CHAPTER NINE

Descartes and Spinoza

TWO APPROACHES TO EMBODIMENT

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1. Introduction

Descartes[1] (1596–1650) and Spinoza (1632–1677) each gave us interesting and influential approaches to answering what I'll call "embodiment question": what is the relationship between a mind and its body—the one that it seems to inhabit, feel, control or otherwise be uniquely involved with?[2] In Spinoza we find (at least) three different answers, the ingenuity of all of which is attested to by their long reception in the philosophical tradition. Descartes was an important influence on Spinoza, but on many others, too, ushering in the era of the "mind-body

1 I am grateful to Colin Chamberlain, Michael Della Rocca, Keota Fields, Kristin Primus, and Alison Simmons for discussion, and also to the other contributors to this volume.

2 This question is broader than one than one about the *constitutive* or *essential* relationship between a mind and its body.

problem" in the form that many philosophers still grapple with. Here, I'll by no means attempt a comprehensive treatment of their contributions. Instead I will try to uncover an unnoticed similarity between the two, and apply it to understanding the coherence of Spinoza's account of embodiment. I'll argue that Descartes and Spinoza both approach the embodiment question in two different ways: one approach starts with some metaphysical commitments about the kinds of entities, properties, and interactions there are in the world, and the other starts by attending to the experience of an embodied subject. The "third-personal" or "metaphysical" approach and the "first-personal" approach lead each to two different conclusions, which neither Descartes nor Spinoza is able fully to merge. In Section 2 I'll show this for Descartes, who makes the tension between these approaches relatively explicit. Then I'll go on in Section 3 to show this for Spinoza, who does not.

2. Descartes

As the previous contributions to this volume attest, up until around the time of Descartes, the animate soul plays an ineliminable role in accounts of embodiment. By "soul" I mean a single entity that performs (at least) three different kinds of functions: it is responsible for rational thought; for informing a body or actualizing it as an organic body; and for explaining motion, sensation, and other organic functions of living creatures. It is an egregious but useful oversimplification to say that Descartes is responsible for popularizing a philosophical research program that eschews appeals to this kind of entity.[3] Instead, Descartes argues that we can explain all of the same physical, organic, and human

3 Not to say that Descartes does not invoke substantial forms, even to explain the relationship of the mental to the body; see, for example, CMK 207-208/AT III 505–506, CSM I 279/AT XI 315, CSMK 278–279/AT IV 344–346, see Paul Hoffman, "The Unity of Descartes's Man," *Philosophical Review* 95 (1986): 339–370. Descartes also continues to use the word "soul," sometimes meaning "mind" and sometimes intending something closer to the scholastic sense.

phenomena by functions that can be cleanly sorted into either mental or physical functions. An animal is a physical machine, and so is a human in respect of the functions that it shares with animals, so that "it is not necessary to conceive of this machine as having any vegetative or sensitive soul or other principle of movement and life."[4] Human mental life can be explained by the mind, whose essence is thought, where this includes "everything that is within us in such a way that we are immediately aware of it."[5] That includes not only rational thought, which was specific to the intellectual part of the Aristotelian Scholastic soul, but also conscious sense experience and imagination.

A human being involves a mind and a body, each of which is a substance distinct from and independent of the other.[6] According to Descartes, every substance has one and only one principal attribute or property "which constitutes its essence, and to which all its other properties are referred."[7] Extension is the principal attribute of any body and thought of any mind. To the metaphysical claim that all the properties of a substance depend upon one of these primary attributes, Descartes adds the epistemic claim that all the properties of a substance must be "understood through" their primary attribute and that they are "unintelligible when referred to one another."[8] This suggests some affinity with Descartes's claim in correspondence that extension and thought are also "primitive notions," which are "as it were the patterns on the basis of which we form all our other conceptions" and "each of which can be understood only through itself."[9]

How are this mind and this body related to one another? Descartes struggled with this question, and there are many illuminating and

4 CSM I 108/AT XI 315.

5 CSM II 113/AT VII 160.

6 CSM II 54/AT VII 78; CSM I, 213/AT VIIIA 29.

7 CSM I 210/AT VIIIA 23.

8 See also CSM I 299/AT XI 351: "neither is contained in the concept of the other."

9 CSMK 218/AT IV 665.

contrasting accounts of this struggle and its results.[10] Here, I'll focus on spotlighting two distinct approaches to the question that led Descartes to two different answers, and show that Descartes himself saw them as distinct.

The first approach begins with the metaphysical picture outlined in the last few paragraphs. Descartes thinks that the world is populated by finite substances, some of them thinking and some of them extended.[11] He also argues that every physical event can be explained in terms of the laws of motion, by an efficient cause. But physical and mental events are correlated in such a way that they seem to cause one another: an apple causes me to have a certain perceptual experience, and the desire that forms on the basis of that experience causes me to reach for it. But how does a mental event cause a physical event, and vice versa? For one thing, physical events are completely explained in terms of physical laws, leaving no causal role for mental events. What is more, the fundamentally different natures of minds and bodies make it difficult to see how they can influence one another. This problem is put to Descartes by Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, whose correspondence with Descartes contains some of Descartes's most sustained discussion of the mind-body union, offered in response to her probing questions. Elisabeth raises the problem of their fundamental dissimilarity for minds and bodies specifically: a mind, for example, is not extended and cannot make contact with a body, which properties seem to be required in something that acts on a body (Elisabeth to Descartes, 6 May 1643). But the problem can be generalized to any properties of any two substances with different attributes. If their properties are

10 For differing accounts of Descartes's account of the mind-body union, see John Cottingham, "Cartesian Trialism," *Mind* 94, no. 374 (1985): 218–230; Hoffman, "The Unity of Descartes's Man"; Daisie Radner "Descartes's Notion of the Union of Mind and Body," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9, no. 2 (1971): 159–170; Rozemond, *Descartes's Dualism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Wilson, "Cartesian Dualism."

11 There's an argument to be made that Descartes thinks there is only one extended substance and that this bears on the relationship of the mind and the body; see CSM II 9/AT VII 13.

"unintelligible when referred" to one another, in virtue of what do the substances causally interact? Descartes does not put the problem quite this way, but Frans Burman reports Descartes to claim that "it is a common axiom and a true one that the effect is like the cause."[12]

This cluster of problems, which I'll just refer to as "the interaction problem," is taken up in a variety of ways by Descartes's followers and opponents like Malebranche, Gassendi, Arnauld, Elisabeth, and, of course, Spinoza. But Descartes himself is not as concerned with this problem as this legacy might suggest. His most consistent response is that the mind and the body *do* causally interact, and this assumption is evident in his explanations of a variety of psychophysical phenomena. His argument for it is simply that interattribute interaction happens, and that the arguments against it don't successfully show that it cannot. Questions about the possibility of interaction

> arise simply from a supposition that is false and cannot in any way be proved, namely that, if the soul and the body are two substances whose nature is different, this prevents them from being able to act on each other. [13]

Descartes's claim that minds and bodies can interact provides him with one answer to the embodiment question: a mind is related to its body just by interacting with it, albeit more immediately than it interacts with other bodies. In the *Passions of the Soul*, the *Treatise on Man*, and the *Description of the Human Body* Descartes develops the story of this interaction in some detail: there are physical events outside the body that cause physical events inside the body, which cause events in

12 CSMK 339/AT V 154. Descartes doesn't write anything quite so explicit, but he does writes things like this: "There can be nothing in an effect which was not previously present in the cause" (CSMK 192). For a recent treatment of Descartes on causation and likeness, see Gorham, "Causation and Similarity in Descartes," in *New Essays on the Rationalists*, eds. Rocco Gennaro and Charles Huenemann, 296–308. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

13 CSM II 275/AT IXA 213.

the mind, which in turn cause events in the body. Although the soul can act on and be acted on by all parts of the body, its "principal seat" is in what Descartes identified as the pineal gland,[14] which is especially sensitive to the volitions of the soul and to the movements of the body's animal spirits.

Descartes does not deny that the model of efficient causation derived from body-body interaction is an awkward fit for mind-body and body-mind causation; for example, he warns against "confus[ing] the notion of the power with which the soul acts on the body with the power with which one body acts on another."[15] We should not expect that the mutual influence between mind and body conforms perfectly to this model. Nonetheless, when Descartes explains sensation and action by claiming in the *Passions* and the *Treatise* that the "most proximate cause of the passions of the soul is simply the agitation by which the spirits move the little gland in the middle of the brain"[16] he assumes that mind-body influence shares some fundamental features of body-body interaction. For example, a body event must follow on a mind event (or vice versa) immediately in time and the two events must take place at the same point in space. Also, at the beginning of the *Passions*, Descartes posits that "what is a passion in the soul is usually an action in the body" in light of the principle that "what is a passion with regard to one subject is always an action in some other regard."[17] This principle relies on treating the body and mind as distinct subjects involved in a single interaction rather than a united subject involved in joint action, so that whenever the mind and body are involved with one another, one is the agent, and the other is the patient.

In contrast, Descartes tells Elisabeth it is a fundamental fact that the mind, "being united to the body . . . can act and be acted upon

14 CSM I 340–341/AT XI 352–354.

15 CSM II 275/AT IXA 213.

16 CSM I 380/AT XI 439.

17 CSM I 328/AT XI 328.

along with it."[18] This provides the occasion for a different story about the relationship of the body and mind, in which sensations, emotions, imaginations, and volitions involve, not the action of one and the passion of the other, but their joint action and passion. And indeed, in many contexts, Descartes stresses not the distinction between the mind and the body, but their union.

The union approach takes as axioms not some claims about substances, attribute, and interactions, but claims about the experience of any embodied subject. To Elisabeth, Descartes writes that "people who . . . use only their senses have no doubt that the soul moves the body and the body acts on the soul. They regard both of them as a single thing, that is to say, they conceive their union."[19] And in the Sixth Meditation, Descartes takes pains to emphasize that the special quality of his sensations indicates to him that the body in which he feels those sensations "more than any other, belong[s] to [him]" and can never be separated from him.[20] When Descartes is in this mood, he will write that the mind and body are "substantially " or "essentially" united,[21] or that they form an *ens* per se[22] or a "real union,"[23] and that sensory ideas like pain and heat "arise from [the soul's] union, and, as it were, intermingling with the body."[24] It's worth noting that "substantial union" in the Scholastic context refers to the kind of union that a form has with matter; this is just one place where Descartes's break with Scholastic explanations in terms of the animate soul is not entirely clean.[25]

18 CSMK 218/AT III 665.

19 CSMK 227/AT III 692.

20 CSM II 52/AT VII 76.

21 CSMK 209/AT III 508.

22 CSMK 200/AT III 460.

23 CSMK 206/AT III 493.

24 CSMK 190/AT III 425.

25 For a much more detailed account of the relationship between Descartes's theory of embodiment and Scholastic views, see Rozemond, *Descartes's Dualism*.

In his exchange with Elisabeth, Descartes explicitly treats these as two different perspectives, approaches, or emphases. Descartes claims that there are actually three primitive notions: besides thought and extension, there is a third notion of the union of the soul and the body, "on which depends our notion of the soul's power to move the body, and the body's power to act on the soul and cause its sensations and passions."[26] It is a little mysterious how this notion can be a notion of a union of mind and body as such, since it is primitive and so it cannot be understood in terms of those concepts. But in any case, while the primitive notions of thought and extension can each be conceived clearly "by the pure intellect" (and extension by the imagination as well)

> what belongs to the union of the soul and the body is known only obscurely by the intellect along or even by the intellect aided by the imagination, but it is known very clearly by the senses.[27]

Descartes does not explain what it means to know something by the senses, and especially to know it clearly by the senses. But he continues on to stress the difference between these two manners of conceiving. The essence of thought is revealed to us by "metaphysical thoughts" and the nature of body by mathematics. But metaphysics will actually prevent us from learning about the union; instead we learn about it through "the ordinary course of life and conversation, and abstention from meditation."[28] In fact Descartes tells Elisabeth that she can think about the distinction between the mind and the body only in spite of having conceived their union, since

> it does not seem to me that the human mind is capable of forming a very distinct conception of both the distinction between the soul

26 CSMK 218/AT III 665.

27 CSMK 227/AT III 691.

28 CSMK 228/AT III 694.

> and the body and their union; for to do this it is necessary to conceive them as a single thing and at the same time to conceive them as two things, and this is absurd.[29]

Descartes thinks that nothing about our "metaphysical meditations" will tell us that there is any special relationship between a mind and a particular body. When he confines himself to metaphysics, Descartes treats the relationship between the mind and its body as simply an instance of interaction, on the model of efficient causation derived from bodies. But when we attend to the primitive notion of the union that embodied experience provides us, we see that such a model is inadequate.[30] Descartes doesn't necessarily contradict himself here—although he will have to address those claims, seemingly in tension, that the mind is always agentive when the body is patient and also that the mind and body can act together. But he suggests in both cases that he has not provided, should not be expected to provide, and perhaps cannot provide an exact mechanism or account either of the interaction or of the union.[31] Leaving this philosophical black box in both accounts means that Descartes can treat these as two ways of approach an ultimately unresolved, and perhaps unresolvable, problem. [32] But it also means that there is no way for us to know that the body that the first-person account picks out is the same body as the medical or

29 CSMK 227–228/AT III 695.

30 There is admittedly an important place for "first-person" considerations in Descartes's identification of the essence of mind as conscious thought, in his claim that thought is indivisible, and in his argument for the real distinction, but I'm focusing here on such considerations with respect to claims about embodiment specifically.

31 CSM II 275/AT IXA 213.

32 In recent work, Alison Simmons has also emphasized that "we do not have a clear and distinct intellectual idea of the mind-body union" but that "our access to our humanity is not through the intellect but through the senses." Simmons's paper offers a much more detailed treatment of Descartes's arguments for these claims as well as of their implications, including a discussion of the special role of the internal senses, a defense of the epistemic value of clear sensory knowledge, and a phenomenological analysis of our experience of embodiment. Simmons, "Mind-Body Union"

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biological body of the *Treatise on Man* or the *Description of the Human Body*—the one that our souls correspond with via our pineal glands.

3. Spinoza

Spinoza makes three claims about the relationship of the mind and the body:

(1) **Parallelism**: the mind relates to other minds in the same way that the body relates to other bodies
(2) **Idea-of**: the mind is the idea of the body; or, the body is the object [*objectum*] of the mind.
(3) **One and the same**: the mind and the body are "one and the same thing, understood in two different ways" (E 2p7s).

I am going to ignore (3).[33] It is a question well beyond the scope of this paper what Spinoza thinks makes two things "one and the same thing." The most natural interpretation is that it means that the mind and the body are numerically identical. If Spinoza does think that, what can we learn about the embodiment question?

Ultimately, I think, not much. Presumably an important part of what we are after when we ask the embodiment question is an understanding of the properties and functions of the mind and the body, and of how the properties and functions of one relate to the properties and functions of the other. But if Spinoza thinks the mind and body are identical, then he denies the indiscernibility of identicals for many of the properties and functions you might be interested in knowing about. For example, just because a body is in a certain place or has a certain speed doesn't mean that the mind that is identical to it does, and just because the mind can

33 For a recent treatment of (3), see Colin Marshall, "The Mind and the Body as 'One and the Same Thing' in Spinoza," in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17, no. 5 (2009): 897–919.

represent bodies doesn't mean that the body that is identical to it can. What that means is that the claim that the mind and the body are identical just does not teach us very much about the nature of the mind and the body, and it doesn't tell us anything further about the nature of their relationship.[34] And indeed, Spinoza never really uses it to establish anything about the mind and the body—with one exception, which I'll mention later.

Focusing on (1) and (2) then, I'll try to show that Spinoza's arguments for these two claims are entirely independent of one another, starting with their initial premises. Unlike Descartes, however, Spinoza makes no suggestion that these two accounts of embodiment result from two different approaches; instead, he takes them to be compatible and even runs them together as equivalent.[35]

Spinoza follows Descartes in rejecting the existence of animate souls:

> . . . those three souls they attribute to plants, the lower, animals, and men are only fictions, for we have shown that there is nothing in matter but mechanical constructions and operations.[36]

We need not posit any special stuff beyond the physical to explain animal behavior, because it can be explained in terms of the structure and motion of the physical stuff we already have:

> no one has yet determined what the Body can do (i.e., experience has not yet taught anyone what the Body can do from the laws of

34 In Section 2 of "Points of View," Della Rocca makes a similar point, stressing in particular that the fact that my mind and my body are identical does not explain why my mind is "peculiarly sensitive to the goings-on in that body."

35 See Ursula Renz, "Finite Subjects in the Ethics: Spinoza on Indexical Knowledge, the First Person and the Individuality of Human Minds," in *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, edited by Michael Della Rocca (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). She defends the intriguing suggestion that while Spinoza likely has Descartes in mind when he articulates his theory of the mind-body union, he is likely also arguing against the Averroist claim that there is a single intellect for all humanity.

36 KV II III, G I 259/C 325.

> nature alone, insofar as nature is only considered to be corporeal) . . . For no one has yet come to know the structure of the Body so accurately that he could explain all its functions—not to mention that many things are observed in the lower Animals that far surpass human ingenuity, and that sleepwalkers do a great many things in their sleep that they would not dare to awake. This shows well enough that the Body itself, simply from the laws of its own nature, can do many things which its Mind wonders at.[37]

Like Descartes, Spinoza claims that extension and thought are different attributes, each of which must be conceived through itself and not through the other, and each of which constitutes the essence of a substance.[38] But Spinoza writes that Descartes is wrong to infer from this that they are two independent substances.[39] Spinoza goes on to prove that they are in fact attributes of the same substance, God or nature,[40] which, moreover, has not just these two but infinite attributes.[41] A mind is a mode of substance conceived under the attribute of thought, and a body is a mode of substance conceived under the attribute of extension.

Spinoza proves explicitly that since extension and thought, or any two modes of different attributes, have nothing in common and cannot be conceived through one another, they cannot causally interact.[42] Spinoza marvels at what he considers the absurdity of Cartesian interactionism (as he understands it): "I would hardly have believed it had been propounded by so great a man, had it not been so subtle . . . [it is] a hypothesis more occult than any occult quality" (5 Preface).

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37 E 3p2s/C 495/G II 142.
38 E 1p10s/C 416/G II 52.
39 E 1p10s/C 416/G II 52.
40 E 2p1–2/C 448-449/G II 86.
41 E 1p11/C 417/G II 52.
42 E 1p3/C 410-411/G II 47.

How does Spinoza explain correlations between mind events and body events, then? Spinoza claims at E 3p2 that "the body cannot determine the mind to thinking, and the mind cannot determine the body to motion, to rest, or to anything else (if there is anything else)." The proof appeals to E 2p7s, which I'll quote here, along E 2p7 and its demonstration and corollary:

> 2P7: The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.
>
> 2p7. demonstration: This is clear from 1a4. For the idea of each thing caused depend on the knowledge of the caused of which is is the effect.
>
> 2p7, corrolary.: From this it follows that God's actual power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting (i.e., whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection.)
>
> Schol.: . . . the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is not comprehended under this attribute, now under that. So also a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways . . . Therefore, *whenever we conceive nature under the attribute of Extension, or under the attribute of Thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find one and the same order, or one and the same connection of causes, i.e. that the same things follow one another.*

Note that E 2p7 and E 2p7s (in bold) are not the same. E 2p7 says that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" while E 2p7s says that we can find the same causal order and connection in any attribute. The proof of E 2p7 invokes E 1a4, which relates ideas to what they are of, while the proof of E 2p7s only shows that the causal order in all the attributes is the same, and does not mention what each idea is of. And as Yitzhak Melamed has argued

at length in print, where he distinguishes carefully between E 2p7 and E 2p7s, Spinoza uses the two differently throughout the *Ethics*.[43]

Is E 2p7s proven from E 2p7? Spinoza does not suggest that it is. Instead, he starts by emphasizing that the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, comprehended under two different attributes. Therefore, he continues, a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, expressed in two ways. Then he concludes that the order and connection of causes is the same under all the attributes. This is the place that I mentioned earlier, where Spinoza seems to use mode identity to prove something important—namely, that the causal order is the same among the attributes.

I don't know if this is the proof that Spinoza had in mind. But we face the same issue here that emboldened me to dismiss identity above. Spinoza does not tell us why mode identity follows from substance identity. (For example, two different modes of thought are modes of the same substance, but that does not mean that they are identical modes.) And he does not tell us why identity of causal order follows from mode identity. (This last one might seem obvious, but Spinoza seems precisely to deny that we can validly infer from the identity of two modes that they share all of their causal properties.) So there is only so much we can learn from the fact—if it is one—that Spinoza thinks that the proof that the causal structural of the attributes is the same relies on mode identity.

Moreover, there is another plausible reconstruction of the proof that relies on considerations of the necessity that attends to God's power. Spinoza establishes in Part I that the things that proceed from God "could have been produced in no other way and in no other order than they have been produced." The thought is that if this order is necessary, then it must be the same in any attribute. This version is supported by

43 Yitzhak Melamed, "Spinoza's Metaphysics of Thought: Parallelisms and the Multifaceted Structure of Ideas." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 86, no. 3 (2013): 636–683.

an interesting claim that Spinoza makes even before E 2p7. E 2p6 establishes that a mode follows from God only insofar as he is considered under the attribute of that mode, and its corollary infers from this that

> the objects of ideas follow and are inferred from their attributes in the same way and by the same necessity as that with which we have shown ideas to follow from the attribute of Thought.

This is offered as an explanation of the correlation between God's ideas and created things—an alternative to the claim that God's ideas are prior to the things that they are of. The explanation seems to be that ideas and things follow "in the same way and by the same necessity"—something very reminiscent of the claim that they follow with the same order.[44]

What I want to stress here is just that the proof of E 2p7s does not depend on E 2p7, and so it tells us nothing about whether a given idea's parallel body is what it is of. E 2p7s either depends on claims about the identity of modes, or it is motivated by propositions like E 1p16 and E 1p29, which establish the necessity of what follows from God's essence, considered under any attribute. In either case, the proof of E 2p7s is based on considerations about God in Part I of the *Ethics*, and certainly not on any claims about human sense experience or other kinds of mental representation. Meanwhile, 2p7's proof relies exclusively on E 1a4:

> The cognition of an effect depends upon, and involves, the cognition of its cause.

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44 In fact, the only place where Spinoza uses E 2p6c is when he shows at E 5p1 that thoughts and bodily affections are ordered and connected in the same way. There he gives separate proofs for the claim that the thoughts are connected like body affections and the claim that body affections are connected like thoughts. He appeals to E 2p7 for both the mind-body and body-mind direction, but he adds an appeal to 2p6c for the mind-body direction. I submit that Spinoza's appeal to E 2p7 for both is carelessness on Spinoza's part—a carelessness that arises from his desire to treat E 2p7 and E 2p7s as interchangable. But his inclusion of E 2p6c for the mind-body direction only suggests that he knows very well indeed that they are distinct.

> This (arguably[45]) *does* concern the relationship between an idea and what it is *of*.

Let's now look at the argument for (1): that the mind and its body are parallel modes, or are "ordered and connected" in the same way with the other modes of their respective attributes. This is actually much less obvious than you might expect given how large it looms in the popular conception of Spinoza's system. The strongest evidence that Spinoza accepts it is E 3p2s. There, after explaining that the mind cannot determine the body and vice versa, Spinoza writes we can understand how this could be true

> from what is said in 2p7s, viz., that the Mind and the Body are one and the same thing, which is conceived now under the attribute of Thought, now under the attribute of Extension. The result is that the order, or connection, of things is one, whether nature is conceived under this attribute or that; hence the order of actions and passions of our Body is, by nature, at one with the order of actions and passions of the Mind (E 3p2s).

So it looks from this like the mind and body are parallel in the sense that E 2p7s establishes, not (just) in the sense that E 2p7 establishes. And as we saw, E 2p7s derives from some claims about the necessity of God's essence and what follows from it, not from an appeal to first-person data.

The juxtaposition of 3p2s with Spinoza's screed against interactionism suggests that Spinoza is thinking of parallelism as a solution to the interaction problem. Compare Spinoza's claim that the mind and

45 Arguably, because one way to read "the idea of an effect depends upon, and involves, the idea of its cause," which Spinoza takes as equivalent to E 1a4, is just as saying that the idea that corresponds to a thing is caused by the idea that corresponds to that thing's cause. That is, it is possible to read E 1a4 without representational import.

body are parallel with Descartes's treatment of the mind and body as interacting substances. Both accounts of embodiment start with the metaphysical claims that the mind and the body are conceived under different attributes. Both are aimed at explaining the appearance of mind-body interaction in general. Both explain it in terms of a position about interattribute interaction in general. And finally, both apply this very general account of interattribute interaction to explaining the relationship of the mind to its body.

But just like Descartes, Spinoza has another answer to the embodiment question: what I called above the "idea-of" account. He asserts it at E 2p13:

> The object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and nothing else.

Spinoza claims in the scholium that from E 2p13 and its corollary, "we understand not only that the human mind is united to the body, but also what should be understood by the union of mind and body." This is the only place in the Ethics that Spinoza mentions a union of the mind and body.

The proof of E 2p13 is very complicated and involves many propositions, themselves contentious, so I can only make a claim here and go a little way toward justifying it. Also for the sake of space, I'm going to ignore the negative claim in 2p13, that the object of the human mind is nothing in addition to the body, and focus on the positive one, that the object of the mind is the body.

The positive claim starts with E 2a4:

> We feel that a certain body is affected in many ways.

Like Descartes's own union account, Spinoza's starts with some first-person premises. These premises concern, in particular, the felt quality of sensations—or, in Spinoza's terms, ideas of affections, where

affections are just states of the body arising from its interaction with other bodies. The indexicality of "a certain" body is preserved all the way through 2p13: there is no way of characterizing your body other than as *that* one—the one that you feel.[46]

Now I'd like to show, very briefly, that the argument from 2a4 to 2p13 is independent of the argument for the parallelism account of embodiment.

The proof of the positive claim—that my mind is the idea of my body—is this, in short:

1. I feel the affections of a certain body (E 2a4).
2. If my mind were not the idea of my body, I would not feel the affections of that body (E 2p9c and E 2p11c).
3. Therefore, my mind is the idea of my body (1 and 2).

Let's take a look at (2). E 2p9c says that the idea of an affection of some body is in God "only insofar as" the idea of that body is in God. But what does this mean—"only insofar as"—this phrase that is used for the first time in this context at 2p9c? (Spinoza uses it in many other, equally vexing, contexts.) We can try to answer this by looking at the meaning that is licensed by E 2p9 and E 2p9c. E 2p9 says that God is the cause of the (finite) idea of something only considered as affected by another (finite) idea. Spinoza justifies this by appealing to E 1p28, which is the claim that every finite thing has a finite cause. So when Spinoza says that God is the cause of an idea only insofar as he is modified (or "affected") in a certain way, his appeal to E 1p28 suggests that it's because a finite idea needs a finite cause. If that's right, then to say that one idea is caused by God "only insofar as" God has another idea

46 Renz ("Finite Subjects") also stresses that 2a2–4 involve the subjective perspective, and that although Spinoza does not develop the first-person perspective, these axioms have "crucial argumentative functions in the *Ethics*."

as a mode just means that one idea is caused by God only if God has another mode to cause it. So the meaning of "only insofar as" licensed by E 2p9 is analogous to this: a window breaks only insofar as a stone is thrown.

Note that this should be true for all the partial causes of an event: a window breaks only insofar as a stone is thrown, and the glass is fragile, and so on. Now Spinoza thinks that an idea of any affection is caused both by my body as well as by the external thing affecting my body.[47] That means that God should be the cause of that idea only insofar as God is modified by my body and God is modified by the external body. Spinoza goes on at E 2p7c to claim that the idea of an affection of a thing is in God only insofar as God has the idea of that thing. But note that given how Spinoza understands "only insofar as" in E 2p7, this means that the idea of an affection of a thing is in God only insofar as God has the idea of all of its partial causes.

Remember that Spinoza needs to show (2), that if my mind weren't the idea of my body, then I wouldn't feel the affections that I do. But given how I've read E 2p7c, it does not distinguish in any way between my body and the external cause.

Instead, a lot of the work of proving E 2p13 is done by E 2p11c, which is the claim that for me to have[48] an idea of a something (or, for the ideas of the affections of something to be in my mind) is just for God to have an idea of that thing insofar as he constitutes my mind. Spinoza simply provides no proof of this, no less a proof that appeals

47 E 2p16/C 463/G II 104. [AU and ED: Have retained this slash system where it occurs to be consistent with author(s) style.]

48 For this to be true, "have" must be used here with a sense that applies only to the special way that we can be said to have the ideas of our bodily affections, and not in a sense, that might be otherwise natural, in which we can be said to have the ideas of affections of other bodies. At the same time, as I'll argue in the coming paragraphs, there is a sense in which Spinoza wants to explain our ideas of sensations in our own body and our ideas of other things in the same terms. Compare this with Descartes's, who provides a relatively careful phenomenological analysis of the difference between how I feel sensations in my body and how I represent properties and changes in other bodies (e.g., CSM II, 56/AT VII 81; CSMK, 190/AT III 424).

to parallelism. He does not suggest a proof from 2p11, which is the claim that the human mind is an idea of something that exists. But in any case, I cannot see that the proof of 2p11 sheds any light, either, on what are Spinoza's reasons for thinking that this is the only explanation of our sensations.

This should not be too surprising, since 2p11c is Spinoza's attempt to move from a claim about our awareness of certain sensations to a metaphysical claim about what sort of entities my mind and its ideas are. To do this requires solving an incredibly deep, difficult, and perennial problem: what metaphysical story underlies felt mental experience, including our experience of our own bodies, and the world through our own bodies? Spinoza's answer is that my feeling of a certain affection is an idea in God insofar as God constitutes the essence of my mind, but since his attempt to justify this claim comes up short, we have to look elsewhere to understand why Spinoza thinks that it is true.

Some of the intuition behind Spinoza's adoption of the "idea-of" account of embodiment is illuminated by taking a look at Spinoza's earlier work. There the parallelism account hasn't emerged yet, and a somewhat different "idea-of" account makes Spinoza's intentions in adopting it a little more explicit.

In the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, one of his earliest works, Spinoza writes:

> after we clearly perceive that we feel such a body, and no other, then, I say, we infer clearly that the soul is united to the body, which union is the cause of such a sensation; but we cannot understand absolutely from this what that sensation and union are . . . we understand nothing through that union except the sensation itself; . . . concerning . . . the cause, we understand nothing.[49]

49 TIE 21/C 14/G II 11.

This is almost exactly what Descartes thinks about the union: we perceive that the soul and body are united and that this union is the cause of our sensations. So why does Spinoza change his mind by the Ethics, deciding that we can learn something about the union? Why does he come to believe that the fact that we feel the sensations that we do means that a human mind is the idea of the body?

In the *Short Treatise*, written a few years after the *Treatise*, Spinoza starts by making a Cartesian point. He explains that when we consider the nature of extension or thought alone, we cannot see how it is possible for a mind to intervene in the physical world or a body in the mental world. However, he continues:

> according to what we perceive in ourselves, it can indeed happen that a body which is not moving in one direction comes to move in another direction—e.g., when I stretch out my arm, and thereby bring it about that the spirits, which previously were moving in a different direction, now however have this one . . .

Spinoza is making a point that Descartes makes a few times, including to Elisabeth: when we consider the essences of minds and bodies, we have difficulty in seeing how they can interact. He contrasts this with "what we perceive in ourselves," which forces us to conclude that they do influence one another. But instead of claiming that the union is inscrutable, Spinoza writes that the cause of the union

> is, and can only be, that the soul, being an Idea of this body, is so united with it, that it and this body, so constituted, together make a whole.[50]

There are a couple of important differences between Spinoza's approach to embodiment in the *Short Treatise* and in the *Ethics*.

50 ST II XIX/C 131-132/G I 91.

First, in the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza classifies the object-idea relationship as a kind of dependence, so that the body affects, influences or causes changes in the mind. For example, Spinoza writes that "there is in Nature a body by whose form and actions we are affected, so that we perceive it,"[51] and that "the principal [action of the body on the soul] is that it causes the soul to perceive it, and thereby to perceive other bodies also."[52] Bodies act on the soul by "making themselves known to it as objects,"[53] and the soul is "an idea arising from an object which exists in nature."[54]

Spinoza rejects the idea that this is a dependence relationship in the *Ethics*, for the arguments outlined earlier in this section. Even further, he explicitly denies at E 2p6c that an object causally influences or otherwise explains the idea of it. So while in the *Short Treatise* Spinoza explains mind-body interaction in terms of the idea-object relation, he needs a different explanation in the *Ethics*, and that is where parallelism makes its first appearance.

Furthermore, since there is no parallelism in the *Short Treatise*, there is nothing besides the idea-object relationship anchoring a mind to its body. That means that if I think about something else, my mind literally become the mind of that thing. This is a consequence that Spinoza embraces: for our own sakes, Spinoza argues, we should turn our minds to God, seeking to unite our minds to something incorruptible rather than corruptible:

> if we once some to know God (at least with as clear a knowledge as we have of our body), we must then come to be united with him even more closely than with our body, and be, as it were, released from the body.[55]

51 ST II XIX/C 130/G I 89.
52 ST II XIX/C 133/G I 93.
53 ST II XIX/C 133/G I 93.
54 ST II C 155.
55 ST II XIX/C 133/G I 93.

Spinoza describes this process as being "born again."[56]

Not only is the soul the idea of the body according to the *Short Treatise*, but the soul *loves* the body, since "love is nothing but enjoying a thing and being united with it."[57] This doctrine bears a resemblance to some comments that Descartes makes in an exchange with his friend, the French diplomat Pierre Chanut. Descartes tells Chanut that intellectual or rational love "consists simply in the fact that when our soul perceives some present or absent good . . . it joins itself to it willingly, that is so say, it considers itself and the good in question as forming two parts of a single whole."[58] While both Descartes and Spinoza think that love is naturally inspired in the soul by the body and that the soul and body are brought closer by this love, only Spinoza seems to think of love as *constitutive* of the union:

> Love is a union with an object that our intellect judges to be good and magnificent; and by that we understand a union such what the lover and the loved come to be one and the same thing, or to form a whole together.[59]

The claim that love is constitutive of the union between mind and body drops out of *Ethics,* but a transformed and implicit one takes its place. According to the *Ethics,* "one who loves necessarily strives to have present and preserve the thing he loves,"[60] and the mind "strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the body's power of acting."[61]

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56 ST II XXII/C 140/G I 102

57 ST II V/C 105/G I 62. I am grateful to Colin Chamberlain for pointing out that Descartes, too, claims that the soul loves the body.

58 CSMK 306/AT IV 602.

59 ST II V/C 105/G I 62.

60 E 3p13s/C 502/G II 151.

61 E 3p12/C 502/G II 150.

So one important difference between the *Short Treatise* account and the *Ethics* account is that in the *Short Treatise*, the mind depends on the body in virtue of being the idea of it.

A second important difference between the *Short Treatise* and *Ethics* claims that the mind is the idea of the body is that in the former, Spinoza makes very explicit that this implies that the mind is aware of the body. There has been a lot of interesting work done trying to square Spinoza's claim that the body is the object of the mind with the apparent facts that most of our ideas are about other things and that we don't have ideas of much of what goes on in our bodies. One way to do this is by distinguishing in some way or other between the relationship that my mind has with my body and the relationship that my mind has with other things, with the result that my mind doesn't have anything like the relationship to my body that it has to the things that it represents.[62] And it is true that in the *Ethics* there are many suggestions of such a distinction.[63]

But in the *Short Treatise*, it is clear that Spinoza takes the mind to represent the body in a much more robustly mentalistic sense: for example, he writes that the mind is aware of the body,[64] and that a mind's awareness of other bodies is of the same kind as the awareness of the its own body and derive from it.[65] I think that this suggests that the initial intuition behind the idea-of account of embodiment is that God, understood under the attribute of thought, is characterized by a certain kind of basic awareness or distinctively mental representation,

62 For a variety of approaches to this issue, see Robert Brandom, "Adequacy and the Individuation of Ideas In Spinoza's Ethics," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (1976): 147–162; Margaret Wilson, "Objects, Ideas, and 'Minds':Comments on Spinoza's Theory of Mind," in *Ideas and Mechanism*, ed. Margaret Wilson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 126–140.;" Radner, "Spinoza's Theory of Ideas"; Michael Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

63 I myself think that the most promising way of doing this in the *Ethics* is to restrict the ideas we have to ideas of affections, distinguishing them from ideas that we are constituted by, as suggested by E 2p12.

64 e.g., ST II Pref./C 96/G I 52; ST II XXI/C 139/G I 101.

65 e.g., ST II XIX/C 132/G I 92.

which our ideas inherit. It makes sense to think of this on an analogy with motion in extension: just as the motion of finite bodies can be understood as partaking in God's motion, finite thoughts partake in God's representation. This is much clearer in the *Short Treatise* than in the *Ethics*, where Spinoza is trying to resolve the idea-of picture with parallelism. But I think it is what is behind 2p11c of the *Ethics*—the unproven corollary that Spinoza relies upon to prove that the mind is the idea of the body—and ultimately behind 2p13's claim that the mind is the idea of the body. It is less surprising that Spinoza's two accounts of embodiment are articulated independently when we consider that he held the idea-of account before accepting the parallelism account.

Why does Spinoza add the parallelism account? I am not sure, but it is interesting to note that the attempt to explain mind-body interaction by positing that an idea depends on the body that is its object works nicely as a model for explaining body-mind influence but not so nicely for explaining mind-body influence. It is even more interesting to note that Spinoza spends much more time explaining phenomena, like sensation and imagination, that seem to involve body-mind causation, and he never appeals to parallelism—that is, to E 2p7s—in those cases, instead relying on E 2p12. I think this shows that Spinoza still thinks of the idea-object relation as involving some kind of dependence. In contrast, he only uses E 2p7s three times and rarely makes claims that involve the mind moving the body.

4. Conclusion

I've tried to suggest that despite Spinoza's desire that they be compatible and even identical, his two accounts of embodiment derive from very different considerations. It turns out that Descartes, before Spinoza, develops two similarly distinct accounts of embodiment, but does so more explicitly. Both Descartes and Spinoza offer one account of embodiment that is aimed at addressing the apparent causal interaction of minds and bodies, and one that addresses the special quality of

the relationship that a mind has with its particular body. Both start, in the former case, with a set of metaphysical commitments about the kinds of things, properties and interactions there are in the world, and in the latter case with the fact and subjective quality of embodied experience, especially sensation. In trying to square these two approaches, both Descartes and Spinoza are attempting to answer a deep, difficult and perennial question: what metaphysics gives an account of our mental experiences, especially the experience that we have of our bodies and the world through our bodies?

While Descartes acknowledges that squaring these two approaches is difficult and maybe even impossible, Spinoza does not. But there remains to be undertaken a more detailed analysis of how Spinoza explains away individual cases of apparent psycho-physical interaction to see how deeply these two approaches are intertwined and whether he can indeed eventually square them.

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