



# Spinoza and the Radical Enlightenment

Week 3. 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2017

Minds, Bodies and Power



‘I believe in Spinoza’s God, who reveals Himself in the lawful harmony of the world, not in a God who concerns Himself with the fate and the doings of mankind...’ – Albert Einstein





..and that was  
the Archers  
omnibus....

What's going on  
down there?  
...Whoops

*Disease*

*World*

*Moral Evil*

*Natural Evil*

# Recap: Part I, 'On God'

- Substance monism: there's only **one** substance
- God is singular, infinite, eternal, and necessary
- God exists through an infinite amount of attributes, expressed in individual modes
- God is an efficient, immanent and first cause
- Only God is free.

# Spinoza's God

- Everything that is, is in God, and cannot be conceived without God
- God is not a creator or transcendent intervener.
- God is instead *immanent*, inherent within the universe
- God is the sum total of all things and ideas in the universe – infinite, necessary, and perfect
- We are finite parts or expressions of God's power, which emanates through us
- 'All things emanate necessarily from God's nature, and that the universe is God' - Letter 43



# Unanswered questions...

- If we human beings are just infinitesimally small and finite modes (or parts) of the universe's greater power – and pre-determined to act by many prior events... to what extent are we even free?
- Is Spinoza not simply a determinist and 'fatalist', ruling out the possibility of good conduct and freedom?



# Part II: 'Of the Nature and Origin of the Mind'

- Goal of Spinoza's philosophy is blessedness
- It is an *ethics*, not a work of science
- Freedom through knowledge of the human mind

“only those things that can lead us as it were by the hand to the knowledge of the human mind and its utmost blessedness.” - Part II, Preface



# Substance, attributes, modes

- Substance:
  - reality, God
- Attribute:
  - a form that reality exists in
- Mode:
  - a quality or dependent entity of substance, that takes form through an attribute

Substance = infinity of attributes

???

???

Extension

Thought

Attributes

a ball

a dog

a body

a mind

a circle

justice

Modes

# Modes manifest God's power

- Substance first manifests itself in attributes which express essence (being, reality)
  - Attributes are infinite, but humans perceive only thought (IIP1) and extension (P2)
  - Attributes are constituted by an infinity of modes that modify substance through their affections
- ∴ ideas = modes of substance as thought;  
bodies = modes of substance as extension.
- They are not representations but express reality.

# Parallelism

- God's power is expressed in thought (P1)
- God is expressed in existing bodies (P2)
- God is power or activity (P3), which we partake in
- We perceive bodies and ideas by activity (being affected and affecting others)
- Attributes of thought and extension are equal (P7)

# Parallelism

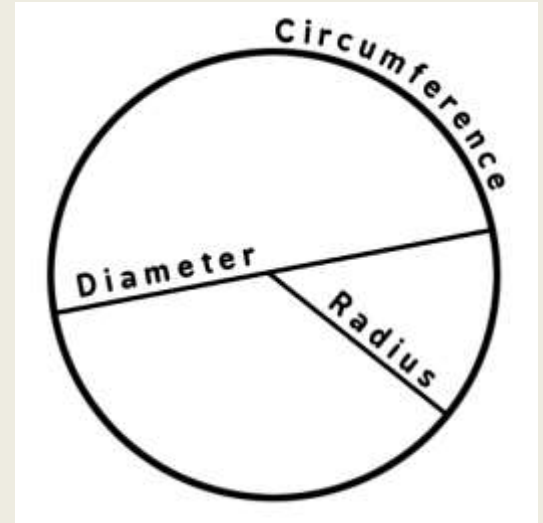
- Re-read and consider Proposition 7 of Part 2, and discuss :
- *What does Spinoza mean by 'the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things'?*



# How do minds and bodies interact?

- Consider the problem of mind-body interaction in Descartes
- For Spinoza, one substantial essence e.g. circle is expressed through two different attributes

*'The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.'* (P7)



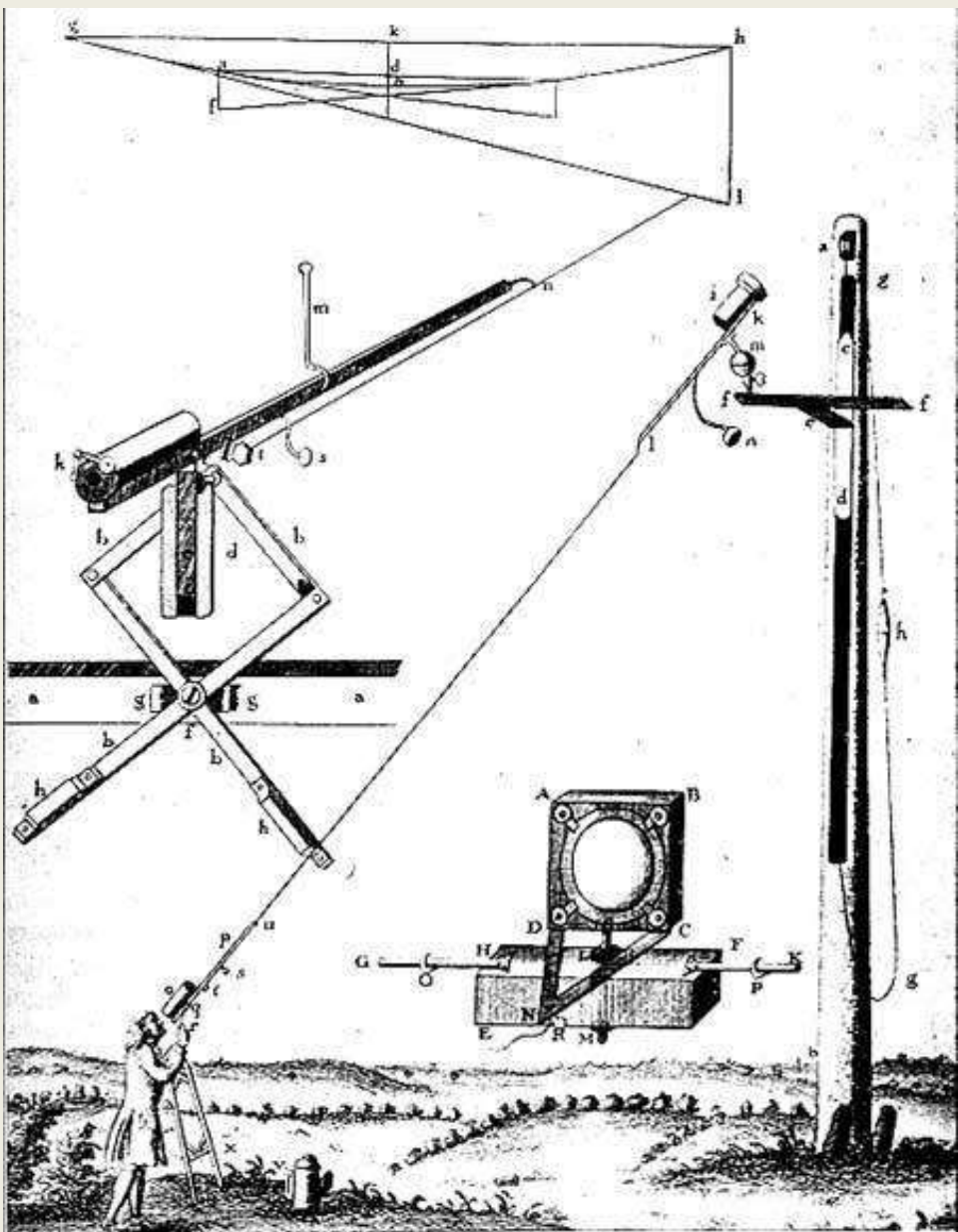
# Connection of ideas and bodies

- The mind is the idea of an actually existing thing, a body (P11)
- The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body (P13)
- Personal identity: the 'union' of mind and body into a singular person, formed of multiple modes as a 'composite individual' (P13)
- Therefore we are the same person, perceived separately as a body or as a mind.

# God or nature? *Deus sive natura*



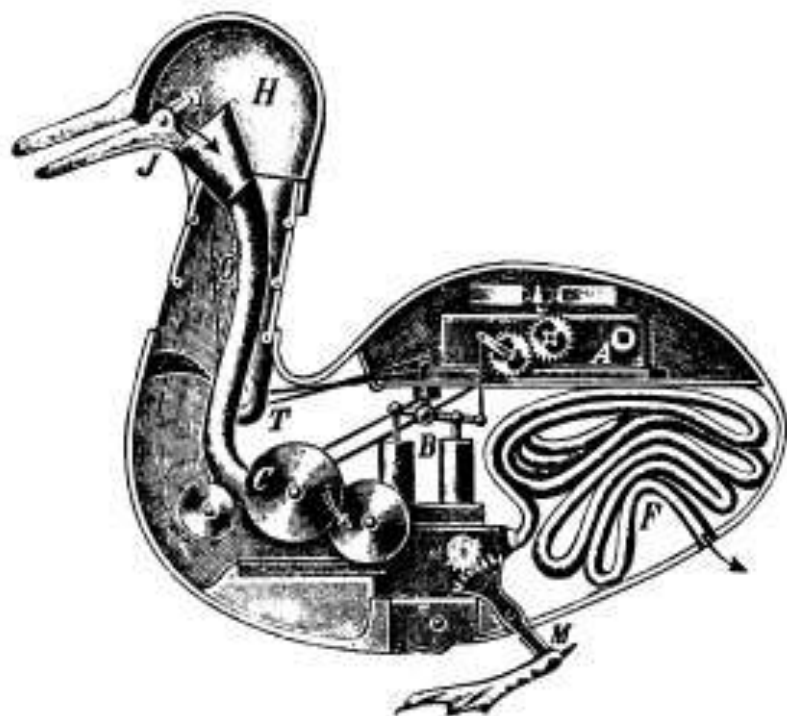
If parallelism equates  
minds and bodies,  
then does Spinoza's  
God simply signify the  
material universe, or  
nature?



# What can a body do?

- ‘No-one knows what a body can do’ – Deleuze draws Spinoza into a radical, materialist tradition
- Spinoza was a leading lens-grinder, making microscope and telescope lenses for Constantijn Huygens
- He also debated with Robert Boyle and the Royal Society on theories about saltpetre and fluidity, experimenting in a home-made lab
- Rumoured ‘lost’ works on rainbows and optics
- Whatever the truth of these, *Ethics* only briefly discusses physics in E2p13s, where things are defined by their complexity and proportion of motion-and-rest





# MAELZEL'S EXHIBITION, *No. 29, St. James's Street.*

**The  
Automaton**



**Chess  
Player**

Being returned from *Edinburgh* and *Liverpool*, where (giving the Pawn and Move) it baffled all Competition, in upwards of 200 Games, although opposed by ALL THE BEST PLAYERS.

**Has opened its Second Campaign,**  
WITH THE ADDITION OF THE  
**AUTOMATON TRUMPETER,**  
AND THE  
***Conflagration of Moscow,***

# What can a body do?

- ‘Nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same; that is, the laws and rules of Nature, according to which all things happen and all things are changed from one form into another. That is why there must be one and the same way of understanding the nature of anything whatever, through the universal laws and rules of Nature.’  
– Part 3 Preface
- *What distinguishes Spinoza’s view from say Descartes?*

# What can a mind do?

- On this Spinoza has far more to say, suggesting the route to the kind of freedom which might be possible
- Please take a look at Proposition 40 Scholium, where Spinoza outlines three kinds of knowledge...
- In pairs, please read and identify:
- *What are the three kinds of knowledge?*

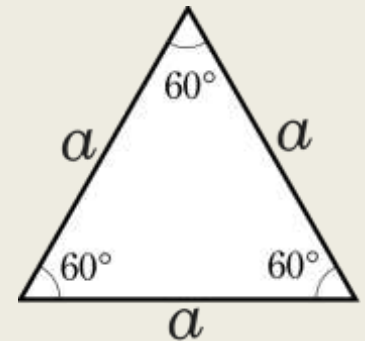
# Three kinds of knowledge (P40 S)

- First: casual experience of senses, imagination, symbols, words, time.



**False**

- Second: reason, from common notions and adequate ideas of properties of things. **True**



- Third: intuition, based on adequate idea of formal essences of God. **Necessarily true**, best kind









# How do we acquire knowledge?

- His arguments are built up, proposition by proposition, across Part 2
- The mind's object is the body, so...
- The greater a body's activity, the greater the mind's power to perceive ideas (P13-P15)
- Mind perceives external bodies, and its own body, through the body's affections, perceived as images
- But imagination (and hence knowledge from bodies) is inadequate: it is externally determined and passive (P29)

# How do we acquire knowledge?

- ‘(1) Truth consists in agreement between thought (or idea) and the object of thought (*ideatum*);
  - (2) reality is a single system, expressed in an order of thought which step by step matches an equivalent order of physical reality; and
  - (3) the thought of human beings matches the order of physical reality only in fragments, specifically in mathematical knowledge, and for the rest human thought is partial and limited’
- Stuart Hampshire, ‘Introduction’, *Spinoza* (1987)

# So what is inadequate knowledge?

Following Descartes:

- Error is *nothing*, a privation of knowledge
- We can perceive clearly and distinctly
- The senses and imagination lead to inadequate knowledge
- Adequate knowledge is innate



# So what is inadequate knowledge?



## Beyond Descartes:

- mind can grasp ideas adequately through its active reason
- Maximising the body's affections increases our ideas and capacity for adequate knowledge
- Mind includes will, intellect, etc.

# What is adequate knowledge?

- Adequate knowledge is intrinsically true (II D4), without dependence on anything else
- Ideas are only 'adequate' in relation to God (P32)
- Adequate knowledge understands common notions in bodies and minds, based on particularities (P39)
- Perceiving a thing truly regards it as necessary (P44)
- Every particular involves knowledge of God (P45)
- Human mind *is* capable of adequate knowledge (P47)



# Gaining adequate knowledge

- It cannot be doubted (P43)
- It regards things as necessary (P44)
- Every idea of a particular thing involves knowledge of God, which is adequate (P45)
- Possible for all human minds, so long as they acquire this knowledge of God (P47)
- It grasps things under the form of eternity (*sub specie aeternitas*), as infinite and eternal



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## Next week...

- We will turn to human power and freedom!
- In what sense are we free? Does Spinoza rule out moral responsibility? What does our knowledge consist of?
- We will focus on Part Two, propositions 41-49, and Letter 58, so please read the excerpt before class
- *Please also aim to read the remainder of Part Two, and a guiding chapter on Spinoza's views on human nature, e.g. in Scruton, Curley, Jarrett, Hampshire or elsewhere*