

SPINOZISTIC ATTRIBUTE ANTI-REALISM

Abstract:¹ *In this paper, I attempt to show how, contrary to criticisms by, for instance, Wilson (Wilson 1999) Spinoza's double-aspect theory of mind is indeed a plausible position. Much of the interpretations that render Spinoza's theory of mind implausible rest on specific interpretations of 1) parallelism, 2) incrementalism or panpsychism and, 3) what is commonly known as objectivist understanding of attributes. In the first part of the paper, I examine reasons for 3). Haserot (in Kashap 1972) famously denied the possibility of subjectivist understanding of attributes, though recently Shein (Shein 2010) put forward an argument that the dichotomy between subjectivist and objectivists interpretations is false. However, I will claim there is another way of interpreting attributes that is neither subjectivist, nor objectivist, but anti-realist. I lack the space here to go into much detail, but in short, the starting point of my interpretation will be EID4 and EIID3. The second part will, following the implications of this interpretation, try to shed new light on 1) and 2). Here I will examine interpretations of the two put forward by, among others, Curley (Curley 1969), Garrett (Garrett 1996), Wilson (Wilson 1999) and Miller (Miller 2007). Finally, I conclude that, if my interpretation is correct, Spinoza presents us with a way to make sense of his double-aspect theory of mind coherently and plausibly.*

Key words: Spinoza, Substance, Attributes, Parallelism, Subjectivism, Objectivism, Anti-Realism

1.

It is often claimed that Spinoza doesn't have much interesting to say about mind-body relation (see, for example Wilson 1999). I think, however, that such attitudes rest upon a specific understanding of his philosophy in general, and are ultimately tied to how his doctrine of parallelism is understood. The latter will come into foray near the end of the paper. The first, however, is crucial, for it establishes the viewpoint from which one will proceed to interpret a significant number of other Spinoza's doctrines relevant to his philosophy of mind. Arguably the most important of these is the way he understands, first, the relation between

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attributes and substance, and second, the relation between attributes and the intellect. The two are, as we shall see, inextricably linked. In this paper, I will put forward an interpretation of these relations that should make this link apparent, and subsequently result in a view of the doctrine of parallelism that will show us how we can recognize the relevance of Spinoza's philosophy of mind. Moreover, two other doctrines that Spinoza is often believed to have held – incrementalism and panpsychism, will become more clear (and, as I will try to show, more acceptable) in the light of the previous considerations. This paper will thus consist of three parts. The first part deals with the interpretation of the attributes in Spinoza's philosophy. The second part sketches a spinozistic double-aspect theory of mind that is, again, more plausible and more interesting than is often surmised. The third part of the paper will interpret (away) parallelism, incrementalism and panpsychism in the vein of the second part. In conclusion, I will try to establish a more contemporary, strawsonian framework and terminology that present a good fit with Spinoza's philosophy of mind.

2.

The starting point of our discussion, naturally, must be Spinoza's definition of the attributes²:

Attribute is what intellect perceives as constituting the essence of the one substance (E1D4).

As Shein (Shein 2010) observes, the definition of the attributes gives rise to two very distinct interpretations – subjectivist, and objectivist³. Subjectivists believe that it is the human intellect referred to in E1D4 and that 'as' means 'as if, but not actually'. Thus, what human mind erroneously observes as attributes does not really constitute the essence of the substance, which means that humans do not possess true understanding of the substance. On the other hand, objectivists believe that the Spinoza refers to the infinite intellect, and that 'as' (*tanquam*) means that the infinite intellect truly observes attributes that actually constitute the essence of the substance.

Now, Shein will point out in his paper that objectivists believe subjectivists are wrong mainly because the subjectivist interpretation entails we possess illusory knowledge, i.e. the attributes themselves seem illusory, which creates a gap between knowing the substance and knowing the attributes.⁴ That is, since the attributes are what the human intellect immediately observes, and through the attributes it then acquires knowledge of the substance, if there is a gap, we cannot know the substance as it is in itself. Shein proceeds then to show how objectivist interpretation suffers from the objection quite similar to the one they

2 Baruch de Spinoza, Complete Works, London: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002.

3 The most famous proponent of subjectivism is Wolfson (Wolfson 1934), and among the objectivists especially influential are Gueroult (Gueroult 1968) and Haserot (Haserot 1972). Also see Della Rocca 1996, Allison 1987 and Bennett 1984.

4 See esp. Gueroult, p. 50.

themselves make against subjectivists, and that neither interpretation has clear advantage.⁵

Now, I will not directly argue against Shein. What I want instead to propose is that objectivists are wrong when they put forward the illusory knowledge objection in the first place. Namely, from the proposition that (every) human intellect has some sort of limitation preventing it from truly observing the substance, it does not follow that attributes are illusions or that the knowledge of attributes is illusory. If that were the case, knowledge of space and time in Kant's philosophy, or the knowledge of appearances we have according to him, would also be illusory. An additional assumption for such a conclusion is needed – that it is possible to attain real knowledge of the substance in itself. Thus, having been able to contrast that kind of knowledge, with the one subjectivists hold that we have of attributes, objectivists would be correct to state that subjectivist interpretation gives rise to the illusory knowledge.

However, *if* subjectivists are right, there is no additional knowledge of substance, much less the one objectivists are considering to obtain. Thus, the objectivist criticism begs the question and supposes that its own claims are correct thereby criticizing subjectivists. Such a criticism cannot be valid, for objectivists must first show how is subjectivism wrong, and then proceed to independently argue for their own stance. Subjectivists can, then, having claimed that the intellect in E1D4 is finite, and 'as' is 'as if, but not actually', hold that our knowledge of attributes indeed is real knowledge.

Having said that, I do not want to claim subjectivism is a correct interpretation of Spinoza's view of attributes, even though it is closer to it than objectivism. In fact, it seems to me that neither subjectivists nor objectivists took properly into account all the relevant notions of E1D4. In my view, there exists a sort of middle ground between subjectivism and objectivism in one sense (MG), and an interpretation to which both are contrary (C). Speaking of MG we can, turning to Kant once again, introduce the notion of subjective generality, and be closer to what would actually be claimed by Spinoza. In this context, subjective generality would mean that it is not up to some or another individual to regard attributes in one way or another (which would create a sort of situation objectivists refer to). Instead, there is a consistency in (acquiring) knowledge across multiple subjects and thus there is no subjective or collective illusion.

The knowledge we have of attributes is, as already suggested a real knowledge, as is knowledge of every proposition based on it. Now, we do posit that there is one substance, but we do not think of it as more than simply the existence of something that is in fact the world around us, to which one or the other attribute is properly applied. The set of ways we can apply attributes of thought and extension to that world, is *all* there is to be said about that world. In that sense, perhaps the most important term in E1D4 is not 'intellect' or 'as (if)', but 'constituting'. That is the (C) sense. In so far as the subjective generalist interpretation of our knowledge of attributes is valid, its conclusion must be that our perceiving the world under the attribute of extension, or under the attribute

5 Shein, 2010, p. 520.

of thought, will result in thinking of it as the extended world or as the thinking world. In that sense, it is precisely this sort of observation that constitutes the world as such, regardless of what it is independently of attributes (of which we, from the perspective of human intellect, cannot even begin to speculate).

In the sense outlined above, the world has two aspects, extended and thinking aspect. The world in itself is not part of the collective intellectual space we occupy and in that sense what it is isn't of importance for the knowledge of the way it appears. This claim, in conjunction with what I said above, can be contrasted with both subjectivism and objectivism because it assigns constitutive role to the human intellect, whereas the other two do not even consider it in this context. This reading of Spinoza allows us to formulate a different sort of a double-aspect theory that commonly goes unrecognized in connection with Spinoza.

First, we can now separate it from neutral monism. The double-aspect theory would have cognitive priority regardless of the doctrine of neutral monism. Now, to be absolutely clear, neutral monism *is* the most natural understanding of the world for a double-aspect theorist. To see this, remember that Spinoza forms his views primarily under Descartes' influence. Where Descartes held that there are two substances, two independent existences which allow for different attributes, Spinoza thought that the roles of thought and extension are more appropriately played by attributes. In that sense, the world is neither, or neutral. But from the perspective of the finite intellect, which comes to know about that world only through attributes, the ultimate knowledge of it is not attainable.⁶

Second, which follows directly from the first, the proposed reading establishes a double-aspect theory as a specific view of the world that considers the 'true' nature of substance irrelevant to the two aspects. Given that, we will now move on to formulate in greater detail the double-aspect theory of the mind, and establish it as a more plausible set of views that is usually thought. I will also argue in more detail that it is Spinoza's doctrine of parallelism that often gives pause to contemporary scholars and philosophers in general, but that, reinterpreted (which will be possible in the light of our previous discussion), it turns out to be the strength of Spinoza's position. Establishing that point will be the topic of the third part of the paper.

3.

We have already seen the way in which the majority of interpreters consider attributes and substance to be the crucial part, and in fact two of the three pillars of Spinoza's metaphysics⁷. Having put forward what I believe to be the correct

6 We could propose an interpretation that there are two accounts of our knowledge and our world that are put forward (albeit not explicitly) in the *Ethics*. The first account is *sub speciei aeternitatis*, which assumes the position of an infinite intellect and is often the basis for objectivist interpretations. The second account is from the perspective of the finite, human intellect, and his inherent limitations. The second one often goes unnoticed, but I believe that is the principal one. It also has roots in historical continuity between medieval Jewish philosophy and Spinoza. Wolfson (Wolfson 1934) talks at length of this continuity.

7 The third are modes. See Melamed, forthcoming,

interpretation of Spinoza's view of the relation between our intellect and the attributes, I will now generalize that account in the way that should pave the way for what I will ultimately claim in this paper. The view could be called antirealist and it goes roughly as follows: It is not that a substance *has* the attributes of thought and extension; it is that the two attributes are the way in which we (at least partly) *constitute, make sense of* reality around us. In a way, these attributes are constructs which help us describe what we see around us, i.e. modes. Even though this may sound dangerously Kantian, I want to make several observations that can, I think, make it more intuitively acceptable. In any case, it is not as important for me to claim that this is what Spinoza in fact thought, but what I think he may have meant on the basis of the things he said in Ethics. There are three main propositions on which this view rests.

We have already discussed the first two – subjective generalist interpretations, and the idea that there are cognitive limitations with respect to the attributes we perceive. The third is E2D3, and needs to be quoted in full:

By 'idea' I mean the mental concept which is formed by the mind as a thinking thing. I say 'conception' rather than perception because the word perception seems to imply that the mind is passive with respect to the object; whereas conception seems to express an *activity* of the mind.

Expanding on the antirealist interpretation, we can infer from these three statements that the attributes represent the two key aspects of phenomena we perceive around us in the form of modes, or created things, having no objective way of telling whether perfection in substance really corresponds to our way of our perceiving it. In that sense, objectivists' 'perfect knowledge requirement'⁸, cannot be achieved. Our limitations, as well as the activity of our mind, let us construct the two in a way our cognitive capacities allow us, that is, imperfectly.

In that sense, we may see, first, further elaboration on why the neutral monism, as a metaphysical theory is less important than the double-aspect theory: whereas neutral monism assumes there are no fundamental constraints on our mind and we can legitimately talk about basic metaphysical entities, the double-aspect theory appropriately recognizes the way we cognitively approach reality. Second, we may dismiss an often posed objection towards neutral monists that it is unclear what the nature of the one substance really is, by initially limiting the scope of the possible range of our answers to our *conception* and *description* of reality. And, thirdly, we may make more sense of the way the mind-body relation works if we approach it through antirealist perspective, putting most of the weight on its explanatory aspect.

In order to show how this can be the case, let us develop an analogy which I think will clarify these points. It is inspired by Plato's famous 'cave allegory'. Imagine that you are sitting in a room tied to a chair. In front of you are two mirrors, forming a wide angle. Behind you is something you are not able to see directly, but only as a reflection. Now, let's say that the glass of the one mirror is colored red and another is colored blue. When you are looking at the reflection, you can only see it either in one mirror, or in the other, and in no way in both at

8 The expression is from Shein 2010.

the same time. Now, what you are seeing is a blue thing on the one hand, and a red thing on the other. Moreover, if someone asked you what you can see in one mirror, you would be able to describe the thing *exactly*, and in terms of seeing it as red, or in the other mirror and in terms of seeing it as blue. The thing itself is (probably) neither red, nor blue, nor has any combination of these colors. You are simply not aware of its true coloring, but you are quite aware that what you are seeing in front is not that thing itself, but a reflection, and that the colors you are seeing it in, are actually properties of the mirror, or of the reflection (as the reflection, indeed, is blue or red), but not of the thing itself. Of course, the two thoughts that you plausibly form are that there may be, and possibly are, many other mirrors that reflect this thing behind you, but because of your position, you are unable to acquire any additional viewing angle. Another thought that naturally occurs is that what you see in the mirrors are red and blue color *as* constituting (the properties of) that thing, each in its own right.

Now, analogies have limitations, and we can take this one only to a certain length. Stretching it too far might distort the antirealist position I am trying to defend. For example someone could invoke our imperfect perception of colors, and the limited scope of wave lengths reflecting off a surfaces. It is not only imaginable that there could be creatures with a better sense of color, there indeed *are* animals with such capabilities. Therefore, we may say, our initial capacity for perceiving the reflection determines the ultimate way we can see it and describe it. However, such a way also gives us a sense in which we may talk about a thing *as* consisting of the two colors.

Another example we can give, through which I think all this can become much more concrete is the thought-experiment of the duck-rabbit⁹. We see an image which represents both a duck and a rabbit at the same time. The relevant questions that can be asked with regards to the double-aspect theory (as well as the neutral monism) are strikingly similar to the questions about the duck-rabbit picture. Namely, even though we can see both shapes, we may ask which one is real? Is it that the picture of a rabbit we also see as a duck (remaining, though, a picture of a rabbit essentially), or vice-versa? Is it both? These are obviously the same sorts of questions we may ask about Spinoza, and the E1D4 above. They also bring us to the core of his philosophy of mind.

Do we think that what really exists are brain processes, with a subset of phenomena we can conveniently, though not necessarily talk about in terms of something distinct, i.e. mind, consciousness, thinking, or are there two sets of genuine phenomena, different from each other, and each requiring somewhat distinct language in order to be described in the most appropriate way? I want to claim that these questions is basically wrong. But, one might wonder, why is it wrong to ask whether the only thing that exists are the physical processes that give rise (or have some other relation) to phenomena that are also mental in nature? Why is it wrong to ask whether the animal in the picture is duck or a rabbit?

In my opinion this is the case because what is really in the picture *is* not a duck, nor a rabbit. It is a shape, a form that is drawn, which *we see as* a duck, or *as* a rabbit. Because of our cognition being the way it is we can see these two forms

9 Wittgenstein 1998.

in that picture, and describe them consistently with two distinct sets of terms. Conversely, it is impossible to use rabbit terms to say something informative about the duck-aspect of the shape. Now, it is quite imaginable that, if we had different cognitive powers, we could have seen in that picture some additional form, or possibly an infinite number of different forms, or only one of these two. There are surely beings in this world that do not see both a duck and a rabbit in this picture, and I am quite certain that ducks or rabbits see neither.

What this shows us is that our metaphysical questions about the relation of the body and the mind are bound to be answered only with the respect to the way we pose them, which is, as we have seen, an imperfect way. One illustration of that way is the relatively obvious circularity in examples of how materialists see reducing thinking to brain processes. When, for example, Place (Place 1956) says that thought is the brain process in the same way that lightning is only a discharge of electricity, and that the two are only different ways of describing the same phenomena, he is correct in the latter. But, the circularity of the former is reflected in a simple fact that by comparing thought, which we initially want to reduce, but have not yet done it, to phenomena that are clearly of the materialistic nature, we are already assuming that thought is of materialistic nature as well. However, since we have not yet actually made the reduction, we should not assume the analogy is correct, which Place does.

Now, he may defend himself and say that what he offers with this analogy is only a way to explain thought as merely a brain process, thereby *assuming* that such a fact will be discovered sometime in the future by scientists. In that case, we are not talking about circularity, but the problem, perhaps even deeper now, remains. Namely, if we use proper means to describe thought, and mental states in general are a set of terms that are completely distinct from the terms we use for physical processes, is it not possible to say that mental phenomena may be completely different in nature from such processes, and thus properly described in quite a different manner? Indeed, that is a possibility, but with such a possibility, how can we ever know for certain, using scientific methodology and technical instruments designed to register, measure and categorize only physical processes and things physical in nature, that we will be able to observe all that there is to be observe? In other words, the types of scientific tools we have at our disposal only lead us towards objects and types of objects they were designed to discover. For example, Geiger counter is built to detect and measure ionizing radiation. How could we ever use it to detect electricity? In a sense, even though radiation and electricity both have physical nature, we couldn't use one for detecting other. Of course, claiming that electricity doesn't exist because we couldn't discover it with Geiger counter is plainly absurd.

However, mental phenomena might be of completely different sort. Thus the gap is only wider. Even though the double-aspect theory I am describing does not imply that there really *are* such things as mental entities, or entities made of some completely different substance, it is important to recognize that the uncertainty based on the described inadequacy is a good reason for us to remain antirealists in approaching mind-body relation and to claim that our cognitive limitations are what determines our ultimate means of research and

description. In so far as Spinoza gives us means to formulate such a double-aspect theory, we can consider his philosophy as having something important, relevant and interesting to say when it comes to mind-body relation.

4.

We now turn to possible problems of several doctrines that Spinoza was believed to put forward and which, if it were true, would render his view of the mind-body relations implausible. According to the double-aspect theory, we are able to characterize the things we can see around us using terms of thought and extension. We are able to ascribe to these things two distinct, mutually incompatible sets of features. Still, both sets may still be ascribed to them correctly. Now, when we say that we as human beings consist of a mind and a body, what we want to say is that any description we want to give can either be done in terms of having thoughts or in terms of being extended. However, one potentially fatal conclusion is that not only do human beings can be described in that way, but that every created thing can be described in terms of both.

There were many objections against a completely counter-intuitive claim that, for example, stones can have thoughts. There are also several lines of arguments that can attempt to deal with this question. One is that Spinoza did pertain to this view, and that, moreover, it was his intention to say that indeed stones have thoughts, although on an immeasurably smaller scale than us. This may remind us of Leibniz, or of animism¹⁰. This is known as incrementalism. Another line that argues against it is that Spinoza did not intend to draw that conclusion, but that he is obliged to do it, which poses an unsolvable problem for his philosophy.¹¹ Now, we are clearly obliged to say that we as humans have ideas and that it is a consequence of us being modes under the attribute of thought. If that is the line of reasoning, it is thought, then that such a thing can also be sad about stones, because they follow from the same substance like we do and that is an unacceptable consequence.

One plausible way to defend Spinoza, along the lines of the double-aspect theory we formulated, and along the lines of his own thought, would be to say that not every thing, every mode has ideas, or contents of the mind, because not every being is capable of having thoughts in the way we are. For example, animals can have some ideas, so thought can be ascribed to them. Stones do not have any ideas, so we will not ascribe any thoughts to them. In other words, we will not be able to *describe* them at all in terms of thinking. However, some will argue that such an explanation, though plausible to us, is not consistent with Spinoza's view that whatever modes follow from a substance, they must have every attribute the substance has. This point is, I think wrong on two accounts.

First, when Spinoza talks about the one substance as God or Nature, he does not claim, as it is sometimes thought, simply that they are two names of the same thing that can be used interchangeably. Instead, I think that what Spinoza wants

10 See, for example, Garrett 1996.

11 See Wilson 1999. Also a very insightful discussion of the topic can be found in Miller 2007.

to say is, and E1P21–23, or as the account of infinite modes suggests it as well, that we need to talk about the substance as ‘Nature’ when we are explaining the phenomena that follow from it in terms of physical causality. In other words, Nature is the object of our scientific observation. On the other hand, ‘God’ is the name that is equivalent with the sets of descriptions falling under it and dealing with the thinking aspect of the phenomena (set of all the reasons, falling under the one infinite Reason, as it is in E1P16).

That said, we can comfortably say that it is not that from one substance follow modes that have both the thinking aspect and the physical aspect, but simply the modes to which one *or* both aspects may correctly be ascribed, and by us who are able to make these ascriptions. To say it once again, had we been of a different capacity, it is plausible that there might have been additional types of attributes, or, even more precisely, types of ways in which we might have described the existing modes.¹² Therefore, we can argue that, even according to Spinoza, stones, being a product of nature, its effect, or the effect of its processes, have only physical predicates ascribable to them. It is thus safe to say that stones do not have thoughts, and that the only relevant attribute under which it is possible to consider them is the attribute of extension.

The second erroneous point is that from the claim that the substance has both attributes it follows that each of its creations must have both. In a way this is encompassed by the first point, but it is necessary to separate this aspect of the mistake, as I see it. Namely, I have also said that it is incorrect to claim simply that a substance *has* thought and extension. It is us who see thought and extension as making up, partly, its essence. And even though Spinoza often speaks of the two statements as claiming the same thing, namely that our *seeing as* means that substance really has both, I think that the terminology of his day, and standard meanings the terms he used had rendered him unable to state his case more clearly, which has already been noted as the main difficulty in general by almost every commentator. Even if he thought something like that, what I am trying to say is that, following his own propositions, it was not a necessary, or even a correct conclusion.

Having (hopefully) explained away incrementalism as an incorrect interpretation, we now turn to Spinoza’s doctrine of parallelism. A common

12 This can lead to a question of the relation between the attributes we may perceive, and those that could be, but are not perceived. One way of answering this is, I think recalling similar distinctions that have arisen in recent cosmology. Namely, dark matter and dark energy are ‘things’ that we cannot (presumably) ever see with the capacities we have, although we may measure their influence. Also, there is much talk about there being more dimensions than these four. Again, we can only construct them mathematically, while we are cognitively unable to even imagine what those dimensions could look like, or what could be the nature of the dark energy and dark matter. Now, one key difference between these examples and the mind body distinction is that the latter is even more fundamental, and thus epistemically, so to speak, unreachable even in principle, whereas dark matter can be researched with our current instruments at least to some degree. This also brings us back to the need to abandon the metaphysical question of the existence of a separate set or purported reducibility of mind phenomena, and we can focus our attention on the explanatory aspect. Obviously, this is only a cursory look at the very complex question of the purported infinity of attributes. Discussing this would take us far, and is in any case not relevant to our present topic in the sense that our conclusion does not rest upon that problem.

claim of Spinoza's error says that he maintained a doctrine of 'one-to-one' mind-body parallelism, as stated in E2P7: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and the connection of things". That means that there is no way a particular physical state could cause a particular mental state, but that for each of the first type there is another of the second type corresponding to it. Now, one might think that saying that the two sets of phenomena are parallel to each other does offer a more intuitive way to think about the mind-body relation when compared to Cartesian theory. Regardless of whether thus understood parallelism is more plausible than Descartes' dualism, according to Wilson (Wilson 1999), the consequences that follow from it are completely unintuitive. She essentially agrees with Della Rocca (Della Rocca 1996) that this statement of parallelism involves the mentioned one-to-one correspondence of each mental state with each physical state. Knowing now what many functionalists, among others, believe to be the case, it is not surprising that thus understood, parallelism would not have much interesting to offer.

However, the antirealist stance we have adopted can lead us to a different reading of Spinoza's statement. Namely, what I now want to propose is that when Spinoza claims that the order and connection of the ideas is the same as the order and connection of things, he believes the correspondence is not individual (one mental state tied to one physical state, to state it in more contemporary terms), but holistic – meaning that the way mental phenomena relate amongst themselves, and create a specific web of beliefs, so to speak, corresponds, or is in character (and not the number) the same as the way physical phenomena are connected. This reading is supported by the way we understood relations of our intellect to the attributes in the sense that when we observe the things under the attribute of thought, we input a specific cognitive structure which depends on the way our intellect functions. The same goes for when we observe the things under the attribute of extension. In a way, what is common to them is the mode of our cognition which pertains to both. Thus, we need not commit to more than the claim that structurally the realm of mental phenomena functions in the same way that the realm of physical phenomena does.¹³ Such a view then is quite natural to maintain if we adopt the stance described as an antirealist double-aspect theory. If we reformulate it in the vein of Strawson's (Strawson 1959) theory of persons, of which we will say some more in the final section, we could claim that in the case of the mind-body relations what we do is apply mental or physical predicates where appropriate and that the way in which we apply them needs to be always consistent, and thus correspond structurally. What is, then, the upshot of these considerations?

First, if we adopt the antirealist, or constructivist position regarding Spinoza, it is clear that the parallelism in question need not be metaphysical, but epistemological and explanatory. In other words, when we are talking about the 'order of ideas' and the 'order of things', we can comfortably agree with Spinoza that it is indeed about two different sets of things, but, and here is the difference, only in so far as it concerns our explanatory stance. In other words, we can track

13 We can remember here the Davidson's (Davidson 1980) view of the relation between the mental and the physical.

the chain of our ideas from a single idea, and the chain of our physical states from a single physical state, and the two will never cross each other's paths in terms of providing an explanation. In that sense, we indeed have a parallelism.

On the other hand, Spinoza himself claims that the mind starts to know itself only after perceiving the body that the mind pertains to. Now, does this mean the body is the cause of the mind, speaking in his terms? Initially, and upon looking at the E2P5, we can see that he thinks the 'ideas both of the attributes of God and of particular things do not own as their efficient cause their objects or the things perceive'. Here, it seems, there is clearly a case for the full-blooded metaphysical parallelism. An idea is the cause of an idea and the body is the cause of another body, and it cannot be any other way, because both stem from God. However, few propositions later, E2P13, we see that Spinoza says the content of an idea may be a body and the body alone. That is, we can only start thinking upon considering something that is of a different, physical nature, as it is the main object of thought.

What I want to claim is that Spinoza makes a crucial and very helpful difference between causation and content. What causes one thing need not be its sole content, and vice versa. That said, and with our constructivist thesis in place, we can further explain what a mental holism, and a physical holism in this respect mean. The two can interact in a way in which, say, feeling pain may lead me to have very unpleasant thoughts. However, the lack of the causation between the two is not at all a problem, but an advantage. The clearest case for such a contention, I think, comes from the very case of being in pain.

In Grahek (Grahek 2002), there is an account of many cases where people whose bodies are in pain in fact do not have that pain or unpleasantness as a content of their thought. In fact, something quite different occurs. A person can be in pain without being bothered at all by it, and without having it as content of any of these thoughts. That said, we can claim that the so-called causation of the two types of states is only a confusing way to say that most of the time, though not always, and, as we can see, not necessarily, what happens in our body is the content of our thoughts, but there is a causation lacking. In saying that, we may speak of our intuitive causal observations merely as the two sets of phenomena being associated incorrectly, much in the same way Hume thought that because of a constant interaction we perceive a cause where there is not any. Regardless of whether Hume is right or not, I think such a reminder can serve as a model for what is essentially a correct statement regarding the mind-body relation.

At the same time, this may prevent the materialist objection that because of the causation what really exists are only physical processes, and on the other hand the often disputed plausibility of statements that the causation exists, but works in only a limited way.

5.

Having shown the way in which both incrementalism and parallelism can be explained away or be interpreted as more intuitive than usually thought,

we have one task remaining in our attempt to formulate a spinozistic double-aspect theory of mind in a way that will look more plausible than is usually the case. I will now try to give an outline of how such a theory can be explained in more contemporary terminology. Here we can claim, introducing a concept of a 'person' which Strawson, another double-aspect theorist¹⁴, suggested (Strawson 1959, p. 87–117), that because we are all essentially persons, having necessarily both sets of phenomena, physical processes and mental states, within us, we can claim that there is a close relation between the two. That said, we may plausibly state that our minds necessarily need to form statements about our bodies, and about each of the states perceived in it, though such a relation need not be that of a cause. One way in which we may claim such a thing is plausible, is the existence of the cases, as it were, described in Grahek, in which there really is no causation between physical processes and mental contents.

How can, then, the concept of persons help strengthen the double-aspect theory. Without at least some revision, it is difficult to make Spinoza's explicit statements, taken at face value, closer to our metaphysical intuitions, or to our terminology. In that respect, every interpretation we make needs to be in a way a corrective. Simply put, Spinoza operated with a set of terms whose contents were not adequate for what he was trying to express. Due to the spatial limit, I cannot discuss at length just where he was possibly misled by precisely the terms he was trying to define. However, having in mind the subsequent development in philosophy, I think we may try to explain and clarify what Spinoza wanted to say, and also in some places try to improve his theory starting from his own assumptions, which is what I tried to do. Also, we may try to replace some of his basic terms with some that are, as it were, more contemporary. In that sense, I think that concept of 'persons' is indeed adequate for what Spinoza tried to say about minds and bodies, and their relation. Moreover, there is a basic assumption, in both Spinoza and Strawson (Strawson 1959, p.104) that each human being has the same set of capabilities and for each of us there is the same set of phenomena ascribable to ourselves. It is precisely the sense in which we may talk of subjective generality, mentioned above. Now, where Spinoza spoke about attributes, Strawson speaks of different types of predicates. Just like Spinoza thought that the primary content of our minds are our bodily states, as I have noted above, Strawson speaks of the logical primacy of predicates ascribed to our physical, or as he calls it, corporeal states.

Put in this way, the statements made by Strawson are seemingly similar to Spinoza's. Also, as it seems to me, the concept of a person, serving as a primitive concept which adequately describes what human beings are, is an explanatory tool, not necessarily a metaphysical entity.

To briefly summarize, a Spinozistic double-aspect theory claims that, in the background of the primitive concept of a person, there are two sets of phenomena occurring, which are closely tied, but causally unrelated to each other. Recalling the duck-rabbit analogy, both the duck-predicates and the

14 As noted by, for example, Stephen Priest (Priest 1991, p. 156).

rabbit-predicates are what can logically be ascribed to that one shape we see as underlying both aspects. To say that it is actually a duck, or a rabbit, would mean that such a shape is not described in a complete way. To say that the duck-predicates can be reduced to the rabbit-predicates, or vice versa would take away from the explanatory force of either of the two. Now, moreover, we are left without any reason for doing it if we recall the fact that we cannot know for certain if any of the two is actually a primitive one, and that, moreover, quite possible neither of the two is.

In conclusion, this reading amounts to much more intuitive understanding of the relation between the physical and the mental. With this, however, we still haven't made an argument as to why we should think of a spinozistic double-aspect theory as the most plausible theory of the mind, but only as to why we shouldn't dismiss it.

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