the total incomprehensibility of one's behaviour and the consequent impossibility of empathising with the deceiver – of considering her, that is, as a human being, endowed with a mind, feelings, and affects equal to ours. As we will see, providing answers to these questions will also help us to address another fundamental problem, raised by Margaret Wilson, concerning how we can distinguish specifically human behaviour and corresponding mentality from their non-human counterparts, in a universe where all things are conceived of as "animate" and provided with a relevant conscious mind (Wilson [1980] 1999a, 130).

In order to better elaborate the conceptual framework sketched above and address the challenges that it poses, I will begin, in section 2, by summarising the main traits of Spinoza's panpsychist account of nature. In section 3, I will analyse Spinoza's characterisation of radical sceptics as mindless automata. In section 4, I will consider passages, found in Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*, where he equates automata and beasts, on the one hand, and opposes them to humans, on the other hand; I will compare these cases to instances, found in the *Ethics*, where Spinoza seems to treat other seemingly human beings as individuals whose behaviour and mentality are incomprehensible and impenetrable. In section 5, I will explain Spinoza's theory of the "imitation of the affects", by which we "judge things to be like us" (E3p22s; C I, 507 / G II, 157) and ascribe them affects identical to those that we feel in ourselves. In section 6, I will analyse Spinoza's definition of "humanity" as an affect shared by people capable of empathising with each other, and will consider the reasons that lead human beings to misjudge each other's affective states and thoughts. In section 7, which concludes the chapter, I will suggest how the mechanism of the imitation of affects characterises specifically human behaviour and mentality, stressing the challenges and risk to which this mechanism is exposed when faced with systematic deceitful behaviour.

2. Spinoza's panpsychism

As we have seen in the previous chapter, in his philosophical masterpiece, the *Ethics*, Spinoza seems to lean towards a panpsychist account of nature. He contends that for each corporeal thing existing in nature — each body, that is, existing as an affection or modification of God insofar as It is an infinitely extended thing — there is a corresponding idea, which exists as a modification of God's attribute of thought (E2p3). This idea, Spinoza argues, acts as the mind of the body: everything that happens in the object of the idea — that is, in the body — must be somehow "perceived" (E2p12; C I, 456-457 / G II, 95) by the corresponding idea, or mind.

> For whatever happens in the object of any idea, the knowledge of that thing is necessarily in God, insofar as It is considered to be affected by the idea of the same object, i.e., insofar as It constitutes the mind of some thing.
>
> (E2p12d; C I, 457 / G II, 95)

This demonstration, Spinoza holds, is "completely general [*admodum communia*], and do[es] not pertain more to man than to other individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate" (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 96).

A problem sometimes attributed to Spinoza's account of nature is that it leaves unanswered the question as to whether this panpsychist framework also implies that all individuals that exist in the physical realm are conscious of themselves (or of anything in general), so long as they are all provided with a mind and perceptions of their own bodily affections. This is a common question for any advocate of panpsychism[2] and, indeed, it was explicitly addressed by Leibniz, who started to develop his own philosophy when Spinoza's system was basically accomplished.[3]

Leibniz maintains that all simple substances existing in nature, or created monads, have perceptions and appetitions and that "[i]f we wish to call *soul* everything that has *perceptions* and *appetites* [...] then all simple substances or created monads can be called souls" (*Monadology* §19; AG 215 / Ge VI, 610). He also contends that "there must be simple substances everywhere" and that, "[a]s a result, all of nature is full of life" (*Principles of Nature and Grace* §1; AG 207 / Ge VI, 598). Yet, Leibniz also distinguishes between perceptions that arise to consciousness in a monad – which he names "apperceptions [*apperception ou [...] conscience*]" (*Monadology* §14; AG 214 / Ge VI, 608) – from unconscious perceptions, which are "similar to when we faint or when we are overwhelmed by a deep, dreamless sleep" (*Monadology* §20; AG 215 / Ge VI, 610). Thus, he eventually opts for limiting the use of the term "soul

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[2] Thomas Nagel (1979, 195), for example, acknowledges the relevance of the question, but leaves it unanswered, given the difficulties related with providing an explanation of consciousness as a phenomenon emerging from basic properties of matter and bodies. By contrast, thinkers such as David Chalmers (2013) and Galen Strawson (2017) seem to allow for a definition of "panpsychism" which straightforwardly associates basic physical states of affair with forms of mental activity, and mental activity with subjective, conscious experiential states. Chalmers writes: "For present purposes, [...] I will understand panpsychism as the thesis that some fundamental physical entities are conscious: that is, that there is something it is like to be a quark or a photon or a member of some other fundamental physical type" (2013, 1). See also Goff 2017.

[3] The texts of Leibniz to which I explicitly refer here, namely the *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason* and *The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology*, were both written in 1714, towards the end of his life. For a detailed account of Leibniz's reception of Spinoza's philosophy, see Lærke 2008.

[*âme*]" for "those substances [...] where perception is more distinct and accompanied by memory" (*Monadology* §19; AG 216 / Ge VI, 610).[4]

Spinoza, by contrast, does not seem to provide any distinction between conscious and unconscious ideas, minds, or perceptions within a mind.[5] As a matter of fact, Spinoza's use of the notion of "consciousness" — to which he sometimes refers by means of the Latin noun *conscientia* and the relevant verb *conscius esse* ("to be conscious") — seems to suggest that consciousness, or awareness of one's own perceptions of bodily and mental states, is something connatural to thought and coextensive with it. Consciousness, that is, is a feature of thought, which is capable of mirroring and encompassing all the aspects of the mental life of an individual's mind — just as much as a certain kind of mental life is assumed, in the first place, to mirror the whole range of phenomena that occur in the physical realm of bodies.

The claim that all things have a mind, for Spinoza, therefore entails that all things are conscious.[6] What a thing may be conscious of, however, and in which ways, depends on what Spinoza calls the "degree of animation" of a body. It depends, that is to say, on the capability of a body to be affected and modified by external bodies, and to act and produce modifications by its own power alone. Indeed, according to Spinoza, the more a body can be disposed and affected in a great many ways – either by external things or by its own power alone – the more a mind is also capable of being affected by and perceiving many things in many ways.[7] The mechanism that underlies the formation of ideas and perceptions in an individual's mind is, in this sense, meant to reflect the number, variety and complexity of modifications that a body is capable of producing and undertaking, either simultaneously or through time, autonomously or under the impulse of external bodies, without losing its essential integrity.[8]

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[4] In the *Principles of Nature and Grace* §4, Leibniz affirms that "*apperception,* which is *consciousness*", is "something not given to all souls, nor at all times to a given soul" (AG 208 / Ge VI, 600). In the same text, by the notion of "sensation" (*sentiment*, in French), Leibniz defines a perception which is sufficiently distinct and accompanied by memory — "a perception of which there remains an echo long enough to make itself heard on occasion" (*Principles of Nature and Grace* §4; AG 208 / Ge VI, 599) — distinguishing it from the state of "simple monads". Non-conscious perceptions are, therefore, those which characterise the state of simple, or even "bare monads [*monades toutes nues*]" — as he also writes in the Monadology (§24; AG 216 / Ge VI, 611) — "in which nothing is distinct" (*Monadology* §21; AG 216 / Ge VI, 610). For some studies concerning Leibniz's account of human awareness and the relation between perception and consciousness, see Wilson (1992) 1999b, Gennaro 1999, and Jorgensen 2011. I disagree with one of Wilson's conclusion, according to which "both Spinoza and Leibniz radically divorce the notion of perception from that of conscious, explicit awareness" (Wilson [1992] 1999b, 336), since I see no trace of such a "radical divorce" of notions in Spinoza's texts.

[5] Furthermore, and differently from Leibniz, Spinoza seems to consider the terms "perception [*perceptio*]" and "sensation [*sensatio*]", and the relevant verbs "to perceive [*percipere*]" and "to feel [*sentire*]", as equivalent in many cases, and capable of referring to both adequate and inadequate ideas (see, for example, E2p49s; C I, 487-488 / G II, 133). For studies concerning similarities and differences between Spinoza's and Leibniz's theories of a wholly animated universe, see Bouveresse 1992 and Piro 1994.

[6] Concerning this point, see also Melamed 2011, 161-162.

The quantity and the quality of the conscious experience entertained by each individual's mind may vary, therefore, in order to reflect in thought the peculiar constitution of each body and the effective interactions that each body has with external bodies during its existence. No threshold to conscious life is ever mentioned or considered by Spinoza, however, since the reason for the existence of consciousness itself does not depend on any of the particular features that may define an individual's body or mind, but is grounded on the mere fact that for any existing thing there must be an idea, in God, capable of expressing in thought everything that passes into that thing — if and when anything occurs into that thing — and that any idea can be, in turn, perceived by an individual's mind by means of other ideas (E2p20-23).

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[7] See, for example, E2p14, according to which it is in virtue of the fact that the human body is capable of being affected in many ways by external bodies, and disposed to affect external bodies in many ways, that the human mind is also capable of perceiving many things.

[8] Hence, in E2p13s, Spinoza claims:

> [T]o determine what is the difference between the human mind and the others, and how it surpasses them, it is necessary for us [...] to know the nature of its object, i.e., of the human body. [...] I say this in general, that in proportion as a body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly.
> (E2p13s; C II, 458 / G II, 97)

Spinoza's definition of body, his theory of individuation of bodies in extension and his account of how bodies preserve their identity, or nature, through change, are topics still debated by Spinoza scholars. For a recent discussion of these themes, see Peterman 2017.

This thesis has raised eyebrows among Spinoza scholars. One of the most straightforward and apparently decisive motives to resist such a sweeping theory of mind is that, in our common understanding, "[h]aving a mind is associated with thinking and being conscious" and "mentality is recognizable from behavior of a certain sort, and the absence of mentality from 'behavior' of other sorts," as pointed out by Margaret Wilson. From such a perspective, Spinoza's overall theory of mind would simply "fail to make sense of the specific phenomena of human mentality" (Wilson [1980] 1999a, 130).

Objections based on such an argument — according to which the attribution of mentality, inasmuch as it also implies the presence of consciousness, should account for the existence of a specific kind of behaviour in nature, characterising a limited set of individuals (namely, humans and, possibly, a few other species of animals) — seem however to miss the target, in Spinoza's case. Spinoza rejects the existence of free will: there is nothing that a mind can do to change the train of its thoughts, which follow one another according to eternal necessity (E2p48), let alone to change the course of the events that occur between bodies in the physical domain. Indeed, Spinoza also rejects any mind-body causal interaction, while maintaining at the same time a strict, necessary correlation between mental and bodily states. According to his so-called mind-body parallelism, "[t]he order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (E2p7; C I, 451 / G II, 89) and "the order of actions and passions of our body is, by nature, at one with the order of actions and passions of the mind" (E3p2s; C I, 494 / G II, 141). Moreover, Spinoza argues that "[t]he 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)" (E3p2; C I, 494 / G II, 141). Modes of different attributes (such as bodies in extension and ideas, or minds, in thought) can only have modes of their same attribute as their proximate causes (E2p6 and E2p7s). In other words, only a body can put another body into motion or to rest, and only an idea can cause another idea to exist. Therefore, Spinoza claims:

> [S]o long as things are considered as modes of thinking, we must explain the order of the whole of nature, *or* the connection of causes, through the attribute of thought alone. And insofar as they are considered as modes of extension, the order of the whole of nature must be explained through the attribute of extension alone.
> (E2p7s; C I, 452 / G II, 90)

Based on these premises, it follows that whatever we may conclude regarding the behaviour of an individual by analysing her states of mind (if this is possible), must eventually correspond and lead to the same conclusions that we may also draw, regarding the same individual, by limiting our analysis to an in-depth survey of her bodily functions and the way in which they necessarily interact with the external environment.[9] Whether or not I conceive of it as provided with a conscious mind, a body in motion will always and necessarily act in the same way, according to the laws of physics. Hence, from a Spinozistic standpoint, we have no need to distinguish between conscious and non-conscious entities in order to distinguish in nature "behavior of a certain sort [...] from 'behavior' of other sorts", as Wilson would have us do, since none of the peculiarities which characterise specific human behaviour — and which we are used to associating with some specific human mental phenomena — are determined by the presence of consciousness *per se*, or by the presence of mentality, in general.[10]

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[9] In this regard, Margaret Wilson correctly writes:

> [T]he mental aspect of finite things is, like the material, a 'part of nature': minds themselves belong to 'nature's order'. [...] the changes of the ideas that compose minds are subject to deterministic explanation in some way parallel to explanation of material change according to the laws of matter-in-motion.
> (Wilson [1999] 1999c, 178)

Yet, this answer to Wilson's objection provides a further sense in which her observation becomes relevant. For, even if Spinoza's thought-extension parallelism prevents us from concluding that the presence of mentality as such may determine any specific behaviour in nature, the same thought-extension parallelism requires us to admit that different kinds of corporeal behaviours must necessarily be accompanied by the presence of different, corresponding kinds of thought activities. Hence, if there is a specific kind of behaviour that we may call "human", then we can associate that behaviour with the presence of a specific kind of mental life which is also definable as peculiarly "human". Vice versa, the presence of a kind of mentality which we can define as typically "human", must express itself, in the corporeal domain, in a kind of behaviour that we shall also recognise as peculiarly "human".

We are therefore left wanting an answer to the following question: how do we define specifically human behaviour and mentality? As we shall see, Spinoza does not provide any conclusive definitions of these.[11] Rather, what Spinoza seems to provide, in his *Ethics*, is the description of a sophisticated mechanism by which we, from a first-person point of view, acknowledge humanity in individuals by recognising, in nature, something "similar to us".

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[10] As pointed out in the previous chapter (chapter 1, footnote 56), Wilson recognises this peculiar consequence of Spinoza's parallelistic conception of mental and corporeal events:

> Spinoza maintains that all physical phenomena whatsoever, including (one must suppose) what we think of as 'intelligent behavior', are susceptible of explanation within the realm of physical causes exclusively. Mental 'determination' of anything material is, according to his system, inconceivable. (And, likewise — and perhaps less attractively from a present day perspective — he holds that material explanation of mental occurrences is ruled out).
>
> (Wilson [1999] 1999c, 178)

[11] The absence of such definitions in Spinoza constitutes the main problem investigated by Julien Busse (2009). See also Matheron (1978) 2011a; Sharp 2011b, 94; Sangiacomo 2013b, 85-87.

In the rest of this chapter, therefore, I will explore and try to make sense of this mechanism. I will begin, however, by analysing those cases in which Spinoza denies the presence of the basic features that characterise human behaviour — cases in which he, despite his panpsychism, seems to deny mentality to individuals outright.

3. Mindless automata and spiritual automata in the TIE

There is a passage, in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, where Spinoza claims that, under certain circumstances, some individuals "must be regarded as automata, completely lacking a mind" (TIE §48; C I, 22 / G II, 18). Spinoza is addressing there some supposed radical sceptics who, in opposition to the philosophical method that Spinoza is expounding, are willing to deny that one may know any truth whatsoever — let alone deduce one truth from another.

> But perhaps, afterwards, some sceptic would still doubt both the first truth itself and everything we shall deduce according to the standard of the first truth. If so, then either he will speak contrary to his own consciousness [*contra conscientiam loquetur*], or we shall confess that there are men whose minds also are completely blinded [*penitus ... animo occæcatos*], either from birth, or from prejudices, i.e., because of some external chance. For they are not even aware of themselves [*neque seipsos sentiunt*].
>
> (TIE §47; C I, 22 / G II, 18)

Examples that employ soulless automata — mostly referred to as "zombies" — are commonly used in contemporary philosophy of mind. In philosophy, zombies are conceived of as beings virtually identical to their conscious counterparts in every aspect of their behaviour and relevant physical functions, "but lacking conscious experiences altogether" (Chalmers 1996, 94). Their role in thought experiments is usually to support the claim that there is no entailment from physical facts to facts regarding consciousness: the conceivability of philosophical zombies, that is, seems to provide arguments in favour of the thesis according to which the presence of conscious experience cannot be inferred from any of the physical, functional, or behavioural features of a living being, nor can it be caused by these features, or ascribed to the presence or absence of any of them.[12]

Spinoza's reference to soulless automata is, however, different from contemporary thought experiments employing zombies in at least two important respects. First, despite the hypothetical situation that he describes in the quoted passage, Spinoza does not seem to refer to fictional, philosophically useful entities. Rather, he points at potentially real people — people, moreover, who take some precise philosophical stances — and prescribes to regard them and treat them as individuals devoid of any mentality. Second — and more importantly — differently from contemporary philosophical zombies, there is a specific kind of behaviour that gives Spinoza's supposed mindless automata away, revealing and denoting these particularly stubborn sceptics as individuals who, in Spinoza's terms, "are not even aware of themselves". Indeed, Spinoza seems willing to conclude for the lack of any form of self-awareness based on a series of observations concerning their behaviour: namely, from what these sceptics say. In the following lines, he writes:

> If they affirm or doubt something, they do not know that they affirm or doubt. They say that they know nothing, and that they do not even know that they know nothing. And even this they do not say absolutely. For they are afraid to confess that they exist, so long as

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[12] For a survey on the philosophical use of the notion of "zombie", see Kirk 2015.

> they know nothing. In the end, they must be speechless, lest by chance they assume something that might smell of truth.
>
> (TIE §47; C I, 22 / G II, 18)

Faced with this kind of responses, Spinoza considers two possibilities. On the one hand, it could be the case that the words of such sceptics simply do not depict the truth: their assertions systematically fail to describe any of their actual beliefs (anything they may take to know or not to know, that is, about themselves and the world).[13] In this first scenario, these radical sceptics are certainly conceived of as human beings — endowed with a human soul and conscious access to at least some of their mental states, that is to say. However, they regularly and stubbornly lie when inquired about what they know or seem to know. These sceptics, in Spinoza's words, "speak against their consciousness".[14]

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[13] By building on the thesis that ideas, in Spinoza, can be usefully equated to the contemporary notion of "propositional attitudes", Martin Lenz argues that Spinoza's overall conception of idea can be reduced to that of "belief": "according to Spinoza, for human beings every idea is a belief" (Lenz 2013, 42). See also Sandler 2005, 75: "All ideas, *qua idea*, involve affirmation or negation and are thereby beliefs". A problem related with a straightforward identification of ideas and beliefs, in Spinoza, is that it would make it difficult to understand the nature of what he calls "affects" of joy and sadness: in which sense do my feelings of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain — which Spinoza equates to ideas (E3p11s) — correspond to beliefs? Sandler overcome this problem by postulating the existence of a "dual nature" of ideas: "an affective one and a representational one". Affects of joy and sadness, on his reading, would correspond therefore to the "affective aspect" of our beliefs (Sandler 2005, 76, n. 17). Lenz, instead, characterises Spinoza's account of ideas *qua* beliefs in terms of "thick beliefs" (the notion of "thickness" is borrowed from Williams 2006, 129 fol.), "in the sense that they are inherently emotional and evaluative" (Lenz 2013, 50). As we will see in sections 5, 6, and 7, the capacity to ascribe to other beings not only intentional states — such as beliefs — but also affective states of joy and sadness — understood as phenomenal states of mind, such that our comprehension of them is inseparable from the knowledge of "what it is like to have them" — is fundamental for Spinoza's theory of human recognition and for the building up of a shared notion of "humanity".

[14] The Latin expression used by Spinoza (*contra conscientiam loquere*) could also be translated as "speaking against their conscience". There are no strong motives to have a propensity for one translation rather than another, in this case, as long as they both convey Spinoza's intention to stress the fact that the words uttered by the radical sceptics, if taken seriously, cannot reflect the things that they really think and feel. Moreover — and more importantly — the sceptics' words also make it impossible for us to understand what kind of thoughts may truly populate their minds. As we shall see, this is the perspective from which, on Spinoza's account, incomprehensible talking, systematic lies, and deceitful behaviour can be equated with "complete lack of mind" (and, hence, of consciousness) — even in a universe where "all individuals [...], though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate" (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 96) and provided with a conscious mind.

On the other hand, Spinoza considers the alternative possibility that such sceptics may be "men whose minds are completely blinded". They really have no awareness of what is going on inside or outside them. In this sense, the words they utter have no meaning at all and, as far as we may know, they could just as well be attributed to a mindless machine.

In both cases, the conclusion, according to Spinoza, must be the same: "there is no speaking of the sciences with them" (TIE §48; C I, 22 / G II, 18).

> For, if someone proves something to them, they do not know whether the argument is a proof or not. If they deny, grant, or oppose, they do not know that they deny, grant, or oppose. So they must be regarded as automata, completely lacking a mind [*tanquam automata, quæ mente omnino carent*].
>
> (TIE §48; C I, 22 / G II, 18)

Now, not only does Spinoza's final assertion – that radical sceptics of this sort should really be conceived as mindless automata – sound a bit exaggerated, if taken at face value, but it also seems to conflict with some central tenets of Spinoza's philosophical system. For, on Spinoza's account, neither does there seem to be anything wrong in portraying humans as "automata", nor does being an automaton necessarily conflict with having a mind. Quite the opposite: one of the explicit purposes of the TIE is to conceive of the human soul itself "as acting according to certain laws, like a spiritual automaton [*secundum certas leges agentem, et quasi aliquod automa spirituale*]" (TIE §85; C I, 37 / G II, 32). Such a goal squares well with two of Spinoza's metaphysical cornerstones: that is, his rejection of free will and his mind-body parallelism.[15] As we have seen, the combination of these theses demands that

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Concerning Spinoza's use of the term *conscientia* in this passage, see also Malinowski-Charles 2004a, 125.

[15] These two theses will only be explicitly formulated, and fully developed, in the *Ethics*. However, they both seem to be already at work in the TIE. There, even though Spinoza states that confused ideas are "formed against our will" (TIE §108; C I, 44 / G II, 39), the rejection of a *free* will seems implied by Spinoza's conception of the human soul "as acting according to certain laws, like a

everything that concerns bodies and physical objects be conceived in rigorously mechanistic terms, through the laws of physics alone, and be mirrored by some sort of mental activity, which is in turn to be conceived of in deterministic terms.[16] On the one hand, therefore, there is no complex body existing in nature that cannot be conceived of as an automaton (or as a part of it). On the other hand, there is no automaton (or anything existing in nature, in general) that can reasonably be conceived of as "completely blind" or "lacking a mind".[17] These considerations must also concern all functions and possible ways of behaving that we may observe in and ascribe to a human body. A well-performing human body — one, that is, that we would associate with a well-performing human mind and relevant conscious experience — is properly understood as a well-performing corporeal automaton. Hence, within the philosophical framework drawn by Spinoza himself, accusing someone (or

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spiritual automaton" (TIE §85). Indeed, Spinoza clarifies that clear and distinct ideas, which "seem to depend absolutely on our power alone", follow "from the *necessity* of our nature", and not by any freedom of the will (TIE §108; C I, 44 / G II, 39. My italics). Moreover, as demonstrated by Matheron ([1987] 2011b), in the TIE Spinoza employs a version of his parallelism theory that involves both an "extra-cogitative" aspect (i.e., that the order and connection of ideas in thought is the same order and connection of external things) and an "intra-cogitative" aspect (i.e., that the order and connection by which ideas are caused in the soul is the same order and connection according to which ideas themselves are conceived by means of other ideas; the notions of "extra-cogitative" and "intra-cogitative" parallelism are taken from Gueroult [1974, 15-16, 51, 66-70]). Not only, according to Spinoza, do ideas represent in the soul the order and connection of their objects (for "the idea is objectively in the same way as its object is really", Spinoza writes in TIE §41 [C I, 20 / G II, 16]), but they are also causally connected to each other as their objects are (since, as Spinoza writes in TIE §38, "the relation between the two ideas is the same as the relation between the formal essences of those ideas" [C I, 19 / G II, 16]). Ideas are in turn objects of other ideas (see TIE §§33-34; the notion of an "idea of an idea [*idea ideæ*]" is mentioned in TIE §38 [C I, 19 / G II, 16]), which mirror the order and connection of their objects and are causally connected to each other according to the same order and connection of their objects. This allows Spinoza to characterise the soul as a "spiritual automaton", based on the claim that the "objective effects of the ideas proceed in the soul according to the formal nature of its object" (TIE §85; C I, 37 / G II, 32): that is, because ideas in the soul interact with each other and are cause of one another following the same order and connection with which their objects interact with each other and cause one another (TIE §41, n. P).

[16] François Zourabichvili (2002, 122-145) attempts a systematic interpretation of Spinoza's conception of mind and ideas as determined by mechanistic laws comparable with, yet not reducible to, those of the physics of bodies (a "physics of thought", or even, a "cogitative physics", as Zourabichvili calls it).

[17] Frederick Ablondi and Steve Barbone write: "Spinoza's monistic naturalism precludes a division of the world into minds and bodies, or persons and machines" (Ablondi and Barbone 1994, 77).

even, something) of being a mindless automaton seems particularly paradoxical.[18]

Furthermore, Spinoza adds that there is other evidence to suggest that the supposed sceptics have a nature similar to ours. In all other situations, Spinoza writes, they exhibit normal human behaviour, strive for the same things that we strive for, and display a reasoned use of language, aimed at satisfying the needs of their physiological nature.

> For as far as the needs of life and society are concerned, necessity forces them to suppose that they exist, and to seek their own advantage, and in taking oaths, to affirm and deny many things.
> (TIE §48; C I, 22 / G II, 18)

This is the kind of behaviour that we would attribute to, and expect from, any human being, under normal circumstances. In such situations we would not fail to regard similar individuals as humans and to ascribe them a human mind – a mind, that is, capable of all the functions, feelings and thoughts of which our mind is also capable. In these ordinary occasions of life, in other words, we would empathise with these individuals: as Spinoza also writes in the *Ethics* – as we will see – we would imitate and share their affects (E3p27).

In conclusion, we have good reasons to interpret the whole argument put forward by Spinoza as a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*. Faced with radical scepticism, we are confronted with a dilemma of which we must grasp the first horn – that is, that a sceptic of this sort can only be a systematic liar, someone who deliberately "speaks contrary to his own consciousness" – since the alternative hypothesis is to be rejected as absurd – namely, admitting "that there are men whose minds also are completely blinded", to the point that they are "not even aware of themselves".[19] So, why does Spinoza conclude his anti-sceptic rant otherwise, by inviting us to regard these individuals as "automata, completely lacking a mind"?

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[18] According to Christopher Noble, in the TIE Spinoza "contrasts two types of automata as a way of illustrating his distinction between the imagination and the intellect" (2017, 70). In this sense, the "mindless automaton", rather than implying lack of mentality and awareness, is comparable to someone who "is dreaming with open eyes" (Noble 2017, 71).

To be sure, this claim is also intended to rhetorically stress the stubbornness of the sceptics: their obstinacy in denying "anything that might smell of truth" makes engagement in meaningful philosophical discussion with them impossible. Even so, Spinoza's rhetorical use of the notion of "mindless automata" achieves this intended effect by suggesting one important thing: if we were to judge these sceptics through their words alone, we would ultimately have no available criteria to assess whether we are interacting with self-aware human beings, or with some other sort of automatic device that is simply meant to simulate the exterior behaviour and linguistic expressions of a human being, without, however, sharing any of our thoughts.[20] As far as we may infer from what they say, these individuals could have no awareness at all of any of their mental states; if they had one, it must be of a totally different kind — say, a totally different "subjective character of experience" (Nagel 1974), as incomprehensible to us as it may be that of an alien, or a bat. However, Spinoza's metaphysical pillars — as we have seen — exclude that anything may really exist in nature that has no mind and, consequently, no consciousness at all. Hence, we can conclude that Spinoza is using the juxtaposition of radical sceptics and mindless automata as a kind of metaphor, to point at the fact that the kind of behaviour displayed by the sceptics' words does not allow us to deduce, in them, the presence of any sort of mental life which we can identify with our own. This reading is also confirmed by further examples, drawn from other texts of Spinoza, which I will turn to analyse in the next section.

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[19] For further discussions concerning Spinoza's rebuttal of scepticism, see Doney 1971; Bolton 1985; Della Rocca 1994 and 2007; Popkin 2003, 239-253; Perler 2007 and 2017.

[20] In other words, for Spinoza these sceptics would not pass a so-called "Turing test", which Alan Turing called — using a terminology that, as we shall see, sounds particularly apt with regard to some of the topics touched on in the rest of this chapter — "the imitation game" (Turing 1950).

4. Automata, beasts, and other incomprehensible minds

Spinoza uses the concept of "automaton" to express absence of mentality on another occasion, in his *Theological-Political Treatise*. In this case, not only does Spinoza associates automata with lack of mentality, but he also equates automata to beasts. In TTP XIII, 17, he writes:

> Someone may say: indeed, it's not necessary to understand God's attributes, but it's quite necessary to believe in them, simply, without any demonstration. But anyone who says this is talking nonsense. Invisible things, and those which are the objects only of the mind, can't be seen by any other eyes than by demonstrations. Someone who doesn't have demonstrations doesn't see anything at all in these things. If they repeat something they've heard about them, it no more touches or shows their mind than do the words of a parrot or an automaton, which speak without a mind or without meaning [*verba psittaci, vel automati, quæ sine mente, et sensu loquuntur*].
> (TTP XIII, 17; C II, 260-261 / G III, 170. Translation modified)

In this passage, Spinoza contends that believing in things that we can neither see nor understand, and repeating words that we have been taught, without however being able to grasp their meaning and identify the object to which they refer, is not different from the behaviour of parrots and automata, which utter words with no real knowledge of what they say. Those who act in this way, in Spinoza's terms, "speak without a mind". Parrots and automata, in this sense, are on a par with radical sceptics and "blind believers" — if we may call them in this way. Their behavioural expressions (verbal expressions, in these cases) do not allow us to establish any correspondence between their exterior acts and the kind of thoughts that they may — or may not — have.

There is a second passage, still in the TTP, where automata are recalled alongside beasts. Spinoza writes:

> The end of the republic [...] is not to change men from being rational into beasts or automata [*homines ex rationalibus bestias, vel automata facere*], but to enable their minds and bodies to perform their functions safely, to enable them to use their reason freely, and not to clash with one another in hatred, anger or deception, or deal inequitably with one another.
>
> (TTP XX, 12; C II, 346 / G III, 241. Translation modified)

In this case, the emphasis is not directly put on the absence of thought that would characterise beasts or automata, but on the lack of humanity that tyranny brings about. The aim of the state, Spinoza contends, is to "enable humans to use their reason freely". However, according to Spinoza, to act according to one's own reason is nothing else but to act according to the laws of one's own nature (E4p24d).[21] Hence, beasts and automata are evoked by

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[21] The traits that characterise human reason will be better analysed in chapter 4. Suffice it to say, for the moment, that, according to Spinoza, acting rationally is the same thing as acting virtuously (E4p24); acting virtuously, in turn, is nothing else but acting according to the laws of one's own nature (E4d8). To act according to one's own reason, therefore, is nothing else but to be able to bring about things which can be understood as effects that follow from the laws of one's own nature alone, on Spinoza's account. The presence of reason, in this sense, cannot and does not exclusively define the human essence, or the human nature, as opposed to the nature of other animals. For reason, on Spinoza's account, does not denote a superior cognitive faculty, to which a limited set of individuals (i.e., humans) would have privileged access. I am inclined, therefore, to agree with Wilson ([1999] 1999c, 184-187), according to whom Spinoza has no basis (and, indeed, he provides no clear indication in this sense) to deny reason to other individuals apart from humans – insofar as reason is generally defined as the presence of adequate ideas, originating from common properties that an individual shares with the external environment and with other individuals (see E2p38-40s2). Concerning this point, see also Matheron (1978) 2011a, 19-24; Busse 2009, 51-73; Sharp 2011a, 53, and 2011b, 97; Grey 2013, 373-374. According to Wilson ([1999] 1999c, 192-193, n. 20), Edwin Curley interprets the last passage quoted from the TTP as suggesting that Spinoza denies reason to animals and that, therefore, the presence of the faculty of reason marks an essential difference between animals and humans. On this basis, Curley translates the Latin formula, quoted above, *homines ex rationalibus bestias facere*, as implying that humans are changed "from *rational beings* into beasts" (C II, 346. My italics). He provides a similar translation of an almost identical passage found in the Preface to the TTP: *homines ex rationalibus brutos reddunt* (TTP Pref, 15; C II, 70 / G III, 8). In none of these passages, however, does Spinoza define humans as "rational beings". By contrast, in the *Ethics*, the definition of "man" as a "rational animal [*animal rationale*]" is counted by Spinoza among the "universal notions" – that is, confused images of multiple things that each one forms differently, "in accordance with what the body has more often been affected by" – and put alongside other flawed definitions of man, such as "animal of erect stature [*animal erectæ staturæ*]", "animal capable of laughter [*animal risibile*]", or "featherless biped [*animal bipes sine plumis*]" (E2p40s1; C I, 477 / G II, 121). Consider also the following passage, quoted from Spinoza's *Political Treatise*:

Spinoza in order to stress the absurdity of a political system that would compel humans to act against their own nature, expecting them to change into something they are not.[22]

Excerpts like those I just quoted from the TTP, where Spinoza equates automata and animals, and opposes them to human beings, may give the false impression that Spinoza is possibly embracing a Cartesian view over the nature of animals – conceiving them, that is, as purely corporeal machines, potentially devoid of mind and thinking capabilities.[23] That this cannot be the

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> When we say, then, that the best state is one where men pass their lives harmoniously, I understand a human life [*vitam humanam intelligo*], which is defined not only by the circulation of the blood, and other things common to all animals, but mostly by reason, the true virtue and life of the mind.
>
> (TP V, 5; C I, 530 / G III, 296. Translation modified)

In the quotation above, Curley italicises the term "human"; this emphasis, however, is absent in both the OP (290) and the NS (328). The specifically human life, defined by reason, to which Spinoza alludes in TP V, 5, is nothing but the life of human beings insofar as they act according to the laws of their nature alone, not compelled by external causes. Hence, a state that allows humans to spend a properly "human life", in Spinoza's terms, is a state that allows them to freely act according to the laws of their nature alone – hence, to use their own reason. Thus, in TTP XX, 12, after having claimed that the aim of the state is not to change humans into different beings, but "to enable them to use their reason freely", Spinoza concludes that "the end of the republic is really freedom" (C II, 346 / G III, 241).

[22] With regard to the absurdity, or inconceivability that humans can be changed into beasts, see TIE §62:

> [I]f by chance we should say that men are changed in a moment into beasts, that is said very generally, so that there is in the mind no concept, i.e., idea, *or* connection of subject and predicate.
>
> (TIE §62; C I, 28 / G II, 24)

With reference to Spinoza's last quotation from the TTP, this remark points at the metaphorical use that he is making of the equation between a human being stripped of her capability to reason – i.e., her capability to comply with her very own nature – and turning her into a beast.

[23] See, for example, Descartes's *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* XII (CSM I, 42 / AT X, 415), his *Discourse on the Method* I (CSM I, 112 / AT VI, 2) and *Discourse on the Method* V (CSM I, 134 / AT VI, 45-46), his *Replies* to the *Fourth Objections* (CSM II, 161-162 / AT VII, 230-231), the *Preface* to the French edition of his *Principles of Philosophy* (CSM I, 180 / AT IXB, 4), his *Passions of the Soul* I, 50 (CSM I, 348 / AT XI, 369) and *Passions of the Soul* II, 138 (CSM I, 376-378 / AT XI, 431), and his *Letter* to Henry More dated 5 February 1649 (CSMK 365-366 / AT V, 275-279). For a careful study of Descartes's account of animal automatism, see Kekedi 2015. It is to be noticed that Descartes, in his *Discourse on the Method* V, explicitly mentions "magpies and parrots" as animals capable of imitating the linguistic expressions of humans. Yet, on his account, their incapability of using language in a creative and meaningful way denotes them as purely corporeal machines, devoid of thinking capacities (CSM I, 140-141 / AT VI, 56-58). For Spinoza, conversely, the impossibility of associating behavioural and verbal expressions of animals to corresponding mental states is rather to be understood as marking the difference between human

case, however, results quite clearly from some other passages that we can find in his *Ethics*.[24] For example, in E3p57s Spinoza writes:

> [T]he affects of the animals which are called irrational (for after we know the origin of the mind, we cannot in any way doubt that the lower animals feel things [*bruta enim sentire nequaquam dubitare possumus, postquam mentis novimus originem*]) differ from men's affects as much as their nature differs from human nature. Both the horse and the man are driven by a lust to procreate; but the one is driven by an equine lust, the other by a human lust. So also the lusts and appetites of insects, fish, and birds must vary.
>
> (E3p57s; C I, 528 / G II, 187)

In this scholium, as we may observe, Spinoza attributes mentality and sensations to animals "which are called irrational [*quae irrationalia dicuntur*]".[25] This conclusion, Spinoza asserts, can be inferred by the same

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and non-human mentality – that is, the existence in non-human beings of a kind of mentality with which we cannot identify. I will demonstrate this thesis in the following part of this section.

[24] It could be objected that referring to the *Ethics* to make sense of passages contained in the TTP or in the TIE is methodologically questionable, given the different natures and dates of composition of the texts. Nevertheless, I doubt that Spinoza could have been inconsistent or could have changed his mind concerning this topic. As we have seen before, the elements that allow him to ascribe mentality to all individuals – that is, his thought-extension parallelism and his rejection of free will as a mark of mentality – are already present in the TIE. Furthermore, if we are to believe the *Notice to the Reader* written by the editors of the OP that introduces the TIE (C I, 6 / G II, 4), as well as some letters that Spinoza exchanged with Tschirnhaus by the beginning of 1675 (Ep 59-60), we can infer that Spinoza never abandoned the project to finish his TIE and never rejected the ideas that he expounds in it, although "they aren't yet written out in an orderly fashion" (Ep 60; C II, 433 / G IV, 271). The theses contained in the TIE, therefore, do not deserve quick dismissal, should they appear to clash with those of other texts, but careful exegesis. As far as the TTP is concerned, we know by Spinoza's Ep 30 to Oldenburg that, by the end of 1665, he had already started writing "a treatise on my opinion about scripture" (C II, 14 / G IV, 166). By the same date, according to Spinoza's Ep 28 to Johannes Bouwmeester (dated June 1665), we also know that the composition of the *Ethics* was already in an advanced stage – possibly including propositions that will be later comprised in the Fourth Part, although, by that time, the text was conceived as composed only of three parts; in this regard, Spinoza mentions to Bouwmeester that he reached the 80th proposition of the provisional third part of the manuscript (C I, 396 / G IV, 163). Concerning this, see also C I, 389, n. 20, and C I, 396-397, n. 25.

[25] Once again, it is to be noticed that Spinoza does not explicitly deny rationality to animals. Animals "are said [*dicuntur*]" to be irrational; whether this characterisation actually holds, for Spinoza, is not inferable by this scholium.

means by which he also demonstrated the origin of the human mind.[26] That animals can "feel things" and think,[27] that is, is a conclusion that coherently follows from that set of propositions and demonstrations that occupy the first section of the Second Part of the *Ethics* (until E2p13s, that is to say),[28] and which Spinoza characterises as "completely general [*admodum communia*]" and which "do not pertain more to man than to other individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate" (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 96).[29]

There is no reason whatsoever, therefore, to deny animals — as well as any other corporeal thing, let us add — minds and sensations of their corporeal affections and their appetites, insofar as the appetite is defined as "the very essence" of a thing (E3p9s; C I, 500 / G II, 147) and is identified by Spinoza with "the striving by which *each* thing strives to persevere in its being" (E3p7; C I, 499 / G II, 146. My italics).[30] Yet, in E3p57 — which introduces the scholium in the block quotation above — Spinoza also maintains that "[e]ach affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one from the essence of the other" (C I, 528 / G II, 186). Hence, Spinoza concludes:

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[26] Concerning this point, see also Wilson (1999) 1999c, 182.

[27] I recall here that, according to Spinoza, to feel things [*sentire*] and to perceive things [*percipere*] are modes of thinking, characterising minds and ideas, and they can be regarded as synonymous. See, again, E2p49s (C I, 487-488 / G II, 133); see also E2a4-5 (C I, 448 / G II, 86). In TIE §78, Spinoza defines an "idea" as "nothing but a sensation of a certain sort [*nihil aliud nisi talis sensatio*]" (C I, 34 / G II, 29).

[28] The title of the Second Part of the *Ethics* is, indeed, "On the Nature and Origin of the Mind [*De Natura et Origine Mentis*]" (C I, 446 / G II, 84).

[29] As we have seen above (see footnote 1 in this chapter), also the demonstration of the existence of ideas of ideas — that is, awareness of one's own mind, feelings, sensations, thoughts, and any mental state in general — is regarded by Spinoza as "universal [*universalis*]" (E2p43d; C I, 479 / G II, 123). Hence, not only all individuals have minds and corresponding mental states, but also all individuals are conscious of their mental states. Concerning this point, see also Melamed 2011, 161-162. The relationship between Spinoza's account of consciousness and his theory of the "ideas of ideas" is analysed in section 5 of the previous chapter.

[30] Indeed, the same reasoning, according to Spinoza, can apply "concerning any singular thing, however composite it is conceived to be, and however capable of doing many things" — even to a stone set in motion, which "strives to continue moving" and, therefore, "is conscious only of its striving, and not at all indifferent" (Ep 58; C II, 428 / G IV, 266). This aspect of Spinoza's panpsychism is analysed in section 7 of the previous chapter. See also Melamed 2011, 161-162.

> [T]hough each individual lives content with his own nature, by which he is constituted, and is glad of it, nevertheless that life with which each one is content, and that gladness, are nothing but the idea, *or* soul [*idea seu anima*], of the individual. And so the gladness of the one differs in nature from the gladness of the other as much as the essence of the one differs from the essence of the other.
> (E3p57s; C I, 528 / G II, 187)

As we can see again, Spinoza does not deny that "each individual" — including, thus, animals — has a mind and a certain consciousness of its appetites and affects, of which it "is content [*est contentum*]". Indeed, he asserts that "we cannot in any way doubt" it. For an individual's mind and affects are nothing but the "idea, *or* soul [*idea seu anima*]" of the individual, and of each thing God "can form the idea" (E2p3; C I, 449 / G II, 87), which "constitutes the mind" of that thing (E2p12d; C I, 457 / G II, 95). Furthermore, of each mind, or idea, "there is also in God an idea" (E2p20; C I, 467 / G II, 108), which provides a striving individual with knowledge of the mind itself — that is, what Spinoza refers to as "desire", or "consciousness [*conscientia*]" of one's essence and appetites (E3p9s; C I, 500 / G II, 148).

The equation between beasts and automata, which we found twice in the TTP, is not therefore meant to exclude — as Descartes would have it — that parrots or other animals may have minds, affects, and relevant consciousness of their inner states. Rather, beasts and automata are evoked by Spinoza to stress the incompatibility between the proper human nature — and the corresponding human mentality — and the kind of mentality that other things, whose nature is different from ours, may instead have. For each one's mind and affects "differ in nature" as the essences of the individuals themselves differ from one another. The mark of this "difference in nature", on Spinoza's account, is our incapability to comprehend what may characterise the mentality of non-human beings: what passes into the minds of automata, animals, and even radical sceptics (should we take seriously their words, that is to say), is impossible to understand, from our own point of view. Hence, not only can they all be called "non-human", but also, they can be treated as outright mindless, from our own standpoint.

What is even more interesting is that, building on the same grounds, Spinoza also gets to the conclusion that minds and affects of human beings may differ in nature from one another. At the end of the same scholium, Spinoza writes:

> [F]rom E3p57 it follows that there is no small difference between the gladness by which a drunk is led and the gladness a philosopher possesses. I wished to mention this in passing.
>
> (E3p57s; C I, 528 / G II, 187)

Just as human minds and corresponding human affects differ in nature from minds and affects of other beings, so minds and affects of human beings may also differ between each other as much as the respective essences also differ. The consequence is that also what passes into other seemingly human minds may eventually appear impenetrable to us, to the point that it is impossible to recognise anymore whether we are dealing with human beings — that is, individuals sharing the same human nature and relevant human mentality — or non-human beings. What Spinoza "mentions in passing" in E3p57s is not really an isolated case. For, still in the *Ethics*, he refers to other situations in which the natures of other individuals' minds might seem, on his account, utterly incomprehensible and alien to him, from a subjective point of view. In E2p49s, he writes:

> I grant entirely that a man placed in such an equilibrium (viz. who perceives nothing but thirst and hunger, and such food and drink as

> are equally distant from him) will perish of hunger and thirst. If they ask me whether such a man should not be thought an ass, rather than a man, I say that I do not know — just as I also do not know how highly we should esteem one who hangs himself, or children, fools, and madmen, etc.
>
> (E2p49s; C I, 490 / G II, 135)

Spinoza is here discussing the case of the so-called "Buridan's ass": placed in front of two identical and equidistant sources of nourishment, an individual devoid of free will will necessarily die of starvation, because of the impossibility of making a sensible choice about where to get the food. Spinoza is willing to accept this paradoxical consequence ensuing from his rejection of free will. Yet, he also hastens to add that he would not dare to define that individual as "human". Why does Spinoza feel the urge to make this clarification, since the claim that "a man placed in such an equilibrium [...] will perish of hunger and thirst" seems perfectly acceptable for him, and consistent with his overall philosophy? And why does he also compare an individual put in such a state of perfect equilibrium with other (seemingly) human individuals, such as suicide victims, children, fools, and madmen? Surely, once again, all the examples put forward by Spinoza — that is, donkeys, suicide victims, children, fools, and madmen — must be regarded as each having its own mind, capable of corresponding sensations, affects, and conscious desires. Yet, not only does Spinoza refuse to express any opinion concerning the place in nature, or "how highly [*quanti æstimandus*]" he would esteem "one who hangs himself, or children, fools, and madmen, etc. [*ille, qui se pensilem facit, et ... pueri, stulti, vesani, etc.*]"; but also, in the case of the Buridan's ass situation, he says that he would not be able to distinguish whether that individual, put in a state of perfect equilibrium, is a human being, a donkey, or anything else.

We can attempt a possible explanation. As far as the case of the Buridan's ass is concerned, we can understand Spinoza's reluctance to express an opinion concerning the nature of an individual put in a state of perfect equilibrium, if we consider that the total idleness and inactivity characterising such an individual would prevent us from inferring anything about what is going on into her or its mind, judging from her or its behaviour — for we would be able to observe no behavioural response at all. Whether that individual has the exterior shape of a human being or a donkey, its behaviour would in any case not be different from that of a statue — or what we would regard as a perfect, yet "mindless", replica — and we would ultimately have no criterion to distinguish between them.[31] As a matter of fact, whether it is a human being, a donkey, or a statue, an inactive body would simply have an idle, empty mind, on Spinoza's account (E3p2s)[32] — so that all of them could be rightly regarded as identical to one another, with respect to their equal lack of any kind of motion and mentality. Along the same lines, we can assume that Spinoza is also stressing that he cannot figure at all what passes into the minds of suicide victims, children, fools, and madmen, based on how they act.

If this is the case, then we have reasons to assume that, according to Spinoza, even if mentality and consciousness can be universally ascribed to all existing things, the attribution of a specifically human mental life and consciousness depends on a process that builds on the observation and understanding of external behaviour. In the next section, I will focus on this process, by which we recognise "things like us" and ascribe human mentality to them. I shall argue that this process — which Spinoza names "imitation of the affects" — is based, on the one hand, on the way in which some things may act and affect our imagination and, on the other hand, on attributing to the objects of our imagination the same kinds of mental states that we are used to experiencing in ourselves when we behave similarly.

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[31] The analogy works, of course, only if we do not consider the physical decay that would inevitably characterise the starving human or donkey. Further, this thought experiment seems to raise similar problems to those posed by that of the impassive thinker, evoked by Edgar Singer (1912) as a counterexample to his identification of consciousness and behaviour: how do we know whether there is conscious activity in the mind of a thinker, if the thinker is immobile while she focuses on her thoughts?

[32] "Does not experience also teach", Spinoza asks in E3p2s, "that if [...] the body is inactive, the mind is at the same time incapable of thinking?" (C I, 495 / G II, 142).

5. Human beings as "things like us": the "imitation of the affects"

The expression "a thing like us", with reference to human beings, first appears in the Third Part of the *Ethics*. In E3p27, Spinoza asserts that "[i]f we imagine a thing like us [*rem nobis similem*], toward which we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect" (C I, 508 / G II, 160). As Pierre-François Moreau observes, this sudden introduction[33] of a reference to "things like us" comes as a surprise for the reader:

> Proposition 27 introduces the expression "a thing like us (*res nobis similis*)", which will henceforth be of fundamental significance; and, suddenly, we notice that in all the past propositions there has been no explicit reference to man. The objects of our passions, e.g. our rivals or our allies, are referred to in a general way as "things" (*res*), and without any mention of their human quality. They could have been inanimate objects, beasts, power or glory. The intervening things might have been groups or animals. Any of these could naturally have been humans as well, but this quality was never a relevant factor. Here, though, it is the central issue. And Spinoza, who never provides a definition of man, assumes that we shall spontaneously recognize what this "thing like us" is.
>
> (Moreau 2011, 168-169)

The absence of explicit references to human beings, in Spinoza's previous discussions of human affects, can be explained if we consider that the mechanism by which we are affected with affects that we imagine as also present in "things like us" — a mechanism which he calls "imitation of the affects [*affectuum imitatio*]" (E3p27s; C I, 509 / G II, 160) — is the same mechanism by which we also get to "judge" something "to be like us [*nobis similem judicemus*]" (E3p22s; C I, 507 / G II, 157). How does it come about, then, according to Spinoza, that we "judge" something "to be like us" — that we judge something, that is, to be a human being, endowed with a mind like ours and similar affects?[34] Spinoza provides the answer in the demonstration of E3p27:

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[33] Before E3p27, the reference to "things like us" first appears in E3p22s – *eam nobis similem judicemus* (C I, 507 / G II, 157) – and, then, in E3p23s – *res nobis simile* (C I, 507 / G II, 158). In both occasions, however, Spinoza points out that the meaning and role of this expression will be clarified in E3p27.

> The images of things are affections of the human body whose ideas represent external bodies as present to us, i.e., whose ideas involve the nature of our body and at the same time the present nature of the external body. So if the nature of the external body is like the nature of our body, then the idea of the external body we imagine will involve an affection of our body like the affection of the external body. Consequently, if we imagine someone like us to be affected with some affect, this imagination will express an affection of our body like this affect. And so, from the fact that we imagine a thing like us to be affected with an affect, we are affected with a like affect.
> (E3p27d; C I, 508-509 / G II, 160)

This demonstration relies on the capacity of the human body to be "disposed in a great many ways" (E2p14; C I, 462 / G II, 103), by being able to be "affected by external bodies in very many ways" (E2post3; C I, 462 / G II, 102) and to "move and dispose external bodies in a great many ways" (E2post6; C I, 462 / G II, 103). In other words, the peculiar complexity and plasticity of the human body enable it to interact with the external environment in numerous ways: it can be modified by external objects in several different ways, more or less permanently, and, at the same time, it can perform a great variety of actions, based on these interactions. In particular, according to Spinoza, the human body can retain in itself and reproduce the "impressions" – or even, in Spinoza's terms, the "images" – of external bodies, which are produced in it following contacts and interactions with these external bodies (E2p17d2).[35] The ideas of these images in us, Spinoza contends, "represent external bodies as present to us [*corpora externa velut nobis præsentia repræsentant*]" (E2p17s; C I, 465 / G II, 106. Translation modified). He also adds that "when the mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines" (E2p17s; C I, 465 / G II, 106). The bodies that we imagine as being present outside of us, therefore, are really "images of things" that exist in us; accordingly, the ideas that we have of external objects are really ideas of these images in us, that is, ideas of affections of our own body. This is the reason why Spinoza introduces the demonstration of E3p27, quoted above, by stressing that "[t]he images of things are affections of the human body whose ideas represent external bodies as present to us".

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[34] That by "things like us" we must understand other human beings is clear from Spinoza's reference to "men [*homines*]" in E3p29 and the relevant note (C I, 510 / G II, 162).

Now, according to Spinoza, when we imagine external bodies as present to us, via our own corporeal affections, we imagine these bodies as moving in space, as interacting with and being modified by other bodies, and as being affected themselves in some ways – briefly put, we imagine external bodies as behaving in certain ways within the surrounding environment, doing certain things and undergoing certain other things. Since, as we have seen, the external bodies that we imagine as present outside of us are nothing but ideas of affections taking place in ourselves, to imagine the affections of external bodies is to have, in our own body, affections or images that mirror the movements and the actions of the external bodies. Further, Spinoza contends that, if the nature of an external body which is imagined as present is sufficiently similar to that of our body, the movements and affections of the external body can correspond, in us, to images of affections and movements of which our body is also autonomously capable. While our body is affected in such a way by an external object, therefore, the affections aroused in us will be identical, or similar, to those that can be equally aroused in us by our own movements. In this way, the idea of an affection taking place in an external body, which we imagine as present, will correspond to the idea of an equal affection taking place in our body.[36] Hence, Spinoza adds in the demonstration of E3p27 that "if the nature of the external body is like the nature of our body, then the idea of the external body we imagine will involve an affection of our body like the affection of the external body".

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[35] See also E3post2:

> The human body can undergo many changes, and nevertheless retain impressions, *or* traces, of the objects [*objectorum impressiones seu vestigia*], and consequently, the same images of things.
>
> (E3post2; C I, 493 / G II, 139)

Spinoza also claims that among all the affections by which a human body can be affected, some of them will also be the cause of affects of joy, whereas some others will be the cause of affects of sadness — depending on whether these affections respectively increase or decrease the power of acting of the body and, in parallel, of the mind (E3p11s). Hence, by imagining and reproducing in us affections that we imagine as taking place in external bodies, we can be affected by corresponding affects of joy or sadness.[37] Yet, since we perceive the affection in us to be identical to the affection in the body that we imagine as present, we will be induced to imagine the external body as "a thing like us", which is affected with that affect too. Thus, Spinoza concludes his demonstration by claiming that "from the fact that we imagine a thing like us to be affected with an affect, we are affected with a like affect".

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[36] From this it follows that our mind can have the capacity to imagine our body as replicating the behaviour and affections of the external objects which are imagined as present. By referring to several studies in contemporary neuropsychology, Anna Boukouvala compares this aspect of Spinoza's theory of the imitation of the affects with recent findings on the role of the so-called "mirror neurons" (see, for example, Gallese and Goldman 1998). In particular, mirror neurons would enable in humans a mechanism "that matches observed acts executed by others on the observer's representations of the same motor acts" (Boukouvala 2017, 1013). This neurological mechanisms, she argues, would be "at the basis of the experiential understanding of the actions of others" (she mentions Rizzolatti and Craighero 2004, and Rizzolatti 2005) and of "the experiential understanding of the emotions of others, which drives to empathy" (she mentions Gallese 2003, Gallese et al. 2004, and Gallese 2009), so to bring about "our capacity to share the meaning of actions, intentions and emotions with others, thus grounding our identification with and connectedness to others" (Boukouvala 2017, 1013).

The important thing to note, here, is that the affects ascribed to the external things that we imagine as present are really the affects that we feel as ours, by perceiving and being affected by the images of these external things.[38] They are affects and feelings with which we are acquainted, that is, because we can feel them in ourselves. Thus, the mechanism of the imitation of the affects allows us to recognise "things like us" by ascribing to external bodies affects and thoughts that we feel and experience in ourselves, if the behaviour of an external body is reproducible by us and when such a behaviour, if imitated (even imaginatively), arouses in us certain kinds of mental states and feelings. We will therefore be led to associate certain behaviour of external bodies with the concomitant presence, in them, of certain affects and feelings with which we are acquainted, based on our own personal, subjective experience –

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[37] On these grounds, in E3p32s Spinoza also outlines the beginning of a theory of developmental psychology, according to which children get familiar with behavioural patterns and corresponding feelings by imitating and replicating them, since their bodies, when an affection or image is produced in them, must necessarily mirror the movements and affections of the external objects imagined as present. In Spinoza's words, this must happen "because, as we have said, the images of things are the very affections of the human body, *or* modes by which the human body is affected by external causes, and disposed to do this or that" (E3p32s; C I, 513 / G II, 165).

[38] Francesco Toto mentions this aspect of Spinoza's theory of the imitation of the affects (Toto 2013, 152, and 2016, 227-228, 231). It is to be noted that the same mechanism also explains how we ascribe thoughts to other things based on linguistic signs: we compare the thoughts aroused in us by the words that are uttered by the speaker, before ascribing to the speaker similar thoughts. So, in TTP I, 15, Spinoza writes:

> [B]ecause the mouth is related to the nature of the man saying this, and also because he to whom it is said has previously perceived the nature of the intellect, he easily understands the thought of the man speaking by comparison with his own.
> (TTP I, 15; C II, 81 / G III, 18)

thereby building the notion of "things like us": things, that is, capable of equal thoughts and feelings when they act in ways which are familiar to us.[39]

By using a contemporary terminology, we can say that, when we "judge something to be like us" via the mechanism of the imitation of the affects, not only do we take an "intentional stance" towards that thing's behaviour, but we also take a "phenomenal stance" (Robbins and Jack 2006); that is to say, that not only must individuals whose behaviour physically resembles ours have similar and predictable intentions, but they must also feel the same things that I feel, when I behave in a similar way, and experience the world in the same way that I also experience it.[40] In other words, when I empathise with other people and regard them as "things like me", in Spinoza's terms, I know "what it feels like to be them" — or, better still, I believe that I know what it feels to be like them.

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[39] Justin Steinberg argues for a "direct transmission", or "direct inheritance", of affects from one body to the other (2013, 394-396). On this basis, he questions how it is possible to misrepresent others' affects and misattribute affects to others, via the imitative mechanism. By contrast, I contend that the affects that we ascribe to "things like us" are always and only the affects that are aroused in us by our own affections, independently of whether a similar affect is effectively taking place in the external body that is imagined as present – and, most importantly, independently of whether the external body that we imagine as being present and affected in some way exists at all. Indeed, it is of the nature of our imagination to let us regard as present bodies that "neither exist nor are present" outside of us (E2p17c; C I, 464 / G II, 105). This interpretation of the "imitation of the affects" is consistent with another of Spinoza's claims, according to which:

> [T]he ideas which we have of external bodies indicate the constitution of our own body more than the nature of the external bodies.
>
> (E2p16c2; C II, 463 / G II, 104. Translation modified)

In the best case scenario, therefore, rather than a "direct transmission" or "inheritance" of an affect, there can be a perfect replication in us of an equal affect taking place in a body outside of us, which allows for a correct representation and attribution of that affect. According to Spinoza – as we will see in the next section – this can happen when human affects are aroused by reason. For further discussions of Spinoza's theory of the imitation of the affects, see Matheron (1969) 1988a, 154-155; Macherey 1995, 214-226; Della Rocca 1996b, 247-251, and 2004; Green 2017, 129-130.

[40] According to Philip Robbins and Anthony Jack, "[t]o adopt the intentional stance toward *X* [...] entails ascribing intentional states (beliefs, desires, intentions, etc.) to *X* and using those ascriptions to make sense of *X*'s behaviour" (2006, 69). Daniel Dennett has canonically defined the "intentional stance" as follows:

> Here is how it works: first you decide to treat the object whose behavior is to be predicted as a rational agent; then you figure out what beliefs that agent ought to have, given its place in the world and its purpose. Then you figure out what desires it ought to have, on the same considerations, and finally you predict that this rational agent will act to further its goals in the light of its beliefs. A little practical reasoning from the chosen set of beliefs and desires will in many – but not all – instances yield a decision about what the agent ought to do; that is what you predict the agent *will* do.
>
> (Dennett [1981] 1987, 17)

6. "Humanity" as a shared affect

According to Spinoza, the capacity to empathise with "things like us" is the source of an affect in us that he names "humanity [*humanitas*]" (E3p29s; C I, 510 / G II, 162. Translation modified). He also dubs it "courtesy [*humanitas seu modestia*]" and defines it as "a desire to do what pleases men and not do what displeases them" (E3Ad43; C I, 541 / G II, 202). Indeed, Spinoza argues that it is of the nature of each one's appetite — which he identifies (in E3p9s) with "desire" and "[t]he striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its

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Insofar as, for Spinoza, all things must act according to laws of nature which necessarily determine a thing "to exist and produce an effect in a certain way" (E1p29; C I, 433 / G II, 70), and insofar as the behaviour of all things is defined as essentially goal-oriented — since the essence of a things is nothing else but "the striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being" (E3p7; C I, 499 / G II, 146), this striving being, in turn, nothing else but a thing's "appetite", or even, its "desire" (E3p9s; C I, 500 / G II, 147-148) — the intentional stance, or "intentional strategy" for predicting and interpreting one thing's behaviour applies to virtually all existing things — with no distinction between "things like us" and other things, such as animals or, even, rocks (Ep 58). Furthermore, it follows from Spinoza's thought-extension parallelism that, since "[t]he order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (E2p7; C I, 451 / G II, 89), the results that we may obtain by adopting an intentional stance on something shall not be different from the results obtained by taking a physical stance on the same thing — a strategy which Dennett defines as follows:

> [I]f you want to predict the behaviour of a system, determine its physical constitution (perhaps all the way down to the microphysical level) and the physical nature of the impingements upon it, and use your knowledge of the laws of physics to predict the outcome for any input.
>
> (Dennett [1981] 1987, 16)

By contrast, Robbins and Jack define the "phenomenal stance" in these terms:

> [T]o adopt the phenomenal stance toward X is to understand X as a 'phenomenal system', that is, to regard X as a locus of phenomenal experience.
>
> Part of what it is to regard something as a locus of experience is ascribing phenomenal states (emotions, moods, pains, visual sensations, etc.) to it. But this involves more than mere rote ascription of phenomenal states; it requires a felt appreciation of their qualitative character. For example, if you don't know what it's like to feel sad, you can't understand what it is to feel sad. And if you can't understand what it is to feel sad, you can't regard something as feeling sad — at least, not in the full-blooded way that the phenomenal stance requires.
>
> (Robbins and Jack 2006, 69-70)

being" (E3p7; C I, 499 / G II, 146) — that "[w]e strive to promote the existence of whatever we imagine that leads to joy, and to remove or destroy whatever we imagine is contrary to it, *or* that leads to sadness" (E3p28; C I, 509 / G II, 161. Translation modified). Hence, it follows from our very own desire to promote in ourselves affects of joy — and, accordingly, restrain or remove affects of sadness — that "we shall strive to do [...] whatever we imagine men to look on with joy, and on the other hand, we shall be averse to doing what we imagine men are averse to" (E3p29; C I, 510 / G II, 162). For the affects of joy and sadness that we ascribe to others, as we have seen above, are really the same affects of joy and sadness that we feel in ourselves. In particular, Spinoza contends that when we are affected by sadness because we imagine a thing like us being affected by sadness, this sadness in us can be called "pity [*commiseratio*]" (E3p27s; C I, 509 / G II, 160). As a consequence, Spinoza argues that "as far as we can, we strive to free a thing we pity from its suffering" (E3p27c3; C I, 509 / G II, 161), when we detect sadness and suffering in something, "provided that we judge it to be like us" (E3p22s; C I, 507 / G II, 157).

However, as long as the recognition of other people's thoughts and feelings — and the consequent identification of them as "human beings" — relies on an imaginative process by which we attribute affects that we feel in us to external things, based on observation and replication of their exterior behaviour, this process is exposed to error and failure. For the capacity of the human body to affect, and to be affected by, external bodies in a great many ways, and to be variously moulded by different experiences and interactions with the external environment, brings it about that different subjects will also react differently to apparently similar situations, on the one hand, and that our own way of being affected by same things may also change in time, on the other hand. Regarding this, Spinoza writes:

> Different men can be affected differently by one and the same object; and one and the same man can be affected differently at different times by one and the same object.
>
> (E3p51; C I, 522 / G II, 178)

It can happen, therefore, that affections that we imagine as producing certain affects of joy or sadness in "things like us", based on our personal experience of similar cases, may in reality have a totally different nature and effect in other people — or, more generally, in other beings. Indeed, the number of circumstances and reasons that may determine the nature of one's affections and appetite — and that, consequently, determine why someone acts or reacts in a certain way, when compelled by external causes — generally surpass our capability of understanding.[41] Hence, Spinoza writes that "[m]en can disagree in nature [*homines natura discrepare possunt*] insofar as they are torn by affects which are passions; and to that extent also one and the same man is changeable and inconstant" (E4p33; C I, 561 / G II, 231).

This "disagreement of natures", or "natural discrepancy" between individuals, follows from the fact that the affects of an individual must also differ in nature from the affects of another individual, as much as each one's appetite, or desire, is differently affected and determined by apparently similar things. However, as I mentioned above, Spinoza conceives the appetite, or desire, of an individual, as "the very essence, *or* nature [*essentia seu natura*], of each [man] insofar as it is conceived to be determined, by whatever constitution he has, to do something" (E3p56d; C I, 527 / G II, 185). Therefore, as we have seen in section 4, Spinoza concludes that "[e]ach affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one from the essence of the other" (E3p57; C I, 528 / G II, 186). In this sense, Spinoza writes:

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[41] In E3Ad1 (C I, 531 / G II, 190), Spinoza defines "desire" as "man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something", adding that, since "desire is appetite together with the consciousness of it [*cupiditatem esse appetitum cum ejusdem conscientia*]", he "really recognize[s] no difference between human appetite and desire" (E3Ad1exp; C I, 531 / G II, 190). In E3p9d, he also stresses that "[t]he essence of the mind is constituted by adequate and by inadequate ideas". It follows that the first reason why we necessarily misunderstand others' affects and misattribute affects to others is that we have an inadequate understanding of the origin and nature of our very own affects — those that we also ascribe to "things like us". That is to say, that, despite the fact that we are conscious of our appetites, thoughts, and affects, insofar as our essence is constituted by inadequate ideas we do not know why we feel certain affects and think certain things in association with certain kinds of environmental inputs and consequent behavioural responses. As Spinoza repeats several times, all humans "are conscious of their actions and appetites, but not aware of the causes by which they are determined to want something" (E4Pref; C I, 545 / G II, 207). See also E1App (C I, 440 / G II, 78), E2p35s (C I, 473 / G II, 117), E3p2s (C I, 496 / G II, 143), and Ep 58 (C II, 428 / G IV, 266). Concerning the relationship between appetite and desire, or "appetite with the consciousness of it", recall the analyses in section 5 of the previous chapter.

> The nature, or essence, of the affects cannot be explained through our essence, or nature, alone, but must be defined by the power, i.e., by the nature of external causes compared with our own. That is why there are as many species of each affect as there are species of objects by which we are affected; that is why men are affected differently by one and the same object, and to that extent, disagree in nature. And finally, that is also why one and the same man is affected differently toward the same object, and to that extent is changeable, etc.
>
> (E4p33d; C I, 562 / G II, 231)

In other words, it is often the case that the behaviour that we observe in other beings does not correspond to the kind of affects, thoughts, and mental states that we would imagine and expect, based on our own experience.[42] This may be the cause of incomprehension, mutual misunderstandings, and can eventually lead human beings to be "contrary to one another [*invicem esse contrarii*]" (E4p34; C I, 562 / G II, 231).

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[42] With reference to the story of the fall of Adam, in the *Ethics* Spinoza also mentions the possibility that we can judge animals "to be like us", and attribute them human affects and feelings, thereby getting to imitate their behaviour and their (supposed) affects:

> [A]fter he believed the lower animals to be like himself [*bruta sibi similia esse credidit*], he immediately began to imitate their affects (see E3p27) and to lose his freedom.
>
> (E4p68s; C I, 585 / G II, 262)

Concerning this passage, see Montag 2009, 65-71; Sharp 2011a, 56-63, and 2011b, 201-209.

According to Spinoza, however, there is one case in which our attribution of equal mental states to "things like us" never fails: that is, when humans "live according to the guidance of reason [*ex ductu rationis vivunt*]".

> Only insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, must they always agree in nature [*natura semper necessario conveniunt*].
> (E4p35; C I, 563 / G II, 232)

To the extent that human beings think and act according to reason, they must agree in nature, and to that extent, their respective affects must also be identical. Indeed, according to Spinoza, to reason is nothing else but to think and to act on the basis of adequate ideas (E2p40s2; E4p23) — ideas of properties that are equal in us as in other beings, that is, and which are therefore common to all of those who share them (E2p38-39). Hence, if we think and act based on ideas which are "common to all men" (E2p38c; C I, 474 / G II, 119), then the thoughts that we have, the actions that we perform, and the corresponding affects that we may feel, cannot be different from the thoughts, actions, and affects that other human beings would also think, do, and feel when they also reason.

When we reason and act accordingly, in other words, we necessarily think and do those things that all human beings would also think and do, should they find themselves in our own situation. Put otherwise, actions that are guided by reason — and the underlying reasoning processes on which those actions are based — are completely transparent to all humans who are capable of the same reasoning. Therefore, when people reason, and we reason along with them, we necessarily know what they think, why they think what they think, and why they do what they do: for we think the same things and would therefore do the same things that they also do. More importantly, when we reason, the kind of affects by which we are affected must be the same in everyone.[43] Hence, when humans live "according to the guidance of reason", the kind of good that they seek for themselves is necessarily a good that "is common to all men, and can be possessed equally by all men insofar as they are of the same nature" (E4p36d; C I, *564* / G II, 234).[44] So, the good and the joy that a human may seek for herself, while she acts according to the guidance of reason, she will also desire them for all other humans (E4p37).

> The good which man wants for himself and loves, he will love more constantly if he sees that others love it. So, he will strive to have the others love the same things. And because this good is common to all, and all can enjoy it, he will therefore (by the same reason) strive that all may enjoy it.
>
> (E4p37d2; C I, *565* / G II, 235-236)

Spinoza calls "morality [*pietas*]" the "desire to do good generated in us by our living according to the guidance of reason" (E4p37s1; C I, *565* / G II, 236), and defines it as a kind of "courtesy [*modestia*]" (E4App25; C I, *592* / G II, 272), as he also did with the affect of "humanity". Yet, whether our affects of "courtesy" and our desire to please and help those that we recognise as human beings depend on our imagining their possible mental states — and acting humanly towards them out of "pity" — or on our reasoning and wanting for them the same things that we also want for us, the possibility to develop these feelings and desires towards others is always grounded on the same basis: it is grounded, that is, on our ability to judge someone to be like us and empathise with her, thereby attributing her mental states, feelings, and thoughts which are equal to ours. Thus, in E4p50s, Spinoza concludes by claiming:

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[43] Furthermore, Spinoza maintains that affects aroused by reason can never be related to sadness (E3p59). It follows that, in order to promote one's own affects of joy through empathy and imitation of affects, a human being acting according to the guidance of her reason will necessarily strive to make other people reason with her and feel equal affects of joy. Spinoza defines "nobility [*generositas*]" as the "desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to aid other men and join them to him in friendship" (E3p59s; C I, 529 / G II, 188).

[44] Indeed, Spinoza contends that "the good which everyone who lives according to the dictate of reason wants for himself is understanding" (E4p37d; C I, *565* / G II, 235), that is, reasoning itself, whereas "the supreme good" of a human being is "to know God" (E4p36d; C I, *564* / G II, 234) and, according to Spinoza, "it pertains to the essence of the human mind to have an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence" (E4p36s; C I, *564* / G II, 235).

> [O]ne who is moved to aid others neither by reason nor by pity is rightly called inhuman [*recte inhumanus appellatur*]. For (by E3p27) he seems to be unlike a man [*homini dissimilis esse videtur*].
>
> (E4p50s; C I, 574 / G II, 247).

In other words, according to Spinoza, it is only our capacity to recognise other beings as "things like us", and let them, in turn, recognise us as "things like them", that denotes us as properly "human" and determines the limits of applicability of the very notion of "humanity". That is to say, that only to the extent that we partake in this process of mutual recognition are we human, and only to that extent can we also understand what humanity consists in.

7. Conclusion

The analyses carried out so far allow us to finally provide an answer to Wilson's question, concerning how we define specifically human behaviour and mentality in a universe where all things have a mind and are therefore "animate", and where, as a consequence, the presence of mentality *per se* does not account for any specific behaviour. Given these unconventional premises, the answer cannot but be unconventional too.

There is no specifically human behaviour. Or, better still, the boundaries and characteristics that define specifically human behaviour are traced by the very capacity that humans have to imitate one another's behaviours, and collectively act in order to promote one another's wellbeing. The existence of "humanity" as a species, in this sense, is a result that follows from the existence of intraspecific social behaviour — and not vice versa.

In parallel, on the mental domain, specifically human mentality can be identified with the existence of intraspecific affects, which define our very notion of "humanity", and by which several individuals think and feel things on the basis of what they assume other individuals' thoughts and feelings might be. The development of such affects, as we have seen, requires not only that we take an intentional stance on someone else's behaviour — for the behaviour of any thing, in Spinoza's panpsychist and determinist universe, is interpretable and theoretically predictable as originating from "systems of intentions" (Dennett [1981] 1987, 15) — but also a "phenomenal stance": what makes a human being properly "human" in the eyes of someone else, is her capacity to have feelings and affects equal to those of the observer and, in general, to experience the world in the same way from her internal, subjective point of view. It is only this kind of comprehension of another mind's nature that allows us to empathise with other individuals and act towards them in a properly "human" way, according to Spinoza; for it is only this kind of comprehension of another individual's nature that arouses in us the will to take care of her and treat her as a moral agent.[45]

If we fail to access this kind of empathic and mutual understanding of each other's affects, we cannot be naturally led to act humanly towards one another — by feeling in us the desire, that is to say, to prevent and remove another's sadness and arouse and increase another's joy — for we do not feel any sadness or joy that could affect us and prompt us to act in association to someone else's sadness or joy. Indeed, when we fail to empathise, we do not actually see and recognise any sadness or joy in others — to the point that we may even regard those other things as "mindless". Far from being contradictory, this outcome is particularly cogent in Spinoza's panpsychist universe, where the difference between "things like us" and "things unlike us" cannot be drawn on the mere attribution of mentality and consciousness (which are universal features), but only on the attribution of mentality and consciousness "like ours". Paradigmatic, in this sense, is Spinoza's consideration of animal life, concerning which the obviousness of their capacity to have sensations and feelings ought nevertheless not to restrain us from "killing them", "using them at our pleasure", and "treating them as is most convenient for us", in accordance with "the rational principle of seeking our own advantage".

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[45] That a mere stance concerning one's intentions is not sufficient for treating someone as a moral subject, is true also for Dennett, who writes:

> One is guilty of no monstrosities if one dismembers the computer with whom one plays chess, or even the robot with whom one has long conversations. One adopts the intentional stance toward any system one assumes to be (roughly) rational [...]. [T]o adopt a truly moral stance toward the system (thus viewing it as a person), might often turn out to be psychologically irresistible [...], but it is logically distinct.
>
> (Dennett [1973] 2017, 258)

Concerning the function of the phenomenal stance in shaping up the image of a subject of moral concern, with whom we empathise and establish social relationships, see instead Robbins and Jack 2006, 70-72.

> For they do not agree in nature with us, and their affects are different in nature from human affects [*quandoquidem nobiscum natura non conveniunt et eorum affectus ab affectibus humanis sunt natura diversi*] (see E3p57s).
>
> (E4p37s1; C I, 566 / G II, 237)

In a few words, when we fail to empathise and recognise other individuals as "things like us", we treat them as inhuman and we can, in turn, be equally and "rightly called inhuman", by those whose feelings we fail to understand.

Here, where they also appear to be more important and crucial, the reasons for attributing human or non-human mentality to someone else could not be any more precarious and fragile, for they are based uniquely on an individual's capacity to recognise, based on her own personal experience and on observable exterior traits of another individual's behaviour, something that by definition seems to preclude any possibility of direct observation: that is, an equal "subjective character of experience". As we have seen, Spinoza does not deny that *any* behaviour in nature may correspond, in principle, to some kind of conscious activity.[46] However, it is only to the extent that I can fully identify myself in the acts and decisions of another individual, that I will also acknowledge that individual as a "thing like me", endowed with a similar mentality and — more importantly — a similar capacity to feel joy and sadness when I also feel them, in the same way that I also feel them. So that one and the same individual will appear more or less human in the eyes of someone else, to the extent that her behaviour will appear more or less familiar and capable of arousing equal affects, feelings and thoughts.[47]

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[46] In this sense, the attribution of consciousness — or the claim that all bodies must have a corresponding mind — according to Spinoza, is not and cannot be a consequence ensuing from an "analogy argument", as Edgar Singer calls it (1911, 180). It is a metaphysical necessity dictated by God's infinite nature. Because, for each body existing in nature there must be in God's attribute the corresponding idea, which acts as the mind of that body, as well as the corresponding idea of the mind. Furthermore, in the light of the previous analyses, I assume that Spinoza would not be unsympathetic to Singer's thesis, according to which "our belief in consciousness is an expectation of probable behavior based on an observation of actual behavior, a belief to be confirmed or refuted by more observation, as any other belief in a fact is to be tried out" (1911, 183) — if by "consciousness" we intend to refer to specifically human mentality. Yet, Spinoza's panpsychism presses further exactly those questions to which Singer's behaviourism appears incapable of providing an answer — that is, discriminating the behavioural features that one is willing to identify with *human* behaviour, hence with *human* consciousness:

> You will ask me: What aspect of the behavior of certain objects leads us to call them conscious? I answer, I do not know, and expect never surely to know. Had I been asked: What aspect of the behavior of certain objects leads us to call them alive? I must have returned the same answer.
>
> (Singer 1911, 183-184)

In other words, reducing consciousness to behaviour is a trivial solution in Spinoza's system, as long as all things behave in a certain way and must feel and experience the world accordingly. Still, it does not answer the questions concerning which behaviour we are keener on calling "human", and why we consequently believe such behaviour to be necessarily associated with a certain kind of specifically human conscious life. In this sense, the reintroduction of a subjective experiential element with regard to our consideration of the nature of the mental, through the mechanism of the imitation of the affects, is aimed at answering these questions.

[47] As we have seen, Spinoza contends that only reasoning prevents us from misinterpreting other people's affects or misattributing affects to them; for, when we reason, we must by necessity think, do and feel the same things that other human beings also think, do and feel. Yet again, appealing to reason provides no safe ground for developing stable intraspecific affects and recognition of each other's humanity. For, according to Spinoza, it is not in our free power to choose to reason, and we are constantly under the effect of passions that can prevent us from reasoning. As he also writes, "it is impossible that a man [...] should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his own nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause" (E4p4; C I, 548 / G II, 212). For this reason, he concludes, "man is necessarily always subject to passions" (E4p4c; C I, 549 / G II, 213).

These considerations also allow us to shed more light on Spinoza's apparently striking assertions concerning the radical sceptics evoked in the TIE — according to which "they must be regarded as automata, completely lacking a mind" — and his uncompromising take on deceitful behaviour in general.[48] As we have seen, Spinoza contends that all properly human relationships — by which we mutually help each other and treat each other as moral agents — arise in us only because of our capacity to recognise, in other individuals, the presence of equal thoughts and feelings in association with certain exterior, observable signs. Lies and deceitful behaviour seem instead to have a contrary effect. Indeed, they entail a deliberate use of the same signs that we ordinarily adopt to communicate and share our mental states (all of our beliefs, intentions, and affects, that is to say) with the opposite purpose to misguide one's capability to interpret one's real thoughts. As Spinoza writes, when humans act deceptively, they "agree only in words, and are contrary to one another in fact" (E4p72d; C I, 586 / G II, 264). Lies and deception, that is, turn the words that we use to describe our beliefs, intentions, and affects into meaningless sounds — as "the words of a parrot or an automaton, which speak without a mind". Therefore, as far as deception represents an obstacle to recognising similarities in our respective ways of thinking and experiencing the world, it threatens and hinders our capability of empathising with other individuals and creating with them stable social relationships — that is, human relationships.[49] As Steven Nadler remarks, the problem with acts of deception is that "they bring about [...] division between individuals" (2016, 265), since they "put people at odds with one another and generate a difference in their natures" (2016, 267). The disagreement between individuals' natures brought about by deception is, in effect, its most dangerous aspect, since it entails that we lose the capacity to recognise each other as "humans" and to treat each other accordingly.

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[48] In E4p72, Spinoza claims that a human being guided by reason always, and unconditionally, "acts honestly, not deceptively" (C I, 586 / G II, 264). Concerning this, see also Garrett 1990, 221-224.

[49] As we have also seen in the quotation from TTP XX, 12 — cited in section 4 — a society that does not allow humans "to use their reason freely" and lead them instead to "clash with one another in hatred, anger or deception, or deal inequitably with one another", is a society that "change men [...] into beasts or automata". In such a state, proper human relationships between individuals are disrupted and lost.

Indeed, not only does deceitful behaviour clash with acting according to the guidance of reason — by which our thoughts and feelings are necessarily transparent to all humans — but it also undermines our capacity to naturally feel pity towards others, whenever we seem to detect sadness and suffering in "things like us". So, Spinoza writes:

> [H]e who is easily touched by the affect of pity, and moved by another's suffering or tears, often does something he later repents — both because, from an affect, we do nothing which we certainly know to be good, and because we are easily deceived by false tears.
> (E4p50s; C I, 574 / G II, 247)

If our pity gets frustrated too many times "by false tears", we may eventually conclude that the exterior traits by which we recognise sadness and suffering in "something like us", do not mark in the individual by whom we are systematically deceived the presence of the same affects that we feel. This may, in turn, undermine our reasons to believe that the deceiver may have the capacity at all to perceive the very same affects that we perceive when we act similarly — to perceive, that is, the same kind of joy and the same kind of sadness, or pleasure and pain: for the deceiver, apparently, does not feel sad at all when I feel sad *for him*. In other words, exposure to systematic deception can make us believe that other human beings are of a different nature, thereby unworthy of our care and attention, since, just as animals or other non-human things, "they do not agree in nature with us, and their affects are different in nature from human affects". That is to say, that systematic deceitful behaviour can be the trigger to a process of "dehumanisation", by which we fail — or, even worse, refuse — to acknowledge other people's suffering and happiness.

Hence, insofar as persistent deceitful behaviour can bring about inhuman feelings, it seems that, according to Spinoza, systematic deception is to be treated as outright inhuman behaviour. For this reason, his reaction to the sceptic's lies could not be more radical, consequential, and inhuman. For, by inviting us to regard the sceptic as an automaton "completely lacking a mind", he ends up dehumanising the deceiver.

Chapter 3

Networks of Ideas: Spinoza's Conception of Memory

Chapter Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to offer an explanation of what memory is, on Spinoza's account, and how it is understood to determine the life of an individual by interacting with the rest of her mental content and functions. In order to unpack Spinoza's theory of memory and assess and situate its role with respect to his philosophy of mind, I analyse the definitions and descriptions of memory that Spinoza provides in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and in the *Ethics*. I highlight common features and differences between the two accounts. In my analyses, I use the contemporary distinction between "episodic memory" and "semantic memory" (Tulving 1972) as a heuristic device. I show that, in the TIE, Spinoza presents cases of episodic memory — which involve a temporalization of their objects — as distinct from, and incompatible with, the intellect and its order and connection of ideas. Conversely, he considers instances of semantic memory as cases which not only allow for the intelligibility of mnemonic associations, but also for a seeming interaction between intellect and memory. I also demonstrate that, in the *Ethics*, Spinoza defines memory as composing networks of ideas synchronically associated to each other, thereby reducing cases of episodic memory to cases of semantic memory. I conclude by showing why Spinoza fleshed out his account of memory in this way, in order to allow for a relationship between intellect and memory, and why he deemed it important for the intellect to have access to mnemonic content.

1. Introduction

Spinoza contends that all humans "are conscious of their volitions and their appetite" (E1App; C I, 440 / G II, 78). He also affirms that this appetite is "the very essence of man" (E3p9s; C I, 500 / G II, 147), and that all humans are conscious of their essence (E3p9d; E3Ad1ex). The following analyses are aimed at exploring and describing one fundamental dimension of Spinoza's account of the conscious mind, which has been traditionally neglected by

Spinoza scholars — namely, the dimension constituted by memory. I will inquire how mnemonic items become objects of conscious recollection in the mind and how memory, according to Spinoza, is responsible for shaping a certain network of conscious perceptions that are all given within a single enchainment of ideas. At the same time, I will consider how memory contributes, in this way, to determining the overall affective state of the mind, i.e., its current appetite — that is, what Spinoza also calls its "actual essence" (E3p7; C I, 499 / G II, 146), the object of our consciousness (E3p9; C I, 499 / G II, 147).

By these analyses, I intend to fill a gap in current Spinoza scholarship. Indeed, many commentators mention memory only to relate it to Spinoza's accounts of personal identity and identity through time.[1] Only a few, however, seem to consider Spinoza as having a specific theory of memory, or an account capable of playing a foundational role with respect to his overall philosophy of mind, and worth being analysed separately.[2] Detailed analyses of Spinoza's account of memory are, nevertheless, still wanting. For memory looks, overall, like a marginal topic in Spinoza's philosophical system.

If we consider the whole corpus of Spinoza's texts, we can find only two definitions of memory — namely, in the unfinished *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, and in the *Ethics*. On both occasions, consideration of its nature and functions seems to be limited. In both texts

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[1] See, for example, Saw (1969) 1972, 9-10; Rice 1971, 656-657; Donagan 1973, 256-257; Matson 1977, 405; Curley 1988, 85-86; Ablondi and Barbone 1994, 84-86; Nadler 2001, 126-127, and 2006, 270-271; Lin 2005, 254-258; Della Rocca 2008, 259; Waller 2009, 498-499; Thiel 2011, 63-64;

[2] Memory occupies very little space in Cornelius De Deugd's study of Spinoza's theory of the first kind of knowledge (1966, 202-206). See also Wolfson 1934b, 80-90, and Gueroult 1974, 229-235. Laurent Bove (1996, 20-24) and Syliane Malinowski-Charles (2004b, 106-107) analyse the role of memory with respect to Spinoza's theory of habits. More recently, Peter Weigel has pointed out the centrality of memory, in Spinoza, with regard to his accounts of imaginative processes, such as linguistic cognition, the formation of universal notions, and inductive reasoning (2009, 239-246). Sergio Rojas Peralta (2016) has provided a more articulate study of Spinoza's theory of memory, comparing it with Aristotle's theory.

Spinoza sharply distinguishes between memory and intellect, explicitly denying the latter any mnemonic power (TIE §82; E5p23s; E5p34s). By contrast, he grounds the human capability of retaining and retrieving images of things in a corporeal function (TIE §§82-83; E2p17d2; E2p18d). Yet, Spinoza also contends that the intellect can aid one's memory and increase the strength of one's mnemonic associations (TIE §§81). He also claims that images and thoughts, when they are connected to each other according to the order of the intellect, are capable of arousing affects which are stronger in time (E5p7; E5p10s) than those aroused by images and thoughts connected according to "the order and connection of the affections of the human body" (E2p18s; C I, 465 / G II, 107), which are determined by "fortuitous encounters with things" (E2p29s; C I, 471 / G II, 114). It remains unclear, on the basis of these claims, whether and how the intellect can interact with memory — in order to help the organisation, retention and recollection of information stored in the body — without assuming any interplay between functions of the mind and functions of the body.

As I will demonstrate in this chapter, however, Spinoza puts forward a sophisticated account of memory, capable of distinguishing between different functions, such as episodic and semantic memory. I will argue that when Spinoza refers to cases of episodic memory — involving, that is, a temporalization of their objects — he dismisses them as incompatible with the intellect and its order and connection of ideas. Conversely, cases in which memory is reduced to its semantic functions — expressed by synchronic associations of ideas, divested of spatial and temporal context — are considered by Spinoza as instances that allow for the intelligibility of mnemonic associations and for a seeming interaction between intellect and memory. I will show that Spinoza has at least two reasons to propose such a model of human memory. The first reason concerns Spinoza's way of describing how, on occasion of any given affection, images recalled by memory determine the appetite of an individual. The second reason is related to his explanation of how the intellect can interact with memory, in order to aid and strengthen its associations.

In section 2, I will provide an overview of the taxonomy employed in contemporary studies on memory, introducing the distinction between "episodic" and "semantic" memory. In sections 3 and 4 I will consider Spinoza's description and definition of memory in the TIE: section 3 analyses aspects of Spinoza's treatment of memory that can be related to memory of the semantic kind, and section 4 deals instead with episodic memory. In section 5 I will analyse the description and definition of memory that Spinoza provides in the *Ethics*. I will illustrate how he conceives of memory as composing networks of ideas which are all synchronically connected with each other, and all simultaneously recalled on occasion of an external stimulus. In section 6, I will show how Spinoza's model of memory allows him to explain the associative act by which affects aroused by memory immediately impact on the affective life of an individual, determining her current striving, or appetite (that is, the desire, of which she is conscious). In section 7, I will explain how Spinoza conceives of one of the powers of the mind over one's affects as the rearranging of mnemonic items according to the order of the intellect. Section 8 concludes the chapter.

2. Episodic and semantic memory

It is commonly agreed, among both neuropsychologists and philosophers, that by the name of "memory" we can refer to a great variety of aspects and different functions of the cognitive life of an individual.[3] Since the purpose of this chapter is to look for some definitions and explanations of human memory in Spinoza, I shall start by clarifying on which of the many aspects of memory I will focus. I will, therefore, introduce and make use of some contemporary categories and distinctions between functions of the human memory, or "kinds" of memories. These distinctions will help to narrow the scope of my analyses, setting the limits of my inquiry to a circumscribed and possibly well-defined set of features concerning the general notion of human memory. The use of these categories will also serve as a heuristic device, apt to detect the elements of an articulated conceptual framework, underpinning Spinoza's otherwise relatively concise treatment of memory.

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[3] See Tulving 1991; Tulving 1983, 6-8; Tulving 2000; Sutton 2009; Michaelian and Sutton 2017; Werning and Cheng 2017.

Nowadays it is held that a first line of distinction between kinds of memory can be drawn to separate "procedural", rule-based mnemonic information and operations, on the one hand, from "declarative" (or even, "propositional"), data-based ones, on the other hand — in a way "which is reminiscent of the classical distinction between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'" (Cohen and Squire 1980, 209).[4] So, for example, Larry Squire writes:

> The major distinction is between the capacity for conscious, declarative memory about facts and events and a collection of unconscious, nondeclarative memory abilities, such as skill learning and habit learning.
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> (Squire 2009, 12711)

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[4] Concerning the division between nondeclarative — or procedural — memory, and declarative — or propositional — memory, see also Squire 1987, 152-169. With regard to the same distinction, Endel Tulving writes:

> The first step we take in subdividing the domain of memory is to distinguish between procedural and propositional memories. [...] A corresponding division is that between skills and knowledge. The category of operational or procedural memory consists of a huge number of perceptual-motor skills and cognitive skills; and the latter category [...] consists of an equally huge variety of knowledge that can be represented and expressed symbolically.
>
> (Tulving 1983, 8)

Generally speaking, by the notion of "nondeclarative" or "procedural memory" we refer to an individual's ability to learn complex tasks, or to have her behavioural patterns modified by experience and interactions with the external environment, along with the relevant capability to store this practical knowledge and retrieve it on the occasion of adequate external stimuli. Otherwise stated, "[n]ondeclarative memory is expressed through performance" (Squire 2009, 12711).

> Nondeclarative memory refers to a heterogeneous collection of skills, habits, and dispositions that are inaccessible to conscious recollection, yet are shaped by experience, influence our behavior and mental life, and are a fundamental part of who we are.
>
> (Squire 2009, 12713)

By contrast, "declarative" or "propositional memory" deals with conscious knowledge, grounded on acquired information about ourselves and the world, which includes the symbols and signs that we use to model and represent the world to ourselves.

Now, according to a distinction first proposed by Endel Tulving, within the functions of the human declarative memory we can further distinguish between two different (albeit not necessarily separated) kinds of memory systems – or even, in Tulving's words, "categories" of memory. On the one hand, there is the "episodic memory"; on the other hand, there is the "semantic memory".[5] He writes:

> Episodic memory refers to memory for personal experiences and their temporal relations, while semantic memory is a system for receiving, retaining, and transmitting information about meaning of words, concepts, and classification of concepts.
>
> (Tulving 1972, 402)

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[5] Tulving 1972 and 1983, 33. See also Squire 1987, 169-174; Squire and Zola 1998; Tulving and Markowitsch 1998.

As far as the aims of this investigation into Spinoza's account of memory are concerned, we may retain only the basic features of Tulving's distinction between these two kinds of declarative memory.

On the one hand, episodic memory is definable as an individual's capability of recollecting past events and objects tied to her experience of the world, of figuring them in terms of their perceptible properties, and of collocating them within a coherent spatial-temporal framework, involving the biography of the individual herself.[6] On the other hand, differently from the objects of episodic memory, the objects of semantic memory are not displaced into a temporal-spatial framework. Objects registered in and presented by semantic memory may certainly be regarded as having had an origin in time — an origin which partially or totally depended on one's personal experience and interactions with the external world. Differently put, objects of semantic memory are usually considered to be objects of learning. When they become actual objects of conscious recollection, however, they do not necessarily exhibit diachronic relations with other items of semantic memory, nor do they need to bear or display any biographical information about themselves or the way in which they were first perceived by the recollecting individual.[7] Rather, the most important feature of objects of semantic memory is that they allow the retrieval of synchronic relations and associations between different objects of knowledge, such as between words and their meanings. In Tulving's words:

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[6] As Tulving also writes, any item of episodic memory "can be stored in the episodic system solely in terms of its perceptible properties or attributes, and it is always stored in terms of its autobiographical reference to the already existing contents of the episodic memory store" (Tulving 1972, 385-386). Then, he adds:

> Episodic memory is a more or less faithful record of a person's experiences. Thus, every 'item' in episodic memory represents information stored about the experienced occurrence of an episode or event. [...] Each event, or its representation in memory [...] can be reasonably completely described in terms of (a) its perceptible properties, and (b) its temporal-spatial relation to other experienced events.
>
> (Tulving 1972, 387-388)

[7] Regarding this, Tulving writes:

> Information stored in the semantic memory system represents objects — general and specific, living and dead, past and present, simple and complex — concepts, relations, quantities, events, facts, propositions, and so on, detached from autobiographical reference.
>
> (Tulving 1972, 389).

> The information they contain is information about the referent they signify rather than information about the input signals as such. [...] If a person possesses some sematic memory information, he obviously must have learned it, either directly or indirectly, at an earlier time, but he need not possess any mnemonic information about the episode of such learning in order to retain and to use semantic information.
>
> (Tulving 1972, 389)

In the following analyses of Spinoza's references to memory I will not directly consider or look for aspects related to what we nowadays address as "procedural memory". The reason for this choice, as mentioned above, lies in the characteristics of Spinoza's theory of the human mind that I intend to explore, by approaching his account of memory – namely, the mind understood as a system of conscious perceptions of bodily modifications. As we have just seen, procedural, nondeclarative memory is defined as mainly operating at the unconscious level.[8] In this chapter, therefore, I will focus on those traits of Spinoza's theory of memory that deal with conscious recollection, taking into account aspects of the so-called "declarative memory", divided into semantic and episodic kinds.

To be sure, the few details concerning the distinction between semantic and episodic memory summarised above cannot be considered exhaustive, in contemporary scientific terms. Moreover, they are not meant to suggest a comparison – let alone, an equivalence – between contemporary accounts of memory systems and Spinoza's theory of memory.[9] However, as I will demonstrate, the main features of this distinction can be seen reflected in Spinoza's admittedly limited remarks on the topic.[10] In this sense, the distinction between episodic and semantic memory, used as a heuristic, is introduced in order to facilitate observations concerning how Spinoza addresses memory under different perspectives. The presence of these perspectives – one emphasising the role of memory in enchaining events according to temporal sequences, the other stressing the synchronicity of mnemonic associations – will emerge in the following analyses of Spinoza's treatment of memory, and it will allows us to track down and analyse some interesting, and apparently conflictual, aspects of his ways of dealing with memory in the TIE and in the *Ethics*.

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[8] See Squire 2009, 12711; Squire and Dede 2015, 3.

3. Semantic memory in the TIE

Spinoza provides a first definition of memory in his *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, at the end of a digression "about memory and forgetting" (TIE §81; C I, 35 / G II, 31). Before summarising his analyses of the origin and nature of fictitious, false, and doubtful ideas, and proceeding then to "the second part of [his] method" (TIE §91; C I, 38 / G II, 33), he decides to spend a few words on memory, to consider the means through which it can be strengthened.

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[9] An unbridgeable gap between Spinoza's approach and contemporary neuropsychology is that the latter also grounds its distinctions between memory systems on empirical, neurobiological bases. Spinoza had no access to this information. Moreover, Spinoza seems to consider the physiological grounds of corporeal memory useful only to the extent that they allow him to correlate a non-implausible model of the human body with properties and relations between ideas, which he deems essential to his definition of memory as a psychological event – namely, retention, association and recollection of ideas of corporeal images and affects.

[10] By commenting on the case of the amnesic Spanish poet mentioned by Spinoza in E4p39s, Rojas Peralta gets to the conclusion that Spinoza may have envisaged a distinction akin to that between episodic and semantic memory (Rojas Peralta 2016, 166). Spinoza writes:

> I have heard stories [...] of a Spanish poet who suffered an illness; though he recovered, he was left so oblivious to is past life that he did not believe the tales and tragedies he had written were his own. He could surely have been taken for a grown-up infant if he had also forgotten his native language.
>
> (E4p39s; C I, 569 / G II, 240)

As Curley points out, Spinoza's final characterisation of the Spanish poet as a "grown-up infant if he had also forgotten his native language" is also based on etymological grounds, since the Latin term *infans* is connected with the verb *fari*, which, in Latin, means "to speak", "so that an infant is literally someone incapable of speech" (C I, 569, n. 23). Concerning these points, see also Zourabichvili 2002, 131-135. For considerations concerning Spinoza's account of infants and the use that he makes of the Latin terms *infans* and *puer*, see Manzi-Manzi 2016 and 2017.

Spinoza affirms that there are two ways to improve one's memory. One way is through the aid of the intellect, since "the more intelligible a thing is, the more easily it is retained" (TIE §81; C I, 36 / G II, 31). The second way, by contrast, is "without the aid of the intellect, by the force with which the imagination, or what they call the common sense, is affected by some corporeal things" (TIE §82; C I, 36 / G II, 31).

In the first case, Spinoza seems to consider the intellect as somehow capable of acting upon memory, by aiding and strengthening its connections and associations. In this regard, Spinoza provides an example:

> [T]he more intelligible a thing is, the more easily it is retained; and conversely, the less intelligible, the more easily forgotten. E.g., if I give someone a large number of disconnected words, he will retain them with much more difficulty than if I give him the same words in the form of a narration [*in forma narrationis tradam*].
>
> (TIE §81; C I, 35-36 / G II, 31. Translation modified)

By this example, Spinoza seems to be claiming that apparently random items, such as "a large number of disconnected words", are more easily retained and recalled, the more the mnemonic associations between them are intelligible — and, conversely, less easily retained and recalled when they appear random and disconnected. What "intelligible [*intelligibilis*]" may mean in this context, however, is not immediately clear. We may tentatively paraphrase the passage in question by assuming that the associations between some given objects of memory are stronger, and allow for an easier retention and recollection, when they reflect and follow more closely what Spinoza also calls the "order of the intellect" (E2p18s; C I, 466 / G II, 107) — to borrow an expression that he uses in the *Ethics*, in a scholium which is precisely about human memory.

Since Spinoza's example of an intelligible order for apparently disconnected mnemonic items refers to words and narrations, it *prima facie* suggests that we are here dealing with what we would nowadays call a case of semantic memory. Yet, mnemonic activities such as remembering variously connected (or disconnected) lists of words are usually considered, in contemporary neuropsychology, as particular cases of episodic memory — verbal episodic memory, to be precise.[11] Indeed, although the objects of memory are words, their mnemonic associations could simply be meant to reflect a specific temporal sequence by which words are supposed to follow each other, or a specific chronological order of appearance, apprehension, and recollection of the words themselves.

In order to better grasp the sense of this example, then, it may be useful to further investigate Spinoza's claim that apparently disconnected words are more easily remembered when they are "given in the form of a narration [*in forma narrationis tradam*]". There is a lexical observation to be made, in this regard, that concerns Spinoza's account of "narrations", when referred to mental objects. While the Latin verb *narrare* (which generally means "to tell") is often found in Spinoza's works, the noun *narratio* (which I am here translating as "narration") appears very rarely: two times overall, if we exclude the occurrences found in the *Theological-Political Treatise* and one letter.[12] The first occurrence is in the aforementioned passage of the TIE. The second case, instead, is found in the *Metaphysical Thoughts*. There, Spinoza uses the word "narration" to describe the nature of any idea, insofar as an idea is conceived of as an act of understanding that bears information concerning an object – and whose veracity can, in this sense, be questioned. He writes that "ideas are nothing but narrations, *or* mental histories of nature" (CM I, 6; C I, 312 / G II, 246. Translation modified).

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[11] So, for example, Tulving writes:

> Consider now a typical memory experiment in which a subject is asked to study and remember a list of familiar words or pair of words. This is an episodic memory task. The occurrence of a verbal item in a given list, at a particular time, and in specified temporal relation to other items in the list is an autobiographical episode having no necessary extra-episodic denotative reference. The subject has successfully retrieved information about this episode when he responds to the retrieval query with the reproduction of an appropriate copy of the input item.
>
> (Tulving 1972, 390)

Tulving will later redefine his position, conceding that Ebbinghaus-inspired tests — where the patient or tester, that is, is requested to recall lists of words or linguistic items — rather involve an interaction between the episodic and semantic memory systems (see Tulving 1983, 31, and 2002, 3-4). The notion of "verbal episodic memory" has, nevertheless, proven to be very successful in neuropsychology, and the functioning of verbal episodic memory has been the object of many separate studies. Concerning this, see for example Herlitz and Viitanen 1991; Shallice et al. 1994; Sandrini et al. 2003; Rémy et al. 2005; Solomon et al. 2007; Leube et al. 2008; Ystad et al. 2010; Wolk et al. 2011.

> [A] narration was called true when it was of a deed that had really happened, and false when it was of a deed that had never happened.
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> Afterwards the philosophers used this meaning to denote the agreement of an idea with its object and conversely. So an idea is called true when it shows us the thing as it is in itself, and false when it shows us the thing otherwise than it really is. For ideas are nothing but narrations, *or* mental histories of nature [*ideæ enim nihil aliud sunt, quam narrationes sive historiæ naturæ mentales*].
>
> (CM I, 6; C I, 312 / G II, 246)

It is important to note that, when Spinoza refers to an idea as a "narration, *or* mental history of nature", the idea need not be conceived as reproducing a particular sequence of words or signs. Nor does the information content of the idea necessarily need to be conceived as the depiction of a chronological succession of episodes, related to historical facts concerning the object of the idea. If we look at the *Ethics*, we can observe that Spinoza also writes that an idea is not "something mute, like a picture on a tablet [*quid mutum instar*

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[12] Namely, Ep 52 to Hugo Boxel (G IV, 244a). The occurrences in the TTP, by contrast, are many, and they mostly refer to Scripture and the Prophets' words, insofar as they do not necessarily provide trustworthy descriptions and accounts of natural events or historical facts.

picturæ in tabula]" (E2p43s; C I, 479 / G II, 124). In fact, Spinoza maintains that ideas tell something about their objects: they affirm or deny something. In E2p49s, he writes that "an idea, insofar as it is an idea, involves an affirmation or negation [*ideam, quatenus idea est, affirmationem aut negationem involvere*]" (C I, 486 / G II, 132). Yet, this information – or narration, as it were – which any idea reports about its object, by affirming or denying something about it, is not meant to portray the nature of the object in biographical or temporal terms. For example, Spinoza maintains that the idea of a triangle tells us something about the nature of the triangle by necessarily affirming that its three angles are equal to two right angles. "This affirmation pertains to the essence of the idea of the triangle", he writes, "and is nothing beyond it" (E2p49d; C I, 484-485 / G II, 130).

If we concede, therefore, that Spinoza may sometimes refer to "narrations" according to this loose sense of the notion, then we are now in a position to provide some clarifications concerning the possible meaning of Spinoza's example in TIE §81. To say that random words are more intelligible when presented "in the form of a narration" may not necessarily mean that they must also be remembered according to a certain chronological sequence. Nor does it mean that these words must refer to a temporal succession of historical events or episodes. Rather, what we can reasonably infer by Spinoza's reference to narrations – conceived of as signs of intelligibility and mnemonic devices at one and the same time – is that words are much more easily remembered if they, taken altogether, "mean" something. More trivially, words are much better understood and recalled when they make some sense, i.e., when they signify something. Their intelligibility, in this sense, is provided by the fact that they are connected to one another in order to express in thought, as a whole, some aspects concerning the nature or the properties of an object.[13]

If this interpretation is correct, then the example proposed by Spinoza in the TIE can really be taken as referring to a case of semantic memory — a case, that is, that concerns synchronic association between mnemonic items, such as words and their meanings, and where chronological information is neither recalled, nor involved as a criterion of intelligibility.

Yet, as we will see in the following section, the rest of Spinoza's analysis on the nature of memory in the TIE seems to proceed in a quite different direction.

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[13] That the order of the words, by which words mean something intelligible, is not merely a chronological order of succession of signs, can also be inferred by what Spinoza writes in his Ep 40 to Jarig Jelles:

> [I]f I see in the hands of an ordinary person an elegantly written book, full of excellent thoughts, and I ask him where he got such a book, and he replies that he copied it from another book of another ordinary person, who also could write elegantly, and he proceeds in this way to infinity, he will not satisfy me. For I wasn't asking only about the shape and order of the letters (which was all he was replying about). I was also asking about the thoughts and the meaning their composition indicates. He does not give me any answer to that question by proceeding in this way to infinity. How this can be applied to ideas can easily be seen from what I have explained in the ninth axiom of my geometric demonstration of *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*.
>
> (Ep 40; C II, 38 / G IV, 198b-199b)

Spinoza's final reference to PPC1a9 is, again, illuminating in this sense. He claims that the order of the composition of words and texts is not the same thing as the meaning of the words themselves. In the passage recalled, he writes:

> Suppose someone sees two books — one the work of a distinguished philosopher, the other that of some trifler, but both written in the same hand. If he does not attend to the meaning of the words (that is, does not attend to them insofar as they are like images), but only to the handwriting and to the order of the letters, he will recognize no inequality between them which compels him to look for different causes. They will seem to him to have proceeded from the same cause in the same way. But if he attends to the meaning of the words and the discourses, he will find a great inequality between them. And so he will conclude that the first cause of the one book was very different from the first cause of the other, and really more perfect than it in proportion to the differences he finds between the meaning of the discourses of each book, *or* between the words considered as images.
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> (PPC1a9; C I, 245; G I, 156-157. Translation modified)

4. Episodic memory in the TIE

Even though, in the TIE, Spinoza contends that the intellect has the power of influencing and strengthening one's memory, he nevertheless concludes for the radical heterogeneity of intellect and memory. Even more so — with possible reference to scholastic or Cartesian debates on intellectual memory[14] — Spinoza asserts that the intellect, considered in itself, has no kind of memory or mnemonic power at all. He thus claims:

> Since the memory is strengthened both by the intellect and also without the intellect, we may infer that it is something different from the intellect, and that concerning the intellect considered in itself there is neither memory nor forgetting.
>
> (TIE §82; C I, 36 / G II, 31)

After having established this sharp distinction between memory and intellect, Spinoza provides his definition of memory. He writes:

> What, then, will memory be? Nothing but a sensation of impressions on the brain, together with the thought of a determinate duration of the sensation, which recollection also shows. For there the soul thinks of that sensation, but not under a continuous duration.
>
> (TIE §83; C I, 36 / G II, 31)

In this case, as we may notice, the kind of memory which seems to be the object of Spinoza's definition appears to be more similar to what we could consider, nowadays, the episodic kind of memory.

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[14] For considerations of Descartes's references to intellectual memory, see Mondolfo 1900, 6-10; Reiss 1996, 599; Joyce 1997; Fóti 2000; Levy 2011, 346-349; Shevtsov 2011; Clucas 2015, 152-155; Tuomo 2016. For analyses that include the reception of Descartes's notion of intellectual memory among Cartesian philosophers in the 17th century (in particular with regard to Louis de La Forge), see Scribano 2015, 50-54, 86-94. For an overview of the historical development of the debate concerning the relationship between intellect and memory before Descartes (from Aristotle to the early modern period), see Julião et al. 2016.

Indeed — as we have seen in section 2 — episodic memory is defined as the conscious recollection of perceptible qualities of objects that we associate to events tied to a particular time and place. Now, according to Spinoza's definition, a sensation recalled through memory is associated with the thought of its "determinate duration" — that is, it is accompanied by some conscious knowledge concerning where and when that sensation had its origin, or how far and how long ago with respect to the present place and time. The first sentence of a footnote to the quoted passage, which is meant to explain the introduction of the notion of the "thought of a determinate duration of the sensation [*cogitatione ad determinatam durationem*]" in the definition of memory, seems also to suggest this conclusion — that is, that Spinoza's definition is primarily concerned with cases falling within the domain of episodic memory. In that note, Spinoza adds that "if the duration is indeterminate, the memory of the thing is imperfect, as each of us also seems to have learned from nature. For often, to believe someone better in what he says, we ask when and where it happened" (TIE §83, note; C I, 36 / G II, 31).[15]

Things, however, become more complicated when Spinoza starts to develop this concept of a "duration of the sensation", which is associated with memories. He goes on to say that "the idea of that sensation is not the duration itself of the sensation, i.e., the memory itself" (TIE §83; C I, 36 / G II, 31). This clarification seems to suggest the possibility of adopting two different perspectives, from which to see what memory is and how it works.

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[15] See, for comparison, how Tulving characterises the episodic memory:

> To ask a person about some item in episodic memory means to ask him when did event E happen, or what events happened at time T. Retrieval of information of this kind from episodic memory is successful if the person can describe the perceptible properties of the event in question and more or less accurately specify its temporal relations to other events.
>
> (Tulving 1972, 388)

On the one hand, as we have seen, ideas of memory are sensations of past corporeal impressions, which also bear information about the "determinate duration of the sensation". Along with the sensible qualities of the impressions themselves, these ideas can remind an individual of when and where the original sensation occurred, with respect to the moment and the place in which the act of recollection happens. In other words, these ideas of sensations, when associated to the thought of their "determinate duration", attribute a temporal and spatial positioning to the objects to which they refer, by situating them in a system of diachronic relations that involves the whole of the objects of memory, as well as the biography of the individual.

On the other hand, these sensations of impressions have also their own duration in the mind, as long as they are actively recollected. This is, Spinoza writes, "the duration itself of the sensation [*ipsa duratio sensationis*]", or its "continuous duration [*continua duratione*]". It is, in other words, the duration of memory itself, understood as a mental phenomenon – that is, the persistence of ideas of past corporeal impressions in the mind of an individual, while they are consciously perceived by the individual herself.

Once again, this reading is supported by Spinoza's footnote to the notion of "duration", whose first part I mentioned above. In the following part, he writes:

> Although the ideas themselves also have their own duration in the mind, nevertheless, since we have become accustomed to determine duration with the aid of some measure of motion, which is also done with the aid of the imagination, we still observe no memory that belongs to the pure mind.
>
> (TIE §83, note; C I, 36 / G II, 31)

To summarise, the thought of a "determinate duration" of a sensation – or in other words, the ability to conceive of the object of a present sensation in relation to a different time and place – is a result that follows from our mnemonic associations, "done with the aid of the imagination". It requires, that is, the corporeal function by which the body is affected by different objects at different times; or even, to retain Spinoza's words, it requires the mechanism by which "the imagination, or what they call the common sense, is affected by some corporeal things" (TIE §82; C I, 36 / G II, 31). In addition, the act by which such mnemonic associations, which present us with a temporal overview concerning the objects of our experience, are consciously recalled and retained by the mind, has itself a duration – for, as Spinoza writes, "ideas themselves also have their own duration in the mind". Hence, only as long as memory, understood as conscious recollection of sensations, endures uninterrupted under a continuous duration, is the mind able to attribute a determinate duration to its sensations and situate in time and space the objects that it imagines.[16]

However, whether by the notion of "duration" we understand the persistence of ideas of past affections in the mind, or rather the temporal relations that, while memory endures, are established between objects of memory, Spinoza regards the concept of duration itself as independent of that of a "pure mind", if not totally incompatible with it. The intellect does not have the "power of determining the existence of things by time, and of conceiving them under duration", as Spinoza also writes in the *Ethics* (E5p23s; C I, 607 / G II, 296).[17] Since such power of conceiving things according to their duration is an essential feature of memory, on Spinoza's definition, the intellect can have no memory. Or, at least, it is incapable of memory of the episodic kind.

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[16] In E2a5, Spinoza defines "duration" as "an indefinite continuation of existing [*indefinita existendi continuatio*]" (C I, 447 / G II, 85). Concerning Spinoza's account of time as determination of duration, see Jaquet 2005, 149-161, who also compares and contrasts Spinoza's theories of eternity, duration and time with scholastic accounts of the same notions.

[17] The passage appears in a scholium where Spinoza discusses the relationship between the eternal part of the mind, which remains after the body's destruction, and memory, which instead depends on the body's existence. I am assuming, therefore, that the eternal part of the mind, of which Spinoza writes in the Fifth Part of the *Ethics*, and the intellect evoked in the *Treatise* refer to the same notion. Spinoza explicitly equates the intellect to the eternal part of the mind, by distinguishing it from memory, towards the end of E5p39s. See also E5p40c: "the eternal part of the mind is the intellect" (C I, 615 / G II, 306).

There are two points that I find worth further investigation, regarding the way in which Spinoza presents memory in the TIE. The first point concerns the relationship between intellect and memory, and more generally, between intellect and functions of imagination. Spinoza wholly grounds the origin of memories in their corporeal correlate, that is, according to his terminology in the TIE, "impressions on the brain". Even more so, he claims that memories are nothing but sensations of these impressions. Memory, Spinoza seems to argue, is nothing other than the mental counterpart of a function of our corporeal imagination. He refers to this corporeal function by using a vocabulary possibly inspired by Descartes, who individuated the seat of mnestic traces in the "internal part of the brain" and identified corporeal imagination with "common sense".[18] This dependency on the body and its functions also explains why, in Spinoza's words, there is "no memory that belongs to a pure mind". As we will see in the next section, in the *Ethics* Spinoza abandons any reference to Descartes's physiology. Nevertheless, in both the TIE and the *Ethics*, Spinoza identifies the source of memory with a function of the human body, responsible for the formation, retention, association and reproduction of some corporeal affections or impressions of external objects, which are in fact the images or sensations remembered by the mind. On the one hand, the thesis that the intellect can aid an individual's memory, by strengthening her mnemonic associations, seems in possible contradiction with Spinoza's remarks concerning the intellect's lack of mnemonic powers. On the other hand, if Spinoza is really maintaining that the intellect is capable of strengthening connections between ideas of corporeal images, we might ask what happens to the corporeal images and the relevant corporeal functions that Spinoza holds as responsible for the existence of memories themselves? Is the intellect modifying the structure of the brain, when ideas of past impressions are reallocated according to a more intelligible order, which allows for an easier remembering? The mere question seems to force us to admit the possibility of a certain interaction between the mind and the human body – which seems in patent contradiction with Spinoza's rejection of any mind-body interactionism in the *Ethics*.[19]

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[18] See Descartes's *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* XII (CSM I, 41-42 / AT X, 414-415), his *Treatise on Man* (CSM I, 106 / AT XI, 176-177), his *Discourse on the Method* V (CSM I, 139 / AT VI, 571), his *Optics* IV (CSM I, 164-166 / AT VI, 597-600), and his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (CSM II, 59-60 / AT VII, 86). According to the inventory of Spinoza's library that was compiled after his death, Spinoza owned a Latin copy of the *Discourse* with the *Optics* (in Descartes 1650), three Latin editions of the *Meditations* (the earliest of which is found in Descartes 1650), and a Latin version of the *Treatise on Man* (Descartes 1664). According to Mignini's chronology of Spinoza's life, Spinoza might have already begun writing the TIE between the end of 1656 and the beginning of 1657, shortly after he was banished from the Jewish community of Amsterdam (Mignini 2007, LXXXVIII; see also Spinoza 2007, 5-6). Omero Proietti argues that Spinoza must have written the TIE no later than in October 1656 (Proietti 2010, 108). Should Mignini or Proietti be right in their dating of the composition of the TIE, it is unlikely that the observations on memory and common sense contained in Descartes's *Treatise on Man* could have had an impact on Spinoza's few remarks concerning the physiological bases of memory in the TIE. However, the editors of the OP affirm that Spinoza never gave up the idea of perfecting and finishing his *Treatise* (C I, 6 / G II, 4). Moreover, by some letters that Spinoza exchanged with Tschirnhaus (Ep 59-60), we can infer that, by the beginning of 1675, the TIE was still regarded as a text worthy of consideration, discussion, and publication, even though "not yet written out in an orderly fashion" (C II, 433 / G IV, 271). It could be the case, therefore, that Spinoza kept emending and improving his manuscript throughout his life, even though he was never able to finish it. As far as any influence deriving from Descartes's *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* is concerned, we cannot exclude that the young Spinoza may have had access to a copy of the manuscript of Descartes's then unpublished text, maybe through Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker, Dutch translator of Descartes's *Regulæ* (first published in Descartes 1684) and possible co-translator of Spinoza's NS (concerning this point, see Akkerman 1980, 77-185; C I, X, n. 3; Steenbakkers 1994, 64). On Spinoza's potential reception of Descartes's *Regulæ*, see Sánchez Estop 1987, 57-58. See also Curley 1977, 141-142, n. 21; Marion

The second point concerns Spinoza's characterisation of memory and its functions. We have seen that Spinoza, in the TIE, seems to acknowledge both a semantic and an episodic dimension of memory. When he wants to stress possible forms of interaction between memory and intellect, he seems to lean

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1994, 145, n. 26; Bartošek 2005; Nelson 2015, 57-58. A copy of the inventory of Spinoza's library is available in Pozzi 1994. For further considerations regarding the possible date of composition of Spinoza's TIE, see C I, 3-4. For a study of early modern physiology, from Descartes to Leibniz, see Andrault 2014.

[19] Regarding this, see E3p2: "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)" (C I, 494 / G II, 141).

towards a model of memory where the associations between mnemonic items are comparable to those expressed by memory of the semantic kind. By contrast, when Spinoza wants to describe memory as a product of the human imagination, or as the mental correlate of bodily functions — totally distinct from the intellect and its order of ideas — he provides a description of memory which seems more fit to explain memory of the episodic kind. This is, I think, a valuable hint that we shall keep in consideration for the following analyses — especially because in the definition of memory provided in the *Ethics*, as we shall see, Spinoza seems instead to conflate the two domains, and to reduce episodic memory to a case of semantic memory.

5. Memory in the *Ethics*

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza identifies corporeal images with "impressions, *or* traces [*impressiones seu vestigia*]" (E3post2; C I, 493 / G II, 139), which are left on soft parts of the human body by some fluid parts of the body, following a contact with an external body.

> When a fluid part of the human body is determined by an external body so that it frequently thrusts against a soft part, it changes its surface and, as it were, impresses certain traces of the external body striking against it.
>
> (E2post5; C I, 462 / G II, 102-103)

Based on his mind-body parallelism thesis — according to which "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (E2p7; C I, 451 / G II, 89) — Spinoza claims that, when the contact with an external body produces a mark on the soft parts of the human body, the human mind has in parallel an idea of the impression left by this contact (E2p17s). These impressions, or traces, are therefore like "images" left in our body by external bodies,[20] and their ideas, Spinoza writes, "represent external bodies as present to us [*corpora externa velut nobis præsentia repræsentant*] [...] even if they do not reproduce the figures of things" (E2p17s; C I, 465 / G II, 106. Translation modified). Hence, he adds that "when the mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines" (E2p17s; C I, 465 / G II, 106).

Spinoza also argues that, as long as the soft parts of the human body retain an impression of an external body, the fluid parts can interact again with the soft parts according to a fixed pattern of movement — rebounding on them, as it were, in the same way as when the trace of an external object was originally impressed in the body. This allows for the same affection of the body to be repeated over and over again. This reiteration of a past affection, Spinoza adds, can also happen in the absence of the external object — or the external stimulus, that is to say — that first caused the original mark to be impressed in the human body. This is made possible, he contends, thanks to the spontaneous motion of the fluid parts in the body, which can flow along the soft parts already shaped by past contacts.

Still in line with his mind-body parallelism thesis, Spinoza maintains that any time that an affection in the human body is thus repeated, it must be necessarily mirrored by the presence of a corresponding idea in the human mind. This is the reason why, he observes, "[a]lthough the external bodies by which the human body has once been affected neither exist nor are present, the mind will still be able to regard them as if they were present" (E2p17c; C I, 464 / G II, 105). Thus, Spinoza writes:

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[20] In E3post2, Spinoza writes:

> The human body can undergo many changes, and nevertheless retain impressions, *or* traces, of the objects [*objectorum impressiones seu vestigia*], and consequently, the same images of things.
>
> (E3post2; C I, 493 / G II, 139)

> While external bodies so determine the fluid parts of the human body that they often thrust against the softer parts, they change their surfaces with the result that they are reflected from it in another way than they used to be before, and still later, when the fluid parts, by their spontaneous motion, encounter those new surfaces, they are reflected in the same way as when they were driven against those surfaces by the external bodies. Consequently, while, thus reflected, they continue to move, they will affect the human body with the same mode, concerning which the mind will think again, i.e., the mind will again contemplate the external body as present [*mens iterum corpus externum ut praesens contemplabitur*]; this will happen as often as the fluid parts of the human body encounter the same surfaces by their spontaneous motion. So although the external bodies by which the human body has once been affected do not exist, the mind will still contemplate them as present [*mens tamen eadem toties ut præsentia contemplabitur*], as often as this action of the body is repeated.
>
> (E2p17d2; C I, 464 / G II, 105. Translation modified)

This sketchy physiological description – which includes the formation of corporeal traces in soft parts of the body and their interaction with fluid parts – is used by Spinoza to explain distinct mnemonic phenomena at one and the same time.

First, Spinoza's model[21] accounts for the conscious retention of images of things which have just left the perceptive field of an individual. Indeed, Spinoza writes that "so long as the human body is so affected" – that is, so long as the interaction between fluid and soft parts that gave origin to an impression persists unmodified – "the human mind will contemplate this affection of the body [*mens humana hanc corporis affectionem*

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[21] It is to be noted that Spinoza is very prudent regarding his physiologic explanation of corporeal memory, which is put forward in terms of a hypothesis. "This can happen from other causes also", Spinoza advices the reader, "but it is sufficient for me here to have shown one through which I can explain it as if I had shown it through its true cause" (E2p17s; C I, 464 / G II, 105).

contemplabitur]" (E2p17d; C I, 464 / G II, 104. Translation modified). While the bodily affection persists, therefore, the mind will also "contemplate" the image of the external cause that produced the impression in the body – it will keep regarding, that is, the external body represented by the impression as if it was present (E2p17).[22] It will do so, Spinoza adds, until the body is affected in some other way which "excludes the existence or presence" of the external body that caused the first impression (E2p17; C I, 464 / G II, 104).

Second, the repetition of the same pattern of movement of the fluid parts against the soft parts, shaped by some past impressions, allows the mind to recollect the ideas that correspond to these impressions – so that the mind will be able to figure again the images once left by external objects, in different and separate moments.

Within this general framework, Spinoza understands "memory" as essentially a matter and product of associations between ideas – associations which necessarily reflect a corresponding order of associations of corporeal affections. He starts by arguing that "[i]f the human body has once been affected by two or more bodies at the same time [*simul*], then when the mind subsequently imagines one of them, it will immediately [*statim*] recollect the others also" (E2p18; C I, 465 / G II, 106). The demonstration of this proposition proceeds as follows:

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[22] In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II, 10, 1-2, Locke distinguishes this function of the mind – i.e., "keeping the idea [...] for some time actually in view" (W I, 137) – from memory itself – i.e., "the power to revive again in our minds those ideas which after imprinting have disappeared, or have been as it were laid aside out of sight" (W I, 137). By using a terminology similar to the one also employed by Spinoza, he addresses the former kind of mnemonic retention by the name of "contemplation". Locke's and Spinoza's notions of mnemonic "contemplation" can be equated, in very general terms, to our current concept of "working memory". Squire defines "working memory" as such:

> Working memory refers to the capacity to maintain temporarily a limited amount of information in mind, which can then be used to support various abilities, including learning, reasoning, and preparation for action.
>
> (Squire 2009, 12714)

For a classic investigation concerning the nature of human "working memory", see Baddeley and Hitch 1974.

> The mind imagines a body because the human body is affected and disposed as it was affected when certain of its parts were struck by the external body itself. But (by hypothesis) the body was then so disposed that the mind imagined two [or more] bodies at once [*simul*]; therefore it will now also imagine two [or more] at once [*simul*], and when the mind imagines one, it will immediately [*statim*] recollect the other also.
>
> (E2p18d; C I, 465 / G II, 106)

By this demonstration, we may see, Spinoza aims at explaining the associative act by which the mind imagines at once — or, better still, simultaneously — multiple ideas of bodily impressions on the occasion of a single affection. Once again, the explanation is grounded in Spinoza's brief physiological account.

The human body, Spinoza argues, can be affected or disposed in such a way that multiple images of external bodies are impressed together on its soft parts. If these traces are physically connected to each other — say, if all these images are impressed on the soft parts as if they were part of a single picture — then, the triggering of one of those traces, by means of the movement of the fluid parts of the body, will also necessarily trigger the whole network of impressions that are naturally linked to the first. Therefore, when the human body is affected in ways which cause an interaction between fluid parts and a pre-existing impression on the soft parts (whether by the contact with an external body, or by the spontaneous internal movement of the fluid parts), the mind will also simultaneously imagine that impression, along with all the other impressions that are naturally associated with the former. This process is the cause of a kind of recollection by association, and the effect in our mind of this recollection is, strictly speaking, what Spinoza calls "memory".

After having explained how recollection by association might work in human beings, Spinoza provides his definition of memory. In the following scholium, he writes:

> From this we clearly understand what memory is. For it is nothing other than a certain connection of ideas involving the nature of things which are outside the human body — a connection that is in the mind according to the order and connection of the affections of the human body.
>
> (E2p18s; C I, 465 / G II, 106-107)

As we may notice again, Spinoza defines memory in terms of associations, or connections of ideas, which are grounded in the constitution of the body. In fact, memory is nothing other than a certain connection of corporeal impressions, reflected in thought as a network of interconnected ideas, due to Spinoza's mind-body parallelism. Then, he distinguishes between the order of the affections of the body and the order of the intellect.

> I say [...] that this connection happens according to the order and connection of the affections of the human body in order to distinguish it from the connection of ideas which happens according to the order of the intellect, by which the mind perceives things through their first causes, and which is the same in all men.
>
> (E2p18s; C I, 466 / G II, 107)

In light of the previous analysis of the description of memory that Spinoza provided in the TIE, there is one aspect of his treatment of memory in the *Ethics* that appears as particularly striking. Differently from the definition of memory that Spinoza presented in the TIE, in the definition found in the *Ethics* we can observe the lack of any reference to temporality — or to a connected "thought of a determinate duration of the sensation", to retain the words that he used in the TIE. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza apparently describes the objects of mnemonic recollection as having no temporal relations to each other, except for being simultaneous to each other — which is also stressed by his repeated use of the Latin term *simul*. He affirms that the ideas of the images which are naturally connected to each other in the body, are also recollected immediately — or, also, instantaneously (*statim*, in Latin). Therefore, all associations composing a single network of interconnected affections must be regarded as having simultaneous effect. This means that all mnemonic items included in the same network of interconnected ideas are presented to the mind at one time, when the occasion of recollection is given. We must assume that the same goes for the corporeal images which are the object of associative recollection: they are all triggered simultaneously in the body, as it were.

To be sure, in the *Ethics* Spinoza also relates the order of one's mnemonic associations to "the order and connection of the affections of the human body". This order is, indeed, what constitutes the biography of an individual; for this order of connections of ideas is supposed to reflect the peculiar constitution of a particular human body as modified by "fortuitous encounters with things" (E2p29s; C I, 471 / G II, 114), and it is distinct from the order of connections "by which the mind perceives things through their first causes, and which is the same in all men" (E2p18s; C I, 466 / G II, 107). In the order of corporeal affections, therefore, is grounded an individual's power of conceiving of herself and the external objects on a temporal scale — or "under duration", as Spinoza would also say. Yet, in the demonstration analysed above, Spinoza describes the order and connection of the affections of the human body — which are the object of conscious recollection — in terms of simultaneous, synchronic dispositions of the body. In parallel, on the mental domain, objects recalled through memory and their associations are conceived of as composing networks of ideas, which are all simultaneous with each other and synchronically connected to each other.

If this interpretation is true – that is, if Spinoza, in the *Ethics*, is effectively reducing memory to networks of synchronic associations of ideas – then we might expect him to consider only instances of memory of the semantic kind, in his discussion of memory. Or, at least, we might expect him to try to reduce cases of episodic memory to cases of semantic memory. Indeed, this is exactly what happens in the two examples that Spinoza provides in the scholium, after his definition of memory.

In the first example, he writes:

> [F]rom this we clearly understand why the mind, from the thought of one thing, immediately passes [*incidat*] to the thought of another, which has no likeness to the first: as, for example, from the thought of the word *pomum* a Roman will immediately pass [*incidet*] to the thought of the fruit, which has no similarity to that articulate sound and nothing in common with it except that the body of the same man has often been affected by these two, i.e., that the man often heard the word *pomum* while he saw the fruit.
>
> (E2p18s; C I, 466 / G II, 107)

This, I argue, can be safely considered an example of semantic memory. According to Spinoza, a mnemonic association such as the one between the word *pomum* and the thought of an apple must certainly have had an origin in time, grounded in the experience of the individual. However, once this association has been established and apprehended by the individual, there is no need to refer to such episode, or to conceive of that association as being dependent on time and space, in order for such association of ideas to obtain again from then on. The passage from one item of memory to the other is regarded as immediate, or even coincident – if we can render in such a way the Latin verb *incidere* – and it does not involve any temporal transition. Spinoza concedes that such connection between words and images is grounded in "the order and connection of the affections of the human body".

For there is no similarity and nothing in common between an "articulate sound" whatsoever and the image of a fruit. Such association, otherwise stated, is just the result of "fortuitous encounters with things", which left a simultaneous mark on the soft parts of our body. Yet, every time in which a Roman will hear the word *pomum*, he will also immediately recollect an image of the fruit, without any necessary reference to temporal information concerning the way in which the two images are connected.

In the second example, Spinoza writes:

> [I]n this way each of us will immediately pass [*incidet*] from one thought to another, as each one's association has ordered the images of things in the body. For example, a soldier, having seen traces of a horse in the sand, will immediately pass [*incidet*] from the thought of a horse to the thought of a horseman, and from that to the thought of war, etc. But a farmer will immediately pass [*incidet*] from the thought of a horse to the thought of a plow, and then to that of a field. etc. And so each one, according as he has been accustomed to join and connect the images of things in this or that way, will immediately pass [*incidet*] from one thought to another.
> (E2p18s; C I, 466 / G II, 107)

This second example, at least in the case of the soldier, could be used to take into account instances of episodic memory. We may certainly assume that the soldier evoked by Spinoza is aware that the images of war, object of his conscious remembering, refer to an event belonging to a different time and space, related to his personal experience. Indeed, this particular aspect of the phenomenon of conscious recollection seemed to be essential to the definition of memory that Spinoza put forward in the TIE. The same aspect, however, seems irrelevant to him here – or, at least, it appears completely overlooked in the example mentioned. Once again, the associations between the soldier's ideas are presented as images immediately recalling one another. When the soldier imagines a horse, because of the sight of some hoof prints on the sand, he also imagines, at the same moment, the war he fought. Whether the image of the war is the image of a past event or not is irrelevant: the idea of that image is regarded in its actuality, while it simultaneously interacts with other connected ideas, shaping the soldier's phenomenological horizon. The effects produced by the presence of such an image in the perceptive field of the soldier, with respect to his affective life, are to be regarded in the same way: that is, they all take place actually and simultaneously.

In the next sections, I will suggest two reasons concerning why Spinoza abandons any reference to temporality, or duration, in his description of memory in the *Ethics*, and why he opts instead for a conception of memory more akin to a model of semantic memory — where associations between ideas are conceived of as simultaneous and synchronic to each other. The first reason concerns Spinoza's way of describing how, on occasion of any given affection, images recalled by memory determine the appetite of an individual. The second reason, instead, deals with Spinoza's thesis — which we already found in the TIE — concerning the power of the intellect of aiding and strengthening human memory.

6. Memory, associations of affects, and human desire

As I have mentioned at the end of the previous section, there are at least two reasons that could explain why Spinoza, in the *Ethics*, privileges a model of memory based on synchronic relations and associations between ideas. The first reason is that such a description of memory seems to provide him with the means to explain why we often experience affective states — generally describable as more or less complex forms of joy and sadness — in connection with ideas of objects which are not externally present and are not directly the cause of either harm or benefit to ourselves. In other words, with his account of memory, Spinoza aims at demonstrating why and how past experiences and absent things may influence and determine our present life, by presenting themselves under the appearance of objects of actual recollection.

As we have seen, however, the objects that are recollected through memory, insofar as they are only represented by ideas of impressions, or images existing in the soft parts of our body, are to be regarded under all respects as imaginary objects. Yet, the corresponding sensations or ideas — that is, the memories that presently exist in the mind and are consciously perceived by it — are real and actual, and they can have a significant impact on one's life, by determining an individual's current affects and desire, and, therefore, her disposition to act in a particular way. They can determine, to use Spinoza's vocabulary, the "actual essence" of an individual (E3p7; C I, 499 / G II, 146). We can therefore rephrase the statement with which I concluded the paragraph above, by turning its terms around: one of the goals of Spinoza's theory of memory in the *Ethics* is to show why and how actual sources of sensations of joy or sadness can influence and determine our present being, by presenting themselves in disguise, as it were, under the appearance of objects of past experiences and memories of long gone events.[23]

Spinoza defines affects as "affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections" (E3d3; C I, 493 / G II, 139). Assumed in their most basic forms, such affects can be of three kinds. Affects of joy are perceived when an increase in one's power of acting and thinking occurs, whereas affects of sadness relate to a decrease in one's power of acting and thinking (E3p11s and E3ad2-3). The third affect is the human desire itself, or the "appetite", which Spinoza defines as "nothing but the very essence of man, from whose nature there necessarily follow those things that promote his preservation" (E3p9s; C I, 500 / G II, 147), or else as "man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something" (E3ad1; C I, 531 / G II, 190).[24]

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[23] I assume that this is the right perspective from which to explain the mental phenomena to which Colin Marshall refers as "flashbacks" (2012).

Based on his demonstration of how associative memory works in humans, Spinoza maintains that "[i]f the mind has once been affected by two affects at once [*simul*], then afterwards, when it is affected by one of them, it will also be affected by the other" (E3p14; C I, 502 / G II, 151). This observation leads him to conclude that "[a]ny thing can be the accidental cause of joy, sadness, or desire" (E3p15; C I, 503 / G II, 151). Spinoza's demonstration proceeds as follows:

> Suppose the mind is affected by two affects at once [*simul*], one of which neither increases nor diminishes its power of acting, while the other either increases it or diminishes it. […] It is clear that when the mind is afterwards affected with the former affect as by its true cause, which (by hypothesis) through itself neither increases nor diminishes its power of thinking, it will immediately [*statim*] be affected with the latter also, which increases or diminishes its power of thinking, i.e., with joy, or sadness. And so the former thing will be the cause of joy or sadness – not through itself, but accidentally. And in the same way it can easily be shown that that thing can be the accidental cause of desire.
>
> (E3p15d; C I, 503 / G II, 151-152)

It seems that the case of the soldier – mentioned by Spinoza at the end of E2p18s, in the second of his two examples illustrating the functioning of associative memory, analysed in the previous section — can be easily adapted to fit with this demonstration. Let us suppose, for example, that the soldier has sad affects bound to the images of the war that he fought; affects which, perhaps, were caused by and are related to miseries and sufferings that he had to go through, while at war. It follows that the mere sight of some horse's hoof prints acts for that soldier as the accidental cause of sadness. To be sure, this is a result of a connection between images (as well as between relevant affects) established according to the personal experiences of the soldier — it depends on his biography, so to speak, and on the order and connection of the affections of his body, as it was affected by fortuitous encounters with things. Yet, it is a result which obtains at any time in which the soldier sees images recalling horses, and it obtains immediately and necessarily. The fact that the war recalled by the soldier and the relevant affect of sadness refer to a past event — and, let us add, the fact that the soldier is aware that he is not presently fighting any war, and that nothing is presently harming him — cannot prevent that thought and that affect from presenting themselves again, at the sight of the hoof prints, and such awareness cannot do much to heal the soldier's present pain.

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[24] Note that I am not considering here the distinction between "appetite" and "desire" that Spinoza makes in E3p9s on account of the presence of consciousness. In E3ad1ex Spinoza affirms that he "really recognizes no difference between human appetite and desire" (C I, 531 / G II, 190). All desires are appetites, insofar as the mind is considered to be conscious of them, whereas there is no appetite that is not also a desire, since the mind has ideas and perceptions of all of its ideas, or affections (as per E2p20, E2p21, E2p22, and E2p23, also recalled in E3ad1ex). In chapter 1 I expressed at length the reasons why, on Spinoza's account, desires, or conscious appetites, are not to be considered as a subset of appetites. Regarding this point, see also LeBuffe 2010a, 130.

Spinoza is consistent on this point. Indeed, he maintains that a "man is affected with the same affect of joy or sadness from the image of a past or future thing as from the image of a present thing" (E3p18; C I, 504 / G II, 154). He writes:

> So long as a man is affected by the image of a thing, he will regard the thing as present, even if it does not exist; he imagines it as past or future only insofar as its image is joined to the image of a past or future time. So the image of a thing, considered only in itself, is the same, whether it is related to time past or future, or to the present, i.e., the constitution of the body, *or* affect, is the same, whether the image is of a thing past or future, or of a present thing. And so, the

> affect of joy or sadness is the same, whether the image is of a thing past or future, or of a present thing.
>
> (E3p18d; C I, 504-505 / G II, 154)

In this passage, we may finally witness the return of the notion of the "connected thought of a determinate duration of the sensation" — which explained episodic memory in the TIE — appearing here in the shape of a "joint image of a past or future time". This implies that Spinoza does not simply forget to take the episodic dimension of memory into account in his description of memory in the *Ethics*. He has it well present to his mind, but he deems it irrelevant in order to explain how memory affects the conative, or affective life of an individual.[25] Each time in which an image is impressed or aroused in individuals capable of semantic memory, it will immediately recall a relevant network of interconnected ideas. Altogether, they contribute both to shaping the perceptual landscape of the individual and determining, simultaneously, a connected affective state which determines her current desire. This desire, as we have seen, is the appetite of which all humans are conscious (E1App; E4Pref) — that is, "man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something" (E3ad1; C I, 531 / G II, 190).

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[25] He deems it irrelevant, at least, at this stage of his analysis of memory. I do not mean here to argue that images related to past thing — conceived, that is, as absent or non-presently existing — and images related to present things may have the same effects on the individual, if we are to consider the intensity, or force, of the associated affect. This is also denied by Spinoza in E4p9s, where he clarifies the sense of the demonstration quoted above (namely, E3p18d). He states that an affect tied to the image of a thing "is of the same nature" (E4p9s; C I, 551 / G II, 216) whether we imagine the thing as present, past, or future — i.e., we still feel the same kind of joy or sadness. Yet, if we imagine the thing that causes that affect as absent (as non-presently existing, or as existing in the past or the future), then the relevant affect of joy and sadness is also less powerful than if it was connected to the same thing imagined as present. The appearance of the idea of an image in one's mind (whether it is conceived of as present, past, or future), along with a connected affect, remain nevertheless a matter of simultaneous connections of ideas. Further, the awareness that the image is an image of a past thing — and the ensuing softening of the relevant affect associated to that image — is again to be understood as the result of synchronic, simultaneous associations of ideas, which exclude the existence of the external source of joy or sadness *at the same time in which the affect is perceived*. The important thing to notice here is that the associations of ideas by which an object of memory is conceived as absent do not prevent memories from reappearing in one's mind, as they do not prevent the connected affects from being perceived again. The awareness of the non-existence of the object of memory is, indeed, the result of an additional and simultaneous enchainment of other ideas that involve the recollected idea and affect, without eliminating them. For studies concerning Spinoza's explanation of how the human mind can conceive of non-existent objects, see Malinowski-Charles 2012; Marrama 2016; Lærke 2017.

7. A remedy for the affects: rearranging one's own memories

Let us focus, now, on the second reason why Spinoza, in the *Ethics*, develops a theory of memory based on a semantic, synchronic account of its associative processes. This reason is in continuity with the former, and it deals with Spinoza's theory of "the remedies for the affects" (E5p20s; C I, 605 / G II, 293) — including what an individual's mind can do, by its own power alone, to oppose the affects that are brought about by its memories.

In the Fifth Part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza affirms that one of the "powers of the mind over the affects" consists in "the order by which the mind can order its affects and connect them to one another" (E5p20s; C I, 605 / G II, 293). He writes:

> So long as we are not torn by affects contrary to our nature, we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the body according to the order of the intellect.
>
> (E5p10; C I, 601 / G II, 287)

Spinoza grounds this seminal claim of his system on his mind-body parallelism thesis. "In just the same way as thoughts and ideas of things are ordered and connected in the mind", Spinoza argues, "so the affections of the body, *or* images of things are ordered and connected in the body" (E5p1; C I, 597 / G II, 281).

We have seen that, in his description of memory, Spinoza regarded the order and connection of ideas of images in the mind as mirroring the order and connection of corresponding corporeal affections. Now, Spinoza affirms that the order and connection of corporeal images and affections of the body must also reflect the order of the corresponding ideas in the mind. Spinoza apparently conceives this passage as unproblematic:

> [J]ust as the order and connection of ideas happens in the mind according to the order and connection of affections of the body, so vice versa, the order and connection of affections of the body happens as thoughts and ideas of things are ordered and connected in the mind.
>
> (E5p1d; C I, 597 / G II, 281)

The consequences of this apparently straightforward restatement of the mind-body parallelism are quite remarkable — and, to some extent, decisive. If the mind, by its own power, is effectively capable of rearranging a given order of ideas of impressions, then the relevant affections in the body must, in parallel, assume a new corresponding configuration, reflecting the new connections of ideas now existing in the mind. The challenge for Spinoza is, of course, to maintain this conclusion while rejecting any action of the mind upon the body *à la* Descartes,[26] and without resorting to the introduction of any free causation[27] or creation *ex nihilo* in the extended realm of bodies.[28]

The solution to this problem, I think, requires taking into account the notion of "adequate, *or* formal [*adæquata, seu formalis*]" (E5p31d; G II 299) causation. Spinoza defines "adequate" that cause "whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it" (E3d1; C I, 492 / G II, 139). By using that notion,[29] I argue, it is possible for Spinoza to consistently contend that the same effect obtains simultaneously in the mind and the body, without any interaction between the two, when rationality (or an intelligible order of causes and effects) is foreseen through memories. Let us recall that the intellect, for Spinoza, is not free,[30] it does not create the objects of its understanding[31] and, more importantly, it cannot determine the body to do anything. The activity of which the intellect is the adequate cause, rather, is understanding things "through their first causes" (E2p18s; C I, 466 / G II, 107), deducing one adequate idea from the other.[32] This activity, Spinoza maintains, is the origin of actions that can be understood through the nature of the agent alone. For example, in E4p23d, the notion of adequate cause is recalled to demonstrate that when an individual "is determined to do something from the fact that he understands [*intelligit*], he [...] does something which is perceived through his essence alone" (C I, 558 / G II, 226).[33] Hence, in E5p10d Spinoza writes:

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[26] The Preface to the Fifth Part of the *Ethics*, which introduces the theses that we are presently discussing, is in fact an elaborate criticism of Descartes's theory of mind-body interaction.

[27] According to Spinoza, "God acts from the laws of Its nature" (E1p17; C I, 425 / G II, 61) and "does not produce any effect by freedom of the will" (E1p32c; C I, 435 / G II, 73). See also E1p17s.

[28] The rejection of causation *ex nihilo*, in Spinoza, takes the form of a particularly strong formulation of the principle of sufficient reason, which is found in E1p11d2: "For each thing there must be assigned a cause, or reason [*causa, seu ratio*], as much for its existence as for its nonexistence" (C I, 417 / G II, 52). For studies on Spinoza's formulation and implementation of the principle of sufficient reason, see Della Rocca 2002; Della Rocca 2003; Della Rocca (2006) 2011; Della Rocca 2008; Lin 2017; Melamed and Lin 2018. Discussions concerning the appreciation of the principle of sufficient reason in interpreting Spinoza can be found in Lærke 2014, Della Rocca 2015, and Garber 2015.

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[29] The notion of "adequate cause" is primarily used by Spinoza to define "action", that is, "when something in us or outside us follows from our nature, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone" (E3d2; C I, 493 / G II, 139). Spinoza recalls the two definitions several times, in order to describe the activity of the mind insofar as it has adequate ideas – an activity whose effects can be understood through the nature of the mind alone (see E3p1d; E4p15d; E4p23d; E4p35d; E4p35c1; E4p52d; E4p59d; E4p61d; E5p31d). For an insightful analysis of Spinoza's account and use of the notion of "adequate, *or* formal" causation, see Hübner 2015.

[30] As per E1p32 and the following two corollaries, as well as per E2p49c and the relevant demonstration.

[31] In E1p17s, Spinoza denies that God's intellect might be "prior in causality" (C I, 427 / G II, 63) to its objects of understanding. For this reason, the intellect cannot be said to invent or create any rational order in nature, on Spinoza's account: it finds it or, better still, it follows it, necessarily. For ideas must proceed in God's infinite intellect as their corresponding objects follow from one another in each of God's infinite attributes, according to the necessity of the laws of God's nature (see E1p16, E2p3s, and E2p7c). Indeed, God's infinite intellect is itself a mode of God, following from the nature of God's attribute of thought. Concerning this point, see Koyré 1950 and Marrama 2014, 95-97. See also E2p6c, where Spinoza states:

> [T]he formal being of things which are not modes of thinking does not follow from the divine nature because [God] has first known the things; rather the objects of ideas follow and are inferred from their attributes in the same way and by the same necessity as that with which [...] ideas [...] follow from the attribute of thought.
>
> (E2p6c; C I, 450-451 / G II, 89)

[32] In E4p26d, Spinoza writes that "the essence of reason is nothing but our mind, insofar as it understands clearly and distinctly [*rationis essentia nihil aliud est, quam mens nostra, quatenus clare, et distincte intelligit*]" (C I, 559 / G II, 227). In E2p38c Spinoza identifies ideas that are "clearly and distinctly" perceived with adequate ideas (C I, 474 / G II, 119). In E2p40, Spinoza contends that "[w]hatever ideas follow in the mind from ideas that are adequate in the mind are also adequate" (C I, 475 / G II, 120).

> [S]o long as we are not torn by affects contrary to our nature, the power of the mind by which it strives to understand things [*mentis potentia, qua res intelligere conatur*] is not hindered. So long, then, the mind has the power of forming clear and distinct ideas, and of deducing some from others. And hence, so long do we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the body according to the order of the intellect.
>
> (E5p10d; C I, 601 / G II, 287)

What is happening then, in the corporeal domain, when the intellect is said to reorder or rearrange ideas of bodily affections (including mnemonic items, images and affects) according to its own order? Simply put, the intellect is witnessing the moment in which images impressed in the body tend, by their own force alone – by their mere being there, that is, not obstructed by external forces – to assume a new disposition, meant to reflect and express a rational order and connection of causes, or a certain "form".[34] Such bodily affections produce an effect which depend on them alone and can be understood through them alone, not depending on any external cause.[35] This is when

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[33] In E4p35d, Spinoza also writes that: "whatever follows from human nature, insofar as it is defined by reason [*quatenus ratione definitur*], must be understood through human nature alone" (C I, 563 / G II, 233). In E5p59d, he similarly affirms that "[a]cting from reason [*ex ratione agere*] is nothing but doing those things which follow from the necessity of our nature, considered in itself alone" (C I, 579 / G II, 254).

[34] Similarly, by referring to E5p10, Pierre-François Moreau contends that it is by their own movement that images in the body tend to order and connect to one another according to the order of the intellect, and not because they are caused by the intellect. This excludes any mind-body interaction. Indeed, Moreau argues, the body always strives to produce those effects that adequately follow from its nature (Moreau 1994, 318). The intellect is simply the necessary understanding in one's mind of this natural movement in one's body.

[35] How the notion of adequate cause can apply to the body, if we conceive of the actions of the body as determined by the nature of the human body alone, is explained by Spinoza with an example in E4p59s:

> The act of beating, insofar as it is considered physically, and insofar as we attend only to the fact that the man raises his arm, closes his fist, and moves his whole arm

adequate, or formal, causation kicks in. When, in the absence of external opposing forces, all the elements sufficient for a certain effect to obtain are present, the effect necessarily obtains, and this effect is understood and deduced by the intellect through those foundational elements alone – as a necessary consequence must follow from its premises, once the premises are given.

The interesting thing that I would like to stress here, is that the claim expressed in E5p10d – according to which "we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the body according to the order of the intellect" – is also used by Spinoza to support the thesis, found in the TIE, from which our discussion departed. That is, that the intellect can aid one's memory by strengthening the associations between ideas – or rather, that the intelligibility of the associations between images is the cause of their easier retention and recollection. We may not notice it at first sight, because this thesis is neither explicitly recalled, in the *Ethics*, nor further elaborated. As a matter of fact, we may find it immediately at work, within the mechanism of Spinoza's theory of the healing of the soul.

What is essential, for Spinoza, is to have reduced all memory to simultaneous associations of ideas, on the one hand, and to have demonstrated that the order of the affections of the body must reflect and follow the order of the ideas in the mind, on the other hand. For if the mind can establish causal connections between ideas of affections of the body according to the order of the intellect, then the mind can also rearrange the order of the connected affects of joy and sadness in a more rational way.[36] "By

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> forcefully up and down, is a virtue, which is conceived from the structure of the human body.
>
> (E4p59s; C I, 580 / G II, 255)

[36] It is also important to note that Spinoza considers this activity, by which the mind orders its ideas according to the order of the intellect, as capable of arousing affects of joy by itself (see E3p53 and E3p58-59), or rather as being, in Genevieve Lloyd's words, "inherently joyful" (1996, 81; see also

this power of rightly ordering and connecting the affections of the body", Spinoza argues, "we can bring it about that we are not easily affected with evil affects" (E5p10s; C I, 601 / G II, 287). Then, he continues:

> For a greater force is required for restraining affects ordered and connected according to the order of the intellect than for restraining those which are uncertain and random.
>
> (E5p10s; C I, 601 / G II, 287)

In this passage, I argue, we may see quite clearly a reformulation of the thesis first expressed in the TIE. Intelligible connections between ideas – that is, connections agreeing with the order of the intellect – are stronger than connections between random objects. That is to say, that they are more easily retained and remembered. Hence, also the affects associated to these ideas will be stronger, or more difficult to restrain. One important thing to notice here, however, is that Spinoza understands this concept of force, or the strength of such connections or associations of ideas, as time related.

Here Spinoza, amazingly, turns back to a temporal perspective over memory, and describes the action of the intellect upon memory as having effect in time. "Affects that arise from, or are aroused by, reason", he writes, "are, if we take account of time, more powerful than those that are related to singular things which we regard as absent" (E5p7; C I, 600 / G II, 285). Indeed, Spinoza affirms that connections of ideas that follow the order of the intellect are stronger in time, since ideas of reason are conceived as being always present – or "under a certain species of eternity" (E2p44c2; C I, 481 / G II, 126). Hence, they can be associated with affects and images that never change in one's mind (and, in parallel, in one's body).[37]

Lloyd 1994, 94). This aspect of Spinoza's theory of adequate understanding has been analysed by Susan James (1997, 200-207).

[37] Temporal relations between images of things can be considered superadded connections of ideas, which mutually exclude or posit the existence of the external cause of an image, when that image presents itself to an individual's mind. As I mentioned before (see footnote 25 of this chapter),

> So such an affect will always remain the same, and hence, the affects that are contrary to it, and that are not encouraged by their external causes, will have to accommodate themselves to it more and more, until they are no longer contrary to it. To that extent, an affect arising from reason is more powerful.
>
> (E5p7d; C I, 600 / G II, 285-286)

In order for these connections of ideas to remain always the same, and to be always present through time, as we have seen, Spinoza contends that the intellect can always regard the order and connections of the affections of the body — which memory conceives under duration, as a kind of temporal development of events — from a horizontal, synchronic perspective: a perspective where such connections and their effects take place simultaneously, according to an order of causes which does not depend on time. A perspective, that is, according to which the order and connection between objects of memory does not depend on temporal relations, or on the biography of the individual. An order, he adds, "by which the mind perceives

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those connections of ideas can be power-decreasing for a connected affect, if the image and the affect are perceived in connection with an idea which) excludes the present existence of their external cause (without however, eliminating the image and the affect themselves, which thing, as we have seen above, is impossible; see also E4p9d). Now, ideas of reasons, being conceived "under a species of eternity", do not allow for this kind of relations and connections with other ideas. For example, in E4p62 Spinoza affirms that "[i]nsofar as the mind conceives things from the dictate of reason, it is affected equally, whether the idea is of a future or past thing, or of a present one" (C I, 581 / G II, 257). In the following demonstration, he writes:

> Whatever the mind conceives under the guidance of reason, it conceives under the same species of eternity, *or* necessity and is affected with the same certainty. So whether the idea is of a future or a past thing, or of a present one, the mind conceives the thing with the same necessity and is affected with the same certainty. And whether the idea is of a future or a past thing or of a present one, it will nevertheless be equally true, i.e., it will nevertheless always have the same properties of an adequate idea. And so, insofar as the mind conceives things from the dictate of reason, it is affected in the same way, whether the idea is of a future or a past thing, or of a present one.
>
> (E4p62d; C I, 581 / G II, 257)

Hence, affects related to ideas of reasons are conceived as being "more intense, *or* stronger [*intensior, seu fortior*]" in time, for, when they are conceived, the ideas to which they are attached completely override temporal relations and connections with other ideas which could be power decreasing. As we can see, the effect in time of the intellect can still be explained from a synchronic, non-temporal standpoint.

things through their first causes, and which is the same in all men" (E2p18s; C I, 466 / G II, 107).

8. Conclusion

We have seen that, in the description and examples of memory provided in the TIE, Spinoza attributes the possibility of tracking intelligible connections or associations between ideas to instances of memory of the semantic kind. By contrast, he excludes any kind of relationship between intellect and memory of the episodic kind. Further, we have seen that, in the same text, Spinoza also distinguishes between two ways of conceiving of the duration in time of our sensations, when attributed to episodic memory. On the one hand, memory provides the mind with the power of imagining absent things under duration, as belonging to a certain time and place. On the other hand, memory has a duration itself, that is, the unfolding of the very act of remembering and imagining things and the extension in time of a certain conscious recollection of objects.

An individual who remembers things, imagines the things — as well as herself, along with those things — as unfolding in time, and having each one its own duration. That individual, in other words, imagines things as being present or absent at different times and places, according to the way in which the connections between her ideas respectively posit or exclude the existence of the objects represented by the impressions recollected. According to Spinoza, however, the capability of the human mind of understanding the overall duration of its own memory is very limited. "Our mind", Spinoza writes, "can be said to endure, and its existence can be defined by a certain time, only insofar as it involves the actual existence of the body, and to that extent only does it have the power of determining the existence of things by time, and of conceiving them under duration" (E5p23s; C I, 608 / G II, 296).

Yet, Spinoza also claims that "we can only have an entirely inadequate knowledge of the duration of our body" (E2p30; C I, 471 / G II, 114). It follows, therefore, that we can only have an entirely inadequate knowledge of the duration of our mind, including memory. Hence, to understand how memory itself unfolds in time — determining how long the vision of an external world, shaping itself around us in time and space, has lasted in absolute terms — remains an impossible task for the human mind.

By contrast, the intellect, which cannot determine the existence of things through time, sees the act of recollection itself — by which time itself unfolds in the imagination of the individual — "in one glance [*uno intuitu*]" (E2p40s2; C I, 478 / G II, 122). It sees the unfolding of memory, that is, in one instant — or rather, "under a species of eternity" (E5p29; C I, 609 / G II, 298) — by perceiving connections between ideas in their simultaneity, or synchronicity, while they all concur to the production of a single effect — which effect may also be, as we have seen, an affect.

To conclude, I argue that it is from this standpoint on memory — a standpoint, that is, which reduces memory to its semantic functions, or to its synchronic associations — that the intellect, by looking at the phenomenological horizon composed by one's imagination and one's mnemonic associations, is able to find at any given moment the same order of causes and the same connections between things, or images of things. When these new associations are seen by the mind, a newly composed enchainment of ideas of images is encoded in the body of the individual, made in such a way as to be meaningful, as it were — capable, that is, of reflecting and reproducing a rational order and connection of affections at any time in which external events will determine the body to remember the same images.[38] For the capacity to remember things through time remains a function of memory, understood as a product of human corporeal imagination. Indeed, the intellect has no memory, and it cannot trigger or recall corporeal memories. What the intellect can do, rather, is to witness at any moment the presence of some eternal rationality in apparently disconnected and fortuitous images of the world, and then let memory remember such a vision by recalling connections between images now made intelligible.

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[38] Interestingly, after having demonstrated that "we have the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the body according to the order of the intellect" (E5p10d; C I, 601 / G II, 287), Spinoza starts focusing on aspects of memory that we may regard as "procedural" (see E5p10s, E5p11,

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E5p12 and E5p13). That is, he starts focusing on how images can be connected and enchained in such a way to reflect and express rational precepts and maxims, which can be implemented at any occasion of recollection. He also investigates how such associations of images can be arranged in order to increase the occasions of recollection that one's experience and fortune might bring about, in order for the rational precept that they express to be recalled and implemented in as many occasions as possible.

> The best thing, then, that we can do, so long as we do not have perfect knowledge of our affects, is to conceive a correct principle of living, *or* sure maxims of life, to commit them to memory, and to apply them constantly to the particular cases frequently encountered in life. In this way our imagination will be extensively affected by them, and we shall always have them ready. [...] And he who will observe these [rules] carefully [...] and practice them, will soon be able to direct most of his actions according to the command of reason.
>
> (E5p10s; C I, 601-602 / G II, 287-289)

This aspect of Spinoza's theory of memory will be analysed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

“The Habit of Virtue”: Spinoza on Reason and Memory

Chapter Abstract

In this chapter I explain how, according to Spinoza, we can acquire the “habit of virtue” from “fatal necessity”. Spinoza maintains that there can be no decision of the mind if there is no memory of the decision that we want to take. Moreover, Spinoza’s rejection of free will implies that nobody can freely select the mnemonic content which is the object of retrieval and present awareness. It seems, therefore, that it is not in the power of an individual to act virtuously. Nevertheless, Spinoza also contends that the acquisition of the habit of virtue is a goal that all humans can achieve by employing their powers alone. To solve this puzzle, I focus on the way in which memory interacts with reason, in Spinoza’s system. I argue that this interaction gives rise to what we may call “discursive reasoning”, that is, the unfolding in time of reasoning processes. In this sense, reasoning can be understood as a kind of habit, which generates virtuous behaviour. First, I clarify what the notion of “habit of virtue” signifies for Spinoza. Then, I briefly review his account of memory. Next, I show how reason can be understood as an activity by which mnemonic associations are reconfigured. To further elucidate his conception of reason, I analyse his account of “common notions”, which he calls the “foundations of our reasoning”. Finally, I point out how reason relies on memory to preserve itself in time, determining the virtuous habit.

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will focus on the way in which memory interacts with reason, in Spinoza’s system. I argue that this interaction between memory and reason gives rise to what we may call “discursive reasoning”, that is, the unfolding in time of reasoning processes. Further, discursive reasoning can be understood as a habit, which is identical, on Spinoza’s account, with virtuous behaviour.

The impetus for this investigation is provided by a question that the German mathematician Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus poses in a letter addressed to Spinoza, around the end of 1674.[1] In his letter, Tschirnhaus expresses perplexities about Spinoza's necessitarianism and his rejection of free will. He asks him:

> If we were compelled by external things, who could acquire the habit of virtue [*habitus virtutis*]? [...] [I]n how many ways does it not happen that if we are determined to something by external things, we resist this with a firm and constant heart?
>
> (Ep 57; C II, 425-426 / G IV, 264)

Spinoza's answer to Tschirnhaus's question is rather elusive:

> As for what he has maintained [...]: "that if we were compelled by external causes, no one could acquire the habit of virtue", I don't know who has told him that it can't happen from a fatal necessity [*ex fatali necessitate*], but only from a free decision of the mind, that we should have a firm and constant disposition.
>
> (Ep 58; C II, 430 / G IV, 267)

This reply suggests that an individual can acquire the "habit of virtue" from a "fatal necessity". Yet, Spinoza does not demonstrate how, on his account, it can actually happen that one acquires this "firm and constant disposition" to act virtuously. In the rest of this chapter I will try to address Tschirnhaus's question, providing a series of arguments compatible with Spinoza's overall philosophical framework. My aim is to demonstrate that the acquisition of the habit of virtue, in Spinoza's terms, is intimately connected to precise accounts of reason and memory, and it depends on them.

Indeed, for Spinoza the effects of both reason and memory are necessarily determined. Our power to reason depends only on the laws of our nature; in this sense, I shall argue, its effects can be understood as originating from a kind of "free necessity". It expresses itself as the power of ordering and connecting images according to the order of the intellect. The images themselves, which we perceive in our mind and which our reason orders according to the order of the intellect, are provided by memory. Yet, the way in which we come to perceive, retain, and recollect images in our mind is not in our power: it is determined, rather, by the way in which external causes necessarily arouse in us particular networks of memories rather than others. Hence, the acquisition of a "habit of virtue" – which I identify with the permanence and flourishing in the mind of trains of ideas ordered according to the order of the intellect – insofar as it also relies on memory, remains also dependent on elements of "fatal necessity".

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[1] The letter (Ep 57) was handed in by Tschirnhaus to their common friend Georg Schuller, and delivered to Spinoza by Jan Rieuwertsz, the publisher in Amsterdam of Glazemaker's French translations of Descartes and of all Spinoza's works.

To support this thesis, I will begin, in section 2, by clarifying what the notion of "habit of virtue" signifies for Spinoza. In section 3, I will explain Spinoza's account of memory: this entails the presence, in the human mind, of networks of ideas which are constantly determined by the way in which the human body is affected by external objects. In section4, I will show how reason – that is, the activity by which the mind understands properties of the things and joins images through them – can be understood as a kind of reconfiguration of mnemonic associations. In section 5, I will analyse how, on Spinoza's account, we get to perceive adequate ideas of common properties of things – that is, in Spinoza's terminology, "common notions" – which provide us with the "foundations of our reasoning" (E2p40s1; C I, 475-476 / G II, 120). In sections 6, I will point out how reason relies on memory and organises it in order to preserve itself in time, to give rise to discursive reasoning. In section 7, which concludes the chapter, I will show how reason and memory concur to determine the acquisition of one's virtuous habits.

2. Human virtue: actions *vs* passions of the mind

To better understand Spinoza's reply to Tschirnhaus, we can start by clarifying what Spinoza understands by "habit of virtue". The expression "habit of virtue [*virtutis habitus*]" is rarely used in Spinoza's works.[2] In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza explicitly mentions "habit of virtue" a few times. On one occasion, he identifies "acquiring the habit of virtue" with "gaining control over the passions" (TTP III, 12; C II, 113 / G III, 46). Spinoza also adds that the means to acquire the habit of virtue depends "chiefly on our power alone, *or* on the laws of human nature alone". For this reason, he concludes that "these gifts [...] have always been common to the whole human race" (TTP III, 12; C II, 114 / G III, 46-47).[3] Still, this power, common to all humans, is not conceived by Spinoza as determined by any freedom of the will. By contrast, it is conceived as subject to the same "universal laws of nature according to which all things happen and are determined" (TTP III, 8; C II, 112 / G III, 46).[4]

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[2] With regard to Spinoza's general terminology for "habits", see Malinowski-Charles 2004b, 101. The notion of "habit" was widely discussed throughout the Middle Ages. From the 13th century, specific debates on virtue, understood as a kind of "habit" and "second nature", were prompted and influenced by the appearance of Robert Grosseteste's full translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (regarding previous debates, see Nederman 1990). In the version of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* owned by Spinoza (in Aristotle 1548, III, 1-86, translated by Ioannis Argyropoulos), the translator renders the Greek ἦθος ("habitude") with the Latin *assuetudo* (see, for example, Aristotle 1548, III, 9) and the Greek ἕξις ("habit") with *habitus* (see Aristotle 1548, III, 5-12). Syliane Malinowski-Charles highlights the differences between the Aristotelian conceptions of virtue and habits as a "second nature" and that of Spinoza, who instead identifies virtue with one's very own nature (Malinowski-Charles 2004b, 102).

[3] Besides this passage, Spinoza mentions "habit of virtue" another three times in TTP. In TTP V, 4, Spinoza refers to the "habit of virtue *or* of good actions [*virtutis sive bonarum actionum usu seu habitu*]" to stress the universality of Isaiah's teaching, which extends to all humans (C II, 139 / G III, 69. Translation modified). On another occasion, in TTP XV, 44, Spinoza mentions how difficult it is to acquire the "habit of virtue", with the purpose to highlight the importance of Scripture and obedience when we cannot live in accordance to the dictates of our reason (C II, 281-282 / G III, 188). In TTP XVI, 6-7, Spinoza affirms that, in a state of nature, humans that do not live under the guidance of reason, or do not have the "habit of virtue", have a supreme right to do whatever their appetite urges them to do (C II, 283 / G III, 190).

[4] In the same passage Spinoza adds that these "laws of nature [*leges naturæ*]" are "nothing but the eternal decrees of God, which always involve eternal truth and necessity" (TTP III, 8; C II, 112 / G III, 46). For this reason, Spinoza calls whatever follows from the power of human nature alone

In a similar way, in the *Ethics* Spinoza defines “virtue” as the power by which we cause effects that can be understood through the laws of human nature alone. He writes:

> By virtue and power I understand the same thing, i.e., virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, *or* nature, of man, insofar as he has the power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone.
>
> (E4d8; C I, 547 / G II, 210)

In Spinoza’s terms, to be able to bring about things which can be understood through one’s own nature alone means, for an individual, to be the “adequate cause” of those things (E3d1).[5] When an individual is the adequate cause of effects, that individual is also said to act (E3d2).[6] Expressions of our virtue are, therefore, those affections in us that Spinoza identifies with “actions”, as opposed to “passions” (E3d3).[7] Actions, that is, are those affections in us that can be entirely understood through the laws of our nature, as effects of which

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“God’s internal aid” (TTP III, 9; C II, 113 / G III, 46). On this basis, he contends that “no one does anything except according to the predetermined order of nature, i.e., according to God's eternal guidance and decree” (TTP III, 10; C II, 113 / G III, 46).

[5] In his definition of “adequate cause”, Spinoza writes:

> I call that cause adequate whose effect can be clearly and distinctively perceived through it. But I call it partial, *or* inadequate, if its effect cannot be understood through it alone.
>
> (E3d1; C I, 492 / G II, 139)

[6] By recalling E3d1, in E3d2 Spinoza writes:

> I say that we act when something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause, i.e., when something in us or outside us follows from our nature, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone. On the other hand, I say that we are acted on when something happens in us, or something follows from our nature, of which we are only a partial cause.
>
> (E3d2; C I, 493 / G II, 139)

[7] In E3d3 Spinoza writes:

> By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections.
>
> Therefore, if we can be the adequate cause of any of these affections, I understand by the affect an action; otherwise a passion.
>
> (E3d3; C I, 493 / G II, 139)

we are the adequate cause. They originate in and depend only on ourselves, rather than on the influence of external causes acting upon us. Passions, by contrast, are those affections of the mind and the body that are produced in us as a result of external causes acting upon us.

The first thing to notice, therefore, is that Spinoza does not absolutely deny that there can be some effects in us that are not caused by external causes. Quite the opposite, expressions of our virtue are, by definition, those actions that depend on our nature alone and can be understood through our nature alone. Yet, these actions, insofar as they necessarily follow from the laws of our nature, are no less necessary than all the other effects which are compelled in us by external causes. As Spinoza writes to Tschirnhaus in the same letter, the fact that something "exists and acts solely from the necessity of its own nature" is the only way in which he conceives of freedom: it is, in Spinoza's words, "free necessity [*libera necessitate*]" (Ep 58; C II, 427 / G IV, 265).[8] What Spinoza means to deny, in his reply to Tschirnhaus, is that what determines an individual to act virtuously — or to produce certain effects that can be understood through the laws of her nature alone — must depend on a free decision of the mind, or on the freedom of our will.

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[8] In his reply to Tschirnhaus, Spinoza writes that, according to his definition of freedom, "a thing is free if it exists and acts solely from the necessity of its own nature, and compelled if it is determined by something else to exist and produce effects in a fixed and determinate way" (Ep 58; C II, 427 / G IV, 265). In E1d7, he defines "freedom" as follows:

> That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone. But a thing is called necessary, or rather compelled, which is determined by another to exist and to produce an effect in a certain and determinate manner.
>
> (E1d7; C I, 409 / G II, 46)

Spinoza's account of freedom and its relationship with his necessitarianism have attracted a great deal of attention, and the scholarly literature concerning this topic is vast (see, for example, Hampshire [1960] 1973 and 1971; Næss 1969 and 1974; Parkinson 1971; Sokolov 1977; Bennett 1984, 315-328; Russell 1984; Kashap 1987; James 1996 and 2009; Negri 2000; Lucero-Montaño 2003; Steinberg 2005; Arola 2007; Scribano 2009; Kisner 2010 and 2011; Frankel 2011; Sangiacomo 2011b; Laurens 2012; Nadler 2015; Lenz 2017; Boros 2018).

In this regard, in the *Ethics*, Spinoza invokes the role of memory to claim that there would be no decision in the mind – that is, there would be no disposition of an individual to do or will anything – if there was no memory of the thing that we want to do, or of the action that we want to perform. Consistent with his rejection of free will, Spinoza adds that it is not in the free power of the mind to either recollect a thing or forget it. Hence, it is not by an act of free will that we decide what to do or not to do.

> [W]e can do nothing from a decision of the mind unless we recollect it. E.g., we cannot speak a word unless we recollect it. And it is not in the free power of the mind to either recollect a thing or forget it.
>
> (E3p2s; C I, 497 / G II, 144)

It follows that no virtuous decision or disposition to act can arise in the mind of an individual, if memory is not pre-emptively set to recollect ideas that are capable of arousing, somehow, virtuous decisions and actions in the individual. Therefore, in order to understand how memory can determine one's decisions, and eventually determine the acquisition of the habit of virtue, it will be useful to look at Spinoza's description of human memory.

3. Spinoza's account of associative memory: images, affects, and decisions

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza identifies the source of memory with a function of the human body that is responsible for the formation, retention, association and reproduction of some corporeal affections, or impressions of external objects.[9] He contends that, following a contact with an external body, the fluid parts of the human body can interact with the soft parts, and leave "traces [*vestigia*] of the external body" on them (E2post5; C I, 462 / G II, 103). When the body is so affected or modified, the mind has, in parallel, ideas of such corporeal affections.[10] These affections are in fact the "images" which are perceived and remembered by the mind.[11] According to Spinoza, they "represent external bodies as present to us [*corpora externa velut nobis præsentia repræsentant*]" (E2p17s; C I, 465 / G II, 106. Translation modified).

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[9] The content of this section recalls and summarises what has been explained, in greater detail, in sections 5 and 6 of the previous chapter. Malinowski-Charles correctly stresses the role of memory in determining the repetitive nature of habitual behaviour (2004b, 106-107). My aim, here, is instead related to explaining how memory accounts for the presence or absence of ideas and affects in one's mind – determining, therefore, an individual's appetite and decisions.

As long as the soft parts of the human body retain these traces, or impressions, the fluid parts can interact with them according to the same pattern of movement. This allows bodily affections to be repeated as they originally happened, when an impression was first created.[12] According to Spinoza, the retention and repetition of the same interaction between fluid parts and soft parts of the body can explain how the mind is capable of retaining and recollecting ideas of past impressions and representing them again, in different and separate moments. This is because the reiteration of these affections in the human body must, in parallel, be mirrored by corresponding ideas in the human mind. He contends, on this basis, that "[a]lthough the external bodies by which the human body has once been affected neither exist nor are present, the mind will still be able to regard them as if they were present" (E2p17c; C I, 464 / G II, 105).

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[10] This is a consequence of Spinoza's so-called "mind-body parallelism", according to which: "[t]he order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (E2p7; C I, 451 / G II, 89). Another formulation of the same principle can be found in E3p2s: "the order of actions and passions of our body is, by nature, at one with the order of actions and passions of the mind" (C I, 494 / G II, 143).

[11] In E3post2, Spinoza writes:

> The human body can undergo many changes, and nevertheless retain impressions, *or* traces [*impressiones seu vestigia*], of the objects, and consequently, the same images of things [*rerum imagines*].
>
> (E3post2; C I, 493 / G II, 139)

[12] This reiteration of a bodily affection may also occur in the absence of the external object that caused the first impression – thanks, Spinoza writes, to the "spontaneous motion" of the fluid parts along the soft parts already shaped by the past contact (E2p17d2; C I, 464 / G II, 105).

> We see, therefore, how it can happen (as it often does) that we regard as present things that do not exist. This can happen from other causes also, but it is sufficient for me here to have shown one through which I can explain it as if I had shown it through its true cause.
>
> (E2p17s; C I, 464 / G II, 105)

Building on this model, Spinoza specifically understands "memory" as the result of associations between ideas[13] — associations which necessarily reflect, in the mind, a corresponding order of existing associations of corporeal affections (E2p18s; C I, 465 / G II, 106-107). He argues that "[i]f the human body has once been affected by two or more bodies at the same time [*simul*], then when the mind subsequently imagines one of them, it will immediately [*statim*] recollect the others also" (E2p18; C I, 465 / G II, 106).

The human body can be affected in such a manner that several images of external bodies are impressed together on its soft parts. If these traces are physically connected to each other in the body, the interaction of one of them with the fluid parts of the body will involve the whole network of interconnected impressions.[14] Thus, when the human body is affected in ways which cause the fluid parts to interact with a pre-existing impression, the mind will also imagine that impression, along with all the impressions that are naturally associated with the former. This, Spinoza contends, allows the mind to simultaneously perceive multiple ideas of bodily impressions on the occasion of a single affection (E2p18d; C I, 465 / G II, 106). In this sense, the notion of "memory" put forth by Spinoza includes the whole spectrum of sensations and images that are presented at one time to an individual, following an external stimulus.[15]

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[13] Harry Parkinson writes that when Spinoza, in E2p18s, "speaks of what he calls *memoria*, [...] he seems to understand, not memory in the usual sense of the term, but the association of ideas" ([1969] 1973, 74).

[14] Laurent Bove argues that the capacity of the human body to have interconnected impressions of corporeal affections is a result of the very striving of the body to persevere in its being. He therefore identifies the human *conatus* with what he calls *Habitude* (in French, capitalised), contending that *Habitude* constitutes the foundation of memory itself (Bove 1996, 20). He maintains that the body "establishes" connections between corporeal traces when they are simultaneously impressed on its soft parts (Bove 1996, 20), and he distinguishes then this "aptitude, or spontaneous power [*aptitude ou [...] puissance spontanée*]" (Bove 1996, 24) of one's body, from the repetition of the affections themselves, which ensues from memory and which he calls *habitudes* (in French, non-capitalised). For reasons of clarity, I prefer to stick to Spinoza's terminology, and retain the term "habit", with reference to one's virtue, to address what Spinoza explicitly defines, in his Ep 58 to Tschirnhaus, as "a firm and constant disposition [*firmato, et constanti ... animo*]" to oppose the power of the passions (C II, 430 / G IV, 267).

The same associative mechanism, on Spinoza's account, also explains how affects of sadness and joy – which Spinoza identifies with affections respectively related to a decrease or an increase in one's power of acting[16] – are joined to each other and to the images which are presented to one's memory.[17] Spinoza maintains that "[i]f the mind has once been affected by two affects at once [*simul*], then afterwards, when it is affected by one of them, it will also be affected by the other" (E3p14; C I, 502 / G II, 151). This observation leads him to conclude that "[a]ny thing can be the accidental cause of joy, sadness, or desire" (E3p15; C I, 503 / G II, 151).

On this basis, Spinoza conceives memory as the mechanism by which, at any given time, a whole network of interconnected ideas is immediately and necessarily presented to the mind of the individual, following a single affection produced by external causes. The same mechanism also brings about a corresponding connection of affects, which necessarily determine the actual disposition of an individual to act, or react to the sources of joy and sadness that she imagines as present – determining, therefore, her current appetite, decisions and actions.

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[15] For, when an affection provoked by some external cause arouses in the body a network of interconnected impressions – acting, therefore, as the occasion of recollection – all the ideas of the impressions naturally connected to one another in the body are recollected immediately and simultaneously to each other (as emphasised by Spinoza's use of the Latin terms *statim* and *simul* in E2p18 and its demonstration).

[16] Recall E3d3, quoted above in footnote 7. In E3p11s, Spinoza identifies affects of sadness with passions that involve a decrease in one's power of acting. Conversely, he identifies affects of joy with passions that involve an increase in one's power of acting. See also E3ad2-3.

[17] Concerning this point, see also Shapiro 2017, 215-219.

Indeed, according to Spinoza, "the decisions of the mind are nothing but the appetites themselves, which therefore vary as the disposition of the body varies" (E3p2s; C I, 497 / G II, 143). The human appetite, in turn, is "nothing but the very essence of man, from whose nature there necessarily follow those things that promote his preservation" (E3p9s; C I, 500 / G II, 147).[18] It is, therefore, by the nature of our appetite that "[w]e strive to promote the existence of whatever we imagine that leads to joy, and to remove or destroy whatever we imagine is contrary to it, *or* that leads to sadness" (E3p28; C I, 509 / G II, 161. Translation modified). Hence, insofar as the way in which our memory is constituted, along with the way in which it can be aroused by external causes, determine at each moment one's images and affects, memory can also determine one's decisions — by bringing about affects of joy and sadness that determine one's appetite or, in Spinoza's terms, "the striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being" (E3p7; C I, 499 / G II, 146).

4. Reason and its power over the affects

According to Spinoza, the order and connection in which ideas are immediately associated in one's memory reflect the way in which an individual "is determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that" (E2p29s; C I, 170 / G II, 114).

> [M]emory is […] nothing other than a certain connection of ideas involving the nature of things which are outside the human body — a connection that is in the mind according to the order and connection of the affections of the human body.
>
> (E2p18s; C I, 465 / G II, 106-107)

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[18] Spinoza conceives human desire as "appetite together with the consciousness of it" (E3ad1exp; C I, 531 / G II, 190). From these assumptions it follows, for Spinoza, that desire itself can be defined as "man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something" (E3ad1; C I, 531 / G II, 190). The relationship between appetite and desire is analysed in chapter 1, section 5.

Spinoza, however, distinguishes the order and connection of the ideas provided by one's corporeal memory from the connection of the ideas which follows the order of the intellect, and which is equal in all humans. He therefore adds:

> I say [...] that this connection happens according to the order and connection of the affections of the human body in order to distinguish it from the connection of ideas which happens according to the order of the intellect, by which the mind perceives things through their first causes, and which is the same in all men.
>
> (E2p18s; C I, 466 / G II, 107)

In the Fifth Part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza contends that the mind, so long as it is not diverted by affects contrary to its own nature, has "the power of ordering and connecting the affections of the body according to the order of the intellect" (E5p10; C I, 601 / G II, 287). Spinoza grounds this claim on his mind-body parallelism thesis. "In just the same way as thoughts and ideas of things are ordered and connected in the mind", he argues, "so the affections of the body, *or* images of things are ordered and connected in the body" (E5p1; C I, 597 / G II, 281). It follows that, if the mind, by its own power, can rearrange a given order of ideas of impressions, then the relevant impressions in the body must, in parallel, assume a new corresponding configuration.[19] Accordingly, if the mind can reorder the ideas of the affections of the body, then the mind can also rearrange the relevant affects of joy and sadness that those affections bring about.

Spinoza also argues that, by this power, an individual can acquire an increasing capability of defending herself from the influence of passions and evil affects. Indeed, he contends that one of "the remedies for the affects"

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[19] In section 7 of the previous chapter, I touched on how the rearrangement of bodily affections according to the order of the intellect may happen without implying any interaction between mind and body. Concerning this point, see also Moreau 1994, 318.

(E5p20s; C I, 605 / G II, 293) consists in "the order by which the mind can order its affects and connect them to one another" (E5p20s; C I, 605 / G II, 293). He writes:

> By this power of rightly ordering and connecting the affections of the body, we can bring it about that we are not easily affected with evil affects. For a greater force is required for restraining affects ordered and connected according to the order of the intellect than for restraining those which are uncertain and random.
>
> (E5p10s; C I, 601 / G II, 287)

Spinoza demonstrates this thesis by referring to another proposition (E5p7), where he identifies the affects that are ordered according to the intellect, as affects "arising from, or aroused by reason".

> Affects that arise from, or are aroused by, reason are, if we take account of time, more powerful than those that are related to singular things which we regard as absent.
>
> (E5p7; C I, 600 / G II, 285)

It is to be noted here that this power, concerning the affects arising from reason, is only defined as more powerful, compared to other affects, insofar as it has an effect through time — that is, insofar as it is capable of persisting in one's memory.

Spinoza affirms that connections of ideas that follow the order of the intellect are stronger in time, since they allow for more, and more stable, associations between themselves. Images (and relevant affects), associated according to the order of the intellect, that is, reveal themselves to be more easily retained and recollected — given favourable circumstances. He writes:

> Things we understand clearly and distinctly are either common properties of things or deduced from them, and consequently are aroused in us more often. And so it can more easily happen that we

> consider other things together with them rather than with [things we do not understand clearly and distinctly].
>
> (E5p12d; C I, 603 / G II, 289)

According to Spinoza, the human reason conceives "common properties of things", or things inferred from these common properties. These ideas, he argues, allow associations with and between all images that share such properties.[20] Hence, the more these ideas will be associated with images that share those properties, the more likely it is that these ideas will be aroused in the mind, according to the external circumstances (E5p11, E5p13) – namely, they will be aroused in one's mind each time in which an image associated to the idea of one of these properties is recollected by memory, following an affection of the body.[21]

Therefore, to elucidate what Spinoza understands by "reason", and by those clear and distinct ideas that allow for stable and resilient mnemonic associations, I now turn to analyse Spinoza's account of "common notions": that is, adequate ideas of "common properties of things" and all the ideas "deduced from them".

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[20] Spinoza also maintains that the objects of such ideas of reason, being common to all things, are conceived as being always present – or also, they are perceived "under a certain species of eternity [*De natura rationis est res sub quadam æternitatis specie percipere*]" (E2p44c2; C I, 481 / G II, 126). Hence, he writes:

> [A]n affect that arises from reason is necessarily related to the common properties of things, which we always regard as present (for there can be nothing that excludes their present existence) and which we always imagine in the same way. So such an affect will always remain the same, and hence, the affects that are contrary to it, and that are not encouraged by external causes, will have to accommodate themselves to it more and more, until they are no longer contrary to it. To that extent, an affect arising from reason is more powerful.
>
> (E5p7d; C I, 600 / G II, 285-286)

These ideas, therefore, can be equally related to all the images of things that are present to one's consciousness – if these things share these properties – regardless of whether the object of an image is conceived of as being present or absent, existing or non-existing, or related to a past or future time.

[21] Regarding this aspect of Spinoza's theory of the power of affects related to adequate ideas, see also Malinowski-Charles 2004b, 113.

5. Common notions, the "foundations of our reasoning"

In the Second Part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza defines "common notion" as the "foundations of our reasoning" (E2p40s1; C I, 475-476 / G II, 120). They include "adequate ideas of the properties of things" (E2p40s2; C I, 478 / G II, 122) and all other adequate ideas that can be inferred from them (E2p40s1).[22] The demonstration that Spinoza provides in order to explain their existence in the mind relies on the existence of common properties of bodies (E2p38d and E2p39d). He affirms that these ideas do not have essences of singular things as their objects (E2p37). Their objects, rather, consist in properties that are common to all things – hence, also "common to all men" (E2p38c; C I, 474 / G II, 119) – and equally present "in the part and in the whole" (E2p38), or in properties that are common to certain specific things and our body, and which are equally present in the part and in the whole of these things and our body (E2p39).[23]

Some scholars have analysed Spinoza's account of common notions against the background of Aristotle's theory of knowledge.[24] They all seem to agree on one respect: common notions correspond to universal principles of demonstrative reasoning, which are instantiated in the things and reflected in the content of our ideas.[25] Interpretations of this kind also share the feature of shifting the typical Aristotelian problem concerning the epistemic origin of the first principles of demonstrative knowledge into Spinoza's theory of common notions.[26] As to the answer to that puzzle, however, the opinions of commentators diverge, reflecting more or less closely the different ways in which they interpret the last chapter of the Second Book of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* – where the problem is expounded in its classic form.[27] Because of the common difficulties related to interpreting Aristotle's theory, on the one hand, and the peculiarity of Spinoza's own theory, on the other, these readings do not seem to provide conclusive solutions to the issue that they raise.[28]

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[22] In E2d4 and the following explanation, Spinoza defines adequate ideas as follows:

> By adequate idea I understand an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself, without relation to an object, has all the properties, *or* intrinsic denominations of a true idea.
>
> I say intrinsic to exclude what is extrinsic, viz. the agreement of the idea with its object.
>
> (E2d4exp; C I, 447 / G II, 85)

[23] Common notions, therefore, can be generally defined as adequate ideas of common properties pertaining to sets of things (including the totality of things). Harry Wolfson contends that "Spinoza's common notions are the primary principles only of the science of bodies or of physics" (1934, 125). Edward Schoen (1977, 545-547) argues against this reductionist reading, which he also ascribes to Stuart Hampshire (1970, 95) and Edwin Curley (1973, 49-52). Schoen, however, also denies that the *ideata* of common notions can be properties (1977, 545). By contrast, Martial Gueroult argues that common notions mirror in the mind the properties of the objects of the ideas, and that they concern what is common between modes and their relevant attributes (hence between modes of a same attribute), without restriction to the sole attribute of extension (Gueroult 1974, 326-328). Yet, he reckons that the demonstrations of E2p38-39 refer only to common notions pertaining to the corporeal domain (Gueroult 1974, 365-370). Concerning these points, see also Marshall 2014, 32-34, and LeBuffe 2017, 86-92.

[24] See, in particular, Wolfson 1934, 117-130; Sellars 2002, 241-245; Manzini 2009, 146-169.

A different perspective on the same topic has been recently put forward by Eugene Marshall. He draws on a problem that Michael Della Rocca formulated in these terms:

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[25] See, for example, Manzini 2009, 161-162.

[26] See Manzini 2009, 163; see also Matheron 1988b, 103-104.

[27] See Aristotle 1993, 72-74. Harry Wolfson and Wilfrid Sellars hold that common notions are apprehended by the human mind following a sort of abstractive process, which originates in our sense perception of singular objects and deals with the content of the corresponding ideas (see Wolfson 1934, 125-129, and Sellars 2002, 242). On the other hand, Frédéric Manzini (2009, 169) suggests that common notions are rather grasped through the "third kind of knowledge", that is, "intuitive knowledge" (E2p40s2; C I, 478 / G II, 122).

[28] Interpretations based on abstraction of universal notions from sense perception of singular objects require a problematic distinction between acts of thought and the content of thought (see Wolfson 1934, 127, and Sellars 2002, 242), which seems at odds with Spinoza's identification of the cognitive content of the ideas with the activity by which the ideas themselves affirm their positive content in our mind (see E2p49 and its demonstration). On this basis, Ferdinand Alquié (1981, 193) and Marco Messeri (1990, 247, and 251-252) convincingly argue against such readings. Interpretations based on intuition of common notions must deal with Spinoza's peculiar characterisation of intuitive knowledge, according to which intuitive knowledge seems not to appear first either in the order of method (TIE §§30-31), or logically or epistemologically (see E2p47s and E5p28). Edwin Curley (1973, 52) also argues against the thesis that common notions might derive from intuition on Spinoza's account.

> In order for a certain idea that the human mind has to be adequate, the human mind must include all the ideas that are the causal antecedents of this idea. How could the human mind, in any particular case, have all these ideas?
>
> (Della Rocca 1996a, 183, n. 29)

To address this question, Marshall identifies "two criteria for adequacy" with which common notions have to comply (Marshall 2014, 24-30). He calls the first criterion "the containment requirement",[29] and the second "the causal requirement".[30] On account of these two criteria, Marshall concludes that common notions must correspond to "ideas of infinite modes" (2014, 34) and that they are to be regarded as ideas that are "latent in the mind, yet innate" (2014, 53). This interpretation has the advantage of highlighting one important feature concerning the nature of common notions: that is, that the adequate ideas that we can deduce by means of analysis of a complex idea must somehow originate from within the mind (or in the complex idea). This does not make the case, however, for admitting the existence of latent – i.e., unconscious – ideas in the mind, within Spinoza's framework, as Marshall would have it (2014, 138).[31] Nor does it require that we identify common notions and properties of things with infinite modes of God.[32]

Spinoza's wording seems to show some affinities with that of Descartes, who sometimes treats "common notions" and "axioms" as analogous and interchangeable terms.[33] If this is the case, then further evidence may suggest that Spinoza is sometimes willing to present common notions as axioms and self-evident truths, and sometimes as propositions and theorems deduced in turn by other axioms and true ideas – distinguishing between them only for pedagogical or expositional reasons.[34] This way of proceeding seems consistent with two Spinozistic claims. According to the first claim, "[w]hatever ideas follow in the mind from ideas that are adequate in the mind are also adequate" (E2p40; C I, 475 / G II, 120). This proposition grounds metaphysically the validity of inferential reasoning: adequate ideas follow from each other and can be therefore adequately understood through each other. The second claim affirms that "[h]e who has a true idea at the same time knows that he has a true idea, and cannot doubt the truth of the thing" (E2p43; C I, 479 / G II, 123). This proposition implies that adequate ideas – all of which are true (E2p34) — are also conceived of as "self-evident".[35] Taken altogether, these two principles (i.e., deducibility and self-evidence of adequate ideas) entail that adequate ideas can be grasped either through other ideas, by means of deductive reasoning, or because of their self-evidence alone.[36] That is to say, that adequate ideas need not necessarily be conceived or understood through other ideas and "antecedent causes" — in order for them to be, and to be conceived of as, adequate and true in one's mind — if, by an "antecedent cause", we mean something different from the power of the mind itself.

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[29] See Marshall 2014, 26: "Idea *x* as it exists in God's mind is adequate in human mind *y*, itself a complex idea, iff *x* as a whole is a part of *y*".

[30] See Marshall 2014, 28: "Idea *x* is adequate in mind *y* iff *y* also has an adequate idea of *x*'s cause".

[31] Spinoza's conception of God's infinite intellect, of which our mind is only a finite part existing in act (E2p11c; see also TIE §73), seems to provide sufficient grounds for accommodating in God's intellect any idea which is not consciously perceived by our mind, and not presently determining our appetite. Furthermore, it saves us from the necessity of reduplicating in each finite human mind the existence of identical, infinite sets of "latent" adequate ideas of infinite modes. For more arguments against the existence of unconscious ideas in Spinoza's philosophy of mind, see chapter 1.

[32] Marshall himself concedes that this identification does not hold all the time (2014, 33, n. 37). Concerning Spinoza's account of infinite modes, see Melamed 2013b, 113-136.

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[33] Descartes identifies "common notions and axioms [*communis notio, sive axioma*]" in his *Principles of Philosophy* I, 49 (CSM I, 209 / AT VIIIA, 23). According to Murray Miles (2015, 138-139), Descartes's "common notions" derive their name from the κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι of Euclid's *Elements*, which Clavius translated in Latin as "*communes notiones, sive axiomata*" (1574, 15a). See also Ariew et al. 2010, 63. Descartes was also aware of the theory of "common notions" put forward by Herbert of Cherbury in his *De Veritate* (1624, first edition; Descartes owned the third edition, in French, 1639): he discusses and criticises it in a letter to Mersenne (dated 16 October 1639; CSMK 139-140 / AT II, 596-599). Concerning this, see Popkin 2003, 134-135, and Wild (2008) 2009, 225. The connections between Descartes's and Spinoza's terminologies can mostly be appreciated in Spinoza's treatise *Descartes's "Principles of Philosophy"*. In the Preface to the PPC, Lodewijk Meijer also identifies "[p]ostulates and axioms, or common notions of the mind [*postulata [...] et axiomata, seu communes animi notiones*]" (C I, 225 / G I, 127). With regard to Spinoza's own use, based on E1p8s2, E2p40s1, and Ep 4, Manzini suggests that what Spinoza understands by "axioms" is at least a subset of common notions (Manzini 2009, 166-168). Other authors allow for a stricter correspondence between axioms and common notions in Spinoza (see, for example, Gueroult 1968, 85-92, and Delahunty 1985, 74-78). If, on Spinoza's account, all axioms can be assumed as expressing common notions, then several axioms of the *Ethics* (at least E1a1-7, E2a1-3, E4a1, and E5a1-2) show that common notions do not only refer to laws of physics.

[34] Besides several cases in the PPC, in the *Ethics* we may observe this in E1p8s2 and E2p40s1. In E2lem3, Spinoza's version of the law of inertia of bodies is first demonstrated by means of a proposition grounded on purely metaphysical principles (E1p28); then, in the following corollary, Spinoza states that the same "law" is "also known through itself [*per se notum*]" (E2lem3c; C I, 459 / G II, 98). E3post1 is also called "axiom [*postulatum seu axioma*]" (C I, 493 / G II, 139), and is demonstrated through E2post1, E2lem5, and E2lem7. E5a2 is considered "evident [*patet*]" because of E3p7 (C I 597 / G II, 281).

Indeed, when the mind has adequate ideas, it is the adequate cause of these ideas. Vice versa, adequate ideas — that is, clear and distinct ideas — are effects in one's mind that can be adequately understood through the laws of human nature alone. In other words, the power of the mind, by which the mind understands and connects things according to the order of the intellect — or "the power of forming clear and distinct ideas, and of deducing some from others", in Spinoza's words (E5p10d; C I, 601 / G II, 287) — is nothing other than the necessary activity in which the mind expresses its nature.[37] Hence (as we have seen in section 2) it is identical with its virtue. As Spinoza writes in E4p23d:

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[35] The self-evidence of true ideas, which Spinoza also calls "certainty [*certitudo*]", applies to all adequate ideas, since "[e]very idea that in us is absolute, *or* adequate and perfect, is true" (E2p34). Conversely, the self-evidence of an adequate idea does not depend itself on the truth of the idea, or on the correspondence of an idea with its *ideatum*, which Spinoza regards as an extrinsic feature of ideas (E1a6; E2d4exp; see also TIE §35). Concerning the self-evidence of adequate ideas, conceived of as "notions whose truth is so firm and steady that no power can be or be conceived by which they could be changed" (even if we did not know that God existed), and by which the existence of God itself can be inferred, see in particular TTP VI, 17 and the attached ADN VI (C II, 156 / G III, 84). Concerning Spinoza's "absolute confidence in reason", regarded as his "first epistemic principle" for the acquisition of true knowledge, see Schneider 2013.

[36] As a further proof of the interchangeability between self-evident truth and demonstrated truths, we may observe that both the theses quoted from Spinoza's *Ethics* — that is, "deducibility" and "self-evidence" of adequate ideas — appear in the text in the form of propositions deduced from antecedent principles, and are held at the same time as "evident [*patet*]", the former (E2p40d; C I, 475 / G II, 120), and "sufficiently manifest by itself [*per se satis esse manifestam*]", the latter (E2p43s; C I, 479 / G II, 124).

[37] "For the mind", Spinoza also writes, "has no other power than that of thinking and forming adequate ideas" (E5p4; C I, 599 / G II, 284).

> [I]nsofar as [a man] is determined to do something from the fact that he understands, he acts, i.e., does something which is perceived through his essence alone, *or* which follows adequately from his virtue.
>
> (E4p23d; C I, 558 / G II, 226)

How can we define reason, then, and what are common notions, on Spinoza's account? My suggestion is that reason can be understood as the activity by which randomly received environmental inputs – which are provided to our mind, in terms of images, by our imagination and memory – are naturally and necessarily rearranged in one's mind, according to the order of the intellect.[38] Taking into account the body's parallel activity, reason can further be understood as a natural and necessary activity in the body – reflected in the mind – that hinges on common properties of bodily affections and the interactions that these affections entertain with each other, based on such properties. Accordingly, it is possible to understand what common notions are along the lines proposed by Robert Abraham, in his functional interpretation of Spinoza's account of common notions: they are "knowledge of the dynamic relationships within the body" (1977, 32), and they acquaint us with "the principal virtue of things having something in common, namely their compelling causal relationship" (1977, 35).

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[38] Based on the problem of the causal history of adequate ideas raised by Della Rocca – mentioned above – Martin Lin gets to the conclusion that "[a]n idea is adequate just in case the human mind possesses it independent of any causal inputs from the environment" (2009, 265). I think this thesis is contradicted by textual evidence. In E2p39d, Spinoza explicitly affirms that we have adequate ideas of properties that are common to our body and other specific bodies when "the human body is affected by an external body through what it has in common with it" (C I, 475 / G II, 119). The unjustified separation between the acquisition of sense data, on the one hand, and the acquisition of adequate ideas, on the other hand, is the reason why Lin's interpretation of the role and power of reason over the affects gets eventually entangled in numerous problems, leading him to assert that Spinoza's account of the power of reason over the passions is "doomed to failure because the basic claim that he seeks to justify [i.e., "that acquiring knowledge will reorder our desires"] is false" (Lin 2009, 282). I do not intend to dispute whether this claim is true or false (Colin Marshall argues that it is true [2012, 139]). I simply do not consider it as a Spinozist claim, if by the acquisition of rational knowledge we understand something that must precede the acquisition of sense data and the reorganisation of one's desires, or something that happens independently of them. Quite the opposite, I argue that acquisition of rational knowledge, according to Spinoza, is identical with reordering one's own sense data and – as a necessary consequence – one's affects and desires.

6. The "habit of virtue" as discursive reasoning

The fact that the human body is capable of a great many affections or modifications at once (E2p14),[39] on this account, represents both a means and an obstacle to acquiring the habit of virtue. On the one hand, having a body capable of "being acted upon in many ways at once" (E2p13s; C I, 458 / G II, 97) — that is, having a body that is capable of such imaginative and mnemonic powers as the human body — allows our mind to have at its disposal, at any given time, a high number of ideas of bodily affections, variously composed and interconnected, of which reason can "understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions" (E2p29s; C I, / G II, 114).[40] On the other hand, the same capacity of our body to be affected by external bodies in many ways, brings it about that our perceptive field and our appetite are constantly exposed to great variations.

Indeed, according to Spinoza, it is impossible for a human being not to be exposed to the effects of the external world in ways which are beyond our control, or power. In E4p4, he claims:

> It is impossible that a man should not be a part of nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be

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[39] Spinoza grounds the capability of the human body "of perceiving a great many things" (E2p14; C I, 462 / G II, 103) on two postulates. According to E2post3, "[t]he individuals composing the human body, and consequently, the human body itself, are affected by external bodies in very many ways" (C I, 462 / G II, 102). According to E2post6, "[t]he human body can move and dispose external bodies in a great many ways" (C I, 462 / G II, 103).

[40] Spinoza describes in these terms the power of the mind "as it is determined internally", that is when it acts according to the laws of its nature alone, not determined by external causes and "fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that". This is, in other words, the activity of the mind when it reasons. "For so often as it is disposed internally, in this or another way", he adds, "then it regards things clearly and distinctly" (E2p29s; C I, / G II, 114).

> understood through his own nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause.
>
> (E4p4; C I, 548 / G II, 212)

According to Spinoza, "[f]rom this it follows that man is necessarily always subject to passions" (E4p4c; C I, 549 / G II, 213). As long as an individual is alive, that is, her imagination and memory will constantly and necessarily be affected in multiple ways which do not depend on her power, and which are unknown and unpredictable for her, yet necessarily determined by the immutable laws of nature, i.e., "the eternal decrees of God" (TTP III, 8; C II, 112 / G III, 46).[41] The ways in which our body is constantly modified by external causes, totally unknown to us, determine multiple images to affect our mind, each time causing different networks of ideas to be recalled by memory and to affect us with affects of joy and sadness — determining in turn our actual appetites and decisions.[42]

In this scenario, what a human being necessarily strives for, when she reasons, is not only to understand everything that she is capable of at any given time, but also to keep understanding the things that she understands, throughout the variations to which our imagination is necessarily exposed.

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[41] In E4p4c, Spinoza calls the way in which our imagination and memory are necessarily affected in unknown and unpredictable ways by external causes — yet according to the necessary and immutable laws of nature — the "common order of nature [*ordo communis naturæ*]" (C I, 549 / G II, 213). See also E2p29c (C I, 471 / G II, 114), E2p30d (C I, 471 / G II, 115), E4p57s (C I, 578 / G II, 252), and E4App7 (C I, 589 / G II, 268).

[42] This is the reason why, Spinoza argues, all humans "think themselves free":

> [B]ecause they are conscious of their volitions and their appetite, and do not think, even in their dreams, of the causes by which they are disposed to wanting and willing, because they are ignorant of [those causes].
>
> (E1App; C I, 440 / G II, 78)

This is a point that Spinoza also makes in his letter to Tschirnhaus (Ep 58; C II, 428 / G IV, 266). See also E2p35s (C I, 473 / G II, 117), E3p2s (C I, 496-497 / G II, 143), and E4Pref (C I, 545 / G II, 207).

> What we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding; nor does the mind, insofar as it uses reason, judge anything else useful to itself except what leads to understanding.
>
> (E4p26; C I, 559 / G II, 227)

It must be our very own reason, therefore, that, by the necessity of its own laws, creates the conditions for its persevering in its acting and existing. In this sense, the human capability of retaining and retrieving images that are already ordered and connected according to the order of the intellect, reveals itself essential for our reason to become discursive, as it were: to become, that is, a train of adequate ideas that preserves and further increases itself in time. Moreover, since reasoning — as we have seen — is our virtue itself, memory is also essential for our virtue to become a "habit": memory, that is, is essential for ideas and affects "arising from, or aroused by, reason" to become the common motive that determines our decisions and guides our thoughts and actions, despite the power of the passions to which we are always exposed and by which we are constantly affected.

Thus, we can understand human reason — that is, a natural and necessary activity by which the human mind acts according to its own laws — as performing three functions:

1. it looks for an order of intelligible causal connections, based on common properties between items of memory, each time that memory provides the mind with a new network of images and relevant affects (E2p29s; C I, / G II, 114);
2. it orders and connects affections and affects according to the order of the intellect (E5p10; E5p20);
3. it provides memory with images or ideas of affections rearranged according to such new configuration, for future recollection and implementation (E5p10s).

The last point is particularly important, as far as the acquisition of the "habit of virtue" is concerned. As we have seen in section 2, Spinoza holds that "it is not in the free power of the mind to either recollect a thing or forget it" (E3p2s; C I, 497 / G II, 144). Indeed, reason is just the activity by which the mind understands and organises the content provided by one's memory. This activity, however, is not a kind of memory itself — that is, it does not retain or remember any image by itself, and it is not capable of triggering any kind of mnemonic recollection in one's mind.[43] Memory — and, along with memory, the possibility to retain and recollect images ordered according to the order of the intellect — is always dependent on the affections that affect the human body from the external environment. However, as we have just seen, the ways in which our memory can be variously aroused and affected, at each time, with images and affects produced in us by stimuli coming from the external world, are unknown to us. Consequently, our appetite and desire are constantly subject to unpredictable changes, reflecting how our body is affected by the external world in ways which are beyond our control. This implies three things, concerning the activity of reason, according to Spinoza:

1. it is crucial that the results that we attained by reasoning — knowledge of common notions, adequate ideas of properties of things — can be kept present to one's consciousness, or be recalled as easily and as frequently as possible, in order for reason to keep performing and flourishing. It is of the essence of reason, therefore, to strive to enchain and order images in such a way that they can appear immediately meaningful and useful to us, when recollected — capable, that is, of easily expressing and showing to our understanding those common notions, rational precepts and "sure

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[43] Concerning this point, see also TIE §82 and §83, note.

maxims of life [*certa vitæ dogmata*]" (E5p10s; C I, 601 / G II, 287) that we need to retain, recollect, and implement;[44]

2. such associations of images must also be arranged in a way that can increase the occasions of recollection that one's experience and fortune might bring about, in order for the rational content that they express to be recalled and implemented in as many occasions as possible. That is, reason will strive to associate adequate ideas (expressed by means of images ordered according to the order of the intellect) to as many images as possible;[45]

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[44] In E5p10s, Spinoza writes:

> The best thing, then, that we can do, so long as we do not have a perfect knowledge of our affects, is to conceive a correct principle of living, *or* sure maxims of life [*rectam vivendi rationem seu certa vitæ dogmata*], to commit them to memory […].
>
> (E5p10s; C I, 601 / G II, 287)

The first step, therefore, consists also in developing proper symbolic systems, that allow us to easily understand and retrieve – by the way in which symbols, or images, are connected with each other – rational content (that is, common notions and other adequate ideas deduced or deducible from these). Of course, language plays a fundamental role in this sense. Yet, language, as any other symbolic system that we may develop for this purpose, remains, on Spinoza's account, nothing else but a mnemonic device (see, for example, TIE §88 and E2p40s2). Like any other mnemonic element, language is necessarily and inevitably exposed to the interferences of the external world, it can arouse passions in us, and lead an individual into error. Indeed, Spinoza maintains that "most errors consist only in our not rightly applying names to things" (E2p47s; C I, 483 / G II, 128). For two opposite views concerning Spinoza's account of language and its power of bearing adequate knowledge, see Savan (1958) 1973, and Parkinson (1969) 1973.

[45] Still in the same scholium (E5p10s), Spinoza carries on by arguing that those maxims and precepts, which we committed to memory, are to be applied "constantly to the particular cases frequently encountered in life".

> In this way our imagination will be extensively affected by them, and we shall always have them ready.
>
> (E5p10s; C I, 601 / G II, 287)

It is to be noticed that Spinoza, here, does not mean to exclusively refer to the implementation of a maxim in real circumstances. He is also suggesting that, by using our imaginative resources, we build up all possible scenarios that we can figure out in which such a maxim could turn out to be useful or applicable, in order for us to "always have it ready". In one of the examples that he provides in the scholium, he writes:

> [W]e have laid it down as a maxim of life that hate is to be conquered by love, *or* nobility, not by repaying it with hate in return. But in order that we may always have this rule of reason ready when it is needed, we ought to think about and meditate frequently on the common wrongs of men, and how they may be warded off best by

3. most importantly, these ideas must be associated in such a way as to always (as far as possible) determine us to decide to pursue reasoning and act accordingly — in order for us to be able to maintain trains of adequate ideas or recall those that have been temporarily abandoned. Hence, reason will strive to associate images in such a way that their recollection will arouse in us affects of joy, capable of orientating our appetite towards actions that agree with the "precepts of the reason [*rationis præcepta*]" (E4p18s; C I, *555* / G II, 222), and of overwhelming potential passions that may distract or divert our determination to act according to those precepts.[46]

At the end of the scholium of E5p10, after having provided a series of examples aimed at concretely showing the reader how these activities can be performed, Spinoza concludes:

> nobility. For if we join the image of a wrong to the imagination of this maxim, it will always be ready for us when a wrong is done to us.
>
> (E5p10s; C I, 601-602 / G II, 287-288)

[46] Hence, in E5p10s, Spinoza writes:

> [I]t should be noted that in ordering our thoughts and images, we must always attend to those things which are good in each thing so that in this way we are always determined to acting from an affect of joy.
>
> (E5p10s; C I, 602 / G II, 288)

To be sure, Spinoza contends that "[a]mong all the affects that are related to the mind insofar as it acts, there are none that are not related to joy or desire" (E3p59; C I, *529* / G II, 188). Indeed, when the mind is the adequate cause of its own affections, those affections are, by definition, actions of the mind (E3d3). Therefore, they can only be related to a permanence or an increase in one's power of acting. Hence, they can only arouse in us affects of joy and, as a consequence thereof, a desire to persevere in this acting (E3p28). It follows, for Spinoza, that the activity of the reasoning mind is always, if taken by itself, a source of joy that feeds on itself, as it were (more on this aspect of Spinoza's philosophy can be found in James 1997, 200-207; see also Malinowski-Charles 2004a, 222-224, and 2004b, 111). Nevertheless, Spinoza is also adamant in contending that this joy can be easily overwhelmed by passions, since "the power of external causes [...] compared with ours [...] indefinitely surpass[es] our power" (E4p15d; C I, *554* / G II, 220). Therefore, Spinoza writes:

> A desire which arises from a true knowledge of good and evil can be extinguished or restrained by many other desires which arise from affects by which we are tormented.
>
> (E4p15; C I, *553* / G II, 220)

As a consequence, it is perfectly reasonable to reinforce our determination to act according to the precepts of reason by joining additional sources of joy to our motive, as long as they are not excessive. In other words, we give ourselves treats (also in terms of reasonable expectations of future joy).

> [H]e who will observe these [rules] carefully — for they are not difficult — and practice them, will soon be able to direct most of his actions according to the command of reason.
> (E5p10s; C I, 601-603 / G II, 287-289)

The list of "rules" and examples that Spinoza provides in E5p10s as remedies against the power of passions may seem, at first sight, to express moral precepts, and have a normative value. As a matter of fact, as long as these precepts are all deduced from the nature of reason, and are intended to promote the flourishing of reasoning itself, they are simply meant to describe what the primary activity of our reason necessarily consists in.[47]

Indeed, this is what we all constantly do, in our everyday life, as much as we can, as rational beings: we strive to organise our memory and the external world that, through our memory and imagination, we imagine "as present to us" (E2p17s; C I, 465 / G II, 106), in order to keep track of our thoughts and actions.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, acquiring the habit of virtue, for Spinoza, is a complex process, totally determined by the way in which natural powers, common to all human beings, necessarily interact with the various circumstances and situations brought about by the external world. On the mental level, it requires the interplay of two functions of the mind, each of which acts according to its own necessary mechanism.

On the one hand, there is memory, which passively receives stimuli from the external world and constantly feeds the mind with networks of images of external objects variously associated with each other. On the other hand, there is the striving of the mind to reason — that is, to understand things and order them according to the order of the intellect. By these means, memory becomes the necessary background that allows reason to unfold and flourish in time and become discursive reasoning, by allowing conclusions of right inferences to be retained, recalled and implemented through mnemonic devices. As long as memory allows this retention and retrieval of intelligible connections between images in the mind, it also allows the permanence in time or the retrieval of reasoning processes. This, eventually, provides an individual with the means by which she can acquire the "habit of virtue", or a "firm and constant disposition" to overcome the power of passions and sad affects by reasoning.

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[47] It is to be noticed here that the word "rules", with reference to Spinoza's list of precepts in E5p10s, is an addition made by Curley in his translation. It is present neither in the OP (which simply refers to *hæc*, "these"; see OP 245), nor in the NS (the Dutch word used is *dingen*, "things"; see NS 278).

Yet, the capacity to have this or that network of images present to oneself at a given time, is entirely determined by our memory, also understood as a product of external causes affecting the human corporeal imagination. For what the mind can or cannot remember at a certain given time is always determined by the affections that, coming from the external environment, trigger in one's body certain pre-existing networks of images or others. For this reason, the process by which we become virtuous remains always exposed to the risk of failure: for the power by which we strive to keep reasoning can be easily overwhelmed by the force with which random encounters constantly affect and variously dispose the human body, causing a constant mutation of images and memories, affects and desires. For this reason, in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza concludes that "only a very few (compared with the whole human race) acquire a habit of virtue [*virtutis habitus*] from the guidance of reason alone" (TTP XV, 45; C II, 282 / G III, 188).

Briefly put, we need to get lucky, at least a bit, and be put into the right conditions and circumstances, in order to acquire a virtuous habit.[48] But it is human reason, which is equal in all humans, that strives, by its own power and as much as it can, to create and provoke such proper conditions.

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[48] In the TTP, all conditions provided by the external environment that encourage and promote our power of being active, reasoning, and acquiring the "habit of virtue" are called by Spinoza "God's external aid" (TTP III, 9; C II, 113 / G III, 46). Among the external factors that affect the way in which our affects are joined and aroused in our mind, we must include those determined by culture, such as religion and education (see E3ad27exp).

Conclusion

In the introduction I listed four questions to which this text was intended to provide answers. What is consciousness, and what are the causes that determine the presence of consciousness in nature? How can human and non-human individuals be distinguished on account of their mentality, if the presence of mentality and consciousness is a feature that can extend to all existing entities? How can Spinoza conceive of the human mind as a network of ideas consisting entirely of conscious perceptions? And how, according to Spinoza's mind-body parallelism, is the content of consciousness determined so that it reflects in thought the order and connection of the actions and the passions of the body?

To the first question, the answer is the following: consciousness, on Spinoza's account, is nothing but knowledge of an entity *qua* mode of thought, and the origin of such knowledge lies in the fact that for each existing thing there must be in God's attribute of thought the corresponding idea, which mirrors in thought everything that happens in its object. So that, for each existing body in extension, there must be an idea that acts as the mind of the body and which involves, in God's attribute of thought, knowledge of the body; accordingly, for each mind, or idea in general, there must also be in God an idea, which accounts for its knowledge (that is, consciousness). In this sense, the first chapter has been devoted to demonstrating that Spinoza's panpsychism is a direct expression of his rigorous understanding of God — that is, nature itself — as an infinitely thinking being, which can think infinitely many things, in infinitely many ways — that is, all the things that exist in nature. Along these lines, I have pointed out that much of the contemporary debate concerning the apparent lack of a selective theory of consciousness in Spinoza's philosophy of mind fundamentally begs the question. Spinoza never intended to distinguish minds in nature on account of their capability of being conscious of their mental states.

This answer raised the second question, concerning how human and non-human individuals can be distinguished on account of their mentality in Spinoza's panpsychist universe. The answer to this question is that specifically human mentality can be identified with the existence of intraspecific affects, by which several individuals think and feel things on the basis of what they assume other individuals' thoughts and feelings might be. Appreciation of these intraspecific affects requires that we adopt a "phenomenal stance" on the nature of someone else's mind. It follows that the specific characteristics of a "human" mind can only be discerned from a subjective point of view, by the members of a community who mutually recognise each other as "humans". These characteristics are identified with the capacity to have equal feelings and affects in concomitance with equal behavioural patterns, and to collectively act in order to promote one another's wellbeing under the impulse of those shared affects. The second chapter has therefore been devoted to expounding Spinoza's theory of the imitation of the affects, through which members of a community get to recognise one another as "humans" and attribute to each other the same subjective character of experience, based on observation of behavioural similarities.

The third question asked how Spinoza can conceive of the human mind as entirely consisting in conscious perceptions. In order to address this question, in the third chapter I focused on Spinoza's account of memory. I demonstrated that, in the *Ethics*, Spinoza conceives human memory as consisting in networks of conscious ideas. All the ideas belonging to a single network are synchronically associated to each other — as in the case of semantic memory — and simultaneously presented to the mind on the occasion of recollection. These networks of ideas mirror in the mind the parallel existence of networks of corporeal affections, which are encoded and stored in the body according to the way in which the body is modified by its interactions with the external environment. The activation of one of these pre-existing networks of corporeal affections, by means of physical stimuli, determines the phenomenon of recollection and the parallel perception, in one's mind, of the corresponding network of mental affections. Spinoza's conception of memory is, in this sense, meant to reflect in the mind the whole range of affections produced by interactions with the external environment which are currently affecting the body. It follows that memory can be regarded as identical with the whole of the perceptual landscape presented at one time to an individual.

The fourth question concerned how the content of consciousness is constituted in order to reflect in the mind the actions and the passions of the body. To answer this question, in the fourth chapter I have further investigated Spinoza's theory of memory and the way in which memory interacts with specific operations of the mind. Insofar as memory mirrors the affections brought about in one's body by interactions with the external environment, it also reflects a certain disposition of the body to do something because of the way in which it is determined by external causes — a disposition of which the mind is conscious in terms of "desire" and "decision". At the same time, memory also defines the amount of affections to which a specific internal activity of the mind and, in parallel, of the body, can apply itself. This internal activity is called "reason", and it consists in a spontaneous rearrangement of the affections, based on their common causal properties. Affections rearranged in such a way are, in turn, encoded and stored into corporeal memory, and thus made available for future recollection, should environmental inputs trigger again networks of affections which include them. By these means, memory represents the background that allows reason to unfold and flourish in time — becoming, that is, "discursive" — by allowing the retention, recollection and consequent implementation of decisions following from affections already rearranged by reasoning.

In conclusion, to recall the research goals outlined in the introduction, with these four studies I hope that I have succeeded in providing the reader with a convincing interpretation of Spinoza's theory of the human mind, coherent with his thought-extension parallelism, his rejection of free will, and his panpsychism. In particular, I hope that these studies have helped to shed some light on how the nature, functions, and specific behaviour of the human mind can be consistently conceived, on Spinoza's account, as entirely determined by the sum of its conscious perceptions and mental operations — that is, in Spinoza's words, as expression of a spiritual automaton.

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Samenvatting[1]

Spinoza's Theorie van de Menselijke Geest: Bewustzijn, Geheugen, en Rede

Spinoza beweert dat "de volgorde en het verband van de ideeën is hetzelfde als de volgorde en het verband van de dingen" (E2p7). Op grond van deze claim trekt hij twee conclusies: dat er niets kan gebeuren in een lichaam dat de geest niet waarneemt (E2p12) en dat alle dingen, hoewel "in verschillende gradaties", "bezield" zijn (E2p13s). Het blijft echter onduidelijk wat het voor iets bestaands betekent om een geest te hebben die alles waarneemt dat plaatsvindt in het corresponderende lichaam. Het is met name onduidelijk welke rol het bewustzijn speelt in de definitie van iemands bezieldheid omdat, gezien het feit dat alles bezield is, het zelfs van eenvoudige voorwerpen als stenen gezegd kan worden dat ze zich bewust zijn van wat er in hen omgaat (Ep58).

Om een geloofwaardige theorie te hebben die ons "naar de kennis van de menselijke geest en zijn hoogste gelukzaligheid kan leiden" (E2Pref), moet Spinoza's filosofie antwoord kunnen geven op de volgende vragen: wat is bewustzijn, en wat veroorzaakt het bestaan hiervan in de natuur? Hoe kunnen menselijke en niet-menselijke individuen van elkaar onderscheiden worden op basis van hun bezieldheid, als de aanwezigheid van bezieldheid en bewustzijn iets is dat zich uitstrekt over alle levende wezens? Hoe kan Spinoza de menselijke geest zien als een netwerk van ideeën dat geheel bestaat uit bewuste waarnemingen? En hoe is, volgens Spinoza's lichaam-geest parallelisme, de inhoud van het bewustzijn zodanig dat het in denken de volgorde en het verband van de handelingen en passies van het lichaam reflecteert? Aan de hand van deze vragen richt dit onderzoek zich op Spinoza's opvatting van de bewuste geest en zijn functioneren.

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[1] This section is a Dutch summary of the thesis. All information presented here is available in English in the Introduction.

Het onderzoek bouwt voort op de hypothese dat Spinoza's panpsychisme geïnterpreteerd kan worden als een nauwkeurige, consistente filosofische positie. Om dit te laten zien zal ik bepalen wat het begrip 'bewustzijn' volgens Spinoza inhoudt en hoe hij dit gebruikt. Vervolgens onderzoek ik of hij een theorie van herkenning heeft die in staat is om specifiek het menselijk gedrag en de menselijke mentaliteit te verklaren. Daarna analyseer ik Spinoza's beschrijving van de menselijke geest als een netwerk van bewuste ideeën en bekijk ik de rol die de inhoud van het geheugen speelt in het vormen van het raamwerk van het bewuste denken van de mens. Tenslotte ga ik op zoek naar een begrip van discursief redeneren dat in staat is om het bestaan van activiteit van de geest, die met behulp van het geheugen behouden blijft te midden van tijd en verandering te verklaren.

In het eerste hoofdstuk, genaamd "Consciousness, Ideas of Ideas, and Animation in Spinoza's *Ethics*", richt ik me op Spinoza's vocabulaire aangaande "bewustzijn". Ik beargumenteer dat, voor Spinoza, het begrip "bewustzijn" neerkomt op de kennis die we wellicht van onze geest hebben als we het als een "als een modus van denken zonder relatie tot een object" beschouwen (E2p21s) — dat wil zeggen, dat het afgescheiden en onafhankelijk van het lichaam kan worden beschouwd. Ik laat zien dat het gebruik van het begrip "bewustzijn" twee doelen dient: om ons foutieve geloof in het bestaan van de vrije wil uit te leggen en om te verwijzen naar de kennis die we hebben van onze geest als iets eeuwigs. Ik maak onderscheid tussen Spinoza's technische gebruik van "bewustzijn" en de "verschillende graden van bezieldheid" die hij ook in de *Ethica* (E2p13s) gebruikt. Dit vormt de grondslag voor mijn betoog dat Spinoza's begrip van bewustzijn niet is bedoeld om de aard van de geest te karakteriseren in termen van het bewustzijn van de eigen ideeën.

In het tweede hoofdstuk, genaamd: "'A Thing Like Us': Human Minds and Deceitful Behaviour in Spinoza" onderzoek ik of Spinoza, ondanks zijn panpsychisme, verschillen toestaat tussen menselijke en niet-menselijke bezieldheid. Ik analyseer Spinoza's verwijzingen naar automata zonder geest en automata met geest in de *Verhandeling over de Verbetering van het Verstand*. Ik beargumenteer dat Spinoza naar individuen als "zonder geest" refereert om een soortbezieldheid te beschrijven waarmee wij ons niet kunnen identificeren. Ook betoog ik dat voor Spinoza de (on)mogelijkheid van het herkennen van een overeenkomende bezieldheid in anderen gebaseerd is op gedrag dat hij "imitatie van gevoelens" noemt (E3p27s1). Ik voeg toe dat dit een van de redenen zou kunnen zijn voor Spinoza's compromisloze houding tegenover misleidend gedrag.

In het derde hoofdstuk, getiteld: "Networks of Ideas: Spinoza's Conception of Memory", ontrafel ik Spinoza's theorie van het geheugen en beschouw ik haar functie aangaande zijn begrip van de menselijke geest. Ik analyseer de definities van het geheugen die Spinoza verschaft in de *Verhandeling over de Verbetering van het Verstand* en de *Ethica*. Ik gebruik het onderscheid tussen "episodisch geheugen" en "semantisch geheugen" als een heuristisch hulpmiddel. Ik laat zien dat, wanneer Spinoza verwijst naar gevallen van episodisch geheugen — hetgeen een tijdsgebonden karakter van de betreffende objecten impliceert — hij ze verwerpt als onderscheiden van, en niet compatibel met, het intellect en zijn volgorde en verband van ideeën. Anderzijds lijkt hij gevallen van semantisch geheugen te beschouwen als gevallen die ogenschijnlijke interactie tussen intellect en verbeelding toestaan. Ik laat zien dat Spinoza het geheugen om twee redenen beschouwt als een netwerk van bewuste synchrone ideeën: om uit te leggen wat voor impact het geheugen heeft in het bepalen van onze huidige begeerten en om het spectrum van ideeën waarop het intellect zich kan toepassen te definiëren.

In het vierde hoofdstuk, genaamd "'The Habit of Virtue': Spinoza on Reason and Memory", richt ik me op de manier waarop, in Spinoza's systeem, het geheugen in wisselwerking staat met het intellect. Ik betoog dat deze wisselwerking leidt tot wat we "discursief redeneren" zouden kunnen noemen, dat wil zeggen, hoe redeneerprocessen zich in de loop der tijd ontwikkelen. Derhalve moet redeneren worden beschouwd als een soort gewoonte, die deugdzaam gedrag voortbrengt. Ik leg uit wat het idee van "deugdzame gewoonte" (Ep 58; TTP III, 12) voor Spinoza betekent. Ik vat zijn theorie van het geheugen samen en laat zien hoe de rede gezien kan worden als een activiteit waarbij associaties in het geheugen worden geherstructureerd. Ik toon hoe deze activiteit van de geest steunt op het geheugen om zichzelf door de tijd heen te behouden, terwijl het deugdzame gewoonten bepaalt, ofwel de "ferme en constante dispositie van de geest" (Ep 58), waar Spinoza op zinspeelt.