

Main Points

- substances are independent of one another
- substances can have nothing to do with one another
- existence is an attribute
- there is only one substance: God
- this substance has infinitely many attributes
- > the mind and body are the attributes we know

Spinoza is mostly applied to Descartes, Conway and Leibniz

Cartesian substance & methodology

For Spinoza, God is the only real substance: *monism*

-> mind and body are not actually substances, but only modes and hence do not interact (there thus is no mind/body problem)

According to him, Descartes' methodical doubt is unnecessary, because you can learn about the truth by thinking the truth -> why look for something that you apparently already possess?

Deus sive natura

God's essence is the same as that of nature

There is only one substance (namely God) that has infinite attributes and these attributes have infinite modes. This substance only affects itself

-> "God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things"

Scala Naturae

According to Spinoza, Man is special because he can use reason, a reflection of which is found in his physical body and he can understand God from thought.

Everything is a necessary mechanism

God's qualities

God is:

- the only substance
- indivisible
- eternal
- self-caused
- something with infinite attributes with infinite modes

God is not:

- beneficent (as he does not act according to reasons or purpose)
- guaranteeing that we are not misled: reason does
- good: ethics are dependent on the *conatus*

Monism

a substance cannot come from another substance (P6)

-> since they're no shared attributes, they have nothing in common; and that which has nothing in common can't cause on another

it's in the nature of the substance that it exists (P7)

-> existing cannot be determined by another substance, only by itself. and existence can only be an attribute

-> so, existence is an attribute of a substance and so it exists necessarily

Monism (cont)

Because existence is an attribute of substance there can only be one existing substance (God)

Mind and Body

According to Spinoza, there is no mind and body problem (contrary to Descartes).

The mind and body are indivisible attributes* of God (not of substances), since there is only one substance there is no problem of interaction.

For him the mind and body belong together, they cannot act on each other - the body cannot limit mind/thoughts but only body can limit body, and thoughts can limit thoughts (mind)

Determination

According to Spinoza, everything that has a substance is always limited by one another *omnis determinatio est negation*

-> in short, every determination is negation/limitation of God and thus a non-being

Spinozistic Methodology

For Spinoza, geometry is the methodological model on which he bases his philosophy

-> specifically: Euclid's elements starting from definitions and axioms he tries to prove certain propositions the difference between axioms and definitions: definitions don't give new information and just state what is already (widely) known, while an axiom is something that is so possible that it is supposed/assumed to be true but is not so necessarily



By **faminconnue**
(faminconnue)

cheatography.com/faminconnue/

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Substances, Attributes, and Mode

Substance: is that which is in itself and can be conceived through itself and not through something else (def. 3)

-> can only be understood by itself; they are independent of one another, they have nothing to do with one another

-> a substance has many/infinite of attributes, but we humans partake only two of them (extension and thought);

the only substance is God, who is infinite and overshadows the attribute

Attribute: is what is conceived as the essence of a substance (def. 4)

-> a necessary essence of the substance

-> substance has many (infinite) attributes, but we humans partake only two of them (extension and thought).

The substance = God, who is infinite and overshadows the attributes (monist)

Mode: is the affection of substance, that which is in something else and conceived through something else (def. 5)

-> something which the substance is affected with but could be different/ is contingent

example: Socrates has a pot-belly

- substance: Socrates

- attribute: being human

- mode: having a pot-belly

Propositions

preparatory work

- P1: substance is by nature prior to its affections

-> a mode can only exist in something else

- P2: two substances having different attributes have nothing in common

-> otherwise understanding the one substance requires the other and would thus it would not be a substance

- P3: when things have nothing in common, one cannot be the cause of the other

uncoupled substances

- P4: two or more distinct things are distinguished by attributes or modes

-> these are things the understanding can separate and everything is either in itself or something else

- P5: in the universe, there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute

-> if there are two substances with the same attribute, we cannot use this to distinguish them

-> modes can only differentiate depending on substances (P1)



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