

Three

The Human Mind

Spinoza's philosophy of mind is, in many ways, the richest and most challenging part of his metaphysical system. Here, perhaps, more than anywhere else, Spinoza is ahead of his time: anticipating mind–body identity views that were to become much more popular only much later, anticipating the notion of a science of the psychological, every bit as strict as any science of the physical, and anticipating the representational theory of the human mind that grounds all the mind's properties in its ability to have thoughts about things. All of these positions are much more prominent now than in Spinoza's day, but are still extremely controversial. We will find Spinoza's philosophy of mind brimming with insights that are only now beginning to be understood. In part for this reason, much of Spinoza's philosophy of mind will also seem exotic and poorly motivated. While the appearance of exoticness cannot and should not be dispelled, the appearance of poor motivation can and should be. Here again our chief tool in casting away the obscurity is Spinoza's PSR in its twofold use, and here again the contrast with Descartes's treatment of these issues will be extremely useful.

1. PARALLELISM AND REPRESENTATION

The most fundamental question in the philosophy of mind, for Spinoza, is this: What is it for a thought or idea to represent, to be about, a particular object? This is the crucial question because, as we will see later in this chapter, all features of a mental state just are, or derive wholly from, its representational features. In this way,

representation—and not, as Descartes would have it, consciousness—is the essence of the mental.¹ But not only is representation constitutive of the mental, Spinoza wants representation to be explained, he wants to give an account of what representation is, and, of course, he accounts for representation in terms of the notion of explanation itself, as we will now see.

To understand Spinoza's theory of representation, we must understand his thesis of parallelism. Here is the master statement of Spinoza's parallelism: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (2p7). What can this possibly mean? Recall that, for Spinoza, there is a causal chain of modes of extension. 2p7 asserts that, for any extended thing, x , which is caused by another extended thing, y , there is an idea of x that is about x or represents x . This idea is caused by the idea of y which, in turn, is caused by the idea of y 's cause, etc. Similar claims would hold for each extended thing, and thus there is a causal chain of ideas that is isomorphic with, that parallels, that has the same order and connection as, the chain of extended things represented by these ideas.

This elaborate mirroring between extension and thought is the embodiment, as it were, of Spinoza's explanatory and causal separation between the different attributes: for Spinoza, ideas enter into causal relations only with other ideas, just as modes of extension enter into causal relations only with other modes of extension.

Spinoza's thesis of parallelism holds not just for the relations between modes of extension and ideas of them. The parallelism is more general; it is a parallelism of *things* and ideas. This point has two important implications. First, for modes of attribute 3 (an attribute other than thought and extension and thus unknown to human minds), there are parallel ideas that represent these modes of attribute 3. These ideas enter into causal relations that are isomorphic with the causal relations that modes of attribute 3 enter into.

Second, because ideas themselves are *things*, there is, for each idea, an idea of that idea. The ideas of ideas enter into causal rela-

tions with, and only with, other ideas of ideas, and these causal relations parallel those of what might be called first-level ideas.

Finally, although this is not strictly implied by 2p7 itself, Spinoza also holds that modes of any two non-thinking attributes are parallel to one another. Thus, for example, modes of attribute 3 are causally isomorphic with modes of extension. In this case, the parallelism is not a representational parallelism—because neither modes of extension nor modes of attribute 3 are representational—but it is a kind of parallelism nonetheless. Spinoza gives expression to this more general parallelism in 2p7s:

whether we conceive of 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, that is, that the same things follow one another.²

I will not dwell here on these ramifications of Spinoza's parallelism and will instead focus primarily on the parallelism between ideas of modes of extension and modes of extension themselves. This case by itself is most useful for illuminating Spinoza's philosophy of mind. I will, though, at various points turn to some issues raised by the notion of ideas of ideas.

How can Spinoza argue for this remarkable thesis? The demonstration of 2p7 is short and sweet:

This is clear from 1ax4. For the idea of each thing caused depends on the knowledge of the cause of which it is the effect.

One can see how the axiom is relevant: it states, in part, that if there is an idea of an effect, then that idea depends on the idea of the cause of that effect. But 1ax4 does not get us all the way to parallelism. One problem is that 1ax4 seems to be merely a conditional claim: if there is an idea of an effect, then it depends on

the idea of the cause. But, for parallelism to hold, there must actually be an idea of an effect, and 1ax4, by itself, doesn't guarantee that there is such an idea.

It's not hard to see how Spinoza would close this gap. Prior to 2p7, Spinoza has established that there is an idea of each thing: "In God there is necessarily an idea, both of his essence and of everything which necessarily follows from his essence" (2p3). We can see the PSR as undergirding this claim. Given the PSR, each thing is explainable, i.e. each thing can be conceived. Thus each thing is such that there can be an idea of it. Given necessitarianism—which also stems, of course, from the PSR—it follows that this is actually the case, i.e. there is actually an idea of each thing. In this light, it is instructive that in 2p3d Spinoza invokes 1p16, the core claim behind Spinoza's necessitarianism as we saw in the previous chapter.

This goes some distance toward plugging one of the gaps in Spinoza's argument for parallelism. There are other gaps as well, but I believe that these can be filled in similar fashion.³ Let's leave these details aside and grant Spinoza that his argument is valid. An even more important question is whether the argument is sound, i.e. whether, in addition to the validity of the argument, the premises are true. This brings us to the crucial question: is 1ax4 true? Unfortunately, commentators have not, in general, been able to motivate this axiom in the way that it needs to be and can be motivated. To this extent, I believe, the grounds of the thesis of parallelism have remained opaque. However, light can be shed by turning to Spinoza's notion of essence and its connections with the notion of representation.

2. ESSENCE AND REPRESENTATION

Why should the idea of a thing depend, as 1ax4 suggests, on the idea of the causes of that thing? The answer to this question can be seen as turning on Spinoza's notion of the nature or essence of a thing, and this is so because, for Spinoza, the representation of a thing is intimately connected to that thing's essence.

So let's focus, for a moment, on what the essence of a thing is. In particular, what is the essence of a certain mode, x ? It will be helpful here to turn to Spinoza's definition of mode. Recall that, for Spinoza, following in a long tradition, the definition of a thing states its essence. Thus the definition of a mode will help us see what its essence is. Spinoza says in 1def5:

By mode I understand the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived.

The key point here is that the essence of a mode is to be a thing conceived through another. By contrast, as the definition of substance (1def3) makes clear, the essence of a substance is to be conceived through itself. Given that, as we saw in Chapter 2, the relation of cause and effect is nothing other than the relation of being conceived through, we can say that the essence of a mode is to be caused by other things. And we find Spinoza saying precisely this in a number of places. Thus he says in Letter 60: "the idea or definition of a thing should express its efficient cause."⁴

The picture, then, is this: by seeing what brings x into existence, one will grasp what x is most fundamentally, what its nature is and thus what it can do. In this way the causes and the essence of a thing explain the thing's abilities. This is simply a manifestation of the kind of explanatory notion of essence that Spinoza shares with Descartes, as we saw in the previous chapter. In tying the explanatory role of essence to a thing's causes, Spinoza is again following in a long tradition—in this case a tradition of offering genetic definitions of a thing, accounts of a thing's essence in terms of its genesis, its causes.⁵

Of course, once x is caused to exist, it will undergo changes that are partly due to its own nature and partly due to other things that are (to some degree at least) separate from the causes that brought x into existence. These changes are, in each case, due to the nature of x and also to the nature of the things with which x interacts.

Thus, for example, when a pin pokes my body, the changes in my body are due partly to the nature of my body and partly to the nature of the pin. Had a balloon—instead of the pin—struck my body, the effect on my body would have been much different (in particular, there would have been far less yelling and screaming), and if the pin had struck the balloon, instead of my body, the effect would (again) have been very different—for one thing, the balloon would be far less likely to scream! Spinoza sums up the point this way:

All modes by which a body is affected by another body follow both from the nature of the body affected and at the same time from the nature of the affecting body, so that one and the same body may be moved differently according to differences in the nature of the bodies moving it. And conversely, different bodies may be moved differently by one and the same body.

[Axiom 1" after 2p13s]

Given that the essence of a thing is to have certain causes, we can see that Spinoza is committed to the uniqueness of essences: no two things share the same essence. One can see why this is so in the following way. Let's say that x and a distinct thing, y , share the same essence. Because x and y are different, we can ask: in virtue of what are they different? There must be some feature in virtue of which they differ, otherwise their non-identity would be a brute fact and this, of course, Spinoza will not allow. Let's say that the individuating feature is F and that x has F and y lacks F . This feature will be part of the explanation of x 's existence as a distinct thing, distinct, in particular, from y . Thus, given the equivalence between explanation and causation, this feature will be part of the causes of x 's existence. Given that a thing's causes are, for Spinoza, built in to its essence, we can see that x 's being F will be part of the essence of x and, because y lacks F , y 's being F will certainly not be part of the essence of y . Thus x and y have different essences after all.

So, given Spinoza's PSR and given the causal notion of essences, it turns out that Spinoza is committed to the uniqueness of essences. We can see this commitment explicitly in 2def2:

I say that to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing.

Because the essence of a thing cannot be without the thing, Spinoza is saying that if the essence of a thing is present, then the thing is present. If another thing were to have the essence as well, it would seem that the essence could be present without the thing. But this would seem to contradict the definition.

It must be admitted, however, that there are passages in which Spinoza seems not to respect this commitment and to allow that men, for example, "can agree entirely according to their essence" (1p17s).⁶ It's not clear how to reconcile such passages with 2def2. One strategy might be to see Spinoza as speaking of essences at different levels of generality and specificity. Thus there is the essence of Peter, insofar as he is a human being, and there is also the essence of Peter insofar as he is Peter. The former essence can be shared, but the latter, perhaps, cannot. In any event, however these passages are to be reconciled, the key point is that, according to one major strand in Spinoza's thinking, essences of individuals are unique.

We can see in Spinoza's notion of essence another twofold use of the PSR. Spinoza first asks for an account of what it is to be a particular thing; he is thus demanding that a thing's essence be made intelligible. This is the first use of the PSR. Spinoza meets this demand by appealing to the fact that a thing is caused, i.e. explained or made intelligible in a certain way. So what it is to be a thing can be explained, and it is explained in terms of the notion

of explanation itself. Here again is the characteristic rationalist move. We will see in Chapter 7 that not only the essence of thing but also its existence is intimately bound up with its intelligibility.

Let's return to the connection between essence and representation. For Spinoza, to represent a thing is to grasp its essence. There are different ways to see why this is so. Perhaps the following is the simplest.⁷ Let's begin with the claim we wish to argue for, namely that to represent a thing is to represent its essence. Let's say that the thing represented is a mode of extension, x , and its essence is E . What would happen if we denied this claim; if we allowed—as seems initially quite plausible—that one can represent a thing without representing its essence? Perhaps one represents x not by grasping its essence E , but by grasping some feature F , besides E , that x has and that is due to y , separate from x . Thus one might represent Emma Thompson not in terms of her essence, but simply as the lead actress in the film, *Howards End*. One may thus represent Emma Thompson without grasping her essence.

To see what would, for Spinoza, be wrong with a scenario in which an extended object is represented via a grasp of a feature, F , that doesn't stem simply from x 's essence, consider the following question: Given that the idea is about the thing that has F , why is that idea about x in particular? The answer, it seems, is that this is because x is the thing with F . Fine, but this fact—that x is the thing with F —depends, as we stipulated, on some object other than x , namely y . Because x is extended and because extended things interact only with other extended things, y too must be extended. In light of the fact that the idea of the thing with F is about x because x is the thing with F , and in light of the fact that x is the thing with F because of some other object, y , it follows that the idea is of x because of some other object, y . And now we reach a problem that would trouble Spinoza: here a certain mental fact—that an idea represents a certain object—is explained by a certain fact concerning not thought, but extension, namely the fact that y exists. But this explanation of something mental in terms of

something physical would violate the explanatory barrier. A similar problem would arise, I believe, for each purported case of representation of a thing in terms of its non-essential features.

By contrast, the same problem does not arise for representation of a thing in terms of its essence. The parallel question here would be: Given that the idea is of the thing with essence, E, why is it of x ? Answer: because x is the thing with E. But if we ask the next parallel question, we reach nonsense: Given that E is the essence of x , and given that, for Spinoza, as we have seen, the essence of a thing simply amounts to the very intelligibility of the thing, the way in which that thing must be understood, it follows that to ask why x has E is as silly as asking why squares have four equal sides. It's part of the essence, and indeed part of the concept, of squares to have four equal sides—this is how squares must be understood. In the same way, it's just x 's concept or essence to have E. So, for Spinoza, given that the idea is of the thing with E, the reason that the idea represents x in particular does not invoke any dependence on an extended object and thus does not violate the explanatory barrier between thought and extension. For Spinoza, in the case of representation of a thing in terms of its essence, which object is represented is determined simply by the nature of the thought itself and by the features grasped in the thought. No help from any extended object, such as y , is required and so the explanatory barrier is preserved.

Evidence that Spinoza holds the general view that the explanatory barrier precludes factors other than thought from determining the object of representation can be found in 2p5 and its demonstration:

Ideas, both of God's attributes and of singular things, admit not the objects themselves, or the things perceived, as their efficient cause, but God himself insofar as he is a thinking thing.

(2p5)

This is evident from [2]p3. For there we inferred that God can form the idea of his essence, and of all the things that follow

necessarily from it, solely from the fact that God is a thinking thing, and not from the fact that he is the object of his own idea.

(2p5d)

Spinoza here seems to say that the fact that there is an idea of a particular object is to be explained completely in mental terms and not in terms of any other attribute. This consideration would rule out representation of things that does not proceed via a grasp of their essence.

With this account of representation as grasp of essence, we can now see why Spinoza also insists on 1ax4 and thus insists on parallelism. Because the essence of a thing is, as we have seen, its place in an explanatory network, to grasp the essence of a thing is to explain it, to see it as intelligible. Since, as we have also seen, to represent a thing is to grasp its essence, it follows that to represent a thing is to explain it, to find it intelligible, to see how it follows from its causes. And this is more or less what 1ax4 offers: the idea of a thing depends on and involves the ideas of its causes.

This motivation for 1ax4 and parallelism helps to resolve a lingering worry about representation that must now be addressed. If representation of x is to be accounted for in terms of having a grasp of a certain essence, E , then how are we to account for the grasp of the essence? In virtue of what does a given idea count as a grasp of a given essence? Until we answer that question, an old problem may seem to arise again. For it seems that the natural thing to say is that the idea of E is about E simply because it has some relation to E itself. If that's the case, then again it seems we have a mental fact (namely the fact that the idea is of E) being dependent on something extended, namely E , the essence of an extended mode. And, here again, despite our best efforts to avoid this result, we have a violation of the explanatory barrier. A different account of the idea of E is needed and, in light of the recent argument for parallelism, this is not hard to find. Recall that, for Spinoza, there is an infinite chain of modes of extension (1p28). Each of these modes has its

own, distinct essence. The essences in this chain depend on one another; thus E depends on essence E' (the essence of the cause of x), etc. Because parallelism holds, we can also say that the idea of E depends on the idea of E', etc. So the idea in question is of E because it is the effect of the idea of E', etc. There is no dependence here of the idea of E on E itself or on anything else extended and so the explanatory barrier is preserved.

We can see in this account of representation another twofold use of the PSR. First, Spinoza asks for an account of what it is for an idea to represent a certain object. He wants an explanation of what representation consists in. This is the first use of the PSR in this case. The account he offers is that representation of a given object is simply explaining that object, to represent an object is to find it intelligible in terms of its causes. Thus representation is to be explained and it is explained in terms of the notion of intelligibility itself. And so we can see how Spinoza's theory of representation is fundamentally rationalist.

3. PARALLELISM AND MIND-BODY IDENTITY

Spinoza's parallelism embodies in many ways a deeply anti-Cartesian view. By keeping the causal chains of modes of extension somehow separate from the causal chains of modes of thought, Spinoza is guided by his overarching denial of any explanatory connections between the mental and the physical, i.e. of connections of the kind that Descartes, in his account of mind-body interaction, quite happily embraces. But precisely because Spinoza separates the causal chains in this way, there might be thought to be a crucial point of agreement between Descartes and Spinoza on the nature of mind-body relations. Descartes holds, as we saw, that the mind and the body or, more generally, mental things and extended things, are not and cannot be identical. This is Descartes's dualism, and Spinoza's parallelism may seem to put him in the dualist camp as well. 2p7 seems to offer the following picture: here's one set of things—modes of extension—and here's another—ideas or

modes of thought—which are connected with one another in the same way that the things in the first set are connected. On this picture, we seem to have mental things and physical things belonging to two separate classes, and this would be a kind of dualism.

But this dualist picture is actually not Spinoza's. For him, each idea and the mode of extension to which it is parallel are, as Spinoza says, "one and the same thing" (2p7s), and thus Spinoza explicitly embraces in Part II a monism of finite mental things and finite extended things that is analogous to the monism of extended substance and thinking substance that he embraces in Part I. While parallelism does imply some kind of dualism, as we will see, it is not a dualism of extended things and thinking things, as in Descartes.

To see what kind of dualism Spinoza is committed to, let's see what supports Spinoza's claim that ideas and modes of extension are identical. This support comes largely from the kinds of consideration that also lead to Spinoza's substance monism and that were canvassed in the previous chapter. So I can be brief here.

Recall that Spinoza accepts the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles, and thus there must, for him, be a legitimate way of explaining the non-identity of any two distinct things. Take an idea and its parallel mode of extension, and assume, contrary to Spinoza, that these things are not identical. What difference in properties could explain this non-identity? Notice first that, because of parallelism, these things have very many properties in common. After all, each plays the same role in a system of causes and effects. Given that the order and connection is the same, if a mode of extension has a certain number of immediate effects, if it has a certain degree of power, then the parallel mode of thought—the idea of that mode of extension—has the same number of immediate effects and has the same degree of power. Because parallelism guarantees that all the properties concerning order and connection are shared by parallel modes, these properties cannot do the job of

explaining the purported non-identity between the mode of thought and the mode of extension in question.

Are there any properties that can explain the non-identity here? Perhaps the fact that the idea is thinking, is mental, and the fact that the mode of extension is extended preclude them from being identical. However, to appeal to the properties of thought and of extension to ground the non-identity would be to violate the explanatory barrier. The reasoning here is the same as in the case of the argument for substance monism. That a mode is thinking cannot preclude it from being identical to a mode of extension because this would make a fact concerning extension, namely the fact that a given mode of extension is not identical to a thinking thing, depend on something mental, on the fact that a given mode is thinking. This dependence would violate the explanatory barrier and so Spinoza would reject it. Thus the facts that a mode of extension is extended and that a mode of thought is thinking cannot legitimately individuate these modes. And, as we saw in the case of parallel modes, these modes share all their properties that concern order and connection. These properties, therefore, also cannot legitimately individuate these modes. So what properties are left in order legitimately to individuate these modes? It seems that there are none, and thus, in the absence of an explanation of non-identity, the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles and the PSR dictate that these modes are identical. So, far from entailing the non-identity of modes of thought and modes of extension, Spinoza's parallelism actually leads to the claim that they are identical. It is in virtue of the shared attribute-neutral properties concerning order and connections that there is one thing here and not two.

Given this identity, parallelism may seem puzzling. It's hard to shake the impression that, in stating his parallelism, Spinoza is invoking separate collections of things that are similarly structured. It's hard, in other words, to dispel the appearance of dualism. Quite right, but the dualism here is not, for Spinoza, a dualism of extended things and thinking things. Rather the dualism is a dualism of

ways of conceiving or explaining the same thing. One and the same thing can be explained in terms of thought, as following from the attribute of thought, and also and separately can be explained in terms of extension, as following from the attribute of extension. When we explain a thing as thinking, we must explain it through things considered as thinking, and when we explain a thing—the same thing—as extended, we must explain it through things considered as extended. The things themselves don't run on parallel tracks, for Spinoza, rather the ways of conceiving or explaining the things do. Spinoza vividly expresses this point in 2p7s:

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.

All of these points apply to the human mind and the human body because, as we will see presently, for Spinoza the human mind is the idea that is parallel to the human body. So the identity between parallel modes is a general version of Spinoza's mind-body identity thesis. In developing such a thesis, Spinoza is a clear forerunner of the many modern views that see the mind not as something over and above the body, but as somehow identical to it. Such an identity was very threatening to many in Spinoza's day, as it is in our own. For it might seem that if the mind just is the body, then the hope of some kind of existence after the inevitable destruction of the body would be unfounded. One of Descartes's aims in arguing for mind-body dualism was precisely to preserve the possibility of some kind of continued existence of the mind. As we will see much later, despite his mind-body identity thesis, Spinoza wants to preserve some kind of existence of the mind after the destruction of the body. Whether he can pull this feat off and what the

significance of this kind of existence would be remains to be seen, and will be seen in Chapter 7.

But, independently of these concerns with the issue of post-mortem existence, it is important to see that, while Spinoza does anticipate modern identity theories in a striking way, his version of the identity claim is, in some respects, not standard and, for that reason, extremely interesting. It might be helpful to lay out roughly several options in the philosophy of mind. First, there is dualism according to which the mind and mental states are not identical to the body and physical states. This is the Cartesian position. Second, there are non-dualist positions that identify the mind and body or the mind and something physical, such as the brain. Spinoza is clearly such an identity theorist. Among identity theorists, there are those that hold that the mental properties of a thing are to be completely explained by and depend on its physical properties which are in some sense more fundamental. Such a theorist would be physicalist. By contrast, an idealist holds that mind and body are identical and, more generally, that physical things just are mental things, and also holds that the mental properties of a thing explain and are more fundamental than its physical properties.

In terms of these descriptions, Spinoza is, despite being an identity theorist, neither a physicalist nor an idealist. This is because of Spinoza's strict explanatory barrier between the attributes which rules out any mental-physical dependence of the kind that both idealists and physicalists invoke. For Spinoza, neither the mental nor the physical are reducible to the other. Rather, they are two separate ways of explaining the same things.⁸ In this respect, within contemporary philosophy, Spinoza's position is very similar to Donald Davidson's. Davidson also rejects at least certain kinds of explanatory connections between the mental and the physical and, like Spinoza, employs the lack of these connections as part of the basis for the identity between mental things and physical things.⁹ Nonetheless, there are significant differences between Spinoza and Davidson: Davidson rejects any strict science of the psychological.

For Davidson, there are strict laws governing the physical, but no strict laws governing the psychological. Thus for Davidson, the psychological is special, not governed by the same kinds of principles at work throughout nature. This would be a violation of naturalism, according to Spinoza, and thus Spinoza would insist, contra Davidson, on a science of the mental that is every bit as strict and fundamental as the science of the physical, even though there are no explanatory connections between the mental and the physical.

4. THE IDEA OF THE HUMAN BODY

Let us look more closely at the role of the human mind in Spinoza's parallelism. As always with Spinoza, it is helpful to begin with God. The system of ideas that are parallel to modes of extension constitutes God's infinite intellect. These infinitely many ideas are simply the thoughts that God has and the means by which he knows everything. Spinoza ties his parallelism directly to God's intellect in 2p7c:

God's power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting. That is, whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection.

Of course, for Spinoza, not only does God's infinite intellect exist, but also finite minds, including human minds, exist. What is the relation between such a finite mind, say, my mind, and the ideas that make up God's infinite intellect? My mind is obviously a thinking thing, but equally obviously for Spinoza, it cannot be a thinking *substance*. Only God is a thinking substance. Thus, my mind must, for Spinoza, be a mode of thought. And since, as we will see in the next section, all modes of thought are or reduce to ideas, my mind must simply be a mode of the thinking substance, i.e. an idea in God's intellect, or, perhaps, a collection of such ideas.

Further, the content of this idea (or ideas) must, for Spinoza, be a function of the content of the idea as it is contained in God's intellect. That is, whatever the idea that is my mind represents, it must represent because that is what is represented by the idea insofar as it is in God's intellect. As Spinoza says in 2p11c:

the human mind is a part of the infinite intellect of God. Therefore, when we say that the human mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing but that God, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he is explained through the nature of the human mind, or insofar as he constitutes the essence of the human mind, has this or that idea.

One can easily see why this is so: if the representational content of the idea that is the human mind could not be derived from the representational content of that idea insofar as it is in God's intellect, then where would this new representational content come from? It would seem to be wholly arbitrary—a brute fact—if the contents of the human mind diverged in this way from the content of the relevant idea in God's intellect. To say this, however, is not to say that there cannot be a difference between representation in the human mind and representation in God's mind. There is a difference, and it is important, as we shall see. But the point here is that representation in the human mind must derive from, be a function of, representation in God's intellect on pain of violating the PSR.

Here is a crucial question: Which of the ideas in God's intellect is the idea that is the human mind? Spinoza's answer turns on two important axioms:

We feel that a certain body is affected in many ways.
(2ax4)

We neither feel nor perceive any singular things except bodies and modes of thinking.
(2ax5)

Initially the meaning of these axioms is somewhat obscure, but as is the case with so many of Spinoza's crucial claims, their meaning becomes much clearer once one sees the use to which they are put in Spinoza's demonstrations. 2p13d plays this elucidating role for these two axioms. There Spinoza takes 2ax4 to show that the mind is aware of (feels, *sentit*) a particular body, its own body, and he takes 2ax5 to show that the mind is not aware of any other body in this way. The general point here is rather plausible: we have a kind of awareness of our own bodies that we do not have of other bodies. As we will see shortly, Spinoza also holds that the human mind does represent things other than its body, but it does so only via the representation of its body. In this way, one's body, for Spinoza, provides the point of view from which one represents anything else.

Why does Spinoza accept these axioms understood in this way? It's not clear. After all, they are axioms and thus do not receive any explicit argument. However, I will soon go some way toward developing a Spinozistic motivation for these axioms.

But first, with 2ax4 and 2ax5 in hand, we can see why Spinoza holds that the idea of God's that is my mind must be God's idea of a particular body, the body that I *feel*, my body. Here's one way to make this point. Call my body "A." Let's say—contra Spinoza—that my mind is the idea not of A, but of some distinct body, B. If so, then how could my mind be aware of, how could it represent, body A, as 2ax4—as clarified by 2p13d—says? Given that my mind is, on this scenario, the idea of something else, B, how could my mind also come to have this other content and represent A? Where would this additional content come from if it is not already part of the content of God's idea? Further, if my mind is the idea of some body other than my own, i.e. if it is of B, then this is not compatible with 2ax5 which rules out such awareness of other bodies in the human mind. So, given 2ax4 and 2ax5, my mind can only be God's idea of my body.

But how, though, can these axioms be motivated? Again, Spinoza does not offer an explicit argument, but we can go some distance

toward seeing how he might do so. Let's begin with a basic point about Spinoza's theory of individuals. For Spinoza, a collection of things constitutes a singular thing or individual to the extent to which the members of this collection join together to have certain effects (2def7).¹⁰ This point is also rather plausible. The cells that make up the human body, for example, join together to produce many effects—in my case, they produce the marks on the pages that constitute this book, they produce the bodily motions that led to my buying the latest Paul McCartney CD, etc. By contrast, collections of things that are relatively causally independent do not, to that extent, constitute a singular thing. Thus, intuitively, my right thumb, Bill Clinton's nose and the dark side of the moon don't seem to have many joint effects, and to that extent, this relatively disparate collection of things does not constitute a singular thing.

Here again we have a twofold use of the PSR. Spinoza offers an explanation of what it is for a thing or collection of things to be one thing, and what it is for a thing or collection of things to be one thing is for it to have effects, is for it to have things explained or made intelligible in terms of it. Once again, a key metaphysical notion—in this case, being a singular thing—is explained in terms of the notion of explanation itself.

For Spinoza, obviously, the human mind, as well as the human body, are individuals (actually, they are the same individual). However, this individuality of the human mind would be threatened if the human mind were made up of ideas whose contents were relatively disparate, if these ideas were not all focused around a particular unified thing, such as the human body. To see why this is so, recall that parallelism dictates that the ideas of things will be connected, to the extent that the things represented are connected. It follows that if the ideas that make up my mind were of relatively disconnected things, then those ideas themselves would be relatively disconnected, and so these ideas will not form a unified mental individual, a mind. So, given parallelism, to the extent that the human mind is a single mental individual, the ideas in the

mind must be focused on, must represent, a single extended individual, just as $2ax4$ and $2ax5$ state.

But why must the individual that my mind is focused on be my body and not some other equally unified body? Spinoza doesn't take up this question directly, but it's not difficult to see what his answer might be. If my mind is focused on, represents in some direct sense, not my body, A, but say your body, B, then in what sense is A *mine* instead of B being mine? After all, my mind—if it represents B instead of A—will be parallel to B and given parallelism, it will, as we saw in the previous section, be identical to B. If my mind is, for this reason, identical to body B, it seems that nothing more is needed for B to be my body and for A not to be, after all, my body.

Thus, for Spinoza, what it is for a body to be my body is simply that my mind represents that body. And, as we have seen, what it is for an idea to represent a body is for the idea to represent the body's place in a causal network, i.e. for the idea to be the explanation of the body in thought. This is another twofold use of the PSR. The mineness of my body must be explained, and it is explained in terms of the notion of representation and ultimately of explanation itself.

5. THE PANCREAS PROBLEM, THE PAN PROBLEM, AND PANPSYCHISM

Let's now explore three further, interrelated problems with the thesis that my mind is God's idea of my body. Each of these problems arises naturally from Spinoza's system which has, I will argue, the resources to provide answers to them. These solutions will lead us to see even more clearly how fundamentally rationalist Spinoza's philosophy of mind is.

I call the first problem "the pancreas problem." For Spinoza, my mind is the idea of my body. And just as the body is a complex individual made up of many parts and with many states and which undergoes many changes, so too—given parallelism—the mind is a

complex individual made up of many parts (2p15) and with many states and which undergoes many changes. In each case, the ideas parallel to the parts, states or events represent those items.¹¹ This means, for example, that my mind contains ideas that represent changes going on in my pancreas right now and, indeed, ideas that represent all the changes going on in my other internal organs. Spinoza makes this point in 2p12:

Whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human mind must be perceived by the human mind, or there will necessarily be an idea of that thing in the mind; that is, if the object of the idea constituting a human mind is a body, nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by its mind.

As Spinoza makes clear in 2p12d, this claim is forced on him by the logic of his parallelism. And it does seem that Spinoza has a real insight here, one that turns on the PSR. Why should some of my bodily states be represented by my mind and others not? Where can one draw the line in a principled way? Spinoza would refuse, of course, to draw an unprincipled line, so he draws no line at all: for him, all my bodily states are represented in my mind, even individual states of my pancreas (whatever they might be). As with so many principled conclusions, this one seems very hard to swallow. How could I perceive in any way all the changes that occur in my body? Yes, I am certainly aware of some of the changes occurring in my body (just consider hunger or pain), but it seems absurd to say that I represent *all* the states of my body. Margaret Wilson presses this worry, and suggests that a view that allows this much scope to the mental will “simply fail to be a theory of the mental.”¹² Is there any way to make Spinoza’s claim less unpalatable? This is the pancreas problem.

A related problem: Just as there is in God’s mind an idea of my body, so too there is in God’s mind an idea of each extended mode. And just as the idea of my body is my mind, so too the idea of

each extended mode is, in some way, the mind of that mode. Thus all extended objects, no matter how apparently unthinking and inanimate, do indeed have minds. Not only I, but the rock, the plant, the kitchen clock, and the pan on my kitchen stove have minds. Mentality, for Spinoza, extends everywhere. Such a view is known as panpsychism. And although Spinoza doesn't use this term, he gives expression to this thesis in 2p13s:

the things we have shown so far are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate. For of each thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause in the same way as he 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.

One advantage of this doctrine is that Spinoza—in contrast to Descartes—readily accords a mental life to animals. Descartes saw animals as mere machines, without thought or consciousness, a view that Spinoza directly inveighs against (3p57s). Further, in extending mentality so broadly, Spinoza does seem to have a real insight based on the PSR. If thinking were to be associated with only some physical objects, then where could one draw the line in a principled way? Why does my body have a mind, but the pan does not? For Spinoza, there would be no principled line to draw, and so there is no line to draw at all.¹³ Despite this insight, however, the view that pans and clocks have mentality may—once again—seem to disqualify Spinoza's position as a genuine theory of the mental. The challenge here, again, is to make more palatable the view that mentality extends even to objects such as the pan.

In approaching both the pan and pancreas problems, we can perhaps take our cue from something Spinoza says in the passage just quoted from 2p13s, namely that all extended things are animate “though in different degrees.” If we can make sense of

greater or lesser degrees of animation, then perhaps we can make sense of Spinoza's panpsychism and the mindedness of the pan. Similarly we might, in that case, be able to make sense of the claim that I represent all the changes in my body: if such representation need involve awareness only to a very small degree, then perhaps it wouldn't be so bad to say that I represent changes in my pancreas. More generally, if Spinoza can articulate a view according to which consciousness comes in degrees in this way, then perhaps we can make headway on our two problems.

In this regard, it is helpful to note that Spinoza's immediate successor Leibniz, who was also a panpsychist and believed that I represent all changes in my body, does appeal to varying degrees of consciousness for precisely this reason.¹⁴ Spinoza doesn't have a theory of consciousness nearly as well worked out as Leibniz's. And, in fact, some of the things Spinoza says about consciousness seem to make an appeal to consciousness unable to help resolve the pancreas and pan problems. I have in mind here the passages in which Spinoza seems to think that consciousness is simply having ideas of one's ideas.¹⁵ This theory of consciousness as higher order thought is fairly common (and there are strands of it Leibniz too), but such a theory doesn't by itself seem to give us a handle on degrees of consciousness: either one has an idea of one's idea or one does not. There doesn't seem to be a middle ground when it comes to ideas of ideas, and thus there doesn't seem to be an entry here for the notion of degrees.

However, there is another strand in Spinoza's thinking about consciousness which is potentially very helpful in approaching our two problems. I will elicit this line of thought indirectly by introducing the third in our trio of problems. For Spinoza, as we have seen, my representation of things is a function of the content of those ideas of God's that are contained in my mind. Those ideas of God's that are in my mind are simply God's ideas of states of my body. Nevertheless, it certainly seems as though we represent external bodies—such as the pan!—all the time. Is this yet another deliverance

of common sense that Spinoza is prepared simply to deny? Not exactly. Spinoza does want to preserve the intuitive view that we represent external things, but how can he do so consistently within the strictures imposed by his parallelism and his theory of the human mind? This is what I call the external-object problem.

Spinoza happily grants that we perceive external bodies, but he claims that we do so only by perceiving states of our own body. Recall that crucial axiom: “the knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause” (1ax4). As we saw, for Spinoza this axiom amounts to the claim that we represent things as the effects of certain causes. To grasp an object is already and thereby to have some grasp of its cause. Consider a state of my body that is caused by some external object. Let’s say my trusty pan interacts with my body. Perhaps it reflects light in a certain way that affects my eyes and leads to changes in my brain. These changes are, ultimately, caused by the pan. Of course, there will be—as our discussion of the pancreas problem showed—an idea in my mind of those changes in my brain. Since any representation of a thing involves representation of its causes, it follows that in having the idea of the brain change, I am having also an idea of the cause of that change, i.e. an idea of the pan. Spinoza’s point is the fairly commonsensical one that we perceive external bodies because of their effect on our body. He is simply adding the point that when we perceive the external body we are doing so in virtue of perceiving its effects on my body. Spinoza argues in precisely this fashion in 2p16 and its corollaries.

It is crucial to note that when we perceive external bodies in this way, we are inevitably *confused*. This is indicated by 2p16c2:

the ideas which we have of external bodies indicate the condition of our own body more than the nature of the external bodies.

Here Spinoza seems to say that we confuse the external object with the state of my body that object causes. Indeed, he stresses that whenever we perceive things through the common order of nature,

we can have only confused ideas not only of external objects but also of our own bodies and of our own minds (2p29s). Why are all these ideas inevitably confused?

Spinoza's general account of confusion seems to be the following. (This is apparent in his discussion in 2p40s1 of certain universal notions which for him are highly confused.) For Spinoza, an idea is confused when it represents, is about, two separate things and yet the mind is unable to distinguish these things by having an idea that is just of one of the objects and an idea that is just of the other of the objects. In a case where more than one thing is represented, lack of confusion requires being able to perceive the things separately. I think that this is a fairly plausible condition to place on being free of confusion.

When the body is affected by an outside object and the mind perceives the bodily effect as well as the outside object, all the ingredients for confusion are in place. Thus the idea in question is of two separate things: the bodily effect and the external cause. Further, the mind is unable to have an idea that is just of that effect and an idea that is just of the external object; for consider that each idea in the human mind is of its extended counterpart in the body. This follows from Spinoza's parallelism. Thus, since a given idea is of a bodily state, E1, and of the external cause, C1, of that state, no idea will be available in the mind to be just of E1 or just of C1. Each other idea is already committed, as it were, to being (at least) of some other bodily state. So the human mind can never catch up: because of its limited resources, it can never succeed in having an unconfused idea of C1. For the same reason it can never succeed in having an unconfused idea of its own state, E1. And now we can begin to see why, as Spinoza says in 2p29s, our ideas not only of external objects, but also of our own bodily states are confused. (By a similar line of reasoning it can be shown that our ideas of our own minds or mental states are also confused.)

The culprit behind all this confusion is the fact that the body is affected from without by external bodies just as the mind is determined

externally by other ideas that are in God but are not contained in the human mind. It is this external determination of the mind that leads the mind to represent external bodies in a way that must always be tainted by confusion, because any idea that represents external bodies also has to represent a state of one's own body in such a way that one is unable to separate the contribution to the idea's content made by the external body and the contribution made by the bodily state. Thus Spinoza says that:

the mind has, not an adequate, but only a confused knowledge, of itself, of its own body, and of external bodies, so long as it perceives things from the common order of nature, that is, so long as it is determined externally. ... For so often as it is disposed internally, ... then it regards things clearly and distinctly.
(2p29s)

As Spinoza indicates here, such confused ideas are inadequate. For Spinoza, “inadequacy” is a technical term referring to ideas a given mind has but that depend on ideas not contained in that mind (2p11c). Here it is instructive to note that Spinoza explicitly links adequate ideas to the mind's being the complete cause of such ideas (3p3).

In this light, we can see two important points. First, God's ideas are never confused, they are always adequate. This is because God's mind is not subject to external causes; God's mind is always determined internally. In fact, the very same idea that is caused from outside my mind is *not* caused from outside God's mind. Thus that idea is confused and inadequate relative to my mind (see, for example, 2p28), but unconfused and adequate relative to God's mind.

Second point: for this reason also, it seems difficult, if not impossible, for the human mind to have genuinely unconfused and adequate ideas. How could any of our ideas fail to be caused—at some remove or other—from outside the mind? This is an important problem, but whether or not we can make sense of human

ideas that are adequate simpliciter for Spinoza, he is, as we will now see, certainly entitled to appeal to—and he does appeal to—human ideas that have a greater degree of adequacy, but may not be fully adequate.¹⁶

Let's return now to the issue of degrees of animation. Spinoza's account of the perception of external objects gives us a new means of making sense of such degrees. The crucial notion Spinoza invokes in accounting for perception of outside objects is that of dependence on outside causes. Such dependence can come in degrees. That is, while most, if not all, of our ideas depend, at some remove, on ideas that are not contained in our mind, nonetheless some ideas may be less dependent on outside ideas than others. These ideas will be due more wholly to one's own mind and will, to that extent, be less confused and have a greater degree of adequacy.

It will be helpful to illustrate the notion of degrees of dependence on outside causes before turning to the case of the mind. (This is in keeping with Spinoza's own stated method, for he says in 2p13s that we can—and indeed have to—get at the differences among minds by looking at the differences among the corresponding bodies.) Let's say that the frying pan on my stove is so heavy and that I am so weak that I am unable to lift it without help from someone else. However, imagine that, after taking the right vitamins, I am able to lift the pan without assistance from anyone else. In this case, I become less dependent than I was previously on outside causes in the production of a certain effect. In the same way, one can envisage that a Spinozistic mind might gain greater independence from external causes in the production of certain ideas. These ideas would thus be relatively less confused and more adequate. Of course, neither my body nor my mind will achieve complete independence from outside causes, but one can, I believe, make sense of increasing independence in these cases.

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. Spinoza makes this clear in 2p13s soon after making his point about degrees of animation:

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.

Spinoza similarly ties degrees of consciousness to a mind's degree of independence of outside causes in 5p39s:

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 itself, or of God, or of things. 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.

On this way of seeing things, the problem with the pan is that it is less able to act on its own than are my mind and my body. Simply put, for Spinoza, there are more things that we can do on our own or more completely on our own, and thus more things that we can understand, than a pan can. From this point of view, that pan differs from us not in kind, but merely in degree of independence of ideas, and this difference exhausts the way we are to understand the difference between us and the pan with regard to being minded or animated. This is the way, I believe, Spinoza would approach the pan problem.

Of course, for this response to work, we would need to be confident that we are more able to do things on our own than is the pan. This idea does have some plausibility—after all, the pan just sits there and is not capable of the great variety of movements and activity that we are. Nonetheless, this plausible idea is still quite sketchy and needs more development than Spinoza provides.

A similar strategy may enable us to make some progress on the pancreas problem. For Spinoza, we are aware of changes in our pancreas, but only to a small degree. The reason that we are not more aware of these changes is that they are only to a small degree bound up with the activity of our body, with the ability to do more things on our own. However, this line of thought also is in need of much more development before it can really support Spinoza's position.

Further, even if a precise sense could be made out in which our bodies are more independent than the pan and in which particular pancreatic changes are less central to our bodily activities than other changes, what reason is there for thinking that this kind of independence and activity goes along with animation and consciousness? Here I think that Spinoza would have a ready, though controversial rejoinder: How else are we to understand animation and consciousness but in terms of causal independence in some such way? If animation and consciousness are not to remain inexplicable, a Cartesian mystery, they must be explained in terms of the notion of causal power in the above way. To appeal to something else beyond causal power, beyond what, as we have seen, a thing most fundamentally is, is to threaten to treat animation and consciousness as something merely tacked on to a thing and its essence. This would be a violation of naturalism and, ultimately, of the PSR. So, for Spinoza, any other explanation of animation and consciousness would be no explanation at all. For Spinoza, in effect, unless one wants to give up on these notions altogether, one must treat the degrees of animation and consciousness as simply the degree of causal independence of a mind.

Here again we see the characteristic twofold use of the PSR. Spinoza insists that animation and consciousness be explained. And he believes that they can be explained only in terms of the notion of a thing's degree of causal independence and the degree to which it approximates being the complete cause of other things, including its own states. Of course, for Spinoza, the notion of causation just

is the notion of conceiving or explaining something. Thus to say that a thing is to some degree the complete cause of a thing is to say that it is to some degree the complete explanation of that thing. So, for Spinoza, animation and consciousness are to be explained and they must be explained in terms of the notion of explanation itself. Animation and consciousness can be made intelligible only as some form of intelligibility itself.

6. NOTHING BUT REPRESENTATION

In the previous section, we began to see how fundamental Spinoza's notion of representation is to his theory of the mind. But there's much more to the story than representation's role in accounting for consciousness. One might say—and I do say—that for Spinoza every feature of the mind as a mind is to be derived from its representational features, from the fact that the mind represents things. Thus Spinoza holds a thoroughly representational theory of the mind—and in this he anticipates a prominent strand in contemporary philosophy of mind.¹⁷ This is in keeping with Spinoza's overarching rationalism, for not only is the aim of attempting to account for all mental phenomena in terms of a single feature a rationalist move, but also the use of representation for this purpose is thoroughly rationalist given that Spinoza's notion of representation just is, as we have seen, the notion of mental explanation, of giving reasons for things.

In this section, I will first outline briefly Spinoza's argument for the general view that everything in the mind is representational. I will then explore (in Section 7) how Spinoza seeks to show in particular that volition or the will is to be understood purely in representational terms. As we will see, this connection between will and representation will generate Spinoza's representational conception of belief and his trenchant attack on Descartes's theory of belief. Later in this chapter and in the succeeding two chapters, I will show how the representational nature of mind provides Spinoza with his response to skepticism and his account of epistemic

justification (Section 8), and also provides him with his account of the emotions (Chapter 4) and of moral obligation (Chapter 5). Throughout all these arguments the twofold use of the PSR will be prominently on display.

First, let's explore Spinoza's argument for the claim that all mental states are representational—i.e. ideas—and that all features of mental states are to be explained in terms of representation. The view that all mental states are representational, are about things, are ideas in Spinoza's sense, is certainly not a commonsense view, the view of the person on the street. To the extent that the average person has a view of such matters, it is likely to be something like the following:¹⁸

There are mental states that are not representational or merely representational. For example, fear is a mental state, but involves something more than the representation or idea that something harmful may happen to me. After all, one could imagine having the idea without any affective overlay. Fear may involve a representation, such as the one just mentioned, but it also crucially involves something over and above such an idea: a distinctive kind of feeling beyond anything representational that may be kicking around in the mind. Similarly, emotions such as love, hate and also perhaps other non-emotional states (such as will) also involve a distinctive feeling or other kind of non-representational state.

So much for the view of the person on the street. It's striking that—initially at least—Spinoza seems to agree with this commonsense view. It's striking because, as we have seen, Spinoza is so often not in line with common sense. Thus Spinoza says early in Part II of the *Ethics*:

There are no modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever is designated by the word affects of the mind, unless there is in

the same individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, and the like. But there can be an idea, even though there is no other mode of thinking.

(2ax3)

Here Spinoza seems to give expression to the standard view that there are ideas, i.e. representations, and there are “other” modes of thought which may presuppose certain ideas but are something over and above these ideas. However, it’s clear from the way Spinoza uses 2ax3 later in Part II that he sees himself as making a much bolder claim. In the midst of his argument that the human mind is God’s idea of the human body, Spinoza says this:

The essence of man (by 2p10c) is constituted by certain modes of God’s attributes, namely (by 2ax2), by modes of thinking, of all of which (by 2ax3) the idea is prior in nature, and when it is given the other modes (to which the idea is prior in nature) must be in the same individual (by 2ax3).

(2p11d)

Here Spinoza reveals that, contrary to what 2ax3 might suggest on its own, he is not merely saying that affects and other similar mental states somehow require or involve an idea (as the person on the street would hold). Rather Spinoza is making the much stronger claim that ideas fully account for modes of thought such as, love, desire, etc.¹⁹

To see why Spinoza would hold this view, consider what would be the case if it were false, if there were two radically different kinds of mental states: ideas, i.e. representations, and non-representational states such as the non-representational states purportedly involved in fear, love, etc. Such a scenario would, I believe, amount to a violation of Spinoza’s naturalism and, ultimately, a violation of the PSR.

Let’s say that A is an idea or representation and that B is a non-representational state in the same mind. In virtue of what are A

and B both mental states? What feature do these states have in common that enables us to classify each as mental? If there is nothing in virtue of which A and B are both thinking, nothing that explains why A and B are both mental states, then it would seem that there would be no reason why B—the non-representational state—couldn't belong to another attribute, say extension, rather than thought. That B is thinking would thus be a brute fact and this would obviously be unacceptable to Spinoza.

What then is it that makes A and B both thinking? A Cartesian would have a ready answer: consciousness, i.e. A and B are both such that the one who has these states is aware of them in a characteristically immediate way.²⁰

But one could challenge this answer by asking: In virtue of what are these two, rather disparate, states both conscious? Here again, this fact can, it seems, be nothing other than a brute fact which would be unacceptable to Spinoza.

So let's return to the original question: What is it in virtue of which A and B are both thinking? Perhaps they are both mental in virtue of the fact that they causally interact with mental states. But this won't get us very far. For Spinoza, two things interact only because they belong to the same attribute, for example the attribute of thought.²¹

I know of no other plausibly Spinozistic way to answer the question what is it in virtue of which A, a representational mental state, and B, a non-representational mental state, are both thinking. Thus the existence of such disparate mental states would involve a brute fact for Spinoza and so be unacceptable. For Spinoza, the relation between A and B—their both belonging to the attribute of thought—would be unintelligible in the same way that mental-physical causal relations are, for Spinoza, unintelligible. In each case, two otherwise disparate items do not have enough in common to explain why they stand in these relations. In this way, the distinction between representational and non-representational states in the same mind is a replication of the mind-body problem

within the mind itself. We can thus see that Spinoza's PSR forces on him the view—contrary to common sense—that if some mental states are representational, then all must be.

This line of reasoning would also lead to the view that not only are all mental states representational—i.e. ideas—but also all other features of ideas derive from their representational features. For consider: If there were both representational features of an idea and independent non-representational features of an idea, then in virtue of what would these rather different features be features of the same idea? So given that ideas are representational, then all features of ideas must, on pain of violating the PSR, somehow derive from their representational features. Again, this is a fully representational account of the mind and its contents.

It must be acknowledged that the lines of reasoning I have just articulated are not to be found on the surface of Spinoza's texts; yet I think that they are not far below the surface. This is particularly evident in the way Spinoza sees his thesis about the intelligibility of the relations among modes of thought as captured by his thesis of the parallelism between *ideas* and other kinds of modes. Thus, for Spinoza, the intelligibility of relations involving modes of thought is to be captured by relations specifically between ideas:

the formal being of the idea of the circle can be perceived only through another mode of thinking, as its proximate cause, and that mode again through another, and so on, to infinity. 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.

(2p7s)

Spinoza seems to be saying here that, in the realm of the mental, only ideas—only representations—enter into intelligible relations, relations that are compatible with the explanatory self-sufficiency of thought.²²

7. REPRESENTATION, WILL, AND BELIEF

Spinoza's account of the will and his famous, but poorly understood, critique of Descartes's views on the relation between will and belief turn heavily on his view that all mental states are ideational. Here again I will begin with the view of the person (or philosopher) in the street.

On a standard reading of Descartes, the mind has two faculties, two basic capacities: intellect and will. The intellect is the mind's faculty of having ideas, representational states, states that are about things. These ideas are purely passive. The causal power or *oomph*, as it were, in the mind comes from the will, from its volitions which are active but non-representational mental states. Volition and intellect come together in all cases of action. Thus, to put it a bit crudely: I may have the idea that—the representation that—eating ice cream would be good and that there is ice cream nearby in the freezer. These ideas are not enough by themselves to get me to act; if they were, then—given that I have these ideas almost all the time—I would be eating altogether too much ice cream. Instead, a separate kind of mental state—an act of will, a volition—is needed to carry out the action. And, on any given occasion, I may or may not bring to bear an act of will on this matter, but when I do, I will act and get the ice cream or at least try to do so (if someone hasn't padlocked the freezer to save me from myself). On this view which sometimes seems to be at work in Descartes, the volition would be a non-representational mental state and would be just a bit of mental power, as it were.²³

Spinoza, of course, has no patience for such separate volitions. For him, the power of the mind must come from ideas, from the intellect, alone: "the power of the mind is defined by understanding alone" (*Mentis potentia ... sola intelligentia definitur*; 5Pref). In denying separate acts of will, Spinoza does not deny that there are volitions. He merely holds that volitions are identical with ideas (2p49 and 2p49c). His reasoning here turns crucially on 2ax3 which, as we have seen, is a key place where Spinoza articulates the representational nature of all mental states.

For Spinoza, ideas as such are active and inherently have a tendency to prompt action. Does this mean that, perhaps, my friends should after all put a padlock on the freezer because I will always be trying to get the ice cream? Not at all. For Spinoza, although each idea has some power, not all ideas are equally powerful. The default position, as it were, is that I will act on each idea I have. If I am to be prevented from acting on that idea, it must not be because an act of will separate from any idea leads me in the other direction; rather it must be because some other *idea* with greater power leads me in the other direction. Thus, my idea that eating ice cream is good may be overwhelmed by another idea I have, an idea that eating ice cream will lead to poor health. The latter idea may be more powerful and will thus lead me to refrain from going to the freezer. We will explain these matters in more detail in the next chapter when we discuss Spinoza's psychology, but for now the key point is that whether I act is a function solely of my *ideas* and not of any separate act of will.

Some of the most important implications of Spinoza's views on the representationality of volitions emerge when he considers Descartes's theory of belief. Descartes recognizes that there is a difference between merely having an idea and believing it. Thus I may entertain the idea that Emma Thompson is a Martian without *believing* it even for a second. Something more is needed for belief, according to Descartes, and this something is provided by the will. When I join a non-representational volition—in this case an act of assent—to an idea, then, and only then, is the idea believed. In this way, Descartes assimilates belief to ordinary action: *believing* that my stupid friends have locked the freezer and wielding an axe to break the lock are each actions in the same sense: they result from an appropriate combination of intellect and will, of representational and non-representational states.

This role for will in belief is especially important to Descartes because it enables him to get God off the hook for our having false beliefs. Descartes, especially in the Fourth Meditation, famously

worries that a truly good God would not allow his creatures—for example you and I—to fall into error, as we obviously do with startling frequency. Descartes's account of the will and belief allows him to exonerate God: our false beliefs are a product of our will, and thus because for Descartes the will is free, these beliefs, these actions, are our fault, not God's. Thus Descartes maintains the goodness of God.

Spinoza, of course, has no truck with this account. For him the idea of a good God who genuinely looks out for his creatures and needs to be gotten off the hook implies a divine purposiveness which, as we have seen, conflicts with the PSR. Similarly, the notion of the freedom of the will is, for Spinoza, incoherent, also because of the PSR. We treated Spinoza's account of freedom briefly in the previous chapter and will return to the topic in more detail in Chapter 5. But the point I want to stress now is that Spinoza denies that acts of will separate from ideas have any role to play in belief formation. Spinoza agrees with Descartes that belief involves the notion of power. In this way, Spinoza would be happy to agree with Descartes in assimilating belief to action generally. However, for Spinoza, the mental power resides not in a separate volition, but in the idea believed itself. If an idea is not to be believed, that is not because I employed an act of will separate from all ideas, but rather because some other, more powerful idea led me to withdraw assent from the original idea. Thus even my idea that Emma Thompson is a Martian has some tendency to be a belief, but I don't actually assent to it because other ideas—for example the idea that no evidence of life, let alone evidence of movie stars has been found on Mars—are more powerful than this idea. Spinoza makes this point with an equally fanciful example:

I deny that a man affirms nothing insofar as he perceives. For what is perceiving a winged horse other than affirming wings of the horse? For if the mind perceived nothing else except the winged horse, it would regard it as present to itself, and would

not have any cause of doubting its existence, or any faculty of dissenting, unless either the imagination of the winged horse were joined to an idea which excluded the existence of the same horse, or the mind perceived that its idea of a winged horse was inadequate. And then either it will necessarily deny the horse's existence, or it will necessarily doubt it.

(2p49s)

One of Spinoza's rare images can help us grasp this point. He says—on a couple of occasions—that we must not make the mistake of seeing ideas as “mute pictures” on a panel or tablet. Instead, we should recognize that “an idea, insofar as it is an idea, involves an affirmation or a negation” (2p49s). For Spinoza, Descartes's ideas passively waiting for volitions to bring them to life are mute pictures. But this Cartesian view must be wrong, says Spinoza, because it would involve two radically different kinds of mental states, in violation of the PSR. As I mentioned in the previous section, this kind of view would simply be an objectionable replication within the mind itself of the mind–body problem and of unintelligible Cartesian interaction. Instead, we must see ideas as inherently powerful, inherently active, and even inherently affirmatory. Of course, other ideas may be more powerful and better able to lead to affirmation or, as Spinoza might say, more strongly affirmed. Just as, as we have seen, there are no differences in kind between conscious mental states and apparently non-conscious mental states, rather there are only differences in degree of consciousness, so too ideas may differ in degree of affirmation, but there are no differences in kind between ideas that are affirmed and ideas that are not. Rather, all ideas enjoy a degree of power, a degree of affirmation.

Here again, unsurprisingly, we see a twofold use of the PSR. Spinoza asks, in effect, for an explanation of belief and mental activity in general. This is the first use of the PSR. His answer is that belief and mental activity do not turn on some mysterious

non-representational act of will. Rather these phenomena are to be explained simply in terms of ideas—mental representations—themselves. This is the second use of the PSR because, as we have seen, for Spinoza the notion of representation is just the notion of explaining something in thought. Thus belief and mental action are to be explained and what they are to be explained in terms of is the notion of explanation itself.

8. SKEPTICISM

In the early modern period, interest in skepticism underwent a revival. Much of the fascination was due to the renewed attention to ancient philosophy in which skepticism played a prominent role, but much of it also stemmed from the new science which, unlike the previous, Aristotelian science, refused to take the senses more or less at face value. Descartes explicitly engaged in discussions of skepticism in order to promote, as he puts it, detachment from sense. Spinoza, from early on in his career, was deeply influenced by Cartesian physics and was in many ways in tune with the anti-Aristotelian tenor of the new science. He was thus, like Descartes, motivated to consider skeptical scenarios that called the evidence of the senses into doubt.

Spinoza's attention to skepticism is more explicit and detailed early in his career when the influence of Descartes on Spinoza was strongest. Spinoza's early, unfinished work, the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, was wholly devoted to the theory of knowledge and gave serious attention to skepticism. Spinoza's early book on Descartes's *Principles* begins with a long discussion of the so-called Cartesian Circle, of the charge that Descartes, after raising his skeptical doubts, uses illegitimate means to get out of the doubt. Much of the detailed treatment of skepticism drops out in the *Ethics* and, of course, it is not really present in the political writings. But it would be a mistake to think—as some have—that, by the time of the *Ethics*, Spinoza has more or less abandoned the issue of skepticism. There is indeed in the *Ethics* a well worked out and extremely interesting position on skepticism, one that is a consistent development

of the views on this matter found in his earlier works, especially the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. This underappreciated position constitutes, I believe, a highly unusual and specifically rationalist challenge to skepticism.

Let's begin with a sketch of the skeptic's position, as Spinoza sees it. Consider the skeptical scenario that Descartes concocts in the First Meditation. There Descartes comes to doubt that our sensory ideas—indeed any of our ideas—give us any knowledge, give us any purchase on reality at all. For the Descartes of the First Meditation, ideas, such as that there is a world of extended objects, and even our most coherent and compelling ideas, such as $2 + 2 = 4$, ideas that Descartes famously and obscurely calls clear and distinct, are called into doubt. To do this, he invokes the possibility that there is a maximally powerful deceiver bent on deceiving Descartes. As Descartes says from the abyss of this doubt, “there is not one of my former beliefs about which a doubt may not properly be raised” (AT VII 21/CSM II 14–15).

This kind of skeptic need not deny—and certainly the Descartes of the First Meditation does not deny—that we can have clear and distinct ideas, but for the skeptic these features do not constitute and, indeed, are not even necessarily connected with the certainty of the idea in question. More specifically, while these features may go along with the merely *psychological* certainty of such ideas, i.e. with the fact that such clear and distinct ideas are extremely compelling and perhaps impossible to doubt while one is attending to them, they are nonetheless, for our skeptic, not normatively certain, i.e. certain in a way that meets the standards for genuine knowledge. No matter how clear and distinct the ideas are, the skeptic says, they do not amount to knowledge or genuine normative (and not merely psychological) certainty. In what follows, whenever I speak of certainty I have in mind this kind of normative, not-merely-psychological certainty.

Equally, however, for the skeptic, the fact that such ideas are clear and distinct does not by itself constitute the fact (if it is a fact) that

those ideas are not genuinely certain. For the skeptic, these ideas fail to be certain not because they are clear and distinct, but because of some further feature that is independent of clarity and distinctness. Although the lack of clarity and distinctness, i.e. some kind of internal incoherence, may entail that the idea in question is not genuinely certain and does not amount to knowledge, clarity and distinctness by itself does not, for the skeptic, entail lack of genuine certainty. So, for the skeptic, clarity and distinctness do not entail or constitute either certainty or its lack. Clarity and distinctness, on this view, are at most a merely psychological feature of ideas and not an epistemic one, i.e. not a feature having to do with knowledge.

What, then, does constitute the epistemic status of clear and distinct ideas if not their clarity and distinctness? For the skeptic, that epistemic status depends on epistemic features of ideas, typically other ideas. Why, on this view, doesn't a given idea amount to knowledge? Answer: because we cannot rule out a certain possibility, i.e. we do not know or are not certain that, an evil demon (or whatever) is not making it that case that the idea is false despite its clarity and distinctness and despite its seeming to us to be true. For the skeptic, being certain of an idea depends on being certain of such things as that God is not a deceiver. For the skeptic, if, per impossibile perhaps, the idea were to amount to knowledge or certainty, that would only be because we were already certain, for example, that God is no deceiver.

We can see, then, that for the kind of radical skeptic we are considering, there is a sharp divide between epistemic features of ideas (i.e. whether or not they are genuinely certain) and other features such as clarity and distinctness. And it is precisely because of this separation that the skeptic gets his skepticism going. If the epistemic status of ideas—or at least the certainty or positive epistemic status of ideas—were simply a function of their clarity and distinctness, then we would automatically have certainty just by having clear and distinct ideas. (Recall that this skeptic does not deny that we have clear and distinct ideas.) But because the epistemic

status of ideas is a feature separate from clarity and distinctness, the door is left open for the skeptic. If the skeptic sees even an inch of daylight here, he will exploit it for all it's worth: for once the distinction is allowed, any putative fact that might be invoked to close the gap between clarity-and-distinctness, on the one hand, and truth, on the other, would itself be called into doubt and so could not legitimately close the gap.

This is, in effect, the problem of the Cartesian Circle alluded to earlier. The worry is that in setting up such a radical skepticism early in the *Meditations*, Descartes has dug himself a hole so deep that he has no way to get out. Any tool—and claim—that he might use to argue his way out of the doubt has already been swept away by the vast doubt.

There has been a bewildering variety of responses to this problem—some proposed by Descartes himself who was pressed on this very point by astute interlocutors. Spinoza's strategy for dealing with the radical skeptic is, I believe, rather distinctive, generally overlooked, and particularly powerful.

Spinoza pounces on the skeptic's basic thesis that there is a sharp divide between epistemic features of ideas and other features of those ideas. This separation would, in Spinoza's eyes, be a brute fact, a primitive, inexplicable separation between two features of a given idea. As we have just seen, on the Cartesian view from the representational features of an idea, in particular from the clarity and distinctness of an idea, we can draw no conclusion either way about the epistemic status of the idea. The epistemic status derives, in general, not from the idea's representational qualities, but from the epistemic status of other ideas. In this way, epistemic status cannot be derived from the representational features of ideas. And, obviously, the representational features of an idea cannot be derived from its epistemic status. For the skeptic, just by knowing that an idea does not amount to knowledge, we cannot infer that the idea is or is not clear and distinct or that it represents such-and-such an object in such-and-such a way. Thus we can see that the epistemic

status and representational features of an idea are merely tacked on to one another: there is no way to explain the connection between the representational features of an idea and its epistemic status.

We can see this point in the following way: starting just from the representational character of an idea and even presupposing the representational character of other ideas as well, there is no way intelligibly to get to the epistemic status of that (or any other) idea. From the representational character alone, there is just no way to see the epistemic status coming, as it were. And from epistemic status alone there is no way to see the representational character coming.

We have seen this phenomenon already: in the will/intellect case, from intellect alone, from the nature of ideas qua ideas, there is no way to see the distinct Cartesian volitions coming. In the same way, on the Cartesian view from a physical change, there is no way to see a mental change coming. In each case, there is a relation between two things that must remain inexplicable, and in each case Spinoza would rule out this relation for precisely this reason.

Again, I believe, Spinoza would plead with us this way: “Hey, if you feel uneasy about the inexplicable relation, on the Cartesian view, between the mind and the body and, then you should feel equally uneasy about the inexplicable relation between representational character and epistemic status that is at the heart of the skeptical position.” Spinoza would point out, in effect, that what’s wrong with skepticism is that it conflicts with naturalism by introducing an illegitimate bifurcation between features of ideas, and that, ultimately, it conflicts with the PSR in much the same way that various other Cartesian dualisms do.

Instead of the skeptical primitive separation between features of ideas, Spinoza proposes a rival view according to which ideas are inherently certain and do not need any external help to achieve that status. What provides ideas with certainty, for Spinoza, is their most fundamental feature: their representational character. We find Spinoza saying precisely this in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*

§35: “certainty is nothing but the objective essence itself, i.e. the mode by which we are aware of the formal essence is certainty itself.” In speaking of the *objective* essence of a thing, Spinoza is using a traditional term, used also by Descartes and a host of other philosophers, to refer to the representation of a thing’s essence. So Spinoza is saying that certainty is just representation itself.²⁴ Spinoza’s account of certainty in terms of representation alone is also apparent from 2p43s where he says that certainty is understanding [*intelligere*] itself (G II 124). As we saw, for Spinoza, to represent is to explain or to understand or to make intelligible. So, given this conception of representation, he is saying in 2p43s that certainty is representation itself.

For Spinoza, then, by having a particular representational character, an idea is certain. In order for an idea that one has to be certain, one does not have to take the representational features as given and then ask the question: In virtue of what is an idea with these representational features certain (if it is certain)? No, his point is that the idea is certain by virtue of its representational features alone. Spinoza sums it up in remarkably similar fashion early and late in his career:

truth requires no sign, but it suffices, in order to remove all doubt, to have the objective essences of things, or, what is the same, ideas.

(TdIE §36)

What can there be which is clearer and more certain than a true idea, to serve as a standard of truth? As the light makes both itself and the darkness plain, so truth is the standard both of itself and of the false.

(2p43s)

In these passages, Spinoza clearly removes the primitive separation, removes the daylight, between representational character and

epistemic status that is the hallmark of skepticism. Thus, just as he holds that ideas are inherently active, inherently affirmed, and inherently conscious, he also holds that ideas are inherently certain. In this case as in the others, Spinoza accounts for an important feature of the mind in terms of representation alone.

Once again, we have the twofold use of the PSR. Spinoza demands an account of—an explanation of—certainty and epistemic status in general. Certainty cannot be a free-floating, inexplicable feature of mental states. And the account he gives is of certainty as representation itself and thus as finding something intelligible in thought, i.e. as explaining a thing. Certainty is therefore explained in terms of explanation itself.

Of course, as in the other cases, to say that ideas are all inherently certain is not to say that they are all perfectly certain. For Spinoza, certainty comes in degrees, and so, as we have seen, do confusion and adequacy. The degree of certainty we are able to achieve is a function of the power of our mind and the degree to which the mind can do many things on its own. We are obviously quite weak in many ways, but the point remains: we are on the scoreboard when it comes to power. We thus enjoy some degree of certainty; we have some grasp—however confused—of the way the world is. We are not—as the skeptic would have it—completely cut off from knowledge of the world.²⁵

Spinoza's strategy—of, in effect, investigating how much anti-skeptical weight the PSR can carry—is intriguing and promising. Whether this strategy can ultimately work would, of course, require further exploration. There are immediate challenges to Spinoza's position: first, this response to the skeptic is only as good as Spinoza's support for the PSR. We will have to wait until the end of this book to see how Spinoza might justify the PSR. A more specific worry is the following: even if the PSR is granted, it is still not clear just how representation, which, for Spinoza, guarantees certainty, can actually do this job. Because the certainty of an idea requires that it be true, the representational features of an idea must

then somehow guarantee the truth of the idea. But how can mere representation pull off this remarkable task? The answer to this question—needed to complete Spinoza’s case against skepticism—will have to wait until Chapter 7 where we explore Spinoza’s account of existence and, hence, truth. But even before resolving these questions, we can see that Spinoza’s anti-skeptical strategy testifies to the scope and systematic power of his rationalism and his use of the notion of representation.

SUMMARY

Spinoza’s naturalism and rationalism are nowhere more evident and more relevant to contemporary philosophy than in his philosophy of mind. All there is to thought is the having of ideas, representations of certain things. Thus, in laying down requirements on what it is to have an idea or representation of an object, Spinoza is articulating the essence of the mental. Spinoza’s strictures on representation turn on the enigmatic but crucial axiom: “The knowledge of an effect depends upon, and involves, the knowledge of its cause” (1ax4). Spinoza says here that to represent a thing is to represent its causes. This understanding of representation derives from his understanding of the essence of a thing as its having certain causes, and from his denial of any explanatory connections between the attributes. (In Chapter 7, we will see a different justification of this axiom.) The axiom is the primary support for Spinoza’s mind-body identity thesis which, like his claim of the identity of the thinking substance and the extended substance, stems from his commitment to the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles and the PSR. For Spinoza, my mind is simply an idea in God’s intellect; in particular it is God’s idea of my body. Because each detail in extension is paralleled by and represented by an idea, it follows that my mind represents all the states of my body and that, likewise, each extended thing is represented by (and identical to) an idea in God’s mind, an idea that is the mind of that thing. Spinoza thus embraces panpsychism, the

thesis that all things are mental. He can mitigate some of the counterintuitive consequences of this view by attributing ever diminishing degrees of consciousness and mentality to less powerful beings. Spinoza's account of mental power constitutes a sharp critique of Descartes's theory of belief or judgment. For Spinoza, as for Descartes, judgment is simply a function of mental power or assent brought to bear on a certain idea. But whereas for Descartes, this mental power comes from a separate non-representational mental state (a volition), for Spinoza, assent is internal to an idea: each idea is, by its nature, powerful to some degree and so commands a degree of assent. This refusal to bifurcate mental states, as Descartes does, into passive, representational ideas and active, non-representational volitions reflects Spinoza's naturalism and his rejection of inexplicable disparities. Here the PSR is at work. The PSR similarly guides his response to radical skepticism. The radical skeptic draws a sharp line between the representational character of ideas (their clarity and distinctness, in Descartes's terms) and their epistemic status, i.e. their amounting to genuine certainty or knowledge. Thus the skeptic sees himself as showing that our clear and distinct ideas, our ideas that are representationally most in order, do not amount to knowledge. Spinoza rejects this sharp separation implicit in skepticism between the representational character of ideas and their epistemic status. This separation is, for Spinoza, an inexplicable bifurcation every bit as objectionable as the sharp Cartesian separations between mind and body, between will and intellect, and between consciousness and representation.

FURTHER READING

- Edwin Curley (1975) "Descartes, Spinoza, and the Ethics of Belief." (Classic account of Spinoza's rejection of Descartes's theory of judgment.)
- Donald Davidson (1980) "Mental Events." (Highly influential statement of the view that mental events are identical to physical events despite the fact that, as in Spinoza, certain explanatory connections between the mental and the physical are ruled out.)

- Michael Della Rocca (1996a) *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*. (Extended discussion of the requirements on representation of an object and of Spinoza's reasons for embracing mind-body identity.)
- . (2003b) "The Power of an Idea: Spinoza's Critique of Pure Will." (Spinoza's representational theory of the mind together with a defense of the view that for Spinoza all ideas are beliefs.)
- . (2007) "Spinoza and the Metaphysics of Scepticism." (Spinoza's anti-skepticism as stemming from the PSR.)
- Willis Doney (1975) "Spinoza on Philosophical Skepticism." (Useful overview of Spinoza on skepticism.)
- G. H. R. Parkinson (1954) *Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge*. (Good account of all aspects of Spinoza's epistemology.)
- Daisie Radner (1971) "Spinoza's Theory of Ideas." (Classic paper on Spinoza's theory of representational content.)
- Alison Simmons (2001) "Changing the Cartesian Mind: Leibniz on Sensation, Representation and Consciousness." (Excellent account of Leibniz's representational theory of mind.)
- Michael Tye (1997) *Ten Problems of Consciousness*. (Contemporary version of the representational theory of mind.)
- Margaret Wilson (1999) "Objects, Ideas, and 'Minds': Comments on Spinoza's Theory of Mind." (Trenchant and important criticisms of Spinoza's philosophy of mind.)

- 21 There is some unclarity as to whether the mediate infinite modes can be said to follow from God's nature absolutely. The account I gave above of the nature of following absolutely from God suggests that they do not, for the mediate infinite modes follow from God only because something else (namely an immediate infinite mode) also follows from God. And 1p23 does indicate that the mediate infinite modes do not follow from the absolute nature of God. However, in 1p23d, Spinoza seems to allow mediate infinite modes to follow absolutely from God as well (see Giancotti 1991). I believe, in light of what I take to be the natural interpretation of Spinoza's line of reasoning in 1p21d, that the locution in 1p23 is to be favored over the locution in 1p23d.
- 22 See especially TdIE §101. For a classic statement of the relation between infinite modes and laws of nature, see Curley 1969: 58–62. As Curley explains, it would be more accurate to say that the infinite modes are not themselves the laws of nature, but are rather the facts within extension or thought that correspond to the laws. The laws are, as it were, statements of these facts. As Spinoza puts it in TdIE §101, the laws are inscribed in the “fixed and eternal things.”
- 23 See 2def6 for the equivalence of reality and perfection, and 4pref (G II 208) for the equivalence of perfection and power. Spinoza also links power and reality in 2p49s (G II 133).
- 24 For such a connection between the PSR and necessitarianism, see van Inwagen 2002: chap. 7, and Bennett 1984: 115. Curley and Walski object to using PSR to justify a necessitarian reading of Spinoza. They base this objection on the claim that the totality of particular facts cannot be explained because “if the totality really does contain all the particular facts ... the only facts available for explaining that totality are those wholly general facts described by the laws of nature, and you cannot deduce any particular facts from general facts alone” (Curley and Walski 1998: 258). Curley and Walski seem to assume that the laws of nature and thus the attributes are wholly general facts. To assume this is really to beg the question because the necessitarian reading involves the claim that attributes are sufficient explanations for particulars and thus attributes may be seen as not mere general facts.
- 25 There are some worries here about whether a mental intention can give rise to a physical action, but we will bracket these worries for now and return to this matter in the next chapter when we discuss Spinoza's parallelism.
- 26 See note 23.

THREE THE HUMAN MIND

- 1 See Descartes's definition of thought in the *Replies to the Second Objections* (CSM II 113, AT VII 160).

- 2 I am indebted here to Yitzhak Melamed for convincing me that the parallelism between modes of two non-thinking attributes does not follow directly from the parallelism between things and ideas stated in 2p7 itself.
- 3 For some discussion, see Della Rocca 1996a: 23.
- 4 For other such passages, see TdIE §§36, 51; TTP, p. 48, chap. 4 (G III 58), Ethics 4pref (G II 208), 5ax2.
- 5 See Aaron Garrett 2003.
- 6 See also 1p8s2, G II 51.
- 7 I will present a different derivation of this claim in Chapter 7.
- 8 Actually, of course, there are, given the infinity of attributes, infinitely many different ways of explaining the same things.
- 9 The classic statement of Davidson's position is in Davidson 1980. I have analyzed the similarities between Spinoza and Davidson in Della Rocca 1996a: chap. 8. Davidson has expressed his indebtedness to Spinoza in Davidson 1999.
- 10 This is a fully general account of individuality, applying to extended things and to thinking things. In the next chapter, we will consider in detail a compatible account of individuality for bodies in particular. I am here treating being a singular thing as equivalent to being an individual, or at least I see Spinoza as drawing no sharp line here.
- 11 Indeed, for Spinoza, the idea of the body is a representation of the body only in virtue of the ideas of the affections of the body: "The human mind does not know the human body itself, nor does it know that it exists, except through the ideas of affections by which the body is affected" (2p19). (Spinoza understands affections of the body very broadly as *any* constitution of the body (3da1exp).) I think that in 2p19 Spinoza expresses the view that, unlike a substance, the human body is not prior to its affections or constitutions. For example, it, unlike substance, is divisible into its parts. Thus the representation of the body is posterior to the representation of the affections of the body, as 2p19 indicates.
- 12 Wilson 1999: 130.
- 13 Bennett advances a similar argument (Bennett 1984: 135–39).
- 14 See Simmons 2001. For my understanding of consciousness in Leibniz and in early modern philosophy in general, I am indebted to Jorgensen 2007.
- 15 See the way Spinoza invokes 2p23 in 3p9d.
- 16 For a helpful exploration of the issue of the human mind's ability to have fully adequate ideas, see Marshall forthcoming.
- 17 See, e.g., Tye 1997. Leibniz also holds a fully representational theory of mind; see Simmons 2001.
- 18 It's also often the view of the philosopher on the street, e.g. Descartes.

- 19 Cf. KV II App. §§5–6. Guérout 1974: 33.
- 20 See the definition of thought in the Second Replies (AT VII 160, CSM II 113); see also *Principles* I 9; AT III 273, CSMK 165–66; AT VII 246, CSM II 171.
- 21 Spinoza makes this point in various places, including 1a5, 1p3, 2p7s, 3p2, 5pref.
- 22 For further evidence, see Della Rocca 2003b: 220–24.
- 23 See, e.g., Descartes, *Passions* I §17, CSMK 182/AT III 372.
- 24 Spinoza’s focus on essences is due, I believe, to Spinoza’s view, already discussed, that one represents a thing by representing its essence.
- 25 See TTP, chap. 2, p. 21: “Imagination by itself, unlike every other clear and distinct idea, does not of its own nature carry certainty with it.” This passage indicates that certainty is simply a function of clear and distinct representation and that lack of certainty is a function of confusion or lack of clarity.

FOUR PSYCHOLOGY

- 1 See also the reference to 3p4d in 4p17s. Spinoza also sees the related claim that bodily states persist by their very nature as self-evident in 2le3c and in PPC 2p14. See also 4p20s.
- 2 For Spinoza’s discussion of suicide, see, e.g., 4p20s. For the candle, see TdIE §57.
- 3 In reading 3p5 as invoking degrees of being in, I am much indebted to Garrett 2002. However, I part company with Garrett in allowing that, for Spinoza, if x is partly caused by y , then x is to that extent in y . I do not see how one can deny this and still maintain the equivalence—on which Spinoza insists—between causation and the in-relation. For further discussion, see Della Rocca 2008b.
- 4 Similarly, Hoffman speaks of a stripped-down notion of final causation in Descartes and Aquinas in Hoffman unpublished.
- 5 See also *Principles* II 37, where Descartes does not use the term “strives” and instead uses “tends.” But it seems clear from this passage that the notion he is concerned with is equivalent to the notion of striving. (For a contrary view, see Hoffman unpublished.) It’s not clear how Descartes would account in these terms for the striving of minds. This is, as we will see presently, a major difference from Spinoza. For further discussion and a limited defense of Descartes’ extremely subtle views on striving and causation in the extended realm, see Della Rocca 1998 and 2008a.
- 6 Garber discusses this objection in Garber 1992: 363n39, and in Garber 1994: 47–48.
- 7 See PPC 2p17, 3d3. A similar account of striving is found in CM I.6.