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Pars melior nostri
The Structure of Spinoza's Intellect

Ons betere deel
De Structuur van Spinoza's Intellect

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

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Henk-Jan Hoekjen, June 2018.

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Abbreviations

In this study I make use of Edwin Curley's translation of Spinoza's works, published in *The Collected Works of Spinoza* Volume I and II. The original Latin text is from the *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia* in the version of Carl Gebhardt. Latin translations are provided italicized and in parentheses, both in the main text (in the case of longer citations) and in the footnotes. I have employed the following abbreviations and notations:

<i>Letters:</i>	Letter
<i>Treatise on the Emendation of the intellect:</i>	TdIE
<i>Short Treatise:</i>	KV
<i>Descartes' Principles of Philosophy:</i>	PCP
<i>Appendix Containing Metaphysical Thoughts:</i>	CM
<i>Theological-Political Treatise:</i>	TTP
<i>Ethics:</i>	E
<i>Nagelate Schriften:</i>	NS

A chapter is indicated with 'Ch.', a section with '§', a part with a Roman number, a definition with a 'D', an explanation with 'Expl.', an axiom with an 'A', a proposition with a 'p', a scholium with an 's', a corollary with a 'c', a lemma with an 'L', a postulate with 'Post.' a preface with 'Preface' and an appendix with 'Appendix'.

The volume of *The Collected Works of Spinoza* in which a passage can be found is provided in parentheses, followed by the page number. So §33 from the *Treatise on the Emendation of the intellect*, that can be found on page 17 of volume I of *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, is referred to in the following way: TdIE §33, (I) 17. The scholium from proposition 29 of part V of the *Ethics* is referred to thus: EVp29s, (I) 610. And a passage from Chapter XVI of the *Theological-Political Treatise* on page 282 of volume II of *The Collected Works of Spinoza* receives the following circumscription: TTP, Ch. XVI, (II), 282.

Introduction

It is one of the great ironies of the history of thought that the work of a philosopher who, perhaps more than any of his peers, is praised for his friendly and balanced character, has given rise to some of the fiercest controversies in the history of philosophy. As Alexandre Koyré put it in a slightly understated way, ‘agreement between commentators of Spinoza is not something that happens frequently’.¹ The disagreement concerning the work of the ‘righteous atheist’² is not confined to those who fight over the supposed pantheistic or atheistic tendencies that permeate the philosophy of this ‘God-intoxicated man’.³ Anyone who made the effort to analyze the secondary literature on Spinoza of (say) the last 25 years, knows that Koyré’s words are as relevant today as ever. Indeed, the controversies surrounding the interpretation of Spinoza’s philosophy go far beyond the subjects that were brought up by Pierre Bayle in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697), or that were debated in the notorious *Pantheismusstreit* that raged in Germany at the end of the 18th century. In the second decade of the 21st century there still is almost not a single Spinoza-related topic that can be considered to be entirely uncontroversial. Whether it be the assumed materialistic bedrock of Spinoza’s thought,⁴ the prevailing importance of his ‘radically enlightened’ philosophy for Western

¹ (*L'accord entre les commentateurs de Spinoza n'est pas chose très fréquente*) Alexandre Koyré, ‘Le chien, constellation céleste, et le chien, animal aboyant’ in : *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 55 No. 1 (1950), 52 [my translation].

² The wording is inspired by Immanuel Kant. In the *Critique of the power of Judgment* he writes ‘We can thus assume a righteous man (like Spinoza) who takes himself to be firmly convinced that there is no God [...] (*Wir können also einen rechtschaffenen Mann (wie etwa den Spinoza) annehmen, der sich fest überredet hält, es sei kein Gott [...]*)’. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the power of Judgment* (Cambridge 2000) (translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews) §87, A 422/B 427, 317.

³ The German poet Novalis famously called Spinoza (*Gott-trunkener Mensch*). Novalis, *Schriften* (Berlin 1826), 193.

⁴ Antonio Damasio stated in this respect that Spinoza argues about mind and body in ways ‘that were not only profoundly opposed to the thinking of most of his contemporaries, but remarkably current three hundred and some years later’. See: Antonia Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (Orlando 2003) 15-16. The apparent implication that Spinoza endorses a materialistic perspective on the mind-body problem finds no unambiguous support in the *Ethics*. Spinoza’s claim in E1p10 that ‘each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself (*unumquodque unius substantiae attributum per se concipi debet*) is so fundamental to his metaphysics, that claiming that extension is somehow prior to thought would demolish the intricate architecture of Spinoza’s main work.

democratic culture,⁵ the exact meaning of his claim that ‘the human Mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body’,⁶ or the possibility of Spinoza’s ‘model of human nature’⁷ (i.e. ‘the free man’)⁸ to actually exist (to pick a few random examples), Spinoza scholars continue to show a predilection for disagreement. To be sure, this is not to say that there is nothing at all on which commentators concur. Some aspects of Spinoza’s philosophy are more or less uncontested. Few interpretations dispute the claim that according to Spinoza

- there is only *one substance* (i.e. God)⁹ (even though Spinoza’s claim that ‘someone who calls God one or unique does not have a true idea of God, or is speaking improperly about him’¹⁰ makes it unclear in what way this claim must be evaluated precisely)
- the knowledge of the essence of this substance is attainable via *attributes* (even though the exact nature of these attributes is subject of an ever-ongoing debate)
- the human mind knows only two attributes: *thought and extension* (even though there is no consensus as to the way Spinoza must be understood to underpin this assertion)
- everything that is – with the sole exception of God (i.e. the one substance) and his infinitely many attributes – must be conceived to be *modes* that are *in God* somehow (even though scholars disagree about the nature of this ‘in-relation’)
- we must distinguish between *finite and infinite modes* (even though there is little consensus concerning the precise way these modes must be conceived to

⁵ See Jonathan Israel’s trilogy on ‘the radical enlightenment’: *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (2001), *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (2006) and *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (2011).

⁶ Spinoza, *Ethics* (London 1996) Translated by Edwin Curley. EVp23, (I) 607 (*Mens humana non potest cum Corpore absolutè destrui*).

⁷ EIV Preface, (I) 545 (*naturae humanae exemplar*).

⁸ EIVp67, (I) 584 (*Homo liber*). For a detailed scrutiny of the notion ‘free man’ in Spinoza see: Steven Nadler, ‘On Spinoza’s Free Man’ in: *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* Volume 1 Issue 1 (2015), 103-120.

⁹ In this study I will use the terms ‘God’ and ‘substance’ as synonyms, unless indicated otherwise.

¹⁰ Letter 50, (II) 406 (*qui Deum unum vel unicum nuncupat, nullam de Deo veram habere ideam, vel impropriè de eò loqui*).

follow from God, nor what we are to make of the distinction between *immediate* and *mediate* infinite modes)

- the infinitely many modes that are conceived under the different attributes, must be understood to parallel each other in such a way that (say) a man's *body* and the idea of this body – the man's *mind* – can be conceived to be 'one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways'¹¹ (even though the exact nature and underpinning of this '*parallelism*' is – unsurprisingly – being discussed about continuously).

There is yet another aspect of Spinoza's philosophy that seems unchallenged. It is the pivotal role that must be attributed to the intellect. No matter how diverse the various interpretations of Spinoza's work may be, there is little doubt among scholars about the importance of the intellect in Spinoza's metaphysics. This is hardly surprising, as the importance of the intellect surfaces explicitly in several passages in Spinoza's works, not in the least in his claim that the intellect must be considered to be 'the better part of us' (*pars melior nostri*),¹² the 'eternal'¹³ part that enables us to 'absolutely act from virtue'.¹⁴ Indeed: according to Spinoza 'in [the intellect's] perfection must consist our supreme good'.¹⁵ It is precisely the human ability to gather knowledge by way of the intellect that offers us the power to become a 'free man'¹⁶ who is led by reason alone,¹⁷ and who thus reaches the highest happiness. Or, as it is stated in the appendix to part 4 of the *Ethics*:

In life, therefore, it is especially useful to perfect, as far as we can, our intellect, *or* reason. In this one thing consists man's highest happiness, *or* blessedness.¹⁸

¹¹ EIIp7s, (I) 451 (*una, eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa*).

¹² EIV Appendix XXXII, (I) 594. The same characterization also surfaces in the Theological-Political Treatise: 'since the intellect is the better part of us, we should certainly strive above all to perfect it as much as we can' (*Cum melior pars nostri sit intellectus, certum est, si nostrum utile revera quaerere velimus, nos supra omnia debere conari, ut eum quantum fieri potest, perficiamus*). Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* (TTP) Ch. IV, (II) 127-128.

¹³ EVp40c, (I) 615 (*aeternus cogitandi modus*).

¹⁴ EIVp23, (I) 558 (*Homo quatenus ad aliquid agendum determinatur ex eo, quòd ideas habet inadaequatas, non potest absolutè dici ex virtute agere; sed tantum quatenus determinatur ex eo, quòd intelligit*).

¹⁵ TTP) Ch. IV, (II) 128 (*in ejus enim perfectione summum nostrum bonum consistere debet*).

¹⁶ See EIVp67, (I) 584 (*Homo liber*), and the subsequent propositions.

¹⁷ EIVp68, (I) 584 (*Illum liberum esse dixi, qui solà ducitur ratione*).

¹⁸ EIV Appendix, IV, (I) 588.

(In vitâ itaque apprimè utile est, intellectum, seu rationem, quantum possumus, perficere, & in hoc uno summa hominis felicitas, seu beatitudo consistit)

Moreover, once it is recognized that the concluding part of the *Ethics* – the *grande finale* of Spinoza’s main work – is called ‘The Power of the Intellect, or on Human Freedom’ (*De Potentiâ Intellectûs seu de Libertate Humanâ*), any reserve concerning the cardinal importance that Spinoza ascribes to the intellect is effectively erased. It is by way of the *intellectus sive ratio* that man is able to reach the highest goal in nature, and to develop a demeanor that is as friendly and balanced as humanly possible.

The agreement among scholars with regard to the role of the better part of the human mind in Spinoza’s philosophy does not imply that controversies do not arise concerning the way in which the notion of ‘intellect’ must be interpreted. On the contrary even, at this point the problems only seem to start. One of the difficulties one meets when trying to unravel Spinoza’s conception of our intellect is the puzzling fact that, despite the crucial role that must be assigned to the intellect in Spinoza’s ethical program, the notion itself cannot be found among the terms that are defined at the beginnings of four of the five parts of the *Ethics*.¹⁹ Whereas concepts such as ‘God’, ‘substance’, ‘attribute’, ‘mode’, and ‘idea’ receive explicit descriptions on the basis of which Spinoza is able to unfold his philosophy in geometrical order, ‘intellect’ is sought in vain among the twenty-six definitions that Spinoza provides in his main work.²⁰ This confronts us with an important problem: anyone who aims at understanding the exact purport of Spinoza’s philosophy as well as the way in which he thinks the human mind must be understood to be a thinking thing that has (and augments) knowledge so as to reach the highest happiness, is forced to *construe* an adequate conception of *pars melior nostri* (and the way it is related to the finite mind it is a part of). It is the aim of this study to provide such a construction. By way of an analysis of key passages in (mainly) the *Ethics*, I intend to lay bare the structure of the intellect in the way this concept is

¹⁹ Part V of the *Ethics* contains no extra definitions, only two Axioms.

²⁰ Moreover, the term that denotes *pars melior nostri* cannot be found either in the Axioms that are given at the beginnings of the parts I, II, IV, V, nor is it elucidated in the ‘physical treatise’ following EIIp13s. To be sure, the notion *is* mentioned in one of the definitions of part I of the *Ethics*, namely the famous definition of ‘attribute’, which reads thus: ‘by attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence’ (*Per attributum intelligo id, quod intellectus de substantiâ percipit, tamquam ejusdem essentiam constituens*), EID4, (I) 408.

used by Spinoza. In the subsequent chapters it will become clear – I hope – why and how our intellect can be understood to have the already indicated *instrumental function* with respect to the reaching of the highest goal in nature.

One of the difficulties one faces when unraveling Spinoza's view on this instrumental function is the precise relation between the intellect and the mind it is claimed to be the better part of. Indeed: what is the relation between *pars melior nostri* and other phenomena that we would normally associate with human mental behavior? A first indication as to how we should understand the demarcation between the intellect and the other forms of knowledge can be found in EIIp40s2, where Spinoza provides a concise overview of his theory of knowledge. Consider the following passage:

From what has been said above, 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 which is mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect (see P29C); for that reason I have been accustomed to call such perceptions knowledge from random experience;

II. from signs, for example, from the fact that, having heard or read certain words, we recollect things, and form certain ideas of them, like those through which we imagine the things (P18S); these two ways of regarding things I shall henceforth call knowledge of the first kind, opinion or imagination;

III. finally, from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things (see P38C, P39, P39C, and P40). This I shall call reason and the second kind of knowledge.

[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. 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.²¹

(Ex omnibus supra dictis clarè apparet, nos multa percipere, & notiones universales formare I°. Ex singularibus, nobis per sensûs mutilatè, confusè, & sine ordine ad intellectum repræsentatis (vide Coroll. Prop. 29. hujus): & ideò tales perceptiones cognitionem ab experientiâ vagâ vocare consuevi. II°. Ex signis, ex. gr. ex eo, quòd auditis, aut lectis quibusdam verbis rerum recordemur, & earum quasdam ideas formemus similes iis, per quas res imaginamur (vide Schol. Prop. 18. hujus). Utrumque hunc res contemplandi modum cognitionem primi generis, opinionem, vel imaginationem in posterum vocabo. III°. Denique ex eo, quòd notiones communes, rerumque proprietatum ideas adæquatas habemus (vide Coroll. Prop. 38. & 39. cum ejus Coroll. & Prop. 40. hujus); atque hunc rationem, & secundi generis cognitionem vocabo. Præter hæc duo cognitionis genera datur, ut in sequentibus ostendam, aliud tertium, quod scientiam intuitivam vocabimus. Atque hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adæquatâ ideâ essentiæ formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adæquatam cognitionem essentiæ rerum)

²¹ EIIp40s2, (I) 477-478.

This important passage contains relevant information about the scope of the intellect. Apparently, the intellect must be understood to encompass, not *imaginatio*, but only *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*. The remark that ‘singular things which have been represented to us through the senses’ have no ‘order for the intellect’ appears to make it clear that Spinoza’s notion of ‘intellect’ is to be distinguished from the imagination (i.e. from the first kind of knowledge). At the same time EIIp40s2 evidently is not exhaustive in its exposition of how we should understand the intellect (and the way in which it can be distinguished from the imagination). In order to construct a full-blown version of Spinoza’s theory of the intellect we must address several issues, among which the question (i) how we must conceive the *adequacy* of the knowledge of the second and third kinds, (ii) how adequate ideas can *be had* (i.e. how a mind can contain adequate mental representations of things that are outside that conceiving mind), and (iii) how adequate knowledge can be understood to provide a way to blessedness.

Luckily, the interpreter of Spinoza’s work need not start from scratch when trying to unravel Spinoza’s theory of the intellect. For despite the omission of a clear-cut definition of ‘intellect’, there are several passages in the *Ethics* – as well as in Spinoza’s earlier works and his letters – that are helpful in trying to disentangle the claims in EIIp40s2. Propositions 30 and 31 in the first part of the *Ethics* are a case in point. Consider the following claims:

P30: An actual intellect, whether finite or infinite, must comprehend God's attributes and God's affections, and nothing else.²²

(PROPOSITIO XXX. *Intellectus actu finitus, aut actu infinitus Dei attributa, Deique affectiones comprehendere debet, & nihil aliud*)

[...]

P31: The actual intellect, whether finite or infinite, like will, desire, love, and the like, must be referred to *Natura naturata*, not to *Natura naturans*.²³

(PROPOSITIO XXXI. *Intellectus actu, sive is finitus sit, sive infinitus, ut & voluntas, cupiditas, amor &c. ad Naturam naturatam, non verò ad naturantem referri debent*)

²² EIp30, (I) 434. Piet Steenbakkers remarked in a personal conversation (june 2018) that the second ‘*actu*’ in the Gebhardt-version of the *Opera* is an unwarranted insertion. This will be elucidated in the new critical edition of the *Ethica* by Fokke Akkerman and Piet Steenbakkers (Paris, PuF, forthcoming).

²³ EIp31, (I) 434.

These evidently are important claims. They provide us with a preliminary indication as to how we must conceive the metaphysical status of the intellect (namely, that it must be conceived to be operative at the level of *Natura naturata*), as well as what must apparently be understood to be the represented content of this better part of our minds (i.e. God's attributes and his affections). At the same time it cannot be neglected that the quoted assertions are far from elucidative, as it is unclear what we must understand by terms such as 'finite', 'infinite', 'attribute' '*Natura naturata*' and '*Natura naturans*'. Examples like these teach us that an investigation into Spinoza's view on the notion 'intellect' – and the way it is to be distinguished from the imagination – must go hand in hand with the unfolding of a coherent view on a range of other controversial issues. Clarifying Spinoza's take on the intellect entails the development of a fair understanding of (inter alia) what the scholastic terms²⁴ '*Natura naturans*' and '*Natura naturata*' refer to in the context of Spinoza's philosophy, of how (infinite and finite) modes must be understood to follow from and be in substance, and of Spinoza's idiosyncratic use of the notions 'substance' and 'attribute'. Indeed, anyone who wishes to elucidate Spinoza's concept of 'intellect' must be willing to engage in some of the long-standing controversies in the history of Spinoza scholarship.

Treatment of these complex issues in the context of one single study may seem hilariously pretentious. Is it really possible to do justice to the intricate problems that are implied in the controversies mentioned (and that, I may add, have occupied some of the brightest minds in the history of philosophy for the last 350 years)? This hesitation is understandable – and perhaps even justified. Yet, it must be stressed once more that the present strategy is motivated, not (only) by preposterous ambition, but (first and foremost) by the nature of the material that is to be investigated. The choice to enter Spinoza's metaphysical labyrinth – or, as some would have it, swamp – is brought about by more than just the evident need to clarify the terms that are used in the various descriptions of the intellect that can

²⁴ H. Siebeck showed that the terms '*Natura naturans*' and '*Natura naturata*' originate in Latin translations of Averroes' comments on Aristotle. See: Piet Steenbakkers, 'Een vijandige overname' in: Gunther Coppens ed. *Spinoza en de scholastiek* (Leuven/Leusden 2003), 35. Steenbakkers called Spinoza's use of the terms *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* a 'hostile take-over' ('*vijandige overname*'). Jonathan Bennett likewise stated that 'the terminology had a long history before Spinoza, and he introduces it into the *Ethics* because he likes capturing in his own terms as much as he can of rival philosophies.' Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Cambridge 1984), 119.

be found in the *Ethics*. In the following chapters it will become clear that a scrutiny of Spinoza's notion of intellect cannot avoid addressing various fundamental metaphysical discussions *precisely because the structure of Spinoza's metaphysics can be understood to be an expression of his conception of the intellect*. One of the central claims of this study is that the intellect not only has an *instrumental* function in Spinoza's philosophy, but that it also has a *constructive* function. It will be shown that *the structural characteristics of the intellect are recognizable in the metaphysical structure that is laid down in the Ethics*. Hence, a study of *pars melior nostri* cannot refrain from paying attention to a range of controversial metaphysical issues, not only because clarification of often hermetic notions enables us to decipher intellect-related claims in the *Ethics*, but also because an elegant reading of some of the most fundamental issues in Spinoza scholarship may provide us with important additional corroboration for the uncovered characteristics of our better part.

This book consist of five chapters from which emerges a picture of Spinoza's conception of the intellect. In order to foster an adequate understanding of the complex issues at hand, a preliminary outline of the topics that are to be treated must be provided. However, before turning to a summary of the subjects that are to be scrutinized in the subsequent chapters, I will first furnish a succinct overview of the characteristics of the intellect in the way it shall surface throughout this work. The present study will make it clear that:

- (1) The intellect provides the way to blessedness. This can be called *the instrumental function of the intellect*.
- (2) The ideas that constitute the intellect are characterized by a *duality* of things insofar as they are considered *objectively* (viz. *with* respect to their object), and the same things insofar as they are considered *formally* (viz. as they are *in themselves, without* respect to their object).
- (3) The objective and formal being of a thing is operative in respectively an *extrinsic* and an *intrinsic* causal thread, that must be conceived to be two *modal* manifestations of God's all-encompassing causal power. Ideas (and their objects) that are considered insofar as they are caused extrinsically (i.e.

functioning in the *order of nature*) must be understood to *exist under duration*; and insofar as the same things are conceived to be caused intrinsically (i.e. functioning in the *order of the intellect*), they must be understood to *exist eternally*.

- (4) The duality of the formal and objective being of things is recognizable in the structure of the *Ethics* itself,²⁵ to such an extent that even the most fundamental concept that is presented in it – substance (or God) – can be understood in (at least) two different ways. Considered in its formal being, substance can be denoted as *Natura naturans*; and in its objective being the very same substance surfaces as *Natura naturata*. The mirroring of the dual structure of the intellect in this – and several other – structural characteristics of Spinoza’s metaphysics can be called *the constructive function of the intellect*.
- (5) The conceptual distinction between the formal and objective being of things entails a further *trichotomy*. Apart from the formal and objective being of a thing, we can also distinguish *the parallel object of the idea*. This intricate trichotomy can be characterized thus: if the intellect considers things with respect to (i) their *durational objects*, they are said to be conceived (ii) *objectively* as ideas. And if these same things are considered under a species of eternity, they are grasped as to (iii) their *formal* being.
- (6) The (infinite and finite) intellect is constituted by *true* or *adequate ideas*. As conceiving the truth and adequacy of ideas implies the conscious grasping of a thing under a species of eternity, *pars melior nostri* – that is: the collection of all adequate ideas in a mind – can be understood to be an *eternal part* of God’s eternal self-knowledge. This eternity of the intellect – which sets it

²⁵ Piet Steenbakkens noted: ‘[...] I cannot interpret the *Ethics* otherwise than as belonging to the sphere of *ratio* [...]’. Piet Steenbakkens, *Spinoza’s Ethica from Manuscript to Print* (Assen 1994), 164. As will become clear in this study, *ratio* – or ‘the second kind of knowledge’ (EIIp40s2) – must indeed be understood to be characterized by the duality of the formal and the objective being of things that will be shown to be a pervasive element of the geometric exposition of the *Ethics*. To be sure, *scientia intuitiva* – or the third kind of knowledge – can also be understood thus, even though the ‘direction of fit’ is diametrically opposed. However, as Steenbakkens rightly remarked ‘A discourse that moves exclusively within the sphere of *scientia intuitiva* is, I think, a practical impossibility’. Steenbakkens, *Spinoza’s Ethica from Manuscript to Print*, 164.

apart from the eternity of its parallel mode of extension – is due to the *axiomatic representational nature of thought*.

- (7) The *truth* of an idea consists in the agreement between the idea and its *object*. The *adequacy* of an idea consists in the grasping of the formal status (i.e. the existence of the conceived thing under a species of eternity) of that idea. Furthermore, an idea is *inadequate* insofar as there is a mismatch between the image in the imagination of the perceiver and the object of that particular mode of thinking.
- (8) The adequacy of an idea can be grasped via two routes: *bottom-up* (in which case the eternal formal being of a thing in the *order of the intellect* is grasped on the basis of things that are common to all things in the *order of nature*), and *top-down* (in which case the eternal formal being of things is conceived to follow immediately from the formal essence of the attributes). Spinoza calls the former variant of knowledge *ratio* (or the ‘second kind of knowledge’), and the latter *scientia intuitiva* (or the ‘third kind of knowledge’).²⁶

Attentive readers of Spinoza’s work will have noticed that in the enumeration (1)-(8), I employ terms that are used – more than in the *Ethics* – in Spinoza’s earlier *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (TdIE) and *Short Treatise* (KV): the *formal* and *objective* being of things.²⁷ This may lead some to the supposition that this study is grounded on the conviction that Spinoza’s various publications can be considered to form one consistent body of work, from which passages can be adduced at will. It must be stressed that this is *not* a presumption that I share. Even though there are various currents in Spinoza’s thought that remain more or less unaltered from his early works and letters until his mature philosophy as laid down in the *Ethics* – the significance that is attributed to the intellect being a case in point – it is important to recognize that an interpretation of Spinoza’s final view on the

²⁶ EIIp40s2, (I) 478.

²⁷ Moreover, attentive readers may have noticed that I have provided *eight* points. This is evidently inspired by the concluding paragraphs of the (unfinished) *TdIE*, where Spinoza himself provides eight – different – points.

precise structure and workings of the intellect cannot be based on an uncritical analysis of the TdIE or KV (or any other of his earlier works and letters). Rather, in the subsequent chapters I will only invoke and validate earlier claims when these are corroborated by assertions in the *Ethics*, or Spinoza’s later letters. Evidently, this goes for the terms ‘formal’ and ‘objective’ as well. In the following chapters it will become clear that these terms can indeed be used constructively when laying bare the structure of the intellect in the way it emerges in Spinoza’s mature philosophy.

A first instance of the conceptual bifurcation between the formal and the objective being of things, that will turn out to be constitutive for Spinoza’s view on *pars melior nostri* (and that is illustrative for the eminent role that the *constructive function of the intellect* must be understood to play in Spinoza’s philosophy) will be treated in **Chapter 1**. It surfaces in the important distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. In the first chapter I will investigate Spinoza’s idiosyncratic use of these scholastic terms by way of an analysis of the terms ‘God’s intellect’ in EIp17s and ‘infinite intellect of God’ in EIIp11c. It will become clear that in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy these designations must be understood to be *ontologically identical*, but *conceptually distinct*. Another way of saying this is that the attribute of thought (and any other attribute) – which is to be located at the conceptual level of *Natura naturans* – and the infinite mode of thought (or of any other attribute) – which is operative at the level of *Natura naturata* – must be understood to have the *same reference* but *another meaning*. In this sense, the elucidation in Chapter 1 will provide us with a first step in clarifying the ‘thicket of intensionality’ that Margaret Wilson discerned in the metaphysical structure of the *Ethics*.²⁸

The distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* can be rendered thus:

<i>Natura naturans</i>	}	(a) God’s intellect (EIp17s)

<i>Natura naturata</i>	}	(b) the infinite intellect (EIIp11c)

(table 1)

²⁸ Margaret Wilson in a review of Thomas Carson Mark’s work *Spinoza’s Theory of Truth*, quoted in: Michael Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza* (New York 1996), 118.

In order to elucidate this difference between ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s) and ‘the infinite intellect’ (EIIp11c), we must engage in a debate with the already mentioned Alexandre Koyré. That is to say: in the first chapter I will argue for the invalidity of the claim of Koyré and others that the concept ‘God’s intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God’s essence’ in EIp17s must be understood to be *vacuous*. In opposition to Koyré *cum suis* I will show that this scholium does *not* harbor a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Now, it is true that Spinoza’s mature philosophy provides many ways to argue for the ontological identity of and the conceptual distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. So why elucidate this distinction by way of a treatment of EIIp11c and the controversial EIp17s?

The first reason for choosing this rather thorny route is that the aforementioned scholium and corollary are formulated in terms of *thought*, and deal explicitly with the notion ‘intellect’. So a treatment of these passages brings us immediately to the heart of our subject. Indeed, both EIp17s and EIIp11c contain remarks that shed an interesting light on the way in which we should understand the ‘intellect’ in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy. In EIIp11c Spinoza famously claims that ‘the human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God’.²⁹ This assertion – in Chapter 1 I will use the term ‘Mereological Claim’ for it – provides us with a first indication as to why Spinoza would hold that the intellect must be considered to be essential for the possible blessedness of the human animal. From EIIp11c we can gather that the intellect is *pars melior nostri* because our finite intellect is somehow³⁰ encompassed by God’s infinite intellect. Spinoza’s claim that the highest virtue of the human animal is understanding,³¹ and that ‘the greatest virtue of the mind is to understand, or know, God’³² can thus be rephrased in the following way: via the intellect the human animal is capable of somehow *logging in to God’s self-knowledge*. Or to state it in yet another way: the Mereological Claim makes it clear that according to Spinoza the intellectual knowledge that is had by a singular human mind can be understood to be *God’s self-knowledge insofar as God thinks by way of that particular mind*.

²⁹ EIIp11c, (I) 456 (*Hinc sequitur Mentem humanam partem esse infiniti intellectus Dei*).

³⁰ In Chapter 2 it will become clear that modes can be understood to be ‘in’ God in different ways, depending on the perspective that is taken.

³¹ EIVp26d, (I) 559.

³² EIVp28, (I) 560 (*Ergo Mentis summa virtus est Deum intelligere, seu cognoscere*).

EIp17s also contains important preliminary hints concerning the way in which we must conceive the notion ‘intellect’. In order to see this, we must adduce the following passage that can be found in EIp17s:

If intellect pertains to the divine nature, it will not be able to be (like our intellect) by nature either posterior to (as most would have it), or simultaneous with, the things understood, since God is prior in causality to all things (by P16Cl). On the contrary, the truth and formal essence of things is what it is because it exists objectively in that way in God's intellect.³³

(Si intellectus ad divinam naturam pertinet, non poterit, uti noster intellectus, posterior (ut plerisque placet), vel simul naturâ esse cum rebus intellectis, quandoquidem Deus omnibus rebus prior est causalitate (per Coroll. 1. Prop. 16.); sed contrâ veritas, & formalis rerum essentia ideò talis est, quia talis in Dei intellectu existit objective)

As already noted, various scholars, among whom Koyré and Martial Gueroult, have claimed that these claims are part of a *reductio*-argument. As Michael Della Rocca expresses it: ‘Spinoza is here simply drawing out the implications of a view about God’s nature that he himself rejects’.³⁴ Or as Edwin Curley adds in a footnote to his translation of EIp17s: ‘[Spinoza] is only discussing here what follows from a common view’.³⁵ Claims like these suggest that the remarks in EIp17s cannot be understood to be very helpful when trying to understand how we must conceive Spinoza’s view on our intellect. However, once it is acknowledged that this claim is *not* a part of a *reductio ad absurdum* and that Spinoza thus must be understood to actually endorse these claims, it becomes clear that the intellect in the way ‘men commonly understand’ it³⁶ is not only to be seen as a part of the infinite intellect (by EIIp11c), but moreover that the intellect must be understood to be characterized by the fact that it is ‘by nature posterior to [...] or simultaneous with, the things understood [...]’.³⁷ Another way of saying this is that Chapter 1 will provide us with a first indication that according to Spinoza, the ideas that constitute our intellect (and the infinite intellect of which it is a part) are characterized by a certain dual structure. Furthermore, Spinoza’s use of the terms

³³ EIp17s, (I) 427.

³⁴ Della Rocca, *Representation*, 181, note 55.

³⁵ EIp17s, (I) 427, translator’s footnote 49.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, (I) 427 (*aliud [...] intelligendum est, quàm quod vulgò solent homines*).

³⁷ *Ibidem*, (I) 427 (*noster intellectus, posterior (ut plerisque placet), vel simul naturâ esse cum rebus intellectis*).

‘formal’ and ‘objective’ in EI_p17s suggests that these traditional terms³⁸ may very well be understood to play an important role in Spinoza’s mature view of the notion ‘intellect’.

These preliminary observations of course lead to a host of subsequent questions. One of the things that must be answered concerning the Mereological Claim is how we are to understand the metaphysical status and causal generation of the infinite mode that our human mind (and its better part) is claimed to be a part of. This is the main subject of **Chapter 2**. By way of a scrutiny of the mereological, causal and existential tissue of Spinoza’s philosophy we will see that modes – whether finite or infinite – can be grasped in two ways: either insofar as they are understood to *exist eternally* as to their *intrinsically caused formal being*, or insofar as they are conceived to *exist under duration* as to their *extrinsically caused objective being*. This can be rendered thus:

(b) <i>Natura naturata</i>	{	(b-i) The intrinsically caused eternal formal being of things
		(b-ii) The extrinsically caused durational objective being of things

(table 2)

The scrutiny of the mereological, causal and existential tissue of Spinoza’s philosophy in Chapter 2 is induced by the supposition that the finite human mind can be understood to be an *infinite mode* when considered in its formal being. This seemingly absurd assertion (as it appears to posit that something finite is infinite) turns out to be less absurd once the pervasive nature of the distinction between the formal and objective being of things is acknowledged. Furthermore, the applicability of the terms ‘formal’ and ‘objective’ with respect to the duality that is shown to permeate Spinoza’s philosophy firmly underpins the already indicated supposition that in the *Ethics* we encounter a *twofold use* of the intellect.³⁹ In the

³⁸ Spinoza’s use of the terms ‘formal’ and ‘objective’ – which appears to be inspired by Descartes – can rightfully be called ‘traditional’. John Cottingham stressed that ‘Descartes’ use of the term ‘objective’ (which is, of course, wholly different from modern usage) is borrowed from the scholastics’. In: John Cottingham, *A Descartes Dictionary* (Oxford 1993), 136-137. To be sure, as Marco Forlivesi showed, the genealogy of the formal-objective distinction is rather complicated. See: Marco Forlivesi, ‘La Distinction entre Concept Formel et Concept Objectif ; Suárez, Pasqualigo, Mastri’ in: *Les Études Philosophiques* 1:60 (2002), 3-30.

³⁹ In this sense I follow Michael Della Rocca’s claim concerning ‘the twofold use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason’. Consider the following remark from Della Rocca: ‘Often these unifications that

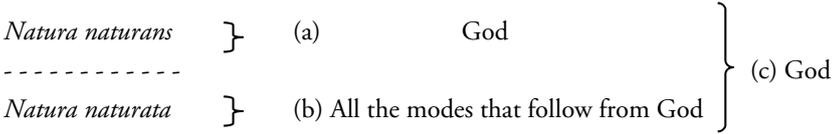
second chapter it will be shown that the intellect does not only play a decisive role in the reaching of ‘blessedness’, but can also be understood to offer a key for understanding the way in which Spinoza’s philosophy is devised. Indeed, Chapter 2 provides us with a strong indication that the structure of Spinoza’s metaphysics in the way it is presented in the *Ethics* can be understood to *express the structure of the intellect*. It will become clear that the bifurcation of substance and its infinite modes, and of the formal (eternal) and objective (durational) being of modes, surfaces precisely because – in the wording of EVp29s – ‘we conceive things as actual in two ways’.⁴⁰ Hence, we can distinguish between *the instrumental function of the intellect* (providing the way to blessedness by logging in to God’s self-knowledge) and *the constructive function of the intellect* (expressing the structure of Spinoza’s metaphysics). As will be shown in Chapter 2, recognition of the constructive function of the intellect in turn enables us to solve some hard problems concerning the way in which we must conceive the distinction between the *immediate* and the *mediate* infinite modes, as well as the way in which these types of modes must be understood to be *in* God.

The second chapter actually will tell us still something more. It is important to note that the duality between the objective and the formal being of things entails a *trichotomy* of (i) durational *objects*, (ii) their parallel durational *objective being* (or ideas), and (iii) the eternal *formal being* of ideas. To be sure, the precise way in which this important structure must be understood (and is corroborated) will be treated more extensively only in Chapter 4, which deals (inter alia) with Spinoza’s parallelism thesis. Before we can turn to this important subject, something else

Spinoza introduces manifest a twofold use of the PSR that I see as characteristic of his rationalism. Let me illustrate this twofold use of the PSR by returning to the case of causation. Spinoza demands that we give an account of what causation is; we must be able to explain what it is for one thing to cause another. [...] This [...] demand that causation be intelligible, is the first use of the PSR in this case. The account of causation that Spinoza goes on to offer is [...] roughly this: for a to cause b is nothing more than for a to make b intelligible [...]. This analysis of causation in terms of [...] intelligibility is the second use of the PSR in this case. Thus causation is [...] made intelligible in terms of intelligibility itself. Here we see the notion of intelligibility doubling back on itself: a given phenomenon is explained in terms of explanation itself. This double use of the PSR pervades Spinoza’s philosophy.’ Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (New York 2008), 8. Just as Della Rocca, I think that the way in which Spinoza’s philosophy (and hence the notion of ‘intellect’ that surfaces in it) is presented, is determined by his conception of the intellect. In this sense the intellect can indeed be considered to be ‘doubling back on itself’. To be sure, unlike Della Rocca I do *not* think that the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR) can be ascribed unconditionally to Spinoza, as will become clear in Chapter 3.

⁴⁰ EVp29s, (I) 610 (*Res duobus modis à nobis ut actuales concipiuntur*).

must be treated first. In **Chapter 3** I will show that the conceptual bifurcation that can be conceived to be an expression of *pars melior nostri* has important implications for the way in which we must understand the most fundamental concept of Spinoza’s metaphysics: substance (i.e. God). Chapter 3 is dedicated to an explanation of the way in which the bifurcation between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* can serve as a stepping stone for understanding a further conceptual distinction that is harbored in Spinoza’s intricate metaphysical structure. It will become clear that God can be conceived in two ways: (i) as a *coalescent*⁴¹ *identity* of his essence and the infinitely many things that follow from (and are in) it in infinitely many ways, and (ii) as an *absolute essence*, that cannot even be understood to be ‘one’, as ‘someone who calls God one or unique does not have a true idea of God, or is speaking improperly about him’.⁴² These two ways of conceiving God can be rendered schematically in the following way:



(table 3)

It is crucial to acknowledge that the particular bifurcation that is hinted at in Chapter 3 is different from the bifurcation that surfaces in Chapter 1. Whereas Chapter 1 deals with the conceptual distinction between (a) and (b), Chapter 3 treats the difference between (a) and (c).

Now, why would this be important in a study that is concerned with an elucidation of the notion ‘intellect’? Why entangle ourselves in an analysis of ‘God’? The answer is rather straightforward: we must elucidate this fundamental notion precisely because our mind is claimed to be a part of the infinite intellect of God. Hence, an analysis of the structural characteristics of the divine *res* in the way it is portrayed in the *Ethics* may provide us with an answer to the important question how we must conceive the difference (if there is one) between God’s self-knowledge *insofar as he is expressed in a human mind* and God’s self-knowledge *as it is in itself*. As will become clear in Chapter 3, there is good reason to distinguish between

⁴¹ This designation will be elucidated in Chapter 3.
⁴² Letter 50, (II) 406 (*qui Deum unum, vel unicum nuncupat, nullam de Deo veram habere ideam, vel impropriè de eò loqui*).

God's power of thinking considered in itself, and God's power of thinking insofar as it is expressed in a mode (*in casu*: the intellect). An analysis of the most fundamental causal concept that can be found in the *Ethics* – the notion of '*causa sui*' – will teach us that these conceptual aspects stand to each other as 'the dog that is a heavenly constellation' stands to 'the dog that is a barking animal'.⁴³ Indeed, a scrutiny of the way in which God causes himself will make it clear that God can be understood to know himself in two ways: God (*c*) can be conceived to know himself via the (infinite) intellect in the way we commonly understand it. God (*a*), in contrast, must be understood to be self-knowing via his *extra-intellectual absolute power of thinking*. Our human mind can be conceived to be a part of the first variant of God's self-knowledge only. And hence, an investigation of the way in which we must conceive *pars melior nostri* must focus (mainly) on this *coalescent* concept of God. This is precisely the route that will be taken in the last two chapters of this study.

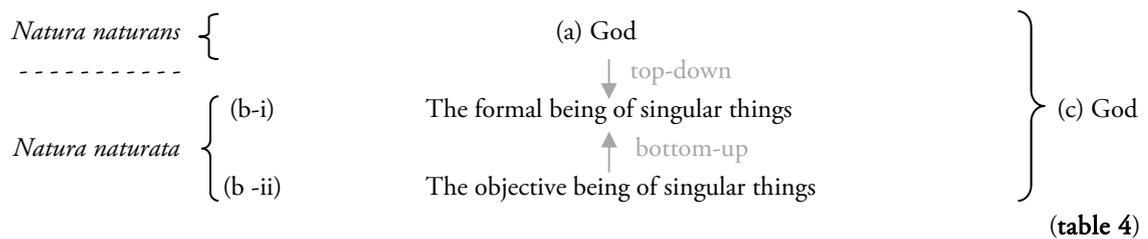
Chapter 4 is dedicated to Spinoza's important 'parallelism thesis' (i.e. the remarkable thesis that a man's body and his mind can be conceived to be 'one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways').⁴⁴ There are two reasons for treating this notorious thesis. Firstly, as already noted, in Chapter 2 it will become clear that the intellect must actually be understood to be characterized by a certain *trichotomy*. The ideas that constitute the intellect must be understood to encompass an *object*, the *objective being* (or *idea*) of that object, and the *formal being* of that object. In Chapter 4 we will see that this very trichotomy also surfaces in Spinoza's parallelism thesis. On the basis of a detailed scrutiny of Spinoza's parallelism-claims in EIIp7, EIIp7c, EIIp7s and EIIp21s we will see that recognition of the importance of the trichotomy that was uncovered in Chapter 2 yields an elegant reading of Spinoza's idiosyncratic (or even hermetic) claims about the identity of minds and bodies and the identity of minds and ideas of these minds.

Our findings concerning the parallelism thesis not only corroborate our claim that *pars melior nostri* is characterized by a trichotomy (and hence underpin our claims concerning the *constructive function* of the intellect). They also provide us with new information as to the way in which we must understand the precise *modus operandi* (and hence the *instrumental function*) of this better part of us. For in

⁴³ This example is taken from EIp17s, that will be scrutinized thoroughly in Chapter 1.

⁴⁴ EIIp7s, (I) 451 (*una, eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa*).

Chapter 4 we will see that the remarkable claim that a man’s body and his mind can be conceived to be ‘one and the same thing’ can only be upheld once it is acknowledged that the knowledge of the formal being of things can be reached via *two distinct routes*. The intrinsically caused and eternal formal being of things can be known *top-down* – i.e. proceeding from God’s essence (a) to knowledge of the formal being (b-i) of the things that constitute (b) – and they can be known *bottom-up* – i.e. starting with the knowledge of the objective being of singular things (b-ii) in order to ‘climb up’ to knowledge of their formal being (b-i). Consider table 4:



Actually, both perspectives are already recognizable in the earlier chapters. Chapters 1-3 show that considered *realiter*, God (a) is *prior* to his modes at level (b), a priority that is posited in the very first proposition of the *Ethics* (which reads that ‘a substance is prior in nature to its affections’),⁴⁵ and that surfaces also in Spinoza’s *Principle of Plenitude* EIp16 (which states that ‘from the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes’).⁴⁶ From these important propositions we can gather that the causal (and hence the conceptual) direction must be understood to be *top-down* (i.e. *from cause to effect*), that is: starting in God at level (a) and proceeding to the being of singular things at level (b). Yet, treatment of the parallelism-claim makes it clear that there must also be understood to be a *bottom-up* perspective (i.e. *from effect to cause*) at work in Spinoza’s philosophy. If things are grasped with our intellect, the conceptual direction *does not necessarily run parallel with the causal direction*. Rather, if things are grasped with the intellect in the way we commonly understand it, the direction of knowledge can in a certain sense⁴⁷ be understood to *start with a durational mode*

⁴⁵ EIp1, (I) 410 (*Substantia prior est naturâ suis affectionibus*).

⁴⁶ EIp16, (I) 424 (*Ex necessitate divinae naturae infinita infinitis modis [...] sequi debent*).

⁴⁷ In Chapter 5 we will see that adequate knowledge can only be attained by virtue of a ‘first adequate idea’ that accounts for the self-consciousness of the conceiver.

in order to attain ‘intellectual love of God’, which is nothing else than ‘the very love of God by which God loves himself’.⁴⁸

Acknowledgement of the importance of the top-down and bottom-up perspectives in turn makes it clear how Spinoza’s theory of knowledge is to be understood precisely. This will be the subject of **Chapter 5**. This chapter is dedicated first and foremost to the concept of *representation*. For one of the things that remained more or less out of sight up till this point is the (in the words of Jonathan Bennett) ‘deep assumption that it is of the essence of the mental [...] that mental items are representative, about something, pointed outwards’.⁴⁹ In the final chapter it will be shown (i) that Spinoza can be understood to fully share this assumption, and (ii) how according to Spinoza the representational nature of mental items must be conceived precisely. By way of an analysis of some key propositions in (mainly) part II of the *Ethics* it will become clear that Spinoza distinguishes two types of ideas that can be mapped on two distinct representation relations. An understanding of the way in which these two representation relations must be conceived in turn provides us with an answer to the question how the intellect is to be distinguished from the imagination. Indeed, on the basis of various claims in the *Ethics* I will show how *inadequate* knowledge (or *imaginatio*) must be conceived, and in what way images in the imagination can be understood to differ fundamentally from the *truth* and *adequacy* that characterize ideas insofar as they are in the intellect. It will become clear that *imaginatio* must be considered to consist in a representational mismatch between an image in the imagination that is acquired via sense perception, and the thing this mode of thinking is taken to refer to. In contrast, the *truth* of an idea consists in the grasping of the agreement between the idea and its *object*, and that same true idea is *adequate* insofar it is considered as to its *eternal formal being*. Combining this latter claim with the things that were elucidated in the preceding chapters, it will become clear that the adequacy of an idea can be reached *bottom-up* (in which case the eternal formal being of a thing in *the order of the intellect* is grasped on the basis of things that are common to all things in the *order of nature*), and *top-down* (in which case the eternal formal being of things is conceived to *follow* immediately from the formal essence of the attributes). Spinoza designates these two ways of acquiring

⁴⁸ EVp36, (I) 612 (*Mentis Amor intellectualis erga Deum est ipse Dei Amor, quo Deus se ipsum amat*).

⁴⁹ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 155.

intellectual knowledge with the terms *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*. That this last way of knowing in to God's self-knowledge is as difficult as it is rare is no surprise for anyone who has ever taken the trouble to engage in the many controversies surrounding Spinoza's challenging philosophy.

1 Two dogs

*In this chapter it will be shown that according to Spinoza, God's infinite power of thinking can be understood to be conceptually bifurcated. Insofar as God is a *res cogitans*, he can be conceived in two ways: if considered *realiter*, God's power of thinking can be understood to be the undividable *attribute* of thought, and insofar as this infinite power of thinking is considered *modaliter*, it surfaces as the *infinite mode* of thought (i.e. the infinite intellect) of which the human mind – and hence its better part: the intellect – is a part. These two variants of God's infinite power of thinking must be understood to be *ontologically identical* yet *conceptually distinct*.*

1.1 Introduction

Baruch de Spinoza is without a doubt one of the most radical philosophers of the early modern period. A thinker who in 1677 had the audacity to claim that ‘the human Mind is part of the infinite intellect of God’¹ evidently could not count on the unconditioned support of all of his contemporaries. To be sure, this latter astonishing assertion in the corollary of EIIp11 – henceforth referred to as the *Mereological Claim* – and Spinoza's explication that ‘when we say that the human Mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing but that God [...] has this or that idea’² is remarkable not only for its supposed blasphemous character. The audacious claims in EIIp11c also leads to a host of subsequent questions concerning the way in which the structure of Spinoza's metaphysics must be understood, a fact that Spinoza fully acknowledges by adding in EIIp11s that ‘here, no doubt, my readers will come to a halt, and think of many things which will give them pause’.³

¹ EIIp11c, (I), 456 (*Hinc sequitur Mentem humanam partem esse infiniti intellectus Dei*).

² Ibidem, (I) 456 (*Ac proinde cum dicimus, Mentem humanam hoc, vel illud percipere, nihil aliud dicimus, quam quod Deus [...], hanc, vel illam ideam habere*).

³ EIIp11s, (I) 456 (*Hic sine dubio Lectores haerebunt, multaque comminiscuntur, quae moram injiciant*). The Mereological Claim can also be found in Letter 32: ‘Next, I maintain that the human Mind is this same power [which, insofar as it is infinite, contains in itself objectively the whole of Nature], not insofar as it is infinite and perceives the whole of Nature, but insofar as it is finite and perceives the human body only. For this reason I maintain that the human Mind is a part of a certain infinite intellect.’ (*Deinde Mentem*

One of the many things that give rise to questions with respect to the assertion that the human mind – and hence its better part: *noster intellectus*⁴ – can be understood to be part of the infinite intellect of God, is the exact meaning of the notion ‘infinite intellect of God’. It is the aim of this chapter to provide an introductory explanation of (i) the notion ‘infinite intellect’ in the way it is used in EIIp11c, and (ii) the way this notion must be understood to be related to God’s infinite power of thinking. This elucidation, which will be provided on the basis of a comparison between the terms ‘infinite intellect’ (EIIp11c) and ‘God’s intellect’ (that Spinoza employs in EIp17s), as well as the way in which these concepts are related, will teach us two important things that can serve as a basis for an understanding of *pars melior nostri*, and the way it functions in the metaphysical structure that is laid down in the *Ethics*:

- God’s infinite power of thinking can be understood to be *conceptually bifurcated* in an absolutely undividable *attribute* of thought, and an *infinite mode* of thought that can be conceived to consist of parts (such as human minds) in the way referred to in EIIp11c.
- the intellect can also be understood to have a bifurcated structure, as it is ‘by nature posterior to [...] or simultaneous with, the things understood [...]’.⁵

In order to see how we are able to reach these conclusions, we must turn to an analysis of Spinoza’s conception of the infinite intellect.

humanam hanc eandem potentiam statuo, non quatenus infinitam, & totam Naturam percipientem; sed finitam, nempe quatenus tantum humanum Corpus percipit, & hac ratione Mentem humanam partem cujusdam infiniti intellectus statuo). Letter 32, (II) 20. Here also, Spinoza acknowledges that this is not an easy claim to swallow: ‘But it would take too long to explain accurately and demonstrate here all these things [...]’ (*Verum hæc omnia [...]hic accuratè explicare, & demonstrare, res esset nimis prolixa [...]*) Ibidem (II) 20.

⁴ The term ‘*noster intellectus*’ is used by Spinoza in: EIp17s, (I) 427. For the claim that our intellect must be understood to be ‘our better part’ (*pars melior nostri*), see the Introduction.

⁵ EIp17s, (I) 427 (*noster intellectus, posterior (ut plerisque placet), vel simul naturâ esse cum rebus intellectis*).

1.1.1 A pressing contradiction

So how does Spinoza conceive the infinite intellect of God? This question cannot be answered so easily. An obvious problem for understanding the divine intellect is the following: the intuitive assumption that the ‘infinite intellect of God’ (EIIp11c) refers to God’s infinite power of thinking (i.e. to God as a *res cogitans*)⁶ seems to be repudiated by Spinoza’s claims in EIp12, EIp13 and EIp15s that substance is essentially undividable and thus cannot be conceived to consist of parts such as infinitely many human minds. Indeed: how can something be conceived to consist of parts if it is claimed to be essentially undividable? A related problem presents itself in EIp17s. In this scholium Spinoza is speaking about ‘God’s intellect’ (*Dei intellectus*), a term that *prima facie* seems to mean the same thing as ‘infinite intellect of God’ (EIIp11c): God as a *res cogitans*. However, when comparing the assertions in EIp17s with the claim in EIIp11c, contradictions emerge. In EIp17s, Spinoza states explicitly that

if will and intellect do pertain to the eternal essence of God, we must of course understand by each of these attributes something different from what men commonly understand. For the intellect and will which would constitute God's essence would have to differ entirely from our intellect and will, and could not agree with them in anything except the name. They would not agree with one another any more than do the dog that is a heavenly constellation and the dog that is a barking animal.⁷

(si ad æternam Dei essentiam, intellectus scilicet, & voluntas pertinent, aliud sanè per utrumque hoc attributum intelligendum est, quàm quod vulgò solent homines. Nam intellectus, & voluntas, qui Dei essentiam constituerent, à nostro intellectu, & voluntate, toto coelo differre deberent, nec in ullà re, præterquam in nomine, convenire possent; non aliter scilicet, quàm inter se conveniunt canis, signum coeleste, & canis, animal latrans)

It seems that these statements cannot be brought in line with the Mereological Claim in EIIp11c. For it is hard to see how Spinoza can maintain that our finite intellect is a part of the divine intellect, when this latter intellect in EIp17s is claimed to agree with our intellect only in name. If something is part of a bigger whole, the part and the whole would seem to have more in common than only their name. There are more things a single drop of water and the ocean of which the

⁶ ‘Thought is an attribute of God, or God is a thinking thing (*res cogitans*)’. EIIp1, (I) 448.

⁷ Ibidem, (I) 427. Several scholars have argued that this assertion is part of a *reductio* argument and thus cannot be understood to be endorsed by Spinoza. We will return to this subject in the next section.

drop is a (conceived)⁸ part have in common than merely the fact that both can be referred to using the term ‘water’. They also agree in (say) their salty taste, their liquid stage, their molecular structure, and all the other things that can be conceived to be equally in the part and in the whole.⁹ Hence, as our intellect is claimed to be a part of the infinite divine intellect (EIIp11c), but *cannot* be understood to be a ‘part’ of ‘*Dei intellectus*’ (EIp17s) in any normal sense of the term, we are confronted with a pressing problem, which can be rendered tentatively in the following way:

- (1) God has an infinite power of thinking (i.e. God is a *res cogitans*)
- (2) ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s) = God’s infinite power of thinking
- (3) ‘The infinite intellect of God’ (EIIp11c) = God’s infinite power of thinking
- (4) Our intellect *cannot* be conceived to be a part of ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s)
- (5) Our intellect *can* be conceived to be a part of ‘the infinite intellect of God’ (EIIp11c)

This way of putting things suggests that we are facing a problem concerning the indiscernibility of identicals. The principle that ‘given a true statement of identity, one of its two terms may be substituted for the other in any true statement’¹⁰ does

⁸ The drop of water in this context must be understood to be *conceived* as a drop only, whereas it actually is an integral part of the ocean. If the particular conglomerate of water molecules that we designate with the term ‘drop’ would be a drop in the sense that it is not merely conceptually but also *ontologically* distinct from the ocean (say, because it is sticking to a beer can that is lying on the beach) it would no longer be a part of the ocean and as such would not meet the requirements of the present example.

⁹ As Paul Ziche rightly remarked in a private conversation (July 2017), the applicability of the present example is depending (inter alia) on the *scale* of the parts that are used in it. In the case of *drops* of water the argument works just fine. But if the ocean is considered on a *molecular* scale, the claim concerning the liquidity, the salty taste and the molecular structure of the parts must be rejected. For molecules of course are not liquid in themselves, and furthermore H₂O molecules do not have the same taste nor the same molecular structure as the NaCl molecules that also must be understood to be parts of the salty ocean. So it must be admitted that considered on this particular scale the aspects mentioned – liquidity, saltiness, molecular structure – no longer refer to things that are equally in the part and in the whole. Yet at the same time this counterexample does not counteract the main point of the example: that things that stand to each other in a relation of parts and wholes must be understood to have more in common than merely their name, namely the very things that *are* equally in the part and in the whole.

¹⁰ Willard Van Orman Quine, ‘Reference and Modality’ in: *From a Logical Point of View* (New York 1963), 139.

not seem to hold in this particular context, as the contradiction between (4) and (5) is irreconcilable with the assumed identity (by transitivity) of (2) and (3).

One way to solve this problem would be the supposition, voiced (among others) by H. Barker, that Spinoza's conception of God as a thinking thing is fuzzy. Barker states that 'I [...] will [...] treat *Res Cogitans* and *intellectus infinitus* for the most part as equivalent expressions, although strictly they are not so for Spinoza himself',¹¹ which amounts to claiming that the apparent difference between the two concepts is of no decisive importance for the interpretation of Spinoza's metaphysics. This seems to boil down to saying that Spinoza's philosophy should be treated as a *quantité négligiable*. For indeed: why would one make the effort to study the work of a philosopher, if that philosopher is fuzzy even in describing some of the key notions of his system? A fuzziness in the treatment of some of the elementary foundations of an ethical program does not give the unsuspecting reader particularly much confidence in the way some of the more intricate details are rendered in the work under scrutiny. Now, of course we cannot rule out the possibility that Spinoza must be considered to be a fuzzy philosopher, whose work does not deserve any detailed attention – except maybe because the supposedly pantheistic and atheistic tendencies in his works, as well as the strict geometrical manner in which his *Ethics* is rendered, make him an interesting historical curiosity. However, I think that before drawing any definite conclusions as to the supposed fuzziness of Spinoza's claims (and before putting the *Ethics* aside definitively), we must consider at least three more options.

Firstly, the problem with the apparent irreconcilability of EI_p17s and EI_p11c may find its root in the fact that (1) is wrong and that according to Spinoza, God is *not* a thinking thing. Secondly, we must consider the possibility that, although God *is* a thinking thing, one or both of the terms mentioned in EI_p17s and EI_p11c do not have this particular divine thing as their reference (in which case (2) and/or (3) are wrong). Lastly, the contradiction may be caused by the fact that, even though 'God's intellect' and the 'infinite intellect of God' must both be understood to refer to God as a *res cogitans*, they do *so in another sense*. To adduce the classic example from Frege: 'God's intellect' and 'the infinite intellect of God' in these particular contexts may stand to each other as the description 'Venus'

¹¹ H. Barker, 'Notes on the Second Part of Spinoza's Ethics' in: *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 47, No. 186 (1938), 173.

stands to ‘the Morning Star’. In the next sections I will scrutinize the solutions mentioned, starting with the question how we must conceive the term ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s). For one of the many controversies among Spinoza scholars concerns precisely this issue.

1.2 ‘God’s intellect’ vs. ‘the infinite intellect of God’

1.2.1 *A reductio ad absurdum?*

We have seen that the terms ‘God’s intellect’ and ‘the infinite intellect of God’ can be understood to have contradictory characteristics. Our human intellect can be conceived to be part of the one, but not of the other. In order to understand this distinction, we must investigate the precise purport of the points (1)-(5). In this section we will concentrate on (1) and (2):

- (1) God has an infinite power of thinking (i.e. God is a *res cogitans*)
- (2) ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s) = God’s infinite power of thinking

So how must these claims be understood?

The term ‘God’s intellect’ – to start with (2) – is used in EIp17s in the following way:

if will and intellect do pertain to the eternal essence of God, we must of course understand by each of these attributes something very different from what men commonly understand. For the intellect and will which would constitute God’s essence would have to differ entirely from our intellect and will, and could not agree with them in anything except the name. They would not agree with one another any more than do the dog that is a heavenly constellation and the dog that is a barking animal.

[...]

[...] God’s intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute the divine essence, [...] cannot agree with [our intellect] except in name [...].¹²

(si ad æternam Dei essentiam, intellectus scilicet, & voluntas pertinent, aliud sanè per utrumque hoc attributum intelligendum est, quàm quod vulgò solent homines. Nam intellectus, & voluntas, qui Dei essentiam constituerent, à nostro intellectu, & voluntate, toto coelo differre deberent, nec in ullâ re, præterquam in nomine, convenire possent; non aliter scilicet, quàm inter se conveniunt canis, signum coeleste, & canis, animal latrans.

¹² EIp17s, (I) 427.

[...]

[...] *Dei intellectus, quatenus divinam essentiam constituere concipitur, à nostro intellectu, tam ratione essentia, quam ratione existentia differt, nec in ullâ re, præterquam in nomine, cum eo convenire potest [...].*)

Part of this passage was already adduced above; it fuelled our supposition concerning the indiscernibility of identicals with respect to God's infinite power of thinking. Indeed, it is hard to see how our intellect can be understood to be a part of an infinite divine intellect if Spinoza at the same time claims that 'God's intellect' could not agree with our intellect in anything except the name. Now, at this point it must be noted that according to several eminent scholars, Spinoza actually does *not* endorse the claim that God's intellect and the human intellect stand to each other as 'the dog that is a heavenly constellation' stands to 'the dog that is a barking animal'. Rather, as opposed to medieval thinkers such as Philo, Maimonides and Averroes,¹³ Spinoza is believed to use the example of the two dogs in EIp17s in order to show that the common medieval view concerning God's intellect is *wrong*. In the words of Michael Della Rocca: 'Spinoza is here simply drawing out the implications of a view about God's nature that he himself rejects'.¹⁴

There appears to be a lot to say for this contention. For one thing, Spinoza asserts in EIp17s that according to him intellect does not pertain to God's nature. In a passage preceding the example of the two dogs, he claims that

neither intellect nor will pertain to God's nature. Of course I know there are many who think they can demonstrate that a supreme intellect and a free will pertain to God's nature. For they say they know nothing they can ascribe to God more perfect than what is the highest perfection in us.¹⁵

([...] *ad Dei naturam neque intellectum, neque voluntatem pertinere. Scio equidem plures esse, qui putant, se posse demonstrare, ad Dei naturam summum intellectum, & liberam voluntatem pertinere; nihil enim perfectius cognoscere sese ajunt, quod Deo tribuere possunt, quàm id, quod in nobis summa est perfectio*)

Spinoza's assertion that God does not have an intellect that pertains to his nature of course puts considerable strain on the term 'God's intellect' in EIp17s. It is precisely because of this that a subsequent part of the same scholium is claimed by

¹³ Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza I* (New York 1969), 316-317.

¹⁴ Della Rocca, *Representation*, 181, note 55.

¹⁵ EIp17s, (I) 426.

many scholars to host a *reductio ad absurdum*. Alexandre Koyré is a case in point.¹⁶ In his article ‘*Le chien, constellation céleste, et le chien, animal aboyant*’ (1950), he contends that Spinoza deems it is *absurd* that ‘God’s intellect’ should differ from our intellect in the same way a constellation of stars differs from a barking animal. Another way of saying this is that Koyré detects the very same contradiction that we have rendered in (1)-(5), and that he solves it by claiming that the designation ‘God’s intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God’s essence’ in (2) and (4) is vacuous, as according to Spinoza there is no intellect that pertains to God’s nature. The only intellect that can be ascribed to God is the infinite intellect of EIIp11c, of which the human mind is a part.

Prima facie, Koyré’s solution appears to be convincing. For it provides an answer to question that the points (4) and (5) give rise to, while at the same time doing justice to Spinoza’s explicit claim that ‘neither intellect nor will pertain to God’s nature’. However, we must not proceed too quickly here. For even though many eminent Spinoza scholars have adopted a similar position – Gueroult, Macherey, Laerke, to mention still a few more¹⁷ – on closer scrutiny Koyré’s way of unraveling EIp17s does not seem to be entirely convincing.

The first thing that must be noted in this respect is that Koyré argues for his claim *by changing the relevant passage from the Ethics* so as to make it meet his claims. In order to show this, I must first provide the passage itself and then quote the way in which Koyré translates it. Explaining the ‘dog-example’ in the scholium

¹⁶ ‘On le voit bien : le texte de Spinoza n’est pas thétique, mais polémique. Ce n’est pas un exposé de la doctrine spinoziste, mais une réfutation par l’absurde’. Alexandre Koyré, ‘Le chien, constellation céleste, et le chien, animal aboyant’ in : *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 55 No. 1 (1950), 53.

¹⁷ With respect to the claim that God’s intellect and our intellect stand to each other like the dog in the sky stands to the barking animal, Martial Gueroult states that ‘pour une philosophie comme celle de Spinoza [...], une doctrine qui [...], professe [l’incompréhensibilité de Dieu] proclame par là même qu’elle est absurde’. Gueroult, *Spinoza. Dieu*, 277. Mogens Laerke explicitly teams up with Koyré: ‘As Alexandre Koyré clearly shows in a classic 1950 article, followed by Martial Gueroult, Ferdinand Alquie and a host of other commentators, Spinoza’s development in EIp17s is essentially a *reductio ad absurdum* against the view that “will and intellect pertain to the eternal essence of God.”’. Mogens Laerke, ‘Aspects of Spinoza’s Theory of Essence. Formal essence, non-existence, and two types of actuality’, 5. Pierre Macherey also claims that EIp17s hosts a *reductio* argument: ‘Spinoza a donné au passage dans lequel il développe cette explication [qu’intellect et volonté sont en Dieu infiniment plus qu’ils ne sont en nous, de telle manière qu’entre ce qu’ils sont en lui et ce qu’ils sont en nous, il ne puisse rien y avoir de commun, sinon le nom, de même qu’entre ‘le chien signe céleste et le chien animal aboyant’] *la forme d’un raisonnement par l’absurde* [emphasis added]’. Pierre Macherey, *Introduction à l’Éthique de Spinoza. La premier partie. La nature des choses* (Paris 1998), 155.

of EIp17, Spinoza says the following:

If intellect pertains to the divine nature, it will not be able to be (like our intellect) by nature either posterior to (as most would have it), or simultaneous with, the things understood, since God is prior in causality to all things (by P16Cl). On the contrary, the truth and formal essence of things is what it is because it exists objectively in that way in God's intellect. So God's intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God's essence, is really the cause both of the essence and of the existence of things. This seems also to have been noticed by those who asserted that God's intellect, will, and power are one and the same. Therefore, since God's intellect is the only cause of things (viz. as we have shown, both of their essence and of their existence), he must necessarily differ from them both as to his essence and as to his existence. [...] But God's intellect is the cause both of the essence and of the existence of our intellect. Therefore, God's intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute the divine essence, differs from our intellect both as to its essence and as to its existence, and cannot agree with it in anything except in name, as we supposed.¹⁸

(Si intellectus ad divinam naturam pertinet, non poterit, uti noster intellectus, posterior (ut plerisque placet), vel simul naturâ esse cum rebus intellectis, quandoquidem Deus omnibus rebus prior est causalitate (per Coroll. 1. Prop. 16.); sed contra veritas, & formalis rerum essentia ideò talis est, quia talis in Dei intellectu existit objectivè. Quare Dei intellectus, quatenus Dei essentiam constituere concipitur, est reverà causa rerum, tam earum essentia, quàm earum existentia; quod ab iis videtur etiam fuisse animadversum, qui Dei intellectum, voluntatem, & potentiam unum & idem esse asseruerunt. Cùm itaque Dei intellectus sit unica rerum causa, videlicet (ut ostendimus) tam earum essentia, quàm earum existentia, debet ipse necessariò ab iisdem differre, tam ratione essentia, quàm ratione existentia. [...] Atqui Dei intellectus est & essentia, & existentia nostri intellectus causa: ergo Dei intellectus, quatenus divinam essentiam constituere concipitur, à nostro intellectu, tam ratione essentia, quam ratione existentia differt, nec in ullâ re, præterquam in nomine, cum eo convenire potest, ut volebamus)

Now, consider the way in which Koyré renders this very same passage (the brackets around the emphasized verbs are Koyré's):

If intellect [*would pertain*] to the divine nature, it [*would*] not be able to be (like our intellect) by nature either posterior to (as most would have it), or simultaneous with, the things understood, since God is prior in causality to all things (by P16Cl). On the contrary, the truth and formal essence of things [*would be*] what it is because it exists objectively in that way in God's intellect. So God's intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God's essence, [*would*] really [*be*] the cause both of the essence and of the existence of things. This seems also to have been noticed by those who asserted that God's intellect, will, and power are one and the same. Therefore, [*in that case*] since God's intellect is the only cause of things (viz. as we have shown, both of their essence and of their existence), he must necessarily differ from them both as to his essence and as to his existence. [...] But [*in that case*] God's intellect is the cause both of the essence and of the existence of our intellect. Therefore, God's intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute the

¹⁸ EIp17s, (I) 427-428.

divine essence, [*would differ*] from our intellect both as to its essence and as to its existence, and cannot agree with it in anything except in name, as we supposed [emphasis added].¹⁹

(“*si l’entendement [appartenait] à la nature divine, il ne pourrait, comme nôtre entendement, être par nature postérieur, ainsi que la veulent la plupart, aux choses dont on a l’intelligence, ou être en même temps qu’elles, puisque Dieu est antérieur à toutes choses par causalité (selon le corrolaire 1 de la prop. XVI) ; mais au contraire la vérité et l’essence formelle des choses est [serait] telle parce que telle elle existe objective- ment dans l’entendement de Dieu. C’est pourquoi l’entendement en tant qu’il est conçu comme constituant l’essence de Dieu, est [serait] réellement la cause des choses : ce qui paraît avoir aussi été aperçu par ceux qui ont affirmé que l’entendement de Dieu, sa volonté et sa puissance ne sont qu’une seule et même chose*. [...]. *Puisque donc [dans cette conception] l’entendement divin est l’unique cause des choses, à savoir tant de leur essence que de leur existence, il doit nécessairement différer d’elles, tant en raison de l’essence qu’en raison de l’existence*. *Or, [dans cette conception] l’entendement divin est cause et de l’essence et de l’existence de notre entendement : donc l’entendement de Dieu, en tant qu’il est conçu comme constituant l’essence divine, diffère [différerait] de notre entendement tant en raison de l’essence qu’en raison de l’existence, et ne peut convenir avec lui en aucune chose, à part le nom, comme nous le voulions*”)

The important parts are the emphasized words between the brackets. Koyré uses these brackets in order to indicate that he changed the tenses of the verbs in this passage to a status of unreal conditionality: in Koyré’s translation ‘pertain’ becomes ‘would pertain’, ‘is’ becomes ‘would be’, ‘differs’ becomes ‘would differ’. Moreover, he adds the words ‘in that case’.²⁰ Now, if Spinoza would have stated the passage in EI_p17s in this way, we would indeed have a somewhat stronger argument for the claim that ‘[Spinoza] is only discussing here what follows from a common view’²¹ (to adduce a phrase of Edwin Curley). But the crucial point of course is that Spinoza did not state it in this way. The conditionality is added by Koyré himself. And hence Koyré’s claim, despite its apparent merits, stands on a somewhat feeble foundation.

A second important problem with Koyré’s interpretation of EI_p17s concerns the alleged *reductio* character of the claims in this scholium. For on closer scrutiny the assertions in EI_p17s do not have the appearance of a *reductio* argument at all. A *reductio ad absurdum* normally has (a variant of) the following form:

(i) Suppose that p is true

¹⁹ Koyré, ‘Le chien, constellation céleste, et le chien, animal aboyant’, 57-58.

²⁰ Remarkably enough, Koyré changed the tense of the latin term ‘*poterit*’ in the first sentence – which he translates with ‘pourrait’ (‘would’) in stead of ‘pourra’ (‘will’) – *without putting the term between brackets*. Ibidem, 57.

²¹ EI_p17s, (I) 427, translator’s footnote 49.

- (ii) If p then q
- (iii) Therefore q must also be true
- (iv) But q is absurd
- (v) So p is absurd

Indeed, in order for an argument to be a *reductio ad absurdum*, the argument must lead to something that is contrary to the initial supposition; in a *reductio ad absurdum* it is the absurd outcome of the argument that grounds the rejection of the initial supposition. Spinoza of course is fully aware of this. Consider for instance the *reductio* argument that is provided in EIp11:

If you deny [that God necessarily exists], conceive if you can, that God does not exist. Therefore (by A7) his essence does not involve existence, But this (by P7) is absurd. Therefore God necessarily exist, q.e.d.²² (*Si negas, concipe, si fieri potest, Deum non existere. Ergo (per Axiom. 7.) ejus essentia non involvit existentiam. Atqui hoc (per Proposit. 7.) est absurdum: Ergo Deus necessariò existit. Q. E. D.*)

This argument can clearly be captured in terms of the rendering (i)-(v). If p is understood to refer to the claim ‘God does not exist’, and q to ‘his essence does not involve existence’, the structure of (i)-(v) is easily recognizable in the demonstration. The absurdity of the claim that God’s essence does not involve existence (q) leads Spinoza to the conclusion that the initial supposition – i.e. that God does not exist (p) – is absurd, too. Indeed:

- (i') Suppose that God does not exist
- (ii') If God does not exist, his essence does not involve existence (by A7)
- (iii') God’s essence does not involve existence (by (i) and (ii))
- (iv') It is absurd that God’s essence does not involve existence (by P7)
- (v') So it is absurd that God does not exist

The claim from Koyré *cum suis* that EIp17s harbors a *reductio ad absurdum* firmly suggests that a similar structure can be recognized in this scholium. Yet,

²² EIp11, (I) 417. We will return to this proof in Chapter 3, where it will become clear why Spinoza would use a *reductio* argument in this particular demonstration.

surprisingly this is not the case. If we formalize the relevant passage, we get the following:

- (i'') Suppose that God has an intellect that constitutes his essence
- (ii'') In that case, this particular divine intellect could not agree with our intellect in anything except the name
- (iii'') God is prior in causality to all things (by EIp16c1)
- (iv'') Therefore (by (i''), (ii'') and (iii'')) the particular divine intellect of (i'') will not be able to be (like our intellect) by nature either posterior to or simultaneous with the things understood²³
- (v'') So (by (iii'') and (iv'')) this particular divine intellect is really the cause both of the essence and of the existence of things.
- (vi) Therefore, since this particular divine intellect is the only cause of things (by (v'')), it must necessarily differ from our intellect both as to its essence and as to its existence and cannot agree with it in anything except in name.
- (vii) As was supposed.

We cannot fail to notice that the structure of this argument is fundamentally different from (i)-(v). That is to say: the formalization (i'')-(vii) makes it clear that it is very doubtful whether the quoted passage can be considered to be a *reductio* argument. For as we saw, a *reductio* argument must lead to something that is contrary to the initial supposition. Yet, in Spinoza's argument in EIp17s the initial supposition is fully corroborated by the conclusion. If Spinoza indeed intended to argue for the absurdity of the claim that 'God's intellect' and our intellect agree only in name, he appears to have chosen the wrong route. For the only thing he shows in the passage of EIp17s, is that the supposition that 'we must of course understand by [God's intellect insofar as it is conceived to constitute God's essence] something different from what men commonly understand [by the term 'intellect']' is internally coherent.

Now, we can of course choose to follow Martial Gueroult, and claim that '[Spinoza] does not bother to make the claim that [the thesis of God's intellect] is

²³ This step does not seem to be absolutely necessary in this formalization. However, I have added it, because this step contains crucial information in the context of the present study. I will return to this claim in the concluding section.

absurd (because it seems evident to him)'.²⁴ Surely, claiming that Spinoza intended his explicit conclusion 'as we supposed' to actually mean 'as is evidently absurd' opens up all kinds of new interpretational possibilities. But intellectual honesty demands that in interpreting a philosopher one does not alter the text in order to make it suit an interpretation, and that one surely does not claim that Spinoza must be understood to make the very opposite assertion from the thing he states explicitly. So, awkward as the conclusion may seem for various reasons (which will be addressed in this and subsequent chapters), the evidence presented provides us with a strong second indication that the adduced passage is not intended to contain a *reductio* argument, the more so, as there is not a single other *reductio* argument in the *Ethics* that deviates from the structure of (i)-(v).²⁵ Indeed, how could there be? For it is the very absurdity of the conclusion that is essential for a *reductio ad absurdum*. Any argumentation that does not lead to an absurd outcome, simply is not a *reductio* argument.

The crucial point with respect to the passage in EIp17s of course is not whether Spinoza uses a proper *reductio* argument, but whether Spinoza must be understood to take the designation 'God's intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God's essence' to be vacuous or not. This is especially important in the context of the present study since the alleged *reductio* argument contains some important remarks concerning the way in which we must understand our intellect. If it would become clear that according to Spinoza the description 'God's intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God's essence' *does* have a reference, we would also be fully entitled to consider the claims – part of the argument – that our intellect is 'by nature either posterior to [...] or simultaneous with, the things understood', and that 'the truth and formal essence of things is what it is because it exists objectively in that way in God's intellect', to be assertions that Spinoza endorses. And this would in turn provide us with a firm basis for a continued investigation into how we must understand the notion 'intellect' in the context of Spinoza's mature philosophy. In other words: *as EIp17s contains potentially important information concerning the way in which our intellect must be understood*

²⁴ Gueroult, *Spinoza. Dieu*, 282 (*il ne se donne cependant pas la peine d'en proclamer l'absurdité (tant elle lui semble évidente)*).

²⁵ See: EIp6c; EIp8; EIp11; EIp12; EIp13; EIp14; EIp15s; EIp20c2; EIp21; EIp25; EIp26; EIp33; EIp33s2; EIp10; EIp11; EIp5; EIp8; EIp37; EIp44s; EIp27c2; EIVp1; EIVp4; EIVp22; EIVp25; EIVp30; EIVp31; EIVp60; EIVp72; EVp19; EVp37.

precisely, a proper understanding of Spinoza's exact claims in this scholium is essential in the context of an investigation into the meaning of pars melior nostri in the Ethics.

Having established the relevance of determining the precise status of Spinoza's claims about the intellect in EI_p17c, it is important to recognize that, apart from Koyré's need to change the formulation of EI_p17s as well as the indicated absence of a *reductio ad absurdum* in EI_p17s, there actually are more indications that the assertions in the quoted part of this scholium do represent a position that must be understood to be fully endorsed by Spinoza. Consider for instance the following passage in the CM, in which Spinoza adduces the very same example of the two dogs, without the slightest suggestion that the example is absurd:

For God's knowledge agrees no more with human knowledge than the Dog that is a heavenly constellation agrees with the dog that is a barking animal²⁶

(Nec enim scientia Dei cum scientiâ humanâ magis convenit, quam canis, signum coeleste, cum cane, qui est animal latrans)

It must be admitted that the CM cannot be understood to provide a decisive argument, as it is an appendix of the PCP, a work in which Spinoza gives an explanation of Descartes' philosophy, rather than expounding his own metaphysics. But the remark is certainly illustrative, the more so, as it is corroborated by some 'late' letters.²⁷ In Letter 54 (October 1674) to Hugo Boxel, Spinoza states the following concerning the difference between God's intellect and our intellect:

people commonly grant that God's will is eternal, and has never been indifferent. Therefore, they must also necessarily grant (NB) that the world is a necessary effect of the divine nature. They may call this will, intellect, or whatever they want to. In the end, though, they arrive at this: they express one and the same thing in different words. For if someone asks them whether the divine will does not differ from the human will, they answer that the one has nothing in common with the other except the name. Besides, generally

²⁶ CM II Ch. XI, (I), 340.

²⁷ I use the term 'late' with respect to letters from the 1670's. Spinoza started working on the *Ethics* already in the beginning of the 1660's. The manuscript was ready for print in 1675, but was not published until after Spinoza's death in 1677. For a detailed scrutiny of the editorial history of the *Ethics*, see inter alia: Piet Steenbakkens, *Spinoza's Ethica from Manuscript to Print* (Assen 1994). The new critical edition of Spinoza's *Ethica* by Fokke Akkerman and Piet Steenbakkens (Paris, PuF, forthcoming) includes an updated and extended version of the editorial history of the text.

they grant that God's will, intellect, essence and nature are one and the same thing. I, too, not to confuse the divine nature with human, ascribe to God no human attributes, such as will, intellect, attention, hearing, etc. I say, then, as I said before: the world is a necessary effect of the divine nature, and was not made by chance.²⁸

([...] *vulgò unanimiter, Dei voluntatem aeternam, ac nunquam indifferentem fuisse, concedunt: & propterea necessariò quoque debent largiri, (Nota bene) mundum Naturæ Divinæ necessarium esse effectum. Vocent hoc voluntatem, intellectum, vel quocunque lubet nomine, eò tamen tandem devenient, quòd unam, eandemque rem diversis nominibus expriment. Si enim eos roges, an Divina voluntas ab humanâ non differat, respondent priorem non nisi nomen cum posteriore commune habere: præterquam quòd plerumque Dei Voluntatem, Intellectum, Essentiam, aut Naturam unam, eandemque rem esse, concedunt; sicuti & ego, ne Divinam Naturam cum humanâ confundam, Deo humana attributa, nempe Voluntatem, Intellectum, attentionem, auditum &c. non adsigno. Dico igitur, ut jam modò dixi, Mundum Divinæ Naturæ necessarium effectum eumque fortuitò non esse factum*)

True, this passage corroborates the view from Koyré *cum suis* that Spinoza's opponents hold that the divine intellect, insofar as this term is used to denote the divine nature, has nothing in common with the human intellect but the name (notice the similarity with the claim concerning the two dogs in EIp17s). However, the sheer fact that Spinoza's opponents endorse this claim of course does not at all imply that Spinoza himself rejects this position. As a matter of fact, the exact opposite turns out to be the case: from the letter to Hugo Boxel it becomes clear that Spinoza actually agrees with his opponents on this point. He too (*sicuti et ego*) ascribes no human attributes to God. From this remark we can gather that Spinoza does not adduce the example of his opponents so as to make it clear that he has a different opinion, but rather in order to underline that his opponents share the same principle as Spinoza does and hence that, if they think correctly, they cannot but come to the very same conclusion he himself has reached (namely: that the world is a necessary effect of the divine nature). So on closer scrutiny, Letter 54 provides us with yet another strong argument for the claim that Spinoza fully underwrites the claim that 'God's intellect', insofar as the term is used to denote the divine nature, *differs fundamentally from* our intellect and 'could not agree with [it] in anything except the name'. Anyone who claims that this is a view about God's nature that Spinoza rejects, must also grant that Spinoza misunderstands himself in Letter 54. This does not seem to be a preferable route, the more so as a remark in Letter 64 (July 1675) makes it clear once more that Spinoza fully endorses the

²⁸ Letter 54, (II) 414.

claim that ‘God’s intellect’ must be understood to have nothing in common with our intellect. In order to see this, we must first adduce a passage in Letter 63 from G.H. Schuller. In this letter, Schuller poses the following problem:

Second, since God’s intellect differs from our intellect both in Essence and in existence, it will have nothing in common with our intellect, and therefore, by I P3, God’s intellect cannot be the cause of our intellect.²⁹

(Secundò, Cùm Dei intellectus à nostro intellectu tam Essentiâ quàm existentia differat, ergo nihil commune habebit cum nostro intellectu, ac proinde (per 3 prop. lib. 1.) Dei intellectus non potest esse causa nostri intellectus)

Now, on the reading of Koyré *cum suis*, Spinoza’s answer would have to be something like ‘you have misunderstood me, for I do *not* claim that God’s intellect has nothing in common with our intellect. I am merely drawing absurd conclusions, that I myself do not endorse’. However, in Spinoza’s actual answer in Letter 64 there is no indication at all that he does not endorse the claim that God’s intellect has nothing in common with our intellect. Rather, he states that he does not see a problem in the assertion in EIp17s that is adduced by Schuller. Consider Spinoza’s answer:

I pass to the second question, which is, whether one thing can be produced by another from which it differs, both in its essence and its existence. For things which differ in this way from one another seem to have nothing in common. But since all singular things, except those produced by their likes, differ from their causes, both in their essence and in their existence, I do not see any reason for doubt here.³⁰

(ad alterum transeo, quòd est, an id possit ab alio produci, in quo tam essentia, quàm existentia discrepat: nam quæ ab invicem ità differunt nihil commune habere videntur. Sed cùm omnia singularia, præter illa, quæ à suis similibus producuntur, differant à suis causis, tam essentiâ, quàm existentia, nullam hîc dubitandi rationem video)

The argument that Spinoza provides may not be entirely convincing. But this need not concern us here. The thing we must note in the present context is that Spinoza does not see any reason for doubt concerning the fact that the very thing that must be understood to be the cause of our intellect – *in casu* ‘God’s intellect’ – has nothing in common with it as it differs both in essence and existence. On the

²⁹ Letter 63, (II) 436-437.

³⁰ Letter 64, (II) 439.

reading of Koyré *cum suis* this is a tough bullet to bite. For again, Spinoza appears to misunderstand himself fundamentally.

The presented arguments suggest that Koyré is on the wrong interpretational track. Still, despite the evidence given, his claim cannot be considered to be fully refuted yet. For the important question remains: how can Spinoza hold that ‘God’s intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God’s essence’ differs from our intellect in everything but its name in a scholium that starts with the explicit claim that ‘neither intellect nor will pertain to God’s nature’? Does not the latter claim imply that the former must be understood to be rejected by Spinoza? Or to state it in terms of Letter 54: does not the very claim from Spinoza that he ‘ascribe[s] to God no human attributes’ entail that the designation ‘God’s intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God’s essence’ must indeed be understood to be vacuous? I think it does not. The crucial thing to note in this respect is that the term ‘God’s intellect’ in EIp17s and Letter 54 is used under certain conditions. In other words: the very conditionality that Koyré projected on the tenses of the bracketed verbs in the alleged *reductio* argument – hence establishing a status of unreal conditionality (see above) – must actually be ascribed to the term ‘God’s intellect’. The following example, which has more or less the same structure³¹ as the argument in EIp17s, may help to explain why.

- (i''') Suppose that there is a mathematical figure that we decide to call ‘square circle’
- (ii''') In that case, this particular mathematical figure could not agree in anything except the name with things that we would commonly call ‘square’ and ‘circular’
- (iii''') A circle has no angles

³¹ In this argument, I will compare Spinoza’s assertions concerning ‘God’s intellect’ with assertions concerning ‘a mathematical figure that we decide to call ‘square circle’’. Paul Ziche brought up the objection that being God and having an intellect is not really analogous to being a mathematical figure and having the property of being square and circular. However, as will become clear shortly, the example in (i''')-(vi') is first and foremost concerned with the *structure* of the argument. I aim to show that as soon as a term is taken conditionally, properties can be ascribed to it that cannot be ascribed to it if the very same term is taken unconditionally. In this respect I could have taken any example. I chose the example of ‘square circle’ because it is evident that according to Spinoza a square circle does not exist, as long as the term is understood in the way we commonly understand it (i.e. *unconditionally*).

- (iv''') Therefore (by (i''') and (iii''')) the particular 'square circle' from (i''') will not be able to be (like our conception of a square circle) by nature square and circular at the same time.
- (v''') Therefore, since this particular mathematical figure is not square and circular at the same time, it must necessarily differ from a thing that due to its description must be understood to be 'square' and 'circular' at the same time.
- (vi') As was supposed.

It is important to note that someone who is firmly convinced of the fact that square circles do not exist (such as Spinoza³² (and probably all his opponents)) nevertheless is perfectly able to make the inference (i''')-(vi') without contradicting himself. There is no need to suppose that (i''')-(vi') shelters a tacit *reductio* argument, even though it is clear that square circles (in the way we commonly understand them) do not exist. The only thing that is shown in (i''')-(vi') is that, *if* the term 'square circle' is applied to describe something that *does* actually exist (*in casu* the mathematical figure that is featured in (i''')), then we must of course understand by this term something very different from what we would commonly understand when we use the term 'square circle'. That is to say: in this particular case the term 'square circle' must be used conditionally. Exactly the same applies to the term 'God's intellect' in the adduced part of EIp17s (as well as in Letter 54): the term must be understood to be a conditional term: it can only be applied correctly when some specific conditions are met. If we want to use the term 'intellect' in order to refer to God's eternal thinking essence (or, in terms of Letter 54: if we '*grant (concedunt)* that God's will, intellect, essence and nature are one and the same thing [emphasis added]'), we must be aware that in this particular case, the term means something very different from what men commonly understand when they use the term 'intellect'. Indeed, Spinoza explicitly warns his readers not to draw wrong conclusions from the particular use of the term 'intellect' in EIp17s and Letter 54: it is *not* the 'human attribute' (i.e. the intellect in the way we commonly understand it) that must be understood to pertain to God's essence; if the

³² In the demonstration of EIp11 he says the following: 'For example, the very nature of a square circle indicates the reason why it does not exist, namely, because it involves a contradiction.' (*Ex. gr. rationem, cur circulus quadratus non existat, ipsa ejus natura indicat; nimirum, quia contradictionem involvit.*). EIp11, (I) 417

conditionality of the term ‘God’s intellect’ in this context is not recognized, all kinds of wrong conclusions could be drawn.

One of the wrong conclusions that could follow if one fails to recognize the conditionality of the term ‘God’s intellect’ in EIp17s would be the suggestion that ‘God’s intellect’, even though it is claimed to differ fundamentally from our intellect, can nevertheless be understood to be characterized by a conceptual duality of the intellect and the things that are grasped with it. It is precisely this problem that Spinoza detects in the scholastics (who, as several interpreters have observed correctly, must be understood to be the main polemical target in EIp17s).³³ As we saw above, this problem is addressed in Letter 54; in this Letter to Hugo Boxel, Spinoza implicitly accuses his opponents of not drawing the proper conclusion from the essentially right claim that ‘God’s intellect’ *insofar as it is understood to pertain to his essence* must be understood to differ fundamentally from our human intellect. This point is further substantiated in Letter 56. It is crucial to acknowledge that in this subsequent letter to Hugo Boxel (September 1674), Spinoza actually says the very opposite from what modern commentators have claimed him to assert. For here it becomes clear – again – that Spinoza does not reject the fundamental difference between our intellect and ‘God’s intellect’, but rather that he accuses Boxel of not understanding that distinction thoroughly enough. Boxel’s position is rejected in the following way:

This makes me suspect that you believe that there is no greater perfection than that which can be explicated by the attributes mentioned [i.e. seeing, hearing, attending, willing, etc.]. I don’t wonder at this. I believe that if a triangle could speak, it would say in the same way that God is triangular in an eminent way [...].³⁴

(hinc suspicor te credere, non majorem esse perfectionem, quàm quæ memoratis attributis explicari potest. Hæc non miror; quia credo, quòd triangulum, siquidem loquendi haberet facultatem, eodem modo diceret, Deum eminenter triangularem esse [...])

This claim makes it abundantly clear that according to Spinoza, Boxel is not wrong in taking the human nature and the divine nature to be absolutely distinct, but rather the opposite: Boxel is accused of projecting his own thinking power on God

³³ In Koyré’s words: ‘Or, la contradiction disparaît si l’on admet que le scolie tout entier est de nature polémique et critique’. Koyré, ‘Le chien, constellation céleste, et le chien, animal aboyant’, 55.

³⁴ Letter 56, (II) 421.

and hence not taking the distinction between our intellect and ‘God’s intellect’ seriously enough. This passage thus provides us with yet another proof for our present claim that according to Spinoza, ‘God’s intellect’ must be understood to be fundamentally different from our intellect. Anyone who would claim that ‘God’s intellect insofar as it pertains to the divine essence’ is in any way similar to our human intellect, makes the same mistake anyone would make who asserts that, because a dog is an animal that is able to bark, the dog that is a heavenly constellation must be understood to be a barking combination of stars.

Another wrong conclusion that could be drawn if the conditionality of the term ‘God’s intellect’ in EIp17s is not acknowledged, is that God does not have an infinite and absolute power of thinking. For it is evident that Spinoza *does* consider God to be a thinking thing (and hence that we can uphold point (1)). This becomes clear, not only from (for instance) EIIp1, where Spinoza states explicitly that ‘God is a *res cogitans*’,³⁵ but also from a remark that is a part of the alleged *reductio* argument in EIp17s. Consider the following line once more:

So God’s intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God’s essence, is really the cause both of the essence and the existence of things [...].³⁶

(*Quare Dei intellectus, quatenus Dei essentiam constituere concipitur, est reverà causa rerum, tam earum essentia, quàm earum existentia*)

The important thing to note with respect to this assertion is that various passages in the *Ethics* and his letters make it clear that Spinoza does not doubt at all that there *is* a divine thing (i.e. the divine essence that is *granted* in Letter 54, and concerning which Spinoza claims in Letter 64 that there is not *any reason for doubt*) that is the cause of both the essence and the existence of our intellect.³⁷ Apart from EIp16c1

³⁵ ‘Thought is an attribute of God, or God is a *res cogitans*’ (*Cogitatio attributum Dei est, sive Deus est res cogitans*). EIIp1, (I) 448.

³⁶ EIp17s, (I) 427.

³⁷ We have already shown that Spinoza cannot be understood to employ a *reductio* argument in EIp17s. But even if we suppose that he does, some claims in the argument must be considered to be trustworthy. For indeed: a *reductio* only works (i.e. something absurd can only be concluded from a certain premise so as to constitute a convincing argument for the rejection of a certain claim), *if the intermediate steps with which one reaches the absurd conclusion are trustworthy*. Now, as the argumentative steps in EIp17S must be understood to be trustworthy, and as moreover the claim that ‘God’s intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God’s essence, is really the cause both of the essence and the existence of things’ is explicitly based on EIp16c1, we cannot but conclude that this statement must be understood to be a claim that

(which as we saw is referred to explicitly in EIp17s), and his answer to Schuller in Letter 64 (see above), EIp25 is particularly noteworthy in this respect:

God is the efficient cause, not only of the existence of things, but also of their essence.³⁸

(Deus non tantum est causa efficiens rerum existentiae, sed etiam essentiae)

This provides us with a further corroboration for the assertion that the term ‘God’s intellect’ in EIp17s must be understood to be used conditionally. That is to say: if we are willing to permit the awkward use of the term ‘intellect’ with respect to God’s absolute power of thinking for the time being, this particular divine ‘intellect’ must be conceived to be the cause of the essence and the existence of things. The point that Spinoza wants to make in EIp17s is not that God is not a thinking thing, but rather that the divine thinking essence cannot be referred to correctly using the term ‘intellect’ (or ‘will, [...] or any name they please’) in the way we commonly understand it.

Now, it is crucial to note here that this actually is the very same conclusion that was drawn by Koyré. For he claims that ‘intellect cannot pertain to God’s nature (that is: God’s essence), because if it would [...], it [...] would not be an intellect’.³⁹ Koyré is absolutely right that the term ‘intellect’ cannot be used properly to describe God’s essence. So in this sense the present interpretation runs parallel to Koyré’s. However, at the same time it has become clear that this conclusion can be reached without assuming that the verbs in the passage of EIp17s are stated in the wrong tense, without assuming that Spinoza mysteriously misconstrued a *reductio* argument, without supposing that Spinoza does interpret his own philosophy wrongly, and hence without supposing that ‘Spinoza is here ‘drawing out the implications of a view about God’s nature that he himself rejects’. As already noted above, this is crucial information in a study that is dedicated to the notion of ‘intellect’ in Spinoza’s philosophy. For the alleged *reductio* argument contains crucial information with respect to *pars melior nostri* and its relation with

Spinoza endorses (and that thus must be understood to fall outside the scope of the conditionality of the term ‘God’s intellect’).

³⁸ EIp25, (I) 431.

³⁹ Koyré, ‘Le chien, constellation céleste, et le chien, animal aboyant’, 55 (*l’entendement ne peut pas appartenir à la nature (c’est-à-dire à l’essence) de Dieu, parce que, s’il y appartenait [...], il [...] ne serait pas un entendement*).

God's infinite power of thinking. As has become clear now, Spinoza can be understood to endorse the following claims:

- our intellect is by nature either posterior to (as most would have it), or simultaneous with, the things understood
- the truth and formal essence of things is what it is because it exists objectively in that way in God's intellect

Furthermore, we have made an important step in our aim to elucidate the contradiction between (4) and (5) (and hence the mereological status of the human mind and its better part). We started this section with the following assertions:

- (1) God has an infinite power of thinking (i.e. God is a *res cogitans*)
- (2) 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) = God's infinite power of thinking

From what we have said in this section, it has become clear that (1) is warranted unconditionally, and that (2) is provisionally passable with the following stipulation:

- (2') Provided that the term 'intellect' means something very different from what men commonly understand, 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) = God's infinite power of thinking

In order to see how this observation enables us to solve the contradiction between the points (4) and (5), we must still say something more concerning the exact metaphysical status of 'God's intellect'.

1.2.2 The attribute of thought

Elucidating the way in which we must understand Spinoza's Mereological Claim, it must be established how we are to understand the exact purport of the notion 'God's intellect'. In this respect it may be informative to adduce some descriptions of the term 'intellect' insofar as Spinoza uses it unconditionally (i.e. in the way we commonly understand it). For it seems that we can only determine the exact

metaphysical status of ‘God’s intellect’ if we also understand the notion it is explicitly contrasted with.

An important indication as to how we should understand the unconditional use of the term ‘intellect’ in the *Ethics* is provided in EIp17s itself, where Spinoza remarks that our intellect must be conceived to be ‘by nature either posterior to [...] or simultaneous with, the things understood’ – we will return to this important claim in a subsequent section (and indeed in subsequent chapters, where it will be shown how we must understand the representation of external things in the human mind). However, in determining how we should conceive the intellect in the way we commonly understand it – and hence the way it differs from ‘God’s intellect’ – a claim in EIp31 actually appears to provide a better route.

EIp31 reads thus:

The actual intellect, whether finite or infinite [...], must be referred to *Natura naturata*, not to *Natura naturans*.⁴⁰

(*Intellectus actu, sive is finitus sit, sive infinitus [...] ad Naturam naturatam, non verò ad naturantem referri debent*)

As already noted in the Introduction, this passage can only be understood properly if it is clear what we must understand by *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*.

Spinoza provides the following descriptions of these important terms:

[...] by *Natura naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, that is (by P14C1 and P17C2), God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause.

But by *Natura naturata* I understand whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature, or from any of God's attributes, that is, all the modes of God's attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God.⁴¹

(*per Naturam naturantem nobis intelligendum est id, quod in se est, & per se concipitur, sive talia substantiae attributa, quæ æternam, & infinitam essentiam exprimunt, hoc est (per Coroll. 1. Prop. 14. & Coroll. 2. Prop. 17.), Deus, quatenus, ut causa libera, consideratur. Per naturatam autem intelligo id omne, quod ex necessitate Dei naturæ, sive uniuscujusque Dei attributorum sequitur, hoc est, omnes Dei attributorum modos, quatenus considerantur, ut res, quæ in Deo sunt, & quæ sine Deo nec esse, nec concipi possunt*)

⁴⁰ EIp31, (I) 434. We must not be led astray by the term ‘actual’. As Spinoza says himself in the scholium of EIp31: ‘The reason why I speak here of actual intellect is not because I concede that there is any potential intellect, but because, wishing to avoid all confusion, I wanted to speak only of what we perceive as clearly as possible, that is, of the intellection itself.’ EIp31s, (I) 435.

⁴¹ EIp29s, (I) 434. In the subsequent chapters a more thorough scrutiny of these terms will follow.

It must be admitted, that this passage raises a lot of subsequent questions.⁴² Still, the quoted descriptions certainly are elucidative in the present context, as they provide us with a clear indication as to why Spinoza would claim that our intellect and ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s) agree only in name, and why the term ‘intellect’ can only be used conditionally when denoting God’s essence. In this regard it is crucial to acknowledge that in EIp31, the intellect is explicitly claimed to belong to *Natura naturata*, and thus must be considered to be a *mode* of the attribute of thought. In terms of the definition of ‘mode’ that Spinoza provides in the first part of the *Ethics*: an intellect must be understood to be ‘in another through which it is also conceived’.⁴³ ‘God’s intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God’s essence’, in contrast, must be attributed another metaphysical status. Spinoza’s formulation in EIp17s firmly suggests that ‘God’s intellect’ must be understood to denote the *attribute* of thought, which in EIp29s is located at the level of *Natura naturans*. For his definition of ‘attribute’ reads thus: ‘By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence’,⁴⁴ a formulation that suits the description ‘God’s intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God’s essence’ nicely. This way of understanding the metaphysical status of the conditional notion ‘God’s intellect’ provides us with a first clue as to why Spinoza would claim that God cannot be understood to have an intellect: ‘God’s intellect’ differs from the intellect in the way we commonly understand it – and hence is used conditionally – because *an attribute is not a mode*.⁴⁵

That the term ‘God’s intellect’ can indeed be attributed another metaphysical status than the intellect in the way we commonly understand it because it denotes the *attribute* of thought, can be conjectured also from a passage from the demonstration of EIp31:

⁴² Questions that must be answered are (inter alia): how must we understand the self-conceiving operation of the non-intellectual *Natura naturans*, and how must we conceive God’s causal power and its relation with his power of thinking? These questions will be treated in Chapter 3.

⁴³ EID5, (I) 409 (*Per modum intelligo substantiae affectiones, sive id quod in alio est, per quod etiam concipitur*).

⁴⁴ EID4, (I) 408 (*Per attributum intelligo id quod intellectus de substantiâ percipit tamquam eiusdem essentiam constituens*). In Chapter 3 we will see that apart from this intellect-*dependent* variant of the attributes, there must also be conjectured to be an intellect-*independent* variant of the attributes.

⁴⁵ Evidently, the precise purport of this claim needs more elucidation, which will be provided in the subsequent chapters.

By intellect (as is known through itself) we understand not absolute thought, but only a certain mode of thinking, which mode differs from the others, such as desire, love, and the like, and so (by D5) must be conceived through absolute thought, that is (by P15 and D6), it must be so conceived through an attribute of God, which expresses the eternal and infinite essence of thought, that it can neither be nor be conceived without [...].⁴⁶

(Per intellectum enim (ut per se notum) non intelligimus absolutam cogitationem, sed certum tantum modum cogitandi, qui modus ab aliis, scilicet cupiditate, amore, &c. differt, adeoque (per Defin. 5.) per absolutam cogitationem concipi debet, nempe (per Prop. 15. & Defin. 6.) per aliquod Dei attributum, quod aeternam, & infinitam cogitationis essentiam exprimit, ita concipi debet, ut sine ipso nec esse, nec concipi possit)

These assertions tell us a lot about the sense in which we must understand the term 'God's intellect' in EIp17s. The first thing to note in this regard is that in this passage, Spinoza distinguishes explicitly between (i) absolute thought, and (ii) a certain mode of thinking. Furthermore, it is important to stress once again that the conditional (but non-vacuous) term 'God's intellect' in EIp17s is claimed to 'pertain to the eternal essence of God'. Now, whereas 'intellect' in the passage from the demonstration of EIp31 is called 'a certain mode of thinking', Spinoza uses the term 'God's absolute thought' (or 'an attribute of God') in order to refer to the mental characteristic that, other than the intellect, does pertain to God, expressing 'the eternal and infinite essence of thought'. As we saw, this is precisely what Spinoza considers to be a characteristic of 'God's intellect' in the particular conditional way in which the term is used in EIp17s. This corroborates the assertion that the term 'God's intellect' in EIp17s indeed does not denote a *mode* (i.e. variant (ii) at *Natura naturata*) but an *attribute* (i.e. variant (i) at *Natura naturans*) And hence we can provide the following enhanced rendering of (2'):

(2'') 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) = the attribute of thought (i.e. thinking substance)⁴⁷

Point (2'') makes it perfectly clear why Spinoza would claim that 'God's intellect' differs from the notion 'intellect' in the way men commonly understand it: for clearly, unlike God, men are not endowed with the attribute of thought

⁴⁶ EIp31d, (I) 434-435.

⁴⁷ The ratio behind – and the problems with – the equation of attributes and substance, will be elucidated in Chapter 3 and 4.

(although their minds are somehow contained in it).⁴⁸ As in the context of Spinoza's philosophy humans are not substances, they cannot be conceived to have attributes.⁴⁹

With this it has become clear that – as is stated in (2'') – '*Dei intellectus*' (EIp17s) must be understood to refer to the attribute of thought (or 'absolute thought').⁵⁰ To be sure, our interpretation is not without problems. The most threatening difficulty appears to be the fact that on the present reading of EIp17s, the attribute of thought is claimed to be so fundamentally different from our intellect (as it is claimed to stand to our intellect as a dog that is a heavenly constellation stands to a dog that is a barking animal) that it is hard to see how our intellect can still be claimed to resort under it. The intricate problem concerning the exact relation between modes and their attributes will be addressed only in the next chapters. So in this respect we must ask a certain 'suspension of disbelief' from

⁴⁸ The *containment* of human minds (and the other infinitely many mental modes in nature) in the attribute of thought – which must be distinguished from 'being a part' of the infinite intellect – will be elucidated in Chapter 2.

⁴⁹ Here we actually encounter yet another argument against the interpretation of Koyré. For in order to prove the contention that Spinoza deploys a *reductio* argument in EIp17s, Koyré needs to claim that humans actually *are* essentially characterized by thought. Consider Koyré's following remark: 'Indeed, neither the intellect, nor the will pertain to the *essence* of man – it is Thought, in both God and man, which occupies that place'. Koyré, 'Le chien, constellation céleste, et le chien, animal aboyant', 56 [my translation] (*ni l'intelligence, ni la volonté n'appartiennent en effet à l'essence de l'être humain - c'est la Pensée, en Dieu comme dans l'homme, qui occupe cette place*). Now, it must be granted that thought pertains to the essence of God: thought pertains to God's essence because it is an attribute of God (by EIIp1) (and precisely in *this* sense – and in this sense only – that Spinoza is able to state in Letter 54 that it must be granted that 'God's will, intellect, essence and nature are one and the same thing'). However, if thought indeed would pertain to the essence of man in the same way it pertains to the essence of God – as Koyré claims – it seems that we cannot avoid the conclusion that *man is a thinking substance too*. Yet, this is clearly wrong in the context of Spinoza's philosophy, as according to Spinoza 'the essence of man is constituted by certain modifications of God's attributes [emphasis added]. EIIp10c, (I) 454. From this it becomes evident that, other than Koyré claims, the essence of man is not constituted by thought (as is the case with substance), but by a *mode* of thought. Just as Hugo Boxel in his letters to Spinoza, Koyré does not take the distinction between God and man thoroughly enough. And hence we have found yet another argument for the rejection of Koyré's much followed suggestion that the term '*Dei intellectus*' in EIp17s does not stand to *noster intellectus* like a constellation of stars stands to a dog. As Koyré's interpretation leads to an absurd conclusion (i.e. that man is a substance), its initial supposition (i.e. that the designation 'God's intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute God's essence' is vacuous) must be rejected.

⁵⁰ This way of putting things suggest that the attribute of thought can be considered to a *supreme intellect* (indeed in the very same way a constellation of stars can be described as some sort of 'supreme dog'). In Chapter 3 it will be shown how Spinoza can use the conditional term 'God's intellect' in order to refer to the attribute of thought, *without* the implication that this attribute thus must be understood to be a supreme intellect that is characterized by some sort of 'supreme duality'.

the reader. This disbelief may be suspended somewhat more easily once it is recognized that our assertions can only be rejected if it is claimed that (i) Spinoza formulated EIp17s in the wrong way, that (ii) Spinoza misinterprets himself in letters 54, 56 and 64, and (iii) that thought pertains to man in the very same way it pertains to God (and hence that man can be considered to be a substance). As already noted, the doubts concerning the reference of ‘God’s intellect’ in EIp17s are understandable. Yet, at the same time scientific integrity would seem to command that any interpretation – such as the one presented in this section – that does *not* need to take recourse to bold statements such as (i), (ii) and (iii), must be considered to be superior (or at least be granted the benefit of doubt) to an interpretation that does.

1.2.2.1 Some more conclusions

In this chapter we investigate the following rendering of the apparent contradiction between EIp17s and EIIp11c:

- (1) God has an infinite power of thinking (i.e. God is a *res cogitans*)
- (2) ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s) = God’s infinite power of thinking
- (3) ‘The infinite intellect’ of God (EIIp11c) = God’s infinite power of thinking
- (4) Our intellect *cannot* be conceived to be a part of ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s)
- (5) Our intellect *can* be conceived to be a part of ‘the infinite intellect of God’ (EIIp11c)

Up till now we have been concentrating mainly on point (2). A scrutiny of the claim (made by several scholars) that (2) must be understood to be erroneous, as Spinoza uses a *reductio* argument in EIp17s, has taught us that this widely accepted claim can be counteracted. On the basis of the things we have said in this section, we are able to provide the following improved rendering of (2):

- (2'') ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s) = the attribute of thought

To be sure, still some more conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, we have seen that (1) must be understood to be a correct statement. So this point remains unaltered:

(1) God has an infinite power of thinking (i.e. God is a *res cogitans*)

Furthermore, we are in a position to restate point (4) as well. Here is why. As Spinoza asserts in EIp12 that ‘no attribute of a substance can be truly conceived from which it follows that the substance can be divided’,⁵¹ it becomes clear that we were right in our initial assumption in (4) that our intellect cannot be conceived to be a part of ‘God’s intellect’. Indeed, given what we have seen in this section, we can reformulate (4) in the following way:

(4’) Our intellect cannot be conceived to be a part of the attribute of thought

Now that we have ascertained that ‘God’s intellect’ refers to God’s absolute and infinite power of thinking of which our intellect cannot be understood to be a part, we can turn to a treatment of the notion that surfaces in EIIp11c: ‘the infinite intellect of God’.

1.2.3 The infinite mode of thought

In section 1.1.1 we have made the following tentative claims concerning the term ‘the infinite intellect of God’, which can be found in EIIp11c:

(3) ‘The infinite intellect of God’ (EIIp11c) = God’s infinite power of thinking

(5) Our intellect *can* be conceived to be a part of ‘the infinite intellect of God’ (EIIp11c)

Given what we have seen above, the first question we face now is whether the term ‘the infinite intellect of God’ in (3) must be referred to *Natura naturans* or *Natura*

⁵¹ EIp12, (I) 419 (*Nullum substantiae attributum potest verè concipi, ex quo Sequatur, substantiam posse dividi*).

naturata. Now, the fact that the ‘the infinite intellect’ (EIIp11c) is explicitly claimed to consist of parts provides us with an important clue as to the way in which we are to conceive the sense in which the term is used. For it is precisely in this mereological respect that the infinite intellect must be understood to differ from ‘God’s intellect’. At the end of the previous section we have seen that Spinoza makes it clear in EIp12 that insofar as God’s thinking essence is conceived truly, it cannot be understood to be constituted by an infinity of ideas. Another way of saying this is that from EIp12 we can gather that, as opposed to ‘God’s intellect’, the term ‘the infinite intellect of God’ cannot be considered to denote the undividable thinking substance ‘*verè*’. But if it does not denote ‘absolute thought’, then what does it denote?

The already adduced EIp31 provides us with an answer to this question. As we saw above, in this proposition it is asserted explicitly that an actual intellect – *whether finite or infinite* – must be considered to be operative at the conceptual level of *Natura naturata*. The thing to note here is that the things that were said in the previous section with regard to our intellect *are applicable to the infinite intellect also*. From this we can gather that ‘the infinite intellect of God’ can be understood to be an infinite mode, a supposition that finds further warrant in EIp32c2. Consider the following claim:

will and intellect are related to God’s nature as motion and rest are.⁵²
(voluntatem, & intellectum ad Dei naturam ità sese habere, ut motus, & quies)

If we acknowledge that Spinoza considers motion and rest to be an infinite mode of extension,⁵³ and if it is recognized furthermore that Spinoza champions the parallelism of modes conceived under different attributes,⁵⁴ it becomes evident that the infinite intellect – like motion and rest – must be understood to be something eternal and infinite that follows from the attribute of thought (by EIp21-23).⁵⁵ In

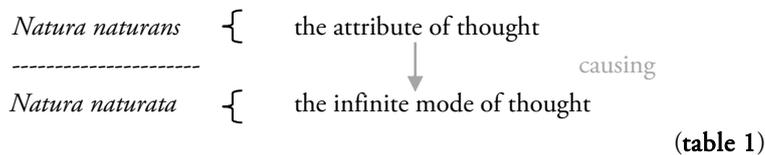
⁵² EIp32c2, (I) 435.

⁵³ Indeed, the very few times that Spinoza is explicit about the infinite modes, he makes it clear that ‘motion and rest’ is an infinite mode. See for instance KV I, Ch. IX and Letter 64. In the next chapter Spinoza’s concept of ‘infinite mode’ will be scrutinized more thoroughly.

⁵⁴ See EIIp7s, (I) 451. More on this important ‘inter-attribute parallelism’ in Chapter 4. See also note 70.

⁵⁵ In the demonstration of EIp23 Spinoza resumes EIp21 and EIp22 in the following way: ‘the mode, which exists necessarily and is infinite, has had to follow from the absolute nature of some attribute of God – either *immediately* (see P21) or by some mediating modification, which follows from its absolute

other words: the assertion in EIp32c2 teaches us that the infinite intellect must be conceived to be an infinite mode of thought, that is an *effect* of the attribute of thought. Given Spinoza’s description of the terms *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* in EIp29s, this relation can be rendered schematically in the following way:



(table 1)

The next thing that must be noted is that, as opposed to an attribute, an infinite mode *can* indeed be conceived to consist of parts. A first hint in this direction is provided by Spinoza’s description of *Natura naturata*, in which he claims (as we have seen) that *Natura naturata* must be understood to encompass ‘all the modes of God’s attributes’. This clearly suggests that *Natura naturata* is characterized by the fact that it encompasses a multiplicity of modes. With respect to the infinite intellect, this multiplicity is corroborated by EIIp48s, where Spinoza asserts that ‘intellect’ must be understood to be a notion that is ‘not distinguished from the singulars from which we form’ it.⁵⁶ Indeed: ‘intellect and will are to this or that idea, or to this and that volition as ‘stone-ness’ are to this or that stone, or man to Peter or Paul’.⁵⁷ According to Spinoza the term ‘intellect’ in its infinite variant⁵⁸ embraces the totality of the infinitely many ideas in Nature (apparently in more or less the same way an ocean can be conceived to be constituted by the infinitely

nature, that is (by P22), which exists necessarily and is infinite [...]. (*Modus ergo, qui & necessariò, & infinitusexistit, ex absolutâ naturâ alicujus Dei attributi sequi debuit; hocque vel immediatè (de quo Prop. 21.), vel mediante aliquâ modificatione, quæ ex ejus absolutâ naturâ sequitur, hoc est (per Prop. præced.), quæ & necessariò, & infinita existit*). EIp23d, (I) 431. In this chapter we will not yet make the distinction between *immediate* and *mediate* infinite modes. In the next chapter it will become clear why this particular distinction need not be made yet.

⁵⁶ EIIp48s, (I) 484 (*quæ à singularibus, ex quibus easdem formamus, non distinguuntur*). In Chapter 4 we will see that the perspective from which the whole (*in casu*: the infinite intellect) is constituted by its parts plays an important role in Spinoza’s metaphysics.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, (I) 483 (*Adeò ut intellectus, & voluntas ad hanc, & illam ideam, vel ad hanc, & illam volitionem eodem modo sese habeant, ac lapideitas ad hunc, & illum lapidem, vel ut homo ad Petrum, & Paulum*).

⁵⁸ The meaning of ‘infinite’ in this particular context refers to the sense of this term as explicated by Spinoza in Letter 12: that which is infinite ‘by the force of the cause in which [it] inhere[s], though when [it is] conceived abstractly [it] can be divided into parts and regarded as finite’. Letter 12, (I) 205.

many drops that are conceived to be ‘in’ it).⁵⁹ And this makes it clear that the infinite intellect can be conceived to be an infinite mode, that consists of parts (namely of the very ideas that constitute this infinite intellect).

This way of understanding the infinite intellect – viz. as an effect of the attribute of thought, that can be understood to consist of parts – is further corroborated by the important EIp16.⁶⁰ Consider this proposition:

From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect).⁶¹

(Ex necessitate divinae naturae, infinita infinitis modis (hoc est, omnia, quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt) sequi debent)

The ‘infinitely many things in infinitely many modes’ are asserted to follow from God, which is a clear indication that the all-encompassing totality of these things must be conceived as a mode, not as an attribute.⁶² Furthermore, the claim that the infinitely many things in infinitely many modes ‘fall under an infinite intellect’ suggests once more that the infinite intellect is a mode that – unlike the attribute of thought – *can* be conceived to consist of parts (namely: the infinitely many things that fall under it).

Recall that we are testing the contradiction that surfaces in (1)-(5). As we saw above, (5) states that ‘our intellect can be conceived to be a part of the infinite intellect of God (EIIp11c)’. Given what we have seen in this section, we are in a position to draw the conclusion that the term ‘infinite intellect of God’ is to be understood in the sense described in EIp31-32: as belonging to *Natura naturata*,

⁵⁹ With respect to the infinite mode of motion and rest, this seems to become clear in EIIIL1, which reads that ‘bodies are distinguished from one another by reason of motion and rest, speed and slowness, and not by reason of substance’ (EIIIL1, (I) 458) and EIIIL7s, in which it is stated that the totality of these bodies (i.e. parts) make up ‘the whole of nature’ (EIIIL7s, (I) 462).

⁶⁰ In Chapter 2 we will see that this proposition can be understood to be Spinoza’s *Principle of Plenitude* with which he opens his *creation narrative*.

⁶¹ EIp16, (I) 424.

⁶² See also Letter 64, in which Spinoza makes it clear that ‘absolutely infinite intellect’ is an example of an *immediate infinite mode*. Letter 64, (II) 439. In the next chapter we will return to this issue. We will see (i) that the infinite intellect must indeed be understood to be an infinite mode, (ii) in what way the *immediacy* of the absolute infinite intellect (as opposed to the *mediacy* of the ‘whole of nature’) must be understood, and (iii) in what way the infinite intellect can be conceived to consist of the modes that are ‘in’ it.

that is: as the infinite mode of thought that follows from God's absolute and infinite power of thinking, and that is conceived to be constituted by infinitely many singular ideas. Evidently, this claim – as well as the assertion that 'God's intellect' refers to the attribute of thought – needs more elucidation. A proper understanding of *pars melior nostri* can only be attained if it is clear (inter alia) how we must understand the 'infinite mode' our mind is asserted to be a part of. Insight into the exact meaning of this term – as well as the term 'attribute' – will be provided in the ensuing chapters. For now it suffices to note that our findings enable us to provide the following enhanced rendering of the points that were treated in this section:

- (3') 'The infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c) = the infinite mode of thought
- (5') Our intellect *can* be conceived to be a part of the infinite mode of thought

And this in turn leads to the following rendering of the claims from section 1.1.1:

- (1) God has an infinite power of thinking (i.e. God is a *res cogitans*)
- (2'') 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) = the attribute of thought
- (3') 'The infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c) = the infinite mode of thought
- (4') Our intellect *cannot* be conceived to be a part of the attribute of thought
- (5') Our intellect *can* be conceived to be a part of the infinite mode of thought⁶³

⁶³ This section about the infinite intellect is considerably less extended than the section that was dedicated to 'God's intellect'. There are two reasons for this. Firstly the claim that 'the infinite intellect' (EIIp11c) must be understood to be the *infinite mode* of thought is far less controversial than the claim that 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) must be considered to be the *attribute* of thought. And secondly the notion 'infinite mode of thought' will be treated thoroughly in the next chapter. In this section I have only been treating the aspects that were relevant in order to elucidate the apparent contradiction in (1)-(5). To be sure, there also remains a lot to be noted about the notion of 'attribute'. In this respect, some pressing questions will be answered in the chapters 3 and 4.

1.3 Corporeal substance vs. motion-and-rest

One of the starting points of this chapter is the supposition that, in order to understand the purport of the intellect in the way this notion is employed by Spinoza, we must gain insight into the way in which God's infinite power of thinking contains our intellect. Therefore, one of the things we aim to elucidate is what must be understood to be the reference of the terms 'God's intellect' and 'infinite intellect'. Now, recall that we assumed in our first rendering ((1)-(5)) that both terms refer to the same thing: God's infinite power of thinking. This was claimed in the tentative points (2) and (3):

- (2) 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) = God's infinite power of thinking
- (3) 'The infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c) = God's infinite power of thinking

We cannot fail to see that in the restatements of these points that I have given at the end of the previous section, the identity (by transitivity) of the terms 'God's intellect' and 'the infinite intellect of God' seems to have disappeared. In (2'') and (3') the term 'God's infinite power of thinking' is substituted with respectively 'the attribute of thought' and 'the infinite mode of thought'. Indeed, we have rendered (2) and (3) in the following way:

- (2'') 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) = the attribute of thought
- (3') 'The infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c) = the infinite mode of thought

However, we must not be led astray by this restatement. For the disappearance of the term 'God's infinite power of thinking' in (2'') and (3') does not necessarily imply that our initial assumption that both terms refer to the very same thing – God's infinite power of thinking (i.e. God as a *res cogitans*) – was mistaken. Changing the terms that are used to refer to an object does not change the status of

the object as it is in itself.⁶⁴ Spinoza makes this clear himself, not only in Letter 54 to Hugo Boxel, when he claims that it is possible to express ‘one and the same thing [*in casu*: the divine nature] in different words’,⁶⁵ but also in a letter to Simon de Vries. Consider the following claim:

you want me to explain by example how one and the same thing can be designated by two names [...]. Not to seem niggardly, I offer two: (i) I say that by Israel I understand the third patriarch; I understand the same by Jacob, the name which was given him because he had seized his brother’s heel; (ii) by flat I mean what reflects all rays of light without any change; I understand the same by white, except that it is called white in relation to a man looking at the flat [surface].⁶⁶

(vultis tamen, quod minime opus est, ut exemplo explicem quomodo una, eademque res duobus nominibus insigniri possit. sed ne parcus videar duo adhibeam. 1_m. dico per israelem intelligo 3_{um} patriarcham. idem per Jacobum intelligo. quod nomen Jacobi ipsi imponebatur propterea quod calcem fratris apprehenderat. 2_m per planum intelligere volo id quod omnes radios lucis sine ulla mutatione reflectit. idem per album intelligo nisi quod album dicatur respectu hominis planum intuentis)

The first example in this passage can be rendered thus:

- (6) Israel = the third patriarch
- (7) Jacob = the third patriarch

Now, let us say that a certain investigation urges us to reformulate (6) and (7) in the following way:

- (6') Israel = the person who was so called because he fought with an angel
- (7') Jacob = the person who was so called because he seized his brother’s heel

⁶⁴ It seems to be different with the causal claim that is made with respect to both terms. The fact that the ‘infinite intellect of God’ (EIIp11c) must be considered to be an *effect* of ‘God’s intellect’ appears to imply that both terms do have another reference. However, in a subsequent section we will see that Spinoza’s idiosyncratic conception of causation actually allows for an *identity* of cause and effect.

⁶⁵ Letter 54, (II) 414.

⁶⁶ Letter 9, (I) 195-196. To be sure, Spinoza uses this example when he is reasoning about the relation between *substance and its attributes*, and not about the relation between *attributes and its infinite modes*. More on the problems with respect to the specific use Spinoza makes of this example in: A. Donagan, ‘Essence and the Distinction of Attributes in Spinoza’s Metaphysics’, in: Grene (ed), *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York 1973), 168.

In this second rendering, the identity of Israel and Jacob has disappeared from sight in the same way the assumed identity of ‘God’s intellect’ and the ‘infinite intellect’ no longer appears in (2'') and (3'). Yet, at the same time it is evident that (6') and (7') – although no inferences can be made from these points concerning the identity of Israel and Jacob – do not at all refute this identity. The identity is merely obscured because the investigation that led to the restatement of (6) and (7) was directed at something else – in this case the etymological origins of the names ‘Israel’ and ‘Jacob’. In the same way, the obliteration of the possibility to infer the identity of the reference of ‘God’s intellect’ of EIp17s (i.e. the attribute of thought), and ‘the infinite intellect’ of EIIp11c (i.e. the infinite mode of thought) in (2'') and (3') does not imply that these terms refer to things that must be considered to be ontologically distinct. In this case also, the investigation was simply directed at something else.

Now, in order to establish whether the attribute of thought and the infinite intellect indeed have one and the same reference (as we have supposed in the initial rendering of the contradiction between EIp17s and EIIp11c), we must take the same route the philologist takes if he wants to test whether the names ‘Israel’ and ‘Jacob’ refer to the very same person: we will have to investigate the respective references ‘out there’ and determine whether the thing these terms refer to is one and the same. In this respect an excursion in the realm of extension – the only other attribute that according to Spinoza is conceivable for us⁶⁷ – may be fruitful. That is to say: although Spinoza states in EIp10 that ‘each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself’⁶⁸ – which makes it clear that ‘God’s infinite power of thinking’ cannot be conceived to have its ultimate root ‘out there’ in extension – a detour into this particular realm can nevertheless provide us with additional ammunition with which we can attack the question concerning the possible identity of the attributes and their infinite modes. In this sense we follow the same route Spinoza chooses in EIIp13s when he claims that in order to know the nature

⁶⁷ In Letter 64 Spinoza states that ‘it is evident, then, that the human Mind [...] neither involves nor expresses any other attributes of God besides [Extension and Thought]. [...] So I conclude that the human Mind cannot achieve knowledge of any other attribute of God beyond these [...]’ (*Apparet itaque mentem humanam sive corporis humani ideam praeter haec duo nulla alia Dei attributa involvere, neque exprimere. [...] Atque adeo concludo mentem humanam nullum Dei attributum praeter haec posse cognitione assequi*). Letter 64, (II) 438.

⁶⁸ EIp10, (I) 416.

of the human mind ‘it is necessary for us [...] to know the nature of its object, i.e. of the human Body’.⁶⁹ we make use of the attribute of extension to learn more about the parallel⁷⁰ attribute of thought, without implying that there is a causal or hierarchical relation between the attributes (as some scholars appear to hold).⁷¹

1.3.1 *Realiter vs. modaliter*

The distinction we discerned in the realm of thought (i.e. the distinction between an attribute and its infinite mode) may be recognizable in the extended realm too. Indeed, Spinoza’s important assertion in EIIp7s that ‘the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance’⁷² firmly suggests that the structure that was uncovered with respect to the realm of thought is also operative in the realm of extension. This supposition is corroborated by various passages in the *Ethics*. The scholium of EIp29 is a case in point. Recall that in EIp29s Spinoza distinguishes between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. This distinction is most telling.⁷³ Spinoza’s use of these scholastic terms⁷⁴ makes it clear that according to him nature can be conceived in two ways: (i) as infinite and indivisible (by EIp13), unique (by EIp14) and all-encompassing (by EIp15), and (ii) insofar as it is considered to follow from the necessity of God’s nature so as to fall under an

⁶⁹ EIIp13s, (I) 458 (*necesse nobis est, ejus objecti, ut diximus, hoc est, Corporis humani naturam cognoscere*).

⁷⁰ In EIIp7s, Spinoza makes the following important assertion: ‘the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that’ (*substantia cogitans, & substantia extensa una, eademque est substantia, quae jam sub hoc, jam sub illo attributo comprehenditur*), EIIp7s, (I) 451. This attribute-parallelism in turn grounds the mode-parallelism that was referred to in section 1.2. See note 54 and Chapter 4.

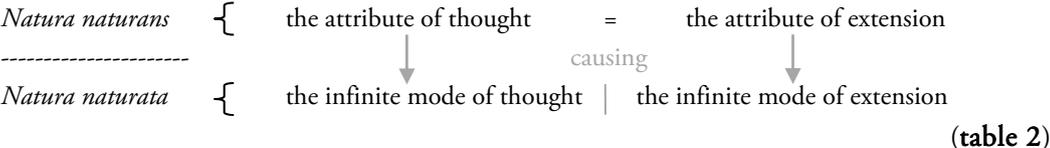
⁷¹ Antonio Damasio stated that Spinoza argues about mind and body in ways ‘that were not only profoundly opposed to the thinking of most of his contemporaries, but remarkably current three hundred and some years later’. Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (Orlando 2003) 15-16. The materialist tendency that Damasio appears to hint at, is also recognizable in the interpretation of Jonathan Bennett when he claims that in Spinoza’s philosophy ‘the body calls the tune’. Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics* (Cambridge 1984), 81 and 186.

⁷² See note 70.

⁷³ Bennett claims with respect to *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* that this ‘technical terminology [...] has been accorded an importance which it does not have’. Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 118-119. Curiously enough, Bennett gets the main point – that ‘the point that p31 is making is just that *intellect* is not to be equated with *thought* [...]’ – however, apparently without recognizing the far-reaching consequences of this claim (that will become clear in the remainder of this study). Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 119.

⁷⁴ See Introduction, note 24.

infinite intellect (by EIp16), to be immanently caused by God (by EIp18) and to be an infinite and eternal mode (by EIp21-EIp23) by virtue of this divine cause. Furthermore, the definition of *Natura naturata* states that this term is applicable to ‘any of God’s attributes [emphasis added]’ (*uniuscujusque Dei attributorum*), which strongly suggests that the distinction must be conceived to be operative in the attribute of extension (and any other of the infinite attributes) in the very same way it surfaces in the attribute of thought. This conclusion finds further warrant in a claim in EIp21, where it is stated that infinite modes follow from ‘any of God’s attributes [emphasis added]’,⁷⁵ and in EIp32c2, in which Spinoza asserts (as we already saw) that the relation between the infinite mode of thought and God’s nature must be conceived to be identical to the relation between the infinite mode of extension – motion and rest – and God’s nature: ‘intellect [is] related to God’s nature as motion and rest [is]’.⁷⁶ On the basis of these claims, table 1 can be complemented in the following way:



Indeed, even though this table evidently needs a lot more elucidation (for example with respect to the exact relation between (and the nature of) the attributes as well as the way in which the causal relation between the attributes and their infinite modes must be understood),⁷⁷ it is informative concerning to the subject that is treated in the present section. Table 2 aims to show that the infinite mode of extension must be conceived to follow from the attribute of extension in the very same way the infinite mode of thought follows from the attribute of thought.

The next thing to note is that the applicability of the distinction between an attribute and an infinite mode in the realm of extension suggests that in this latter realm a paradox can be detected that is similar to the one we encountered with

⁷⁵ EIp21, (I) 429 (*alicujus attributi Dei*). The claim that the distinction must also be understood to be recognizable in extension is further strengthened by what Spinoza says in Letter 64 if asked for ‘the examples of [of infinite modes]: ‘examples of the first kind [i.e., of things produced immediately by God] are, in Thought, absolutely infinite intellect, and in Extension, motion and rest’ Letter 64, (II) 439.

⁷⁶ EIp32c2, (I) 435.

⁷⁷ These subjects will be treated extensively in the chapters 2, 3 and 4.

respect to thought. That is to say: it seems that the distinction between an undividable attribute and a dividable infinite mode must also be recognizable in the realm of extension. Now, is it? Is there a distinction between a conditional ‘body of God’ (i.e. the parallel of ‘God’s intellect’ of EIp17s) and an infinite mode of extension? In order to establish this, we must turn to an analysis of EIp15, as this proposition deals explicitly with the relation between God and the modes that are in him.

EIp15 reads that ‘whatever is, is in God [...]’,⁷⁸ a claim that implies that all singular bodies in nature are in God in one way or another. Thus, from EIp15 we seem to be able to draw the following provisional conclusions:

- (I) God must be conceived to be an all-inclusive whole
- (II) This whole can be conceived to consist of parts

As God is absolutely infinite and indivisible (by EIp13), unique (by EIp14) and encompasses ‘whatever is’ (by EIp15), it seems clear that he cannot be but an absolutely inclusive whole (as (I) states). Point (II) is not without apparent merit either: if ‘whatever is, is in God’, then all singular (i.e. finite) things must be conceived to be in God *eo ipso*. And as Spinoza states in EIIIL7s that ‘the whole of nature is one individual, whose parts, that is, all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole of the individual’,⁷⁹ it appears to be clear that the relation between God and the extended things that are in him must be understood to be the mereological relation of parts and a whole (indeed in the same way drops of water can be understood to be parts of the all-encompassing ocean). This suggestion appears to be corroborated by arguably the most famous turn of phrase in the *Ethics: Deus sive Natura*. If God and nature indeed are the same thing for Spinoza, then *prima facie* it does not seem too preposterous to suggest that, if nature is a whole, then God must also be understood to be an all-encompassing whole.

Evident as these preliminary conclusions may appear, on closer scrutiny they are less unproblematic than it would seem. For one thing, the relation of ‘in-ness’ is

⁷⁸ EIp15, (I) 420 (*Quicquid est, in Deo est [...]*).

⁷⁹ EIIIL7s, (I) 462.

not exhausted by the relation of parts in a whole.⁸⁰ Whereas the (conceived) drop is in the ocean as a part, the fluidity of water is in the ocean as a property. And when the drop of water is in a can that is lying on the bottom of the ocean, this particular relation of in-ness (i.e. of the drop in the can) is different again. So the relation of being-in-God that is asserted in EIp15 is less clear than suggested under (I) and (II). That the relation between God and the things that are in him indeed is not (only) mereological becomes clear when we recognize that the term ‘whole’ (or ‘one individual’, as it is called in EIIIL7s) is not really applicable to God *qua* God. Spinoza states in Letter 50 that ‘someone who calls God one or unique does not have a true idea of God, or is speaking improperly about him’.⁸¹ Terms like these according to Spinoza can only be used if ‘another thing has been conceived which [...] agrees with it’.⁸² And so we are led to the conclusion that if God is described as a ‘whole’ or ‘one individual’, the description must be considered to be ‘improper’ in a certain respect: apparently God can only be described as a whole, if there is another (prior) thing this whole refers to.⁸³ Now, as there is nothing prior to God *qua* God, the claim that God is a whole (I) appears to be improper. The invalidity of (I) in turn renders (II) problematic too. For if God cannot be considered as a whole, then the claim that ‘this whole can be conceived to consist of parts’ – as (II) states with a reference to (I) – becomes meaningless.

At this point it is noteworthy to remark that the very invalidity of (II) is addressed in EIp15s. Spinoza makes it clear in this scholium that the assertion that all bodies must be conceived to be in God does *not* imply that God can be said to consist of parts (*in casu*: modes of extension). On the contrary even: according to Spinoza ‘everyone who has to any extent contemplated the divine nature denies that God is corporeal,⁸⁴ as ‘nothing more absurd than this can be said of [...] a being absolutely infinite’.⁸⁵ Indeed:

⁸⁰ As Steven Nadler claimed: ‘There are many ways in which something can be in something else’. Steven Nadler, ‘Substance and things in Spinoza’s metaphysics’ in: Charlie Huenemann, *Interpreting Spinoza. Critical Essays* (Cambridge 2008), 54.

⁸¹ Letter 50, (II) 406 (*qui Deum unum, vel unicum nuncupat, nullam de Deo veram habere ideam, vel improprie de eò loquitur*). We will return to this important point in Chapter 3.

⁸² *Ibidem*, (II) 406.

⁸³ This claim will be elucidated in Chapter 3, which deals with the two concepts of God that can be discerned in the *Ethics*.

⁸⁴ EIp15s, (I) 421.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, (I) 421.

it is no less absurd to assert that corporeal substance is composed of bodies, *or* parts, than that a body is composed of surfaces, the surfaces of lines, and the lines, finally, of points. All those who know that clear reason is infallible must confess this [...].⁸⁶

(Et profectò, non minùs absurdum est ponere, quòd substantia corporea ex corporibus, sive partibus componatur, quàm quòd corpus ex superficiebus, superficies ex lineis, lineæ denique ex punctis componantur. Atque hoc omnes, qui claram rationem infallibilem esse sciunt, fateri debent)

So on closer inspection, Spinoza rejects both (I) and (II), which in turn would seem to put him in the camp of philosophers who – in Spinoza’s words – ‘entirely remove corporeal, *or* extended, substance itself from the divine nature’.⁸⁷ However, at this point Spinoza makes a bold move. Although he denies that substance is a whole that consists of parts, he nevertheless maintains that ‘extended substance is one of God’s attributes’ (i.e. that God is a *res extensa*). This appears to be contradictory: on the one hand Spinoza claims that extension pertains to God’s essence, but on the other hand he maintains that corporeality – which seems to be an essential characteristic of extended nature in the way we commonly understand it – is *not* applicable to God. Or to put it in other terms: how must we understand Spinoza’s famous phrase *Deus sive Natura* (which appears to posit the absolute identity of God and nature), if Spinoza stresses that, whereas God cannot be understood to be an individual (Letter 50) constituted by infinitely many extended parts (EIp13), the identical⁸⁸ nature is portrayed as an individual consisting of infinitely many extended parts (EIIIL7s)?

It is hard to miss the similarity between this paradox in the extended realm and the one that emerged in the case of thought. On the one hand, God is portrayed as an undividable *res*. Yet, on the other hand he can be conceived to be an aggregate whole of all the modes that are in him (i.e. respectively the ‘infinite intellect of God’ (EIIp11c) consisting of all singular ideas, and ‘the whole of [extended]⁸⁹ nature’ (EIIIL7s) consisting of all singular bodies).

⁸⁶ Ibidem, (I) 423.

⁸⁷ Ibidem, (I) 421.

⁸⁸ This term is inspired by the phrase ‘*Deus sive Natura*’. In the next section (and again in Chapter 3) we will scrutinize this identity claim.

⁸⁹ The context of EIIIL7s, from which I gather this quote, makes it abundantly clear that Spinoza is talking about *extended* nature here. In subsequent chapters I will also use the same term ‘the whole of nature’ in order to refer to (mediate) infinite modes of other attributes. In order to forestall any misconceptions in these cases, I will add the adjective ‘objective’ (in the case of thought) and ‘r’ (in the case of the remaining attributes).

Above we claimed that the distinction between (the conditional term) ‘God’s intellect’ and the ‘infinite intellect’ is rooted in the fact that the former term denotes an *attribute* of substance, whereas the latter term denotes an infinite mode (see table 1). Our claim that a similar distinction is recognizable in the realm of extension (see table 2) is firmly warranted, not only by the things that were said so far in this section, but also by the following passage, in which Spinoza distinguishes between two ways in which matter can be grasped:

This will be sufficiently plain to everyone who knows how to distinguish between the intellect and the imagination – particularly if it is also noted that matter is everywhere the same, and [...] parts are distinguished in it only insofar as we conceive matter to be affected in different ways, so that its parts are distinguished only modally, but not really. For example, we conceive that water is divided and its parts separated from one another – insofar as it is water, but not insofar as it is corporeal substance. For insofar as it is substance, it is neither separated nor divided.⁹⁰

(Quod omnibus, qui inter imaginationem, & intellectum distinguere sciverint, satis manifestum erit: Præcipue si ad hoc etiam attendatur, quòd materia ubique eadem est, nec partes in eadem distinguuntur, nisi quatenus materiam diversimodè affectam esse concipimus, unde ejus partes modaliter tantùm distinguuntur, non autem realiter. Ex. gr. aquam, quatenus aqua est, dividi concipimus, ejusque partes ab invicem separari; at non, quatenus substantia est corporea; eatenus enim neque separatur, neque dividitur)

This passage is most telling, as it fully corroborates our present claim that corporeal substance can be conceived in (at least) two ways:

- (a) Considered *realiter*, corporeal substance is an infinite essence that *cannot* be conceived to consist of parts (it is in this particular sense that substance must be considered to be ‘infinite, unique and indivisible’⁹¹ *res extensa*)
- (b) Considered *modaliter*, corporeal substance *can* be conceived to consist of parts

If we recall that Spinoza states in EIp32c that ‘will and intellect are related to God’s nature as motion and rest’,⁹² and that motion and rest is claimed by Spinoza to be

⁹⁰ EIp15s, (I) 424. This passage, more specifically the way in which the difference between the intellect and the imagination is forwarded in it, will receive further treatment in Chapter 5.

⁹¹ Ibidem, (I) 424.

⁹² EIp32c2, (I) 435.

an infinite mode of extension,⁹³ we cannot escape the conclusion that in the realm of extension Spinoza indeed makes the very same distinction that we also encountered with respect to the attribute of thought: he distinguishes between substance conceived *realiter* (or as EIp12 reads: ‘truly’ (*vere concipi*)) on the one hand, and the infinitely many things that can be conceived to form an aggregate whole on the other. Indeed, on the basis of what has been said in this and the previous section, we are entitled to conclude that ‘motion and rest’ (*motus et quies*) stands to ‘corporeal substance’ (*substantia corporea*) in the same way as ‘*infinitus intellectus Dei*’ (EIIp11c) stands to ‘*Dei intellectus*’ (EIp17s). Or, to state this in yet another way: according to Spinoza, considered *realiter* God does not only not have a *mind* (in the way we commonly understand it),⁹⁴ but he also cannot be conceived to have a *body* (in the way we commonly understand it). Thinking substance and extended substance – which, to be sure, is the very same one substance – stand to their respective infinite modes as the dog that is a heavenly constellation stands to the dog that is a barking animal.

1.4 Ontological identity

Having shown that the distinction between attributes and their infinite modes is a deliberate and pervasive property of Spinoza’s metaphysics,⁹⁵ we can turn to the question whether the attributes (at the level of *Natura naturans*) and their infinite modes (at the level of *Natura naturata*) must be considered to have one and the same reference. In other words: in this section we are to investigate whether the distinction we have found is *ontological* (i.e. in nature) or merely *conceptual* (i.e. in

⁹³ See note 53.

⁹⁴ One would expect the term ‘intellect’ instead of ‘mind’ here. However, I use the term ‘mind’ (i) because ‘mind and body’ is the standard term for designating the relation between extended and mental capacities, and (ii) because in the case of God, ‘mind’ and ‘intellect’ can be understood to be identical, as in God all ideas are true (by EIIp32, (I) 472); God’s infinite power of thinking cannot in any way be understood to have a *better part*.

⁹⁵ Richard Mason calls the distinction ‘centrally relevant, in the sense that it underlies almost all his other thinking’. Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza* (Cambridge 1997), 29. In the following chapters we will see how and why this distinction plays a crucial role in Spinoza’s metaphysics.

knowledge).⁹⁶ My (hidden) assertion in (2'') and (3') that 'God's intellect' (EI_p17s) and 'the infinite intellect of God' (EI_p11c) have the same reference – God as a *res cogitans* – and that the distinction thus must be understood to be conceptual, finds warrant in Spinoza's works, for instance in the following remark in the KV:

the infinite intellect must exist in Nature from all eternity [...]. For since God has existed from eternity, so also must his Idea in the thinking thing, i.e., exist in itself from eternity; this Idea agrees objectively with him.⁹⁷

(het oneyndelyk verstand [moet] van alle eeuwigheid in de Natuur zyn [...] [W]ant aangezien dat God van eeuwigheid geweest is zoo moet ook zyn Idea in de denkende zaak, dat is in zig zelfs van eeuwigheid zyn, welke Idea voorwerpelyk overeen komt met hem zelfs)

The first thing to note is that Spinoza takes the term 'the infinite intellect' to be equivalent to the term 'God's idea'. This is hardly surprising, as we have seen that according to Spinoza 'intellect and will are to this or that idea, or to this and that volition as 'stone-ness' are to this or that stone, or man to Peter or Paul'.⁹⁸ This latter assertion makes it clear that the infinite intellect must indeed be understood to be equivalent to the infinite idea God has of himself: there is no mediating faculty conceivable between God and the idea he has of himself. The second thing that must be noted with respect to the assertion in the KV, is that the quoted claim – which is mirrored in the statement in EI_p4d that 'God is unique [...]. Therefore God's idea [...] must be unique'⁹⁹ – seems to make it clear that Spinoza indeed takes *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* to have the same reference: God. For Spinoza claims explicitly that his idea (i.e. the infinite intellect) coincides with himself. This asserted identity of God and his idea suggests that, according to Spinoza, *Natura naturans* (and hence the attribute of thought) and *Natura naturata* (and hence the infinite mode of thought) refer to the very same thing. In terms of the supposition that was forwarded in section 1.1.1: it seems that the contradiction that is treated in this chapter finds its root in the fact that, even though 'God's intellect' in EI_p17s

⁹⁶ The terms 'in nature' and 'in knowledge' are used by Spinoza in EI_p10s, where he says that 'the divine nature [...] is prior both in knowledge and in nature [...]'. EI_p10s, (I) 455 (*Nam naturam divinam [...], quia tam cognitione, quàm naturâ prior est [...]*).

⁹⁷ KV II, Ch. XXII note a, (I) 139.

⁹⁸ EI_p48s, (I) 483 (*Adeò ut intellectus, & voluntas ad hanc, & illam ideam, vel ad hanc, & illam volitionem eodem modo sese habeant, ac lapideitas ad hunc, & illum lapidem, vel ut homo ad Petrum, & Paulum*).

⁹⁹ EI_p4d, (I) 449-450 (*Deus est unicus [...]. Ergo idea Dei [...] unica tantùm esse potest*).

and the ‘infinite intellect of God’ in EIIP11c must both be understood to refer to God as a *res cogitans*, they do so in another sense.

To be sure, the assumption that the attributes and their respective infinite modes have the same reference is not entirely uncontroversial. Consider the following remark from Edwin Curley:

What troubles me is the assumption that what is the cause of its own existence, for Spinoza, is the whole of Nature, that the term “substance,” while it connotes independent existence, denotes the totality of things. This is, of course, an assumption that is very often made. And there is some (though surprisingly little) textual support for it.¹⁰⁰

True, this passage appears to deal with the realm of extension,¹⁰¹ and not with the realm of thought. But given the structural similarity between the two realms that was argued for in the previous section, Curley’s claim is relevant for the realm of thought too. In this respect it is important to acknowledge that in the quoted passage we encounter precisely the distinction between substance (or *Natura naturans*) and the all-encompassing aggregate of infinitely many modes (or *Natura naturata*), which surfaced in the previous sections.¹⁰² And apparently, despite the textual support, Curley has serious doubts about the identity of these two. He claims that ‘there is a good deal to support the contrary assertion that “substance” denotes, not the whole of Nature, but only its active part [...]’.¹⁰³ Furthermore he claims that Spinoza ‘probably *does not identify substance with the whole of Nature* [emphasis added]’.¹⁰⁴ As must be clear from the foregoing, I think that Curley is right if he means to say that substance *qua* substance denotes only the active part of substance. That is to say (in terms of thought): ‘*res cogitans*’ denotes thinking substance (i.e. the attribute of thought), whereas ‘*infinitus intellectus Dei*’ merely denotes the infinite modal expression of thinking substance (i.e. the infinite mode of thought). This actually is precisely what was captured in the following points:

¹⁰⁰ Edwin Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics* (Cambridge 1969), 42.

¹⁰¹ As the term ‘the whole of Nature’ in EIIL7s is stated in terms of extension. EIIL7s, (I) 462.

¹⁰² In the next chapter it will become clear that *Natura naturata* can actually be understood to be expressed exhaustively by *two* infinite modes: the *immediate* and a *mediate* infinite mode. In the case of thought, the latter can be called ‘the whole of objective nature’, the former must be understood to be ‘the absolutely infinite intellect’ (see chapter 2, section 2.6.2). However, this important distinction is not relevant for the claims that are being made in the present section.

¹⁰³ Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 75.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, 43.

- (2'') 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) = the attribute of thought
 (3') 'The infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c) = the infinite mode of thought

However, as I read him, Curley appears to be claiming still something more. His claim that Spinoza does not *identify* substance with the whole of nature appears to imply that according to Curley the terms mentioned not only have another *meaning*, but moreover must be understood to have another *reference*. Curley's hesitation concerning the identity of 'substance' and 'the totality of things'¹⁰⁵ suggests that he considers the difference in denotation to be caused, not by a *conceptual*, but by an *ontological distinction* between the things these terms refer to.¹⁰⁶

Now, an ontological distinction between substance and its infinite modes (i.e. between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*) would deal a serious blow to the present interpretation. For one thing, if the attributes and their infinite modes would be ontologically distinct things, the claim that these terms have a different meaning would teach us nothing. Indeed, it seems redundant to state that the names 'Jacob' and 'Israel' have a different meaning if the latter name is understood to refer, not to the third patriarch, but to the country that was founded in the Middle East in 1948. More importantly, an ontological distinction between substance and its infinite modes would seem to form a serious threat to the pivotal importance of the Mereological Claim in Spinoza's ethical program. In order to see this, it may be instructive to adduce the following rendering of the Mereological Claim, which can be found in EVp36:

The mind's intellectual love of God is the very love of God by which God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human mind's essence, considered under a species of eternity; that is, the mind's intellectual love is part of the intellectual love by which God loves himself.¹⁰⁷ (*Mentis Amor intellectualis erga Deum est ipse Dei Amor, quo Deus se ipsum amat, non quatenus infinitus est, sed quatenus per essentiam humanæ Mentis, sub specie æternitatis consideratam, explicari potest, hoc est, Mentis erga Deum Amor intellectualis pars est infiniti amoris, quo Deus se ipsum amat*).

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem, 43.

¹⁰⁶ As already noted, this is *my* interpretation of the things Curley says. Curley himself does not use the term 'ontological distinction'.

¹⁰⁷ EVp36, (I) 612. This passage – and the way it *differs* from the Mereological Claim – will be treated more extensively in Chapter 5. To be sure, this difference has no implications for the present argument.

If substance and its infinite modes would be ontologically distinct, ‘the intellectual love by which God loves himself’, of which the ‘mind’s intellectual love’ is claimed to be a part, would have to be considered to differ ontologically from the divine essence. And this would seem to put a serious restriction on (i) the absolute divinity of God’s self-love and hence (ii) on the ethical value of the human knowledge that is claimed to be a part of that divine self-love.

1.4.1 A divine residue?

So how does Curley underpin his claim that Spinoza does not identify substance with the whole of nature? The crux of his argument seems to be that the identity is problematic because the relation between substance and its modes must be understood to be causal.¹⁰⁸ This asserted causal relation – expressed in the top-down directed arrow in tables 1 and 2 – indeed appears to put some strain on the supposed identity of substance and its infinite modes. For *prima facie* a cause would seem to be distinct from the thing it causes. So how can the causal relation between God and nature be brought in line with an ontological identity between the two? A remark in EI_p17s may be helpful in this respect. Consider the following quote:

But I think I have shown clearly enough (see P16) that from God’s supreme power, *or* infinite nature, infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, that is, all things, have necessarily flowed, or always follow, by the same necessity and in the same way as from the nature of a triangle it follows, from eternity to eternity, that its three angles are equal to two right angles.¹⁰⁹

(*Verùm ego me satis clarè ostendisse puto (vid. Prop. 16.), à summâ Dei potentiâ, sive infinitâ naturâ infinita infinitis modis, hoc est, omnia necessariò effluxisse, vel semper eâdem necessitate sequi, eodem modo, ac ex naturâ trianguli ab aeterno, & in aeternum sequitur, ejus tres angulos aequari duobus rectis*)

Perhaps the most interesting term in this passage in the present context is ‘all things’ (*omnia*). As we saw, Curley states that the relation between God’s supreme power and ‘all things’ must be conceived as a relation of causation. Now, this indeed appears to make room for an ontological difference between the two stages. However, it is very important to note the implications of such a view. If the term

¹⁰⁸ Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 19. This actually is in line with our observation in the previous section that the ‘infinite intellect’ of EI_p11c must be considered to be an *effect* of ‘God’s intellect’ in EI_p17s.

¹⁰⁹ EI_p17s, (I) 426.

‘*omnia*’ does not have infinite, unique and indivisible substance as its ultimate reference, but merely refers to a totality of modes that is ontologically distinct from substance, then it is hard to escape the conclusion that there is some kind of divine residue that can be conceived to pertain to substance without following from it in the way infinitely many things are claimed (in EIp16) to follow from the one substance. Indeed, it seems to be precisely this residue – i.e. that which is in the cause but not in the effect – that would constitute the ontological difference between substance and the all-encompassing aggregate of its infinitely many modes.

Can this be right? Does Spinoza really leave room for an ontological divine residue? I think he does not. A first indication that Spinoza does not champion a ‘divine remainder’ can be found in Letter 75, in which Spinoza states explicitly that ‘God does not manifest himself outside the World, in that imaginary space they hypothesize’.¹¹⁰ This seems to make it very clear that the concept of a divine residue is completely alien to Spinoza’s philosophy. The reference to EIp16 in the just given quotation provides us with a second important hint in this respect, as in the demonstration of this proposition it is explained how the claim that the infinitely many things follow from the divine nature is to be grasped exactly. According to Spinoza the causation relation between substance and its modes must be understood in the same way as ‘from the definition of any thing a number of properties [...] really do follow necessarily [...]’.¹¹¹ This passage makes it clear that in EIp16 Spinoza makes use of a special variant of causation, which can be conceived to be a relation of inherence (as well).¹¹² Although Curley vehemently denies that things inhere in God, as according to Curley ‘modes are [...] of the wrong logical type’,¹¹³ Spinoza’s explicit claim in the demonstration of perhaps one of the most

¹¹⁰ Letter 75, (II) 471-472 (*quòd Deus extra Mundum in spatio, quod fingunt, imaginario, sese non manifestet*).

¹¹¹ EIp16d, (I) 425.

¹¹² In the next chapter I will show that EIp16 can be considered to be Spinoza’s *Principle of Plenitude*, that encompasses both internal and external efficient causation. We will see that things, insofar as they follow from substance *intrinsically*, can be understood to be *properties* of substance, and that the same things, insofar as they are caused *extrinsically*, can be conceived to be *parts of the whole of nature* (a whole that is conceptually distinct but ontologically identical to substance). Another way of saying this is that the ‘in-ness’ that characterizes the relation of inherence must be distinguished from the ‘in-ness’ of parts in wholes. This latter point is also made by Don Garrett. See: Don Garrett, ‘Representation and consciousness’ in: Charlie Huenemann ed., *Interpreting Spinoza. Critical Essays*, 10.

¹¹³ Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 18. Curley claims that modes are *particular things* for Spinoza, not qualities. ‘And it is difficult to know what it would mean to say that particular things inhere in substance’.

important propositions of the first part of the *Ethics*¹¹⁴ urges us to acknowledge that Spinoza *does* take modes to inhere in substance (as well). Apparently, within the context of Spinoza's conceptual toolkit, a thing can be conceived to be the 'cause' of the properties that inhere in it. A relation of causation for Spinoza is *not* necessarily characterized by an ontological difference between cause and effect. For indeed, a thing must be conceived to be the exhaustive aggregate of all the properties that 'follow' from it (i.e. that are 'caused' by it by way of inherence); it would seem to be very hard to think of a thing that is stripped of all its properties one by one until no single property is left, and still be left with some sort of residue, that, although necessary for the thing, cannot be counted among its necessary properties.¹¹⁵

This reading of EI_p16 is underpinned by a remark in EI_p25s, in which Spinoza states that 'God must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which he is called the cause of himself (*causa sui*)'.¹¹⁶ The claim that the notion '*causa sui*' refers to the very same causal operation with which all things are caused seems to leave no room at all for a divine residue that, although it is in God, is not included in the self-causing operation that is a defining characteristic of God.¹¹⁷ For in the case of the existence of such a divine residue, God would not be entirely self-caused; there would be a residue that, although it is in God, cannot be conceived to be part of God as a *causa sui*. Now, this is a claim for which there seems to be no textual support at all. And hence the causal relation between substance and the totality of things that are in substance does not suffice for the assertion that Spinoza does not *identify* these two notions. The supposition that substance and the totality of things have different references – and that there thus must be understood to be

Ibidem, 18. In the next chapter I will show that (and how) things *can* be understood to inhere in substance. It will be shown that modes can be grasped from two perspectives: *objectively* as finite modes, that are conceived to be caused by God insofar as he is expressed in another finite mode, and *formally* as infinite modes, that are conceived to be caused by God insofar as he is infinite. However, at this point it suffices to acknowledge *that* Spinoza claims that modes can be understood as inherent properties too.

¹¹⁴ *Dixit* Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus. See Letter 82, (II) 486.

¹¹⁵ Indeed, as Quine remarked when speaking about the option 'to repudiate all objects which are nameable by names which fail of interchangeability in modal contexts': 'To do so would be to sweep away all examples indicative of the opacity of modal contexts. But what objects would remain in a thus purified universe?' Willard Van Orman Quine, 'Reference and Modality' in: *From a Logical Point of View* (New York 1961), 150.

¹¹⁶ EI_p25s, (I) 431 (*eo sensu, quo Deus dicitur causa sui, etiam omnium rerum causa dicendus est*).

¹¹⁷ The notion '*causa sui*' will be elaborated in Chapter 3.

an *ontological* difference between these two notions – can be rejected. Even though the exact nature of the causal thread that is introduced in EIp16 must remain in the dark for now – this will be treated extensively in the next chapter – it has become clear that the very dependence relation between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* does not forestall their ontological identity.

There are still some more passages that corroborate the present claim that *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* actually are identical in the sense that they refer to the very same thing: God. The already adduced ‘water example’ in EIp15s is a case in point. Recall that Spinoza claims in this scholium that ‘we conceive that water is divided and its parts separated from one another insofar as it is water, but not insofar as it is corporeal substance. For insofar as it is substance, it is neither separated nor divided’.¹¹⁸ Evaluating this argument, it seems evident that the water conceived *modaliter* is the very same water as the water that is conceived *realiter*. That is to say: although Spinoza asserts a certain hierarchy in the way this particular fluid is conceived, this conceptual hierarchy does not at all imply that there is an ontological distinction as well. Now, this clause in EIp15s is merely an example, which suggest that no definite conclusions can be based on it. That this example can nevertheless be understood to provide a fairly accurate description of how we should understand the relation between God and nature becomes clear, not only from the arguments given above, but also when we focus on the precise purport of the formula *Deus sive Natura*.¹¹⁹ This famous clause can be found (inter alia) in the demonstration of EIVp4. An analysis of this proposition provides us with a clue as to how precisely this formula must be understood. EIVp4 reads thus:

It is impossible that a man should not be a part of nature [...].¹²⁰

(*Fieri non potest, ut homo non sit Naturæ pars*)

We cannot fail to notice that in this proposition, nature is described insofar as it is conceived to consist of parts. And hence the identity claim concerning God and nature that is provided in the demonstration of this claim must be understood to refer to an identity between God and the infinite modes. For in the foregoing we

¹¹⁸ EIp15s, (I) 424.

¹¹⁹ EIVp4d, (I) 548.

¹²⁰ EIVp4, (I) 548.

have seen that nature, insofar as it is conceived to consist of parts, must be understood to refer to *Natura naturata*, not to *Natura naturans*. Furthermore, when Spinoza states in a letter to Henry Oldenburg that he does ‘not separate God from nature as everyone known to me has done’,¹²¹ he does seem to assert once more that he takes God and the whole of nature to be ontologically identical.

The presented evidence in this section makes it clear that according to Spinoza ‘*Natura naturans*’ and ‘*Natura naturata*’ are identical in the sense that they refer to the very same thing: God. Hence we can provide the following tentative rendering of the relation between the two concepts:

(8) *Natura naturans* = *Natura naturata*

Or, in the terms used by Curley:

(8') substance = the totality of things

That is, in terms of the present chapter:

(8'') The attribute of thought (or ‘God’s intellect’) = the infinite mode of thought (or ‘the infinite intellect’)¹²²

1.4.2 Referential opacity

We have refuted the suggestion that God and nature are not absolutely ontologically identical. We have seen that, even though Spinoza’s metaphysics is characterized by a pervasive conceptual distinction (i.e. between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*), these distinct concepts must nevertheless be understood to be ontologically identical. As will become clear in the subsequent chapters, this particular characteristic of Spinoza’s metaphysics is closely connected to the way in which we must understand *pars melior nostri*; it will become clear that this conceptual distinction is due to the fact that according to Spinoza, if we grasp a

¹²¹ Letter 6, (I) 188 (*quod Deum a natura non ita separem ut omnes, quorum apud me est notitia, fecerunt*).

¹²² This actually is a wrong way of putting it, as will become clear in the subsequent section.

thing with the intellect, we conceive it in two ways. However, in the context of the present chapter we must turn to something else first. For the conclusions of the previous sections appear to confront us with a contradiction.

Recall that we started this chapter with the observation that there is an incongruence in the following argument:

- (1) God has an infinite power of thinking (i.e. God is a *res cogitans*)
- (2) 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) = God's infinite power of thinking
- (3) 'The infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c) = God's infinite power of thinking
- (4) Our intellect *cannot* be conceived to be a part of 'God's intellect' (EIp17s)
- (5) Our intellect *can* be conceived to be a part of 'the infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c)

In the previous sections we have tried to solve the contradiction between (4) and (5) by way of a scrutiny of the terms 'God's intellect' and 'infinite intellect'. This scrutiny led to the following enhanced version of (1)-(5):

- (1) God has an infinite power of thinking (i.e. God is a *res cogitans*)
- (2'') 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) = the attribute of thought
- (3') 'The infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c) = the infinite mode of thought
- (4') Our intellect *cannot* be conceived to be a part of the attribute of thought
- (5') Our intellect *can* be conceived to be a part of the infinite mode of thought

Now, it is important to notice that our findings in the previous section appear to neutralize the progress that we seemed to have made so far. For our claim that the attribute of thought is identical to the infinite mode of thought (8'') leaves the contradiction between (4') and (5') unsolved. If the attribute of thought indeed is identical to its infinite mode, it is still hard to see how the first cannot be conceived to consist of parts, whereas the latter can. Yet another way of saying this is that

conclusion (8'') actually posits an identity between 'God's intellect' and 'infinite intellect', whereas we have argued in the previous sections that these two must be understood to differ from each other in the same way a dog that is a heavenly constellation differs from a dog that is a barking animal.

So is there a way out of this? I think there is. In this respect it must be noted that Curley actually had a good reason to assert that 'substance' and 'the totality of things' are *not* absolutely identical. That is to say: even though we have shown that Curley's arguments must be rejected insofar as they are taken to assert an *ontological* distinction between substance and the all-encompassing totality of things that follow from it, it must be stressed now that Curley is right to the extent that (8') (and hence (8'')) must nevertheless be understood to be an invalid rendering of the things Spinoza says in the *Ethics*. In a certain respect there is indeed a distinction between *Natura naturata* and *Natura naturans*. In order to show why this is so, we must return to the example of Jacob and Israel once more.

With respect to these names ('Israel' denoting the third patriarch, *not* the country in the Middle East) we can claim that *realiter* they are equivalent, as considered in this particular way they are grasped as to their reference only. That is to say: these names can be substituted in any true statement only as long as they are taken to be *referentially transparent* and no other aspects (such as for instance the etymological origin of the names) are taken into account. Recall that the following was stated in a previous section:

- (6) Israel = the third patriarch
- (7) Jacob = the third patriarch

Given these claims, the truth value of the assertions 'Jacob was buried in the Cave of Machpelah', 'Israel was buried in the Cave of Machpelah' and 'the third patriarch was buried in the Cave of Machpelah' is the same. As these claims concern the *reference* of the names 'Jacob', 'Israel', and 'the third patriarch', these sentences have the same truth value. Yet, as soon as other than purely referential aspects are taken into account, problems can arise, as will be clear from the following example:

- (9) Jacob = Israel

(10) Jacob is so called because he seized his brother's heel¹²³

Both claims appear to be true in themselves. Yet, at the same time it is evident that (10) does not provide a context in which the name 'Jacob' can still be substituted by the name 'Israel' without problems. For the following claim is obviously false:

(10') Israel is so called because he seized his brother's heel

The substitution problem is caused by the fact that the name 'Jacob' in (10) is not only used as to its reference. It does not only denote the third patriarch, but still something else. This becomes clear when we restate (10) in the following way:

(10'') Jacob is called 'Jacob' because he seized his brother's heel

This restatement makes it evident that the name 'Jacob' in (10) is equivocal. In (10) the term 'Jacob' denotes the two things that are presented separately in (10''): the person as it is in itself (i.e. the *reference* of the name 'Jacob') *and* a particular name that is used in order to refer to this person (i.e. the *meaning* of the name 'Jacob').¹²⁴ The first occurrence of the name 'Jacob' in (10'') can be substituted by 'Israel', the second cannot. It is precisely because these two occurrences in (10) were denoted by one and the same term that we can say that 'Jacob' in (10) was not *referentially transparent* but *referentially opaque*.¹²⁵ The reference and the meaning of the name were confused. In order to forestall any confusion, (10) must be restated in the way of (10''). Moreover, (9) must be understood to actually express the following:

¹²³ This example is inspired by Quine's example of Giorgione and Barbarelli. Quine, 'Reference and Modality', 139-140.

¹²⁴ It is important to note that I use the terms 'reference' and 'meaning' here in the sense forwarded by (inter alia) Quine, *not* in the way these terms are used in the (translated) works of Frege, in which the German word '*Bedeutung*' – which *prima facie* could be translated with '*meaning*' – is coupled with the *extension* of a term, and where the *intension* of a term is designated with the term 'sense' (as a translation of '*Sinn*'). In the present study the notion of 'meaning' is concerned with the *intension* of a term; for the *extension* of a term I use the word 'reference'.

¹²⁵ Quine, 'Reference and Modality', 142. Michael Della Rocca also used the notion of referential opacity in order to elucidate certain aspects of Spinoza's metaphysics (among which inter-attribute parallelism). See for instance: Della Rocca, *Representation*, 118-119, 125-129 and 144-147. In Chapter 4 I will treat some of the aspects of the variant of referential opacity that Della Rocca put forward.

(9') The person 'Jacob' refers to = the person 'Israel' refers to

Indeed, on the basis of (9') and (10'') we can provide the following correct restatement of (10):

(10''') The person 'Israel' refers to was called 'Jacob' because he seized his brother's heel

Now, why would this be illuminating with respect to the question why our rendering in (8)-(8'') is invalid? In order to see this, I will apply the analysis of 'Jacob' and 'Israel' to the relation between God's attributes and the infinite modes that follow from God's attributes. Consider the following invalid inference:

(8'') The attribute of thought = the infinite mode of thought

(11) The infinite mode of thought can be conceived to consist of parts

Hence:

(12) The attribute of thought can be conceived to consist of parts.

The points (8'') and (11) seem to be true statements in pretty much the same way (9) and (10) appeared to be correct initially. So *prima facie* (12) must also be considered to be a true statement. However, there is considerable evidence that (12) is invalid in the context of Spinoza's philosophy, as Spinoza states explicitly that attributes *cannot* be conceived to consist of parts.

But if (12) is wrong, what precisely makes the inference from (8'') and (11) to (12) invalid? The key to understanding this is provided by our treatment of the example of Jacob and Israel. From this example we can learn that (12) cannot be inferred on the basis of (8'') and (11) because in these latter statements there is a mix up between the used terms on the one hand, and the things these terms refer to on the other. That is to say: at this point we must acknowledge that (8'') actually is not precise enough; it should be restated in the following way:

(8''') The thing 'the attribute of thought' refers to = the thing 'the infinite mode of thought' refers to

This seems to be a fair description of the identity that we have argued for above. We have shown that *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* are identical because they refer to the same thing: God. And hence point (8^{'''}) makes it perfectly clear why the adduced inference is invalid: it is invalid because in (11) the term ‘infinite mode of thought’ is referentially opaque. The term in (11) is not about the thing the infinite mode refers to, but about the way that very same thing – i.e. God as a *res cogitans* – is grasped *modaliter*. That is: the term in (11) denotes the meaning of the term ‘infinite mode of thought’, not its reference. Another way of saying this is that the thing the infinite mode of thought refers to can only be conceived to consist of parts insofar as it is an infinite mode (in the same way the person ‘Jacob’ refers to can only be called ‘Jacob’ insofar as he seized his brother’s heel)

This provides us with the following addition to our rendering:

- (13) ‘The attribute of thought’ = God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *realiter*¹²⁶
- (14) ‘The infinite mode of thought’ = God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *modaliter*

This addition is reminiscent of Spinoza’s claim in EIp17s. Recall that in this important scholium, Spinoza warns his readers that when using the term ‘God’s intellect’ we must understand ‘something very different from what men commonly understand’. At this point we recognize that this is Spinoza’s way of saying that the term ‘God’s intellect’ – which in this scholium is conditionally taken to denote God’s infinite power of thinking as it is in itself – cannot be substituted for the referentially opaque term ‘infinite intellect’ – which denotes God’s infinite power of thinking insofar as it is expressed as an infinite modal intellect. We have just seen that, if this advice is neglected and the attributes and the infinite modes are erroneously taken to be absolutely (i.e. ontologically *and* conceptually) identical (such as in (8)), we end up with false claims such as (12). The distinction between (13) and (14) is as crucial as it is subtle. Anyone who – like H. Barker – treats *res cogitans* and *intellectus infinitus* as equivalent expressions may very well come to

¹²⁶ This claim will be elucidated in section 3.6, where it will become clear that in the context of Spinoza’s thought it is important to distinguish between an intellect-*dependent* (in EID4) and an intellect-*independent* (in EIp29s) variant of ‘attribute’. In this latter variant, meaning and reference converge *absolutely*, whereas in the former variant meaning and reference must be understood to converge *coalescently*.

invalid assertions of the sort ‘Israel is so called because he seized his brother’s heel’. Furthermore, anyone who takes the distinction too far – as Edwin Curley appears to have done with his claim that substance and nature are *not* identical – must seem to grant that there is a divine residue and (hence) that God cannot be understood to be entirely self-causing. Neither position is attractive when trying to establish the structure of *pars melior nostri* in the context of Spinoza’s mature philosophy.

1.5 Conclusion

In Letter 27 to Willem van Blyenbergh, Spinoza states that ‘everyone knows’ that ‘Ethics [...] must be founded on metaphysics and physics’.¹²⁷ Above we have seen that this also holds for a reconstruction of what the important notion ‘intellect’ means in the *Ethics*. In this chapter I have made a start with an analysis of the human intellect by way of an inquiry into the metaphysical structure of Spinoza’s philosophy. The question how we must understand the notion ‘intellect’ was addressed by way of a scrutiny of the Mereological Claim, which states that the human mind (and hence its better part) must be understood to be a part of the infinite intellect. With respect to this latter notion we encountered an important problem: ‘the infinite intellect of God’ (EIIp11c) appeared to be a fuzzy notion. That is to say: the term does not seem to be on a par with ‘God’s intellect’ in the way it is used in EIp17s. Indeed, as Spinoza states in this latter scholium that ‘God’s intellect [...] would have to differ entirely from our intellect [...] and could not agree with [it] in anything except the name’, it seemed rather hard to uphold the very Mereological Claim that is so important for Spinoza’s ethical program (and for understanding our intellect).

The problem concerning ‘God’s intellect’ and ‘the infinite intellect of God’ was rendered thus:

- (1) God has an infinite power of thinking (i.e. God is a *res cogitans*)
- (2) ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s) = God’s infinite power of thinking

¹²⁷ Letter 27, (I) 395 (*de Ethica, die, gelyk een ieder weet, op de metaphisica en phisica gegront moet werden [...]*).

- (3) 'The infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c) = God's infinite power of thinking
- (4) Our intellect *cannot* be conceived to be a part of 'God's intellect' (EIp17s)
- (5) Our intellect *can* be conceived to be a part of 'the infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c)

The problem that was captured in (1)-(5) seemed hard to overcome. However, an analysis of the claims in EIp17s and EIIp11c has provided us with the following solution:

- (1) God has an infinite power of thinking (i.e. God is a *res cogitans*)
- (2'') 'God's intellect' (EIp17s) = the attribute of thought
- (3') 'The infinite intellect of God' (EIIp11c) = the infinite mode of thought
- (4') Our intellect *cannot* be conceived to be a part of the attribute of thought
- (5') Our intellect *can* be conceived to be a part of the infinite mode of thought
- (8''') The thing 'the attribute of thought' refers to = the thing 'the infinite mode of thought' refers to
- (13) 'The attribute of thought' = God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *realiter*
- (14) 'The infinite mode of thought' = God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *modaliter*

Indeed, the root of the problem concerning the indiscernibility of identicals, that was detected in section 1.1.1, has become apparent. We have seen (i) that Spinoza's metaphysics is characterized by a pervasive duality of attributes (at the level of *Natura naturans*) and infinite modes (at the level of *Natura naturata*), and (ii) that the problem from rendering (1)-(5) was caused by the fact that, even though they are *ontologically identical*, 'the attribute of thought' and 'the infinite intellect' are not equivalent expressions for Spinoza. They must be understood to have the same *reference* but a different *meaning*.

1.5.1 *Pars melior nostri*

Spinoza's claims in EIp17s and EIIp11c were treated in order to illuminate the way in which we must understand 'our better part': the intellect. Now, the elucidation of the ontological identity of and the conceptual distinction between the attribute of thought and the infinite mode of thought not only provided us with a first important insight into the basic structure of Spinoza's metaphysics, but it also taught us some important things concerning the way in which we must conceive *pars melior nostri*. The things we have said in this chapter enable us to draw the following provisional conclusions:

- The intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) is a mode
- The intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) can be conceived to be a part of the infinite mode of thought

To be sure, there is yet another important conclusion that can be drawn presently. In order to see this, we must return to EIp17s one more time. In section 1.2 we have seen that this puzzling scholium does not harbor a *reductio ad absurdum*. The following rendering of Spinoza's assertions concerning 'God's intellect' in EIp17s made this clear:

- (i'') Suppose that God has an intellect that constitutes his essence
- (ii'') In that case, this particular divine intellect could not agree with our intellect in anything except the name
- (iii'') God is prior in causality to all things (by EIp16c1)
- (iv'') Therefore (by (i''), (ii'') and (iii'')) the particular divine intellect of (i'') will not be able to be (like our intellect) by nature either posterior to or simultaneous with the things understood
- (v'') So (by (iii'') and (iv'')) this particular divine intellect is really the cause both of the essence and of the existence of things.
- (vi) Therefore, since this particular divine intellect is the only cause of things (by (v'')), it must necessarily differ from our intellect both as to its essence and as to its existence and cannot agree with it in anything except in name.

(vii) As was supposed.

We have seen that this argument in EIp17s cannot be understood to be a *reductio* argument, as the initial supposition (i'')-(ii'') is fully corroborated by the conclusion (vii). This in turn makes it clear that the assertion that contains potentially crucial information concerning 'our intellect' – i.e. (iv'') – can be understood to be fully endorsed by Spinoza. Apparently, Spinoza champions the claim that, as opposed to 'God's intellect' (i.e. God's infinite power of thinking insofar as it is grasped *realiter*), our intellect is by nature *either posterior to or simultaneous with the things understood*. And hence we can draw the following additional conclusion with respect to the question how we must conceive the notion 'intellect' in the context of Spinoza's philosophy:

- The intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) is by nature either posterior to or simultaneous with the things understood, which in turn implies that the intellect is *characterized by a conceptual duality*.¹²⁸

Moreover, as in EIp17s the particular claim (iv'') is followed by the remark that 'the truth and formal essence of things is what it is because it exists objectively in that way in God's intellect',¹²⁹ there appears to be some ground to suppose that the duality that characterizes our intellect is closely related to the distinction between the *objective* and the *formal* being of things that surfaces in the remark about the characteristic of 'God's intellect'. Whereas in the case of this latter divine intellect the formal and objective being must apparently be understood to converge absolutely,¹³⁰ our intellect appears to be characterized by a necessary divergence of these two notions. And hence we can add the following tentative claim:

- The intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) is characterized by a conceptual distinction between the objective and formal being of the things understood.

¹²⁸ In this respect it is crucial to note that the notion of 'simultaneity' presupposes a duality: something can only be understood to be 'simultaneous' if there is something this thing is *simultaneous with*.

¹²⁹ EIp17s, (I) 427 (*sed contra veritas, & formalis rerum essentia ideò talis est, quia talis in Dei intellectu existit objective*).

¹³⁰ This absolute convergence will be treated extensively in Chapter 3.

These provisional conclusions will be tested and elaborated in the subsequent chapters. In Chapter 4 we will (inter alia) treat the ‘parallelism’ between the realms of thought and extension and the implications of the parallelism thesis for Spinoza’s conception of God’s self-knowledge and the way the human mind can be understood to ‘log in’ to this divine self-knowledge. As a proper understanding of the human intellect cannot do without a more detailed scrutiny of the divine thing this *pars melior nostri* must be conceived to ‘be in’, Chapter 3 will be dedicated to a scrutiny of Spinoza’s conception of God and his attributes. It will become clear why we are entitled to equate the terms ‘God’, ‘attribute’ and ‘infinite power of thinking’. Yet, before turning to these important subjects, we must first attain a better understanding of the way in which the human mind (and hence its better part) can be understood to be a part of the infinite mode of thought, whilst at the same time being ‘in’ the completely undividable substance that stands to our intellect as a constellation of stars stands to a barking animal. This is the subject to which we will turn in Chapter 2. Treatment of this subject will turn out to be highly illuminating with respect to the way the conceptual duality that characterizes our intellect can be understood to be related to the structure of Spinoza’s metaphysics.

2 Two infinite modes

This chapter aims to show that according to Spinoza the human mind can be understood to be conceptually bifurcated. It will become clear that the human mind – and any other singular thing in nature – can be conceived both as an infinite and as a finite mode. Furthermore it will be shown that this conceptual bifurcation is on a par with the distinction between the formal and the objective state of the human mind. This in turn teaches us that the conceptual bifurcation that is characteristic for the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) is recognizable in the concepts that are employed in the Ethics. Indeed, the very bifurcation that we encountered in Chapter 1 – and several other bifurcations – will turn out to be expressions of the dual character of our intellect. As the intellect is thus shown to have a constructive function in Spinoza’s philosophy, the findings in this chapter also enable us to elucidate the intricate distinction between immediate and mediate infinite modes.

2.1 Introduction

Few books in the history of philosophy have gained a more notorious reputation than Spinoza’s *Ethics*. This is partly due to the remarkable form of the *Ethics*. The geometrical order of definitions, axioms, propositions, corollaries, scholia, lemmata and postulates may have offered Spinoza himself the possibility to ‘consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a Question of lines, planes, and bodies’,¹ at the same time the Euclidan rendering of Spinoza’s philosophy has deterred many from really getting to grasps with it. To be sure, it is not the form, but first and foremost the content of the *Ethics* that since its publication in 1677 has stirred the greatest turmoil. For in this work Spinoza makes the bold claim that God and nature are identical, a contention that is famously captured in the phrase *Deus sive Natura*. In the previous chapter we have seen that this infamous clause entails that Spinoza’s metaphysics – often referred to as a textbook example of monism – is

¹ EIII Preface, (I) 492 (*humanas actiones, atque appetitūs considerabo perinde, ac si Quæstio de lineis, planis, aut de corporibus esset*).

nevertheless characterized by a certain duality. It has become clear that in the context of Spinoza's philosophy the infinite power of the one substance – God – can be understood to be *conceptually bifurcated*.² According to Spinoza, substance can be conceived (1) as to its essence that is grasped intellectually³ via an attribute (viz. as *Natura naturans*), and (2) as to the expression of this essence in an infinite mode that consist of infinitely many parts (viz. as *Natura naturata*). With respect to God's infinite power of thinking, this remarkable bifurcation can be rendered thus:

- (1) 'The attribute of thought' = God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *realiter*
- (2) 'The infinite mode of thought' = God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *modaliter*

Richard Mason rightly stipulated that this conceptual bifurcation in Spinoza's philosophy is 'centrally relevant, in the sense that it underlies almost all his other thinking'.⁴ Recognition of the importance of this bifurcation is certainly crucial when investigating Spinoza's conception of *pars melior nostri*. For it gives us a first indication as to how the Mereological Claim in EIIp11c must be understood: if God is conceived in the way of (1), the human mind (and its better part) *cannot* be conceived to be a part of God, as considered in this way God is absolutely undividable. But if God's infinite power of thinking is conceived in the way of (2), the Mereological Claim is sanctioned and the human mind *can* actually be understood to be a part of God.

² To be sure, this particular bifurcation is different from the multiplicity that led Donald Davidson to his remark that Spinoza's philosophy can be called an 'anomalous monism', as Davidson refers to the conceptual distinction *between* the attributes, whereas the present conceptual bifurcation refers to a conceptual distinction *within* each of the attributes: 'the reading I find plausible of Spinoza's ontological monism coupled with a dualistic (or multiple) explanatory apparatus is close to my own view of the relation between the mental and the physical. I call this position *anomalous monism*'. Donald Davidson, 'Spinoza's Causal Theory of the Affects' in: Yirmiyahu Yovel ed., *Desire and Affect. Spinoza as a Psychologist* (New York 1999), 106. In Chapter 4, where I will elucidate Spinoza's so-called 'parallelism thesis', it will become clear how the conceptual distinction *within* the attributes can be understood to be related to the conceptual distinction *between* the attributes.

³ The *intellectual* character of this grasping surfaces in the definition of 'attribute', which famously states that 'by attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance as constituting its essence', EID4, (I) 408 (*Per attributum intelligo id, quod intellectus de substantiâ percipit, tamquam eiusdem essentiam constituens*). More on the 'intellectual' character of the attributes in the next chapter.

⁴ Mason, *The God of Spinoza*, 29.

To be sure, this elucidation of the conceptual distinction between (1) and (2) of course is merely a start. The problem concerning the indiscernibility of identicals that was referred to in the previous chapter is far from solved. For if we are right with our claim that the attribute and its infinite mode must be conceived to be ontologically identical, it is still hard to see how a singular thing such as a human mind can be understood to be a part of the one (i.e. the infinite mode), but not of the other (i.e. the attribute). That is to say: in Chapter 1 we have seen *that* Spinoza argues for the distinction between (1) and (2) in order to be able to uphold the Mereological Claim. However, as of yet it is not clear at all *how* this distinction enables him to claim that the human mind (and its better part: *noster intellectus*) is part of the infinite intellect, but not of the ontologically identical attribute of thought. This will be the next step in the elucidation of how we must understand the notion ‘intellect’ in Spinoza’s mature philosophy. In this chapter we will see how Spinoza can argue for the claim that the finite human mind, which must be conceived to be a *part* of the infinite mode of thought, can at the same time be understood to be *contained ubiquitously* in the attribute of thought. As will become clear below, this remarkable conceptual bifurcation of the human mind (and indeed any other thing in nature) must be understood to be *an expression of the structure of pars melior nostri*. Or to use a phrase coined by Michael Della Rocca: in this chapter we will see in what way the intellect is ‘doubling back on itself.’⁵

2.1.1 Two types of infinite modes

In order to see how the human mind can be conceived to function within the metaphysical framework that is exposed in the *Ethics*, we must turn to a closer analysis of the thing the human mind is claimed to be a part of: the infinite mode of thought. Now, how do we have to conceive Spinoza’s notion of ‘infinite mode’? In Chapter 1 we have already uncovered some important characteristics of this particular concept. It has become clear that ‘the infinite mode of thought’ that surfaces in (2) has the following characteristics:

- it functions at the level of *Natura naturata*

⁵ Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 8.

- it can be conceived to *follow from* the attribute of thought
- it can be conceived to *consist of parts*
- the human mind is an example of such a part
- the infinite mode of thought = the infinite intellect (or God's idea)

So in the previous chapter we have already gathered insight into some relevant aspects of the whole the finite human mind is claimed to be a part of. Yet, if we want to understand how the finite human mind is related to the infinite mode of thought, still a lot more must be said about the assertion in point (2).

An important subject that needs treatment is the question *what kind* of infinite mode is staged in (2). For Spinoza actually distinguishes two kinds of infinite modes per attribute: an *immediate* and a *mediate* one. This particular distinction comes to light in the propositions 21-23 of part I of the *Ethics*. Consider the following claims in EIp21 and EIp22:

P21: All the things which follow from the absolute nature of any of God's attributes have always had to exist and be infinite, or are, through the same attribute, eternal and infinite.⁶

(*Omnia, quæ ex absolutâ naturâ alicujus attributi Dei sequuntur, semper, & infinita existere debuerunt, sive per idem attributum æterna, & infinita sunt*)

P22: Whatever follows from some attribute of God insofar as it is modified by a modification which, through the same attribute, exists necessarily and is infinite, must also exist necessarily and be infinite.⁷

(*Quicquid ex aliquo Dei attributo, quatenus modificatum est tali modificatione, quæ & necessariò, & infinita per idem existit, sequitur, debet quoque & necessariò, & infinitum existere*)

In the demonstration of EIp23, the claims in EIp21 and EIp22 are summarized in the following way:

the mode, which exists necessarily and is infinite, has had to follow from the absolute nature of some attribute of God – either *immediately* (see P21) or *by some mediating modification*, which follows from its absolute nature, that is (by P22), which exists necessarily and is infinite [...] [emphasis added].⁸

(*Modus ergo, qui & necessariò, & infinitus existit, ex absolutâ naturâ alicujus Dei attributi sequi debuit; hocque vel immediatè (de quo Prop. 21.), vel mediante aliquâ modificatione, quæ ex ejus absolutâ naturâ sequitur, hoc est (per Prop. præced.), quæ & necessariò, & infinita existit*)

⁶ EIp21, (I) 429.

⁷ EIp22, (I) 430.

⁸ EIp23d, (I) 431.

From these passages it becomes clear that we must distinguish between infinite modes that follow from an attribute of God directly, and infinite modes that follow from an attribute of God indirectly (i.e. that are mediated by another infinite mode). If we want to uncover the exact status of the thing our mind (and its better part) must be conceived to be a part of, we must establish whether this whole can be understood to be an infinite mode of the immediate or of the mediate variant.

Concerning the particular infinite mode of thought the human mind is claimed to be a part of (in EIIp11c), we seem to be entitled to claim tentatively that it must be understood to be an infinite mode of the immediate variant.⁹ The things we have said in the previous chapter concerning the infinite mode of thought in the way it is staged in (2) appear to fall within the scope of the claim of EIp21. In section 1.2 the infinite intellect was shown to be infinite because it follows from of the attribute of thought. This would seem to qualify this infinite intellect as something that ‘follow[s] from the absolute nature of [one of] God's attributes’ (EIp21) directly. Moreover, this infinite mode of thought was called ‘the infinite intellect’ – and ‘God’s idea’ – which appears to corroborate our supposition that it is to be considered an infinite mode of the immediate variant. For what faculty could be understood to be operative between God’s infinite power of thinking and its modal expression as an infinite intellect (i.e. between God and his idea of himself)? Provisionally there seems to be nothing that can be conceived to mediate the infinite intellect. As this reading appears to find further corroboration in Letter 64 – in which Spinoza refers to ‘the absolutely infinite intellect’ as one of the examples of the immediate infinite mode of thought¹⁰ – it seems that we can restate (2) in the following way:

(2') God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *modaliter* = ‘The *immediate* infinite mode of thought’

⁹ The terms ‘immediate infinite mode’ and ‘mediate infinite mode’ – that have become more or less standard terminology for referring to the distinction that is made in the demonstration of EIp23 – are *not* used as such by Spinoza himself. Yet, the claims in EIp23d provide a firm fundament for using these terms.

¹⁰ Letter 64, (II) 439. The relevant passage reads thus: ‘[...] the examples of infinite modes which you ask for: examples of the first kind i.e. of things produced immediately by God are, in Thought, absolutely infinite intellect’ (*Denique exempla, quæ petis, primi generis sunt in Cogitatione, intellectus absolutè infinitus; in Extensione autem motus & quies*). More on this important passage in section 2.6.

Having established tentatively that the infinite intellect of EIIp11c must be referred to as the immediate infinite mode of thought,¹¹ we can turn to an elucidation of the mediate infinite mode(s) of thought. In this chapter I will show that the mediate infinite things that in EIIP22 are claimed to be modified by an infinite mode, can actually be understood to denote the parts of the infinite mode of thought. Another way of saying this is that human minds – which in EIIp11c are asserted to be a part of the infinite intellect – can be conceived as mediate infinite modes also. Indeed, it is by understanding how human minds function as mediate infinite modes that we are able to see how they can be understood (i) to be contained ubiquitously in the attribute of thought, and (ii) to be a part of the infinite mode of thought.

Now, I am well aware of the fact that *prima facie* the claim concerning the mediate infinite status of human minds appears to be highly problematic, if not plainly nonsensical. For one thing, when asked to elucidate the notion of mediate infinite mode, Spinoza in Letter 64 refers to the (extended) whole of nature (EIIL7).¹² As it seems wrong to claim that a human mind can count as (the mental parallel of) the whole of nature of EIIL7, this assertion in Letter 64 appears to imply that human minds cannot be considered to be mediate infinite modes. A more unequivocal objection to the present supposition is the following: if the human mind would be an infinite mode, this mental thing would have to be *both finite and infinite*. For Spinoza makes it very clear in EIIp11 that the human mind is a singular thing, which (by EIID7) must be understood to be finite by definition. Indeed, in EIIp11 he claims:

The first thing which constitutes the actual being of the human Mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which actually exists¹³

¹¹ I will return to this claim in section 2.6.2.

¹² Letter 64, (II) 439. The relevant passage reads thus: ‘an example of the second kind i.e. of those produced by the mediation of some infinite modification is the face of the whole Universe, which, however much it may vary in infinite ways, nevertheless always remains the same. On this, see L7S before II P14’ (*secundi autem, facies totius Universi, quæ quamvis infinitis modis variet, manet tamen semper eadem, de quo vide Schol. 7. Lemmatis ante Prop. 14. p. 2*). Commentators have often claimed that the whole of nature must be understood to be *the* example. In the words of Edwin Curley: ‘it is usually thought that there will be one immediate infinite mode and one mediate infinite mode under each attribute’. Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 58-59. More on this important subject in section 2.6.

¹³ EIIp11, (I) 456.

(Primum, quod actuale Mentis humanæ esse constituit, nihil aliud est, quàm idea rei alicujus singularis actu existentis)

And EIID7 reads:

By singular things I understand things that are finite and have a determinate existence.¹⁴

(Per res singulares intelligo res, quæ finitæ sunt, & determinatam habent existentiam)

If we moreover acknowledge that according to Spinoza ‘a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways’,¹⁵ it seems clear that human minds are finite things. The assertion that a human mind is an infinite mode appears to be a contradictory statement, which hence has to be dropped.

So why still claim that singular things can be considered to be infinite modes (as well)? The reason is the following: a thorough scrutiny of the *Ethics* will make it clear that Spinoza’s philosophy is characterized by a pervasive and recurring conceptual bifurcation. In the previous chapter, where it was shown that God can be grasped *realiter* as an attribute, and *modaliter* as an infinite mode, we encountered a first example of this important bifurcation. In the present chapter I will show that a similar duality is applicable to the way human minds can be conceived. In order to show this, I will firstly focus on the mereological, existential and causal tissue of the *Ethics*. In the sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 it will be argued that the mentioned distinction is recognizable in Spinoza’s mereological, existential and causal claims respectively. In the important section 2.5 I will show that the distinction that was uncovered in the preceding sections is on a par with Spinoza’s assertions concerning *the formal and the objective* being of things. That is to say: in that important section we will encounter yet another important reason for choosing the present interpretational route, as in section 2.5 we will see that *the conceptual bifurcation that surfaces in this chapter must be understood to be an expression of the very bifurcation that characterizes the intellect in the way we commonly understand it*. In section 2.6 I shall turn to the question how this remarkable insight can be brought in line with Spinoza’s claims about the two types of infinite modes that can

¹⁴ EIID7, (I) 447.

¹⁵ EIIP7s, (I) 451 (*modus extensionis, & idea illius modi una, eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa*). This so-called ‘parallelism’ will be treated extensively in Chapter 4.

be found in EI_p21-EI_p23, Letter 64 and EI Appendix. Finally, in section 2.7 it will become clear why our findings should be illuminating with respect to the way in which the human mind must be conceived to be a part of the infinite intellect.

2.2. A mereological angle

In this chapter I aim to show that the human mind (and any other singular thing in nature)¹⁶ can be conceived as an infinite mode (as well). As already noted, this tentative claim appears to be incongruous. For how can a thing be finite and infinite at the same time? *Prima facie* the relation between finitude and infinity would seem to be disjunctive: a thing is either finite, or it is infinite (but not both). Any interpretation that attributes a position to Spinoza from which a finite thing can also be understood to be infinite, would seem to be absurd. However, at closer scrutiny there are various passages in Spinoza's work that drag the present hypothesis out of the realm of sheer absurdity. Some contentions in Letter 32 are a case in point. In this letter to Henry Oldenburg, Spinoza aims to explain the claim that the human mind is part of an infinite intellect – indeed the very assertion that was posited in EI_p11c and that we have christened the 'Mereological Claim' in the previous chapter. In Letter 32, he says the following on this subject:

But as far as the human Mind is concerned, I think it is a part of Nature [...]. For I maintain that there is [...] in nature an infinite power of thinking, which, insofar as it is infinite, contains in itself objectively the whole of Nature, and whose thoughts proceed in the same way as Nature, its object, does. Next, I maintain that the human Mind is this same power, not insofar as it is infinite and perceives the whole of Nature, but insofar as it is finite and perceives only the human body. For this reason I maintain that the human Mind is part of a certain infinite intellect.¹⁷

(quòd autem ad Mentem humanam attinet, eam etiam partem Naturæ esse censeo; nempe quia statuo, dari etiam in naturâ potentiam infinitam cogitandi, quæ, quatenus infinita, in se continet totam Naturam objectivè, & cujus cogitationes procedunt eodem modo, ac Natura, ejus nimirum ideatum. Deinde Mentem humanam hanc eandem potentiam statuo, non quatenus infinitam, & totam Naturam percipientem; sed finitam, nempe

¹⁶ Below we will see that the human mind holds no special position in this respect. Indeed, Spinoza's claim in EI_p13s that 'the things we have shown so far are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals (*Nam ea, quæ hucusque ostendimus, admodum communia sunt, nec magis ad homines, quam ad reliqua individua pertinent*) will prove to be applicable to the infinite modal status of things as well. EI_p13s, (I) 458.

¹⁷ Letter 32, (II) 20.

quatenus tantum humanum Corpus percipit, & hac ratione Mentem humanam partem cujusdam infiniti intellectus statuo)

It must be admitted straightaway that this passage in itself does not underpin the present claim concerning the infinite status of the human mind. On the contrary even, in this passage the human mind is explicitly claimed to be finite, which firmly suggests that we are on the wrong track. Yet, a closer scrutiny of the context in which this remark is made sheds a somewhat different light on the things that are said here. For the assertion about the finite status of the human mind is preceded by a passage that suggests that singular things – including finite human minds – can actually be conceived in yet another way:

all bodies are surrounded by others, and are determined by one another to existing and producing an effect in a fixed and determinate way [...]. From this it follows that every body, insofar as it exists modified in a definite way, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, must agree with its whole and must cohere with the remaining parts. [...] [P]arts [of the whole universe] are regulated in infinite ways by this nature of the infinite power, and compelled to undergo infinitely many variations. *But in relation to substance I conceive each part to have a closer union with its whole.* For [...] since it is of the nature of substance to be infinite, it follows that each part pertains to the nature of corporeal substance, and can neither be nor be conceived without it [emphasis added].¹⁸

(omnia enim corpora ab aliis circumcinguntur, & ab invicem determinantur ad existendum, & operandum certâ, ac determinatâ ratione [...] hinc sequitur, omne corpus, quatenus certo modo modificatum est, partem esse totius universi, cum suo toto convenire, et cum reliquis partibus cohærere [...] Porro ratione substantiæ unamquamque partem arctionem unionem cum suo toto habere concipio, nam cum de substantiæ natura, [...] sit esse infinita, hinc sequitur unamquamque partem totius substantiæ corporeæ ad totam substantiam pertinere, nec sine reliqua substantia esse aut concipi posse)

This passage makes it clear that, if considered from a part-whole (i.e. a mereological) perspective, modes¹⁹ are conceivable in two distinct ways. Things can be grasped:

¹⁸ Ibidem, (II) 19-20. Curley translates the term ‘*partibus*’ at the end of the second sentence into ‘bodies’. I have chosen to use the term ‘parts’ here.

¹⁹ In this passage, Spinoza is clearly speaking about the relation between substance and *bodies*. Yet, given the ‘parallelism’ of modes that surfaces in EIIp7s (and which will be treated in Chapter 4), we are entitled to draw conclusions from it regarding modes of *thought* (or modes of any other attribute) such as human minds as well. Indeed, as we just saw, in the adduced letter Spinoza himself stresses that ‘there is [...] in nature an infinite power of thinking, which, insofar as it is infinite, contains in itself objectively the whole of Nature’ (*in natura potentiam infinitam cogitandi, quae quatenus infinita, continet in se objective totam naturam*).

- (I) insofar as they ‘exist as modified in a definite way’; in this particular guise a thing ‘must be considered as a part of the whole universe, and as agreeing with the whole and cohering with the other parts’.
- (II) insofar as they have *a closer union with their whole*. For, unlike the case of a thing that is conceived to exist as modified in a definite way, that same thing insofar as it is related to substance according to Letter 32 must be understood to *pertain to the nature of substance*.

This provides us with a first indication that according to Spinoza the same thing can be grasped in two ways.

An analogous bifurcation can be found in a passage from another early work of Spinoza. Consider the following remark in the KV:

So according to this definition of ours, we posit a universal and a particular Providence. The universal is that through which each thing is produced and maintained insofar as it is a part of the whole of Nature. The particular Providence is that striving which each particular thing has for the preservation of its being insofar as it is considered not as a part of Nature, but as a whole.²⁰

(zoodat wy dan, volgens deze onze beschryvinge stellen, een algemeene, en een bezondere Voorzienigheid: de algemeene is die, door de welke ieder zaak voortgebracht en onderhouden word voor zoo veel zy zyn deelen van de geheele Natuur. De bezondere Voorzienigheid is die poginge, die ieder ding bezonder tot het bewaaren van syn wezen heeft, voor zoo veel ze niet als een deel van de Natuur, maar als een geheel aangemerkt word)

Just as the greater part of Letter 32, this passage deals with the way parts and wholes must be conceived. And again the part-whole structure unveils two distinct manners in which a thing can be understood to be operative in nature. In terms of the passage adduced: things can be grasped according to the way in which they are produced by the universal providence, and things can be grasped insofar as they are conceived to be produced by the particular providence. As William Sacksteder asserted (with respect to Letter 32) ‘something may be *considered* [...] to be whole or part only by adopting this or that viewpoint’.²¹ This conceptual stance is clearly recognizable in the quoted passage of the KV, too.

So again, we encounter a certain conceptual bifurcation. As already noted in the previous section, this bifurcation provides us with a remarkable possible way of

²⁰ KV I Ch. V, (I) 84.

²¹ William Sacksteder, ‘Spinoza on Part and Whole: The Worm’s Eye View’ in: *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1977), 143.

conceiving the metaphysical status of singular things (and hence human minds). In order to show the potential of the adduced passages in this respect, it may be illuminating to invoke an example from the previous chapter once more. Recall that with respect to Spinoza's Mereological Claim in EIIp1 1c, it was suggested that the human mind can be conceived to be related to the infinite intellect in more or less the same way a single drop of water is related to the ocean it is conceived to be a part of. Now, at this point it is important to recognize that in the water example a similar bifurcated structure can be discerned as the one that surfaces in Letter 32 and the passage in the KV. The drop of water can be grasped as a *part* of the all-encompassing whole that is the ocean. Yet, this very same drop can also be conceived to have a closer union with the whole it is conceived to be a part of. For it is crucial to acknowledge that *the drop of water is as watery as the ocean it is a part of*. The priority of the ocean insofar as this ocean is considered to be the whole that the drop is merely a part of,²² evaporates as soon as the drop of water and the ocean are both considered as to the things that are equally in the part and in the whole – say: the wateriness, the salty taste and the liquid stage. If the drop of water is considered as a watery whole in itself, this drop of water pertains to the nature of water in exactly the same way the ocean does. In this sense the water that *is* the drop is considered *in itself* and has a closer union with its substance (i.e. water) than if it is considered to be a part of a (watery) ocean.

Translating this in terms of the present subject, we are able to make the following provisional claim: considered in itself *the human mind pertains to the nature of thinking substance in exactly the same way the infinite intellect does*. And as according to Spinoza the infinite intellect must be considered to be an infinite mode of thought (as was shown in the previous chapter), this tentative claim

²² In Spinoza's metaphysics, if things are considered *realiter*, the whole is in a certain sense *prior* to the part. This particular stance surfaces in the very first proposition of the *Ethics*, which reads thus: 'A substance is prior in nature to its affections (*Substantia prior est natura suis affectionibus*)'. EIp1, (I) 410. To be sure, this claim is opposed by the contentions of various scholars. Yitzhak Melamed says the following: '[Spinoza's] understanding of the part-whole relation is quite traditional. Parts are prior to their whole, both in nature and in our knowledge'. Yitzhak Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance and Thought* (Oxford 2013), 47. Melamed is right to the extent that God cannot be properly called a whole. However, as I have shown in the previous chapter and will further elucidate in this and the subsequent chapters, for Spinoza parts are only prior to their whole when things are considered *modaliter*. That is to say: from a certain perspective parts indeed *are* conceived to be prior to their wholes. However, this particular priority is a priority in knowledge by way of the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it), *not* in nature. More on this in the chapters 4 and 5.

appears to imply that the human mind – insofar as it is perceived to pertain to the nature of thinking substance – can indeed be considered to be an infinite mode of thought (as well). Now, undoubtedly these assertions – especially the emphasized clause – will strike many readers as evidently false. For how could the human mind pertain to the nature of substance in the same way the all-encompassing and all-knowing infinite intellect of God does? At this point – again – I must ask for a certain suspension of disbelief. For I think it can be shown that a proper understanding of the intricate distinction between the immediate and mediate infinite mode(s) of thought renders the emphasized claim less absurd than it would seem at first sight. In order to see this, we will have to investigate (i) whether the distinction that surfaces in Letter 32 and the KV is also recognizable in the *Ethics*, and (ii) whether this distinction can indeed be understood to corroborate our claim that human minds can be conceived as mediate infinite modes. These questions will be treated in the subsequent sections.

2.3 Two senses of existence

Certain remarks in Spinoza's letters and the KV leave some room for the possibility that human minds can be considered to be infinite. Yet, as the quoted remarks concerning the relation between parts and wholes stem from relatively early works of Spinoza, we cannot content ourselves with the provisional conclusion from section 2.2. In the present section I must show that the supposition that singular things can be grasped in (at least) two ways indeed is a structural feature of Spinoza's philosophy, that is recognizable in the *Ethics* as well. Moreover, I need to argue for the claim that this underpinning is firm enough to enable us to conclude that the human mind can indeed be considered to be an infinite mode. In order to elucidate these two points, I will scrutinize some of Spinoza's assertions about the *existence* of modes. We will see that these particular assertions can be understood to mirror the bifurcated structure that emerges in Spinoza's mereological claims referred to in the previous section.

2.3.1 Eternity and duration

Consider the following important assertion in EVp29s:

we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. But the things we conceive in this second way as true, *or* real, we conceive under a species of eternity, and their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God (as we have shown in IIP45 and P45S).²³

(Res duobus modis à nobis ut actuales concipiuntur, vel quatenus easdem cum relatione ad certum tempus, & locum existere, vel quatenus ipsas in Deo contineri, & ex naturæ divinæ necessitate consequi concipimus. Quæ autem hōc secundo modo ut veræ, seu reales concipiuntur, eas sub æternitatis specie concipimus, & earum ideæ æternam, & infinitam Dei essentiam involvunt, ut Propositione 45. Partis 2. ostendimus, cujus etiam Scholium vide)

There is an obvious similarity between this assertion and the things we inferred on the basis of Letter 32 and the KV: again we encounter a bifurcation of the way in which singular things can be grasped. According to this passage too, things – purportedly including human minds – can be conceived in two ways: insofar as we conceive a singular thing in relation to a certain time and place, and insofar as we conceive this very same thing to have a closer union with substance because it ‘involves the eternal and infinite essence of God’.

To be sure, there are important differences between this claim and the assertions in Letter 32 and the KV. Perhaps the most obvious divergence is the temporal dimension that surfaces in EVp29s. In this latter scholium it is stated explicitly that things exist (i) in relation to a certain time and place, and (ii) insofar as we conceive them to follow from the eternal necessity of the divine nature, a causal operation that appears to detach the thing under scrutiny from the realm of time and place. If we want to be sure whether the bifurcation of EVp29s is on a par with the part-whole distinction that was treated in the previous section, we must scrutinize the foundations of EVp29s and determine how the asserted conceptual bifurcation in this scholium is to be understood precisely. In this respect, it may be instructive to start with an analysis of EID8. For the remarkable distinction that is staged in EVp29s – i.e. the distinction between existence under duration and

²³ EVp29s, (I) 610.

existence without relation to time and place – surfaces explicitly in this definition. And thus EID8 may provide us with a first indication as to how we should understand the specific bifurcation that is hinted at in EVp29s.

EID8 reads thus:

D8: By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the eternal thing.

Exp.: For such existence, like the essence of a thing, is conceived as an eternal truth, and on that account cannot be explained by duration or time, even if the duration is conceived to be without beginning or end.²⁴

(VIII. Per aeternitatem intelligo ipsam existentiam, quatenus ex solâ rei aeternæ definitione necessariò sequi concipitur. EXPLICATIO. Talis enim existentia, ut aeterna veritas, sicut rei essentia, concipitur, proptereaque per durationem, aut tempus explicari non potest, tametsi duratio principio, & fine carere concipiatur)

Yitzhak Melamed argued that the specific species of eternity that is treated in EID8 is only applicable to God, and not to infinite modes (let alone to finite modes).²⁵ Melamed's interpretation implies that the variant of eternity that is attached to infinite modes – immediate and mediate ones alike – is merely *sempiternity* (or 'everlastingness', that *can* be explained by duration, namely as duration 'without beginning or end').²⁶ Now, it must be admitted that (some) infinite modes can be understood to be sempiternal in a certain respect – I will argue for this in the next chapter.²⁷ However, the claim that the specific variant of eternity that is referred to in EID8 cannot be attributed to modes at all seems false. The first thing that must be noted in this respect is that in this definition, eternity is explicitly asserted to *follow* from the eternal thing, which suggests that this species of eternity is actually applicable to modes (as well).²⁸ Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that, if modes would indeed be 'eternal' in the sense of everlastingness at most, then the claim in EVp29s would have to be understood in the following way:

²⁴ EID8, (I) 409.

²⁵ Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 122-124.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 126.

²⁷ See note 174 and section 3.3.

²⁸ More on God's causal power – which can be understood to be equivalent to the 'follow from' relation (see note 60) – in a subsequent section and Chapter 3.

we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to exist everlastingly.

It is not easy to make sense of this assertion. Do we really conceive (say) the present president of France insofar as he exists now, and insofar as he existed infinitely long before his birth and after his death? If this would be a correct interpretation of what Spinoza is saying in EVp29s, it would be very tempting to join Jonathan Bennett in his judgment that part V of the *Ethics* is ‘an unmitigated and seemingly unmotivated disaster’,²⁹ and leave it at that. However, it is hard to believe that Spinoza – for all his boldness – would argue for the sempiternity of all things. The reluctance to accept the bold rephrasing of EVp29s that Melamed’s interpretations induces finds confirmation, not only in the demonstration of EVp29 itself, where Spinoza states explicitly that ‘eternity cannot be explained by duration’,³⁰ but also in EIp24c, where he claims that ‘so long as we attend to [the essence of things] we shall find that it involves neither existence nor duration [emphasis added]’.³¹ This latter clause suggests that eternity in its absolute non-durational sense of EID8 can actually be considered applicable to singular things such as human minds: singular things can be conceived to be eternal as long as they are considered as to their essences only. This understanding of the scope of the notion ‘eternity’ is corroborated by EIIp44c2, where Spinoza states that ‘it is of the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain species of eternity’.³² The eternity that is attached to ‘things’ – which cannot but include modes as ‘outside the intellect there is nothing except substances and their affections’³³ – is claimed to be equivalent to ‘the very necessity of God’s eternal nature’.³⁴ And hence we can conclude that things can be conceived ‘without any relation to time’³⁵ in the same way God can. Additional evidence for the supposition that modes can be understood to exist eternally (as well) can be found in EVp23s. In this scholium Spinoza claims that an ‘idea, which

²⁹ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 357.

³⁰ EVp29d, (I) 610 (*aeternitas per durationem explicari nequit*).

³¹ EIp24c, (I) 431. We will return to this corollary in section 3.4.1.

³² EIIp44c2, (I) 481 (*De naturâ Rationis est res sub quâdam aeternitatis specie percipere*).

³³ EIp4d, (I) 411.

³⁴ EIIp44c2, (I) 481 (*hæc rerum necessitas est ipsa Dei aeternæ naturæ necessitas*).

³⁵ *Ibidem*, (I) 481 (*quæque propterea absque ullâ temporis relatione*).

expresses the essence of the body under a species of eternity, is a certain mode of thinking, which pertains to the essence of the Mind, and which is necessarily eternal'.³⁶ This makes it clear once more that according to Spinoza, some modes are necessarily eternal.

Given these examples, it is rather clear that Melamed's interpretation must be rejected. In the context of Spinoza's philosophy, modes can be understood to be eternal, namely if they are grasped in a certain way. And hence the following proposed reading of EVp29s would seem to be a little less disastrous (even though it still needs a lot of elucidation) than the reading that is implied by Melamed's take on the scope of 'eternity' in EID8:

we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them as to their eternal (i.e. absolutely non-durational)³⁷ essences that are characterized by the very necessity of God's eternal nature³⁸

The adduced passages make it clear that, apart from God, modes can also be understood to have 'existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the eternal thing' (EID8).

2.3.2 Eternal and durational existence

The treatment of EID8 has taught us that modes can be understood to be eternal if they are considered in a particular way. Moreover, from this definition we learn still something else. EID8 makes it clear that Spinoza uses different concepts of existence in the *Ethics*³⁹ – *eternal* and *durational* existence – that both must be

³⁶ EVp23s, (I) 607 (*Est, uti diximus, hæc idea, quæ Corporis essentiam sub specie æternitatis exprimit, certus cogitandi modus, qui ad Mentis essentiam pertinet, quique necessariò æternus est*).

³⁷ Indeed, Spinoza states in EIp33s2 that 'in eternity, there is neither *when*, nor *before*, nor *after*'. EIp33s2, (I) 437 (*At cum in æterno non detur quando, ante, nec post*).

³⁸ See note 3432.

³⁹ Several scholars have made the same observation. See for instance: Charles Jarrett 'Spinoza's Distinction between Essence and Existence' in: *The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 50 (2001), Andrew Youpa, 'Spinoza on the Very Nature of Existence' in: *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, volume XXXV (2011), and Thomas Ward, 'Spinoza on the Essences of Modes' in: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19 (1) (2011), 33.

understood to be applicable to modes. At this point it is important to note that this particular equivocalness between eternal and durational existence emerges also in the very passages that Spinoza refers to explicitly in the important clause in EVp29s: EIIp45 and its scholium. In order to understand the exact purport of Spinoza's claim in EVp29s that 'we conceive things as actual in two ways', we must turn to these passages now.

EIIp45 reads thus:

Each idea of each body, or of each singular thing which actually exists, necessarily involves an eternal and infinite essence of God.⁴⁰

(Unaquæque cujuscunque corporis, vel rei singularis, actu existentis, idea Dei æternam, & infinitam essentiam necessariò involvit)

In this claim we recognize the close⁴¹ relation between substance and its modes treated in the previous section. Again, a singular (i.e. finite) thing is claimed to involve an eternal and infinite essence of God, which makes it clear that the conceptual distinction of EVp29s may very well be similar to the one we encountered when scrutinizing Spinoza's claims in Letter 32 and the KV. To be sure, the distinction of EVp29s only flares up fully in the *scholium* of EIIp45. Consider the following passage in EIIp45s:

By existence here I do not understand duration, that is, existence insofar as it is conceived abstractly, and as a certain species of quantity. For I am speaking of the very nature of existence, which is attributed to singular things because infinitely many things follow from the eternal necessity of God's nature in infinitely many modes (see IP16). I am speaking [...] of the very existence of singular things insofar as they are in God. For even if each one is determined by another singular thing to exist in a certain way, still the force by which each one perseveres in existing follows from the eternal necessity of God's nature.⁴²

(Hic per existentiam non intelligo durationem, hoc est, existentiam, quatenus abstractè concipitur, & tanquam quædam quantitatis species. Nam loquor de ipsâ naturâ existentia, quæ rebus singularibus tribuitur, propterea quòd ex æternâ necessitate Dei naturæ infinita infinitis modis sequuntur (vide Prop. 16. p. 1.). Loquor [...] de ipsâ existentia rerum singularium, quatenus in Deo sunt. Nam, etsi unaquæque ab aliâ re singulari determinetur ad certo modo existendum, vis tamen, quâ unaquæque in existendo perseverat, ex æternâ necessitate naturæ Dei sequitur)

⁴⁰ EIIp45, (I) 481.

⁴¹ The term 'close' is inspired by the way Spinoza describes the relation wholes and its parts in the following line in the passage in Letter 32: 'in relation to substance I conceive each part to have a *closer union* (*partem arctiorem unionem*) with its whole [emphasis added]'.

⁴² EIIp45s, (I) 482.

Indeed, here we encounter the very bifurcation of EID8 and EVp29s. For in EIIp45s it becomes clear that a singular thing can be conceived to exist in *two* ways.

On the one hand a singular thing can be conceived to exist eternally, in which case the thing under scrutiny is considered insofar as it follows from the eternal necessity of God's nature in the way explicated in EIp16 (which clearly is on a par with the claim in EVp29s that things can be conceived 'to follow from the necessity of the divine nature', and which is also remarkably similar to the assertion in EID8 concerning the 'existence itself insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the eternal thing'). Taken in this particular way, a singular thing must be understood to exist 'in the same way as from the nature of a triangle it follows, from eternity to eternity, that its three angles are equal to two right angles'.⁴³ Furthermore (as was already suggested by EID8), if the relation between God and a singular thing is conceived in this particular way, the existence of a thing must be conceived to be an eternal truth,⁴⁴ as the thing under scrutiny must be understood to partake in 'the very necessity of God's eternal nature'.⁴⁵

However, singular things must of course be understood to exist in yet another way. In EIIp45s the close union of a thing with God is contrasted explicitly with a second way in which a thing can be understood. For in this scholium Spinoza distinguishes between eternal existence and 'existence insofar as it is conceived abstractly, and as a certain species of quantity'. Insofar as the singular thing under scrutiny is conceived in this latter way and thus is 'determined by another singular thing to exist in a certain way', it apparently does not follow necessarily from the eternal thing in the way of *EIp16*. Rather, it seems that from this perspective it must be understood to be operative in the causal thread that is posited in *EIp28*. This latter proposition reads thus:

Every singular thing, or any thing which is finite and has a determinate existence, can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another cause,

⁴³ EIp17s, (I) 426. This formulation was already adduced in section 1.4.1.1, where it was shown that the causal relation between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* does *not* imply an ontological distinction. In a subsequent section we will see that EIp16 – to which Spinoza refers in EIp17s – actually encompasses *two* conceptually distinct causal threads: an *internal* and an *external* one. The causal thread that is expressed with the claim in EIp17s is the internal variant that also surfaces in section 1.4.1.1.

⁴⁴ 'For such existence, like the essence of a thing, is conceived as an eternal truth [...]'. EID8 Exp., (I) 409 (*Talis enim existentia, ut aeterna veritas, sicut rei essentia, concipitur*).

⁴⁵ EIIp44c2, (I) 481 (*Dei aeternae naturae necessitas*).

which is also finite and has a determinate existence; and again, this cause also can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another, which is also finite and has a determinate existence, and so on, to infinity.⁴⁶

(Quodcunque singulare, sive quævis res, quæ finita est, & determinatam habet existentiam, non potest existere, nec ad operandum determinari, nisi ad existendum, & operandum determinetur ab aliâ causâ, quæ etiam finita est, & determinatam habet existentiam: & rursus hæc causa non potest etiam existere, neque ad operandum determinari, nisi ab aliâ, quæ etiam finita est, & determinatam habet existentiam, determinetur ad existendum, & operandum, & sic in infinitum)

It appears to be this particular variant of causation that must be considered applicable to things insofar as these are asserted to exist under duration and to be ‘conceived abstractly, and as a certain species of quantity’ in EIIp45s (and thus to things that are conceived ‘to exist in relation to a certain time and place’ in EVp29s).

The supposition that EIp28 deals with the causation of things insofar as they are understood to exist under duration – and that this particular causal thread indeed is staged in the quoted passage of EIIp45s – is corroborated by the fact that in the demonstration of EIp21 the notions ‘determinate existence’ and ‘duration’ are claimed to be equivalent: ‘[...] determinate existence, *or* duration [...]’.⁴⁷ This suggests that singular things that are operative in the causal thread of EIp28 must be conceived to be characterized by the fact that they exist ‘in relation to a certain time and place’. Moreover, in the demonstration of EIp28 Spinoza contrasts the clause ‘a modification which is eternal and infinite’ with the clause ‘a modification which is finite and has a determinate existence’.⁴⁸ This makes it clear once more that the latter modification must be understood to exist, not eternally, but under duration (i.e. ‘as a certain species of quantity’, to adduce a phrase of EIIp45s). That EIp28 is about things insofar as they are conceived to exist under duration is further warranted by EIIp30, in which the concept of duration is explicitly linked with EIp28 (and contrasted with EIp21):

P30: We can have only an entirely inadequate knowledge of the duration of our body.

⁴⁶ EIp28, (I) 432.

⁴⁷ EIp21d, (I) 430 (*Deinde id, quod ex necessitate naturæ alicujus attributi ita sequitur, non potest determinatam habere existentiam sive durationem*).

⁴⁸ EIp28d, (I) 432 (*modificatione, quæ æterna, & infinita est*); (*modificatione, quæ finita est, & determinatam habet existentiam*).

Dem.: Our body's duration depends neither on its essence (by A1), nor even on God's absolute nature (by IP21). But (by IP28) it is determined to exist and produce an effect from such causes as are also determined by others to exist and produce an effect in a certain and determinate manner, and these again by others, and so to infinity.⁴⁹

(PROPOSITIO XXX. Nos de duratione nostri Corporis nullam, nisi admodum inadequatam cognitionem habere possumus.

DEMONSTRATIO. Nostri corporis duratio ab ejus essentiâ non dependet (per Ax. 1. hujus), nec etiam ab absolutâ Dei naturâ (per Prop. 21. p. 1.). Sed (per Prop. 28. p. 1.) ad existendum, & operandum determinatur à talibus [andere] causis, quæ etiam ab aliis determinatæ sunt ad existendum, & operandum certâ, ac determinatâ ratione, & hæc iterum ab aliis, & sic in infinitum. [...]).

As Spinoza adds in the subsequent proposition that this duration is not only applicable to bodies but to each singular thing,⁵⁰ we are able to conclude that the causal thread that is the subject of EIp28 must be understood to be the productive causal power of God insofar as it has things as its effect that are conceived to exist under duration. And hence it seems to be precisely this causal thread of EIp28 that is hinted at in EIIp45s when Spinoza speaks about singular things insofar as these are ‘determined by another singular thing to exist in a certain way’.

The upshot of this way of understanding the related claims in EVp29s and EIIp45s is that – as was already suggested by our scrutiny of EID8 – we can discern (at least) two senses of ‘existence’ in the *Ethics*, both of which are shown to be applicable to singular things:⁵¹

A thing can be conceived as to its:

(3) Eternal existence

And *that very same singular thing* can also be conceived as to its

⁴⁹ EIIp30, (I) 471.

⁵⁰ EIIp31d, (I) 472 (*Unaquæque enim res singularis*).

⁵¹ This view seems to be opposed by Mogens Laerke, who claims that ‘for Spinoza, things either exist or they don’t, there is no class of beings in between, and existence is always said in the same sense of the things of which it is said’. Mogens Laerke, ‘Aspects of Spinoza’s Theory of Essence. Formal essence, non-existence, and two types of actuality’ in: Mark Sinclair ed., *The Actual and the Possible. Modality and Metaphysics in Modern Philosophy* (Oxford 2017), 13. Below it will become clear why I disagree with this view. Provisionally I can say that, even though Spinoza is committed to the univocal character of being, he is not committed to the univocal character of the *conception* of being.

(4) Existence under duration

EID8, EIIp45s, and EVp29s are not the only places in the *Ethics* where this particular conceptual bifurcation is recognizable. The claim that singular things can be understood to exist in the two ways mentioned is corroborated by other passages as well. Perhaps the most telling instance of the bifurcation that is expressed in (3) and (4) can be found in the corollary and scholium of the enigmatic⁵² EIIp8.

Consider the following claim in EIIp8c:

when singular things are said to exist, not only insofar as they are comprehended in God's attributes, but insofar also as they are said to have duration, their ideas also involve the existence through which they are said to have duration.⁵³

(& ubi res singulares dicuntur existere, non tantum quatenus in Dei attributis comprehenduntur, sed quatenus etiam durare dicuntur, earum idea etiam existentiam, per quam durare dicuntur, involvent)

The evidently conjunctive formulation ('not only [...] but [...] also' (*non tantum [...] sed [...] etiam*)) underpins our assertion that according to Spinoza singular things can be conceived to exist in two ways: insofar as they are 'comprehended in God's attributes' (which purportedly corresponds with the eternal existence of (3)), *and* insofar as they are said to have duration (which evidently corresponds with the existence under duration of (4)).⁵⁴

The scholium of EIIp8 is even more explicit about the distinct variants of existence that must be understood to be operative in the *Ethics*. Consider the following passage, in which Spinoza explicitly aims to provide an example of the things he has said in EIIp8c:

the circle is of such a nature that the rectangles formed from the segments of all the straight lines intersecting in it are equal to one another. So in a circle there are contained infinitely many rectangles which are equal to one another. Nevertheless, none of them can be said to exist except insofar as the circle exists, nor also can the idea of any of these rectangles be said to exist except insofar as it is comprehended in the idea of the circle. Now of these infinitely many rectangles let two only [...] exist. Of course their

⁵² More on the enigmatic character of this proposition in section 3.4.

⁵³ EIIp8c, (I) 452. The enigmatic aspect of the proposition – that deals with 'singular things [...] that *do not* exist [emphasis added]' is elucidated in Chapter 4.

⁵⁴ That we are indeed entitled to make this connection becomes clear if we acknowledge that this very corollary is actually referred to in EIIp45, the proposition which (together with its scholium) grounds Spinoza's claim in EVp29s that 'we conceive things as actual in two ways'.

ideas also exist now, *not only insofar as they are only comprehended in the idea of the circle, but also insofar as they involve the existence of those rectangles*. By this they are distinguished from the other ideas of the other rectangles [emphasis added].⁵⁵

(Nempe circulus talis est natura, ut omnium linearum rectorum, in eodem sese invicem secantium, rectangula sub segmentis sint inter se æqualia; quare in circulo infinita inter se æqualia rectangula continentur: attamen nullum eorum potest dici existere, nisi quatenus circulus existit, nec etiam alicujus horum rectangulorum idea potest dici existere, nisi quatenus in circuli ideâ comprehenditur. Concipiantur jam ex infinitis illis duo tantum [...] existere. Sanè eorum etiam ideæ jam non tantum existunt, quatenus solummodò in circuli idea comprehenduntur, sed etiam, quatenus illorum rectangulorum existentiam involvunt, quo fit, ut à reliquis reliquorum rectangulorum ideis distinguantur)

Spinoza admits that this example is inadequate.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, we can learn from it that we are right in distinguishing (at least) two different ways in which things can be grasped. In this respect the line emphasized in this passage is especially important. This particular conjunctive clause (that reiterates the conjunction of EIIp8c) makes it clear that the ideas of the rectangles can be conceived to exist in two ways. The ideas of the rectangles can be grasped insofar as they are comprehended in the idea of the circle, and insofar as they are actually instantiated in the idea of the circle (i.e. under duration (by EIIp8c)).⁵⁷

It is hard to miss the similarity between this claim and the things that are said in EID8, EIIp45s and EVP29s: in all these passages Spinoza posits an explicit distinction between things insofar as they can be conceived to exist eternally, and the same things insofar as they can be understood to exist under duration. And hence EIIp8c and EIIp8s further corroborate our claims in (3) and (4): in Spinoza's philosophy, things can be understood to exist in two ways: eternally (i.e. partaking in the very necessity of God's nature) and under duration (i.e. conceived abstractly, and as a certain species of quantity).

⁵⁵ EIIp8s, (I) 452-453.

⁵⁶ Spinoza opens the scholium with the following remark: 'If anyone wishes me to explain this further by an example, I will, of course, not be able to give one which adequately explains what I speak of here, since it is unique.' EIIp8s, (I) 452 (*Si quis ad uberiorem hujus rei explicationem exemplum desideret, nullum sane dare poterò, quod rem, de quâ hic loquor, utpote unicam, adæquatè explicet*).

⁵⁷ It is important to recognize that this particular instantiation must be understood to be positioned *within* the attribute of thought. Anyone who would claim that the essence of the idea of a circle is a *thought item* whereas the existence of that idea is an *extended item* neglects the absolute barrier between the attributes that Spinoza upholds. More on the way this instantiation must be understood to be related to a notion of *attribute-neutrality* in Chapter 4.

Recall that I aimed to elucidate two things in this section. Firstly, I endeavored to make it clear that our supposition that ideas of singular things can be grasped in (at least) two ways is a structural feature of Spinoza philosophy that surfaces, not only in his earlier works, but also in the *Ethics*. Moreover, we wanted to ascertain whether this possible underpinning is firm enough to allow us to conclude that the human mind can be conceived as an infinite mode (if considered from a certain perspective). In this section the first aim appears to be achieved. It became clear that in the *Ethics* too, Spinoza advocates a conceptual bifurcation: things can be considered as to their eternal being, and the very same things can be grasped as to their existence under duration. This was rendered thus:

A thing (and hence a human mind) can be conceived as to its:

(3) Eternal existence

And *that very same singular thing* can also be conceived as to its

(4) Existence under duration

Or, in terms of EVp29s:

we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to exist eternally

As of yet, the important second question still awaits an answer. At this point we are not entitled to claim that the human mind is an infinite mode. Even though Spinoza's formulations concerning the 'close' way in which things can be conceived to be attached to substance – in EIIp8c they are staged as being 'comprehended in God's attributes' and in EIIp45s they are asserted to 'follow from the eternal necessity of God's nature' – suggest that the *eternal* status of things implies an *infinite* status, we still need more evidence for this claim. In the next section we will

see that in this respect an analysis of the way God's causal power must be conceived proves to be a profitable route.

2.4 God's causal power⁵⁸

According to Spinoza, singular things can be conceived to exist in two ways. An important aspect of this conceptual bifurcation is the fact that the existential status⁵⁹ of a thing is closely related to the way in which a thing is understood to be caused. Indeed, in EIIp45s things are asserted to exist eternally (3) because 'infinitely many things *follow (sequuntur)* from the eternal necessity of God's nature [emphasis added]'; and things are considered to exist under duration (4) insofar as 'each one is *determined (determinetur)* by another singular thing to exist in a certain way [emphasis added]'. So the bifurcation of the existence of singular things appears to be mirrored in a bifurcated structure of the causation (or conceptual dependence)⁶⁰ of singular things. Consequently, rendering (3)-(4) can be restated tentatively in the following way:

A thing (and hence a human mind) can be conceived as to its:

- (3') Eternal existence, i.e. as to its existence insofar as it is caused in the way of EIp16

And that very same singular thing can also be conceived as to its:

⁵⁸ In this section we will only treat God's causal power insofar as it produces *modes*. A treatment of the same power insofar as it produces *itself* will be provided in the next chapter.

⁵⁹ It is very important to acknowledge that the clause 'existential status' in the context of Spinoza's philosophy is *not* equivalent to 'ontological status'. As must be clear from the preceding section, 'existence' must be understood to be a *conceptual*, not an *ontological* notion. That is to say: the referring to EIIp45s in EVp29s makes it clear that the notions of 'existence' that surface in the former scholium result from *conceiving* a thing as actual in a certain way. As will become clear in Chapter 3, the absolutely ontological variant of existence must be located *absolutely outside the intellect*.

⁶⁰ More on the similarity of the different kinds of dependence relations in Spinoza's metaphysics in: Samuel Newlands, 'Another Kind of Spinozistic Monism' in: *Nous* 44:3 (2010), 469-502. In this chapter I will use the term 'cause' for both for the *explicit* causal relations (such as the one that is staged in EIp28) as well as the relations that are expressed in a 'follow from'-formula (such as the one that is staged in EIp16). As will become clear in a subsequent section, this choice is motivated by the fact that Spinoza uses the terms 'cause' and 'effect' with respect to 'follow from'-relations himself.

- (4') Existence under duration, i.e. as to its existence insofar as it is caused in the way of EIp28

In this section we are looking for an answer to the question whether the conceived eternity of singular things also implies a status as infinite modes. As Spinoza's claims about infinite modes (in EIp21-EIp23) are stated in terms of causal dependence, a promising way to proceed would seem to be a closer analysis of the causal claims in EIIp45s (and consequently (3') and (4')). In other words: in order to determine whether we are right in our supposition that singular things such as human minds can be considered to be infinite modes if grasped in a certain way, we may very well turn to an examination of the causal claims that are made in EIIp45s. In this respect we must start by paying closer attention to the proposition that – unlike EIp28 – is adduced explicitly in EIIp45s: EIp16.

2.4.1 Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude

In a letter to Spinoza, Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus observes that EIp16 is 'nearly the most important proposition' of the first part of the *Ethics*.⁶¹ It is easy to see why he would say this. For EIp16 is the first in a set of propositions in which the generation of modes is treated. Martial Gueroult rightly remarked that 'proposition 16 opens the second part of Book I (propositions 16-29), which deals with the deduction of God's power':⁶² these propositions aim to make it clear in what way modes – which must necessarily be understood to be in God (by EIp15) – must also be conceived to be caused by God. In other words: EIp16 marks the start of Spinoza's highly idiosyncratic creation narrative.

Now, analyzing the set of propositions that deal with the way the divine causal power must be understood to be operative in nature, we appear to be confronted with a sobering insight with respect to our main claim in the present chapter. It is this: the very reference to EIp16 in EIIp45s suggests that the eternally existing things that are mentioned in this latter scholium cannot be considered to be infinite modes. For a provisional scrutiny of the creation narrative in the way it

⁶¹ Letter 82, (II) 486 (*quæ præcipua ferè est 1 lib. tui Tractatus*).

⁶² 'La Proposition 16 inaugure la seconde partie du Livre I (Propositions 16 à 29), consacré à la déduction de la puissance de Dieu'. Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza. Dieu (Ethique, 1)* (Paris 1968), 243.

unfolds in EIp16-EIp29 teaches us that the divine power insofar as it is conceived to have infinite modes as its effect, is treated in EIp21-EIp23, and *not* in EIp16. So an important question that is in need of an immediate answer is the following: does not the reference to EIp16 in EIIp45s falsify our supposition that the eternal things in EIIp45s can be considered to be infinite modes in the sense of EIp21-EIp23? Or does EIp16 nevertheless leave room for the supposition that things that follow from the necessity of the divine nature in the way of this proposition can be conceived as infinite modes?

An analysis of Spinoza's claim in EIp16 will provide us with an answer. EIp16 reads thus:

From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect).⁶³
(Ex necessitate divinae naturæ, infinita infinitis modis (hoc est, omnia, quæ sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt) sequi debent)

It is important to remark that this proposition deals explicitly with 'everything which can fall under an infinite intellect'. This implies that there cannot be anything that, even though it is a mode, does not fall within the scope of this conceptual dependency claim. Indeed, as Spinoza adds himself that EIp16 entails that 'God is the efficient cause of *all things* which can fall under an infinite intellect [emphasis added]',⁶⁴ we must understand EIp16 to be Spinoza's *Principle of Plenitude*.⁶⁵ In the previous chapter we have seen that this proposition implies that *there is no divine residue* that, even though it is in God, cannot be understood to follow from God. At this point it must be acknowledged that there is yet another conclusion that can be drawn with respect to EIp16. It is this: as the causal flow presented in EIp16 and its corollaries encompasses all things, it thus must be understood to encompass the causation of both infinite and finite modes. Apparently, the set of propositions dealing with God's causal power starts with a proposition in which this power is considered in its all-encompassing sense. In

⁶³ EIp16, (I) 424.

⁶⁴ EIp16c1, (I) 425.

⁶⁵ Arthur Lovejoy stated that 'Spinoza has [...] expressed the principle of plenitude in its most uncompromising form and has presented it as necessary in the strict logical sense'. Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (New York 1965), 155. In reference to Spinoza's version of this principle, Lovejoy refers explicitly to EIp16. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 152.

other words: as EIp16 treats the exhaustive productive power of God,⁶⁶ this proposition treats the causal thread that leads to infinite modes *eo ipso*, as there cannot be conceived to be any causal thread that is not encompassed by God's power. On closer inspection, this abundant character of God's power in the way it surfaces in EIp16 need not surprise us too much. Spinoza's claim in EIp34 that 'God's power is his essence itself'⁶⁷ makes it clear that God's causal power must be understood to be all-encompassing. It seems absurd to assume that God's essence would not encompass the production of a certain set of modes (*in casu*: the infinite modes); the generation of both infinite and finite modes must be conceived to be located within the confines of God's essence.⁶⁸

Recall that we are interested in the way Spinoza underpins the asserted two ways of existence of things that are posited in EIIp45s. We were wondering whether the reference to EIp16 in EIIp45s supports our supposition that the things conceived as to their eternal existence (3') in the scholium mentioned can be considered to be *infinite modes*. An important step in warranting this hypothesis has been made. For an elucidation of the causal claim in EIp16 has taught us that the mentioning of this Principle of Plenitude in EIp45s does not thwart the possibility

⁶⁶ God's exhaustive causal power is treated here insofar as it has *modes* its effect. The next chapter we be dedicated to the way in which God's causal power can be understood to cause *itself*.

⁶⁷ EIp34, (I) 439 (*Dei potentia est ipsa ipsius essentia*).

⁶⁸ The present way of understanding the purport of EIp16 is corroborated by EIp18. In the latter proposition it is stated that *all things (omnium rerum)* must necessarily be conceived to be the effect of *immanent* causation. Consider the proposition and (part of) its demonstration:

'P18: God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things.

Dem.: Everything that is, is in God, and must be conceived through God by P15), and so (by P16C1)

God is the cause of things, which are in him [...].

(PROPOSITIO XVIII. *Deus est omnium rerum causa immanens, non verò transiens.*

DEMONSTRATIO. *Omnia, quæ sunt, in Deo sunt, & per Deum concipi debent (per Prop. 15.), adeoque (per Coroll. 1. Prop. 16. hujus) Deus rerum, quæ in ipso sunt, est causa, quod est primum).*

EIp18, (I) 428. Proposition 18 accords with EIp16 as to the *neutrality* with respect to any bifurcation of God's causal power at the level of modes. The elucidation of the clause 'all things' in the demonstration of EIp18 by way of a reference to EIp15 (which states that 'whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God') and EIp16c1 (which states that 'God is the efficient cause of all things which can fall under an infinite intellect') makes it clear that the notion of 'immanent causation' in the way it is staged in this proposition is applicable to *infinite and finite modes alike*. Both types of modes must be considered to fall within the scope of the clause 'whatever is' (EIp15) and 'all things' (EIp16c1). And thus the immanent causation of EIp18 incorporates all the conceptual aspects of the causal generation of modes in the same way EIp16 does.

that a thing that is conceived as to its eternal existence can be understood to be an infinite mode. Once the all-encompassing character of the causal claim of EIp16 is acknowledged, it becomes clear that this proposition can be considered to also harbor the causal thread that has infinite modes as its result. The particular causal thread that surfaces explicitly in EIp21-EIp23 must be understood to merely be an aspect of the all-encompassing causal power introduced in EIp16. And hence, despite initial signs to the contrary, the eternally existing modes that are subsumed under (3') may very well be infinite modes.

To be sure, the treatment of EIp16 has not yet provided us with an absolute and unshakeable proof concerning the infinite status of the modes that are conceived as to their eternal existence (3'). The thing we have shown so far is that it is not impossible to suppose that the eternally existing things that are referred to in EIIp45s are caused in the relevant way to be considered infinite modes. However, if we want to be certain that we are right in our supposition that human minds can be considered to be infinite modes (as well), we of course need a much stronger claim. We need to establish whether it are precisely the causal threads that lead to infinite and finite modes which are referred to in EIIp45s. This is the subject of the next section. I will show that EIp16 harbors precisely the causal threads of EIp21-EIp23 and EIp28, and that these threads can thus be understood to mirror the bifurcation of eternal and durational existence from (inter alia) EIIp45s.

2.4.2 Two causal threads

A first indication that Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude encompasses precisely (and only) the causal threads that lead to infinite and finite modes can be found in the demonstration of EIp28. Consider the following passage:

But what is finite and has a determinate existence could not have been produced by the absolute nature of an attribute of God; for whatever follows from the absolute nature of an attribute of God is eternal and infinite (by P21). [...] But it also could not follow from God, or from an attribute of God, insofar as it is affected by a modification which is eternal and infinite (by P22). It had, therefore, to follow from, or be determined to exist and produce an effect by God or an attribute of God insofar as it is modified by a modification which is finite and has a determinate existence.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ EIp28d, (I) 432.

(At id, quod finitum est, & determinatam habet existentiam, ab absolutâ naturâ alicujus Dei attributi produci non potuit; quicquid enim ex absolutâ naturâ alicujus Dei attributi sequitur, id infinitum, & æternum est (per Prop. 21.). [...] At ex Deo, vel aliquo ejus attributo, quatenus affectum est modificatione, quæ æterna, & infinita est, sequi etiam non potuit (per Prop. 22.). Debit ergo sequi, vel ad existendum, & operandum determinari à Deo, vel aliquo ejus attributo, quatenus modificatum est modificatione, quæ finita est, & determinatam habet existentiam)

With respect to this passage it is crucial to acknowledge that, apart from the causal thread that leads to infinite modes (in EIp21-EIp22) and the one that leads to finite modes (in EIp28), no other possibility is offered here. In point of fact: any other possibility is implicitly excluded. Anything that is not caused in the way of EIp21-EIp22 is ‘*ergo*’ claimed to be caused by ‘a modification which is finite and has a determinate existence’, that is: in the way of EIp28 (which reads – as we saw – that ‘any thing which is finite and has a determinate existence [...] is determined to exist and produce an effect by another cause, which is also finite and has a determinate existence’). This claim thus provides us with a strong indication that EIp16 (and by implication EIIp45s) must be understood to encompass precisely and only these two causal threads.

The same conclusion can be drawn when considering a remark in the demonstration of EIp29, where Spinoza states explicitly that EIp16 must be understood to encompass precisely two distinct causal threads: the causal generation of infinite modes, and the causal generation of finite modes:

the modes of the divine nature have [...] followed from it necessarily and not contingently (by P16) – *either* insofar as the divine nature is considered absolutely (*by P21*) *or* insofar as it is considered to be determined to act in a certain way (*by P28*) [emphasis added].⁷⁰

(Modi deinde divinæ naturæ ex eâdem etiam necessariò, non verò contingenter secuti sunt (per Prop. 16.), idque, vel quatenus divina natura absolutè (per Prop. 21.), vel quatenus certo modo ad agendum determinata consideratur (per Prop. 27.))

⁷⁰ EIp29d, (I) 433. The use of ‘is considered’ in this passage makes it clear that according to Spinoza the difference between the singular things and their formal essences is *conceptual*. To be sure, in the *Opera Posthuma*, the NS and the Vatican manuscript of the *Ethics*, Spinoza does not refer to EIp28, but to EIp27. However, the formulation seems to make it clear that he actually intends to refer to EIp28. It is precisely because of this that in his translation of the *Ethics* Curley chose to use ‘28’ instead of ‘27’. Samuel Shirley, in his translation of the *Ethics*, maintains the original reference. Spinoza, *Complete Works* (Indianapolis 2002) [transl. by S. Shirley], 234.

Again, EIp16 is claimed to put forward only the causal thread that leads to infinite and the causal thread that leads to finite modes. In combination with the claim in the demonstration of EIp28, this passage provides us with clear evidence that Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude encompasses – and only encompasses – the causal threads of EIp21-EIp22 and EIp28.⁷¹

The scholium of EIp28 provides additional corroboration for this important claim. Consider the following passage in EIp28s:

Since certain things had to be produced by God immediately, namely, those which follow necessarily from his absolute nature, and others (which nevertheless can neither be nor be conceived without God) had to be produced by the mediation of these first things, it follows:

I. That God is absolutely the proximate cause of the things produced immediately by him, and not [a proximate cause] in his own kind [...]. For God's effects can neither be nor be conceived without their cause (by IP15 and IP24C).

II. That God cannot properly be called the remote cause of singular things, except perhaps so that we may distinguish them from those things that he has produced immediately, or rather, follow from his absolute nature. Or by a remote cause we understand one which is not conjoined in any way with its effect. But all things that are, are in God, and so depend on God that they can neither be nor be conceived without him.⁷²

⁷¹ At this point it may be important to remark that in the KV Spinoza distinguishes no less than *eight* ways in which God can be said to be an efficient cause: emanative causation, immanent causation, free causation, the causation of God through himself, principal causation, God as the first cause, universal causation and proximate causation. KV I Ch III, (I) 80-81. Martial Gueroult remarked that Trendelenburg claims that Spinoza got this table of causes – via Heereboord – from Burgersdijck. Gueroult, *Spinoza. Dieu (Ethique, 1)*, note 7, 245-246). The fact that Spinoza mentions eight causes in the KV seems to put some strain on the present claim that God's causal power only encompasses *two* causal threads. Two things must be noted in this respect. Firstly, it is important to note that the prominent mentioning of the eight causes in the early KV cannot serve as a decisive argument as to Spinoza's mature take on this subject. Secondly, it can be noted that, even though 'Burgersdijck's causes' appear in the *Ethics* as well, they do so mainly, not in the geometrically ordered part of the text, but in the explanatory corollaries and scholia (such as EIp16c2 and c3, EIp17c1 and c2, EIp17s). This suggests that the eightfold division can be understood to be merely subdivisions of the principal bifurcation of causes that surfaces explicitly in EIp28d and EIp29d. Piet Steenbakkers suggested in a personal conversation that the mentioning of 'Burgersdijck's causes' in the *Ethics* hence can be understood to be a 'service' to his readers, as they – especially the circle of friends who already read (earlier versions of) the *Ethics* before its publication – would be used to understanding causation in terms of the eight categories mentioned.

⁷² EIp28s, (I) 433. The clause 'and others' is a translation of '*et alia*' that can be found in the edition of EIp28s in the Gebhardt-version of the *Opera Posthuma*. In the *Opera Posthuma* this word is lacking. However, it is generally agreed on that Spinoza distinguishes here between 'some things' (*quaedam*) and 'other things' (*et alia*). Piet Steenbakkers remarked in a personal correspondence (April 6, 2016) about this issue that "*et alia*' is a Germanism. Idiomatically the best (and simplest) solution is repeating the term '*quaedam*'. This solution was actually already proposed by J.H. Leopold.'

(*Cùm quædam à Deo immediatè produci debuerunt, videlicet ea, quæ ex absolutâ ejus naturâ necessariò sequuntur, et alia mediantibus his primis, quæ tamen sine Deo nec esse, nec concipi possunt; hinc sequitur I°. quòd Deus sit rerum immediatè ab ipso productarum causa absolutè proxima; [Ik zeg volstrektelijk de naaste oorzaak, en] non verò in suo genere, ut ajunt. Nam Dei effectûs, sine suâ causâ, nec esse, nec concipi possunt (per Prop. 15. & Coroll. Prop. 24.). Sequitur II°. quòd Deus non potest propriè dici causa esse remota rerum singularium, nisi fortè eâ de causâ, ut scilicet has ab iis, quas immediatè produxit, vel potiùs, quæ ex absolutâ ejus naturâ sequuntur, distinguamus. Nam per causam remotam talem intelligimus, quæ cum effectu nullo modo conjuncta est. At omnia, quæ sunt, in Deo sunt, & à Deo ità dependent, ut sine ipso nec esse, nec concipi possint)*)

In this scholium too, we encounter a bifurcation of causal threads. Even though Spinoza does not state explicitly that the things that are subsumed under the points (I) and (II) can actually be conceived to be *the very same things* (which the present interpretation implies), it becomes clear once more that in the context of Spinoza's creation narrative, things can be conceived to be caused in two ways: God can be conceived as the 'absolutely proximate cause' of things (I), and he can be conceived insofar as he is the cause of the things that do not 'follow from his absolute nature' (II). To be sure, Spinoza's use of the term 'immediate' in (I) may lead some to the supposition that in EIp28s a distinction is made, not between infinite and finite modes, but between immediate (point I) and mediate (point II) infinite modes.⁷³ It is important to acknowledge that this would in turn imply that this scholium cannot be understood to underpin our hypothesis, as we are presently looking for a distinction between the causal thread that has *infinite*, and the causal thread that has *finite* modes as its effect. Hence, EIp28s can only be understood to corroborate the present interpretation if it is shown that – despite Spinoza's use of the terms '*immediatè*' and '*mediantibus*' in EIp28s – in this scholium he does not refer to the distinction between immediate and mediate infinite modes.⁷⁴ Below I will provide three arguments that underpin our claim that the two concepts that surface in EIp28s can be considered to refer to infinite and finite modes (and hence can be considered to provide a further warrant for our claim that EIp16 harbors precisely two causal threads).

⁷³ See Emilia Giancotti, 'On the Problem of Infinite Modes' in: Yirmiyahu Yovel ed., *God and Nature. Spinoza's Metaphysics* (Leiden 1991), 103-104.

⁷⁴ Martial Gueroult declares that this is obvious, stating that the opposing interpretation is '*évidemment fausse*'. Gueroult, *Spinoza. Dieu*, 342.

Argument 1: ‘Singular things’

A first – although in the present context not entirely convincing⁷⁵ – argument is the following. In EIp28s point II the term ‘singular things’ is used. This is a clear indication that this particular point is not about infinite, but about *finite* modes (or rather: about modes insofar as they are conceived to be finite). For indeed, as already noted above, in EIID7 Spinoza defines ‘singular things’ as ‘things that are *finite* and have a determinate existence [emphasis added]’.⁷⁶

Argument 2: An odd position

If EIp28s would be about infinite modes only, the scholium is placed in a rather odd position in the *Ethics*. If EIp28s would indeed be a restatement of the things that are being said in EIp21 and EIp22, one would expect this scholium to be attached to EIp23, which as we saw recapitulates the statements on (immediate and mediate) infinite modes in the two preceding propositions. However, as the proposition to which EIp28s is attached is not about infinite, but about *finite* modes, it is highly questionable whether the distinction in the scholium of this very proposition is on a par with the distinction between two different kinds of *infinite* modes that are staged in EIp21-23. It seems far more plausible to suppose that point II is about *finite* modes. This supposition is corroborated by the fact that in the demonstration of EIp28, the claim from this proposition concerning finite modes is contrasted explicitly with the causal thread of EIp21 and EIp22 (as already noted above). Moreover, we have seen that in the demonstration of the very subsequent proposition – EIp29 – Spinoza asserts explicitly that EIp16 encompasses (and only encompasses) the two causal threads of EIp21-EIp22 and EIp28. This provides us with additional (con)textual evidence that the bifurcation

⁷⁵ For in the present investigation we are concerned with the very question whether (and if so: in what way) singular things can be claimed to be *infinite* too. So the use of the term ‘singular thing’ in order to underpin the claim that Spinoza is referring specifically to *finite* things appears to be rather weak. Still, I think the argument can be used, as in many contexts the term ‘singular thing’ *does* refer specifically to finite things. The additional arguments must make it clear whether this is the case in the context of EIp28s as well.

⁷⁶ EIID7, (I) 447 (*Per res singulares intelligo res, quæ finita sunt, & determinatam habent existentiam*).

in EIp28s must be understood to refer to the distinction between the causation of infinite (I) and finite (II) modes.

Argument 3: 'Absolute'

In EIp28s Spinoza claims that the things that 'had to be produced by God immediately' are those 'which follow necessarily from his *absolute* nature [emphasis added]'. As we shall see in a subsequent section, the term '*absolute*' is used explicitly by Spinoza in order to distinguish between the causal threads that lead to infinite and finite modes respectively.⁷⁷

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With this we have gathered considerable evidence for the claim that the eternal things mentioned in EIIp45s can actually be understood to be infinite modes. In this section we have found strong indications that the very proposition that is adduced to underpin the assertion in EIIp45s – Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude in EIp16 – encompasses precisely and only the causal threads that lead to infinite and finite modes respectively. And hence we can conclude that in the important EIIp45s we encounter the distinction between the divine productive power insofar as it is considered absolutely (i.e. the causal flow 'from the eternal necessity of God's nature in infinitely many modes'), and that same causal power insofar as it is considered to be determined to act in a certain way (i.e. 'insofar as it is conceived [...] as a certain species of quantity'). This in turn makes it clear that EIIp45s refers to the conceptual distinction between infinite modes that exist in the way of (3), and finite modes that exist in the way of (4).

This can be rendered thus:

A thing can be conceived as to its:

(3'') Eternal existence, i.e. as to its existence insofar as it is caused in the way of EIp21-EIp23, viz. as an *infinite* mode

⁷⁷ See section 3.5.

And *that very same thing* can also be conceived as to its

- (4'') Existence under duration, i.e. as to its existence insofar as it is caused in the way of EIp28, viz. as a *finite* mode

Furthermore, given what we have seen in this section, we are entitled to provide the following restatement of Spinoza's important claim of EVp29s:

we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist as a durational finite mode, or insofar as we conceive them as an eternal infinite mode.

Indeed, even though there still appear to be difficulties with respect to the present interpretation – which will be dealt with substantially in the subsequent sections – we have made another step in warranting the seemingly absurd claim that human minds can be considered to be infinite modes (as well). Moreover, the restatement of the claim in EVp29s suggests that we have also made considerable progress in understanding the way the dual structure of *pars melior nostri* must be understood. However, before turning to an elucidation of the crucial claim that the distinction between infinite and finite modes can actually be understood to be *an expression of the dual character of the intellect*, we must first turn to yet another important aspect of the bifurcation that was uncovered in the preceding sections: the intricate link between the mereological and the causal tissue in Spinoza's philosophy.

2.4.3 Intrinsic and extrinsic causation

In section 2.2 I have argued that there is a conceptual bifurcation recognizable in Spinoza's claims concerning the relation between parts and wholes. In this section it will be shown that this particular bifurcation is congruent with the distinction that surfaces in EIIp45, EIIp45s and EVp29s.

A first indication that there is a close relation between the two senses of existence that surface in EIIp45 and its scholium, and Spinoza's view on the relation between parts and wholes, can be found in the demonstration of EIIp46. For here – i.e. in the demonstration of the proposition immediately following

EIIp45s – Spinoza explicitly mentions the subject of parts and wholes. Consider the following claim:

The demonstration of the preceding proposition is universal, and whether the thing is considered as a part or as a whole, its idea, whether of the whole or of a part (by P45), will involve God's eternal and infinite essence.⁷⁸

(Demonstratio præcedentis Propositionis Universalis est, & sive res, ut pars, sive, ut totum, consideretur, ejus idea, sive totius sit, sive partis (per Prop. præced.), Dei æternam, & infinitam essentiam involvet)

To be sure, if we want to ascertain that the conceptual bifurcation in EIIp45s indeed is on a par with Spinoza's claims concerning the relation between parts and wholes, we need more evidence.

Now, the supposed similarity between the mereological claims in Letter 32 and the things we have said about the causal status of modes may provide us with a way to gather more corroboration in this respect. For our present supposition suggests that the two causal threads uncovered in the previous section – EIp21-EIp23 and EIp28 respectively – can be restated in mereological terms.

Considering the propositions EIp21-EIp23 – to start with the causal thread of (3'') – we are entitled to assert that it is a defining characteristic of infinite modes that they must be understood to *follow from the absolute nature of God's attributes* – either immediately or mediately. The particular way in which this conceptual dependence relation must be understood becomes clear from a line in the demonstration of EIp23, in which the following is stated:

So if a mode is conceived to exist necessarily and be infinite, its necessary existence and infinity must necessarily be inferred [...] through some attribute of God, insofar as that attribute is conceived to express infinity and necessity of existence, or (what is the same, by D8) eternity, that is (by D6 and P19), insofar as it is considered absolutely.⁷⁹

(Si ergo modus concipitur necessariò existere, & infinitus esse, utrumque hoc debet necessariò concludi, sive percipi per aliquod Dei attributum, quatenus idem concipitur infinitatem, & necessitatem existentia, sive (quod per Defin. 8. idem est) æternitatem exprimere, hoc est (per Defin. 6. & Prop. 19.), quatenus absolutè consideratur)

⁷⁸ EIIp46d, (I) 482. We will return to the purport of this claim in a subsequent section.

⁷⁹ EIp23d, (I) 430-431.

From this passage we can gather that the necessity, infinity and eternity of an infinite mode is *the very necessity, infinity and eternity of the attribute it resorts under*. That is to say: infinite modes are infinite and eternal because they are conceived to have such a close relation with the attributes they follow from, that the necessity, infinity and eternity of the attributes is somehow prolonged in them. Indeed, the infinite and eternal essence of God is claimed to be prolonged in things insofar as these things are conceived to be ‘infinite by the force of the cause in which they inhere’ (to adduce a remark in the important Letter 12).⁸⁰

As argued for above, the second conceptual variant of God’s causal power that must be understood to be entailed by Spinoza’s Principle of Plenitude is the one that is treated in EIp28, which deals with the specific causal thread that is applicable to finite (and durational) modes only. In EIp28 it is stated that finite modes are finite because they are conceived to be caused by something that is finite itself. These modes are conceived to be caused by God, not insofar as he is considered to be infinite, but insofar as he is expressed in finite things. Another way of saying this is that the very finitude of finite modes is a necessary result of the finitude of their causes, a claim that can be rendered in the following clause: finite things necessarily have finite causes and effects (or more precisely: things insofar as they are conceived as finite, necessarily have causes and effects that must be conceived as finite).

We must establish now in what way these claims can be translated in mereological terms. The following assertions may be helpful in understanding the way in which the mentioned causal threads can be conceived to harbor a mereological perspective (and hence why the mereological assertion in EIIP46d can be understood to be in line with our present interpretation):

- the infinite modes of EIp21-EIp23 are conceived to be caused absolutely by the thing they are conceived to be in in such a way, that the necessity, infinity and eternity of the causing thing is prolonged both in the caused whole and in its parts
- the finite modes of EIp28 are conceived to be caused by other parts of the same whole they are conceived to be in

⁸⁰ Letter 12, (I) 205.

Another way of saying the same thing is that infinite modes are conceived to be caused by something that is in an important respect *internal* to the infinite mode (in more or less the same way all the properties that are equally in the part and in the whole of the ocean are also in the drop of water that is conceived to be a part of the ocean). In contrast, finite modes are caused by something that can be understood to be *external* to the mode itself (in the same way one drop of water that is a part of an ocean is external to another drop of water that is part of that same ocean).

The use of the terms ‘internal’ and ‘external’ in this context is no coincidence, as this way of addressing causal (or conceptual dependency) issues is used by Spinoza himself. Sometimes this particular distinction is merely implicit. In our treatment of Letter 32 we have seen that Spinoza distinguishes between bodies that are ‘surrounded by others and [...] reciprocally determined to exist and to act in a fixed and determinate way’ (which clearly is a claim about bodies being determined by something external to them), and the very same bodies insofar as these have ‘a closer union’ with the whole they are conceived to be a part of (a union which, as it is contrasted with the externality of the surrounding bodies, purportedly has an internal character). In other passages the use of the terms ‘internal’ and ‘external’ is more explicit. And again, these passages cannot only be found in relatively ‘early’ works of Spinoza such as early letters or the CM.⁸¹ The distinction between internal and external causes surfaces also in a later letter as well as in the TTP. In Letter 60 Spinoza claims that he understands ‘the efficient cause to be both internal and external’.⁸² From this we can gather that the two causal threads that are encompassed by God’s causal power in the way it is expressed in the Principle of Plenitude must be understood to consist of both the traditional concept of external efficient causation (which is the subject of EIp28), *and* an internal variant of efficient causation (EIp21-EIp23) that appears to be modeled

⁸¹ In this latter work we encounter the following passage: ‘For it is evident in itself that if a thing has neither an internal nor an external cause for existing, it is impossible that it should exist. Nevertheless such a thing is assumed in this second hypothesis: one that could exist without either the power of its own essence (which is what I understand by an internal cause) or the power of the divine decree (the only external cause of all things’. CM I Ch. III, (I) 307 (*Nam per se manifestum est, id quod nullam causam, internam scilicet aut externam, habet ad existendum, impossibile esse, ut existat: atqui res in hac secundâ hypothesisi ponitur talis, ut neque vi suæ essentiæ, quam per causam internam intelligo, neque vi decreti divini, unica omnium rerum causæ externæ, existere possit*).

⁸² Letter 60, (II) 433 (*intelligo enim causam efficientem tam internam, quàm externam*).

upon emanative models of formal causation.⁸³ It is precisely because of this that Spinoza is able to state in EI_p16c1 that ‘God is the efficient cause of all things which can fall under an infinite intellect’:⁸⁴ God can be understood to be the efficient cause of all things – finite *and* infinite modes – precisely because Spinoza distinguishes between two variant of efficient causation: an external and an internal one.⁸⁵

The very same bifurcation between the internal and external determination of things is also recognizable in Chapter 3 of the TTP, where we read the following:

Next, because the power of all natural things is nothing but the power itself of God, through which alone all things happen and are determined, from this it follows that whatever man, who is also a part of nature, provides for himself, as an aid for preserving his being, or whatever nature supplies him with, without his doing anything himself, it is the power of God alone which provides these things for him, inasmuch as it acts either through human nature or through things outside human nature. Therefore, whatever human nature can furnish for preserving its being from its own power alone, we can rightly call *God's internal aid*, and whatever in addition turns out for his advantage from the power of external causes, we can rightly call *God's external aid*.⁸⁶

(Deinde quia rerum omnium naturalium potentia nihil est nisi ipsa Dei potentia, omnia fiunt, & determinantur, hinc sequitur, quicquid homo, qui etiam pars est nature, sibi in auxilium, ad suum esse vel quicquid natura ipso nihil operante, ipsi offert, id omne sibi a sola divina potentia oblatum esse, vel quatenus per vel per res extra humanam naturam. Quicquid itaque natura humana ex sola sua potentia prestare potest ad suum esse auxilium internum, & quicquid præterea ex potentia causarum externarum in ipsius utile cedit, id Dei auxilium externum possumus)

These statements are clearly in line with the things that were said above. For one thing, in this passage we again encounter both the *absolute ontological identity* and the *conceptual bifurcation* of God’s productive power. Indeed, the power of nature – whether conceived to act through human nature itself *or* through some external

⁸³ See Valterri Viljanen, *Spinoza's Dynamics of Being* (Turku 2007), Chapter 2. To be sure, my interpretation differs from Viljanen’s in an important respect. Viljanen claims that the “formal-emanative” [...] following [...] has an autonomous standing and is not reducible to or to be confused with efficient causation’. Viljanen, *Spinoza's Dynamics of Being*, 35. As will become clear shortly, on the present interpretation it is correct that both causal threads should not be confused (as the external one has the durational being of a thing, and the internal one has the eternal being of a thing as its effect). However, it is equally important to note that Spinoza *does* consider both as variants of *efficient* causation.

⁸⁴ EI_p16c1, (I) 425 (*Deum omnium rerum, quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt, esse causam efficientem*).

⁸⁵ It is because of this that I claimed to be entitled to also use the term ‘cause’ when referring to ‘follow-from’-relations. See note 60.

⁸⁶ TTP Ch. III, (II) 113.

source – is claimed to be one and the same power: the power of God. Furthermore, this power is explicitly claimed to incorporate two strands of dependency that are conceptually distinct: *internal* and *external aid*. Moreover, in this passage the mereological perspective surfaces again. It becomes clear that insofar as a man is a part of nature, he must be conceived to be determined externally by God's power (in somewhat the same way a drop of water is part of the ocean and as such must be understood to be determined by other drops of water that are part of the ocean). And insofar as this same man is understood to act by his own power, he must be conceived to be determined internally by God's power (just as a drop of water is watery in the same way the ocean as a whole is).⁸⁷

From this we can gather that finite things are claimed to exist as a result of being (conceived to be) caused necessarily via *external efficient causation*, that is: by things that are *extrinsic* to the mode under scrutiny. The relation between the infinite modes and God appears to be more close and can be characterized with the claim that the (conceived) cause of the existing infinite mode must be understood to be *internally efficient*, that is: to be *intrinsic*⁸⁸ to the effect. Knowing this, we can provide the following improved rendering:

A thing can be conceived as to its:

(3^{'''}) Eternal existence, i.e. the existence of things insofar as they are conceived to be caused *intrinsically*, viz. as an *infinite* mode

And that thing can be conceived as to its:

⁸⁷ This can also be stated in terms of motion and rest. A thing can be understood to be a finite individual if it has a certain ratio of motion and rest (EIIIL5) that is distinct from the ratio of motion and rest of another (i.e. external) individual. However, insofar as the very same thing is conceived insofar as it is determined internally, it appears in its guise of being an expression of the all-encompassing ratio of motion of rest that can be understood to follow internally from its attribute (*in casu*: extension). In a subsequent section it will become clear how the distinction between these two conceptual layers must be understood precisely.

⁸⁸ I have chosen the terms 'intrinsically' and 'extrinsically' (instead of 'internally' and 'externally'), because Spinoza himself uses these terms in EIp17c1, when he says that 'there is no cause, either extrinsically or intrinsically (*extrinsecè, vel intrinsecè*), which prompts God to action [...]'. EIp17c1, (I) 425. More on this particular claim in the next chapter.

(4^m) Existence under duration, i.e. the existence of things insofar as they are conceived to be caused *extrinsically*, viz. as a *finite* mode

Indeed, at this point we are entitled to claim that a singular human mind (and any other thing in nature) that is a finite mode (and that exists under duration) insofar as it is conceived to be caused extrinsically by God's power in the way of EIp28, must be understood to be an infinite mode (that exists eternally) insofar as it is conceived to be caused intrinsically by God's power in the way of EIp21-EIp23. Or, in terms inspired by EVp29s:

we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist as an extrinsically caused durational finite mode, or insofar as we conceive them as an intrinsically caused eternal infinite mode.

As already noted above, there still appear to be important problems with our take on the infinite status of the human mind (and all other things in nature). It is hard to see how the present interpretation can be brought in line with some of Spinoza's explicit claims about infinite modes in EIp21-EIp22 and Letter 64. These claims will get the attention they deserve. However, before we are able to turn to this subject, we will first have to treat something else: how the (rephrased) claim of EVp29s provides us with information as to the way we must understand the structure of our intellect. For, as will become clear, the problems concerning Spinoza's other claims about the infinite modes can only be solved once we have said something more about the structural characteristics of *pars melior nostri* and the way in which these characteristics are related to the structure of Spinoza's metaphysics.

2.5 Formality and objectivity

We have found considerable evidence for the hypothesis that Spinoza's metaphysics harbors a conceptual duality. In Chapter 1 we have seen that God can be understood to be bifurcated in the active *Natura naturans* and the passive *Natura naturata* that, even though they have the very same reference, must be understood

to have another meaning. And in the previous sections it became clear that singular things are subject to a conceptual distinction as well. Singular things were shown to be conceivable in two ways. Insofar as they are conceived to be caused intrinsically, they must be understood to be eternally existing infinite modes (3^{'''}); and insofar as the very same things are conceived to be caused extrinsically, they must be understood to be finite modes that exist under duration (4^{'''}). The recognition of this conceptual duality was based (inter alia) on the following claim in EVp29s:

we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. But the things we conceive in this second way as true, *or* real, we conceive under a species of eternity, and their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God (as we have shown in IIP45 and P45S).⁸⁹

(Res duobus modis à nobis ut actuales concipiuntur, vel quatenus easdem cum relatione ad certum tempus, & locum existere, vel quatenus ipsas in Deo contineri, & ex naturæ divinæ necessitate consequi concipimus. Quæ autem hōc secundo modo ut veræ, seu reales concipiuntur, eas sub æternitatis specie concipimus, & earum ideæ æternam, & infinitam Dei essentiam involvunt, ut Propositione 45. Partis 2. ostendimus, cujus etiam Scholium vide)

Now, with regard to this assertion it is important to notice that so far we have been focusing mainly on the way in which, according to EVp29s, we must understand the singular things under scrutiny. By way of the claim in this scholium we have made it clear that a singular thing – whether it be a human mind, a horse, a tree, a stone or a toaster – can be grasped in the two conceptual variants mentioned (i.e. in the way of (3^{'''}), and in the way of (4^{'''})). However, with respect to the important assertion in EVp29s we can choose yet another perspective. For this scholium provides us with information, not only as to the metaphysical status of the things that are conceived, but also as to *the way in which* these things are conceived by the intellect. As the important claim in EVp29s concerning the two ways in which we conceive things is attached to a proposition that deals explicitly with the way ‘*the mind understands (mens intelligit)*’ [emphasis added],⁹⁰ it is hard to escape the remarkable conclusion that the two manners of conceiving to which Spinoza refers in EVp29s – and hence the distinction between infinite and finite modes that was treated in the previous sections – must be understood to be closely related to the

⁸⁹ EVp29s, (I) 610.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, (I) 610.

duality of the intellect that was uncovered in Chapter 1.⁹¹ Another way of saying this is that, apparently, in Spinoza's philosophy we can detect a twofold use of the intellect.⁹² The intellect does not only play a decisive role in reaching 'blessedness', but it can also be understood to offer the key for understanding the way in which Spinoza's philosophy is devised. The present section will provide us with strong additional evidence for the crucial claim that the very structure of Spinoza's metaphysics in the way it is presented in the *Ethics* can be understood to *express the dual structure of the intellect*.⁹³ It will become clear that the bifurcation of (inter alia) the infinite and finite being of modes is made precisely because – to cite the wording of EVp29s once more – *we conceive things as actual in two ways*. Spinoza's mature philosophy can be understood to be pervaded by a conceptual duality – between attributes and infinite modes, between immediate and mediate infinite modes, and between things conceived under a species of eternity and the same

⁹¹ In section 2.5.3 we will see that the claims from Chapter 1 (concerning the duality between *noster intellectus* and the things perceived, and the duality between the objective and the formal being of things) must be understood to refer to *two* separate distinctions, and that *pars melior nostri* thus must be understood to be characterized by a *trichotomy* between objects, their objective being and their formal being.

⁹² In this sense I follow Michael Della Rocca's claim concerning 'the twofold use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason'. Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 8. As Della Rocca, I think that the very way in which Spinoza's philosophy (and hence the notion of 'intellect' that surfaces in it) is presented, is determined by his conception of the intellect. In this sense the intellect can indeed be considered to be 'doubling back on itself'. To be sure, other than Della Rocca I do *not* think that the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR) can be ascribed unconditionally to Spinoza, as will become clear in Chapter 3. In this latter chapter it will be shown that there must be understood to be a *res* – substance *qua* substance – that escapes the conceptual duality that necessarily surfaces when things are grasped with an intellect (in the way we commonly understand it).

⁹³ This also seems to have been noticed by Samuel Newlands, when he claims the following: 'What, according to Spinoza, are the relationships between causation, inherence, conceptual connectedness, following-from, and existential dependence? My proposed answer is that Spinoza thinks all metaphysical dependence relations are conceptual containment relations, a single kind of dependence that Spinoza labels "conceptual involvement."' Samuel Newlands, 'Another Kind of Spinozistic Monism', 469. That is to say: as will be argued for below, the 'conceptual involvement' that Newlands refers to must be understood to be an expression of the necessary bifurcation that surfaces when things are grasped with an intellect. On the present interpretation all metaphysical dependence relations – between substance and infinite modes, between immediate and mediate infinite modes, and between infinite and finite modes – are to be seen as expressions of the bifurcated character of the intellect that grasps these relations. In this sense *conceptuality* – i.e. the *intellectual access to things* – forms the basis for all metaphysical relations that are forwarded in the *Ethics*. It is precisely because of this that we can discern – in the words of Margaret Wilson – 'a thicket of intensionality' in Spinoza's metaphysics (quoted in: Della Rocca, *Representation*, 118). For the intensionality surfaces as soon as there is a distinction between the conceptual and the ontological status of a thing, and on the present supposition this very distinction is absolutely pervasive in the structure of Spinoza's metaphysics.

things conceived under duration – *precisely because Spinoza’s metaphysics is mediated by an intellect that is characterized by a necessary bifurcation of the things it conceives.*

This claim evidently needs a firm underpinning. In this respect it may be instructive to start with a passage that has already been treated in the previous chapter. Consider the following claim in EIp17s once more:

If intellect pertains to the divine nature, it will not be able to be (like our intellect) by nature either posterior to [...], or simultaneous with, the things understood [...]. On the contrary, the truth and formal essence of things is what it is because it exists objectively in that way in God’s intellect’.⁹⁴

(Si intellectus ad divinam naturam pertinet, non poterit, uti noster intellectus, posterior [...], vel simul naturâ esse cum rebus intellectis [...]; sed contrâ veritas, & formalis rerum essentia ideò talis est, quia talis in Dei intellectu existit objectivè)

A thorough scrutiny of the context of this passage has made it clear that these claims cannot be understood to be part of a *reductio ad absurdum*, and hence that these assertions in EIp17s must be understood to be endorsed by Spinoza. It was precisely because of this that with respect to the way in which we must understand *pars melior nostri*, we have stated the following in the concluding section of Chapter 1:

- The intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) is by nature either posterior to or simultaneous with the things understood, which in turn implies that the intellect is *characterized by a conceptual duality*.
- The intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) is characterized by a distinction between the *objective* and *formal* being of the things understood.

Now, as the important claim in EVp29s concerning the two ways in which we conceive things is attached to a proposition that deals explicitly with the way our intellect functions, we can assert tentatively that the two ways of conceiving that Spinoza refers to in EVp29s can be understood in the following way: our human intellect understands things *objectively* (i.e. as to their ‘present actual existence’,⁹⁵ ‘in

⁹⁴ EIp17s, (I) 427.

⁹⁵ EVp29, (I) 609 (*Corporis præsentem actualem existentiam*).

relation to a certain time and place'),⁹⁶ and *formally* (i.e. as to their 'essence under a species of eternity',⁹⁷ involving 'the eternal and infinite essence of God').⁹⁸ In other words: the things we have seen so far suggest that the bifurcation uncovered in the previous section on the basis of (inter alia) EVp29s – i.e. the conceptual distinction between the finite and infinite modal status of singular things – can be understood in terms of objectivity and formality as well. Now, can it? Is there more evidence for the claim that the distinction between the eternal and the durational being of singular things can be stated in terms of formality and objectivity?⁹⁹

There certainly are indications that this is a correct way of understanding the conceptual duality uncovered. This supposition finds a first confirmation in the things we have seen in section 2.3.3. For our findings in that section indicate that the bifurcated structure that was uncovered can indeed be described in terms of the formal and objective states¹⁰⁰ of the thing under scrutiny. Consider the relevant claim in EIIp8c once more:

when singular things are said to exist, not only insofar as they are comprehended in God's attributes, but insofar also as they are said to have duration, their ideas also involve the existence through which they are said to have duration.¹⁰¹

(*Et ubi res singulares dicuntur existere, non tantum quatenus in Dei attributis comprehenduntur, sed quatenus etiam durare dicuntur, earum ideæ etiam existentiam, per quam durare dicuntur, involvent*)

⁹⁶ EVp29s, (I) 610 (*cum relatione ad certum tempus, et locum*).

⁹⁷ EVp29d, (I) 609 (*Corporis essentiam concipit sub specie æternitatis*).

⁹⁸ EVp29s, (I) 610 (*æternam, et infinitam Dei essentiam involvunt*).

⁹⁹ This distinction has its roots in the scholastic tradition. Marco Forlivesi stated with respect to the use of the formal-objective distinction in the works of Thomas de Vio and Francisco Suárez that '[t]ous deux concordent en revanche sur un point essentiel: le concept formel est le terme réel de l'opération réelle qu'est l'intellection, le concept objectif est ce que la connaissance rend présent'. Marco Forlivesi, 'La Distinction entre Concept Formel et Concept Objectif ; Suárez, Pasqualigo, Mastri', 14. The same distinction is also used by Descartes. See for instance: René Descartes, *Third Meditation* in: René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations* (Harmondsworth 1968), translation: F.E. Sutcliffe, 120. John Cottingham stressed that Descartes' use of the term 'objective' can rightfully be called 'traditional': 'Descartes' use of the term 'objective' (which is, of course, wholly different from modern usage) is borrowed from the scholastics'. In : John Cottingham, *A Descartes Dictionary* (Oxford 1993), 136-137. I think it can be maintained that Spinoza derived the use of these terms from Descartes (as well). However, an analysis of the way in which Spinoza was influenced by Descartes, and a treatment of the way in which Spinoza's use of the formal-objective distinction differs from Descartes' would take us to far afield.

¹⁰⁰ I use the neutral term 'state' instead of 'being' because – as will become clear in a subsequent section – we must distinguish between the formal *essence* and the formal *being* of a thing. This conceptual distinction within the formal *state* of a thing plays no important role presently and can only be elucidated once the precise nature of the attributes and the infinite modes is elucidated.

¹⁰¹ EIIp8c, (I) 452.

Above we argued that the conjunctive character of this claim corroborates our assertion that singular things can be understood to exist in two ways. At this point it must be added that in this particular context, Spinoza employs the very distinction he also uses in EI_p17s – i.e. the difference between the formal and the objective states of a thing – in order to refer to the conceptual bifurcation between the eternal and the durational existence of singular things. In the proposition to which this corollary is attached, he distinguishes explicitly between ‘formal essences of singular things [emphasis added]’ (i.e. (3^{'''})), and ‘ideas of singular things’ (i.e. (4^{'''})). EI_p8 reads thus:

P8: The *ideas of singular things*, or of modes, that do not exist must be comprehended in God's infinite idea in the same way as the *formal essences* of the singular things, or modes, are contained in God's attributes [emphasis added].¹⁰²

(PROPOSITIO VIII. *Idea rerum singularium, sive modorum non existentium ita debent comprehendi in Dei infinita idea, ac rerum singularium, sive modorum essentia formales in Dei attributis continentur*)

Moreover, in the corollary of this proposition it becomes clear that the term ‘ideas of singular things’ can be understood to be equivalent to ‘*objective* being [emphasis added]’ of singular things.¹⁰³ Now, this clearly underpins our suggestion that the distinction between the two senses of existence of singular things (and hence their status as infinite and finite mode) must indeed be understood to be analogous to the ‘intellectual’ distinction between the formal and the objective status of singular things. So at this point we can claim tentatively that:

we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them in their objective state, or insofar as we conceive them in their formal state.

To be sure, at this point the evidence is still far from conclusive. In order to understand the dual structure of our intellect (and the way in which this dual structure renders the concepts of infinite and finite modes intelligible), it is necessary to provide additional proof for – as well as treat some pressing objections

¹⁰² EI_p8, (I) 452. It cannot escape our notice that this proposition deals with singular things that *do not* exist. In Chapter 4 we will see why Spinoza would treat non-existing modes in this proposition. It is important to note that this aspect of EI_p8 has no for the claim that I aim to make here: Spinoza makes an explicit distinction between the *formal* and the *objective* status of things.

¹⁰³ EI_p8c, (I) 452.

against – the claim that the bifurcation that characterizes the structure of Spinoza’s metaphysics can indeed be understood to be an expression of the way *mens intelligit*. Only after having established this can we return to the question how our claims concerning the infinite status of all singular things in nature can be squared with Spinoza’s other claims about (immediate and mediate) infinite modes.

2.5.1 Two causal threads revisited

Showing that the distinction from (3^{'''}) and (4^{'''}) is on a par with the grasping of things in their formal and objective state, I will turn to a scrutiny of the passages in the *Ethics* that deal with the causal generation of the formal and the objective being of things. The first proposition we must treat in this respect is EIIp5, as this proposition deals explicitly with the way in which the formal being of ideas must be conceived to be caused.

Consider EIIp5:

The formal being of ideas admits God as a cause only insofar as he is considered a thinking thing, and not insofar as he is explained by any other attribute. That is: ideas, both of God’s attributes and of singular things, admit not the objects themselves, or the things perceived, as their efficient cause, but God himself, insofar as he is a thinking thing.¹⁰⁴

(Esse formale idearum Deum, quatenus tantum, ut res cogitans, consideratur, pro causâ agnoscit, & non, quatenus alio attributo explicatur. Hoc est, tam Dei attributorum, quàm rerum singularium ideæ non ipsa ideata, sive res perceptas pro causâ efficiente agnoscunt, sed ipsum Deum, quatenus est res cogitans)

Several things can be noted with respect to this claim. Firstly, it is important to stress that in EIIp5 the intra-attribute character of the causal relation is posited.¹⁰⁵ This proposition makes it clear that a mental item cannot be understood in its ‘formal’ being if it is caused by a mode of another attribute than the attribute of thought. In the *Ethics* Spinoza upholds a strict causal barrier between the attributes, a barrier that thwarts the possibility for an idea to be caused by an object that is located in the attribute of extension (or in any other of the remaining infinite

¹⁰⁴ EIIp5, (I) 450.

¹⁰⁵ It is important to distinguish this ‘intra-attribute’ character from the meaning of the term ‘intrinsic’ in the way I employ this latter term. Intra-attribute causation encompasses both intrinsic and extrinsic causation. More on this shortly.

attributes).¹⁰⁶ In the context of Spinoza's philosophy, an idea can only be caused by another *mental* thing. However, Spinoza does not seem to posit EIIp5 only in order to assert this causal (and explanatory) barrier.¹⁰⁷ For if the only hallmark of the formal being of an idea would be its causal isolation from the other attributes, the notion of 'formality' would be superfluous. After all, the causal barrier implies that it is the hallmark of *all* modes of thought that they can only be conceived to be caused by other thought items.¹⁰⁸ Thus, in this respect the objective and formal status of an idea cannot be distinguished.

Now, we cannot rule out the possibility that the term 'formal' in EIIp5 is superfluous, and that Spinoza does not use this term in the traditional way¹⁰⁹ (i.e. as distinct from the 'objective' being of the same thing). Indeed, it may very well be the case that in his mature philosophy, Spinoza must be understood to reject the way in which the formal-objective distinction is used by his predecessors (and indeed by himself in (inter alia) the early TdIE, in which intellectual knowledge is shown to be characterized by a duality between the formal and objective status of the things that are grasped with it).¹¹⁰ However, this seems to be opposed by the fact that – as we saw – in EIp17s (and in the important EIIp7c, which will be treated extensively in Chapter 4) Spinoza does apply the two terms in connection with each other (and moreover specifically with respect to the realm of thought).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ This causal barrier is most explicitly stated in EIIIp2, which reads: '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).' EIIIp2, (I) 494. However, other propositions (such as EIIp5 and EIIp6) have actually been referred to by scholars in this respect. See the next note.

¹⁰⁷ Several scholars appear to claim he does. In *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem*, Michael Della Rocca refers to this important proposition three times. In all three cases, the isolated nature (and *only* this isolated nature) of the attributes is stressed. See: Della Rocca, *Representation*, 3, 99 and 189. Steven Nadler also describes EIIp5 (and EIIp6) as the propositions that posit this barrier. In: Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics. An Introduction* (Cambridge 2006), 131-132. Now, it is true that EIIp6 must be understood to ground the causal barrier as EIIIp2 (see the previous note) refers to this proposition. However, EIIp5 (and EIIp6C) actually says something more, as will become clear shortly.

¹⁰⁸ It is precisely this that is stated in the subsequent proposition EIIp6 (to be sure, *without* being founded on EIIp5).

¹⁰⁹ See note 99.

¹¹⁰ Consider for instance the following claim from the TdIE, which is provided in a passage in which Spinoza aims to make it clear how we must grasp 'the situation of the intellect' (*intellectus ita sese habeat*): 'certainty is nothing but the objective essence itself, i.e., the mode by which we are aware of the formal essence is certainty itself' (*certitudo nihil sit præter ipsam essentiam objectivam; id est, modus, quo sentimus essentiam formalem, est ipsa certitudo*). TdIE § 35, (I) 18.

¹¹¹ As Margaret Wilson stressed with respect to Spinoza's claim in EIIp7c: 'here he simply expresses in Cartesianese the notion that in whatever order things follow from God's nature, in that same order God

This need not surprise us, as his contemporary audience – schooled in scholastic and Cartesian philosophy – would clearly associate the term ‘formal’ with a related ‘objective’ being in thought. Using the term ‘formal’ without an implicit reference to the conceptually distinct ‘objective’ being of the same thing would seriously disorient the audience for whom Spinoza wrote. Now, it is absolutely true that Spinoza did not shy away from disorienting contemporary readers. But using a term in a certain sense (namely as closely connected with another term) in a scholium (i.e. EIp17s), then neglecting that distinction altogether in another proposition (i.e. EIIp5), and then curiously introducing it again in a subsequent corollary (i.e. EIIp7c), would seem to go against the geometrical rigidity with which Spinoza’s philosophy is devised. So *prima facie* we must hold on to the term ‘formal’ in EIIp5, and suppose that the causation that is rendered in EIIp5 must somehow be distinguished from the causation of the ‘objective’ being of the same thing.

This supposition is corroborated, not only by a claim in Letter 72, where Spinoza makes it clear that EIIp5 is concerned with the causation of the *essence* of ideas¹¹² rather than merely with the intra-attribute causation of *ideas*, but also by the fact that in the *Ethics*, Spinoza provides *two* ways in which the causal generation of mental modes can be understood. Apart from the generation of modes of thought by God as a *res cogitans*, modes of thought are also claimed to be caused by God *insofar as God is considered to be affected by another mode of thinking*. This latter causal thread is staged, not in EIIp5, but in EIIp9, that is to say: in the proposition that immediately follows the proposition in which the concept of ‘objective being’ – as an equivalent of ‘idea’ – is introduced in the second part of the *Ethics*: EIIp8. EIIp9 reads thus:

The idea of a singular thing which actually exists has God for a cause not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he is considered to be affected by another idea of a singular thing which actually exists [...].¹¹³ (*Idea rei singularis, actu existentis, Deum pro causâ habet, non quatenus infinitus est, sed quatenus aliâ rei singularis actu existentis ideâ affectus consideratur [...]*)

thinks, knows, or (so to speak) ideates them’. Margaret Wilson, ‘Spinoza’s theory of knowledge’, in: Don Garrett ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge 1995), 97.

¹¹² Letter 72, (II) 465 (*in hac enim prop. affirmatur, quod ideæ cujuscumque essentia Deum, quatenus ut res cogitans consideratur, pro causa habet*)

¹¹³ EIIp9, (I) 453.

It cannot escape our notice that with EIIp5 and EIIp9, Spinoza indeed provides two claims concerning the causal generation of modes of thought. EIIp5 treats the causation of mental things insofar as they are understood to follow from God's infinite power of thinking (i.e. God as a *res cogitans*). In EIIp9, on the other hand, Spinoza treats the causation of mental modes insofar as these singular things are conceived to follow *from other finite mental things*. This accessory rendering of the way modes can be understood to follow from God's causal power suggests that we are right in supposing that the term 'formal' in EIIp5 is not superfluous, and that ideas in their formal being must be understood to be caused differently than these same things insofar as they are grasped in their objective being. The distinction between EIIp5 and EIIp9 firmly underpins our tentative claim that Spinoza does make a distinction between the formal and the objective being of things. Modes of thought apparently emerge in their formal being (i.e. as ideas *as they are in themselves, without respect to their objects*)¹¹⁴ if they are understood to be caused in the way of EIIp5, and these same things are considered as to their objective being (i.e. as ideas *that represent their objects*)¹¹⁵ as soon as they are grasped to be operative in the causal thread that surfaces in EIIp9 (viz. if they are conceived to follow from God insofar as he is considered to be affected by idea of a singular thing which actually exists).¹¹⁶ In the former variant the mental modes must be understood to somehow be 'contained' in the attribute of thought (EIIp8); in the latter variant

¹¹⁴ This way of understanding the notion of 'formality' is inspired (inter alia) by Spinoza's claims in EIIp5 (see above), EIIp21s and §33 of the TdIE. These two latter passages will be treated extensively in Chapter 4.

¹¹⁵ It is crucial to recognize that the 'objective being' does not have the *eternal being* of that idea as its object, but the *durational being* of that same thing, conceived either under another attribute (in which case it appears as 'idea'), or under the same attribute (in which case it appears as 'idea of idea'). In section 2.5.3 and Chapter 4 these claims will be elucidated.

¹¹⁶ To be sure, the term 'objective' is not used by Spinoza in EIIp9. However, as Davide Monaco pointed out in a personal correspondence about this matter (December 13, 2016), 'one reason to believe [that EIIp9 is about the *objective* being of ideas] is that Spinoza mentions the "object of any idea" both in IIP9C and IIP9CD'. As already noted, another reason to believe this is the fact that the term 'objective being' is introduced in part II of the *Ethics* in the corollary of the very proposition preceding EIIp9. As the term 'idea' is claimed in EIIp8c to be equivalent to 'objective being' (*esse objectivum sive ideae*), there appears to be little doubt that the very same term in the proposition that immediately follows it must also be understood to denote *the objective being of a thing*, that hence can be contrasted conceptually with the formal being of an idea that is the subject of EIIp5.

ideas ‘involve the existence through which they are said to have duration’ (EIIp8c).¹¹⁷

At this point we cannot fail to notice that in EIIp5 and EIIp9 we recognize precisely the two conceptual dependence relations that were treated in the previous sections. The causal thread that Spinoza introduces in EIIp5 is on a par with the *intrinsic* thread of EIp21-EIp23, originating in God insofar as he is conceived as an infinite *res* and resulting in things that must be conceived to exist *eternally*. And in EIIp9 we encounter the *extrinsic* causal thread of EIp28: the causal efficacy of God insofar as he is expressed in singular finite things that exist *under duration*. This conclusion is underpinned by the fact that Spinoza’s Principle of Plenitude of EIp16 is used (via EIIp3) to prove EIIp5, and that EIp28 is mentioned explicitly in the demonstration of EIIp9. It is hard to overlook the fact that these two references mirror the explicit corroboration of the two distinct senses of existence in the important EIIp45s (and hence by implication EVp29s). Indeed, in his underpinning of the way the formal and the objective being of things must be understood to be caused, Spinoza uses the very same proof as in his underpinning of the way a thing must be understood to exist eternally and under duration. Thus we can conclude that the formal being of ideas must indeed be considered to be the result of *intrinsic* causation (3^{'''}), and that the objective being of ideas must be understood to be the effect of *extrinsic causation* (4^{'''}). This can be rendered thus:

A thing can be conceived:

(3*) *Formally*, that is: as to its intrinsically caused eternal and infinite existence

And the same thing can be conceived:

(4*) *Objectively*, that is: as to its extrinsically caused durational and finite existence

¹¹⁷ Remark that I tacitly suppose that formal *being* (EIIp5) and formal *essence* (EIIp8) are equivalent terms. This is not entirely correct. As will become clear in section 2.6.2, the formal status of things can be conceived in *two* ways: as (non-modal) formal essences that are contained in the attributes, and as (modal) formal beings that function as parts-with-a-vista of the immediate infinite intellect. However, this conceptual distinction has no import on the things that I aim to show in the present section.

This in turn enables us to draw two remarkable conclusions. Firstly, it has become clear that, apparently, EIIp5 must be understood to treat the causal generation of infinite modes of thought.¹¹⁸ Whereas the causal generation of infinite modes is mentioned explicitly in EIp21-EIp23, our elaboration implies that the intrinsic causal thread that has infinite modes as its effect is actually treated implicitly in EIIp5. Hence (3*) and (4*) can also be rendered in the following way:

An idea can be conceived:

(3*) *Formally*, that is: as intrinsically caused eternal and infinite mode

And that same thing can be conceived:

(4*) *Objectively*, that is: as an extrinsically caused durational and finite mode

Secondly, we have found considerable evidence for our suggestion that the conceptual bifurcation that we have been treating in this chapter – i.e. the distinction between the eternal and the durational existence of singular things – can be understood to be an expression of the very duality that characterizes *pars melior nostri*. In a subsequent section we will see that this conceptual duality between the formal and the objective being of things is essential, not only for understanding the conceptual bifurcation between the finite and infinite being of singular things, but also for an understanding of the immediate and mediate infinite modes. However, before treating that important subject, we must first turn to some pressing objections against the claim that the duality that is recognizable in the mereological,

¹¹⁸ Don Garrett actually reached a similar conclusion: ‘formal essences of singular things must be modes of God. [...] But if the formal essences of singular things are modes of God, they can hardly be finite modes. [...] Their status as infinite modes is strongly confirmed in 5p23s by Spinoza’s description of the parallel “idea, which expresses [i.e., is of] the essence of the body” as “a mode of thinking . . . which is necessarily eternal.” Outside the *Ethics*, too, Spinoza indicates that (formal) essences are eternal, immutable, and infinite [...]’. Don Garret, ‘Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That Is Eternal’ in: Olli Koistinen ed., *A Companion to Spinoza’s Ethics* (Cambridge 2009), 289-290. To be sure, in a subsequent section it will become clear that it is important to distinguish between the formal *essence* and the formal *being* of a thing. See also note 117.

existential and causal tissue of Spinoza's philosophy can be understood in terms of the formal and objective being of things too.

2.5.2 Objections

It has become clear that, considered in a certain way, a human mind can be conceived to inhere in substance in the very same way the infinite mode of thought does, indeed in a similar vein a drop of water is as watery as the ocean it is a part of.¹¹⁹ This particular characteristic is not only recognizable in the mereological, existential and causal threads that can be discerned in the *Ethics*, but also when Spinoza's use of the terms 'formal' and 'objective' is taken into account. Above we have gathered evidence for the claim that a human mind can be understood to be an *infinite* mode if it is understood in its formal being, and a *finite* mode if it is understood in its objective status. As already remarked, this observation is very important in the present investigation, as the terms 'formal' and 'objective' play a crucial role in Spinoza's understanding of the notion of 'intellect' – I will return to this subject in the chapters 4 and 5. Right now we must address some important problems that appear to arise with respect to the claim that ideas must be understood to be infinite modes if they are grasped in their the formal being. In this respect, at least three points deserve attention:¹²⁰ the equivocalness of EI_p16 (which grounds EII_p5 via EII_p3), the mentioning of the clause 'only insofar as he is a thinking thing' in the demonstration of EII_p9, and the asserted *immediacy* of the relation between God and the formal being of ideas.

Problem 1: The equivocalness of EI_p16

Above we have shown that Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude in EI_p16 must be understood to encompass (and only encompass) intrinsic and extrinsic causation. As EII_p5 is ultimately based on EI_p16, this bifurcation is also of some importance

¹¹⁹ More on this particular inherence relation in section 2.6.2.

¹²⁰ The seemingly most important problem with the present interpretation – viz. the way in which this claim can be brought in line with Spinoza's assertions concerning infinite modes in Letter 64 – will be treated in section 2.6. Spinoza's claims in EII_p7s, which also deal with the formal being of ideas, are addressed in Chapter 4.

in the present section. If we want to be absolutely sure that we are right about the infinite status of the formal being of ideas, we must determine whether EIIp5 indeed refers to the intrinsic variant of causation that is encompassed by EIp16 (and that is shown to lead to infinite modes in the way of EIp21-EIp23).¹²¹ So at this point, a treatment of EIIp3 is due, as the use of Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude in EIIp5 is refracted by EIIp3.¹²²

Now, EIIp3 treats the interplay between God and the things he produces (or, in the words of EIp29s, the interplay between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*) conceived under the attribute of thought. That is to say: EIIp3 deals with the way God as an absolutely self-causing thinking thing¹²³ causes the infinitely many 'mental things'¹²⁴ that are in him. The proposition reads thus:

P3: In God there is necessarily an idea, both of his essence and of everything which necessarily follows from his essence.

Dem.: For God (by P1) can think infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, *or* (what is the same, by IP16) can form the idea of his essence and of all the things which necessarily follow from it. But whatever is in God's power necessarily exists [...]; therefore, there is necessarily such an idea, and [...] it is only in God, q.e.d.¹²⁵

(PROPOSITIO III. In Deo datur necessariò idea, tam ejus essentia, quàm omnium, quæ ex ipsius essentiâ necessariò sequuntur.

DEMONSTRATIO. Deus enim (per Prop. 1. hujus) infinita infinitis modis cogitare, sive (quod idem est, per Prop. 16. p. 1.) ideam suæ essentia, & omnium, quæ necessariò ex eâ sequuntur, formare potest. Atqui omne id, quod in Dei potestate est, necessariò est (per Prop. 35. p. 1.); ergo datur necessariò talis idea, & (per Prop. 15. p. 1.) non nisi in Deo. Q. E. D.)

In this passage a threefold distinction surfaces. We encounter:

- (a) The essence of substance
- (b-i) The idea of the essence of substance (i.e. God's idea, *or* the infinite intellect)

¹²¹ See section 2.4.

¹²² The first line of the demonstration of EIIp5 reads thus: 'This is evident from P3' (*Patet quidem ex prop. 3. huius*), EIIp5d, (I) 450. In the demonstration of EIIp3, EIIp16 is mentioned.

¹²³ In Chapter 3 it will become clear in what ways God can be understood to be *causa sui*.

¹²⁴ That is: all things insofar as they are conceived under the attribute of thought (i.e. formal and objective being alike).

¹²⁵ EIIp3, (I) 449.

(b-ii) The ideas of all the infinitely many things which necessarily follow from the essence of substance¹²⁶

As EIIp3 is referred to in the demonstration of EIIp5, it is important to acknowledge that the formal being of ideas (EIIp5) can only be understood to be infinite modes if the causal claim in EIIp3 encompasses the causal generation of infinite modes. Now, does it? Actually, it is rather easy to find examples in the *Ethics* of passages that suggest the exact opposite. The corollary of EIIp9 is a case in point. Here it is stated that ‘whatever happens in the object of any idea, there is an idea of it in God (*by P3*), *not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he is considered to be affected by another idea of [a] singular thing* (*by p9*) [...] [emphasis added]’.¹²⁷ This remark appears to make it clear that EIIp3 is about (a) thinking substance, (b-i) the infinite idea of thinking substance, and (b-ii) *finite* ideas. The same conclusion can be drawn on the basis of EIIp20d. A passage in this demonstration seems even more relevant, as it treats precisely the subject we are interested in (as well): the human mind and the exact way it can be conceived to be a part of God’s idea. Consider the following passage.

Thought is an attribute of God (*by P1*), and so (*by P3*) there must necessarily be in God an idea both of [thought] and of all its affections, and consequently (*by P11*), of the human mind also. Next, this idea, or knowledge, of the mind does not follow in God insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he is affected by another idea of a singular thing (*by P9*) [emphasis added].¹²⁸

(Cogitatio attributum Dei est (per Prop. 1. hujus), adeoque (per Prop. 3. hujus) tam ejus, quàm omnium ejus affectionum, & consequenter (per Prop. 11. hujus) Mentis etiam humanæ debet necessariò in Deo dari idea. Deinde hæc Mentis idea, sive cognitio non sequitur in Deo dari, quatenus infinitus, sed quatenus aliâ rei singularis ideâ affectus est (per Prop. 9. hujus))

Again, EIIp3 is mentioned while referring to *finite* ideas that are operative in the causal thread of EIIp9; Spinoza claims explicitly that the human mind ‘does not follow in God insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he is affected by another idea of a singular thing’. This is potentially defeating for our supposition that human

¹²⁶ In this enumeration I use ‘(b-ii)’ instead of ‘(c)’ for two reasons. Firstly, it has already become clear that (b-i) and (b-ii) are the very same thing. Secondly, in this way this enumeration is on a par with a further conceptual distinction that will be treated in the next chapter, in which ‘(c)’ stands for the concept of God as a *coalescent identity*.

¹²⁷ EIIp9c, (I) 454.

¹²⁸ EIIp20d, (I) 467.

minds can be considered to be intrinsically caused infinite modes (as well). So at this point our interpretation meets serious objections. The quoted passages seem to make it clear that EIIp3 – insofar as it is not about the essence of God (a) or the idea of the essence of God (b-i) – must be understood to be about the *extrinsic* causal thread of EIIp9. And this in turn suggests that the formal being of ideas in EIIp5 cannot be considered to be intrinsically caused (and thus infinite) modes.

However, we must not accept conclusions – whether they confirm or undermine our interpretation – too quickly. For on closer scrutiny EIIp3 does shelter the intrinsic causal thread that is encompassed by EIp16. Consider EVp22 and EVp22d:

P22: Nevertheless, in God there is necessarily an idea that expresses the essence of this or that human body, under a species of eternity.

Dem.: God is the cause, not only of the existence of this or that human body, but also of its essence (by IP25), which therefore must be conceived through the very essence of God (By IA4), by a certain eternal necessity (by IP16), and this concept must be in God (by IIP3), q.e.d.¹²⁹

(PROPOSITIO XXII. In Deo tamen datur necessariò idea, quæ hujus, & illius Corporis humani essentiam sub æternitatis specie exprimit.

DEMONSTRATIO. Deus non tantùm est causa hujus, & illius Corporis humani existentie, sed etiam essentia (per Prop. 25. p. 1.), quæ propterea per ipsam Dei essentiam necessariò debet concipi (per Axiom. 4. p. 1.), idque æternâ quâdam necessitate (per Prop. 16. p. 1.), qui quidem conceptus necessariò in Deo dari debet (per Prop. 3. p. 2.). Q. E. D.)

From this proposition and its demonstration we can gather that according to Spinoza, EIIp3 also says something about the essence of the human body (and, by parallelism, the essence of the human mind) under a species of eternity. And hence this passage firmly suggests that – despite the aforesaid indications to the opposite – EIIp5 may very well be another expression of the intrinsic causal thread that is encompassed by Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude. This becomes even clearer in the scholium of the subsequent proposition EVp23. Referring to the very 'idea that expresses the essence of this or that human body' in the previous proposition, Spinoza makes the following remark:

we [feel] that our mind, insofar as it involves the essence of the body under a species of eternity, is eternal, and that this existence it has cannot be defined by time or explained by through duration. [The] existence

¹²⁹ EVp22, (I) 607.

[of our mind] can be defined by a certain time, only insofar as it involves the actual existence of the body [...].¹³⁰

(sentimus tamen Mentem nostram, quatenus Corporis essentiam sub aeternitatis specie involvit, aeternam esse, & hanc ejus existentiam tempore definiri, sive per durationem explicari non posse. Mens igitur nostra eatenus tantum potest dici durare, ejusque existentia certo tempore definiri potest, quatenus actualem Corporis existentiam involvit)

This teaches us that on the basis of EIIp3 (that was just shown to provide a foundation for EVp22 and hence for EVp23s) it is possible to make precisely the distinction between eternal and durational existence that our present investigation of the formal being of ideas has yielded. EVp23s makes it clear that we are right in assuming that EIIp3 also entails non-durational conceptions of ideas.¹³¹ And thus, contrary to the first indications, the reference to EIIp3 in EIIp5 does not thwart our claim concerning the eternal and infinite status of human minds. Rather, EIIp3 appears to be the specification in terms of thought of the neutrality of Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude (of EIp16) with respect to the causal generation of infinite and finite modes.¹³² In the same way modes of the infinitely many attributes are claimed to follow from God both in their infinite and in their finite being (by EIp16), so also modes of thought (being a subcategory of modes of the infinitely many attributes) must be understood to follow from God both in their infinite and in their finite being (by EIIp3).

Problem 2: EIIp9 is demonstrated via EIIp5 as well

Our interpretation is based on the observation that Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude must be understood to harbor (and to harbor only) two causal threads. With respect to mental items we have uncovered the following distinction: the intrinsic causation of modes of thought was shown to be the subject of EIIp5, and the extrinsic causation of these very same things was located in EIIp9. Another way of

¹³⁰ EVp23s, (I) 607. This scholium, and the seemingly hermetic proposition to which it is attached, will be treated more extensively in Chapter 5.

¹³¹ With the clause 'entails-also' I aim to make it clear that the intrinsic aspect that was uncovered presently *does not counteract* the extrinsic aspect of EIIp3 that surfaced earlier in this section. Rather, the intrinsic and extrinsic causal threads must be understood to be encompassed in EIIp3 in a similar way as they are shown to be harbored in EIp16. The way in which the infinite modes can be understood to be a part of (b-i) and/or (b-ii) will be elucidated in section 2.6.

¹³² This neutrality of EIp16 was treated in section 2.4.1.

saying this, is that – apparently – the ‘causal narrative’ of propositions EIp16-EIp29 can be mapped on the causal narrative in terms of thought that surfaces in EIIp3-EIIp9, whereby

- EIIp3 must be understood to be (and actually *is* explicitly) related to EIIp16;
- EIIp5 can be understood to be related to EIp21-EIp23 (which it indeed seems to be in the very same implicit way as ‘the very nature of existence’ that ‘follows from the eternal necessity of God’s nature’ in EIIp45s was shown to be related to EIp21-EIp23);
- EIIp9 must be understood to be (and actually *is* explicitly) related to EIIp28.

In our treatment of Problem 1 we have seen that as of yet we seem to be entitled to claim that EIIp3 – and by implication EIIp5 – can be understood to encompass the intrinsic causation of eternal things. Yet, at this point it must be noted that – despite the explicit reference to EIp28 – the assertion that EIIp9 treats only extrinsic causation is not entirely unproblematic. In the demonstration of this latter proposition, Spinoza makes a remark that actually would seem to thwart this claim. For in the demonstration of EIIp9 – which we have claimed to be exclusively about the objective (i.e. durational) being of things – the intrinsic causal thread of EIIp5 is mentioned as well. Consider the following passage in EIIp9d:

The idea of a singular thing which actually exists is a singular mode of thinking [...], and so (by P6) has God for a cause only insofar as he is a thinking thing. But not (by IP28) insofar as he is a thinking thing absolutely; rather insofar as he is considered to be affected by another mode of thinking.¹³³

(Idea rei singularis, actu existentis, modus singularis cogitandi est [...]; adeoque (per Prop. 6. hujus) Deum, quatenus est tantum res cogitans, pro causâ habet. At non (per Prop. 28. p. 1.), quatenus est res absolutè cogitans, sed quatenus alio [definito] cogitandi modo affectus consideratur [...])

¹³³ EIIp9d, (I) 453. Remarkably enough, in this passage Spinoza calls God a cause ‘only insofar as he is a thinking thing’ – which is a formulation of EIIp5 – he actually refers to EIIp6. The same seemingly erroneous reference can be found in the Vatican manuscript of the *Ethics*. See: Leen Spruit and Pina Totaro, *The Vatican Manuscript of Spinoza’s Ethica* (Leiden 2011), EIIp9, 127. As will become clear shortly, the reference to EIIp6 is basically right, as this latter proposition can be understood to be a more general claim that hence *encompasses* the claim in EIIp5: the intrinsic thread of EIIp5 is encompassed by EIIp6, which is neutral with respect to the intrinsic or extrinsic character of the way God’s causal power is expressed *modaliter*. More on the neutrality of EIIp6 in Chapter 4.

The thing that interest us here is that in this passage the causal generation of the supposedly objective being of things in EIIp9 is proven with reference to the very clause ('only insofar as he is a thinking thing') that we have supposed to be applicable to the causal generation of the formal being of ideas only. If ideas of the singular existing things of EIIp9 indeed are claimed to have God for a cause in the way of EIIp5, our interpretation seems to lack an important fundament. For we have just asserted that the difference between the objective and the formal being of modes must be understood to find its root in the distinction between the causal threads that these things are conceived to be operative in. Whereas the latter were claimed to be caused intrinsically by God insofar as he is conceived as a *res cogitans*, the former were asserted *not* to be caused in this specific way. And now it appears to turn out that Spinoza actually claims that objective things *are* caused intrinsically in the way of EIIp5 and thus cannot be distinguished from the formal being of ideas by referring to the specific causal thread they are conceived to be operative in.

Is there a way out of this? I think there is. For on closer scrutiny the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic causation *is* recognizable in the demonstration of EIIp9. The most important term in this respect is 'absolutely' (*absolute*). The adduced passage makes it clear that, even though eventually all mental items are caused by God as a *res cogitans*,¹³⁴ there still are two perspectives from which the causation of mental items can be grasped. On the one hand things can be understood to be caused by God as a *res cogitans* insofar as God's power of thinking is expressed in each singular mental thing (resulting in the infinite causal thread of EIp28 and EIIp9). And on the other hand things can be conceived to be caused by God insofar as he is a thinking thing *absolutely*. The distinction between the two causal threads is made explicit by Spinoza's use of the construction 'not [...] insofar [...]; rather insofar' (*At non [...] quatenus [...], sed quatenus*) in the demonstration of EIIp9. This disjunctive formulation makes it clear that Spinoza indeed distinguishes two causal threads: a substance-mode and a mode-mode variant.

¹³⁴ This is the wider sense of EIIp6 that is referred to in the previous note. In this particular claim the causal isolation of the attributes ('all *mental* items') meets the all-encompassing character ('*all* mental items') of God's causal power that is the subject of EIp16. EIIp5, in contrast, is not about *all* mental items, but merely about *the formal being* of all mental items.

That the causal thread of EIIp5 – as opposed to the one in EIIp9 – must be understood insofar as the things that are staged in it follow from God as a thinking thing *absolutely* becomes even more evident when we realize that the particular variant of causation that emerges in EIIp5 is explicitly claimed to be applicable, not only to ideas of singular things, but also to the idea of God’s attributes. Consider the following argument. As we saw in the previous chapter, the *idea* of God as a *res cogitans* is claimed to follow from the attribute of thought, and not from something else. This is no surprise, as it is hard to see how the exhaustive modal expression of the attribute of thought (that is, by what we have seen in the previous chapter: the infinite intellect *or* God’s idea) can be conceived to be caused by a *mode* of that same attribute. As the attributes of God are what the intellect perceives as the essence of God (by the famous EID4), there cannot be anything that is extrinsic to the attributes, because this would imply (by transitivity) that there can be conceived to be some causing thing that is extrinsic to God’s essence. As this is absurd in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy, the only possible cause for the idea of the attribute of thought must be something that is capable of causing this infinite mode of thought intrinsically.¹³⁵ The only candidate for this seems to be the attribute of thought *as it is in itself* (i.e., in terms of EIp31d, ‘absolute thought’). Now, it cannot escape our notice that precisely this is stated in EIIp5: the formal being of the idea of the attribute of thought admits God as a cause only insofar as he is considered a *res cogitans*. That is: only insofar as God is considered to be expressed exhaustively (and non-opaquely) by the attribute of thought (i.e. only insofar as God is *a thinking thing absolutely*) can he be considered to be the cause of the formal being of the idea of the attribute of thought. And as in EIIp5 this particular kind of causation is claimed to be applicable to any idea in nature – not only to the idea of the attribute of thought, but also to the idea of a toaster, a stone, a tree and a human body – it is clear that in EIIp5 Spinoza asserts that the formal being of all ideas is caused by God as a thinking thing *absolutely*.

Yet another way of saying this is that in EIIp5 an *immediate* relation between God as a thinking thing and the formal being of ideas is posited: unlike EIIp9,

¹³⁵ In the next chapter we will see that the whole of nature (EIIIL7s), even though it cannot be understood to be caused extrinsically (as there is nothing outside the whole of nature), must nevertheless be conceived to be *characterized by* external causality, as the infinitely many parts that constitute the whole of nature are subject to extrinsic causality. It is because of this ‘extrinsic flavour’ that the whole of nature can be understood to exist *sempiternally* (i.e. has duration without beginning or end). See section 3.3.

where we encounter God as a thinking thing insofar as he is conceived as an infinite causal chain of singular mental items, the causal thread of EIIp5 is characterized by the fact that *there is no mediating mental item (expressing God as a thinking thing in a certain way) between God as a thinking thing absolutely and the formal being of an idea.*¹³⁶ And as this is claimed to be applicable to the formal being of any mental thing, we can conclude that finite minds can indeed be conceived in the two distinct ways discerned above. Insofar as a human mind is understood to be operative in the causal thread of EIIp9 it must be conceived to be caused extrinsically (i.e. by other finite mental things) and thus to exist under duration. And insofar as this same human mind is conceived to be operative in the causal thread that is treated in EIIp5, it must be understood to be caused intrinsically (or, to use the phrasing of EIp23d: ‘to follow from the absolute nature of some attribute of God’) in the very same way the ideas of the attributes are. In this sense, the human mind is grasped as an infinite and eternal mode, as was supposed.

Problem 3: The immediacy of the formal being of ideas

The solution to the second problem confronts us with another apparent rift in our interpretation: the claimed immediacy of the relation between God as a *res cogitans* and the formal being of ideas. In the foregoing we have seen that only immediate infinite modes can be understood to be caused ‘immediately’; mediate infinite modes are merely caused through the mediation of something infinite. Spinoza’s claim in the demonstration of EIp23 seems to be clear enough:

the mode, which exists necessarily and is infinite, has had to follow from the absolute nature of some attribute of God – either *immediately* (see P21) or by some mediating modification, which follows from its absolute nature, that is (by P22), which exists necessarily and is infinite [...] [emphasis added].¹³⁷
(Modus ergo, qui est necessariò, est infinitus existit, ex absolutâ naturâ alicujus Dei attributi sequi debuit; hocque vel immediatè (de quo Prop. 21.), vel mediante aliquâ modificatione, quæ ex ejus absolutâ naturâ sequitur, hoc est (per Prop. præced.), quæ est necessariò, est infinita existit)

¹³⁶ This is a qualified remark. That is to say: as we will see, for most formal beings of ideas (that is: the formal being of *all* ideas *except* of the idea of the attributes) there actually *is* such a mediating object: the *immediate infinite mode*; the formal being of the idea of (say) a human body will turn out to be an *infinite mode that is mediated by the absolutely infinite intellect*.

¹³⁷ EIp23d, (I) 431.

In this passage the term ‘*immediate*’ is explicitly reserved for immediate infinite modes. Yet, our interpretation of EIIp5 suggests that the formal being of singular ideas (such as human minds) are caused in this way as well. Indeed, I have just claimed that the causal thread of EIIp5 is characterized by the fact that ‘there is no mediating mental item between God as a thinking thing and the formal being of an idea’. That is to say: I have asserted that according to EIIp5 the formal being of (the idea that is) the human mind inheres in substance in the same way the idea of (say) the attribute of thought does. These claims appear to imply that the formal being of ideas must be considered to be immediate infinite modes (and that the concept of mediate infinite modes thus must remain in the dark until further notice). Is this right? Or is it possible to uphold the claim that the formal being of ideas inheres in substance in the same way the ideas of the attributes do, while at the same time safeguarding the assertion that finite minds can be conceived as *mediate* infinite modes (as we have supposed in the introduction of this chapter) and hence that we do not run in the apparent absurdity that the human mind must be equated with the ‘absolutely infinity intellect’ of Letter 64?¹³⁸ Actually, I already gave (part of) the answer to this question. The treatment of EIp28s in section 2.3 has made it clear that Spinoza employs different concepts of immediacy in the *Ethics*. Whereas in EIp21-23 Spinoza distinguishes between (i) things that follow immediately, and (ii) things that are modified by things that follow immediately from some attribute of God, in EIp28s this particular distinction is obliterated. Indeed, as the immediacy of EIp28s is claimed to be applicable to ‘those things [...] that follow from his absolute nature’, the infinite modes of EIp21 and EIp22 must both be understood to follow ‘immediately’ (in the sense of EIp28s) from God’s absolute nature.¹³⁹ That is to say: the immediacy that is referred to in EIp28s can be understood to be

¹³⁸ The assertions in Letter 64 will be scrutinized more extensively in the next section.

¹³⁹ Emilia Giancotti claimed that the *disjunction* in EIp23 between modes that follow ‘from the absolute nature of some attribute of God’ and modes that follow ‘from some attribute, modified by a modification which exists necessarily and is infinite’ makes it clear that the latter modes do *not* follow from the absolute nature of some attribute of God. Emilia Giancotti, ‘On the Problem of Infinite Modes’, 103-104. However, Spinoza’s claim in the demonstration of EIp23 about ‘some mediating modification, which follows from its absolute nature, that is (by P22), which exists necessarily and is infinite’ (*vel mediante aliquà modificatione, quæ ex ejus absolutâ naturâ sequitur, hoc est (per Prop. præced.), quæ est necessariò, & infinita existit*) does not seem to leave any doubt as to the fact that the mediate infinite modes can be conceived to follow from the absolute nature of an attribute as well. And hence these infinite modes can also be understood to follow from God immediately in the wider sense that surfaces in EIp23d and EIp28s.

a wider notion of immediacy, which encompasses the concepts of immediacy and mediacy that surface in EIp23.¹⁴⁰ It is precisely this wider notion of immediacy that is also recognizable in Spinoza's claim in EIIp5 that '*ideas, both of God's attributes and of singular things, admit not the objects themselves, or the things perceived, as their efficient cause, but God himself, insofar as he is a thinking thing [emphasis added]*'¹⁴¹ (see above). Acknowledging that in EIp28s the term '*immediate*' has a wider scope than in EIp23, there is, in principle, room for the supposition that the formal being of ideas can be considered as mediate infinite modes. Another way of saying this is that the mediacy of mediate infinite modes is not contradicted by the immediacy that was granted these things on the basis of EIIp5: from of the elaboration of EIp28s and EIIp5 we can gather that the particular (and well-defined) mediacy of EIp23 is encompassed by the species of immediacy mentioned in EIp28s.

*

Where does this leave us? We started this section with the supposition that the bifurcation between the intrinsically caused infinite and the extrinsically caused finite being of singular things can also be described in terms of the formal and objective being of the thing under scrutiny. An elucidation of Spinoza's claims about the causal generation of the formal (in EIIp5) and the objective being of things (in EIIp9) has taught us that this supposition can be sustained. Indeed, on the basis of the things that were said in this section – and given the fact that three pressing problems¹⁴² with respect to our claim were neutralized – we can uphold the

¹⁴⁰ The term '*immediate*' can only be found in Part 1 of the *Ethics* (in EIp23d, EIp28s and EI Appendix).

¹⁴¹ EIIp5, (I) 450 (*tam Dei attributorum, quàm rerum singularium ideæ non ipsa ideata, sive res perceptas pro causâ efficiente agnoscunt, sed ipsum Deum, quatenus est res cogitans*). It may be instructive to add that in this particular claim, Spinoza is not talking about the *formal being* of ideas, but about *ideas* (i.e. the *objective being* of a thing). In the chapter 4 and 5 we will see why he would be entitled to equate the formal and the objective being of a thing.

¹⁴² There seems to be yet another problem with our claim that EIIp5 implicitly posits the causation of infinite modes. In EIIp7s, Spinoza claims the following: 'When I said that *God is the cause of the idea, say of a circle, only insofar as he is a thinking thing*, and the cause of the circle, only insofar as he is an extended thing, this was *for no other reason* than because the formal being of the idea of the circle can be perceived only through another mode of thinking, as its proximate cause, and that mode again through another, and so on, to infinity. Hence, so long as things are considered as modes of thinking, we must explain the order of the whole of Nature, or the connection of causes, through the attribute of thought alone [emphasis

following rendering of the (conceived) bifurcated metaphysical status of singular ideas (such as human minds):

A thing can be conceived:

(3*) *Formally*, that is: as intrinsically caused eternal and infinite mode

And that same thing can be conceived:

(4*) *Objectively*, that is: as an extrinsically caused durational and finite mode

Or, in terms of EVp29s:

added]’ (*Nec ullâ aliâ de causâ [te voren] dixi, quòd Deus sit causa ideæ ex. gr. circuli, quatenus tantùm est res cogitans, & circuli, quatenus tantùm est res extensa, nisi quia esse formale ideæ circuli non, nisi per alium cogitandi modum, tanquam causam proximam, & ille iterùm per alium, & sic in infinitum, potest percipi, ità ut, quamdiu res, ut cogitandi modi considerantur, ordinem totius naturæ, sive causarum connexionem, per solum Cogitationis attributum explicare debemus*). The problem concerns the emphasized parts of this passage. These claims suggest that EIIp5 (to which the clause ‘God is the cause of the idea [...] only insofar as he is a thinking thing’ appears to refer) must be understood to posit – *and to posit only* – the causal barrier between the attributes. And this would in turn go against our claim that EIIp5, even though this proposition *implies* the causal isolation of the attributes, says still something more (namely that the *formal* being of ideas must be conceived to be caused by God insofar as he is a thinking thing absolutely). The first thing that must be noted with respect to this problem, is that we have already provided some convincing arguments for the position that the distinction between the ‘formal’ and ‘objective’ being of ideas *cannot* be done away with in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy. Secondly, we have seen with respect to Problem 2 that in the demonstration of EIIp9, Spinoza actually uses the clause ‘God is the cause of [an] idea [...] only insofar as he is a thinking thing’ when he refers to EIIp6, *not* to EIIp5. This provides us with a second indication that the emphasized lines do not invalidate the things we have said concerning EIIp5 (see also notes 133 and 134). Indeed, Spinoza appears to be able to use the mentioned clause because EIIp6 posits – *and posits only* – that ‘God is the cause of [an] idea [...] only insofar as he is a thinking thing’ (although, as we have seen, not insofar as he is a thinking thing *absolutely*, as this particular way of causing ideas is the subject of EIIp5). That this indeed is the right way of reading the quoted passage in EIIp7s will become even clearer in Chapter 4, where the close connection this scholium and the important §33 of the TdIE will be elucidated.

we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist as an extrinsically caused finite¹⁴³ mode (i.e. in their objective being), or insofar as we conceive them as an intrinsically caused infinite mode (i.e. in their formal being).

‘Our better part’ must be understood to conceive things in two ways: objectively-under duration and formally-eternally. This way of understanding the distinction between the objective and the formal being of things makes it clear that in the *Ethics* we can indeed detect a *twofold use of the intellect*. Firstly, the intellect must be understood to provide a way to blessedness because – by the Mereological Claim of EIIp11c and EVp36 – it is to be seen as a part of the love with which God loves himself. However, in this section it has become clear that this *instrumental function of the intellect* – the precise functioning of which of course still needs closer scrutiny – is supplemented with yet another way in which the intellect is employed in Spinoza’s philosophy. This latter *constructive function of the intellect* emerges once it is acknowledged that the conceptual duality that characterizes the intellect is expressed in the metaphysical concepts that Spinoza uses in order to unfold his ethical program. Indeed, in this section we have argued that Spinoza distinguishes between infinite and finite modes precisely because our intellect conceives things in two ways.

2.5.3 The objects of ideas

In the next section we will treat the question how our findings concerning the conceptual status of the infinite modes can be understood to be in line with Spinoza’s assertions about infinite modes in EIp21-EIp23, EI Appendix and Letter 64. Yet, before turning to this important subject, two things must still be added: it is crucial, firstly, to recognize the *trichotomy* that is implied in the distinction between the objective and the formal being of things that characterizes *pars melior nostri*, and, secondly, to acknowledge that the distinction between the formal and the objective being of a thing (and hence the trichotomy) *is applicable to the infinite intellect as well*.

¹⁴³ More on this in the next section.

The first point hinges on two claims put forth the conclusion of Chapter 1. Recall that we have established the following:

- The intellect is by nature either posterior to or simultaneous with the things understood, which in turn implies that the intellect is *characterized by a conceptual duality*.
- The intellect is characterized by a conceptual distinction between the *objective* and *formal* being of the things understood.

In the conclusion of Chapter 1 we stated that ‘there appears to be some ground to suppose that the duality that characterizes our intellect is closely related to the distinction between the objective and the formal being of things’. On the basis of the things we have said in this section we can add that, even though both cited claims must be upheld, they do not seem to refer to the same distinction. The first claim appears to be concerned with the (‘horizontal’)¹⁴⁴ duality between an idea in the intellect¹⁴⁵ and its object (or in terms of EIIp5: the duality between ideas and ‘the objects themselves’).¹⁴⁶ In contrast, the second claim posits the (‘vertical’) distinction between the idea in the intellect *with* respect to its object (i.e. the extrinsically caused durational objective being of a thing) and that very same idea considered *without* respect to its object (i.e. the intrinsically caused eternal formal being of that idea).

This way of understanding these distinctions can be elucidated with the help of EIIp13. Consider the following claim:

¹⁴⁴ The terms ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ will be elucidated in Chapter 4. At this point it must suffice to note that in the present context these terms are used to distinguish between (i) the relation between two *durational manifestations of the same thing* (‘horizontal’), and (ii) the relation between *the durational and the eternal being of the same thing* (‘vertical’).

¹⁴⁵ That we are speaking about ideas *in the intellect* is clear from the fact that the very distinction between the formal and the objective being of an idea is based on EVp29s (see above). In this chapter (and indeed in the next two chapters) we will only deal with ideas insofar as they are conceived to be ideas of the intellect. In Chapter 5 we will focus on the distinction between ideas in the intellect and ‘ideas’ that we have of external things, which Spinoza calls ‘images in the imagination’.

¹⁴⁶ EIIp5, (I) 450 (*ipsa ideata*). To be sure, the term that Spinoza uses here to denote the object of an idea (‘*ideatum*’) must be distinguished from the term ‘*objectum*’ that surfaces (inter alia) in EIIp13. The intricate distinction between the two terms, which will be elucidated in section 5.3.1, is of no import for the present argument.

P13: The object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, [...] and nothing else’.

Dem.: For if the object of the human Mind were not the Body, the ideas of the affections of the Body would not be in God (by P9C) insofar as he constituted our mind, but insofar as he constituted the mind of another thing [...].¹⁴⁷

(PROPOSITIO XIII. *Objectum ideæ, humanam Mentem constituentis, est Corpus, sive certus Extensionis modus actu existens, & nihil aliud.*

DEMONSTRATIO. *Si enim Corpus non esset humanæ Mentis objectum, ideæ affectionum Corporis non essent in Deo (per Coroll. Prop. 9. hujus), quatenus Mentem nostram, sed quatenus alterius rei mentem constitueret*

Combining this passage with Spinoza’s claim in the scholium of this proposition that ‘the things we have shown so far are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals’,¹⁴⁸ it becomes clear that for Spinoza the object of any singular idea – that is: the object of any singular *objective being* – is *not* the eternal formal being of that idea. Rather, the object of a singular idea – whether it be the idea of a human body, of a horse, of a stone or of a toaster – is an individual that is grasped insofar as it (i) exists under duration, (ii) is finite, and (iii) is operative under another attribute (i.e. the extended and durational being of the human body, the horse, the stone and the toaster).¹⁴⁹ Now, this claim has all kinds of remarkable implications. From EIIp13 and its scholium we can gather for instance that in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy every singular thing in nature must be understood to have a mind (namely: the objective being – or idea – of that thing). However, the thing that interests us here is that the claim in EIIp13 underpins our contention that the *object* of an idea must be distinguished from both the infinite eternal formal being ((3*’)), and the finite durational objective being ((4*’)) of that object. Hence, in the case of a human mind we can distinguish between:

- a finite *body* serving as the object

¹⁴⁷ EIIp13, (I) 457.

¹⁴⁸ EIIp13s, (I) 458 (*Nam ea, quæ hucusque ostendimus, admodum communia sunt, nec magis ad homines, quam ad reliqua individua pertinent*).

¹⁴⁹ That is to say: in the example of EIIp13 the object resorts under *another* attribute. In Chapter 4 we will see that this ‘horizontal relation’ between a finite idea and its finite object can also be positioned under the same attribute, in which case the resulting objective being is an *idea of an idea*.

- the *objective being* of that body (i.e. its *idea*, or mind, that is: the body represented in thought)¹⁵⁰
- the *formal being* of that idea (i.e. the idea, or mind, as it is in itself, that is: the idea without respect to the represented body)

In Chapter 4 we will see how this trichotomy is recognizable in Spinoza's 'parallelism thesis' too; it will become clear that it is precisely the intricate (and intellect-dependent) structure of formal being, objective being and object that enables Spinoza to claim that 'a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways'.¹⁵¹ However, at this point it suffices to note that the conclusions of Chapter 1 can be understood to refer to two conceptual distinctions: a distinction between ideas in the intellect and their durational objects, and a distinction between ideas in the intellect and their eternal formal being.

We must turn now to the second point that was put forward above: the claim that the uncovered trichotomy can be conjectured to be applicable to the infinite intellect as well. This latter claim may strike some as a highly controversial. Is it not – for lack of a better word – heretical to suppose that God's idea has the same structure as finite ideas? Could it not be the case that, whereas finite ideas have durational modes as their objects, the infinite intellect of God has something else as its object (purportedly God's eternal essence)? The hesitation is understandable given (inter alia) the already adduced claim in EIIp3 that 'in God there is necessarily an idea, both of his essence and of everything which necessarily follows from his essence'. This proposition suggests that the infinite intellect (i.e. God's idea of his essence) indeed has God's eternal essence as its object, and – unlike the finite intellect – not an object that is operative in the realm of duration. So why still claim that the God's idea has the same structure that was uncovered with respect to the ideas that constitute our intellect?

A first indication that we are entitled to assert that the structure that characterizes the finite intellect can be understood to be applicable to the infinite

¹⁵⁰ In Chapter 5 I will show how the notions of 'representation' and 'consciousness' must be understood in the context of Spinoza's philosophy. The thing to note here is that on the basis of EVp29s we are entitled to claim that the objective being is an idea *of the intellect*.

¹⁵¹ EIIp7s, (I) 451 (*modus extensionis, & idea illius modi una, eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa*).

intellect as well, can be found in EI_p30 and EI_p31. In these propositions Spinoza makes it clear that in a certain respect there is no difference between the finite and the infinite intellect. In EI_p30 we read: ‘an actual intellect, *whether finite or infinite*, must comprehend God's attributes and God's affections, and nothing else [emphasis added]’;¹⁵² in EI_p31 Spinoza states that ‘the actual intellect, *whether finite or infinite*, [...] must be referred to *Natura naturata*, not to *Natura naturans* [emphasis added]’;¹⁵³ and in EI_p31d we encounter the explication that ‘by intellect [...] we understand not absolute thought, but only a certain mode of thinking’.¹⁵⁴ These passages provide us with a clear indication that God’s eternal power of thinking, insofar as it is conceived to be expressed in an all-encompassing mode – i.e. God’s idea – must be understood to have the very same object of knowledge (viz. ‘God's attributes and God's affections’) as its parts – i.e. finite ideas – have.

The concordance of the terms ‘finite intellect’ and ‘infinite intellect’ surfaces in Spinoza’s description of the important notion ‘attribute’ as well. In the definition of attribute EID4 – which will be treated extensively in the chapters 3 and 4 – Spinoza uses the term ‘intellect’, whereas in the paraphrase of this definition in EI_p7s Spinoza employs the term ‘*infinite* intellect [emphasis added]’,¹⁵⁵ again suggesting that the finite and the infinite intellect, even though they must be conceived to differ in scale, do not differ as to the nature of their object.¹⁵⁶ Indeed:

¹⁵² EI_p30, (I) 434 (*Intellectus actu finitus, aut actu infinitus Dei attributa, Deique affectiones comprehendere debet, & nihil aliud*). See also Introduction, note 22.

¹⁵³ EI_p31, (I) 434 (*Intellectus actu, sive is finitus sit sive infinitus, [...] ad naturam naturatam, non verò ad naturantem referri debent*).

¹⁵⁴ EI_p31d, (I) 434 (*Per intellectum enim (ut per se notum) non intelligimus absolutam cogitationem, sed certum tantum modum cogitandi*).

¹⁵⁵ EID4 reads: ‘By attribute I understand what *the intellect* perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence [emphasis added]’ (*Per attributum intelligo id, quod intellectus de substantiâ percipit, tanquam ejusdem essentiam constituens*), EID4, (I) 408; in EI_p7s we encounter the following paraphrase: ‘Before we proceed further, we must recall here what we showed, namely, that whatever can be perceived by an *infinite intellect* as constituting an essence of substance pertains to one substance only, and consequently that the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance [emphasis added]’ (*Hic, antequam ulterius pergamus, revocandum nobis in memoriam est id, quod supra ostendimus; nempe, quòd quicquid ab infinito intellectu percipi potest, tanquam substantiæ essentiam constituens, id omne ad unicam tantum substantiam pertinet, & consequenter quòd substantia cogitans, & substantia extensa una, eademque est substantia*), EI_p7s, (I) 451.

¹⁵⁶ This is a qualified remark. For later in this chapter it will become clear that the way in which Spinoza explicates the generation of infinite modes (in EI_p21-EI_p23) leaves space for the generation of infinitely many *coexistent* infinite modes. The interesting question how this claim is related to Spinoza’s puzzling assertion in Letter 66 that ‘each thing is expressed in infinite ways in the infinite intellect of God’ (Letter 66 (II), 440) will not be treated in this study.

the formulations in EID4 and EIIp7s indicate that the knowledge of God's essence is accessible to the infinite and the finite intellect in the very same way (even though at this point it is of course unclear *how* the intellect, whether finite or infinite, can be conceived to attain knowledge of God's essence, of God's attributes and of God's affections).¹⁵⁷

Perhaps the strongest argument for the claim that the infinite intellect has the very same structure as its finite counterpart can be found in EIIp5. In this respect it is important to stress once more that the intrinsic causation of EIIp5 is claimed by Spinoza to be applicable to 'ideas, *both of God's attributes and of singular things* [emphasis added]'.¹⁵⁸ The thing to note in the present context is that this claim is not only informative as to the immediacy that can be attributed to the formal being of singular ideas (as was shown above), but also as to the applicability of the designation 'formal' with respect to the idea of the attributes. Indeed, the claim in EIIp5 firmly suggests that the distinction between the formal and the objective being of ideas can be understood to be functioning with respect to the idea of God's attributes as well. Apparently, Spinoza somehow distinguishes between:

(b-i)¹⁵⁹ the formal being of the idea of God's attributes, that is: God's idea (i.e. the infinite intellect)¹⁶⁰ insofar as it falls within the scope of the causal thread that is put forward in EIIp5

¹⁵⁷ This will be elucidated in Chapter 4, which deals with the *bottom-up* perspective in Spinoza's philosophy: the perspective from which knowledge of God's essence can be attained via knowledge of modes.

¹⁵⁸ EIIp5, (I) 450 (*tam Dei attributorum, quàm rerum singularium ideæ non ipsa ideata*).

¹⁵⁹ This particular enumeration refers back to the enumeration that was provided in Problem 1 (see above).

¹⁶⁰ The equivalence of the terms 'God's idea' and 'infinite intellect' was already indicated in the previous chapter (see section 1.4, where a claim from the KV was shown to indicate that both terms denote the same concept). The same conclusion can also be drawn on the basis of certain claims in the *Ethics*. In EIIp4d we read that 'An infinite intellect comprehends nothing except God's attributes and his affections (by IP30). But God is unique (by IP14Cl). Therefore God's idea [...] must be unique'. EIIp4d, (I) 449-450 (*Intellectus infinitus nihil, præter Dei attributa, ejusque affectiones, comprehendit (per Prop. 30. p. 1.). Atqui Deus est unicus (per Coroll. 1. Prop. 14. p. 1.). Ergo idea Dei [...] unica tantùm esse potest*). This makes it clear that God's idea is *in* the infinite intellect. If we moreover acknowledge that according to Spinoza 'there is in the mind no absolute faculty of understanding' (*in Mente nullam dari facultatem absolutam intelligendi*) and that 'intellect and will are to this or that idea, or to this and that volition as 'stone-ness' are to this or that stone, or man to Peter or Paul' EIIp48s, (I) 483 (*Adeò ut intellectus, & voluntas ad hanc, & illam ideam, vel ad hanc, & illam volitionem eodem modo sese habeant, ac lapideitas ad hunc, & illum*

and

(b-ii) the idea (i.e. the objective being) of God's attributes insofar as it has something as its object, that is: God's idea (i.e. the infinite intellect) insofar as it falls within the scope of the causal thread that is forwarded in EIIp9¹⁶¹

This supposition – which will find further warrant in the next section – in turn leads us to the question what can be understood to be the *object* of God's idea that surfaces under (b-ii) (and that hence establishes the trichotomy with respect to God's idea). Spinoza provides an answer in the 'physical excursion', which can be found immediately after EIIp13s. Consider the following remark in EIIL7s:

And if we proceed in this way to infinity, we shall easily conceive that the whole of nature is one Individual, whose parts, that is, all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole Individual.¹⁶²

(Et si sic porrò in infinitum pergamus, faciliè concipiemus, totam naturam unum esse Individuum, cujus partes, hoc est, omnia corpora infinitis modis variant, absque ullâ totius Individui mutatione)

If it is acknowledged that the 'physical excursion' is used by Spinoza in order to make it clear how we are able to 'know the nature of [the] object [of the human mind], that is, of the human body', then it seems hard to escape the conclusion (i) that 'the whole of nature' that surfaces in EIIL7s has a parallel in the all-encompassing collection of ideas, and (ii) that precisely this all-encompassing collection of bodies in EIIL7s – indeed the very whole of nature – must be understood to be the object of this all-encompassing collection of ideas. In other words: the 'physical excursion' teaches us that the object of God's idea is the whole of nature, i.e. that God's idea is the objective being of the whole of nature.¹⁶³ Yet

lapidem, vel ut homo ad Petrum, & Paulum), it becomes clear that 'God's idea' simply *is* the infinite intellect.

¹⁶¹ The question how God's idea can be understood to fall within the scope of an extrinsic causal thread without having something that is extrinsic to this idea (as God's idea must be understood to be all-encompassing) will be answered in section 3.3.

¹⁶² EIIL7s, (I) 462.

¹⁶³ This way of understanding the relation between God's idea and its object is also recognizable in Letter 32. Consider the following passage: 'every body, insofar as it exists modified in a definite way, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, must agree with its whole and must cohere with the remaining bodies. [...] You see, therefore, how and why I think the human Body is a part of Nature. But as far as the human Mind is concerned, I think it is a part of Nature too. For I maintain that there is also in nature an

another way of saying this is that Spinoza's parallelism thesis is applicable to God's idea in the same way it is applicable to singular ideas: his claim in EIIp7s that 'a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways' can apparently be understood to be a claim about modes (and thus the intellect), *whether finite or infinite*. Hence we seem entitled to render the trichotomy that was uncovered with respect to singular ideas in the following way as well. In the case of God's idea we can distinguish between:

- *the whole of nature* serving as the object
- the *objective being* of that whole of nature (i.e. its idea, or mind, that is: the whole of nature in its status of being represented in thought. Below we will call this *the whole of objective nature*)¹⁶⁴
- the *formal being* of the idea of the whole of nature (i.e. God's idea, or mind, as it is in itself, that is: God's idea without respect to the whole of nature)

This way of understanding God's idea and its object undoubtedly leads to many subsequent questions. We must elucidate (inter alia) how the definition of attribute is to be understood, how the trichotomy that was uncovered in this section is related to Spinoza's parallelism claim, how the infinite and finite intellect can be conceived to attain knowledge of God's essence, and how we must understand the distinction between the *being* of an idea and the *having* of an idea (i.e. the conscious mental representation of something in a mind). However, before

infinite power of thinking, which, insofar as it is infinite, contains in itself objectively the whole of Nature, and whose thoughts proceed in the same way as Nature, its object, does'. Letter 32, (II) 19-20 (*omne corpus, quatenus certo modo modificatum existit, ut partem totius universi, considerari debere [...] Vides igitur, quâ ratione, & rationem, cur sentiam Corpus humanum partem esse Naturæ: quòd autem ad Mentem humanam attinet, eam etiam partem Naturæ esse censeo; nempe quia statuo, dari etiam in naturâ potentiam infinitam cogitandi, quæ, quatenus infinita, in se continet totam Naturam objectivè, & cujus cogitationes procedunt eodem modo, ac Natura, ejus nimirum ideatum*). Indeed, in this passage too, the whole of nature is staged as the object of the infinite power of thinking insofar as this latter infinite power manifests itself as a whole of which the human mind is claimed to be a part.

¹⁶⁴ It is very important to stress once more that in the context of Spinoza's philosophy the term 'objective' refers to the realm of *thought*. Whereas 'the whole of nature' must be understood to be nature under extension, the 'whole of objective nature' is nature conceived under the attribute of thought (i.e. the *whole of extended nature represented objectively in thought*). In Chapter 4 the ratio behind this claimed equivalence will be elucidated. To be sure, the very term 'whole of objective nature' is inspired by a remark from Spinoza himself, namely in Letter 32, where he uses the term 'objective' with respect to the modal expression of God's infinite power of thinking (see the previous note).

treating these important questions in the subsequent chapters, we must return to the subject that led us to the present interpretational route: the precise relation between the immediate and the mediate infinite modes. In this respect it is noteworthy that from Letter 64 it becomes clear that the thing we have just claimed to be the parallel object of God's idea – the whole of nature – must be understood to merely be a *mediate* infinite mode.¹⁶⁵ This elicits the questions (i) how the human mind (and any other singular thing in nature) can be conceived to be a mediate infinite mode as well (which is our present supposition), and (ii) how the *immediate* infinite modes can be fitted in the structure that was uncovered in this section. These questions will be treated in the next section.

2.6 Reverse engineering¹⁶⁶

So far we have been concentrating mainly on what seemed to be the strongest objection against our initial supposition that human minds can be conceived to be infinite modes: the fact that a thing cannot be infinite and finite at the same time. We have learned that this objection can be neutralized once it is acknowledged that Spinoza's metaphysics is characterized by a dual perspective, which in turn must be understood to be an expression of the bifurcated character of *pars melior nostri*. Recognition of the importance of the *constructive function of the intellect* led us to the observation (i) that the idea of a thing can be conceived in its formal being (i.e. insofar as the idea is conceived under a species of eternity, without relation to the object it represents) as an intrinsically caused infinite mode that is somehow contained (by EIIp8) in the attribute of thought (or as it is stated in EVp29s: 'contained in God'),¹⁶⁷ and (ii) that this very same thing can be conceived in its objective being (i.e. insofar as it is an idea that represents its durational object) as an

¹⁶⁵ Letter 64, (II) 439. More on this letter shortly.

¹⁶⁶ The 'engineering' can be understood to be 'reverse' as it appears to be a normal procedure to *start* with the claims concerning the infinite modes of EIp21-22 and Letter 64 and *then* decide what sort of things fall within the scope of the claims mentioned. However, we have taken another route: on the basis of other evidence we have identified the things that can be understood to be infinite modes. So the thing we must do now – *reversibly* as it were – is treat the question how (if so) the claims in EIp21-22 and Letter 64 can be understood to be applicable to the particular things (i.e. the intrinsically caused formal being of things) that we have shown to be infinite modes.

¹⁶⁷ EVp29s, (I) 610 (*in Deo contineri*).

extrinsically caused finite mode that is comprehended in God's infinite idea (EIIp8).¹⁶⁸

Evidently, with this we have not yet sufficiently countered all the possible objections against our claim that the human mind can be conceived to be an infinite mode. That is to say: now that we have developed an interpretation of the way infinite and finite modes play their specific roles in the mereological, existential and causal tissue of Spinoza's metaphysics (namely as an expression of the bifurcated structure of our better part), I will have to elucidate how our present model can be brought in line with the other claims that are made by Spinoza concerning the generation of immediate and mediate infinite modes, and the way these respective things must be conceived to be related to their attributes. More specifically, in this section I will show how our assertions about the formal being of the human mind can be understood to be corroborated by the claims in EIp21–EIp22, EI Appendix,¹⁶⁹ and the enumeration of infinite modes that Spinoza provides in Letter 64. In order to be able to treat these important points sufficiently – and to show that our interpretation concerning the constructive function of *pars melior nostri* provides an elegant reading of a notorious problem in the study of Spinoza's work – we will first have to establish whether the human mind in its infinite guise must be conceived to be an *immediate* or a *mediate* infinite mode. This is the subject I will turn to now.

2.6.1 Immediate or mediate?

In the previous sections we have assumed that human minds can be conceived as *mediate* infinite modes. In order to establish whether this supposition can be

¹⁶⁸ Recall that EIIp8 reads thus: 'The ideas of singular things, or of modes, that do not exist must be *comprehended in God's infinite idea* in the same way as the formal essences of the singular things, or modes, are *contained in God's attributes* [emphasis added. EIIp8, (I) 452]. (*Idea rerum singularium, sive modorum non existentium ita debent comprehendi in Dei infinita idea, ac rerum singularium, sive modorum essentiae formales in Dei attributis continentur*).

¹⁶⁹ In EI Appendix the following relevant claim can be found: 'as has been established in PP21–23, that effect is most perfect which is produced immediately by God, and the more something requires several intermediate causes to produce it, the more imperfect it is'. EI Appendix, (I) 442 (*Nam (duobus prioribus omisis, quia per se manifesta sunt) ut ex Propositionibus 21. 22. & 23. constat, ille effectus perfectissimus est, qui à Deo immediatè producitur, & quò aliquid pluribus causis intermediis indiget, ut producat, eò imperfectius est*).

warranted, we must adduce an important passage in Letter 64. Consider the following claim:

the examples of infinite modes which you ask for: examples of the first kind i.e. of things produced immediately by God are, in Thought, absolutely infinite intellect [...]; an example of the second kind i.e. of those produced by the mediation of some infinite modification is the face of the whole Universe, which, however much it may vary in infinite ways, nevertheless always remains the same. On this, see L7S before II P14.¹⁷⁰

(Denique exempla, quæ petis, primi generis sunt in Cogitatione, intellectus absolutè infinitus; in Extensione autem motus & quies; secundi autem, facies totius Universi, quæ quamvis infinitis modis variet, manet tamen semper eadem, de quo vide Schol. 7. Lemmatis ante Prop. 14. p. 2.)

These examples of the immediate and mediate infinite modes make it fairly clear that a human mind (and any other singular thing in nature) cannot be considered to be an *immediate* infinite mode. For even though it has become clear that singular ideas such as human minds can be conceived to follow from the absolute nature of the attribute of thought, it seems grotesque to state that a singular mind can be attributed the very same status as the ‘absolutely infinite intellect’ that is mentioned in Letter 64 as an example of the immediate mode of thought. A singular mind in its infinite guise must be conceived to differ from the absolutely infinite intellect in at least one important respect: the formal being of a singular idea does not qualify as an exhaustive expression of the attribute it is conceived to follow from (which is the case with the infinite intellect, as we have shown in Chapter 1 that there cannot be a divine residue). It seems that, unlike the case of the infinite intellect, the formal being of singular ideas cannot be understood to be absolutely identical to the causing attribute. It appears to make more sense to claim that these particular infinite modes of thought must be conceived to be merely non-exhaustive parts of the infinite intellect. And hence there seems to be no other tentative option than understanding them to be *mediate* infinite modes.

There is a second provisional argument for the claim that the formal being of a human mind must be understood to have a status different from that of the infinite intellect (and hence that the formal being of a human mind must be understood to be a *mediate* infinite mode). Consider the following argument. The part-whole relation that surfaces in the Mereological Claim in EIIP11c (see the

¹⁷⁰ Letter 64, (II) 439.

previous chapter) makes it clear that singular ideas (such as human minds) can be conceived to be caused extrinsically, whereas the infinite intellect cannot. Indeed, it is important to notice that extrinsic causation is only applicable to things of which the eternal being does not involve necessary instantiation under duration.¹⁷¹ For consider the case in which the eternal being of a singular mind, such as (say) the idea of the present president of France, would actually involve necessary existence under duration. For this eternal idea to be caused extrinsically, there would have to be conceived another mental thing that is prior in time to the idea of the present president of France (by EIp28).¹⁷² But this cannot be the case, as we have just supposed that the eternal being of the idea of the present president of France involves necessary existence under duration, a claim that implies that the present president of France's idea (and her/his body, and her/his r)¹⁷³ exists at *any given moment under duration*. Now, evidently, if the idea of this French president would exist at any given moment under duration, there could not be anything that is prior in time to the present president of France. Indeed: the extrinsic causal thread of EIp28 cannot be understood to be applicable to things that are conceived to exist at any given moment under duration.¹⁷⁴ Things can only be conceived to be caused in this particular way if their eternal beings do not involve necessary durational existence. Now, as opposed to the formal being of the idea of the present president of France, the eternal being of the infinite intellect *does* involve durational existence. It is precisely because of this that we have stated above that the infinite intellect is an exhaustive expression of the attribute of thought, i.e. that considered *realiter* this particular infinite mode is absolutely identical with its cause. There is nothing in

¹⁷¹ See the notes 135 and 174.

¹⁷² The necessary durational aspect of the causal thread of EIp28 was argued for in section 2.3.2.

¹⁷³ 'r' stands for 'mode of the remaining attributes'.

¹⁷⁴ This claim is in need of an important addition, as will become clear in the next chapter. At this point it must suffice to state that the whole of nature, which actually is necessarily instantiated under duration and as such cannot be conceived to be caused extrinsically, nevertheless must be understood to be *characterized* by extrinsic causation, as the whole of nature is conceived to consist of parts that stand in extrinsic causal relations to each other. This particular character of the whole of nature surfaces with respect to its durational aspect as well: even though the whole of nature is not eternal (i.e. absolutely non-durational), it must be understood to exist without beginning or end, that is: it must be understood to be *sempiternal*. Indeed, the whole of nature is characterized by eternity without itself being eternal (to paraphrase the formula that we used with respect to the notion of extrinsic causation). Stated in mereological terms: the whole of nature is *an all-encompassing whole that nevertheless can be conceived to be a part* (namely: of the immediate infinite mode insofar as it is conceived to be self-contained). More on this shortly and in section 3.3.

the intrinsic cause of the infinite intellect – i.e. in the attribute of thought – that could produce something that would in any way be capable of causing the infinite intellect extrinsically. As opposed to singular things, the infinite intellect is necessarily instantiated under duration and thus can only be conceived to be caused intrinsically. This in turn underpins our claim that the formal being of a finite mind must be understood to have a different status than the *immediate* infinite mode of thought, even though both must be considered to be caused intrinsically (i.e. ‘to follow from the absolute nature of an attribute’) and can thus be grasped as to their infinite being and eternal existence. Now, as Spinoza distinguishes only two variants of infinite modes – immediate and mediate ones – and as the human mind in its infinite modal being apparently is *not* an *immediate* infinite mode, it thus seems that it must be understood to be a *mediate* infinite mode.¹⁷⁵

To be sure, there appears to be at least one crucial objection to these two arguments. As Spinoza makes it clear in Letter 64 that an example of the mediate infinite mode that is staged in EIp22 is the ‘face of the universe’, which in turn is claimed to be equivalent to ‘the whole of nature’ in EIIL7 (or, as we have called it above, ‘the object of God’s idea’), it appears to be rather clear that – despite all the arguments I have provided for the claim that the human mind can be understood to be eternal and infinite as well – it cannot be understood to be a mediate infinite mode. For *prima facie* it seems hard to uphold the claim that the human mind is the mental parallel of either ‘the face of the universe’ or ‘the whole of nature’. Does this mean that we have reached a deadlock in this chapter? Must we reject the claim that the formal being of a human mind is to be considered a mediate infinite mode? I think not. In the next section, which is dedicated to the treatment of three closely interrelated problems with respect to the present interpretation, it will become clear that the counterarguments can be refuted. Indeed, on the basis of certain crucial assertions from Spinoza’s mature works – and our claims concerning the crucial importance of the *constructive function of the intellect* – we will see that a human mind (and indeed any other singular thing in nature) can be understood to be the face of the objective universe in the same way (say) a drop of water can be understood to be the face of the ocean. Moreover, it will become clear that the

¹⁷⁵ The question how the whole of nature – that must also be understood to be an *exhaustive* modal expression of its attribute – can still be understood to be a *mediate* infinite mode (instead of an *immediate* one) will be provided in this section, as well as in section 3.3.

‘whole of nature’ of E11L7 (i.e. the object of God’s idea) is to be seen as one of infinitely many mediate infinite modes that can all be conceived to have the very same metaphysical status of being modified by an infinite mode.

2.6.2 Three remaining problems

In this chapter I have provided considerable evidence for the claim that the human mind can be considered to be an infinite mode. However, at this point it must be acknowledged that at least three (seemingly major) problems present themselves with respect to the way we have warranted our claims.

Firstly, there seems to be an incongruence between the status of the infinite intellect and the status of the infinite being of a singular mind. In order to see this, it is important to note once more that Spinoza uses the term ‘God’s *idea*’ with respect to the infinite mode of thought. That is to say: on the present interpretation this particular infinite mode of thought must be understood to be an *objective* expression of God’s infinite power of thinking (i.e. insofar as this mode represents its durational object: the whole of nature). However, this appears to be crucially different in the case of singular minds. For above we have seen that singular things are asserted to be infinite modes, not if they are considered objectively (representing their durational objects) – for in this guise they are claimed to be finite – but if they are considered *formally* (i.e. insofar as they are considered under a species of eternity, without respect to their objects). This elicits the question how something in its formal guise can be conceived to be a part of something that is grasped objectively. Or to put it differently: is it not a category mistake to claim that something that is *considered without respect to its object* (viz. the formal being of the human mind) is a part of something (viz. God’s objective being) that is *representing its durational object*?

The second problem concerns (i) the *multiplicity* of mediate infinite modes, and (ii) the way in which these eternal beings can be conceived to be *contained* in the attributes. For both claims appear to be opposed by Spinoza’s contentions that ‘no attribute of a substance can be truly conceived from which it follows that the substance can be divided’ (E1p12) and that ‘a substance which is absolutely infinite is indivisible’ (E1p13). Indeed: whereas Spinoza asserts explicitly that substance (and its attributes) are absolutely undividable, our present interpretation appears to

imply that Spinoza in a certain sense does consider the attributes to consist of parts, namely of the formal being of singular things that are contained in God's attributes. This leads us to two interrelated questions: (i) how can we account for the multiplicity of the mediate infinite modes, and (ii) how can these eternal beings be understood to be contained in the attributes without destroying the undividable character of substance?

The last problem concerns the 'decreasing perfection' of infinite modes.¹⁷⁶ In the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics*, Spinoza states the following:

as has been established in PP21–23, that effect is most perfect which is produced immediately by God, and the more something requires several intermediate causes to produce it, the more imperfect it is.¹⁷⁷ (*Nam (duobus prioribus omissis, quia per se manifesta sunt) ut ex Propositionibus 21. 22. & 23. constat, ille effectus perfectissimus est, qui à Deo immediatè producitur, & quò aliquid pluribus causis intermediis indiget, ut producat, eò imperfectius est*)

The part that interests us here is the claim that 'the more something requires several intermediate causes to produce it, the more imperfect it is'. The reference to EIp21-EIp23¹⁷⁸ in this passage suggests that the decreasing perfection is applicable to infinite modes (as well). However, as Yitzhak Melamed remarked, the perfection in the process of subsequently causing infinite modes must be preserved 'since we cannot explain its miraculous disappearance at every stage'.¹⁷⁹ So how do we have to read Spinoza's claim about the increasing imperfection of infinite modes?

At this point we must start our process of reverse engineering and see in what way EIp22 and Letter 64 – which both deal explicitly with the things we call 'mediate infinite modes' – offer us ways to solve the three problems mentioned.

¹⁷⁶ The term is Yitzhak Melamed's. See: Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 120.

¹⁷⁷ EI Appendix, (I) 442.

¹⁷⁸ The fact that Spinoza treats EIp21-EIp23 as a unity can be considered to be a further corroboration of our claim concerning 'the wider notion of immediacy'. Yitzhak Melamed makes a similar claim when he says that 'it is noteworthy that Spinoza treats EIp21-23 here as one textual unit addressing a specific doctrine'. Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 121.

¹⁷⁹ Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 121, note 16.

Problem 1: An apparent incongruence

If we want to find a solution to the first problem – viz. the apparent incongruence between the asserted formal status of the human mind in its infinite being, and the objective status of the infinite intellect of which it must be understood to be a part – an elucidation of EIp22 (and its relation to EIp21) and the claims in Letter 64 is necessary.

Recall that EIp22 reads thus:

Whatever follows from some attribute of God insofar as it is modified by a modification which, through the same attribute, exists necessarily and is infinite, must also exist necessarily and be infinite.¹⁸⁰

(Quicquid ex aliquo Dei attributo, quatenus modificatum est tali modificatione, quæ & necessario, & infinita per idem existit, sequitur, debet quoque & necessario, & infinitum existere)

We must establish in what way the things that are the subject of this proposition – the *mediate* infinite modes – differ from the things that are caused in the way of EIp21. Now, whereas these latter *immediate* infinite things ‘follow from the absolute nature of any of God’s attributes’,¹⁸¹ EIp22 makes it clear that the *mediate* infinite modes do not follow immediately (in the strict sense of EIp23) from the absolute nature of any of God’s attributes, but must be conceived to follow from an attribute insofar as it is modified by an infinite modification. From this we can gather that a thing can be considered to be a *mediate* infinite mode if it is modified by an immediate infinite mode. Stated in terms of the present interpretation this in turn suggests that the human mind can be grasped as a *mediate* infinite mode insofar as it is conceived to be a part of¹⁸² the infinite intellect. With this statement we encounter the very incongruence that was hinted at above. That is to say: Spinoza’s Mereological Claim makes it very clear that the human mind is part of the infinite intellect insofar as the human mind is conceived to be *finite*. So how can this be reconciled with our present claim that a human mind in its formal being as an *infinite* mode must be conceived to be a part of the infinite intellect?

¹⁸⁰ EIp22, (I) 430.

¹⁸¹ EIp21, (I) 429.

¹⁸² This way of putting things is inspired, not only by our use of mereological language in this section, but by Spinoza own Mereological Claim in EIIP11c, as well as the fact that the term ‘modification’ refers (by EID5’s term *in alio*) to a certain relation of ‘in-ness’.

The key to understanding this apparent incongruence can be found in a passage in Letter 64. For a closer scrutiny of some assertions in this letter (as well as a passage in the *Ethics* to which Spinoza refers in this letter) makes it clear that this incongruence is precisely what we have called it so far: an *apparent* incongruence. Consider the relevant following remark in Letter 64 once more:

the examples of infinite modes which you ask for: examples of the first kind i.e. of things produced immediately by God are, in Thought, absolutely infinite intellect [...]; an example of the second kind i.e. of those produced by the mediation of some infinite modification is the face of the whole Universe, which, however much it may vary in infinite ways, nevertheless always remains the same. On this, see L7S before II P14.¹⁸³

(Denique exempla, quæ petis, primi generis sunt in Cogitatione, intellectus absolutè infinitus; in Extensione autem motus & quies; secundi autem, facies totius Universi, quæ quamvis infinitis modis variet, manet tamen semper eadem, de quo vide Schol. 7. Lemmatis ante Prop. 14. p. 2.)

In the scholium (EIIL7s) that is referred to explicitly in this passage, Spinoza claims the following:

And if we proceed in this way to infinity, we shall easily conceive that the whole of nature is one Individual, whose parts, that is, all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole Individual.¹⁸⁴

(Et si sic porrò in infinitum pergamus, facilè concipiemus, totam naturam unum esse Individuum, cujus partes, hoc est, omnia corpora infinitis modis variant, absque ullâ totius Individui mutatione)

Combining these assertions we encounter something very remarkable that did not always receive the attention it deserves. It is this: apparently the infinite mode *itself* must be understood to be conceptually bifurcated. That is to say: if we are right in supposing (i) that ‘the whole of nature’ and ‘the absolutely infinite intellect’ have the very same reference – which is firmly corroborated by our claims in section 1.5 concerning the impossibility of a divine residue in Spinoza’s philosophy – and (ii) that a mode can only be modified by a mode that resorts under the same attribute (which implies that the ‘whole of nature’ has the ‘whole of objective nature’ as its parallel in thought), then the claim in Letter 64 can be rendered thus:

¹⁸³ Letter 64, (II) 439.

¹⁸⁴ EIIL7s, (I) 462.

whereas the absolutely infinite intellect must be understood to be an immediate infinite mode of thought, the ontologically identical whole of objective nature is a mediate infinite mode of thought.

In other words: Letter 64 uncovers a conceptual distinction between the absolutely infinite intellect and the whole of objective nature – both of which must be positioned at the level of *Natura naturata* – that appears to have a bifurcated structure similar to the distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* that was uncovered in Chapter 1: ontological identity is combined with conceptual distinction: the absolutely infinite intellect and the whole of objective nature can be understood to have *the same reference* but *another meaning*.

How can we account for this remarkable conceptual bifurcation between the absolute infinite intellect and the whole of objective nature? Actually, the things we have said concerning the *constructive function of the intellect* provide the key for understanding this remarkable feature. Recall that we claimed in the previous section that we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them in their objective being, or insofar as we conceive them in their formal being. Spinoza's claims in Letter 64 make it clear that this very distinction surfaces not only if we conceive singular things, but also if our intellect is directed at the all-encompassing collection of singular things: the infinite modes. Indeed, from Letter 64 we can gather that thinking substance can be understood to be modified exhaustively in two ways: as the immediate infinite mode of thought (viz. the absolutely infinite intellect), and as a mediate infinite mode of thought (viz. the whole of objective nature).¹⁸⁵ That is to say: at this point we actually find further warrant for our claim at the end of the previous section that God's idea is subject to the distinction between objectivity and formality in the very same way singular ideas are: Letter 64 provides us with a firm indication that *the infinite intellect can be grasped in two ways itself*, namely (i) formally, as the absolutely infinite intellect under a species of eternity, and (ii) objectively, as the whole of objective nature representing its durational object.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ For a detailed account of the way this bifurcation must be understood to be operative in the realm of *extension*, see: Don Garrett, 'Spinoza's Theory of Metaphysical Individuation', in: K.F. Barber, J.J.E. Garcia (eds), *Individuation and Identity in Early Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Albany 1994), 78-82.

¹⁸⁶ See note 135.

On closer scrutiny, this remarkable conceptual bifurcation between the absolutely infinite intellect and the whole of objective nature is recognizable in other passages in Spinoza's work too. In this respect a passage in §33 of the TdIE is most telling. Consider the following claim:

A true idea [...] is something different from its object [...]. And since it is something different from its object, it will also be something intelligible through itself; that is, the idea, as far as its formal essence is concerned, can be the object of another objective essence, and this objective essence in turn will also be, considered in itself, something real and intelligible, and so on, indefinitely.¹⁸⁷

(Ideam vera (habemus enim ideam veram) est diversum quid à suo ideato. [...] & cum sit quid diversum à suo ideato, erit etiam per se aliquid intelligibile; hoc est, idea, quoad suam essentiam formalem, potest esse objectum alterius essentiae objectivæ, & rursus hæc altera essentia objectiva erit etiam in se spectata quid reale, & intelligibile, & sic indefinitè)

Applying this intellectual structure to the infinite intellect of EIIp1 1c, we can state that *God's idea* – the infinite intellect – is something different from its object, i.e. something different from (so to speak) *God's body* – the whole of nature. And since it is different from its object, it is *intelligible through itself*. That is to say: God's idea can be understood to be bifurcated *itself*; if the intellect grasps the infinite mode of thought *qua* infinite mode, this infinite mode in turn falls apart in an objective and a formal aspect. This is of course precisely what we have just shown with respect to the claims in Letter 64. The passage in the TdIE fully confirms our claim that (i) formally the infinite intellect (EIIp1 1c) can be understood as the absolutely infinite intellect, and that (ii) objectively the very same thing is to be conceived as the whole of objective nature. This applicability of the constructive use of the intellect to God's idea can be rendered thus:

- (2 (i))¹⁸⁸ 'the absolutely infinite intellect' = the infinite mode of thought (*qua* infinite mode) in its *formal* being, i.e. the infinite mode of thought *considered under a species of eternity*
- (2 (ii)) 'the whole of objective nature' = the infinite mode of thought (*qua* infinite mode) in its *objective* being (viz. as *idea*), i.e. the infinite mode

¹⁸⁷ TdIE §33-35, (I) 17.

¹⁸⁸ Recall that in section 2.1 the status of the infinite modes was rendered thus: (2) 'The infinite mode of thought' = God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *modaliter*.

of thought *insofar as it represents its durational object* (this object being the whole of nature)

Furthermore:

- (5) the thing ‘the absolutely infinite intellect’ refers to = the thing ‘the whole of (objective) nature’ refers to

To be sure, the bifurcation of the infinite mode of thought that we have gathered from Letter 64 is recognizable in various passages in the *Ethics* too, hence suggesting that the important claim in the TdIE (to which we will return in Chapter 4) represents an enduring view of Spinoza regarding the structure of *pars melior nostri*.¹⁸⁹ A first indication in this respect can be found in the things we have said at the end of section 2.5. There we adduced some passages from the *Ethics* that make it clear that the whole of objective nature can be understood to be the all-encompassing and infinite collection of finite objective modes representing the (extended and durational) whole of nature. Now, as we have shown that any singular idea in nature surfaces in two modal ways (i.e. in its finite objective and in its infinite formal state), it seems that this all-encompassing infinite collection of finite objective modes (i.e. the whole of objective nature, or the *mediate* infinite mode of thought) must be considered to be accompanied by an all-encompassing and infinite collection of infinite formal beings (i.e. the absolutely infinite intellect, or the *immediate* infinite mode of thought) that, although this totality ultimately refers to the very same thing – God as a *res cogitans* – must be understood to be conceptually distinct. This claim – which of course accords entirely with the remarkable conceptual distinction that surfaced in Letter 64 – finds further corroboration in some other crucial remarks that can be found in the *Ethics*.

The first passage to which must be referred in this respect is Spinoza’s Principle of Plenitude in EIp16. Recall that this proposition states that ‘from the necessity of the divine nature there must follow [...] everything which can fall under an infinite intellect’. The crucial thing to note at this point is that, if it is acknowledged that the infinite intellect *itself* must be considered to follow from the

¹⁸⁹ Which of course is also corroborated by the fact that the very same distinction is recognizable in the ‘late’ Letter 64.

necessity of the divine nature as well, the infinite intellect must actually be understood to *fall under itself*. The remarkable implication that the infinite intellect somehow contains itself – that again is in line with the bifurcation that surfaces in Letter 64 – finds further warrant in EIIp3. Recall that this proposition states the following:

P3: In God there is necessarily an idea, both of his essence and of everything which necessarily follows from his essence.

Dem.: For God (by P1) can think infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, *or* (what is the same, by IP16) can form the idea of his essence and of all the things which necessarily follow from it. But whatever is in God's power necessarily exists [...]; therefore, there is necessarily such an idea, and [...] it is only in God, q.e.d.¹⁹⁰

(PROPOSITIO III. In Deo datur necessariò idea, tam ejus essentia, quàm omnium, quæ ex ipsius essentiâ necessariò sequuntur.

DEMONSTRATIO. Deus enim (per Prop. 1. hujus) infinita infinitis modis cogitare, sive (quod idem est, per Prop. 16. p. 1.) ideam suæ essentia, & omnium, quæ necessariò ex eâ sequuntur, formare potest. Atqui omne id, quod in Dei potestate est, necessariò est (per Prop. 35. p. 1.); ergo datur necessariò talis idea, & (per Prop. 15. p. 1.) non nisi in Deo. Q. E. D.)

In section 2.5.2 we provided the following threefold distinction on the basis of this passage:

- (a) The essence of substance
- (b-i) The idea of the essence of substance
- (b-ii) The ideas of all the infinitely many things which necessarily follow from the essence of substance

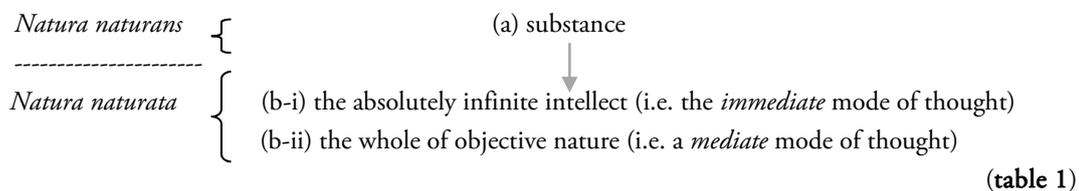
At this point we cannot fail to notice that in this enumeration too, the conceptual distinction that was uncovered above is clearly recognizable. That is to say: God's idea is clearly bifurcated in (b-i) and (b-ii). Moreover, the explicit reference to EIp16 in the demonstration of EIIp3 underpins our claim that the infinite intellect is somehow *self-contained* and that (b-i) and (b-ii), even though they are staged as conceptually distinct, must be understood to be ontologically identical. For it is precisely the causal claim of EIp16 that led us to the conclusion (i) that the concept

¹⁹⁰ EIIp3, (I) 449.

of a divine residue is alien to Spinoza's philosophy,¹⁹¹ and (ii) that the very same thing can be conceived to exist in two ways. So indeed, from EIIp3 we can gather once more:

- that the infinite intellect can be understood to be bifurcated in two modal aspects that – although *ontologically identical* – must be understood to be *conceptually distinct*;
- that Spinoza recognizes and makes this distinction himself, both in a late letter and in the *Ethics*.¹⁹²

Rendered schematically:



Recognition of this remarkable bifurcation of the infinite mode of thought if it is considered *qua* infinite mode of thought provides us with an answer to our first problem (i.e. the apparent incongruence between the asserted formal status of the human mind-as-mediate-infinite-mode, and the apparent objective status of the immediate infinite modes). Knowing that the bifurcation that due to the constructive function of the intellect is applicable to singular things, is applicable in the very same way to the all-encompassing collection of singular things (i.e. that God's idea can indeed be understood to be bifurcated in (b-ii) God's idea and (b-i) the formal being of God's idea) we can see how the human mind can be understood to be part of the infinite intellect: whereas the objective being of a singular mind can be conceived to be a part of the objective being of the infinite

¹⁹¹ See section 1.5.

¹⁹² This distinction surfaces also in an early work of Spinoza. Consider the way in which he describes *Natura naturata* in the KV: 'We shall divide *Natura naturata* in two: a universal, and a particular. The universal consists in all those modes which depend on God immediately. [...] The particular consists in all those singular things which are produced by the universal modes'. KV I Ch. VIII, (I) 91 (*De Natura naturata zullen wy in twee verdeelen, in een algemeene, en in eenbezondere. De algemeene bestaat in alle die wyzen die van God onmiddelyk afhangen, waarvan wy in het navolgende Cap. zullen handelen; de bezondere bestaat in alle die bezondere dingen de welke van de algemeene wyze veroorzaakt werden*).

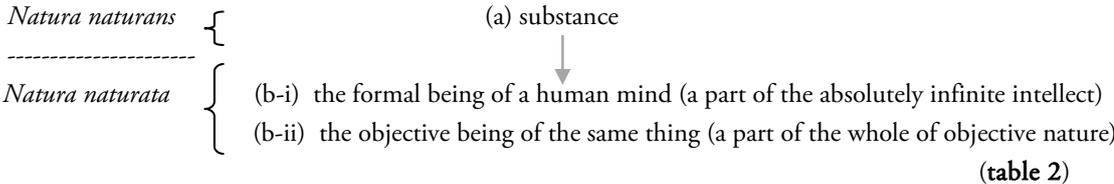
intellect (i.e. the whole of objective nature), the formal being of a singular mind can be understood to be a part of the formal being of the infinite intellect (i.e. the absolutely infinite intellect). Or to put this in other terms: whereas the human mind insofar as it exists under duration is part of an infinite mode insofar as it exists under duration, the very same human mind insofar as it exists under a species of eternity is part of an infinite mode insofar as it exists under a species of eternity. Indeed, our findings above enable us to make the following claim:

the formal being of a human mind is a part of the formal being of the whole of objective nature, and a human mind (i.e. the objective being of a human body) is a part of the whole of objective nature (i.e. the objective being of the whole of nature)

That is:

the being of a human mind insofar as it is considered under a species of eternity is a part of the infinite intellect insofar as the infinite intellect is considered under a species of eternity, and the being of a human mind insofar as it represents its durational object is a part of the infinite intellect insofar as the infinite intellect represents its durational object

Rendered schematically:



One of the questions we aim to answer in this chapter is whether (and if so: how) the infinite being of a human mind – that is a non-exhaustive expression of God as a *res cogitans* – can be understood to have the same metaphysical status (i.e. to be a *mediate* infinite mode) as the whole of objective nature – that is an exhaustive expression of God as a *res cogitans*. The things we have seen in this section provide us with an indication that the formal being of a human mind and

the whole of objective nature can indeed be understood to have the same metaphysical status. In order to see this we must adduce the claim in EIp22 – which treats the generation of mediate infinite modes – once more. EIp22 reads thus:

Whatever follows from some attribute of God insofar as it is modified by a modification which, through the same attribute, exists necessarily and is infinite, must also exist necessarily and be infinite.¹⁹³
(*Quicquid ex aliquo Dei attributo, quatenus modificatum est tali modificatione, quæ & necessariò, & infinita per idem existit, sequitur, debet quoque & necessariò, & infinitum existere*)

Now, with respect to the whole of objective nature, we can make the following claim:

The whole of objective nature is modified by the absolutely infinite intellect

Knowing that according to Spinoza a mode is ‘that which is in another through which it is also conceived’,¹⁹⁴ this claim can also be rendered thus:

the whole of objective nature can be understood to be in (and to be conceived through) the absolutely infinite intellect.

The relation of in-ness that surfaces in this formulation of course is quite remarkable. For as the whole of objective nature and the absolutely infinite intellect must at the same time be understood to be *ontologically identical*, in this particular case the ‘modifier’ and the thing it modifies must be understood to converge. This is precisely the notion of self-containment that we have shown to be implied in EIp16; the infinite intellect can be grasped as the absolutely infinite intellect, *and* it can be grasped as the identical whole of objective nature, which is a (so to speak) *exhaustive part*¹⁹⁵ of the absolute infinite intellect. Now, above we have seen that the formal being of an idea can be understood to be a part of the absolutely infinite intellect as well. For it became clear that the formal being of a human mind can be conceived to be a part of the formal being of the whole of objective nature. This in

¹⁹³ EIp22, (I) 430.

¹⁹⁴ EID5, (I) 409. (*Per modum intelligo [...] id quod in alio est, per quod etiam concipitur*).

¹⁹⁵ See note 182.

turn corroborates our supposition that the formal being of a human mind can indeed be understood to have the very same status as the whole of objective nature that Spinoza (via EIII7s) refers to in Letter 64 when elucidating the concept of mediate infinite modes. For it is clear now that both the whole of objective nature and the formal being of singular ideas can be understood to be parts of (i.e. to be modified through) the absolutely infinite intellect.

In our treatment of the next problem – the way in which the formal being of things can be understood to be contained in the attributes – we will see that there is yet another way to show that the status of the formal being of singular ideas and the whole of objective nature can be understood to be the same (and hence that the formal being of singular ideas can indeed be understood to be mediate infinite modes). It will become clear that both can be understood to be a face of the universe. However, before turning to this intricate point, we must first add still something else. It is this. With respect to the important Mereological Claim in EIIp11c we asserted tentatively that the human mind can be understood to be a part of the *immediate* infinite mode of thought (i.e. (b-i)). That is to say: in section 2.1 we supposed that the infinite intellect, being a *modaliter* expression of God’s infinite power of thinking, must be understood to be caused in the way of EIp21. This claim led us to the following rendering:

(2’) God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *modaliter* = ‘The *immediate* infinite mode of thought’

Yet, given what we have seen above, it is actually wrong to claim that the modal grasping of God as *res cogitans* is equivalent to the *immediate* infinite mode. In this section it became clear that the distinction between immediate and mediate infinite modes only surfaces if the infinite mode is considered *qua* infinite mode (i.e. only if, due to the constructive use of the intellect, the infinite mode *itself* is conceived as to a formal and an objective aspect). Hence, the infinite intellect in the way it is staged in the Mereological Claim in EIIp11c must be understood to be *unspecified* as to the immediate or mediate status of the infinity that is attributed to it (i.e. as to what variant of (b) it must be subsumed under). Indeed, we have shown that the human mind can be understood to be a part of the infinite intellect in two ways: in

its formal being the human mind is part¹⁹⁶ of the formal being of the whole of objective nature (i.e. part of the *immediate* infinite mode (b-i)), and in its objective being the same thing is part of the objective being of the whole of nature (i.e. part of a *mediate* infinite mode (b-ii)). As this particular distinction does not surface in EIIp11c, the infinite intellect in the way it is staged in this corollary must be understood to be unspecified as to its formality or objectivity. Thus we can reformulate (2') in the following way:

(2'') God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *modaliter* = 'The *unspecified* infinite mode of thought'

And hence:

(2'' (i)) 'the absolutely infinite intellect' = the *unspecified* infinite mode of thought (*qua* infinite mode) in its *formal* being, i.e. the *unspecified* infinite mode of thought *considered under a species of eternity*

(2'' (ii)) 'the whole of objective nature' = the *unspecified* infinite mode of thought (*qua* infinite mode) in its *objective* being (viz. as *idea*), i.e. the *unspecified* infinite mode of thought *insofar as it represents its durational object* (this object being the whole of extended nature)

To be sure, the crucial point (5) remains unaltered:

(5) The thing 'the absolutely infinite intellect' refers to = the thing 'the whole of (objective) nature' refers to

*

In sum: in this section we aimed to find an answer to the question how we must understand the mereological relation between the formal being of a human mind and the objective being of God. The problem concerning the apparent category mistake can be solved once it is acknowledged that the infinite intellect (EIIp11c) can be

¹⁹⁶ More on the use of the term 'part' in this specific context will follow shortly.

understood in two distinct ways: if this infinite mode is considered formally (or insofar as it is considered under a species of eternity, without relation to its object), it must be conceived as the absolutely infinite intellect (Letter 64), and if it is considered insofar as it represents its durational object, it is grasped as the whole of objective nature (EIII7s). A human mind (and indeed any other idea in nature) must be understood to be a part of the absolutely infinite intellect insofar as this mind is conceived formally, and the same thing must be considered to be a part of the whole of objective nature insofar as it is conceived objectively. In the first case this mind can be understood to be a mediate infinite mode; in the second case it is conceived as a finite mode.

Problem 2: Containment in the attributes

The second problem that was distinguished above concerns the asserted containment of the multiple formal being of things in the attributes. As already noted, our claim that things in their formal being can be considered mediate infinite modes that are contained¹⁹⁷ in the attributes seems to be opposed by Spinoza's assertion that substance (and its attributes) is absolutely undividable. So how can we nevertheless uphold the claim that there must be understood to be infinitely many mediate infinite modes? Do the passages in EIp21-EIp23 and Letter 64 provide any textual support for our supposition?

It must be admitted that at first glance Spinoza's remarks in Letter 64 do not seem to be very promising in this respect. Consider this important passage once more:

the examples of infinite modes which you ask for: examples of the first kind i.e. of things produced immediately by God are, in Thought, absolutely infinite intellect [...]; an example of the second kind i.e. of those produced by the mediation of some infinite modification is the face of the whole Universe, which, however much it may vary in infinite ways, nevertheless always remains the same. On this, see L7S before II P14.¹⁹⁸

(Denique exempla, quæ petis, primi generis sunt in Cogitatione, intellectus absolutè infinitus; in Extensione autem motus & quies; secundi autem, facies totius Universi, quæ quamvis infinitis modis variet, manet tamen semper eadem, de quo vide Schol. 7. Lemmatis ante Prop. 14. p. 2.)

¹⁹⁷ This clause surfaces in EIIp8, (I) 452, and EVp29s, (I) 610.

¹⁹⁸ Letter 64, (II) 439.

Prima facie, Spinoza's use of the term '*facies totius universi*' (and his reference to EIIIL7s, which deals with the whole of nature) with respect to infinite modes of the mediate variety suggests that – given Spinoza's parallelism – there is one (and only one) mediate infinite per attribute: the whole of nature in the case of extension, the whole of objective nature in the case of thought, and the whole of 'r' nature in the case of R. Various scholars endorse this position. As Edwin Curley remarked: 'it is usually thought that there will be one immediate infinite mode and one mediate infinite mode under each attribute'.¹⁹⁹

What can we learn from EIp22 in this respect? As already noted above, Spinoza makes it clear in this proposition that for a mode to be grasped as a mediate infinite mode, it must be modified by a mode which exists necessary and is infinite. So far we have been assuming that this means that a mode can be conceived to be a mediate infinite mode if it is modified by an immediate infinite mode. However, at this point it is important to acknowledge that if an infinite mode, that is modified by an immediate infinite mode, in turn modifies something *itself*, the result of this modifying operation again is something that is modified by a modification which is infinite through the attribute under which it resorts. And the result of a subsequent modifying operation again is something that is modified by an infinite modification, and so on to infinity. Another way of saying this is that the 'modifying modes' of EIp22 and EIp23 are not necessarily immediate infinite modes. Mediate infinite modes *themselves* can also be understood to function as modifying infinite modes. And this in turn makes it clear that there can actually be conceived to be, not one but infinitely many mediate infinite modes per attribute.²⁰⁰

To be sure, this particular infinity of the number of mediate infinite modes does not serve our purposes. If the infinite number of mediate infinite modes is rooted only in the fact that each infinite mode (immediate or mediate) has precisely one infinite mode as its modified result, our present claims must still be put aside. For our interpretation requires that the immediate infinite modes have multiple mediate infinite modes as their *coexistent* (as opposed to *subsequent*) effects. Indeed,

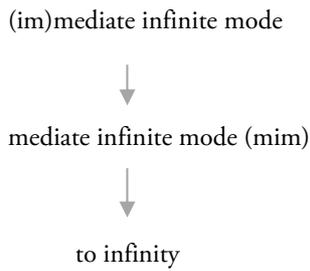
¹⁹⁹ Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 58-59.

²⁰⁰ As will become clear below, Spinoza's claim in EI Appendix concerning the decreasing perfection of infinite modes suggests that he endorses this way of understanding the generation of multiple infinite modes per attribute.

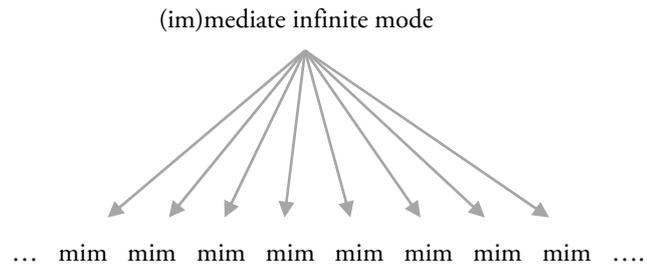
one of the implications of the claim that the formal being of any singular thing can be conceived to be a mediate infinite mode appears to be that the formal being of coexistent things such as (say) the present president of France, the present president of the United States, myself, the tree in front of my house, a stone in my garden, the toaster in my kitchen, and so on) must all be conceived to be modified by the immediate infinite mode (of thought, extension or R). In other words: in order to be able to uphold the claim that singular ideas (and bodies, and r's) are mediate infinite modes if conceived in their formal being, the multiplicity of mediate infinite modes must be the result of coexistent modification; an infinite mode must be understood to modify coexisting 'faces of the universe' (in any of the infinite attributes).

Now, this coexistence of the mediate infinite modes is not immediately evident. Quite the opposite. There seem to be strong arguments against it. Yitzhak Melamed argued that EIp22 only harbors the notion of *subsequent* modification; according to him each infinite mode has precisely one mediate infinite mode as its effect. Melamed's argument is based on the fact that EIp22 is demonstrated in the very same way as EIp21. This is absolutely correct. Indeed, the demonstration of EIp22 consists of one line only: 'The demonstration of this proposition proceeds in the same way as the demonstration of the preceding one'.²⁰¹ As according to Melamed the demonstration of EIp21 makes it clear that there is only one immediate infinite mode per attribute, he concludes that there can also be conceived to be only one mediate infinite mode per immediate infinite mode, and only one mediate infinite mode per mediate infinite mode (and so on to infinity). Another way of saying this is that Melamed endorses subsequent modification of mediate infinite modes while denying coexistent modification of mediate infinite modes (under the same attribute). That is to say: Melamed appears to advocate table 3, and to reject table 4:

²⁰¹ EIp22d, (I) 430 (*Hujus Propositionis demonstratio procedit eodem modo, ac demonstratio præcedentis*).



(table 3)



(table 4)²⁰²

Let us see how Melamed reaches the conclusion that Spinoza endorses only subsequent modification of infinite modes (table 3). Scrutinizing a passage in the demonstration of EIp21,²⁰³ he claims the following:

Spinoza’s point is that if two items follow from the absolute nature of an attribute, then neither item follows necessarily from merely the absolute nature of attributes; either this flow is *not* necessary, or there is another element, in addition to the common cause (“the absolute nature of the attribute”), which is responsible for the distinction between the two effects.

Why does Spinoza think that two distinct items (such as *m* and *n*) cannot follow necessarily from precisely the same cause? As far as I can see, Spinoza’s reasoning here is motivated by a strong version of the “same cause, same effect” principle.²⁰⁴

So according to Melamed, Spinoza’s argument in EIp21d can be rendered thus: if an infinite mode has two modified effects, there must be conceived to be a bifurcation in the cause between (i) the aspect of the cause that causes the infinite expression of (say) the present president of France, and (ii) the aspect of the cause that causes the infinite expression of another thing, such as (say) the present president of the United States. As the causation of these infinite things must be understood to imply an *aspectual* (and not an *absolute*) conception of the cause, the

²⁰² Remark that, as in both tables any ‘mim’ is shown to be able to cause another ‘mim’, this rendering implies that subsequent causation (table 3) is encompassed by coexistential causation (table 4).

²⁰³ Melamed focuses on the following claim: ‘there is thought which does not constitute God’s idea, and on that account God’s idea does not follow necessarily from the nature [of this thought] insofar as it is absolute thought (for [thought] is conceived both as constituting God’s idea and as not constituting it)’. EIp21d, (I) 429 (*Datur igitur cogitatio non constituens ideam Dei, ac propterea ex ejus naturâ, quatenus est absoluta cogitatio, non sequitur necessariò idea Dei. (Concipitur enim ideam Dei constituens, & non constituens.)*).

²⁰⁴ Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 118.

cause cannot be conceived as to its absolute identity. Hence: multiple effects cannot be conceived to follow from a cause insofar as this cause is considered to be absolutely unique and undividable. For insofar as this cause is considered in its absolute sense, it can produce only one effect. And thus there can be conceived to be only one (subsequent) mediate infinite mode per infinite mode (which of course implies that coexisting things cannot be considered to be mediate infinite modes (as well)).

As already noted, this appears to be a strong argument. Nevertheless, I think that Melamed's claim can be counteracted. That is to say: it can be shown that Spinoza does *not* claim that infinite items (say: the formal being of the mind of the present president of France and the formal being of the mind of the present president of the United States) cannot be conceived to follow necessarily (and coexistentially) from the same infinite mode. The important thing to note in this respect is that in the demonstration of EIp21 it is not the *plurality* of things that follow from an attribute that is denied by Spinoza, but only their *mutually limiting character*. This becomes clear once we acknowledge that for Spinoza the infinity of infinite modes is rooted (and rooted only) in the fact that the mode under scrutiny is not limited by another mode that follows from the same attribute. Indeed, in the demonstration of EIp21 Spinoza explicitly adduces EID2 (which reads that a thing is said to be 'finite in its own kind' if it is '*limited* by another of the same nature [emphasis added]')²⁰⁵ in order to show that something that follows from the absolute nature of an attribute cannot be conceived to be finite. Moreover, Spinoza adds that his example of God's idea is applicable to 'anything else in any attribute of God' as 'it does not matter what example is taken'.²⁰⁶ These remarks provide us with an alternative angle with which we can consider the coexistent modification of infinite modes. Spinoza's explicit claim that things can only be conceived to be finite if there is another thing that limits it, and the assertion that the demonstration of EIp21 is applicable to 'anything else', opens up the possibility that in the context of Spinoza's metaphysics infinite things can actually be conceived to follow coexistentially from one and the same absolute cause. That is to say: we encounter the possibility that coexisting things can be conceived to be the

²⁰⁵ EID2, (I) 408 (*Ea res dicitur in suo genere finita, quæ aliâ ejusdem naturæ terminari potest*).

²⁰⁶ EIp21d, (I) 429-430 (*aut aliquid (perinde est, quicquid sumatur, quandoquidem demonstratio universalis est)*).

infinite modified effect of the same cause, namely *insofar as they are considered only as to the aspects that cannot be understood to ground a mutual limitation*.²⁰⁷

Now, are the formal beings of the ideas of the present presidents of France and the United States considered as to such particular non-limiting aspects? The things that were said in the previous sections make it clear that this certainly appears to be the case. Recall that we have stated that formal beings have a ‘closer union’ (Letter 32) with substance as they ‘pertain [...] to the nature of substance’ (Letter 32), are ‘eternal truth[s]’ (EID8) that are ‘comprehended in God’s attributes’ (EIIp8c), as they follow ‘from the eternal necessity of God’s nature’ (EIIp45s) and thus ‘involve the eternal and infinite essence of God’ (EVP29s). From this we have gathered that the formal being of any thing is characterized by (and hence shares) the very characteristics that are intrinsically prolonged from the attributes into the infinite modes: the necessity, the eternity and the infinity of the attributes. Now, it seems to be precisely the resulting *infinity* of the formal being of ideas that forestalls any mutual limitation, as *infinite things are unlimited eo ipso*. The formal beings of ideas are shown to be necessarily operative in an intrinsic causal chain. And hence ‘[the] cause on account of which [they exist] must be contained in the very nature and definition of [them]’.²⁰⁸ In other words:

the formal beings of singular things are infinite because the attribute under which they resort is in the very nature and definition of these things

It appears to be because of this that Spinoza asserts in the TdIE that the essences of particular mutable things are present ‘everywhere’²⁰⁹ and ‘by nature [...] at once’.²¹⁰ Indeed, as Don Garrett remarked, ‘Spinoza regards it as self-evident that whatever follows from the “absolute nature” of a thing must necessarily be manifested pervasively throughout that attribute’.²¹¹ Edwin Curley formulates it thus:

²⁰⁷ In Chapter 5 it will become clear that it is precisely the *non-individuality* (and non-limiting character) of the formal being of things that safeguards the possibility for the human mind to gather *adequate knowledge* of things.

²⁰⁸ EIp8s2, (I) 415 (*Denique notandum, hanc causam, propter quam aliqua res existit, vel debere contineri in ipsâ naturâ, & definitione rei existentis*).

²⁰⁹ TdIE §101 (I) 41 (*ubique præsentiam*).

²¹⁰ TdIE §102 (I) 42 (*Ibi enim omnia hæc sunt simul naturâ*).

²¹¹ Don Garrett, ‘Spinoza’s Necessitarianism’ in: Yirmiyahu Yovel ed., *God and Nature. Spinoza’s Metaphysics* (Leiden 1991), 196. In his article ‘Spinoza’s Theory of Metaphysical Individuation’, Garrett

Some things follow from the attributes in such a way that they too are permanent and pervasive. That is to say that the most general of the permanent features of reality have less general consequences which are equally permanent and equally universal in their application. These are the infinite modes whose production Spinoza describes in PP21-23.²¹²

It is precisely the conceived pervasive nature of the necessity, eternity and infinity of the formal being of ideas (or bodies, or r's) that according to Spinoza secures the non-limiting character of these coexistent mediate infinite modes.²¹³

This particular way of understanding the demonstration of EIp21 and EIp22 in turn provides us with a way to understand Spinoza's enigmatic claim in Letter 64 that a mediate infinite mode must be understood to be a '*facies totius universi*'. As we have just seen, if a finite mode – that is limited by other finite modes *eo ipso* – is considered as to its formal being, it must be conceived to be pervasive. Now, it is this very pervasiveness that makes any formal being of a thing a face of the universe, as by way of the pervasive nature *it offers a vista on the whole it is conceived to be a part of* if the same thing is conceived objectively. Considered with regard to the aspect that follows absolutely in all things from the absolute character of the attributes, we can make the following claim:

gives an account of the way extended things can be understood to function as a part of the infinite mode of extension. See: Garrett, 'Spinoza's Theory of Metaphysical Individuation', 79-81. To be sure, he does not employ the terms 'formal' and 'objective', but rather explains how local motion and rest can be understood to be distinguishable from pervasive motion and rest: 'For it now becomes comprehensible how he could see not only motion-and-rest as a force that constitutes a single pervasive feature of the extended universe [...], but also as one that manifests itself in two different and complementary ways, as quantity of motion [...] and as quantity of rest [...]. Ibidem, 80.

²¹² Edwin Curley, *A Spinoza Reader* (New Jersey 1994), xxiv.

²¹³ The assertion concerning the non-limiting character of formal beings is remarkably similar to the way Averroes has argued for the oneness of prime matter. Consider for instance the following passage from his *In Meta*: 'Let us then demonstrate how numerically one thing can be found in many places. This is not found in what is actual. But in what is potential it can be said that a thing is numerically one and common to many, and that it does not have the differentiating features by which [the many] differ from each other in singular individuals'. Averroes, *In Meta*, XII.14 cited in: Robert Pasnau, 'Form and Matter' in: Robert Pasnau ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy* Volume II (Cambridge 2014), 640. To be sure, Averroes' terminology is alien to Spinoza's philosophy; notions such as 'prime matter' and 'potential' have no place in Spinoza's metaphysical toolkit. Yet, at the same time it is hard to miss the structural similarity between Averroes' example of the way prime matter can be 'found in many places' without losing its oneness, and the way we have portrayed Spinoza's take on the way in which formal beings can be understood to be multiple 'things' *without* limiting each other (and hence without annihilating the absolute oneness of the 'thing' they are claimed to be contained in).

each infinite mode expresses the characteristics of the attribute under which it is understood to resort, among which its necessity, eternity and infinity.

Hence each of the infinitely many mediate infinite modes can be considered to be a ‘face of the universe’ (or the equivalent in its own attribute);²¹⁴ according to Spinoza, each part in its formal being is to be seen as a *part-with-a-vista* on its whole. Stated in terms of water: anyone who considers the drop of water as to its wateriness (and all other things that are equally in the part and in the whole) does not only gather knowledge about this drop of water, but also about the watery nature of the ocean as a whole (as well as about what it is to be watery *generaliter*). As a singular drop of water has exactly the same molecular structure, liquidity and saltiness that characterizes the ocean of which the drop is a part, knowledge of these aspects of the drop yields knowledge of these aspect of the ocean *eo ipso*. As such the drop can be considered to be ‘a face of the ocean’. In the very same way, each formal being of an idea (and of any other singular thing) – that must be understood to be operative at level (b-i) (see table 2 above) – can be understood to offer an outlook on the whole it is a part of, and as such to be a ‘face of the universe’.

In this section we aim to provide an answer to the question how the multiple formal being of ideas can be understood to be contained in the attributes. In this respect we have made considerable progress. Above it has become clear these formal beings are not mereological parts (such as drops of an ocean), but must be understood to be parts-with-a-vista (such as watery drops of a watery ocean). This is an important step towards the concept of absolutely non-mereological containment that is required by Spinoza’s claims in EI_p12 and EI_p13. However, we are not there yet. At this point it must be stressed that the metaphysical structure that Spinoza forwards is still a bit more complicated. With respect to the precise status of the formal being of things yet another important distinction must be taken into account. It is the distinction between the formal *being* of things at the level of the immediate infinite modes, and the formal *essence* of things at the level of the attributes. Indeed, as noticed by several scholars, it is crucial to distinguish between the ‘*esse formale*’ that Spinoza forwards in EI_p5, and the ‘*essentia formale*’ that

²¹⁴ I have added this clause because ‘face of the universe’ appears to be a designation that is attached to the attribute of extension.

surfaces in EIIp8.²¹⁵ Things can be conceived in a formal state, not only insofar as they are understood to follow immediately from God's infinite power of thinking (in which case, despite their eternity and infinity, they must be positioned at the level of *Natura naturata* (b-i)), but also insofar as they are conceived to be *contained* in God's infinite power of thinking (in which case they can be conceived to function entirely at the level of *Natura naturans* (a)). A thing (say: a human mind) that *follows* from God's infinite power of thinking must be understood – by EIIp5 – to be the *formal being* of that mind, that is in the immediate infinite mode of thought as a *part-with-a-vista*. And insofar as the very same thing is understood insofar as it is contained in God's infinite power of thinking, it must be understood – by EIIp8 – to be the *formal essence* of that mind, that is in God's essence *absolutely pervasively* (or *ubiquitously*)

As already noted, the containment of formal essences at the level of *Natura naturans* – which thus must be distinguished from the status of parts-with-a-vista of the formal being of things at the level of *Natura naturata* – is put forward by Spinoza in EIIp8, which reads thus:

²¹⁵ Martial Gueroult's observation that we can distinguish between 'the idea considered in its formal essence (or formal being), as mode of thinking, a cause in the infinite chain of causes in Thought', and 'the idea considered in its form or nature, as idea of idea' hints in this direction. Gueroult, *Spinoza. L'Âme*, 70 (*L'idée considérée comme essence formelle (ou être formelle), mode de la Pensée, cause comprise dans la chaîne infinie des causes dans la pensée*) ; (*L'idée considérée dans sa forme ou nature, comme idée de l'idée*). The status of formal essences as things that must be understood to be operative at the level of *Natura naturans* too surfaces clearly in Mogens Laerke's claim that 'formal essences are what they are, because they are contained in God's attributes, not his intellect'. Laerke, 'Aspects of Spinoza's Theory of Essence', 12. To be sure, in the present enumeration we make a further distinction between the formal *being* of an idea (which is a mode (by EIIp5), which still functions at the level of the infinite intellect, and the formal *essence* of that same idea, which functions at the level of *Natura naturans* (and can no longer be conceived to a mode). Valtteri Viljanen's remark that 'the *formal being* Spinoza discusses mainly in 2p3–p7 involves more than just the formal essences of finite things, namely also all the particular states resulting from intermodificationary determination relations, that is, from the way in which formal essences determine each other' can be adduced in this context as well. Valtteri Viljanen, *Spinoza's geometry of power* (New York 2014), 29. For indeed, formal beings *can* be understood to determine each other, on the basis of a remarkable 'eternal variant' of extrinsic causation that surfaces (inter alia) in EVp40s, (I), 615: 'it is clear that our Mind, insofar as it understands, is an eternal mode of thinking, which is determined by another eternal mode of thinking, and this again by another, and so on, to infinity; so that together, they all constitute God's eternal and infinite intellect.' (*apparet, quòd Mens nostra, quatenus intelligit, æternus cogitandi modus sit, qui alio æterno cogitandi modo determinatur, & hic iterum ab alio, & sic in infinitum; ità ut omnes simul Dei æternum, & infinitum intellectum constituent*). The purport (and basis) of this claim will be elucidated in Chapter 5.

P8: The ideas of singular things, or of modes, that do not exist must be comprehended in God's infinite idea in the same way as the formal essences of the singular things, or modes, are contained in God's attributes.²¹⁶

(*PROPOSITIO VIII. Idea rerum singularium, sive modorum non existentium ita debent comprehendi in Dei infinita idea, ac rerum singularium, sive modorum essentiae formales in Dei attributis continentur*)

This claim makes it clear that the formal *essences* of things must be understood to be contained in God's attributes, which firmly suggests that this particular ubiquitous containment – that is to be distinguished from the pervasion of the formal being of things that accounts for their *vista* on the whole – can indeed be located at the level of *Natura naturans*. This supposition finds corroboration in other passages that can be found in the *Ethics*, among which the following passage in EIII1:

bodies are distinguished from one another by reason of motion and rest [...], and not by reason of substance.²¹⁷

(*Corpora ratione motus, & quietis, celeritatis, & tarditatis, & non ratione substantiae ab invicem distinguuntur*)

The first thing that must be noted with respect to this claim is that singular things can be conceived *by reason of substance*. This appears to be a clear indication that here too, Spinoza is reasoning, not about things (*in casu*: bodies) insofar as they are conceived to *follow* from substance, but about these same things insofar as they must be conceived to be *contained* in substance. Indeed: bodies are claimed to be distinguishable by reason of (unspecified) motion-and-rest, which functions at the level of *Natura naturata*; by reason of substance – i.e. at the level of *Natura naturans* – they are claimed to be indistinguishable. And hence, the specific status of bodies in this claim must be understood to be conceptually distinct from the status of these same bodies insofar as they are conceived to *follow* from *Natura naturans*. To be sure, there is a close relation between the ubiquitous essences in *Natura Naturans* and the pervasive infinite modes in *Natura naturata*. The absolute non-distinctiveness of the formal essences of things at the level of *Natura naturans* (a) must be understood to be prolonged in the formal being of these same things insofar as these are conceived to function at *Natura naturata* (b-i). As we have seen, each thing that is conceived to follow from the absolute nature of substance – either immediately or mediately – shares absolutely in the necessity, the eternity and the

²¹⁶ EIIp8, (I) 452.

²¹⁷ EIII1, (I) 458.

infinity (and all the other aspects that are equally in the part and in the whole) of the causing substance. Indeed, the necessity and infinity of the formal beings of the present presidents of France and the present president of the United States (and any other singular thing in nature) cannot be conceived to limit one another. Rather, these infinite modes must be understood to prolong the specific characteristics of eternal and infinite substance in more or less the same way the property of being watery of a single drop of water in the ocean does not limit the property of being watery of another drop of that same ocean; in their wateriness both drops (and indeed the ocean as a whole) *are absolutely the same* and thus are not conceived as to their mutual limiting characteristics. But at the same time it must be acknowledged that they differ in one important respect: infinite modes are *modes* (and as such ‘in something else through which they are also conceived’), whereas their ontologically identical ubiquitous essences cannot be understood to be modes, as it would be absurd to suppose that substance *qua* substance consists of modal parts.

The structure that is uncovered here is quite complicated (and evidently needs additional proof, which will be provided in the subsequent chapters). Moreover, at first glance it appears to counteract our claim that the structure of Spinoza’s metaphysics can be understood to an expression of the structure of our intellect. For did we not see above that intellect is characterized by a trichotomy, consisting of objects, their objective being and their formal being? So how can the further bifurcation of the formal status of things be accounted for? I think there is an answer to this question. The first thing to note in this respect is that it is absolutely true that Spinoza states in EVp29s that we conceive things in two ways: with respect to their durational objects (i.e. objectively), and under a species of eternity (i.e. formally). In section 2.5.3 we have seen that this bifurcation in turn implies a trichotomy of the durational object, the objective being (i.e. the idea) of this object, and the formal being of this idea. *Prima facie* this ‘intellectual structure’ does not seem to leave room for yet another distinction; as the formal being of an idea is understood to be the idea ‘as it is in itself’ and ‘without relation to its object’, it is hard to see how this particular being of a thing can be understood in two ways. But reflect. The formal being of an idea must be understood to be the formal being of the idea *insofar as it is grasped by the intellect*. It is crucial to acknowledge that on Spinoza’s account this intellectual knowledge can only be considered to be a

‘conclusion with a premise’,²¹⁸ if it is granted at the same time that the thing that is grasped objectively (and that hence is conceived insofar as it exists under duration) and formally (and hence is conceived under a species of eternity) must also be understood to exist *absolutely outside the intellect*. And this, I claim, is precisely what Spinoza’s concept of ‘formal essence’ aims to denote. This particular notion makes it clear that true knowledge can only be had of things that have their ultimate ontological basis outside the intellect.²¹⁹ They must be positioned at the level of ‘God’s intellect, insofar as it is conceived to constitute the divine essence’ (see Chapter 1), that is: absolutely outside our intellect. In the next chapter we will see how this important observation is corroborated by Spinoza’s intricate claims concerning the self-causation and self-knowledge of God. The thing to note here is that on closer scrutiny, the particular distinction that surfaces in the present section is in line with our claims concerning the *constructive function of the intellect*.

Recall that we are looking for a way in which Spinoza’s contentions about the containment of the formal status of multiple things in God’s infinite essence can be reconciled with his claim that substance is essentially undividable. Our take on this complicated subject not only makes it clear in what way each mediate infinite mode can be considered to be a face of the universe, but moreover it provides us with a

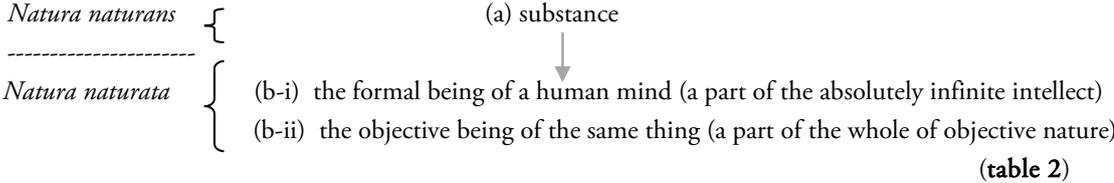
²¹⁸ This clause is inspired by Spinoza’s claim in EIIp28d that confused ideas can be understood to be ‘conclusions without premises’. EIIp28d, (I) 470 (*consequentiae absque praemissis*).

²¹⁹ This assertion will be elucidated only in the next chapter. However, one thing must be noted here. *Prima facie*, the claim about the ‘ontological basis outside the intellect’ may appear to be counteracted by Spinoza’s assertion in EIp8s2 that ‘we can have true ideas of modifications which do not exist; for though they do not actually exist outside the intellect, nevertheless their essences are comprehended in another in such a way that they can be conceived through it’. EIp8s2, (I) 414 (*quocirca modificationum non existentium veras ideas possumus habere; quandoquidem, quamvis non existant actu extra intellectum, earum tamen essentia ita in alio comprehenditur, ut per idem concipi possint*). This is a complicated issue. There are several ways in which this claim can be explained. One way to understand this assertion is that Spinoza is reasoning here about modifications that do not exist *at this moment*, but that have existed or will exist *at a certain moment* under duration (an existence that in turn accounts for the axiomatic agreement (by EIA6) of the true idea with the thing under scrutiny). Another suggestion that has been forwarded by several scholars is that Spinoza refers here to the un-instantiated *possibilities* that are harbored in each of the infinite attributes. It would take us too far afield to treat these different interpretational strategies in detail. The thing to note here is that, as far as I can see, in whatever way the claim in EIp8s2 is interpreted, it does not at all imply that true ideas of the intellect have no ontological basis outside the intellect *at all*. And hence, it seems that our claim can be upheld, the more so as it finds further warrant in an analysis of Spinoza’s conception of ‘God’. See Chapter 3. The way in which the axiomatic agreement of true ideas with their objects must be understood will be treated in Chapter 5.

solution to the apparent contradiction between the claims in EIp12 and EIp13 that substance is indivisible, and the assertion in EIIp8 that formal essences must be understood to be contained in the attributes. On the basis of the things that were said in this section, we can make the following three claims:

- (a) Things can be conceived insofar as they are *contained ubiquitously in any of the infinite attributes*. In this respect they must be understood to be formal *essences* (by EIIp8) that function at *Natura naturans*.
- (b-i) Things can be conceived insofar as they are *pervasive parts-with-a-vista of the immediate infinite modes* under which they resort. In the case of thought they must be considered to be formal *beings* of ideas (by EIIp5) that function at *Natura naturata*.
- (b-ii) Things can be conceived insofar as they are *parts of the whole of nature* of the attribute under which they resort. In the case of thought they must be considered to be objective beings (i.e. ideas) (EIIp8c) that function at *Natura naturata*.

Consider table 2 once more:



The claimed containment of the formal *essences* of things in the attributes (at level (a)) must not be understood to refer to a part-whole structure in which the parts limit the other parts of the same whole, but to ‘containment’ of things in a whole (or rather, in the infinite *res* this whole refers to (‘water’)); formal essences can be claimed to be in God in the same way the wateriness of a single drop of water is ‘contained’ in the very nature of water. The formal *being* of things (at level (b-i)) can be claimed to be a part-with-a-vista of its immediate infinite mode in the same way a single drop of water is a part-with-a-vista of the ocean; things appear in their

formal being insofar as the things contained in the whole are equally in the part ('drop') and in the whole ('ocean') that refers to the infinite *res*. And the objective being of things (at level b-ii) can be claimed to be a part of the whole of nature in the same way a single drop of water is a part of the ocean.

With this we have found an answer to the question in what way infinite and finite modes of thought can be conceived 'in another' (*in alio*).²²⁰ The things that are contained ubiquitously as formal essences in God's attributes at *Natura naturans* (and hence cannot be conceived to be *in alio* in this particular capacity) can in turn be understood to be *in alio* at *Natura naturata* in two distinct ways. In their formal being they are pervasive (infinite modal) *parts-with-a-vista* (table 2, level (b-i)) of their modifying immediate infinite mode;²²¹ and in their objective being they are in the infinite intellect as *finite parts* in a larger whole (see table 2, level (b-ii)).²²² Another way of saying this is that the term 'containment' in EIIp8 must be understood to be the *realiter* expression of the part-whole relation that surfaces as long as things are conceived *modaliter*. Or, to state the same things in terms of the important Letter 12 (which is also known as 'Letter on the Infinite'): the formal being of things can be understood to be *parts-with-a-vista* ((b-i)) that are infinite by virtue of the cause in which they inhere insofar as they surface as formal beings that follow from God's essence.²²³ These latter things can also be 'conceived abstractly'.²²⁴ From this latter perspective 'they can be divided into parts and be regarded as finite' ((b-ii)).²²⁵ To be sure, as to their formal *essence* (a) – that is:

²²⁰ 'D5: By mode I understand the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived' (V. *Per modum intelligo substantiæ affectiones, sive id, quod in alio est, per quod etiam concipitur*). EID5, (I) 409.

²²¹ This makes it clear that the formal being of things can be grasped from *two perspectives*. The 'vista'-aspect accounts for the infinity of the formal being of things, the 'part'-aspect accounts for their status as *mode*. In Chapter 4 it will become clear that these ways of conceiving the formal being of a thing can be understood to be related to respectively a *top-down* and a *bottom-up* perspective. In Chapter 5 we will see that – and how – these perspectives can in turn be mapped on the two variants of adequate knowledge that Spinoza discerns.

²²² Remark that in this enumeration the distinction between the absolute infinite intellect and the whole of mental nature is out of sight. This claim concerns the part-whole structure of the unspecified infinite mode of thought. The part-whole structure of the absolutely infinite intellect will be addressed when providing an answer to Problem 3.

²²³ Letter 12, (I) 205.

²²⁴ *Ibidem*, (I) 205.

²²⁵ *Ibidem*, (I) 205. The division into parts of modes in their finite being in turn accounts for the 'decreasing perfection' of infinite modes that will be elucidated below.

insofar as they are considered ‘by reason of substance’ – they are ‘infinite by their nature and cannot in any way be conceived to be finite’.²²⁶

*

In sum: there can be conceived to be infinitely many mediate infinite modes of thought (and indeed of any other attribute) that can be understood to follow from a modifying infinite mode coexistentially. These things appear as pervasive parts-with-a-vista of the absolutely infinite intellect, and as parts of the whole of objective nature. Furthermore it is important to note that these very same things are contained ubiquitously in the divine essence as (non-modal) formal essences. This latter relation of containment is to be distinguished sharply from a mereological relation of parts and wholes. As opposed to the case of the specific part-whole relation (i) of the formal being of ideas and the absolute infinite intellect, and (ii) of the objective being of things and the whole of objective nature, the relation of containment in the divine essence is characterized the absolute pervasiveness of the formal essences of things. As a result of this ubiquitous character, each of the infinitely many mediate infinite modes that follow from their formal essences can be considered to offer an outlook on their whole and hence to be a ‘face of the universe’ (i.e. to be a part-with-a-vista of their modifying infinite mode).

Problem 3: Decreasing perfection

Recall that Spinoza states the following in the Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics*:

²²⁶ Ibidem, (I) 205 (*sua natura esse infinita, nec ullo modo finita concipi posse*). It may surprise some readers that this species of infinity is attributed to the formal essences of singular things, whereas it this particular variant of infinity is often ascribed to substance only. In this respect it can be noted that we have already argued that the formal essences of things must be understood to be the being of things insofar as they are considered ‘by reason of substance’. So in this sense our claim does not seem to oppose the assertion that the clause ‘infinite by nature’ is applicable to substance only. That Spinoza indeed allows for this particular way of understanding this variant of infinity becomes clear if it is acknowledged that it is not only ‘improper’ to attribute a number to *God* (see our claims about Letter 50 in section 1.3.1; the very same claim will be treated extensively in the next chapter as well), but that according to Spinoza there are ‘many things which cannot be explained by any number [emphasis added]’. Ibidem, (I) 204 (*multa invenerunt, quæ nullo numero explicari possunt*). It is precisely these ‘many things’ that are considered ‘by reason of substance’, that we have just claimed to be ‘infinite by their nature’.

as has been established in PP21–23, that effect is most perfect which is produced immediately by God, and the more something requires several intermediate causes to produce it, the more imperfect it is.²²⁷ (*Nam (duobus prioribus omissis, quia per se manifesta sunt) ut ex Propositionibus 21. 22. & 23. constat, ille effectus perfectissimus est, qui à Deo immediatè producitur, & quò aliquid pluribus causis intermediis indiget, ut producat, è imperfectius est*)

The question we face now is how this particular claim must be understood. How can we understand the asserted *decreasing perfection* of infinite modes (i.e. the things that are claimed to follow from God in the way of EI_p21–EI_p23), without needing to succumb to a – in the words of Melamed – ‘miraculous disappearance’²²⁸ of their perfection?

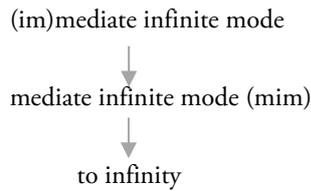
In order to understand this decreasing perfection, it must be acknowledged that, if the ‘intermediate causation’ that Spinoza mentions in EI Appendix refers to the causal efficacy of *infinite* modes – which is clearly suggested by the adduced passage – then the variant of causation that leads to decreasing perfection must be understood to be of the same type as the relationship between the formal being of ideas and the infinite mode that modifies it.²²⁹ This in turn has two important implications. Firstly, this way of understanding the assertion in EI Appendix suggests that Spinoza endorses the subsequent causation of infinite modes that was treated above. As the term ‘intermediate causes’ (*causis intermediis*) in the quoted passage appears to denote the ‘modified by a modification’-clause in EI_p22 (for indeed: there is no other intermediate cause that is referred to in EI_p21–EI_p23), it becomes clear that not only *immediate* infinite modes can be understood to modify infinite modes, but that this same operation can also be considered applicable to *mediate* infinite modes. In other words, the claim in EI Appendix appears to underpin our rendering in table 3:²³⁰

²²⁷ EI Appendix, (I) 442.

²²⁸ Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 121, note 16.

²²⁹ As Melamed remarks, ‘I believe we can conclude that each item in this chain is the immanent cause of the following item’. Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 122.

²³⁰ To be sure, *without* invalidating the simultaneous causation of table 4.



(table 3)

The second thing that must be noted with respect to the asserted applicability of a notion of decreasing perfection to the chain of infinite modes in table 3 is that in this case any subsequent mediate infinite mode of the infinite chain of infinite modes must be understood (a) to be *contained ubiquitously* as a formal essence in God’s essence, and (b-i) to be a pervasive *part-with-a-vista* of the formal being of the idea of God’s infinite essence (and (b-ii) to be a *part* of the idea of God’s infinite essence). For as already noted above, if an infinite mode that is modified by an immediate infinite mode in turn modifies something itself, the result of this modifying operation again is something that is modified by a modification which is infinite through the attribute under which it resorts (and can be understood to be a finite part insofar as this thing is grasped with respect to its durational object).

Having established this, we can turn to the problem of the decreasing perfection. In this respect, I will first say something more about the way in which mediate infinite modes can be understood to be increasingly imperfect if the same things are considered in their *objective* being. Whereas an idea in its formal being has the same vista on the whole as the infinite mode that modifies it, the objective being of this very same thing is merely a part of the objective being of its modifying mode. And hence (as parts can be considered to be less perfect than the wholes they are conceived to be a part of)²³¹ the decreasing perfection comes to light (firstly)²³² if a mediate infinite mode is considered as to its objective aspect (or, in terms of

²³¹ In this sense, Common Notion 5 from Part I of Euclid’s *Elements* can be invoked: ‘And the whole is greater than the part’ (*Καὶ τὸ ὅλον τοῦ μέρους μείζον [ἐστίν]*). Euclid, *Elements* (2007) translated and edited by Richard Fitzpatrick, 7.

²³² We will turn to the decreasing perfection of the *formal* being of things shortly. To be sure, the ‘firstly’ has still another meaning, as (as will become clear) our intellect acquires its knowledge mostly via a bottom-up perspective that indeed starts with the objective being of things and then infers their formal being as necessary, eternal and infinite modes. This subject will be treated in Chapter 4.

Letter 12, is ‘conceived abstractly’). In this sense, (say) an idea in a mind is less perfect than the mind of which that idea is merely a part (in the same way a part of my body is less perfect than my body as a whole). Indeed, in EIIp13s and the ‘physical excursion’ that follows it, Spinoza makes it clear that a greater complexity of the body – i.e. the body being ‘composed of a great many individuals of different natures’²³³ – parallels a mind that is more capable of ‘perceiving a great many things’,²³⁴ that is: of ‘understanding distinctly’.²³⁵ It is this complexity of the human body – and hence of the parallel human mind – that makes this latter mind more perfect than an idea that is merely a part of it. This way of understanding the ‘perfection’ of a thing is corroborated by a claim in EIV Preface, where Spinoza makes it very clear that the term ‘perfection’ can only be used as long as nature is conceived *modaliter*. Consider the following passage in EIV Preface:

Perfection and imperfection [...] are only modes of thinking, that is, notions we are accustomed to feign because we compare individuals of the same species or genus to one another.²³⁶

(*Perfectio igitur, & imperfectio reverâ modi solummodò cogitandi sunt, nempe notiones, quas fingere solemus ex eo, quòd ejusdem speciei, aut generis individua ad invicem comparamus*)

From this we can gather that things can indeed be called ‘less perfect’ if we compare them as to the aspects that render them distinct (i.e. mutually limiting). So indeed, in their objective being things can be claimed to be decreasingly perfect. If an idea *in my mind* (or a part of my body) is considered insofar as it is distinct from the idea that *is my mind* (or from my body as a whole), then the latter can be understood to be more perfect than the former, because it has a greater complexity.

To be sure, with this we have not yet provided an answer to the question how *infinite modes* can be understood to be increasingly imperfect – and this was what we set out to do. So how about the decreasing perfection of things insofar as they are considered in their formal being? As already noted, the claim in EI Appendix clearly suggests that the decreasing perfection must be considered to be applicable to the formal being of things (i.e. to infinite modes). The mentioning of EI p21-EI p23 in the adduced passage leaves little room for doubt in this respect: the

²³³ EII Post I, (I) 462 (*componitur ex plurimis (diversæ naturæ) individuis*).

²³⁴ EIIp14, (I) 462 (*plurima percipiendum*).

²³⁵ EIIp13s, (I) 458 (*distinctè intelligendum*).

²³⁶ EIV Preface, (I) 545.

decreasing perfection is to be conceived to be applicable to the formal being of ideas *qua formal being*. Moreover, this take on the precise subject of decreasing perfection is also indicated by something we have asserted ourselves. Consider the following claim once more:

the being of a human mind insofar as it is considered under a species of eternity is a part of the infinite intellect insofar as the infinite intellect is considered under a species of eternity, and the being of a human mind insofar as it represents its durational object is a part of the infinite intellect insofar as the infinite intellect represents its durational object

It is important to note that the asserted ontological identity of things insofar as these things are considered under a species of eternity, and the same things insofar as they represent their durational objects, firmly suggests that a lesser degree of perfection of a thing representing its durational object (i.e. its objective being, or idea) must be understood to be an objective expression of a lesser degree of perfection of a thing insofar as it is considered under a species of eternity (i.e. its formal being). This leads us to the question how this latter decreasing perfection can be understood, without danger of falling in the pitfall of a ‘miraculous disappearance’ of perfection at every modifying stage from table 3.

In order to show how the formal being of things can be understood to be ‘decreasingly perfect’, we must turn to an apparent contradiction at the heart of our interpretation, that was not referred to yet. We have argued for the claim that the formal being of things, insofar as they are considered as to their formal essences, must be understood to be contained ubiquitously in God’s essence (a). In this sense, the formal being of each thing must be understood to have the very same status. So the formal being of (say) a drop of water would seem to be equally perfect as the formal being of the ocean it is a part of (as both are mediate infinite modes that are pervasive parts-with-a-vista of their modifying infinite mode, and are contained ubiquitously in God’s essence if they are considered as to their formal essence).²³⁷ Yet at the same time it was claimed that most formal beings of things

²³⁷ This point is also made by Spinoza in the KV, when he claims the following: ‘The essence of a thing does not increase through its union with another thing with which it constitutes a whole’. KV I, Ch. II, Second Dialogue, (I) 77. In the *Ethics* the same point is made in EIIp46d: ‘The demonstration of [EIIp45,

(i.e. the formal being of all things, with the sole exception of the whole of nature) must be considered to be *non-exhaustive expressions* of the attribute. So how can the non-exhaustive character of the formal being of things be reconciled with their own vista on their whole and the ubiquitous nature of their essences? I think that the decreasing perfection of the formal being of things must be located precisely at this point. A certain infinite mode (say: the formal being of my mind) can be understood to be more perfect than another infinite mode that merely is a *part* of my mind (say: the formal being of a particular idea *in* my mind), *because the first pervasive infinite mode is closer to the exhaustive expression of the attribute than the second one*. That is to say: even though their vista on the absolutely infinite intellect (and the absolute pervasiveness of their formal essences at the level of substance *qua* substance) must be understood to be exactly the same, the basis for the one vista is broader than the basis for the other.²³⁸ It is because of this, I claim, that Spinoza is able to speak about the decreasing perfecting of subsequently caused infinite modes.

This second argument accords nicely with the first one. For if the grade of exhaustiveness is translated in terms of objectivity, we get exactly the difference between the objective complexity of modes, that was referred to in our treatment of the decreasing perfection of modes in their objective being. Furthermore it becomes clear that the notion of ‘perfection’ can be understood to be applicable to the infinite formal beings of finite modes in the same way it was shown to be applicable to objective modes. This need not surprise us, as we have seen that Spinoza asserts explicitly that the formal being of ideas also is a *mode* of thinking. Indeed, even though the formal being of things is claimed to express the being of things insofar as they are *considered under a species of eternity*, this particular being must be understood to be grasped *from the perspective of the intellect* (in the way we commonly understand it). It is precisely this ‘intellectual’ status of the formal being of things that accounts for the remarkable part-character of the infinite modes at

which claims that ‘each idea [...] of each singular thing which actually exists, necessarily involves an eternal and infinite essence of God’] is Universal, and whether the thing is conceived as a part or as a whole, its idea, whether of the whole or of a part (by P45), will involve God’s eternal and infinite essence’ (*Demonstratio precedentis Propositionis Universalis est, & sive res, ut pars, sive, ut totum, consideretur, ejus idea, sive totius sit, sive partis (per Prop. preced.), Dei aeternam, & infinitam essentiam involvet*). EIIp46d, (I) 482.

²³⁸ And it is precisely here, I will claim in Chapter 5, where the *ethical* purport of Spinoza’s philosophy must be located. The aim to ‘emendate the intellect’ is directed at *broadening the basis* for the grasping of God’s infinity and eternity, that is: in ‘*logging in*’ to a *greater part* of God’s self-knowledge.

the level of the absolutely infinite intellect ((b-i)). Furthermore, as will become clearer in the next chapters, the *extra-intellectual* status of their formal *essences* accounts for the ubiquitous character of these beings at the level of God's essence ((a)).

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In sum: in the Appendix of part I of the Ethics, Spinoza appears to claim that infinite modes can be understood to be decreasingly perfect, as 'the more something requires several intermediate causes to produce it, the more imperfect it is'.²³⁹ In this section it has become clear that subsequently caused infinite modes can indeed be understood to be less perfect than their causes. This decreasing perfection can be conceived in two ways. Insofar as the infinite modes of (say) my mind (or my body) and an idea in my mind (or a part of my body) are considered objectively, the decreasing perfection is expressed in the decreasing complexity of the finite thing. And insofar as these same things are considered formally, the decreasing perfection surfaces in the degree of exhaustiveness of the part-with-a-vista in comparison with the immediate infinite mode it is conceived to be a part of. Indeed, the whole of objective nature is an exhaustive part-with-a-vista of the absolutely infinite intellect, my mind is a less exhaustive part-with-a-vista of the absolutely infinite intellect, and an idea in my mind again is a less exhaustive part-with-a-vista of the absolutely infinite intellect, and so on to infinity.²⁴⁰

2.7 Conclusion

It is often assumed that infinite modes and finite modes are ontologically distinct things. Even though scholars wildly disagree about what things must be considered

²³⁹ EI Appendix, (I) 442.

²⁴⁰ That this chain must be conceived to be infinite is clear from the fact that Spinoza is not an atomist. That is to say: the chain can only be conceived to be finite if there would be parts in nature that no longer can be understood to be constituted by parts themselves (i.e. 'atoms'). That Spinoza rejects such a conception of nature is clear from his remark in EI p15s that the thought that 'a line cannot be divided to infinity' is an 'absurdity'. EI p15s, (I) 423. To be sure, this puts some strain on the term 'simplest bodies' (*corporibus simplicissimis*) that Spinoza employs in the 'physical excursion'. EII A2", (I) 460. Treatment of this contradiction would lead us too far afield.

to be infinite modes precisely – especially the *mediate* infinite modes appear to be a troublesome variety – they mostly agree on one thing: infinite modes must be understood to be other things than finite modes. In the introductory section of this chapter we have supposed ourselves that the very *infinity* of the infinite modes appears to thwart the claim that finite things can be conceived to be infinite. A finite thing is *finite eo ipso*, and thus is *not* infinite. However, in this chapter it has become clear that the distinction between infinite and finite modes is not *ontological*, but must be understood to be *conceptual*, that is: *depending on the particular perspective that is taken*. This was rendered thus:

A thing can be conceived:

(3*') *Formally*, that is: as intrinsically caused eternal and infinite mode

And that very same thing can be conceived:

(4*') *Objectively*, that is: as an extrinsically caused durational and finite mode

Indeed, a scrutiny of the mereological, existential and causal tissue of Spinoza's philosophy has shown us that singular things can be considered in two conceptually distinct ways: the *formal* being of a thing is the particular being of that thing insofar as it is conceived to be caused *intrinsically* in the way of EIp21-23, and the *objective* being of the thing comes to light if that very same thing is understood to be operative in the *extrinsic* causal chain of EIp28. Hence we can conclude that *the finite human mind* (and any other singular thing in nature) can be conceived to be *an infinite mode*, namely insofar as it is conceived formally (i.e. as an intrinsically caused eternal thing).

If we combine this with the things we have seen in the previous chapter, we get the following. Recall that we stated in the previous chapter that:

(1) 'The attribute of thought' = God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *realiter*

- (2) 'The infinite mode of thought' = God as a *res cogitans*, grasped *modaliter*

And that:

- (6) The thing 'the attribute of thought' refers to = the thing 'the infinite mode of thought' refers to

We have seen that the dual structure that surfaces in (1) and (2) – being an expression of *pars melior nostri* – can be understood to be applicable in the same way to the level where the modification does take place, not between the attribute of thought (1) and its objective expression as an (*unspecified*) infinite mode of thought (2), but between the immediate and the mediate infinite modes. And hence we can also state the following:

- (2" (i)) 'the absolutely infinite intellect' = the unspecified infinite mode of thought (*qua* infinite mode) in its *formal* being
(2" (ii)) 'the whole of objective nature' = the unspecified infinite mode of thought (*qua* infinite mode) in its *objective* being
(5) The thing 'the absolutely infinite intellect' refers to = the thing 'the whole of (objective) nature' refers to (as a face of the universe)

This operation of the intellect can in turn be repeated with respect to singular ideas, as these were shown to be modified by the immediate infinite mode of thought in the very same way the whole of objective nature is:

- (7) 'The mediate infinite mode that is my mind' = my mind in its *formal* being
(8) 'The singular idea that is my mind' = my mind in its *objective* being (i.e. as the idea of my body)

Hence:

(9) The thing ‘the singular idea that is my mind’ refers to (as well)²⁴¹ = the thing ‘the *mediate* infinite mode that is my mind’ refers to

And as the mediate infinite mode that is my mind is shown to be a *face of the universe* (i.e. a *part-with-a-vista*) in the same way the whole of objective nature is, we can claim the following too:

(10) The thing ‘the mediate infinite mode that is my mind’ refers to (as a face of the universe) = the thing ‘the whole of objective nature’ refers to (as a face of the universe)

Combining this with (9), we get:

(11) The thing ‘the singular idea that is my mind’ refers to (as well) = the thing ‘the whole of objective nature’ refers to (as a face of the universe)

Combining (11) with (5) we get the following remarkable claim:

(12) The thing ‘the singular idea that is my mind’ refers to (as well) = the thing ‘the absolutely infinite intellect’ refers to

And combined with (2" (i)), (2" (ii)) and (6) we get:

(13) The thing ‘the singular idea that is my mind’ refers to (as well) = the thing ‘the attribute of thought’ refers to

Now, strange as this claim may appear at first sight, we must acknowledge that with (13) we actually encounter precisely the claim concerning the *pervasive non-limiting* status of infinite modes that is referred to in the important assertion in EVp29s (i.e.

²⁴¹ ‘As well’ is used here, because the singular idea can be understood to refer to *two* things. In its objective being it can be understood to refer – ‘horizontally’, so to speak – to its extended object. In this variant it is understood with respect to its *meaning*. But as we have seen, it can also be understood to refer to something else, namely – ‘vertically’ – to the thing ‘the *mediate* infinite mode that is my mind’ refers to. In this respect it is understood as to its *reference*. More on horizontal and vertical representation in the treatment of Spinoza’s ‘parallelism’ in Chapter 4.

that we conceive things, not only insofar as they have a limited duration (i.e. as objective singular things), but also insofar as their ideas *involve the eternal and infinite essence of God* (i.e. as formal infinite modes that express formal essences)). Indeed, point (13) is nothing but a restatement of the claim that, considered from a certain perspective, singular things *pertain to substance*. The union between singular things and substance must be understood to be so close, that conceived in its formal being a singular thing refers to – or at least offers a vista on – the very thing the attribute under which it is conceived refers to, that is: *to God*. It is precisely here where we must locate the ethical purport – and instrumental function – of the intellect. For – as already noted in Chapter 1 (and as will be elucidated in Chapter 5) – this grasping of the God by way of the intellect is the very love with which God loves himself.

2.7.1 *Pars melior nostri*

One of the aspects that makes the present chapter so complicated is that we have actually treated two issues in it. The scrutiny of the two types of infinite modes that are mentioned in EIp21-EIp23, EI Appendix and Letter 64 not only taught us how these intricate concepts must be understood, but it also provided us with additional insight into the structure of *pars melior nostri* as well as its important *constructive function* in Spinoza's metaphysics.

In the previous chapter we already established the following points concerning the structure of the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it):

- The intellect is a *mode*
- The intellect can be conceived to be *a part of the infinite mode of thought*
- The intellect is by nature either posterior to or simultaneous with the things understood, which in turn implies that the intellect is *characterized by a conceptual duality*.
- The intellect is characterized by a conceptual distinction between the *objective* and *formal* being of the things understood.

In this chapter we have uncovered additional information as to how we should conceive the intellect, in the way this notion is employed in Spinoza's mature

philosophy. A scrutiny of the mereological, existential and causal tissue in the *Ethics* has made it clear that:

- The intellect is characterized by a conceptual distinction in the following way: our intellect conceives things either insofar as it conceives them to exist as *extrinsically caused finite modes* (i.e. in their *objective being under duration, representing their durational objects*), or insofar it conceives them as *intrinsically caused infinite modes* (i.e. *considered in themselves, in their eternal formal being*).
- This distinction entails yet another distinction, which accounts for a certain *trichotomy*: the distinction between the durational *object* of an idea, the *objective being* of this object (i.e. the idea itself), and the *formal being* of this idea.
- The things that function in this structure in turn must be understood to have an ubiquitous counterpart that must be located *absolutely outside the intellect*: the *formal essences of things*.

Furthermore we have seen that in Spinoza's philosophy there can be detected a *twofold use of the intellect*. Firstly, we recognize an *instrumental function of the intellect*. The intellect must be understood to provide a way to blessedness, because – being a part of the infinite intellect – it is a part of the love with which God loves himself. Considered thus, the intellect is the divine instrument with which the human mind is able to partake in God's self-love, a partaking that has its basis in the fact that any thing that is grasped with the intellect involves an eternal and infinite essence of God (see point (13)). However, in the present chapter we have encountered yet another way in which the intellect is employed in the *Ethics*. I have called this the *constructive function of the intellect*. It has become clear that the very fact that the intellect can be understood to be characterized by a duality between the formal and the objective being of the things that are conceived with it, has an important structuring function in Spinoza's philosophy. Spinoza distinguishes between attributes and infinite modes, between immediate and mediate infinite modes, and between finite and infinite modes *precisely because we conceive things in the two ways mentioned*. And hence, the intellect must not only be understood to furnish a way to blessedness, but its dual character must moreover be conceived to

be expressed in the very structure of Spinoza metaphysics. In the next chapter I will show how this way of understanding the intellect is recognizable Spinoza's claims with regard to the most fundamental concept of his metaphysics: God. However, before turning to the important question how God can be understood to know himself, one question still awaits an answer: what can we learn from the elaboration in this chapter concerning the way in which we must understand the Mereological Claim?

2.7.1.1 From infinity to finitude

Recall that in the introduction of this chapter I stated that, even though it is clear *that* Spinoza argues for the distinction between God as a *res cogitans* (1) and its exhaustive expression as the infinite intellect (2), it was not clear at all *how* this distinction enables him to claim that the human mind is part of the infinite intellect (and hence how *pars melior nostri* is able to perform its instrumental function). The things we have said in this chapter make it clear that the part-whole structure that is referred to in the Mereological Claim in EIIp11c can be differentiated in the following way:

- (a): The formal essence of a human mind is *contained ubiquitously* in the formal being of God's infinite power of thinking
- (b-i): The formal being of a human mind is a pervasive *part-with-a-vista* of the absolutely infinite intellect
- (b-ii): The objective being of that very same thing (i.e. the idea, that is: the human mind itself) is a *part* of the whole of objective nature

This enumeration of the way *the finite is related to the infinite* in the context of Spinoza's philosophy helps us understand how the human mind can be conceived to be a part of the infinite intellect (2), but *not* of the ontologically identical God as a *res cogitans* (1). The points (a)-(b-ii) are illustrative in this respect, as they show a (so to speak) *declining conceptual unity* of the infinite divine *res*. The first thing that must be noted in this respect, is that the *absolute unity* of God must be located at

level (a).²⁴² At the same time, this level provides a first basis for a certain conceptual multiplicity. True, the infinitely many things that follow from God in infinitely many ways (by EI p16) cannot in any way be understood to be multiple *parts* of God's infinite essence (a). Still, point (a) allows for conceptual multiplicity further down the causal thread, as the ubiquity and absolutely non-limiting character must be understood to concern *the formal essences of infinitely many things that necessarily follow from (a)* that function absolutely *outside the intellect* (and in this respect the grasping of 'infinitely many formal essences' of course is 'improper' in the very same way it is improper to call God 'one').²⁴³ That is to say: it is the plenitudinal causal power of God's essence²⁴⁴ – insofar as it is grasped with an intellect – that accounts for the multiplicity further down the causal chain. Under point (b-i) this basis for multiplicity is further fortified. We have seen that the *ubiquity* of the formal essences of the infinitely many ideas – including human minds – that are contained in God, attains a certain *part*-character at the level of the absolutely infinite intellect. To be sure, the ubiquity of these very same things is still upheld in a certain respect, namely in their being pervasive *parts-with-a-vista* (i.e. *faces of the universe*) of the immediate infinite mode. But at the same time the latent multiplicity that must be understood to be rooted in the plenitudinal character of God's essence (a) is accounted for in the fact that the formal being of ideas surfaces in (b-i) as *parts-with-a-vista*, that is: as beings that each can be understood to have a distinct basis – differing in perfection – from which their vista is employed. Finally, under point (b-ii) the particular species of infinity of a human mind (and indeed any other singular thing that is grasped with an intellect) insofar it is considered *formally* (i.e. in itself), is eradicated. Point (b-ii) makes it clear that as soon as the

²⁴² This claim will be evaluated in the next chapter.

²⁴³ Letter 50, (II) 406 (*certum est, eum, qui Deum unum, vel unicum nuncupat, nullam de Deo veram habere ideam, vel improprie de eò loqui*). In Chapter 3 we will return to this important assertion.

²⁴⁴ Spinoza refers to this plenitudinal character of God's essence in EI Appendix, when he says: 'But to those who ask "why God did not create all men so that they would be governed by the command of reason?" I answer only "because he did not lack material to create all things, from the highest degree of perfection to the lowest"; or, to speak more properly, "because the laws of his nature have been so ample that they sufficed for producing all things which can be conceived by an infinite intellect" (as I have demonstrated in P16)'. EI Appendix, (I) 446 (*Is autem, qui quærunt, cur Deus omnes homines non ità creavit, ut solo rationis ductu gubernarentur? nihil aliud respondeo, quàm quia ei non defuit materia ad omnia, ex summo nimirum ad infimum perfectionis gradum, creanda; vel magis proprie loquendo, quia ipsius naturæ leges adeò amplè fuerunt, ut sufficerent ad omnia, quæ ab aliquo infinito intellectu concipi possunt, producenda, ut Propositione 16. demonstravi*).

same thing is considered *objectively* (i.e. insofar as it represents its object), the *infinity* of the part-with-a-vista turns into finitude. In its objective being the human body is a *finite part* of the whole of objective nature.²⁴⁵

From this we can conclude that the Mereological Claim can be understood thus:

The human mind is part of the infinite intellect – encompassing the formal being of the infinite intellect (i.e. the absolutely infinite intellect (b-i)) and the objective being of the infinite intellect (i.e. the whole of objective nature (b-ii)) – because a human mind can be understood in its formal and its objective being itself. In its formal being the human mind is a part-with-a-vista of the absolutely infinite intellect, and in its objective being the same thing is a part of the whole of objective nature.

To be sure, this way of understanding the Mereological Claim is not complete as to an elucidation of the ability of our intellect to perform its *instrumental* function (i.e. the way in which the intellect is instrumental in reaching the ‘highest happiness’: the ‘logging in’ to the love with which God loves himself), nor as to the *extra-intellectual* status of God’s essence (and the formal essences that are contained ubiquitously in this essence). In order to clarify these points, we must turn to an analysis of the manner in which the constructive function of the intellect is recognizable in the way the divine *res* itself is staged in the *Ethics*. This will be the subject of the next chapter. We will see that, apart from the (a)-variant of God that surfaced in the present chapter, Spinoza can be conceived to champion *yet another concept of God*. As will become clear in the chapters 4 and 5, the distinction between the two conceptual variants of God in turn enables us to see how we must understand the two variants of *adequate knowledge* that Spinoza discerns: *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*.

²⁴⁵ In section 4.2.3 we will see that the attribute-dependence of singular modes can be understood to follow from God’s absolute attribute-neutrality in a very similar way.

3 Two Gods

In this chapter I will treat the conceptual, causal and existential aspects of the most fundamental concept in Spinoza's philosophy: God (or substance). We will see that Spinoza's God can be conceived in two ways. Firstly, God can be conceived as an absolute identity of the divine nature and the infinitely many things that follow from this divine nature in infinitely many ways. In this respect, God cannot even be understood to be 'one', as 'someone who calls God one or unique does not have a true idea of God, or is speaking improperly about him'.¹ Secondly, God can be conceived as a coalescent identity of his nature and the things that follow from it. These two ways of conceiving God can be rendered schematically in the following way:



*These ways of grasping God are on a par with the two conceptually distinct manners in which God can be conceived to be self-caused. That is to say: in this chapter it will become clear that God (a) and God (c) are *causa sui* in a different sense. The distinction between (a) and (c) is important as it provides us with an understanding of the way in which Spinoza's two types of adequate knowledge must be conceived. As we will see in the next chapters, things can be known top-down – i.e. proceeding from (a) to knowledge of the things that constitute (b) – and things can be known bottom-up – i.e. starting with the intellectual knowledge of singular things (at level (b)) in order to 'climb up' to knowledge of God (a). It is the coalescent conception of God (c) that makes both types of knowledge God's self-knowledge.*

¹ Letter 50, (II) 406 (*certum est, eum, qui Deum unum, vel unicum nuncupat, nullam de Deo veram habere ideam, vel improprie de eò loqui*).

3.1 Introduction

Philosophy can be a risky business, and Spinoza was fully aware of this. His decision – contrary to his initial plans – to leave the *Ethics* unpublished during his lifetime was clearly invoked by the growing insight that some of his claims would not be received too friendly by his opponents. Already in 1670, the ecclesiastical court of the Reformed Church in Amsterdam had declared the TTP to be ‘blasphemous and dangerous’,² and in 1671 the Court of Holland stated that the work contained ‘Godless thoughts’.³ Similar – or even worse – charges could be expected after the publication of the *Ethics*. As Spinoza writes Henry Oldenburg in the fall of 1675 about his initial plans to publish the *Ethics*: ‘I decided to put off the publication I was planning, until I saw how the manner would turn out. [...] But every day the matter seems to get worse, and I don’t know what I should do’.⁴

One of the main problems that Spinoza faced in this respect was the fact that his opponents could not – or did not want to – understand the way in which he portrayed God. Consider Spinoza’s definitions of ‘God’ and ‘substance’:

D3: By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed.⁵

[...]

D6: By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence.⁶

(III. *Per substantiam intelligo id, quod in se est, & per se concipitur: hoc est id, cujus conceptus non indiget conceptu alterius rei, à quo formari debeat.*

[...]

VI. *Per Deum intelligo ens absolutè infinitum, hoc est, substantiam constantem infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque aeternam, & infinitam essentiam exprimit*

² Nadler, *Spinoza*, 296.

³ *Ibidem*, 296.

⁴ Letter 68, (II) 459 (*editionem, quam parabam, differre statui, donec, quo res evaderet, viderem [...]. Verùm negotium quotidie in pejus vergere videtur, & quid tamen agam, incertus sum*)

⁵ EID3, (I) 408.

⁶ EID6, (I) 409.

As Spinoza also makes it clear that ‘except God, no substance can be conceived’,⁷ that ‘whatever is, is in God’,⁸ that from God’s nature ‘there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes’,⁹ and the *Deus* and *Natura* are the very same thing,¹⁰ it is not very hard to imagine why his contemporary opponents would not be unequivocally happy with Spinoza’s philosophy. For his ‘God’ clearly is not the person-like figure with a supreme intellect that was forwarded by Spinoza’s scholastic predecessors, by his contemporary opponents, and by ‘ordinary people [who] conceive God as a man, or as like a man’.¹¹ Rather, the adduced definitions make it clear that Spinoza’s ‘God’ must be understood very differently. His divine *res* must be considered to be the one and only conceivable substance, which is ontologically identical to the all-encompassing totality of modes, and which cannot be understood to have a mind or a body, ‘for everyone who has to any extent contemplated the divine nature denies that God is corporeal’¹² (EIp15s) and denies that ‘intellect [and] will pertain to God’s nature’ (EIp17s).¹³

Whereas this way of understanding God was deemed dangerous by influential institutions in Spinoza’s own time, present-day scholars have less trouble accepting the presented picture of the divine *res*. Even though ‘agreement between commentators of Spinoza is not something that happens frequently’,¹⁴ there is remarkably little controversy with respect to the way God is staged in the *Ethics*. As opposed to ‘ordinary people [who] [...] confuse God’s power with the human power or right of kings’,¹⁵ present-day scholars mostly agree that in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy, ‘God’ must be understood to refer to the all-encompassing one and unique substance that is absolutely identical to nature. So about this

⁷ EIp14, (I) 420 (*Præter Deum nulla dari, neque concipi potest substantia*).

⁸ EIp15, (I) 420 (*Quicquid est, in Deo est*).

⁹ EIp16, (I) 424 (*Ex necessitate divinæ naturæ, infinita infinitis modis [...] sequi debent*).

¹⁰ EIVp4d, (I) 548.

¹¹ EIIp3s, (I) 449 (*quod ostendit Deum hominem, vel instar hominis à vulgo concipi*).

¹² EIp15s, (I) 421 (*nam omnes, qui naturam divinam aliquo modo contemplati sunt, Deum esse corporeum, negant*).

¹³ EIp17s, (I) 426 (*ad Dei naturam neque intellectum, neque voluntatem pertinere*).

¹⁴ Koyré, ‘Le chien, constellation céleste, et le chien, animal aboyant’, 52 (*L'accord entre les commentateurs de Spinoza n'est pas chose très fréquente*) [my translation].

¹⁵ EIIp3s, (I) 449 (*Dei potentiam cum humanâ Regum potentiâ, vel jure confundat*).

particular term there seems to be relatively little danger that scholars ‘interpret the mind of the other man badly’.¹⁶

Still, uncontroversial as the meaning of ‘God’ in the *Ethics* may appear to be in the twenty-first century, we must nevertheless turn to a closer analysis of this notion. The reason for this can be elucidated adducing a remark that can be found in EIIp11c. Consider the following passage, which serves as an explanation for the important Mereological Claim (‘the human mind is a part of the infinite intellect of God’) from the same corollary:

when we say that the human mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing but that God, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he is explained through the nature of the human mind, or insofar as he constitutes the essence of the human mind, has this or that idea¹⁷

(Mentem humanam hoc, vel illud percipere, nihil aliud dicimus, quàm quòd Deus, non quatenus infinitus est, sed quatenus per naturam humanæ Mentis explicatur, sive quatenus humanæ Mentis essentiam constituit, hanc, vel illam habet ideam)

Two things must be noted with respect to this remarkable claim. Firstly, as Spinoza also maintains that ‘whatever is, is in God’ (EIp15) and that ‘each idea of each body [...] necessarily involves an eternal and infinite essence of God’ (EIIp45), God’s knowledge ‘insofar as he is explained through the nature of the human mind’ can be understood to be (a part of) God’s knowledge of an eternal and infinite essence of God, that is: *God’s self-knowledge*. This makes it clear that an analysis of the way in which we must understand *par melior nostri* must encompass a thorough scrutiny of God’s infinite power of thinking. Secondly, it is important to acknowledge that so far we have only been treating the conceptual and causal status of the modal expression of this divine power of thinking. In our analysis of the important Mereological Claim in EIIp11c we scrutinized the way the infinite intellect and its parts must be conceived; the status of God’s infinite power of thinking as it is in

¹⁶ In EIIp47s, Spinoza writes that ‘most controversies have arisen from this, that men do not rightly explain their own mind, or interpret the mind of the other man badly. For really, when they contradict one another most vehemently, they either have the same thoughts, or they are thinking of different things, so that what they think are errors and absurdities in the other are not’. EIIp47s, (I) 483 (*Atque hinc pleraque oriuntur controversiæ, nempe, quia homines mentem suam non rectè explicant, vel quia alterius mentem male interpretantur. Nam reverà, dum sibi maximè contradicunt, vel eadem, vel diversa cogitant, ita ut, quos in alio errores, & absurda esse putant, non sint*). This remark surfaces precisely in a passage in which Spinoza aims to make it clear that the term ‘God’ is often used in a wrong way.

¹⁷ EIIp11c, (I) 456.

itself was not addressed. The following table, which is a reiteration of the things we have seen in Chapter 1, may be elucidative in this respect:

(a) 'God's intellect'¹⁸

 (b) The infinite intellect

(table 1)

The previous chapter was dedicated to (b): the infinite mode of thought (i.e. the objective state of God's infinite power of thinking) and its parts. Elucidative as our analysis of (b) may have been with respect to the way modes (such as the human mind) must be conceived to be 'in' God, up till this point the exact status of God *insofar as he is God* (i.e. the formal state of God (a)) remained out of sight. Apart from the ascertainment that the term 'God's intellect' in EIp17s must be understood to refer to the attribute (as opposed to the infinite mode) of thought, and that this attribute contains the infinite intellect and its parts, we have said little about the precise characteristics of this important aspect of God. However, as the infinite intellect (b) (and hence our intellect, which is claimed to be a part of it) is asserted to follow from its attribute, it must be understood to not only derive its eternity and infinity from 'God's intellect' (a), but also its specific *thought* character. And hence, despite the seemingly uncontroversial nature of Spinoza's 'God', a study of the structure of our intellect cannot do without a closer scrutiny of the concept that is forwarded under (a). For we can only seem to attain a coherent view of the metaphysical status and functioning of *pars melior nostri* if we understand the exact (conceptual and ontological) condition of the absolutely independent being the human mind and its better part (and indeed the all-encompassing totality of singular ideas: the infinite intellect) is claimed to be in, to be conceived through¹⁹ and to follow from. If we want to be sure that we 'apply names to things rightly' and that we do not 'confuse God's power with the human power', we must investigate the exact way in which Spinoza's God conceives himself, not only

¹⁸ It is important to stress once more that this term in EIp17s is used *conditionally* (hence the quotation marks). It refers to God's infinite power of thinking. As shown in Chapter 1, God can only be understood to have an intellect if this intellect differs fundamentally from our intellect. In the present chapter we will focus on the question how this fundamentally different divine power of thinking, from which our human power of thinking only *follows*, must be understood.

¹⁹ This of course is a paraphrase of the definition of 'mode' in EID5.

insofar as he is understood with respect to his object ((b)), but also insofar as he is considered in itself ((a)).

3.1.1 Another variant of causation

In the previous chapter we have seen that in the context of Spinoza's philosophy, things can be conceived in two ways. A thing can be conceived:

- (1) *Formally*, that is: as to its intrinsically caused eternal and infinite existence

And that very same thing can be conceived:

- (2) *Objectively*, that is: as to its extrinsically caused durational and finite existence

Points (1) and (2) entail that for Spinoza the conceivability of a thing (and its conceived existence) is intimately connected with the way that thing must be understood to be *caused*.²⁰ Recognition of this close union between conception, existence, and causation – that of course is an expression of the very *constructive function of the intellect* that was uncovered in the previous chapter – provides a key for understanding the exact status of God *insofar as he is God*: when looking for a way to see how God *qua* God can be understood to conceive himself, we can turn to an analysis of the causal generation of God. That this is a tenable strategy finds corroboration, not only in the things we have said concerning the importance of the intellect with respect to the structural characteristics of Spinoza's metaphysics, but also in the important 'causal axiom' EIA4, which reads thus:

The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause.²¹

²⁰ As Samuel Newlands remarked: 'What, according to Spinoza, are the relationships between causation, inherence, conceptual connectedness, following-from, and existential dependence? My proposed answer is that Spinoza thinks all metaphysical dependence relations are conceptual containment relations, a single kind of dependence that Spinoza labels "conceptual involvement."' Samuel Newlands, 'Another Kind of Spinozistic Monism', 469.

²¹ EIA4, (I) 410.

(Effectus cognitio à cognitione causæ dependet, & eandem involvit)

This important claim reiterates that understanding the way in which God *causes* himself may very well provide us with valuable information concerning the way God *knows* himself (as well as the way in which God can be conceived to *exist*).

So how can God be understood to be caused in the context of Spinoza's philosophy? *Prima facie*, the question concerning the causal status of God *qua* God does not seem very hard to answer. Spinoza makes it abundantly clear that a substance (and consequently God, who according to Spinoza is the only substance that can be or be conceived)²² causes itself. Indeed:

A substance cannot be produced by anything else (by P6C); therefore it will be the cause of itself [...].²³
(Substantia non potest produci ab alio (per Coroll. Prop. præced.); erit itaque causa sui)

Furthermore, in the scholium of EIp11, Spinoza says the following about this self-causing operation of substance:

It is sufficient to note only this, that I am not here speaking of things that come to be from external causes, but only of substances that (by P6) can be produced by no external cause. For things that come to be from external causes [...] owe all the perfection or reality they have to the power of the external cause; and therefore their existence arises only from the perfection of their external cause, and not from their own perfection. On the other hand, whatever perfection substance has is not owed to any external cause. So its existence follows from its nature alone; hence its existence is nothing but its essence.²⁴

(Sed hoc tantùm notare sufficit, me hîc non loqui de rebus, quæ à causis externis fiunt, sed de solis substantiis, quæ (per Prop. 6.) à nullâ causâ externâ produci possunt. Res enim, quæ à causis externis fiunt, sive eæ multis partibus constant, sive paucis, quicquid perfectionis, sive realitatis habent, id omne virtuti causæ externæ debetur, adeoque earum existentia ex solâ perfectione causæ externæ, non autem suæ oritur. Contrâ, quicquid substantia perfectionis habet, nulli causæ externæ debetur; quare ejus etiam existentia ex solâ ejus naturâ sequi debet, quæ proinde nihil aliud est, quàm ejus essentia)

In this passage, Spinoza states explicitly that substances (and hence God) are not caused by an external cause (and hence do not exist in the way of (2)). Now, since we have claimed in Chapter 2 that Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude encompasses (and only encompasses) an internal (1) and an external (2) variant of efficient

²² 'Except God, no substance can be or be conceived' (*Præter Deum nulla dari, neque concipi potest substantia*). EIp14, (I) 420.

²³ EIp7d, (I) 412.

²⁴ EIp11s, (I) 418.

causation, we seem entitled to conclude that the formula in EIp11s that the existence of a substance ‘follows from its nature alone’ must be understood to refer to causal variant (1). Apparently, God is *the intrinsic cause of himself*. As a substance is asserted to be *causa sui*, the one or unique substance seems to be ‘absolutely the proximate cause’ of itself (to adduce a line from EIp28s). And so it seems that this infinite *res* must be understood to exist eternally, and thus to be caused intrinsically by itself in the way of the following table:



(table 2)

The rendering of table 2 appears to be endorsed by various Spinoza scholars. Jonathan Bennett’s observation that ‘[Spinoza’s] causal rationalism made the phrase ‘cause of itself’ a perfect label for something with a *necessarily instantiated nature* [emphasis added]’²⁵ hints in this direction. For the ‘necessary instantiation’ that Bennett refers to, presupposes a duality between a thing (a), and the instantiation of that thing (b), which in turn appears to champion the very causal operation that is rendered in table 2. Mogens Laerke’s claim that ‘for Spinoza, the *causa sui* cannot be separated from efficient causation’²⁶ appears to be based on a similar supposition.²⁷ In this claim too, a conceptual distinction between (efficient) cause and effect seems to be implied;²⁸ in whatever way the efficient cause is conceived,

²⁵ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 74.

²⁶ Mogens Laerke, ‘Spinoza and the Cosmological Argument according to Letter 12’ in: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21 (1) (2013), 70.

²⁷ Martin Lin’s assertion that ‘[Spinoza] says that God is the cause of himself in the same sense that he is the cause of his creatures, and so he is the efficient cause of himself’ is yet another claim in a similar vein. Martin Lin, ‘Efficient causation in Spinoza and Leibniz’ in: Tad M. Schmaltz ed. *Efficient Causation. A History* (Oxford 2014), 169.

²⁸ To be sure, Laerke appears to circumvent this take by claiming that the causation of God is very specific as in the case of God, the (internal) efficient cause does not cause an *effect*, but a *cause*: ‘We should, however, also understand the SSC in a stronger sense to say that when God causes Himself and when He causes all things, these two causal actions are not only the same kind of causal action, but also one and the same causal action, considered from two different perspectives, namely from the perspective of the cause that the divine cause produces (i.e. itself) and from the perspective of the effects produced by this same divine cause (i.e. all things).’ Laerke, ‘Spinoza and the Cosmological Argument according to Letter 12’, 71. Later on in the same article he uses the formula ‘the self-caused cause’. Laerke, ‘Spinoza and the Cosmological Argument according to Letter 12’, 76. In section 3.5.1. we will see why he would be seduced to take refuge in this apparently absurd use of terms.

the notion appears to entail the distinction between cause and effect in the way rendered in table 2. Apparently then, the notion of '*causa sui*' is to be considered a *two-place predicate* (to borrow a term from Charles Jarrett):²⁹ the self-causing thing must be conceived as a cause and as an (identical) effect. This way of understanding God's causation appears to be warranted by the following important claim in EIp25s:

God must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which he is called the cause of himself.³⁰
(*☞, ut verbo dicam, eo sensu, quo Deus dicitur causa sui, etiam omnium rerum causa dicendus est*)

Charles Jarrett remarked that if Spinoza's notion of self-causation would *not* imply a two-place predicate, Spinoza would have no ground for this claim.³¹ This appears to be a correct observation. For indeed, as 'God' and 'all things' are *conceptually distinct*,³² the only way in which this conceptual duality can be accounted for is by granting that the notion '*causa sui*' in the way it is staged in EIp25s admits of two places. On the one hand there is God (a) (i.e. the causal aspect of the self-causing operation), and on the other hand there are the infinitely many things that follow from him (b) (i.e. the conceived effect of the self-causing operation).

Still, however straightforward it may seem to assert that God causes (and knows) himself intrinsically, on closer scrutiny this contention leads to pressing inconsistencies. The first thing to note in this respect is that the intrinsic and extrinsic causal threads that surface in (1) and (2) deal with the way things can be conceived to exist (and to be expressions of God's self-knowledge) by way of our intellect. However, as Spinoza makes it very clear throughout the *Ethics* that thought is in no way prior to the other attributes, it seems that there must also be a causal variant that is absolutely intellect-*independent*. This supposition is corroborated by a remark in EIp8s2, where Spinoza states that 'the truth of substances is not outside the intellect, unless it is in them themselves, because they

²⁹ Jarrett claims that the definiendum of EID1 must be considered to be a *relational predicate* (i.e. a two-place predicate). Charles Jarrett, 'The Logical Structure of Spinoza's "Ethics", Part I' in: *Synthese*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1978), 17.

³⁰ EIp25s, (I) 431.

³¹ Jarrett, 'The Logical Structure of Spinoza's "Ethics", Part I', 17.

³² Spinoza's use of the term 'sense' (*sensu*) may lead some to think that Spinoza actually claims that 'God' and 'all things' are also *conceptually* identical. However, we cannot suppose Spinoza to actually use 'sense' in a Fregean way.

are conceived through themselves'.³³ This claim firmly suggest that there also is an intellect-*independent* way of understanding the self-knowledge – and hence the self-causation and existence – of God: apparently the self-causation of God can (also) be understood insofar as it falls without the scope of the ‘intellectual variants’ of causation that are staged in (1) and (2).³⁴

That God indeed cannot be understood to be his own intrinsic cause in the way rendered in table 2, becomes clear when we recapitulate the precise purport of the causal claims that are expressed in (1) and (2). In Chapter 2 we have shown that Spinoza’s Principle of Plenitude (i.e. EIp16) is about the way God’s causal power produces things that are ‘in another’ (EID5). Indeed, the causal threads that surface in (1) and (2) were shown to have *modes* as their effect. This in turn implies that these two causal categories cannot be considered appropriate for the causal generation of a substance, as evidently *substances are not modes*. Any causal category that is claimed to have modes as its effect is not sufficiently befitting for an understanding of the way ‘what is in itself and is conceived through itself’ (EID3) is caused. It appears to be precisely because of this that Spinoza claims in EIp17c1 that ‘there is no cause, either extrinsically or intrinsically, which prompts God to action, except the perfection of his nature’:³⁵ this assertion underpins the present supposition that intrinsic and extrinsic causation are applicable to the generation of modes only, and hence fall short in denoting the way in which the one and unique substance must be conceived to be caused.

Recapitulating the arguments that were given above, we face the following problem: in EIp25s Spinoza appears to claim that God causes himself intrinsically,

³³ EIp8s2, (I) 414 (*Verum substantiarum veritas extra intellectum non est, nisi in se ipsis, quia per se concipiuntur*).

³⁴ *Prima facie*, our claim that ‘there also is an intellect-*independent* way of understanding the self-knowledge’ appears to be contradictory, as it suggests that God can be understood without being understood (so to say). In the remainder of this chapter it will become how this claim must be evaluated. One more thing must be added with respect to the present claim that substance is self-causing absolutely outside the intellect. It is this. According to Michael Della Rocca there is *nothing* outside the intellect as he states that in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy *everything* is explainable. In a passage in which he claims that Spinoza must be understood to be committed to the *Principle of Sufficient Reason* (PSR), Della Rocca says the following: ‘[...] Spinoza presupposes that everything is able to be explained, he builds the notion of intelligibility into the heart of his metaphysical system’. Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 4-5. For my evaluation of this view, see the subsequent sections and note 151.

³⁵ EIp17c1, (I) 425 (*Hinc sequitur I°. nullam dari causam, quæ Deum extrinsecè, vel intrinsecè, præter ipsius naturæ perfectionem, incitet ad agendum*).

yet in EIp17c1 he denies that the concept of intrinsic causation can be understood to be appropriate for the self-generation of God. This problem can be rendered thus:

(4)³⁶ God does *not* cause himself intrinsically (nor extrinsically), but from the perfection of his nature (by EIp17c1)

Yet:

(5) God causes himself in the same sense as he causes all things (by EIp25s)

That is:

(5') God causes himself in the same sense as he causes the ontologically identical unspecified infinite modes, i.e. intrinsically

Hence:

(5'') God causes himself intrinsically, i.e. in the sense of (1)

The points (4) and (5'') are clearly contradictory. So how can we reconcile Spinoza's claims in EIp17c1, where he appears to *deny* the applicability of intrinsic causality with respect to God, and EIp25s, which seems to *require* this variant of causation? How can (4) and (5'') be brought in line?

The answer to this question is to be sought in a better understanding of the exact purport of the important clause '*from the perfection of his nature*' in EIp17c1. For the causal generation that is implied in this statement must apparently be distinguished from the causal threads that surface in (1) and (2). That is to say: the claim in EIp17c1 that God is not prompted into action by intrinsic or extrinsic causes '*except (praeter) the perfection of his nature [emphasis added]*', makes it clear that the causing operation that prompts God into action must be understood to differ in a certain sense from intrinsic and extrinsic variants of causation that were uncovered in Chapter 2, while at the same time implying the claim that emerges in EIp25s. And this in turn suggests that apart from the two causal threads that were shown to be encompassed by Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude in EIp16, there must be detectable yet another causal variant in the *Ethics*. Indeed, the remarks in EIp11s

³⁶ Attentive readers may have noticed that point (3) has not been mentioned yet. This is correct. Compositional considerations have prompted me to provide point (3) (which posits the causal category of *causa sui*) only later in this section.

and EIp17c1 – in which Spinoza uses the clauses ‘from [its] own perfection’ and ‘from the perfection of his nature’ with respect to the causal generation of God³⁷ – allow us to augment our rendering of the causal concepts that must be understood to be operative in the *Ethics*. Apart from (1) and (2), we must apparently distinguish the following causal variant:

There is a thing that can be conceived as:

- (3) a substance, that is: as a *causa sui* that is caused, *neither intrinsically nor extrinsically*, but *from the perfection of its own nature*.

It is the aim of this chapter to elucidate this rendering of God’s all-encompassing causal (and conceiving) power – that is actually defined in the very first definition of the *Ethics*. We will see how causal variant (3) allows us to understand the way in which God can be understood to be self-conceiving (and to exist) insofar as he is expressed as to the perfection of his nature. This elucidation is all the more important as the term ‘God’ in Spinoza’s philosophy will turn out to be less unambiguous than present-day scholars have supposed it to be. Indeed, below it will become clear that we must distinguish two conceptual variants of God, which can be mapped on the two ways in which the important notion ‘*causa sui*’ is defined in the very first definition of the *Ethics*.

3.2 Two Gods?

Spinoza makes it very clear that there can be conceived to be only one substance: God. As we saw above, this divine *res* receives a detailed description in EID6, a description that does not in any way suggest that the term ‘God’ can be conceived in two conceptually distinct ways. So why make the seemingly preposterous claim that Spinoza’s mature philosophy harbors two conceptual variants of God? In order to see this, we must adduce table 2.

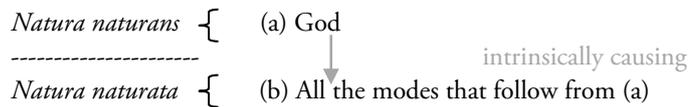
Consider the following schematic rendering once more:

³⁷ Yet another variant of the same clause can be found in the demonstration of EIp34: ‘from the necessity alone of God’s essence’ (*Ex solâ enim necessitate Dei essentia sequitur*). EIp34d, (I) 439.



(table 2)

This table aims to express that in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy there must be understood to be a conceptual distinction between (a) God, and (b) everything that follows from God. We encountered this very duality in Chapter 1, when we treated the distinction between ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s) and ‘the infinite intellect’ – i.e. ‘God’s idea’ – (EIIp11c). It was argued that the former term refers to the attribute of thought (that expresses an essence of substance), whereas the latter refers to the (unspecified) infinite mode of thought (that merely follows from substance). Furthermore, this conceptual distinction between the causal aspect of God and its effect was shown to be equivalent to the conceptual bifurcation that surfaces in EIp29s, where Spinoza asserts that substance can be conceived as ‘*Natura naturans*’ (i.e. ‘something that is in itself and conceived through itself’), and as ‘*Natura naturata*’ (i.e. ‘whatever follows from the necessity of God’s nature’).³⁸ Hence, table 2 can also be rendered thus:



(table 2')

Recall that EIp25s states that ‘God must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which he is called the cause of himself’. Applying the scholastic terms³⁹ from table 2' to the things I have said above, the self-causing operation of substance in the way it is staged in EIp25s (and that appears to be opposed by EIp17c1) can in turn be formulated thus:

(5^m) God is self-causing, as *Natura naturans* causes the ontologically identical (yet conceptually distinct) *Natura naturata*

³⁸ EIp29s, (I) 434.

³⁹ See Introduction, note 24.

In this claim a defining aspect of Spinoza's metaphysics comes to light one more time: Spinoza's God does not only drag himself out of the swamps of nothingness, but the entire creation with it.⁴⁰ Indeed, because of the ontological identity of God and nature that is characteristic for Spinoza's philosophy, his notion of *causa sui* must be understood to encompass the created world – it is of course precisely this that is stated in the quoted assertion from EIp25s.

To be sure, I think that there is still something else that we can learn from point (5^{'''}), something that has not always received the attention it deserves. The claim that *Natura naturans* causes the ontologically identical *Natura naturata* teaches us that, given the identity of God and the infinitely many things that follow from him, we must actually be very cautious when we use the term 'God' (or 'substance'). For the formulation of the self-causing operation of God in terms of the relation between the active *naturing* nature (a) and the passive *natured* nature (b) suggests that it is possible to distinguish more than one concept that, although conceptually distinct, ultimately denotes the very same eternal independent being.⁴¹ As already argued for in the previous chapters, the following concepts must be understood to refer to the same infinite and divine thing:

⁴⁰ This way of putting things is inspired by a remark by Nietzsche: "The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction that has ever been conceived, a type of logical rape and abomination. [...] The longing for "freedom of the will" in the superlative metaphysical sense (which, unfortunately, still rules in the heads of the half-educated), the longing to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for your actions yourself and to relieve God, world, ancestors, chance, and society of the burden – all this means nothing less than being that very *causa sui* and, with a courage greater than Munchhausen's, pulling yourself by the hair from the swamp of nothingness up into existence' (*Die causa sui ist der beste Selbst-Widerspruch, der bisher ausgedacht worden ist, eine Art logischer Nothzucht und Unnatur: [...] Das Verlangen nach „Freiheit des Willens“, in jenem metaphysischen Superlativ-Verstände, wie er leider noch immer in den Köpfen der Halb-Unterrichteten herrscht, das Verlangen, die ganze und letzte Verantwortlichkeit für seine Handlungen selbst zu tragen und Gott, Welt, Vorfahren, Zufall, Gesellschaft davon zu entlasten, ist nämlich nichts Geringeres, als eben jene causa sui zu sein und, mit einer mehr als Munchhausen'schen Verwegenheit, sich selbst aus dem Sumpf des Nichts an den Haaren in's Dasein zu ziehn*). Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge 2002), translated by Judith Norman, section 21, 21. To be sure, Nietzsche's accusation seems to be off the mark with respect to Spinoza, as Spinoza makes use of the concept of *causa sui* while *rejecting* 'freedom of the will' (in the way we commonly understand it).

⁴¹ Jean-Luc Marion argued that there actually are *three* concepts of 'God' operative in the *Ethics*. Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Coherence of Spinoza's Definitions of God' in: Yirmiyahu Yovel ed., *God and Nature. Spinoza's Metaphysics* (Leiden 1991), 67. Marion reaches this conclusion by way of an analysis of EIp11. We will return to this important proposition in a subsequent section. At this point it must be noted that the three concepts that Marion distinguishes differ (partly) from the three concepts that are treated in the upcoming sections.

- (a) *Natura naturans*, or (the active being of) God
- (b) *Natura naturata*, or all the infinitely many modes that follow (passively) from God, and that in their all-encompassing totality must be understood to be identical to the divine *res*

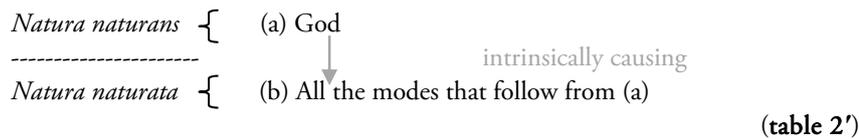
Indeed, one of the remarkable features of Spinoza's philosophy – a feature that was rather hard to swallow for his contemporary opponents – is the asserted ontological identity of the active and passive aspect of nature. In Spinoza's philosophy, creator and creation are the very same thing. Or, to state it in a way that is reminiscent of the things we have said in Chapter 1:

- (6) The thing '*Natura naturans*' refers to = the thing '*Natura naturata*' refers to

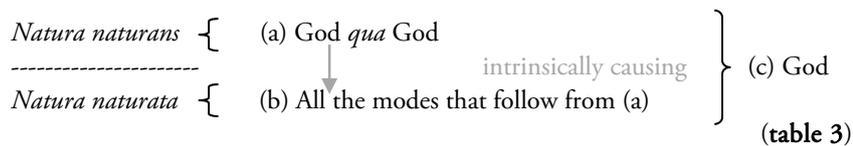
Point (6) makes it clear that, even though the terms *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* have *another meaning* (and in this sense, as Edwin Curley rightly remarked, *cannot* be identified with each other), they have *the very same reference*: God or substance (and in this sense, as was shown in Chapter 1, *must* be identified). In other words: at this point we can distinguish two concepts that, even though they clearly have a different meaning, both have God as their reference.

So far so good. However, at this point it is important to stress that on the basis of the claim in (5''') there can be understood to be (at least)⁴² one more concept that ultimately and exhaustively denotes the very same divine *res*. In order to see this, we must adduce table 2' once more:

⁴² This 'at least' refers to the fact that – as was argued for in the previous chapter – *Natura naturata* itself can be understood to consist of two notions that both ultimately (and exhaustively) refer to substance, namely (in the case of thought) the absolutely infinite intellect and the whole of objective nature. However, it is very important to stress that, as we are reasoning here about the relation between the formal and the objective being of *God* (and *not* of his infinite modes), *Natura naturata* surfaces here in its *unspecified* guise; the distinction between the absolutely infinite intellect and the whole of objective nature (and between their respective parallel counterparts in the remaining attributes) need not be taken into account here.



This table aims to provide a rendering of the structure of Spinoza’s metaphysics. Yet, on closer scrutiny table 2’ is incomplete. That is to say: this table does not account for the very ontological identity of God (i.e. (a)) and his creation (i.e. (b)) that is characteristic for Spinoza’s philosophy. Indeed, the very aspect that can be considered to be the most typical aspect of Spinoza’s metaphysics – the ontological identity of (a) and (b) which is made explicit in point (6) – is lacking in table 2’. The following table appears to provide a more accurate rendering of the structure of Spinoza’s metaphysics:



This rendering in turn uncovers something remarkable. For table 3 suggests that the distinction between (a) God insofar as he is God, and (b) the ontological identical all-encompassing totality of things that follows from him, allows us to distinguish *yet another concept* that can be understood to refer to the same thing. This concept can be rendered provisionally in the following way:

- (c) *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* understood as a *coalescent*⁴³ *identity* of two conceptually distinct aspects

⁴³ It must be admitted that this term is not entirely adequate. ‘Coalescence’ in physics denotes the process whereby (say) particles merge so as to form *bigger particles*. This is crucially different in the case of the coalescent identity (c) of God (a) and all the modes that follow from him (b). In this case the coalescence does not imply that (c) is in any way ‘bigger’ than (a). On the contrary: (a) and (c) must be understood to be *the very same thing*. The difference is only conceptual. Actually, this very problem is addressed by Spinoza himself in the KV. In the ‘Second Dialogue Between Erasmus and Theophilus’, Erasmus states the following: ‘[...] if [God] and what he has produced make together a whole, then you ascribe more essence to God at one time than at another’ (*Want zoo hy, en ’t geene van hem is voortgebracht tezamen een geheel maaken, zoo schryft gy God op de eene tyd meer wezen toe, als op de andere tyd*). Theophilus answers that ‘the essence of a thing does not increase through its union with another thing, with which it makes a whole’ (*Het wezen van de zaak en neemt niet toe door het vereenigen van een ander zaak met de welke het een geheel maakt*). KV I Ch. II, (I) 77. The ‘coalescence’ that surfaces in the present formulation must be understood to be coalescent in the way Theophilus understands the ‘union with another thing’.

Apart from God *qua* God (a) there appears to be yet another conceptual aspect that can be termed ‘God’: (c). In table 3 we encounter *two concepts of God*. Whereas in the introduction of this chapter we have asserted that present-day Spinoza scholars mostly agree on the fact that in Spinoza’s philosophy ‘God’ must be understood to refer to the one or unique substance with infinite attributes, our findings in the present section suggest that the term ‘God’ can actually be understood in two ways. Evidently, this is crucial information in a chapter that is dedicated to the causal generation of God. For it may very well be the case that the causal generation (and the self-knowledge and existence) of the two conceptual variants of God must be understood differently – and hence that the contradiction between (4) and (5”) can be located precisely here. To be sure, before turning to the question how the causal (self)generation (and self-conception) of God *qua* God (a) and God (c) is to be conceived, we must first ascertain whether it is at all correct to distinguish between two conceptually distinct variants of the divine *res*. Is there any additional textual support for our seemingly preposterous claim?

3.2.1 A coalescent concept?

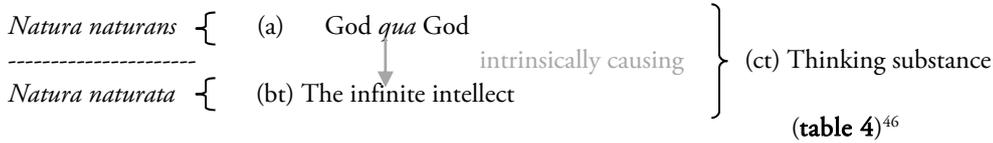
With respect to the different concepts of God that were discerned above, it seems feasible to claim that variant (a) is unproblematic. Spinoza’s explicit reference to the distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* in EIp29s – that was treated extensively in Chapter 1 – appears to leave little doubt as to the validity of the schematic distinction between (a) and (b). Spinoza’s claim that *Natura naturans* must be understood to refer to ‘something that is in itself and conceived through itself’⁴⁴ – a formulation that is identical to the formulation that surfaces in the definition of ‘substance’⁴⁵ – makes it clear that (a) is a conceptual variant of the one substance that Spinoza endorses. Concept (b) appears to be unproblematic too. Even though we have seen that the term *Natura naturata* does not refer to God *realiter*, but merely denotes the modal (or objective) expression of God’s essence, there is little doubt that this concept is championed by Spinoza. But what about variant (c)? Are we entitled to claim that (c) is more than just a schematic concept

⁴⁴ EIp29s, (I) 434.

⁴⁵ EID3 reads: ‘By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself [...]’. (*Per substantiam intelligo id quod in se est & per se concipitur*) EID3, (I) 408.

on our part? Is this coalescent identity of (a) and (b) actually used by Spinoza as a particular concept of God?

It must be admitted straightaway that certain passages from the *Ethics* appear to *rule out* this particular way of understanding substance. An important assertion in EIp17s is a case in point. As already noted in Chapter 1, Spinoza states explicitly in this scholium that ‘neither intellect nor will pertain to God’s nature’. This is problematic in the present context, as with (c) we encounter a concept of God that must be understood to actually *have* an intellect: as table 3 shows, the coalescent conception of God (c) encompasses the infinite modes. Consider table 4, in which I have rendered table 3 in terms of thought:



Even though Spinoza made it very clear that God cannot be claimed to have an intellect, the particular variant of God that surfaces on the right side of table 4 (i.e. thinking substance, or God as a *res cogitans*) evidently does have an intellect. This rendering suggests that the infinite intellect (bt) is an integral part of this coalescent concept of God (ct). Now, can we find further warrant for this claim in the *Ethics*? That is to say: can we distinguish a conceptual variant of God in the *Ethics* that, other than variant (a), can be understood to *have* an intellect (namely the infinite intellect)? I think it is actually rather clear that we can. Below I will provide no less than eight arguments for the claim that Spinoza fosters the conceptual variant of God that surfaces at the right side of the tables 3 and 4.

Argument 1: the infinite intellect of God

A first indication that conceptual variant (c) can indeed be understood to be harboured in the *Ethics* is provided by the important Mereological Claim in

⁴⁶ It may surprise some readers that in this rendering in terms of thought, I have used the term ‘substance’ for level (a), and not the conditional term ‘God’s intellect’ (that was used in table 1 above, and that in Chapter 1 was shown to be the cause of the infinite intellect). The reason for this is that I do not want to confuse my readers too much. In section 3.6, which deals with the way in which we must conceive the notion ‘attribute’, it will become clear (i) that the conditional term ‘God’s intellect’ can indeed be used for level (a), and (ii) why it would be highly confusing to use this term in the present table.

EIIp11c. As we have seen, this claim reads that ‘the human mind is a part of the infinite intellect *of God* [emphasis added]’. Now, the clause ‘of God’ makes it very clear that the infinite intellect of EIIp11c *can* be understood to be ‘God’s intellect’ in a certain sense. When we recall that in Chapter 1 this infinite intellect was shown to be an all-encompassing mode, and that all modes must be understood to be in God (by EIp15) as their formal essences are contained in the attributes (see the previous chapter), it is hard to escape the conclusion that considered in this way, God does have an intellect – an intellect, to be sure, that does not pertain to his essence, but that nevertheless must be understood to be ontologically identical to God (see Chapter 1).

Argument 2: Thinking substance

The first argument is corroborated by the fact that the specific term ‘thinking substance’ – that is used for variant (c) in table 4 – is employed by Spinoza himself. Consider the following important claim in EIIp7s:

whatever can be perceived by an infinite intellect as constituting an essence of substance pertains to one substance only, and consequently [...] the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that.⁴⁷

(quicquid ab infinito intellectu percipi potest, tanquam substantiae essentiam constituens, id omne ad unicam tantum substantiam pertinet, & consequenter quod substantia cogitans, & substantia extensa una, eademque est substantia, quae jam sub hoc, jam sub illo attributo comprehenditur)

From Spinoza’s use of the term ‘thinking substance’ (and indeed, in other passages, ‘God as a *res cogitans*’) we can gather that Spinoza admits some sort of conceptual distinction between God *qua* God, and God insofar as he considered to have his essence expressed by way of an attribute (*in casu*: thought).⁴⁸ As the notion of

⁴⁷ EIIp7s, (I) 451.

⁴⁸ Martial Gueroult makes the same observation when he claims that ‘*chaque attribut ne fait pas connaître par lui seul l’essence de la substance infiniment infinie, mais seulement celle d’une certaine substance, c’est-à-dire d’une des perfections dont Dieu est constitué*’. Gueroult, *Spinoza. Dieu*, 54. To be sure, as will become clear in Chapter 4, the present interpretation differs from Gueroult in an important respect: Gueroult locates both aspects of substance at the level of *Natura naturans*. However, it will become clear that there cannot be posited a conceptual duality at level (a).

‘attribute’ is dependent on the notion of ‘intellect’ – by the famous EID4⁴⁹ – this provides us with a second indication that table 4 must be understood to be a correct rendering of the conceptual structure of the God in the way this concept is employed in the *Ethics*. Spinoza’s claim in EIIp7s suggests that he distinguishes between two concepts of God (that, to be sure, must be understood to be the very same thing): (a) God insofar as he is the active divine *res*, and (c) God insofar as he is expressed as the coalescent identity of his absolutely active being and a passive infinite intellect. For indeed, God can only be conceived (in the way we commonly understand it) as a thinking being when his infinite modal expression (b) is understood in terms of thought.

Argument 3: God’s self-understanding

Consider the following passage from the scholium of EIIp3:

we have shown in IP16 that God acts with the same necessity by which he understands himself, that is, just as it follows from the necessity of the divine nature (as everyone maintains unanimously) that God understands himself, with the same necessity it also follows that God does infinitely many things in infinitely many modes.⁵⁰

(*Propositione 16. partis 1. ostendimus, Deum eâdem necessitate agere, quâ seipsum intelligit, hoc est, sicuti ex necessitate divinæ naturæ sequitur (sicut omnes uno ore statuunt), ut Deus seipsum intelligat, eâdem etiam necessitate sequitur, ut Deus infinita infinitis modis agat*)

The claim that God ‘*understands himself* with the same necessity it also follows that God does infinitely many things in infinitely many modes [emphasis added]’ again appears to posit a conceptual duality in God, consisting of the (active) aspect of God that understands ((a)), and the (passive) aspect of God that is understood ((b)).⁵¹ It is precisely because of this that Spinoza is able to claim in EIp16c1 that

⁴⁹ This definition reads thus: ‘By attribute I understand what *the intellect* perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence [emphasis added]’ (*Per attributum intelligo id quod intellectus de substantiâ percipit tamquam eiusdem essentiam constituens*), EID4, (I) 408.

⁵⁰ EIIp3s, (I) 449.

⁵¹ In the next chapter I will treat the two directions (i.e. *top-down* and *bottom-up*) in which this understanding can be conceived. Provisionally it must be noted that the ‘is understood’-clause refers first and foremost to the *object* of God’s idea that is implied in the trichotomy that characterizes the (finite and infinite) intellect (see section 2.5.3).

‘God is the efficient cause of all things which can fall under an infinite intellect’.⁵² Insofar as the conceptual distinction between God *qua* God (a) and all the things that follow from him (b) is made, God is conceived to *have* an intellect, namely (as was shown in Chapter 1) the very infinite intellect that surfaces in EIIp11c, and that can be understood to be the all-encompassing collection of singular ideas. And hence (c) can be considered to be a conception of God that is endorsed by Spinoza. Indeed, if (c) was not implicitly endorsed in the quoted passage, God’s understanding in the way it is mentioned in EIIp3s could not be rendered God’s understanding of *himself* (*se ipsum*).

Argument 4: God’s intellectual love

Another example of the (c)-variant of God can be found in EVp35. Consider the following passage from this proposition and its demonstration:

P35: God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love.

Dem.: God is absolutely infinite (by ID6), that is (by IID6), the nature of God enjoys infinite perfection, accompanied (by IIP3) by the idea of himself, that is (by IP11 and D1), by the idea of his cause. And this is what we have said (P32C) intellectual love is.⁵³

(PROPOSITIO XXXV. *Deus se ipsum Amore intellectuali infinito amat.*

DEMONSTRATIO. *Deus est absolute infinitus (per Defin. 6. p. 1.), hoc est (per Defin. 6. p. 2.), Dei natura gaudet infinita perfectione, idque (per Prop. 3. p. 2.) concomitante idea sui, hoc est (per Prop. 11. & Defin. 1. p. 1.), idea sua causa, & hoc est, quod in Coroll. Prop. 32. hujus Amorem intellectualem esse diximus)*

Again, as opposed to EIp17s, where Spinoza vehemently denies that God has an intellect, in this proposition and its demonstration it is firmly suggested that, in a certain sense, God *does have an intellect*: he loves himself with an *intellectual* love. Moreover, this intellectual love is explicitly presented here insofar as it has its basis in the conceptual duality between God’s absolute infinity (viz. God conceived as exclusively *Natura naturans* (a)) and the ontologically identical, yet conceptually distinct *idea of himself* from EIIp3 (viz. God conceived as expressed exhaustively in the infinite mode of thought, or *Natura naturata* (b)). Once more, the divine concept (c) finds warrant in a passage from the *Ethics*.

⁵² EIp16c1, (I) 425 (*Deum omnium rerum, quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt, esse causam efficientem*).

⁵³ EVp35, (I) 612.

Argument 5: *Deus sive Natura*

‘*Deus sive Natura*’ is one of the catchphrases of Spinoza’s philosophy. At this point it must be noted that Spinoza can only uphold this famous claim if he champions the coalescent conception of God (c). Indeed, the claim ‘*Deus sive Natura*’ can actually be considered to be the most concise formulation of the coalescent conception of God that is forwarded by Spinoza. The following table may help to explain why:

(a) <i>Natura naturans</i>	}	(c) <i>Deus sive Natura</i>

(b) <i>Natura naturata</i>		

(table 5)

If God is claimed to be identical to nature in its all-encompassing sense, then insofar as the twin-terms *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* are employed, God must be understood to encompass both conceptual aspects in the way rendered in table 5. Or, to adduce a remark from Steven Nadler:

Spinoza identifies *Deus* with *Natura*. Thus, when he tells us that *Natura* includes both a *naturans* aspect and a *naturata* aspect, the natural conclusion would seem to be that *Deus* is to be identified with both of these. God is both the active and the passive dimensions of Nature, what causes (or “natures”) and what is caused (or “natured”).⁵⁴

Indeed, if ‘*Natura*’ in the formula ‘*Deus sive Natura*’ refers to *both Natura naturata and Natura naturans*, then we cannot escape the conclusion that (c) finds (con)textual support in one of the most stereotypical formulations of Spinoza’s philosophy. The term ‘*Deus*’ in the formula ‘*Deus sive Natura*’ must be understood to be equivalent to the coalescent identity of nature’s active and passive dimension.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Steven Nadler, ‘Substance and things in Spinoza’s metaphysics’ in: Charlie Huenemann ed., *Interpreting Spinoza. Critical Essays* (Cambridge 2008), 66.

⁵⁵ This argument finds further warrant in a claim from the KV, where Spinoza states that ‘here [...] we shall briefly divide the whole of Nature into *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*’ (*Alhier zullen wy nu eens [...] kortelyk geheel de Natuur schiften – te weten in Natura naturans en Natura naturata*). KV I Ch. VIII, (I) 91.

Argument 6: The complicated proof for the existence of God

The first proof for the existence of God in the demonstration of EIp11 appears to be unnecessarily complicated. Consider the following claim:

If you deny [that God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, necessarily exists], conceive, if you can, that God does not exist. Therefore (by A7) his essence does not involve existence. But this (by P7) is absurd. Therefore God necessarily exists, q.e.d.⁵⁶

(Si negas, concipe, si fieri potest, Deum non existere. Ergo (per Axiom. 7.) ejus essentia non involvit existentiam. Atqui hoc (per Proposit. 7.) est absurdum: Ergo Deus necessariò existit. Q. E. D.)

One of the puzzles we are confronted with when trying to understand this very first proof for the existence of God is why Spinoza would not argue for the necessary existence of God by simply invoking EID6 instead of EIA7.⁵⁷ For this would seem to be an easier way to underpin EIp11. Consider these claims:

D6: By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence.⁵⁸

(VI. Per Deum intelligo ens absolutè infinitum, hoc est, substantiam constantem infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque æternam, & infinitam essentiam exprimit)

P7: It pertains to the nature of a substance to exist.⁵⁹

(PROPOSITIO VII. Ad naturam substantiæ pertinet existere)

Given these two assertions, the necessary existence of God would seem to be deducible very easily in the following way:

(7) God is a substance consisting of infinite attributes (EID6)

(8) A substance exists necessarily (EIp7)

Hence:

(9) God exists necessarily

⁵⁶ EIp11d, (I) 417.

⁵⁷ This point is made by various scholars. See for instance: Don Garrett, 'Spinoza's "Ontological" Argument', 204, and Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Coherence of Spinoza's Definitions of God', 63.

⁵⁸ EID6, (I) 409.

⁵⁹ EIp7, (I) 412.

It is hard to believe that Spinoza overlooked this obvious possibility for proving the existence of God. So why would he pass over this option⁶⁰ and choose the path of EIA7? I claim (and will show comprehensively in section 3.7) that the complicated proof is induced precisely because Spinoza fully recognizes that God can be understood in two conceptually distinct ways. The following rendering of the ‘easy proof’ in terms of (a) and (c) makes it clear why the easy inference (7)-(9) does not suffice for proving God’s existence:

- (7’) God is a substance consisting of infinite attributes (c)⁶¹
 (8’) A substance (a) exists necessarily
 Hence:
 (9’) God exists necessarily

Clearly, conclusion (9’) is not corroborated by (7’) and (8’). Conclusion (9’) can only be drawn when it would also be ascertained that God (c) and substance (a) refer to the very same thing. The following rendering may make this even clearer:

- (10) Jacob is the third patriarch
 (11) Israel was buried in the Cave of Machpelah
 Hence:
 (12) the third patriarch was buried in the Cave of Machpelah

It is evident that this inference is incomplete. Conclusion (12) can only be drawn when it is ascertained that ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ refer to the very same person. Now, the same goes for God (c) and substance (a) in argument (7’)-(9’). In EIp11d, Spinoza employs the complicated proof in order to ascertain that there is no conceptual mix up whatsoever between the two variants of God. The *reductio*-form

⁶⁰ Remarkably enough, Michael Della Rocca claims that Spinoza actually *does* make the easy inference in the first demonstration of EIp11: ‘One of the ways Spinoza demonstrates [EIp11] is simply by applying 1p7 to God in particular. Since God is, by definition, a substance and since each substance exists necessarily, it follows that God exists necessarily (1p11d1)’. Della Rocca, *Representation*, 5. Now, it is true that Spinoza invokes EIp7 in the first proof for EIp11. But Della Rocca’s ‘simply’ appears to be somewhat misplaced, as Spinoza chooses the remarkable detour via EIA7. Below it will become clear why he would choose this path.

⁶¹ The reason for adhering the (c) to the variant of God under point (7) will become clear in section 3.7. See inter alia note 182.

of the demonstration enables Spinoza to claim that (c) and (a) refer to the very same divine thing. To be sure, the precise structure of his argument in EI_p11d will only be elucidated in section 3.7. The thing to note at this point is that the complicated proof of EI_p11 harbors yet another indication that Spinoza distinguishes between two conceptually distinct versions of ‘God’.

Argument 7: Jacob and Israel

It is important to stress once more that the example of Jacob and Israel that was staged in the previous argument, stems from Spinoza himself. He employs this example in a letter to Simon de Vries in order to show ‘how one and the same thing can be signified by two names’. The example is invoked in order to explain that substance can be signified by two names. This is the passage that Spinoza seeks to elucidate:

By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself [...]. I understand the same by attribute, except that it is called attribute in relation to the intellect [...]⁶²
(Per substantiam intelligo id, quod in se est, & per se concipitur [...]. Idem per attributum intelligo, nisi quòd attributum dicatur respectu intellectùs)

He then provides the following explanation:

you want me to explain by an example how one and the same thing can be designated by two names (though this is not necessary at all). Not to seem niggardly, I offer two: (i) I say that by Israel I understand the third patriarch; I understand the same by Jacob, the name which was given him because he had seized his brother's heel; (ii) by flat I mean what reflects all rays of light without any change; I understand the same by white, except that it is called white in relation to a man looking at the flat [surface].⁶³
(vultis tamen, quod minime opus est, ut exemplo explicem quomodo una, eademque res duobus nominibus insigniri possit. sed ne parcus videar duo adhibeam. 1m. dico per israelem intelligo 3umpatriarcham. idem per Jacobum intelligo. quod nomen Jacobi ipsi imponebatur propterea quod calcem fratris apprehenderat. 2m per planum intelligere volo id quod omnes radios lucis sine ulla mutatione reflectit. idem per album intelligo nisi quod album dicatur respectu hominis planum intuentis)

A lot can be said about the actual suitability of the Jacob-Israel example with respect to the claim that ‘substance’ and ‘attribute’ can be understood to refer to the

⁶² Letter 9, (I) 195.

⁶³ Ibidem, (I) 195-196.

same thing. According to Alan Donagan, the argument that the third patriarch can be designated by two names is invalid with respect to the distinction between ‘substance’ and ‘attribute’, as ‘being the third Patriarch, and grasping his brother’s heel, are different modes of the man called “Israel” and “Jacob”, and not attributes constituting his essence’.⁶⁴ However, the apparent invalidity of the argument need not concern us here. What is of importance in the present context is that – again – Spinoza explicitly stresses that substance – that is: God – can be understood in two ways.

Argument 8: The definition of ‘attribute’

One of the most discussed definitions of the *Ethics* is the definition of ‘attribute’. I will not address all the issues that have been raised with respect to the circumscription that is provided in EID4. Still, this definition must be adduced here, as it appears to corroborate our claim that Spinoza upholds the coalescent concept (c) of God (as well). Spinoza’s definition of ‘attribute’ reads thus:

D4: By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence.⁶⁵
(IV. Per attributum intelligo id quod intellectus de substantiâ percipit tamquam ejusdem essentiam constituens)

If we recognize once more (i) that the notion of ‘attribute’ in the way it is staged in this definition is dependent on the notion of ‘intellect’, and furthermore (ii) that Spinoza asserts in EIp4d that the definition of ‘attribute’ implies that substances and their attributes are ‘*the same* [emphasis added]’ (*idem est*),⁶⁶ it appears to become clear that the notion of attribute in the way it surfaces in EID4 refers to the very coalescent concept of God ((c)) that we are treating in this section. Insofar as God is considered to be identical to his intellect-dependent attributes (i.e. the attributes in the way defined in EID4),⁶⁷ Spinoza must be understood to forward an intellect-dependent concept of God in the *Ethics*.

⁶⁴ Alan Donagan, ‘Essence and the Distinction of Attributes in Spinoza’s Metaphysics’ in: Genevieve Lloyd ed., *Spinoza. Critical Assesments* (London 2001), 55.

⁶⁵ EID4, (I) 408.

⁶⁶ EIp4d, (I) 411.

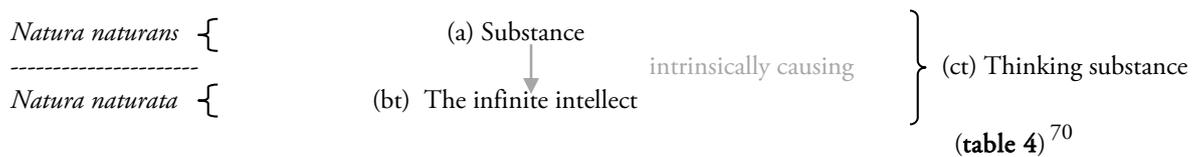
⁶⁷ In section 3.6 we will see that the attributes, which are defined in their conceptual (i.e. *intellect-dependent*) guise, must also be considered to have an ontological (i.e. *extra-intellectual*) aspect.

Actually, this argument was already used in a disguised form above in Argument 2, when we invoked the passage from EIIp7s in which the term ‘thinking substance’ is used. Consider this passage once more:

whatever can be perceived by an infinite intellect as constituting an essence of substance pertains to one substance only, and consequently that the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that.⁶⁸

(quicquid ab infinito intellectu percipi potest, tanquam substantiæ essentiam constituens, id omne ad unicam tantum substantiam pertinet, & consequenter quòd substantia cogitans, & substantia extensa una, eademque est substantia, quæ jam sub hoc, jam sub illo attributo comprehenditur)

It cannot escape our attention that this passage harbors a specified version of EID4. In this scholium Spinoza makes it clear that the ‘intellect’ in EID4 can be understood to refer to the *infinite* intellect (as well).⁶⁹ And this in turn enables me to provide the following renderings of the coalescent concept of God. In terms of thought, the two concepts of God (viz. substance) were portrayed thus:

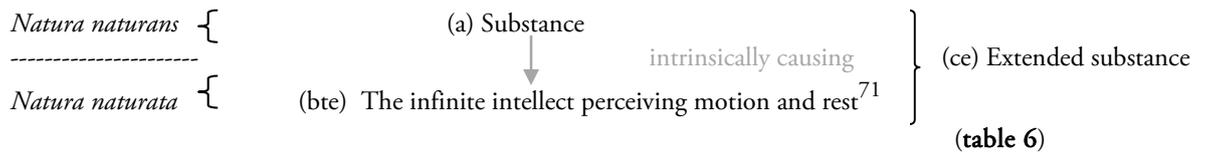


Given the statement in EIIp7s, this can be translated in terms of extension in the following way:

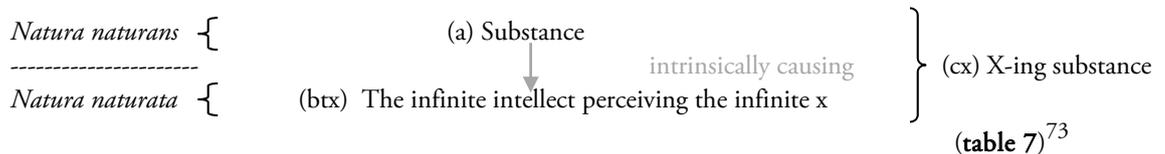
⁶⁸ EIIp7s, (I) 451.

⁶⁹ This need not surprise us, as we have seen in the previous chapter that a finite intellect and the infinite intellect vary only in scale. Both can be understood to be (i) modes that (ii) are characterized by the duality of the formal and the objective being of the things that constitute it. This implies that both the finite and the infinite intellect can be understood to perceive God’s essence in the very same way. The present interpretation makes it clear why Spinoza would be entitled to use the distinct formulations from EID4 and EIIp7s. On any other interpretation the distinct formulations threatens to lead to (and indeed has led to) severe disagreement between commentators concerning the question what definition of attribute must be considered to be the right one.

⁷⁰ Two things must be added with respect to this table. Firstly, I make use of the term ‘substance’ (instead of ‘God *qua* God’) here only because this way of putting thing is more clear in the present context. The change of terms does is not in any way meant to have philosophical implications. Secondly, it must be noted that the correct rendering of (bt) would actually be ‘The infinite intellect perceiving the infinite intellect’. This self-perception of the infinite intellect is in line with our claims in the previous chapter concerning bifurcation of the infinite intellect in the whole of objective nature and the absolutely infinite intellect. However, not to complicate things too much, I have omitted this aspect in the present table. More on this internal bifurcation in the attribute of thought in the next chapter.



And in terms of any of the infinite attributes, including thought and extension:⁷²



These renderings bring us closer to an understanding of Spinoza’s definition of ‘attribute’. On the basis of the tables 4, 6 and 7, the definition of attribute can be understood in the following way:

*an attribute (cx) is what the (infinite) intellect perceives – i.e. the infinite x – of substance (a) as constituting its essence.*⁷⁴

⁷¹ ‘Motion and rest’ is Spinoza’s term for the infinite mode of extension. See the previous chapters.

⁷² That Spinoza claims that God consist of an *all-encompassing* infinity of attributes is clear from his claim in the demonstration of EIp14, where he states that ‘God is an absolutely infinite being, of whom no attribute which expresses an essence of substance can be denied (by D6)’. EIp14d, (I) 420 (*Cum Deus sit ens absolutè infinitum, de quo nullum attributum, quod essentiam substantiæ exprimit, negari potest (per Defin. 6.)*).

⁷³ The use of the ‘x’ may be somewhat confusing, as earlier in this study I have used the ‘r’ for the remaining attributes. I use the ‘x’ here, because in this table does not deal with the *remaining* attributes (i.e. any of the infinite attributes *except* thought and extension), but with *any* of the infinite attributes (i.e. *including* thought and extension).

⁷⁴ It is very important to stress that in this claim the term ‘the infinite x’ must be understood to be coupled with ‘what the infinite intellect perceives’, and not with ‘substance (a)’. See the previous chapter and note 70. One more thing can be noted: this way of rendering things provides us with an understanding of why Spinoza would use the term ‘perceives’ (*percipit*) instead of ‘conceives’ (*concipitur*) in his definition of attribute. This is his way of making it clear that the intellect is able to somehow ‘cross the boundaries of the attributes’ (more on this particular representative aspect of thought in Chapter 5). If Spinoza would have used ‘conceive’ in EID4, this would have suggested that the attribute of extension (and indeed any other of the remaining attributes) can be *conceived* through the attribute of thought (under which the intellect must be understood to resort), which is opposed by EIp10. The only attribute that *can* be *conceived* by the infinite intellect is the attribute of thought, as in this case – and in this case only – the infinite intellect does not need to cross the boundaries of the attributes in order to grasp the attribute under scrutiny. Knowing this, we can provide the following adjusted version of EID4: ‘By attribute of *thought* I understand what the intellect *conceives* of a substance, as constituting its essence. And by the *remaining* attributes I understand what the intellect *perceives* of a substance, as constituting its essence’.

It must be admitted straightaway that this rendering of EID4 does not solve the many problems that are detected with respect to Spinoza's use of the notion 'attribute'.⁷⁵ One of the things that needs elucidation is how the infinite *x* can be understood to be mediated by the infinite mode of one specific attribute: thought (bt).⁷⁶ Moreover, the problem of the simplicity of God as opposed to the multiplicity of attributes, of the compatibility of the attributes, and of the real distinction between the attributes are far from tackled.⁷⁷ However, in this section we are not concerned primarily with elucidating Spinoza's seemingly hermetic definition of 'attribute'. Rather, we need to establish whether EID4 can be understood to corroborate the claim that Spinoza employs a coalescent concept of God (as well). Now, our elucidation makes it clear that EID4 and EIIp7s indeed underpin our assertion that in the *Ethics* Spinoza fosters a conception of the divine *res* that is dependent on the notion of intellect in the way we commonly understand it. That is to say: the tables 4, 6 and 7 can be understood to be a schematic rendering of the very intellect-dependence of the infinite attributes that is made explicit in EID4 and EIIp7s. And hence, apart from God *qua* God yet another concept of 'God' – i.e. the intellect-mediated version of God, or God insofar as he is conceived to consist of (and to be identical to) infinitely many intellect-dependent attributes – can be understood to be endorsed by Spinoza.

One more thing must be added. *Prima facie* the present argument may appear to imply that there are infinitely many (c)-versions of God, as Spinoza can be understood to claim that there are infinitely many attributes. However, it must be stressed that it was not my intention to argue that (ct) or (ce) (or any other single attribute) can be understood to be referred to as 'God (c)'. Rather, the point that I wanted to make was (i) that an intellectual (and hence coalescent) grasping of the divine essence is part of Spinoza's metaphysical toolkit, and (ii) that God can be conceived as God (c) insofar as he is understood to consist of an all-encompassing

⁷⁵ Haserot identified three ambiguities in Spinoza's definition of 'attribute'. See: Francis S. Haserot, 'Spinoza's Definition of Attribute' in: *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 62, No. 4 (1953), 499. To be sure, various other scholars have also given attention to EID4. See for instance Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza. Dieu* (Paris 1968), 48-56; R.J. Delahunty, *Spinoza* (London 1985); Della Rocca, *Representation*, Chapter 9.

⁷⁶ In Chapter 5 we will see that this can be understood once the *axiomatic representational character of thought* is acknowledged.

⁷⁷ This enumeration of problems is inspired by Delahunty. See: Delahunty, *Spinoza*, 118-119.

infinity of attributes.⁷⁸ In this sense the (c)-conception of God is fully corroborated by Spinoza's own definition of God in EID6. Recall that this definition reads thus:

By God, I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, *a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes*, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence [emphasis added].⁷⁹

(Per Deum intelligo ens absolutè infinitum, hoc est, substantiam constantem infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque aeternam, & infinitam essentiam exprimit)

The first thing to note with respect to this definition is that in EID6, 'God' is defined in terms of the intellect-dependent attributes of EID4, which makes the concept 'God' in EID6 intellect-dependent as well.⁸⁰ Hence, EID6 corroborates our claim that Spinoza distinguishes a (c)-version of God. Secondly, it is important to remark that, as (say) thinking substance *qua* thinking substance (i.e. (ct) from table 4') does not consist of an infinity of attributes (but rather is the expression of one attribute), (ct) cannot be understood to be God (i.e. the one or unique substance) itself.⁸¹ The same argument can be invoked with respect to any of the infinite attributes when considered in isolation from the others. However, as soon as the attributes are considered in their all-encompassing totality, things are different. For God is defined as consisting of an infinity of attributes. Hence, the claim in EIp4 that substances and attributes are the same (*idem est*) must be understood to express the view that substances and their all-encompassing totality of attributes are the same.⁸² It is of course precisely because of this that Spinoza

⁷⁸ See note 72.

⁷⁹ EID6, (I) 409.

⁸⁰ As we will see in section 3.6, in the context of Spinoza's philosophy there must also be conceived to be an *ontological* (i.e. intellect-independent) variant of the attributes. However, it seems rather clear that in EID6 Spinoza makes use of the concept of 'attribute' that has just been introduced in EID4.

⁸¹ Spinoza appears to use the same argument himself in EIp10s, when he claims that 'from these propositions it is evident that although two attributes may be conceived to be really distinct [...], we still cannot infer from that that they constitute two beings, or two different substances' (*Ex his apparet, quod, quamvis duo attributa realiter distincta concipiantur, hoc est, unum sine ope alterius, non possumus tamen inde concludere, ipsa duo entia, sive duas diversas substantias constituere*), EIp10s, (I) 416. If the remark 'from these propositions' (*ex his*) is taken to refer to EIp9 and EIp10 – which would seem to be a rather uncontroversial claim – then Spinoza's remark can be understood to mean that attributes cannot be substances as, even though they are conceived through themselves, *there belong no attributes to attributes* (to paraphrase EIp9).

⁸² This formulation may seem to suggest that I think that Spinoza's God is *constituted* by the infinite attributes (and hence, that God must be understood to be dividable). However, this is not my claim. When using the name 'Jacob' in order to refer to the third patriarch, not all conceptual aspects of the third patriarch are taken into account. Still, the name 'Jacob' *can* be understood to refer to the third patriarch

stresses in EID6 that God is ‘*absolutely* infinite’,⁸³ and adds in the explication that God is not ‘infinite in its own kind’.⁸⁴ Yet another way of saying this is that ‘(c)’ must be understood (and understood only) in the sense of *(cx)* from table 7: God insofar as he consist of an all-encompassing totality of attributes that each is ‘infinite in its own kind’, that ‘have always been in [substance] together’,⁸⁵ and that all express the very same essence in a certain way.

*

The arguments adduced show that there is ample textual support in the *Ethics* for the assertion that Spinoza’s mature philosophy harbors a coalescent conception of God. As soon as God is claimed to understand his own all-encompassing modal expression, to have an intellectual love for everything that follows from him, to be (self)mediated by an infinite intellect, and to consist of an all-encompassing totality of intellect-dependent attributes each of which expresses his eternal and infinite essence in a certain way, the one or unique substance must be conceived insofar as it is understood in the sense of (c), i.e. as the coalescent identity of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. Indeed, we are able to distinguish (at least) three concepts that refer to one and the same absolutely infinite divine being:

- (a) *Natura naturans* (or God *qua* God)
- (b) *Natura naturata* (or the all-encompassing totality of all the infinitely many things that follow from God (a) in infinitely many ways)
- (c) the *coalescent identity* of (a) and (b) (or God, consisting of the all-encompassing totality of intellect-dependent attributes)

qua third patriarch (as well). In the same way the attribute of (say) thought refers to God *qua* God – and not to merely one of the infinitely many constitutive aspects of God *qua* God – even though these other aspects of God are not taken into account in this particular description. Furthermore it is important to stress that God *qua* God can only be *described* exhaustively – as opposed to serve as an exhaustive *reference* – when all the relevant aspects (*in casu*: the infinitely many attributes) are taken into account. Concept (c) concerns precisely this concept of God: God *qua* God, not insofar as he is considered as an absolute reference (a), but insofar as he is understood to be described exhaustively in terms of his attributes. More on this in section 4.3.3.1, Argument 3.

⁸³ EID6, (I) 409 (*Per Deum intelligo ens absolute infinitum*).

⁸⁴ EID6 Exp., (I) 409 (*Dico absolutè infinitum, non autem in suo genere*).

⁸⁵ EI10s, (I) 416 (*quandoquidem omnia, quæ habet, attributa simul in ipsâ semper fuerunt*).

We must now turn to the question how these three concepts can be conceived to be susceptible to God's causal power. For, as already noted in section 3.1, knowledge of the causal (self)generation of God may provide us with insight into the way God must be understood to know himself (and to exist) *insofar as he is God*. This of course is crucial information in a study that deals with *pars melior nostri* and the way this eternal part of our minds derives its thinking capacity from God.

3.3 The causal generation of *Natura naturata* (b)

In the present chapter we are investigating Spinoza's concept of 'God' because we can only attain a coherent view of the exact metaphysical status of our intellect if we understand the causal generation (and hence self-conception) of the absolute independent being our better part is claimed to be in and to be conceived through. Looking for an answer to the question in what way the self-causation of God must be conceived, we encountered the following apparent contradiction:

(4) God does *not* cause himself intrinsically (nor extrinsically), but from the perfection of his nature (by EIp17c1), i.e. in the sense of (3)

Yet:

(5) God causes himself in the same sense as he causes all things (by EIp25s)

That is:

(5') God causes himself in the same sense as he causes the ontologically identical unspecified infinite modes, i.e. intrinsically

Hence:

(5'') God causes himself intrinsically, i.e. in the sense of (1)

The previous section has brought us a step closer to a possible solution to the problem that is presented in the points (4)-(5''). Acknowledgement of the fact that Spinoza uses different concepts of God in the *Ethics* provides us with way in which the opposing claims in (4) and (5'') can be reconciled. For once it is recognized that Spinoza uses different concepts of 'God', the contradiction from (4)-(5'') may be solved by acceding that the variant of God that causes himself from the perfection of his nature (EIp17c) is different from the concept of God that causes himself in

the same sense as he causes all things (by EIp25s). To be sure, this conclusion cannot be drawn yet. In order to make it clear how (if so) the assertions in EIp17c1 and EIp25s can both be upheld, we must turn to an analysis of the causal generation of the three concepts that all (ultimately) refer to very same divine *res*. Indeed, knowing that we are able to distinguish three concepts that can all be understood to have the very same substance as their reference, we must be cautious when we use the term ‘substance’ (or ‘God’) and claim that it is caused (and that it conceives and exists) in a certain way.⁸⁶

Recall that we formulated an alternative causal thread that must be understood to be applicable to substance:

There is a thing that can be conceived as:

- (3) a substance, that is: as a *causa sui* that is caused, *neither intrinsically nor extrinsically*, but *from the perfection of its own nature*.

When we state that the one or unique substance is self-caused and (self-conceived) in the way of (3), we will have to be absolutely clear about what variant of (the concept that refers to) this unique substance must be understood to be caused in this way. Hence, in our search for the causal (and conceptual) status of God it is necessary to treat the status of the three mentioned concepts separately. In this section I will start with the – by the looks of it – least problematic point: the causal generation of *Natura naturata* (b). In subsequent sections the causal generation of respectively God (c) and God *qua* God (a) will be addressed.

Trying to avoid confusion when reasoning about the causation of God, concept (b) indeed seems to be the least problematic, as neither in the *Ethics*, nor in any other of Spinoza’s works the terms ‘God’ or ‘substance’ is used with reference to *Natura naturata*. Terms that Spinoza employs in this respect are (inter alia) ‘(absolutely) infinite intellect’, ‘God’s idea’, and ‘the whole of nature’. In the previous chapters we have seen that *Natura naturata* is to be considered a *mode* instead of a substance, as it merely *follows* from the necessity of the divine nature. So it appears to be

⁸⁶ As already noted in the introduction of this chapter, Spinoza stresses himself that ‘most errors consist only in our not rightly applying names to things’.

reasonably clear that concept (b) cannot be understood to be fall within causal category (3).

Still, in order not to omit anything, we must consider the causal characteristics of (b) once more. Concerning the causal generation of the infinitely many things that can be conceived to be a *part* of (b) (and that in their totality can be understood to constitute (b)),⁸⁷ we can claim the following: ‘all the modes that follow from God’ can be understood to be caused in the two ways that were distinguished in Chapter 2: each of the infinitely many singular things that fall under an infinite intellect (EI_p16) can be conceived to be caused intrinsically as to their formal being, and extrinsically as to their objective being. This was rendered thus:

A thing can be conceived:

- (1) *Formally*, that is: as to its intrinsically caused eternal and infinite existence

And that very same thing can be conceived:

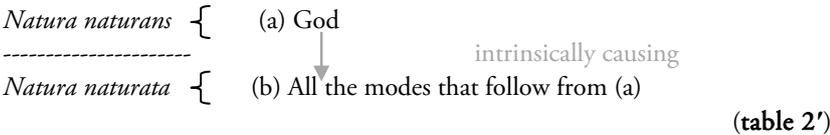
- (2) *Objectively*, that is: as to its extrinsically caused durational and finite existence

Indeed, in the previous chapter we have seen that it is a defining aspect of modes that, insofar as they are conceived to exist eternally (1), they are caused intrinsically (and must be understood to be infinite), and insofar as they are conceived to exist under duration (2), they are caused extrinsically (and must be understood to be finite).

To be sure, a treatment of the causal status of ‘all the modes that follow from God’ does not suffice when treating the way in which *Natura naturata* must be understood to follow from *Natura naturans*. For we are not primarily interested in

⁸⁷ More on the perspective from which the whole indeed is *constituted* by its parts (in which case the parts are conceived to be *prior* to their whole) in the next chapter. It may be instructive to add here that this is not the only perspective that is recognizable in the *Ethics*. Spinoza also makes use of a perspective from which the whole is in a certain sense prior to its parts (see also Chapter 2, note 22). This distinction will be elucidated in the chapters 4 and 5.

the causal status of the *parts* that constitute (b). Rather, we are interested in the way (b) *itself* is caused (or, in terms of EIIp3: we are not primarily interested in the *ideas of all the things that follow from God's essence*, but first and foremost in *the idea of God*). Now, with respect to the causal status of the unspecified infinite modes, it is important to note once more that Spinoza does not claim that these things are self-causing (i.e. are caused in the way of (3)). As we saw in the previous chapter, unspecified infinite modes are stated to follow intrinsically (1) from God's attributes. Or, as I have rendered it in table 2':



In Chapter 2 a lot has been said already concerning the way the intrinsic causation of ideas 'both of God's attributes and of singular things' must be understood. Our findings enable us to conclude that with respect to (b) there is no problem with the assertion that this concept is caused intrinsically in the way of (1).⁸⁸ However, this is not to say that the intrinsic causation of variant (b) is entirely without problems. We must still consider a seemingly problematic aspect of the causation of (b) that has not been addressed yet. It is this: *prima facie* the unspecified infinite modes (i.e. *Natura naturata* (b)) are caused *intrinsically only*, as there is nothing that can be conceived to be extrinsic to them.⁸⁹ And hence the existence that can be attributed to *Natura naturata* (b) seems to be of the eternal variant only (as we have claimed that intrinsic causes (1) necessarily lead to (conceived) eternal existence). However, this confronts us with the following problem: as *Natura naturata* must be conceived

⁸⁸ Moreover, it is precisely because of this that we have stressed in Chapter 1 that Edwin Curley actually does have a point when he claims that 'there is surprising little textual support [for] the assumption that what is the cause of its own existence, for Spinoza, is the whole of Nature, that the term "substance," while it connotes independent existence, denotes the totality of things'. Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 42. That is to say: we need not be astounded by the fact that there is surprising little textual support for the claim that 'substance' and 'the whole of nature' are absolutely identical, as they must be understood to be *conceptually distinct*. It is precisely because of the important conceptual distinction between God and the all-encompassing totality of the infinitely many things that follow from him, that Spinoza does not use the term 'substance' when referring to an infinite mode (just as we cannot use the term 'third patriarch' when someone asks us the *name* of the man who is so-called because he fought with an angel).

⁸⁹ Indeed, in section 2.6.1 we have claimed that 'it is important to notice that extrinsic causation is only applicable to things of which the eternal essence does *not* involve existence under duration'.

to exist under duration (as well), it seems that it must be considered to be *subject to extrinsic causality (2) too*. Is there a way out of this? Can we uphold our claim that there is nothing external to *Natura naturata* and still argue for the extrinsic causal (and durational) aspect of this concept? I think we can. The thing to note in this regard is that, even though (b) as a whole cannot be conceived to be caused extrinsically, (b) can nevertheless be conceived to have an ‘extrinsic (and durational) flavour’. This can be shown adducing something that was already referred to in the first two chapters. We have seen that, as opposed to the attributes, the infinite modes can be conceived to consist of parts. Indeed, insofar as the unspecified *Natura naturata* (b) is considered *qua Natura naturata* and this infinite mode is conceived objectively, it can be conceived to consist of infinitely many finite parts that must be understood to exist under duration (namely all the objective beings of the things that constitute the whole of nature). This can be rendered thus:

$$(b) \text{ Natura naturata} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{(b-i) } \textit{Natura naturata} \text{ in its } \textit{formal being}, \text{ consisting of } \textit{eternal and infinite parts-with-a-vista} \\ \text{(b-ii) } \textit{Natura naturata} \text{ in its } \textit{objective being}, \text{ consisting of } \textit{durational and finite parts} \end{array} \right. \quad \text{(table 8)}$$

Now, it seems to be precisely the part structure that is applicable to (b-ii) that accounts for the extrinsic (and durational) character of (b). For even though (b-i) – the immediate infinite mode (under any of the infinite attributes) – and (b-ii) – the whole of nature (under any of the infinite attributes) – are not caused extrinsically (as there is nothing external to these infinite things), all the finite parts that can be conceived to constitute the whole of nature (b-ii) *are* operative in the extrinsic causal chain of EIp28. This in turn makes it clear that the (unspecified) infinite modes (b) may not be caused extrinsically, but can nevertheless be conceived to be *characterized by extrinsic causation* (and hence *by duration*).⁹⁰

⁹⁰ This way of putting things of course leads to the question how it is possible that durationally flavored *Natura naturata* does not in turn ‘contaminate’ God (c) with its durational flavor. The answer must be that God (c) *is* actually contaminated by *Natura naturata*. It appears to be precisely because of this that Spinoza states in Letter 50 that anyone who claims that God is one or unique is speaking of him ‘very improperly’. That is to say: according to Spinoza the only proper way to speak about God would be *to speak about Natura naturans only* (which appears to be impossible as any intellectual operation (in the way we commonly understand it) posits *Natura naturata* along with it. The assertion of impropriety that slips in when calling God one and unique, I claim, must be understood to be Spinoza’s expression of the (inter alia) temporal contamination of the coalescent concept of God. More on this in a subsequent section.

The present way of safeguarding extrinsic causation (and duration) with respect to *Natura naturata* may strike some as highly speculative, as – apart from the things that were stated in section 2.6.2 – there appears to be little direct evidence for it. Yet, I think that this account of the status of the unspecified infinite modes can be upheld nevertheless, as there surely can be found additional indirect textual support in Spinoza’s work. In the *Ethics* Spinoza uses a concept that appears to be applicable precisely to the specific durational character of the whole of nature: insofar as an infinite mode is conceived as the all-encompassing aggregate of the finite durations of the infinitely many modes that follow from God’s causal power, it can be granted ‘duration conceived without beginning or end’ (EID8),⁹¹ i.e. *sempiternal* existence. The clause in EID8 makes it clear that this particular way of conceiving eternity is part of Spinoza’s conceptual toolkit. This becomes even clearer when we acknowledge what is being said in EIID5. Consider this definition:

Duration is an indefinite continuation of existing.⁹²
(Duratio est indefinita existendi continuatio)

Definitions EID8 and EIID5 teach us that Spinoza makes use of the concept of indefinite continuation of existence. Now, the whole of nature (under any one of the infinite attributes) – that is: (b) *qua* (b) in its objective state (i.e. (b-ii)) – is the one and only individual in Spinoza’s metaphysical universe that exists under duration, but that due to its claimed infinity cannot be understood to have a beginning or an end. And hence it is precisely this thing (and this thing only) that can be allotted indefinite continuation of existing (or sempiternity). And as the whole of nature is characterized by duration in this way, it can also be understood to be characterized by extrinsic causation, even though there is nothing extrinsic to this unique infinite individual.

This conclusion is corroborated by the very proposition which treats extrinsic causation: EIp28. Recall that this proposition reads thus:

⁹¹ EID8, (I) 409 (*tametsi duratio principio, & fine carere concipiatur*). To be sure, in this explication Spinoza focuses on a variant of existence that does *not* involve duration. But the very denial that is expressed here implies that he also distinguishes a variant of existence that *does* involve duration. Spinoza makes the distinction precisely because in his metaphysics there can be distinguished (at least) two variants of existence.

⁹² EIID5, (I) 447.

Every singular thing, or any thing which is finite and has a determinate existence, can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another cause, which is also finite and has a determinate existence; and again, this cause also can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another, which is also finite and has a determinate existence, and so on, to infinity.⁹³

(*Quodcunque singulare, sive quævis res, quæ finita est, & determinatam habet existentiam, non potest existere, nec ad operandum determinari, nisi ad existendum, & operandum determinetur ab aliâ causâ, quæ etiam finita est, & determinatam habet existentiam: & rursus hæc causa non potest etiam existere, neque ad operandum determinari, nisi ab aliâ, quæ etiam finita est, & determinatam habet existentiam, determinetur ad existendum, & operandum, & sic in infinitum*)

The important thing to note is that this proposition makes it clear that Spinoza fully accepts the notion of an infinite causal chain of finite things.⁹⁴ As all the modes – hence including the finite singular modes that are staged in EIp28 – together are claimed to constitute *Natura naturata* (in EIp29s),⁹⁵ it is clear that, insofar as *Natura naturata* is conceived to consist of infinitely many finite parts, it must be understood to be made up of singular things that exist under duration, that are caused by other singular things that exist under duration, and so on to infinity. In other words: considered in this specific way, *Natura naturata* must be understood to be characterized by the extrinsic causal thread that is posited in EIp28. And it is precisely the cumulative duration of all the singular things that constitutes the infinitely recessing (and extending) causal thread that accounts for the sempiternity of the whole of nature (and thus the durational aspect of the unspecified (b)).

⁹³ EIp28, (I) 432.

⁹⁴ In the early modern period, this was a controversial position. Medieval cosmological arguments for the existence of God for instance use as a premise the axiom that the causation of finite things cannot regress infinitely. See: Brian Leftow, ‘Arguments for God’s existence’ in: *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy* II (Cambridge 2014), 741-746. However, in Letter 12 Spinoza makes it clear that a cosmological argument need not necessarily derive its force from the premise that there is no infinite regress of causes. Referring to a *reductio* argument by Crescas, he states that ‘the force of the argument lies not in the impossibility of an actual infinite or an infinite series of causes, but only in the assumption that things which by their own nature do not necessarily exist are not determined to exist by a thing which necessarily exists by its own nature’. Letter 12 in: *Complete Works*, 791. This emphasis of Spinoza is understandable. For he wants to be able to provide a cosmological argument himself, without needing to take refuge in a denial of an infinite causal thread.

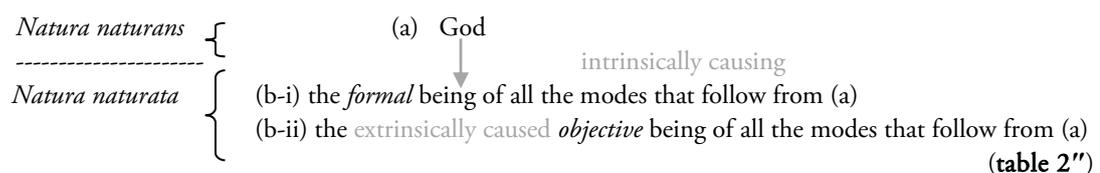
⁹⁵ EIp29s, (I) 434.

Where does this leave us? The elaboration in this section suggests that the causal variants (1) and (2) can both be understood to be applicable to (b). This is of course precisely what we would expect of something that is *in alio* by definition (as *Natura naturata* is claimed to follow from the necessity of God's nature).⁹⁶

Moreover, turning from a substance into an (unspecified) infinite mode is the prize that (b) must pay for being caused intrinsically. Furthermore, if this unspecified infinite mode itself is conceived as to its formal and its objective existence (see table 8) (i.e. when this infinite mode *qua* infinite mode is 'conceived to be actual in two ways' by way of our intellect), it is the exhaustive part of the immediate infinite mode – viz. the whole of nature as one individual – that surfaces in its durational (*in casu*: sempiternal) guise. Indeed: given the presented evidence we can assert that *Natura naturata* (b) can be conceived:

- (b-i) formally, insofar as it is conceived as to its eternal existence as an intrinsically caused (1) immediate infinite mode
- (b-ii) objectively, insofar as it is conceived as to its sempiternal existence as an infinite individual (i.e. the whole of (objective) nature of EIIL7) that is characterized by the extrinsic causality (2) of its constituting parts.

Rendered in the vein of table 2':



This table can also be stated in terms of EVp29s, the scholium that provides a basis for the recognition of the *constructive function of the intellect*. In terms of this scholium, our findings in the present section can be rendered thus:

Our intellect conceives Natura naturata (qua Natura naturata) as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive it to exist as a mediate infinite

⁹⁶ Ibidem, (I) 434.

mode that exists sempiternally and is characterized by the extrinsic causality of its constituting parts (b-ii), or insofar as we conceive it as an intrinsically caused immediate infinite mode that exists eternally (b-i).

Regarding the subject that was treated in this section we can conclude that the causal variant that needs closer elucidation – (3): the self-causation (and self-conception and existence) of God – is not applicable to *Natura naturata*. Even though conceptual variant (b) must be understood to be an efficiently caused necessary instantiation of *Natura naturans*, it cannot in any way be understood to be *causa sui*. And hence, if we want to solve the contradiction between EI_p17c1 (which appears to *deny* intrinsic causality with respect to God) and EI_p25s (which appears to *require* that God causes himself intrinsically), we must turn to a treatment of the two other notions that we have shown to refer to the infinite divine substance.

3.4 The causal generation of God (c)

Having established that there does not seem to be severe danger of confusing (b) with the one or unique substance (as *modes are not substances*), we can turn to an analysis of the causal status of concepts (a) and (c). Concerning these two variants of God, the danger of confusion is far more threatening than in the case of (b). Consider the following rendering once again:

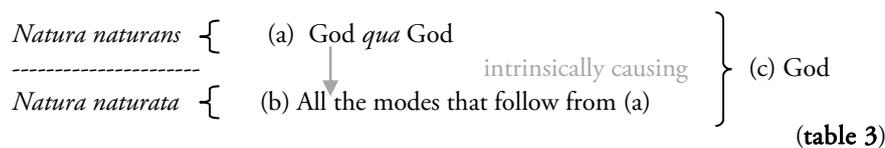


Table 3 makes it clear that (a) and (c) can both be denoted with the term ‘God’ (or ‘substance’), which implies that we must be cautious indeed. That is to say: when considering the causal (and conceptual) status of the divine *res*, we will have to be absolutely clear about whether we are claiming that variant (a), or that variant (c) is caused in a specific way. In the present section I shall scrutinize the causal generation of the (c)-version of the one or unique substance. Analyzing the way in which this concept can be understood to be *causa sui*, we will encounter another

strong argument for the fact that the conceptual distinction between God *qua* God (a) and God (c) is fully recognized by Spinoza. For, as will become clear below, these variants each fall within the confines of causal concept (3) in a different way. The key to this difference can be found in the very first definition in the *Ethics*: the definition of *causa sui*.

3.4.1 The psychological definition of *causa sui*

In order to understand the way in which God can be understood to be caused (and to be self-conceiving), we must turn to EID1. This definition reads thus:

D1: By *causa sui* I understand that whose essence involves existence, *or* that whose nature cannot be conceived except existing.⁹⁷

(*Per causam sui intelligo id, cujus essentia involvit existentiam, sive id, cujus natura non potest concipi, nisi existens*)

It is hard to overlook the fact that the definition of *causa sui* actually harbors two descriptions of what it is to be self-causing. According to Spinoza, a thing can be understood to be *causa sui* (i) if its essence involves existence, and (ii) if its nature cannot be conceived except existing. Don Garrett remarked that ‘the two parts of this definition provide logical and psychological ways, respectively, of describing logically necessary existence’.⁹⁸ Recognition of this important distinction in turn suggests that our point (3) can be differentiated too. It seems that there must be a version of self-causation that expresses the first part of EID1, and a version of (3) that expresses the second part of EID1. In this section I will concentrate on the part of the definition that posits the relation between self-causation and conception. That is to say: we will turn to the *psychological* version of *causa sui*, that is recognizable in the second part of EID1.

Consider the psychological definition of *causa sui* once more:

By *causa sui* I understand [...] that whose nature cannot be conceived except existing.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ EID1, (I) 408.

⁹⁸ Don Garrett, ‘Spinoza’s Ontological Argument’ in: *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 88, No. 2 (1979), 203.

⁹⁹ EID1, (I) 408.

(Per causam sui intelligo id, [...] cujus natura non potest concipi, nisi existens)

Now, it is crucial to acknowledge that the term ‘existing’ (*existens*) in this particular context must be understood to entail both eternal existence *and* existence under duration. This can be shown in the following way:

(I) *any* thing in nature can be conceived to exist *as an eternal truth*

This is evident, not only from the things that were said in the previous chapter, but also from a remark in EVp37d. Consider the following passage:

intellectual love follows necessarily from the nature of the mind insofar as it is considered as an eternal truth, through God's nature (by P33 and P29) ¹⁰⁰

(intellectualis Amor ex Mentis naturâ necessariò sequitur, quatenus ipsa, ut æterna veritas, per Dei naturam consideratur (per Prop. 33. & 29. hujus.))

This claim makes it very clear (again) that the human mind (and indeed any other thing in nature) can be understood to be an eternal truth, namely insofar as it is understood ‘through God’s nature’.¹⁰¹ This in turn teaches us that in a certain sense:

(II) *any* thing in nature cannot be conceived *except existing* (namely as an eternal truth (I))

Indeed, if something – say: a human mind – is considered as an eternal truth, it is conceived as to its *eternal existence* (see Chapter 2). To be sure, we still have to account for a claim forwarded in EIp24:

P24: The essence of things produced by God does not involve existence.

Dem.: This is evident from D1. For that whose nature involves existence (considered in itself), is its own cause, and exists only from the necessity of its nature.¹⁰²

(PROPOSITIO XXIV. Rerum à Deo productarum essentia non involvit existentiam.

¹⁰⁰ EVp37d, (I) 613. In Chapter 5 it will be elucidated how the eternity of the intellect (and things that are grasped with it) must be understood.

¹⁰¹ In Chapter 5 we will see that the human intellect can be attributed yet another variant of eternity.

¹⁰² EIp24d, (I) 431.

DEMONSTRATIO Patet ex Definitione 1. Id enim, cujus natura (in se scilicet considerata) involvit existentiam, causa est sui, & ex solâ suæ naturæ necessitate existit)

We can gather two important things from this proposition. Firstly, we learn that, even though singular things can be conceived as to their eternal existence, this is not to say that their nature can be understood to *involve* existence. Apparently the *involving* of existence requires an extra condition (to which we will turn shortly). Secondly, it becomes clear from EIp24 and its demonstration that according to Spinoza it is evident that ‘things produced by God’ – i.e. *modes* – cannot be understood to be self-causing. The force of the proof is based entirely on the supposition that it is evidently wrong to assume that modes fall within the scope of EID1. Hence:

(III) the eternally existing truths of modes are *not* considered to be *causa sui* by Spinoza

At this point we draw near to the way in which we must understand the distinction between the eternal truth of modes and the eternal truth of God. On the basis of points (I)-(III) it becomes evident that:

(IV) In order to exclude the possibility that modes can be conceived to be self-causing (namely, insofar they are conceived to exist as an eternal truth), the ‘existence’ that is referred to in the latter part of definition of *causa sui* must entail existence under duration.

Indeed, *any* thing in nature can be conceived to exist as an eternal essence without existing at a certain moment under duration; it is the sole prerogative of God (and of the things that, although conceptually distinct, are ontologically identical to God, namely the unspecified infinite modes (b))¹⁰³ that he cannot be conceived *not*

¹⁰³ It is the conceptual distinction between substance and its ontologically identical unspecified infinite modes that accounts for the fact that these infinite modes cannot be understood to be *causa sui*, even though – unlike in the case of finite modes – their eternal essence is necessarily instantiated under duration. An infinite mode cannot be understood to be self-caused *because it follows from substance (a)*. And hence its essence does not involve existence: an infinite mode does not exist necessarily *qua infinite mode*, but rather *qua being caused by something else* (i.e. substance *qua* substance) in such a way that the

to exist under duration. Hence, the involvement of existence that is referred to in EIp24d cannot but entail both eternal and sempiternal existence, a claim that can be rendered in the following formula:

whereas in the case of both God and the infinitely many finite modes that follow from him durational existence involves eternal essence, only in the case of God eternal essence involves durational existence.

If the essence of a thing is claimed to *involve* existence, this existence must be understood to entail both eternal and durational existence. Indeed, on Spinoza's account it would be absurd that God's creation – that must be understood to be ontologically identical to the creator – would not exist 'without beginning or end'.¹⁰⁴

From this elaboration we can gather that the second part of the definition of *causa sui* must be understood in the following way:

A causa sui is that whose nature cannot be conceived except existing both eternally and under duration.

This in turn implies that a thing can only be understood to be self-causing (3) – that is: in the way of the second part of EID1 – *if it also exists in the way of both (1) and (2)*. On closer scrutiny, this need not surprise us. Recall that I have argued for the all-encompassing character of God's causal power. In the previous chapter it was shown that EIp16 must be understood to be Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude, which encompasses the causal threads of EIp21-EIp23 (1), and EIp28 (2). As God's power and his essence are claimed to be the same (in EIp34),¹⁰⁵ the conceptual variants of existence (as staged in (1) and (2)) must also be encompassed as soon as God's plenitudinal causal power is defined in terms of self-causation (3).¹⁰⁶ As (1) and

formal being of the infinite mode *qua* infinite mode (i.e. the immediate infinite mode) exists necessarily (and objectively) under duration (i.e. as the whole of nature).

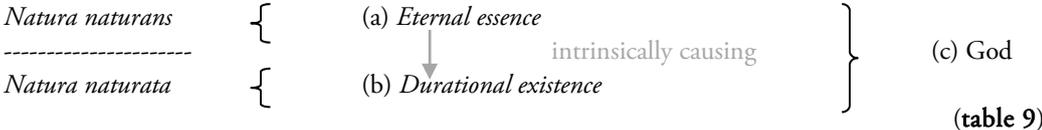
¹⁰⁴ EID8, (I) 409 (*principio, & fine carere concipiatur*).

¹⁰⁵ EIp34, (I) 439 (*Dei potentia est ipsa ipsius essentia*).

¹⁰⁶ With respect to the principle of plenitude of EIp16 it is furthermore important to notice that (i) the self-causation of (c) can be conceived to be the divine causal power insofar as it is conceptually prior to the bifurcation of that same power in the causal threads of (1) and (2), and thus that (ii) the coalescent conception of substance is in an important (conceptual) sense *prior* to substance *qua* substance. This

(2) are shown to be conceptual variants of the causal power with which God causes himself, the conceptual existences that accompany these causal threads (i.e. *eternal* and *durational* existence) cannot but be understood to be encompassed by the notion of *causa sui* (3).¹⁰⁷

Understanding the ‘psychological’ part of EID1 in this way, it becomes clear that this aspect of the definition of *causa sui* must be understood to be applicable to the coalescent conception of God. Indeed, claiming that in the case of God *eternal essence involves durational existence* amounts to stating that in this particular case, the divine *res* must be conceived insofar as duration is understood to be encompassed by it. The following rendering may be elucidative in this respect:



In this way of conceiving the purport of what it is to be self-causing, we encounter the coalescent conception of the one or unique substance. Table 9 reiterates something that was already noted above: formulated in terms of *conceived eternal existence*, God’s self-causing operation entails his exhaustive *modal* expression (which indeed must be understood to encompass existence under duration – see the previous section). As the duration that is implied in the psychological part of *causa sui* (see (I)-(IV)) cannot but be operative at the level of *Natura naturata*, the self-causing operation that is addressed in this part of EID1 must be the operation that treats the causal generation of God (*c*), that is: the conceptual variant of the divine *res* that entails the notion of duration.

Table 9 actually teaches us something more. For on the basis of this table we are able to solve the contradiction between EIp17c1 and EIp25s. In order to see this, it is instructive to consider the schematic rendering of this contradiction once more. The seemingly opposing claims in EIp17c1 and EIp25s were rendered thus:

remarkable conceptual priority will be treated more extensively in the next chapters, which will deal with the two kinds of ‘adequate knowledge’ that Spinoza distinguishes. Provisionally it can be noted that this apparent conceptual priority accounts for the *bottom-up* perspective that will be elucidated in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁷ A similar observation is made by Mogens Laerke, when he claims that ‘divine self-causation constitutes the common ontological ground of all causation’. Laerke, ‘Spinoza and the Cosmological Argument according to Letter 12’, 76.

(4) God does *not* cause himself intrinsically (nor extrinsically), but from the perfection of his nature (by EIp17c1), i.e. in the sense of (3)

Yet:

(5) God causes himself in the same sense as he causes all things (by EIp25s)

That is:

(5') God causes himself in the same sense as he causes the ontologically identical unspecified infinite modes, i.e. intrinsically

Hence:

(5'') God causes himself intrinsically, i.e. in the sense of (1)

Table 9 allows us to understand how the contradiction of (4)-(5'') can be neutralized. The conceptual distinction between concepts (a), (b) and (c) offers a way in which the (c)-variant of God can be claimed to fall within the scope of a causal thread (3), without causing itself intrinsically (i.e. in the way of (1)).

Consider the following causal claim:

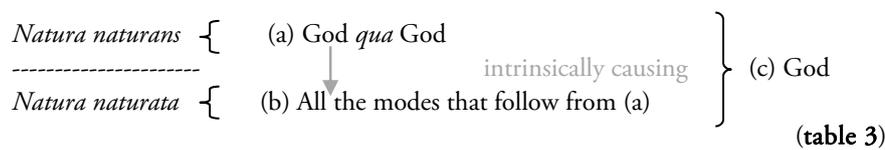
God, insofar as he is conceived to consist of an infinity of attributes (c), is the cause of himself, because God qua God (a) causes the infinitely many things in infinitely many modes that are in him (and that are identical to him) (b)

Or to state the same thing more concisely:

(c) is the cause of itself, because (a) causes (b)

This particular claim offers a solution to the contradiction that is rendered in the enumeration (4)-(5''). The first thing that must be acknowledged in this respect is that rendered in this way, variant (c) can be claimed to be *causa sui*: the coalescent version of God is constituted by two conceptual aspects that function as cause and (identical) effect. Secondly, with this take on the self-causation of the divine *res*, we seem to have found a way in which it is possible to maintain the claim that God's causal power in the way it surfaces in his Principle of Plenitude encompasses (and only encompasses) intrinsic (1) and extrinsic causation (2), while at the same time upholding a separate causal class for the one or unique substance: (3). For on the

one hand variant (c) meets the important condition from EIp17c1 that God is caused neither intrinsically nor extrinsically (4). Yet on the other hand it does not counteract the claim from EIp25s that God is the cause of himself in the same sense in which he¹⁰⁸ is called the cause of all things (5). The given formula makes it clear that the coalescent concept that is denoted with the term ‘God (c)’ is caused *neither extrinsically nor intrinsically*. The existence of God (c) simply *follows from the perfection of the nature of (c)*, a perfect nature that is characterized by the fact that *Natura naturans* (a) causes the conceptually distinct but ontologically identical *Natura naturata* (b) intrinsically. Consider the following table once more:



This rendering makes it even clearer that the self-causation of God (c) can indeed be conceived to be constituted by the two conceptual aspects (a) and (b) (which is required by the remark from EIp25s), without the implication that God (c) is caused either extrinsically or intrinsically (which is required by the remark of EIp17c1). In terms of our intellect, this can be stated thus:

We conceive God (c) as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive him to exist as Natura naturans (a), or insofar as we conceive him as the ontologically identical Natura naturata (b) that is caused intrinsically by (a).

On this reading, God (c) can be understood to be *causa sui* as a two-place predicate (Jarrett) consisting of the aspects (a) and (b), without the unwelcome implication that the coalescent variant of God is caused intrinsically. Another way of saying this is that this particular variant of the self-causation (and self-conception) of God is not susceptible to the criticism that the effect of the self-causing operation is merely a mode. In the case of variant (c), the one or unique substance is conceptually distinguished from the infinitely many things that follow from it in infinitely many ways because in the case of God (c) the ontological identity of the conceptually

¹⁰⁸ This ‘he’ denotes another conception of God (i.e. (a)) than the notion ‘God’ earlier in the sentence (which refers to (c)). Spinoza aims to solve this conceptual mix-up in the first proof of EIp11, as we shall show in section 3.6.

distinct (a) and (b) is fully accounted for. Indeed: God (c) falls outside the scope of the intrinsic causal operation with which *Natura naturans* (a) causes *Natura naturata* (b) as in the case of God (c), God *qua* God (a) is recognized to be identical to the all-encompassing totality of things that fall under the infinite intellect (b). This particular variant of the divine *res* hence expresses the coalescent conception of the absolute identity of the divine *res* and the infinitely many modes that follow from it, whereas (b) merely represents the means¹⁰⁹ with which this coalescence can be grasped *a posteriori*.¹¹⁰

In the introduction of this chapter I have suggested that apart from the causal threads (1) and (2), there must be distinguished yet another causal concept. This was rendered tentatively in the following way:

There is a thing that can be conceived as:

- (3) a substance, that is: as a *causa sui* that is caused, *neither intrinsically nor extrinsically*, but *from the perfection of its own nature*.

An analysis of the second part of the definition of *causa sui* has shown us that this claim can actually be differentiated. In this section we have seen that, apart from intrinsic (1) and extrinsic causation (2), we can distinguish *self*-causation of the *coalescent* variant of the one or unique substance, a variant of causation that does

¹⁰⁹ It is important to stress that the term ‘means’ with respect to the infinite modes (b) stems from Spinoza himself. In the *Theological-Political Treatise* he says the following: ‘We can call the *means* required by this end of all human action – i.e., God insofar as his idea is in us – God’s commands, because God himself, insofar as he exists in our mind, prescribes them to us, as it were [emphasis added]’ (*Media omnium humanarum actionum, nempe ipse Deus, quatenus ejus idea in nobis est, exigit, jussa Dei vocari possunt, quia quatenus in nostra mente existit*). TTP Ch. IV, (II) 128. Indeed, in this passage our idea of God is staged as a *means* with which we can attain ‘the ultimate end and object of all human actions’ (*scopus omnium humanarum actionum*), that is: ‘the knowledge and love of God’ (*cognitionem scilicet et amorem Dei*). Ibidem, (II) 128.

¹¹⁰ Spinoza explicitly uses (b) in his *a posteriori* proof in the *aliter* demonstration of EIp11 when he claims that ‘we exist, either in ourselves, or in something else, which necessarily exists [...]. Therefore an absolutely infinite Being [...] necessarily exists [...].’ EIp11d, (I) 418. The same *a posteriori* reasoning, in which (b) is used as a *means* that provides a *coalescent* understanding of an absolute being, is provided in the demonstration of EIIp1. More on this ‘bottom-up perspective’ in the next chapter.

not defer the effect to *modal* existence (as is the case with intrinsic causation).
Indeed:

There is a thing that can be conceived as:

(3-(c)) The coalescent variant of God (i.e. God (c)) that is caused as a *causa sui* as a *two-place predicate*.

It must be stressed once more that point (3-(c)) expresses the ‘psychological’ part of EID1. This is hardly surprising as the very notion of ‘conceiving’ that is staged in the second part of the definition of *causa sui* posits a conceptual duality between that which *conceives* and that which *is conceived*. To be sure, we can only gather a full understanding of God’s self-causation (and hence of God’s self-knowledge insofar as he is God) when we also understand in what way we must grasp the ‘logical’ part of EID1. This is the subject of the next section.

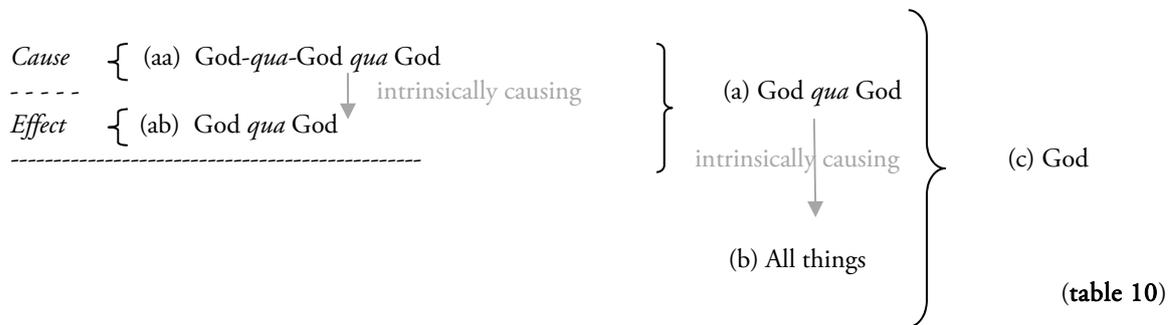
3.5 The causal generation of God *qua* God (a)

We have seen that it is feasible to distinguish (at least) three concepts of causation (and conceived existence) in Spinoza’s work: (1), (2) and (3-(c)). Having established that *Natura naturata* (i.e. the infinitely many things that follow from the divine *res* (b)) must be understood to be caused in the way of (1) and (2), and that the coalescent identity of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* (i.e. God (c)) falls in causal category (3-(c)), we can turn to an investigation of the way in which *Natura naturans* (i.e. God *qua* God) (a) is caused.

The first thing to note in this respect is that, even though variant (a) must be understood to be *causa sui*, this concept cannot be considered to be self-causing in the way of conceptual variant (c). Whereas God (c) can be claimed to be *causa sui* because this concept comprises both *Natura naturans* (a) and *Natura naturata* (b), it seems that the strictly causal aspect (i.e. God *qua* God (a)) of this bifurcation cannot be conceived in this way. That is to say: if *causa sui* is understood exclusively as a two-place predicate, a thing can only be conceived to be *causa sui* when it is

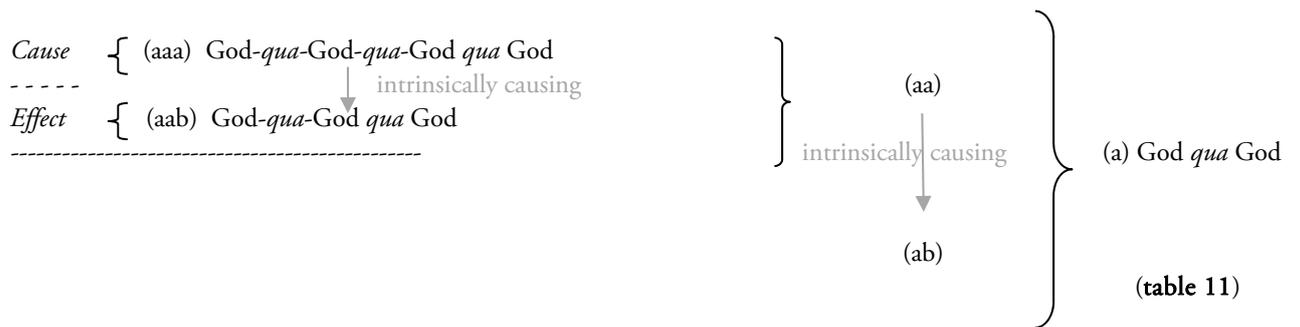
possible to conceive of the thing as a conceptual duality of cause and effect.¹¹¹ Indeed, it seems that a thing can only be conceived to be *causa sui* as a two-place predicate (i.e. in the psychological sense of (3-(c)), that expresses the necessary duality that characterizes the intellect) if the identity of that thing is constituted by an active aspect (that *causes*) and a passive aspect (that *is caused*). Yet, as variant (a) must be understood to denote *the active aspect of the divine res only*, it appears to be impossible for God *qua* God (a) to involve the conceptual duality that is incorporated in the coalescent notion of God.

This point can be elucidated using a method that was favored by Spinoza himself: a *reductio ad absurdum*. Let us consider the possibility that God *qua* God can be claimed to be *causa sui* in the psychological way of (3-(c)). In this case, the strictly causal aspect of the divine *res* must be understood to be an effect of itself. That is to say: in this case we must make a conceptual distinction between an *active cause and a passive effect* at the level of God *qua* God. Thus, variant (a) must be understood to encompass God *qua* God (i.e. the passive effect of this higher order self-causing operation) and God-*qua*-God *qua* God (i.e. the active cause of this operation). Consider the following table, in which I provide a rendering of this particular self-causing operation:



Now, if we want to uphold the claim that the self-causation of variant (a) falls under (3-(c)) (as is supposed in our present *reductio* argument), the new concept that surfaces in the upper part of table 10 – i.e. variant (aa) – must be considered to be caused by itself *itself*. And hence this particular causal aspect incorporates a passive effect (i.e. (aa), or God-*qua*-God *qua* God) and an active cause (i.e. (aaa), or God-*qua*-God-*qua*-God *qua* God). This leads to the following rendering (remark that, due to the subsequent causal operation, table 11 only takes God *qua* God (a) into account – variants (b) and (c) are out of sight now):

¹¹¹ See note 29.



And again, the new causal aspect (aaa) must be conceived to be *causa sui* itself, and thus to encompass an active cause (aaaa) and a passive effect (aaab), and so on to infinity.

From this we gather that God *qua* God can only be conceived to be *causa sui* in the sense of (3-(c)) when we are willing to admit the *necessary coalescent* character of the divine *res*, and an *infinite regress of self-causing stages*. Now, it is true that Spinoza does not steer away from bold assertions; the very notoriety that he has gained in the history of philosophy is due to the fact that Spinoza often offers radical solutions to existing problems. Indeed, how else can we evaluate his claims that *God and nature are the very same thing*, or that *God thinks by way of the human mind*? Still, in the present case it seems hard to sustain that Spinoza is willing to defy common expectations. Both characteristics – a necessary coalescent character of the divine *res*, and an infinite regress of self-causing stages – do not seem to be workable options when interpreting the *Ethics*. In the demonstration of EI_p7 Spinoza asserts that a substance is *causa sui*. If we are right in assuming that this claim can also be inverted (i.e. that a substance is not only necessarily *causa sui*, but that a thing that is *causa sui* also necessarily is a substance (which is a clear implication of Spinoza’s definition of substance)),¹¹² it is hard to escape the conclusion that if God *qua* God (a) is self-causing in the same way as God (c), then an infinity of substances must be admitted. As the latter is absurd in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy (by EI_p14),¹¹³ so also is the former.

¹¹² As according to Spinoza a substance must be understood as something ‘whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed’ EID3, (I) 408 (*id, cujus conceptus non indiget conceptu alterius rei, à quo formari debeat*). So as soon as something is *causa sui* and hence does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed, it would seem to qualify as a substance.

¹¹³ In EI_p14 Spinoza states: ‘Except God, no substance can be or be conceived’ (*Præter Deum nulla dari, neque concipi potest substantia*), EI_p14, (I) 420.

This *reductio* argument can be formalized thus:

- (i) Suppose that God *qua* God is *causa sui* as a two-place predicate
- (ii) If God *qua* God is *causa sui* as a two-place predicate, then it must consist of a *passive* and an *active* aspect
 - (ii') This latter active aspect must be understood to be *causa sui* as a two-place predicate itself, and hence must be understood to consist of a *passive* and an *active* aspect itself
 - (ii'') This latter active aspect must be understood to be *causa sui* as a two-place predicate itself, and so on to infinity
- (iii) Whatever is *causa sui* is a substance
- (iv) There must be understood to be an infinity of substances (by (ii)-(iii))
- (v) (iv) is absurd in the context of Spinoza's philosophy as '[e]xcept God, no substance can be or be conceived'
- (vi) So (i) is wrong: God *qua* God *c a n n o t* be understood to be *causa sui* as a two-place predicate¹¹⁴

This *reductio* argument provides us with a strong indication that the (a)-variant of the divine *res* cannot be understood to be caused in the way of (3-(c)). But if God *qua* God is not caused in the way of (3-(c)), then how *is* he caused? Referring to the things we have said in the previous chapters, we can state this problem in the following way too: how can a God that is claimed to be devoid of an intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) nevertheless *conceive* himself? Or in terms of EI_p8s2: how can Spinoza assert that 'the truth of substances is not outside the

¹¹⁴ One could object that this argument merely makes it clear that there must be conceived to be an infinity of (conceptual) *aspects* of the one substance (in the very same way we have identified the aspects (a) and (c) without assuming that Spinoza thus forwards two ontologically distinct substances). However, it must be noted that in the case of this *reductio* argument, (c), (a), (aa), (aaa), *et cetera*, are portrayed as being self-caused *in the very same way*. Given the close connection between causation and conception in the context of Spinoza's philosophy, this seems to thwart the possibility for understanding the distinction between these infinitely many aspects to still be merely *conceptual*; it is because of this that I have staged them as *ontologically* distinct substances. In contrast, the different aspects of the one and unique substance that emerge in the present interpretation – i.e. (a) and (c) – can be understood to be conceptually distinct *precisely because they can be conceived to differ in the way they are self-causing*. Indeed, in the remainder of this section it will become clear that Spinoza champions an alternative way of understanding the causal generation of (a), a way that emerges (inter alia) in the first part of EID1, and that accounts for the extra-intellectual (and non-regressing) way of (divine) self-conceiving that is forwarded in EI_p8s2.

intellect unless it is in themselves, because they are conceived through themselves’?¹¹⁵

With respect to variant (c) we have shown that God is able to conceive himself because this particular conceptual variant of the one or unique substance expresses the coalescent conception of the absolute identity of the eternal substance *qua* substance (a) and the durational all-encompassing totality of the infinitely many modes that follow from it (b); God (c) is able to know himself due to a conceptual distinction between God *insofar as he is conceived to know*, and God *insofar as he is conceived to be known*.¹¹⁶ It is precisely this conceptual distinction that expresses the *psychological* character of causal concept (3-(c)). However, with respect to variant (a) this road cannot be taken. Hence, as God *qua* God cannot be understood to be characterized by any conceptual distinction, we seem to be forced to draw a remarkable provisional conclusion: apparently, in a certain sense *the divine res cannot be understood to be self-conceived at all*. And given the close ties between self-conception, self-causation and existence, this appears to imply that on the present reading *the divine res cannot be understood to be caused or to exist at all*.¹¹⁷

Strange as this tentative claim concerning the non-existence of God may sound in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy, it must be stressed that this position is not entirely alien to his way of thinking. There is some textual support for the assertion that Spinoza does actually provide this bold solution to the present problem. Consider the following passage in the CM:

¹¹⁵ EIP8s2, (I) 414 (*Verum substantiarum veritas extra intellectum non est, nisi in se ipsis, quia per se concipiuntur*).

¹¹⁶ In the next chapter we will see how this knowledge must be understood precisely.

¹¹⁷ This view is (partly) endorsed by Wolfson, who claims: ‘We thus have in Spinoza the following equation: necessary existence = *causa sui* = that whose essence involves existence. All of these expressions [...] mean primarily nothing but causelessness.’ H. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza I* (New York 1961), 127. Mogens Laerke, on the other hand, states the following concerning the supposition that substance can be considered to be an *ens a se* that is uncaused: ‘On Spinoza’s view, is this a correct account of God’s necessary existence? Even a cursory look at *Ethics* could seem to yield a fairly straightforward answer to the question, namely: No. According to EIP7D, a substance is not only a conceptually self-sufficient thing or *ens a se*, but also a self-caused thing: ‘A substance cannot be produced by anything else (by P6C); therefore it will be the cause of itself [. . .]’. Hence, since God by definition is a substance (EID6), He is not *sine causa*, but *causa sui*’. Laerke, ‘Spinoza and the Cosmological Argument according to Letter 12’, 65. In the remainder of this section it will become clear how we must evaluate the claim concerning the non-existence of God (a).

the created thing can be said to enjoy existence, because existence is not of its essence; but God cannot be said to enjoy existence, for the existence of God is God himself, as is his essence also; from which it follows that created things enjoy duration, but that God does not in any way.¹¹⁸

(quòd res creata potest dici frui existentiâ, nimirum quia existentia non est de ipsius essentiâ: Deus verò non potest dici frui existentiâ, nam existentia Dei est Deus ipse, sicut etiam ipsius essentia; unde sequitur res creatas duratione frui: Deum autem nullo modo)

This passage clearly suggests that, considered in a certain sense, Spinoza's God indeed cannot be understood to exist. Applying this particular remark to the things we have said so far, the following tentative claims can be made:

- modes exist in the sense of (2) – at level (b-ii)
- modes also exist in the sense of (1) – at level (b-i)
- God (c) exists in the sense of (3-(c))
- God *qua* God (a) does not exist at all.

To be sure, the PCP (that contains the CM as an appendix) is not very trustworthy when uncovering the intricacies of Spinoza's metaphysics. In the words of Lodewijk Meyer: 'let no one think that [Spinoza] is teaching here either his own opinions, or only those which he approves of'.¹¹⁹ So at this point we certainly cannot consider the last point to be an expression of Spinoza's mature view on the existential status of God *qua* God. In order to determine whether the claim in the CM must be understood to be corroborated or counteracted by Spinoza's assertions in the *Ethics*, we must turn to a closer scrutiny of the definition of *causa sui*.

3.5.1 The logical definition of *causa sui*

We have seen that the (a)-variant of the divine *res* cannot be understood to be *causa sui* in the way of the second part of EID1, which we have called *the psychological* definition of *causa sui*. Testing whether this conceptual variant can be understood to be caused (and exist) at all, we must now investigate whether God *qua* God meets the condition put forth in the first – or logical – part of EID1.

The logical part of the definition of *causa sui* reads thus:

¹¹⁸ CM II, Ch. 1, (I) 317-318.

¹¹⁹ PCP, Preface, (I) 229 (*Quamobrem iudicet nemo, illem hic aut sua, aut tantum ea, quae probat, docere*).

By *causa sui* I understand that whose essence involves existence¹²⁰
(Per causam sui intelligo id, cujus essentia involvit existentiam)

It must be established now in what way this logical part can be said to differ from the psychological part of EID1. In order to fully understand this distinction, it is informative to recall what we have said regarding the self-causing variant that can be attributed to God (c). With respect to the psychological part of EID1 we have ascertained that it involves a *conceptual duality* between an absolute eternal essence (a) and the exhaustive modal expression under duration of this essence (b). This conceptual bifurcation was rendered thus:

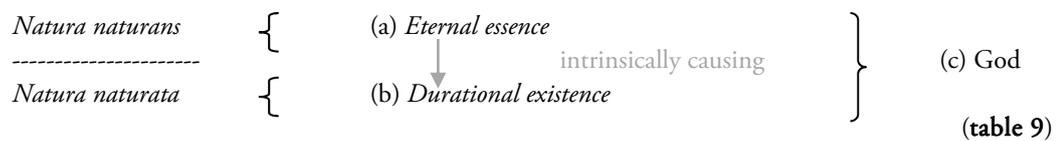


Table 9 shows that God’s self-causing operation – insofar as it is applicable to the coalescent conception of the divine *res* – entails his exhaustive expression under duration. As we saw, it is because of this that God (c) can be conceived to be *causa sui* as a *two-place* predicate: the (c)-variant of God is self-causing in the psychological sense insofar as its eternal essence is conceptually distinct from its existence under duration. As it was formulated above:

A c a u s a s u i is that whose nature cannot be conceived except existing both eternally and under duration.

It is precisely the conceptually distinct durational aspect of God (c) that was shown to occupy one of the two places in the notion of *causa sui* as a two-place predicate. In other words: the psychological definition of *causa sui* is to be seen as a two-place predicate because the necessary duality that characterizes the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) is entailed in it via the very conceiving operation that is staged in the second part of EID1.

Now, we have seen that variant (a) *cannot* be understood to be self-caused in this particular way because God *qua* God cannot in any way be understood to be susceptible to an intrinsic duality of an eternal and a durational aspect. The

¹²⁰ EID1, (I) 408.

question we face is the following: can the logical part of EID1 be understood in a way that makes it clear that (i) God *qua* God (a) *is* self-caused (and hence exists and conceives himself), although (ii) *not* in the way of God (c)? I think this question can be answered affirmatively. Below it will become clear that the first part of EID1 can be understood to forward the concept of *causa sui* as a *one-place predicate* in which, to adduce a formulation from Mogens Laerke, a cause causes a *cause* (instead of an *effect*).¹²¹

In order to see this we must adduce the following claim in the demonstration of EIp24 once more:

This is evident from D1. For that whose nature involves existence (considered in itself), is its own cause, and exists only from the necessity of its nature.¹²²

(*Patet ex Definitione 1. Id enim, cujus natura (in se scilicet considerata) involvit existentiam, causa est sui, & ex solâ suæ naturæ necessitate existit*)

We have already treated this demonstration in a previous section, where it was shown that if and only if the nature of a thing *involves* existence, this thing can be understood to be a *causa sui* (and hence a substance). In this sense, this demonstration was elucidative with regard to the causal aspect of (3-(c)) and the way in which it must be distinguished from causal variants (1) and (2). The thing to note in the present context is that the claim in EIp24d is also instructive with respect to the particular variant of self-causation that can be ascribed to God *qua* God (a). For this demonstration makes it clear that the two concepts that are used in the *logical* part of EID1 – ‘essence’ and ‘existence’ – do not refer to both the realms of eternity (a) and duration (b) (in the way of the psychological part of EID1). In the demonstration of EIp24 Spinoza states explicitly that the claim in EID1 concerning the essence involving existence (i.e. the logical part of the definition) deals with existence *considered in itself*, that is (by EID8): with ‘existence [...] conceived as an eternal truth’ that ‘cannot be explained by duration’. This teaches us that the self-causing operation must be understood to be operative exclusively at level (a); duration (i.e. level (b)) is clearly claimed *not* to be implied in it. And as we have shown that there cannot be understood to be any duality at level

¹²¹ See note 28.

¹²² EIp24d, (I) 431.

(a), we cannot but conclude that the logical part of EID1 forwards the concept of *causa sui* as a one-place predicate.

This remarkable way of understanding the self-causation of God (a) finds further corroboration in an important claim that can be found in the CM.

Consider the following passage:

duration is an affection of existence, and not of the essence of things. But since God's existence is of his essence, we can attribute no duration to him. Whoever attributes duration to God distinguishes his existence from his essence.¹²³

(duratio est affectio existentiae, non verò essentiae rerum; Deo autem, cujus existentia est de ipsius essentia, nullam durationem tribuere possumus. Qui enim Deo illam tribuit, ejus existentiam ab ejus essentia distinguit)

From this assertion – which can be found in the very same chapter in which the claim concerning the non-existence of God surfaces (see above) – we can gather that, apart from a concept of existence that is meant to denote existence under duration, Spinoza also distinguishes a variant of existence – i.e. the very existence of God – that must be understood to be *absolutely free from duration*. So again we encounter a variant of divine existence that does not take (b) into account and hence cannot be understood to be *causa sui* as a two-place predicate.

One could object that the passage can be found in the CM and hence cannot be considered to be an expression of Spinoza's mature position – indeed in the very same way the claim about the non-existence of God was supposed to be unreliable (see above). However, when we know that the assertion concerning the attribution of duration to God is used by Spinoza as an explication of proposition 19 of part I of his PCP,¹²⁴ and that this very proposition 19 from the PCP in turn is referred to in an assenting way in the *Ethics* (namely in the scholium of EI_p19, where Spinoza states that 'I have also demonstrated God's eternity in another way (Descartes' Principles IP19), and there is no need to repeat it here'),¹²⁵ it becomes clear that the posited absolute identity of eternal essence and (eternal) existence with respect to

¹²³ CM II Ch. I, (I) 316.

¹²⁴ Spinoza concludes the proof of proposition 19 thus: 'So God has, not a limited, but an infinite existence, which we call eternity. See our *Appendix, II, 1* [emphasis added]'. PCP Ip19, (I) 261 (*ergo Deus non limitatam, sed infinitam habet existentiam, quam aternitatem vocamus. Vide cap. 1. Part. 2. nostr. Append.*).

¹²⁵ EI_p19s, (I) 428 (*Deinde (Prop. 19. Principiorum Cartesii) alio etiam modo Dei aternitatem demonstravi, nec opus est eum hinc repetere*).

God is an enduring position of Spinoza. Hence it need not surprise us that this very absolute identity of essence and existence, in which *no duration is attributed to God*, surfaces not only in EIp24d (see above), but also (and even more clearly) in EIp20, which reads explicitly that ‘God’s existence and his essence are one and the same’.¹²⁶ This makes it abundantly clear that in Spinoza’s mature metaphysics, he also fosters *a concept of existence that is free from of a durational aspect* (whence he is able to add in EIp20c1 that ‘God’s existence, like his essence, is an eternal truth’).¹²⁷ And as this particular variant of existence is explicitly claimed to be applicable to God, it seems that there must also be a causal concept that is attached specifically to this absolutely eternal (i.e. absolutely non-durational) existence of God. Now, at this point it is not too hard to see what causal concept is applicable to the non-durational existence of God. Spinoza’s assertion in the demonstration of EIp24 (see above) makes it clear that God *qua* God (a) is *causa sui* in the way forwarded in the *logical part* of EID1. God *qua* God must be understood to be self-causing as a *one-place predicate*, i.e. as a *cause causing a cause*.¹²⁸

This in turn enables us to conclude that, apart from the three senses of causation that were distinguished so far ((1), (2) and (3-(c))), we can single out yet another concept of causation. The causal generation (and existence) of God, which was rendered tentatively in (3), can be subdivided in the following way:

There is a thing that can be conjectured to exist as:

- (3-(a)) The eternal truth of God (i.e. God *qua* God (a)) that is caused as a *causa sui* as a *one-place predicate*
- (3-(c)) The coalescent variant of God (i.e. God (c)) that is caused as a *causa sui* as a *two-place predicate*.

Indeed, in this section it has become clear that the divine *res* can be understood to be self-causing in two ways. Insofar as the one or unique substance is understood in its *coalescent being*, the absolute essence of this substance (at level (a)) can be conceived to cause the infinitely many things that follow from it in infinitely many

¹²⁶ EIp20, (I) 428 (*Dei existentia, ejus' que essentia unum & idem sunt*).

¹²⁷ EIp20c1, (I) 428 (*Dei existentiam, sicut ejus essentiam, aeternam esse veritatem*).

¹²⁸ See note 28.

ways (at level (b)). And insofar as this substance is understood *as to its essence* only – an essence in which the formal essences of things must be understood to be contained ubiquitously (see Chapter 2) – the conceptual duality that is characteristic for the self-causing operation of the coalescent variant of the one or unique substance evaporates. God *qua* God is characterized by an *absolute identity* of essence and existence.

3.5.2 Absolute identity

Recall that we started our investigation into the causal characteristics of God because we are interested in the way God *conceives* himself. The things we have seen above are elucidative in this respect. Our conclusions suggest that there must be detectable a special variant of divine self-knowledge, that – unlike the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) – cannot be understood to be characterized by a conceptual duality. It seems that, apart from God’s self-conception (and existence) in the way we commonly understand it (i.e. as characterized by a conceptual duality), Spinoza’s philosophy also harbors a variant of God’s self-conception (and existence) that is on a par with the remarkable concept of causation as a one-place predicate. This variant can be described tentatively as ‘God’s self-knowledge insofar as it must be understood to be *absolutely outside the intellect* in the way we commonly understand it, and that is characterized by an *absolute identity* of the active and the passive aspect of the conceiving operation’. Now, can this concept of God’s self-knowledge be recognized in Spinoza’s work? Can our interpretation of the causal generation of God *qua* God be understood to be corroborated by claims concerning the self-conception and existence of this particular concept of the divine *res*? I think it can. Below I will provide two comprehensive arguments for this position. The first argument deals with the oneness of God, the second will address the extra-intellectual self-knowledge of God.

Argument 1: The oneness of substance

In Letter 50 Spinoza makes an important remark. He states that ‘someone who calls God one or unique (*unum, vel unicum*) does not have a true idea of God, or is

speaking improperly about him'.¹²⁹ Terms such as these according to Spinoza can only be used when 'another thing has been conceived which [...] agrees with it',¹³⁰ that is to say: if there can be posited some sort of conceptual distinction between the thing that is conceived and something this thing can be understood to agree with.

What can we learn from this concerning the two concepts of the divine *res* that were distinguished above (i.e. the variants (a) and (c))? In order to see this, we must analyze the remark from Letter 50 some more. With respect to the claim that God cannot be called *unum, vel unicum*, Spinoza refers explicitly to the CM.¹³¹ He does not specify what passage from this work he has in mind precisely, but it seems rather obvious that it is the following one, as this is the only paragraph in the CM in which the question of the oneness of God is addressed:

All that need to be noted here is that God can be called one insofar as we separate him from other beings. But insofar as we conceive that there cannot be more than one of the same nature, he is called unique. Indeed, if we wished to examine the matter more accurately, we could perhaps show that God is only very improperly called one and unique. But this does not matter greatly, or even at all, to those who care about things and not about words.¹³²

(sed tantùm hic notandum est, Deum, quatenus ab aliis entibus eum separamus, posse dici unum; verùm, quatenus concipimus ejusdem naturæ plures esse non posse, unicum vocari. At verò si rem accuratiùs examinare vellemus, possemus forte ostendere Deum non nisi impropriè unum, & unicum vocari, sed res non est tanti, imò nullius momenti iis, qui de rebus, non verò de nominibus sunt solliciti)

As we have just seen that Spinoza refers to these lines in an assenting way in the rather 'late' Letter 50 (from 2 June 1674), the remark can be understood to represent an enduring view of Spinoza. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that in the present section, we are inquiring precisely into what is

¹²⁹ Letter 50, (II) 406 (*qui Deum unum, vel unicum nuncupat, nullam de Deo veram habere ideam, vel impropriè de eò loqui*). This very same argument was also invoked in section 1.4.

¹³⁰ Ibidem, (II) 406.

¹³¹ As Piet Steenbakkers remarked in a personal conversation (April 6, 2017), Spinoza appears to be somewhat cautious in his correspondence with Boxel, as this correspondent clearly disagrees with Spinoza's philosophy. It may very well be the case that in Letter 50, Spinoza chooses to make his point while referring to a passage from the (already published) CM because he feels reluctant to inform Boxel about the (unpublished) *Ethics*. That being said, it must be conjectured that, even though Spinoza may have given his arguments in a somewhat disguised form, his answers must still be understood to be endorsed by him.

¹³² CM I Ch. 6, (I) 312.

claimed to ‘not matter greatly, or even at all’ in this passage from the CM. For we are not primarily concerned with the thing the words ‘God *qua* God’ and ‘God’ both refer to – we already established that they must be conceived to refer to the very same infinite *res* – but with the way in which these terms refer to this thing, that is: with the exact *meaning* of the words that are employed in order to refer to one and the same divine thing. The distinction is crucial. Indeed, when considering the person the term ‘the third patriarch’ refers to, it does not matter greatly what meaning we attach to the words that are used to denote that very thing. As already mentioned in the first chapter, the truth value of the assertions ‘Jacob was buried in the Cave of Machpelah’, ‘Israel was buried in the Cave of Machpelah’ and ‘the third patriarch was buried in the Cave of Machpelah’ is the same, as these claims concern the reference of the names ‘Jacob’, ‘Israel’, and ‘the third patriarch’. However, even though these names have the same reference, they do not have the same meaning. The meaning of ‘Israel’ is ‘the person who was so called because he fought with an angel’, whereas the meaning of ‘Jacob’ is ‘the person who was so called because he seized his brother’s heel’. So when speaking about the words that are employed in order to refer to the third patriarch, we must be very cautious. In the very same way the conceptual variants (a) and (c) can be considered to have another meaning, even though they must be understood to refer to the very same divine *res*. And hence, in this case too, we must be very cautious with assertions concerning variant (a) or (c).

Knowing this, we can return to a scrutiny of the claim in Letter 50. Recall that we have noted with respect to the cited assertion from this letter that terms such as ‘*unum, vel unicum*’ can only be used if there can be posited some sort of conceptual distinction between the thing that is conceived and something this thing agrees with. Now, with respect to variant (c) we are entitled to claim that God can be called *unum, vel unicum* in a certain sense. God can be called ‘one or unique’ insofar as he is conceived to express the coalescent identity of the cause and the effect that are entailed in the notion of *causa sui* as a two-place predicate. God (c) is ‘one or unique’ insofar as God *qua* God (or *Natura naturans* (a)) is recognized to be identical to the (unspecified) infinite modes (or *Natura naturata* (b)). Indeed, in this case we have met the condition that there can be posited some sort of conceptual distinction between the thing that is conceived ((c)), and something this thing can be understood to agree with ((a) and (b)). In short: God (c) can be

claimed to be ‘one’ precisely because it denotes *the coalescent conception of God* that is caused in the way of the psychological part of EID1. Moreover, God (c) can be claimed to be ‘unique’ because (c) is the only conceivable thing that is characterized by the fact that (a) causes (and can be conceived to agree with) (b).

However, with respect to God *qua* God (a) this route is obstructed, as there is no other concept that allows for agreement between variant (a) and something that is conceptually distinct from it. As God *qua* God is not in any way ‘contaminated’ with the individuality of the infinite modes that are coalescently encompassed by it (as is the case with variant (c)),¹³³ variant (a) cannot in any way be called ‘*unum, vel unicum*’. This of course is precisely the purport of Spinoza’s claim in Letter 50. The notion of ‘oneness’ that can still be applied to concept (c), is inapplicable to concept (a). The defining characteristic of the variant of ‘God’ that cannot be called ‘*unum, vel unicum*’ is that it is essentially impossible to conceive the divine *res* as a conceptual duality of (ontologically identical) eternal conceiving cause and durational conceived effect. The quoted passages hence underpin our claim that in his mature philosophy, Spinoza also champions a concept of *absolute identity*, and that God *qua* God thus cannot be understood to be self-caused, to be self-known and to exist as a *two-place* predicate. Rather, the self-causing and -knowing operation of God *qua* God cannot but be understood as a *one-place* predicate, that is: as an absolute identity of the ‘divine knower’ and the object of this divine knowledge, an absolute identity that cannot even be called ‘one or unique’ anymore.

Argument 2: Eminent causation

Another way of showing that God *qua* God must be understood as an absolute identity of divine knower and divine knowledge can be found in a passage from the KV in which Spinoza makes it clear how the existence of God can be proven *a posteriori*. Consider the following claims:

If there is an idea of God, the cause of this Idea must exist formally and contain in itself whatever the Idea has objectively. But there is an Idea of God. Therefore.¹³⁴

¹³³ See note 90.

¹³⁴ KV I Ch. I, (I) 61.

(Als' er een Idea van God is, zoo moet de oorzaak des zelfs formelyk zyn, en in zig vervatten alles wat de Idea voorwerpelyk heeft: maar daar is een Idea van God. Ergo)

Furthermore, he states:

So if man has an Idea of God, it is clear that God must exist formally (but not eminently, since there is nothing more real or more excellent above or outside him).¹³⁵

(Zoo nu de mensch de Idea van God heeft, zoo is het klaar dat God formelyk moet zyn, dog niet uytsteekentlyk, aangezien boven, of buyten die niet wezentlyker of voortreffelyker is)

With respect to these passages a few things must be recognized. Firstly, it is important to note that the very terms that we have claimed to be an expression of the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) – the formal and the objective being of things – are staged in this passage as well. The formal aspect of God is asserted to denote God as he is *in zig* (corresponding with the concept of God *qua* God (a)); the objective aspect of God is ‘the idea of God’ (corresponding with the infinite mode of thought (b)).¹³⁶ Yet, the crucial thing to note here is not that God can be conceived as a coalescent identity of a formal and an objective aspect (and hence that considered in this way God falls within the scope of the *constructive use of the intellect*) – this was already shown in our treatment of (c) – but that Spinoza claims explicitly that with respect to the formal being of God, *no further conceptual distinction can be made*. Indeed, in the cited passage Spinoza makes it clear that there is no tool available with which it is possible to distinguish between God considered *formaliter* (i.e. God *qua* God), and that same divine thing considered *eminenter*. The claim that God does not exist *eminenter* fully corroborates our supposition that the conceptual duality between the formal and

¹³⁵ Ibidem, (I) 64.

¹³⁶ This may be considered surprising: is the idea that I have of God indeed equivalent to (b)? In understanding Spinoza’s view with respect to this question it is important to acknowledge firstly that the *idea* that I have of God must be distinguished from the *image* that I may have of him *in my imagination*. The *idea* that I have may have of God surfaces in the *Ethics* in EIIp47, where it is stated that ‘the human mind has an adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence’. EIIp47, (I) 482. Now, as the formal essence of my idea of God is shown in the previous chapter to be contained pervasively in the attributes, my adequate knowledge of God implies adequate knowledge of God *generaliter* in the same way my knowledge of the watery drop provides knowledge of what it is to be watery *generaliter*. So indeed, my *idea* of God (as opposed to an *image* I may have *in my imagination* of a divine being, say of an old man with a beard and a supreme intellect, who creates things at will) can be considered to be equivalent (in a relevant aspect) to (b). More on this in the next chapter.

the objective being of a thing is not applicable to the formal being of substance itself. At the level of *Natura naturans*, no further bifurcation can be made.

Now, given what we have seen, it appears to be fairly clear why Spinoza would argue against an *eminenter* existence of God. The formal being of the divine *res* cannot be understood to be conceived through a higher ‘eminent’ concept as this would lead, either to a ‘sanctuary of ignorance’¹³⁷ in which the term ‘*eminenter*’ is used in order to avoid the question how a duality in God can be accounted for, or to the notion of ‘an infinity of self-causing stages’ that was referred to earlier in this section (see the tables 10-11 and the *reductio* argument (i)-(vi) that is based on them). Rather, the formality and objectivity of things that surfaces as soon as things are grasped with an intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) must be understood to *converge absolutely in God qua God*. It is this absolute convergence – that defies any sense of simultaneity or coalescence as in these concepts the two components are still implicitly presupposed – that Spinoza refers to when he claims that ‘among the attributes of God we have numbered also *supreme understanding* [emphasis added]’.¹³⁸ Indeed, supreme understanding (or as Spinoza calls it in EI_p31d: ‘absolute thought’)¹³⁹ must be conceived to be characterized by the fact that there is no duality conceivable in God *qua* God. Whereas *pars melior nostri* is at most ‘simultaneous with the things understood’,¹⁴⁰ God must be conceived to be absolutely identical to the things understood. It is precisely this absolute identity that sets the existence of God *qua* God apart from the conceptual existence of both (infinite and finite) modes and the coalescent conception of God. These latter variants of existence (that surface in the points (1), (2) and (3-(c))) are each depending on a duality of the conception of the thing with respect to its object (i.e. the objective being), and the thing conceived in itself (i.e. the formal being of that same thing). Yet, the passage from the KV suggests that the existence of God *qua* God cannot be understood to be characterized by such a duality. Rather, as the notion ‘*eminenter*’ is denounced in it, God *qua* God must be conceived to be characterized by an absolute unity of (objective) idea and its formal being (and

¹³⁷ EI Appendix, (I) 443 (*ignorantiae asyllum*).

¹³⁸ CM, Appendix II Ch. 2, (I) 318 (*summam intelligentiam*).

¹³⁹ EI_p31d, (I) 434 (*absolutam cogitationem*). See also the treatment of this demonstration in Chapter 1.

¹⁴⁰ EI_p17s, 427 (*noster intellectus [...] simul naturâ esse cum rebus intellectis*).

indeed its formal essence). In this sense, variant (a) can be understood to provide a non-dual limit to any duality whatsoever.

That this is hard to understand for anyone who maintains that God *qua* God has a supreme intellect (i.e. anyone who thinks that the highest degree of understanding –or ‘absolute thought’ – is characterized by a necessary distinction between a formal being, an objective being and an object) becomes clear in Letter 55, in which Hugo Boxel asks Spinoza the following:

Finally, you say that you admit no human attributes in God, in order not to confuse the divine nature with human. [...] But if you completely deny these actions, and all our most lofty speculations about God, and say that they are not in God in an eminent and metaphysical way, then I don't know what sort of God you have, or what you understand by the word "God". We must not deny what we don't grasp.¹⁴¹ (*Denique ais, te in Deo nulla humana concedere attributa, ne Divinam cum humanà confunderes naturam [...]. Verùm enim verò, si has operationes, summasq' ue nostras de Deo contemplationes pernegas, affirmasque, eas non esse eminenter, & metaphysicè in Deo; tuum Deum, aut quid per hanc vocem Deus intelligas, ignoro. Quod non percipitur, haud negandum est*)

Spinoza's reply¹⁴² is important for us in two ways. Firstly, we can learn from his answer in Letter 56, that in September 1674 Spinoza has not changed his mind concerning the notion *eminenter*. This teaches us that the cited claims from the earlier KV can be understood to be upheld by Spinoza in his mature philosophy. Secondly, his answer makes it clear that according to Spinoza the notion of eminence must be rejected because it is the result of a perspective distortion:

Next, you say that if I deny that the acts of seeing, hearing, attending, willing, etc., are in God – or that those things are in him in an eminent way – you don't know what kind of God I have. This makes me suspect that you believe there is no greater perfection than that which can be explicated by the attributes mentioned. I don't wonder at this. I believe that if a triangle could speak, it would say in the same way that God is triangular in an eminent way, and that a circle would say that in an eminent way the divine nature is circular. In the same manner, each being would ascribe its own attributes to God, and make itself like God. Everything would seem deformed to it.¹⁴³

(*Porrò, ubi dicis, si in Deo actum videndi, audiendi, attendendi, volendi, &c. eosque in eo esse eminenter nego, quòd te tum lateat qualem habeam Deum: hinc suspicor te credere, non majorem esse perfectionem, quàm qua memoratis attributis explicari potest. Hæc non miror; quia credo, quòd triangulum, siquidem loquendi haberet facultatem, eodem modo diceret, Deum eminenter triangularem esse, & circulus, Divinam naturam eminenti*

¹⁴¹ Letter 55, (II) 417-418.

¹⁴² This answer was already adduced in Chapter 1. See section 1.2.1.

¹⁴³ Letter 56, (II) 421-422.

ratione circularem esse; & hâc ratione quilibet sua attributa Deo adscriberet, similemque se Deo redderet, reliquumque ei deforme videretur)

With this argument Spinoza stresses that God is often erroneously modeled according to human nature. As already noted in the introduction of this chapter, according to Spinoza it often happens that men ‘conceive God as a man, or as like a man’¹⁴⁴ and ‘confuse God’s power with the human power or right of kings’.¹⁴⁵ This can still be excused as long as one ventures to be operative within the realm of *theology*. Yet in *philosophy* this way of reasoning must be avoided, as Spinoza writes in Letter 23:

For because theology has usually – and that not without reason – represented God as a perfect man, it is appropriate in theology to say that God desires something, that he finds sorrow in the acts of the godless and takes pleasure in those of the pious. But in philosophy we understand clearly that to ascribe to God those ‘attributes’ which make a man perfect is as bad as if one wanted to ascribe to man those which make an elephant or an ass perfect. So these words of this kind have no place, and we cannot use them without confusing our concepts very much. Therefore, speaking philosophically, we cannot say that God desires something of something, nor that something is pleasing or a cause of sorrow to him. For those are all human ‘attributes’, which have no place in God.¹⁴⁶

(Nam, quia Theologia Deum passim, nec temerè, ut hominem perfectum repræsentat, propterea oportunitum est, ut in Theologiâ dicatur Deum quicquam cupere, Deum tædio operibus improborum affici, & proborum delectari; in Philosophiâ verò, ubi clarè percipimus, quòd Deo illa attributa, quæ hominem perfectum reddunt, tam ægrè possunt tribui, & adsignari, quàm si ea, quæ elephantum, asinumve perficiunt, homini tribueremus: Ibi hæc, & his similia verba nullum obtinent locum, nec ibi sine nostrorum conceptuum summâ confusione ea usurpare licet. Quare Philosophicè loquendo, dici nequit, Deum à quoquam quicquam petere, neque ei tædiosum, aut gratum quid esse; hæc quippe omnia humana sunt attributa, quæ in Deo locum non habent)

In the realm of theology it may still be feasible to claim that, as our intellect is characterized by a duality (namely of the formal and objective being of the objects that are grasped with it), ‘God’s intellect’ is also characterized by a duality (namely of the eminent and the formal being of the things that are grasped with it). In the realm of philosophy, however, this claim cannot be made. From the perspective of an intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) that must be considered to be ‘posterior [...] or simultaneous with the things understood’,¹⁴⁷ God can be

¹⁴⁴ EIIp3s, (I) 449 (*quod ostendit Deum hominem, vel instar hominis à vulgo concipi*).

¹⁴⁵ Ibidem, (I) 449 (*Dei potentiam cum humanâ Regum potentiâ, vel jure confundat*).

¹⁴⁶ Letter 23, (I) 388.

¹⁴⁷ EIp17s, (I) 427.

understood to exist in a familiar way, namely as a coalescent *res* that is conceptually grasped to be constituted by a cause (a) that is conceived formally, and an effect (b) that is conceived objectively. However, with respect to the formal aspect of God (i.e. God *in zig* (a)) there is no such familiar duality. God *qua* God must be conceived to be the causal limit that cannot in any way be conceived to be caused eminently. It is precisely because of this that Spinoza claims in Elp17s that ‘God is prior in causality to all things’:¹⁴⁸ from the perspective of the self-conceiving God *qua* God, the idea of God (i.e. God considered as the objective effect of the self-causing operation considered under the attribute of thought) and the divine *res* as it is in itself (i.e. God considered as the formal cause of this self-causing operation) converge absolutely and thus cannot be conceived distinctly in any way.

It becomes clear now why Spinoza stresses in Elp17s that God does not have an intellect in the way we commonly understand it: God *qua* God must be understood to be free of any duality (and hence of an intellect in the way we commonly understand it). Another way of saying this is that the *constructive function of the intellect*, which bifurcates all concepts that are grasped by way of God’s self-knowledge insofar as he is expressed in the infinite intellect, cannot be understood to be applicable to God *qua* God, precisely because God’s self-knowledge *insofar as he is God* can no longer be understood to be intellectual in the way we commonly understand it. God *qua* God *does not have an intellect*. Anyone who claims that God *qua* God is susceptible to the constructive function of the intellect (i.e. to some sort of conceptual duality or trichotomy) makes the very same mistake a triangle would make if it would claim that God is eminently triangular.

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In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume says the following about Spinoza’s ‘substance’:

The fundamental principle of the atheism of *Spinoza* is the doctrine of the simplicity of the universe, and the unity of that substance, in which he supposes both thought and matter to inhere. There is only one substance, says he, in the world; and that substance is perfectly simple and indivisible, and exists every where, without any local presence.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem, (I) 427.

¹⁴⁹ David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* I.IV. (Oxford 1896), 240 (edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge).

Prima facie this seems to be a correct rendering of Spinoza's conception of substance. The claim that Spinoza asserts that there is one perfectly simple and indivisible substance that exists everywhere appears to be one of the very few claims that are endorsed more or less unconditionally by all Spinoza scholars. Nevertheless, given what we have seen in this section there are serious reasons to doubt Hume's and numerous other scholars' view on the subject. Whereas God (c) satisfies the quoted description, it is rather doubtful whether the same claim can also be made with respect to God *qua* God (a). For indeed, Spinoza makes it clear that 'someone who calls God one or unique does not have a true idea of God, or is speaking improperly about him'.¹⁵⁰ This teaches us that Spinoza's 'God' is not as unambiguous as often thought. As opposed to God (c), God *qua* God (a) cannot be called 'one substance'. Variant (a) of Spinoza's divine *res* cannot be understood to be conceptually bifurcated, as this would lead to all kinds of unwelcome outcomes (such as the positing of infinitely many coalescent substances or the attribution of an eminent or supreme intellect to the divine *res*). Hence, in God *qua* God cause and effect must be understood to converge absolutely. In other words: even though variants (a) and (c) are both claimed to be self-causing by Spinoza, God (c) is a coalescent concept that is *intellect-dependent*, whereas God *qua* God (a) must be considered to be the *absolutely extra-intellectual version of God*, i.e. the variant of God that also surfaces in EI_p17s, where Spinoza claims that God has no intellect.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Letter 50, (II) 406 (*qui Deum unum, vel unicum nuncupat, nullam de Deo veram habere ideam, vel improprie de eò loqui*).

¹⁵¹ In note 34, I referred to Michael Della Rocca's claim that 'Spinoza presupposes that everything is able to be explained, he builds the notion of intelligibility into the heart of his metaphysical system'. Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 4-5. In this section it has become clear that there is one important exception to 'Spinoza's commitment to [...] the Principle of Sufficient Reason' (Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 4): God *qua* God cannot be explained in terms of intelligibility (in the way we commonly understand it). Daniel Garber seems to make roughly the same point, when he states that 'we know that God is self-caused, and we know that God as substance is conceived through himself. But why it is *this* nature, the nature that entails [the horse] Harry but not [the unicorn] Eunice, that is self-caused and self-conceived seems to be beyond reasons'. Daniel Garber, 'Superheroes in the history of philosophy: Spinoza, Super-Rationalist' in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 53, Number 3 (2015), 516. To be sure, this is not to say that God's existence *qua* God thus must necessarily be understood to be a brute fact (as Garber claims (Garber, 'Spinoza: Super-Rationalist, 518)). For the fact that God cannot be explained by an intellect in the way we commonly understand it does not imply that God cannot be explained *at all*. Michael Della Rocca, in his response to Garber's attack on his endorsement of a radical version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), takes this line of reasoning, when he says: 'What, then, is the reason that God's nature entails H[arry the Horse]? I think that the answer has to be that God's nature explains not only H[arry the Horse], but also the fact that H[arry the Horse] follows from that nature. God's nature's explaining facts

The conceptual duality that is the defining aspect of a thing insofar as it is conceived to be self-causing (and self-conceiving) as a two-place predicate must be understood to be absent in the divine *res* insofar as it is considered as it is in itself, i.e. prior to a self-causing (and self-conceiving) operation that implies a conceptual duality between the thing that causes (and understands) and the (identical) thing that is caused (and understood).

Recall that the following rendering was provided of the way in which substance can be understood to cause itself:

There is a thing that can be conjectured to exist as:

(3-(a)) The eternal truth of God (i.e. God *qua* God (a)) that is caused as a *causa sui* as a *one-place predicate*

(3-(c)) The coalescent variant of God (i.e. God (c)) that is caused as a *causa sui* as a *two-place predicate*.

As to the subject we are primarily interested in in the present chapter – the way God conceives himself *insofar as he is God* – we can state the following concerning (3-(c)): God (c) conceives himself as an identity of his active cause (a) and its passive effect (b). Or in terms of causal axiom EIA4: God's knowledge as a passive effect (b) depends on, and involves God's knowledge as an active cause (a). This particular way of conceiving himself is not necessarily different from the way we conceive things (even though, as we shall see in Chapter 5, the proceeding from an adequate idea of the formal essence of the attributes to the adequate knowledge of

about God's own nature is simply an aspect of the fact that, as Spinoza stresses and as Garber, of course, recognizes, God is self-caused and self-conceived, a being whose existence follows from its very nature. What I am suggesting is that, in explaining itself, God explains why certain things and not others follow from God's nature'. Michael Della Rocca, 'Interpreting Spinoza: The real is the Rational' in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 53, Number 3 (2015), 529. I agree with Della Rocca. However, at the same time it must be kept in mind that the self-causation and self-conception that Della Rocca refers to must be understood to differ considerably from the way in which we commonly understand these concepts. We have seen that with respect to God *qua* God the conceiving operation of a *causa sui* as a one-place predicate must be conceived to take place *beyond the realm of the intellect*. Anyone who claims that in the context of Spinoza's philosophy God is rationally explainable is right. However, at the same time it must be admitted that providing a rational explanation for God's existence can only be done when talking very improperly about God (to adduce the clause from Letter 50 once more). In other words: God (c) falls within the scope of the PSR, but God (a) does not. See also note 160.

the essence of things is something that is difficult and happens rarely).¹⁵² To be sure, things are still a bit more complicated with respect to the self-conception of God *qua* God (a). *Prima facie*, the things we have said may appear to imply that God *qua* God does not conceive himself at all.¹⁵³ Yet, it is important to stress once more that I do not mean to say that variant (a) is not conceived through itself at all – for indeed, it is clear that Spinoza does claim that God *qua* God conceives himself; his assertion that ‘by *Natura naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself’ erases all doubt in this respect. Rather, with our elaboration we have argued for the claim that the particular variant of self-conception that is characteristic for variant (a) is very different from the way men commonly understand a (self)-conceiving operation. Whereas an intellect – whether finite or infinite – is characterized by a duality of the formal and the objective being of the thing that is grasped with it, in God *qua* God this understanding is characterized, not by a ‘supreme’ conceptual duality of eminence and formality, but by the *absolute absence of any conceptual duality whatsoever*. It is precisely this that is captured in the claim that God *qua* God must be understood to be *causa sui* as a one-place predicate: variant (a) is caused *absolutely by itself* as God *qua* God is essentially characterized by the fact that he conceives himself by way of knowledge that can no longer be understood to be ‘intellectual’ in the way we commonly understand it. In Spinoza’s own words: ‘the truth of substances is not outside the intellect unless it is in themselves, because they are conceived through

¹⁵² It must be added that this top-down perspective is only one of the two adequate perspectives that can be positioned at (c). More on the alternative (bottom-up) perspective in the next chapter.

¹⁵³ This is precisely Yitzhak Melamed’s argument against Curley’s interpretation. Melamed states that ‘prima facie it seems that Curley makes God know things without endowing him with any internal mentality or representational capacities. Can Spinoza accept a God that is ignorant?’. Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 23. Of course, Spinoza cannot accept a God that is ‘ignorant’. But we have seen that Spinoza can – and does – portray God as not having the internal mentality and representational capacities that would postulate an internal conceptual duality in the essence of this divine being. In EIp17s he makes it clear that God does not have an intellect in the way we ‘commonly understand’ it. Melamed’s concern seems to be ignited by an erroneous anthropocentric perspective: because *we* understand by way of an internal representation, Melamed assumes that God also must be understood to understand in this way. Now, in the case of variant (c) this indeed is the case: God (c) ‘understands’ because the infinite intellect at (b), which expresses (and is ontologically identical to) (a), represents both itself and the infinite modes of the remaining attributes (more on this representation in chapters 4 and 5). But as we have seen, in the case of variant (a) this kind of internal representation can no longer be predicated of God. According to Spinoza, anyone who would claim that God *qua* God understands by way of an internal representation operation makes the same mistake a triangle would make when it would be claiming that God is eminently triangular.

themselves'.¹⁵⁴ The particular self-conceiving operation that is characteristic for God *qua* God must be understood to be *absolutely extra-intellectual* in the sense that it is devoid of a conceptual divergence of a formal and an objective aspect. Or, in terms of EIp17s, 'the truth and formal essence of things is what it is because it exists objectively in that way in God's intellect':¹⁵⁵ as opposed to our intellect, which is marked by a duality, God's intellect – in this specific context meaning: God's infinite and absolute power of thinking¹⁵⁶ (i.e. absolute thought) – is characterized by *an absolute identity of the formal essence, the formal being and the objective being of things*. It is precisely because of this that Spinoza is able to state in EIp17s that the dog that is a heavenly constellation differs from the dog that is a barking animal. Anyone who would claim that this assertion in EIp17s expresses 'a view about God's nature that [Spinoza] himself rejects',¹⁵⁷ appears to miss a crucial point, namely that the fact that our intellect is characterized by a conceptual duality does not at all imply that God's absolute thought must be understood to be structured in the same way. On the contrary, anyone who would claim this, makes the same mistake 'ordinary people' make, who 'conceive God as a man, or as like a man'.¹⁵⁸

One more thing must be added with respect to the *existence* of the divine *res*. Whereas all other notions of existence are stated in terms of intellectual conceivability (and causation) and as such denote *concepts* of existence (i.e. existence insofar as it is grasped via an intellect in the way we commonly understand it), it has become clear in this section that God *qua* God cannot be stated in terms of common intellectual conceivability (and causation). It is precisely because of this that Spinoza is able to claim in his CM that 'God cannot be said to enjoy existence':¹⁵⁹ we have seen that this means that God *qua* God cannot in any way be understood to be constituted by a coalescent duality. To be sure, Spinoza is not a skeptic. There is little doubt that according to Spinoza God *qua* God does 'exist' in a certain sense. Better still: as in the very first proposition of the *Ethics* a substance is claimed to be prior in nature to its affections (which makes it clear that variant

¹⁵⁴ EIp8s2, (I) 414.

¹⁵⁵ EIp17s, (I) 427 (*veritas, & formalis rerum essentia ideò talis est, quia talis in Dei intellectu existit objective*).

¹⁵⁶ See Chapter 1.

¹⁵⁷ Della Rocca, *Representation*, 181, note 55.

¹⁵⁸ EIIp3s, (I) 449 (*quod ostendit Deum hominem, vel instar hominis à vulgo concipi*).

¹⁵⁹ CM II Ch. I, (I) 318.

(a) is prior to (b) and hence also to (c)), the eternal existence of variant (a) (and (a) only) is to be considered *the absolute variant of existence*.¹⁶⁰ Just as the intellect in the way we commonly understand it must be understood to be nothing but a derivate of God's absolute power of thinking, so also the existence (and causation) of things in the way we commonly understand it is dependent on the absolute existence (and self-causation) of the divine *res*.

3.6 The ontological aspect of the attributes

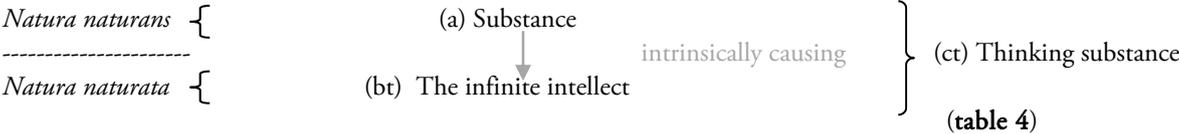
The previous sections have been elucidative with respect to various questions. Our elaboration of the ways in which God (c) and God *qua* God (a) must be understood to be caused and conceived has provided us with a solution to the apparent contradiction between EIp17c1 and EIp25s. Moreover, we have seen why God cannot be understood to have an intellect in the way we commonly understand it: insofar as God is conceived as to his absolute essence (i.e. in the (a)-variant), he must be understood to be absolutely free from the duality that characterizes *pars melior nostri*. Anyone who would claim that God has a supreme intellect (purportedly characterized by a duality of the eminent and the formal being of things) makes the same mistake a triangle would make if it would claim that God is eminently triangular.

To be sure, our interpretation is not without apparent difficulties. The most serious problem concerns a claim that was made in Chapter 1, which dealt with the way in which we must understand the 'two dogs' that are staged in the scholium of EIp17. There we have said (i) that the term '*Dei intellectus*' in the alleged *reductio* argument in EIp17s must be understood to refer to the attribute of thought, and (ii) that the infinite intellect must be conceived to follow intrinsically from it. However, if we compare these claims with the things uncovered in the present

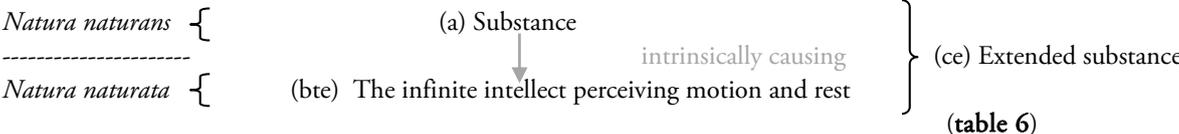
¹⁶⁰ One more thing must be added here with respect to the limited applicability of the PSR in the context of Spinoza's philosophy (see also note 34 and 151). Michael Della Rocca suggested (rightly) that a rejection of the overriding applicability of the PSR implies the drawing of a line between the explicability of the existence of things that fall *within* the scope of the PSR, and the existence of things that fall *outside* that scope. Della Rocca, 'PSR' in: *Philosopher's Imprint* Volume 10, No. 7 (2010), 6-8. Referring to this take on the PSR, we can draw the conclusion that the overriding applicability of the PSR by Spinoza can indeed be rejected as he can be understood to draw a line between the explicability of the existence of God (c) on the one hand, and the existence of God (a) on the other.

chapter, we encounter an apparent contradiction. The following tables may help to elucidate this problem.

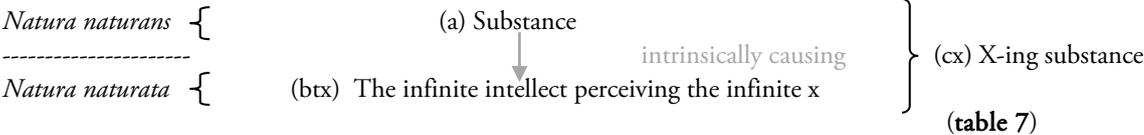
I have stated that the divine *res* can be conceived in terms of thought in the following way:



Rendered in terms of extension this leads to the following table:



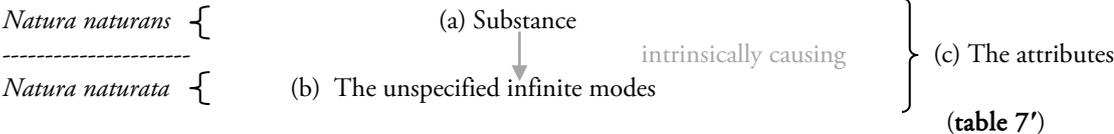
And rendered in terms of any of the infinite attributes, including thought and extension:



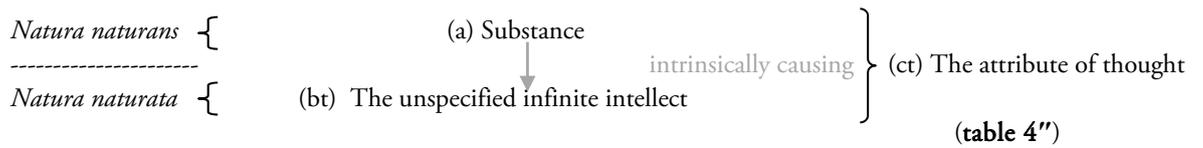
Furthermore, it was stated in section 3.2 that the (c)-variants in these tables must be understood to refer to the attributes. Indeed, I have provided the following reformulation of Spinoza’s definition of ‘attribute’:

an attribute (cx) is what the (infinite) intellect (btx) perceives of substance (a) – i.e. the infinite x – as constituting its essence.

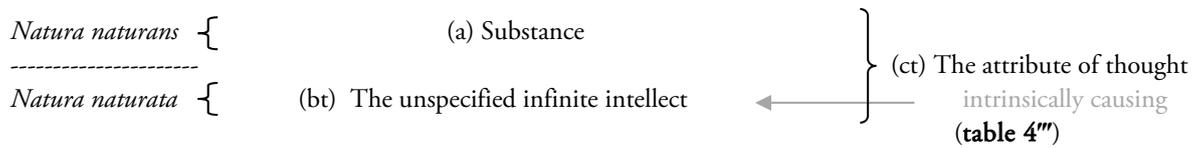
This adjusted version of EID4 in turn suggests that these tables can be rendered in the following way as well:



In terms of thought:



However, these tables are problematic for various reasons. In section 3.2.1 it was noted already that – other than table 4'' suggests – conceptual variant (c) cannot be understood to denote the different attributes in isolation from the others. We have seen that this would inevitably lead to the absurd conclusion that Spinoza's attributes are self-causing themselves and hence must be understood to be substances. Another pressing problem – that does not seem to be neutralized completely by our assertions in section 3.2.1– is the following: in Chapter 1 it was argued that the unspecified infinite intellect must be conceived to follow intrinsically from (and to be an exhaustive expression of) the attribute of thought. That is to say: it seems that, once thought *is* isolated conceptually – which in itself is not problematic, as long as it is kept in mind that this is a *conceptual* operation – table 4'' must be rendered thus:



Indeed, as we have stated in Chapter 1 that the infinite intellect follows from the attribute of thought, table 4''' appears to be a correct schematic rendering of our conclusions in the first chapter. Yet, table 4''' is utterly unconvincing as a depiction of Spinoza's causal claims, if only because this rendering nullifies the intrinsic causal efficacy of (a). Given our treatment of the Principle of Plenitude (see Chapter 2) this would seem to posit a serious threat to the omnipotence of (a).¹⁶¹ Furthermore, if the unspecified infinite intellect (bt) (and hence all its parallel infinite modes of the remaining attributes) would be caused intrinsically in the way of table 4''', the very reason for distinguishing (c) would be subverted. For as we saw in a previous section, the only way in which we can understand (c) is by positing the intrinsic

¹⁶¹ For indeed, we have identified only two ways in which God's causal power can be understood to produce modes: intrinsic and extrinsic causality. If the intrinsic causality would be attributed to God (c) only, God *qua* God (a) would seem to become powerless.

causal thread (in any of the infinite attributes) between (a) and (b), and not between (c) and (b).

So how can this problem be accounted for? How can we consider the attributes in isolation, taking them to be the cause of their infinite modes (as we have claimed in Chapter 1), whilst at the same time honoring the metaphysical structure that was uncovered in the present chapter?

The solution is provided by the recognition that the intellect-dependence of the attributes that is forwarded in the famous EID4 – and that finds its problematic rendering in table 4'' and 7' – tells only part of the story. That is to say: even though the attributes are staged in EID4 as being intellect-dependent, the essence of substance (i.e. God *qua* God) that is claimed to be perceived intellectually in this definition must be understood to be *intellect-independent* insofar as it is considered in itself. It is crucial to acknowledge that EID4 deals with the attributes understood as the essence of God insofar as the divine *res* is perceived with the intellect; in this sense an attribute can be called a conceptual variant of the essence of God (in the same way 'Jacob' is a conceptual variant of the third patriarch). However, the particular variant of God's essence that is conceptually accessible via an attribute in the sense of EID4 must be understood to be ontologically operative at level (a).¹⁶²

The supposition that the conceptual variant of 'attribute' in EID4 must be understood to have an ontological counterpart finds warrant in several passages in the *Ethics*, for instance in EI4d. Consider the following claim:

there is nothing outside the intellect through which a number of things can be distinguished from one another except substances, *or* what is the same (by D4), their attributes, and their affections¹⁶³
(*Nihil ergo extra intellectum datur, per quod plures res distingui inter se possunt præter substantias, sive quod idem est (per Defin. 4.) earum attributa, earumque affectiones*)

It is stated explicitly that EID4 implies that the attributes exist *outside the intellect*. This provides us with a clear indication that, indeed, the apart from the intellect-

¹⁶² Henk Keizer drew a similar conclusion (i.e. that EID4 merely says something about the 'epistemological' side of the attributes, a side that must be understood to be mirrored in an *ontological* variant of the attributes). See: Henk Keizer, 'Spinoza's Definition Of Attribute: An Interpretation' in: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20 (2012), 479-498.

¹⁶³ EI4d, (I) 411. From this claim we can furthermore learn that God's affections exist outside the intellect as well. Given what we have seen in Chapter 2 this is not surprising. For there it became clear that the formal essences of all modes are *contained in the attributes*.

dependent variant of ‘attribute’ that surfaces in EID4, Spinoza also employs a variant of ‘attribute’ that is intellect-*independent*. This supposition is corroborated by an assertion in EIp10s. Here Spinoza states that the attributes each express ‘a certain eternal and infinite essence’,¹⁶⁴ a formulation that clearly suggests that each attribute – although perceived via *Natura naturata* – must be understood to have a counterpart at the level of *Natura naturans*. Hence it need not surprise us that in EIp29s, where the terms *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* are introduced, the attributes are staged in their strictly *ontological* guise. Consider this passage once more:

by *Natura naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, *or* such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, that is (by P14C1 and P17C2), God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause. But by *Natura naturata* I understand whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature, *or* from any of God's attributes, that is, all the modes of God's attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God.¹⁶⁵

(*per Naturam naturantem nobis intelligendum est id, quod in se est, & per se concipitur, sive talia substantiæ attributa, quæ æternam, & infinitam essentiam exprimunt, hoc est (per Coroll. 1. Prop. 14. & Coroll. 2. Prop. 17.), Deus, quatenus, ut causa libera, consideratur. Per naturatam autem intelligo id omne, quod ex necessitate Dei naturæ, sive uniuscujusque Dei attributorum sequitur, hoc est, omnes Dei attributorum modos, quatenus considerantur, ut res, quæ in Deo sunt, & quæ sine Deo nec esse, nec concipi possunt*)

We cannot fail to notice that in this passage the attributes are positioned at the level of *Natura naturans*. Even though the concept of ‘attribute’ is claimed to be *intellect-dependent* in EID4 – and as such would seem to belong (partly) to *Natura naturata* (as well) – Spinoza positions them explicitly, and only, at the level of what is in itself and conceived through itself (a). This makes it clear that Spinoza is reasoning here about a variant of the attributes that – other than the variant in EID4 – is *not* mediated by the intellect. According to Spinoza, the aspects of God's essence that are intellectually perceived via the intellect-dependent attributes (EID4) must necessarily be in God (EIp4d, EIp29s).¹⁶⁶ On closer scrutiny this is no real surprise, as Spinoza stresses in the demonstration of EIp30 that ‘what is contained

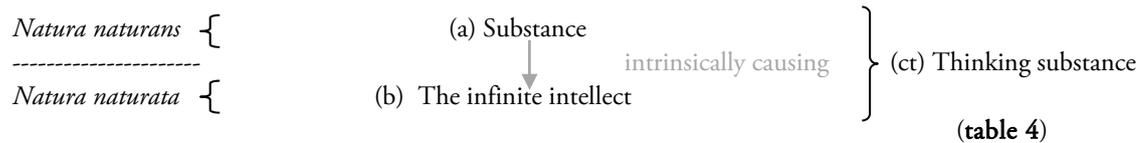
¹⁶⁴ EIp10s, (I) 416 (*æternam, & infinitam certam essentiam exprimit*).

¹⁶⁵ EIp29s, (I) 20-21.

¹⁶⁶ For an interesting account of the way the *multiplicity* of the attributes can be understood to be squared with the *simplicity* of substance, see: Andreas Schmidt, ‘Substance Monism and Identity Theory in Spinoza’ in: Olli Kostinen ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics* (Cambridge 2009), 79-98.

objectively in the intellect must necessarily be in nature'.¹⁶⁷ This makes it clear that the very essence that according to EID4 is perceived by the intellect, must have an extra-intellectual counterpart. If this counterpart would fail, the intellectual operation in EID4 would not be an intellectual operation on Spinoza's own terms.

Earlier in this section we have adduced the tables 4-6. At this point it must be stressed that the ontological aspect of the attributes was actually already captured implicitly in these tables. Consider table 4 once more:



The thing to note with respect to this rendering is that (ct) can only be called *thinking* substance if the infinite intellect is produced by (a). This means that the very thinking essence that is expressed objectively in (bt) (by the Principle of Plenitude EIp16), and that comes to light conceptually in (ct) (by EID4), must be understood to be rooted ontologically in (a). On closer scrutiny this is completely in line with Spinoza's claim that 'God's power is God's essence itself':¹⁶⁸ God is omnipotent precisely because 'everything which can fall under an infinite intellect' (bt) follows from the necessity of God's essence (a). It is also because of this that Spinoza is able to state in EIIp7c that 'God's power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting':¹⁶⁹ the divine essence that can be grasped intellectually via an attribute (*in casu*: thought) must be understood to be absolutely identical to the divine essence *sui generis*. In other words: God's power of acting encompasses his power of thinking, his power of moving (and being at rest) and his power of r-ing. And really, what else can we expect from a being that is claimed to be omnipotent?

This perspective on the attributes in turn provides us with an answer to the question with which we started this section: how can the infinite intellect (EIIp11c) be understood to follow from the attribute of thought (i.e. the conditional term 'God's intellect' that Spinoza invokes in EIp17s)? Our elaboration has provided us with an answer to the problem that was rendered schematically in table 4". For in the present section it has become clear that our claims from Chapter 1 can be

¹⁶⁷ EIp30d, (I) 434 (*quod in intellectu objective continetur, debet necessariò in naturâ dari*).

¹⁶⁸ EIp34, (I) 439 (*Dei potentia est ipsa ipsius essentia*).

¹⁶⁹ EIIp7c, (I) 451 (*Dei cogitandi potentia æqualis est ipsius actuali agendi potentia*). We will return to this important corollary in the next chapter.

upheld if it is acknowledged that the intellect-dependent attributes of EID4 have an extra-intellectual ontological counterpart. The infinite intellect (bt) can be understood to follow from ‘God’s intellect’, not insofar as this power of thinking must be located at level (c), but insofar as this essence is understood to be operative at the ontological level (a). And hence table 4 can be rendered thus:

<i>Natura naturans</i> {	(a) Substance encompassing ‘God’s intellect’	}	(ct) Thinking substance
----- <i>Natura naturata</i> {	(bt) The infinite intellect		
		↓	
		intrinsicly causing	
(table 4*)			

Or in terms of EIIp7c:

<i>Natura naturans</i> {	(a) God’s power of acting encompassing his power of thinking	}	(ct) Thinking substance
----- <i>Natura naturata</i> {	(bt) The infinite intellect		
		↓	
		intrinsicly causing	
(table 4*)			

These tables makes it clear how we must understand the causal structure that was uncovered in Chapter 1. The infinite intellect can be understood to follow from the attribute of thought (i.e. ‘God’s intellect’ in the way it is used in EIp17s) insofar as the attribute of thought is understood in its ontological variant as ‘absolute thought’,¹⁷⁰ i.e. the formal essence of the attribute of thought,¹⁷¹ that ‘pertains to the divine nature’¹⁷² and that ‘could not agree with [our intellect] in anything except the name’.¹⁷³

Before moving on to the next section – an excursion in which I will provide a comprehensive rendering of an argument that was used already in section 3.2.1 – it is important to stress that the apparent contradiction between the claims in Chapter 1 and the findings in the present chapter is not the only reason for entangling ourselves in the difficult debate concerning the precise meaning of EID4. There is yet another motive for taking this turn. As we are investigating the structure of the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it), it is helpful to know the confines of the terrain that must be covered. In order to establish this, we had to ascertain what can still be understood to be within the reach of the intellect, and what must

¹⁷⁰ EIp31d, (I) 434 (*absolutam cogitationem*).

¹⁷¹ This clause is inspired by EIIp40s2, (I) 478. More on this important scholium in Chapter 5.

¹⁷² EIp17s, (I) 427 (*ad divinam naturam pertinet*).

¹⁷³ Ibidem, (I) 427 (*à nostro intellectu [...] toto coelo differre deberent, nec in ullâ re, praeterquam in nomine, convenire possent*).

be understood to be absolutely outside the reach of the intellect in the way we commonly understand it. In this respect, a further treatment of the notion ‘attribute’ was necessary, as the divide between the intellect and that which must be understood to be absolutely outside the intellect *is located at the heart of this very notion*. Indeed, whereas God *qua* God (a) was shown to be absolutely outside the intellect, and whereas the unspecified infinite modes (b) fall under the (infinite) intellect, the conceptual transition between things insofar as they are considered in the intellect (and exist conceptually), and things insofar as they are considered outside the intellect (and exist ontologically), was shown to take place precisely at the level of attributes. It seems to be because of this that EID4 has become one of the most discussed claims in the *Ethics*. For this definition treats an aspect of Spinoza’s metaphysics that can only partly be understood with an intellect. EID4 defines the *intellectual side* of the attributes, while (for the most part) leaving out of sight the extra-intellectual part. This is understandable, as this latter part has characteristics that are impossible to grasp fully with an intellect in the way we commonly understand it, such as the fact that the formal essence of the attributes must be understood to be operative at a level that *causes an absolute cause qua cause (i.e. a cause that cannot in any way be conceived as effect)*.¹⁷⁴

One more thing must still be added. In the previous chapter we have seen that things that are grasped with *pars melior nostri* – and that hence are conceived in their objective and in their formal being – must be understood to have an extra-intellectual counterpart: their formal essences, which were claimed to be *contained ubiquitously in the attributes*. At this point it must be noted that our findings in the present section accord nicely with the claims from Chapter 2. For it is clear now that Spinoza’s metaphysics indeed leaves room for the extra-intellectual existence of formal essences of singular things (purportedly the very *affections* of the attributes that by EI4d must be located *extra intellectum* – see above). From what we have said in this section it becomes clear that the formal essences of things can be understood to be contained ubiquitously in the very ontological (and intellect-independent) variant of the attributes (i.e. the formal essence of the attributes) that was uncovered in this section. Even though the distinction between this extra-

¹⁷⁴ And where (as we shall see in the next chapter) *multiplicity and simplicity* must be understood to *converge absolutely* as the formal essence of each of the infinitely many a singular thing in nature can be understood to express God’s unique essence.

intellectual level and our modal concept of it is not precisely as crude as the distinction between a barking dog and a constellation of stars – as a dog evidently does not follow from a constellation of stars – the difference between the things insofar as they are in our intellect and the same things insofar as they are contained ubiquitously in God’s extra-intellectual and absolutely infinite power of thinking is fundamental enough to render Spinoza’s use of this traditional¹⁷⁵ dog example understandable.

3.7 Excursion: A proof for the existence of God

In the previous sections I have shown that in the *Ethics* Spinoza makes use of two concepts of God: an absolute eternal variant (i.e. God *qua* God), and a coalescent variant (i.e. God understood as the coalescent identity (c) of God *qua* God (a) and the infinitely many things that follow from the divine *res* in infinitely many ways (b)). In this section I will illustrate how these two concepts can be recognized in the proposition in which Spinoza aims to prove the existence of God: EIp11.

Consider this important proposition once more:

God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists.¹⁷⁶

(Deus, sive substantia constans infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque aeternam, & infinitam essentiam exprimit, necessario existit)

In a previous section (and indeed in Chapter 1) I already referred to the (first) proof for this proposition. Let us consider this proof again. It runs like this:

If you deny [that God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, necessarily exists], conceive, if you can, that God does not exist. Therefore (by A7) his essence does not involve existence. But this (by P7) is absurd. Therefore God necessarily exists, q.e.d.¹⁷⁷

(Si negas, concipe, si fieri potest, Deum non existere. Ergo (per Axiom. 7.) ejus essentia non involvit existentiam. Atqui hoc (per Proposit. 7.) est absurdum: Ergo Deus necessario existit. Q. E. D.)

¹⁷⁵ See Chapter 1, note 13.

¹⁷⁶ EIp11d, (I) 417.

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem, (I) 417.

As already noted in Argument 5 from section 3.2.1, this claim appears to be more complicated than strictly needed. One of the puzzles that we are confronted with when trying to understand this proof, is why Spinoza would not argue for the existence of God by simply invoking EID6 instead of EIA7. For this would seem to be an easier way to underpin EIp11. Consider these claims once more:

D6: By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence.¹⁷⁸

(VI. *Per Deum intelligo ens absolutè infinitum, hoc est, substantiam constantem infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque æternam, & infinitam essentiam exprimit*)

P7: It pertains to the nature of a substance to exist.¹⁷⁹

(*Ad naturam substantiæ pertinet existere*)

Given these two claims, the existence of God would seem to be deducible very easily in the following way:

(7) God is a substance consisting of infinite attributes (EID6)

(8) A substance exists necessarily (EIp7)

Hence:

(9) God exists necessarily

It is hard to believe that Spinoza overlooked this obvious possibility for proving the existence of God. So why he would pass over this option and choose the path of EIA7? Don Garrett has stated that the form of the argument in the first demonstration EIp11 is dictated by two considerations: ‘Spinoza’s expressed preference for *reductio* arguments, and his desire to utilize both of the alternative definitions of “cause of itself” given in Definition I’.¹⁸⁰ Given what we have seen in this chapter, Garrett’s claim can be made still a bit stronger. It is not Spinoza’s mere preference for certain types of arguments that leads him to the remarkable proof, but his recognition of the fact that the *reductio* form is required. If Spinoza wants a full-blown proof for the existence of God, he not only needs to employ both the

¹⁷⁸ EID6, (I) 409.

¹⁷⁹ EIp7, (I) 412.

¹⁸⁰ Garrett, ‘Spinoza’s “Ontological” Argument’, 204

'logical' and the 'psychological' definitions of *causa sui*, but also the *reductio* form. Indeed, as will be shown below, this is the only way in which he is able to forestall a possible conceptual mix-up with respect to the existence of God.

3.7.1 A conceptual mix-up

In order to see in what way the mentioned proof for the existence of God is threatened by a conceptual mix-up, it is instructive to adduce an example that was already referred to. Consider the following deduction again:¹⁸¹

(13) Jacob = Israel

(14) Jacob is so called because he seized his brother's heel

Hence:

(15) Israel is so called because he seized his brother's heel

As noted above, this deduction is invalid: Israel is so called, not because seized his brother's heel, but because he fought with an angel. That is to say: conclusion (15) is invalid because the conceptual status of the name 'Jacob' in (13) and (14) is different. Point (13) actually must be understood in the following way:

(13') The person 'Jacob' refers to = the person 'Israel' refers to.

Moreover, the occurrence of 'Jacob' in (14) is referentially opaque, which can be shown by restating (14) in the following way:

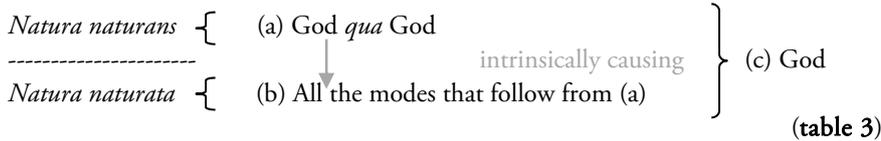
(14') Jacob is called 'Jacob' because he seized his brother's heel.

The invalidity of the deduction (13)-(15) can thus be understood to be rooted in a conceptual mix-up. Whereas we seemed to be talking about the same thing in (13) and (14), we were actually mixing up the concepts and the object these concepts refer to. Because we erroneously took the concept 'Jacob' to be identical to the object it refers to, we ended up with the wrong conclusion that 'Israel is so called

¹⁸¹ See Chapter 1, section 1.4.2.

because he seized his brother’s heel’. On closer scrutiny, however, the circumscription ‘is so called because he seized his brother’s heel’ is only applicable to the concept ‘Jacob’, and not to the object this concept refers to. From this we can gather that a deduction is only valid if there is no conceptual mix-up of the terms that are used in it.

Now, in the previous sections we have argued that with respect to the term ‘God’ in the way it is used in Spinoza’s philosophy, a conceptual mix-up can occur very easily. We have seen that there are two senses in which ‘God’ can be used. On the one hand the term is used to denote the coalescent identity of the divine *res* and the things that follow from it: God (c). And on the other hand the term is used to denote God *qua* God (a), that cannot even be called ‘one or unique’ anymore. This was rendered thus:



The two concepts of the divine *res* that surface in table 3 can be distinguished according to the way they are conceived to be *causa sui*. We have seen that God *qua* God (a) is self-causing insofar as this variant of the divine being is understood to be the absolute identity of (eternal) essence and (eternal) existence; and God (c) is self-causing because this concept expresses the coalescent identity of (eternal) essence and (durational) existence. It is important to acknowledge that Spinoza’s remarkable neglect of the ‘easy deduction’ (7)-(9) in the proof for EI_p11 is induced by his recognition of the conceptual difference between the variants (a) and (c). For it is precisely this conceptual difference that threatens the validity of (7)-(9), as will become clear from the following alternative (and tentative) rendering of the ‘easy deduction’:

(7') God is a substance consisting of infinite attributes (c)¹⁸²

¹⁸² Substance is staged here in its (c)-variant for two important reasons. Firstly it must be noted that this proof is about ‘substance consisting of infinite attributes’. As the notion of ‘attribute’ according to EID4 is parasitic on the notion of ‘intellect’, we seem to be entitled to suppose that ‘God’ here must be understood to be the *coalescent* version, in which the notion of ‘intellect’ (i.e. the infinite mode of thought that constitutes *Natura naturata* if nature is conceived under the attribute of thought) is encompassed. To be sure, as we have just argued in the previous section that the notion of attribute is also used by Spinoza in

(8') A substance (a) exists necessarily (EIp7)¹⁸³

Hence:

(9) God exists necessarily

Indeed, once the conceptual difference between (a) and (c) is recognized, it becomes clear that (7)-(9) *cannot* be used in order to prove the existence of God properly. An unproblematic proof requires the ruling out of any possible conceptual mix-up. In other words: what is needed in order to validate (9) is an extra argument to the effect that what is said of 'substance' in (7') is also applicable to 'substance' in (8'). For in that particular case, the proof for the existence of God would be valid in the following way:

(7') God is a substance consisting of infinite attributes (c)

(8') A substance (a) exists necessarily (EIp7)

(9-i) The thing 'substance' in (7') refers to = the thing 'substance' in (8') refers to

(9-ii) God exists necessarily, as substance (a) = substance (c)

Now, with respect to Spinoza's strategy to prove the existence of 'God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes' while utilizing both of the alternative definitions of *causa sui* (to paraphrase Don Garrett one more time), EIA7 plays a crucial role. Consider this Axiom:

A7: If a thing can be conceived as not existing, its essence does not involve existence.¹⁸⁴

an *ontological* variant, this argument is not conclusive. But there is a second reason for asserting that God is staged here in its (c)-version. For in the very first line of the demonstration of EIp11, the presented variant of substance is related to the operation of 'conceiving' in the way we commonly understand it ('conceive [...] that God does not exist'), which as we saw is a defining aspect of the divine *res* insofar it is considered to be caused as a *two-place predicate* (c). Moreover, in the next step of the argument, Spinoza makes use of a formula – EIA7 – that employs precisely the terms that characterize the two variants of *causa sui* (i.e. being conceived as (not) existing, and the essence (not) involving existence). The way the argument is devised – i.e. taking the coalescent version as a starting point – makes it even clearer that the God-variant of whom the existence is asserted in EIp11 is *God whose nature cannot be conceived except as existing*, that is: God (or substance) (c).

¹⁸³ 'Substance' in (8') is staged as the (a)-variant as the substance that is referred to in the demonstration of this proposition is the *causa sui* of which it is stated that 'its essence necessarily involves existence', which we have seen to be applicable specifically to variant (a).

¹⁸⁴ EIA7, (I) 410.

(*Quicquid, ut non existens, potest concipi, ejus essentia non involvit existentiam*)

The thing to note is that EIA7 deals precisely with the two distinct conceptual perspectives that also surface in the definition of *causa sui* (and that threaten the validity of (7')-(9)): on the one hand EIA7 mentions the thing insofar as it is (or is not) *conceived* to exist, and on the other hand the Axiom refers to a thing that exists because of *the identity of essence and existence*. That is to say: this axiom makes reference to both a *psychological* and a *logical* way of considering things. Hence, in terms introduced earlier in this chapter, the Axiom states that if a thing can be conceived to not be a *causa sui* as a two-place predicate, it also is not a *causa sui* as a one-place predicate. And this in turn implies that EIA7 can be rendered thus:

A7': If a thing is not (c), it is not (a)

It is important to acknowledge that EIA7 (and thus A7') has the wrong form to suit Spinoza's aims in the demonstration of EI p11. As it stands, the Axiom is about things that can be conceived *not* to exist, which appears to rule out any application to a thing that is *causa sui* and thus must be conceived to *exist necessarily*. In order to make the Axiom work in a demonstration for the existence of God, Spinoza needs the inversion of EIA7, which can be rendered thus:

*A7'': if a thing is (a), it also is (c)*¹⁸⁵

It is precisely this need for the inverted Axiom that motivates the use of a *reductio* argument. For such an argument allows Spinoza to put EIA7 on its head and mould it exactly in the way he needs it; the *reductio* argument provides Spinoza

¹⁸⁵ That Spinoza fully endorses this inverted claim becomes clear, not only from the fact that he makes use of it in the important demonstration of EI p11, but also from his Principle of Plenitude EI p16, which indeed states that 'from the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes'. EI p16, (I) 424 (*Ex necessitate divinae naturae, infinita infinitis modis [...] sequi debent*), that is, as stated in EI Appendix, God creates infinitely many things (that together constitute *Natura naturata*) 'because the laws of his nature have been so ample that they sufficed for producing all things which can be conceived by an infinite intellect'. EI Appendix, (I) 446 (*quia ipsius naturae leges adeo ample fuerunt, ut sufficerent ad omnia, quae ab aliquo infinito intellectu concipi possunt, producenda*). Combined with the absolute ontological identity of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* that was argued for in Chapter 1, this amounts to the very claim that surfaces in A7': if a thing is God *qua* God (a), it also is a coalescent identity of God and all the modes that follow from it (c).

with the A7"-formula that is required in order to forestall any conceptual mix-up in his demonstration for the existence of God.

In order to make it clear how Spinoza utilizes the inversion of EIA7 so as to avoid a conceptual mix up, we must consider the full first proof of EIp11 once again:

If you deny [that God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, necessarily exists], conceive, if you can that God does not exist. Therefore (by A7) his essence does not involve existence. But this (by P7) is absurd. Therefore God necessarily exists, q.e.d.¹⁸⁶

(Si negas, concipe, si fieri potest, Deum non existere. Ergo (per axiom. 7.) eius essentia non involvit existentiam. Atqui hoc (per prop. 7.) est absurdum. Ergo Deus necessario existit. Q. E. D.)

This claim can be rendered in the following way. Spinoza starts his proof with the supposition of the non-existence of God:

- (i) Suppose that a substance consisting of infinite attributes (i.e. God (c)) does not exist

Then he invokes EIA7. In the second step of the argument it is claimed that, if God is conceived not to exist, then his essence does not involve existence. Hence: if God (c) does not exist (and thus is a thing that cannot be considered to be a *causa sui* as a two-place predicate), *thus (ergo)* (by EIA7) God cannot be considered to be a *causa sui* as a one-place predicate. This can be rendered thus:

- (ii) If a substance consisting of infinite attributes does not exist, then God *qua* God (a) does not exist

However, according to Spinoza argument (ii) is absurd because of EIp7. For in the demonstration of this latter proposition it is asserted that the essence of a substance necessarily involves existence.¹⁸⁷ Hence:

- (iii) But (by EIp7) God *qua* God (a) exists necessarily

¹⁸⁶ EIp11d, (I) 417.

¹⁸⁷ EIp7, (I) 412.

Which in turn leads to the following conclusion:

(iv) So God (c) exists necessarily

Making use of the terms that were introduced earlier in this chapter, the argumentation in the first proof of EIp11 can be rendered concisely in the following way:

(i') Suppose that God (c) does not exist

(ii') If God (c) does not exist, then God *qua* God (a) does not exist

(iii') But God *qua* God (a) exists necessarily

(iv') So God (c) exists necessarily

Now, it is very important to acknowledge that this rendering is still invalid, which becomes even clearer when we compare (i')-(iv') with the following *reductio* argument, which has a similar structure:

(i'') Suppose that it is not raining

(ii'') If it is not raining, then the street is not wet

(iii'') But the street *is* wet

(iv'') So *it is* raining

This inference is obviously invalid. It states that if the street is wet, then it is raining necessarily, thus neglecting the possibility that a street can also be wet when (say) someone has been washing his car. In order to make the inference valid, an extra argument is needed to the extent that the street is wet *if and only if* it is raining. It is here where the importance of the *reductio* form of the first proof of EIp11 becomes clear, as precisely this extra argument is provided by the inverted EIA7. In order to make this clear, I shall render the Axiom in the terms that are used in (i'')-(iv'').

Translated in 'rain-terms', EIA7 runs thus (see also point (ii'')):

A7_{rain}: if it is not raining, the street is not wet

If we invert this claim by way of a statement that *it is not the case that A7_{rain} obtains*, we get:

A7'_{rain}: if the street is wet, then it is raining

It is crucial to recognize that A7'_{rain} rules out the possibility that the street can also be wet when someone has been washing his car. The *reductio* form of the argument ensures that A7_{rain} can be used in order to make it clear that the street is wet *if and only if* it is raining. Now, the very same thing happens with EIA7 in the demonstration of EIp11. The crucial clause is the following:

Therefore (by A7) his essence does not involve existence. But this (by P7) is absurd.¹⁸⁸
(*Ergo (per axiom. 7.) eius essentia non involvit existentiam. Atqui hoc (per prop. 7.) est absurdum*)

As already noted, this clause enables Spinoza to put EIA7 on its head. In the quoted proof, EIA7 posits this:

A7': If a thing is not (c), it is not (a)

However, by putting EIA7 within the scope of a *reductio* argument, Spinoza attains precisely the formula he needs in order to proof the existence of God (c), without any conceptual mix up. By way of the assertion that *it is not the case that (A7') obtains* he is able to state the following:

A7'': if a thing is (a), it also is (c)

And with the help of this claim, the following valid inference can be made:

- (i') Suppose that God (c) does not exist
- (ii') If God (c) does not exist, then God (a) does not exist
- (iii') But God (a) exists necessarily

A7'': If a thing is (a), it also is (c)

¹⁸⁸ EIp11d, (I) 417.

(iv') So God (c) exists necessarily

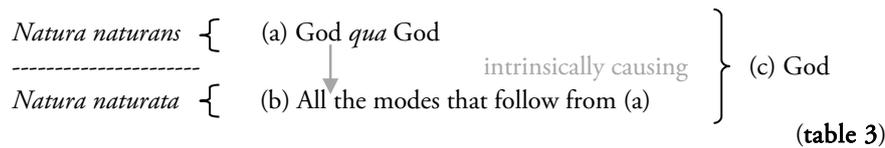
This can also be stated in terms of *Modus Tollens* ($((p \rightarrow q) \wedge \neg q) \rightarrow \neg p$). In this case p must be understood to be $(\neg c)$ and q must be conceived to be $(\neg a)$. This leads to the following formalization of the claim in EI_p11 (remark that the ' $\neg q$ ' from the *Modus Tollens* represents the operation with which EIA7 is put on its head):

$$(((\neg c) \rightarrow (\neg a)) \wedge \neg(\neg a)) \rightarrow \neg(\neg c)$$

Indeed, stated in this particular 'complicated way', Spinoza attains a proof for the existence of God ('not not-c') that is not threatened by a conceptual mix-up between the logical and psychological concepts of God that are employed in the *Ethics*. To be sure, this is not to say that this first proof is unproblematic. Yet, Spinoza's neglect of the 'easy deduction' and his use of EIA7 in his very first proof for the existence of God in EI_p11 makes it clear once more that the distinction between God *qua* God (a) and God (c) is fully recognized by Spinoza and can be understood to be a structural feature of his metaphysics.

3.8 Conclusion

In the introduction of this chapter I have claimed that *pars melior nostri* can only be understood properly when the precise causal, conceptual and existential status of the divine *res* is elucidated. Indeed, we can only understand God *insofar as he knows himself by way of the human mind* when we have gathered an understanding of the way God knows himself *insofar as he is God*. A scrutiny of the way in which God must be understood to be self-caused (and hence self-conceived) has made it clear that the thing 'God' refers to can be considered in *three* ways. 'The divine being can be grasped as (a) God *qua* God, as (b) an ontologically identical yet conceptually distinct infinite mode that follows from God *qua* God, and as (c) the *coalescent identity* of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. This was rendered thus:



Even though (a), (b) and (c) all ultimately refer to the very same thing, the conceptual, existential and causal status of these three variants were shown to differ.

Variant (b) can be conceived in the following way:

- (1-(b-i)) formally, insofar as it is considered in its eternal being as an intrinsically caused immediate infinite mode
- (2-(b-ii)) objectively, insofar as it is conceived in its durational being as an infinite individual that is characterized by the extrinsic causality of its constituting parts.¹⁸⁹

Interesting as the elucidation of the conceptual, existential and causal status of (b) may be, it did not provide us with much new knowledge as to the status of God. The things that were said in section 3.3 concerning this issue were merely a reiteration and elaboration of the things that were argued for in Chapter 2.

Variant (c) proved more interesting with respect to the issues at stake in the present chapter. This particular concept of ‘God’ was portrayed thus:

- (3-(c)) The coalescent variant of God (i.e. God (c)) that is caused as a *causa sui* as a *two-place predicate*.

Indeed, the *constructive function of the intellect*, by which things fall apart in an objective and a formal aspect, led to a *coalescent conception* of God (see table 3). On the one hand this variant of God – being mediated by an intellect – can be understood to be characterized by a conceptual duality of a formal (a) and an objective aspect (b). Yet at the same time it can be conceived to be ‘one’ as the identity of *Natura naturans* (a) and *Natura naturata* (b) is fully accounted for. With this, God (c) was shown to meet the requirements in both EI_p17c1 and EI_p25s.

¹⁸⁹ Remark that the finite modes are left out of the picture in precisely the same way we have shown them to have escaped from sight in EI_p3 and its demonstration (see section 2.5.1). They are only implicitly incorporated in this enumeration as the ‘duration without beginning or end’ of the whole of nature must be understood to be *the infinite aggregate of the restricted durations of the finite modes that are in it*.

That is to say: although God (c) can be claimed to be *causa sui* in the same way the infinitely many things follow from God (EIp25s), the coalescent conception of the divine *res* can nevertheless be understood to be caused *neither intrinsically, nor extrinsically* (EIp17c1). Furthermore, this variant of God was shown to be captured in the second (‘psychological’) part of Spinoza’s definition of *causa sui*, which reads thus: ‘by cause of itself I understand [...] that whose nature cannot be conceived except existing’.

Apart from the coalescent concept of the divine *res*, there can also be distinguished a variant of God that meets the requirements of the first (‘logical’) part of EID1. This variant of the divine *res* – God *qua* God – was rendered in the following way:

- (3-(a)) The eternal truth of God (i.e. God *qua* God (a)) that is caused as a *causa sui* as a *one-place predicate*

The particular variant of self-causation (and hence self-conceiving) that is characteristic for concept (a) *is very different from the way men commonly understand a self-conceiving operation*. Whereas our intellect is (commonly) characterized by an (at most simultaneous) duality of the formal and the objective being of the thing that is grasped with it, God *qua* God must be understood to be *absolutely free from any conceptual duality* whatsoever. From our scrutiny of the concept of *causa sui* it has become clear that variant (a) cannot be understood to be conceptually bifurcated, as this would lead to all kinds of unwelcome outcomes (such as the positing of an infinite regress of self-causing stages, or even an eminently triangular God). Hence, in God *qua* God cause and effect must be understood to *converge absolutely*. It is precisely this that is captured in the claim that the (a)-version of the divine *res* must be understood to be *causa sui* as a *one-place predicate*: God *qua* God is caused *absolutely by itself* as God is essentially characterized by the fact that he conceives himself by way of knowledge that can no longer be understood to be ‘intellectual’ in the way we commonly understand it. Indeed, as Spinoza remarks himself in EIp8s2: ‘the truth of substances is not outside the intellect unless it is in themselves, because they are conceived through themselves’:¹⁹⁰ the particular self-

¹⁹⁰ EIp8s2, (I) 414.

conceiving operation that is characteristic for the divine *res* can be understood to be *extra-intellectual* in the sense that it is *absolutely free from* a conceptual divergence of formal and objective aspects (in the same way the extra-triangular nature of God makes him unsusceptible to any supposed triangularity).

An important implication of this is that God *qua* God can be understood to represent an *absolutely ontological* variant of existence. Whereas all other notions of existence are stated in terms of intellectual conceivability and as such merely denote *concepts* of existence (i.e. existence insofar as it is grasped via an intellect in the way we commonly understand it), it has become clear in this chapter that God *qua* God cannot be stated in terms of common intellectual conceivability (and causation). It is precisely in this sense that Spinoza is able to claim in his CM that ‘God cannot be said to enjoy existence’:¹⁹¹ we have seen that this means that the divine *res* in its (a)-variant cannot in any way be understood to exist in the way we commonly understand it. Our notion of ‘existence’ is merely a conceptual derivative of the absolute ontological eternal existence of God *qua* God, indeed in the very same way the variants of causation (and conception) (1) and (2) must be understood to be modal expressions of the absolute causal (and conceptual) operation with which the divine *res* causes and knows itself.

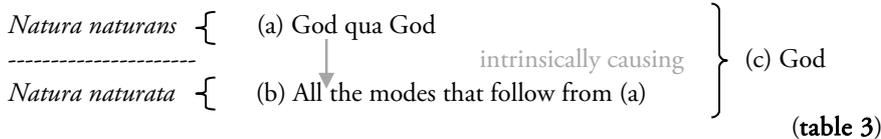
3.8.1 *Pars melior nostri*

In the previous chapter it was shown that in the *Ethics* we can discern a *constructive function of the intellect*. That is to say: we have established that the duality that permeates Spinoza’s metaphysics must be understood to be an expression of the duality that characterizes the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it). In this chapter we have treated the way in which the constructive function of the intellect is recognizable in the way Spinoza portrays the most fundamental concept in his philosophy: God. In this respect we have seen that:

*We conceive the one or unique substance as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive it to exist as *Natura naturans* (a), or insofar as we conceive it as *Natura naturata* (b) that is caused intrinsically by (a).*

¹⁹¹ CM II Ch. I, (I) 318.

The ontological identity of (a) and (b) that is entailed by this claim can be rendered thus:



Concerning the conceptual status of (a), (b) and (c) we have made some important observations. In terms of EVp29s, (b) can be understood thus:

We conceive Natura naturata as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive it to exist as a mediate infinite mode that exists sempiternally and is characterized by the extrinsic causality of its constituting parts, or insofar as we conceive it as an intrinsically caused immediate infinite mode that exists eternally.

With respect to God (c) the following claim can be made:

We conceive God (c) as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive him to exist as Natura naturans (a), or insofar as we conceive him as the ontologically identical Natura naturata (b) that is caused intrinsically by (a).

This claim of course is virtually identical to the assertion about the way in which we conceive ‘the one or unique substance’ (see above). This need not surprise us, as we have seen in this chapter that God (i.e. the substance consisting of infinite attributes) can only be called ‘one or unique’ insofar it is considered in its (c)-variant.

This take on God (c) naturally leads to the question how we must conceive the (a)-variant of the divine *res*, from which infinitely many things follow in infinitely many ways. Now, as ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s) was shown to stand to our intellect like a ‘dog that is a heavenly constellation’ stands to a ‘dog that is a barking animal’,¹⁹² we can make the following remarkable claim with respect to God’s infinite power of thinking:

¹⁹² EIp17s, (I) 427 (*canis, signum coeleste, & canis, animal latrans*).

Whereas we conceive things (and even God (c)) as actual in two ways, God qua God (a) cannot be understood to conceive himself in such a dual way

As according to EIp17s ‘the thing that is the cause both of the essence and of the existence [...] of our intellect’ – *in casu* (by EIp25): God – must be understood to ‘differ from our intellect both as to its essence and as to its existence’, it cannot but be understood to be *absolutely free from an intellect in the way we commonly understand it*. Indeed, Spinoza makes it very clear that God (which we can understand to be God *qua* God), *does not have an intellect*. The importance of this claim for the present investigation can hardly be overrated. For as we are investigating the intellect in the context of the *Ethics*, we are able to conclude now that in the remainder of this study we can leave the (a)-variant of God aside (mostly) – as it is *absolutely outside the intellect* – and must concentrate on the (c)-variant of the divine being. In section 3.6 I have claimed that EID4 tells only part of the story of what we must understand concerning the notion ‘attribute’. It must be noted now that this definition *tells precisely the part of the story that we are primarily interested in* (which of course makes it understandable why Spinoza himself has only provided the definition of the attributes in their *conceptual* guise). Another way of saying this is that in the subsequent chapters, in which the important concepts of ‘parallelism’ and ‘adequate knowledge’ will be elucidated, we will no longer concentrate on the divine *res* insofar as it is *outside the intellect* (and exists absolutely ontologically), but (almost) only on God insofar as he is mediated intellectually by the attribute of thought (and exists conceptually). Indeed, in the remainder of this study we will test *in what way God can be understood to know himself by way of the intellect in the way we commonly understand it*.

In this respect an important (and indeed very complicated) aspect of Spinoza’s philosophy needs attention now. It is this. Up till this point we have claimed that the causal and the conceptual flows in Spinoza’s philosophy are equivalent. On the basis of (inter alia) EIA4 it can indeed be claimed that the *top-down causal flow* from God *qua* God to the infinitely many things that follow from him in infinitely many ways implies a *top-down conceptual direction*. However, the things we have said in this and the preceding chapters suggest that matters actually are a bit more complicated. For once it is acknowledged (i) that we are able to attain knowledge of God’s essence by way of *pars melior nostri*, (ii) that this intellect

in the way we commonly understand it must be positioned at level (b), and (iii) that this better part of ours must nevertheless be understood to be *a part of God's self-knowledge*, we cannot evade the conclusion that the self-knowledge of God (c) cannot only be understood to be directed *top-down* (i.e. proceeding from (a) to (b)), but also *bottom-up* (i.e. proceeding from (b) to (a)). And thus we encounter the following confusing relation: in a certain sense the thing that *conceives actively* (i.e. the infinite intellect (bt)) must be understood to be the *passive effect* of the *actively causing* self-causing thing (a) whose nature is claimed to *be conceived passively*. The following table may elucidate this confusing inversion:

<i>Natura naturans</i>	}—	(a) God's active being	(passively conceived cause)	}	(ct) God
<i>Natura naturata</i>	}—	(bt) God's passive idea	(actively conceiving effect)		
			↑ ↓		(table 12)

This complicated structure will be elucidated in the next two chapters, where will see that the reasoning *from cause to effect*, and the reasoning *from effect to cause* marks the distinction between the two types of adequate knowledge that Spinoza discerns: *intuitive* and *rational* knowledge. In order to provide an elucidation of the distinction between intellectual self-knowledge of God (c) insofar as it proceeds from God *qua* God (a) to knowledge of the essences of the infinitely many things that constitute (b), and that very same self-knowledge insofar as it is understood to start with the knowledge of singular things (at level (b)) in order to 'climb up' to knowledge of God *qua* God (a), we must turn to an important aspect of Spinoza's philosophy that is closely connected with some of the things we have uncovered in the present and indeed the previous chapters: his so-called 'parallelism thesis'.

4. Two perspectives

*In this chapter I will show that the perspective that came to light in the previous chapters – from which God is prior to the modes that follow from him – must be understood to be combined with a perspective from which the parts are prior to the whole they constitute. That is to say: the top-down perspective in the previous chapters must be understood to be accompanied by a bottom-up perspective. This bottom-up perspective surfaces (inter alia) in Spinoza’s important ‘parallelism thesis’. As we shall see in the next chapter, recognition of the importance of these two perspectives in turn makes it clear how we must understand the two kinds of adequate knowledge that Spinoza discerns: *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*.*

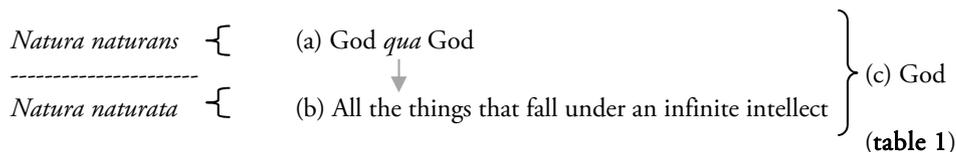
4.1 Introduction

Spinoza has been called ‘the last of the mediaevals’¹ – a title that is understandable given the priority that Spinoza allots the divine *res*. Even though Spinoza’s God is evidently very different from the scholastic conception of God, there is a clear traditional element recognizable his philosophy: the *top-down direction* of God’s power. The top-down perspective surfaces perhaps most explicitly in the proposition that starts off Spinoza’s creation narrative: EIp16. This Principle of Plenitude – that was treated extensively in Chapter 2 – leaves little doubt as to the direction proposed in it: in EIp16 Spinoza makes it clear that God *qua* God must be understood to be prior to the infinite modes (and all the things that fall under these infinite modes). Indeed, everything which can fall under an infinite intellect – i.e. *omnes res* – is claimed to follow from the divine nature. The agreement with his medieval predecessors concerning the causal priority² of God is made explicit in the third corollary of EIp16, where Spinoza states that ‘God is absolutely the first

¹ Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* I, vii. The relevant passage reads thus: ‘Then there is [...] the implicit Spinoza, who lurks behind these definitions, axioms, and propositions, only occasionally revealing himself in the scholia; his mind is crammed with traditional philosophic lore and his thought turns along the beaten logical paths of mediaeval reasoning. Him we shall call Baruch. [...] Baruch is the last of the mediaevals’.

² The asserted equivalence of the designations ‘follow from’ and ‘is caused by’ is argued for in Chapter 2.

cause'.³ This priority of the divine *res* is reiterated in various passages in part I of the *Ethics*, among which the claim in EIp25 that 'God is the efficient cause, not only of the existence of things, but also of their essence',⁴ as well as Spinoza's description of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* in EIp29s. The assertions in this latter scholium – that round off the creation narrative that starts with EIp16 – are completely in line with the causal direction that surfaces in EIp16: it is from *Natura naturans* that all things in nature must be understood to follow. Even though Spinoza's view differs considerably from the Thomistic conception of *Natura naturans*,⁵ the causal direction he propagates is similar to the one his scholastic predecessors foster: in Spinoza's philosophy too, *Natura naturans* is staged as the active principle from which *Natura naturata* follows.⁶ So in the *Ethics* (as well as in Spinoza's other philosophical works), God's all-encompassing power is directed *top-down*. This can be rendered thus:



Important as this top-down perspective may be for Spinoza's philosophy, it is not the only perspective that can be recognized in it. His highly original (and non-medieval) claim that creator and creation are ontologically identical – and that the relation from EIp16 can thus be understood to be a relation of inherence (see

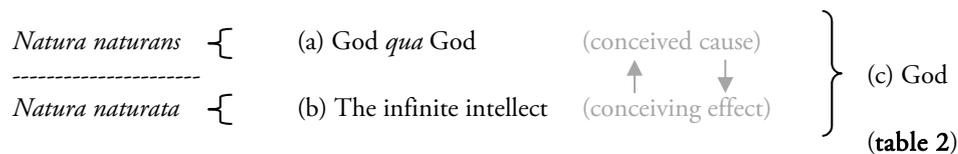
³ EIp16c3, (I) 425 (*Deum esse absolutè causam primam*).

⁴ EIp25, (I) 431 (*Deus non tantùm est causa efficiens rerum existentiaè, sed etiam essentiaè*).

⁵ In the KV, Spinoza refers explicitly to the Thomists when using the term '*Natura naturans*'. KV I, Ch. VIII, (I), 91. To be sure, Spinoza may very well have gathered this term (and the accompanying '*Natura naturata*') from another source. Steenbakkers, 'Een vijandige overname', 43-45.

⁶ According to Steenbakkers, there is reason to suspect that Spinoza made use of these scholastic terms only during a relatively short span of time (1660-1663). Ibidem, 43. However, even though after EIp31 Spinoza does not employ the terms anymore in the *Ethics* (nor refers to the passages in which he does), the structural characteristic that is denoted with it – i.e. the conceptual distinction between an *active* and an ontologically identical *passive* aspect of nature – is clearly upheld in his mature philosophy.

Chapter 2)⁷ – accounts for yet another conceptual perspective in the *Ethics*.⁸ We have seen in the previous chapters that God knows himself (also) by way of the human mind, which is part of the infinite intellect of God. Combining these claims, we cannot evade the conclusion that God (c) knows himself (also) by way of the infinite intellect, that is: by way of (b). It seems that, whereas the *causal direction* from the divine *res* to all the things that follow from it must be conceived to be *top-down*, the *conceptual direction* can be understood to (also) be diametrically opposed to this causal flow.⁹ This can be rendered tentatively in the following way:



This table suggests that God (c) can be understood to know himself in two ways.

- Firstly, God (c) can be understood to know himself *top-down*, or *from the knowledge of the cause to the knowledge of the effect*, that is: from the absolute

⁷ The term ‘inherence’ itself does not surface often in Spinoza’s work. It can be found (in a relevant way) only in Letter 12, where Spinoza makes it clear that ‘some things are infinite [...] by the force of the cause *in which they inhere* [emphasis added]’. Letter 12, (I) 205 (*quaedam suâ naturâ esse infinita [...]verò vi causæ, cui inherent*). In Chapter 2 we have seen that this clause can be understood to be applicable to the *formal being of things* (and by implication the *objective being of things*, as these are portrayed to be the very same things, albeit ‘conceived abstractly’. Ibidem, (I) 205 (*abstractè concipiuntur*)). This observation in turn is on a par with our claim in Chapter 2 that EIp16 must be understood to encompass intrinsic and extrinsic causation.

⁸ And thus we need not be surprised that Harry Wolfson does not only call Spinoza ‘the last of the mediaevals’, but also ‘the first of the moderns’. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza I*, vii.

⁹ This is partly due to the *mathematical model* that Spinoza uses, a way of thinking that surfaces inter alia in his claim in the demonstration of EIp16 that ‘this Proposition must be plain to anyone, provided he attends to the fact that the intellect infers from the given definition of any thing a number of properties that really do follow necessarily from it’ and the elucidation in EIp17s that ‘all things [...] always follow, by the same necessity and in the same way as from the nature of a triangle it follows, from eternity to eternity, that its three angles are equal to two right angles’. These claims make it clear that, even though the causal *direction* – top-down – is distinctly medieval, the causal *character* is (early) modern. For an interesting account of the way this early modern character of Spinoza’s thought is related to (and radicalizes) Descartes’ mathematical perspective see: Valterri Viljanen, *Spinoza’s Geometry of Power* (Cambridge 2011), 16-20. To be sure, in the passages of EIp16 and EIp17s the bottom-up perspective is not recognizable. The only claim I make here is that the mathematical character of the top-down cause that surfaces in it is distinctly *non-medieval*, and can be understood to give way to yet another conception of causal direction, which in turn surfaces in other propositions and scholiums (to be dealt with in subsequent sections).

omnipotence of God *qua* God (a) – about whom it can be claimed that ‘the laws of his nature have been so ample that they sufficed for producing all things which can be conceived by an infinite intellect’¹⁰ – to all the things which can be conceived by an infinite intellect (b).

- Secondly, as ‘each idea [...] of each singular thing that actually exists, necessarily involves an eternal and infinite essence of God’,¹¹ God (c) can also be understood to know himself *bottom-up*, or *from the knowledge of the effect to the knowledge of the cause*, that is: from the infinite intellect (b) to God *qua* God (a).¹²

The implicit claim that the bottom-up perspective – i.e. the perspective that ‘starts with the parts’ at level (b) – is nothing but an aspect of God’s self-knowledge sets Spinoza apart from his medieval predecessors. It allows Spinoza to assert that an investigation of the order of nature (b) can somehow lead to true and adequate knowledge of (the ontologically identical) God *qua* God (a).¹³ Another way of saying this is that, even though Spinoza claims in EIIp10s that ‘the divine nature [...] is prior both in knowledge and in nature’,¹⁴ there nevertheless appears to be a conceptual commitment with respect to the infinitely many individual things that constitute (b). It is the aim of this chapter to show how Spinoza’s view of the absolute causal and conceptual priority of God is combined with a conceptual commitment to the whole of nature (i.e. as argued for in Chapter 2, to the *object of*

¹⁰ EI Appendix, (I) 446 (*quia ipsius naturæ leges adèd ample fuerunt, ut sufficerent ad omnia, quæ ab aliquo infinito intellectu concipi possunt, producenda*).

¹¹ EIIp45, (I) 481 (*Unaquæque cujuscunque corporis, vel rei singularis, actu existentis, idea Dei æternam, & infinitam essentiam necessariò involvit*).

¹² These are the two ways in which the (c)-variant of God can be understood to know himself. In Chapter 3 we have seen that the (a)-variant can be understood to know himself in an absolutely prior way, namely (so to speak) *from knowledge of the cause to knowledge of the cause*. Indeed, it became clear that God (a) is absolutely free from the duality that characterizes the intellect in the way we commonly understand it.

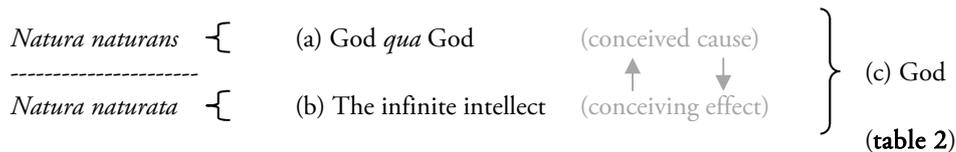
¹³ Indeed, however much Spinoza’s opponents (and, for that matter, many of his adherents) have claimed that Spinoza is an *atheist*, the claim that God is illusory must nevertheless be understood to be *absurd* in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy. To be sure, the claim that God is a person-like figure with a supreme intellect is *equally absurd* in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy. So iff ‘atheism’ is defined as ‘the denial of the *realiter* existence of a divine person-like figure who creates at will and who has a supreme intellect’, then Spinoza is an atheist. For Spinoza makes it very clear that *this* particular conception of God is illusory.

¹⁴ EIIp10S, (I) 455 (*Nam naturam divinam [...], quia tam cognitione, quàm naturà prior est*).

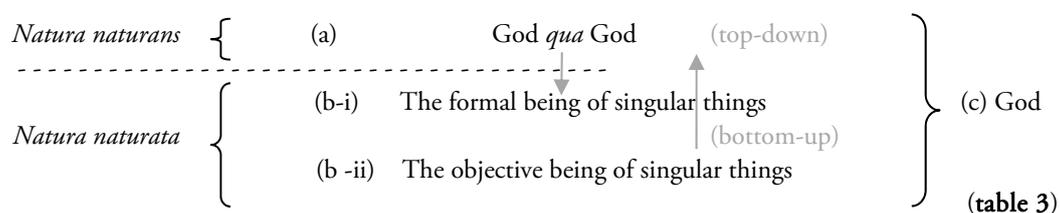
God's idea), a commitment needed in the new mechanical worldview that ignited the philosophy of thinkers such as Bacon, Descartes, and Spinoza himself.

4.1.1 An idiosyncratic reading?

Consider table 2 once more:



We have just asserted that this table expresses the way in which the bottom-up perspective offers God a way to know himself. However, at this point it must be noted that table 2 is not as complete as we could wish for. The rendering of table 2 accounts for the way the bottom-up perspective can be understood insofar as God knows himself by way of the *unspecified* infinite intellect, that is: by way of the infinite intellect insofar as the distinction between the formal and the objective being of this infinite intellect is not yet made. However, in the previous chapters we have seen that an understanding of the functioning of the intellect must incorporate the conceptual distinction between the formal and the objective being of these things. And hence, apparently, the bottom-up variant of God's self-knowledge that we are interested in must be rendered, not in the manner of table 2, but in the following way:



Indeed, in Chapter 2 it has become clear that by way of our intellect we conceive singular things (i.e. modes that serve as the basis for the bottom-up perspective) in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them as to their objective being (b-ii), or insofar as we conceive them in to their formal being (b-i). It is this particular way of conceiving things that we have shown to be the structural characteristic of God's self-knowledge insofar as he is expressed in the human mind (and indeed God's

self-knowledge insofar as he is expressed in God's idea). And hence this particular variant of God's self-knowledge – that entails a trichotomy of modes, their objective being and its formal being¹⁵ – must somehow be integrated in our rendering of the bottom-up perspective.

Table 3 evidently needs more elucidation. At least two things deserve attention:

- (I) We are in need of closer insight into the exact relation between the formal (b-i) and the objective (b-ii) being of singular things
- (II) We must illuminate how knowledge of the formal being of singular things (b-i) enables our intellect to attain knowledge of God *qua* God (a) (i.e. how God (c) is able to gather self-knowledge)

We will return to point (II) in a subsequent section (and in the next chapter). First, it must be established how the levels (b-ii) and (b-i) are related. In order to provide an answer to point (I), I will turn to a treatment of one of the central aspects of Spinoza's metaphysics: his so-called 'parallelism thesis' of EIIp7. In the next sections it will become clear that this proposition deals precisely with the relation between (b-ii) and (b-i) (and thus can be understood to shed further light on the trichotomous structure of the intellect that was uncovered in Chapter 2). Indeed, below I will argue for the claim that the famous assertion 'the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things' – on which Spinoza's claim that a man's body and his mind can be conceived to be 'one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways'¹⁶ is based – must be understood to say the following:

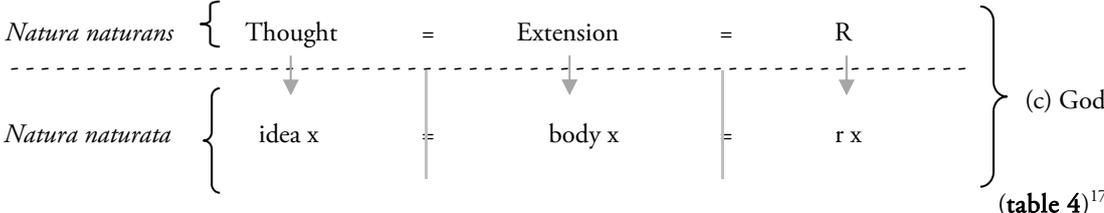
the order and connection of the objective being of things (b-ii) is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of things (b-i).

Another way of saying this is that Spinoza's parallelism thesis in EIIp7 can be conceived to be yet another expression of the *constructive function of the intellect* that can be discerned in the *Ethics*.

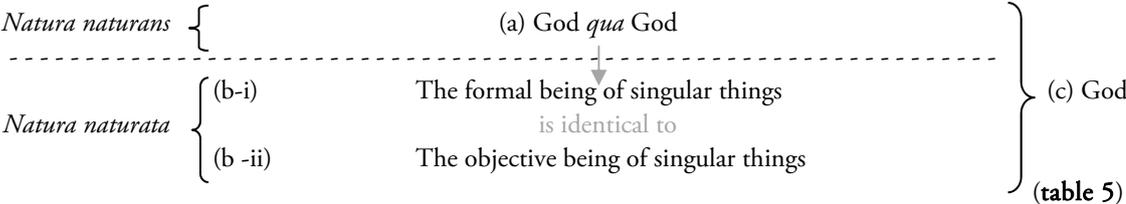
¹⁵ See section 2.5.3.

¹⁶ EIIp7s, (I) 451 (*una, eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa*).

Now, it must be admitted that *prima facie* this is a rather idiosyncratic rendering of Spinoza’s assertion in EIIp7. Generally, Spinoza’s parallelism thesis in EIIp7 is claimed to consist in an *inter*-attribute identity between modes of one attribute (say: human minds), and modes of another attribute (*in casu*: human bodies). That is to say: Spinoza’s parallelism is commonly understood to posit the following:



Indeed, there appears to be consensus among scholars that with EIIp7 Spinoza aims to make it clear that for each extended thing – whether it be a stone, a tree, a man or a toaster – there is an idea (i.e. a ‘mind’) that is numerically identical to it. Yet, the rephrased version of EIIp7 provided above suggests that this ‘parallelism proposition’ must actually be understood to posit an *intra*-attribute parallelism i.e. a ‘vertical’ parallelism of things that are conceived within the realm of thought – in the following way:



Claiming that in EIIp7 Spinoza forwards an *intra*-attribute identity of the objective and the formal beings of things appears to deviate considerably from the *communis opinio* among Spinoza scholars. It must be stressed immediately that this deviation is partly illusory. I do not at all deny that Spinoza’s claim in EIIp7 entails an *inter*-

¹⁷ A few things must be noted with respect to this table. Firstly, it is important to make it clear the ‘R’ stand for ‘the remaining attributes’ and ‘r’ for ‘mode of the remaining attributes. Secondly, it must be stressed that this table only aims to express the *identity relation* that is entailed by Spinoza parallelism; the *causal* purport of his parallelism thesis will be addressed in the next chapter. Lastly, it must be added that in positioning Thought, Extension and R at the level of *Natura naturans* we have tacitly switched from the *conceptual* sense of the attributes (that surfaces in EID4) to the ontological (i.e. extra-intellectual) variant of the attributes (that is argued for in section 3.6). See also note 19.

attribute identity of ideas and their extended objects. There is little doubt that EIIp7 must be understood to imply that (as it is stated explicitly in the scholium of this proposition) ‘a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways’.¹⁸ So I do *not* want to oppose the rendering of table 4. Rather, this chapter is aimed at showing that table 4 tells only part of the story.¹⁹ It will become clear that the horizontal identity of modes from table 4 can only be made intelligible on the basis of the specific vertical identity-relation that is posited in table 5. Indeed, below we will see that *inter*-attribute parallelism is merely an implication of Spinoza’s more comprehensive (what I have chosen to call) *transitive* parallelism that surfaces, not only in EIIp7, but also in EIIp21s.²⁰ Treatment of this subject in turn enables us to understand how the top-down and the bottom-up perspective of God’s self-knowledge can be conceived. Or, to put the same point differently: treatment of the parallelism claim of EIIp7 makes it clear how Spinoza is able to reconcile a medieval perspective with a (very particular)²¹ early modern scientific view.

4.2 Two parallelisms?

The ‘parallelism thesis’²² is one of the fundamental aspects of Spinoza’s philosophy. In previous chapters we have referred to this thesis various times. Up till this point

¹⁸ EIIp7s, (I) 451 (*Sic etiam modus extensionis, & idea illius modi una, eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa*). This very insight enabled us to investigate the realm of extension in order to gather a better understanding of the way thought must be understood to be conceptually bifurcated. See section 1.3.

¹⁹ Attentive readers may have noticed that I have used the very same wording with respect to the elucidation of the intellect-dependent definition of ‘attribute’ (EID4) (see section 3.6). This is no coincidence. For in this chapter it will become clear that with respect to the intellectual grasping of singular things we encounter the very same structure as the one we encountered with respect to the attributes. *Conceptually* a man and the idea of that man are distinct in the same way the attributes are (this agrees with the claims in EIA4 and EIIp7s). Yet *ontologically* the formal being of a man and the formal being of the idea of the man are *identical* in the same way the attributes must be understood to express one and the same divine essence. More on this in a subsequent section.

²⁰ The exact purport of the terms ‘vertical’ and ‘transitive’, as well as the relation with the term ‘intra-attribute’, will be elucidated in the subsequent sections.

²¹ For in certain respects, Spinoza of course deviates as much from his early modern contemporaries as he does from his medieval predecessors.

²² I use quotation marks here because the term ‘parallelism’ is not actually used by Spinoza. The term seems to originate in the work of Leibniz, who in *Considerations on the Doctrine of a Universal Spirit* uses ‘parallelism’ to refer to the relation between soul and body: ‘And as to the complete separation between soul and body [...], I see no reason either in religion or in philosophy, which obliges me to give up the

we have more or less taken it for granted that according to Spinoza a body (or the all-encompassing collection of bodies: the whole of nature) and the idea of that body (or the all-encompassing collection of ideas of bodies: the whole of objective nature) are one and the same thing. At this point it must be shown how this claim is to be understood precisely, and how it functions within the structure of Spinoza's metaphysics.

4.2.1 *Inter-attribute parallelism*

Spinoza's parallelism thesis is rooted in EIIp7, which famously states the following:

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.²³
(*Ordo, & connexio idearum idem est, ac ordo, & connexio rerum*)

As already noted, this proposition is generally taken to posit a numerical identity between singular things that are understood to be operative under the attribute of thought ('ideas'), and singular things that are conceived under the attribute of extension ('bodies').²⁴ This reading of EIIp7 is underpinned by the following passage in EIIp7s:

a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways.²⁵
(*modus extensionis, & idea illius modi una, eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa*)

Spinoza's explication in EIIp7s teaches us that the claim in EIIp7 must be understood to entail an identity relation between things that are conceived under *different* attributes that each express an essence of the very same substance. It is this

doctrine of the *parallelism of the soul and the body*, and to admit a perfect separation [emphasis added] (*je ne voy aucune raison ny de la religion ny de la philosophie, qui m'oblige de quitter la doctrine du parallelisme de l'ame et du corps, et d'admettre une parfaite separation*). Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'Considerations on the Doctrine of a Universal Spirit' in: George Martin Duncan ed., *The Philosophical Works of Leibnitz* (New Haven 1890), 143. However, despite the somewhat problematic implications of the term when using it in the context of Spinoza's philosophy, I will continue to use 'parallelism' anyway (while dropping the quotation marks), as it has become the standard term for Spinoza's claim in EIIp7.

²³ EIIp7, (I) 451.

²⁴ See for instance: Wallace Matson, 'Spinoza's theory of mind' in: *The Monist*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (1971), 573; Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 127; Della Rocca, *Representation*, 19.

²⁵ EIIp7s, (I) 451.

very *inter*-attribute relation that enables Spinoza to assert that a man and the idea of that man are one and the same thing, yet conceived under another attribute (see table 4). Furthermore, the claim concerning the identity of things conceived under the attributes of thought and extension allows Spinoza to state that ‘the object of the idea constituting the human mind is the human body [...] and nothing else’ in EIIp13.²⁶ The parallelism thesis enables him to posit that mind and body are one and the same thing, expressed in two ways. In this way, Spinoza claims, ‘we understand [...] what should be understood by the union of mind and body’.²⁷ Unlike René Descartes – who must allow causal interaction between the realms of thought and extension – Spinoza posits that these realms are causally closed. In Spinoza’s philosophy (say) the intended raising of an arm is not the result of an occurrence in thought, causing an action in the extended realm. Rather, the occurrence in thought causes some sort of process in the idea of the arm; and it is the extended parallel of the occurrence in thought that must be understood to cause the movement of the extended arm. This inter-attribute parallelism relation between ideas and their extended counterparts – one of the few things that Spinoza commentators agree upon completely – can be rendered in the way of table 4 (see above).

4.2.2 *Intra*-attribute parallelism

To be sure, the *Ethics* appears to harbor yet another parallelism thesis. Apart from the *inter*-attribute parallelism that is asserted explicitly in the claim of EIIp7s, Spinoza also endorses a variant of parallelism that is operative *within* the attribute of thought. This latter *intra*-attribute parallelism surfaces in EIIp20 and EIIp21. In proposition 20 we read the following:

²⁶ EIIp13, (I) 457 (*Objectum ideæ, humanam Mentem constituentis, est Corpus, sive certus Extensionis modus actu existens, & nihil aliud*).

²⁷ EIIp13s, (I) 457-458 (*Ex his non tantum intelligimus, Mentem humanam unitam esse Corpori, sed etiam, quid per Mentis, & Corporis unionem intelligendum sit*). At this point it must be stressed that Spinoza’s term ‘idea’ is rather different from the way in which we commonly understand this term. The idea of my body in the sense in which Spinoza uses the term is not the idea that I have in my mind as ‘a picture on a tablet’ (EIIp43s) of my body. Rather, the idea of my body simply *is* my body, understood from the perspective of thought. More on this in the next chapter.

There is also in God an idea, *or* knowledge, of the human mind, which follows in God in the same way and is related to God in the same way as the idea, *or* knowledge, of the human body.²⁸

(Mentis humanæ datur etiam in Deo idea, sive cognitio, quæ in Deo eodem modo sequitur, & ad Deum eodem modo refertur, ac idea sive cognitio Corporis humani)

In the subsequent proposition Spinoza states:

This idea [in God] of the [human] mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind is united to the human body.²⁹

(Hæc Mentis idea eodem modo unita est Menti, ac ipsa Mens unita est Corpori)

These claims uncover an alternative variant of parallelism. The explicit reference to the union of the human mind and body teaches us that the identity relation that is referred to in EIIp7s and EIIp13 (i.e. the identity of the mind and its extended object) is applicable, not only to the conceiving of a thing under *different attributes*, but also to things that are understood to resort *under the same attribute*. For as we saw, the union of mind and body according to Spinoza consists in the fact that both are the same thing, expressed under different attributes. As EIIp21 reads that the idea of the human mind in God (that surfaces in EIIp20) is united to the human mind ‘in the same way’ (*eodem modo*) as this mind is united to the body, we are led to the conclusion that the idea of the human mind *in God* and the human mind *itself* are one and the same thing, conceived under the same attribute: thought. This puzzling relation between the idea of the mind and the mind itself is affirmed in EIIp21s:

So the idea of the mind and the mind itself are *one and the same thing*, which is conceived *under one and the same attribute*, namely, thought. The idea of the mind, I say, and the mind itself follow in God from the same power of thinking and by the same necessity. For the idea of the mind, that is, the idea of the idea, is nothing but the form of the idea insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object [emphasis added].³⁰

(quare Mentis idea, & ipsa Mens una, eademque est res, quæ sub uno, eodemque attributo, nempe Cogitationis, concipitur. Mentis, inquam, idea, & ipsa Mens in Deo eadem necessitate ex eadem cogitandi potentiâ sequuntur dari. Nam reverâ idea Mentis, hoc est, idea ideæ nihil aliud est, quàm forma ideæ, quatenus hæc, ut modus cogitandi, absque relatione ad objectum consideratur)

²⁸ EIIp20, (I) 467.

²⁹ EIIp21, (I) 467.

³⁰ Ibidem, (I) 467.

Paraphrasing EIIp7s – which is validated by Spinoza’s remark that the present parallelism relation must be understood ‘in the same way’ as the union of mind and body – we can tentatively rephrase the claim of EIIp21s in the following way:
a mode of thinking and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways.

Or in terms of EIIp13:

the object of the idea of the human mind is the human mind and nothing else.

Remarkable and counterintuitive as these claims may seem at first sight, they are actually confirmed by Spinoza in the demonstration of EIIp21, which reads:

We have shown that the mind is united to the body from the fact that the body is the object of the mind (see P12 and 13); and so by the same reasoning the idea of the mind must be united with its own object, that is, with the mind itself, in the same way as the mind is united with the body.³¹

(Mentem unitam esse Corpori ex eo ostendimus, quòd scilicet Corpus Mentis sit objectum (vide Prop. 12. & 13. hujus): adeòque per eandem illam rationem idea Mentis cum suo objecto, hoc est, cum ipsà Mente eodem modo unita esse debet, ac ipsa Mens unita est Corpori)

These claims posit an aspect of duality within the attribute of thought that is in need of a closer scrutiny. For if the idea *of* the mind (viz. the idea of the idea, i.e. the idea God has of the mind) is identical to its object (viz. the idea that *is* the human mind, i.e. the idea God has of the body), and if both singular things³² are subsumed under thought, the question arises how they still can be conceived to be conceptually distinct. That is: how is it possible to distinguish between things if these things are claimed to be *the very same thing*, conceived *under the same attribute*? How must the *intra*-attribute relation between ideas and the ideas of these ideas be understood?

³¹ EIIp21, (I) 467.

³² Spinoza defines ‘singular things’ as: ‘[...] things that are finite and have a determinate existence’. EIID7, (I) 447 (*Per res singulares intelligo res, quae finitae sunt et determinatam habent existentiam*). As Spinoza in EIIp21s is arguing about the human mind insofar as it is united to the body (i.e. ‘insofar as it expresses the actual existence of the body, which is explained by duration’, EVp23d, (I) 607 (*quatenus corporis actualem existentiam, quae per durationem explicatur*)), in this context ‘idea’ and ‘idea of the idea’ both qualify as things that are finite and have a determinate existence, that is: they qualify as singular things.

4.2.2.1 Formality and objectivity revisited

In order to show how an idea can be distinguished from the identical idea of that idea, it may be instructive to recapitulate how an idea can be distinguished from its extended object. As Spinoza claims in EIIp21 that the former relation must be understood in the same way as the latter, a summary of the things we have said concerning the status of ideas and their parallel bodies may provide us with a clue as to the way in which the distinction between an idea and the idea of that idea must be understood.

Now, with respect to the *inter*-attribute relation between ideas and their parallel bodies (such as an idea of a raising arm and its parallel extended counterpart, or indeed the whole of objective nature – God’s idea – and its object: the whole of nature), Spinoza makes use of an internal characteristic of substance on the basis of which it is possible to conceive of substance in (at least) two ways: the very notion of ‘attribute’. It is by way of the attributes that our intellect has cognitive access to two ways – and two ways only³³ – of understanding the essence of the one undividable substance: we grasp the essence of substance through thought, and we grasp it through extension. A singular thing can be understood to be mind *and* body, because a thing can be conceived to resort under two distinct attributes. In terms of Spinoza’s Principle of Plenitude (EIp16): ideas and bodies can both be understood to ‘fall under the infinite intellect’ (b) because a thing that follows from God *qua* God (a) can be understood (i) as an idea (that falls under the infinite intellect as it is part of this infinite mode of thought), and (ii) as a body (that falls under the infinite intellect because the whole it is conceived to be a part of – i.e. the infinite mode of extension – is perceived by the infinite intellect).³⁴

We gathered Spinoza’s parallelism thesis in EIIp21 – the one I referred to using the term ‘*intra*-attribute parallelism’ – from the assertion that ‘the idea of the

³³ This is stated explicitly for in Letter 64. ‘So I conclude that the human Mind cannot achieve knowledge of any other attribute of God beyond [Extension and Thought]’ (*Atque adeò concludo Mentem humanam nullum Dei attributum præter hæc posse cognitione assequi, ut fuit propositum*). Letter 64, (II) 438. An analysis of the arguments that Spinoza provides for this claim would take us too far afield. See also note 158.

³⁴ This latter formulation is inspired by the version of the definition of attribute that Spinoza provides in EIIp7s. The definition of attribute (in both EID4 and EIIp7s) entails a claim about the *representational nature of the intellect*, which will be treated comprehensively in the next chapter.

mind and the mind itself are one and the same thing, *which is conceived under one and the same attribute*'. In this case too, some sort of internal characteristic must be supposed on the basis of which these two distinct descriptions are intelligible.³⁵ So what could this internal characteristic be?

At this point we must recall that in the previous chapters we have already uncovered an internal distinction that can be understood to be operative *within* the attributes, and that moreover is closely related to the distinction between ideas and their objects. We have seen that modes can be grasped in two ways. They can be considered:

- (1) insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, that is: in their objective being, representing their objects³⁶

And the very same things can be grasped

- (2) insofar as we conceive them under a species of eternity, that is: in their formal being³⁷

Indeed, in the previous chapters we have seen that any operation of the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) must be understood to be characterized by a conceptual bifurcation between the objective and the formal being of the thing under scrutiny. Stated in terms of EVp29s:

we conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them in their objective being, or insofar as we conceive them in their formal being.

³⁵ Yitzhak Melamed made the same observation: 'If the order of ideas is supposed to perfectly reflect the order of things, there must be an internal barrier within thought [...] which reflects the barrier among the attributes'. Yitzhak Melamed, 'Spinoza's Metaphysics of Thought: Parallelisms and the Multifaceted Structure of Ideas' in: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 86:3 (May 2013), 674.

³⁶ The next chapter will be dedicated to a scrutiny of the *representational* character of this relation.

³⁷ Attentive readers may notice that I have changed the order of (1) and (2). In the previous chapters point (1) harbored the formal being of things, and point (2) the objective being of the same things. The present way of staging things is induced by the main subject of this chapter; the elucidation of the *bottom-up* perspective. More on this in the subsequent sections.

Looking for an internal feature within the attributes that makes the *intra*-attribute parallelism of EIIp21s intelligible, the distinction between the formal and the objective being of things is very promising.

The first thing that must be noted in this respect is that this very distinction plays a crucial role with respect to the perception of the multiple attributes (and thus with respect to *inter*-attribute parallelism). Indeed, in EID4 ‘attribute’ is defined as ‘what *the intellect* perceives of a substance [emphasis added]’. In the previous chapter it became clear that, insofar as the level of modes (b) is taken into account, the attributes must be taken in this intellect-*dependent* fashion. This in turn teaches us that the *inter*-attribute parallelism of EIIp7s must also be understood to be intellect-dependent. That is to say: we can only posit that the idea of a man (or of a raising arm) and the body of that man (or of the raising arm) are the very same thing if the intellectual distinction between the formal and the objective being of things is presupposed. For the attributes – the very internal feature of substance that allows us to distinguish between ideas and bodies – can only be grasped insofar as the divine *res* is conceived both as to its formal being (as God *qua* God (a)), and as to its objective being (as the (perceiving) infinite intellect (b)). In short: *the recognition of inter-attribute parallelism is intellect-dependent*. Now, as Spinoza’s claim in EIIp21 makes it clear that *intra*-attribute parallelism is to be understood in the same way as *inter*-attribute parallelism, we can draw the provisional conclusion that *intra*-attribute parallelism must be considered to be intellect-dependent as well (or to say it in a slightly different way: that both *inter*- and *intra*-attribute parallelism fall within the scope of the *constructive function of the intellect* that was uncovered in section 2.5). And hence, we have found an important indication that the internal feature that we are looking for is precisely the distinction between formality and objectivity that was treated in Chapter 2.

The tentative suggestion that the distinction between the formal and objective being of things is precisely the feature that accounts for the *intra*-attribute parallelism of EIIp21 and its scholium is underpinned by the fact that the notion ‘form of the idea’ is used explicitly by Spinoza in EIIp21s. Consider the following claim from this scholium once again:

the idea of the Mind, that is, the idea of the idea, is nothing but the *form of the idea* insofar as this is considered a mode of thinking *without relation to the object* [emphasis added].³⁸

(*Nam reverâ idea Mentis, hoc est, idea ideæ nihil aliud est, quàm forma ideæ, quatenus hæc, ut modus cogitandi, absque relatione ad objectum consideratur*)

This formulation clearly corroborates our supposition that the bifurcation that surfaces in EIIp21s (i.e. the distinction between ideas and the ideas of these ideas) can be understood in terms of the very conceptual bifurcation that was treated in the previous chapters: the distinction between a finite idea that is conceived to exist in relation to a certain time and place (1), and that very same thing insofar as it is conceived in its eternal formal being (2). The assertion concerning *forma ideæ* in this scholium reiterates that according to Spinoza an idea can be grasped in at least two ways: *with* and *without* relation to the object it is the idea of. It is hard to miss the similarity between these claims in EIIp21s and the things we have said in Chapter 2 with regard to the formal and objective being of ideas:

- An idea that is claimed to be grasped insofar as it is considered *with* relation to its object is on a par with the *objective being* that surfaces in EIIp8c (and EIIp9).
- The ‘form of the idea’ in EIIp21s is on a par with the formal being of EIIp5, that is: the being of the idea under scrutiny *as it is in itself*, viz. *without relation to its object*.³⁹

So Spinoza’s formulation in the scholium of EIIp21 corroborates our tentative claim that the internal feature that enables him to distinguish between an idea and an identical mode under the very same attribute is grounded on the distinction between the objective and the formal status of that idea, i.e. the distinction between an idea insofar as it *represents its object* and that same idea *as it is in itself*. In terms of EIIp21s the distinction can be rendered thus:

³⁸ EIIp21s, (I) 467-468.

³⁹ Here we take a tacit turn. Up till this point we were treating the question how the parallel relation between an idea and the *idea of that idea* can be understood. Henceforth we will be focusing on the parallel relation between the idea and the *form of that idea*. The important question how the *form* of an idea can in turn be understood to be the *idea* of an idea will be elucidated in a subsequent section.

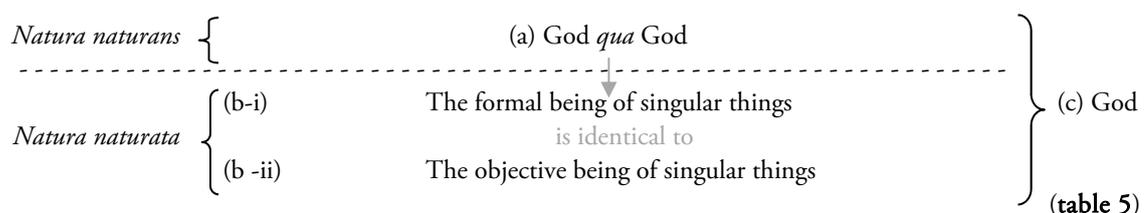
A singular mind can be grasped in two ways:

- (1') as the objective being of a body (i.e. as the idea *with* relation to its object)
- and
- (2') as the formal being of the idea of a body (i.e. as the idea *without* relation to its object)⁴⁰

These claims are very important when trying to understand Spinoza's parallelism (and indeed *pars melior nostri*), as they suggest that the intra-attribute parallelism that surfaces in EIIp21 is an expression of the fact that *ideas insofar as they are considered with respect to their extended objects must be understood to be paralleled by the very same ideas insofar as they are considered in themselves*. And hence the claims in EIIp21 and its scholium can also be formulated thus:

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of these ideas.

Or, as we have rendered it in table 5:



This particular way of staging the intra-attribute parallelism claim of EIIp21 and its scholium becomes even more important once it is acknowledged that according to Spinoza this *intra*-attribute parallelism must be understood in the very same way as *inter*-attribute parallelism. In order to test whether – and how – this claim can be upheld, we must return to EIIp7. In the next section I will show that this latter parallelism proposition can indeed be understood to make the very same claim that

⁴⁰ It is precisely this particular dual structure that enables Spinoza to claim (in the demonstration of EIVp8) that it is clear from EIIp21s, that an idea is ‘not really distinguished’ but ‘only conceptually distinguished’ from its object. EIVp8d, (I) 551 (*ab ideâ Corporis affectionis reverâ non distinguitur, nisi solo conceptu*).

was uncovered with respect to EIIp21s (and hence that EIIp7 can also be rendered in the way of table 5). Below it will become clear that EIIp7 must be read thus:

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of these ideas

Furthermore, I will argue that the assertions in EIIp7s concerning the identity of a body and the idea of that body are merely implied by proposition 7 (and in a subsequent section it will be shown that the identity of an idea and the idea of that idea can be understood to follow from the comprehensive parallelism claim of EIIp7 as well). Another way of saying this is that the present interpretation entails that, unlike some commentators have claimed,⁴¹ the variants of parallelism that we have treated in this section must be understood to be conceptual variants of one overriding parallelism claim. It will become clear that EIIp7 and EIIp21s posit the very same identity (and representation) relation, a relation that can be understood to be an expression of the very trichotomous structure of the intellect that was uncovered in Chapter 2.

4.2.3 One parallelism

Recall that EIIp7 reads thus:

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.⁴²
(*Ordo, & connexio idearum idem est, ac ordo, & connexio rerum*)

We have just asserted tentatively that this proposition can also be formulated thus:

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of these ideas.

⁴¹ Yitzhak Melamed claimed the following: 'E2p7 and its scholium assert two separate and distinct doctrines of parallelism. The former asserts a parallelism between the causal order of *ideas* and *things*, the latter a parallelism among the causal order of modes in each of the *infinitely many attributes*.' Yitzhak Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics. Substance and Thought*, 142. I fully agree with his latter claim. However, I disagree with his claim that these two variants are 'separate and distinct', as will become clear below.

⁴² EIIp7, (I) 451.

This formulation of course needs further elucidation. For the claim that the term ‘things’ in EIIp7 can be understood to refer to the *formal being of ideas* is controversial. Various commentators have suggested that the term ‘things’ must be understood to refer to *bodies*. Jonathan Bennett is a case in point. He stated that the *res* in proposition 7 are to be seen as modes of extension.⁴³ Michael Della Rocca ‘for convenience’ assumes the same.⁴⁴ In other words: some leading Spinoza scholars have considered the term ‘things’ in the important EIIp7 to refer to *something else* than the formal being of ideas. This need not surprise us, as Spinoza himself appears to do the same. Consider the following assertions:

If the human body is not affected by an external body in any way, then (by P7) the idea of the human body [...] is also not affected in any way by the idea of the existence of that body⁴⁵

(Si à corpore aliquo externo Corpus humanum nullo modo affectum est, ergo (per Prop. 7. hujus) nec idea Corporis humani, [...] ideâ existentia illius corporis ullo etiam modo affecta est)

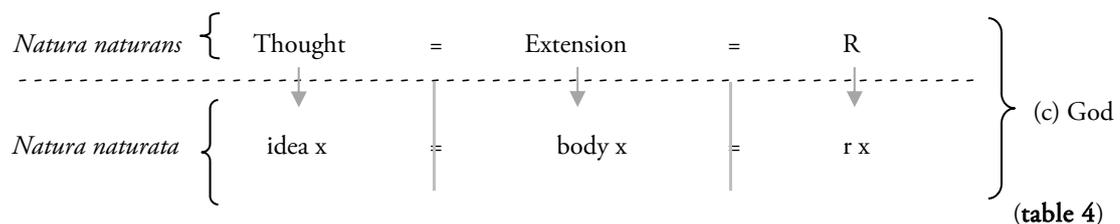
P 11: The idea of any thing that increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our body's power of acting, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our mind's power of thinking.

Dem.: This proposition is evident from IIP7 [...] ⁴⁶

(PROPOSITIO XI. Quicquid Corporis nostri agendi potentiam auget, vel minuit, juvat, vel coërcet, ejusdem rei idea Mentis nostræ cogitandi potentiam auget, vel minuit, juvat, vel coërcet.

DEMONSTRATIO. Hæc Propositio patet ex Propositione 7. Partis 2)

These two passages suggest that Spinoza himself chooses the same convenient route that Della Rocca has taken. Indeed, Spinoza’s position appears to be rendered correctly in table 4:



⁴³ According to Bennett, Spinoza ‘advocates a doctrine of parallelism between the mental and physical realm’, and in this respect he refers to EIIp7. This appears to imply that according to Bennett, the distinction between thought and extension surfaces explicitly in the mentioned proposition. See: Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 127.

⁴⁴ Della Rocca, *Representation*, 18.

⁴⁵ EIIp26d, (I) 469.

⁴⁶ EIIIp11, (I) 500.

Table 4 makes it clear that things (and their causal connection) that are operative under the attribute of thought are numerically identical to the parallel things (and their causal connection) under the attribute of extension (or any of the remaining attributes). As already noted, this appears to be a fair description of Spinoza's parallelism. That is to say: table 4 is fully corroborated by Spinoza's explicit assertions in the *scholium* of EIIp7. However, if table 4 renders the purport of proposition 7 *itself* correctly – as is suggested by the passages adduced above – then how can we still uphold the supposition that Spinoza refers to the formal being of ideas – and not to modes of extension – when he uses the term 'things' in EIIp7? Our seemingly idiosyncratic reading of EIIp7 suggests that Spinoza in this proposition does not primarily forward an *inter*-attribute parallelism between ideas, bodies and r's, but an *intra*-attribute parallelism between the objective and the formal being of a thing. How can this latter position (and hence table 5) be brought in line with table 4?

Actually, there is considerable evidence for the claim that in EIIp7 Spinoza does indeed assert that the order and connection of ideas (b-i) is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of these ideas (b-ii). Below I will provide additional arguments for this controversial contention. Apart from our observation that both types of parallelism must be understood to be intellect-dependent – and must thus be conceived to be characterized by the distinction between the formal and the objective being of things – there are at least four more arguments that underpin our seemingly idiosyncratic assertion concerning the purport of EIIp7. After having provided these arguments, it will become clear how the present claim about the *intra*-attribute identity of ideas and their formal beings can be brought in line with the *inter*-attribute identity of ideas and their bodies (and, in a subsequent section, how this can be understood to be related to the bottom-up perspective in Spinoza's philosophy).

Argument 1: the context of EIIp7

EIIp7 is embedded in a series of propositions that deal explicitly with the *formal* (EIIp5 and EIIp6c) and the *objective* being of things (EIIp8 and EIIp9). In the claims preceding EIIp7 it is made clear how we must conceive the causal generation of the formal being of things. And the two subsequent propositions deal

respectively with the interrelation between the formal and the objective status of things (EIIp8, its corollary and its scholium), and the way in which the objective being of things must be conceived to be caused (EIIp9). This provides us with a first contextual indication that EIIp7 refers to the relation, not between objective beings (i.e. ideas) and their objects under extension (i.e. bodies), but between ideas and their formal being.

Argument 2: the corollary of EIIp7

Consider the following claim in EIIp7c:

From this it follows that God's power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting. That is, whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection.⁴⁷

(Hinc sequitur, quòd Dei cogitandi potentia æqualis est ipsius actuali agendi potentia. Hoc est, quicquid ex infinità Dei naturà sequitur formaliter, id omne ex Dei ideâ eodem ordine, eâdemque connexionem sequitur in Deo objectivè)

It is hard to miss the fact that the very terms that I claim to be applicable to the assertion in EIIp7 – the formal and the objective being of things – are used explicitly in the very corollary of this parallelism proposition. Indeed: whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature, is claimed to follow objectively in God insofar as the thing under scrutiny is considered under the attribute of thought. This underpins the assertion that the formal-objective distinction plays an important role in EIIp7, and that this proposition (and EIIp8)⁴⁸ can in a certain sense be considered to be the crossroads of Spinoza's claims about the formal being of ideas (in EIIp5 and EIIp6c) and the objective being of these same things (in EIIp8c and EIIp9) (see the previous argument).

But this is not all. There is a further way in which Spinoza's claims in EIIp7c can be understood to corroborate our present claim. For on the basis of EIIp7c it can be shown that – unlike what is commonly supposed (see above) – the term 'things' in EIIp7 *does not refer to extended objects*. The following *reductio* argument may be elucidative in this respect:

⁴⁷ EIIp7c, (I) 451.

⁴⁸ More on this seemingly hermetic proposition shortly.

- (i) Suppose that the term ‘things’ in EIIp7 *does* refer to bodies
- (ii) The order and connection of ideas is identical to the order and connection of bodies (by EIIp7 and (i))
- (iii) *From this (ii) it follows* that ‘whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea’ (EIIp7c)
- (iv) The things that follow *objectively* in God from his idea must be the *ideas* from (ii) (by the causal barrier of EIIp6)⁴⁹
- (v) So the things that follow *formally* from God's infinite nature must be understood to be the *bodies* from (ii) (by (ii), (iii) and (iv)).
- (vi) Bodies must be understood to be the formal being of ideas (by (iii), (iv) and (v))
- (vii) It is absurd to claim (as (vi) does) that bodies are the formal being of ideas (by EIIp5)
- (viii) So the term ‘things’ does *not* refer to bodies

The crucial steps in this argument can be elucidated in the following way:

Ad. (i)-(iii). These claims are rather straightforward; (i) is the supposition that we are testing, (ii) is EIIp7 rendered in terms of the supposition in (i), and (iii) is the restatement of the part of EIIp7c in which the terms ‘formal’ and ‘objective’ are staged.

Ad (iv). The claim that the things that follow objectively in God from his idea must be the ideas from (ii) perhaps needs some more elucidation. As noted under (iv), this assertion is corroborated by the causal barrier that is posited EIIp6, from which it can be inferred that if things follow in God from his idea, they must be modes of thought (and not modes of extension). That the things that follow ‘objectively’ from God's idea indeed are modes of thought (i.e. ideas) is further underpinned by the fact that in the *Ethics* Spinoza uses the term ‘objective’ only with respect to the

⁴⁹ EIIp6 reads thus: ‘The modes of each attribute have God for their cause only insofar as he is considered under the attribute of which they are modes, and not insofar as he is considered under any other attribute’. EIIp6, (I) 450 (*Cujuscunque attributi modi Deum, quatenus tantum sub illo attributo, cujus modi sunt, & non, quatenus sub ullo alio consideratur, pro causà habent*). To be sure, we have already referred to this ‘causal barrier’ various times in the preceding chapters.

representational nature of thought.⁵⁰ So it appears to be rather uncontroversial that the claim about the things that follow objectively in God from his idea must be understood to refer to the order and connection of ideas.

Ad. (v)-(vi). In EIIp7, Spinoza makes a distinction between two classes of things. On the present supposition these two classes consist of respectively ideas and bodies. Now, if things that ‘follow objectively in God from his idea’ must be understood to be ideas (as was established in (iv)), there appears to be only one candidate left for the things that according to EIIp7c ‘follow formally from God’s infinite nature’: bodies. Indeed, if it is granted that in EIIp7c Spinoza employs the terms ‘formal’ and ‘objective’ in order to refer to a duality of the objective being of things and their formal being,⁵¹ then the *formal* being of the things that follow ‘objectively in God from his idea’ must be understood to be bodies. Hence: bodies must be understood to be the formal being of ideas.

Ad. (vii) and (viii). Point (vi) states that bodies must be understood to be the formal being of ideas. Yet, as we have seen in Chapter 2, EIIp5 reads that ‘the formal being of ideas admits God as a cause only insofar as he is a thinking thing [...]’. And in the demonstration of this proposition Spinoza adds that ‘the formal being of ideas is a mode of thinking’ which ‘involves the concept of no other attribute of God’. This makes it abundantly clear that point (vi) is wrong: in the context of Spinoza’s mature thought it is absurd that bodies should be the formal being of ideas. And hence the initial supposition (i) must be rejected: the term ‘things’ does not refer to bodies (viii).

This argument teaches us that EIIp7 cannot be understood to make a claim about ideas and bodies (nor about ideas and finite modes of any of the remaining

⁵⁰ See EIp17s, EIp30, EIIp8c. Or as Della Rocca claims: the traditional term ‘objective’ clearly indicates that Spinoza posits a *representational* aspect in EIIp7c. Della Rocca, *Representation*, 19. As I will show in the next chapter, this representational aspect is a characteristic aspect of modes insofar as they are conceived under the attribute of thought (just as (say) motion is a characteristic aspect of modes insofar as they are conceived under the attribute of extension).

⁵¹ A duality that, as we saw in Chapter 2, entails a *trichotomy* of formal being, objective being and object. More on the import of this structure for Spinoza’s parallelism claims will follow shortly.

attributes).

Argument 3: The formulation of EIIp8

As already noted in Chapter 2, EIIp8 is generally considered to be a rather hermetic proposition. Consider this proposition and its demonstration once more:

P8: The ideas of singular things, or of modes, that do not exist must be comprehended in God's infinite idea in the same way as the formal essences of the singular things, or modes, are contained in God's attributes.

Dem.: This proposition is evident from the preceding one, but is understood more clearly from the preceding scholium.⁵²

(PROPOSITIO VIII. Idea rerum singularium, sive modorum non existentium ita debent comprehendi in Dei infinita idea, ac rerum singularium, sive modorum essentia formales in Dei attributis continentur.

DEMONSTRATIO. Hac Propositio patet ex precedenti, sed intelligitur clarius ex precedenti Scholio)

One of the problems that needs solving is why Spinoza would say something here about modes that *do not* exist. In the propositions that precede EIIp8, Spinoza speaks about modes that *do* exist. And then all of a sudden he switches to *non-existing* singular things. Why? This puzzle is solved once it is acknowledged that EIIp7 deals with the very distinction that was uncovered in section 2.5: the distinction between durational ideas (b-ii) and the eternal formal status of these ideas (b-i). It is crucial to recognize that the question how we must understand the metaphysical status of modes that do not exist arises precisely because in the preceding proposition it is claimed that ideas (that exist under duration) have the same order and connection as these very same things considered in their eternal formal state. For it is this remarkable assertion that leads to the problem how things that *do not exist now* (such as (say) king Louis XIV of France), can be conceived to have the same order and connection as something that must be understood to *exist eternally*. If EIIp7 would deal with bodies and ideas only, the reference to EIIp7 in the demonstration of EIIp8 would be incomprehensible. On our present reading, however, it is clear why Spinoza would treat the ideas of modes that do not exist, and why he would refer to the preceding proposition. Indeed, Spinoza's claim that the ideas of non-existing modes must be comprehended in God's infinite idea in

⁵² EIIp8, (I) 452.

the same way the formal essences of these modes are contained in God's attributes can only be understood to follow from the preceding proposition and its scholium if it is acknowledged that in these passages the very same distinction between an eternal realm of formality and a durational realm of objective beings is posited.⁵³ And hence, the seemingly hermetic formulation of EIIp8 fully underpins our suggestion that EIIp7 must be understood to deal with the isomorphic causal chains of durational ideas (b-ii) and their eternal formal beings (b-i).

Argument 4: The *attribute-neutral* aspect of the formal being of things

EIIp7 deals with the order and connection of *things* (*res*). Above we have argued that the term must be understood to refer, not to bodies, but to the formal being of things. In order to establish whether we are right in claiming that EIIp7 deals with things in their formal being we can take yet another route.

Consider the following claim from the demonstration of EVp1:

The order and connections of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things (by IIP7), and vice versa, the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas (by IIP6C and P7).⁵⁴

(*Ordo, & connexio idearum idem est (per Prop. 7. p. 2.), ac ordo, & connexio rerum, & vice versâ, ordo, & connexio rerum idem est (per Coroll. Prop. 6. & 7. p. 2.), ac ordo, & connexio idearum*)

This passage makes it clear that the term 'things' in EIIp7 must be understood to refer to the 'things' that are treated in EIIp6c. This latter corollary reads thus:

From this it follows that the formal being of things which are not modes of thinking does not follow from the divine nature because [God] has first known the things; rather the objects of ideas follow and are

⁵³ I use the epithet 'formality' here because the eternal status is applicable to both the formal *essence* and the formal *being* of things.

⁵⁴ EVp1d, (I) 597. The 'vice versa' deserves some attention: this term seems to imply that 'ideas' and 'things' operate at the same conceptual level, whereas my contention is that this is *not* the case (as I will claim that the relation is *vertical*). This problem disappears once we realise that Spinoza is reasoning specifically about the *causal characteristics* of these items. The claim that 'Dutchmen are Europeans, and vice versa' is untrue. However, it is completely sound to say that 'the cause by way of which Dutchmen come into being is the same as the cause by way of which Europeans come into being, and vice versa'. The same applies to the present subject: the causation is applicable to both classes of things in the same way, even though there is a conceptual priority of one class over the other.

inferred from their attributes in the same way as that with which we have shown ideas to follow from the attribute of thought.⁵⁵

(Hinc sequitur, quòd esse formale rerum, quæ modi non sunt cogitandi, non sequitur ideò ex divinà naturâ, quia res priùs cognovit, sed eodém modo, eàdemque necessitate res ideata ex suis attributis consequuntur, & concluduntur, ac ideas ex attributo Cogitationis consequi ostendimus)

Now, it must be admitted that *prima facie* this reference suggests that the term ‘things’ does refer to bodies (or finite modes of any of the remaining attributes). For Spinoza clearly equates ‘things’ with ‘the objects of ideas’,⁵⁶ which appears to imply that he is reasoning here about bodies (and modes of the remaining attributes). However, this leads to a problem. For above we have seen that the term ‘things’ in EIIp7 cannot be understood to refer to modes of any of the other attributes. Above it became clear that it is absurd that a body (or a finite mode from any of the remaining attributes) should be the formal being of an idea, as Spinoza claims in EIIp5d that the formal being of ideas is a mode of thinking.

Is there a way out of this? I think there is. Knowing (i) that Spinoza states in EIIp6c that ‘the objects of ideas follow and are inferred from their attributes in the same way as that with which we have shown ideas to follow from the attribute of thought’, and (ii) that the only causal thread that is treated explicitly at this point in part II of the *Ethics* is the intrinsic causal thread of EIIp5,⁵⁷ we seem to have gained enough ground to suppose that ‘the objects of ideas’ that ‘follow and are inferred from their attributes in the same way as’ the formal being of ideas can be understood to refer, not to the extrinsically caused finite modes of extension and the remaining attributes, but to the intrinsically caused formal being of these things. And hence we can proceed our investigation with the tentative claim that EIIp7 can be reformulated thus:

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of things which are not modes of thinking (i.e. the esse formale rerum)

⁵⁵ EIIp6c, (I) 450-451.

⁵⁶ In order to refer to the ‘object of ideas’, Spinoza uses the term ‘*ideatum*’ – instead of ‘*objectum*’. In Chapter 5 it will become clear why he would choose this term in this specific context.

⁵⁷ As we have seen that the *extrinsic* causal thread of *finite objective beings* surfaces explicitly only in EIIp9; see section 2.5.

To be sure, with this reformulation we have not yet found a decisive answer to the question we aim to treat in this section. For one thing, the claim that the term ‘things’ refers to the *esse formale rerum* of EIIp6c needs more underpinning. Moreover, it was not our aim to establish that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of things *which are not modes of thinking*. Rather, we intended to show that EIIp7 can be understood thus:

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of these ideas

So one of the questions we face now is whether there is a way to get from the claim concerning *the formal being of things which are not modes of thinking* to a claim that deals with *the formal being of ideas*. Now, I think there is such a way. In order to show this, I must adduce the *reductio ad absurdum* that was provided above once more, and substitute the term ‘bodies’ with ‘*esse formale rerum*’. If it is assumed that term ‘things’ in EIIp7 can be understood to refer to the *esse formale rerum* of EIIp6c, then the argument can be restated in the following way:

- (i') The term ‘things’ in EIIp7 refers to the *esse formale rerum* of EIIp6c
- (ii') The order and connection of ideas is identical to the order and connection of the *esse formale rerum* (by EIIp7 and (i'))
- (iii') From this (ii') it follows that ‘whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea’ (EIIp7c)
- (iv') The things that follow *objectively* from God's idea must be the *ideas* from (ii') (by the causal barrier of EIIp6)
- (v') So the things that follow *formally* from God's infinite nature must be understood to be the *esse formale rerum* from (ii') (by (ii'), (iii') and (iv')).
- (vi') The *esse formale rerum* must be understood to be the formal being of ideas (by (iii'), (iv') and (v'))

Point (vi') can count as a step forward in comparison with the *reductio* argument (i)-(viii) that was provided above. It neutralizes part of the incongruence that surfaced in the *reductio ad absurdum* from Argument 2. Whereas in the *reductio*

argument the (durational) extended body was staged as the (eternal) formal being of the idea under scrutiny, point (vi') suggests that it is not the extended object of the idea (i.e. its body) that can be understood to serve as the formal being of the idea under scrutiny, but the *formal being* of this extended object. Indeed, whereas in the *reductio* variant of the argument the eternal and infinite formal being of an idea appeared to be a durational and finite thing (*in casu*: a body), point (vi') safeguards that the eternal and infinite formal being of an idea is an eternal and infinite formal being.

To be sure, this observation still does not fully corroborate the present supposition. For above we have seen that the formal being of an idea must be understood to be a mode of *thinking* (by EIIp5d). And hence we can only consider our claim to be validated (and argument (i')-(viii') *not* to be an incomplete rendering of yet another *reductio* argument) once we have shown that the horizontal conceptual distinction between the eternal formal being of ideas and the identical (by (vi')) eternal formal being of non-mental modes (at level (b-i)) is less impermeable than the distinction between finite ideas and their identical finite bodies (at level b-ii)). Now, is it? Can the referential opacity⁵⁸ that is applicable to modes insofar as they are considered objectively (i.e. the distinction between ideas and their extended objects) be understood to be neutralized if these singular things are considered in their formal being? I think it can be conjectured that this indeed is the case. That is to say: in a certain sense – and as opposed to modes insofar as they are conceived in their durational state – the formal being of modes can be understood to have an aspect of *attribute-neutrality*. Whereas durational things (such as ideas and bodies at level (b-ii)) can only be considered insofar as they are subsumed under a certain attribute, their eternal being at level (b-i) can (also) be understood insofar as it follows in an attribute-neutral way from God *qua* God.

Prima facie, this solution may appear to rest on mere speculation. Indeed, it must be admitted that the concept of 'attribute-neutrality' does not surface explicitly in the *Ethics*. The existence of 'attribute-neutral' modes or features may have been forwarded by several scholars,⁵⁹ but this sheer fact of course cannot serve

⁵⁸ In this context, this term is inspired by Michael Della Rocca. See section 4.3.1 and note 95.

⁵⁹ Yitzhak Melamed calls these attribute-neutral modes 'modes of God'. See: Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics. Substance and Thought*, 82-86. The same term is used by Gueroult. Gueroult, *Spinoza. Dieu*, 339. Jonathan Bennett calls them 'attribute-neutral differentiae'. Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 144-145. Della Rocca stresses that the concept of 'mode [...] of no attribute whatsoever [...] is Spinozistically

as an underpinning for our present claim; we are in need of additional textual evidence. That is to say: as I do not want to take refuge in an *argumentum ad verecundiam*, we must test whether there are indications in the *Ethics* that corroborate our claim (i) that Spinoza makes implicit use of the concept of attribute-neutrality, and (ii) that this attribute-neutrality can be understood to be applicable to the formal being of things.

So is there any textual support for the assertion that the *Ethics* harbors the concept of attribute-neutrality? Perhaps unsurprisingly, I think there is. The first passage that must be adduced in this respect is EIIp7c. The already quoted claim that ‘whatever follows formally from God’s infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea’ provides us with an important indication that attribute-neutrality is an implicit feature of Spinoza parallelism. For it is hard to see how the term ‘God’s infinite nature’ can be understood to be attribute-*dependent*; as God is defined in EID6 as ‘a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes’, the term ‘God’s infinite nature’ appears to denote the divine being, *irrespective of the way its essence is perceived by the intellect*, that is: God in his absolute, attribute-neutral being.

So far so good. It appears to be rather clear that the concept ‘God’ is prior to the concept ‘attribute’ and hence that attribute-neutrality is an implicit feature of Spinoza’s metaphysics. But this is of course not to say that modes can be conceived to be attribute-neutral as well. The question we must answer is not whether *God* is attribute-neutral, but whether *the formal being of singular things* can be understood as such; can the implicit attribute-neutrality of God *qua* God be understood to ‘contaminate’ the things that follow formally from the necessity of the divine nature? Indeed, we must answer the question whether the attribute-dependent modes that follow ‘objectively in God from his idea’ can be allotted an attribute-neutral aspect insofar as they follow ‘formally from God’s infinite nature’. Now, with respect to this important question it is crucial to acknowledge that in fact we have already distinguished the ingredients on the basis of which the attribute-neutral feature of modes in their formal state can be understood. For in the

unacceptable’. Della Rocca, *Representation*, 121. However, at the same time he writes that ‘there is [...] a small, but important class of extensional properties’. Ibidem 129. These are ‘properties [...] that [do] not presuppose that the item with that property is of a particular attribute’. Ibidem 132. Samuel Newlands argued that the conceptual dependence relations in Spinoza’s philosophy must be understood to be attribute-neutral. Newlands, ‘Another Kind of Spinozistic Monism’, 472.

previous chapters it was shown that there is a close relation between extra-intellectual formal essences in *Natura Naturans* and intra-intellectual formal beings in *Natura naturata*. It became clear that the absolute non-distinctiveness and ubiquity of the extra-intellectual formal essences of things at the level of God *qua* God (a) must be understood to be prolonged in the intra-intellectual formal being of these same things insofar as they are conceived to function as pervasive parts-with-a-vista at the level of the immediate infinite modes (b-i). It is precisely here where we must locate the ‘contamination’ that we are looking for. I claim that *the attribute-neutral aspect of things in their formal being must be understood to find its root in the attribute-neutrality of the formal essences of things at the level of God qua a God*. That is to say: just as the formal beings of things can be attributed a certain species of eternity insofar as they are conceived to follow from the absolutely eternal formal essences, so also these formal beings can be ascribed a certain species of attribute-neutrality insofar as they are conceived to follow from the absolutely attribute-neutral formal essences. This can be rendered thus:

- (a) Formal *essences* are attribute-neutral *eo ipso*, as they must be understood to be operative at the level of *absolute identity* (i.e. *Natura naturans* (a)).⁶⁰
- (b-i) Formal *beings* can be conceived in two ways. Insofar as these parts-with-a-vista are conceived in their *part* character, they can be subsumed under an attribute (namely the attribute of which the immediate infinite mode is the whole they are conceived to be a part of); and insofar as these parts-with-a-vista are conceived in their *vista*-character, they can be understood to express the absolute ubiquity of the formal essences they follow from, and hence transfer the attribute-neutrality of their formal essences to the level of *Natura naturata* (b-i).

This way of understanding the attribute-neutrality of the formal being of things finds corroboration in the already adduced claim of EIIp7c. Recall that this corollary reads thus:

⁶⁰ More on the absolute identity and attribute-neutrality of the divine nature (a) in section 4.3.3.1.

From this it follows that God's power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting. That is, whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection.⁶¹

(Hinc sequitur, quòd Dei cogitandi potentia aequalis est ipsius actuali agendi potentiae. Hoc est, quicquid ex infinità Dei naturà sequitur formaliter, id omne ex Dei ideâ eodem ordine, eâdemque connexionione sequitur in Deo objective)

With respect to this claim it is informative to recall what was said in section 3.6. There it was shown that God's power of acting can be understood to encompass his power of thinking, his power of moving (and being at rest) and his power of r-ing. Indeed, as 'God's power is God's essence itself',⁶² there appears to be no ground at all to suppose that 'God's power of acting' must be assigned to a specific attribute (and hence that EIIp7c and (by implication) EIIp7 deal with ideas and bodies). Rather, the adduced clause appears to state that everything that follows formally from God's attribute-neutral infinite nature must be understood to fall within the scope of God's all-encompassing power, and hence can (also) be understood irrespective of the attribute under which it is considered.

This prolonged⁶³ *absolute identity* of the extended and the mental being of a thing can be gathered from EIIp6c too. Recall that we have shown in Chapter 2 that the formal being of ideas must be understood to be caused intrinsically. Furthermore, as we saw above, in EIIp6c this variant of causation is deemed applicable to modes of any of the other attributes as well. If it is acknowledged that the clause 'God's infinite nature' in EIIp7c indeed is attribute-neutral in the sense that it must be understood to encompass all the ways in which the essence of this nature can be perceived by an intellect (i.e. all the intellect-dependent attributes, including thought), then the claim in EIIp7c that 'whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection' can be understood to say that *whatever is caused intrinsically from God's infinite nature* follows objectively in God from his idea in

⁶¹ EIIp7c, (I) 451.

⁶² EIp34, (I) 439 (*Dei potentia est ipsa ipsius essentia*).

⁶³ This absolute identity is claimed to be 'prolonged' as in the present reading it is understood to cross the boundary between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. Recall that we used the same term with respect to the eternity and infinity of the formal being of things (see section 2.4.3). This is no coincidence. The present claim implies that the attribute-neutral character of God can be understood to follow from the divine *res* in the very same intrinsic way the eternity and infinity of the formal being of things can be conceived to proceed from the necessity of the divine nature (see section 2.7.2).

the same order and with the same connection. That is to say: as EIIp6c is aimed at stressing that as to the intrinsic causation of things there is no distinction whatsoever between the formal being of ideas and the formal being of modes of the other attributes,⁶⁴ we are able to conclude once more that the things that follow intrinsically from God's attribute-neutral infinite nature can be understood to have an attribute-neutral aspect (as well).

As this point is crucial, I will provide yet another argument for it. Consider the following claim in EIIp9d, where Spinoza provides a paraphrase of EIIp7:

But the order and connection of ideas (by P7) is the same as the order and connection of causes.⁶⁵
(*Atqui ordo, & connexio idearum (per Prop. 7. hujus) idem est, ac ordo, & connexio causarum*)

This assertion is important in the present context, as it makes it clear that the term 'things' in EIIp7 can be understood to be equivalent (or can at least be used *salva veritate*) to the attribute-neutral term 'causarum'. Now, it appears to be fairly clear that this latter term must be considered to be attribute-neutral. For it is precisely because of this that the example of the raising arm (see above) can function at all. Spinoza can only foster a numerical identity of the order and connection of modes that resort under different attributes (which, as we saw, he forwards explicitly in EIIp7s) if the causal laws that are operative in these attributes are exactly the same. In order to prevent the possibility of a 'representational mismatch'⁶⁶ between (say) a raising arm and the idea of that raising arm, the causal power that can be recognized in nature must be understood to be attribute-neutral.

The next thing that must be noted is that this attribute-neutrality of causes is not only applicable to the extrinsic causal thread of durational finite modes, but also the intrinsic causal thread of eternal infinite modes. As argued for in Chapter 2, EIIp5 posits an intrinsic top-down causal thread in the realm of thought. EIIp6c

⁶⁴ It is because of this that Spinoza adds in EIIp6c that 'the formal being of things which are not modes of thinking does *not* follow from the divine nature *because God has first known the things* [emphasis added]'. EIIp6c, (I) 450-451 (*esse formale rerum, quæ modi non sunt cogitandi, non sequitur ideò ex divinâ naturâ, quia res priùs cognovit*). The duality between *knowing* (in thought) and the thing that *is known* (in another attribute) is not applicable to God's infinite nature. And hence the distinction between the attributes is not applicable to God *qua* God (a).

⁶⁵ EIIp9d, (I) 453.

⁶⁶ The term is Della Rocca's. Della Rocca, *Representation*, 44-45. To be sure, Della Rocca understands the representational nature of Spinoza's parallelism in a way that is different from mine, as will become clear in the next chapter.

makes it clear that the top-down causal thread that is staged in EIIp5 is not only applicable to the mental realm, but to the modes of the other attributes as well (see above). Just as the formal being of ideas follows ‘from the absolute nature of some attribute of God’ (EIp23d), so also the formal being of the modes of any other of the infinite attributes must be understood to ‘follow from the absolute nature of some attribute of God’, without God first knowing these things.⁶⁷ Now, if it is acknowledged that the intrinsically caused formal beings of things are all subject to God’s causal power – that is (by EIp34): God’s attribute-neutral essence⁶⁸ – in the very same way, it becomes clear once more that descriptions such as ‘the formal being of ideas’, ‘the formal being of bodies’ and ‘the formal being of r’s’ *can all be considered to be members of the same class of attribute-neutral formal beings*.⁶⁹ As the ‘res’ are treated as to an aspect that is absolutely identical in each case (i.e. the fact that they follow immediately from God *qua* God), the ‘res’ in this context can be considered to be attribute-neutral in a certain respect. It is the very attribute-neutrality of the causal claims in EIIp5 and EIIp6c that safeguards that the term ‘things’ in EIIp7 can be understood to fall without the scope of the referential opacity that is applicable to modes if they are considered to resort unconditionally under a certain attribute. Insofar as the formal beings of things are considered as to their causal order and connection, there is a perspective from which the fact that they must be understood to fall under one particular attribute can be ignored. Stated in terms of EIIp7c this is to say that *the modes that are conceived to follow objectively as ideas in God from his idea, have an attribute-neutral aspect insofar as they are conceived to follow formally from God’s infinite nature*.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See note 64. It is precisely because of this that ‘God’s intellect insofar as it is understood to constitute his essence’ (EIp17s) must be understood to differ fundamentally from our intellect: God’s thinking essence is *absolutely identical* to his all-encompassing essence and hence, as opposed to *noster intellectus*, is not characterized by any duality. See the chapters 1 and 3.

⁶⁸ ‘God’s power is his essence itself’ (*Dei potentia est ipsa ipsius essentia*). EIp34, (I) 439.

⁶⁹ This can also be deduced from the demonstration of EVp1, which reads: ‘the order and connections of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things (by EIIp7), and vice versa, the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas (by IIP6C and P7)’. EVp1d, (I) 597. See note 54.

⁷⁰ Two things must be added. Firstly, one may object here that the *extrinsic* causal thread (that surfaces both in EIp28 and EIIp9) is attribute-neutral too (as it can be understood to be operative in any of the infinite attributes) and hence that the *durational* being of things can also be understood to have an aspect of attribute-neutrality (namely, insofar as they are conceived to be caused). Now, it is true that the extrinsic causal thread is attribute-neutral – this was actually stated above. But the crucial thing to note is that *this* attribute-neutrality cannot be understood to nullify the ‘referential opacity of causal contexts’

With this we have made considerable progress in elucidating and corroborating our claim that the term ‘things’ can be understood to refer to the *esse formale* of EIIp5 and EIIp6c. The conceptual distinction between the formal being of ideas and the formal being of things that surfaced in point (vi’) indeed appears to be less impermeable than the conceptual distinction between ideas and their extended objects. For whereas in this latter case the absolute attribute-*dependent* context accounts for referential opacity, the identity of the formal beings from point (vi’) is not threatened by attribute-dependent referential opacity, as these formal beings can be understood insofar as they follow from the attribute-neutral necessity of the divine nature. To be sure, there still appears to be a problem with

(Della Rocca, *Representation*, 166) as the things that are operative in the extrinsic causal thread do not follow from God in its *absolute* being. It is precisely the absolute being of the intrinsically causing *prima causa* that accounts for the specific attribute-neutral aspect of the formal being of things; insofar as things are conceived to be operative in an extrinsic causal thread only, *there is no prima causa* (and hence no *prima cause* that can be conceived in its absolute being, ‘contaminating’ the being of things with an aspect of attribute-neutrality).

The second thing that can be noted here is that the close relation between EIIp7 and EIIp6c becomes evident also when considering the stunning brevity of Spinoza’s proof for EIIp7. The demonstration of this proposition reads thus: ‘This is clear from IA4. For the idea of each thing caused depends on the knowledge of the cause of which it is the effect.’ (*Patet ex Ax. 4. p. 1. Nam cujuscunque causati idea à cognitione causæ, cujus est effectus, dependet*), EIIp7d, (I) 451. EIA4 only states that ‘[t]he knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause’, EIA4, (I) 410. Understandably, various commentators have hinted at the meagerness of the demonstration of EIIp7. Jonathan Bennett rightfully states that ‘1a4 does not rule out mental items which do not match any physical items’ in: Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 130. And Michael Della Rocca makes the same point when he says that ‘1ax4 does not by itself guarantee the thoroughgoing parallelism that Spinoza has in mind in 2p7.’ in: Della Rocca, *Representation*, 22. However, if it is acknowledged that the reference to EIA4 in EIIp7 is in fact connected closely to the reference to the same axiom in the preceding proposition EIIp6, things may become a bit clearer. Recall that EIIp6 reads that the modes of each attribute have God for their cause only insofar as he is considered under the attribute of which they are modes (see note 49). Now, it is crucial to recognize that Spinoza *proves EIIp6 with the help of the very axiom EIA4 that is cited in EIIp7* (the very axiom, it can be added, by which – in the words of Della Rocca – ‘causation is [...] made intelligible in terms of intelligibility itself – see Introduction, note 39). Spinoza posits in EIIp6 that the characteristic that is forwarded in it is applicable to the modes of *any of the infinite attributes*. In this sense the causal claim of EIIp6 (and EIA4) can be understood to be *attribute-neutral*. Furthermore, from EIIp6c it becomes clear that this attribute-neutrality is applicable to things that follow from God’s absolute nature as well. So on this account, EIA4 can be understood to imply that the knowledge of an effect, *whether conceived to be caused intrinsically or extrinsically*, depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its (intrinsic or extrinsic) cause. In this sense Spinoza is able to claim in EIIp7 that the order and connection of things that are considered insofar as they are caused extrinsically as *objective beings*, must be understood to be the same as the order and connection of these very same things insofar as they are conceived to be caused intrinsically as *formal beings*. And apparently he thinks that his treatment of the *esse formale* in EIIp5 and EIIp6c (as well as the purport of causal axiom EIA4) is so clear, that he does not even bother to mention it in the demonstration of EIIp7.

the present interpretation. For does Spinoza not state explicitly (in the demonstration of EIIp5) that the formal being of an idea must be understood, not to be attribute-neutral, but to be a mode of thinking? Indeed, we have used this very argument ourselves in our rejection of the horizontal reading of EIIp7 (see the *reductio ad absurdum* (i)-(viii), point (vii)). So how can we nevertheless uphold the claim that the formal being of an idea can be understood to have an attribute-neutral aspect? Precisely here the importance of the distinction that was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter – i.e. the distinction between the *top-down* and the *bottom-up* perspectives – and its relation with Spinoza’s parallelism comes to light. Although this subject will be treated comprehensively only in a subsequent section, it must be noted here *that the formal being of an idea, which can be conceived as to an attribute-neutral aspect if it is conceived to follow top-down from God’s infinite (and attribute-neutral) nature, must be understood to be an attribute-dependent mode of thinking if it is conceived from the bottom-up perspective of thought.*⁷¹

This claim – that actually is a restatement of our assertion that the formal being of a thing can be conceived both in its part- and in its vista-character (see above) – may sound all too hermetic. Therefore I will provide a preliminary example that may elucidate things a bit (even though it is hard to provide an example which adequately explains what we speak of here).⁷² Suppose we have two glasses. One is filled with water and the other is filled with milk. So now we have a glass of water and a glass of milk. Two children enter the room, they both take a glass and drink it until virtually no liquid is left. Thus we are left with two almost empty glasses: an almost empty glass of water and an almost empty glass of milk. As

⁷¹ This same distinction surfaces in Martial Gueroult’s claim that there can be considered to be *three* parallelisms in Spinoza’s philosophy. Apart from the inter-attribute parallelism between ideas and bodies, Gueroult discerns two intra-attribute parallelisms: in one case the idea is taken in its ‘formal essence, as mode of thinking, a cause in the infinite chain of causes in Thought’ (*L’idée considérée comme essence formelle (ou être formelle), mode de la Pensée, cause comprise dans la chaîne infinie des causes dans la pensée*), and in the other case the idea is taken ‘in its form or nature as idea of idea’ (*L’idée considérée dans sa forme ou nature, comme idée de l’idée*). Gueroult, *Spinoza. L’Ame*, 70. These two variants correspond with the two ways of understanding the formal being of ideas that will be presented in this section. To be sure, I claim that these two variants – as well as the inter-attribute parallelism of EIIp7s – must be considered to be variants of *the one overriding variant of parallelism that is posited in EIIp7*.

⁷² Attentive readers will have noticed that this formulation is inspired by a remark from Spinoza himself in EIIp8c. This is no coincidence, as the present example treats the same subject: the distinct conceptual states of the very same thing.

the father of the two children is thirsty himself, he decides to really empty the glasses. He does so, and empties both glasses till the last molecule; not a single trace of milk or water can be found in the two glasses. Reasoning from the perspective of the father and the children we are left with a totally empty glass of milk and a totally empty glass of water. Of course the glasses can also be described differently: they are just two empty glasses. When the mother enters the room after a day's work and notices that the father did not tidy up the room as promised, she may get angry about the two empty glasses that are still standing on the table. However, it is nonsensical for her to say to her husband that he should have cleared away the 'empty glass of milk and the empty glass of water'. She will refer to the objects simply as 'the empty glasses'. As the milk-water information is not available to her, she only considers the glasses *qua* glasses.⁷³ Now, a similar thing seems to happen with respect to the formal being of things. From a *top-down* perspective, the formal being of an idea must be considered to be an *esse formale* that does not belong to a certain 'preferred attribute'; in this sense this formal being can be understood to proceed from an adequate idea of the formal essence of God's attributes⁷⁴ (i.e. top-down), and can be called a 'mode of God' (to use a phrase from Yitzhak

⁷³ One may object that considered in this way, God's position (which is represented by the mother) is less powerful than our position (which is represented by the father) as the father has knowledge (i.e. the milk-water information) that is not available to the mother. And hence the example appears to state that *we have knowledge that is not available to God*. However, once we realize that the milk-water information is a representation of the *intellect-dependent* attributes, the claim that the father is more powerful than the mother boils down to the claim that something with an intellect (such as the human animal) is more powerful than God, who according to Spinoza does *not* have an intellect. Now, this is evidently absurd in the context of Spinoza's philosophy. Another way of saying this is that it must be granted that we have knowledge that is not available to God insofar as God is considered in his (a)-variant that (as opposed to God (c)) is absolutely free from an intellect in the way we commonly understand it. Claiming that God *qua* God *has* an intellect in the way we commonly understand it (i.e. claiming that the milk-water information *is* available to God *qua* God) implies a diminution of his power. The suggestion that God *qua* God must also be understood to have access to the milk-water-information is on a par with the claim that God *qua* God must have three angles, just because the triangle that is in him has three angles. As must be clear from these remarks – and from the things that were said in the previous chapter – these claims can only be made with respect to *the coalescent concept* of God (i.e. God (c)). In terms of the milk-water information: this information can only be understood to be available to the mother insofar as the mother is considered to be a coalescent aspect of the family she forms with her husband and children. See also Chapter 3, note 153.

⁷⁴ Attentive readers will doubtlessly have noticed that I use a part the very formulation with which Spinoza elucidates his 'third kind of knowledge'. Evidently, this is no coincidence. The ratio behind the use of this formulation will become clear in the next chapter.

Melamed).⁷⁵ Yet, if the formal being of this idea is grasped on the basis of an idea (i.e. bottom-up), this very same formal being somehow ‘belongs to’ the attribute it is comprehended in, in pretty much the same way the glasses from the perspective of the father and the children ‘belong to’ the fluids that were in them.

We will return to the distinction between the top-down and the bottom-up perspective in a subsequent section (and will provide textual support for (i) this distinction, and (ii) the close relation with Spinoza’s parallelism claims as well as his view on the structure of the intellect). The thing to note here is that the distinction between these two perspectives makes it clear that Spinoza’s claim in EIIp5d that the formal being of an idea is a mode of thinking, does not counteract our claim that the formal being of an idea can be grasped as to an attribute-neutral aspect as well. And hence we are in a position to draw an important conclusion with respect to the way in which we must understand the term ‘things’ in EIIp7. In the context of the present argument it was already established tentatively that EIIp7 can be rendered thus:

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of things which are not modes of thinking (i.e. the esse formale rerum)

As we have seen that considered top-down the *esse formale rerum* in EIIp6c can be understood from an attribute-neutral perspective, and that ‘the formal being of ideas’ can be conceived to be a subcategory of the *esse formale*, we are able to conclude that EIIp7 can also be rendered in the following way:

the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of ideas (and modes of the other attributes)

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⁷⁵ See note 59. One more thing must be added. At this point it may appear that we are actually speaking here about the very *formal essences* that were referred to in Chapter 2. However, it must be stressed that this is not the case. The crucial thing to note in this respect is that we are dealing here with things that are claimed to *follow* from God, which makes it clear that the attribute-neutrality that is treated here is the attribute-neutrality of the formal *beings* at *Natura naturata*, and *not* of the (ontologically identical) formal *essences* at *Natura naturans*. To be sure, the attribute-neutrality of pervasive formal beings is evidently closely connected with the absolute attribute-neutrality of the ubiquitous formal essences they must be conceived to follow from.

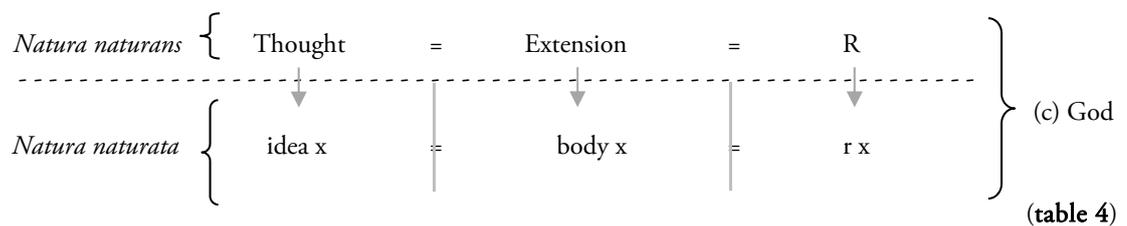
In this section I have treated four arguments for the claim that EIIp7 must be understood to posit a parallelism relation, not between ideas and bodies, but between ideas and the formal being of these ideas. We have seen (i) that EIIp7 is embedded in a series of propositions that deal with the formal and the objective being of things, (ii) that EIIp7c implies that ‘things’ in EIIp7 cannot be understood to refer to finite modes of extension, (iii) that the hermetic EIIp8 makes it clear that EIIp7 must be understood to deal with the eternal and the durational being of things, and (iv) that considered top-down the *esse formale* that surface in EIIp5 and EIIp6c can be conceived as to an attribute-neutral aspect that nullifies the ‘referential opacity of causal contexts’ and hence that the formal being of ideas and the formal being of modes of the other attributes can be understood to be absolutely identical. Thus, we are in a position to state that EIIp7 claims that *the order and connection of the objective being of things is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of things*. Idiosyncratic as this reading of EIIp7 may have seemed at first sight, I have provided considerable evidence for the claim that Spinoza’s ‘parallelism proposition’ must be read in this particular way. To be sure, not all the problems that this reading gives rise to are solved yet. One of the pressing questions that is in need of an answer is how this ‘vertical’⁷⁶ reading of EIIp7 can be brought in line with the inter-attribute reading that – as we saw – surfaces explicitly in various passages from the *Ethics*. For the present interpretation can only be considered to do justice to Spinoza’s claims if it also provides a way to understand the ‘horizontal’ *inter-attribute* relation between ideas and their parallel bodies. This is the subject to which we will turn now.

⁷⁶ I use the term ‘vertical’ here because on the present reading there is posited a relation between the levels (b-i) and (b-ii), that stand in some sort of hierarchical relation (as in Spinoza’s philosophy the *eternity* of (b-i) appears to have a more ‘real’ status than the *duration* of b-ii)). To be sure, it is important to stress that this ‘vertical’ relation is *not* on a par with *intra-attribute* parallelism. Firstly it must be noted that the vertical relation is between modes of a certain attribute (at (b-ii)) and their identity with modes that are *attribute-neutral* (at (b-i)) – which of course implies that the vertical relation *does not stay within the boundaries of a certain attribute*. Secondly, it is important to stress that a horizontal relation (i.e. an identity relation between two modes that both are operative at level (b-ii)) *does not necessarily cross the boundaries between the attributes*. Indeed, the very relation between an idea and the idea of that idea must be understood to be a *horizontal* relation that nevertheless stays within the boundaries of the attribute of thought. A subsequent section will be dedicated to the question how this idea of the idea (at (b-ii)), that is related *horizontally* to its idea (at (b-ii)), is related *vertically* to the formal being of its idea (at (b-i)).

4.2.3.1 Two parallelisms reconciled

So far we have been focusing mainly on the vertical ontological identity and conceptual distinction of things. For we concluded that EIIp7, with its reference to ‘the order and connection of ideas’ and ‘the order and connection of things’, actually establishes an identity relation, not between finite things, but between (b-i) the eternal and infinite formal being of a thing and (b-ii) its durational and finite objective being. The horizontal relation between durational finite things that are conceived under different attributes – i.e. ideas and bodies – (and indeed the relation between ideas and ideas of these ideas),⁷⁷ remained (mostly) out of sight. However, Spinoza explicitly posits such a horizontal relation (i.e. an identity-relation between things that both are operative at the level of duration (b-ii)) in EIIp7s, where it is stated that ‘a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways’.⁷⁸ This claim clearly posits the identity of singular modes of different attributes. As we have seen that in other propositions not EIIp7s but *EIIp7 itself* is staged as the foundation for the parallelism between ideas and bodies, we face the question in what way this *inter-attribute* parallelism can be understood to be grounded in the intrinsic distinction between the formality and objectivity of things that was uncovered in the previous section. Indeed: how can our tables 4 and 5 can be reconciled?

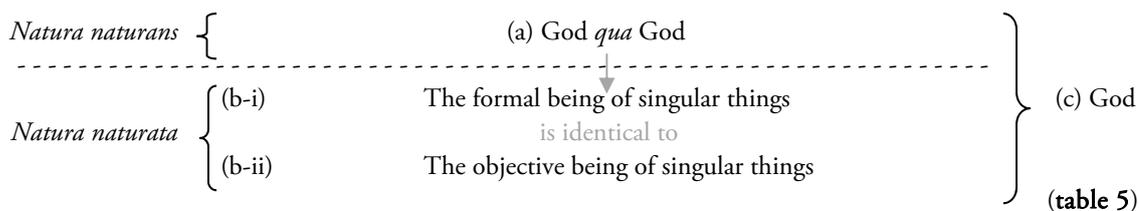
Recall that these two tables provided the following – apparently opposing – renderings of Spinoza’s parallelism thesis:



And:

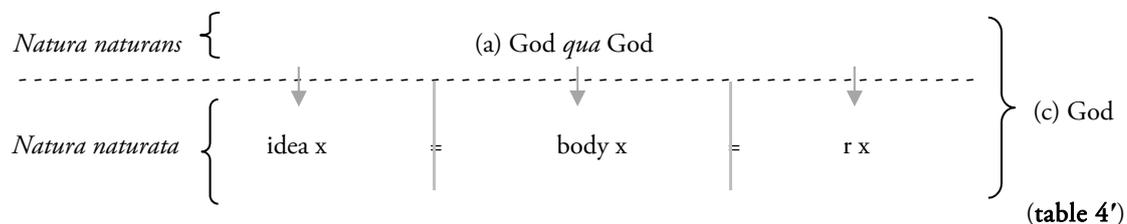
⁷⁷ This identity relation between ideas and the *ideas of these ideas* will be treated in section 4.3.2.

⁷⁸ EIIp7s, (I) 451.

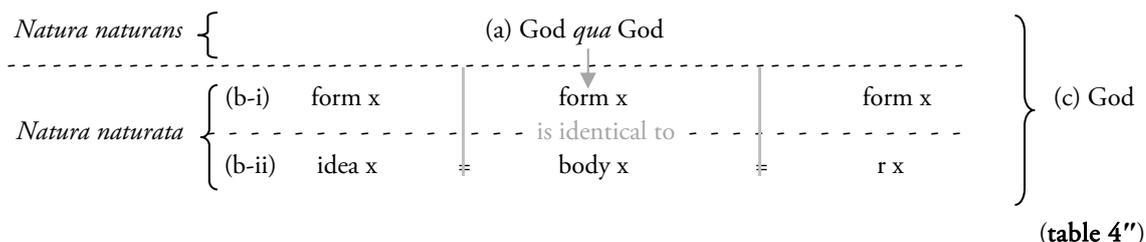


At first glance, these tables appear to state something different. Yet, given what we have seen above, we are in a position to see how table 4 and 5 can be brought in line.

The first thing to stress in this respect is that the attributes in table 4 are staged in their *ontological* variant (see section 3.6). In this particular state, the attributes must be understood to be *ontologically and conceptually identical* to the very infinite nature of God (i.e. God *qua* God (a)).⁷⁹ Another way of saying this is that *God's essence is absolutely attribute-neutral*, that is: his essence must be understood to exist irrespective of the way it is perceived via an intellect.⁸⁰ Indeed, as (by EIIp7c) 'God's power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting' – and as there is no reason to attach the designation 'power of acting' to a 'preferred attribute' – the designations 'Thought', 'Extension' and 'R' from table 4 can all be captured under the one designation 'God *qua* God (a)' that surfaces in table 5. Hence table 4 can also be rendered thus:



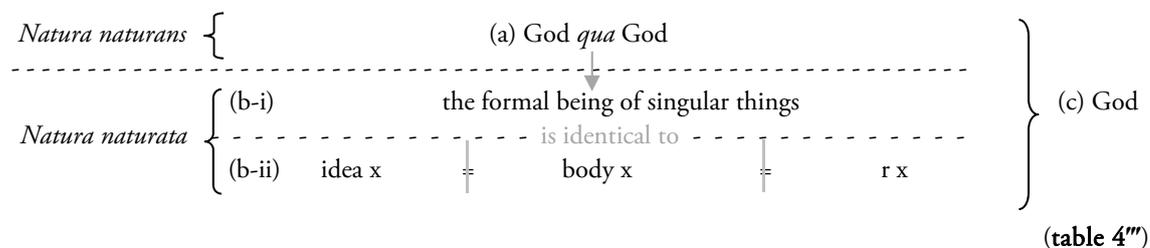
Secondly, we have seen in Chapter 2 that modes of the infinite attributes can be understood in two ways: objectively as finite durational modes, and formally as infinite eternal modes. This can be rendered thus:



⁷⁹ For a further elucidation of this claim, see section 4.3.3.1.

⁸⁰ The extra-intellectual 'existence' of God's essence was treated in Chapter 3.

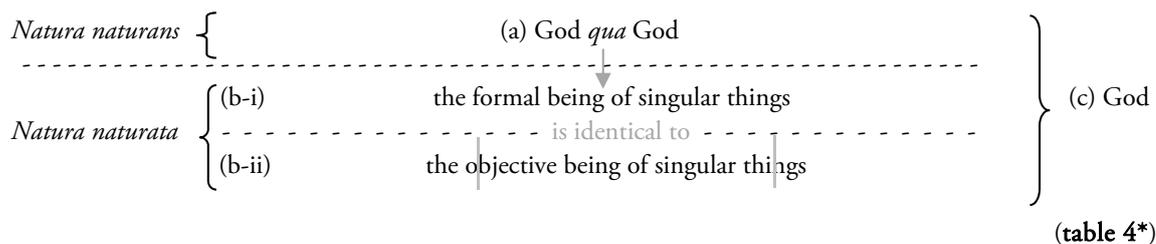
Thirdly, it became clear that the absolute identity of the attributes at the level of *Natura naturans* can be understood to be mirrored in the formal beings of things insofar as these are conceived to follow top-down from God’s absolutely infinite nature. That is to say: these formal beings can be considered to be attribute-neutral in the very same way God *qua* God (and indeed the formal essences that are contained ubiquitously in God *qua* God) is. Insofar as the formal being of things is considered to follow top-down from God *qua* God, the absolute divine attribute-neutrality is transferred to the level of *Natura naturata* (or, as we have formulated it somewhat awkwardly above: the formal being of things can be understood to be ‘contaminated’ by the absolute attribute-neutrality of God’s infinite nature). This observation allows us to adjust table 4'' in the following way:



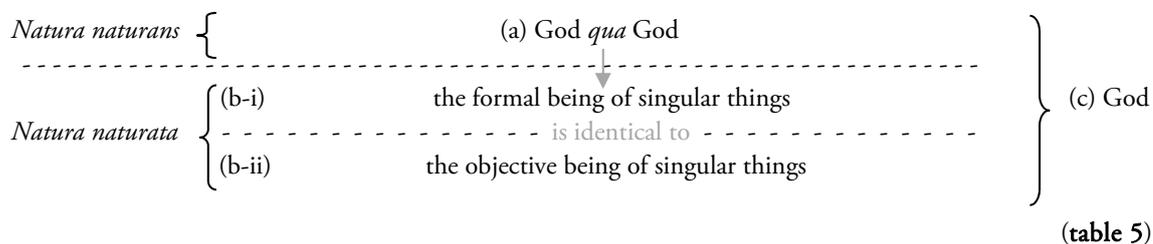
In the previous section we have asserted that considered *top-down* – that is: insofar as the formal being of a thing is conceived to follow intrinsically from God’s infinite nature – the distinction between the attributes is not applicable to level (b-i) (indeed in the same way the designations ‘milk’ and ‘water’ were not applicable to the perspective of the mother). And so from this top-down perspective the schematic distinction between the attributes is only operative at level (b-ii), in the way rendered in table 4'''.

The next thing that must be incorporated in the schematic rendering of Spinoza’s parallelism is the representational nature of thought,⁸¹ that also surfaces in our claim concerning the trichotomy that is entailed by the formal-objective distinction (see section 2.5.3). As thought was shown to be characterized by the fact that modes of this attribute have objects that resort under other attributes, table 4''' can also be rendered thus:

⁸¹ This representational nature of thought will be elucidated further in the next chapter.



Now, it cannot escape our notice that table 4* is virtually identical to table 5 (see above). There is only one difference: in table 4* the distinction between the attributes (i.e. between the objective being in thought and its object in another attribute) is still recognizable at level (b-ii) (namely in the grey vertical lines). This is informative, as it makes it clear that things insofar as they are grasped objectively in thought (and which as such surface as a *durational* idea), must be understood to be *durational in their own attributes as well*. Indeed, the parallel extended object of a durational idea must be understood to be a durational body (which is of course precisely what we have claimed in section 2.5.3, when we introduced the concept of trichotomy). If this is kept in mind, table 4* can also be rendered thus:



The upshot of the arguments in this section is that it is possible to reconcile both renderings of Spinoza’s parallelism thesis. The present reading of EIIp7 provides us with a way to understand how Spinoza’s vertical parallelism claim of EIIp7 (and EIp21s) can be conceived to encompass the inter-attribute parallelism of EIIp7s. For our findings allow us to make the following claim:

*A singular idea and its parallel mode (or object) under extension both are finite and durational expressions in their own attribute of the very same attribute-neutral and eternal formal being.*⁸²

⁸² I use the term ‘singular idea’ instead of ‘idea’ because there is one important exception (which we could call a ‘borderline case’): the whole of objective nature (i.e. the all-encompassing totality of singular ideas,

And hence we can draw the important conclusion that *the inter-attribute parallelism of EIIp7s can be understood to be an implication of the vertical parallelism of EIIp7*. Indeed, *because of the fact that the attribute-neutral and infinite esse formale are expressed within each of the infinite attributes, there also is an inter-attribute parallel relation between the finite modes that are conceived under different attributes*. Table 5 implies that idea x, body x and rx are identical, precisely because they are finite expressions under their own intellect-dependent attribute of the very same attribute-neutral formal being. In this sense, inter-attribute parallelism can be understood to be an implication of vertical parallelism. According to Spinoza, a man and the idea of that man can be considered to be one and the same thing because the order and connection of things is expressed in the same way in any of God's attributes (thus including extension and thought). Every extended mode is identical to the parallel mental one *because an idea and its object both are finite expressions (within their respective attributes) of the very same thing*: the attribute-neutral *esse formale* that follows from God's infinite nature (and that, unlike the *formal essences*, must be positioned at the level of *Natura naturata*).

This *transitive* structure of Spinoza's parallelism – that we recognize as yet another expression of the trichotomous structure of *pars melior nostri* – can be elucidated with the following example. The German poet Heinrich Heine once wrote that 'thought precedes action as lightning precedes thunder'.⁸³ Whatever Heine's poetic or political purpose may have been with this remark,⁸⁴ in a certain sense the claim is imprecise. For as is well known, lightning and thunder are distinct manifestations of *one and the same phenomenon*: the discharge of huge amounts of electricity in the sky. Insofar as this discharge is considered in itself, lighting does *not* precede thunder. The respective manifestations of this single phenomenon can only be perceived to be distinct because the discharge is expressed in two separate ways: in light waves (in which case it is called 'lightning'), and in

which due to its infinity is *not* a singular idea). It is an exception because it must be understood to be an *infinite* expression of an eternal formal being. Indeed, the whole of objective nature and its parallel modes under the remaining attributes can be understood to be *the only modes that combine infinity with duration*. The durational nature of the whole of objective nature was treated in section 3.3.

⁸³ In: *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (1835). In: Heinrich Heine, *Heines Werke in fünf Bänden* 5 (Berlin 1964), 141 (*Der Gedanke geht der Tat voraus wie der Blitz dem Donner* [my translation JHH.]).

⁸⁴ Heine uses this metaphor in order to make it clear that according to him revolution is due in nineteenth century Germany, as at that point there is a rich corpus of revolutionary philosophy in Germany.

sound waves (in which case it is called ‘thunder’). Even though this distinction between lightning and thunder is real enough – especially when the electrical discharge is considered from a certain distance – the perceived preceding of the manifestation insofar as it is expressed in light waves should not lead one to the conclusion that lightning and thunder refer to separate events. The difference between the speed of light and the speed with which sound waves travel through air makes these two separate manifestations only seem to indicate separate events. But in fact they have one and the same reference: the ‘light-and-sound-neutral’ discharge of electricity. Indeed:

- (3) Lightning is a manifestation of an electrical discharge
- (4) Thunder is a manifestation of the same electrical discharge

Hence:

- (5) The phenomenon ‘lightning’ refers to = the phenomenon ‘thunder’ refers to

Or, to state it in yet another way: lightning and thunder have the *same reference* but a *different meaning*. Now, the very same applies to the way in which according to Spinoza a mind and a body must be understood to be related. Even though their distinction is real enough, the mind and body of (say) the present president of France must be understood to refer to the very same thing: their attribute-neutral formal being. Indeed:

- (6) The mind of the present president of France is an expression of the attribute-neutral formal being of the present president of France
- (7) The body of the present president of France is an expression of the attribute-neutral formal being of the present president of France

Hence:

- (8) The thing ‘the mind of the present president of France’ refers to = the thing ‘the body of the present president of France’ refers to

It is due to the *intrinsic identity* of a finite mode and its infinite attribute-neutral being that a mode of thinking and its parallel extended object can be understood to

be the very same thing, even though the manifestation of the thing – as a body or as an idea – is quite different.⁸⁵

On the basis of the things we have seen above, we can conclude that God *qua* God (a) can be conceived to create infinitely many attribute-neutral and eternal formal beings (*top-down*) that in turn can be understood to be expressed in infinitely many attribute-dependent durational modes. It appears to be precisely because of this that Spinoza is able to state in EIp16 that ‘infinitely many things’ follow from the divine nature ‘in infinitely many modes’: the infinitely many formal beings of things that follow from the divine nature can in turn be conceived to be expressed as *modes of the infinitely many attributes*.⁸⁶ Or, as Spinoza repeats in the concluding remark of EIIp7s: ‘So of things as they are in themselves, God is really the cause insofar as he consists of infinitely many attributes’⁸⁷ – a further clear indication that things in their formal being can be conceived irrespective of their attribute (as well). Yet another way of saying this is that the parallelism of modes mirrors the absolute identity of the ontological attributes that was treated in section 3.6, and that surfaces explicitly in the claim in EIIp7s that ‘the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same’. As the attributes must be understood to be absolutely identical in their ontological status, so also the eternally existing formal beings of the modes (that follow immediately from the attribute-neutral essence of God), and the finite expressions of these forms in objective beings and their objects (under duration) must be understood to have the very same

⁸⁵ Furthermore, from EIIp8 we can gather that this relation is not only applicable to things that exist at *this* moment under duration (such as the present president of France), but also to things that do *not* exist at this moment under duration, but that do have an ‘external cause which has been determined to produce such a thing’ (EIp33s1, (I) 436 (*causa externa datur, ad talem rem producendam determinata*)) at a *certain* moment under duration (such as (say) king Louis XIV). Indeed:

(9) The mind of Louis XIV is an expression of the attribute-neutral formal being of Louis XIV

(10) The body of Louis XIV is an expression of the attribute-neutral formal being of Louis XIV
Hence:

(11) The thing ‘mind of Louis XIV’ refers to = the thing ‘the body of Louis XIV’ refers to.

⁸⁶ Yitzhak Melamed made more or less the same observation. He states with respect to EIp16 that ‘the things that follow from God’s nature are the infinitely faceted units that I call ‘modes of God’ (i.e. modes under the infinitely many attributes), and the infinitely many ways by which each mode of God follows from God’s nature are the infinitely many modes of the attributes that are aspects of the same mode of God.’ Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 150. However, there is one crucial difference between Melamed’s interpretation and the present one: Melamed does not equate the ‘things’ that surface in EIp16 with the ‘things’ from EIIp7 (and EIIp6c).

⁸⁷ EIIp7s, (I) 452 (*Quare rerum, ut in se sunt, Deus reverà est causa, quatenus infinitis constat attributis*).

reference. Hence they can be conceived to parallel each other insofar as they are grasped as to their meaning. In this sense, the claim in EIIp7 posits a *transitive* parallelism relation:⁸⁸ mode of thought x_t can be understood to be identical to mode of extension x_e because mode of thought x_t is identical to attribute-neutral mode x_f , and attribute-neutral mode x_f in turn is identical to mode of extension x_e . With this we encounter the very same trichotomy relation that was treated in section 2.5.3. Our claim in that section that the *constructive function of the intellect* entails a trichotomy of eternal formal beings, durational objective beings and their durational objects is fully corroborated by the present way of understanding Spinoza's parallelism. It has become clear that transitive parallelism is nothing but an expression of the very trichotomy that characterizes the intellect in the way we commonly understand it: an idea is numerically identical to its object because idea and parallel object both are durational expressions of the very same formal being.⁸⁹

*

*In sum: EIIp7 does not primarily posit a parallelism relation between ideas and bodies. This important parallelism proposition must be understood to assert that the order and connections of things insofar as they are considered with respect to their objects is the same as the order and connection of things insofar as they are considered in themselves. As due to the absolute identity of the attributes at the level of *Natura naturans* the formal being of ideas and the formal being of*

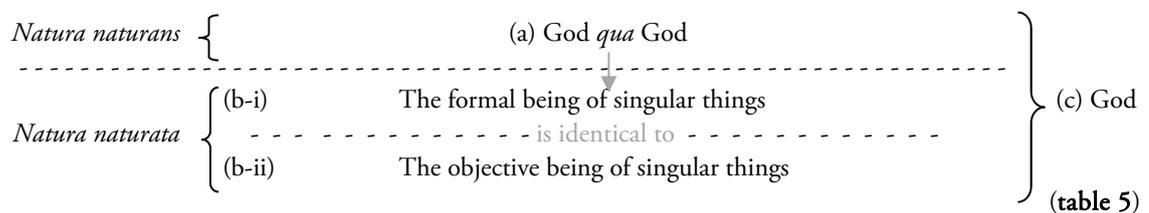
⁸⁸ There is some controversy concerning the use of the term 'parallelism' with respect to the aspect of Spinoza's metaphysics that was treated in this section. Chantal Jacquet argued that 'equality' is a better term than the Leibnizian term 'parallelism' (see note 22). Yet, given the indicated importance of the *esse formale* for Spinoza's parallelism thesis, the term 'conformity' (which can also be found in Leibniz' work, namely in the following claim: '*C'est qu'il faut donc dire que Dieu a créé d'abord l'âme, ou toute autre unité réelle de telle sorte, que tout lui doit naître de son propre fonds, par une parfaite spontanéité à l'égard d'elle-même, et pour tant avec une parfaite c o n f o r m i t é aux choses de dehors* [emphasis added]' in: G.W. Leibniz, *Neues System der Natur* in: *Fünf Schriften zur Logik und Metaphysik* (Stuttgart 1966), 30 (note)) actually seems more appropriate. Indeed, this term accounts both for the transitive identity ('con') and the referential aspect ('form') of this relation. However, not to disorient the reader too much, I will stick to the term 'parallelism' in this study, as this term is firmly rooted in mainstream Spinoza-scholarship.

⁸⁹ The question in what way transitive parallelism is related to the *truth* and *adequacy* of ideas will be treated in the next chapter.

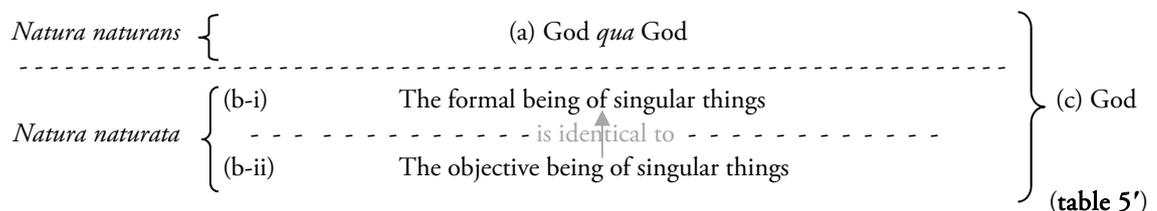
bodies must be understood to be absolutely identical as well, this ‘vertical’ parallelism of the formal and the objective being of things entails the ‘horizontal’ inter-attribute parallelism between ideas and bodies. A singular idea is identical to the body it is the idea of because both can be considered to be finite and durational expressions of the very same infinite and eternal formal being. In this sense Spinoza’s parallelism thesis can be understood to be an expression of the trichotomy that characterizes the intellect in the way we commonly understand it.

4.3 The bottom-up perspective

In the previous section we have seen that (and how) EIIp7, its corollary and its scholium can be understood via EIIp5 and EIIp6c, which both are rooted in the top-down causal thread put forward in the Principle of Plenitude of EIp16.⁹⁰ It was shown that Spinoza’s parallelism entails a vertical identity of the top-down generated infinite and eternal formal being of things and the finite and durational expressions of these same things in each of the infinitely many attributes. This was rendered thus:



In this section I will argue for the claim that the formal being of things can also be grasped bottom-up in the way of the following table:



⁹⁰ As will become clear below, EIIp5d shelters an aspect of the bottom-up perspective as well.

An important reason for taking this turn is the fact that we have not treated Spinoza's parallelism exhaustively yet. In the previous section we may have established that EIIp7 can be understood thus:

the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of things

which was shown to imply that

the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of bodies

However, as of yet it is not clear at all how this parallelism can account for the identity relation that surfaces in EIIp21s, namely the relation between ideas and *ideas of ideas*, a variant of parallelism that in turn can be rendered thus:

the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of ideas of these ideas

Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that up till this point we have been arguing mainly about the way in which ideas can be understood to be identical to their formal being and their extended objects; the question how these *forma ideae* can in turn be understood to be *idea ideae* was not addressed yet. This is the subject that we will turn to now. In this section I will argue that (and how) ideas of ideas are related horizontally to their ideas in the same way ideas are related to their body. The bottom-up perspective will be shown to play an important role in this *horizontal intra-attribute* parallelism; it will become clear that this particular perspective accounts for the way in which this variant of parallelism can be fitted in the encompassing transitive parallelism that was elucidated above. Moreover, a treatment of the bottom-up perspective will also provide us with an answer to the question that induced our investigation of Spinoza's parallelism claims in EIIp7 and EIIp21: the way in which we must understand God's self-knowledge (and hence the knowledge of *pars melior nostri*).

4.3.1 Similar passages

We already caught a first glimpse of the bottom-up perspective in the example of the glass of water and the glass of milk. It was argued in the previous section that in the context of Spinoza's philosophy the formal being of things can be conceived in two ways: top-down these things can be conceived to have an attribute-neutral aspect, and considered bottom-up they must be understood to 'belong' to a specific attribute. In order to provide a more comprehensive argument for the claim that the *Ethics* harbors two perspectives – and that the formal being of things can also be grasped bottom-up in the way suggested in table 5' – we must turn to the passage that spurred our interest in *intra*-attribute parallelism (i.e. EIIp21 and its scholium) once more. For, as will become clear below, Spinoza's claim in EIIp21s that 'as soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows it, and at the same time knows that he knows that he knows, and so on to infinity'⁹¹ can count as an important manifestation of the bottom-up perspective in the *Ethics*, a manifestation that is on a par with (inter alia) a remarkable claim in EIIp7s that was not treated yet.

Elucidating the way in which the bottom-up perspective can be understood, we must start by pointing out once more that in EIIp21s ideas are asserted to be conceivable in two ways: an idea can be grasped *with* and *without* respect to its object. Furthermore we have learned that when an idea is understood in this latter way, Spinoza uses the term '*form* of the idea'. At this point it is important to note that in order to underpin this important claim, Spinoza does not refer to EIIp5 (nor to EIIp7 or EIIp7c) – as we might expect on the basis of the things we have ascertained above – but to EIIp7s. The scholium of EIIp21 starts with the remark that 'this proposition is understood far more clearly from what is said in P7S'.⁹² So if we want to gain a full understanding of the claims that are made in EIIp21 and its scholium, we must turn to a closer scrutiny of EIIp7s.

As was shown above, EIIp7s appears to be dedicated first and foremost to the *horizontal inter*-attribute variant of parallelism (i.e. to the parallel relation between finite ideas and their extended finite objects at level (b-ii)). Hence it is not

⁹¹ EIIp21s, (I) 467-468 (*simulac enim quis aliquid scit, eo ipso scit, se id scire, & simul scit, se scire, quòd scit, & sic in infinitum*).

⁹² EIIp21s, (I) 467 (*Hæc Propositio longè clariùs intelligitur ex dictis in Schol. Prop. 7. hujus*).

immediately evident how EIIp7s can be understood to underpin Spinoza's claims in EIIp21 and its scholium, which assert an *intra*-attribute variant of parallelism. Consider the following remark in EIIp21s:

[in EIIp7s] we have shown that the idea of the body and the body [...] are one and the same individual, which is conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension. So the idea of the mind and the mind itself are one and the same thing, which is conceived under one and the same attribute, namely, thought⁹³

(ibi enim ostendimus Corporis ideam, & Corpus, hoc est (per Prop. 13. hujus) Mentem, & Corpus unum, & idem esse Individuum, quod jam sub Cogitationis, jam sub Extensionis attributo concipitur; quare Mentis idea, & ipsa Mens una, eademque est res, quae sub uno, eodemque attributo, nempe Cogitationis, concipitur)

True, from this assertion it becomes clear *that*, according to Spinoza, the parallelism between ideas and ideas of ideas put forward EIIp21 must be understood in the same way as the variant of parallelism that is staged in EIIp7s. But at the same the adduced claim is hardly illuminating as to *how* EIIp7s can be understood to provide a basis for the parallelism of EIIp21s (or for the bottom-up perspective that I aim to elucidate in this section). In order to understand this, we must turn to a closer scrutiny of the things that are claimed in EIIp7s. Consider the following important passage from this scholium:

When I said that God is the cause of the idea, say of a circle, only insofar as he is a thinking thing, and the cause of the circle, only insofar as he is an extended thing, this was for no other reason than because the formal being of the idea of the circle can be perceived only through another mode of thinking, as its proximate cause, and that mode again through another, and so on, to infinity.⁹⁴

(Nec ullà alià de causà [te voren] dixi, quòd Deus sit causa ideæ ex. gr. circuli, quatenus tantùm est res cogitans, & circuli, quatenus tantùm est res extensa, nisi quia esse formale ideæ circuli non, nisi per alium cogitandi modum, tanquam causam proximam, & ille iterùm per alium, & sic in infinitum, potest percipi)

These remarks may indeed shelter the key for understanding the parallelism – and the bottom-up perspective – of EIIp21 and its scholium. In this respect, the following two aspects are promising. Firstly, the assertion in EIIp7s clearly deals with the relation between modes insofar as they are operative *under the same attribute*. Secondly, in this passage the very term that can be understood to ground Spinoza's transitive parallelism – '*esse formale*' – is used explicitly.

⁹³ Ibidem, (I) 467.

⁹⁴ EIIp7s, (I) 451-452.

Michael Della Rocca claimed that EIIp7s uncovers the ‘referential opacity of causal contexts’⁹⁵ as the quoted assertion from this scholium makes it clear that ‘the truth of causal claims is description-dependent’:⁹⁶ due to the conceptual distinction between the attributes, the formal being of an idea can be understood to be causally related to another mental thing only, and not to a mode of another attribute. This appears to be correct (just as it is correct to state that lightning cannot be described in terms of sound-waves). As a matter of fact, I have used more or less the same argument in the *reductio ad absurdum* above. There I have claimed that the term ‘things’ that is used in EIIp7 cannot be understood to be bodies due to the causal barrier between the attributes. So in this respect Della Rocca’s remark provides a reading of EIIp7s that is in line with the present interpretation. Yet, at the same time it must be noted that the ‘referential opacity of causal contexts’ does not account for the parallelism relation that is suggested by the reference to EIIp7s in EI21s. The fact that a mental thing can only be conceived to be connected causally to another mental thing (and not to an extended or an r-ed thing) – and hence that the causal thread that is mentioned in EIIp7s has an *intra*-attribute character – does not at all imply that (mental) cause and (mental) effect must be understood to be the very same thing. Yet, precisely this identity claim between ideas and their formal being is made in the very passage from EI21s that is claimed to find its ground in EIIp7s. As we saw above, Spinoza states explicitly in EI21s that the form of the idea and the idea itself (and indeed the idea and the idea of that idea) ‘are one and the same thing’. And thus the reference to EIIp7s in EI21s firmly suggests that the quoted passage from EIIp7s actually entails something more than merely the referential opacity of causal contexts; it seems that it must also harbor information with which the identity of ideas and their formal being can be understood.

This supposition is underpinned by the things we have seen in Chapter 2. Recall that we have established there that Spinoza’s assertions in EIIp5 – the very proposition that treats the causal generation of the formal being of ideas – have more to it than merely the causal barrier Della Rocca refers to. We have seen that ideas in their formal being (EIIp5) must be understood to follow intrinsically from God as a ‘thinking thing absolutely’, whereas things in their objective being (i.e. the

⁹⁵ Della Rocca, *Representation*, 166.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 166.

ideas in the way they are staged in EIIp9) follow extrinsically from God as a *res cogitans*.⁹⁷ That is to say: we have established that a thing in its objective being (i.e. its idea) and in its formal being must be understood to *diverge in the conceptual nature of the intra-attribute causal thread it is conceived to follow from*; the formal being of ideas from EIIp5 follow vertically (i.e. from (a) to (b-i)) from God as a ‘thinking thing absolutely’, and the ideas from EIIp9 follow horizontally (i.e. from (b-ii) to (b-ii)) from God as a *res cogitans* insofar as he is conceived to be expressed in another finite mode of thinking, and that mode again in another finite mode of thinking, and so on to infinity. Now, it does not seem to be an outrageous claim to suppose that this very distinction between ideas and their formal being may apply to the assertion in EIIp7s as well. Indeed, on the basis of the things we have said in section 2.5 and the reference to EIIp7s in the scholium of EIIp21 we can conclude tentatively that the quoted passage of EIIp7s must be understood posit, not only the referential opacity of causal contexts, but also the conceptual distinction between the formal and the objective being of things.

To be sure, even though this observation provides us with a firm indication that the claim concerning the formal being of a circle in EIIp7s has more to it than merely the reiteration of the causal barrier between the attributes, our remarks in section 2.5 are not particularly illuminating with respect to the subject that we are treating presently: the identity relation that is posited in EIIp21 (and the way this relation is connected with a bottom-up perspective). In order to clarify these aspects of Spinoza’s philosophy, we must turn to a scrutiny of a passage that can be found in §33 of the TdIE. For this section contains elements that are remarkably similar to some of the assertions that surface in EIIp7s and EIIp21s. This similarity may provide us with an alternative angle with which the assertions concerning ideas and their formal beings in EIIp7s and EIIp21s – and hence the relation between ideas and ideas of ideas (and the bottom-up perspective) – can be understood.

Consider the following claims from §33 of the TdIE:

A true idea (for we have a true idea) is something different from its object. For a circle is one thing and an idea of the circle another – the idea of the circle is not something which has a circumference and a centre, as the circle does. Nor is an idea of the body the body itself. And since it is something different from its object, it will also be something intelligible through itself; that is, the idea, as far as its formal essence is

⁹⁷ See section 2.5.

concerned, can be the object of another objective essence, and this objective essence in turn will also be, considered in itself, something real and intelligible, and so on, indefinitely.⁹⁸

(Idea vera (habemus enim ideam veram) est diversum quid à suo ideato: Nam aliud est circulus, aliud idea circuli. Idea enim circuli non est aliquid, habens peripheriam, & centrum, uti circulus, nec idea corporis est ipsum corpus: & cùm sit quid diversum à suo ideato, erit etiam per se aliquid intelligibile; hoc est, idea, quoad suam essentiam formalem, potest esse objectum alterius essentiae objectivæ, & rursus hæc altera essentia objectiva erit etiam in se spectata quid reale, & intelligibile, & sic indefinitè)

And then Spinoza gives the following example:

Peter, for example, is something real; but a true idea of Peter is an objective essence of Peter, and something real in itself, and altogether different from Peter himself. So since an idea of Peter is something real, having its own particular essence, it will also be something intelligible, i.e., the object of second idea, which will have in itself, objectively, whatever the idea of Peter has formally; and in turn, the idea which is the idea of the idea of Peter has again its essence, which can also be the object of another idea, and so on indefinitely. Everyone can experience this, when he sees that he knows what Peter is, and also knows that he knows, and again, knows that he knows that he knows, etc.⁹⁹

(Petrus ex. gr. est quid reale; vera autem idea Petri est essentia Petri objectiva, & in se quid reale, & omninò diversum ab ipso Petro. Cùm itaque idea Petri sit quid reale, habens suam essentiam peculiarem, erit etiam quid intelligibile, id est, objectum alterius ideæ, quæ idea habebit in se objectivè omne id, quod idea Petri habet formaliter, & rursus idea, quæ est ideæ Petri, habet iterum suam essentiam, quæ etiam potest esse objectum alterius ideæ, & sic indefinitè. Quod quisque potest experiri, dum videt se scire, quid sit Petrus, & etiam scire se scire, & rursus scit se scire, quòd scit, & c)

There is a clear similarity between these passages and the things that are being said in both EIIp7s and EIIp21s. In this respect we must notice, firstly, that in these passages Spinoza treats precisely the subject that is hinted at in EIIp21s: the idea *without relation to the object*. A true idea is described as ‘something different from its object’ and the true idea of Peter is called ‘altogether different from Peter’. An idea considered apart from its object is called the *formal* essence of the idea, which in turn firmly underpins our supposition that the adduced passage treats the very same subject as EIIp21s: the difference between the objective and the formal status of a thing. Secondly, it must be noted that the quoted passages from the TdIE and EIIp7s both deal with the formal status of a *circle*, and hence appear to be the result

⁹⁸ TdIE §33-35, (I) 17. To be sure, the status of the term ‘formal essence’ in this early work of Spinoza must be understood differently than the status that is attributed to the term in the present interpretation (i.e. as affection that must be understood to be located *extra-intellectum* (EIp4d)). A detailed philological scrutiny of the genealogy of this particular term in Spinoza’s work would take us too far afield.

⁹⁹ Ibidem, (I) 17-18.

of a copy-paste operation. To be sure, the remarkable analogy between the passages in the TdIE and EIIp7s does not end with the observation (i) that both deal with the formal and objective status of things and (ii) that both passages are formulated in more or less the same way. Yet another striking similarity surfaces when considering the line in EIIp7s that ‘the formal being of the idea of the circle can be perceived only through *another mode of thinking*, [...] and that mode again through another, and so on, to infinity [emphasis added]’. This claim is strongly reminiscent of Spinoza’s assertion in the TdIE that ‘the idea, as far as its formal essence is concerned, can be the object of *another objective essence*, and this objective essence in turn will also be, considered in itself, something real and intelligible, and so on, indefinitely [emphasis added]’. In both passages there seems to be posited an infinite chain of objective expressions of formal beings that surface as ideas, as ideas of ideas, and so on. This very infinite chain is recognizable in EIIp21s too, namely in Spinoza’s assertion that ‘as soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows it, and at the same time knows that he knows that he knows, and so on, to infinity’. Indeed, the latter claim from EIIp21s is virtually *identical* to something that is asserted in the passage from the TdIE (as an example for the very infinite chain referred to above): ‘the idea of the idea of Peter has again its essence, which can also be the object of another idea, and so on indefinitely. *Everyone can experience this, when he sees that he knows what Peter is, and also knows that he knows, and again, knows that he knows that he knows, etc.* [emphasis added]’.

The similarity of the claims in the TdIE, EIIp7s and EIIp21s suggests that the assertions in the two latter passages can both be considered to be a concise reformulation of Spinoza’s rendering of the working of the intellect in the important passage from the TdIE.¹⁰⁰ For in all three passages we encounter the following key features:

¹⁰⁰ This similarity of course has been noted by other scholars too. Alexandre Matheron is a case in point. He identified a series of apparent differences between the quoted passages from the TdIE and EIIp21s. However, Matheron concludes that these differences do not forestall the important similarity concerning the status of the ideas of ideas in both works: ‘Donc, finalement, il n’y a pas de contradiction entre le *TIE* at l’*Éthique*’. Alexandre Matheron, *Études sur Spinoza et les philosophies de l’âge classique* (Lyon 2011), 540. To be sure, even though I agree with Matheron insofar as the *structure* of the argument is concerned, I do not think there is no relevant difference at all. Perhaps the most important difference concerns the use of the terms ‘*formal*’ and ‘*objective essence*’ in the TdIE. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza switches to ‘*formal*’ and ‘*active*’ essence. The reason for this change of terms will be elucidated in the next chapter.

- (i) A situating of the formal status of things and the objective expression of these things within the attribute of thought¹⁰¹
- (ii) An infinite chain of perceptions
- (iii) A conceptual exclusivity of formality and objectivity

Ad (i). The situating of the formal status of things and the objective expression of these things within the attribute of thought surfaces in the remark in EIIp7s that ‘the formal being of the idea of the circle can be perceived only through *another mode of thinking* [emphasis added]’ (which as we saw mirrors the assertion in the TdIE that ‘the idea can be the object of *another objective essence* [emphasis added]’). With this remark Spinoza makes it clear that the interplay between formality and the objective *modus* in which this formality is expressed must be positioned within the mental realm. The interplay between formal and objective being of things can be understood to be operative entirely in the attribute of thought.

Ad (ii). As we saw, the formal being of the idea can be perceived only through another mode of thinking (i). This other mode of thinking in turn can only be perceived only *per alium cogitandi modum* (EIIp7s). And the resulting mode of thinking again can only be perceived through another mode of thinking. And so on indefinitely. Now, this very same structure of infinite perceptions is recognizable in the claim in the TdIE that ‘the idea, as far as its formal essence is concerned, can be the object of another objective essence, and this objective essence in turn will also be, considered in itself, something real and intelligible, and so on, indefinitely’, which as we saw is explicated by Spinoza – both in the TdIE and in EIIp21s – with a reference to *ideas of ideas*, and to knowledge of knowledge (of knowledge of knowledge, and so on).

¹⁰¹ One important thing must be added: the ‘real Peter’ that gives rise to the first objective essence (‘the true idea of Peter’) may be understood to be the extended Peter in the quoted example. However, in a note Spinoza remarks that ‘we are not asking how the first objective essence is inborn in us’. TdIE §34, note n, (I) 18. That is to say: Spinoza at this point neither confirms nor denies that the original thing is an *extended* thing. In this sense, Bennett’s remark that ‘for Spinoza the body calls the tune’ is misguided. See: Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 81 and 186. In the next chapter we will say something more about the way in which Spinoza conceives the ‘first adequate idea’.

Ad (iii). The conceptual exclusivity of ‘the formal being of the idea of the circle’ and ‘the [objective] idea of the circle’ can be explicated thus: as according to EIIp7s this formal being can be perceived only through another mode of thinking (*non nisi per alium cogitandi modum*), the idea (or objective being (EIIp8c)) of the circle thus is asserted to differ necessarily (in a certain respect) from the formal being of that same idea. This implies that (from the present perspective) the formality and objectivity of a thing are *conceptually exclusive*. When ideas are grasped in the way staged in the passages quoted above, they fall apart in an objective aspect (i.e. the idea *insofar as it represents its object*), and a formal aspect (i.e. the same idea insofar as it is considered *without relation to its object*). This need not surprise us, as this fully corroborates our claim that with respect to Spinoza’s parallelism we encounter the very *constructive function of the intellect* that was elucidated in section 2.5. And as we have seen in Chapter 1 and 2 that (firstly) *pars melior nostri* is characterized by a necessary duality as by EVp29s ‘we conceive things as actual in *two ways* [emphasis added]’, that (secondly) this duality must be understood to be the very duality between the (eternal) formal and the (durational) objective being of things, and that (thirdly) Spinoza states in EVp29d that ‘eternity cannot be explained by duration’,¹⁰² it is clear why the formal and objective being of things are staged as conceptually exclusive.

These similarities, combined with Spinoza’s explicit claim that EIIp21 must be understood to find corroboration in EIIp7s, underpin our supposition that the assertions in this latter scholium refer, not only to the causal isolation of the attributes, but also to the very vertical relation between (durational) ideas and their ontologically identical but conceptually distinct (eternal) formal beings that surfaced in our treatment of EIIp5 and EIIp9. That is to say: the quoted claims from EIIp7s can only be understood to provide an elucidation of EIIp21 – which as we saw is explicitly claimed to be the case by Spinoza – when the assertions in EIIp7s are considered to *posit a vertical relation between the eternal forms and their expression in durational modes within the same attribute*. Spinoza’s claim in EIIp21s that his intra-attribute variant of parallelism is corroborated by EIIp7s only makes sense if it is granted that both scholiums deal with the two ways in which we

¹⁰² EVp29d, (I) 609 (*At aeternitas per durationem explicari nequit*).

conceive singular things: objectively (i.e. as durational finite modes) and formally (i.e. as eternal infinite modes). Yet another way of saying this is that, even though Della Rocca is right in his claim that in the passage from EIIp7s Spinoza forwards the causal isolation of the attributes, this assertion is not complete. This passage must be understood to say still something more: it also posits *the vertical relation between the objective and the formal being of things*. This is of course precisely what we would expect on the basis of the things we encountered in the previous sections (and in section 2.5). For above we have seen that Spinoza's claim from the corollary of EIIp7 (namely that 'whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection') establishes a vertical identity relation between eternal formal beings and durational ideas. It would go vehemently against the geometrical rigour with which Spinoza aimed to devise his philosophy to suppose that in the scholium of the very same proposition and corollary in which the vertical identity relation of formal beings (at (b-i)) and their objective expressions (at (b-ii)) is posited, he would forget about this important characteristic and claim that the relation between (say) the formal being of the idea of a circle and the durational mode of thinking that expresses this formal being (i.e. the idea of the circle) is to be understood as a horizontal causal relation in which the identity claim (as well as the constructive importance of the intellect) has mysteriously disappeared from view (only to rear its ugly head again in EIIp21s).

4.3.1.1 Horizontal intra-attribute parallelism

Our elaborations so far teach us that the relation between ideas and their formal beings must be understood to disclose an *intra-attribute* variant of parallelism (in the sense that these things can be conceived to be operative under the same attribute), and a *vertical* variant of parallelism (in the sense that they must be understood to express the distinction between items under duration (b-ii) and the very same items in their eternal being (b-i)). To be sure, as of yet it is unclear (i) how we must understand the intricate relation between the formal being of an idea ('*forma ideae*') and the idea of that idea ('*idea ideae*') – and the way in which this latter notion must be understood to be parallel to its idea, and (ii) how the perspective that is forwarded in the claims from EIIp7s and EIIp21s can be

understood to be bottom-up. In this section we will treat point (i); the bottom-up character of this perspective will be the subject of the subsequent section.

In order to elucidate the way in which an idea can be understood to be parallel to the *idea of that idea*, it is instructive to adduce the schematic rendering of the conceptual duality that is forwarded in (inter alia) EVp29s once more. We have seen that a singular thing can be conceived as to:

- (1'') the *objective* being of a thing (i.e. the idea *with* relation to its object, in which case the object is the parallel *body*)
- and as to
- (2'') the *formal* being of that idea (i.e. the idea *without* relation to its object)

This dual structure was recognizable in the passages from the TdIE, EIIp7s and EIIp21s as well: in all three passages we encountered the vertical distinction between durational ideas and their eternal formal beings. To be sure, it is important to note that the mentioned passages tell us still something more. The close similarity between the quoted passages from the TdIE, EIIp7s and EIIp21s teaches us that the formal being of an idea (2'') can in turn be the object of another idea. That is: the formal being of an idea *in itself* (i.e. the formal being *qua* formal being) can be conceived as actual in two ways, and can thus be conceived as:

- (2''i) the *objective* being of (the formal being of the idea), i.e. (by EIIp21s) the *idea of the idea*¹⁰³ considered *with* relation to its object (in which case the object is *the idea* (1''))
- and as

¹⁰³ Both Edwin Curley and Jonathan Bennett remarked that this structure of ideas of ideas' may very well be called a *propositional structure*. Curley says the following: "Since I am identifying the possession of an idea of an idea with consciousness, it seems natural to say that an idea of an idea is a special kind of proposition about a proposition, namely, one expressing what is sometimes called a propositional attitude [...]." Edwin Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 129. Bennett writes: "We translate [Spinoza's Latin word *idea*] by 'idea', and think of it as mental [...]. But there is a way of taking 'idea' in which ideas are not mental at all. [...] Much of the time Spinoza takes ideas to be propositionally structured [...]. [O]n the psychological reading an 'idea' is a state or episode of believing that P or the like, while on the logical reading it is just the proposition that P". Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Cambridge 1984) 50-51.

(2"ii) the *formal* being of (the idea of the idea),¹⁰⁴ i.e. the idea of the idea considered *without* relation to its object

And (2"ii) itself can in turn be conceived as actual in two ways (or, in the wording of EIIp7s, ‘be perceived only through another mode of thinking’), resulting in:

(2"ii-i) the *objective* being of (the formal being of (the idea of the idea)), i.e. *the idea of (the idea of the idea)* considered with relation to its object (in which case the object is *the idea of the idea*) (2"i)

and

(2"ii-ii) the *formal* being of (the idea of (the idea of the idea)) and so on to infinity.¹⁰⁵

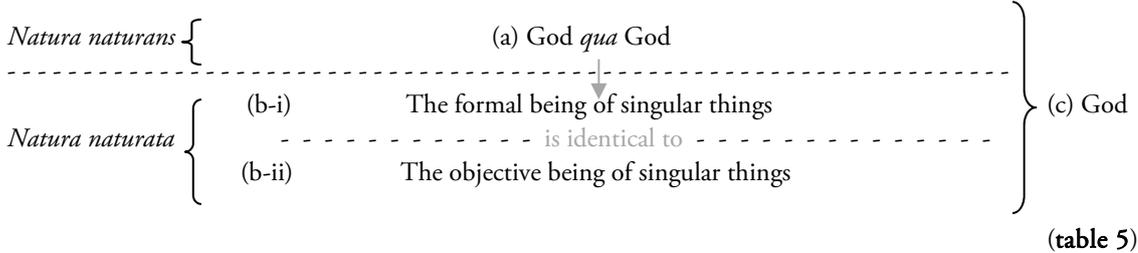
It is precisely this important addition to the structure of EVp29s that provides the basis for Spinoza’s statement in EIIp21s that ‘as soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows it, and at the same time knows that he knows that he knows, and so on to infinity’. Indeed: it is the objective being of something (i.e. the idea) that accounts for the knowledge of the thing under scrutiny¹⁰⁶ (say: a circle), it is the objective being of the idea of the circle (i.e. the idea of the idea) that accounts for the knowledge of the knowledge of the circle, it is the objective being of the idea of the idea (i.e. the idea of the idea of the idea) that accounts for the knowledge of the knowledge of the knowledge of the circle, and so on, to infinity.

¹⁰⁴ These parentheses are ‘*mathematical*’ in the sense that they aim to make it clear that the terms between the parentheses function as a (in linguistic terms) *unit of meaning*.

¹⁰⁵ That this intricate structure – in fact expressing *the infinite applicability of the constructive function of the intellect* – is a recurring theme in Spinoza’s philosophy became clear already in our treatment of the distinction between the absolute infinite intellect and the whole of (objective) nature (see Chapter 2). Indeed, it was precisely the recognition of the constructive function of the intellect that made it clear how the absolutely infinite intellect and the whole of objective nature can be understood to be conceptually distinct. They can be grasped in this way because the unspecified infinite intellect can be grasped as to (1"") the *objective* being of the infinite mode of extension (i.e. as the infinite idea *with* relation to its object, that is: as the whole of objective nature having the whole of extended nature as its perceived object), and as to (2") the *formal* being of the infinite intellect (i.e. the infinite idea *without* relation to its object, that is: as the absolutely infinite intellect).

¹⁰⁶ Or, as Spinoza says in the TdIE: ‘From this it is clear that certainty is nothing but the objective essence itself, i.e., the mode by which we are aware of the formal essence is certainty itself (*Hinc patet, quòd certitudo nihil sit præter ipsam essentiam objectivam; id est, modus, quo sentimus essentiam formalem, est ipsa certitudo*). TdIE §35, (I) 18.

This way of understanding the functioning of *pars melior nostri* provides us with an answer to the question we aimed to answer in this section. For the enumeration above gives us additional insight with respect to the exact nature of the parallelism relation between ideas and the ideas of these ideas. Consider table 5 once more:



Above we have stated with respect to this table that an idea (say: of a circle) and its body (the circle) are numerically identical because they can both be conceived to be objective expressions at level (b-ii) of the same *res*: the formal being of the circle at level (b-i). Given what we have seen in this section, it becomes clear that according to Spinoza the representational nature of thought is so thoroughgoing, that the formal being of an idea is not only expressed in an idea (see point (1'')) that can be understood to be a representation of its parallel extended object, but that this idea can also be understood to be grasped objectively itself (see point (2''i)), in which case it appears as the idea of the idea, that is: as a representation of itself. As soon as the eternal *forma ideae* is perceived by another mode of thinking, this eternal form – due to the conceptual exclusivity of the formal and objective being of things – turns into the durational objective being of the idea it is the form of, and hence surfaces as the *idea ideae* at level (b-ii). In Chapter 5 we will see how the self-representation that is expressed in the notion *idea ideae* can be understood to account for the consciousness that must be attributed to ideas. The thing to note in the context of the present section is that it is precisely the possibility to form an idea of the formal being of a thing *qua* formal being that accounts for the claim that *the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of ideas of ideas*. For on the basis of the things we have seen in this section we can conclude that *transitive parallelism is applicable to ideas and their mental objects in the same way it is applicable to ideas and their extended objects*. Indeed:

the order and connection of the objective being of bodies is the same as the order and connection of the objective being of the ideas of these bodies

This in turn makes it clear that the horizontal relation at level (b-ii) can be understood to be of the *intra*-attribute variant as well: a mode of thinking cannot only be understood to be numerically identical to its finite object *in extension* (in which case the horizontal parallelism is of the *inter*-attribute variant), but also to its finite object in thought (in which case the horizontal parallelism is of the *intra*-attribute variant)).

Before turning to the second important subject that was announced above – an elucidation of the bottom-up perspective – it may be informative to provide yet another argument for the horizontal *intra*-attribute parallelism that was uncovered just now. This additional argument takes off from the acknowledgement that Spinoza’s Principle of Plenitude implies that ideas and bodies can both be understood to ‘fall under the infinite intellect’. They fall under the unspecified infinite mode of thought in the following way: a thing that follows from the necessity of the divine nature can be understood (i) as an idea that is part of the infinite intellect, and (ii) as a body that is a part of the whole that is perceived by the infinite intellect. Considered in this way there appears to be a difference between an idea and a body. For the idea – i.e. the objective being (or the idea *with respect to its object*) – that represents its body, appears to fall under the infinite intellect, not insofar as it is represented in thought (as is the case with its body), but insofar as it is an *unrepresented* part of the infinite intellect. This of course leads to the question whether this idea cannot be understood to have a representational feature as well, not insofar as it is related to its extended object, but insofar as it is *considered in itself*. Now, on the basis of EIIp20 and EIIp21 (and the passages from the TdIE and EIIp7s quoted earlier), this question can be answered affirmatively. That is to say: it is precisely here where the notion ‘*idea ideae*’ comes into play. Insofar as the intellect directs its representational powers at itself, its formal being is not expressed in an extended thing, but in a finite mental thing: the *idea of the idea*. Another way of saying this is that in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy the inherent representational nature of thought¹⁰⁷ is so thoroughgoing that this

¹⁰⁷ This *inherent representational nature of ideas* is also recognizable in Descartes’ philosophy. With respect to this latter subject, Richard Fields has stated the following: ‘An idea, then, has objective being, and is the

particular attribute offers a window on all the other attributes *including itself* (which of course is corroborated by the definition of attribute in EID4).¹⁰⁸ Once God, insofar as he is expressed in the human mind, has an idea of an idea that is in him, that idea must be understood to fall apart in (i) the finite idea of the idea, and (ii) the parallel finite object that is represented (or perceived) by this *idea ideae*: the idea it is numerically identical to.

4.3.2 The objective being as ground floor

Having established how the parallel relation between an idea and the idea of that idea must be conceived, we can turn to the second subject that was announced above: the bottom-up perspective. Now, it is important to note that the way in which a *forma ideae* is shown to turn into an identical *idea ideae* (namely by way of the infinite grasping operation that surfaces *inter alia* in EIIp7s and EIIp21s) also tells us something about the way in which the ‘bottom-up’ perspective must be understood. In order to see this, we must adduce structure (1'')-(2''ii-ii) once more.

We have seen that a singular idea can be conceived as to:

- (1'') the *objective* being of a thing (i.e. the idea *with* relation to its object, in which case the object is the parallel *body*)
 and as to
 (2'') the *formal* being of that idea (i.e. the idea *without* relation to its object)

representation of something, quite apart from any relation, whether actual or hypothetical, it might have to a thing. In other words, the idea is in itself, or essentially, representative. [...] Ideas, considered apart from the actual existence of their objects, represent the natures or essences of things having determinate character independently of the act of thought itself. [...] If the possible existent that is represented in this manner by an idea actually does exist, then the idea can be said to represent something in a second way by virtue of the conformity of the objective being of the idea to the actualized nature, or what Descartes calls the "formal being" of an existing object. [...] Unlike the previous manner of representation, which is nonrelational and essential to the character of ideas, representation in this second manner does require a relation between an idea and an existing object.’ Richard W. Field, ‘Descartes on the Material Falsity of Ideas’ in: *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 3 (1993), 310-312. More on the way in which Spinoza underpins this representational nature of thought in Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁸ As already noted in section 3.6, the definition of attribute (EID4) reads thus: ‘By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence’. As this definition must also be understood to be applicable to the attribute of thought, and as the intellect that does the ‘perceiving of substance’ must be understood to fall under this very attribute, EID4 implies that in the case of the attribute of thought the perceiving operation is to be seen as *self-representational*.

And then we saw that the formal being of an idea *in itself* (i.e. the formal being *qua* formal being) can be conceived as actual in two ways, and can thus be conceived as:

(2"i) the *objective* being of (the formal being of the idea), i.e. (by EIIp21s) the *idea of the idea* considered *with* relation to its object (in which case the object is *the idea* (1"))

and as

(2"ii) the *formal* being of (the idea of the idea), i.e. the idea of the idea considered *without* relation to its object

Furthermore it became clear that (2"ii) itself can in turn be conceived as actual in two ways (or, in the wording of EIIp7s, ‘be perceived only through another mode of thinking’), resulting in:

(2"ii-i) the *objective* being of (the formal being of (the idea of the idea)), i.e. *the idea of (the idea of the idea)* considered with relation to its object (in which case the object is *the idea of the idea*) (2"i))

and

(2"ii-ii) the *formal* being of (the idea of (the idea of the idea))
and so on to infinity.

At this point it is crucial to acknowledge that this structure not only makes it clear how formal beings of ideas can be understood to be expressed in durational ideas of ideas, but also that at each successive step of this intellectual structure *the objective being of a thing serves as the ground floor* for the inference.¹⁰⁹ At every stage, the formal being is conceptually dependent on its objective being (in more or less the same way the time between thunder and lightning – or the designation ‘glass of milk’ and ‘glass of water’ – is depending on the position of the knowing agent). The enumeration that was provided above is based on the concept of a singular idea that is captured in (1"). Point (1") must be understood to serve as the foundation for (2"); and as soon as (2") is grasped objectively in (2"i), the resulting ‘idea of the idea’ serves as the foundation for (2"ii); and again, as soon as (2"ii) is grasped

¹⁰⁹ See note 101.

objectively in (2''ii-i), the resulting 'idea of (the idea of the idea)' grounds (2''ii-ii), and so on indefinitely. In other words, in this particular intellectual operation the conceptual direction must be understood thus: (1'') → (2'') → (2''i) → (2''ii) → (2''ii-i) → (2''ii-ii) → *ad infinitum*.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of this observation. For it teaches us (or rather: it underpins our assertion) that in the context of Spinoza's metaphysics the knowledge of a formal being *qua* formal being – even though it must be understood to follow top-down from God (by EIp16, EIIp5 and EIIp6c) – can be considered from yet another perspective: it can also be conceived to be the result of an act of inferring: from the objective being of a thing (i.e. from an idea with respect to its durational object) an eternal formal being *qua* formal being is inferred on the basis of a conceptually prior objective being.¹¹⁰ That is to say: the formal being of an idea, although shown to follow immediately from God as a 'thinking thing absolutely' – and as such to be *logically prior* to its objective expression – can be considered to be *psychologically posterior* to the objective being that serves as the basis for the inference of this formal being. It is precisely this conceptual priority of an objective being that grounds the rhetorical question 'who can know that he understands something unless he first understands it?' in EIIp43s.¹¹¹ According to Spinoza a true idea must be understood to serve as the basis of the idea of that idea (which by EIIp21s of course is nothing but the *forma ideae*).

As already noted, this bottom-up perspective emerges clearly in the assertion in EIIp21s concerning the knowledge of knowledge of knowledge of things. The close connection between EIIp21s and EIIp7s (see above) suggests that this perspective is also recognizable in this latter scholium. Indeed, our claims concerning the similarity between the claims from EIIp21s and EIIp7s can only be upheld if the very same bottom-up perspective is recognizable in EIIp7s as well. Now, is it? Can this scholium be understood to encompass the perspective that has ideas with respect to their objects *as its ground floor*? On closer scrutiny this indeed appears to be the case. In order to see this, it is crucial to focus on the remarkable causal relation that is posited in EIIp7s. Consider the following claim once more:

¹¹⁰ For as soon as the formal being is grasped objectively (or as EIIp7s states, *per alium cogitandi modum*), it loses the precise characteristic that warrants the use of the predicate 'formal'. When turning into an objective being, the grasped thing can only be described as a (by TdIE §33-35) *modus, quo sentimus essentiam formalem*. However, the formal being *can* be inferred to exist in itself.

¹¹¹ EIIp43a, (I) 479.

the formal being of the idea of the circle can be perceived only through another mode of thinking, as its proximate cause, and that mode again through another, and so on, to infinity.¹¹²

(esse formale ideæ circuli non, nisi per alium cogitandi modum, tanquam causam proximam, & ille iterum per alium, & sic in infinitum, potest percipi)

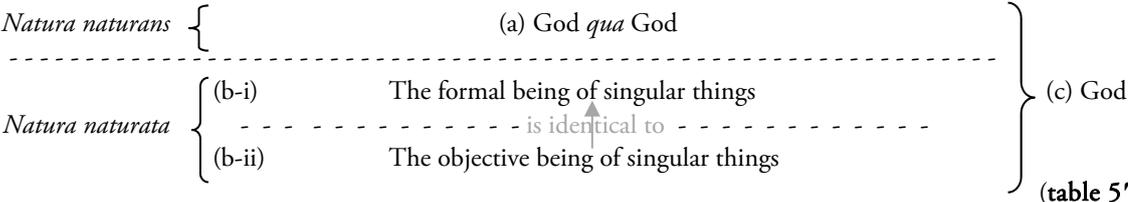
With regard to the causal claim that is being made in this passage, we cannot fail to notice that there is something funny with Spinoza's assertion. For the quoted claim appears to state that the formal being of an idea *is caused by the mode of thinking it is perceived through*. When it is acknowledged that in this assertion from EIIp7s the intra-attribute distinction between the formal and the objective being of the circle is posited, the clause 'as its proximate cause' suggests *that the formal being of an idea is claimed to be caused proximately by the objective being it is the form of*. That is to say: the quoted passage suggests that the logically prior formal being of an idea is merely the proximate result of the objective being of that same thing. *Prima facie*, this appears to go against the causal thread posited in EIIp5 (see section 2.5). For with respect to this important proposition we have established that the formal being of ideas follows immediately from God as a 'thinking thing absolutely'. However, given what we have seen, the assertion that the formal being of ideas can be understood to be caused proximately by their objective expressions is not too surprising. For in the causal claim of EIIp7s that was cited just now we encounter the very bottom-up structure that was elucidated above. Indeed, this formulation in EIIp7s makes it clear that this scholium corroborates our claims concerning the alternative perspective that can be recognized in the *Ethics*. In the quoted passage from EIIp7s, the idea of a circle is staged insofar as it has a certain conceptual priority over its identical formal being. The objective being of the circle (i.e. idea of the circle *with respect to its object*) is portrayed as the proximate cause of the formal being of the idea of the circle (i.e. of the idea of the circle *without respect to its object*). This is completely in line with the assertion in EIIp21s that 'as soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows, and at the same time knows that he knows that he knows, and so on, to infinity'. In other words: the intra-attribute bottom-up perspective is clearly recognizable in EIIp7s too. Just as the passages from the TdIE and EIIp21s, EIIp7s fosters a perspective from which the objective being of things is conceptually prior to their formal beings. This

¹¹² EIIp7s, (I) 451-452.

firmly underpins our claims that (i) these passages all express a vertical relation between ideas and their formal beings, and that (ii) apart from the vertical top-down perspective that is advanced in the Principle of Plenitude of EIp16, Spinoza also puts forward a vertical bottom-up perspective. The vertical top-down perspective runs from *Natura naturans* (a) to *Natura naturata* (b); the vertical bottom-up perspective that was uncovered in this section must be located *within* *Natura naturata* and runs from the objective and durational (b-ii) to the formal and eternal (b-i) being of things.

4.3.2.1 Some more examples

The elucidations so far have shown us that Spinoza’s philosophy must be understood to shelter a bottom-up perspective that expresses the ability of *pars melior nostri* to infer the formal being of things on the basis of the objective being of things. This bottom-up perspective can be rendered thus:



Indeed, we have seen that in (inter alia) EIIp7s and EIIp21s the objective being of a thing (b-ii) is presented as the foundation for the grasping of the formal being of the same thing (b-i). To be sure, in order to erase all doubt as to whether the *Ethics* harbors this bottom-up perspective, I will provide five more examples of passages that underpin this important claim.

Example 1: EIIp5d

A first additional indication that the bottom-up perspective that was elucidated above must be understood to be endorsed fully by Spinoza can be found in the demonstration of EIIp5. In Chapter 2 we have argued that this proposition posits an intrinsic top-down causal thread, as it is based – via EIIp3 – on the ‘medieval’ Principle of Plenitude of EIp16. However, at this point it must be added that in the

demonstration of EIIp5 Spinoza proposes yet ‘another way of demonstrating this’.¹¹³ In this second demonstration he forwards the claim that the formal being of an idea is a mode of thinking. Now, if the formal being of an idea is staged as the formal being *of an idea*, it is quite evident – or as Spinoza formulates it: ‘*ut per se notum*’ – that the recognition of the formal status of the thing under scrutiny *is based on its objective being* (i.e. on the idea of the thing) and not on the absolute attribute neutral divine essence it follows from. Hence it is clear that EIIp5d can be understood to shelter two perspectives from which the very same formal being of ideas can be grasped. Whereas the first part of the demonstration is based on the top-down perspective that is put forward in EIp16, the second part of the demonstration fosters the bottom-up perspective.

Example 2: EIIp6c

A closely related indication can be found in EIIp6c. Consider the following passage:

the objects of ideas *follow and are inferred* from their attributes in the same way as that with which we have shown ideas to follow from the attribute of thought [emphasis added].¹¹⁴

(*eodem modo, eademque necessitate res ideata ex suis attributis consequuntur, & concluduntur, ac ideas ex attributo Cogitationis consequi ostendimus*)

The thing to note here is that Spinoza uses two different terms to explicate the way in which things can be understood to resort under their attributes. Things are asserted to *follow* (*consequuntur*) from their attributes, and they are claimed to be *inferred* (*concluduntur*) from their attributes. Given what we have seen above, we can conjecture that with the term ‘*consequuntur*’ Spinoza refers to the top-down perspective from which the formal being of a thing is prior to its objective being (as this formal being must be understood (by EIIp6c) to follow immediately from God (a)), whereas the term ‘*concluduntur*’ expresses the bottom-up perspective from which the objective being of a thing is perceived to be prior to the formal being of the same thing (as the formal being is understood (by EIIp7s) to be *caused proximately by its objective being*, and hence to be a *mode of thinking* (by EIIp5d)). On the present interpretation it becomes clear why Spinoza in EIIp6c would use

¹¹³ EIIp5d, (I) 450 (*aliter hoc modo demonstratur*).

¹¹⁴ EIIp6c, (I) 450-451.

the two terms in order to refer to the very same operation: the formal being of things can be understood to be grasped in two conceptually distinct ways: top-down and bottom-up.

Example 3: The ‘physical excursion’

The same bottom-up perspective is also recognizable in the ‘physical excursion’ that can be found after EIIp13s. In this respect an already quoted claim from EIIIL7s – part of this ‘physical excursion’ – is very informative. Spinoza states the following in this scholium:

So far we have conceived an individual which is composed only of bodies which [...] are composed of the simplest bodies. But if we should now conceive of another, composed of a number of individuals of a different nature, we shall find that it can be affected in a great many other ways, and still preserve its nature. [...] [E]ach part of it is composed of a number of bodies [...]. But if we should further conceive a third kind of individual, composed of this second kind, we shall find that it can be affected in many other ways, without any change of its form. And if we proceed in this way to infinity, we shall easily conceive that the whole of nature is one individual, whose parts, that is, all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole individual.¹¹⁵

(Atque hucusque Individuum concepimus, quod non, nisi [...] ex corporibus simplicissimis componitur. Quòd si jam aliud concipiamus, ex pluribus diversæ naturæ Individuis compositum, idem pluribus aliis modis posse affici, reperiemus, ipsius nihilominus naturâ servatâ. Nam quandoquidem ejus unaquæque pars ex pluribus corporibus est composita [...]. Quòd si præterea tertium Individuorum genus, ex his secundis compositum, concipiamus, idem multis aliis modis affici posse, reperiemus, absque ullâ ejus formæ mutatione. Et si sic porrò in infinitum pergamus, facillè concipiemus, totam naturam unum esse Individuum, cujus partes, hoc est, omnia corpora infinitis modis variant, absque ullâ totius Individui mutatione)

From this passage we learn that Spinoza offers a perspective that (so to speak) *starts with the parts*. In EIIIL7 the whole of nature is clearly claimed to be an aggregate whole constituted by infinitely many bodies. And insofar as the whole of nature is conceived objectively as the whole of objective nature (i.e. as God’s idea), it can be understood to be constituted by infinitely many ideas. Indeed, there is a perspective – i.e. the bottom-up perspective – from which a body (and its idea) is a prior and constituting part of the whole of (objective) nature, even though these parts cannot in any way be understood to be prior to, or constitutive of, the whole they are in insofar as this whole is considered as to its reference.

¹¹⁵ EIIIL7s, (I) 461-462.

The next thing that must be noted is that in section 2.6 we have established that this whole of nature (EIIL7s) can be understood to be related to its formal being in the same way a part of the whole of nature can be understood to be related to the formal being of that part. Indeed:

The whole of nature can be conceived as actual in two ways. It can be conceived as to

(1*) the *objective* being of the whole of nature, i.e. as God's idea *with* relation to the (extended) whole of nature, (viz. (b-ii) *the whole of objective nature* that exists sempiternally)

and as to

(2*) the *formal* being of God's idea, i.e. God's idea *without* relation to the (extended) whole of nature, (viz. (b-i) *the absolutely infinite intellect* that exists eternally)

The thing to note with respect to these assertions is (i) that in the intellectual structure that surfaces in this particular enumeration, the objective being of a thing must once again be understood to serve as the ground floor for the formal being of that same thing, and (ii) that the relation between the whole of objective nature (1*) and the absolutely infinite intellect (2*) is completely on a par with our mereological contentions from Chapter 2. Recall that we have asserted there that if the unspecified infinite intellect is considered in itself, the whole of objective nature (1*) can be understood to be an exhaustive part of the absolutely infinite intellect (2*). It must be noted now that the claim that (from the bottom-up perspective) the part is prior to its whole is just another way of formulating the claim that the objective being of a thing serves as the foundation for the inference of its formal being: in both cases the whole of objective nature is staged as conceptually prior to the absolutely infinite intellect. And hence from this perspective the (exhaustive) part is staged as prior to its whole. Or stated in terms of the present chapter: from a certain perspective, an objective being (b-ii) can be considered to be prior to its formal being (b-i). If it is acknowledged furthermore that according to Spinoza both the whole of objective nature and the absolutely infinite intellect have God *qua* God as their reference, it becomes clear that the priority of the parts that

surfaces in this example can actually be understood to be a manifestation of the early modern conceptual commitment to the whole of nature that Spinoza fosters. For on his account, investigating the durational parts of nature means nothing less than investigating God.¹¹⁶

Example 4: EIIp43s

The claim in the TdIE that ‘there is no idea of an idea unless there is first an idea’,¹¹⁷ is reiterated in the *Ethics*, not only in the claim in EIIp21s about knowledge of knowledge, but also in EIIp43s. In this scholium, in which Spinoza refers explicitly to the notion ‘idea of an idea’ in EIIp21s, he asks the following:

who can know that he understands some thing unless he first understands it? That is, who can know that he is certain about something unless he is first certain about it? What can there be which is clearer and more certain than a true idea, to serve as standard of truth?¹¹⁸

(quis scire potest, se rem aliquam intelligere, nisi prius rem intelligat? hoc est, quis potest scire, se de aliqua re certum esse, nisi prius de eâ re certus sit? Deinde quid ideâ verâ clarius, & certius dari Potest, quod norma sit veritatis?)

This passages corroborates our claim that the bottom-up perspective – i.e. the proximate causal relation between the objective being and the resulting formal being of ideas – is endorsed by Spinoza. In this passage the idea is portrayed to be conceptually prior to the form of the idea (see EIIp21s). And thus, on the basis of this claim as well, we can posit a priority of (b-ii) over (b-i).

Example 5: EVp29s and EVp30

In EVp29s – the very scholium that also served as a basis for our claim concerning the vertical duality of our intellect – Spinoza asserts explicitly that modes are ‘real’ insofar as they are conceived ‘under a species of eternity’ and their ideas thus

¹¹⁶ To be sure, the way in which the knowledge can be understood to ‘cross the boundary’ between *Natura naturata* and *Natura naturans* will only be elucidated in the next section.

¹¹⁷ TdIE §38, (I) 19.

¹¹⁸ EIIp43s, (I) 479.

‘involve the eternal and infinite essence of God’.¹¹⁹ Indeed, as he stresses once more in the demonstration of EVp30:

To conceive things under a species of eternity, therefore, is to conceive things insofar as they are conceived through God's essence, as real beings, *or* insofar as through God's essence they involve existence.¹²⁰
(*Res igitur sub specie aeternitatis concipere, est res concipere, quatenus per Dei essentiam, ut entia realia, concipiuntur, sive quatenus per Dei essentiam involvunt existentiam*)

Now, it crucial to recognize that the very conception of ‘things under a species of eternity’ can only take place *when these things qua things are conceived as given*. One can only conceive a thing under a species of eternity (i.e. in its formal being at (b-i)), if that very same thing surfaces under duration (i.e. in its objective being at (b-ii)) first.¹²¹ And hence, taken in this way, the objective being serves as the basis for the inference of the formal being of that same thing; the objective being of ideas can indeed be perceived as the proximate cause of their formal beings.

*

These examples make it clear that from a certain perspective the ‘direction of fit’¹²² between the being of things insofar as these are conceived to represent their objects, and the same things insofar as they are considered in themselves, must be understood to be bottom-up in the way of table 5’. We have seen, firstly, that Spinoza’s philosophy also harbors a bottom-up perspective from which *the objective being of things serves as ground floor*, and, secondly, that considered from this bottom-up perspective the formal being of an idea ‘belongs’ to the attribute of thought (in the same way the glasses in our example in a previous section were claimed to ‘belong’ to the liquids that were in it). Consequently, table 5’ can be understood to provide an accurate rendering of an important aspect of Spinoza’s

¹¹⁹ EVp29s, (I) 610.

¹²⁰ EVp30d, (I) 610.

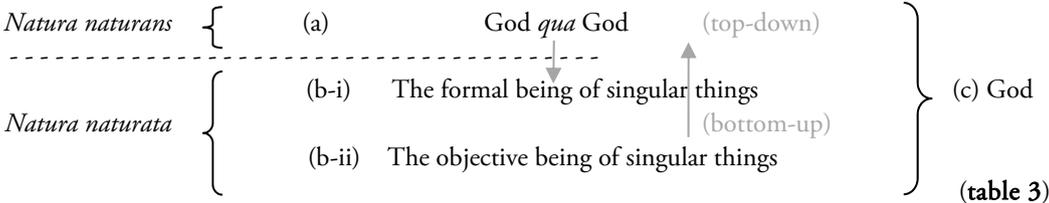
¹²¹ As we shall see in the next chapter, this must be understood to be a qualified remark. In the case of knowledge of the third kind one is actually able to grasp the eternal essence of things, not bottom-up (starting from the durational being of a thing), but top-down (proceeding from the formal essence of the attributes).

¹²² This term is not entirely adequate, as it appears to suppose an *extrinsic* fit (i.e. between the mind and something that is external to the mind), whereas in the present case the fit must be understood to be *intrinsic* (i.e. a bottom-up conception *within the mind* vs. a top-down conception *within the mind*).

metaphysics. On closer scrutiny, this is not too surprising. Actually, the bottom-up perspective appears to express a rather commonsensical view on the way human minds attain knowledge. For human mental behavior in the way we commonly understand it indeed appears to deal primarily with the external ‘parts of nature’ that are somehow represented in a human mind. The way in which this representation of external things can be understood to be related to the intellectual structure that we have uncovered will only be elucidated in the next chapter. First we will have to treat yet another important aspect of the bottom-up perspective: the way in which knowledge of the formal being of things can be understood to entail divine self-knowledge.

4.3.3 God’s bottom-up self-knowledge

There is ample evidence for the claim that Spinoza fosters a bottom-up perspective between the objective (b-ii) and the formal being of things (b-i). Yet, at the same time it must be acknowledged that an understanding of this particular bottom-up perspective does not suffice for an understanding of the way in which God (c) can be conceived to know himself. For the bottom-up perspective that accounts for a full-blown version of God’s self-knowledge by way of our intellect needs to cross the conceptual boundary between *Natura naturata* and *Natura naturans* (i.e. between (b) and (a)). God can only be understood to know himself by way of a human mind *if this perspective offers the divine res cognitive access to his own essence*. It is precisely because of this that the variant of the bottom-up perspective provided in the introduction of this chapter did not halt at level (b), but was claimed to progress to level (a). This was rendered schematically in the following way:



With respect to this table, we formulated the following questions:

- (I) We are in need of closer insight into the exact relation between the formal (b-i) and the objective (b-ii) being of singular things
- (II) We must illuminate how knowledge of the formal being of singular things (b-i) enables our intellect to attain knowledge of God *qua* God (a) (i.e. how God (c) is able to gather self-knowledge)

In the previous sections I have provided an answer to point (I). A scrutiny of Spinoza's parallelism-claims in EIIp7 and EIIp21 has made it clear that the order and connection of the objective being of singular things (at (b-ii)) can be understood to be the same as the order and connection of the formal being of things (at (b-i)). This identity is rooted in the fact that the formal and objective being of things, although conceptually exclusive, must be understood to have the very same reference. Just as the whole of objective nature is ontologically identical to (yet conceptually distinct from) the absolutely infinite intellect (see Chapter 2), so also the finite parts that constitute the whole of objective nature must be understood to be ontologically identical to, yet conceptually distinct from the infinite parts-with-a-vista that constitute the absolutely infinite intellect. This is all but surprising, as we have seen that the formal and objective being of things – whether it be of the whole of nature or of singular things that merely constitute the whole of nature – must be understood to be the two ways in which *pars melior nostri* is asserted (in EVp29s) to conceive the very same things (namely: insofar as the thing under scrutiny is conceived (i) under a species of eternity, and (ii) in relation to a certain time and place).

Having given an answer to the question that was captured under point (I) (and having shown that Spinoza's parallelism can be understood to be yet another expression of the *constructive function of the intellect*, harboring the trichotomy of objects, their horizontally parallel objective beings, and their vertically parallel formal beings), we can turn to point (II). Below I will provide an¹²³ answer to the question how God can be understood to know himself bottom-up (i.e. from effect to cause). However, before elucidating *how* this variant of divine self-knowledge can be understood, it may be instructive to first adduce a few passages that make it clear *that* Spinoza indeed fosters a bottom-up perspective that crosses the boundary

¹²³ I claim that I will provide 'an' answer because a more comprehensive answer will be given in the next chapter, which deals with Spinoza's claims concerning *adequate* knowledge

between *Natura naturata* and *Natura naturans*. I will provide five examples of statements from the *Ethics* that underpin this supposition.

Example 1: The definition of attribute

A first example of a passage that corroborates our claim that Spinoza puts forward a perspective that runs from (b) to (a) can be found in the notorious definition of ‘attribute’, which must be adduced once more:

By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence.¹²⁴
(*Per attributum intelligo id, quod intellectus de substantiâ percipit, tanquam ejusdem essentiam constituens*)

A lot has already been said concerning this important definition. The thing that must be stressed once more is that in EID⁴ Spinoza posits a conceptual operation with which the intellect (which is claimed (in EIp31) to be operative on the level of *Natura naturata*) attains knowledge of substance (which is claimed (in EIp29s) to be operative on the level of *Natura naturans*). So the conceptual operation that is forwarded in one of the most seminal definitions of the *Ethics* entails a conceptual operation that runs from (b) to (a).

Example 2: EIp11d

In the demonstration of EIp11, Spinoza gives various proofs for the existence of God. In the previous chapter we have seen that the first proof can be understood to underpin our claim concerning the conceptual distinction between the (a)- and the (c)-variant of the divine *res*.¹²⁵ That EIp11d also provides evidence for the observation that the *Ethics* harbors a bottom-up perspective that runs from level (b) to level (a) becomes clear in the third proof that is provided in this demonstration:

either nothing exists or an absolutely infinite Being also exists. But we exist [...]. Therefore an absolutely infinite Being – that is [...], God – necessarily exists, q.e.d.

¹²⁴ EID⁴, (I) 408.

¹²⁵ See section 3.7.

Schol.: In this last demonstration I wanted to show God's existence a posteriori, so that the demonstration would be perceived more easily – but not because God's existence does not follow a priori from the same foundation.¹²⁶

(ergo vel nihil existit, vel Ens absolutè infinitum necessariò etiam existit. Atqui nos [...] existimus [...]. Ergo ens absolutè infinitum, hoc est [...] Deus necessariò existit. Q. E. D.

SCHOLIUM. In hac ultimâ demonstratione Dei existentiam à posteriori ostendere volui, ut demonstratio faciliùs perciperetur; non autem propterea, quòd ex hoc eodem fundamento Dei existentia à priori non sequatur)

In this passage, Spinoza evidently makes use of an argument in which the boundary between the levels (b) and (a) is crossed. For he infers from the durational existence of modes (i.e. singular parts of the infinite modes of the attributes) – which clearly must be positioned at level (b) (see table 2 and 3) – that there is an absolutely infinite being (i.e. an absolutely indivisible substance) – at level (a). And although Spinoza's remark in EIp11s indicates that he agrees with Descartes that such a bottom-up argument is 'not so satisfactory as the other',¹²⁷ he evidently does make use of bottom-up reasoning in the adduced passage.

Example 3: EIIp1

This way of reasoning surfaces in EIIp1 and its demonstration too:

P1: Thought is an attribute of God, or God is a thinking thing

Dem: Singular thoughts [...] are modes which express God's nature in a certain and determinate way (by IP25C). Therefore (by ID5) there belongs to God an attribute whose concept all singular thoughts involve, and through which they are also conceived. Therefore, thought is one of God's infinite attributes, which expresses an eternal and infinite essence of God (see ID6), or God is a thinking thing, q.e.d.¹²⁸

(PROPOSITIO I. Cogitatio attributum Dei est, sive Deus est res cogitans.

DEMONSTRATIO. Singulares cogitationes, sive hæc, & illa cogitatio modi sunt, qui Dei naturam certo, & determinato modo exprimunt (per Coroll. Prop. 25. p. 1.). Competit ergo Deo (per Defin. 5. p. 1.) attributum, cujus conceptum singulares omnes cogitationes involvunt, per quod etiam concipiuntur. Est igitur Cogitatio unum ex infinitis Dei attributis, quod Dei æternam, & infinitam essentiam exprimit (vid. Defin. 6. p. 1.), sive Deus est res cogitans. Q. E. D.)

¹²⁶ EIp11-EIp11s, (I) 418.

¹²⁷ Descartes, *Reply to Objections II*, 49.

¹²⁸ EIIp1, (I) 448.

It cannot fail to escape our notice that in this demonstration, Spinoza again starts with singular thoughts. Although singular thoughts – i.e. ‘those things that flow from external causes’ as opposed to ‘substances that [...] can be produced by no external cause’¹²⁹ – must be considered to be caused by God, they nevertheless ‘come first’ in a certain respect. That is to say: it may be obvious that Spinoza takes God to be prior *in nature*, but the priority *in knowledge* (that is asserted in EIIp10s)¹³⁰ is somewhat less obvious in the quoted passage from EIIp1. Apparently, in this latter proposition Spinoza cannot do without the bottom-up perspective that starts with singular things (at level (b)) in order to reach the conclusion that there can be conceived to be a *res cogitans*. And as we have seen in section 3.6 that the intellect-dependent attributes of EID4 must be understood to have an ontological counterpart at *Natura naturans*, this implies that EIIp1 posits a conceptual operation that runs from (b) to (a). EIIp1 provides us with yet another indication that Spinoza fosters a conceptual commitment with respect to *Natura naturata*, a commitment that enables the intellect to achieve knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence.

Example 4: EIIp47

Consider EIIp47 and its demonstration:

P47: The human mind has an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence.

Dem.: The human Mind has ideas (by P22) from which it perceives (byP23) itself, (by P19) its own Body, and (by P16Cl and P17) external bodies as actually existing. And so (by P45 and P46) it has an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence, q.e.d.¹³¹

(PROPOSITIO XLVII. *Mens humana adequatam habet cognitionem æternæ, & infinitæ essentiæ Dei.*

DEMONSTRATIO. *Mens humana ideas habet (per Prop. 22. hujus), ex quibus (per Prop. 23. hujus) se, suumque Corpus (per Prop. 19. hujus), & (per Coroll. 1. Prop. 16. & per Prop. 17. hujus) corpora externa, ut actu existentia, percipit; adeoque (per Prop. 45. & 46. hujus) cognitionem æternæ, & infinitæ essentiæ Dei habet adequatam. Q. E. D.)*

This claim clearly posits the very same conceptual commitment with respect to singular ideas, a commitment that in turn is asserted to provide a way to adequate

¹²⁹ EIp11s, (I) 418.

¹³⁰ See the reference to this scholium in the introduction of this chapter.

¹³¹ EIIp47, (I) 482.

knowledge of God. According to Spinoza, the human mind has adequate knowledge of God's essence *because* it has ideas; in this demonstration singular ideas serve as the ground floor for knowledge of God's essence. Hence the perspective that is championed in the quoted passage can be understood (i) to be directed bottom-up, and (ii) to cross the boundary between *Natura naturata* and *Natura naturans*. In other words: this passage makes it abundantly clear that God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, does have cognitive access to his own essence.

Example 5: The dictates of reason

In part IV of the *Ethics*, Spinoza provides a series of propositions that are aimed at an elucidation of what he calls 'the dictates of reasons'.¹³² In these propositions (EIVp18s-EIVp37s) Spinoza clearly heralds a bottom-up perspective, which surfaces (inter alia) in the following claim in EIVp18s:

if we consider our Mind, our intellect would of course be more imperfect if the Mind were alone and did not understand anything except itself. There are, therefore, many *things outside us which are useful to us, and on that account to be sought* [emphasis added].¹³³

(*Et, si praeterea nostram Mentem spectemus, sanè noster intellectus imperfectior esset, si Mens sola esset, nec quicquam praeter se ipsam intelligeret. Multa igitur extra nos dantur, quae nobis utilia, quaeque propterea appetenda sunt*)

From this passage – and from various other passages from Spinoza's elucidation of the dictates of reason – it becomes clear once more that the perspective from which there must be conceived to be multiple finite things outside our mind provides a way to knowledge of God. Indeed:

The absolute virtue of the Mind, then, is understanding. But the greatest thing the Mind can understand is God.¹³⁴

(*Est igitur Mentis absoluta virtus intelligere. At summum, quod Mens intelligere potest, Deus est*)

Again, the conceptual commitment with respect to the whole of nature (at level (b)) can be understood to provide a way to knowledge of God (at level (a)).

¹³² EIVp18s, (I) 556.

¹³³ Ibidem, (I) 556.

¹³⁴ EIVp28d, (I) 560.

Having established *that* Spinoza can be understood to foster a bottom-up perspective that crosses the boundary between the conceptual levels (b) and (a), we can turn to the question *how* this proceeding functions precisely. With respect to the question how *pars melior nostri* is able to grasp the divine *res* adequately¹³⁵ (or, what is the same, how God is able to attain genuine self-knowledge by way of a human mind), it is crucial to acknowledge that we have actually already isolated the ingredients with which an answer can be provided. That is to say: the things we have uncovered concerning the structure of Spinoza's intellect provide us with a way to understand the variant of the bottom-up perspective that is the subject of the present section. Recall that with respect to *pars melior nostri* we have established the following:

- we conceive things as actual in two ways
- things can be conceived in their objective and in their formal being
- the formal being of things can be understood to be equally in the part and in the whole as these are parts-with-a-vista of its immediate infinite mode
- these parts-with-a-vista must in turn be understood to be contained ubiquitously as a formal essence in their attributes
- these parts-with-a-vista thus involve an eternal and infinite essence of God

These observations enable us to see how God can be understood to have cognitive access to his own essence via a human mind. Consider the following enumeration, in which it is shown how knowledge of a singular thing (*in casu*: a circle) enables God, (only)¹³⁶ insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, to gather knowledge of his own essence:

¹³⁵ In the next chapter we will see that grasping something *adequately* means grasping something in its *formal being*. So this makes it very clear that the adequate grasping of the divine *res* entails the having of knowledge of the (a)-variant of the divine being: God considered in itself, or God *qua* God.

¹³⁶ The term 'only' is added here because of a claim in EIIp11c that makes it clear that this 'only' is an important condition for the *adequacy* of an idea. In the enumeration (I)-(V) (see below) this 'only' is dropped because here the truth and adequacy of the idea that is staged in it (i.e. the idea of a circle) is already accounted for in the claim in EVp29s that 'we conceive things as actual in two ways'. More on the way in which EVp29s is related to EIIp11c, and hence on the way in which the 'adequacy' of ideas must be understood precisely, in the next chapter.

- (I) God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, conceives a circle in two ways.
- (II) God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, conceives a circle in its objective being (i.e. the idea of the circle) and in its formal being (i.e. the formal being of the idea of the circle).¹³⁷
- (III) This formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, is a part-with-a-vista of the absolutely infinite intellect.
- (IV) This formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, must in turn be understood to be the counterpart at *Natura naturata* of the formal essence of that circle that is contained ubiquitously in God as a *res cogitans* at *Natura naturans*
- (V) The formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, thus involves an eternal and infinite essence of God

From this we learn that (God, insofar as he is expressed in) a human mind indeed is able to grasp God's eternal and infinite essence by way of the bottom-up perspective. On the basis of the things we have seen in this and the previous chapters, we can conclude that according to Spinoza knowledge that starts with a part (i.e. with the objective being of a thing) provides a way to knowledge of an eternal and infinite essence of God. Or, as Spinoza states it himself in EIIp45: 'Each idea of each body, or of each singular thing which actually exists, necessarily involves an eternal and infinite essence of God.'¹³⁸ As already noted above, it is precisely this conceptual commitment to the parts of nature that accounts for the early-modern character of Spinoza's philosophy.

¹³⁷ As we are investigating the bottom-up perspective, this formal being surfaces here as the formal being of an idea (viz. as a *mode of thinking*), and not in its attribute-neutral guise. The same argument is applicable to the subsequent points.

¹³⁸ EIIp45, (I) 481 (*Unaquaeque cujuscunque corporis, vel rei singularis, actu existentis, idea Dei aeternam, & infinitam essentiam necessariò involvit*).

4.3.3.1 *An* essence or *the* essence?

Enumeration (I)-(IV) is not complete yet. One problem with it, is that it does not make it clear how the human mind is able to gather true and adequate knowledge of (say) a circle that actually exists under duration (i.e. how the *horizontal representation* of external things *in the human mind* functions precisely). As already noted, this important subject will be treated in the next chapter. First we have to address yet another problem. It is this: enumeration (I)-(IV) only shows how the human mind can be understood to have cognitive access to *an* eternal essence of God (*in casu*: God's thinking essence); we must still answer the question whether cognitive access to *an* eternal essence of God implies knowledge of *the* eternal essence of God. Now, our claims so far certainly suggest that this is the case. In section 4.2.3.1 it was asserted that 'the attributes must be understood to be ontologically and conceptually identical to the very infinite nature of [...] God *qua* God'. However, we must not proceed too quickly here. For with respect to this subject it is crucial to note that some eminent scholars have claimed that knowledge by way of singular ideas does *not* offer a way to knowledge of *the* eternal divine essence. Edwin Curley is a case in point. He stated that 'the idea [...] involves God's essence only insofar as that essence is expressed through the attribute under which the idea's object is conceived, not insofar as God's essence is expressed in infinitely many attributes'.¹³⁹ This claim is based on the following assertion by Martial Gueroult:¹⁴⁰

it is clear as daylight that each attribute does not through itself provide knowledge of the essence of the infinitely infinite substance, but only [of the essence] of a certain substance, that is to say: of one of the perfections by which God is constituted¹⁴¹

So Gueroult and Curley both hold that knowledge that takes off from a singular idea (say: of a circle) only involves *partial knowledge* of God's all-encompassing essence. Even though the thinking substance and the extended substance are

¹³⁹ EIIp45 note 68, (I) 481.

¹⁴⁰ Curley refers explicitly to the claim of Gueroult that will be treated shortly. Ibidem, (I) 481.

¹⁴¹ Gueroult, *Spinoza. Dieu*, 54 (*il résulte, clair comme le jour, que chaque attribut ne fait pas connaître par lui seul l'essence de la substance infiniment infinie, mais seulement celle d'une certaine substance, c'est-à-dire d'une des perfections dont Dieu est constitué*) [my translation JHH].

asserted by Spinoza to be ‘one and the same substance’ (in EIIp7s), these scholars suggest that the referential opacity that is applicable to modal contexts must be understood to be transferred to God’s absolute essence. On their reading Spinoza’s horizontal conceptual dualism¹⁴² (that is expressed in his claim in Letter 64 that the human animal has cognitive access to God’s essence via two attributes, and two attributes only)¹⁴³ must be understood to reach all the way up to substance itself.

Can these claims be upheld? Is it correct to state that knowledge of an idea only provides cognitive access to God’s *thinking* essence (and knowledge of a body only to God’s *extended* essence), and not to God’s essence *sui generis*? I think it is not. It can be shown that Gueroult *cum suis* ‘did not observe the proper order of Philosophizing’ as ‘they believe that the divine nature, which they should have contemplated before all else (because it is prior both in knowledge and in nature) is last in the order of knowledge, and that the things which are called objects of the senses are prior to all’.¹⁴⁴ The crucial point in this respect is that – as argued for in section 3.6 – in Spinoza’s philosophy the attributes can be understood in two ways: in their intellect-*dependent* and in their intellect-*independent* variant. Recognition of this important conceptual duality with respect to the term ‘attribute’ provides a way to understand the ‘conceived real distinction’¹⁴⁵ between the attributes, and the fact that from this conceived distinction ‘we still cannot infer that they constitute two beings, or two different substances’.¹⁴⁶ Below I will provide three arguments for the claim that according to Spinoza the conceptual distinction between the intellect-

¹⁴² This dualism of two attributes is called ‘horizontal’ as there is also a *vertical* conceptual dualism at work in Spinoza’s philosophy, namely between the (ontological) attributes and their (unspecified) infinite modes (and indeed between the formal and the objective being of singular things).

¹⁴³ Letter 64, (II) 438.

¹⁴⁴ EIIp10s, (I) 455 (*Cujus rei causam fuisse credo, quòd ordinem Philosophandi non tenuerint. Nam naturam divinam, quam ante omnia contemplari debebant, quia tam cognitione, quàm naturâ prior est, ordine cognitionis ultimam, & res, quæ sensuum objecta vocantur, omnibus priores esse crediderunt*).

¹⁴⁵ In EIp10s Spinoza claims that ‘two attributes may be conceived to be really distinct’. EIp10s, (I) 416 (*duo attributa realiter distincta concipiuntur*).

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem, (I) 416 (*non possumus tamen inde concludere, ipsa duo entia, sive duas diversas substantias constituere*). Here we encounter the very same contradiction Alan Donagan refers to when he claims that ‘we are now in a deadlock. On the one hand, it has been established that Wolfson was mistaken in denying that the divine attributes are really distinct [...]; on the other, Gueroult’s proposal has also been found wanting, that the divine attributes each constitute the essence of a distinct substance of one attribute, so that the essence of the divine substance is constituted by an infinity of essences of substances each infinite in its kind. Spinoza’s position is *both* that the divine attributes are really distinct, *and* that they each express the same essence’. Alan Donagan, ‘Essence and the Distinction of Attributes’, 62.

dependent attributes – that accounts for their causal and explanatory isolation at the level of *Natura naturata* – must be understood to dissolve into an absolute conceptual and ontological unity of the intellect-*independent* attributes at the level of *Natura naturans*. It will become clear that, as soon as the intellect-dependent attributes (which, as we saw in the previous chapter, must be located at the level of God (*c*)) are grasped as to their referential features, knowledge of the all-encompassing essence of God *qua* God (*a*) is attained.

Argument 1: God's true and adequate ideas

In EIIp32, Spinoza claims the following:

All ideas, insofar as they are related to God, are true.¹⁴⁷
(*Omnes ideae, quatenus ad Deum referuntur, verae sunt*)

And in the demonstration of EIIp36 he states this:

All ideas are in God (by IP15); and, insofar as they are related to God, are true (by P32), and (by P7C) adequate¹⁴⁸
(*Idea omnes in Deo sunt (per Prop. 15. p. 1.); & quatenus ad Deum referuntur, sunt verae (per Prop. 32. hujus), & (per Coroll. Prop. 7. hujus) adequatae*)

As all ideas in God are true and adequate, so also the idea of the circle that is had by God, only¹⁴⁹ insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, can be understood to be true and adequate. It can be understood as such as soon as the objective being of the circle is grasped under a species of eternity, i.e. if the idea of the circle is grasped in its formal being.¹⁵⁰ Now, the claims by Gueroult and Curley imply that the

¹⁴⁷ EIIp32, (I) 472.

¹⁴⁸ EIIp36d, (I), 474.

¹⁴⁹ See note 136.

¹⁵⁰ At this point it may be elucidative to remark that the close connection between the adequacy of an idea and its formal being surfaces clearly in the claim in EIIp36d. For indeed, it cannot escape our notice that in the corollary Spinoza refers to – EIIp7c – the very distinction is made (as we already saw above) between ‘whatever follows *formally* from God’s infinite nature’ and the same things that follow ‘*objectively* in God from his idea’ [emphasis added]. The exact way in which the adequacy of an idea must be understood, and the way in which the formal being of a circle can be understood to be adequate in the human mind will be elucidated in the next chapter.

adequate idea of the circle that is had by God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, only accounts for partial divine self-knowledge. On their reading, in the case of the example of the idea of the circle, God can be understood to have cognitive access only to his own thinking (insofar as the idea is considered in itself) and extended essence (insofar as the idea is considered as to its extended object). The access to his r-ed essence and to his essence *sui generis* is claimed to be barred. This is a surprising limit to ‘a Being absolutely infinite and supremely perfect’,¹⁵¹ the more so as several assertions in the *Ethics* claim the exact opposite. Consider the following clause in EVp30:

Insofar as our mind knows itself and its body under a species of eternity, it necessarily has knowledge of God¹⁵²

(Mens nostra, quatenus se, & Corpus sub æternitatis specie cognoscit, eatenus Dei cognitionem necessariò habet)

In the demonstration of this proposition the following is added:

to conceive things under a species of eternity [...] is to conceive things insofar as they are conceived through God’s essence [...].¹⁵³

(Res igitur sub specie æternitatis concipere, est res concipere, quatenus per Dei essentiam [...] concipiuntur)

Spinoza’s claim in EIIp46 is perhaps even clearer in this respect:

The knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence which each idea involves is adequate and perfect.¹⁵⁴

(Cognitio æternæ, & infinitæ essentiæ Dei, quam unaquæque idea involvit, est adæquata, & perfecta)

In these claims there is no indication at all that knowledge of mind and body by way of *pars melior nostri* (and hence God’s self-knowledge insofar as he is expressed in a human mind) leads to partial knowledge of God only. Knowledge of things under a species of eternity – i.e. knowledge of things in their formal being¹⁵⁵ – is

¹⁵¹ EIp11, (I), 417 (*Ente absolutè infinito, & summè perfecto*).

¹⁵² EVp30, (I) 610.

¹⁵³ EVp30d, (I) 610.

¹⁵⁴ EIIp46, (I) 482.

¹⁵⁵ In the next chapter we will see that the *adequacy* of ideas consists precisely in grasping the *formal being* of ideas. Another way of saying this is that in Spinoza’s philosophy there must be understood to be *two* variants of adequate knowledge: a *bottom-up* and a *top-down* variant (as we have shown that the formal being of ideas can be grasped in two ways). In Chapter 5 we will see (i) that Spinoza indeed distinguishes

claimed to entail ‘perfect’ knowledge of God’s essence. Surely, if it was Spinoza’s intention to assert that knowledge of mind and body leads to knowledge of God’s essence insofar as he is expressed in thought and extension only, he would have added this important restriction (and would have abstained from using the word ‘*perfecta*’).

We cannot fail to notice that the assertions in EIIp46 and EVp30, that must be understood to be strangely incomplete on the reading of Gueroult and Curley, say exactly what they are supposed to say on the present interpretation: knowledge of *an* eternal essence of God implies knowledge of *the* eternal essence of God. According to Spinoza, God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind (i.e. God (c)), has cognitive access to his own all-encompassing essence (i.e. God *qua* God (a)). And really: what else can we expect from a being that is claimed to be absolutely perfect and supreme, and that is asserted to have adequate and true ideas only?

Argument 2: Two attributes only?

Gueroult’s remarks concerning the (in my terms) merely partial self-knowledge of God are motivated by a problem that is real enough. It is the problem of the (apparent) infinity of the number of attributes, and the fact that the human mind is explicitly claimed (in Letter 64) to have access to only two of them: thought and extension.¹⁵⁶ This leads to the following question: if the adequate ideas in our intellect are nothing but adequate ideas of God himself, then how is it possible that we have cognitive access to two attributes only? Does not the fact that we are capable of ‘logging in’ to God’s adequate self-knowledge imply that we must be able to attain knowledge of each of the infinite attributes? And does not the fact that human knowledge of the remaining attributes is explicitly denied by Spinoza in Letter 64 imply that God’s self-knowledge by way of the human mind must thus be understood to be partial after all? As already noted, the problem that is addressed

two variants of adequate knowledge, and (ii) that these can be mapped on the two perspectives that were discerned in this chapter.

¹⁵⁶ I use the term ‘apparent’ because it is absolutely unclear how these remaining attributes must be understood. At the same time, Spinoza’s formulations in (inter alia) Letter 64 make it clear that there must be understood to be more attributes than thought and extension, even though the human mind is claimed to ‘involve’ and ‘express’ the latter two only. Letter 64, (II) 438.

by Gueroult is real enough. Moreover, it must be admitted that Spinoza's answers in Letters 64 and 66 to G.H. Schuller's and Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus's questions¹⁵⁷ about the very same subject are unconvincing, or hermetic at best.¹⁵⁸ Still, even though it is hard to find support for the present interpretation (nor, it must be added, for Gueroult's view) in the only passages in Spinoza's work in which the present problem is addressed explicitly, the remaining 'circumstantial' textual support is clearly in favour of an interpretation that upholds the claim that knowledge of a *certain* essence of substance implies knowledge of *the* essence of substance. In this respect it is crucial to note that any suggestion that God should be constituted by referentially opaque multiple essences defies the explicit claim in EI_p13 that 'a substance which is absolutely infinite is indivisible'.¹⁵⁹ It is hard to see how this assertion can be upheld while at the same time advancing a conception of substance that is constituted by multiple essences. True, Spinoza's definition of attribute (EID4) makes a suggestion in this latter direction; it is hard to deny that according to Spinoza the essence of substance can be perceived in (to put it conservatively) more than one way. But this does not imply that the perceived aspects of the essence of substance must be understood to have a *constituting function* at the level of God *qua* God. EID4 provides two clear indications that the implicit distinction between 'constituting' essences is *intellect-dependent* (and applicable to God (c)) and hence cannot be understood to be operative at the level of *Natura naturans* (God *qua* God (a)) insofar as this level can be inferred to exist

¹⁵⁷ Actually, they are all Tschirnhaus's questions, For as Schuller remarks in Letter 63, just before mentioning the problem concerning the knowledge of only two attributes: '[Mr. von Tschirnhaus] asked me repeatedly to propose a solution to the following doubts' ([*Tschirnhausen*] *me iterato rogans, ut sequentium dubiorum solutionem tibi proponerem*). Letter 63, (II) 426.

¹⁵⁸ In Letter 64 Spinoza says that 'the human Mind can achieve knowledge only of the things which the idea of an actually existing body involves' (*Mentem humanam illa tantummodò posse cognitione assequi, quæ idea corporis actu existentis involvit*). Letter 64, (II), 438. And in Letter 66, replying to Tschirnhaus's question in Letter 65, he claims: 'I say that although each thing is expressed in infinite ways in the infinite intellect of God, nevertheless those infinite ideas by which it is expressed cannot constitute one and the same Mind of a singular thing, but infinity many minds, since each of the infinite ideas has no connection with any other, as I've explained in the Scholium to E II P7, and as is evident from I P10.'. Letter 66, (II) 440-441 (*quòd quàmvis unaquæque res infinitis modis expressa sit in infinito Dei intellectu, illæ tamen infinitæ ideæ, quibus exprimitur, unam eandemque rei singularis Mentem constituere nequeunt; sed infinitas: quandoquidem unaquæque harum infinitarum idearum nullam connexionem cum invicem habent, ut in eodem Scholio Propositionis 7. Part. 2. Ethic. explicui, & ex Prop. 10. Part. 1. patet*). This answer is claimed to be 'hermetic' as it is not easy to see how EI_p10 and EI_p7 provide the answer to Tschirnhaus's question. See also note 163.

¹⁵⁹ EI_p13, (I) 420 (*Substantia absolute infinita est indivisibilis*).

absolutely outside the intellect. For in his notorious definition of ‘attribute’ Spinoza not only claims that an attribute is what the intellect *perceives* (instead of ‘conceives’), but moreover he adds that an attribute is what the intellect perceives *as* (*tamquam*) constituting an essence of substance. If it is acknowledged (i) that the verb ‘perceives’ indicates that this particular way of grasping substance is inferior to another (un-indicated) way of grasping the same thing (i.e. ‘conceiving’),¹⁶⁰ (ii) that the term ‘*tamquam*’ can also be read as ‘as if’, and (iii) that this very ‘as if’ refers to the verb ‘constituting’ (and not to the noun ‘essence’), we encounter an alternative way of understanding EID4, a reading that is completely in line with Spinoza’s other claims about God’s essence. For now we can provide the following comprehensive definition of ‘attribute’, a definition in which both the ontological and the conceptual variants of ‘attribute’ are captured:

An attribute is (i) what expresses a certain essence of substance, and (ii) what the (infinite) intellect grasps bottom-up of a substance as if this certain essence is constituting the all-encompassing essence of substance

Indeed, even though each attribute expresses a certain essence of substance (by EIp10s) that must be understood to have an ontological status at *Natura naturans* (by EIp29s), and even though the perceiving of this essence by way of our intellect – i.e. bottom-up from *Natura naturata* – suggests that substance is thus *constituted* by the infinite attributes, the relation between substance and its attributes can in no way be understood to be a relation of parts and wholes. Rather, it is clear that according to Spinoza the very *horizontal conceptual duality* between the intellect-*dependent* attributes that is recognizable at the level of *Natura naturata* must be understood to be grounded in an *absolute extra-intellectual unity* of the intellect-independent attributes at the level of *Natura naturans*, somewhat in the same way the distinct manifestations ‘thunder’ and ‘lightning’ can be understood to be expressions of one phenomenon (or ‘milk’ and ‘water’ can both be understood to be contained in a fluid-neutral glass).

¹⁶⁰ In the Explication of EIID3, Spinoza says that ‘the word perception seems to indicate that the Mind is acted on by the object. But concept seems to express an action of the Mind’. EIID3, (I) 447 (*quia perceptionis nomen indicare videtur, Mentem ab objecto pati. At conceptus actionem Mentis exprimere videtur*).

This point can be elucidated further adducing an argument that was used in section 3.6. Consider the following table once more:

<i>Natura naturans</i>	{	(a) Substance <i>qua</i> substance	↓ intrinsically causing	}	(ct) Thinking substance
<i>Natura naturata</i>	{	(bt) The infinite intellect			

(table 6)

The thing to recall with respect to this table is that (ct) can only be called *thinking* substance when the infinite intellect is *produced by* (a). The very thinking essence that is expressed objectively in (bt) (by the Principle of Plenitude EIp16), and that comes to light conceptually (or intellect-dependently) in (ct) (by EID4), must be understood to be rooted ontologically in (a). As already noted in section 3.6, this is completely in line with Spinoza’s claim that ‘God’s power is God’s essence itself’.¹⁶¹ Spinoza’s God is absolutely omnipotent because ‘everything which can fall under an infinite intellect’ (bt) follows from the necessity of God’s essence (a). It is also precisely because of this that Spinoza is able to state in EIIp7c that ‘God’s power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting’:¹⁶² the divine essence that can be grasped intellectually via an attribute (*in casu*: thought) must be understood to be absolutely identical to the extra-intellectual divine essence *sui generis*.

There is yet another way of showing this. Consider the following tables:

(a) Electrical discharge	expressed in	}	(c) Lightning
(b) Light waves			

(table 7)

Or:

(a) Glass	containing	}	(c) Glass of milk
(b) Milk			

(table 8)

Or:

¹⁶¹ EIp34, (I) 439 (*Dei potentia est ipsa ipsius essentia*).

¹⁶² EIIp7c, (I) 451 (*Dei cogitandi potentia aequalis est ipsius actuali agendi potentiae*).

(a) The third patriarch	}	(c) Jacob
In his capacity of		
(b) The person who was so-called because he seized his brother's heel		(table 9)

Now, with respect to these tables the following is noteworthy:

- as soon as someone acquires knowledge of a violent electrical discharge *insofar as it is an electrical discharge* by way of a study of the lightning that is an expression of it, one has acquired knowledge of the underlying phenomenon (a) *sui generis* (and not only of this discharge insofar as it is expressed in lightning (c))
- as soon as one has acquired knowledge about a glass *insofar as it is a glass* by way of an investigation of a glass that contained milk, one has acquired knowledge of a glass (a) *sui generis* (and not only of a glass insofar as it contains milk (c)).
- as soon as one establishes that (say) Jacob was buried in the cave of Machpelah, one has also acquired knowledge about the burial place of the third patriarch insofar as he is referred to by any other name (and not only of the burial place of the third patriarch insofar as he is called 'Jacob').

Furthermore it must be noted that knowledge of an electrical discharge, a glass or the third patriarch via the proposed bottom-up route does imply nor require that the knowing agent has acquired knowledge of respectively all (c)-manifestations of the electrical discharge, all the infinitely many fluids that can be understood to be contained in the glass, and all the names that can be used in order to designate the third patriarch. Now, the very same appears to apply to Spinoza's view on the relation between substance and its attributes: as soon as adequate knowledge is acquired by way of the intellect-dependent attribute of thought (ct), one has also acquired knowledge concerning God's essence *sui generis* (a), without the necessary implication that knowledge of this all-encompassing essence at level (a) entails knowledge of all the aspects of this essence that must be understood to be somehow

conceivable with an intellect. Admittedly, this solution is not as strong as one may wish for.¹⁶³ But at the same time it seems to be the only way in which Spinoza's statements in Letter 64 and 66 can be squared with his explicit claim in EIp12 and EIp13 that a substance is indivisible, whilst at the same time upholding the assertion in EIIP47 that 'the human mind has an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence'. With respect to this latter contention it must be added that, if Spinoza would have intended to make it clear that the human mind must be understood to have knowledge of certain constitutive aspects of God's eternal and infinite essence only, then surely he would have added this important restriction here. But again, this addition lacks. On the basis of the comprehensive rendering of EID4 it is clear why: Spinoza does not need to add the restriction as in the context of his philosophy the knowledge of *an* eternal essence of God (c) implies knowledge of *the* eternal essence of God *qua* God (a).

¹⁶³ It seems that the problem is rooted in the notorious EID4. Spinoza's choice to render the definition of attributes in *conceptual* terms (i.e. in terms of 'what the intellect perceives) – a choice that appears to be inspired by his need to combine a medieval top-down perspective with the very bottom-up perspective that is the subject of this chapter, and of which (as we saw above) EID4 can be understood to be an important expression – provides him with the problem that the remaining attributes (i.e. the attributes apart from thought and extension) seem to fall without the scope of EID4. For even though these remaining attributes must be understood to be ontological aspects of substance, it seems that they cannot be perceived by an intellect. Spinoza's hermetic solution to this problem in Letter 66 to Tschirnhaus is hardly illuminating. He states here that 'although each thing is expressed in infinite ways in the infinite intellect of God, nevertheless those infinite ideas by which it is expressed cannot constitute one and the same Mind of a singular thing, but infinitely many minds, since each of the infinite ideas has no connection with any other, as I've explained in the Scholium to EIIP7, and as is evident from IP10'. Letter 66, (II) 440-441 (*quòd quàmvis unaquæque res infinitis modis expressa sit in infinito Dei intellectu, illæ tamen infinitæ ideæ, quibus exprimitur, unam eandemque rei singularis Mentem constituere nequeunt; sed infinitas: quandoquidem unaquæque harum infinitarum idearum nullam connexionem cum invicem habent, ut in eodem Scholio Propositionis 7. Part. 2. Ethic. explicui, & ex Prop. 10. Part. 1. patet*). It is hard to see how the mentioned passages can be understood to corroborate the claim that in nature there must (apparently) be infinitely many parallel minds that (apparently) each have access to one of the remaining attributes. For the only thing that Spinoza asserts in EIp10 and EIIP7s is that (i) attributes must be conceived through themselves, (ii) that we must suppose one and the same connection of causes in any of the attributes. However, in these passages little is said concerning the representational nature of thought and the way it provides cognitive access to the other attributes. And it is precisely this that Tschirnhaus's (and indeed our) question demands.

Argument 3: Absolute unity

Gueroult and Curly hold that Spinoza's horizontal conceptual dualism between thought and extension must be understood to reach all the way up to the essence of substance itself. Just as an idea (at *Natura naturata*) must be conceived to be conceptually distinct from (even though ontologically identical to) its body, so also (Gueroult and Curley claim) thinking substance (which they both locate at *Natura naturans*)¹⁶⁴ is conceptually distinct from (even though ontologically identical to) extended and r-ed substance. We have already provided two arguments that suggest that this is not a correct way of understanding the structure of Spinoza's metaphysics. But there is yet another way of showing that the suggested variant of referential opacity cannot be understood to be operative at the level of *Natura naturans* (a). In this respect it is important to note that we have shown above that the horizontal distinction between an idea and its body *is an implication of the vertical distinction between the objective and the formal being of the thing under scrutiny*. Indeed, concerning Spinoza's important parallelism claim in EIIp7 we have established that the idea of (say) a circle and the extended circle itself can be understood to be the very same thing because they must both be conceived to be finite expressions in their own attribute of their attribute-neutral formal being (see section 4.2.3.1). Now, with respect to the claim of Gueroult *cum suis* it is crucial to note that the horizontal conceptual distinction between thinking, extended and r-ed substance can only be made if there is also asserted a vertical conceptual distinction between these infinitely many *certain essences* and the *all-encompassing essence* of God. That is to say: the horizontal distinction can only be made when apart from the formal being of an attribute (say: of thought), a prior layer of the divine *res* is posited. If two concepts are claimed to be ontologically identical, then the absolute ontological identity of the thing these concepts refer to – and hence a conceptual layer that is prior to the conceptual duality under scrutiny– is posited *eo ipso*. To be sure, Gueroult made the same observation; he makes the distinction between 'a certain substance' and a prior 'infinitely infinite substance'.¹⁶⁵ In this sense his interpretation runs parallel with the present one, as we have also made a conceptual distinction between God and God *qua* God. However, as Gueroult does

¹⁶⁴ More on this shortly.

¹⁶⁵ See note 141.

not distinguish between the two concepts of God that were uncovered in Chapter 3, his position must be understood to entail that the horizontal and vertical duality are operative at the level of God's absolute essence, i.e. *at the level of God qua God (a)*. Yet, it has become clear in the previous chapter that a prior – or eminent – layer of the divine *res* at level (a) goes against anything Spinoza is willing to admit. In section 3.5 we have seen that God's essence (a) must be understood to be an absolute unity that is self-causing as a one place predicate. Anyone who would claim on the basis of the multiplicity in nature that God's essence is constituted by multiple essences¹⁶⁶ turns nature upside down. From what we have seen in the previous chapters, it is clear that God's infinite power of thinking at level (a) must be understood to differ from our intellect precisely in the fact that there is *no duality whatsoever* (i.e. neither vertical nor horizontal) that can be attributed to it; whereas the intellect, whether finite or infinite, is at most simultaneous with the things understood, in God *qua* God (a) thought, extension and r must be understood to be absolutely identical.

*

On the present interpretation the horizontal distinction between the attributes is safeguarded without the unwelcome implication that God must be understood to be *constituted* by infinitely many essences. That is to say: as we have shown that Spinoza distinguishes between two concepts of God, we can see how he is able to state that God's essence admits of no duality or multiplicity whatsoever, while at the same time upholding that God can be perceived to be constituted by his attributes. The distinction between God *qua* God (a) and God (c) safeguards that the intellect-dependent variant of God (c) can be conceived to express the vertical coalescence of God's absolute essence (a) and the infinite modes that follow from this essence (b). Another way of saying this is that the very conceptual distinction

¹⁶⁶ As must be clear from the present context, the 'multiple essences' that we speak of here are the essences that are intellectually expressed in the infinite attributes, i.e. God's absolute thinking, extended and r-ed essence. To be sure, our interpretation implies that there is yet *another category of essences* that must be understood to be operative at the level of *Natura naturans*: the formal essences of the infinitely many things that follow from the necessity of the divine nature. As these formal essences of things were shown to be *contained pervasively in the attributes*, the absolute unity of substance is also not threatened by this particular multiplicity of essences.

between God *qua* God (a) and God (c) accounts for the fact that our intellect can at the same time be understood to be a *part* of a divine intellect (namely of the infinite intellect of God (c) that surfaces in (inter alia) EIIp11c), and to be *fundamentally different* from a divine ‘intellect’ (namely from the absolute thinking essence of God *qua* God (a) that surfaces in EIp17s). With respect to this important observation it may be informative to add that both Gueroult and Curley team up with Alexandre Koyré (see Chapter 1) and claim that ‘God’s intellect’ (EIp17s) and our intellect do not stand to each other like a constellation of stars and a barking animal. As already noted before, this assertion is understandable. For *prima facie* it is hard to see how Spinoza is able to claim that ‘God’s intellect’ and our intellect have nothing in common with each other, whilst at the same time holding that our intellect is part of the infinite intellect of God. However, this apparent contradiction is solved once it is acknowledged that, whereas the term ‘God’s intellect’ insofar as it is conceived to refer to the coalescent thinking substance (c) certainly *has a close connection with our intellect* (as our intellect is a part of the infinite intellect that must be understood to be a coalescent aspect of God (c)), ‘God’s intellect’ insofar as it refers to God’s absolute thinking essence (a) – as is conditionally proposed in EIp17s – is *fundamentally different from our intellect*. The problem that Gueroult encounters finds its root in the fact that he does not distinguish between the two concepts of ‘God’ (and hence between the intellect-dependent and the intellect-independent variants of God’s attributes) that can be detected in the *Ethics*. Gueroult *cum suis* erroneously transfer the intellect-dependent duality between thought and extension (or in terms of EIp10s: the real distinction of the attributes that finds its ground in the fact that one can ‘be conceived without the aid of the other’)¹⁶⁷ from God (c) to God *qua* God (a).¹⁶⁸ Yet, this operation finds no warrant in Spinoza’s work. For Spinoza makes it very clear that anyone who would claim that, because our intellect is characterized by a duality, so also God’s infinite power of thinking must be understood to be characterized by a prior – or eminent – duality (that can account for a horizontal or

¹⁶⁷ EIp10s, (I) 416. Remark that the ‘real distinction’ is staged in terms of ‘conception’, which indeed suggests that the real distinction takes place (and takes place only) insofar as substance appears in it coalescent variant.

¹⁶⁸ Or as Alan Donagan stated it: ‘[Gueroult] has overlooked that if there is only one causal act by which all the attributes of God exist, then there is only one essence which involves their existence’. Donagan, ‘Essence and the Distinction of Attributes’, 61.

vertical duality at level (a)), reasons in exactly the same way a triangle would reason when it would claim that God must be understood to be characterized by a prior – or eminent – layer of triangularity. Anyone who transfers the conceptual commitment with respect to the infinite intellect at level (b) to God’s absolute thinking essence (a), ‘did not observe the proper order of Philosophizing’.¹⁶⁹ For whereas the ‘objects of the senses’¹⁷⁰ are grasped at most ‘simultaneous with the things understood’, God’s essence – encompassing *absolute thought* – must be understood as an absolute unity. To Spinoza, this is as clear as the fact that stars do not bark.

4.3.3.2 Extra-intellectual?

Above I aimed to show that God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, has cognitive access to his own essence *sui generis*. I have provided various arguments for the claim that this bottom-up perspective that crosses the boundary between *Natura naturata* and *Natura naturans* must indeed be understood to play an important role in Spinoza’s mature philosophy. To be sure, we are not there yet. There still appears to be one important lacuna with respect to the present interpretation. It is the tension between the absolute extra-intellectual status of God’s essence (a) that was argued for in the previous chapter, and the present claim that the human mind has cognitive access to *the* eternal and infinite essence of God. Indeed: how can our claim from Chapter 3 that God *qua* God (a) is *outside the reach of the intellect* be squared with the assertions in the present section? Does not the claim that the human mind has cognitive access to God *qua* God (a) imply that God *qua* God is not absolutely extra-intellectual?

The first way to corroborate our claim that God *qua* God, even though this variant of the divine being must be understood to exist and be self-conceiving absolutely outside the intellect, can still be understood to come within the scope of the intellect in the way we commonly understand it, is by stressing that it is (i) the *conceptual direction* and (ii) the *conceptual structure* that dictates whether knowledge can be understood to be knowledge of an intellect or not. With respect to the

¹⁶⁹ EIIp10s, (I) 455 (*ordinem Philosophandi non tenuerint*).

¹⁷⁰ Ibidem, (I) 455 (*sensuum objecta*).

absolute self-conception of God *qua* God (a) that was elucidated in Chapter 3, we can establish the following:

- (i) the absolute self-knowledge of God *qua* God (a) was shown to take place entirely at level (a) and hence to (somehow) proceed *from level (a) to level (a)* (i.e. to *cause a cause qua cause*). This makes it clear that the conceptual (and causal) direction is different from the variant of the divine self-knowledge that was elucidated above. For this bottom-up variant of God's self-knowledge was shown to proceed from *level (b)* to level (a);
- (ii) it was shown that the self-knowledge of God *qua* God (a) cannot in any way be understood to be bifurcated in the way the knowledge of an intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) is. This makes it clear that the conceptual structure of the absolute extra-intellectual self-knowledge differs from our bottom-up knowledge of God in the same way a constellation of stars differs from a barking dog.

These two points make it clear that God *qua* God can be understood to come within the reach of the intellect, without the implication that the bottom-up perspective entails absolute extra-intellectual self-knowledge of the divine *res*. For it is clear now that, even though the bottom-up perspective entails cognitive access to *the* eternal essence of God *qua* God, it has (i) the wrong conceptual direction and (ii) the wrong conceptual structure to count as God's absolute self-knowledge (or 'absolute thought'). Another way of saying this that the bottom-up perspective accounts for self-knowledge of God (c), *not* for self-knowledge of God *qua* God (a).

There is a second way of corroborating the claim that the extra-intellectual character of the absolute self-knowledge of the divine *res* can be squared with the claim that it is possible to gather knowledge of this variant of God. In this respect it is crucial to note that insofar as God's essence is grasped with an intellect – and hence insofar as the divine thing that is contained objectively in the intellect is understood to be necessarily in nature (to paraphrase a claim from EIp30d) – the divine essence is known *insofar as it is mediated by the intellect that grasps it*. Now of course, this very divine essence must also be understood to exist *apart from any intellectual operation*; if this would not be the case, the objective knowledge of this

essence would have to count as ‘a conclusion without a premise’,¹⁷¹ which is absurd on the basis of the claim from EI_p30d. A substance can only be grasped with an intellect – and hence fall apart conceptually in a formal and an objective aspect – if this substance also exists absolutely outside the intellect, i.e. in a realm *where the distinction between its formal and objective being is absolutely senseless*. In short: God’s essence as it is absolutely in itself must be understood to ‘escape’ the intellect; it is essentially impossible to use the intellect to grasp something in its absolute extra-intellectual status. Indeed, God’s essence, which surfaces objectively as the infinite intellect, and formally as the (ontological variant of the) attribute of thought, must be understood to ‘exist’ in itself absolutely extra-intellectually. This of course is precisely the point that was already made in Chapter 3.

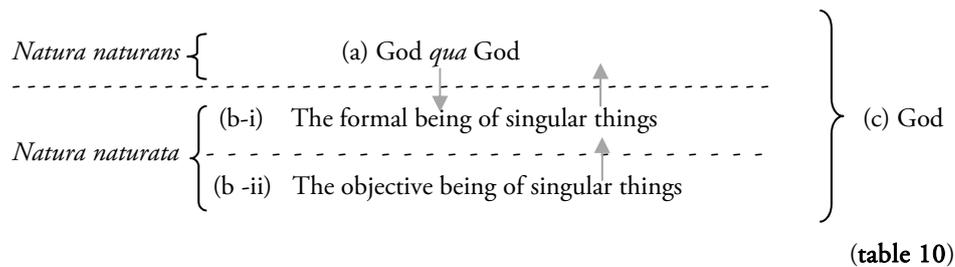
Having elucidated this last important subject, we can conclude that when God (insofar as he is expressed in a human mind) has objective knowledge of a thing, he has cognitive access to his own essence; knowledge of *an* eternal and infinite essence of God (c) (starting from an idea (b-ii), via the formal being of that idea (b-i), reaching knowledge of the formal essence of that idea (a)) implies knowledge of *the* eternal and infinite essence of God (a). Given what we have seen above, we can enhance points (IV) and (V) in the following way:

- (IV') This formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, must in turn be understood to be the counterpart at *Natura naturata* of the formal essence of that circle, which is contained ubiquitously in God sui generis at *Natura naturans*
- (V') The formal being of the idea of a circle, which is in God (c) insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, thus expresses *the* eternal and infinite essence of God *qua* God (a)

God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, has *bottom-up cognitive access* to his own essence.

¹⁷¹ This clause is inspired by Spinoza’s claim in EI_{II}p28d that ‘ideas of the affections, insofar as they are related only to the human mind, are like conclusions without premises’. EI_{II}p28d, (I) 470 (*Sunt ergo hæ affectionum ideae, quatenus ad solam humanam Mentem referuntur, veluti consequentiæ absque præmissis*).

Now that it has become clear that Spinoza not only fosters a variant of bottom-up knowledge that halts at *Natura naturata*, but that the conceptual operation in table 3 can genuinely be called (bottom up) self-knowledge of God (c) (as God (c) encompasses the knowledge with which (b) conceives (a)),¹⁷² we can provide the following comprehensive rendering of the structure of the self-knowledge of God (c):¹⁷³



This table expresses the very way in which Spinoza can be understood to depart from the medieval philosophical tradition, whilst at the same time upholding the medieval view of the absolute priority of God. With the perspective that surfaces in (inter alia) EIIp7s and EIIp21, Spinoza provides a way for attaining true self-knowledge of God – and hence of nature – via the level of modes. The bottom-up perspective in the way uncovered in this chapter must be understood to be a highly idiosyncratic expression of the (early) modern scientific character of Spinoza’s philosophy. Spinoza’s claim that God and nature refer to the very same thing, combined with his assertion – elucidated in this chapter – that it is possible to acquire true knowledge of *Deus sive Natura* by investigating the objective being of singular things, differs considerably from the claims of his medieval predecessors (and contemporary opponents), and provides a philosophical basis for a scientific view of nature. To be sure, this is not to say that Spinoza’s philosophy is devoid of medieval aspects. Quite the opposite. Table 10 clearly shows that Spinoza also upholds a certain ‘medieval perspective’ from which God is prior to the things that follow from him. It is important to note that these two perspectives correspond

¹⁷² Remark that this claim concerning God (c)’s *bottom-up* self-conception mirrors the claim from section 3.4.1 concerning his *top-down* self-causation as a two-place predicate. There we have said that (c) is the cause of itself as (a) causes (b). In this section we claim that (c) conceives itself as (b) conceives (a).

¹⁷³ The extra-intellectual self-knowledge of God (a) that must be understood to *proceed from (a) to (a)*, is not captured in this table, not only because it is very hard to find a proper way to render this particular variant of God’s self-knowledge, but also because in this study we are primarily interested in the knowledge of the intellect.

with the two kinds of adequate knowledge that Spinoza discerns. Indeed, perhaps the best argument for the claim that he distinguishes two variants of God's self-knowledge has not been provided yet. It is the fact that in the important second scholium of EIIp40 Spinoza forwards two kinds of adequate knowledge that can be had by our intellect (and hence by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind): reason (*ratio*) and intuitive knowledge (*scientia intuitiva*). In the next chapter it will become clear that the two perspectives referred to in this chapter must be understood to express these two variants of knowing things adequately.

4.4 Conclusion

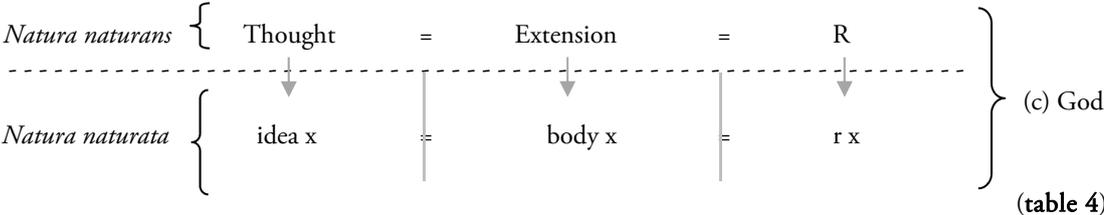
Spinoza occupies an intriguing position in the history of philosophy. For on the one hand this 'God-intoxicated man' champions a medieval way of understanding the causal generation of nature: according to Spinoza the whole of nature can be understood to be *created by God*; considered *realiter*, God is prior to everything that follows from him. Yet on the other hand the 'righteous atheist' fosters a perspective from which the all-encompassing totality of modes that constitute God's creation are (i) identical with God, (ii) conceptually prior to God, and (iii) offer a way to gather knowledge of God's essence. This chapter was aimed at elucidating this latter early modern perspective as well as the way in which it is related to the medieval thread that can be discerned in Spinoza's philosophy. Whereas the previous chapters dealt mainly with the way *omnes res* must be understood to *follow from (and to inhere in) God*, in the present chapter we have seen how the *top-down* causal (and conceptual) perspective can be understood to be teamed up with a *bottom-up* conceptual (and causal) stance.

The scrutiny of this bottom-up perspective was invoked by way of an analysis of one of the central tenets of Spinoza's metaphysics: his so called 'parallelism thesis, which surfaces in EIIp7. This proposition reads thus:

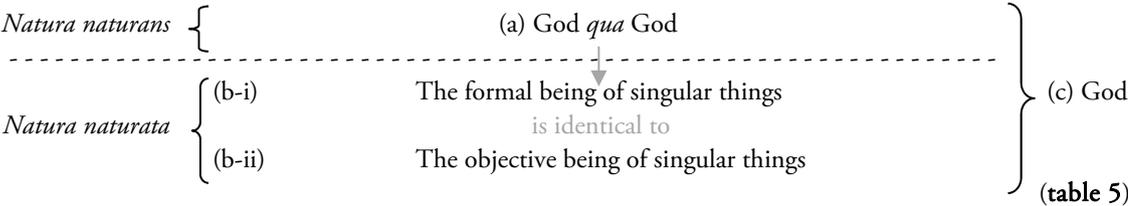
The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.¹⁷⁴
(*Ordo, & connexio idearum idem est, ac ordo, & connexio rerum*)

¹⁷⁴ EIIp7, (I) 451.

This claim is generally understood to posit an identity relation between things conceived under the attribute of thought, and things conceived under the attribute of extension. In Spinoza’s own words: ‘a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways’.¹⁷⁵ This can be rendered schematically in the following way:



In this chapter it has become clear that this rendering of the *horizontal numerical identity* of ideas and bodies (and r’s) does justice to Spinoza’s claims in the *Ethics*. Various passages underpin the claim that *horizontal inter-attribute* parallelism is endorsed by Spinoza. Yet, we have seen that EIIp7 entails something more. A scrutiny of EIIp7 and its connection with an alternative parallelism claim in EIIp21 and its scholium taught us that the horizontal parallelism of table 4 is to be seen as a mere implication of the comprehensive *vertical* parallelism claim that surfaces in the following rendering:



The assertion in EIIp21 that the ‘idea [in God] of the [human] mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind is united to the human body’,¹⁷⁶ and the explication in EIIp21s that ‘the idea of the mind and the mind itself are *one and the same thing*, which is conceived *under one and the same attribute*, namely, thought’¹⁷⁷ led us to the observation that the *horizontal inter-attribute* and *vertical* parallelism must be understood to be manifestations of the very same *transitive parallelism*.

¹⁷⁵ EIIp7s, (I) 451 (*modus extensionis, & idea illius modi una, eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa*).
¹⁷⁶ EIIp21, (I) 467 (*Hæc Mentis idea eodem modo unita est Menti, ac ipsa Mens unita est Corpori*).
¹⁷⁷ EIIp21s, (I) 467 (*quare Mentis idea, & ipsa Mens una, eademque est res, quæ sub uno, eodemque attributo, nempe Cogitationis, concipitur*).

Indeed, a scrutiny of some key passages in the *Ethics* led us to the following comprehensive formulation of the parallelism claim of EIIp7:

the order and connection of the objective being of things (b-ii) is the same as the order and connection of the formal being of things (b-i).

The relation between the ‘horizontal’ (i.e. operating at *the same* conceptual level) and the ‘vertical’ (i.e. operating at *different* conceptual levels) aspects of Spinoza’s parallelism claim can be formulated succinctly in the following way:

A singular idea and its parallel mode (or object) under extension both are finite and durational expressions (b-ii) in their own attribute of the very same eternal formal being (b-i).

Just as a bolt of lightning and the accompanying thunder are one and the same thing insofar as they both are manifestations of one and the same phenomenon, so also a man and the idea of that man are the same thing insofar as they both are finite expressions of the very same formal being. In other words: because the formal and objective being of a thing is (vertically) identical *under the same attribute* (table 5), the objective expression of that same thing is (horizontally) identical *under different attributes* (table 4). Vertical parallelism encompasses horizontal parallelism.

To be sure, it became clear that this horizontal parallelism is not only recognizable in an *inter-attribute* variant, but also in an *intra-attribute* variant. For the following claim can be made as well:

an idea and its parallel mode (or object) under the same attribute (i.e. the i d e a i d e a e) both are finite and durational expressions (b-ii) in their own attribute of the very same eternal formal being (b-i).

And hence it became clear that Spinoza’s transitive parallelism manifests itself in three conceptually distinct ways:

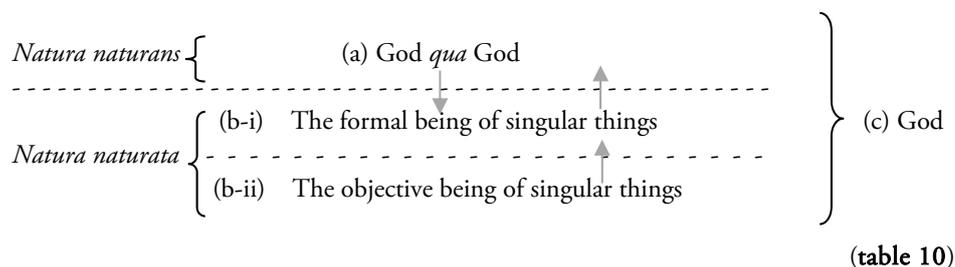
- as *vertical parallelism*, that is: as the identity of the infinite and eternal formal and the finite and durational objective being of things

- as *horizontal inter-attribute* parallelism, that is: as the identity of finite and durational ideas and their finite and durational objects in other attributes
- as *horizontal intra-attribute* parallelism, that is: as the identity of finite and durational ideas and their finite and durational objects in the same attribute

This latter variant of intra-attribute parallelism is based on the *bottom-up perspective* that was discerned in Spinoza's philosophy. The thing to note in this respect is that we turned to an investigation of Spinoza's parallelism claim because we were interested in the precise relation between the formal (b-i) and the objective (b-ii) being of things. Now, a scrutiny of this relation has not only given us insight in the way Spinoza's parallelism thesis must be understood, but has also taught us more about the relation between the formal (b-i) and the objective (b-ii) being of things. In this respect a claim in EIIp7s can hardly be overestimated. In this important scholium, Spinoza asserts that *(b-ii) serves as the proximate cause for (b-i)*. In EIIp7s – in which we can also find the most explicit formulation of Spinoza's horizontal inter-attribute parallelism – we encounter the remarkable claim that 'the formal being of the idea of the circle can be perceived only through another mode of thinking, as its proximate cause'. And this in turn makes it clear that a bottom-up perspective, that is: a *perspective from which the objective being of things serves as the ground floor*, must be understood to form an integral part of Spinoza's metaphysics. That the surprising assertion in EIIp7s cannot be understood to be 'a slip of the pen' becomes clear once it is acknowledged that the bottom-up perspective is recognizable in various other passages in the *Ethics* also, including the very scholium in which the most evident manifestation of Spinoza's vertical and horizontal intra-attribute parallelism can be found: EIIp21s. The claim that 'as soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows it, and at the same time knows that he knows that he knows it, and so on, to infinity' is one of the most evident claims in the *Ethics* in which a thing that is grasped objectively is portrayed to serve as the ground floor for the *idea of that idea* (which by EIIp21s is nothing but the *form* of that idea), which in turn serves as the basis for the *idea of the idea of that idea* (which is nothing but the *form* of the idea of the idea), and so on, to infinity.

Yet another way of saying this is that the perspective that came to light in the previous chapters – from which the whole is in a certain sense prior to the parts –

must be understood to be combined with a perspective from which the parts are conceptually prior to the whole they constitute. That is to say: the top-down perspective treated the previous chapters is accompanied by a bottom-up perspective. Recognition of this bottom-up perspective in the *Ethics* in turn enables us to solve a problem that was brought up in the concluding section of the previous chapter. Recall that in section 3.8 we have stated that the fact that we are able to attain knowledge of God’s essence (i.e. the eternal and infinite power of acting that must be positioned at *Natura naturans*) – by way of our intellect (i.e. an expression of this power which must be positioned at *Natura naturata*), implies that God’s self-knowledge insofar as God is expressed in a human mind (i.e. in the objective being of a human body) must be understood to be directed bottom-up. In this chapter we have seen that this way of understanding the causal and conceptual flow can be validated. Apart from the reasoning *from cause to effect* (i.e. from (a) to (b)), Spinoza also discerns a conceptual direction *from effect to cause* (i.e. from (b) to (a)). This cognitive access of (God, insofar as he is expressed in) a human mind to the essence of the divine *res* can be rendered thus:



This table makes it clear that Spinoza can be called “the last of the mediaevals” – namely insofar as he propagates a top-down perspective – whilst at the same time forwarding an early modern conception – namely insofar as the identification of God and nature is claimed to offer the human mind bottom-up cognitive access to God’s essence by way of a study of the whole of nature. In this way, Spinoza’s ‘righteous atheism’ can indeed be understood to be ‘God-intoxicated’.

4.4.1 *Pars melior nostri*

In the previous chapters we have made considerable progress in determining how *pars melior nostri* must be understood in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy. So far

we were able to make the following claims with respect to the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it):

- The intellect is a *mode*
- The intellect can be conceived to be *a part of the infinite mode of thought*
- The intellect is by nature either posterior to or simultaneous with the things understood, which in turn implies that the intellect is *characterized by a conceptual duality*
- The intellect is characterized by a conceptual distinction in the following way: our intellect grasps things either insofar as it conceives them to exist as *extrinsically caused finite modes* (i.e. in their *objective being under duration, representing their durational objects*), or insofar it conceives them as *intrinsically caused infinite modes* (i.e. *considered in themselves, in their eternal formal being*).
- This distinction entails yet another distinction, which accounts for a certain *trichotomy*: the distinction between the durational *object* of an idea, the *objective being* of this object (i.e. the *idea* of the object), and the *formal being* of this idea.
- The things that function in this structure must in turn be understood to have an ubiquitous counterpart that must be located *absolutely outside the intellect*: the *formal essences of things*.
- The intellect is a coalescent feature of God (c)

In the present chapter we have focused some more on the precise relation between the two aspects that must be understood to be characteristic for the ideas that constitute the intellect (whether finite or infinite): the formal and the objective being of things. In this respect it has become clear that Spinoza's transitive parallelism can be understood to fall within the scope of the *constructive function of the intellect*: Spinoza's three conceptual variants of this parallelism can all be understood to be grounded in the fact that we conceive things as actual in two ways: in their formal eternal being and in their objective durational being (this latter being in turn falling apart in the representing (durational) objective being and the represented (durational) object). Furthermore the following has become clear:

- The eternal and infinite formal being of things can be conceived in two ways: *top-down* (i.e. proceeding from God's essence (a)) and *bottom-up* (i.e. inferring it on the basis the objective being of things)

Whereas the previous chapters were (mainly) concerned with the top-down perspective that surfaces most explicitly in Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude (EIp16), in the present chapter it was claimed that God's self-knowledge cannot only be understood to be (i) absolutely outside the intellect (i.e. proceeding from (a) to (a)), and (ii) proceeding from God's essence to the infinitely many things that follow from this essence (i.e. proceeding from (a) to (b)), but also from the (infinite) intellect to God's essence (i.e. proceeding from (b) to (a)). This latter perspective was rendered schematically in the following way:

- (I) God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, conceives (say) a circle in two ways.
- (II) God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, conceives a circle in its *objective being* (i.e. *the idea* of the circle) and in its *formal being* (i.e. *the formal being of the idea* of the circle).
- (III) This formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, is a *part-with-a-vista of the absolutely infinite intellect*.
- (IV) This formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, must in turn be understood to be the counterpart at *Natura naturata* of the *formal essence of that circle* which is *contained ubiquitously in God as a res cogitans* at *Natura naturans*
- (V) The formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, thus *involves an eternal and infinite essence of God*

And as God *qua* God (a) must be understood to be an absolute identity, this implies that:

- (IV') This formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, must in turn be understood to be the

counterpart at *Natura naturata* of the *formal essence of that circle* which is *contained ubiquitously in God sui generis* at *Natura naturans*

(V') The formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, thus *involves the eternal and infinite essence of God*

In the next chapter we will argue for the claim that the bifurcation in top-down and bottom-up perspective marks the distinction between the two types of adequate knowledge that Spinoza discerns: *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*. Moreover, we will treat an important aspect of the intellect that was not addressed yet: the way in which the human mind is able to gather knowledge of external things in nature by way of *horizontal representation*. In Chapter 5 we will see how the top-down and bottom-up perspectives must be understood to be related to the specific phenomena that we would commonly associate with human mentality.

5 One intellect

*In this chapter it will become clear that Spinoza discerns three kinds of knowledge: *imaginatio*, *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*. Our better part is constituted by ideas that are acquired via the two latter kinds of knowledge. Rational knowledge consists in the bottom-up grasping of the eternal being of things, and intuitive knowledge consists in the top-down grasping of the eternal being of things. These two kinds of knowledge, which must be distinguished sharply from the *imagination* (that is characterized by a representational mismatch between the images in the imagination and the things these images refer to), can be understood to be expressions of the eternal self-knowledge and self-love of the coalescent variant of God.*

5.1 Introduction

Anyone studying the human mind and its better part in the context of Spinoza's *Ethics* cannot neglect an important passage in EIIp40s2. In this scholium, Spinoza makes it clear that a human mind must be understood to be capable of attaining three different kinds of knowledge:

From what has been said above, 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 which is mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect (see P29C); for that reason I have been accustomed to call such perceptions knowledge from random experience;

II. from signs, for example, from the fact that, having heard or read certain words, we recollect things, and form certain ideas of them, like those through which we imagine the things (P18S); these two ways of regarding things I shall henceforth call knowledge of the first kind, opinion or imagination;

III. finally, from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things (see P38C, P39, P39C, and P40). This I shall call reason and the second kind of knowledge.

[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. 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.¹

¹ EIIp40s2, (I) 477-478.

(Ex omnibus suprà dictis clarè apparet, nos multa percipere, & notiones universales formare I°. Ex singularibus, nobis per sensûs mutilatè, confusè, & sine ordine ad intellectum representatis (vide Coroll. Prop. 29. hujus): & ideò tales perceptiones cognitionem ab experientiâ vagâ vocare consuevi. II°. Ex signis, ex. gr. ex eo, quòd auditis, aut lectis quibusdam verbis rerum recordemur, & earum quasdam ideas formemus similes iis, per quas res imaginamur (vide Schol. Prop. 18. hujus). Utrumque hunc res contemplandi modum cognitionem primi generis, opinionem, vel imaginationem in posterum vocabo. III°. Denique ex eo, quòd notiones communes, rerumque proprietatum ideas adequatas habemus (vide Coroll. Prop. 38. & 39. cum ejus Coroll. & Prop. 40. hujus); atque hunc rationem, & secundi generis cognitionem vocabo. Præter hæc duo cognitionis genera datur, ut in sequentibus ostendam, aliud tertium, quod scientiam intuitivam vocabimus. Atque hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adequatâ ideâ essentiæ formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adequatam cognitionem essentiæ rerum)

Below we will see how these three kinds of knowledge – *imaginatio*, *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva* – can be fitted into the metaphysical structure that was shown to find its basis in the *constructive function of the intellect*, and how they can be understood to partake in the *instrumental function of the intellect* (i.e. the reaching of blessedness). In the previous chapter we have already done considerable amounts of groundwork. However, in order to show how Spinoza’s concise explication of his theory of knowledge in EIIp40s2 must be understood precisely, some important questions must still be answered.

One of the questions we face is how we must understand the *representation relation* between ideas and their durational objects. So far we have been treating the way in which knowledge of the intellect can be understood to be conceptually bifurcated in an eternal formal and a durational objective aspect. We have seen that this vertical duality of the intellect entails yet another bifurcation: the horizontal conceptual distinction between a durational mind and its durational object. However, the representational nature of ideas has not been treated sufficiently yet. That is to say: even though we have seen that Spinoza’s parallelism thesis entails a horizontal relation between finite ideas (or objective beings) and their finite objects, it is unclear how this relation (if so) is connected with the ability of the human mind to have ideas of *external* objects. Indeed, in this chapter we must scrutinize whether – and if so: how – (in the words of Jonathan Bennett) ‘the deep assumption that it is of the essence of the mental [...] that mental items are representative, about something, pointed outwards’² is shared by Spinoza.

² Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 155.

This does not appear to be a smooth endeavour. For once it is established that on Spinoza's account the human mind is principally capable of having an idea of an external singular thing (such as (say) a circle that is drawn on a piece of paper, or an approaching truck) in the way we commonly understand it, we are confronted with an even more challenging issue. This problem can be stated thus: how can the idea of an external thing in the human mind be understood to be *true* in the sense that it *agrees with its object* (which is required by EIA6))?³ The objective being of the circle (or the truck) – i.e., by EIIp8c, its idea – appears to be outside the objective being of the human body (i.e. outside the human mind) in the same way the drawn circle (or the truck) is outside the human body. This leads us to the question how the true idea of an external thing can actually be had by a human mind. Indeed, how can an idea of a certain thing *be internal and external at the same time*? Or to state this in yet another way: how must we conceive the relation between the parallel idea of the extended circle and the mental representation of that extended circle that in a mind?

A more or less similar problem surfaces with respect to the important concept of 'adequacy' (which is hardly surprising, as according to Spinoza 'there's no difference between a true and an adequate one' except for the fact that 'that the term "true" concerns only the agreement of the idea with its object, whereas the term "adequate" concerns the nature of the idea in itself').⁴ Spinoza defines this notion in the following way:

D4: By adequate idea I understand an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself, without relation to an object, has all the properties, *or* intrinsic denominations of a true idea.

Exp.: *I say intrinsic to exclude what is extrinsic, namely, the agreement of the idea with its object.*⁵

(IV. *Per ideam adæquatam intelligo ideam, quæ, quatenus in se sine relatione ad objectum consideratur, omnes veræ ideæ proprietates, sive denominationes intrinsecas habet.*

EXPLICATIO. *Dico intrinsecas, ut illam secludam, quæ extrinseca est, nempe convenientiam ideæ cum suo ideato.*)

³ This axiom reads thus: 'A true idea must agree with its object'. EIA6, (I) 410 (*Idea vera debet cum suo ideato convenire*).

⁴ Letter 60 (II), 432 (*Inter ideam veram & adæquatam nullam aliam differentiam agnosco, quàm quòd nomen veri respiciat tantummodò convenientiam ideæ cum suo ideato; Nomen adæquati autem naturam ideà in se ipsâ; itâ ut reverâ nulla detur differentia inter ideam veram, & adæquatam præter relationem illam extrinsecam*).

⁵ EIID4, (I) 447.

And in EIIp11c – indeed the very same corollary in which the Mereological Claim is formulated – he provides the following explanation of *inadequacy*:

when we say that God has this or that idea, not only insofar as he constitutes the nature of the human Mind, but insofar as he also has the idea of another thing together with the human Mind, then we say that the human Mind perceives the thing only partially, *or* inadequately.⁶

(*Et cum dicimus Deum hanc, vel illam ideam habere, non tantum, quatenus naturam humanae Mentis constituit, sed quatenus simul cum Mente humanae alterius rei etiam habet ideam, tum dicimus Mentem humanam rem ex parte, sive inadequatè percipere*)

These claims are not easy to digest, if only because the connection between this latter account of inadequacy and Spinoza's definition of adequate idea is not immediately evident. As Edwin Curley stated, 'Spinoza seems to be working with two definitions of adequacy, and I know of no argument to show that one may be reduced to the other'.⁷ Moreover, in Spinoza's description of inadequacy in EIIp11c we appear to encounter the very same problem that surfaced when considering the possibility of the human mind to have true knowledge of things that are external to that mind (such as the circle on a piece of paper). For if a human mind considers a circle on a piece of paper, it seems that God must be understood to have an idea of the human body (i.e. of the human mind grasping the circle) *and* an idea of the circle (the very idea of the circle grasped by the human mind). And hence, as in this case God appears to have an idea 'insofar as he constitutes the nature of the human mind, [and] insofar as he also has the idea of another thing together with the human mind', the idea the human mind has of a circle on a piece of paper appears to be *necessarily inadequate* (by the claim of EIIp11c).

Michael Della Rocca detected a related problem. He pointed out that EIIp9⁸ entails that the adequate idea of a singular thing is had by God 'insofar as God has the ideas that are the causal antecedents of this idea'.⁹ This in turn puts considerable strain on the possibility for a human mind to 'log in' to God's adequate knowledge. For it seems absurd to suppose that in grasping (say) a particular circle, a human mind should attain knowledge of all of the infinitely

⁶ EIIp11c, (I) 456.

⁷ Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 134.

⁸ i.e. the very proposition that we have shown to account for the *extrinsic* causal thread – see Chapter 2.

⁹ Della Rocca, *Representation*, 55.

many causal antecedents that eventually led to the circle that is drawn on a piece of paper. In short: it seems to be impossible for a human mind to grasp things adequately. *Prima facie*, the ability to acquire knowledge of the ‘intrinsic denominations of a true idea’ – whatever that may mean – appears to be outside the reach of *pars melior nostri*.

With this we have detected two (closely related) problems with respect to Spinoza’s theory of knowledge (and the way our intellect is to be conceived). As of yet it is unclear how we must understand:

- (i) the horizontal representation of things in a human mind
- (ii) the possibility for the human mind to acquire *true* and *adequate* knowledge

In this final chapter I will elucidate these important points. The possibility for the human mind (if so) to acquire true and adequate knowledge will be the subject of the sections 5.3 and 5.4. But first it must be shown how the horizontal representation of things in a human mind is to be understood precisely in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy.

5.2 Horizontal representation

Recall that Spinoza states the following in EIIp11c:

when we say that the human Mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing but that God [...] has this or that idea¹⁰

(*ac proinde cum dicimus, Mentem humanam hoc, vel illud percipere, nihil aliud dicimus, quàm quòd Deus [...], hanc, vel illam habet ideam*)

This highly remarkable claim is a tough bullet to bite. Indeed, as Spinoza himself adds in the scholium to the corollary in which this assertion is put forward: ‘here, no doubt, my readers will come to a halt, and think of many things which will give them pause’.¹¹ One of the readers who ran into problems with Spinoza’s bold

¹⁰ EIIp11c, (I) 456.

¹¹ EIIp11s, (I) 456.

assertions concerning the human mind is Margaret Wilson. She expressed doubts whether Spinoza's theory of mind can be called a proper theory of the mental *at all*:

will [Spinoza's theory of "minds"] not fail to make sense of the specific phenomena of human mentality by attempting to construe the human mind just as a circumscribed piece of God's omniscience?¹²

Wilson's concerns are not without ground. For Spinoza's assertion in EIIp11c leads to all kinds of questions. One of the things that troubled Wilson is the representational aspect of thought.¹³ This is understandable, as Spinoza's contentions concerning this latter issue are anything but easy to untangle. In the previous chapter we have already treated some of the intricate aspects of Spinoza's take on 'representation'. It was argued that the representational nature of thought must be understood to be so thoroughgoing that an idea cannot only be understood to be a representation of its extended (parallel) object, but can be conceived to be a representation of itself (*qua* mode of thinking) as well, in which case it appears as the *idea of the idea*.¹⁴ In short: up till this point we have used the term 'representation' in order to refer to the relation between an idea and its parallel (i.e. numerically identical) object, whether conceived under thought or under any of the other attributes. Yet, this particular form of representation of course is quite different from the representation we commonly associate with human mental behavior: the representation of *external finite objects* in the finite human mind. A treatment of – to quote Wilson once more – 'the specific phenomena of human mentality' must include this latter aspect of 'representation'. This is the subject to which we will turn now.

5.2.1 Ideas and images in the imagination

The way in which the representation relation of external things in the human mind must be understood in the context of Spinoza's philosophy is treated in the propositions 16-31 of part II of the *Ethics*. In these propositions it is explained how

¹² Margaret Wilson, 'Objects, Ideas and "Minds": Comments on Spinoza's Theory of Mind' in: Lloyd, G., ed., *Spinoza. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers* (London 2001), 102.

¹³ According to Wilson, Spinoza's theory of mind appears to '[carry the denial] that the mind [...] represents or has knowledge of external bodies'. Wilson, 'Objects, Ideas and "Minds"', 102.

¹⁴ See section 4.3.1.1, which deals with horizontal intra-attribute parallelism.

the finite human mind (and its body) interacts with other mental (and extended) parts of nature, and how this interaction can be understood to be ‘representational’ precisely.

The mentioned set of proposition starts off with the following claim:

Pl6: 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.

[...]

Cor. 1: From this it follows, first, that the human Mind perceives the nature of a great many bodies together with the nature of its own body.

Cor. 2: It follows, second, that the ideas which we have of external bodies indicate the condition of our own body more than the nature of the external bodies. I have explained this by many examples in the Appendix of Part I.¹⁵

(PROPOSITIO XVI. Idea cujuscunque modi, quo Corpus humanum à corporibus externis afficitur, involvere debet naturam Corporis humani, & simul naturam corporis externi.

[...]

COROLLARIUM I. Hinc sequitur primò Mentem humanam plurimorum corporum naturam unà cum sui corporis naturà percipere.

COROLLARIUM II. Sequitur secundò, quòd ideae, quas corporum externorum habemus, magis nostri corporis constitutionem, quàm corporum externorum naturam indicant; quod in Appendice partis primæ multis exemplis explicui

Some important things can be learned from these assertions.

The first thing to note with respect to EIIp16 and its corollaries is that these claims make it clear that, no matter how idiosyncratic Spinoza’s view on the human mind may be, he does seem to uphold at least one specific phenomenon of human mentality: the fact that ideas *are had* by human minds. Whereas Margaret Wilson stated that ‘Spinoza is unable to reconcile his theory of “minds” with any intelligible conception of mental representation’,¹⁶ Spinoza’s claim in EIIp16c2 about ‘the ideas *which we have* of external bodies [emphasis added]’ teaches us that, even though according to Spinoza an idea of an external body must be understood to indicate the condition of the perceiver more than it indicates the nature of the external body, the idea of the external body is nevertheless clearly claimed to be had by the perceiver. Apparently, a (human) mind must not only be understood to *be* an idea (i.e. an idea that parallels its body due to horizontal inter-attribute

¹⁵ EIIp16, (I) 463.

¹⁶ Wilson, ‘Objects, Ideas and “Minds”’, 97.

parallelism that was treated in Chapter 4), but to also *have* ideas (i.e. to have some sort of mental representation of things that are external to that mind and its parallel body). The theory forwarded in EIIp16 and its corollaries (and indeed the subsequent propositions) may not be as coherent or credible as Wilson would want it to be, but there seems to be little doubt that Spinoza does have an intelligible conception of mental representation on his own account.

This is not to say that Spinoza's account is easy to understand. One of the confusing aspects that surfaces in EIIp16 and its corollaries is the fact that on closer scrutiny the term 'idea' that is used in it appears to be equivocal. That is to say: the 'idea' that is claimed to be had by a human mind seems to be *another type of idea* than the objective being that emerges in EIIp8c, which (as we have seen) must be understood to be (i) a durational expression of the infinite and eternal formal being of the same thing, and (ii) numerically identical to its object (that itself can also be understood to be a durational expression of the infinite and eternal formal being of the same thing). That there indeed can be made a distinction between two types of ideas in the adduced assertions becomes clear in the second corollary of EIIp16, where 'the ideas which we have of external bodies' are claimed to 'indicate the condition of our own body more than the nature of the external bodies'. This teaches us that in this latter particular sense of 'idea' there is no parallelism relation between the idea and the external body it is the idea is of. Whereas the idea of my body (i.e. my mind) must be understood to be numerically identical to my body, it is hard to see how the idea that I have in my mind of (say) a circle that is drawn on a piece of paper in front of me can be understood to be numerically identical to the external extended circle. According to Spinoza, my idea of the external extended thing indicates the condition of my body more than it indicates the nature of the external extended thing. And hence it seems rather clear that in the context of the specific representation relation forwarded in EIIp16, the idea we have of external things must be understood to be *another type of idea* than the objective being (i.e. the parallel idea) of these external things. In short: EIIp16 and its corollaries suggest that Spinoza fosters two distinct variants of 'idea'.¹⁷ On the one hand we can

¹⁷ The important distinction between the two senses of ideas of course has also been noticed by other scholars. See for instance: Margaret Wilson, 'Spinoza's theory of knowledge' in: Don Garrett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge 1995), 102-104; Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 155; Daisy Radner, 'Spinoza's Theory of Ideas' in: *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 80, No. 3 (1971), 339-340.

distinguish the objective being of an extended thing, and on the other hand we encounter the mental representation of that extended thing, that indicates the body of the perceiver more than it indicates the extended thing. Indeed, Spinoza appears to distinguish between:

(I) ideas that can count as the objective being of extended things

and

(II) ideas that can count as the mental representation of extended things in the mind of a perceiver

EIIp16 is not the only passage in the *Ethics* where this remarkable distinction can be found. Another telling example surfaces in Spinoza's very definition of 'idea'. Consider EIID3:

D3: By idea I understand a concept of the Mind which the Mind forms because it is a thinking thing.

Exp.: *I say concept rather than perception, because the word perception seems to indicate that the Mind is acted on by the object. But concept seems to express an action of the Mind.*¹⁸

(III. *Per ideam intelligo Mentis conceptum, quem Mens format, propterea quòd res est cogitans.*

EXPLICATIO. Dico potiùs conceptum, quàm perceptionem, quia perceptionis nomen indicare videtur, Mentem ab objecto pati. At conceptus actionem Mentis exprimere videtur)

True, in the definition itself Spinoza provides only one description of 'idea'. Hence it appears to be clear that, whenever the term 'idea' is used in the *Ethics*, it must be taken in the sense forwarded in EIID3. Yet, we cannot fail to notice that in the *Explication* something important is added. Here, Spinoza makes an explicit distinction between (I) a *concept*, which can be understood to be an *action of the mind*, and (II) a *perception*, which indicates that the mind is *acted on*. This way of staging things – and Spinoza's apparent conviction that, in order to be clear, it is necessary to add an explication to EIID3 – indicates that according to him the term 'idea' can indeed be understood in two ways.¹⁹

¹⁸ EIID3, (I) 447.

¹⁹ It seems rather clear that this is an allusion to a remark from René Descartes, who states in his third *Meditation* that ideas are 'images of the things' as 'to these alone is the title 'idea' properly applied'. Descartes, *The Philosophical works of Descartes Volume I* [translated by Haldane, E.S. and Ross, G.R.T.],

These two variants of ‘idea’ surface in EIIp17s too. Consider the following passage:

Furthermore (from P17C and P16C2), we clearly understand what is the difference between the idea of, say, Peter, which constitutes the essence of Peter’s mind, and the idea of Peter which is in another man, say in Paul. For the former directly explains the essence of Peter’s body, and does not involve existence, except so long as Peter exists; but the latter indicates the condition of Paul’s body more than Peter’s nature, and therefore, while that condition of Paul’s body lasts, Paul’s mind will still regard Peter as present to itself, even though Peter does not exist.²⁰

(Præterea (ex Coroll. præced. & Coroll. 2. Prop. 16. hujus) clarè intelligimus, quænam sit differentia inter ideam ex. gr. Petri, quæ essentiam Mentis ipsius Petri constituit, & inter ideam ipsius Petri, quæ in alio homine, putà in Paulo, est. Illa enim essentiam Corporis ipsius Petri directè explicat, nec existentiam involvit, nisi quamdiu Petrus existit; hæc autem magis constitutionem corporis Pauli, quàm Petri naturam indicat [bezie de tweede Toegift/Corollarium/van de zestiende Voorstelling/Propositio/in dat deel], & ideò, durante illà corporis Pauli constitutione, Mens Pauli, quamvis Petrus non existat, ipsum tamen, ut sibi præsentem contemplabitur)

This passage leaves little doubt with respect to the fact that according to Spinoza, the term ‘idea’ can be understood in two ways. Referring to the very corollary of EIIp16 that deals with the having of ideas of external things, he makes an explicit distinction between modes of thinking that explain the essence of their extended counterparts, and modes of thinking that are ‘in another man’. This enables us to reformulate (I) and (II). Spinoza distinguishes between:

(I)’ ideas that can count as the horizontal inter-attribute parallel of their extended objects (*in casu*: Peter’s body)

and

(II)’ ideas that indicate the condition of the body of the perceiver (*in casu*: Paul’s body) more than they indicate the nature of the thing perceived.

(Cambridge 1977), 159 (*Quaedam ex his tanquam rerum imagines sunt, quibus solis proprie convenit ideæ nomen*). More on the distinction between ‘ideas’ and ‘images’ in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy will follow shortly.

²⁰ EIIp17s, (I) 464-465.

Ad. (I)'. The claims in EIIp17s that the mode of thinking subsumed under point (I)' 'constitutes the essence of Peter's mind' and 'does not necessarily involve existence, except so long as Peter exists' are on a par with some of the things we have noted earlier. As we saw in Chapter 2, ideas do not only exist under duration, but can also be understood insofar as they are conceived to follow intrinsically from the attributes as eternal formal beings. It is crucial to acknowledge that on the basis of these claims the idea of point (I)' can be understood to comprise two states: insofar as it follows intrinsically from the attributes (and as such directly explains the essence of Peter's body), *and* insofar as it involves the existence through which it is said to have duration (and involves existence so long as Peter exists). Idea (I)' hence can be considered to be an *unspecified* idea in the very same way the infinite intellect (EIIp11c) was shown to be an *unspecified* infinite mode of thinking'.²¹ The unspecified idea of Peter surfaces in its formal being insofar as the idea of Peter is conceived in itself, and the very same unspecified idea of Peter surfaces in its objective being insofar as Peter exists under duration.²² In its formal being this idea of Peter must be taken to exist eternally in the very same sense the idea of a rectangle that is contained in a circle (in EIIp8s) must be understood to be 'comprehended in the idea of the circle', even though it may not involve existence.²³ And insofar as the idea from point (I)' does involve existence, this idea must be understood to exist under duration in the very same way the idea of an actual rectangle exists, not only insofar as it is comprehended in the idea of the circle that contains it, but also insofar as it involves the durational existence of its object: the rectangle. In short: the mode of thinking that surfaces under point (I)' is the very notion of 'idea' that we have been reasoning about extensively in the previous chapters: the *objective being* of a thing that can also be considered in itself, without relation to its object (i.e. *formally*).²⁴

²¹ See section 2.6.2. The *unspecified* being of true ideas will be elucidated further in a subsequent section.

²² An answer to the question how this unspecified idea can be understood to '[constitute] the *essence* of Peter's mind [emphasis added]' will be provided in section 5.4.2.1, where the distinction between formal and actual essences will be treated.

²³ EIIp8s, (I) 452. See also section 2.3.2.

²⁴ In the wording of §33 of the TdIE: the true idea of Peter – i.e. the idea *with* respect to its object – is also something real in itself – i.e. *without* relation to its object. See the treatment of this particular passage from the TdIE in the sections 2.6.2 and 4.3.1.

Ad. (II)'. The elaboration of the status of idea (I)' of course leads to the question how we must understand the mode of thinking forwarded under point (II)'. In this sense, the scholium of EIIp17 is instructive. Consider the following remark:

the affections of the human Body whose ideas present external bodies as present to us, we shall call images of things [...]. And when the Mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines.²⁵
(*Corporis humani affectiones, quarum ideae Corpora externa, velut nobis presentia representant, rerum imagines vocabimus*)

This is an important passage in the present context, as it teaches us that modes that indicate the condition of the perceiver's body more than they indicate the nature of things presented as 'present to us' can be called 'images'. Now, we may be tempted to conclude that the 'ideas' of point (II)' thus can be called 'images'. However, it must be stressed that this is not entirely correct. For the 'images' that surface in EIIp17s must be understood to be, not modes of *thinking*, but modes of *extension*. This take on the term 'images' is corroborated by EVp1, which reads thus:

In just the same way as thoughts and ideas of things are ordered and connected in the Mind, so the affections of the body, or images of things are ordered and connected in the body.²⁶
(*Prout cogitationes, rerumque ideae ordinantur, & concatenantur in Mente, ita corporis affectiones, seu rerum imagines ad amussim ordinantur, & concatenantur in Corpore*)

Spinoza's assertion in this proposition are very clear as to the status that must be ascribed to 'images of things': these must indeed be understood to be modes of extension. Insofar as images are conceived to be affections of the body, they are extended modes *eo ipso*. To be sure, this is not to say that EIIp17s and EVp1 do not tell us anything about the way in which we should understand the 'ideas' from point (II)'. In this respect it is crucial to remark that the very modes of extension that are staged in the quoted passages can be considered from the perspective of thought as well. That is to say: Spinoza's parallelism is also operative with respect to affections of the body, which in turn provides a way to consider the extended 'images' insofar as they are related to the attribute of thought. This claim finds full corroboration in the fact that EVp1 is underpinned with the very parallelism

²⁵ EIIp17s, (I) 465.

²⁶ EVp1, (I) 597.

proposition EIIp7,²⁷ which makes it abundantly clear that the extended images of EIIp17s and EVp1 must be understood to have numerically identical parallel modes of thinking. This is an important observation, if only because it enables us to establish that ‘when the Mind [...] imagines’ (EIIp17s) it must be conceived to consider the parallel ideas of the extended images in a way that ‘present external bodies as present to us’. In other words: whereas the ‘images of things’ must be understood to be *modes of extension*, their parallel ‘imaginings of the Mind’²⁸ (i.e., by EIIp17s, ‘the *ideas* of the affections of the human body [emphasis added]’) must be understood to be *modes of thinking*. It is precisely here where the ‘ideas’ of point (II)’ come into focus. From the things that were said above we can learn that this particular variant of ‘idea’ must be understood to designate modes of thinking that are considered only insofar as they present external bodies as present to us, and *not* insofar as these modes are numerically identical with their objects. That is to say: as we saw above, images in the imagination of course *are* paralleled by extended things (*in casu*: the affections of the body), but insofar as they are images in the imagination, they are considered, not as to their parallel objects, but only as to the external thing they present to the perceiver. Below we will say more about these specific modes of thinking and the way in which they can be distinguished from the ideas subsumed under point (I)’. For now, the crucial thing to remark is that the ‘ideas’ from point (II)’ can be understood to be *images in the imagination*.

*

Above we have seen that Spinoza distinguishes between:

- (I)’ ideas that can count as the horizontal inter-attribute parallel of their extended objects.
- (II)’ ideas that indicate the condition of the body of the perceiver more than they indicate the nature of the thing perceived.

²⁷ ‘Dem.: The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things (by IIP7), and vice versa [...].’ Ibidem, (I) 597 (*DEMONSTRATIO. Ordo, & connexio idearum idem est (per Prop. 7. p. 2.), ac ordo, & connexio rerum, & vice versâ*).

²⁸ EIIp17s, (I) 465 (*Mentis imaginationes*).

It is clear now that this distinction can also be rendered thus:

- (I)" the *idea* of a thing (encompassing the horizontal parallelism between objective beings and their objects)²⁹
- (II)" the *image* of a thing in the *imagination* (falling outside the scope of Spinoza's parallelism thesis) of a perceiver

Our elaboration makes it clear that in the context of the *Ethics*, there are two ways in which mental occurrences can be understood: either as concepts of thought (viz. as 'ideas' in the sense of EIID3, which express an action of the mind), or as 'images that are formed at the back of the eye' which 'present external bodies as present to us' (viz. as 'perceptions' that 'indicate that the mind is acted on'). It is precisely because of this that Spinoza stresses in EIIP49s that it is important to 'distinguish accurately between an idea, *or* concept, of the mind, and the images of things we imagine' (which can be considered to be 'mute pictures on a panel').³⁰ For whereas an idea must be conceived to be numerically identical to its object, an image in the imagination – insofar as it is an image in the imagination – is not numerically identical to the external thing it presents to the perceiver.

5.2.1.1 Truth and confusion

Having established that we can distinguish two senses of 'idea' in Spinoza's theory of knowledge, we can turn to the question how the representation relations that are involved in these different cases are to be characterized. Above we have already noted that ideas of class (I)" entail a horizontal parallelism relation because durational objective beings can be understood to represent their parallel durational

²⁹ Actually, if we would be more precise, this version of idea would be called *unspecified idea* (or maybe even *coalescent idea*), as the objective being of an idea necessarily implies its formal being (see above).

However, not to complicate things too much in this section, I will use the term *idea*. The intricate distinction between the eternal and the durational aspect of this idea will surface again when we treat the distinction between the *truth* and the *adequacy* of idea (I).

³⁰ EIIP49s, (I) 485 (*Incipio igitur à primo, Lectoresque moneo, ut accuratè distinguant inter ideam, sive Mentis conceptum, & inter imagines rerum, quas imaginamur*).

objects. Indeed, as Michael Della Rocca stated, ‘an aspect of Spinoza’s parallelism [...] that is, in fact, crucial, is its *representational* nature’.³¹ As he explicates:

A further important feature of parallelism is the fact that an idea *represents* the item with which it is parallel. This emerges most clearly in 2p7c [...]. Spinoza’s use of the traditional term *objective* indicates that he is speaking of a representational relation between the items in the causal chain of things and the parallel items in the causal chain of ideas.³²

As must be clear from the things claimed so far, I agree with Della Rocca that the notion of ‘representation’ plays an important role in Spinoza’s parallelism thesis, and that this very representation relation finds its expression in the term ‘objective’. However, concerning this particular ‘representation relation’, two crucial things must be added.

Firstly, it is important to stress that I disagree with Della Rocca with respect to the status of the object represented in the parallelism relation. Whereas Della Rocca appears to hold that an idea in this case must be understood to have its *formal being* as its object,³³ I have shown in the Chapters 2 and 4 that Spinoza’s philosophy – and his conception of the intellect – shelters a trichotomy of object, objective being and formal being. One of the crucial aspects of Spinoza’s philosophy that is uncovered in this study is the fact that an objective being cannot be understood to have its own formal being as its *objectum*,³⁴ as this would erroneously conflate the realms of eternity and duration. Rather, we have seen that the represented object – whether under extension or under thought – and its

³¹ Della Rocca, *Representation*, 44.

³² *Ibidem*, 18-19.

³³ Indeed, as he claims: ‘Thus we can see that in 2p7c Spinoza is saying that each idea, insofar as it is in God’s mind, represents and only represents its causal counterpart in the realm of extension’. *Ibidem*, 45. The crucial thing to note with respect to this assertion is that in the EIIp7c, Spinoza makes the distinction between ‘whatever follows formally from God’s infinite nature’ and ‘what follows objectively in God from his idea’, which appears to make it clear that according to Della Rocca ‘the causal counterpart in the realm of extension’ that is represented in an idea (i.e. in an *objective being*) must indeed be understood to be the *formal being of that idea*. As was argued for in the previous chapter, this claim is erroneous in two ways. Firstly, Spinoza makes it very clear in EIIp5d that the formal being of an idea must be understood to be a *mode of thinking* (and *not* of extension); secondly, Spinoza’s claim in EIIp21 that ‘[the idea in God] of the mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind is united to the body’ teaches us that an idea does not only represent – in the sense of being parallel to – a thing in the realm of extension, but can also be understood to represent a thing in the realm of thought.

³⁴ More on the term ‘*objectum*’, and the way it can be understood to differ from the term ‘*ideatum*’, in section 5.3.1.

objective being (i.e. its parallel idea) are to be conceived as durational expressions of the very same eternal formal being (that in turn can be understood to be an eternal expression at the level of *Natura naturata* of the absolutely eternal formal essence of that same thing at the level of *Natura naturans*).

The second thing that must be noted with respect to the use of the term ‘representation’ in order to refer to the relation between ideas and their parallel objects, is that Spinoza uses the verb ‘*repraesentare*’ only five times in the *Ethics*,³⁵ and that in any of these cases *the verb is used with respect to the imagination*, and *not* with respect to the parallelism relation between ideas and their objects. So when the term ‘representation’ is used with regard to Spinoza’s parallelism, it must be understood to be an *interpretative term* that differs from the way in which Spinoza himself employs it. For we have seen above that the specific horizontal representation relation between objective beings and their objects is *not* applicable to images in the imagination *insofar as they are images in the imagination*³⁶ (and hence present external bodies as present to the perceiver) of point (II)". Even though images in the imagination *qua* images in the imaginations are ‘representational’ too (in the sense that they ‘represent’ something to the mind of the agent ‘like a picture on a tablet’),³⁷ and must moreover be located in the realm of duration (which sanctions the use of the term ‘horizontal’ in this case as well), we have seen that these specific mental occurrences cannot be understood to be numerically identical to the things they are the mental pictures of. And hence, insofar as the term ‘representation’ is used in order to refer to the parallelism relation between ideas and objects, this particular term cannot be used to characterize the relation between images and the things they are the images of.

This latter point is crucial for an understanding of Spinoza’s theory of knowledge. So it may be instructive to elaborate on this point some more. Above we already encountered the example of the ‘idea’ (i.e. the image in my imagination) I have of the circle that is drawn on a piece of paper in front of me, and the idea (i.e. the objective being) of that circle – external to my mind – that parallels that

³⁵ Twice in EI Appendix, in EIIp17s, in EIIp40s2 and in EIIp27d.

³⁶ For, as already noted above, images in the imagination can also be understood to have parallel modes of extension of which they can be understood to be the objective being. However, this particular representation relation comes into focus only insofar as these images in the imagination are *not* conceived insofar as they present external things as present to the perceiver. More on this shortly.

³⁷ EIIp43s, (I) 479 (*ideam quid mutum instar picturae in tabulâ*).

extended circle. It became evident that the objective being of the circle must be understood to be another idea than the ‘idea’ of the circle in my mind, as according to Spinoza the extended parallel of the latter ‘idea’ (by EIIp16c2) indicates the condition of my body more than it indicates the nature of the external extended circle (which clearly thwarts the identity relation). Indeed, this example appears to be fairly decisive as to the distinction that must be made between the two senses of ‘idea’ – and hence between the specific representation relations that can be ascribed to these two variants. However, in order to erase all doubt in this respect – and to find a further way to uncover Spinoza’s view on the two distinct representation relations that can be mapped on the two variants of ‘idea’ – I will provide yet another example for the claim that idea (I)” and ‘idea’ (II)” differ fundamentally.

Example: Peter and Paul³⁸

Suppose that the image of Peter is in Paul’s imagination. And suppose furthermore that Paul is thinking about Peter, without knowing that at the very moment he is presenting the image of Peter as present to himself, Peter is hanging on a cross upside-down. Now, it seems rather clear that the memorized image of Peter in Paul’s imagination cannot be understood to be numerically identical to the thing Paul presents to himself. For whereas the actual objective being of Peter is parallel to a body that is crucified upside-down, the memorized image of Peter in Paul’s imagination must be understood to be parallel to affections of Paul’s body (according to the quoted EIIp16 and EIIp17),³⁹ and *not* to Peter’s body insofar as it is hanging on a cross up-side down. Indeed, in this latter case the order and

³⁸ I chose this example, not because *Piet Steenbakkers* and *Paul Ziche* serve as the (co)promoters of this dissertation, but (clearly) because this example is used by Spinoza himself in (inter alia) EIIp18s (see above). Unsurprisingly, other commentators have used the same example. See for instance: Margaret Wilson, ‘Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge’, 103-104. One more thing must be added: this example of the idea of Peter differs considerably from the example of the idea of Peter that is staged in §33 from the TdIE. As must be clear from the things said earlier, this latter passage is concerned with the distinction between the objective and the formal being of an idea. In EIIp18s, in contrast, the focus is on the distinction between the idea of Peter, and the image of Peter in the imagination of another man.

³⁹ EIIp43s, 479 (*picturæ in tabulâ*). Another important passage – to which we will return below – can be found in EVp1, where Spinoza states that ‘in just the same way as thoughts and ideas of thing are ordered and connected in the Mind, so the affections of the body, or images of things are ordered and connected in the body’. EVp1, (I) 597 (*Prout cogitationes, rerumque ideæ ordinantur, & concatenantur in Mente, ità corporis affectiones, seu rerum imagines ad amussim ordinantur, & concatenantur in Corpore*).

connection of ‘ideas’ appears to differ considerably from the order and connection of the external things these images ‘represent’ as a ‘picture on a panel’ (EIIp49s) in the mind of the perceiver. Or, as Spinoza states it himself in EIIp18s:

From this we clearly understand what Memory is. For it is nothing other than a certain connection of ideas involving the nature of things which are outside the human Body – a connection which is in the Mind according to the order and connection of the affections of the human Body.⁴⁰

(Hinc clarè intelligimus, quid sit Memoria. Est enim nihil aliud, quàm quaedam concatenatio idearum, naturam rerum, quæ extra Corpus humanum sunt, involventium, quæ in Mente fit secundùm ordinem, & concatenationem affectionum Corporis humani)

Even though Paul’s memory of Peter is claimed to still *involve* – in the sense of ‘having something to do with’ – the nature of Peter, this certain ‘connection of ideas’ nevertheless must be understood to differ from the connection of ideas that *explains the nature* of Peter.⁴¹ Hence, Spinoza adds:

I say, *first*, that the connection is only of those ideas that involve the nature of things which are outside the Body, but not of the ideas which explain the nature of the same things. For they are really (by P16) ideas of affections of the human Body which involve both its nature and that of external bodies. I say, *second*, that this connection happens according to the order and connection of the affections of the human Body in order to distinguish it from the connection of ideas which happens according to the order of the intellect, by which the Mind perceives things through their first causes, and which is the same in all men.⁴²

(Dico primò concatenationem esse illarum tantùm idearum, quæ naturam rerum, quæ extra Corpus humanum sunt, involvunt; non autem idearum, quæ earundem rerum naturam explicant. Sunt enim reverà (per Prop. 16. hujus) ideæ affectionum Corporis humani, quæ tam hujus, quàm corporum externorum naturam involvunt. Dico secundò hanc concatenationem fieri secundùm ordinem, & concatenationem affectionum Corporis humani, ut ipsam distinguerem à concatenatione idearum, quæ fit secundùm ordinem intellectûs, quo res per primas suas causas Mens percipit, & qui in omnibus hominibus idem est)

This passage makes it abundantly clear that the image of Peter in Paul’s imagination must be understood to differ from the idea that explains the nature of Peter. The objective being of Peter – i.e. idea (I) – that *explains* the nature of Peter – may be parallel to an extended object that is hanging on a cross upside-down, but

⁴⁰ EIIp18s, (I) 465.

⁴¹ Or as Margaret Wilson put it: ‘[Spinoza] calls attention to an easily overlooked distinction between "involving the nature of" and "explicating the nature of"’. Wilson, ‘Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge’, 102. The importance of the ‘involvement relation’ for the attaining of rational knowledge will be treated in section 5.4.

⁴² EIIp18s, (I) 465-466.

the idea of Peter in Paul's mind that merely *involves* the nature of Peter – i.e. idea (II)" – is really an idea of an affection of Paul's body.

*

This short excursion into the realm of memory fully underpins our claim that in the context of Spinoza's philosophy it is important to distinguish between two senses of 'idea'. For again, it turns out that an image in the imagination of a perceiver, even though it is a mode of thinking (namely the idea of an affection of the body of the perceiver), cannot be understood to be parallel to the external thing it 'represents' (in the sense of 'evoking an image in the imagination of the perceiver'). To be sure, this example was not adduced (only) in order to corroborate this claim. Rather, I treated the passage of EIIp18s (as well) because the quoted assertions give us additional information as to the way in which we must understand the difference between the *representation relations* that can be detected in the *Ethics*. In this respect, Spinoza's use of the term 'order of the intellect' in EIIp18s is noteworthy. For it enables us to further determine the distinction between (I)" and (II)". On the basis of the 'memory example' (and the things we have seen earlier), the following enhanced rendering of the two variants of ideas can be provided. We can distinguish between:

- (I)" the *idea* of a thing in the *order of the intellect*
- (II)" the *image* of that thing in the *imagination*

This way of rendering the distinction between the two variants of ideas is telling, as it becomes clear now that the two ways of understanding the term 'idea' can be mapped on the crucial distinction that Spinoza announces in EIp15s. As we have seen in Chapter 1, in this scholium Spinoza stresses that it is important to distinguish between *the intellect* and *the imagination*. The example of water insofar as it is substance and water insofar as it is divided must on closer scrutiny be understood to be a first instance of the very same warning that surfaces in EIIp17s and EIIp18s: the warning not to confuse ideas in the intellect with images in the imagination. Moreover, the reformulation of (I)" and (II)" is also instructive as to the way in which we must conceive the two horizontal representation relations that

are implied in this crucial distinction. Concerning this issue we can state the following. We can distinguish between:

- (I)* the representation of a thing in an *idea* in the *intellect*
- (II)* the ‘representation’ of a thing in an internal *image* in the *imagination*

The question we need to answer is how we have to conceive these two representation relations. Does Spinoza provide the conceptual tools with which we are able to further characterize these two relations? Can we find additional designations in the *Ethics* on the basis of which the idea of the drawn circle (or of Peter’s body) can be distinguished from the mere perceptual occurrence of the drawn circle (or of Peter’s body) in the imagination of a perceiver? I think we can. Below I will show that the distinction between knowledge represented in the intellect (I)* and knowledge represented in the imagination (II)* can actually be reformulated in terms of *truth* and *falsity*.

Representation relation (I)*: idea and object

I have already said a lot about this particular representation relation. In the previous chapter it has become clear that this relation must be understood to encompass the numerical identity relation that is characteristic for Spinoza’s horizontal parallelism. The relation staged under point (I)* finds its foundation in the fact that the extended thing and the idea of that thing both are durational expressions of the very same eternal formal being. In other words: (say) an extended circle (i.e. the *object*) and the idea of the circle *with* respect to its object (i.e. the objective being of the circle) must be understood to both be expressions under duration of the idea of the circle *without* respect to its object (i.e. of the formal being of the idea of the circle).

Elucidative as this may have been as to the way in which we must understand Spinoza’s parallelism, something must be added with respect to the specific representational nature of this relation. For the very fact that an objective being and its object can both be understood to be durational expressions of the very same

thing in itself does not imply that one is a representation of the other.⁴³ The ‘deep assumption that it is of the essence of the mental [...] that mental items are representative, about something, pointed outwards’⁴⁴ (to quote Jonathan Bennett once more) – i.e. the fact that the attribute of thought must somehow be understood to provide a window on the other attributes (and indeed on itself) – still needs underpinning. That is to say: even though we have already stated (in the previous chapter) that in the context of Spinoza’s metaphysics modes of thinking must be understood to be *inherently representational*, as of yet little has been said regarding the way in which this specific characteristic is underpinned precisely. This is all the more important as this representational nature of ideas is closely connected with yet another aspect that we would commonly associate with mental behavior: the *consciousness* of the mind that has these ideas.

In order to elucidate these two closely connected points, it is important to recapitulate some of the things that were already noted in the previous chapters. For a proper understanding of the representational nature of ideas as well as the way in which this representational nature accounts for the consciousness of minds, it must be acknowledged once more that according to Spinoza:

- ‘intellect and will are to this or that idea, or to this or that volition as 'stone-ness' is to this or that stone, or man to Peter or Paul. [...] [T]hese faculties are universal notions which are not distinguished from the singulars from which we form them’.⁴⁵

⁴³ A.E. Taylor makes a similar remark: ‘If I am to know the simplest fact about my own body, it is not enough that an ‘ideal counterpart’ of that fact shall exist; the bodily fact and the ideal counterpart - or rather I who am the owner of the ideal counterpart - must further stand in the unique and indefinable relation known-knower. Otherwise you might have the closest correspondence between the “modes” of extension and of thought, there might be a determinate a in the one for every a in the other, and yet there would be no knowledge of the bodily world. The changes in that world would unfold themselves in their regular causal order; concomitantly there would be a second world of ‘ideas’ also unfolding themselves in their regular order, but there would be no cognisance of terms of the one order by terms of the other.’ In: A.T. Taylor, ‘Incoherencies in Spinozism I’ in: *Mind* Vol. 46, No. 182 (1937), 149.

⁴⁴ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 155.

⁴⁵ EIIp48s, (I) 483 (*Adeò ut intellectus, & voluntas ad hanc, & illam ideam, vel ad hanc, & illam volitionem eodem modo sese habeant, ac lapideitas ad hunc, & illum lapidem, vel ut homo ad Petrum, & Paulum. [...] facultates notiones esse universales, quæ à singularibus, ex quibus easdem formamus, non distinguuntur*).

- ‘a true idea must agree with its object (by A6), i.e. (as is known through itself), what is contained objectively in the intellect must necessarily be in Nature’.⁴⁶
- ‘objective being’ and ‘idea’ are equivalent terms for Spinoza⁴⁷
- ‘There is in God also an idea [...] of the [idea of a thing]’.⁴⁸ This *idea ideae* ‘is nothing but the form of the idea’.⁴⁹

The first quote teaches us that according to Spinoza, the intellect is *not* a faculty that has its own characteristics, apart from the things – *in casu*: ideas (I)^{'''} – that are ‘in’ it. The representational feature of the intellect that is forwarded in the second citation – i.e. that what is contained objectively in it must necessarily be in nature – can be understood to be a property of each singular that forms it. So from these first two points we can learn that on Spinoza’s account

what is contained objectively in an idea must necessarily be in nature.

That the representational nature must be understood to be applicable to every idea (I)^{'''} in nature is corroborated by the fact that in EIIp8c ‘idea’ and ‘objective being’ are claimed to be equivalent terms (see the third point). Just as according to Spinoza bodies are characterized by the fact that they either move or are at rest,⁵⁰ ideas apparently are characterized by the fact that they represent an object. It is because of this that Spinoza is able to make the remarkable claim in EIIp12 that ‘[w]hatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human Mind must be

⁴⁶ EIp30d, (I) 434 (*Idea vera debet convenire cum suo ideato (per Axiom. 6.), hoc est (ut per se notum) id, quod in intellectu objectivè continetur, debet necessariò in naturâ dari*).

⁴⁷ EIIp8c, (I) 452 (*esse objectivum sive ideae*). This is a qualified remark. For from EIIp8c it is clear that the equivalence is only applicable to an idea insofar as it has *duration*. More on this in a subsequent section.

⁴⁸ EIIp20, (I) 467. To be sure, the proposition reads that ‘[t]here is in God also an idea [...] of the *human Mind* [emphasis added]’ (*Mentis humanæ datur etiam in Deo idea*). However, Spinoza’s claim in the demonstration of this proposition that ‘(by P3) there must necessarily be in God an idea both of thought and of all its affections, and consequently (by P11), of the human Mind also’ (EIIp20d, (I) 467 (*adeòque (per Prop. 3. hujus) tam ejus, quàm omnium ejus affectionum, & consequenter (per Prop. 11. hujus) Mentis etiam humanæ debet necessariò in Deo dari idea*)) makes it clear that we are entitled to use the general term ‘idea’ here.

⁴⁹ EIIp21s, (I) 467 (*idea ideae nihil aliud est, quàm forma ideae*).

⁵⁰ Indeed, as Spinoza states in the first axiom of the ‘physical excursion’ after EIIp13: ‘All bodies either move or are at rest’. EIIA1’, (I) 458 (*Omnia corpora vel moventur, vel quiescunt*).

perceived by the human Mind'.⁵¹ To be sure, this particular representation of the affections of the body in the human mind does not yet account for the *consciousness* of the ideas that are in that mind. Indeed, it would be grotesque to ascribe to Spinoza the claim that the human mind is conscious of everything that happens in its parallel body.⁵² But it does denote a first instance of the representational nature of thought: EIIp12 can be understood to express that according to Spinoza ideas indeed are 'about something, pointed outwards'.

The next thing that must be noted once more (see also section 4.3.1.1), is that in the context of the *Ethics* this inherent representational nature of ideas is so thoroughgoing that an idea can be understood to have itself as an object as well, in which case it appears as the *idea of the idea* (see the fourth quote). Now, precisely this claim – i.e. that there is in God an idea of the idea of each thing – can be understood to provide a (part of the) basis for Spinoza's theory of consciousness.⁵³ It is the very concept of *idea ideae* that turns the non-conscious *ideas of the affections* of the body⁵⁴ of EIIp12 into the conscious *ideas of the ideas of the affections* of the body that emerge in EIIp22d. The close relation between the notion of *idea ideae* and consciousness can be conjectured (inter alia) from EIIp22 and EIIp47d. In this latter demonstration Spinoza makes it clear that the having of ideas (i.e. the conscious representation of external things in a grasping mind) is based on EIIp22. In this proposition and (especially) its demonstration it becomes clear that this particular characteristic is in turn to be located in the notion *idea ideae* that is introduced in EIIp21s. This way of understanding EIIp22 and its demonstration is

⁵¹ EIIp12, (I) 456-457 (*Quicquid in objecto ideae, humanam Mentem constituentis, contingit, id ab humanâ Mente debet percipi*).

⁵² Margaret Wilson noted the following with respect to EIIp12: 'One point that seems to be overwhelmingly forced upon us by common sense is that Spinoza *must* be dissociating the notion of the human mind's *perceiving* some thing (or occurrence) from that of its being *consciously aware* of that thing (or occurrence)'. Wilson, 'Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge', 100. Indeed, it would seem to be rather grotesque to ascribe to Spinoza the position that a human mind is necessarily conscious of (say) every single erythrocyte transporting oxygen in its parallel body. As Edwin Curley remarked, this would have made a doctor's job quite a bit easier. Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 127.

⁵³ Other scholars have made the same observation. Edwin Curley is a case in point. He stated that '[w]e can equate having an idea of an idea with being conscious'. Curley, *Metaphysics*, 128.

⁵⁴ To be sure, the clause 'ideas of the affections of the body' does not surface in EIIp12 and its demonstration. Yet, in the demonstration of EIIp22 Spinoza refers to EIIp12 using this very clause: 'But the ideas of the affections of the Body are in the human Mind (by P12)'. EIIp22d, (I) 468 (*At ideae affectionum Corporis in Mente humanâ sunt (per prop. 12. hujus)*). This makes it clear that we are entitled to use it when referring to EIIp12.

warranted by the fact that the ideas of ideas of the affections of the body that surface in EIIp22d serve as a basis for the claim in EIIp23 that the mind *knows itself* by way of the perception of the ideas (i.e. the ideas of the ideas) of the affections of the body.⁵⁵ As in EIIp9d it is stated that ‘the mind (*by IIP23*) is necessarily *conscious* of itself [emphasis added],’⁵⁶ there appears to be little doubt left that the notion of *idea ideae* indeed can be understood to play a crucial role in Spinoza’s view on consciousness.⁵⁷ Furthermore it must be noted that the idea of the idea of a thing is claimed to be ‘nothing but the form of the idea’ (in EIIp21s). From this we learn that according to Spinoza an idea that is understood to be representational in terms of representation relation (I)* *is necessarily an idea that is consciously had by a mind*. That is to say: as we have seen above that an idea (I)''' must be understood to comprise both its formal and objective being, and as we have seen furthermore that the idea of an idea is nothing but the formal being of that idea, it becomes clear that, insofar as consciousness is expressed in the concept *idea ideae*, it must be understood to be encompassed by the (unspecified) idea that is captured under point (I)''' .⁵⁸

Evidently a lot more can be said about this. However, a treatment of all the

⁵⁵ The entire proposition reads thus: ‘The Mind does not know itself, except insofar as it perceives the ideas of the affections of the Body’ EIIp23, (I) 468 (*Mens se ipsam non cognoscit, nisi quatenus Corporis affectionum ideas percipit*).

⁵⁶ EIIIp9d, (I) 499 (*Mens (per Prop. 23. p. 2.) per ideas affectionum Corporis necessariò sui sit conscia*).

⁵⁷ Interesting views on the way in which the notion of ‘consciousness’ is to be understood in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy – and the importance of the complexity of the human mind (see note 136) – can be found (inter alia) in: Christopher Martin, ‘Consciousness in Spinoza’s Philosophy of Mind’ in: *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 45 (2007), 269-87; Steven Nadler, ‘Spinoza and Consciousness’ in: *Mind*, Vol. 117, 467, (2008), 575-601; Don Garrett, ‘Representation and Consciousness’ in: Charlie Huenemann ed., *Interpreting Spinoza: Critical Essays* (Cambridge 2008), 4-25; Michael LeBuffe, ‘Theories about Consciousness in Spinoza’s Ethics’ in: *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 119, No. 4 (2010), 531-563; Andrea Sangiacomo, ‘Adequate Knowledge and Bodily Complexity in Spinoza’s Account of Consciousness’ in: *Methodus* 6 (2011), 77-104; Oberto Marrama, ‘Consciousness, ideas of ideas and animation in Spinoza’s Ethics’ in: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 25(3) (2017), 506-525.

⁵⁸ As will become clear shortly (i.e. as soon as it is shown that idea (I)''' can be characterized as *true idea*), it is precisely because of this that Spinoza is able to state in EIIp43 that ‘[h]e who has a true idea at the same time knows that he has a true idea’. EIIp43, (I) 479 (*Qui veram habet ideam, simul scit se veram habere ideam*). Indeed, it would require considerable argumentative acrobatics to claim that the notion of consciousness is *not* encompassed by this claim. To be sure, as Spinoza has not been too informative concerning the way in which the notion of consciousness must be understood in the context his metaphysics, some hesitation of my readers is understandable. In the remainder of this chapter I hope to eradicate this hesitation by providing additional proof for the claim that idea (I)''' (i.e. a true idea) must be understood to comprise both its objective and its formal being (providing the basis for the ‘knowledge of knowledge’ that Spinoza forwards in EIIp43).

subjects that come to mind in this respect ('does this imply that according to Spinoza *all* things in nature are conscious?' (as there must be understood to be an idea in God of *all ideas* in nature),⁵⁹ 'how is this understanding of consciousness related to Spinoza's claims concerning the *complexity* of the human body',⁶⁰ *et cetera*) would take us too far afield. The thing to note in the context of the present section is that, even though Spinoza is not very explicit about the way in which his theory of consciousness is to be understood precisely, it appears to be reasonably clear that the inherent representational nature of thought plays a decisive role in it. This makes the question how this particular feature of thought is underpinned even more pressing. So how does Spinoza account for this aspect of mentality?

There is something to say for Bennett's claim that 'Spinoza does not discuss it'.⁶¹ For indeed, in the *Ethics* little can be found that actually grounds this representational nature of thought; Spinoza does not argue extensively for it. However, this is not to say that this specific characteristic of ideas has no fundament in the text at all. On closer scrutiny, two relevant argumentative strands can be detected in the *Ethics*.

The first one leads from EIIp20 to EIIp1. With respect to this line of argumentation it is important to acknowledge once more that the notion *idea ideae* in EIIp21s (and EIIp22d) is based on EIIp20, which in turn is claimed by Spinoza to have its foundation in EIIp1.⁶² As this latter proposition simply states that '[t]hought is an attribute of God',⁶³ without any further reference to the specific characteristics of this particular attribute,⁶⁴ we get a first firm indication that according to Spinoza *it is simply self-evident that thought (and hence all the modes that*

⁵⁹ Indeed, as it is stated in EIIp20d: 'there must necessarily be in God an idea both of thought and of all its affections, and consequently (by P11) of the human mind also'. EIIp20d, (I) 467 (*quàm omnium ejus affectionum, & consequenter (per Prop. 11. hujus) Mentis etiam humanae debet necessariò in Deo dari idea*).

⁶⁰ See note 136.

⁶¹ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 155.

⁶² And on EIIp3. However, as EIIp3 itself is based on EIIp1 (as well as on God's absolute omnipotence that is forwarded in EIp35), we seem entitled to focus only on EIIp1 in the present context.

⁶³ EIIp1, (I) 448 (*Cogitatio attributum Dei est*).

⁶⁴ This proposition is underpinned with a reference to EID5, EID6 and EIp25c. *Ibidem*, (I) 448. All three passages deal with modes and God, *irrespective* of the particular attribute under which the modes are subsumed. So the 'representation claim' in EIIp3 that – based on EIIp1 and the equally 'attribute-neutral' EIp16 – that 'God [...] can form the idea of his essence and of all the things which necessarily follow from it' (EIIp3, (I) 449 (*Deus enim [...] ideam suae essentiae, & omnium, quae necessariò ex eà sequuntur, formare potest*)) must be understood to be based on an apparently self-evident characteristic of the attribute of thought.

are subsumed under it) is representational. This tentative conclusion finds corroboration in the second argumentative strand that can be detected in the *Ethics*, which leads from EIp30 to EIA6. Above we have adduced the claim in EIp30 that ‘a true idea must agree with its object (by A6), i.e. (as is known through itself), what is contained objectively in the intellect must necessarily be in Nature’. The thing to notice in the present context is that on the basis of this quote the representational nature of an idea *can be traced back to EIA6*. For the very representational nature that is captured by the notion of objectivity (as ‘what is contained objectively in the intellect must necessarily be in Nature’) is claimed to be implied by the axiom that a true idea agrees with its object.⁶⁵ This fully underpins our observation that according to Spinoza it is *axiomatic*, or *known through itself*, that ideas are ‘about something’. Again, we are able to conclude that in the context of the *Ethics*, *the representational nature of ideas (i.e. their objectivity) must be conceived to be a self-evident characteristic of modes of thinking, in the very same way motion and rest are staged as self-evident characteristics of modes of extension.*⁶⁶ Both argumentative strands make it clear that the representational nature of thought is not so much *argued for* by Spinoza as it is *assumed* by him.

Actually, yet another important conclusion can be drawn. For the adduced clauses also provide us with a further way to characterize the relation between an idea and its identical object. From the mentioned passages – especially EIA6 – we can gather that this particular representation relation can be characterized with the important philosophical term ‘truth’. That is to say:

*Insofar as an idea is considered with respect to its parallel object, it must be understood to be true idea.*⁶⁷

As we are concerned here with the way in which we can understand the representation relation between an objective being and its parallel object, we can draw the conclusion that Spinoza’s axiomatic conception of ‘true idea’ can actually

⁶⁵ ‘A true idea must agree with its object’. EIA6, (I) 410 (*Idea vera debet cum suo ideato convenire*).

⁶⁶ Both self-evident properties can be traced back to God’s absolute power that is referred to in EIp35; see also note 50 and 62.

⁶⁷ See note 58.

be understood to be related closely to his parallelism thesis. The self-evident ‘agreement’ (*convenire*) between a true idea and the thing it agrees with that surfaces in EIA6, turns out to entail the very numerical identity of (and conceptual distinction between) an idea and its object that characterizes Spinoza’s parallelism thesis. In this sense, the parallelism thesis can be seen as an elaboration of the way in which we must understand the truth of ideas. In terms of the trichotomy that was uncovered in the previous chapter:

an idea can be understood to be true if the thing it represents objectively (and hence agrees with) is a conceptually distinct durational expression in the order of nature of the formal being of that idea.

This claim is in line with our findings concerning the *constructive function of the intellect*. Indeed, when we recall that Spinoza’s parallelism thesis must be considered to be an expression of the structure of *pars melior nostri*, we need not be surprised that one of the concepts that is essential for characterizing the knowledge that is had by an intellect – truth – turns out to be applicable to the very relation that is forwarded in this parallelism thesis. To be sure, this is not to say that we have treated the concept of truth sufficiently. This becomes clear when adducing (for instance) a passage in EIIp43s.

to have a true idea means nothing other than knowing a thing perfectly, *or* in the best way. And of course no one can doubt this unless he thinks that an idea is something mute, like a picture on a tablet, and not a mode of thinking, namely, the very act of understanding.⁶⁸

(Nam nemo, qui veram habet ideam, ignorat Veram ideam summam certitudinem involvere; veram namque habere ideam, nihil aliud significat, quàm perfectè, sive optimè rem cognoscere; nec sanè aliquis de hac re dubitare potest, nisi putet, ideam quid mutum instar picturæ in tabulâ, & non modum cogitandi esse, nempe ipsum intelligere)

The thing to note here is not (so much) that the very distinction that was made above (i.e. the distinction between idea (I)''' and image in the imagination (II)''') surfaces in this clause as well, nor that this very distinction is presented here in terms of ‘something mute’ on the one hand and a true idea on the other hand, but (especially) that this latter idea again is claimed *to be had*. We have already caught a

⁶⁸ EIIp43s, (I) 479.

first glimpse of the way in which the conscious aspect of this ‘having of ideas’ is to be understood. However, the way in which the human mind can be understood to have a true idea *in* the mind of a thing that is *external to that mind* – i.e. how the objective being of (say) a circle can be understood to *be internal and external at the same time* – is still unclear. The question how this particular aspect of the having of true ideas is to be conceived – and how the *location* of a true idea is related to the *consciousness* of that same idea – will be treated in a subsequent section. First we must treat representation relation (II)*: the relation between an image in the imagination and the thing it is the image of, i.e. the ‘representation’ of an external object in an image in the imagination of a perceiver. For as will become clear, a treatment of this subject provides us with more information about the way in which we must understand the having of true knowledge (and hence the way in which we must conceive *pars melior nostri*).

Representation relation (II)*: image and object

How do we have to conceive the representation relation between the image in the imagination of a perceiver and the external thing it is an internal picture of? A relevant passage can be found in the scholium in which Spinoza provides a concise overview of the three kinds of knowledge that he discerns: EIIp40s2. Consider the following claim once more:

From what has been said above, 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 which is mutilated, confused, and without order for the intellect (see P29C); for that reason I have been accustomed to call such perceptions knowledge from random experience;

II. from signs, for example, from the fact that, having heard or read words, we recollect things, and form certain ideas of them, like those through which we imagine the things (P18S); these two ways of regarding things I shall henceforth call knowledge of the first kind, opinion or imagination.⁶⁹

(Ex omnibus supra dictis clarè apparet, nos multa percipere, & notiones universales formare I°. Ex singularibus, nobis per sensûs mutilatè, confusè, & sine ordine ad intellectum representatis (vide Coroll. Prop. 29. hujus): & idè tales perceptiones cognitionem ab experientiâ vagâ vocare consuevi. II°. Ex signis, ex. gr. ex eo, quòd auditis, aut lectis quibusdam verbis rerum recordemur, & earum quasdam ideas formemus similes iis, per quas res imaginamur (vide Schol. Prop. 18. hujus). Utrumque hunc res contemplandi modum cognitionem primi generis, opinionem, vel imaginationem in posterum vocabo)

⁶⁹ EIIp40s2, (I) 477-478.

This passage is very telling, as it makes it clear (i) that images in the imagination – in contrast with objective beings (i.e. true ideas) – must be understood to have *no order for the intellect* (and by EIIp29c are perceived ‘from the common order of Nature’),⁷⁰ and (ii) that according to Spinoza, images in the imagination are *confused*.

In order to get a full grasp of the subject treated in this section, we need additional information concerning the way in which this confusion of images in the imagination at the conceptual level of the order of nature must be understood precisely. A passage in EIIp35s may be helpful in this respect. Consider the following claim:

when we look at the sun, we imagine it as about 200 feet away from us, an error which does not consist simply in this imagining, but in the fact that while we imagine it in this way, we are ignorant of its true distance and of the cause of this imagining. For even if we later come to know that it is more than 600 diameters of the earth away from us, we nevertheless imagine it as near. For we imagine the sun as near not because we do not know its true distance, but because an affection of our body involves the essence of the sun insofar as our body is affected by the sun.⁷¹

(Sic cum solem intuemur, eum ducentos circiter pedes à nobis distare imaginamur, qui error in hac solâ imaginatione non consistit, sed in eo, quòd dum ipsum sic imaginamur, veram ejus distantiam, & hujus imaginationis causam ignoramus. Nam tametsi postea cognoscamus, eundem ultra 600 terræ diametros à nobis distare, ipsum nihilominus propè adesse imaginabimur; non enim solem adeò propinquum imaginamur, propterea quòd veram ejus distantiam ignoramus, sed propterea, quòd affectio nostri corporis essentiam solis involvit, quatenus ipsum corpus ab eodem afficitur)

This assertion makes it clear once more that the ideas of our bodily affections do ‘represent’ external bodies by being mental pictures of them: according to Spinoza we imagine the sun as near, because an affection of our body (i.e. the ‘extended image’) involves the essence of the sun insofar as our body is affected by the (extended) sun. And by parallelism, the image in the imagination (i.e. the idea of the affection of our body) somehow involves the essence of the sun insofar as our mind is affected by the (idea of) the sun.

So far, so good. But how do we have to conceive the confusion that is characteristic for images in the imagination, and that are ‘represented to us through the senses’? The crucial claim can be found in the last sentence of the quoted

⁷⁰ EIIp29c, (I) 471 (*ex communi naturæ ordine*).

⁷¹ EIIp35s, (I) 473.

passage. Here it is stated that the image in the imagination (*in casu*: of the sun) involves the essence of the external thing (the sun) *insofar as our body is affected by it*. From this claim it becomes clear that insofar as the image in the imagination is taken to present the external thing as present to us, there actually is *something lacking in the perceived representation relation*. Whereas the image in the imagination appears to present the entire sun to us (and to represent nothing but the sun), taken in itself this image in the imagination – i.e. the parallel idea of an affection of our body – does not *explain* the nature of the sun, but merely *involves* the nature of the sun. It is precisely because of this that images in the imagination are called ‘false ideas’ by Spinoza. Indeed, at this point it is crucial to acknowledge that the ‘sun-passage’ in EIIp35s is employed by Spinoza in order to explain the *falsity* of ideas. Consider the proposition to which EIIp35s is added:

Falsity consists in the privation of knowledge which inadequate, or mutilated and confused, ideas involve.⁷²

(*Falsitas consistit in cognitionis privatione, quam ideae inadæquatæ, sive mutilatæ, & confusæ involvunt*)

From what we have said above, it must be clear how we must understand this ‘privation of knowledge’. An image in the imagination is a false idea because the perceiver confuses the external thing in the common order of nature (say: the sun) that causes a bodily affection in his body, with the bodily affection that involves the essence of the sun. In other words: *an imagination can be understood to be a misjudgment concerning the object that is grasped. The image in the imagination is believed to represent an external body, whereas it must actually be conceived to represent (i.e. to be parallel to) an extended part of the perceiving body itself (i.e. an affection of the body: the image) that merely involves the external body.*

This way of understanding Spinoza’s claims not only accounts for his use of the term ‘*privatione*’ – as clearly something is lacking in the judgment of the perceiver – but also clarifies why he would be entitled to make the following important assertion:

⁷² EIIp35, (I) 472.

I should like you to note that the imaginations of the Mind, considered in themselves contain no error, *or* that the Mind does not err from the fact that it imagines, but only insofar as it is considered to lack an idea which excludes the existence of those things which it imagines to be present to it.⁷³

(notetis velim, Mentis imaginationes in se spectatas, nihil erroris continere, sive Mentem ex eo, quòd imaginatur, non errare; sed tantùm, quatenus consideratur, carere ideâ, quæ existentiam illarum rerum, quas sibi præsentem imaginatur, secludat)

For we have learned that an image in the imagination can only be called ‘false’ or ‘confused’ when the perceiving mind concludes that the image in the imagination represents (in the sense of (I)*) the external cause in the common order of nature (i.e. the sun), whereas it is actually a mode of thinking that represents (again: in the sense of (I)*) a part of the body (i.e. an image) of the perceiver). The image of the sun in my imagination is confused as long as I believe this mental picture to agree with (i.e. to be the objective being of) the extended sun. But in itself this image in my imagination contains no error, as in itself this idea of an affection of the body simply is *the objective being of this affection of the body* (an affection, to be sure, that involves my body *and* the external cause of this affection). In terms of the representation relations that were distinguished above: according to Spinoza an image in the imagination is a *false idea* insofar as it is taken to be representational in the way of (II)*; and the very same image in the imagination is a *true idea* insofar as it is conceived to be representational in the way of (I)*.

*

In the introduction to this chapter I have made it clear that scholars have expressed doubts as to the possibility of a human mind to have true ideas. This doubt has not been taken away. For as of yet the question remains: how is it possible to have a true idea of an *external* thing (such as, say, a circle that is drawn on a piece of paper) *in* the mind? How can a thing be external and internal at the same time? This important problem will be dealt with in the subsequent sections. However, in order to be absolutely clear about Spinoza’s theory of knowledge, I must still add two important things with regard to the status that can be attributed to knowledge of the first kind (i.e. the knowledge that is characterized by representation relation (II)*: *imaginatio*).

⁷³ EIIp17s, (I) 465.

Firstly, it is crucial to note that the consciousness that can be attributed to true ideas by virtue of the fact that true ideas encompass their formal being (and hence the *idea ideae*), can be attributed to the imagination too. This observation – that accords nicely with the way in which we commonly understand human mentality – finds its ground in the fact that an imagination in the mind, if considered in itself, must be understood to be the objective being (i.e. idea (I)) of an affection of the body of the perceiver. Indeed, as we just saw, Spinoza claims in EIIp17s that ‘imagination in the Mind considered in themselves, contain no error’. Now, as there is an idea in God of *any idea* in nature (by EIIp20 – see above), and consequently of the idea of a bodily affection that is caused by an external thing as well, this image in the imagination, considered in itself, can be understood to be an *idea ideae* in the same way any other idea can be conceived as such. It is precisely because of this that Spinoza uses the notion *idea ideae* not only in propositions that treat true ideas (such as in EIIp43 – see Chapter 4), but also in propositions that deal with images in the imagination (such as EIIp22 – see above).⁷⁴ To be sure, insofar as the idea of a bodily affection is taken by the perceiver to have the external causing thing as its object, it must be understood to be in the mind of the perceiving agent as an *idea of a false idea*.⁷⁵

The second point that must be made regarding the status of images in the imagination concerns the pejorative sense of the terms I have used with respect to representation relation (II)*. The terms that were employed in order to indicate the status of the images in the imagination – ‘misjudgment’, ‘confused’, ‘false’ – appear to imply that according to Spinoza these particular mental occurrences, despite their conscious state, must be mistrusted and rejected altogether. However, it is crucial to remark that this is not the case. Spinoza’s claim in EIVp4 that ‘it is impossible that a man should not be a part of Nature’⁷⁶ and his addition in EIVp4c that man necessarily ‘follows and obeys the common order of Nature, and

⁷⁴ The notion of *idea ideae* (or a clear allusion to it) surfaces inter alia in the following ‘imagination-related’ passages: EIIp22d, EIIp23d, EIIp28s and EIIp29.

⁷⁵ This is an interpretive term that cannot be found in the *Ethics*. Clearly, a lot more can be said about Spinoza’s theory of consciousness. However, this would take us too far afield. Indeed, in the context of the present study we are not interested in what is applicable to both the intellect and the imagination, but only in what sets the intellect apart from the imagination. See also notes 53 and 174.

⁷⁶ EIVp4, (I) 548 (*Fieri non potest, ut homo non sit Naturæ pars*).

accommodates himself to it as much as the nature of things requires'⁷⁷ implies that false ideas are instrumental – and in this sense are necessary tools – in this continuous accommodation to the common order of nature. This can be elucidated with an example. Consider the case of someone trying to cross the street and then suddenly noticing an approaching truck. On the basis of the things we have seen, it is clear that the approaching truck can be understood to be susceptible to two distinct representation relations. On the one hand the truck is the object of an identical objective being, as according to Spinoza the extended truck must be understood to have a parallel idea that is numerically identical to it, and the grasping of which can be understood to be a true idea. On the other hand, the extended truck is 'represented' in a confused image in the imagination of the person that aims to cross the street. Now, it is important to acknowledge that this latter image in the imagination, which presents the approaching truck as present to the perceiver, *is sufficient for the person to accommodate himself to the order of nature*. True, the 'idea' of the approaching truck insofar as it is merely acquired via the common order of nature must be understood to be 'confused and mutilated' (EIIp29d). But at the same time it provides the person on the sidewalk with enough information so as to decide not to cross the street but to wait until the truck has passed. Indeed: if true knowledge would be an absolute precondition for survival, there would be radically less organic species.

The notion of truth that is characterized by the agreement relation between an objective being and its numerically identical object must be understood to be a strictly defined philosophical notion – or as Spinoza himself calls it, 'another standard of truth'⁷⁸ – that is to be distinguished sharply from our usage of the notion 'truth' in everyday life. To a certain extent it is certainly 'true' that a truck is approaching when a (mentally sane and sober) perceiver notices an approaching truck via sense-perception (i.e., by EIIp29c, via 'the common order of Nature'). But the particular 'truth' of this outing must be understood to be distinct from the concept that Spinoza forwards when he speaks of the representation that is

⁷⁷ EIVp4c, (I) 549; the entire corollary reads thus: 'From this it follows that man is necessarily always subject to passions, that he follows and obeys the common order of Nature, and accommodates himself to it as much as the nature of things requires'. (*Hinc sequitur, hominem necessariò passionibus esse semper obnoxium, communemque Naturæ ordinem sequi, & eidem parere, seseque eidem, quantum rerum natura exigit, accommodare*).

⁷⁸ EI Appendix, (I) 441 (*aliam veritatis normam*).

characteristic for grasping things according to ‘the order of the intellect’ (EIIp18s). For indeed, a perceiver need not perceive the truck *through its first cause* (again (a paraphrase from) EIIp18s) in order to avoid a rather bloody incident. As already noted in slightly different terms, it is rather doubtful whether there would be many living things⁷⁹ left if survival in the order of nature would be dependent on knowledge of things through their first causes.

This important distinction between the notion of truth that characterizes representation relation (I)* and the ‘truth’ of representation relation (II)* can perhaps be understood more easily if it is recalled that Spinoza has a specific ethical aim with his philosophy. Indeed, as he states in the Preface of part IV of the *Ethics*, ‘we desire to form an idea of man, as a model of human nature which we may look to’.⁸⁰ Now, it is important to note that the strictly defined philosophical notion of truth that characterizes representation relation (I)* is essential for the very *instrumental function of the intellect* that was referred to in the previous chapters (and that will be elucidated in a subsequent section). Avoiding trucks in itself, on the other hand – life-saving as it may be – does not bring the ethical aim any nearer. Indeed, ‘the ideas which are clear and distinct in us, [...] cannot follow from mutilated and confused ideas, which (by IIP40S2) are related to the first kind of knowledge’.⁸¹ That is to say: even though the striving for self-perseverance is something that is shared by all things in nature (by EIIIp6),⁸² and even though Spinoza states furthermore that ‘the more each one strives [...] to persevere its being, the more he is endowed with virtue’ (EIVp20),⁸³ Spinoza makes it very clear also that ‘a man cannot absolutely be said to act from virtue insofar as he is determined to do something because he has inadequate ideas, but only insofar as he

⁷⁹ In EIIp13s Spinoza makes the remarkable claim that all individuals in nature are ‘animate’. EIIp13s, (I) 458. The question whether according to Spinoza there can be understood to be a distinction between *organic* and *inorganic* things exceeds the limits of this study.

⁸⁰ EIV Preface, (I) 545 (*Nam quia ideam hominis tanquam naturæ, humanæ exemplar, quod intueamur, formare cupimus*).

⁸¹ EVp28d, (I) 609.

⁸² ‘Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being’. EIIIp6, (I) 498 (*Unaquæque res, quantum in se est, in suo esse perseverare conatur*).

⁸³ The proposition reads thus: ‘The more each one strives, and is able, to seek his own advantage, that is, to preserve his being, the more he is endowed with virtue [...]’. EIVp20, (I) 557 (*Quò magis unusquisque suum utile querere, hoc est, suum esse conservare conatur, & potest, eò magis virtute præditus est*).

is determined because he understands' (EIVp23).⁸⁴ In other words: *imaginatio* – such as the having of an image in the imagination of an approaching truck – in itself cannot provide a way to 'knowledge of God' (EIVp28).⁸⁵ Something more is needed: *adequate* knowledge.⁸⁶ As already noted, this does not imply that the images in the imagination that enable us to avoid trucks (and infinitely many other dangers) must be rejected altogether.⁸⁷ On the contrary: these images are paramount to our survival in the order of nature. Moreover, in a subsequent section we will see that images in the imagination can serve as 'raw material' on the basis of which the human mind is able to expand its range of adequate ideas. But at the same time it must be stressed that the having of images in the imagination in itself is not sufficient for attaining true and adequate knowledge. Spinoza wants to get across that avoiding a danger that is signaled via sense-perception, prudent as it may be, is not an *ethical* thing to do. Grasping a truck's essence by somehow grasping the objective being of that extended thing (and hence its eternal formal status) *is*. For knowing the approaching truck in this latter way means nothing else than knowing the truck through its first cause and hence 'logging in' to God's self-knowledge.

*

In sum: in the Ethics we can distinguish two types of ideas. On the one hand an idea can be understood to be an objective being that is numerically identical to its object and that can also be conceived in its formal being, without respect to its object. On the other hand an 'idea' can be understood to be an image in the imagination, the extended parallel of which indicates the body of the perceiver more than it indicates the external thing that is perceived. These two types of ideas – which both can be understood to be conscious ideas due to the fact that there is

⁸⁴ EIVp23, (I) 558 (*Homo, quatenus ad aliquid agendum determinatur ex eo, quòd ideas habet inadæquatas, non potest absolutè dici, ex virtute agere; sed tantùm, quatenus determinatur ex eo, quòd intelligit*).

⁸⁵ EIVp28, (I) 559 (*Dei cognitio*).

⁸⁶ In the next section we will see how Spinoza defines the *adequacy* of an idea, as well as the way in which the relation between truth and adequacy must be understood.

⁸⁷ It is precisely because of this that terms such as 'good' and 'evil', that according to Spinoza must be understood to belong to the imagination rather than the intellect (see EI Appendix, (I) 444), still can be understood to have instrumental value: 'But though this is so, still we must retain these words'. EIV Preface, (I) 545 (*Verùm, quamvis se res ità habeat, nobis tamen hæc vocabula retinenda sunt*).

an idea in God of any idea in nature – can be mapped on two representation relations. The relation between an objective being and its parallel object can be designated in terms of truth; the relation between an image in the imagination and the thing it is the mental picture of can be designated in terms of confusion – or falsity – because it entails a misinterpretation concerning the object of this specific mental occurrence. To be sure, the confused ideas of the things that are ‘represented to us through the senses’ certainly have their worth, as they enable animated things to accommodate themselves to the common order of nature and hence to lengthen their durational existence. Yet, in order to reach the highest virtue – the grasping of things in the order of the intellect, that is: the logging in to God’s self-knowledge – something more is needed: true and adequate ideas.

5.3 Two orders

In section 5.1.1 it was stated that we will treat two questions in this chapter: (i) how the horizontal representation of things in the human mind must be understood, and (ii) how the human mind can be conceived to have true and adequate ideas. Having treated some important aspects of the first point, we can turn to the second question. Now, from what we have said so far it is clear that this second problem is anything but easy to untangle. We may have gained considerable insight into the way in which ideas must be understood to be representational in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy. But as of yet one aspect of Spinoza’s theory of the intellect remains in the dark. This particular problem can be formulated thus: it is still hard to see how an idea in the mind of a perceiver can be understood to be true in the sense that it *agrees with its object*. The objective being of (say) a circle (or of Peter, or of an approaching truck) – i.e., by EIIp8c, its idea – appears to be outside the perceiving human mind in the same way the drawn circle (or Peter, or the approaching truck) is outside the human body. This inevitably leads to the question how the true idea of an external thing can actually be had by a human mind. Indeed, how can an idea of a certain thing *be internal and external at the same time*? It is the aim of this section to show that Spinoza provides a way to safeguard the possibility for human minds to have true and adequate ideas. We will see that the key to understanding this ability of the human mind is the recognition – and the exact purport – of the distinction Spinoza makes between the *order of nature*

and the *order of the intellect*. As will become clear in the next section, recognition of this important distinction is crucial for understanding how Spinoza is able to claim that a human mind can consciously have a true idea, without needing to locate the objective being of an external thing in the objective being of the knowing agent.

5.3.1 Truth and adequacy

Above we have already said a lot concerning the order of nature and the way in which things are grasped from this specific order. As a matter of fact, Spinoza himself is very explicit about this subject. For in EIIp29c he states the following:

From this it follows that so long as the human Mind perceives things from the common order of Nature, it does not have an adequate, but only a confused and mutilated knowledge of itself, of its own Body, and of external bodies.⁸⁸

(Hinc sequitur, Mentem humanam, quoties ex communi naturæ ordine res percipit, nec sui ipsius, nec sui Corporis, nec corporum externorum adæquatam, sed confusam tantum, & mutilatam habere cognitionem)

This passage – that of course was already referred to various times in the previous section – leaves little doubt as to the status of the knowledge that is attained via the common order of nature. If things are ‘represented to us through the senses’, they are considered insofar as they are subject to representation relation (II)*, that is: insofar as they are false ideas that are ‘mutilated, confused and without order for the intellect’.⁸⁹

To be sure, there is yet another way of staging the character of *imaginatio*. In EIp15s, Spinoza portrays the distinction between the imagination and the intellect in the following way:

So if we attend to quantity as it is in the imagination, [...] it will be found to be finite, divisible and composed of parts; but if we attend to it as it is in the intellect, and conceive it insofar as it is a substance, [...] then [...] it will be found to be infinite, unique and indivisible.⁹⁰

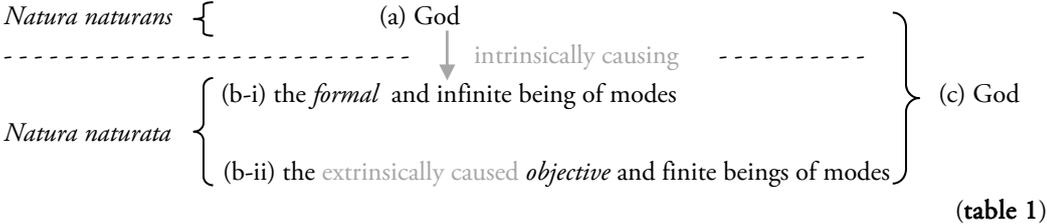
(Si itaque ad quantitatem attendimus, prout in imaginatione est, [...] reperietur finita, divisibilis, & ex partibus conflata; si autem ad ipsam, prout in intellectu est, attendimus, & eam, quatenus substantia est, concipimus, [...] infinita, unica, & indivisibilis reperietur)

⁸⁸ EIIp29c, (I) 471.

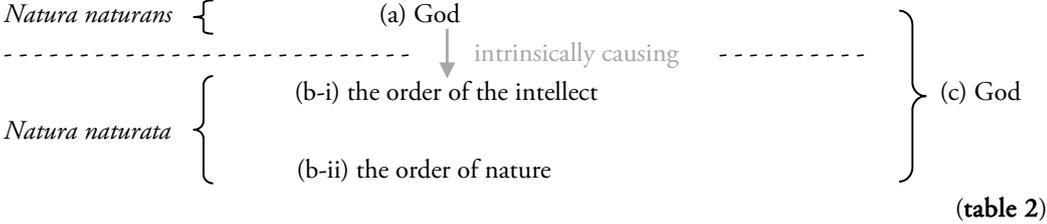
⁸⁹ EIIp40s2, (I) 477 (*mutilatè, confusè, & sine ordine ad intellectum*).

⁹⁰ EIp15s, I) 424.

This passage makes it clear that the confusion that is characteristic for perceiving things with the imagination can also be staged in mereological terms, which in turn suggests that the distinction between the order of the intellect and the order of nature can be mapped on a distinction that was uncovered in the previous chapters. Recall that we have seen that things can be conceived in two ways: as intrinsically caused parts-with-a-vista which are infinite and eternal and provide cognitive access to God’s infinite and eternal essence, and as extrinsically caused parts of nature which are finite and exist under duration. This was rendered thus:



Now, the quoted passage from EIp15s suggests that this table can also be presented in the following way:



Indeed, if our claims concerning the finite objective parts and the infinite formal parts-with-a-vista are considered in conjunction with Spinoza remark in EIp15s, it appears to become clear that the structure of Spinoza’s metaphysics (which was moreover claimed to be an expression of the structure of *pars melior nostri*) can be rendered in the way of table 2.

To be sure, we need more proof for this claim. Below I will show how Spinoza accounts for the counterintuitive claim that the collection of objective parts must be located in the order of nature (b-ii).⁹¹ But first I will provide four arguments for the assertion that according to Spinoza things have order for the intellect, not insofar as they are grasped as mutually limiting parts at level (b-ii), but

⁹¹ This claim is counterintuitive because we have just seen that the objective being of a thing can be characterized with the term ‘truth’, which in turn suggests that objective beings must be located in the order of the intellect, *not* in the order of nature.

only insofar as they are grasped as to their intrinsically caused infinite and eternal being at level (b-i). Another way of saying this is that we will see now how the uncovered structure of *pars melior nostri* is related to Spinoza's conception of true and adequate ideas.

Argument 1: the definition of adequate idea

According to Spinoza, the true ideas in the intellect must be understood to be *adequate*. Whereas 'all those ideas which are inadequate and confused' are claimed to pertain to knowledge of the first kind, 'to knowledge of the second and third kinds pertain those [ideas] which are adequate; and so [...] this knowledge is necessarily true'.⁹² This teaches us that a scrutiny of the concept of 'adequacy' (and its intricate relation with the notion of 'truth') may tell us more about the way in which we must understand the order of the intellect. So how are we to conceive this particular concept?

Spinoza's definition of adequacy famously reads thus:

By adequate idea I understand an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself, without relation to an object, has all the properties, *or* intrinsic denominations of a true idea.

Exp.: *I say intrinsic to exclude what is extrinsic, namely, the agreement of the idea with its object.*⁹³
(*Per ideam adequatam intelligo ideam, quæ, quatenus in se sine relatione ad objectum consideratur, omnes veræ ideæ proprietates, sive denominationes intrinsecas habet.*

EXPLICATIO. *Dico intrinsecas, ut illam secludam, quæ extrinseca est, nempe convenientiam ideæ cum suo ideato*)

We cannot fail to notice that in his description of what it is for an idea to be adequate, Spinoza *uses the very same formulation that also surfaces with respect to the formal being of ideas*: the fact that ideas can also be *considered in themselves*, that is: *without relation to their objects*. This provides us with a strong indication that the adequacy of an idea is connected intimately with the formal being of that idea. In terms of table 2: an idea can only be understood to be adequate if it is conceived to

⁹² EIIp41d, (I) 478 (*Ad primi generis cognitionem illas omnes ideas [...] pertinere, quæ sunt inadæquata, & confusæ [...] Deinde ad cognitionem secundi, & tertii illas pertinere diximus, quæ sunt adæquata; adeoque [...] est necessariò vera*).

⁹³ EIID4, (I) 447.

be operative at level (b-i), i.e. the level of things that are grasped insofar as they are intrinsically caused unlimited parts-with-a-vista.

Argument 2: EIIp32

In EIIp32 we read the following:

All ideas, insofar as they are related to God, are true.

Dem.: For all ideas which are in God agree entirely with their objects (by P7C), and so (by IA6) they are all true, q.e.d.⁹⁴

(Omnes ideae, quatenus ad Deum referuntur, verae sunt.

DEMONSTRATIO. Omnes enim ideae, quae in Deo sunt, cum suis [Objectis et] ideatis omninò conveniunt (per Coroll. Prop. 7. hujus), adeoque (per Ax. 6. p. 1.) omnes verae sunt. Q. E. D.)

This claim is interesting for various reasons. For one thing, it is in line with the assertion that the ideas of our bodily affections – i.e. the images in our imagination – contain no falsity in themselves, and can only be called ‘false’ insofar as they are related to a singular mind that misjudges the represented content. For from EIIp32 we can gather that the ideas of our bodily affections must indeed be understood to be true insofar as they are related to God. This ‘mind-relativity of content’ (to adduce a formulation of Della Rocca)⁹⁵ provides Spinoza with a defence against claims such as the famous arguments that Pierre Bayle forwarded against Spinoza’s

⁹⁴ EIIp32, (I) 472.

⁹⁵ Della Rocca, *Representation*, Chapter 3. To be sure, this ‘mind-relativity of content’ can only be deemed applicable to *false* ideas. For as soon as the human mind has true and adequate ideas, this mind must be understood to converge with God’s self-knowledge, as by EVp36 ‘the mind’s intellectual love of God is the very love of God by which God loves himself’ (EVp36, (I) 612 (*Mentis Amor intellectualis erga Deum est ipse Dei Amor, quo Deus se ipsum amat*)). Della Rocca seems to hold the very same position, as with respect to the mind-relativity of content he considers only the case of *confused ideas*, and adds that in some cases – i.e. in the case of *adequate ideas* – things are different. See: Della Rocca, *Representation*, 46.

philosophy.⁹⁶ Spinoza's line of defense may not be entirely convincing.⁹⁷ But in the present context we are not so much interested in the force of Spinoza's argument concerning the mind-relativity of content, as we aim to find out how EIIp32 corroborates our claim that the order of the intellect must be understood in the way expressed in the tables 1 and 2. With respect to this question, the demonstration of EIIp32 contains an important remark. Spinoza underpins this proposition with a reference to *EIIp7c*. This is most telling, as we have established in the previous chapter that this corollary *posits the identity between the formal and eternal being of things and their objective durational being*. Indeed, the reference to the claim in EIIp7c that 'whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection' makes it very clear that, again, the truth – and (by EIIp36d, EIIp38d, EIIp39d) the

⁹⁶ Pierre Bayle stated that Spinoza is 'the greatest atheist there ever was'. Wiep van Bunge, Henri Krop, a.o., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Spinoza* (London 2014), 86. One of the problems that Bayle detected in Spinoza's philosophy is related to what is called the 'Mereological Claim' in this study: the fact that the human mind must be understood to be a *part of the infinite intellect* of God. Consider the following analysis from Bayle's *Dictionary*: 'If it were true then, as Spinoza claims, that men are modalities of God, one would speak falsely when one said, 'Peter denies this, he wants that, he affirms such and such a thing', for actually, according to this theory, it is God who denies, wants, affirms; and consequently all the denominations that result from the thoughts of all men are properly and physically to be ascribed to God. From which it follows that God hates and loves, denies and affirms the same things at the same time; and this according to all the conditions required to make false the rule mentioned above concerning opposite terms; for it cannot be denied that, taking all these terms with all possible rigour, some men love and affirm what other men hate and deny'. (*S'il était donc vrai, comme le prétend Spinoza, que les hommes fussent des modalités de Dieu, on parlerait faussement quand on dirait, Pierre nie ceci, il veut cela, il affirme une telle chose; car réellement et d'effet, selon ce système, c'est Dieu qui nie, qui veut, qui affirme, et par conséquent toutes les dénominations qui résultent des pensées de tous les hommes tombent proprement et physiquement sur la substance de Dieu. D'où il s'ensuit que Dieu hait et aime, nie et affirme les mêmes choses en même temps, et selon toutes les conditions requises pour faire que la règle que j'ai rapportée touchant les termes opposés soit fausse; car on ne saurait nier que, selon toutes ces conditions prises en toute rigueur, certains hommes n'aiment et n'affirment ce que d'autres hommes haïssent et nient*). Van Bunge, Krop, a.o., *Bloomsbury Companion*, 96. Now, EIIp32 makes it abundantly clear that Spinoza would not agree with Bayle that when 'Peter denies this, he wants that, he affirms such and such a thing [...] it is God who denies, wants, affirms'. On Spinoza's account, Peter's confused ideas cannot be understood to be related to God. For insofar as Peter has confused ideas, something is *lacking* in these ideas, a privation that cannot be ascribed to the very same idea insofar as it is related to God. According to Spinoza, the very *privation* that is characteristic for the misinterpretation of the represented object can only be attributed to the perceiving mind, and not to God, who is infinite and all-encompassing and of whom it is thus senseless to suppose any negation.

⁹⁷ As Margaret Wilson stated: 'from several points of view one may be able to preserve Spinoza's reconciliation of human error with the dictum that all ideas, insofar as they are related to God, are true. [...] But [a false idea] *is* an idea; and thus presumably it has to be conceived as a mode of God. It would seem to follow that ideas which are false are among God's modes: That is (to put the matter colloquially), Spinoza's God *must* after all have false ideas'. Wilson, 'Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge', 110.

adequacy⁹⁸ – of an idea must be conceived to be closely connected with the level of the formal being of things. In terms of tables 1 and 2: it is precisely the recognition of the eternal being of things at level (b-i) that according to Spinoza must be understood to be a necessary constituent of an account of truth and adequacy – and hence of the way in which we must understand the order of the intellect.

Argument 3: *Objectum* and *ideatum*

Earlier in this chapter – and indeed in Argument 1 – we have seen that according to Spinoza an idea is true if it agrees with its object. *Prima facie* it may appear as if this claim refers to the agreement between an idea and its *durational* object. However, even though this agreement at level (b-ii) is indeed captured by ‘truth-axiom’ EIA6, it actually tells only part of the story. In this respect it must be acknowledged that Spinoza uses two distinct terms in order to designate the thing a true idea necessarily agrees with. We have already seen that an idea can be understood to agree with its *objectum*; as a matter of fact, our claim concerning the trichotomy that characterizes the intellect – and that is expressed in Spinoza’s transitive parallelism – was based inter alia on his assertion in EIIp13 that ‘the *objectum* of the idea constituting the human Mind is the body’⁹⁹ (see section 2.5.3). This example – and various others – appears to make it clear that ‘*objectum*’ is the standard term that Spinoza uses in order to refer to the object of an idea.¹⁰⁰ However, remarkably enough in the very axiom in which Spinoza explains how we must conceive a true idea, *he uses another term*. In EIA6, a true idea is not claimed to agree with its

⁹⁸ In EIIp32d, the corollary of EIIp7 is used in order to corroborate a claim concerning the *truth* of an idea; in EIIp36d, EIIp38d, EIIp39d the very same corollary is adduced in order to argue for the *adequacy* of ideas. This need not surprise us too much, as we have seen that Spinoza claims in Letter 60 that he sees no real difference between true and adequate ideas (see note 4).

⁹⁹ EIIp13, (I) 457.

¹⁰⁰ The term ‘*objectum*’ (or a variant of it) is used many times in the *Ethics*. I have found at least eighty-eight occurrences of the term.

‘*objectum*’, but with its ‘*ideatum*’¹⁰¹ (a distinction that is obliterated in Edwin Curley’s English translation of the *Ethics*).¹⁰²

What are we to make of this? Can this vacillation be understood to uncover an intricate differentiation that is made on purpose by Spinoza? Or is it merely an insignificant change of terms? It certainly cannot be ruled out that the latter is the case. Spinoza, for all his evident effort to provide his readers with a well-structured system, sometimes appears to use terms somewhat loosely (his use of the term ‘*idea*’ in EIIp16 (see above) being an evident case in point, his use of the term ‘*duration*’ in his claim concerning ‘the mind’s duration without relation to the body’ in EVp20s being another well-known and much-discussed example).¹⁰³ However, there is reason to suppose that in the present case the employment of two separate terms is deliberate. Firstly, it is rather clear from the many occurrences of the term ‘*objectum*’ in the *Ethics*, which Spinoza uses this term in order to designate an object

¹⁰¹ The term ‘*ideatum*’ (or a variant of it) is used only ten times in the *Ethics*; in eight of these cases there is a clear reference to EIA6 (the axiom in which Spinoza posits the characteristic of a true idea). The same goes for the other uses of this term, such as for instance the claim in letter 32 that ‘there is [...] in nature an infinite power of thinking, which, insofar as it is infinite, contains in itself objectively the whole of Nature, and whose thoughts proceed in the same way as Nature, its object, does’. Letter 32, (II) 20 (*in naturâ potentiam infinitam cogitandi, quâ, quatenus infinita, in se continet totam Naturam objective, & cujus cogitationes procedunt eodem modo, ac Natura, ejus nimirum ideatum*). The very claims in EIA6 and Letter 32 are combined in EIp30d in the claim that ‘a true idea must agree with its object (by A6), that is (as is known through itself), what is contained objectively in the intellect must necessarily be in Nature’ (*Idea vera debet convenire cum suo ideato (per Axiom. 6.), hoc est (ut per se notum) id, quod in intellectu objective continetur, debet necessariò in naturâ dari*).

¹⁰² The translation reads: ‘A true idea must agree with its *object* [emphasis added]’. EIA6, (I) 410 (*Idea vera debet cum suo ideato convenire*). That is to say: Curley uses the very same term ‘*object*’ for ‘*ideatum*’ as he does for ‘*objectum*’.

¹⁰³ EVp20, (I) 606 (*Mentis durationem sine relatione ad Corpus pertinent*). This example is much-discussed because it seems to go against Spinoza’s parallelism thesis: if the mind has duration without the body, then the claim that the mind and the body are the same thing appears to be subverted. I think that the only way in which Spinoza’s claims in EVp20 and onwards can be understood properly – and be brought in line with the metaphysical structure that is laid out in the preceding parts of the *Ethics* – is by supposing that the term ‘*duration*’ in EVp20s is a ‘slip of the pen’ on Spinoza’s part. As must be clear from what I have said in the previous chapters, I admit that this is a weak spot in the present interpretation; claiming that Spinoza should have put things differently cannot be but the last resort of an interpreter. However, in this case – and for the time being – I think this awkward solution is to be sanctioned, the more so as Spinoza himself says with respect to the eternity of the mind that ‘if we attend to the common opinion of men, we shall see that they are indeed conscious of the eternity of their mind, but that they *confuse* it with duration [emphasis added]’. EVp34s, (I) 611-612 (*Si ad hominum communem opinionem attendamus, videbimus, eos suæ Mentis æternitatis esse quidem conscios; sed ipsos eandem cum duratione confundere*).

insofar as it is operative in the realm of *duration*.¹⁰⁴ With this in mind, it is important to recall what we have said concerning idea (I). Above it was stated that this particular idea can actually be considered to be an *unspecified* idea. Indeed, above it was argued that the idea from point (I) is not exhausted by the ‘objective being’ (EIIp8c) that was shown to merely agree with its durational *objectum*. For even though it is right that idea (I) can be understood to parallel its durational *objectum* (i.e. that it is the very same thing considered in two durational ways), it must be conceived to refer to still something else: *the eternal formal being of a thing*. This assertion is corroborated, not only by Spinoza’s claims in EIIp8c and EIIp8s (which were adduced above), but also by (inter alia) EIIp44d and EIIp44c2, where Spinoza provides important information about the way in which ‘truth-axiom’ EIA6 must be understood. EIIp44d contains the following remark:

it is of the nature of reason to perceive things truly [...], viz. (*by IA6*) *as they are in themselves* [emphasis added].¹⁰⁵

(*De naturâ rationis est res verè percipere [...], nempe (per axiom. 6. P. 1.) ut in se sunt*)

And then in the demonstration of EIIp44c2 it is added that this implies that it is of the nature of reason to regard things ‘under a certain species of eternity’.¹⁰⁶ These passages are most telling in the present context, as they teach us that according to Spinoza ‘truth-axiom’ EIA6 entails that an idea can only be called ‘true’ if it agrees with its durational object *and* with that same thing insofar as it is known *in itself*, that is: *under a species of eternity*. In other words: the demonstration and the third corollary of EIIp44 firmly corroborate the claim that a true idea must be understood to agree not only with its durational object, but also with its eternal formal being.¹⁰⁷

It appears to be precisely because of this that Spinoza uses a special term for the thing that is represented by a true idea. Consider the following table:

¹⁰⁴ See for instance: EI Appendix (I) 445, EIIp9c, (I) 454, EIIp10s2, (I) 455, EIIp12, (I) 456, EIIp13, (I) 457, EIIp13s, (I) 458, EIIIPost.2, (I) 493, EIIp2s, (I) 495, EIIp16, (I) 503, EIIp51, (I) 522, EIVp10s, (I) 552, *et cetera*. To be sure, in these passages the durational nature of the ‘*objectum*’ is not always mentioned explicitly. But this particular status of these objects can be conjectured from the context and the other references in the passages.

¹⁰⁵ EIIp44d, (I) 480.

¹⁰⁶ EIIp44c2, (I) 481 (*sub quâdam aeternitatis specie*).

¹⁰⁷ The same point was of course already made when we treated the notion of consciousness. See note 58.

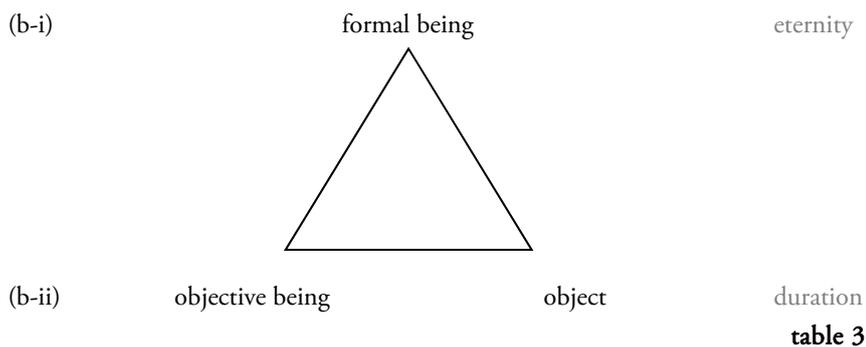
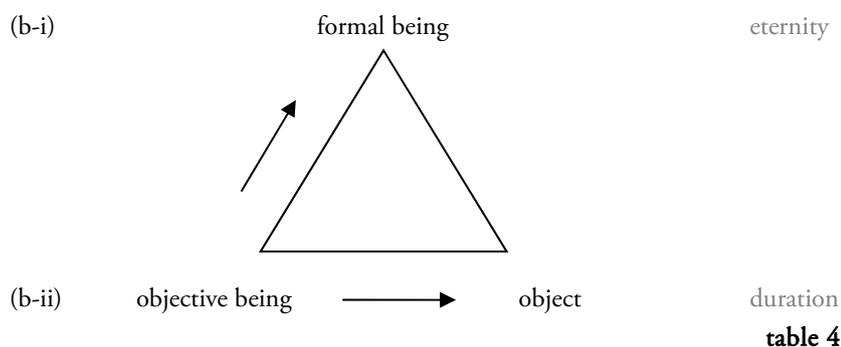


Table 3 provides a schematic rendering of the trichotomy that was shown to characterize the structure of the intellect.¹⁰⁸ With respect to the notion of ‘true idea’ it must be noted that, on the basis of the things we have seen, an objective being is true if it agrees, not only with its object under duration, but also with its formal being. That is to say: *a true idea can only be conceived as such if it is subject to two distinct agreement relations*. An idea can only be true if it agrees with its durational object (at level (b-ii)), *and* with the eternal formal being of the object it is an expression of (at level (b-i)). This can be rendered thus:



It appears to be rather clear that a durational idea must agree with two things. Firstly, an objective being must be understood to be agree with its *durational object*, which is part of the whole of nature. In this sense, an objective being (such as my mind) is numerically identical to an *objectum* (*in casu*: my body insofar as it exists under duration) – this is the parallelism relation between mind and body that is mentioned explicitly in EIIp7s and EIIp13. However, this horizontal agreement

¹⁰⁸ To be sure, in this table (and in table 4) only the being of things at the conceptual level of *Natura naturata* is taken into account. The fact that the formal *being* of things can be understood to be an expression of the extra-intellectual formal *essence* of these same things at the level of *Natura naturans* is left out of this rendering.

relation between durational items can only be had by virtue of their identity in the realm of eternity. In order for an idea to be properly called a *true* idea it must thus be understood *under species of eternity*, that is: as agreeing *with the very eternal formal being that both the idea and its object are durational expressions of*. Indeed, according to Spinoza it is *of the nature of reason* that having a true idea of a thing implies understanding that thing in its eternal being. The particular ‘vertical agreement’ of an objective being with its formal being is a *necessary condition* for an idea to be called ‘true’. If the ‘idea’ of a certain thing is not grasped insofar as it agrees with the eternal being of that thing, it simply is not a true idea on Spinoza’s account (indeed in the same way an idea and a body cannot be understood to be numerically identical when they are not conceived to be conceptually distinct expressions of the very same thing).

This leads us to the conclusion that Spinoza invokes the neutral term *ideatum* in order to make it clear that a true idea must agree with the thing it refers to *irrespective of the durational or eternal status of this referent*. That is to say: the term ‘*ideatum*’ must be understood to designate the thing an idea refers to in its *unspecified* being; and the term ‘*objectum*’ refers to the thing insofar as it is conceived to be operative as a part of the whole of nature, that is: under duration. To be sure, as was argued in a previous section, this durational *objectum* can in turn be grasped in two ways: truly (in which case knowledge of the identical formal being of that idea is reached bottom-up and hence the durational idea under scrutiny agrees with both its durational object and that very idea as it is in itself), or falsely (in which case there is something lacking in the knowledge of the *objectum* because the object is grasped only insofar it is operative as a part in the whole of nature and not as it is in itself).¹⁰⁹

I think the evidence for the claim that Spinoza makes a deliberate distinction between ‘*objectum*’ and ‘*ideatum*’ is rather conclusive. However, in order to remove any remaining doubt I will provide yet another argument for this important assertion. Consider Spinoza’s definition of ‘adequate idea’ once more:

¹⁰⁹ Yet another way of saying this is that an idea is true *when its psychological status converges absolutely with its logical status*; and an idea is false *when there is a divergence between the psychological and logical status of a mode of thinking*. This particular use of terms is inspired (inter alia) by the way in which Don Garrett characterized the two variants of *causa sui* in EID1. See section 3.4 and 3.7.

By adequate idea I understand an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself, without relation to an object, has all the properties, *or* intrinsic denominations of a true idea.

Exp.: *I say intrinsic to exclude what is extrinsic, namely, the agreement of the idea with its object.*¹¹⁰
(*Per ideam adequatam intelligo ideam, quæ, quatenus in se sine relatione ad objectum consideratur, omnes veræ ideæ proprietates, sive denominationes intrinsecas habet.*

EXPLICATIO. *Dico intrinsecas, ut illam secludam, quæ extrinseca est, nempe convenientiam ideæ cum suo ideato)*

We cannot fail to notice that both terms – ‘*objectum*’ and ‘*ideatum*’ – surface in this important definition. What is even more astonishing than this remarkable vacillation of terms in this short passage is that, *prima facie*, the Explication that is added to EIID4 appears to be superfluous. In the definition itself it is noted explicitly that an adequate idea is an idea that is considered *without relation to an object*. This leads us to the question why there would be any need to add that the term ‘intrinsic’ is invoked in order to make it clear that the agreement of an idea with its object is excluded?¹¹¹ Indeed: why add the Explication when the intrinsic character of an adequate idea is already mentioned in EIID4 itself? The addition of the Explication only makes sense if it is acknowledged that the relation with an *objectum* that surfaces in the definition itself is conceptually distinct from the relation with an *ideatum* that is posited in the Explication. For only on that reading there is no need to suppose (i) that Spinoza’s sloppiness goes so far that he uses a certain term in one sentence and then uses another term for the same concept in the very next sentence, and (ii) that the Explication is superfluous. Once it is acknowledged that both terms say something different, it becomes evident why Spinoza would add an Explication to EIID4: the addition makes it clear that the extrinsic character of a true idea consists of two conceptually distinct agreement relations. An idea is true if and only if it agrees with its durational *objectum* at level

¹¹⁰ EIID4, (I) 447.

¹¹¹ I seem to recall that I have actually read a similar argument in the work of another scholar. However, I cannot find that passage anymore. The possible omission of the name of a scholar in this footnote is not the result of a lack of scientific integrity, but of regrettable sloppiness on my part. As long as no scholar reports that I indeed have copied her/his argument, I sooth myself with the thought that my vague recollection of having read a similar argument may be a form of ‘McCartneyism’. Paul McCartney initially did not want to record the famous Beatles-song ‘Yesterday’ because he was rather sure that it actually was someone else’s tune. To my knowledge, to this day no one has claimed convincingly that McCartney stole her/his song.

(b-ii) and with its *eternal formal being* at level (b-i). And an idea is adequate if and only if it is understood independently of both extrinsic agreement relations.¹¹²

Recall that we aim to show how we must understand the metaphysical status of the order of the intellect. Now, Spinoza's distinction between the terms '*objectum*' and '*ideatum*' provides us with further proof for our claim that the order of the intellect consists of things insofar as they are considered in themselves in their eternal and infinite formal being. For it has become clear that things can only be conceived to be known truly if they are grasped as to their eternal being at level (b-i). Indeed, it is the very recognized agreement between the objective and the formal being of an idea that makes truth 'its own standard'.¹¹³

Argument 4: Knowledge of things through their *first causes*

Consider the following passage from EIIp18s once more:

I say, *second*, that this connection happens according to the order and connection of the affections of the human Body in order to distinguish it from the connection of ideas which happens according to the order of the intellect, by which the Mind perceives things through their first causes, and which is the same in all men.¹¹⁴

(Dico secundò hanc concatenationem fieri secundùm ordinem, & concatenationem affectionum Corporis humani, ut ipsam distinguerem à concatenatione idearum, quæ fit secundùm ordinem intellectûs, quo res per primas suas causas Mens percipit, & qui in omnibus hominibus idem est)

From (inter alia) this passage we gathered that the order of nature can be contrasted with the order of the intellect. In the previous arguments we have already said a lot about the way in which we must conceive the order of the intellect. However, one aspect of the claim in EIIp18s remained (mostly) out of sight so far: the fact that Spinoza couples the order of the intellect with perceiving things *through their first causes*. This triggers the question what, according to Spinoza, must be understood

¹¹² Remark that this is in line with our claims concerning the attribute-neutral aspect of the formal being of things (see the previous chapter). For when the formal being of an idea would *not* have this attribute-neutral feature, and the 'idea, insofar as it is considered in itself' would stand in some sort of agreement relation with the formal being of its parallel body (i.e. the body, insofar as it is considered in itself), the adequacy of that idea would not be devoid of any agreement and hence have the very aspect of extrinsity that is denied of it in EIID4.

¹¹³ EIIp43s, (I) 480 (*veritas sui sit norma*).

¹¹⁴ EIIp18s, (I) 465-466.

These arguments enable us to conclude that we were right with our tentative claim concerning the order of the intellect (and the way it must be distinguished from the order of nature). An analysis of Spinoza's definition of adequacy, of his claim that 'all ideas, insofar as they are related to God, are true', of the distinction between the terms '*objectum*' and '*ideatum*', and of the assertion that the intellect perceives things 'through their first causes', has provided us with additional evidence for our contention that the distinction between the order of nature and the order of the intellect can be mapped on the levels (b-ii) and (b-i) that surfaced in the previous chapters. In this section it has become clear that as long as things are perceived as parts that limit each other in the same way (say) one drop of water limits another drop of water, they must be understood to function in the order of nature. And when the same things are understood *in themselves* (i.e. without relation to their durational objects) as *non-limiting eternal parts-with-a-vista* that *follow directly from their first cause*, they are conceived insofar as they are operative in the order of the intellect.

5.3.2 The intellect vs. the imagination

In the previous sections we have uncovered and clarified an important and fundamental distinction in Spinoza's theory of knowledge: the distinction between the *intellect* and the *imagination*. It has become clear that the difference between ideas in the intellect and images in the imagination is to be sought in the fact that the intellect provides cognitive access to the divine and eternal infinite essence that is involved in each idea. The imagination, in contrast, is characterized by a representational mismatch between the things represented (in the sense of Spinoza's parallelism thesis, viz. representation relation (I)*) and the images of external things in the imagination of the perceiver which are 'represented to us through the senses' and grasped insofar as they are operative in the order of nature. Due to this mismatch, the cognitive access to the eternal being of the things represented (again, in the sense of representation relation (I)*) is fundamentally thwarted.

Before turning to the next important subject – the way in which the intellect can be understood to consist of two ways of attaining adequate knowledge, and the way in which adequate ideas can be understood to be *in* the mind – we must treat one potential problem with respect to the present way of conceiving the difference

between the intellect and the imagination. This problem surfaces in relation to the passage in EI_p15s that was quoted above (as well as in Chapter 1). Recall that in this scholium, Spinoza says the following about the distinction between the imagination and the intellect:

So if we attend to quantity as it is in the imagination, [...] it will be found to be finite, divisible, and composed of parts; but if we attend to it as it is in the intellect, and conceive it insofar as it is substance [...], then [...] it will be found to be infinite, unique, and indivisible. This will be sufficiently plain to everyone who knows how to distinguish between the intellect and the imagination – particularly if it is also noted that matter is everywhere the same, and that parts are distinguished in it only insofar as we conceive matter to be affected in different ways, so that its parts are distinguished only modally, but not really.¹¹⁷

(Si itaque ad quantitatem attendimus, prout in imaginatione est, [...] reperietur finita, divisibilis, & ex partibus conflata; si autem ad ipsam, prout in intellectu est, attendimus, & eam, quatenus substantia est, concipimus, [...] tum, [...] infinita, unica, & indivisibilis reperietur. Quod omnibus, qui inter imaginationem, & intellectum distinguere sciverint, satis manifestum erit: Præcipue si ad hoc etiam attendatur, quòd materia ubique eadem est, nec partes in eadem distinguuntur, nisi quatenus materiam diversimodè affectam esse concipimus, unde ejus partes modaliter tantum distinguuntur, non autem realiter)

The problem with this passage is this: if the *realiter* grasping of things forbids the grasping of any multiplicity whatsoever, we seem to be forced to conclude that according to Spinoza *the intellect cannot be understood to grasp the objective being of things*. As we have shown that insofar as things are considered in their objective being they must be understood to be mutually limiting durational *parts* that constitute the order of nature, EI_p15s appears to make it clear that it is wrong to state that the intellect can be understood to grasp things in their objective being.¹¹⁸ The adduced passage suggests that any grasping of nature consisting of durational parts must be considered to be a product of the imagination, and *not* of the intellect.

The problem can be rendered thus:

- (3) Parts are distinguished only *modaliter*, not *realiter* (by EI_p15s). The former is an operation of the imagination, the latter of the intellect

¹¹⁷ EI_p15s, (I) 424.

¹¹⁸ This actually is a reformulation of the problem that was mentioned in note 91. Moreover, as was mentioned already in the introduction, a similar problem is detected by Della Rocca. We will return to his argument in a subsequent section.

- (4) Things can be perceived bottom-up, in which case the (finite and durational) objective being of things is conceptually prior to the (infinite and eternal) formal being of these very same things (by Chapter 4)
- (5) The finite and durational being of things (from (4)) must be considered to be parts of the infinite modes of the attributes under which they are conceived to resort (by Chapter 2)

Hence:

- (6) The bottom-up perspective is a perspective that must be attributed to the imagination, and not to the intellect (by (3), (4) and (5)).

Now, in itself it is correct to state that Spinoza forwards a perspective that yields imaginary (instead of true) knowledge. Indeed, the first kind of knowledge is an integral part of Spinoza's theory of knowledge. Yet, rendering (3)-(6) becomes problematic once we realize (i) that the bottom-up perspective that is referred to in points (4) and (6) was claimed to be an expression of the infinite inference of ideas, ideas of ideas, ideas of ideas of ideas, *et cetera*, which surfaces in EIIp21s and EIIp43, and (ii) that these latter propositions deal explicitly with *true ideas* (see Chapter 4). For this suggests that the imagination that surfaces in (6) *is able to yield true knowledge*. This can be rendered thus:

- (7) The bottom-up perspective is claimed to provide a route to true knowledge (by EIIp21s and EIIp43)

Hence:

- (8) The imagination yields true knowledge (by (6) and (7))

With this we have reached the heart of the problem. For it appears to be clear that according to Spinoza the imagination must be understood to yield, not true, but only *confused* knowledge. We have already quoted several passages that corroborate this point, and it is not very hard to find additional evidence. The assertion that 'imagining' must be understood to be contrary to 'understanding'¹¹⁹ is recognizable

¹¹⁹ 'men judge things according to the disposition of their brain, and imagine, rather than understand them' EI Appendix, (I) 445 (*homines pro dispositione cerebri de rebus judicare, resque potius imaginari, quam intelligere*).

in various other passages too. Consider the following claim from the Appendix of part I of the *Ethics*:

And because those who do not understand the nature of things, but only imagine them, affirm nothing concerning things, and take the imagination for the intellect, they firmly believe, in their ignorance of things and of their own nature, that there is an order in things.¹²⁰

(Et quia ii, qui rerum naturam non intelligunt, sed res tantummodò imaginantur, nihil de rebus affirmant, & imaginationem pro intellectu capiunt, ideò ordinem in rebus esse firmiter credunt, rerum, suæque naturæ ignari)

And in EIIp26c we read:

Insofar as the human Mind imagines an external body, it does not have adequate knowledge of it.¹²¹

(Quatenus Mens humana corpus externum imaginatur, eatenus adæquatam ejus cognitionem non habet)

Indeed, in various passages the imagination is clearly claimed to be opposed to understanding a thing adequately, that is (in terms of EIIp17s): opposed to understanding an idea that ‘directly explains the essence’ of the external body that is grasped. Passages like these – and claims that were adduced earlier in this chapter – make it clear that the assertion in (8) must be considered to be false. But if (8) is false, what precisely makes it false?

The first thing that must be noted in this respect is that there is little doubt that the bottom-up perspective that ‘starts with the parts’ in order to attain true knowledge is an integral part of Spinoza’s metaphysics. This is clear, not only from the arguments that were provided in the previous chapter, but also from Spinoza’s contentions concerning the possibility for the human animal to increase its power. Consider the following claim in EIVp18s:

our intellect would of course be more imperfect if the Mind were alone and did not understand anything except itself. There are, therefore, many things outside us which are useful to us, and on that account to be sought.¹²²

(sanè noster intellectus imperfectior esset, si Mens sola esset, nec quicquam præter se ipsam intelligeret. Multa igitur extra nos dantur, quæ nobis utilia, quæque propterea appetenda sunt)

¹²⁰ EI Appendix, (I) 444.

¹²¹ EIIp26c, (I) 469.

¹²² EIVp18s, (I) 556.

This claim (and various others) suggests that the ability to have adequate ideas is (also) dependent on the fact that the intellect interacts with external things. Indeed, if it is acknowledged (i) that according to Spinoza the power of a human animal consist in the fact that human are able to *understand* (i.e. to have adequate ideas),¹²³ and (ii) that extrinsic causation in the way of EIp28 – i.e. causation from the order of nature – enables the human being to increase its power of acting,¹²⁴ it becomes very clear that Spinoza deems it possible to gather adequate ideas on the basis of a perspective that makes use of the order of nature. From this we learn that the notion of ‘intellect’ does not at all exclude a perceived multiplicity in nature.

But how must this claim be squared with Spinoza’s claim in EIp15s that things will only ‘be found to be finite, divisible, and composed of parts’ insofar as they are grasped *with the imagination*? The problem can be solved once it is acknowledged that according to Spinoza it is not so much the grasped multiplicity in nature, as it is the inability to infer the *realiter* indivisibility of nature that must be understood to be the defining characteristic of confused knowledge. In this respect it is crucial to recognize that Spinoza locates the ability to interpret the content of images in the imagination rightly *outside the imagination*. That is to say: according to Spinoza the mere having of images is not sufficient for attaining true knowledge. As he states it in EVp28: ‘the striving [...] to know things by the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first kind of knowledge, but can indeed arise from the second’.¹²⁵ In addition to knowledge of the first kind, knowledge of (at least) the second kind is needed in order to yield true knowledge via a perspective that recognizes multiplicity in nature. Indeed, it is very important to stress once more that in Spinoza’s philosophy *it is impossible to gather true and*

¹²³ This is clear from EIVD8 (which reads that ‘by virtue and power I understand the same thing’. EIVD8, (I) 547 (*Per virtutem, & potentiam idem intelligo*)) and EIVp23 (which reads that ‘a man cannot be said to act absolutely from virtue insofar as he is determined to do something because he has inadequate ideas, but only insofar as he is determined because he understands’. EIVp23, (I) 558 (*Homo, quatenus ad aliquid agendum determinatur ex eo, quòd ideas habet inadequatas, non potest absolute dici, ex virtute agere; sed tantum, quatenus determinatur ex eo, quòd intelligit*)).

¹²⁴ For an interesting account of the relation between external causation and increasing the power of acting, see: Andrea Sangiacomo, ‘The Ontology of Determination: From Descartes to Spinoza’ in: *Science in Context* 28 (2015), 515-543.

¹²⁵ EVp28, (I) 609 (*Conatus [...] cognoscendi res tertio cognitionis genere oriri non potest ex primo, at quidem ex secundo cognitionis genere*)).

*adequate knowledge from merely investigating the whole of nature.*¹²⁶ In terms of the demonstration of EVp28:

whatever we understand clearly and distinctly, we understand either through itself, or through something else which is conceived through itself; that is, the ideas which are clear and distinct in us, *or* which are related to the third kind of knowledge (see IIP40S2), cannot follow from mutilated and confused ideas, which (by IIP40S2) are related to the first kind of knowledge; but they can follow from adequate ideas, *or* (by IIP40S2) from the second and third kind of knowledge.¹²⁷

(Nam quicquid clarè, & distinctè intelligimus, id vel per se, vel per aliud, quod per se concipitur, intelligimus, hoc est, ideæ, quæ in nobis claræ, & distinctæ sunt, sive quæ ad tertium cognitionis genus referuntur (vide 2. Schol. Prop. 40. p. 2.), non possunt sequi ex ideis mutilatis, & confusis, quæ (per idem Schol.) ad primum cognitionis genus referuntur, sed ex ideis adæquatis, sive (per idem Schol.) ex secundo, & tertio cognitionis genere)

One can gather images in the imagination from level (b-ii) as much as one wants to, without a prior knowledge of level (b-i), the ‘eternal angle’ of the trichotomy of the intellect (and hence the possibility to form clear and distinct ideas) stays out of sight. As Spinoza states it in Letter 37: ‘all the clear and distinct perceptions we form can arise only from other clear and distinct perceptions in us, and cannot have any other cause outside us’.¹²⁸ No matter how often one attains ‘true’ images in the imagination (in our everyday-sense of the term ‘true’) of external things that are operative in the order of nature, and that are caused (and cause) extrinsically in the way of EIp28 (such as approaching trucks), on the basis of this particular notion of truth one will never be able to attain knowledge of the eternal being of things (i.e. adequate knowledge). In order to transform this knowledge from *the order of nature* in an understanding of the being of things in *the order of the intellect*, something

¹²⁶ In this sense, the present reading appears to oppose the conclusion of a fascinating article by Susan James. In ‘Creating Rational Understanding: Spinoza as a Social Epistemologist’ she argues that the transition between inadequate and inadequate ideas is ‘a gradual process’. Susan James, ‘Creating Rational Understanding: Spinoza as a Social Epistemologist’ in: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, Vol. 85 (2011), 197. It must be admitted that there is something to be said for this claim (see the next section). However, the present interpretation entails that this gradual process can only take place when the conceiver has a first adequate idea – that does not find its basis in the imagination – that can serve as the criterion on the basis of which subsequent adequate ideas can be formed. In this sense, the distinction between the imagination and the intellect is anything but gradual. To be sure, as will become clear in the section that deals with *ratio*, this is not to say that the present interpretation denies the instrumental value of confused knowledge altogether.

¹²⁷ EVp28d, (I) 609.

¹²⁸ Letter 37, (II) 32 (*Imò omnes claræ & distinctæ perceptiones, quas formamus, non possunt oriri nisi ab aliis claris & distinctis perceptionibus, quæ in nobis sunt, nec ullam aliam causam extra nos agnoscunt*).

more is needed. In terms of EIIp42d: ‘he who knows how to distinguish between the true and the false must have an adequate idea of the true and of the false’.¹²⁹

This leads to the pressing question how the criterion that enables us to have true knowledge is to be understood. An answer is provided in EVp29. Here Spinoza makes it clear how we must conceive this ‘first adequate idea’ by virtue of which it *is* possible to distinguish between the true and the false.¹³⁰ Consider the following important claim:

Whatever the Mind understands under a species of eternity, it understands not from the fact that it conceives the Body’s present actual existence, but from the fact that it conceives the Body’s essence under a species of eternity.¹³¹

(Quicquid Mens sub specie aternitatis intelligit, id ex eo non intelligit, quòd Corporis præsentem actualem existentiam concipit, sed ex eo, quòd Corporis essentiam concipit sub specie aternitatis)

This claim makes it clear that according to Spinoza it is *the grasping of the body’s essence under a species of eternity* that serves as necessary condition for the having of

¹²⁹ EIIp42d, (I) 479 (*Qui enim inter verum, & falsum scit distinguere, debet adequatam veri, & falsi habere ideam*). Or as Spinoza states in the TTP: ‘Whatever we can honorably desire is related above all to these three things: (i) understanding things through their first causes, (ii) gaining control over the passions, or acquiring the habit of virtue; and finally (iii) living securely and healthily. The means which lead directly to the first and second of these [...] are contained *in the human nature itself* [emphasis added]’. TTP Ch. III, (II) 113 (*Omnia, quæ honeste cupimus, ad hæc tria potissimum referuntur, nempe, res per primas suas causas intelligere, passiones domare, sive virtutis habitum acquirere, et denique secure, & sano corpore vivere. Media, quæ ad primum & secundum directe inserviunt, & quæ tanquam causæ proximæ, [...] in ipsa humana natura continentur*). It seems rather clear that what is ‘contained in the human nature itself’ is to be seen as a particular ability that cannot be acquired via external causes.

In the *Ethics*, this particular ability is asserted in EIIp47, which reads thus: ‘The human Mind has an adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence’. EIIp47, (I) 482 (*Mens humana adequatam habet cognitionem aternæ, & infinite essentiæ Dei*). Various scholars have remarked that this is a rather feeble foundation for Spinoza’s apparent claim that only human minds – and *not* the minds of lower animals – have the ability to acquire adequate knowledge. As Margaret Wilson claimed, ‘by Spinoza’s principles, every “mind” of every body must like the human mind be said to *have* adequate [...] knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God. [...] Apparently this awkward result was not intended by Spinoza; it is, however, dictated by the logic of his system’. Wilson, ‘Objects, Ideas and “Minds”’, 110. I think Wilson is right with this observation. Something more is needed in order to safeguard that ‘men are not like beasts’ (see note 134). However, this particular aspect need not concern us here, as this study is not directed at establishing the difference between the human animal and lower animals.

¹³⁰ More on the precise way in which this ‘first adequate idea’ enables the human mind to expand its range of adequate ideas in section 5.4.1.

¹³¹ EVp29, (I) 609.

true and adequate knowledge.¹³² That is (by what we have seen in the previous chapters concerning the way in which we must understand the distinction that is forwarded in EVp29 and its scholium): the adequate idea that serves as a necessary condition for a mind to attain adequate knowledge is the grasping of the *eternal formal being of its own object*.¹³³ EVp29 teaches us that only perceivers who have cognitive access to their own formal being in the order of the intellect – and as such can be understood to have *an idea of their own idea* (see Chapter 4 and section 5.2.1.1) and hence are *self-conscious* – can consider nature to consist of parts *and at the same time have adequate knowledge of it*.¹³⁴

¹³² It is because of this that the distinction between knowledge of the first and knowledge of the second kind is anything but *gradual* (as Susan James claims it is – see note 126). James' position is rooted in the conviction that 'according to the *Ethics*, our experience of our own bodies and their interaction with bodies external to us gives each of us access to the adequate idea that a body is capable of motion and rest'. James, 'Creating Rational Understanding: Spinoza as a Social Epistemologist', 193. I argue that this claim is misguided insofar as it is not our *experience from the order of nature*, but only our *experience from the order of the intellect* that gives us access to adequate ideas. This adequate knowledge from the order of the intellect can be used as a tool (so to speak) to turn 'raw material' from our experience from the order of nature into adequate knowledge. For an alternative way of attacking James' position, see: Eric Schliesser, 'Angels and Philosophers: with a New Interpretation of Spinoza's Common Notions' in: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. cxi, Part 3 (2011), 497-518.

¹³³ As we shall see in a subsequent section, this is the eternal aspect of the *actual essence* of the body.

¹³⁴ Spinoza appears to locate the distinction between the human animal and the lower animals here. As he stresses in Letter 21 to Willem Blijenbergh: 'What occasion did my letter give you for ascribing these opinions to me; that men are like beasts, that men die and perish as beasts do, that our works are displeasing to God, etc? [...] I have said quite clearly that the pious honor God, and by continually knowing him, become more perfect, and that they love God. Is this to make them like beasts?'. Letter 21, (I) 376 (*Quam, quæso, materiam mea præbuit epistola has mihi affingendi opiniones, homines nempe bestiis esse similes, homines bestiarum more mori, & interire, nostra Deo displicere opera, &c. [...] Quantum ad me, ego profectò clarè dixi, probos Deum colere, & assiduè colendo perfectiores evadere, Deum amare; hocine est eos bestiis similes reddere [...]?*). Further treatment of the intricate distinction between humans and 'beasts' – and the apparent problems with this distinction – would take us too far afield (see the second part of note 129).

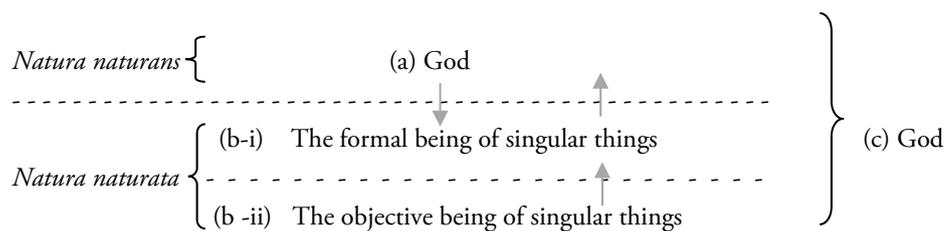
The precise way in which self-conscious beings can be understood to have true and adequate knowledge of external parts of nature of course needs further clarification, which will be provided in a subsequent section. The thing to note here is that it has become clear that there is no contradiction between our claims about the distinction between the order of nature and the order of the intellect on the one hand, and Spinoza's assertions in EIp15s on the other. For on the basis of our observations in this section, we can gather that the problem with the argument in (3)-(8) must be located in point (3). As Spinoza provides a way to found true knowledge on the grasping of parts of nature (i.e. the very bottom-up perspective that was uncovered in Chapter 4), the claim from point (3) that the grasping of parts must be attributed to the imagination is incomplete. As long as nature is considered only as to its divisibility and extrinsic causation, things indeed must be attributed to the imagination – this is the very point that Spinoza aims to make in the quoted passage of EIp15s, and that surfaces in point (3). But if (and only if) this perspective is evaluated on the basis of 'another standard of truth'¹³⁵ – that finds its basis in knowledge of the eternal essence of the own body of the perceiver – the resulting knowledge can be considered to be knowledge of the intellect. Spinoza's argument for this intricate distinction between the imagination and the intellect may not be as strong as we could wish for – the adduced assertions in EIIp42d and EIIp28 are claimed to be 'evident through [themselves]'¹³⁶ – but at the same time it appears to be abundantly clear that anyone who would claim that Spinoza forwards a perspective from which an investigation of merely the order of nature enables us to reach true knowledge of nature, comes in serious conflict with Spinoza's text.

¹³⁵ EI Appendix, (I) 441 (*aliam veritatis normam*).

¹³⁶ And in the TdIE he states with respect to true ideas that 'we are not asking how the first objective essence is inborn in us. For that pertains to the investigation of nature'. TdIE §34, note n, (I) 18 (*Nota, quod hic non inquirimus, quomodo prima essentia objectiva nobis innata sit. Nam id pertinet ad investigationem naturae*). To be sure, in the *Ethics* Spinoza does appear to say something more about the subject, namely in EIIp13s and the subsequent 'physical treatise'. From these passages it becomes clear that the ability to gather true and adequate knowledge (and as various scholars have added, the ability to be *conscious* in the variant that is characteristic for humans (see note 53)) is closely related to the *complexity* of the human mind and the parallel human body. But the way in which this complexity facilitates this 'inborn' standard of truth – i.e. knowledge of the essence of the own body under a species of eternity – remains in the dark (see also the problem that is addressed in the second part of note 131).

5.4 One intellect

Having elucidated how the order of the intellect can be distinguished from the order of nature, we can turn to two important final questions: (i) is it at all possible for a human mind to have true and adequate ideas of external things, and if so (ii) how can these true and adequate ideas be attained? In order to be able to answer these questions we must say something more about a claim that was made at the end of the previous chapter. In the concluding section of Chapter 4 we have stated that the structure of the intellect can be rendered thus:



(table 6)¹³⁷

With respect to this table it was asserted that the bottom-up and top-down perspectives that are rendered in it are on a par with the two ways in which true and adequate knowledge can be attained according to Spinoza: by way of *ratio* and by way of *scientia intuitiva*. Indeed, we have claimed that the two perspectives that are expressed in table 6 can be mapped on the following distinction that is put forward in EIIp40s2:¹³⁸

¹³⁷ We have just seen that the levels (b-i) and (b-ii) can also be formulated in terms of ‘order of the intellect’ and ‘order of nature’. However, the present section is not so much concerned with the terms that are used to denote (b-i) and (b-ii), as we are interested in the ‘conceptual direction’, expressed in the arrows in table 6.

¹³⁸ The claim that the distinction between *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva* can be understood in terms of the way in which knowledge of the very same things is acquired – i.e. from effect to cause vs. from cause to effect – can also be found in the work of other scholars. Spencer Carr is a case in point. He stated that ‘Spinoza’s first example [...] is that of inferring from an effect to its cause [...]. This contrasts with the case of intuitive knowledge in which we perceive a thing through its proximate cause, that is, in which we infer from cause to effect. Spinoza’s point has to do with the proper ordering of our thoughts’. Spencer Carr, ‘Spinoza’s Distinction Between Rational and Intuitive Knowledge’ in: *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 87, No. 2 (1978), 245. To be sure, in this context Carr speaks of the first variant in terms of *inadequacy*. This choice of terms is induced by Spinoza’s particular choice of terms in the TdIE. See: Carr, ‘Spinoza’s Distinction Between Rational and Intuitive Knowledge’, 242.

III. finally, from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things (see P38C, P39, P39C, and P40). This I shall call reason and the second kind of knowledge.

[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. 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.¹³⁹

(III°. *Denique ex eo, quòd notiones communes, rerumque proprietatum ideas adæquatas habemus (vide Coroll. Prop. 38. & 39. cum ejus Coroll. & Prop. 40. hujus); atque hunc rationem, & secundi generis cognitionem vocabo. Præter hæc duo cognitionis genera datur, ut in sequentibus ostendam, aliud tertium, quod scientiam intuitivam vocabimus. Atque hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adæquatâ ideâ essentiæ formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adæquatam cognitionem essentiæ rerum).*

Looking for an answer to the two final questions – and showing how the two kinds of knowledge mentioned in this passage together form *one intellect* – we must treat the way in which we are to understand these cognitive variants. Section 5.4.2 will be dedicated to a scrutiny of *scientia intuitiva*. But first we must turn to knowledge of the second kind: *ratio*.

5.4.1 *Ratio*

In Chapter 4, the following rendering of the bottom-up perspective was provided:

- (I) God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, conceives a circle in two ways.
- (II) God, insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, conceives a circle in its *objective being* (i.e. *the idea* of the circle) and in its *formal being* (i.e. the *formal being of the idea* of the circle).¹⁴⁰
- (III) This formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, is a *part-with-a-vista of the absolutely infinite intellect*.
- (IV') This formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, must in turn be understood to be the

¹³⁹ EIIp40s2, (I) 477-478.

¹⁴⁰ As we are investigating the bottom-up perspective, this formal being surfaces here as the formal being of an idea (viz. as a *mode of thinking*), and not insofar as it has attribute-neutral features. The same argument is applicable to the subsequent points.

counterpart at *Natura naturata* of the *formal essence of that circle* which is *contained ubiquitously in God sui generis* at *Natura naturans*

(V') The formal being of the idea of a circle, which is conceived by God insofar as he is expressed in a human mind, thus *involves the eternal and infinite essence of God*

This rendering fully accounts for the fact that knowledge of the intellect must be understood to be divine self-knowledge. It elucidates the way in which bottom-up knowledge can be understood to be God's knowledge of his own eternal and infinite essence. However, one crucial aspect of human mentality in the way we commonly understand it is sought in vain in this rendering. The point that forces itself upon us in the context of the present chapter is the fact that the *representation* of the external circle in the human mind is not accounted for. Argument (I)-(V') suggests that the objective being of the circle must be located *in* the conceiving human mind, which in turn implies that the parallel extended circle must be located *in the parallel human body*. How can this be explained? How can the bottom-up perspective be understood to function, without the unwelcome – if not absurd – implication that an extended circle (or indeed an extended approaching truck) must be understood to be *in* the body of the knowing agent when the circle (or truck) is grasped adequately? An answer to this pressing question can be found in the propositions that Spinoza refers to when explaining the second kind of knowledge in EIIp40s2: EIIp38-EIIp40.

Consider the following important claims from EIIp38 and its corollary:

P38: Those things which are common to all, and which are equally in the part and in the whole, can only be conceived adequately.

Dem.: Let A be something which is common to all bodies, and which is equally in the part of each body and in the whole. I say that A can only be conceived adequately. For its idea (by P7C) will necessarily be adequate in God, both insofar as he has the idea of the human body and insofar as he has ideas of its affections, which (by P16, P25, and P27) involve in part both the nature of the human body and that of external bodies. That is (by P12 and P13), this idea will necessarily be adequate in God insofar as he constitutes the human mind, or insofar as he has ideas that are in the human mind. The mind, therefore (by P11C), necessarily perceives A adequately, and does so both insofar as it perceives itself and insofar as it perceives its own or any external body. Nor can A be conceived in another way, q.e.d.

Cor.: From this it follows that there are certain ideas, or notions, common to all men. For (by L2) all bodies agree in certain things, which (by P38) must be perceived adequately, or clearly and distinctly, by all.¹⁴¹

(PROPOSITIO XXXVIII. Illa, quae omnibus communia, quaeque aequè in parte, ac in toto sunt, non possunt concipi, nisi adequatè.

DEMONSTRATIO. Sit A aliquid, quod omnibus corporibus commune, quodque aequè in parte cujuscunque corporis, ac in toto est. Dico A non posse concipi, nisi adequatè. Nam ejus idea (per Coroll. Prop. 7. hujus) erit necessariò in Deo adequata, tam quatenus ideae Corporis humani, quàm quatenus ideas habet ejusdem affectionum, quae (per Prop. 16. 25. & 27. hujus) tam Corporis humani, quàm corporum externorum naturam ex parte involvunt, hoc est (per Prop. 12. & 13. hujus), haec idea erit necessariò in Deo adequata, quatenus Mentem humanam constituit, sive quatenus ideas habet, quae in Mente humanà sunt; Mens igitur (per Coroll. Prop. 11. hujus) A necessariò adequatè percipit, idque tam quatenus se, quàm quatenus suum, vel quodcunque externum corpus percipit, nec A alio modo potest concipi. Q.E.D.

COROLLARIUM. Hinc sequitur, dari quasdam ideas, sive notiones omnibus hominibus communes. Nam (per Lem. 2.) omnia corpora in quibusdam conveniunt, quae (per Prop. praeced.) ab omnibus debent adequatè, sive clarè, & distinctè percipi)

A lot can be learned from these assertions. For one thing, it is hard to miss the fact that EIIp38 and its corollary (and indeed EIIp39) are stated in mereological terms. As we have seen in the previous chapters that the mereological relation between parts and wholes can be understood to be operative at the level of modes only (i.e. at level (b)), EIIp38 makes it clear once more that according to Spinoza adequate knowledge can indeed be attained by way of a perspective that (so to speak) ‘starts with the parts’ at *Natura naturata*. If ‘bodies are distinguished from one another’, not ‘by reason of substance’, but ‘by reason of motion and rest’,¹⁴² it is still possible to acquire adequate knowledge of them.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ EIIp38, (I) 474.

¹⁴² EIII1, which was adduced in Chapter 2 also, reads thus: ‘Bodies are distinguished from one another by reason of motion and rest, speed and slowness, and not by reason of substance. Dem.: I suppose that the first part of this is known through itself. But that bodies are not distinguished by reason of substance is evident both from IP5 and from IP8. But it is more clearly evident from those things which are said in IP15S’. EIII1, (I) 458-459 (*Corpora ratione motûs, & quietis, celeritatis, & tarditatis, & non ratione substantiae ab invicem distinguuntur. DEMONSTRATIO. Primam partem hujus per se notam suppono. At, quòd ratione substantiae non distinguantur corpora, patet, tam ex Prop. 5. quàm 8. p. 1. Sed clariùs ex iis, quae in Schol. Prop. 15. p. 1. dicta sunt*). It is hard to miss that this claim in turn is underpinned with a reference to the very scholium – EIp15s – in which Spinoza stresses the importance of distinguishing between the imagination and the intellect. This firmly suggests that the distinction that surfaces in EIII1 can be mapped on the distinction between the imagination and the intellect.

¹⁴³ This is also clear from EIIp46d, which was treated in Chapter 2. (Part of) this demonstration reads thus: ‘whether the thing is considered as a part or as a whole, its idea, whether of the whole or of a part (by P45), will involve God’s eternal and infinite essence. So what gives knowledge of an eternal and infinite

We are, of course, not so much interested in the fact that Spinoza fosters this bottom-up perspective – this was established already in Chapter 4 and the previous section – as we want to know how the representational nature of thought is accounted for in this particular variant of divine self-knowledge. With respect to this question too, the quoted passage provides us with valuable information. For in EIIp38d Spinoza refers precisely – though not exclusively – to the propositions that we have claimed to harbor his theory of representation: EIIp16, EIIp7c and EIIp13. Indeed, we have seen that:

- EIIp16 deals with the representation of external things as images in the imagination of the perceiver (so this proposition accounts for representation relation (II)*)
- EIIp7c treats the vertical identity of the formal and objective being of things
- EIIp13 posits the horizontal parallelism of the human mind and its *objectum* (i.e. the human body), a representation relation that was shown to be an implication of the identity relation between the formal and objective being of things (so in conjunction with EIIp7c, this proposition accounts for representation relation (I)*, as well as the consciousness that was shown to be implied in this relation).

EIIp38 and its demonstration not only make it clear once more that adequate knowledge can indeed be had of parts, but the quoted passage moreover involves the very representational aspect that was still lacking in rendering (I)-(V').

How can these claims in turn safeguard that true and adequate (and conscious) ideas *in* a human mind can be understood to be *of* external things, without the unwelcome implication that (by parallelism) the external body (such as an approaching truck) must be understood to be *in* the body of the perceiving agent? *Prima facie*, the involvement relation of EIIp16 – to start with an analysis of the importance of representation relation (II)* – must be understood to play an important role in this respect. It appears to be rather clear why this proposition

essence of God is common to all, and is equally in the part and in the whole. And so (by P38) this knowledge will be adequate'. EIIp46d, (I) 482 (*sive res, ut pars, sive, ut totum, consideretur, ejus idea, sive totius sit, sive partis (per Prop. preced.), Dei aeternam, & infinitam essentiam involvet. Quare id, quod cognitionem aeternae, & infinitae essentiae Dei dat, omnibus commune, & aequè in parte, ac in toto est, adeoque (per Prop. 38. hujus) erit haec cognitio adequata*).

would be referred to in EIIp38d. It is by way of this specific representation relation that a mind can be understood to have cognitive access to things that are external to that mind. Yet, relevant as EIIp16 may seem in this respect, on closer scrutiny the involvement relation of EIIp16 actually does not seem too promising in uncovering the way in which true and adequate knowledge can be acquired by a mind. For at this point it must be admitted that two other propositions that are also adduced in EIIp38d – EIIp25 and EIIp27 – appear to imply that it is in fact *impossible* for a human mind to have adequate ideas of external bodies that are involved in the perceiving body in the way of EIIp16. EIIp25 reads thus:

P25: The idea of any affection of the human Body does not involve adequate knowledge of an external body.

Dem.: We have shown (P16) that the idea of an affection of the human Body involves the nature of an external body insofar as the external body determines the human Body in a certain fixed way. But insofar as the external body is an Individual which is not related to the human Body, the idea, *or* knowledge, of it is in God (by P9) insofar as God is considered to be affected with the idea of another thing which (by P7) is prior in nature to the external body itself. So adequate knowledge of the external body is not in God insofar as he has the idea of an affection of the human Body, or the idea of an affection of the human Body does not involve adequate knowledge of the external body, q.e.d.¹⁴⁴

(PROPOSITIO XXV. Idea cujuscumque affectionis Corporis humani adaequatam corporis externi cognitionem non involvit.

DEMONSTRATIO. Ideam affectionis Corporis humani eatenus corporis externi naturam involvere ostendimus (vide Prop. 16. hujus), quatenus externum ipsum humanum Corpus certo quodam modo determinat. At quatenus externum corpus Individuum est, quod ad Corpus humanum non refertur, ejus idea, sive cognitio in Deo est (per Prop. 9. hujus), quatenus Deus affectus consideratur alterius rei ideâ, quæ (per Prop. 7. hujus) ipso corpore externo prior est naturâ. Quare corporis externi adaequata cognitio in Deo non est, quatenus ideam affectionis humani Corporis habet, sive idea affectionis Corporis humani adaequatam corporis externi cognitionem non involvit. Q.E.D.)

And in EIIp27, Spinoza asserts the following:

P27: The idea of any affection of the human Body does not involve adequate knowledge of the human body itself.

Dem.: Any idea of any affection of the human Body involves the nature of the human Body insofar as the human Body itself is considered to be affected with a certain definite mode (see P16). But insofar as the human body is an Individual, which can be affected with many other modes, the idea of this [affection] and so on. (See P25D.)¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ EIIp25, (I) 469.

¹⁴⁵ EIIp27, (I) 470.

(PROPOSITIO XXVII. *Idea cujuscunque affectionis Corporis humani adaequatam ipsius humani Corporis cognitionem non involvit.*

DEMONSTRATIO. *Qualibet idea cujuscunque affectionis humani Corporis eatenus naturam Corporis humani involvit, quatenus ipsum humanum Corpus certo quodam modo affici consideratur (vide Prop. 16. hujus). At quatenus Corpus humanum Individuum est, quod multis aliis modis affici potest, ejus idea, &c. Vid. Demonst. Prop. 25. hujus)*

Indeed, these two propositions appear to thwart the possibility for human minds to have adequate ideas of external things on the basis of representation relation (II)*. So how can this be accounted for? Must the having of (rational)¹⁴⁶ adequate knowledge of external things *in* the human mind be understood to be impossible after all? I think not.

The solution to the apparent contradiction between EIIp38 and the assertions in EIIp25-EIIp27 runs along the following lines:

- Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that according to Spinoza it *is* possible for a human mind to attain adequate knowledge of the ideas of the affections of the human body that involve the nature of external bodies.
- Secondly, it must be noted that it is precisely this involvement that safeguards the cognitive access to *what is common* to the conceiving human mind and the things that are external to it.
- Thirdly, it is by way of the common notions that the knowledge that is involved in the ideas of the affection of the human body can be understood to be conscious knowledge of the objective being of external things.

I will treat these three argumentative steps in subsequent order.

Step 1: Adequate knowledge of the ideas of the affections of the body

With respect to the first point it is noteworthy that according to Spinoza the ideas of the affections of the body that ‘contain no error’ insofar as these are related to God, are principally within the reach of the human mind. This is of course already

¹⁴⁶ Recall that we are scrutinizing Spinoza’s claims concerning the *second* kind of knowledge. His corroboration of *intuitive* adequate knowledge will be treated in the next section.

suggested in EIIp38d (and its reference to EIIp7c), but becomes even clearer in EVp4:

P4: There is no affection of the body of which we cannot form a clear and distinct concept.

Dem.: Those things which are common to all can only be conceived adequately (by IIP38), and so (by IIP12 and L2) there is no affection of the body of which we cannot form some clear and distinct concept, q.e.d.¹⁴⁷

(PROPOSITIO IV. Nulla est Corporis affectio, cujus aliquem clarum, & distinctum non Possumus formare conceptum.

DEMONSTRATIO. Quæ omnibus communia sunt, non possunt concipi nisi adequatè (per Prop. 38. p. 2.), adeoque (per Prop. 12. & Lemma 2., quod habetur post Schol. Prop. 13. p. 2.) nulla est Corporis affectio, cujus aliquem clarum, & distinctum non possumus formare conceptum. Q. E. D.)

If there is ‘no affection of the body’ of which we cannot form a clear and distinct concept, then evidently this also goes for affections of the body that involve the nature of external things. EVp4 teaches us that according to Spinoza *there is no affection of the body of which we cannot grasp the eternal and infinite formal being at level (b-i)*. So the question we face is not whether Spinoza leaves room for adequate knowledge of the ideas of the affections of the body that involve the nature of external things, but how he is able to square the claims in EIIp25-EIIp27 and EVp4. That is to say: how can the adequate knowledge be claimed to be had of external things that are represented to the perceiver in the way of EIIp16? This brings us to the second step of the argument.

Step 2: Cognitive access to what is common

With respect to the second point it is crucial to stress that EIIp38 – and hence the rational knowledge that is based on it – *is not concerned with knowledge of the ‘individuals’ that surface in EIIp25d and EIIp27d*. Indeed, whereas the inadequate knowledge that is referred to in these two propositions is explicitly claimed to be applicable to individuals, *ratio* must be understood to consist in adequate knowledge of ‘*what is common to all things* [emphasis added]’.¹⁴⁸ This becomes clear

¹⁴⁷ EVp4, (I) 598.

¹⁴⁸ In EIIp37 Spinoza claims that ‘what is common to all things (on this see L2, above) and is equally in the part and in the whole, does not constitute the essence of any singular thing’. EIIp37, (I) 474 (*Id, quod omnibus commune (de his vide supra Lemma 2.), quodque æquè in parte, ac in toto est, nullius rei singularis essentiam constituit*). Now, it would require some advanced argumentative acrobatics to claim that the

not only from EIIp38, but also from EIIp39 (that, as we have seen, is also mentioned by Spinoza as a foundation of the second kind of knowledge). Consider this proposition:

P39: If something is common and peculiar to, the human Body and certain external bodies by which the human Body is usually affected, and is equally in the part and in the whole of each of them, its idea will also be adequate in the Mind.¹⁴⁹

(Id, quod Corpori humano, & quibusdam corporibus externis, à quibus Corpus humanum affici solet, commune est, & proprium, quodque in cujuscunque horum parte æque, ac in toto est, ejus etiam idea erit in Mente adequata)

The adequate knowledge that is posited here – and that in EIIp40s2 is referred to as *ratio* – is not staged as adequate knowledge of these external things insofar as they are ‘individuals which are not related to the human body’¹⁵⁰ (i.e. insofar as they are mutually limiting *parts*), but *insofar as they have something in common with the body of the perceiver* (i.e. insofar as they provide a *vista on the very same whole*). As Spinoza states it himself in the demonstration of EIIp39:

Let it be posited now that the human body is affected by an external body through what it has in common with it, that is, by A; the idea of this affection will involve property A (by P16), and so (by P7C) the idea of this affection, insofar as it involves property A, will be adequate in God insofar as he is affected with the idea of the human body, that is (by P13), insofar as he constitutes the nature of the human mind. And so (by P11C), this idea is also adequate in the human mind, q.e.d.¹⁵¹

(Ponatur jam humanum Corpus à corpore externo affici per id, quod cum eo habet commune, hoc est, ab A, hujus affectionis idea proprietatem A involvet (per Prop. 16. hujus), atque adeò (per idem Coroll. Prop. 7. hujus) idea hujus affectionis, quatenus proprietatem A involvit, erit in Deo adequata, quatenus ideâ Corporis humani affectus est, hoc est (per Prop. 13. hujus), quatenus Mentis humanæ naturam constituit; adeoque (per Coroll. Prop. 11. hujus) hæc idea est etiam in Mente humanâ adequata. Q. E. D.)

This passage makes it very clear that the adequate knowledge that is attained by the human mind insofar as that mind is affected by an external thing, is knowledge of a *common property* that is *equally in the part and in the whole*. Another way of saying

clause ‘those things which are common to all’ from the very next proposition EIIp38 would actually refer to something else than the common things that are stipulated in EIIp37. I readily admit that I lack the talent and confidence to perform such dangerous acrobatics.

¹⁴⁹ EIIp39d, (I) 475.

¹⁵⁰ This is a paraphrase of a clause that Spinoza uses in EIIp38d. See above.

¹⁵¹ EIIp39d, (I) 475.

this is that the idea of the affection of our body that evokes an image in our imagination of an external thing can only be understood to be adequate if this idea is '[separated] from the thought of an external cause'.¹⁵² My idea of an approaching truck is adequate if and only if this truck (i) is somehow related to my body (*in casu* by way of the very involvement relation of EIIp16), and (ii) is considered as to the aspects that *are shared by myself and the approaching truck*. According to Spinoza I can only have adequate ideas of external things insofar as the mutually limiting aspects of myself and the external thing (i.e. the aspects that render us individual parts in the order of nature, among which the fact that these individual parts necessarily operate in an *extrinsic* causal thread) are somehow overcome.

With this second step we have uncovered the way in which Spinoza is able to uphold both EIIp25-27 and EVp4. Whereas it is impossible to gather adequate knowledge of the second kind of external things in their individual being (and insofar as they are external to the human body), it *is* possible to conceive these things adequately insofar as they are considered 'under a certain species of eternity'.¹⁵³ Actually, this is precisely what we would expect on the basis of the things that were said earlier in this chapter. For it has become clear above that adequate knowledge is not concerned with grasping things as they appear *in the durational order of nature* (b-ii), but with things insofar as they appear *in the eternal order of the intellect* (b-i). Indeed, it is precisely the distinction between the two orders elucidated above that enables Spinoza to claim that eternal knowledge can be had of durational things. Given what we have seen earlier, this claim can also be formulated in the following way: adequate knowledge is not concerned with grasping things insofar as they have God as their *extrinsic cause* in the way EIIp9, but with things insofar as they have God as their *intrinsic cause* in the way of EIIp5.¹⁵⁴ On Spinoza's account things are known adequately only insofar as they

¹⁵² EVp2, (I) 597. The entire proposition reads thus: 'If we separate emotions, or affects, from the thought of an external cause, and join them to other thoughts, then the love, or hate, toward the external cause is destroyed, as are the vacillations of mind arising from these affects' (*Si animi commotionem, seu affectum à causæ externæ cogitatione amoveamus, & aliis jungamus cogitationibus, tum Amor, seu Odium erga causam externam, ut & animi fluctuationes, quæ ex his affectibus oriuntur, destruentur*). The subsequent propositions make it clear that it is precisely this separation that makes ideas 'clear and distinct'.

¹⁵³ Recall that Spinoza claims that 'it is of the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain species of eternity'. EIIp44c2, (I) 481 (*De naturâ Rationis est res sub quâdam æternitatis specie percipere*).

¹⁵⁴ A detailed treatment of the difference between these two causal threads was provided in section 2.5.

are considered *without respect to their objects*, as to their *eternal being* that is *equally in the part and in the whole*.

One more thing must be stressed once more with respect to the involvement relation of EIIp16. It is this: a perceiver can only consider an external thing as to its eternal and infinite aspects that are equally in the part and in the whole *if the perceiver somehow has cognitive access to this external thing*. It is precisely here where the importance of the *involvement* relation of EIIp16 comes to light. Representation relation (II)* provides the perceiving mind with the ‘raw material’ of the imagination that can be turned into true and adequate ideas. The image of an approaching truck in the imagination can be understood to ‘contain no error’, when this truck is considered, not insofar as it is operative as an individual in the order of nature, but insofar as it is considered as to the shared formal, eternal and infinite being of the idea of the truck and the idea of an affection of my body of the perceiver. And insofar as the perceiver grasps this shared and unlimited formal being (i.e. that which is equally in the part and in the whole), he can be understood to ‘log in’ to *the idea* in God (EIIp20) *of the idea* of the approaching truck (and hence be conscious of it by virtue of the self-consciousness of the body in which the nature of the external thing is involved). Acknowledging the importance of the ‘first adequate idea’ that was uncovered in section 5.3.2 – i.e. the knowledge of the essence of the own body of the knowing agent – this can also be stated thus: a mind can only have rational knowledge of an external thing insofar as this mind is able to go through the procedure¹⁵⁵ of inferring that *the mutually limiting and extrinsically caused durational objective being* of this external thing at level (b-ii) is merely an expression in the order of nature of its *non-limiting and intrinsically caused eternal formal being* at level (b-i), that is *involved in the non-limiting and intrinsically caused formal being of the conceiving mind’s own object* in the order of the intellect. In this sense – and in this sense only – the self-consciousness of the conceiving mind can be understood to encompass true and adequate knowledge of external things, without the absurd implication that these external things are in the body of the conceiving agent. A mind can be understood to have an adequate idea of an

¹⁵⁵ The term ‘procedure’ with respect to *ratio* stems from Spinoza himself. See inter alia note 204. It may be informative to add that this procedure is referred to in EIIp6c with the verb ‘*concludo*’. See section 4.3.2.1, Example 2.

external thing, because the adequate (i.e. formal being of that) idea must be located, not in the order of nature, but in the order of the intellect.

Step 3: Common notions

One important issue still awaits elucidation. For even though we have seen how the adequacy of ideas of external things (i.e. these things insofar as they are considered *without* respect to their objects, at level (b-i)) can be accounted for, it is not completely clear how the truth of these ideas (i.e. the things *with* respect to their object, at level (b-ii))¹⁵⁶ is to be understood. Another way of saying the same thing is that the present reading (again)¹⁵⁷ appears to contradict our claim that rational knowledge must be considered to be bottom-up knowledge that ‘starts with the parts’. For have we not just said that ‘it impossible to gather knowledge of the second kind of external things on the basis of their individual being [...], insofar as they are external to the human body’? This would seem to thwart our claim that adequate rational knowledge ‘starts with the parts’. So how can this be accounted for? How can our account of rational knowledge be understood to cohere with the assertion that the order of nature consists of the all-encompassing collection of individual *objective beings* that are within the cognitive reach of a knowing agent? An answer to this question can be found in an analysis of the precise status of the ‘common notions’ that surface in EIIp40s2.

Explaining this issue in EIIp37 and EIIp38c (and indeed in EVp4), Spinoza refers to EIII2. So it is instructive the quote this lemma. EIII2 reads thus:

L2: All bodies agree in certain things.

Dem.: For all bodies agree in that they involve the concept of one and the same attribute (By D1), and in that they can move now more slowly, now more quickly, and absolutely, that now they move, now they are at rest.¹⁵⁸

(LEMMA II. *Omnia corpora in quibusdam conveniunt.*

¹⁵⁶ In a previous section we have seen that the relation of *truth* – i.e. representation relation (I)* – must be understood to include the relation between a durational object and its durational objective being.

¹⁵⁷ A similar problem was treated in section 5.3.2.

¹⁵⁸ EIII2, (I) 459. It is important to add that EIII2 is partly – and tacitly – founded on EIIA1', which reads that ‘all bodies either move or are at rest’. EIIA1', (I) 458 (*Omnia corpora vel moventur, vel quiescunt*).

DEMONSTRATIO. In his enim omnia corpora conveniunt, quòd unius, ejusdemque attributi conceptum involvunt (per Defn. 1. hujus). Deinde, quòd jam tardiùs, jam celeriùs, & absolutè jam moveri, jam quiescere possunt)

This is a telling claim. For if it is acknowledged that rational knowledge – i.e. knowledge of the second kind – thus is concerned with (inter alia) the way in which bodies move or are at rest, and that according to Spinoza motion-and-rest is the (unspecified) infinite mode of extension, it becomes clear that rational knowledge can only be had in virtue of grasping things *as to their relation with the infinite mode they must be understood to resort under*. In terms of ‘mereological letter’ 32 (see Chapter 2): rational knowledge can only be had insofar as things are considered as to the ‘reasons by which we are persuaded that each part of Nature agrees with its whole and coheres with the others’.¹⁵⁹ Now, this is instructive regarding to the way in which it is possible for a human mind to have true ideas of external parts of nature. In this respect it must be noted (i) that the infinite intellect was shown to be the (unspecified) infinite mode of thought in the same way motion-and-rest can be considered to be the (unspecified) infinite mode of extension (see Chapter 1), and (ii) that it was stated in section 5.2.1.1 that the representational nature of ideas is a characteristic of modes of thinking in the very same way motion and rest are staged as characteristics of modes of extension. Indeed, the attribute of thought was shown to be representational (by EIA6) in the very same way the parallel attribute of extension must be understood to entail motion and rest (by EIIA1’). This in turn enables us to provide the following alternative rendering of EIIL2:

L2’: All ideas agree in certain things.

Dem.: For all ideas agree in that they involve the concept of one and the same attribute (By D1), and in that they *represent*.

On the basis of this variant of EIIL2 it can be conjectured how it is possible to have true ideas of things that are external to the human mind (and indeed uphold the claim that the order of nature can be understood to be constituted by infinitely many objective individuals that serve as ground floor for rational adequate

¹⁵⁹ Letter 32, (II), 18 (*puto te rogare rationes, quibus persuademur unamquamque Naturæ partem cum suo toto convenire, & cum reliquis cohæerere*).

knowledge). Insofar as the mind has adequate ideas of things that are common to all ideas (not only of the idea of the body of the perceiver, but also of ideas of external things such as mathematical figures or approaching trucks), the mind is able to infer that the idea of an external thing that is involved in a certain affection of its parallel body *is representational in the very same way the 'first adequate idea' of the essence of the own body is*.¹⁶⁰ And hence the idea of this external thing can be understood to *represent its durational body objectively* in the same way the 'first adequate idea' is expressed in the objective being of a singular (durational and finite) body. In terms of Letter 32: the reasons by which we are persuaded that each part of Nature agrees with its whole and coheres with the others are *the axioms that all bodies and all ideas agree in certain things that are equally in the part and in the whole*.¹⁶¹ Indeed, it is precisely the axiom – or common notion¹⁶² – that all ideas can be understood to be representational in the same way the 'first adequate idea' is (i.e. in the way of representation relation (1)*), that enables the conceiving mind to conjecture that the very external individuals that cause an image in the imagination can actually be understood to be *extrinsically caused, durational and finite objective beings that are eternal and infinite* insofar as they are conceived to be *caused intrinsically*.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ This is an elaboration of the things that were said section 5.3.2, where it was shown how we have to conceive the 'first adequate idea' by virtue of which the human mind is able to expand its range of adequate ideas on the basis of a perceived multiplicity in nature.

¹⁶¹ It seems to be precisely the axiomatic character of this foundation that induces Spinoza to use the clause 'reasons by which we are persuaded' in Letter 32. For without the mentioned (and still some other) axioms – i.e. the *common notions* – it is hard to say something about the subject, as 'to know that would require knowing the whole of Nature and all of its parts', knowledge that according to Spinoza is outside the reach of the finite human mind. Ibidem, (II) 18 (*quia ad hoc cognoscendum requireretur totam Naturam, omnesque ejus partes cognoscere*).

¹⁶² Apart from the axioms mentioned, there are more 'notions, common to all men' (EIIp38c). I will not investigate here which other axioms from the *Ethics* can be understood to constitute the 'foundations of our reasoning' (*ratiocinii nostri fundamenta*) (EIIp40s1, (I) 476), and which axioms 'are hardly of any use' (*quaenam vero vix ullius usus essent*) (Ibidem, (I) 476). With respect to the identification of axioms and common notions it may be informative to add here that (i) the geometrical form of the *Ethics* is clearly inspired by Euclid's *Elements*, and that (ii) Euclid calls his axioms 'common notions' (*koinai ennoiai*) as well. The identification of axioms and common notions finds further corroboration in the clause 'axioms, or notions' in EIIp40s1 (Ibidem, (I) 476 (*axiomatum, sive notionum*)). It seems rather uncontroversial to claim that the term 'notion' in this latter clause refers to the 'notions which are called *common*' from the preceding sentence (Ibidem, (I) 476 (*notionum, quae Communes vocantur*)).

¹⁶³ With respect to the causal aspect of this claim, 'common notion' EIA4 deserves a mention here. This axiom reads: 'The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause'. EIA4, (I) 410 (*Effectus cognitio à cognitione causae dependet, & eandem involvit*). I think it can be shown that this

Recall that we treated the question concerning the common notions because we wanted to elucidate how adequate rational knowledge can be understood to be directed bottom-up, whilst at the same time being knowledge of what is common to all things. The clarification of the way in which we must conceive the common notions teaches us how we are to understand – in the words of R.J. Delahunty – the ‘empirical element in the common notions’,¹⁶⁴ without the implication that adequate rational knowledge is gained only on the basis of the grasping of individuals in the order of nature. The first thing to note in this respect is that I agree with Delahunty that the imagination must be considered to be an important condition for expanding the eternal part of our mind. Even though we have seen that it is impossible to gather adequate knowledge on the basis of the imagination only (see above), it is clear that representation relation (II)* – that we have shown to be the representation relation that is characteristic for *imaginatio* – plays an important role in the gaining of rational knowledge. The imagination can be understood to evoke many ideas of affections, and thus to provide the intellect with (so to speak) additional ‘raw material’ on the basis of which *pars melior nostri* is capable of expanding its range of adequate ideas. Indeed, it must be admitted that *in the case of rational knowledge it is the imagination-mediated interaction with other individual parts in the order of nature that enables the mind to gather additional adequate ideas*. It is precisely because of this that Spinoza mentions EIIp16 in the demonstration of EIIp38 (see above). And it also provides the *rationale* for the following claim in EIVp18s (a scholium that is concerned with ‘the dictates of reason’) that was already adduced above:

our intellect would of course be more imperfect if the Mind were alone and did not understand anything except itself. There are, therefore, many things outside us which are useful to us, and on that account to be sought.¹⁶⁵

(sanè noster intellectus imperfectior esset, si Mens sola esset, nec quicquam præter se ipsam intelligeret. Multa igitur extra nos dantur, quæ nobis utilia, quæque propterea appetenda sunt)

‘causal axiom’ encompasses both intrinsic and extrinsic causation. However, a detailed treatment of this subject would take us too far afield.

¹⁶⁴ R.J. Delahunty, *Spinoza* (London 1985), 75-76.

¹⁶⁵ EIVp18s, (I) 556.

It has become clear now how Spinoza can account for this claim. In this section we have seen that the parts that constitute the order of nature can be understood to be a means (even though not a sufficient condition) for expanding the range of true and adequate ideas in a human mind. Rational knowledge can be considered to ‘start with the parts’, because for beings who are endowed with a ‘first adequate idea’, these parts can function as a stepping stone for acquiring cognitive access to their eternal being. This knowledge can be understood to be bottom-up insofar as the common notions enable the grasping mind to understand that the external extended things that are represented to it through the senses (and that hence are *involved* in an idea of an affection of the body) are finite parts that are related to the infinite whole of nature in the very same way the object of the self-conscious mind (i.e. the body) is a part of that infinite whole: as a durational and finite expression of an eternal and infinite thing that follows intrinsically from the necessity of the divine nature.

5.4.1.1 An answer to Curley and Della Rocca

The present way of understanding Spinoza’s theory of knowledge enables me to formulate an answer to the problems that were brought up by Edwin Curley and Michael Della Rocca (see section 5.1).

Recall that Curley expressed some hesitations concerning the following circumscription of *inadequacy* and its relation with Spinoza’s definition of adequacy:

when we say that God has this or that idea, not only insofar as he constitutes the nature of the human Mind, but insofar as he also has the idea of another thing together with the human Mind, then we say that the human Mind perceives the thing only partially, *or* inadequately.¹⁶⁶

(*& cùm dicimus Deum hanc, vel illam ideam habere, non tantùm, quatenus naturam humanæ Mentis constituit, sed quatenus simul cum Mente humanâ alterius rei etiam habet ideam, tum dicimus Mentem humanam rem ex parte, sive inadæquatè percipere*)

As noted before, the connection between this latter account of inadequacy and Spinoza’s definition of adequate idea is not immediately evident. However, given what we have seen in this section I think that Curley’s claim that ‘Spinoza seems to

¹⁶⁶ EIIp11c, (I) 456.

be working with two definitions of adequacy¹⁶⁷ can be counteracted. For it is clear now that adequacy must be understood to concern (and concern only) things as they are in themselves, as pervasive formal beings that are considered without respect to their objects and hence *without any reference to their position in an extrinsic causal thread in the order of nature*. Insofar as things are grasped adequately, they are considered to follow from their first causes only, i.e. insofar as they are operative as non-limiting infinite modes in the order of the intellect (b-i). Now, in the case of *inadequacy* precisely the separation from the thought of external causes is lacking. The point Spinoza wants to make with his description of inadequacy in EIIp11c is that adequacy is to be understood in terms of the *absolute negation of the existence of limiting external individuals*, as adequate knowledge concerns knowledge of what is *equally in the part and in the whole*. As soon as God is claimed to have an idea, not only ‘insofar as he constitutes the nature of the human mind, but insofar as he also has the idea of another thing together with the human mind’, there surfaces a aspect of externality (and mutually limiting parthood) that thwarts the adequacy of the idea of the other thing insofar as it is in the human mind. For in that case, the shared infinity and (hence) non-limiting character of the idea of the human body (i.e. the human mind) and the idea of the external thing that is involved in it is threatened, as there is supposed to be ‘another of the same nature’ (EID2) that limits it.¹⁶⁸ In this case, things are not considered insofar as they are operative as a (so to speak) *converging formal being* in the order of the intellect (b-i), but only insofar as they are operative as *mutually limiting individuals* in the order of nature (b-ii). As long as God is considered to have an idea of an approaching truck together with the idea of the human body (i.e. the human mind), these two ideas must be considered to be operative at the level of the order of nature. And hence the idea of the truck is not involved in the idea of the perceiving body in the way required for the having of adequate rational knowledge of what is equally in the part and in the whole at the level of the order of the intellect. Yet, as soon as the knowing agent *does* have adequate rational knowledge of the truck, the formal being of the idea of the truck can be understood to (so to speak) converge with the formal being of the idea of the bodily affection that the idea of the truck is involved in. In

¹⁶⁷ Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 134.

¹⁶⁸ EID2, (I) 408 (*aliâ ejusdem nature*). For the importance of this definition with respect to the status of the formal being (and hence the adequacy) of ideas, see section 2.6.2, Problem 2.

this particular case, God can no longer be understood to have ‘in himself the minds of other things together with the mind of [the perceiving] man’,¹⁶⁹ as the converging of the formal beings of truck and conceiver nullifies the very mutual limiting individuality that accounts for the inadequacy of ideas. Understood in this way it becomes clear how Spinoza’s description of inadequacy in EIIp11c can be brought in line with his definition of adequacy in EIID4: both circumscriptions aim to communicate that adequacy is characterized by the *non-limiting infinity* that is characteristic for things insofar as they are considered in themselves, without relation to an object, i.e. as to the aspects that are equally in the part and in the whole in the order of the intellect.

The problem that was signalled by Michael Della Rocca can be solved along these same lines. Recall that Della Rocca pointed out that EIIp9 entails that the adequate idea of a singular thing is had by God ‘insofar as God has the ideas that are the causal antecedents of this idea’.¹⁷⁰ This in turn seems puts considerable strain on the possibility for a human mind to ‘log in’ to God’s adequate knowledge. Indeed:

it seems difficult if not impossible for the human mind to have adequate ideas. In order for a certain idea that the human mind has to be adequate, the human mind must include all the ideas that are the causal antecedents of this idea. How could the human mind, in any particular case, have all these ideas?¹⁷¹

Della Rocca’s claim seems to be that for a mind, in order to have an adequate idea of (say) a drawn circle, it must have knowledge of all the finite and durational ideas that play a role in the causal generation of this mathematical figure (say: of the infinite causal chains that led to Peter – who drew the circle – and Paul’s pencil – with which the circle was drawn, *et cetera*). And this, as Della Rocca claims rightly, seems impossible for a finite human mind. As we have seen above, Spinoza admits

¹⁶⁹ This clause can be found in EIIIp1. The entire proposition reads thus: ‘If something necessarily follows from an idea which is adequate in God, not insofar as he has in himself the mind of one man only, but insofar as he has in himself the minds of other things together with the mind of that man, that man’s mind (by the same IIP11C) is not its adequate cause, but its partial cause. EIIIp1, (I) 494 (*Deinde quicquid necessariò sequitur ex ideâ, quæ in Deo est adequata, non quatenus Mentem unius hominis tantum, sed quatenus aliarum rerum Mentem simul cum ejusdem hominis Mentem in se habet, ejus (per idem Coroll. Prop. 11. p. 2.) illius hominis Mens non est causa adequata, sed partialis*).

¹⁷⁰ Della Rocca, *Representation*, 55.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*, 183, note 29.

in Letter 32 that he does not know ‘how each part agrees with its whole’.¹⁷² However, as became clear as well, Spinoza presents a short-cut. That is to say: it is true that, insofar as things are grasped only as to their individuality (and parthood) in the order of nature – i.e. with respect to their external cause – no adequate knowledge can be had of them (this is precisely the purport of the adduced claims of EIp15s, EIIp25 and EIIp27). Yet, as soon as things are grasped in their pervasive and eternal formal being in the order of the intellect, the causal generation of things is no longer understood to be expressed in an infinite chain of (mutually limiting and finite) extrinsically caused singular things in the way of EIIp9, but in an intrinsic causal thread from God as a *res cogitans* in the way of EIIp5. In other words: just as Spinoza’s God cannot be understood to be a *prima causa* that is positioned at the beginning of a durational causal thread,¹⁷³ so also modes insofar as they are understood to involve an infinite and eternal essence of God, are ‘[separated] from the thought of an external cause’ (EVp2). Insofar as modes are considered ‘through their first causes’ (EIIp18s), they need not be considered primarily insofar as they are ‘parts’ or ‘individuals’ that are operative in the durational causal thread (as Della Rocca supposes). And hence, on Spinoza’s account, adequate knowledge can be had of them, namely insofar as external individuals are involved in the idea of an affection of the body of the perceiver,¹⁷⁴ and are considered only as to the aspects that follow intrinsically from the necessity of the divine nature (and hence are equally in the part and in the whole of the infinite mode they resort under).

5.4.1.2 The instrumental function of *ratio*

Even though I have already said a lot concerning the way in which images in the imagination can be understood to function as ‘raw material’ for the intellect, one more thing must still be added. It concerns the *adequate causation* of ideas. I have stated in this section (and indeed in the previous chapters) that the formal being of

¹⁷² Letter 32, (II) 18 (*unaquaque pars cum suo toto conveniat, id me ignorare*).

¹⁷³ See note 116.

¹⁷⁴ Insofar as this idea of an affection of the body is grasped truly and adequately, the idea of the idea of the bodily affection can be understood to be *an idea of a true idea*, that encompasses conscious knowledge of the external thing, even though the external thing itself is not in the perceiver. In a previous section, an image in the imagination was claimed to be an *idea of a false idea*. See note 75.

things (i.e. things in their eternal and pervasive infinite being) cannot be understood to be operative in the causal thread of EIp28 and EIIP9. That is to say: up till this point it was claimed that the order of the intellect is absolutely devoid of extrinsic causation. However, it must be stressed that the notion of *adequate causation*, which is explained in EIID1,¹⁷⁵ actually does allow for a very specific variant of extrinsic causation that *is* applicable to eternal and infinite things. This particular eternal variant of extrinsic causation, which accounts for the possibility of the human mind to *act* within the order of nature (and thus for our possibility to use the intellect *as an instrument* to come nearer to a status of blessedness), is recognizable in a proposition that is referred to in Spinoza's concise elucidation of rational knowledge in EIIP40s2, and that was not adduced yet: EIIP40 itself. Consider this claim:

Whatever ideas follow in the Mind from ideas which are adequate in the Mind are also adequate.¹⁷⁶
(Quaecunque ideæ in Mente sequuntur ex ideis, quæ in ipsâ sunt adæquatæ, sunt etiam adæquatæ).

This proposition suggests that Spinoza indeed leaves room for an eternal variant of mode-mode causation. The demonstration of EIIP40 is even more telling in this respect. Spinoza claims here that 'when we say that an idea in the human Mind follows from ideas which are adequate in it, we are saying nothing but that (by P11C) in the divine intellect there is an idea of which God is the cause, not insofar as he is infinite, nor insofar as he is affected with the ideas of a great many singular things, but insofar as he constitutes only the essence of the human Mind.'¹⁷⁷ This passage makes it clear that adequate ideas can indeed be understood to be caused extrinsically in a certain sense. To be sure, this particular variant of causation is not extrinsic insofar as God is 'affected with the ideas of a great many singular things' – i.e. from the order of nature – but only insofar as God constitutes the essence of the

¹⁷⁵ EIID1 reads: 'I call that cause adequate whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it. But I call it partial, *or* inadequate, if its effect cannot be understood through it alone'. EIID1, (I) 492 (*Causam adæquatam appellō eam, cujus effectus potest clarè, & distinctè per eandem percipi. Inadæquatam autem, seu partialem illam voco, cujus effectus per ipsam solam intelligi nequit*).

¹⁷⁶ EIIP40, (I) 475.

¹⁷⁷ EIIP40d, (I) 475 (*Nam cum dicimus, in Mente humanâ ideam sequi ex ideis, quæ in ipsâ sunt adæquatæ, nihil aliud dicimus (per Coroll. Prop. 11. hujus), quàm quòd in ipso Divino intellectu detur idea, cujus Deus est causa, non quatenus infinitus est, nec quatenus plurimarum rerum singularium ideis affectus est, sed quatenus tantum humanæ Mentis essentiam constituit*).

human mind (which accounts for the eternal nature of this variant of mode-mode causation). The idea of (say) an approaching truck can only be considered to be adequate if the idea is ‘separated from the thought of an external cause’ and is considered insofar it is involved in the eternal nature of the conceiving human mind. Indeed, as already noted above, only if perceptions from the order of nature are evaluated on the basis of ‘another standard of truth’, *pars melior nostri* is capable of expanding its range of eternal adequate ideas. It is precisely this expanding operation that can be denoted with the term ‘adequate causation’.

With this we have in fact uncovered the very *instrumental function of the intellect* that was referred to earlier in this study. On the basis of EIIp40 it becomes clear why Spinoza would attribute this important function to the intellect. For from this proposition we learn (again) that the possibility to enlarge the contingent of adequate ideas *can only be realized by way of adequate (i.e. eternal) ideas*. To be sure, with respect to the instrumental function of the intellect one more question must be answered: why would the human mind actually strive to enlarge its amount of adequate ideas? Why use the intellect as an instrument to turn inadequate raw material into adequate and eternal ideas? The impetus to turn inadequate ideas into adequate ideas (i.e. to separate images in the imagination from their external causes) can be understood to be rooted in the fact that, even though *each* adequate idea provides cognitive access to God’s eternal and infinite essence, the intellect is instrumental in *broadening the basis* for this knowledge. In terms of the ‘water example’ that was introduced in Chapter 1: even though an investigation of a single drop of water enables us to attain true knowledge of what it is to be water *generaliter*, (say) a bucket full of water (or indeed, the all-encompassing totality of water molecules) provides a broader basis¹⁷⁸ for attaining knowledge of what it is to be water than a single drop of water. The ethical aspects of Spinoza’s philosophy

¹⁷⁸ Recall that we have shown in Chapter 2 that it is precisely because of this that Spinoza is able to assert a decreasing perfection of infinite modes: a certain pervasive mediate infinite mode (say: the formal being of the ocean) can be understood to be more perfect than another pervasive mediate infinite mode that merely is a *part* of the ocean (say: the formal being of a drop of water *in* that ocean), *because the first pervasive infinite mode is closer to the exhaustive expression of the attribute than the second one*. That is to say: even though their vista on the absolutely infinite intellect must be understood to be exactly the same, *the basis for the one vista is broader than the basis for the other*. Still, even though the basis for attaining true knowledge is smaller in the second case (i.e. in the case of the drop of water), the knowledge that is attained of the things that are equally in the part and in the whole must be understood to be adequate in both cases.

consists precisely in the impetus to broaden this basis.¹⁷⁹ For Spinoza makes it very clear that adequate knowledge is nothing else than God's eternal self-love. Indeed:

The mind's intellectual love of God is the very love of God by which God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human mind's essence, considered under a species of eternity; that is, the mind's intellectual love is part of the intellectual love by which God loves himself.¹⁸⁰ (*Mentis Amor intellectualis erga Deum est ipse Dei Amor, quo Deus se ipsum amat, non quatenus infinitus est, sed quatenus per essentiam humanæ Mentis, sub specie æternitatis consideratam, explicari potest, hoc est, Mentis erga Deum Amor intellectualis pars est infiniti amoris, quo Deus se ipsum amat*).

This reformulation of the Mereological Claim makes it clear that expanding the range of adequate ideas in the human mind by way of the specific variant of mode-mode causation that emerges in EIIp40 implies nothing less than enlarging the extent in which that minds participates in God's eternal self-knowledge. According to Spinoza 'our salvation, or blessedness, or Freedom'¹⁸¹ consists precisely in this.

*

In sum: rational knowledge can be understood to be bottom-up knowledge, because the grasping human mind uses the individual modes in the order of nature as 'raw material' on the basis of which it can act (and hence use the intellect in order to expand its range of adequate ideas). This 'raw material' is represented in the human mind by way of the representation relation forwarded in EIIp16. In the case of adequate rational knowledge, the ideas of the affections of the bodies that represent external ideas to us are not considered as to their external durational causes (i.e. in the order of nature), but only as to the things that are 'common to all' and that thus are equally in the perceived things and in the whole of nature (i.e. in the order of the intellect). If considered on the

¹⁷⁹ As Spinoza claims in the scholium of EIIp47: 'From this we see that God's infinite essence and his eternity are known to all. And since all things are in God and are conceived through God, it follows that we can deduce from this knowledge a great many things which we know adequately, and so can form that third kind of knowledge of which we spoke in P40S2 and of whose excellence and utility we shall speak in Part V'. EIIp47s, (I) 482 (*Hinc videmus, Dei infinitam essentiam, ejusque æternitatem omnibus esse notam. Cùm autem omnia in Deo sint, & per Deum concipiuntur, sequitur, nos ex cognitione hâc plurima posse deducere, quæ adequatè cognoscamus, atque adeò tertium illud cognitionis genus formare, de quo diximus in Scholio 2. Propositionis 40. hujus Partis, & de cujus præstantiâ & utilitate in Quintâ Parte erit nobis dicendi locus*).

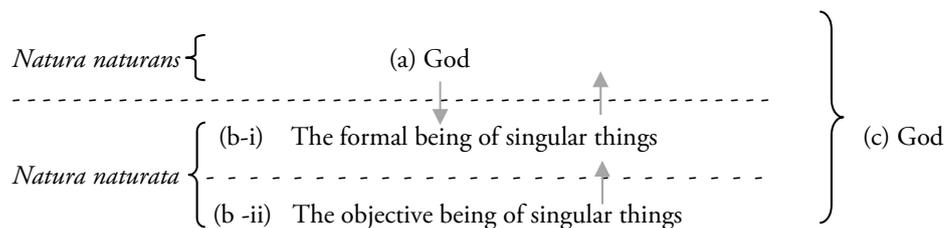
¹⁸⁰ EVp36, (I) 612.

¹⁸¹ EVp36s, (I) 612 (*nostra salus, seu beatitudo, seu Libertas*).

basis of ‘common notions’ the ideas of the affections of the perceiver’s body – which involve the ideas of external things – are understood to ‘contain no error’. Expanding the range of adequate ideas – which is only possible by virtue of the first adequate idea: the grasping of the essence of the own body – can be called the instrumental function of the intellect, by way of which it is possible to enlarge the share of the conceiving human mind in God’s eternal love for himself.

5.4.2 *Scientia intuitiva*

Having elucidated how the bottom-up perspective can be understood to yield knowledge of the second kind and expand the range of adequate ideas in a human mind on the basis of (inter alia) the things this mind perceives from the order of nature, we can turn to the question whether we are entitled to claim that knowledge of the third kind (i.e. *scientia intuitiva*) can be understood to be expressed in the top-down perspective that was uncovered in the previous chapters, and that was rendered in the arrow with the downward direction in table 6:



(table 6)

How can the claim be corroborated that the third kind of knowledge must indeed be understood to proceed from *Natura naturans*? As already noted in the previous chapter, Spinoza’s Principle of Plenitude of EIp16 makes it clear that considered *realiter* the causal and conceptual direction must be understood to be directed ‘from the eternal necessity of the divine nature’ to ‘all things which can fall under an infinite intellect’. So there is little doubt *that* Spinoza fosters a top-down conceptual flow within God (c). The question whether it is precisely this causal and conceptual flow that can be understood to express *scientia intuitiva* can be answered with the help of (inter alia) Spinoza’s assertions in the second scholium of EIIp40.

Recall that in EIIp40s2, the third kind of knowledge was explained thus:

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.¹⁸²

(Atque hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adequatâ ideâ essentia formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adequatam cognitionem essentia rerum)

In order to see what is being claimed here, it must be recalled once more what we have said regarding the adequacy of ideas: the adequacy of an idea was shown to be characterized by the fact that the idea under scrutiny is considered *without respect to its object*. When we apply this formula to the sentence ‘adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God’, it seems rather clear that this clause must be understood to refer to the formal essence of certain attributes *as they are in themselves*. And as there appears to be only one candidate for the attributes as they are in themselves – God *qua* God (a)¹⁸³ – we can draw the tentative conclusion that *scientia intuitiva* must be understood to proceed from an adequate idea of God *qua* God to an adequate idea of the essence of things.

This first indication that the third kind of knowledge is indeed characterized by a direction of cognition that ‘starts at the top’ is corroborated by several claims. In EVp20s, Spinoza states explicitly:

From what we have said, we easily conceive what clear and distinct knowledge – and especially that third kind of knowledge (see IIP47S), whose foundation is the knowledge of God itself – can accomplish against the affects.¹⁸⁴

(Ex his itaque facîle concipimus, quid clara, & distincta cognitio, & præcipuè tertium illud cognitionis genus (de quo vide Schol. Prop. 47. p. 2.), cujus fundamentum est ipsa Dei cognitio, in affectûs potest)

And in EIIp47s we read the following:

since all things are in God and conceived through God, it follows that we can deduce from this knowledge a great many things which we know adequately, and so can form that third kind of knowledge of which we spoke in P40S2.¹⁸⁵

(Cùm autem omnia in Deo sint, & per Deum concipiantur, sequitur, nos ex cognitione hâc plurima posse deducere, quæ adequatè cognoscamus, atque adeò tertium illud cognitionis genus formare, de quo diximus in Scholio 2. Propositionis 40. hujus)

¹⁸² EIIp40s2, (I) 478.

¹⁸³ See section 3.6, which deals with the ontological aspect of the attributes.

¹⁸⁴ EVp20s, (I) 606.

¹⁸⁵ EIIp47s, (I) 482.

Furthermore, in EVp32 it is asserted that

Whatever we understand by the third kind of knowledge we take pleasure in, and our pleasure is accompanied by the idea of God as a cause.¹⁸⁶

(*Quicquid intelligimus tertio cognitionis genere, eo delectamur, & quidem concomitante ideâ Dei, tanquam causâ*)

In all these passages, *scientia intuitiva* is claimed to have ‘knowledge of God’ as its foundation. We form ‘that third kind of knowledge’ from the fact that we know that ‘all things are in God and conceived through God’, and this knowledge is ‘accompanied by the idea of God as a cause’. So it seems rather clear that the third kind of knowledge must indeed be understood to *start with God*, rather than with singular things in the order of nature.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, the quoted descriptions firmly suggest that in the case of the third kind of knowledge, the direction of knowledge must be understood to be on a par with the direction of causation that is forwarded in Spinoza’s creation narrative.¹⁸⁸ Another way of saying this is that, whereas in the case of *ratio* knowledge of the cause was shown to be inferred bottom-up on the basis of ‘knowledge of the effects’ (in which case the conceptual direction was shown to be contrary to the causal direction – see Chapter 4), in the case of *scientia intuitiva* the conceptual and causal direction must be understood to converge absolutely.

The present reading is in line with Spinoza’s assertions in various passages in the *Ethics*. To be sure, there still are some hick-ups. Perhaps the most pressing problem concerns the status of the ‘essences of things’ that are mentioned in the clause that can be found in EIIp40s2. In this respect it must be admitted that our claims in the previous chapters actually appear to imply that on the present interpretation *scientia intuitiva* is not so much *top-down* knowledge as it seems to be *top-top* knowledge (in the same way *imaginatio* can in a certain sense be

¹⁸⁶ EVp32, (I) 611.

¹⁸⁷ As already noted above, bottom-up (i.e. rational) knowledge can be understood to ‘start with God’ too, in the sense that adequate ideas can only be caused by adequate ideas. So in this sense, knowledge of God is a prerequisite for rational knowledge too. However, rational knowledge uses the order of nature as ‘raw material’ in order to enlarge its contingent of adequate knowledge. Intuitive knowledge must be understood differently. More on this shortly.

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter 4.

characterized as *bottom-bottom* knowledge).¹⁸⁹ For throughout this study we have stated that if things are considered as to their *formal essences*, they must be understood to be absolutely outside the intellect (in the way we commonly understand it) on the level of *Natura naturans* (a). Indeed, in section 2.6.2 we have forwarded a structure of the intellect that can be rendered in the way of the following table. If a thing is conceived with the intellect, it was shown to be conceived thus:

<i>Natura naturans</i>	{ (a) formal essence a thing insofar as it is absolutely outside the intellect	} (c) God (table 7)
<i>Natura naturata</i>	{ (b-i) formal being a thing considered with the intellect, as it is in itself (b-ii) objective being a thing considered with the intellect, with respect to its object	

Table 7 aims to explain that, insofar as a thing is grasped with the intellect, it surfaces as a *mode* (and must hence be positioned at the level of *Natura naturata*), even though the thing that is grasped can be conceived to exist outside the intellect as a formal essence at the level of *Natura naturans*. Now, if we acknowledge that God *qua* God is to be positioned on the same conceptual level as the ubiquitous formal essences from table 7 – i.e. at level (a) – and when we recall furthermore that the third kind of knowledge proceeds from God *qua* God to the *essences* of things, it seems that we cannot avoid the conclusion that this intuitive knowledge *is operative entirely at level (a)*, and can hence be understood to (so to speak) proceed *from a cause to a cause*. So what are we to make of this? Does the ‘proceeding’ of EIIp40s2 indeed take place exclusively at level (a) and must *scientia intuitiva* thus be understood to be *extra-intellectual* (or *top-top*) knowledge?

Actually, I think that the third kind of knowledge can be considered to be knowledge of *pars melior nostri* that proceeds from level (a) to level (b) in the way rendered in table 6. Another way of saying this is that it can be argued that the third kind of knowledge is knowledge of the intellect in the way we commonly understand it, and hence that the adequate ideas that are attained via the second and third kind of knowledge together constitute *one intellect*, namely the intellect

¹⁸⁹ As it was shown above that it is impossible to gather adequate knowledge on the basis of the imagination only – see section 5.3.2.

that is *part of the infinite intellect of God (c)* (an intellect that we have shown to differ fundamentally from God's absolute thought). In this regard it is crucial to acknowledge that in the context of Spinoza's philosophy, essences are portrayed to be operative not only at level (a), *but also at level (b)*. Indeed, apart from the *formal* essences that are 'contained in the attributes' at level (a), Spinoza also distinguishes *actual* essences. It is precisely this latter notion that enables us to conjecture that *scientia intuitiva* can be understood to cross the boundary between *Natura naturans* (a) and *Natura naturata* (b).

The first thing to note in this respect is that the propositions EIIIp6-EIIIp9, in which the actual essence – or *conatus* – of things is treated, leave little doubt concerning the modal (i.e. (b)-) status of actual essences. In EIIIp7 Spinoza asserts that the actual essence of a thing can be equated with 'the striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being'.¹⁹⁰ And then in EIIIp9 he states explicitly that the mind 'strives, *for an indefinite duration*, to preserve its being [emphasis added]'.¹⁹¹ This makes it clear that actual essences must be understood to operate in a context of duration, that is: at *level (b)*.¹⁹² And hence we have found a first indication for the claim that *scientia intuitiva* can indeed be understood to cross the boundaries between (a) and (b). As the term 'actual essence' can be understood to refer to the *modal* instantiation – that is: on level (b) – of the 'formal essences' from (a),¹⁹³ the third kind of knowledge can be conceived to proceed from *Natura naturans* to *Natura naturata*, namely insofar as this knowledge is conceived to

¹⁹⁰ EIIIp7, (I) 499. The entire proposition reads thus: 'The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing' (*Conatus, quo unaquaque res in suo esse per perseverare conatur, nihil est præter ipsius rei actualem essentiam*).

¹⁹¹ EIIIp9, (I) 499 (*conatur in suo esse per perseverare indefinitâ quâdam duratione*).

¹⁹² This becomes clear also from EIVp4 and its demonstration, where Spinoza, in order to make it clear that 'it is impossible that man should not be a part of Nature', refers to the finite actual essence of things. EIVp4, (I) 548-549.

¹⁹³ Two things must be noted here. Firstly it is important to stress that the term 'formal essences' refers to the formal essences, both of the attributes and the infinitely many things that follow from the divine nature (indeed in the very same way EIIp5 states that the formal being of ideas 'both of God's attributes and of singular things' follows immediately from God (see section 2.5). Secondly it may be instructive to add that the claim that actual essences must be understood to somehow be modal instantiations of their formal essences has also been made by several other scholars. For a summary of some of the important voices in this respect, see: Laerke, 'Aspects of Spinoza's Theory of Essence', 13. To be sure, there is an important difference between the 'Platonizing' take of the scholars that Laerke mentions (and indeed Laerke's own view) and the present interpretation. More on this shortly. See also note 197.

proceed from the *formal* essence of the attributes at (a) to the *actual* essences of things at (b).

There is additional evidence for this interpretation of the third kind of knowledge. In order to show this, I must elucidate the reasons why Spinoza would use the term ‘*actual* essence’ – instead of the term ‘*objective* essence’ – as a modal counterpart of formal essence. *Prima facie*, the term ‘*objective* essence’ appears to be more obvious (and indeed, as we saw earlier, in the TdIE – as well as in the KV – Spinoza actually does use ‘*objective* essence’ as a counterpart of ‘*formal* essence’).¹⁹⁴ So why would he choose the term ‘*actual*’ instead of ‘*objective*’? I think there are at least two (related) reasons for this.

Firstly – as already noted in section 4.2.3, Argument 2 – in the *Ethics* Spinoza uses the term ‘*objective*’ only with respect to the representational nature of thought. So with the term ‘*actual* essence’ he appears to stress that the essence that is denoted with it is not necessarily a *mental* item, but that this (b)-variant of the essence of a thing must be understood to be related to any of the infinite attributes. This supposition finds corroboration in EIIIp9s. Consider the following claim:

When this striving is related only to the Mind, it is called Will; but when it is related to the Mind and Body together, it is called Appetite.¹⁹⁵

(*Hic conatus, cū ad Mentem solam refertur, Voluntas appellatur; sed cū ad Mentem, & Corpus simul refertur, vocatur Appetitus*)

As soon as it is acknowledged that ‘this striving’ – i.e. ‘*conatus*’ – according to EIIIp7 is ‘noting but the actual essence of the thing’, it becomes clear that the actual essence of a thing indeed is related, not only to that thing insofar as it is a mind, but also to that same thing insofar as it is a body. Another way of saying this, is that Spinoza appears to prefer the term ‘*actual*’ to ‘*objective*’ because the essence under scrutiny – i.e. ‘the striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being’ – must be understood to be attribute-neutral. According to Spinoza, singular things strive for their perseverance, *under whatever attribute they are conceived*. Clearly, this particular characteristic of the *conatus* of singular things is captured better by the term ‘*actual*’ than by the term ‘*objective*’.

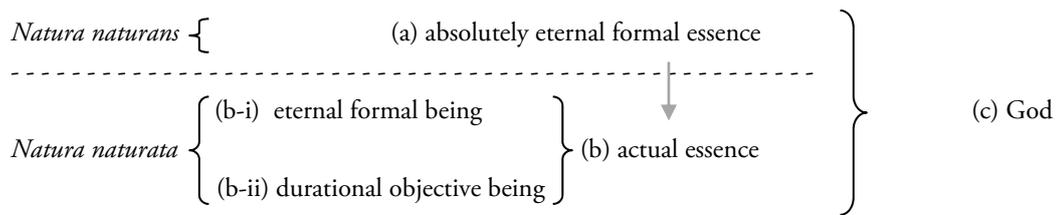
¹⁹⁴ Namely in §33, that was treated extensively in the previous Chapter.

¹⁹⁵ EIIIp9s, (I) 500.

The second apparent (and related) reason why Spinoza has chosen the term ‘actual essence’ – and not ‘objective essence’ – as a counterpart of ‘formal essence’, is that in the case of *objective* vs. formal essence there seems to be something lacking in the account: the formal *being* of a thing that, even though it must be conceived *without relation to its object* (i.e. non-objectively), must still be understood to be a mode that is operative *at level (b)* (whereas the formal *essence* was shown to be operative absolutely outside the intellect at level (a)) – see section 2.6.2). An important implication of this is that the actual essence of a thing can be understood to be operative *both under duration and under a certain species of eternity*. This important observation finds warrant in the important EVp29s (which is an addition to a proposition that deals with the body’s *essence* under a species of eternity), where – as we have seen – Spinoza states the following: ‘we conceive things as *actual* in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature [emphasis added]’.¹⁹⁶ This claim makes it clear that actual essences can be conceived both insofar as they are conceived to exist under duration and insofar as they are conceived to exist eternally. That is to say: contrary to what scholars have often supposed,¹⁹⁷ the divide between eternity and duration does *not* run parallel with the divide between formal and actual essences. The following rendering seems to do more justice to Spinoza’s claims:

¹⁹⁶ EVp29s, (I) 610 (*Res duobus modis à nobis ut actuales concipiuntur, vel quatenus easdem cum relatione ad certum tempus, & locum existere, vel quatenus ipsas in Deo contineri, & ex naturæ divinæ necessitate consequi concipimus*). Mogens Laerke stated that this statement uncovers two concepts of actuality, and that the problem that this bifurcation leads to is ‘terminological rather than conceptual. It could have been resolved by giving a different name to one of the two kinds of actuality’. Laerke, ‘Aspects of Spinoza’s Theory of Essence’, 30. As must be clear now, the present interpretation implies that Spinoza provided two terms in order to refer to the distinction within the concept of actuality: the eternal aspect of actuality is denoted with the notion ‘formal being’, and the durational aspect is denoted with the notion ‘objective being’ (and ‘object’). This claim is further underpinned by EIIp45s. For the reference to EIp24s in EIIp45s makes it very clear that the *modal* essences of EIIp45s can also be understood to be *eternal*.

¹⁹⁷ Mogens Laerke, referring to (inter alia) interpretations of Don Garrett, Thomas Ward and Valterri Viljanen, stated that ‘all these different readings agree on one point, namely that Spinoza operates with several kinds of existence and that a dichotomy opposing formal to actual essences allows capturing the difference between them’. Laerke, ‘Aspects of Spinoza’s Theory of Essence’, 13. From what is being said here it becomes clear that I do *not* agree with this take on the distinction between formal and actual essence, as on the present interpretation the dichotomy between eternal and durational existence must be located *within* the notion of actual essence.



(table 8)

At this point it cannot escape our notice (i) that the very dual character of the actual essence of things has the very same structure as the *coalescent variant of God*,¹⁹⁸ and (ii) that considered in this way the *unspecified infinite modes* can be understood to be the *all-encompassing collection of the actual essences of singular things*. To be sure, the thing to note in the context of this section is first and foremost that the present way of understanding the intricate relation between formal and actual essences has provided us with additional evidence for the claim that the proceeding ‘from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things’ does not at all forestall the claim that knowledge of the third kind can be understood to be *knowledge of the intellect in the way we commonly understand it* (i.e. knowledge that implies the conceptual distinction between (a) and (b)). For we have seen that the essences that are referred to in EIIp40s2 can very well be understood to be essences that are operative at *Natura naturata* (b). This claim – that of course still has a hint of speculation to it¹⁹⁹ – finds further circumstantial evidence in Spinoza’s claim in EIp12 (already adduced in Chapter 1) that ‘[n]o attribute of a substance can be truly conceived from which it follows that the substance can be divided’. The fact that Spinoza uses the term essences *of things*²⁰⁰ in his description of the third kind of knowledge – and states explicitly in EVp36s that *scientia intuitiva* can be understood to be ‘knowledge of *singular things* [emphasis added]’²⁰¹ – gives these essences a part-character that suits the actual essences at level (b) much better than

¹⁹⁸ i.e. that in a certain sense we can say that, in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy too, *man* (and indeed all other things in nature) *is created in the image of God*.

¹⁹⁹ It must be added here that the supposition that Spinoza refers to *formal* essences in his description of the third kind of knowledge is equally speculative. That is to say: it is generally agreed that it is problematic to ascribe the addition ‘formal’ in EIIp40s2 from the *Nagelate schriften* (NS) to Spinoza himself. I think that the ‘circumstantial evidence’ that is provided in this section entitles us to claim that Spinoza must actually be understood to refer to *actual* essences in his circumscription of *scientia intuitiva* in EIIp40s2.

²⁰⁰ EIIp40s2, (I), 478 (*essentiae rerum*).

²⁰¹ EVp36, (I) 613 (*rerum singularium cognitio*).

it suits the ubiquitous and extra-intellectual formal essences that are operative at the level of the absolutely undividable God *qua* God (a). Moreover, it seems that Spinoza can only uphold his claim that our intellect differs from absolute thought in the same way a barking animal differs from a constellation of stars (see Chapter 1), if intuitive knowledge is indeed understood to entail the crossing of the boundary between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. For only in this case Spinoza is entitled to assert that our intellect is part of the *infinite intellect of God* (c). Indeed, the only way in which Spinoza can uphold the claim that the power of thinking of the human mind differs dramatically from the extra-intellectual power of thinking of God *qua* God (a) – as *men are not substances*²⁰² – is by stating that the third kind of knowledge is knowledge of the intellect in the way we commonly understand it, that is: knowledge that presupposes the coalescent identity of God (c), and that partakes in the self-knowledge of this conceptual variant of God.

This particular way of understanding Spinoza's third kind of knowledge enables us to solve a few pressing questions with respect to the distinction between knowledge of the third and knowledge of the second kind.²⁰³ The present reading for instance makes it clear why the third kind of knowledge can be called 'intuitive' – a term that has an element of *immediacy* to it that is lacking in the designation 'rational'.²⁰⁴

²⁰² See Chapter 1, note 49.

²⁰³ Don Garrett singled out four problems with respect to knowledge of the third kind and its relation with the other kinds of knowledge that are staged in EIIp40s2: 'What are the essences of attributes and of things on which *scientia intuitiva* depends, and how does it proceed from the former to the latter? A second question concerns its relation to other kinds of cognition: Given that *all* cognition, according to Spinoza, requires an adequate idea of an attribute of God, how does *scientia intuitiva* differ from other kinds of cognition? A third question concerns its scope: [...] can everything be known by *scientia intuitiva*, or are some truths beyond its reach? A final question concerns the reasons for its value: Given that Spinoza characterizes cognition of both the second and third kinds as "adequate" and "true," why does he nevertheless regard *scientia intuitiva* as the best and most valuable kind of cognition?' Don Garrett, 'Spinoza's Theory of *Scientia Intuitiva*' in: Tom Sorell, G.A.J. Rogers, and Jill Kraye ed., *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy* (Dordrecht 2010), 100-101. In the remainder of this section, all these issues will be addressed.

²⁰⁴ Indeed, in §24 of the TdIE Spinoza stresses that the difference between the two kinds of knowledge can be understood to be found in the fact that 'Mathematicians know, by the force of the demonstration of Proposition 19 in Book VII of Euclid, which numbers are proportional to one another, from the nature of proportion, and its property [...]. Nevertheless, they do not see the adequate proportionality of the given numbers. And if they do, they see it not by the force of the Proposition, but *intuitively, without going through any procedure* [emphasis added]'. TdIE, §24, (I) 15 (*Sed Mathematici vi demonstrationis Prop. 19. lib. 7. Euclidis sciunt, quales numeri inter se sint proportionales, scilicet ex naturà proportionis, ejusque*

The things that were said above teach us that in the case of *scientia intuitiva* the adequacy of ideas is attained *immediately*, that is: *in the very same way the infinite formal being of things follows from God*. It is precisely the absolute convergence of the causal and conceptual direction that accounts for the fact that in the case of intuitive knowledge the grasping mind need not go ‘through any procedure’.²⁰⁵ Rather, *scientia intuitiva* is characterized by the immediate and intuitive insight that ‘the divine nature [...] is prior, both in knowledge and in nature’.²⁰⁶

Our interpretation solves yet another problem with respect to the distinction between the two kinds of adequate knowledge that Spinoza distinguishes. For it becomes clear also why he would consider *scientia intuitiva* a ‘higher’ form of knowledge (indeed, as Spinoza states in EVp25: ‘[the Mind’s] greatest virtue is understanding things by the third kind of knowledge’).²⁰⁷ The answer to the question why the having of intuitive knowledge would be the greatest virtue of the mind can be found precisely in the fact that knowledge of the third kind proceeds immediately from the *prima causa*. Knowledge of the second kind makes use of an intermediate – i.e. the order of nature – in order to understand things through their first causes; when things are grasped adequately via knowledge of the second kind, a certain procedure is followed, a procedure in which the top-down direction of intrinsic causation is established via a contrary conceptual direction. In the case of knowledge of the third kind this procedure is not required. In the case of *scientia intuitiva* the conceiving mind operates ‘as a formal cause, insofar as the mind is eternal’:²⁰⁸ the mind need not go through the procedure of (so to speak) cultivating raw durational material in order to attain additional knowledge of God’s infinite essence.

On the present interpretation it also becomes clear how knowledge of the second kind can be understood to provide a way to knowledge of the third kind (as is stated explicitly in EVp28). For a mind that has cognitive access to God’s essence (which as we saw is a condition for both kinds of adequate knowledge) can enlarge

proprietate [...]. attamen adequatam proportionalitatem datorum numerorum non vident, & si videant, non vident eam vi illius Propositionis, sed intuitivè, [of] nullam operationem facientes).

²⁰⁵ See the previous note and note 155.

²⁰⁶ EIIp10s, (I) 455.

²⁰⁷ EVp25, (I) 608. The entire proposition reads thus: ‘The greatest striving of the Mind, and its greatest virtue is understanding things by the third kind of knowledge’ (*Summus Mentis conatus, summaque virtus est res intelligere tertio cognitionis genere*).

²⁰⁸ EVp31, (I) 610 (*tanquam à formali causà, quatenus Mens ipsa aeterna est*).

its contingent of adequate ideas by way of rational knowledge, and thus broaden the very ‘knowledge of the top’ from which it is able to ‘proceed from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things’. That this is difficult and happens rarely²⁰⁹ is due to the fact that ‘men do not have so clear a knowledge of God as they do of the common notions’,²¹⁰ which in turn ‘comes from the fact that they cannot imagine God, as they can bodies’.²¹¹ *Scientia intuitiva* is so hard to attain *because it cannot take recourse to the two representation relations that were treated in this chapter*. Indeed, even though both *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva* require a prior adequate knowledge of God’s essence as ‘this power of conceiving things under a species of eternity pertains to the Mind only insofar as it conceives the Body’s essence under a species of eternity’²¹² (see above), only rational knowledge is expanded by way of the representational features that are applicable to things insofar as they are operative in the order of nature. Intuitive knowledge, in contrast, is dependent – and dependent only – on the conceiving of the body’s essence under a species of eternity, a knowledge that – rarely and difficultly – enables the conceiving mind to ‘log in’ to the way in which infinitely many things follow from the necessity of the divine nature.

*

In sum: scientia intuitiva can be understood to be top-down knowledge that proceeds from God qua God to the actual essence of things. This third kind of knowledge is intuitive because it follows immediately from God’s absolute essence; the knowing agent need not go through a procedure of turning ‘raw material’ from the order of nature into adequate knowledge. Hence, in the case of scientia intuitiva there is an absolute convergence of the conceptual and causal direction. The attaining of this knowledge ‘from cause to effect’ is

²⁰⁹ This is a paraphrase of the ‘famous last words’ of the *Ethics*. The line reads thus: ‘But all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare’. EVp42s, (I) 617 (*Sed omnia præclara tam difficilia, quàm rara sunt*).

²¹⁰ EIIp47s, (I) 482 (*Quòd autem homines non æquè claram Dei, ac notionum communium habeant cognitionem*).

²¹¹ *Ibidem*, (I) 482-483 (*inde fit, quòd Deum imaginari nequeant, ut corpora,*).

²¹² EVp29d, (I) 610 (*hæc potentia concipiendi res sub specie æternitatis ad Mentem non pertinet, nisi quatenus Corporis essentiam sub specie æternitatis concipit*).

difficult and happens rarely because the knowing agent cannot take recourse to the representation relations that we commonly associate with human mentality. Still, even though the direction of knowledge in the case of knowledge of the second and knowledge of the third kind must be understood to be diametrically opposed, both variants of attaining adequate knowledge can be understood to be knowledge of the intellect in the way we commonly understand it, that is: self-knowledge of the (c)-variant of God.

5.4.3. The eternity of the intellect

After providing (what we have called) the ‘Mereological Claim’ in EIIp11c, Spinoza adds the remark that ‘here, no doubt, my readers will come to a halt, and think of many things which will give them pause’.²¹³ In this chapter we have focused on one of the remaining problems concerning the way in which Spinoza’s notorious claim must be understood: the way in which the *representational* aspect that we commonly associate with human mentality is entailed by Spinoza’s claim that human knowledge is to be seen as a part of God’s self-knowledge. In this respect, a lot has become clear. We have seen that Spinoza’s theory of knowledge can be understood to encompass two representation relations. Furthermore, it was shown how these representation relations are related to the three kinds of knowledge that Spinoza mentions in EIIp40s2. However, one important facet of Spinoza’s conceptions concerning the intellect still needs attention: the *eternity* that Spinoza attaches to *pars melior nostri*.

The problem can be stated thus: as the Mereological Claim states that the human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God, the human mind *in its totality* (and its parallel body and its parallel r) can be conceived to have an eternal aspect. Indeed, we have seen that anything in nature can be understood to be an *eternally existing mediate infinite mode* that is caused *intrinsically* in the way of EIIp5 and EIIp6c. So how can Spinoza account for the claim that only our intellect – which is merely a *part* of our mind – is eternal? What sets the particular eternity of our intellect apart from the eternity that must be attributed to anything in nature? Or to say the same thing in terms of the puzzling EVp23: how is Spinoza able to state

²¹³ EIIp11s, (I) 456 (*Hic sine dubio Lectores haerebunt, multaque comminiscuntur, quae moram injiciant*).

that ‘the human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal’?²¹⁴

In order to see this it may be instructive to analyze the way in which the remarkable claim in EVp23 is underpinned. The assertion that ‘the human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body’ – which actually appears to contradict Spinoza’s parallelism – is demonstrated thus:

In God there is necessarily a concept, *or* idea, which expresses the essence of the human body (by P22), an idea, therefore, which is necessarily something that pertains to the essence of the human mind (by IIP13). But we do not attribute to the human mind any duration that can be defined by time, except insofar as it expresses the actual existence of the body, which is explained by duration, and can be defined by time, that is (by IIP8C), we do not attribute duration to it except while the body endures. However, since what is conceived, with a certain eternal necessity, through God’s essence itself (by P22) is nevertheless something, this something that pertains to the essence of the mind will necessarily be eternal, q.e.d.²¹⁵

(In Deo datur necessariò conceptus, seu idea, quæ Corporis humani essentiam exprimit (per Prop. præc.), quæ propterea aliquid necessariò est, quod ad essentiam Mentis humanæ pertinet (per Prop. 13. p. 2.). Sed Mentis humanæ nullam durationem, quæ tempore definiri potest, tribuimus, nisi quatenus Corporis actualem existentiam, quæ per durationem explicatur, & tempore definiri potest, exprimit, hoc est (per Coroll. Prop. 8. p. 2.), ipsi durationem non tribuimus, nisi durante Corpore. Cum tamen aliquid nihilominus sit id, quod æternâ quâdam necessitate per ipsam Dei essentiam concipitur (per Prop. præc.), erit necessariò hoc aliquid, quod ad Mentis essentiam pertinet, æternum. Q. E. D.)

Spinoza is claiming here that there is a mode of thinking that (i) pertains to the human mind, that (ii) is eternal, that (iii) expresses the essence of the parallel body, and that (iv) is an idea of God. Now, in this study we have encountered a concept that precisely meets requirements (i)-(iv): the *formal being* of the human mind, that due to its attribute-neutral aspect can be understood to express the eternal essence of the human body in the same way it expresses the eternal essence of the human mind. *Prima facie* the particular species of eternity that surfaces in (i)-(iv) can be attributed to anything in nature. After all, in this study it has become clear that anything in nature can be grasped in its eternal and infinite formal being. Still, on closer scrutiny there is something special about the eternity that is put forward in EVp23 and its demonstration. For earlier in this chapter we have seen that the

²¹⁴ EVp23, (I) 607 (*Mens humana non potest cum Corpore absolutè destrui; sed ejus aliquid remanet, quod æternum est*). That the part of the mind that ‘cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body’ indeed is the intellect is stated explicitly in EVp40c, where Spinoza remarks that ‘the eternal part of the mind [...] is the intellect’. EVp40c, (I) 615 (*pars Mentis æterna [...] est intellectus*).

²¹⁵ EVp23d, (I) 607.

grasping of the essence of its body that is emphasized in it can be understood to be *the absolute and first requirement for a mind to have adequate ideas*. Indeed, ‘whatever the mind understands under a species of eternity, it understands [...] from the fact that it conceives the body's essence under a species of eternity’. This means that it is *precisely and only* the grasping of the essence of the body that accounts for the capability of a mind to have intellectual knowledge (and hence to expand its collection of adequate ideas). The eternity of anything in nature can only be recognized by virtue of the absolute and first adequate idea that is highlighted in EVp23. That is to say: the grasped eternity of anything in nature merely is a *conceptual derivate of the intellect*.

The next important thing that must be noted with respect to the remarkable claim in EVp23 is that the ‘eyes of the mind’ (which Spinoza refers to in EVp23s)²¹⁶ can only function as such due to *the representational nature of thought that finds its axiomatic foundation in EIA6* (see above). The intellect is eternal precisely because the inherent representational nature of thought enables it to ‘log in’ to the idea that God has of the essence of the body (which is forwarded in EVp22). In this way – and in this way only – the knowing agent can be understood to have an *idea of a (true) idea* of her/himself as well as of certain external things. Indeed, it is the representational nature of thought that enables the intellect to achieve *consciousness* of the eternal being of its range of adequate ideas. And it appears to be precisely *this* aspect that sets the eternity of the intellect apart from the eternity that can be ascribed to its parallel mode under extension. The parallel part of the body (and indeed all other extended things in nature) lacks the specific species of eternity that is referred to in EVp23, because *bodies are not representational*. That is to say: the axiomatic representational feature of ideas that accounts for the possibility of consciousness-of-eternity is not applicable to bodies. In this sense – and in this sense only – bodies thus are *not* part of the eternal self-knowledge of God (c). Ideas and bodies can both be understood to be a part of the infinite mode under which they resort, but only in the case of ideas the Mereological Claim can also be formulated thus:

²¹⁶ EVp23s, (I) 608.

The mind's intellectual love of God is the very love of God by which God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human mind's essence, considered under a species of eternity; that is, the mind's intellectual love is part of the intellectual love by which God loves himself.²¹⁷ (*Mentis Amor intellectualis erga Deum est ipse Dei Amor, quo Deus se ipsum amat, non quatenus infinitus est, sed quatenus per essentiam humanæ Mentis, sub specie æternitatis consideratam, explicari potest, hoc est, Mentis erga Deum Amor intellectualis pars est infiniti amoris, quo Deus se ipsum amat*).

It is precisely due to the fact that – in the words of Jonathan Bennett – ‘it is of the essence of the mental [...] that mental items are representative, about something, pointed outwards’²¹⁸ that the intellect is able to log-in to God's consciousness of – or love for – himself. In this sense, *pars melior nostri* can be ascribed an extra dimension of eternity. The parallel part of the body, in contrast, cannot be ascribed this specific consciousness-of-eternity because the representational nature of thought that is required for this consciousness is fundamentally inapplicable to modes of extension.

It must be stressed that this way of understanding Spinoza's much-discussed claim in EVp23 does not thwart Spinoza's parallelism (and hence we can uphold what Bennett calls a ‘symmetrical account’ of EVp23).²¹⁹ For there is nothing in Spinoza's parallelism thesis that would suggest or require that the specific characteristics of the attributes (such as the representational nature of thought or the motion-and-rest nature of extension) would have to be paralleled in the other attributes. Indeed: just as bodies cannot be understood to be representational, ideas cannot be understood to move or be at rest.

With this we have solved a last puzzle with respect to Spinoza's theory of the intellect. Obviously, a lot more can be said about the way in which the ‘eyes of the

²¹⁷ EVp36, (I) 612.

²¹⁸ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 155.

²¹⁹ Ibidem, 358-359. Bennett thinks a symmetrical account *cannot* be upheld. He distinguishes three problems with it: (i) EVp23 is stated in an *asymmetrical* way, (ii) in the case of a symmetrical reading of EVp23, the proposition is a truism as it merely claims that essences are eternal, and (iii) according to Bennett it is unclear why Spinoza would need the claim in EVp23 because ‘from the same thesis that essences are eternal, what follows?’. Ibidem, 359. I think that on the present interpretation, Bennett's claims can be counteracted. Spinoza formulated the thesis in an asymmetrical way because part V of the *Ethics* is concerned with the intellect, and not with extended nature. Furthermore, EVp23 can be understood to be something more than a truism, as it can be conjectured that Spinoza is not speaking about the mere eternity of the essence of the body, but of the *conceiving* of this essence, which introduces an aspect of *consciousness* (i.e. ‘eyes of the mind’). Lastly, it has become clear in this chapter that it is precisely this ‘first adequate idea’ that enables the mind to enlarge the amount of adequate ideas it has.

mind' must be understood precisely. A pressing question that calls for an answer is how the relation between conscious and unconscious ideas of the body of the conceiving agent is to be conceived. Another interesting point concerns the way in which the eternal self-knowledge of a human mind can actually be understood to differ from the knowledge that is acquired by the minds of other things in nature. Margaret Wilson observed that 'Spinoza's principles in fact commit him to the view that every "mind" whatsoever possesses distinct or adequate ideas'.²²⁰ Indeed, as Spinoza claims in EIIp46 that 'the knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence which each idea involves is adequate and perfect',²²¹ it seems that the idea of a horse, a stone or a toaster (i.e. their 'minds') must also be ascribed the having of (some) adequate (and hence conscious) ideas (in proportion of the complexity of their bodies).²²² These are interesting issues. Still, I will leave them untouched here. For in the present study I was primarily interested, not in the way in which we must understand consciousness, nor in the way in which the human animal can be understood to differ from the lower animals, but only in the structure and function of Spinoza's intellect. In this respect we have learned a lot. It has become clear that the *constructive function of the intellect* enables Spinoza to argue for the claim that the human mind is able to perform the *instrumental function of the intellect*: the endeavor to enhance the range of adequate ideas in the mind and as such to partake in God's eternal love for himself.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we aimed to solve two remaining problems regarding Spinoza's theory of the intellect. We set out to elucidate (i) the horizontal representation of things in a human mind, and (ii) the possibility for a human mind to acquire *true* and *adequate* knowledge.

Concerning the first issue we have seen that Spinoza distinguishes two horizontal representation relations. On the one hand an idea can be conceived to represent its parallel object, and on the other hand an idea can be understood to

²²⁰ Wilson, 'Objects, Ideas and "Minds"', 109.

²²¹ EIIp46, (I) 482 (*Cognitio aeterna, & infinita essentia Dei, quam unaquaque idea involvit, est adequata, & perfecta*).

²²² See the second part of note 136.

represent the external thing that is expressed as an image in the imagination of the perceiver. We have seen that these two representation relations can be rendered thus:

- (I)* the representation of a thing in an *idea* in the *intellect*
- (II)* the ‘representation’ of a thing in an internal *image* in the *imagination*

It became clear that these representation relations can be understood in terms of respectively *truth* and *falsity*. A true idea – by EIA6 – must be considered to agree with its parallel object (this is representation relation (I)*), images in the imagination were shown to be false as in this case there is a mismatch between the image in the imagination (i.e. the idea of an affection of the human body) and the thing it is the idea of (this is representation relation (II)*).

This observation in turn provided us with the ammunition to attack the question whether it is at all possible for the human mind to acquire *true* and *adequate* knowledge. We have seen that in the context of Spinoza’s philosophy the human mind can indeed be understood to be capable of acquiring true and adequate ideas. Spinoza distinguishes two ways in which truth and adequacy is within the reach of the human mind: *ratio* and *scientia intuitiva*.

Rational knowledge (i.e. the *second* kind of knowledge, which is claimed to be based on ‘common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things’) was shown to be directed *bottom-up*. In the case of *ratio*, images in the imagination are used as (so to speak) ‘raw material’ by way of the involvement of external things in the ideas of the affections of the perceiving human body. As according to Spinoza these images in the imagination (i) involve the nature of the external things that cause them, (ii) are true and adequate insofar as they are related to God, and moreover (iii) are principally within the reach of the grasping human mind, it is clear that on Spinoza’s account it is possible to have true and adequate ideas of the external things that cause images in the imagination. To be sure, the image-causing external things are *not* known adequately insofar as they operate as individual parts in the *order of nature*. Rather, they are grasped adequately (i) insofar as their nature is *involved* in the image in the imagination (viz. in the idea of an affection of the perceiving body), (ii) insofar as this idea of the affection of the body is conceived as to the things that are common to this idea and all other ideas in the order of nature,

and (iii) insofar as this idea of an affection of the body is considered under a certain species of eternity by virtue of the prior knowledge of the conceiver's body's essence under a species of eternity. Indeed, things can only be grasped adequately if they are grasped as to the things that are *equally in the part and in the whole* in the *order of the intellect*. In this way, knowledge that is based on 'common notions and adequate ideas of properties of things' can be understood to be consciously had by the human mind, without the absurd implication that the external individual thing is *in* the individual body of the perceiver at the level of the order of nature. It is by way of grasping the unlimited and eternal formal beings of both the own body and the external extended thing in the order of the intellect that a mind is able to expand its range of adequate ideas.

In the case of intuitive knowledge (i.e. the *third* kind of knowledge, which is claimed to proceed 'from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things'), the direction of knowledge was shown to be diametrically opposed to the direction that surfaced in our account of rational knowledge. Whereas knowledge of the second kind is characterized by the bottom-up proceeding (as it uses 'raw material' from the order of nature in order to enlarge its number of adequate ideas), *scientia intuitiva* must be understood to express the *top-down* direction of God's eternal power. The third kind of knowledge was shown to proceed from God *qua* God to the actual essences of all the things that follow from the necessity of God's infinite nature. Another way of saying this is that in the case of *scientia intuitiva* the causal direction – that surfaces in Spinoza's Principle of Plenitude – and the conceptual direction *converge absolutely*. It is precisely this absolute convergence that accounts for the immediacy that sets intuitive knowledge apart from rational knowledge. Whereas in this latter case the conceiver must go through some procedure in order to grasp God's infinite essence, in the case of *scientia intuitiva* this essence, and everything that necessarily follows from it, is grasped immediately, without taking recourse to the representation of external things in the individual human mind. There is little need to add here that this latter way of conceiving is difficult and hence happens rarely.

5.5.1 *Pars melior nostri*

The intellect is a crucial notion in Spinoza's philosophy. However, despite the evident importance of the term, Spinoza has not provided a definition of it in the *Ethics*. In this study we have tried to reconstruct how this better part of ours must be understood. Our findings concerning *pars melior nostri* can be summarized in the following way:

- (1) The intellect provides the way to blessedness. This can be called *the instrumental function of the intellect*. It is by way of the intellect – and the intellect only – that minds are able (i) to partake in God's self-knowledge and (ii) to broaden the basis from which God's absolutely undividable and eternal essence is grasped.
- (2) The ideas that constitute the intellect are characterized by a *duality* of things insofar as they are considered *objectively* (i.e. *with* respect to their object), and the same things insofar as they are considered *formally* (i.e. as they are *in themselves, without* respect to their object).
- (3) The objective and formal being of a thing is operative in respectively an *extrinsic* and an *intrinsic* causal thread, that must be conceived to be two *modal* manifestations of God's all-encompassing causal power. Ideas (and their objects) that are considered insofar as they are caused extrinsically (i.e. functioning in the *order of nature*) must be understood to *exist under duration*; and insofar as the very same things are conceived to be caused intrinsically (i.e. functioning in the *order of the intellect*), they must be understood to *exist eternally*.
- (4) The duality of the formal and objective being of things is recognizable in the structure of the *Ethics* itself, to such an extent that even the most fundamental concept that is presented in it – substance (or God) – can be understood in (at least) two different ways. Considered in its formal being, substance can be denoted as *Natura naturans*; and in its objective being the very same substance surfaces as *Natura naturata*. The mirroring of the dual

structure of the intellect in this – and several other – structural characteristics of Spinoza’s metaphysics can be called *the constructive function of the intellect*. Recognition of this function enables us to provide viable explanations of some much-debated metaphysical issues, such as the way in which we must conceive the immediate and mediate infinite modes, and the way in which Spinoza’s parallelism is to be understood.

- (5) The conceptual distinction between the formal and objective being of things entails a further *trichotomy*. Apart from the formal and objective being of a thing, we can also distinguish *the parallel object of the idea*. This intricate trichotomy can be characterized thus: if the intellect considers things with respect to (i) their *durational objects*, they are said to be conceived (ii) *objectively* as ideas. And if these same things are considered under a species of eternity, they are grasped (iii) as to their *formal* being.
- (6) The (infinite and finite) intellect is constituted by *true* or *adequate ideas*. As conceiving the truth and adequacy of ideas implies the conscious grasping of a thing under a species of eternity, *pars melior nostri* – that is: the collection of all adequate ideas in a mind – can be understood to be an *eternal part* of God’s eternal self-knowledge. This particular eternity of the intellect is due to the *axiomatic representational nature of thought*.
- (7) The *truth* of an idea consists in the agreement between the idea and its *ideatum*. The *adequacy* of an idea consists in the grasping of the formal status (i.e. the existence of the conceived thing under a species of eternity) of that idea. Furthermore, an idea is *inadequate* insofar as there is a mismatch between the image in the imagination of the perceiver and the object of that particular mode of thinking.
- (8) The adequacy of an idea can be grasped via two routes: *bottom-up* (in which case the eternal formal being of a thing in the *order of the intellect* is grasped on the basis of things that are common to all things in the *order of nature*), and *top-down* (in which case the eternal formal being of things is conceived to *follow* immediately from the formal essence of the attributes). Spinoza calls

the former variant of knowledge *ratio* (or the ‘second kind of knowledge’), and the latter *scientia intuitiva* (or the ‘third kind of knowledge’).

Two more things must be added. Firstly, it is crucial to acknowledge that, despite the eminent importance of the intellect in his philosophy, Spinoza must nevertheless leave room for the notion of *absolute extra-intellectuality*. Indeed, we have seen that the extra-intellectual status can be attributed both to God’s absolute and undividable essence at the level of *Natura naturans* and to the formal essences of singular things that are contained ubiquitously in this essence (and of which the formal and objective being of things can be understood to be *conceptual expressions*). The way in which the formal essences of infinitely many things can be understood to be contained in an absolutely undividable essence is one of the mysteries (or perhaps even *the* mystery) of Spinoza’s metaphysics. But at the same time it must be stressed that, if the things that are claimed to be grasped adequately with an intellect – and that are claimed to be in and follow from God – would *not* have an ultimate root outside that intellect (a root whereof one cannot speak without contradictions), the truth and adequacy of the ideas in the intellect would be groundless.

The second thing that must be added is that our conclusions concern the intellect in the way we commonly understand it, and not ‘God’s intellect’ in the way the term is used in EIp17s (which must be understood to function *absolutely outside the intellect* and as such to ‘differ entirely from our intellect’). This implies that our conclusions about the way in which our eternal knowledge can be considered to be an eternal part of God’s infinite intellect deals specifically with God’s self-knowledge insofar as he is conceived as a *coalescent identity* of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. Our interpretation of the way in which the two types of adequate knowledge – and hence *pars melior nostri* – must be understood, concerns the self-knowledge of *God (c)*, that is: the variant of the divine *res* that, unlike *God qua God (a)*, can be called ‘one and unique’. It must be admitted absolutely that this description is improper in a certain sense. For in Chapter 3 we have seen that according to Spinoza ‘someone who calls God one or unique does not have a true idea of God, or is speaking improperly about him’. The very improperness that thus has slipped in – or other contestable contentions that may be sheltered in this study – will undoubtedly provide Spinoza scholars with

arguments against the various claims that are made in these five chapters. As a rule, novel interpretations of Spinoza's philosophy are not welcomed with unconditioned applause. Indeed, it is one of the great ironies of the history of thought that the work of a philosopher who, perhaps more than any other of his peers, is praised for his friendly and balanced character, has given rise to some of the fiercest controversies in the history of philosophy. As Alexandre Koyré put it in a slightly understated way, 'agreement between commentators of Spinoza is not something that happens frequently'. *Et cetera*

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Samenvatting

Het begrip ‘intellect’ speelt een sleutelrol in Spinoza’s filosofie. In zijn hoofdwerk de *Ethica* laat Spinoza er geen onduidelijkheid over bestaan: het is het intellect dat kan gelden als *pars melior nostri* – dat wil zeggen: als *ons betere deel* – dat de mens in staat stelt om deugdelijk te handelen en op die manier deel te hebben aan Gods absolute en eeuwige zelfkennis. Of zoals hij het formuleert in EVp36:

De intellectuele liefde van de [menselijke] geest voor God is niets anders dan de liefde van God voor zichzelf, [...] dat wil zeggen: de intellectuele liefde van de [menselijke] geest voor God is deel van de oneindige liefde van God voor zichzelf.

Passages als deze maken duidelijk dat ons intellect een sleutelrol speelt in het ‘inloggen’ in Gods zelfkennis. Toch kan er in de *Ethica* opmerkelijk genoeg geen gedetailleerde omschrijving gevonden worden van het intellect. Waar elementaire begrippen als ‘God’, ‘substantie’, ‘attribuut’, ‘modus’, ‘idee’ en ‘deugd’ expliciete definities krijgen op basis waarvan Spinoza in staat is zijn zedenkunde op geometrische wijze uiteen te zetten, kan er in de *Ethica* (of in Spinoza’s andere werken) geen duidelijke definitie aangetroffen worden van het begrip dat overduidelijk een instrumentele waarde heeft in het bereiken van de hoogste deugd: het intellect. In deze studie is getracht deze leemte te vullen. Dit proefschrift beoogt op basis van een serie sleutelpassages uit (vooral) de *Ethica* de structuur van Spinoza’s intellect bloot te leggen.

De hoofdstelling die in dit werk verdedigd wordt, is dat *de structuur van het intellect zijn uitdrukking vindt in de structuur van Spinoza’s metafysica*. Dat wil zeggen: behalve de reeds genoemde *instrumentele functie* bij het ‘inloggen’ in God’s oneindige liefde voor zichzelf, moet aan Spinoza’s intellect ook een *constructieve functie* worden toegekend. Deze vaststelling vindt zijn grond onder meer in een belangrijke bewering in het scholium van propositie 29 van deel V van de *Ethica*. Hier zegt Spinoza het volgende over de wijze waarop ons betere deel functioneert:

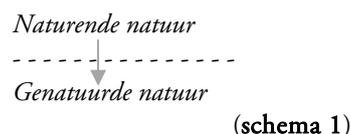
Wij begrijpen dingen als actueel op twee manieren: ofwel in zover we ze begrijpen in relatie tot een bepaalde tijd en plaats, ofwel in zover we ze begrijpen als vervat in God en volgend uit de noodzakelijkheid van de Goddelijke natuur.

Op basis van een analyse van deze bewering – en van de wijze waarop deze bewering gestut wordt door andere opmerkingen in de *Ethica* – kan worden vastgesteld dat dingen die begrepen worden via het intellect uiteenvallen in twee conceptuele bestaanswijzen:

- (1) als *formeel en eeuwig* bestaande *oneindige* modi, die onmiddellijk uit God volgen via een *intrinsieke* causale keten
- (2) als *objectief en tijdelijk* bestaande *eindige* modi, die middellijk uit God volgen via een *extrinsieke* causale keten

Aangezien Spinoza het objectieve zijn van een ding gelijkstelt aan het *idee* van een ding, omvat deze dualiteit in feite een *driehoeksstructuur*, die als volgt aangeduid kan worden: wanneer een ding begrepen wordt met een intellect, valt dat ding conceptueel uiteen in (i) een tijdelijk object, (ii) een tijdelijk objectief zijn (i.e. het idee van dat object), en (iii) een eeuwig formeel zijn.

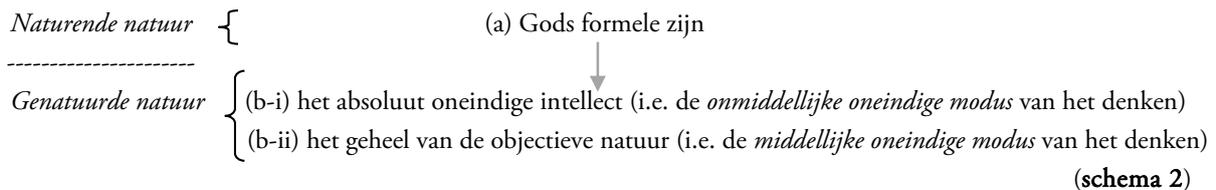
Een eerste manifestatie van deze structuur – en dus het *constructieve* gebruik van het intellect – treffen we aan in Hoofdstuk 1, waar het verschil tussen de *Naturende natuur* en de *Genatuurde natuur* werd behandeld. Hierbij werd onder meer duidelijk dat de *Genatuurde natuur* volgt uit de *Naturende natuur*. Dit kan als volgt schematisch worden weergegeven:



Er werd aangetoond dat beide concepten *ontologisch identiek* doch *conceptueel divergent* zijn. Met andere woorden: ‘*Naturende natuur*’ en de ‘*Genatuurde natuur*’ hebben dezelfde referentie, maar een andere betekenis. De actieve *naturende natuur* kan gelden als het *formele zijn van God*, terwijl de passieve *Genatuurde natuur* optreedt als het (conceptueel onderscheiden maar ontologisch identieke) *objectieve zijn* (ofwel het *idee*) *van God*, dat wil zeggen: de *Genatuurde natuur* onder het attribuut denken, dat de *Genatuurde natuur* onder het attribuut uitgebreidheid als zijn *object* heeft.

In Hoofdstuk 2 werd vastgesteld dat dit *objectieve zijn van God* – ofwel het *oneindige intellect* – op basis van de constructieve functie van het intellect zélf ook

weer begrepen kan worden in zijn formele en in zijn objectieve zijn. Spinoza noemt de formele bestaanswijze van het oneindige intellect het *absoluut oneindige intellect* (ofwel de *onmiddellijke oneindige modus* van het denken); de objectieve bestaanswijze van het oneindige intellect kan worden begrepen als *het geheel van de objectieve natuur* (ofwel de *middellijke oneindige modus* van het denken), die *het geheel van de uitgebreide natuur* (ofwel de *middellijke oneindige modus* van de uitgebreidheid) als zijn object heeft. Schematisch:



Niveau (b-i) wordt geconstitueerd door het oneindige en eeuwige formele zijn van alle dingen, die in deze bestaansvorm kunnen gelden als ‘deel-voor-het-geheel’; niveau (b-ii) bestaat uit het eindige en tijdelijke objectieve zijn van dezelfde dingen, die in deze bestaansvorm kunnen gelden als deel van hun geheel. Net als het formele en objectieve zijn van God (i.e. de *Naturende natuur* en de *Genatuurde natuur*) hebben het formele en objectieve zijn van alle dingen dezelfde referentie, maar een andere betekenis.

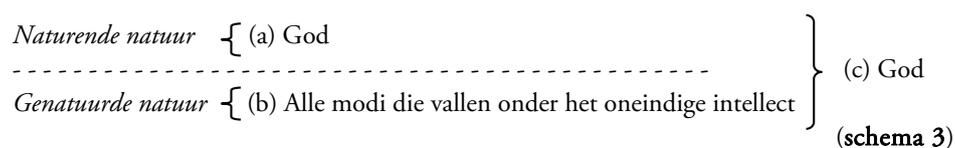
Behalve de veelbediscussieerde distinctie tussen onmiddellijke en middellijke oneindige modi kan ook Spinoza’s beroemde *parallelisme* begrepen worden vanuit de blootgelegde driehoeksstructuur. Zijn opmerkelijke bewering in EIIp7s dat ‘een modus van het attribuut uitgebreidheid en het idee van die modus [...] een en hetzelfde ding [zijn]’ wordt inzichtelijk zodra we inzien dat de geponeerde identiteit – die eveneens de basis vormt voor Spinoza’s oplossing van het lichaam-geest-probleem – *onderdeel is van de driehoeksstructuur die het intellect kenmerkt*. Een object onder het attribuut uitgebreidheid en het objectieve zijn van dat object onder het attribuut denken kunnen beschouwd worden als een en hetzelfde ding *omdat beide volgens Spinoza een uitdrukking zijn onder hun eigen attribuut van één en hetzelfde formele zijn* (net zoals bliksem en donder een uitdrukking zijn van één en hetzelfde fenomeen).

De genoemde driehoeksstructuur biedt eveneens inzicht in de precieze portee van een opmerkelijke tweede variant van parallelisme, die Spinoza introduceert in EIIp21. Hier lezen we de volgende opmerkelijke claim:

Het idee van de geest is op dezelfde manier verbonden met de geest als de geest verbonden is met het lichaam.

Ook deze bewering, die tot nogal wat controversie heeft geleid onder Spinoza-commentatoren, kan verklaard worden uit de ontdekte structuur van het intellect. Want net als een lichaam en het objectieve zijn van dat lichaam (i.e. de geest), kunnen ook de geest en het objectieve zijn (i.e. het idee) van die geest gezien worden als uitdrukking onder hun eigen attribuut van één en hetzelfde formele zijn. Met andere woorden: zoals de geest het numeriek identieke idee van het lichaam is, zo is het idee van de geest het numeriek identieke *idee van het idee* van het lichaam (enzovoort). De opmerkelijke zelfconceptie van de geest die aan de oppervlakte komt in het begrip ‘idee van het idee van het lichaam’ – en die in de *Ethica* gebaseerd is op de in dit proefschrift blootgelegde *axiomatische representativiteit van het denken* – vormt de basis voor Spinoza’s (nauwelijks verder uitgewerkte) opvatting van het begrip ‘bewustzijn’.

De duale structuur van het intellect – en de driehoeksstructuur die deze dualiteit omvat – heeft verdere repercussies voor de wijze waarop wij het meest fundamentele concept uit Spinoza’s metafysica – God (ofwel de ene substantie) – moeten begrijpen. Hierboven werd reeds aangehaald dat Spinoza’s beroemde – hoewel ‘geleende’ – distinctie tussen *Naturende natuur* en *Genatuurde natuur* in feite begrepen kan worden als een door het intellect bemiddelde conceptie van het goddelijke wezen, waarbij de actieve *Naturende natuur* kan gelden als het *formele zijn van het goddelijke wezen*, terwijl de passieve *Genatuurde natuur* optreedt als het (conceptueel onderscheiden maar ontologisch identieke) *objectieve zijn van het goddelijk wezen*. In Hoofdstuk 3 werd getoond dat de conceptuele tweedeling die het gevolg is van de constructieve functie van het intellect de basis vormt voor de vaststelling dat Spinoza in feite werkt met *twee verschillende concepties van ‘God’*. Deze twee concepties komen tot uitdrukking in het volgende schema:



De stelling dat Spinoza onderscheid maakt tussen een *intellectbemiddelde* variant van God (variant (c)) en een variant van God die *absoluut buiten het intellect*

gepositioneerd moet worden (variant (a)) is herkenbaar in tal van passages in de *Ethica*. In het derde hoofdstuk bleek dat dit onderscheid het meest duidelijk naar voren komt in de allereerste definitie van dit werk, waar het begrip ‘oorzaak van zichzelf’ op twee verschillende manieren wordt gedefinieerd. In deze studie werd aangetoond dat deze twee definities precies corresponderen met de twee conceptuele varianten van ‘God’ die weergegeven zijn in schema 3.

Het blootleggen van de twee concepties van God is in meerdere opzichten van belang. Ten eerste biedt deze vaststelling een verdere onderbouwing voor de bewering dat het intellect een *constructieve functie* heeft in Spinoza’s filosofie. De conceptuele distinctie tussen een *absolute variant* van God (i.e. God (a)) en een *coalescente variant* van God (i.e. God (c)) is immers volledig in lijn met de stelling dat de metafysische structuur van de *Ethica* begrepen kan worden als een uitdrukking van Spinoza’s intellect. Ten tweede maakt het herkennen van deze ingewikkelde en vaak veronachtzaamde structuur duidelijk waar we de *buitenintellectuele basis* moeten zoeken van het formele zijn van de dingen. Het onderscheid tussen de *Genatuurde natuur* (b) en de *Naturende natuur* (a) markeert precies het conceptuele verschil tussen de formele status van alle dingen voor zover deze *binnen* de reikwijdte van het intellect vallen (i.e. het formele, eeuwige en oneindige *zijn* van de dingen), en de formele status van dezelfde dingen voor zover deze absoluut *buiten* de reikwijdte van het intellect moeten worden begrepen (i.e. de formele, eeuwige en oneindige *essenties* van de dingen). Met andere woorden: God (a) – die de formele *essenties* van de dingen bevat – biedt precies het buitenintellectuele fundament dat noodzakelijk is om de intellectuele zelfkennis van God (c) niet geheel grondeloos te maken. God (a) kan gelden als *absolute buitenintellectuele identiteit*, waar het objectieve zijn, het formele zijn en de formele essentie van de dingen geheel samenvallen.

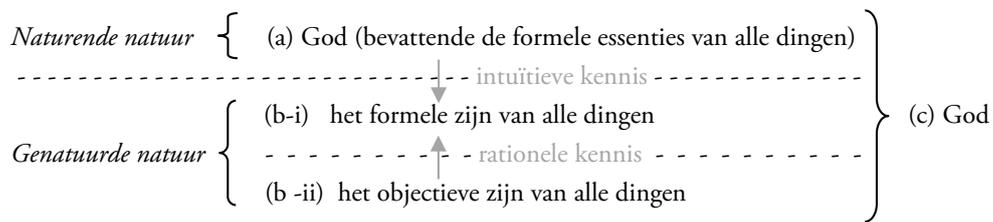
Dit brengt ons bij de derde en laatste reden om de fijnzinnige distinctie tussen de twee conceptuele varianten van ‘God’ bloot te leggen. Het ontrafelen van deze meest fundamentele notie van Spinoza’s metafysica biedt ons meer inzicht in de wijze waarop de *instrumentele functie* van het intellect begrepen moet worden. Met betrekking tot dit aspect is het van eminent belang om nogmaals te benadrukken dat volgens Spinoza de menselijke geest – en dus het *betere deel* van die geest: ons intellect – *onderdeel uitmaakt van Gods oneindige intellect*. In deze studie werd duidelijk dat dit laatstgenoemde oneindige intellect begrepen moet

worden als een *oneindige modus van het attribuut denken*, die gepositioneerd moet worden op het niveau van de *Genatuurde natuur* (b). Met andere woorden: voor zover onze kennis van het intellect begrepen kan worden als Gods zelfkennis, moet deze beschouwd worden als de *zelfkennis van de (c)-variant van God*. Want voor zover God is aangeduid in zijn (a)-variant moet hij begrepen worden als *absoluut buiten het intellect*, hetgeen impliceert dat de *zelfkennis van God (a) absoluut buitenintellectueel is*.

Met betrekking tot de wijze waarop *ons betere deel* onderdeel kan uitmaken van de zelfkennis van God (c) werd in deze studie het volgende aangetoond:

- kennis van God's essentie wordt verkregen via kennis van het *formele zijn van de dingen*. Dit formele zijn kan begrepen worden als een eeuwige uitdrukking in de *Genatuurde natuur* (b) van de *absoluut eeuwige en buitenintellectuele formele essenties* van de dingen die zijn vervat in de *Naturende natuur* (a)
- wanneer dingen begrepen worden in hun formele zijn kan het idee van dat ding aangemerkt worden als *adequaat*
- wanneer dingen begrepen worden in hun objectieve zijn (dat wil zeggen: als tijdelijke uitdrukking van hun conceptueel verschillende maar ontologisch identieke formele zijn) kan het idee van dat ding aangemerkt worden als *waar*
- Adequate ideeën kunnen langs twee wegen verkregen worden. Wanneer het formele zijn van de dingen wordt begrepen langs '*opwaartse weg*' – waarbij het eeuwige formele zijn van dingen (op niveau (b-i)(zie schema 4)) wordt afgeleid van het objectieve tijdelijke zijn (op niveau (b-ii)) – dan is er volgens Spinoza sprake van *rationele kennis* (ofwel 'kennis van de tweede soort'). En wanneer het formele zijn van de dingen begrepen wordt langs '*neerwaartse weg*' – waarbij het begrip van het eeuwige formele zijn van de dingen (opnieuw: op niveau (b-i)) geheel convergeert met de intrinsieke causale keten vanuit de absolute noodzakelijkheid van Gods buitenintellectuele natuur (bevattende de buitenintellectuele formele essenties van alle dingen op niveau (a)) naar het zijn van de dingen in de *Genatuurde natuur* – dan is er volgens Spinoza sprake van *intuïtieve kennis* (ofwel 'kennis van de derde soort')

Deze manier van het begrijpen van de wijze waarop het intellect is geportretteerd in de *Ethica*, kan op de volgende schematische manier worden weergegeven.



(schema 4)

Schema 4 brengt duidelijk tot uitdrukking (i) hoe de *opwaartse* en *neerwaartse* richting van het verkrijgen van adequate kennis moet worden begrepen, en (ii) dat deze beide vormen van kennis – kennis van respectievelijk de tweede en de derde soort – gerekend kunnen worden tot de *zelfkennis van God (c)*.

Eén belangrijk aspect van Spinoza's kennistheorie is nog niet verdisconteerd in dit schema: de wijze waarop Spinoza kennis van de eerste soort – ofwel *imaginaire kennis* – portretteert. In deze studie werd duidelijk dat kennis *imaginair* is wanneer het objectieve zijn van het beeld van een extern ding, dat middels zintuiglijke interactie met de menselijke geest geprojecteerd wordt op het 'innerlijke scherm' van de waarnemer, abusievelijk wordt toegekend aan het externe ding, in plaats van aan het werkelijke object van dit objectieve zijn: de aandoening van het lichaam van de waarnemer die slechts *veroorzaakt* wordt door de zintuiglijke interactie met het externe ding.

Hoewel kennis van de eerste soort opgevat kan worden als een *misrepresentatie* van het object van het objectieve zijn van een lichamelijke aandoening van de waarnemer, moet aan deze vorm van kennis volgens Spinoza niettemin belang gehecht worden. Ten eerste speelt *imaginatio* een belangrijke rol in overlevingsstrategieën, bijvoorbeeld wanneer op basis van een op zintuiglijke wijze verkregen beeld van een naderende vrachtwagen besloten wordt de straat nog even niet over te steken. Maar het belang van deze kennis van de eerste soort reikt nog verder. Want in deze studie werd duidelijk dat imaginaire kennis gebruikt kan worden als 'grondstof' op basis waarvan de menselijke geest zijn hoeveelheid adequate ideeën – en dus zijn *betere deel* – verder kan uitbreiden. In die zin is imaginaire kennis – die in deze studie werd besproken op basis van een analyse van de *constructieve functie* van het intellect – een belangrijke voorwaarde voor de

instrumentele functie van het intellect. Tezelfdertijd moet benadrukt worden dat kennis van de eerste soort volgens Spinoza geen *voldoende* voorwaarde is voor adequate kennis van het intellect. Want de *eeuwigheid* die ons betere deel deelachtig wordt dankzij deze instrumentele functie van het intellect is geworteld in een noodzakelijk ‘eerste adequate idee’ van de essentie van het eigen lichaam. Het is dit eerste adequate idee dat de waarnemer in staat stelt te convergeren met het goddelijke zelfbewustzijn dat kenmerkend is voor het hebben van ware en adequate ideeën. In deze studie werd betoogd dat het eindige en tijdelijke objectief zijnde van de aandoening van het lichaam die veroorzaakt wordt door interactie met een extern ding in wat Spinoza aanduidt als ‘*de orde van de natuur*’, via dit ‘inloggen in Gods zelfkennis’ kan worden begrepen als oneindig en eeuwig formeel ‘deel voor het geheel’, dat de door het externe ding veroorzaakte aandoening van het lichaam van de waarnemer en de natuur van het externe ding als het ware met elkaar laat versmelten in wat Spinoza aanduidt als ‘*de orde van het intellect*’.

Het volgende schema beoogt deze stelling verder te illustreren.:



(schema 5)

Zolang de zintuiglijke kennis die een waarnemer opdoet ‘blijft steken’ in het aannemen van het tijdelijke zijn van de extrinsiek veroorzaakte eindige delen van de orde van de natuur, blijft de opgedane kennis van de waarnemer kennis van de eerste soort. Maar zodra de waarnemer op basis van de interacties met de eindige dingen in de orde van de natuur inziet dat de eindige dingen begrepen moeten worden als oneindige eeuwige ‘delen-voor-het-geheel’ die uitdrukking geven aan hun formele essenties, en die volgen uit God op basis van een intrinsieke causale keten, dan is er sprake van kennis van de tweede soort. En wanneer deze procedure via de orde van de natuur in het geheel niet gevolgd hoeft te worden – hetgeen blijkens de beroemde laatste zin van de *Ethica* moeilijk is en zich dus slechts zeer zelden voordoet – is er sprake van kennis van de derde soort. Beide laatstgenoemde

vormen van kennis, die samen *ons betere deel* uitmaken, worden door Spinoza beschouwd als zelfbewust deel van de oneindige liefde van God voor zichzelf.

Curriculum vitae

Jan Hendrik Hoekjen was born on December 24th 1971 in Hellendoorn (NL). He obtained a Master's degree in History at Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (1998), and a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy at Universiteit Utrecht (2012). Jan Hendrik – who is called 'Henk-Jan' by friends – happily lives in Epe (NL) with Irma, Kik and Puk.

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