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‘AN ACTIVITY WHEREBY THE MIND REGARDS ITSELF’: SPINOZA ON CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract: Baruch Spinoza’s philosophy of mind stirs up the disputes about the nature of body-mind relations with its rigorous and naturalistic monism. The unity of body and mind is consequential of his metaphysics of the substance, but the concept of the unity of the mind and its idea rightfully confuses Spinoza’s commentators. Many have been tempted to interpret this as a possible account of consciousness, but it still has not yet been fully understood. This paper attempts to introduce an interpretation of the concept of ideas of ideas with regards to consciousness based on strict ontological monism, conceptual dualism, and self-similarity architecture, which concludes in distinguishing mental and psychic reality. While we might attribute mental reality, or mentality, to every extended thing, psychic reality is constituted by conscious ideas. And it seems to follow from Spinoza’s theory that the more ‘psychic’ the mind is, the more it knows God.

Keywords: Baruch Spinoza; body-mind problem; consciousness; philosophy of mind; psychic reality

ČINNOST, PŘI KTERÉ MYSL NAHLÍŽÍ SEBE SAMU: SPINOZA O VĚDOMÍ

Abstrakt: Filozofie mysli Barucha Spinozy svým rigorózním naturalistickým monismem podněcuje mnohé diskuze o povaze vztahu mysli a těla. Jednota mysli a těla je konsekventní jeho substanční metafyzice, avšak koncepce jednoty mysli a její ideje oprávněně mate Spinozovy komentátory. Mnozí z nich jsou nakloněni interpretovat tento koncept jako Spinozovu variaci na koncept (sebe)vědomí, přesto se však zdá, že jako takový ještě nebyl zcela adekvátně a celostně uchopen. Příspěvek představuje interpretaci konceptu idejí idejí v kontextu vědomí, přičemž metodologicky vychází z ontologického monismu, konceptuálního dualismu a sebe-opakující se architektury mysli a zahrnuje logické vyvození možné diferenciacie mentální a psychické reality. Zatímco mentální realitu neboli mentalitu je možné na základě Spinozova učení připisovat každé rozprostrané věci, psychická realita neboli psychika je konstituována vědomými idejemi. Ze Spinozova učení přitom také vyplývá, že čím více psychiky jednotlivá věc „má“, tím více poznává Boha.

Klíčová slova: Baruch Spinoza; filozofie mysli; problém vztahu tělo-mysl; psychická realita; vědomí

Spinoza's view of the body-mind relation opposes the dualistic tradition of explaining the psychophysical. The most crucial stance of his metaphysics of the psychophysical – there is no mind without the body, and no body without its mind – creates a strong monistic platform of understanding the nature of the mind and its relation to bodily existence. The so-called psychophysical parallelism, which seems consequential of his metaphysics of the substance, states that the body and the mind (always a particular body, and a particular mind) are one and the same thing, meaning an ontological unity of two different modal states of two different attributes of the substance. It seems unavoidable, then, to condition the study of Spinoza's philosophy of mind with his metaphysics of the substance first. It also means that one needs to adapt paradigmatic fundamentals of Spinoza's theory: rigorous naturalism, honest effort to understand human beings and human nature, and, most importantly, monistic and holistic vision of the universe.¹

The primary ontological status of every existing thing is inherence in the substance (E1def3)², infinite and eternal (and identified with God). While being infinitely complex, i.e., with infinity of attributes, the substance as we know it expresses its essence as two attributes – the attribute of Extension and the attribute of Thought (EIIp2–3). Every existing thing is thus 'in the image of God' in the sense that it exists as a modification of his Extension, while also as a modification of his Thought. A human being, having an individual body as a modification of Extension, must also be an expression and modification of the substance's Thought. The modifications of Thought are ideas; the modifications of Extension are extended things. And since a human body, as an extended thing, must also be an idea, it is precisely this idea of a specific human body in Thought that Spinoza calls 'a mind' (EIIp13).

This psychophysical explanation has been termed as parallelism. However, Hynek Tippelt (2010) argues that it may be a misleading term since it suggests there are two existing series of events taking place independently of one another (Tippelt 2010, 61). It would probably be more accurate to think of it as of Spinoza's version of dual-aspect theory, which simply understands material and mental planes of reality as aspects of one underlying reality. Harald Atmanspacher (2017) distinguishes two types of dual-aspect theories: compositional and decompositional. According to him, compositional theories claim that the compositional arrangements of psychophysically neutral elements decide their differences regarding the material or the mental; in other words, the structural composition of existing phenomena determines whether they are material or mental. Decompositional theories, on the other hand, consider the material or the mental not reducible to one another, and see their differences emerging only when breaking the "holistic symmetry" by making distinctions (Atmanspacher 2017, 307). I hold the view that Spinoza's body-mind theory, as explicated in his *Ethics*, might be viewed as a decompositional type of dual-aspect thinking, since it does not allow for a 'neutral domain' in metaphysics. Every existing thing is granted its essential identity and unity by ontological determination of existence in the substance: "all things are from the necessity of the divine nature determined to exist and to act in a definite way" (EIp29). It is worth noting that taking a look at other, somewhat more recent decompositional metaphysical theories might clarify many confusing aspects of this approach – as also

¹ By terming Spinoza's system 'monistic' I address the unifying tendency of his metaphysics with regards to reality itself; by the term 'holistic' I understand the methods of interpreting the realities of things through their ontological and causal relations.

² When referring to Spinoza's *Ethics* I use the system of abbreviations followed by numbers as adopted by many commentators: E(-*thics*, part of the book), p(-*roposition*), def(-*inition*), pf (*proof*), s(-*cholium*), cor(-*rolary*); so EIIp21s would refer to scholium to proposition 21 of second part of *Ethics*. All citations in this paper are from the English translation by Samuel Shirley, as part of the *Complete Works* edition (2002). In relevant places I also cite from the Latin version, *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata* (1914).

suggested by Atmanspacher, other equally important predominant picture of this type of dual-aspect thinking was proposed by Carl Gustav Jung and Wolfgang Pauli (1955).

If every existing thing in Extension must have a mental ‘counterpart’, then it seems correct to accuse Spinoza of panpsychism, as many of his commentators have (e.g. Bennett 1984; Jobani 2016; LeBuffe 2010; Miller 2007). However, I see panmentalism as a more fitting term, since Spinoza attributes *mentality* and mental processes to every existing thing, not a *psychic* reality, which may be something entirely different, as I shall demonstrate later in this paper. But what exactly is mentality; or, in other words, what does it mean for someone to ‘have a mind’? Through Spinoza’s optic, it is not accurate to think of the mind in terms of ‘having’ it. One does not ‘have a mind’, one *is* a mind, just as one does not ‘have a body’, but *is* a particular body. Just as all attributes of the substance express its fundamental singleness, oneness, and unity, so is this embodied mind – or thinking body – fundamentally one thing, conceivable through two different attributes (EIIp2s).

It follows that from a Spinozian view, when we experience ourselves and think of ourselves in terms of our minds, we perceive and know ourselves as ideas; when we experience ourselves and think of ourselves in terms of our bodies, we perceive and know ourselves as finite things in Extension. It needs to be emphasized that even though these reduced optics are both true partially (we *are* ideas and extended things), they are inadequate in relation to essential knowledge, because focusing on one or the other fails to observe their essential unity and identity. But what exactly is the nature – and where are the boundaries – of this ‘embodied mind’? At first glance, it seems that the boundaries of the mind copy the boundaries of the body it is an idea of. And since the things that we perceive happen both in Extension and in Thought somehow simultaneously, everything that happens in the body must be perceived by the mind in some way.

Peter Dalton (2002) considers this a serious problem: it seems to him that according to this account, one cannot have ideas other than the ideas of bodily states (Dalton 2002, 151). It is true that Spinoza’s account of affections seems to head this way. He defines affections as changes of bodily states and also ideas of these changes of bodily states in EIIIdf3. And since the human body and its states in Extension are the human mind and its ideas in Thought, there seems to be no place for any other ideas within the mind – as they would somehow cross the boundaries of the mind itself. As for the external bodies that we undoubtedly perceive, their ideas are not in our minds while we are perceiving them; as Spinoza claims in EIIp26, the mind does not perceive any external body except through the ideas of affections of its own body; that means that rather than perceiving the idea of a particular thing, we perceive our affections towards it.

However, Spinoza’s philosophy *does* allow the existence of other ideas besides bodily states in the mind. The concept of idea of an idea, which he introduces in EIIp20 in relation to the idea of the human mind, has captured the attention of many commentators mostly because it may be considered as Spinoza’s take on the problem of consciousness.³ As Oberto Marrama (2017) has most recently presented, Spinoza confusingly uses Latin terms related to consciousness, i.e. *conscientia* and *conscius esse*, in many forms and meanings in *Ethics*, with the most explicit formal distinction being the use of the term *conscientia* in both cognitive and moral sense (conscience). It is thus hard to grasp the adequate meaning of the concept, even though the mere use of it might signify its importance for Spinoza’s theory. After all, isn’t it impossible to grasp a complex understanding of the mind without it being conscious?

³ Some of the authors engaged with the question of consciousness in Spinoza’s philosophy attempted to see into whether Spinoza’s claims are compatible with findings and hypotheses of modern neurosciences. To reference some of their interesting works, see Damasio 2003, Höfer 2007, Nadler 2008, or Ravven 2003.

We can find Spinoza's definition of the idea of an idea in EIIp21s:

“For in fact the idea of the mind [*idea Mentis*] – that is, the idea of an idea [*idea ideæ*]– is nothing other than the form of the idea [*forma ideæ*] insofar as the idea is considered as a mode of thinking [*modus cogitandi*] without relation to its object”.

Since this type of an idea is not an idea of a bodily state (which is identical with said state through ontological unity), but an idea of an idea of it, it is in no relation to one's bodily state on an intellectual level. And an idea of the mind – which Spinoza also terms knowledge of the mind in EIIp23pf – is an idea of the mind as an idea: but not as an idea *of a particular body*. Hence, intellectually, these ideas are inadequate, which means that they lack understanding in a way that they are not additive to our adequate knowledge. In spite of this, Spinoza devoted much of his time and thought to this type of ideas, which may signify that even if these ideas as such do not help us much on our advised quest for blessedness, it might be useful to be aware of their nature and the mechanisms behind them.

Antonio Damasio (2003) considers the idea of the mind to be an idea of the self, which is, as a second-order idea, inserted in the flow of ideas of bodily states in the mind, and thus produces the knowledge that one's body is engaged in interacting with the object – the interacting itself being represented by bodily states and their ideas (Damasio 2003, 215). To him, the essence of consciousness is this “sense of self”, or idea of the mind, paired with fundamental cognitive processes (“movies-in-the-brain”) (Damasio 2003, 207). What if we attribute this ‘sense of self’ to every idea, and not just the complex idea of the mind itself? Can any idea in our minds have this ‘sense’? Christopher Martin (2007) believes that this is exactly what Spinoza was trying to point at: an idea of an idea means that an idea is being aware that it is an idea, or – that an affection is being conscious of itself as an idea. So when Spinoza writes of an idea of an affection, he actually claims that the affection is being self-conscious (Martin 2007, 277–278).

I believe that in Spinoza's philosophy of mind, following Martin's interpretation of ideas of ideas as conscious ideas, one can find an interesting and metaphysically sufficient account of a fractured consciousness – instead of an account of a complex consciousness. Humans can only be conscious to the extent ideas forming their minds are conscious. But what about the mysterious idea of the mind – does it imply that the mind as such can be conscious? Do conscious ideas somehow create conscious minds, or is it the other way around – in order to have a conscious idea, one's mind must be conscious? In EIIp23pf, Spinoza clearly states that an idea of an idea must necessarily involve the idea of the mind which it inheres in. It could be said, then, that an idea of pain is formed in the mind by inadequate abstraction of actual, real pain (which itself is an idea), and inadequate grasping of one's mind as an independent ideal being (‘my’ pain). So the mind can be termed conscious, as it involves an idea of self while having conscious ideas, but only then and to that extent.

With no necessary precondition of being conscious for the mind to have conscious ideas, we should move forward to another level of reflecting this problem – the possibility of the existence of conscious ideas in other, non-human beings. As mentioned earlier in this paper, I believe Spinoza was an advocate of panmentalism, meaning that every existing extended thing is also a mind of some form. And since every mind consists of ideas, with every mind there is a possibility that at least one of its ideas might become conscious at some moment of its duration. But even when we accept that we might be sharing this phenomenon, we have to wonder why it manifests in other, non-human finite things to such small extent (at least from our point of view). Don Garrett (2008) explains this by identifying degrees of consciousness with the degrees of power of thinking, which is tied to one's power concerning abilities for self-preservation. He holds that some individuals are “more powerful

self-preservers than others”, and that the more is the body capable of great many things, as is the idea of it (as Spinoza writes in EVp39s), the more conscious it is (Garrett 2008, 22–23). It is, however, unclear, which criteria are supposed to effectively measure one’s abilities for self-preservation. Are my abilities for self-preservation greater than these abilities in, for example, *Deinococcus radiodurans*, the world’s toughest bacterium?⁴ I would not be certain enough to claim that they are. In addition, in terms of being able to self-preserve, this bacterium might actually be more conscious than any human.

Another way to look at this problem may be through complexity-oriented approach, as proposed by Steven Nadler (2008), for example. Nadler correlates consciousness to a more complex body, and defines human consciousness as “the greater complexity of the human body as this is manifested under the attribute of Thought” (Nadler 2008, 591). The main objection against this optic is obvious – again, there is no clear and conclusive method for measuring the body’s complexity. Is it supposed to be mass-related, or rather about subtle complexities, such as highly sophisticated neural networks? The problem is that we just do not possess enough knowledge about matter and its true nature – because our ideas of *extended* things (including our own bodies) are inevitably confused and inadequate. However, even though our ideas of *ideal* things might be essentially inadequate as well, they are indisputably more adequate in relation to Thought and the activity of the mind. I believe, then, that the complexity-oriented approach is far more accurately used when used *at first* in relation to one’s mind, rather than one’s body. That means we need to conceptually divide the psychophysical unity and examine the mind in relation to the attribute of Thought only. So the question is: what makes the human mind more complex than other minds, as far as we do not think of the mind in terms of it being an expression of one’s body?

It seems that the distinction between the minds that seem more conscious and the minds that seem less conscious lies only in either amount or intensity of conscious ideas that the minds involve. And to Spinoza, being conscious in such sense is closely tied to knowledge through the concept of intuition, by means of which we conceive all things through the idea of God as their cause (EVp32). He defines intuition in EIIp39s as proceeding from an adequate idea of the formal essence of some of God’s essential attributes (Extension and Thought) to an adequate understanding of the essences of particular things (i.e., modifications of Extension and Thought). And what are the formal essences of Extension and Thought? I believe that the essential form of Extension is nothing else than its ‘extension’, i.e., the constituting essence and order of the space itself. It follows that the essential form of Thought must be, as Hynek Tippelt (2010) names it, its ‘ideality’, or the fact that it is constituted by ideas and the order of the ideas (Tippelt 2010, 58). So to understand a particular thing through intuition, or conceive it through the idea of God as its cause, means to understand or adequately perceive its extension or ideality in the first place.

How do we perceive the ideality of our ideas, or even the ideality of our minds? By perceiving them as ideas. That means, for example, perceiving our mental states as mental states, i.e., states originating in the mind, while also understanding their ‘place’ in particular order of the ideas.⁵ And as Christopher Martin reflects (2007), by perceiving its own mental states, the human mind perceives much more of the world – or, the substance (Martin 2007,

⁴ “An efficient system for repairing DNA is what makes the microbe so tough. High doses of radiation shatter the *D. Radiodurans* genome, but the organism stitches the fragments back together, sometimes in just a few hours. The repaired genome appears to be as good as new” (DeWeerd 2002).

⁵ As Spinoza claims in EIIp7 and EIIp7sch, the order and connection of the ideas is the same as the order and connection of things, and we must consider both orders of nature in relation to the corresponding attribute. That means that when conceiving an idea as an idea, to grasp a complex understanding of its ideal nature, one must conceive it at its place in the corresponding order of ideas.

282). Through perceiving itself as ideal, the mind understands more of the attribute of Thought, and thus it understands much more of God, even though it needs to be emphasized that we already know God in the sense that our bodies exist in Extension and we experience and consider them as extended things. But the more conscious ideas the mind involves, the more active it is *in relation to Thought*, which is, after all, the only manner in which the mind can be active at all.

The complexity of one's 'consciousness' thus addresses the amount and interconnectedness of conscious ideas. By having conscious ideas, the human mind 'expands' in a way that it is able to perceive inherential and inferential ideal relations, which inevitably determines the more complex knowledge of God in Spinoza's philosophy. I believe that conscious ideas are closely tied to the concept of intuition, defined as a method of seizing things through the idea of God and adequate knowledge of formal essences of his attributes. According to Spinoza, intuitive knowledge leads to intellectual love of God (EVp35cor), and this love of God is, consequently, the love wherewith God loves himself, as he is everything. Later in EVp36pf, Spinoza writes:

This mind's love [*Mentis Amor*] must be related to the active nature of the mind, and is therefore an activity whereby the mind regards itself, accompanied by the idea of God as a cause [*Mens se ipsam contemplatur, concomitante idea Dei tanquam causa*]; that is, an activity whereby God, insofar as he can be explicated through the human mind, regards himself, accompanied by the idea of himself [*seipsum contemplatur, concomitante idea sui*]. And therefore this love of God is part of the infinite love wherewith God loves himself.

For Spinoza, being conscious of one's ideality – and by that, being conscious of God's ideality – is fundamentally God, as expressed in his modifications, conscious of himself and his nature. However, it seems that God is only conscious of himself to the extent that the human mind – or any mind for that matter – conceives his nature as the cause of its conscious ideas. I believe that the consciousness of God must be understood in terms of his nature when considered in its finiteness (i.e., in regards to its particular modifications), rather than in relation to his infinite existence. In the particular act of involving a conscious idea, i.e., being conscious of oneself and of God, the human mind and God are to be perceived in a specific type of identical relation: God is being finitely conscious of himself (in his ideality) in the same way that the human mind is being finitely conscious of itself (in its ideality). I would not go as far as to say that the human mind is an instrument for the substance to become conscious, though, as I believe there is no 'becoming' regarding the substance. But, by contrast, the idea of God might 'serve' as an instrument for the human mind to become more perfect and being consciously 'in the image of God'; as through this particular aspect of finiteness, the human mind gets a 'glimpse' of the infinity. Herman De Dijn (1996) notes that this understanding or love of God, which is also God's love for himself, is part of God insofar as it constitutes his *idea Dei*; therefore, it is part of God's intellect, which is not God as *Natura naturans*, but rather God as *Natura naturata*. That is why "our love can really be part of this love", as De Dijn joyfully puts it (1996, 257).

So far I have identified consciousness in Spinoza's philosophy of mind as fractured consciousness, formed by individual or composite conscious ideas. On an epistemological level it is identified with the concept of intuitive knowledge, i.e., knowledge that seizes God's nature as the cause of things and ideas. I believe that at this point it is necessary to distinguish between philosophy of body and philosophy of mind in Spinoza – while philosophy of body is concerned with the body's extension and its ideality (e.g. affections), philosophy of mind should be concerned with the mind's ideality primarily. I believe that the method of conceptual division according to the conceptual differences should be applied to all

of Spinoza's philosophical 'unities': from God, the ultimate unity, through his conceptual division into attributes, modifications, and modifications of these modifications (states of the bodies and their ideas), to conscious and non-conscious modifications, or modifications that perceive themselves in relation to God's essence, and modifications that do not.

Modifications that do perceive themselves in relation to God's essence understand that they really *are* related to him, and what a special relation it is. Consider the following propositions explicating the duration of the activity of the mind:

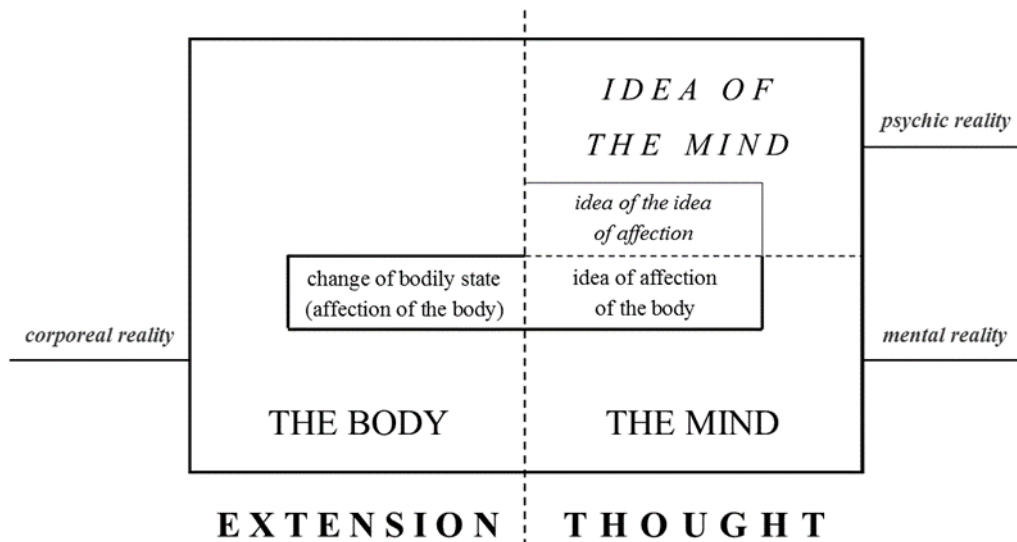
EVp21: "The mind can exercise neither imagination nor memory save while the body endures".

EVp22: "Nevertheless, there is necessarily in God an idea which expresses the essence of this or that human body under a form of eternity".

EVp23: "The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed along with the body, but something of it remains, which is eternal".

In these propositions, Spinoza seemingly claims that every activity of the mind related to its body (imagination, memory) ends as soon as the body dies and an individual unity is destroyed by disintegration. However, since the essence of God constitutes the essences of things, and since God's essence is eternal, there must be something of a particular essence of a thing that is also eternal in God. Spinoza terms this 'something' an idea. The expression 'under the form of eternity [*sub specie aeternitatis*]' may be interpreted through the formal essences of God's eternal attributes, which would mean that what is 'left behind' is the idea of the formal essence of the mind. As I proposed in this paper, the formal essence of the mind is its ideality, which means that the idea that expresses the ideality of the mind – which is undoubtedly the idea of the mind – could exist in God even when the body dies (or even before the body exists, as eternity is not time). Conscious ideas, then, form part of the mind that could be conceived under the form of eternity, and not through the optic of duration of the body; it is the reason, Spinoza speculates, why "we feel and experience that we are eternal" (EVp23sch).

I mentioned above that the concept of mentality and the concept of psychic reality are not to be confused, as I believe in Spinoza's philosophy there are satisfying accounts of both. Mentality, or mental reality, could be defined as processes and events that occur in the mind insofar as we understand it in relation to a particular object of Extension (the body). In contrast, psychic reality would be processes and events that occur in the mind insofar as we understand it in relation to the mind itself. I believe it follows from Spinoza's philosophy that while mentality constitutes the primordial form of consciousness, granting the ideas that are conscious, psychic reality is constituted by consciousness. This reality constituted by human consciousness could be seen as a product of complex 'virtual reflection', which is a concept brought up by Steven Nadler (2008). According to him, the ideas-of-ideas doctrine does not state that every idea is an object of some distinct, second-order idea directed at the first (such as in Damasio 2003); rather, it describes an intrinsic self-reflexivity of every idea, which is guaranteed in God (Nadler 2008, 582-583). Thus, we may understand psychic reality as a product of mentality (ideas to be conscious of) and intrinsic mental self-reflexivity, the latter being immediately caused by the formal essence of God's Thought, or, ideas and the order of ideas.



I have attempted to capture Spinoza’s body-mind-consciousness solution according to this interpretation in graphic form (picture above), which, I hope, might help to understand some of its basic propositions together with more complicated claims. The individual reality of the body and the mind is the basis for this model. Their being in the same position (horizontally) signifies that the body and the mind are ontologically one (expressing the unity of the substance’s essence). The dash line between them (vertically) indicates that they are conceptually distinct. The same holds for affection of the body and the idea of this affection, both of which are modifications of this individual unity – they are ontologically one, but conceptually two things; and this applies to Extension and Thought in the first place. The ‘horizontality’ and ‘verticality’ of attributes, modifications, and modifications of modifications proceed directly and immediately from God’s essence, which itself is conceptually (and only conceptually) distinct.

The mind and its idea are in an identical relation, too; however this identity is not ontological (or substantial) but rather modal, since it expresses the unity of the mode but not the unity of the substance. An idea of the mind is ‘the mind’ inside of the mind, so it inheres in the mind, while the mind does not inhere in the body, nor the body inheres in Extension. The idea of an idea of affection of the body is part of ‘the mind’ in the same way that an idea of affection of the body is part of the mind. That means that the idea of an idea of affection is in identical modal relation to its mental state as well, hence the ‘verticality’ of it. As indicated by the dash line, they are conceptually distinct; we conceive the idea of affection in relation to the body, while the idea of this idea solely in relation to the mind. This distinction, however, is horizontal rather than vertical, because it only distinguishes the mode from itself, not from a mode of a different attribute.

In Jonathan Bennett’s (1984) view, the ideas-of-ideas doctrine indicates that the aspect of self-knowledge precedes the aspect of consciousness in the sense that there is a “basic store of self-knowledge” of ideas that may be conscious at some time (Bennett 1984, 188). This may be interpreted as unconscious knowledge, which I agree may form a greater part of the human mind. The popular interpretation of Gilles Deleuze (1988) considers consciousness as “completely immersed in the unconscious”, because we are mostly conscious of ideas of our affections, i.e., inadequate ideas that we do not understand the origin of. However, he also concludes that by attaining adequate ideas, consciousness becomes their reflection, which is tied with intellectual power of overcoming our fallacies and illusions (1988, 59–60).

I think that placing such importance on distinguishing between conscious and unconscious ideas in terms of their intellectual evaluation might not be the most elucidatory way to help with understanding their relation. I favor interpretations that emphasize the modal identity of the conscious and the unconscious, as in Hynek Tippelt's (2015) interpretation of Lou Andreas-Salomé's view. Through this optic, psychic processes are constantly moving on the scale of absolute unconsciousness to clearest consciousness. It suggests that there are no clear distinctions between conscious and unconscious ideas, since they are the same idea, or same part of the same order of ideas. Conceptually, and solely at the level of psychic reality, psychic data are distinguished by degree of availability for conscious realization. The fact that every idea that becomes self-conscious is actually conscious of its mentality (or ideality) does not imply that every idea has the same potential for self-realization. This potential might depend, for example, on a certain complexity of such idea's object's connections and causal relations (Nadler's method).

Consciousness – as in conscious ideas – constitutes psychic reality that we, human beings, live in. The human mind is generally regarded as conscious to a great extent, because in humans, the idea of the mind is somewhat 'integrated' in the mind; 'integrated' in the sense of constantly inhering within the structure of the mind. We are not born this way; as Spinoza reminds us in EVp39s, children have minds which have practically no consciousness of themselves, of God, and of things, and we should concern ourselves with helping them to evolve to more capable bodies and minds, which are more conscious of themselves etc. The complexity of consciousness of a human being is thus relative in respect to the evolving (or devolving) complexity of its modes. In terms of complexity, it should be also emphasized that for Spinoza, more complex consciousness translates into more complex state of moral development.

The final question I see as emerging regarding the problem of consciousness is, to what extent is it real – in other words, what sort of metaphysical reality is this psychic reality? It has already been implied that conscious ideas, as part of God's intellect, are part of *Natura naturata*, but what I consider as more important is that in contrast to bodies and ideas, *Natura naturata* is also their origin. While the original modifications proceed directly from God's *Natura naturans*, conscious ideas are modifications directly caused by modifications themselves – or other modifications. I agree with Deleuze that this is the moment of birth of many of our philosophical illusions (the illusion of agency, will, freedom of will), but in its positive dimension it can also be a moment when at least parts of us are truly self-determining. And regarding my final question, it seems to me that our modal realities are to be considered just as real as anything else in the substance. Whether they're adequate or inadequate, they exist; and they also provide us with the possibility of taking the likeness to the substance in the sense of being a 'focal point' to which we relate everything else. And even though having our own subjective perspective might move us away from the true nature of reality (and God), it is what makes us 'us'; it constitutes and determines the nature of *our own* existence, which I believe is perfectly real.

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