

The Status of *Idea rei singularis*: The Foundation for Spinoza's Account of Death and Life

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Keywords: Idea, Concept, Singularity, Metaphysics

Introduction

One of the most basic but often neglected difficulties in interpreting Spinoza's *Ethics* concerns the theoretical connections between the theory of substance and the theory of mind or knowledge. It may be true that Spinoza's epistemological argument at least appears to have considerable independence from the ontological argument of substance. In fact, the demonstrations of most of the propositions in Part II do not even refer to the propositions of Part I, so that these two parts appear to be almost irrelevant. It seems as though the theory of knowledge or idea does not need the theory of substance, which is, however, a totally impossible conclusion, considering the nature of this systematically written work.

Since the propositions in this geometrically demonstrated or Euclidian-style work must be dependent on the antecedent propositions and axioms, which include those presented in the earlier parts, the theory of mind in Part II must be regarded as resulting from the theory of substance in Part I. If the latter is supposed to be unconditional, the former must be considered to be a necessary consequence of the precedent consideration of substance.

This leads us to the following question: How can the epistemological

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theory of our intellect result from the ontological theory of substance? How can we understand the connection between the theory of substance in Part I and the theory of mind or knowledge in Part II of the *Ethics*?

Furthermore, the subsequent parts of the *Ethics* are indeed constructed on the basis of the metaphysical argument in the first two parts. Spinoza shows that the more our mind understands things, as explained in Proposition 38 of Part V, “the less it fears death,” which is a necessary conclusion drawn from the metaphysical argument. Considering the ethical conclusions of Spinoza’s philosophy, this question of theoretical connection is ultimately going to lead us to the almost unanswerably fundamental question: How do Spinoza’s metaphysical arguments prepare the ethical conclusion about death and life, that is, *the more we understand things, the less we fear death*?

Although this latter question seems to be too large to treat here, we must study the former question of theoretical connection in order to understand the basic structure of Spinoza’s philosophy.

This question of theoretical connection is, however, not unique to Spinoza. A similar question can be raised concerning Descartes’ philosophy. Commentators often argue about the nature of the difference between the ontological framework of substance in the *Principles of Philosophy* and the theory of ideas in *Meditations*. These two different treatises are not so smoothly connected as often supposed. In this respect, Spinoza’s problem is similar to the problem of Cartesian metaphysics: the theory of ideas, which is first developed in the *Treatise on the Emendations of Intellect*, and later reformulated in Part I of the *Ethics*, cannot be smoothly connected with the theory of substance exhibited in Part I of the *Ethics*.

Unlike Descartes’ case, the difficulty of connection is not between the two works, but between the two parts of the same work: Spinoza’s *Ethics* contains a theory of mind in its Part II, which roughly corresponds to the theory of the *Treatise*. The nature of difficulty is, however, remarkably similar.

Therefore, we can trace the problem back to Descartes in order to answer this question of connection between the theory of substance and the theory of mind. As we shall see below, Spinoza directly *inherits* the problem from Descartes, and subsequently he develops his own systematic argu-

ment, which crystallizes into his theory of *idea rei singularis*.

1. Cartesian Principles of Knowledge

Contrary to our expectation, Spinoza rarely uses the term *idea* in Part I of the *Ethics*. The term appears for the first time in this work in Axiom 6, but it does not appear again in the following geometrically demonstrated argument. It occasionally appears in the Scholia, notably in the Scholium of Proposition 8. However, we can exclude the Scholia from the geometrically demonstrated main exposition. It seems its usage is carefully avoided in this part for an undetermined reason.

Let us examine the first appearance of the term *idea* in Axiom 6 of Part I. This axiom states that “a true idea must agree with its *ideatum*.” But this axiom does not exhibit its meaning at first glance. It is in the demonstration of Proposition 30 that the meaning of this axiom becomes clear. The axiom is used in this demonstration, and is paraphrased as follows:

A true idea must agree with its *ideatum* (by Axiom 6), i.e. (as *per se notum*), what is contained objectively in the intellect must necessarily be given in nature.

In the course of demonstration, the term *idea* appears only in this reference to the axiom. However, the meaning of this axiom can be expressed without the usage of the term, as is shown in the quoted explanation. The term *idea* is actually paraphrased as “what is contained objectively in the intellect.”

Besides, we cannot find the term *idea* used in the main exposition, except for the demonstrations of Proposition 21 and Proposition 30. And its appearance in the demonstration of the latter proposition is already shown to be avoidable, that is, we can do without the term. The only important appearance of the term can be found in the demonstration of Proposition 21. Indeed, commentators have argued about the status of this idea in this demonstration. It is argued whether it is an immediate infinite mode or a mediate infinite mode. But as Curley says, “[i]t must be realized that any interpretations of Spinoza’s doctrine of infinite modes has very little evi-

dence to work from.”¹

Yet, the term in that demonstration is used exclusively in the context of the idea of God, *idea Dei*. Its status as argued by commentators is not the central issue for our focus. Spinoza refers to the idea of God simply *as an example*. Although it is clear that this *example* is quite eminent and not one among other examples, we cannot say that the usage of the term *idea* is essential in the demonstration of Proposition 21.

In short, the term *idea* does not play an essential role in the argument in Part I of the *Ethics*. Its usage is rare, and even if it is used, it is either paraphrased by other terms (Proposition 30) or used simply as an example (Proposition 21).

Observing the above fact, one may be inclined to suppose that the infrequent appearance of the term *idea*, then, means that the theory of knowledge is irrelevant to the theory of substance. However, this somewhat alluring interpretation is simply impossible. Spinoza does not use the term *idea* in Part I of the *Ethics*. Nevertheless, he incessantly uses another term instead. And this term plays an essential role in the geometrical demonstration of the whole argument of this part.

Spinoza uses the term *conceptus* (concept). If he does not need the term *idea*, he still cannot avoid the term *concept*. And this term clearly shows that the theory of substance is based on the theory of knowledge. Part I of the *Ethics* is dependent on the indefinable term *concept*, which means that the theory of substance is not irrelevant to the theory of knowledge.

The term *concept* plays an important role not only in the first part, but also in the whole system of the *Ethics*. When Spinoza defines the term *idea* in Part II, he does so by relying on this undefined term. The term *concept* is simply indefinable, while the term *idea* is definable: *Idea* is a *concept* of the mind that the mind forms because it is a thinking thing (E2Def3). Although this definition is too simple to comment upon, it is clear that Spinoza’s terminology does not assign a pivotal role to the term *idea*, which can be avoided by using the other terms that describe our thought or knowledge. This definition means that Spinoza does not need the term *idea*

1. Edwin Curley, *The Collected Works of Spinoza Volume I* (Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 429.

in order to describe his theory of knowledge.

Spinoza does not rely on the term *idea* in Part I of the Ethics, but he incessantly uses the term *concept*. This means that his ontological argument is inseparable from his theory of knowledge, whereas the former does not operate with the theoretical apparatus of *idea* which is necessary in the latter. Therefore, we have to focus on the distinction between the two terms.

Here, it seems quite reasonable to suppose that Spinoza's terminology has a strong connection with the terminology of Descartes, and that we have to refer to the research concerning the distinctive terminology of the two key terms: *idea* and *conceptus*.

Fortunately, the research has been considerably advanced by the recent works of two historians of philosophy, Jean-François Courtine and, above all, Katsuzo Murakami.² In their studies on Descartes, they emphasize an epistemological break concerning the Cartesian usage of the word *idea*. Before focusing on Spinoza's terminology, let us review the nature of Cartesian epistemology.

According to their studies, one must be careful about the usage of the two terms: *idea* and *conceptus*. Unlike Spinoza, Descartes does not use the term *concept* in order to define the term *idea*. Spinoza's definition quoted above is strikingly different from the one found in Descartes' geometric presentation of his thought, which is seen at the end of the *Second Replies*. And the young Spinoza follows it in his *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*.

By the term *idea* I understand that form of each thought [*cogitationis forma*] through the immediate perception of which I am conscious of the thought itself. (ATVII: 160; PPC1Def2)

Descartes' definition must not be confused with the definition given in the *Ethics*. We have to consider the effort of Descartes to reform philosophy in reaction to the resilient tradition of Scholastic philosophy. Because of this

2. Jean-François Courtine, "La doctrine cartésienne de l'idée et ses sources scolastiques," *Lire Descartes aujourd'hui* (Louvain-Paris, 1997). Katsuzo Murakami, *Études sur la métaphysique cartésienne I* (in Japanese, Chisen Shokan, 2004); *Études sur la métaphysique cartésienne II* (in Japanese, Chisen Shokan, 2005); *Études sur la métaphysique cartésienne III* (in Japanese, Chisen Shokan, 2009).

effort, he must use the term *idea*, which is an unusual term to describe human thought. For example, Francis Bacon used the word in order to refer to divine Ideas, in contrast to human *idola* (idols). Descartes dares to use this Platonic term instead of the Scholastic *conceptus* in order to express his purified thought, which is thoroughly detached from sensory perception and imagination through methodological doubt.

Therefore, Cartesian *idea* should not be confused with *concept*. This terminology radically differentiates his position from the scholastic epistemology. As generally admitted, Descartes uses the distinction between formal and objective concerning the term *idea*. But this distinction is borrowed from the similar distinction concerning *concept*, which is seen in late Scholastic philosophy. Recent studies show that the Cartesian distinction should not be identified with the similar distinction between formal concept and objective concept as described by Suarez.

The entire pre-Cartesian philosophical position can be characterized as a direction “from things to the intellect,” as Murakami emphasizes in his study on Descartes.³ Suarez follows the formula of Middle Age epistemology, *nihil in intellectu nisi prius in sensu*. The objective concept is not identical to Cartesian objective reality precisely because it is seen epistemologically as something perceived and represented, not ontologically as something real and expressive. The so-called objective concept is not so *objective* in the Cartesian sense. The objective concept is nothing but concept as such, which comes to the intellect through the senses from things outside the intellect. If Descartes consciously uses the term *idea* and carefully avoids the term *concept*, it is because he tries to follow the other direction, opposite to the empiricist direction.

Contrary to the Scholastic direction of “from things to the intellect,” Descartes advances a new direction, which can be formulated as that of “from the intellect to things.” The problem is no longer what the intellect receives from outside and how. A new principle of knowledge starts from the intellect to reach out to the things in nature. This new direction is made possible through the notion of the *objective reality* of an idea. Objective reality is the reality that the represented object in an idea has. Descartes

3. Murakami 2004, *passim*.

starts from ideas in the direction “from the intellect to things,” that is, from an idea to the thing outside the intellect which is the object of this idea.

With this different orientation, this almost Copernican revolution which fundamentally defines the whole of modern European philosophy, the Cartesian theory of knowledge is established. And this situation is symbolized by the fresh usage of the term *idea*.

Yet, we still do not know to what extent Spinoza inherits this Cartesian terminology. After all, he does not hesitate to use the term *concept*; and he does not use the term *idea* with the same consistency as Descartes did in his fight against Scholasticism. Although Spinoza keeps the distinction between formal and objective, he no longer uses the theoretical apparatus of objective reality. Spinoza’s terminology seems to have abandoned the Cartesian revolution.

However, Spinoza consciously keeps the direction “from the intellect to things.” Although Spinoza is not faithful to the Cartesian terminology, he inherits the Cartesian principles of knowledge. And when Spinoza uses the distinction formal-objective, he radicalizes it to the extent that Descartes could not do. Spinoza does not use the term objective reality, but he extensively utilizes the distinction between formal and objective, to the extent that he no longer needs the word *idea*.

This systematical distinction of formal-objective is already present in the *Treatise On the Emendation of the Intellect*.

A true idea, (for we possess a true idea) is something different from its *ideatum*; thus a circle is different from the idea of a circle. The idea of a circle is not something having a circumference and a center, as a circle has; nor is the idea of a body that body itself. Now, as it is something different from its ideatum, it will also be something intelligible through itself; that is, the idea, in so far as its *formal essence* is concerned, may be the object of another *objective essence*. And, this other objective essence in turn will also be, regarded in itself, something real (*quid reale*) and intelligible; and so on, indefinitely. (TIE 33)⁴

4. In this article, the translation of Spinoza’s text basically follows Curley’s work, but occasionally slightly modified. Hereafter the abbreviations follow the citation guideline of *Studia Spinozana*.

Here Spinoza still uses the word *idea*, but the emphasis is on the distinction between formal essence and objective essence. The distinction of formal-objective no longer needs the notion of *idea* because everything is now considered to be an *ideatum*. Nothing is outside the intellect; everything is either *idea* or *ideatum*, formal or objective. We no longer keep any perspective outside of the intellect; our perspective is entirely immanent.

In this all-out radicalization of the immanent position in the intellect, Spinoza will no longer rely on the term *idea*. If this is conceded, then even Part I of the *Ethics*, where the term *idea* does not play any important role, can be understood as inseparable from the theory of knowledge. Adding to the term concept, Spinoza often uses the term knowledge [*cognitio*], in order to describe our intellect. When Spinoza demonstrates the important proposition that states parallelism, he simply uses an axiom that does not use the term *idea*. The so-called proposition of parallelism is expressed as follows:

II, P7: *The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.*

Dem.: 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.

This proposition results almost entirely from Axiom 4 of Part I.

I, A4: *The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause.*

This axiom must be considered in the context of the principles of knowledge that are inherited from Descartes. Although this axiom is much disputed, especially in the study by Margaret Wilson, what is important is that *this theory is not separable from Cartesian principles of knowledge*.⁵

Spinoza pursues the Cartesian principles of knowledge with the notion of concept or knowledge. In Spinoza's terminology, concept or knowledge

5. Margaret Wilson, "Spinoza's Causal Axiom (Ethics I, Axiom 4)," in Yovel (ed.), *God and Nature in Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 1991; "Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge," in Garrett (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, 1996.

takes the place that idea or thought [cogitatio] has in the philosophy of Descartes. While Spinoza does not faithfully follow Descartes' terminology, he genuinely inherits the metaphysical framework of his predecessor. The whole system of Spinoza's philosophy is based on the priority of intellect, which is essential to the Cartesian framework. The theory of substance must be interpreted from this foundation. Spinoza does not give an important role to the term *idea* in Part I of the *Ethics*, but his theory of substance must be understood in its connection with Cartesian principles of knowledge.

2. Descartes' explanation of *Attributum*

If Spinoza's *Ethics* starts with the theory of substance, and he genuinely inherits the metaphysical framework of Descartes, then we have to consult the Cartesian theory of substance in order to understand how Spinoza constructs his whole system. Let us now look at Spinoza's theory of substance in relationship to Cartesian philosophy.

The status of Descartes' theory of substance is itself not easy to estimate. This theory is presented in Part I of the *Principles of Philosophy*. Unlike his *Meditations*, this chapter has a title that does not refer to metaphysics; instead, it is titled simply as the *Principles of Human Knowledge*. The theory of substance is not considered to be *philosophia prima* or metaphysics as a study of being, but is humbly regarded as the principles of human knowledge.

We easily notice that the Cartesian theory of substance is inseparable from the theory of ideas, although the theory of ideas does not seem to play a pivotal role in the *Principles*. If the theoretical apparatus of idea no longer plays the essential role in this work, the *theory of attributes* is developed in order to perfect the theory of substance. Here the distinction between substance and attributes differs tremendously from the Aristotelian tradition.

Let us pause here to look briefly at what Descartes says about attribute. He admits that substance does not affect us by itself:

[W]e cannot initially be aware that something is a substance simply from the fact that it is an existing thing, because this in itself alone

does not affect us. [*Verumtamen non potest substantia primum animadverti ex hoc solo, quid sit res existens, quia hos solum per se nos non afficere.*] Yet, we can easily recognize it from any of its attributes, by virtue of the common notion that no attributes (or properties or qualities) are for nothing. From the fact that we perceive that an attribute is present [*quod aliquod attributum adesse*], we conclude that a certain existing thing, or substance, to which it can be attributed, must necessarily also be present. (PP, p1a52)

It is always through attributes that we consider substance. In this sense, Descartes does not consider substances in themselves, but always considers them through attributes. Even when he does not use the term *idea*, his metaphysical inquiry is always based on the theory of knowledge.

In order to characterize the Cartesian notion of substance and attribute, one can distinguish two types of dependency, the *dependency of knowledge* and the *dependency of existence*.⁶ The knowledge of substances depends on the knowledge of attributes, while the existence of attributes depends on the existence of substances. Attribute depends on substance with respect to existence, while substance depends on attribute with respect to knowledge. Since the theory of substance must be regarded not simply as ontological but also as epistemological insight, it cannot dispense with the theory of attributes.

To summarize the Cartesian notion of attribute, we can say as follows. If the term *idea* does not play a pivotal role in the theory of substance, the term *attributum* becomes indispensable instead because it represents the status of intellect in Descartes' metaphysical framework. Once Descartes begins to use the term *attributum*, he no longer needs the term *idea* in order to present the theory of substance.

Let us return to Spinoza's theory of substance. To see how it is also inseparable from the theory of human knowledge, it is sufficient to look at the definitions of metaphysical concepts such as substance and mode. There he uses the notion of concept, but this word does not mean anything different from the apparatus of *idea*. This can be confirmed both in the definition

6. Murakami 2005, pp.203-244.

of substance (“By *substance* I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e., that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, form which it must be formed,” E1Def3) and in that of mode (“By *mode* I understand the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived,” E1Def5). The theory of substance is fundamentally defined by the notion of concept as we have already noted in the previous section.

Then, what is the status of *attribute* in Spinoza’s argument? Indeed, the definition of attribute has been the central issue in the history of interpretations of Spinoza’s philosophy. Many scholars have disputed whether attributes belong to intellect or to reality. The classical disputes are summarized in the chapter devoted to the interpretation of attribute in Gueroult’s study.⁷ However, there is no need to go into detail about the historical disputes because they have no connection with the main subject of our argument. Instead, let us see Spinoza’s definition of attribute from the Cartesian point of view:

By *attribute* I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence. (E1 Def4)

Substance is understood through an attribute, and its knowledge is dependent on the latter. At the same time, the existence of an attribute is dependent on a substance. In this respect, Spinoza does not differ from Descartes on the theory of attributes. We need not review the history of interpretation simply because the theory of attributes is *inherited* from Descartes.

But Spinoza does not refer explicitly to the Cartesian theory of attributes. Does he carefully avoid the reference? In his *Descartes’ Principles of Philosophy*, Spinoza does not analyze this notion of attribute. And one of the reasons the notion of attribute has been disputed is the mysterious paucity of the arguments left for us. Neither does Descartes define the notion of attribute in his geometrical presentation after the *Second Replies*.

Yet, we can find an explanation of the dependency of knowledge that substance has, which is also followed by Spinoza in his exposition of Carte-

7. Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza I: Dieu* (Aubier, 1968).

sian philosophy.

For of substance itself, taken precisely, we have no idea, other than that it is a thing in which exists formally or eminently that something which we perceive, or, which is objectively in one of our ideas [because it is known to the natural light that nothing can have no real attribute]. (ATVII:161; GI:150. The bracketed clause is omitted in Spinoza's exposition.)

Descartes states that we have no idea of substance itself. Substance must be perceived through its attribute. Our ideas perceive objectively something that exists formally in substance. Although Spinoza does not refer to Descartes' explanation of attribute in the *Principles*, he fully comprehends this complex status of substance and its dependency on attribute.

Descartes emphasizes the epistemological importance of the notion of attribute, as the knowledge of substance depends on attribute. And Spinoza is faithfully Cartesian when he states the phrase "substance of attribute," *substantia attributi* (E1PSD). This phrase clearly shows that substance is substance *of* attribute. One cannot suppose substance prior to attribute. Substance must always be considered as the substance of an attribute because its knowledge is dependent on the latter. Attribute exists as an attribute of substance, but substance cannot be known by us without attribute.

Our initial problem is the connection between the first two parts of the *Ethics*. So far, we have seen that Part I of the *Ethics* must be interpreted from the principles of knowledge based on the distinction between formal and objective, that is, the theory of intellect inherited from Descartes. Spinoza uses the term *concept* that Descartes carefully avoided, or develops the theory of attributes without an explicit reference to the Cartesian explanation of attribute. However, the theory of substance and attribute must be seen in continuity with the principles of human knowledge. Although Spinoza does not follow Cartesian terminology, he must be considered as a faithful inheritor of Cartesian philosophy.

3. From *Idea Dei* to *Idea rei singularis*

After having emphasized the continuity between Descartes and Spinoza, now we must consider the difference between these two philosophers with relation to our main purpose. As we know, Spinoza developed the theory of substance, which concludes that there is only one substance, the absolutely infinite substance named God. But this is not the problem for us. Instead, we must examine the way he put the theory of knowledge after the theory of substance, and the connection between those two theories.

Consider the structure of his *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*. Spinoza understands that Descartes' *Meditations* precedes the exposition of the *Principles*, that is, the meditation on human knowledge precedes the theory of substance. On the contrary, his *Ethics* starts from substance and moves to human mind. What does this order of exposition mean?

Let us further consider the status of the term *idea*. This term is used in Part I of the *Ethics* only in the context of *idea Dei*, as we have already seen in the previous section. Now, we should direct our attention to the fact that this terminology is fairly faithful to Descartes. When Descartes uses the term, it is specially used in order to move beyond the realm of our own finite intellect, and it is always in the context of the *causes* of ideas, and the prominent role is given to the idea of God. It is the objective reality of the idea of God that allows us to transcend our finite consciousness and demonstrate the existence of something outside ourselves, that is, the existence of God.

Proposition 9 of Part I of the *Ethics* must be seen in this light: The more reality or being each thing has, the more attributes belong to it. This proposition is not far from the Cartesian argument on objective reality that the idea of God has. The apparatus of *idea* allows us to pursue this *vertical* direction, into the *extra intellectum*. And the idea of God has the most privileged position among all the other ideas we possess because it has the largest reality or being [*realitas aut esse*] (E1P9).

Here, it must be noted that even after the term *idea* is introduced in Part II of the *Ethics*, it is mainly used in the context of *idea Dei*. After the term is explicitly defined in Part II, ideas of things other than God appear for the first time in Proposition 5. The term is connected not only with God's at-

tributes but also with singular things.

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. (E2P5)

But again this usage is in connection with God "insofar as he is a thinking thing." Ideas of singular things are now introduced in the argument, but they are said to admit God as their efficient cause. They express "God's nature insofar as he is a thinking thing." (E2P5D) The term *idea* seems to be inseparable from God in the terminology of the *Ethics*.

But this usage of the term *idea* in the context of *idea Dei* has exceptions. The atmosphere is totally different in Spinoza's earlier works. Consider how the theory of intellect is developed in the *Treatise on the Emendation*. In this treatise by the younger Spinoza, he concentrates on the differences between our knowledge or the distinction between our ideas. Spinoza does not use the term *idea* in connection with God; indeed, God does not play any role in this treatise. Although this terminology might look ordinary to our largely empiricist eyes, it must be recognized that it is far from the Cartesian tradition. Should we suppose that this terminology is unique to the *Treatise on the Emendation*?

We have no need to suppose such an inconsistency of Spinoza's terminology. We just need to distinguish the different directions in which the apparatus of *idea* can be pursued. In the context of epistemology, Spinoza treats our intellect in a *horizontal* direction without inquiring into objective reality and its cause. He does not seek to transcend our intellect *vertically* to find the things that are *extra intellectum*. He does not study the differences between our knowledge in a vertical direction, but in a *horizontal* direction.

This horizontal treatment gives the theory of interaction [*commercium*] between different pieces of knowledge or different ideas. The theory of interaction of ideas, and the parallel behavior on the side of objects and ideas, is described as follows:

Moreover, the idea behaves objectively in the same way as its *ideatum*

behaves really [realiter]. So if there were something in Nature that did not have interaction [commercium] with other things, and if there were an objective essence of that thing which would have to agree completely with its formal essence, then that objective essence would not have interaction with other ideas, i.e., we could not infer anything about it. And conversely, those things that do have interaction with other things (as everything that exists in nature does) will be understood, and their objective essences will also have the same interaction, i.e., other ideas will be deduced from them, and these again will interact with other ideas, and so the tools for proceeding further will increase, which is what we were trying to demonstrate. (TIE 41)

Here the interactions between ideas are clearly at issue. The relation is not between an idea and its object, inside and outside the intellect, but the idea and other ideas next to it. Spinoza developed the theory of ideas not in the vertical direction towards the *extra intellectum*, but in the horizontal direction with the other ideas or thoughts.

Therefore, the Cartesian framework of metaphysics can be developed in two distinct directions. One is in the *vertical* direction, that is, to transcend our own consciousness to the cause of ideas through the Cartesian apparatus of objective reality. The term *idea* symbolizes this theory which tries to go beyond the sphere of intellect, and to illuminate the sphere *extra intellectum*. This direction is already pursued by Descartes himself, in his revolutionary theory of the principles of knowledge. And we have already confirmed that Spinoza is faithful to this heritage in Part I of the *Ethics*.

Yet, there is another direction which Descartes himself could not pursue. Spinoza developed his philosophy in this *horizontal* direction. Ideas or thoughts have relations to each other horizontally, where Spinoza sees the *commercium* between objects, which results in the theory of epistemological parallelism. This *horizontal* analysis cannot be found in the Cartesian theory of knowledge. It is uniquely Spinozist. If the vertical direction is fundamental in constituting the Cartesian revolution of metaphysics, the horizontal analysis is constitutive of Spinoza's ethical view of the world.

However, the theory of substance in Part I of the *Ethics* is already inseparable from the foundation of intellect and the theory of knowledge.

Spinoza is faithful to the Cartesian revolution which is based on the immanence of intellect. Even when the term *idea* or the notion of human mind does not appear, and even when the distinction between formal and objective is still not utilized, the theory of substance is already inseparable from the principles of knowledge.

Spinoza's horizontal analysis is not restricted to his treatment of human mind. This analysis is not restricted to the theory of so-called parallelism. It is not even restricted to the theory of mind in general. It does not belong solely to Part II of the *Ethics*, which is entitled *On the Nature and Origin of the Mind*. The theory of substance is also developed in this horizontal direction. Consider the theory of finite mode, which does not exist in Descartes' treatment of substance. What is lacking in the Cartesian treatment of substance is the theory of singular things, which are finite modes that have determinate existence (E1P28). Spinoza clarifies the ontological status of finite modes, which are also called singular things, *res singularis*. Their ontological status is modification of substance, or mode of attribute. By establishing the ontological status of singular things, Spinoza prepares for the horizontal analysis.

Yet, detailed analysis of singular things is not possible in Part I of the *Ethics*. The ontological status of finite modes makes it possible to analyze them further in the theory of the Mind, where they are considered to be the *ideas of singular things*. The detailed analysis is made possible only in Part II, where finite modes are studied through the ideas of singular things, and through the analysis of the human condition. From the idea of God, the emphasis moved to the ideas of singular things, which constitute our own minds.

Therefore, the notion *ideas of singular things* must be taken seriously and rigorously: it is not we ourselves who have those ideas fully in ourselves, that is, in our own intellect. The ideas of singular things must be contained in the infinite intellect of God and analyzed only with the geometrical method that belongs to the second genre of knowledge, or reason.

In the horizontal interactions of ideas, there is a special object for each of us. It is our own body. The special idea of a singular thing is the idea of our own body. The idea which is given in our intellect is this idea.

The idea that constitutes the formal being of the human Mind is the idea of a body. [*Idea, quae esse formale humanae Mentis constituit, est idea corporis*](E2P15D).

This body is not simple but “composed of a great many individuals of different natures, each of which is highly composite.” (E2P14Pos1) Therefore, the human mind is also highly composite accordingly. Yet, there is a singular essence for each of us, which constitutes the theory of intuitive science [*scientia intuitiva*] in the last part of the *Ethics*. From the new insight into the status of body to the consideration of intuitive science, the theme of singular essence is central to the construction of Spinoza’s philosophy.⁸

Finally, this status of human beings makes it possible to conclude that the more we understand things, the less we fear death. To understand things adequately is to understand them by the second and third kind of knowledge, that is, by reason or by intuitive science (E2P40 S2). And “the more the Mind understands things by the second and the third kind of knowledge, the less it is acted on by affects which are evil, and the less it fears death” (E2P38). The main reason is that the mind understands things *sub specie aeternitatis*, which cannot be explained by bodily endurance (E5 P29D). We fear death because our minds are largely occupied with imaginary representations (the first kind of knowledge) which are dependent on our bodily existence. If our mind is occupied in the greater part with clear knowledge which cannot be explained by bodily endurance, then our bodily endurance almost *doesn’t matter*, and we no longer have any reason to fear the end of our bodily existence.

This does not mean that we do not care about our own individual being, losing our uniqueness in universal knowledge. On the contrary, it is imaginary representations or defective illusions that do not let us *truly be ourselves* because they are essentially dependent on our bodily endurance, which is inseparable from incessant interaction with other bodies. Indeed, as long as our minds are largely occupied with the first kind of knowledge, we inevitably fear death; death is horrible because our minds seem to

8. See Tomomi Asakura, “Singular essence and the problem of Self in Spinoza’s *Ethica*,” *Tetsugauk-zasshi*, Vol. CXXI No. 793, 2006 (in Japanese).

perceive nothing without our bodily existence. Without bodily existence, what is left for our being? When our minds become free from imaginary and defective knowledge, we find ourselves to be independent from our bodily endurance in its busy interaction with other bodies. And the more our minds become free from imaginary and defective knowledge, the more we become independent and *singular*. Thus, by winning true singularity by the second and third kind of knowledge, we become at last almost free from the fear of death.

However, to inquire further into this theme of human condition and the status of singular essence would lead us into a full analysis of the whole system, which is a topic for further discussion in another article.⁹

Concluding Remarks

The theory of substance is inseparable from the theory of mind or knowledge in both Descartes' and Spinoza's philosophies. The nature of this connection itself is at the center of Cartesianism. Substance is knowable only through its attribute, although the existence of attribute depends on its substance. The epistemological argument appears to have considerable independence from the ontological argument of substance, but the latter is entirely based on the former.

Similarly, Spinoza's theory of ideas in the *Treatise on the Emendations of Intellect* gives foundation to the theory of substance in the *Ethics*. The latter contains a theory of mind in Part II, but this doesn't mean that the theory of knowledge is contained only in this part. Spinoza faithfully follows the Cartesian framework in this respect. Although he uses the term *concept* or knowledge rather than *idea* or thought, the whole ontological argument of the *Ethics* is based on the immanence of intellect, which constitutes the Cartesian revolution of metaphysics.

The Cartesian framework presents two possible directions of development: vertical and horizontal. On the one hand, the theory of substance is based on the vertical transcendence of idea or thought, that is, something

9. Cf. Tomomi Asakura, *Notion and Singularity in the philosophy of Spinoza* (doctoral dissertation in Japanese, the University of Tokyo, 2009).

outside intellect is shown to exist. This genuinely Cartesian direction must be paid sufficient attention when interpreting Spinoza. The difficulty concerning the notion of attribute disappears once we see the continuity with Descartes' explanation.

On the other hand, Spinoza radically develops the horizontal direction in which ideas and thoughts interact. This leads to the analysis of finite modes or singular things. Singular things appear in Part I, yet they are analyzed in detail only in Part II. The notion of *ideas of singular things* constitutes Spinoza's unique theory of the nature and origin of the mind. The theory of human beings as modes of substance must be seen as an authentic development of Cartesian principles of knowledge. Therefore, the notion of the ideas of singular things is at the core of the theoretical connection between the first two parts of the *Ethics*, which ultimately shows the possibility of human freedom beyond the fear of death.

Acknowledgement

I express my deep gratitude to Thomas Marks, master faculty specialist at the Career English Language Center for International Students, Western Michigan University, for providing me precious advice to improve the text in English.