Introduction

Charlie Huenemann

Spinoza selected a seal for his correspondence that was both clever and fitting. It was a design with his initials, a stemmed rose, and the word "*Caute*," or: *with caution*. We might suppose that he took this as a motto for himself, to act always with caution; but since his own name connoted the rose (*espina* is Spanish for "thorn"), it is more likely that he was advising his correspondents to handle him with caution. He had fascinating visions to offer – but beware the thorns! And his readers soon were pricked by them, as they discovered that Spinoza denied many things thought to be necessary for a civil life: free will, the traditional distinction between good and evil, heaven and hell, and the existence of a benevolent creator. Spinoza became known as an impious atheist, and philosophers over the next two centuries were both attracted and stung by what he wrote.

Philosophers in more recent times have found Spinoza to be thorny as well, perhaps not so much because of his heretical views, but because of the sheer difficulty of his great work, the *Ethics*. It seems that, in his attempt to lay out his thought as clearly as possible, with sharp definitions, axioms, and demonstrations, Spinoza made his philosophy well-nigh ungraspable. It is not at all unusual to hear a well-intentioned reader despair, "I know there is something powerful in there, but I can't quite get hold of it." Still, more and more philosophers have found their way into this deductive fortress, and have written about what they have found there in increasingly clear and precise ways. This volume of essays, we hope, adds to this broad, communal effort of excavation and interpretation, not only of the *Ethics*, but of his treatises on theology and politics as well. There are indeed many powerful things in Spinoza's philosophy, and we can make sense of a great many of them.

One great virtue of this collection of essays is that they provide penetrating discussion of three important domains of Spinoza's philosophy: metaphysics, psychology, and politics. Furthermore, while these essays were written independently for this volume, several interesting connections can

be found among them. So, for example, the essays by Nadler, Della Rocca, and Garrett all end up exploring various dimensions of the "in" relation in Spinoza's philosophy; Rosenthal and Huenemann offer different estimations of how successful Spinoza was in making room for autonomous thought; James, Sorell, and Garber all discuss the power of the imagination and its role in Spinoza's political thought. The collection thus offers broad coverage, plus the virtue of presenting several ideas in different perspectives, both of which are crucial for grasping the wholeness of Spinoza's philosophical vision.

This volume of essays also pays tribute to a scholar who has devoted his career to helping others make better sense of Spinoza's thought. Edwin Curley has been a translator, an interpreter, and a facilitator of fundamental importance. The first volume of his translation, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (Princeton, 1985), made available, for the first time in English, a critical edition of the *Ethics* along with several other works. It is fair to say that readers who want a more accurate sense of what Spinoza wrote than what Curley offers will need to go and learn Latin and Dutch for themselves (and even so, they will still need to make use of the valuable textual commentary in Curley's edition). Moreover, in *Spinoza's Metaphysics* (Harvard, 1969), *Behind the Geometrical Method* (Princeton, 1988), and in many essays, Curley has developed new and compelling ways to think about Spinoza's metaphysical, ethical, and political projects, ways that have shaped the terrain of contemporary Spinoza scholarship. Finally, Curley has helped build a scholarly bridge across the Atlantic, bringing American and French students of Spinoza into fruitful dialogue with one another.

This overly brief account gestures only toward what Curley has done for Spinoza studies. But his contributions to the history of modern philosophy as a whole are equally impressive. His book, *Descartes Against the Skeptics* (Harvard, 1978), helped situate Descartes's *Meditations* with respect to various kinds of skepticism, and offered (again) a new and compelling interpretation of that work. His edition of Hobbes's *Leviathan* was the first edition in English to incorporate the variations found in the Latin versions of that work. Other essays published by Curley – far too many to mention individually – examine thinkers as diverse as Montaigne, Castellio, Locke, Maimonides, Leibniz, Calvin, and Pufendorf, and topics as diverse as religious toleration, Christian theism, the book of Job, the state of nature, certainty, rationalism, teleology, the soul, personal identity, dreaming, and logic. And that is not yet all; we are assured that there are more works to come.

Each contributor to this volume was eager to do something to honor Curley's long and productive career. This is not only because of his

scholarly contributions, but also because of his scholarly attributes: in both print and in person, Ed Curley is patient, serious, honest, and encouraging. He has helped many scholars, of all ranks, to develop their careers and to enter into productive discussions. He has shown many of us how to approach texts – with serious philosophical intent, abetted by sound historical knowledge and a degree of literary sensitivity. It is with gratitude that we dedicate this volume to him.

CHAPTER 1

Representation and consciousness in Spinoza's naturalistic theory of the imagination

Don Garrett

1 INTRODUCTION

Spinoza identifies the minds or souls of finite things with God's ideas of those things. Margaret Wilson famously suggests that this identification prevents Spinoza from giving an adequate account of the human mind:

> Descartes's position on the mind–body issue is notoriously beset with difficulties. Still, [his] theory of *res cogitantes* does recognize and take account of certain propositions about the mental that seem either self-evidently true or fundamental to the whole concept. These include . . . that the mind (in a straightforward and common sense of the term) *represents* or *has knowledge of* external bodies; that it *is ignorant of* much that happens in "its" body; that having a mind is associated with thinking and being conscious; that mentality is recognizable from behavior of a certain sort, and the absence of mentality from "behavior" of other sorts. Will not Spinoza's theory of "minds" simply *fail to be a theory of the mental* if it carries the denial of all or most of these propositions? More specifically, will it not fail to make sense of the specific phenomena of human mentality by attempting to construe the human mind as just a circumscribed piece of God's omniscience? (Wilson 1980: 111)

This is the primary question that I will try to address: Can Spinoza "recognize and take account of" such "specific phenomena of human mentality" as (i) ignorance of many internal bodily states, (ii) representation of the external world, (iii) consciousness, and (iv) expression in behavior? In order to answer this question, we must solve four puzzles about his theory of the imagination, each corresponding to one of the four phenomena of our primary question. In order to solve these puzzles, in turn, we must first understand some of Spinoza's central doctrines concerning a number of closely related topics – and we must understand an aspect of Spinoza's approach to philosophy that I will call his *incremental naturalism*. Doing so will allow us to see a good deal of his philosophy in a clearer and potentially more attractive light – or at least, so I imagine.

II FOUR PUZZLES ABOUT THE IMAGINATION

Imagination defined

Spinoza defines "imagination" (*imaginatio*) in *Ethics* 2p17s:

> The affections of the human Body whose ideas represent external bodies as present to us, we shall call images of things, even if they do not reproduce the figures of things. And when the Mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines.[1]

As this indicates, his use of the term "imagination" is broad enough to include sensation as well as mental imagery and to include modalities of bodily representation that do not represent shape. He goes on to identify *imagination* as the first and lowest of the three kinds of knowledge or cognition (*cognitio*), with the intellect (constituted by distinct and adequate ideas) providing the higher (second and third) kinds of knowledge.[2]

A puzzle about the scope of the imagination

One puzzle about the imagination concerns its seemingly unlimited *scope*. Prior to his initial definition of "imagination," Spinoza asserts in 2p12 that

[1] Translations are those of Curley, in Spinoza 1985.

[2] Thus, at 2p40s, he writes:

> It is clear that we perceive many things and form universal notions:
>
> I. from singular things which have been represented to us through the senses in a way that is mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect (see 2p29c); for that reason I have been accustomed to call such perceptions knowledge from random experience;
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> II. from signs, e.g., from the fact that, having heard or read certain words, we recollect things, and form certain ideas of them, which are like them, and through which we imagine the things (2p18s). These two ways of regarding things I shall henceforth call knowledge of the first kind, opinion or imagination.
>
> III. Finally, [we have cognition] from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things (see 2p38c, p39, p39c, and p40). This I shall call reason and the second kind of knowledge.
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> IV. In addition to these two kinds of knowledge, there is (as I shall show in what follows) another, third kind, which we shall call intuitive knowledge (*scientia intuitiva*). And this kind of knowing proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things.

Ethics 2p17s treats imagination as the having of a certain kind of idea, while 2p40s2 characterizes it as a way of perceiving or having knowledge; but this does not mark any distinction between senses of *imagination*, since all ideation is perception or knowledge, and vice versa, for Spinoza. See, for example, his use of 1a4 (which concerns "knowledge") in 1p25d. See also his comment about "perception" and "conception" in 2d3, and his very similar account of "four kinds of perception" in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* §§ 18–29.

whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human Mind must be perceived by the human Mind, or there will necessarily be an idea of that thing in the Mind; i.e., if the object of the idea constituting a human Mind is a body, [then] nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by the Mind.

In the next proposition, he goes on to specify that "the object of the idea constituting the human mind" indeed *is* the human body – with the obvious consequence that nothing can happen in the human body that is not perceived by the human mind.[3] Furthermore, it is clear that this "perception of whatever happens in the human body" must be imagination, rather than intellection.[4] Hence, it seems that, for Spinoza, a human being's mind perceives by way of imagination *everything* that happens in his or her body – including, to borrow Michael Della Rocca's example (1996: 9), each specific chemical reaction in the pancreas.

This result is surprising enough. But it seems that we have not yet reached the limits of imagination. For in the immediately following scholium, Spinoza remarks:

The things we have shown so far are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are animate. For of each thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause in the same way as he is of the idea of the human Body. And so, whatever we have said of the idea of the human Body must also be said of the idea of any thing. (2p13s)

Thus, *every* "individual" or "thing" has an idea that is related to that individual in just the way that the human mind is related to the human body; and, at least once (3p1d), he uses the term "minds" to designate these ideas of non-human things.[5] It appears, then, that even individual things whose behavior may seem to express no sentience at all will nevertheless have "minds" and perceive by imagination whatever happens in their

[3] 2p13: "The object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, or a certain mode of Extension that actually exists, and nothing else."

[4] Spinoza regularly treats his distinction of three kinds of knowledge or cognition as jointly exhaustive of all perception. Yet he holds that the human mind's perception of what occurs in the human body is both inadequate and confused. (According to 2p19, "the human Mind does not know the human Body itself, nor does it know that it exists, except through ideas of affections by which the Body is affected"; and according to 3p27, "the idea of any affection of the human Body does not involve adequate knowledge of the human body itself." Furthermore, according to 3p28, "the ideas of the affections of the human Body, insofar as they are related only to the human Mind, are not clear and distinct, but confused.") And of the three kinds of knowledge, only the first kind, *imagination*, can be either inadequate or confused (2p28s, 2p41d, 5p28d).

[5] In 3p57d, he uses the term "soul" (*anima*), which is also suggested, of course, by his use of "animate" (*animata*) in 2p13s.

"bodies": it seems, for example, that toasters must perceive the flow of electricity to their heating elements. Hence, the first puzzle: How can Spinoza seriously maintain that the phenomenon of imagination is so pervasive as to include perception, by every individual thing, of "whatever happens in" its body?

A puzzle about the representational content of the imagination

A second puzzle concerns the *external representational content* of imagination. According to Spinoza's own definition, *all* imagination involves not merely perception of an *internal* state or "affection," but also representation of an *external body*. Yet the seemingly universal scope of the Spinozistic imagination seems to render this utterly incredible. How can each individual's perception of *each* occurrence within it – seemingly including such occurrences as pancreatic chemical reactions or flows of electricity to heating elements – also serve to represent one or more external bodies? Yet that is just what Spinoza seems to think they do. He asserts in 2p16: "The idea of *any mode* in which the human Body is *affected by external bodies* must *involve* the nature of the human Body and *at the same time the nature of the external body*" (emphasis added). And in 2p17, he adds: "If the human Body is affected with a mode that *involves the nature of an external body*, the human Mind will *regard the same external body as present*" (emphasis added) – which is the very condition that he immediately goes on to define in 2p17s as "imagination." It seems to follow that a perception of any internal bodily state that has been even partly *influenced by* an external body will qualify as an imaginative *representation of* that body on Spinoza's account. But while this may help to explain why so many internal states are supposed to qualify as representations of the external for Spinoza, so minimal a requirement on representation seems (as Wilson urges) not so much to account for external representation as to change the subject to a relation much weaker than genuine representation of the external. Hence, the second puzzle: How can Spinoza suppose that imagination as he conceives it always represents something external?

A puzzle about the consciousness of the imagination

A third puzzle concerns the *consciousness* of imagination. It seems that Spinoza could render the seemingly incredible scope of the imagination less incredible if he could maintain that much of this imagination is unconscious, or at least of a very low degree of consciousness. And he

does make a number of claims about consciousness in the *Ethics*[6] that appear to be restricted to human beings. One might suppose, then, that only human beings – and perhaps some higher animals[7] – have conscious imagination on Spinoza's view.

As Wilson rightly argues, however, this interpretive supposition cannot be maintained. Whenever Spinoza offers a demonstration for a claim that human beings are *conscious of* something, the argument always takes the form of showing simply that *an idea of* that thing is *in* the human mind; and *that* argument, in turn, always appeals ultimately only to features of the human mind that are, according to 2p13s, "completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals."[8] It seems, then, that if human minds are conscious, so too must be the minds of all other individual things.

Still, when he reaches Part 5 of the *Ethics*, Spinoza does clearly imply that there are at least degrees of consciousness. In 5p31s, he writes, "The more each of us is able to achieve in this [third] kind of knowledge, the more he is conscious of himself and of God, i.e., the more perfect and blessed he is" (see also 5p42s). In 5p39s, he explains further:

> He who, like an infant or a child, has a Body capable of very few things, and very heavily dependent on external causes, has a Mind which considered solely in itself is conscious of almost nothing of itself, or of God, or of things. On the other hand, he who has a Body capable of a great many things, has a Mind which considered only in itself is very much conscious of itself, and of God, and of things.

[6] These claims include the following: that "men believe themselves free because they are conscious of their own actions, and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined" (3p2s; see also Appendix to Part 1 and 2p35s); that "the Mind . . . strives, for an indefinite duration, to persevere in its being and it is conscious of this striving it has" (3p9); that "desire is generally related to men insofar as they are conscious of their appetites [so that] *desire* can be defined as *appetite together with consciousness of the appetite*" (3p9s); that "man is conscious of himself through the affections by which he is determined to act" (3p30d); and that "knowledge of good and evil is nothing but an affect of Joy or Sadness, insofar as we are conscious of it" (4p8; see also 4p19d and 4p64d).

[7] In Part 3, Spinoza writes of animals such as horses as having "lusts" (3p57s); and a "lust" is defined as a kind of "love and desire" (3p56s, Definition of the Affects 48). From this it seems to follow (by 3p9s) that a lust consists partly in an "appetite together with consciousness of the appetite," and hence that horses, at least, are also conscious to some extent.

[8] Wilson devotes particular attention to the argument of 3p9d that human beings are conscious of the Mind's striving to persevere in its being. The core of this demonstration is the citation of 2p23 to show that human beings are conscious of the ideas of the affections of their bodies. But 2p23 does not use the term "conscious" at all; rather, it claims that human beings have ideas of the ideas of the affections of the body, and the argument for this claim, in turn, depends on noting that God must have an idea of *each* of his affections *including* the human mind, and an *idea of* any mind must be united to that *mind* in the same way – i.e., by identity – that a *mind* is united to the *body* that is its object. Her special attention to this argument is the result, in part, of the identification of consciousness with having *ideas of ideas* in Curley 1969 (see also Curley 1988: 71–72).

In this life, therefore, we strive especially that the infant's Body may change (as much as its nature allows and assists) into another, capable of a great many things and related to a Mind very much conscious of itself, of God, and of things. We strive, that is, that whatever is related to its memory or imagination is of hardly any moment in relation to the intellect. These passages suggest that differences in degrees of consciousness are grounded in differences of bodily capacity and/or intellectual knowledge.

Yet upon examination, this suggestion does not seem to offer a promising approach to distinguishing degrees of consciousness in the imagination. The appeal to mere bodily capacities or skills of the sort that infants lack seems of doubtful relevance to degrees of consciousness of any kind. And the appeal to differences of intellect – such as greater achievements of "the third kind of knowledge" – seems no more helpful, for two reasons. First, it is not obvious why differences of *intellect* should have any bearing on differences in the consciousness of *imagination*. Second, as Wilson argues, it seems doubtful whether Spinoza's own account of the intellect provides any basis for distinguishing different minds with respect to the contents of their intellects. For according to that account (2pp37–46), the foundation for knowledge of the higher, intellectual kinds lies in certain "common notions" that must be perceived adequately in any act of perception performed by any mind.[9] For example, Spinoza holds that every idea – and hence every idea of imagination, regardless of what mind perceives it – necessarily involves an "adequate and perfect" knowledge of God's essence. So far, then, it seems that the minds of even seemingly inanimate individuals, such as toasters, may well have as many adequate ideas of intellect as do human minds; and, if that is so, then the mere possession of ideas of intellect cannot provide any useful basis for distinguishing degrees of consciousness among things. Thus, the third puzzle: How can Spinoza regard some instances of imagination as more conscious than others?

A puzzle about expression in behavior

A fourth puzzle concerns the *expression in behavior* of imagination. Spinoza appears to hold that all individuals perceive, by way of imagination, whatever happens in them. Perception is a mental state. Yet it seems that many individuals, such as rocks and toasters, never express this or any other

[9] These common notions must be adequately perceived in any act of perception, according to Spinoza, because they are ideas of things that are common to all and are "equally in the part and in the whole," so that they cannot be perceived only incompletely.

mental state in behavior. Hence, the fourth puzzle: How can Spinoza explain why many individuals' mental states, such as imaginative perception, are seemingly never expressed in behavior?

III SOME CENTRAL DOCTRINES AND THE APPROACH OF INCREMENTAL NATURALISM

To resolve these puzzles, it is essential to understand some of Spinoza's central doctrines concerning such topics as inherence, individuality, *conatus*, power of thinking, minds, confusion, and intellection. I will take up these topics in that order.

Inherence

Perhaps the most fundamental relation in Spinoza's metaphysics is the relation of *being in*. Spinoza introduces the relation at the very outset of the *Ethics*, in 1d3 and 1d5, when he defines "substance" as "what is in itself and is conceived through itself" and "modes" as "the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived.[10] I will use the term "inherence" to designate this relation of being *in* and to distinguish it from the *in* of spatial containment and from the *in* of the relation of parts to wholes.[11]

Although the definition of "mode" indicates that the affections or modes of a substance are in that substance, it is not only substances that can have modes or affections in them.[12] In 2d7, Spinoza defines "singular things" (*res singulares*) as

> things that are finite and have a determinate existence. And if a number of Individuals so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, I consider them all, to that extent, as one singular thing.

[10] The very first axiom of the *Ethics* (1a1) also concerns this relation: "Whatever is, is either in itself or in another."

[11] It is important to distinguish among these relations because, for Spinoza, the relation of inherence characterizes (non-spatial) thought just as much as it does (spatial) extension, and while everything inheres *in* God (1p15), which is the only substance, God has no real parts at all (1pp12d–15d). I choose the term "inherence" simply because it is commonly used for the relation between modes and substances; I do not mean to suggest that Spinoza's conception of this relation (and its relata) is not highly distinctive; and I especially do not mean to suggest that it involves an unknowable substratum.

[12] In addition, it is not *only* affections or modes that can be *in* something, since, as Spinoza has already indicated in 1d3, a substance is also *in* itself. Furthermore, I have argued (Garrett 2001) that 3p6 should be read literally, as claiming that singular things (which are finite approximations to substance) are *to some extent in* themselves.