

**IMAGINATION AND THE SOURCE OF  
ERROR IN SPINOZA'S *ETHICS***

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## **Abstract**

Spinoza's first kind of knowledge – called imagination – in the Ethics is the only source of error and at the same time the only source of knowledge about external objects, our body and our mind. In my thesis I explore the source of error in Spinoza's theory of knowledge. I argue that Don Garrett, Margaret Wilson and Edwin Curley present a Cartesian interpretation of the source of error, and they try locate the source of error in the relationship of the idea and its object. Instead I claim – developing Wilsons' interpretation – the source of error is that inadequate ideas involve but do not explicate their constituent parts. I use Michael Della Rocca's distinction of eternal and finite things according to which adequate ideas inhere fully in something, while inadequate ideas are only partially inhering in any series of finite modes. I argue that Della Rocca's notion of partial inherence is wrong, since according to the definition of the singular thing there is always a finite mode in which the effect can fully inhere and therefore the real distinction is between the aspect of the finite idea which is adequate – and therefore fully existing, fully inhering and fully intelligible – and between the aspect of the finite idea which is inadequate – and therefore a non-existent, not inhering, irrational phenomenal state. I analyze Della Rocca's distinction of “standard” and “non-standard” falsity, and argue that “standard” falsity, as well as the falsity of universal notions is reducible to “non-standard” falsity.

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## Table of Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. BASIC METAPHYSICAL TERMS AND THE FIRST KIND OF KNOWLEDGE.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Infinite and finite modes .....	4
2.2 Representation .....	6
2.3 Singular things and individuals.....	8
2.4 Formal, actual and objective essences .....	13
2.5 Adequate and inadequate causation .....	15
2.6 Imagination .....	18
2.7 Idea, affirmation and the will .....	19
<b>3. THE SOURCE OF ERROR: EXISTING INTERPRETATIONS .....</b>	<b>22</b>
3.1 Don Garrett’s interpretation .....	22
3.2 Edwin M. Curley’s interpretation.....	25
3.3 Margaret D. Wilson’s interpretation .....	27
3.4 Filippo Mignini’s interpretation.....	30
3.5 Michael Della Rocca’s interpretation .....	32
<b>4. THE SOURCE OF ERROR: A PROPOSED INTERPRETATION .....</b>	<b>37</b>

4.1 Two conceptions of the sun: the failure of the Cartesian interpretation ..... 38

4.2 Representation of the external object ..... 41

4.3 Existence of the external object ..... 53

4.4 Universal notions ..... 55

4.5 Mind-independent and mind-dependent qualities ..... 57

5. CONCLUSION ..... 60

**APPENDIX 1: NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES OF CENTRAL TERMS RELATED TO  
IMAGINATION IN THE TEXT ..... 63**

## 1. Introduction

Imagination, or the first kind of knowledge, is a very widespread concept in Spinoza's system and is ambiguous at best: it is denounced as the source of error,<sup>1</sup> while at the same time we are told that ideas of imagination in themselves are not erroneous.<sup>2</sup> My main aim in this thesis is to locate the source of error in Spinoza's theory of knowledge. I chiefly rely on the works of Michael Della Rocca, Don Garrett and Margaret D. Wilson.<sup>3</sup> I demonstrate that Garrett's interpretation is part of the greater group of what I call Cartesian interpretation. These interpretations try to reconstruct Spinoza's theory of knowledge in Cartesian lines claiming that the source of error is in the idea's relation to its object. I use Wilson's distinction between ideas involving and ideas explicating other ideas in order to argue that, contrary to the Cartesian interpretation, the source of error is located in the inner constitution of the idea, in that the idea does not explicate those other ideas that it involves and therefore the mind is unable to conceive these constituent ideas distinctly.

I use Della Rocca's work in order to show how this is possible. I argue that Della Rocca rightly claimed that in order to form adequate ideas one has to be an adequate cause of the object of the idea. However, I reject Della Rocca's claim that there are ideas that are only partially inhering in any series of finite modes, because I demonstrate that the definition of singular thing implies that

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<sup>1</sup> Especially in E1App, where beauty, goodness and purposiveness are denounced as erroneous ideas of imagination. All references to the *Ethics* are from: Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol. 1.*, with the usual abbreviation: pre – preface, a – axiom, p – proposition, s – scholium, c – corollary, app – appendix, L – lemma, DefAff – definition of affects, d – definition if it is immediately after the number of the part and demonstration in all other cases.

<sup>2</sup> The term imagination in its derived forms occur 354 times in the *Ethics*, around three quarters of these in books three and four where they play an important role in the definition of affects, therefore it is important to understand imagination in order to be able to interpret Spinoza's psychology. Appendix 1 shows all the occurrences of the terms imagination, memory and recollection in the *Ethics*.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, "Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge"; Garrett, "Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind"; Garrett, "Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza's Naturalistic Theory of the Imagination"; Garrett, "Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That Is Eternal"; Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*; Della Rocca, *Spinoza*.

there is always a finite mode that is the adequate cause of any other finite mode and therefore in which the effect can fully inhere. Thus, I argue that in reality there are no inadequate causes or inadequate ideas, only adequate ones, but if the human mind has inadequate ideas that involve other ideas which are not explicated, it will have a mind-dependent phenomenal belief about the phenomenal character of inadequate causation.<sup>4</sup>

In the second chapter I introduce some basic metaphysical notions of Spinoza that are important in order to be able to describe and interpret his theory of knowledge, and I will give a basic overview of the first kind of knowledge. In the third chapter I review the already existing interpretations of the source of error in Spinoza's theory of knowledge, then in chapter 4 I present my account of imagination as the source of error by first refuting its mainstream Cartesian interpretation and then proposing my own view. In the concluding chapter I restate my interpretation of the source of error in Spinoza's *Ethics* and I summarize my answers to the puzzles presented by the existing interpretations.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout this thesis I concentrate on Spinoza's philosophy as presented in the *Ethics*. Though he certainly presents his views on the source of error in his earlier works (the *Short Treatise*, the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and the *Principles of the Cartesian Philosophy*), because of the uncertainty about the relationship of the positions articulated in these works and the one presented in the *Ethics*, the discussion of these texts would have required much more space than what was available for the present thesis. Spinoza also discusses imagination in his works on

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<sup>4</sup> This formulation is slightly inaccurate since – because of the special propositional character of ideas in Spinoza's system, which I will discuss in more detail in section 2.7 – the phenomenal belief and the phenomenal state about which I have the phenomenal belief are the same.

<sup>5</sup> Here I will not be able to take a stance on the question whether the substance and its attributes, infinite modes and the mind or at least part of it are eternal in the same sense or in different senses, I will assume that all of these are eternal in some relevant sense. I am not convinced that Spinoza's position on this question is unequivocal Cf. Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance and Thought*, 121–129.



political philosophy (in the *Theological-Political Treatise* and the *Political Treatise*), but these mainly focus on the consequences of his views for political and theological matters. Since my main interest is epistemological, I will not discuss these works here. However, I believe that his letters mostly reflect his mature views, and since they contain some information relevant to my subject I will freely cite them in support of my interpretation. In order to avoid the possibility of confusion, I will always quote them by providing the year of the letter; thus the reader can decide whether she accepts the claim as reflecting the mature view. I will not refrain from using works of philosophers who have relied heavily on contemporary findings (like Della Rocca), but I will not use notions that I deem to be inapplicable to Spinoza's philosophy (like *a priori* used by Mignini).

## 2. Basic metaphysical terms and the first kind of knowledge

In this chapter I present those metaphysical concepts on which I base my interpretation, and present Spinoza's discussion of the first kind of knowledge. First, I present the distinction of finite and infinite modes the understanding of which is crucial for Spinoza's theory of knowledge because of his claim that both intellect and formal essence is an infinite mode. Second, I introduce the representational relation, which is crucial for understanding Spinoza's theory of knowledge. In the third section I present Spinoza's two principles of individuation, which I use in my argument against Della Rocca, and also for deciding the question what formal, actual and objective essence are essences of, which essences I present in the fourth section. In the next section I introduce the distinction between adequate and inadequate causation, which will be important because of its close connection to the distinction of adequate and inadequate ideas and because it has an important bearing on the metaphysical status of finite modes and inadequate ideas. Then, in section 6 I present Spinoza's definitions of imagination; and in the last section I show that Spinoza conflates will and ideas.

### 2.1 Infinite and finite modes

Spinoza defines modes in E1d5 as affections of the substance, *or* what is in and conceived through another.<sup>6</sup> Finite modes are all those things that we normally would call events, properties, as well

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<sup>6</sup> It is an interesting feature of Spinoza's definitions that he does not include a definition of affection, although it has a considerable role in his metaphysics. The most natural definition of affection inferred from its role in E3d3 and E3p1 would be that it is a mode that was not caused by the essence of the mode it inheres in, but a mode outside of it. (Though it is doubtful whether any property can be adequately caused by the essence of anything. I would like to thank Mike Griffin for pointing this out to me.) In the case of a dog its leg seems to be a mode because it was caused by the essence of the dog, while the bruise on its skin an affection because it was affected by a mode outside of it, namely a cat. This definition however cannot work, since in this case the substance could not have affections; also, E1d5 would be circular. The definition of 'modes of modes' would also not work for a similar reason. Don Garrett's suggestion that affection should be read as quality is also unhelpful, (Garrett, "Spinoza's Conatus Argument," 135.) since the whole reason behind designating objects as modes was to refer to them as properties. (Carriero, "On the Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza's Metaphysics.") Ursula Renz interprets affections as what is in another, but in this case the definition of mode as an affection would be a tautology, since all and everything which is in another is

as finite objects, microscopic, macroscopic and large sized. There are two different kinds of modes: finite and infinite ones. Infinite modes are described in E1p21–23 and they are ones that exist necessarily, are eternal and are caused either by the essence of the attribute they are modes of, or by another infinite mode. There are two kinds of infinite modes: immediate infinite modes that are caused by the essence of the attribute and mediate infinite modes that are caused by another infinite mode.<sup>7</sup> Since everything that exists has to have an effect (E1p36) and since one effect can only have one adequate cause<sup>8</sup> and therefore in the case of infinite modes circular causation is ruled out (since in that case at least one infinite mode would have two adequate causes, which is impossible), there are infinitely many infinite modes. Matter is divisible only according to imagination (E1p15s), thus infinite modes are infinite in their own kind: they are omnipresent both temporally and spatially. Infinite modes are dispositional properties of their attribute that describe what that attribute would look like if that property would be actualized. Thus, the infinite mode of extension which is motion and rest as dispositional property describes how an actually existing mode can have motion and rest as an actual property. Some of the infinite modes of extension are formal essences of singular things which describe how matter would be ordered if that singular thing would exist (for more on the formal essence, see section 2.4).<sup>9</sup> Since, as we will shortly see in section 2.3., a singular thing is individuated by a very weak principle of individuation – that is the

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also a mode. (Renz, *Die Erklärbarkeit von Erfahrung*, 45–58.) Therefore, I do not see how affection could be defined without referring to modes.

<sup>7</sup> In E2p21–23 Spinoza does not use the term causation, but rather he claims that infinite modes “follow” either from God’s infinite essence, or from another infinite mode. It is controversial whether we can simply understand following as causation. I think that the two are interchangeable for two reasons: first, E1a3 speaks about causation in terms of follow; second, in E5p40s Spinoza claims that the intellect is an infinite mode, which was determined by another infinite mode, which is the same language as used in E1p28. Unfortunately because of space considerations I cannot discuss this topic in more detail.

<sup>8</sup> Melamed, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics: Substance and Thought*, 118. See also section 2.2 of the present thesis.

<sup>9</sup> Garrett, “Spinoza’s Necessitarianism”; Garrett, “Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That Is Eternal.”

standards for qualifying as an individual or singular thing is very low –, these essences are very weakly individuated too.

It is important to note that in Ep. 64 (1675)<sup>10</sup> Spinoza calls three infinite modes by name: the immediate infinite mode of extension is motion and rest, the immediate infinite mode of thought is God’s infinite intellect, and a mediate infinite mode of extension is the face of the whole universe. Since the two immediate infinite modes are dispositional properties and are identical and therefore – as we will see in the next section – they stand in a representational relation, it follows that dispositional properties – formal essences included – are described as a “fixed pattern of motion and rest”<sup>11</sup> and also that the infinite intellect is constituted by the ideas of these patterns.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.2 Representation

Representation is a relatively new term in the interpretation of Spinoza’s philosophy which was used only rarely by him (E2p40s2, E3p27d). Representation is the relation in which the idea stands

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<sup>10</sup> All references to letters are from Spinoza, *Complete Works*.

<sup>11</sup> Garrett, “Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That Is Eternal,” 293.

<sup>12</sup> Although he calls here the immediate mode of thought the infinite intellect, the series of infinite modes of thought is also the infinite intellect as indicated in E5p40cs. These two claims may seem less paradoxical, if we recall that since the effect of a cause inheres fully in its adequate cause, therefore all mediate infinite modes of thought ultimately inhere in the immediate infinite mode of thought.

God’s infinite intellect – as far as it is conceived as constituting the infinite intellect and not as far as it is conceived to be constituting finite minds – has ideas of formal essences but not about actual finite modes qua actual finite modes. Following Mike Griffin’s distinction (Griffin, “Necessitarianism in Spinoza and Leibniz.”) I would like to distinguish intrinsic and extrinsic necessity: beings of both necessity are of the same kind of metaphysical necessity, but those that are intrinsically necessary are necessary by virtue of their essence, while those that are extrinsically necessary are necessary by virtue of some external cause. I agree with Griffin that in this sense only the substance and its attributes are intrinsically necessary, while all finite modes are extrinsically necessary. I also agree with him that the existence of no finite mode follows from any infinite mode, but I disagree with his acceptance of Garrett’s identification of the universal individual with the infinite mode of extension called the face of the whole universe. (For my argument against this identification see section 3.5.) This implies that the actual world is not the only possible world, since different finite modes can extrinsically necessitate different series of finite modes. Therefore if God only knows infinite modes, which are dispositional properties, he will not know which modes are actual and which ones are not, even though every finite mode is necessary “in the strongest sense available in Spinoza’s system.

Thus, I will always use possible as a shorthand for ‘logically possible but metaphysically impossible or metaphysically necessary but not yet or no more actual’. Cf. Ibid. In this thesis I need not take a stance on whether God know which finite modes are actual, since I will only use the claim that the infinite mode of thought representing the formal essence of a finite mode contains all information about that singular thing – except that it is actual.

with its object.<sup>13</sup> The problematic point in Spinoza's philosophy is that seemingly there are two different notions of the object of the idea: on the one hand in E1a6 Spinoza states that "[A] true idea must agree with its object [*ideatum*]", while E2d4 states that an adequate idea has all the intrinsic denominations of a true idea "without relation to an object [*objectum*"]".<sup>14</sup> Now if the notion of the true idea depends on its agreement with its object, how can an adequate idea have the intrinsic denomination of the true idea without taking into account its accordance with its object? And what is the idea an idea of?

Though Spinoza does not state it explicitly anywhere<sup>15</sup> it is clear from his theory of knowledge that the idea is an idea of its object, namely of its extended counterpart [*objectum*]; it represents the mode of extension with which it is identical. The basic model of imagination states precisely that the mind does not know external objects [*ideatum*] but through the modifications of its body, since the mind per definition can only have ideas about its bodily modifications; therefore it is in itself a puzzle how it is even possible for the mind to have ideas about external objects. This puzzle is described by Jonathan Bennett with the distinction of direct and indirect representation: the idea directly represents its bodily counterpart and indirectly represents the external cause of that extended mode; in which case the possibility of the latter has to be explained.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> It seems that ideas and their objects stand both in an identity and in a representational relation. This is problematic because it seems that the two are closely connected, since the ideas receive their epistemic value from the fact that they are identical with their object (Cf. Renz, *Die Erklärbarkeit von Erfahrung*, 99–100.). Since identity relation is obviously reflexive, but representation relation in this sense seem not to be – since ideas are represented not by themselves, but rather by ideas of ideas (E2p21s, E2p41s) – I think neither the identity, nor the representational relation that stands between ideas and their objects should be understood in terms of the identity and representational relation of contemporary analytic philosophy. Instead, we should interpret Spinoza defining a unique relation that stand between ideas and their objects. In this way the relation between modes of thought and their objects on the one hand, and parallel modes of different attributes on the other hand seem to come apart, which might support Melamed's claim about the duality of the identity thesis: Melamed, "Spinoza's Metaphysics of Thought: Parallelisms and the Multifaceted Structure of Ideas."

<sup>14</sup> This duality will be utilized by Garrett's 2013 interpretation, as we will see in section 2.1.

<sup>15</sup> The definition of the idea (E2d3: "By idea I understand a concept of the mind which the mind forms because it is a thinking thing.") is obscure, to say the least.

<sup>16</sup> Bennett, "Spinoza on Error."

In this thesis I argue that the distinction of direct and indirect representation is a Cartesian fallacy ruled out in E2d4, since it wants to localize the source of error in the relationship of the idea to its external object: every representation is a direct representation. It is possible to have adequate ideas about external objects only because our body has a bodily modification which has the unique pattern of motion and rest constituting the essence of the external cause and our body distinctly, and therefore we have an idea representing that bodily modification in which the idea of the external cause is present distinctly.<sup>17</sup> Thus, even if I have an adequate idea of the sun, what is represented is not the sun qua external object, but rather the sun qua part of the image formed in my body.

### 2.3 Singular things and individuals

Spinoza has two principles of individuation: in E2d7 he defines singular things as those things that create together one effect, while in the Physical Digression, in the definition after E1p13 he defines individuals as those things that “communicate their motions to each other in a certain fixed manner”. Both principles try to approach individuation from causation: a singular thing is defined by its power to cause<sup>18</sup> while individuals are defined by their power with which they can resist external affections. A good example of a singular thing would be two sheets of paper waved together, while of an individual a living human being that ceases to be individual when he dies.

It seems highly plausible that all individuals are singular things, while not all singular things are individuals, although it is possible that the matter is less straightforward. According to Garrett the “simplest bodies” are singular things but not individuals, while the universal individual is an individual but not a singular thing.<sup>19</sup> The case of the simplest bodies can easily be solved: any

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<sup>17</sup> For more on this, see chapter 3.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Garrett, “Spinoza’s Conatus Argument.”

<sup>19</sup> Garrett, “Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza’s Philosophy of Mind,” n. 6.

division of matter is only possible in a mind-dependent way (E1p15s), therefore the notion of simplest body is a purely hypothetical theoretical entity. This is also suggested by Spinoza's claim in Ep. 83 (1676) in which he contrasts the simplest bodies and theoretical constructs with real things, which indicates that even if he did not think that simplest bodies were theoretical constructs, he did hold the view that they were unreal in some sense. The reason behind Garrett's denial of the status of the singular thing to the universal individual might be that since there is nothing outside it, it could not cause anything. However, since because of E1p36 everything has to have an effect, and since according to E3d2 we can cause adequately within ourselves, I see no reason why the universal individual could not act within itself.

Garrett earlier proposed a further exception: "[f]or a number of individuals 'concurring together in one action' may count to that extent as a singular thing but perhaps not as a further individual"<sup>20</sup> but he later dropped this crucial line and failed to incorporate into his theory of imagination. As I will show in chapter 4 this use of the definition of singular thing has a very important role to play in the account of adequate and inadequate knowledge.

That I have refuted all proposed exceptions – to which either the category of individual or singular thing was not applicable – indicates that the two principles fall together, and since both individuals and singular things have essences,<sup>21</sup> there may be very little difference between the two. This question will be important for the present thesis not as a question about the principle of

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<sup>20</sup> Garrett, "Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza's Naturalistic Theory of the Imagination," n. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Note that Garrett considers the possibility that species have essences: "It is not obvious that the formal essence of a particular individual could ever be so specific that another individual – say, a genetically identical twin – could not possibly coinstantiate it;" Garrett, "Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That Is Eternal," 291 n. 16. This seems for me in Spinoza's framework to be very counterintuitive, since I don't see how Spinoza could speak about species in any non-nominalist way: if there were such things as the formal essence of the dog, the universal notion of the dog could represent that infinite mode and would not be ridiculed in E2p40s as utterly inadequate. See also Della Rocca's claim that Spinoza relies on the shared and unique nature of essence: Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*, 87.

individuation, but rather as a question about the relationship between the human being qua individual and the human being qua singular thing. Since a singular thing is defined as individuals causing together and the cause will have to have a pattern of motion and rest which will be present in the effect either confusedly or distinctly, a singular thing is defined by an actual pattern of motion and rest, while the individual is defined by the ratio of that pattern. Thus the singular thing can change, while the individual remains the same, just as the equilateral triangle which is growing in a proportional manner constantly changes, while the fact that it is an equilateral triangle remains the same. That such changes are possible as far as the individual is concerned is explicitly stated by Spinoza in E2L4–5. If individuals are also singular things, this possibility is intriguing, since – as we will see in the next section – Spinoza attributes essences primarily not to individuals, but rather to singular things. Now if individuals also have essences, this would mean that each individual human being qua individual has an essence that is persisting over time and qua singular thing an essence that changes very rapidly.

One possible escape from this duality might be the position taken by Wallace Matson who integrated into the term ‘body essence’ both essences and argued that as far as the individual of a particular human being is concerned, the singular thing and the individual are identical.<sup>22</sup> This position has the advantage that it wards off implausible consequences and can account for individual identity over time. Watson claimed, that my essence both as an individual and as a singular thing remains the same, even if an alligator eats one of my fingers.<sup>23</sup> However, this case – as far as the essence of the singular thing is concerned – is not different from the case when let’s

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<sup>22</sup> Matson, “Body Existence and Mind Eternity in Spinoza.”

<sup>23</sup> “The body essence is the license (from the nature of Extension) for there to come to be an organism of a certain sort. When it comes into existence, there is no guarantee that it will develop into exactly the kind of thing that the DNA blueprint specifies. For to come into existence is to become subject to buffeting from other modes, some of which will help, others hinder development according to the plan in the essence. My DNA provides for ten fingers, but there are chain saws and alligators lurking.” *Ibid.*, 89.



say four sheets of paper are waved together: just as these four individuals cause an effect together the ten-fingered individual causes effects as one singular thing. It is quite natural to say that if I lose my finger, that finger will be able to cause effects together with other objects, for example if it becomes part of the body of the alligator. Therefore, if Wallace wants to claim that I am not identical with the singular thing that is my lost finger, but rather with the singular thing that is the rest of my body, he has to accommodate the situation when I am waving first four sheets together, and then two sheets in each of my hands. I see no principled reason for claiming that the singular thing of the four sheets is identical with one but not the other singular thing of two sheets rather than being identical with the singular thing of four sheets that ceased to exist. In the case of the alligator attack he cannot appeal to the fact that the singular thing of the rest of my body is identical with the individual which is me because he wants to argue for precisely this fact in order to support his identification of the human being qua individual and human being qua singular thing. Of course, he could claim that more of me remains after the fission in one singular thing than in another, but first, I think that one can come up with a macabre scenario when the individual remains identical with the body part that is smaller than the part that is lost; second, there is no mention of quantity in the definition of singular thing, it seems that even if one atom of me is changed, the singular thing of me has changed too.

Another possible solution is to embrace the duality saying that there may be at the same place at the same time two things of two different metaphysical categories: a chunk of matter, which is a singular thing, and a person or a horse, which is an individual. In this solution the principles of identity and therefore the essences of the two are different. One consequence of this view is that since both the singular thing and the individual have formal essences, and the formal essence grounds the part of the mind that is eternal (E5p22–23), both metaphysical objects will have an

eternal part of their mind. Also, Spinoza seems nowhere indicating that he upholds this duality (e.g. E2p11d where he uses the two interchangeably). Moreover, Spinoza uses the term individual in his definition of singular thing which rules out the interpretation of singular thing as a chunk of matter and individual as some kind of organism or organization, since according to this interpretation the singular thing should be metaphysically more fundamental than the individual. In addition, since the identity thesis would imply that these two objects have two different minds, the individual would not know about the singular thing and the singular thing would not know about the individual. Also, the singular thing would only know about external singular things, while the individual would only know external individuals, since the modification of the body would be at the same time caused by an individual qua being a modification of an individual and by a singular thing qua being a modification of a singular thing.

I think that these consequences and objections render this option unwelcoming enough to make the scenario that individuals are not metaphysically but rather conceptually distinct entities more probable. In this view individuals – in a similar manner to simplest bodies, universal notions and perhaps mathematical entities – are the products of our conceptual apparatus: since every pattern of motion and rest – which defines a singular thing – is fixed at least for a very small amount of time, it depends on our interest which one of these we consider as enduring and which ones ephemeral. The usual shifts in perspective can work here: probably a coral reef or an insect have different perspectives on how long the pattern of motion and rest has to be fixed in order to qualify as an individual.<sup>24</sup> Therefore the question is not why the present King of France and the present

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. “Now let us imagine, if you please, a tiny worm living in the blood, capable of distinguishing by sight the particles of the blood – lymph, etc. – and of intelligently observing how each particle, on colliding with another, either rebounds or communicates some degree of its motion, and so forth. That worm would be living in the blood as we are living in our part of the universe, and it would regard each individual particle of the blood as a whole, not a part, and it could have no idea as to how all the parts are controlled by the overall nature of the blood and compelled to mutual adaptation as the overall nature of the blood requires, so as to agree with one another in a definite way.” Ep. 32 (1665).

Queen of England tied together does not count as an individual, but rather why we are entitled or motivated to call specific bundles of singular things as individuals at all?<sup>25</sup> This point will be important for the treatment of the reality of inadequate ideas in section 4.5.

#### 2.4 Formal, actual and objective essences

As we have seen in the previous section, two questions have a crucial role in Spinoza's principle of individuation: what has an essence and what type of essence it has. Spinoza distinguishes three types of essences: formal essences, as I claimed in section 2.1 are infinite modes, that is, dispositional properties that describe what matter would look like if those things that they are essences of would be actual. Therefore nonexistent modes also have formal essences (E2p8).<sup>26</sup> The actual essence is the instantiated or actualized essence, the fixed ratio of motion and rest which is preserved in the case of the individual, or which describes the pattern of causation in the case of the singular thing. Objective essences are ideas of essences: the idea of my body that is my mind, the idea of my dog in my mind, and the idea of my essence that is an infinite mode of thought all contain essences objectively.<sup>27</sup>

As I have claimed in the previous section, there are two important questions that have a close bearing on the relationship of individuals and singular things: whether singular things also have essences or only individuals, and if they do what is the relationship of their essence to the essence of individuals?

For the first question Spinoza states:

From this [i.e. that there is an idea of each non-actual singular thing in God] it follows that so long as singular things do not exist, except insofar as they are comprehended in God's attributes, their objective being, or ideas, do not exist except insofar as God's infinite idea exists. And when singular

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<sup>25</sup> Melamed, "Acosmism of Weak Individuals? Hegel, Spinoza, and the Reality of the Finite," 88., I used his example.

<sup>26</sup> Garrett, "Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That Is Eternal."

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Wilson, "Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge," 97.

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. (E2p8c)

This corollary explicitly states that not only possible individuals, but also possible singular things are comprehended in the infinite intellect, therefore they all have a formal essence which is an infinite mode. This indicates that when Spinoza claims in E5p22 that there is an infinite mode “that expresses the essence of this or that human body” he could have added to it: e.g. “and also every possible combination of sheets of paper waved together”.

If such a weakly individuated possibility has a formal essence – i.e. it is easy for a possibility to count as an individual or singular thing –, what is the relationship between the formal essence of “this or that human body” and the actual essence of “this or that human body” qua singular thing or qua individual? In E3p7, where Spinoza identifies *conatus* with the actual essence of the thing, he does not mention individuals and does not cite its definition, though this does not say too much, since most of the propositions about the *conatus* go back to E3p4 which is demonstrated without reference to anything. The fact that in E2p11d Spinoza uses individual and singular thing interchangeably does not help clarifying their relation. Renz argues based on this demonstration that individuals and singular things are coextensive terms explaining their object as a reason or as a physical object, respectively.<sup>28</sup> Even if she is right – though as I have shown in the alligator case I doubt that –, she just makes individuation weaker, since according to this identification such ephemeral singular things as two sheets of paper waved together would also count as an individual and therefore would have *conatus*.

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<sup>28</sup> Renz, *Die Erklärbarkeit von Erfahrung*, 70.

I do not need to take a stance on the question, whether individuals have essence or their essence is just a bundle of essences of singular things, though I think that everything points to this direction which would then turn individual either into vacuous or into an honorary title given to bundles of singular things important for us. What is relevant for the topic of this thesis is that nothing indicates that actual essence would not belong to singular things, which will be important for my interpretation of Spinoza's theory of knowledge.

### 2.5 Adequate and inadequate causation

One of the most important and least studied notions in Spinoza's metaphysics is adequate causation. According to E3p1 something is an adequate cause of something else when the cause can be conceived adequately through the effect, which means (from E2p16–17, E3d2) that in the case of adequate causes one cause brings about one effect; in partial or inadequate causation multiple causes bring about one effect in a way that neither cause would individually suffice for bringing about the effect. It is not an obscurity on the part of Spinoza that he defines adequacy of causation by conception:<sup>29</sup> since the definition of a singular thing states that everything that together cause an effect is a singular thing, inadequate causation strictly speaking does not exist; it is only a mind-dependent phenomenon produced by our inferior, inadequate ideas. This fact will have very substantial consequences, as I will show in chapter 4.

E3d2–3 state that when we are adequate causes we act, while when we are inadequate causes we are acted upon; in other words adequate causes have actions as effect, while inadequate causes have passions as effects. Since inadequate causation is a mind-dependent phenomenon produced by inadequate ideas, we are only acted upon as far as we have inadequate knowledge, and we are only

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<sup>29</sup> As it was claimed for example by Daisie Radner: "Spinoza confuses these two notions of adequacy" Radner, "Spinoza's Theory of Ideas," 357.

acting as far as we have adequate knowledge (by the use of E3p3 in E5p40c). Also, because of E1d7 adequate causation is free.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore we can set up the following biconditionals: something is an action if and only if it was caused adequately (by E3d3); something is caused adequately if and only if the agent had adequate idea (by the use of E3p3 in E5p40c); someone is an adequate cause if and only if he is free (by E1d7). These biconditionals are not just the products of happy coincidence, they are all grounded by the relationship of inherence.

Inherence is a notoriously difficult notion in Spinoza's philosophy, for a large part because of its long history in Cartesian, Scholastic and Hellenistic philosophy. In this thesis because of space considerations I cannot discuss the historical aspect of Spinoza's use of this notion, instead, I focus on its systematic role.<sup>31</sup> Inherence is first of all a dependence relation: there are those things that inhere in themselves and are therefore independent, and those which inhere in another, and which therefore depend for their being on what they inhere in. This relationship is usually illustrated by the substrate-property distinction: while the chair does not depend on its color for its being, the color depends on the chair for its being, since without that specific color the chair could exist, but without the chair the color could not exist.<sup>32</sup> This inherence relation is also expressed by Spinoza with the in relation: those things that inhere in themselves are in themselves, and those thing that inhere in another are in another. From E1d3 we know that the substance is in itself, which is also the cause of itself and conceived through itself, as well as free and eternal.

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<sup>30</sup> On the connection of metaphysical and political freedom, see: James, "Freedom, Slavery, and the Passions."

<sup>31</sup> For a historic overview see: Carriero, "On the Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza's Metaphysics"; Renz, *Die Erklärbarkeit von Erfahrung*, 48–53.

<sup>32</sup> Della Rocca, "Explaining Explanation and the Multiplicity of Attributes in Spinoza," 18.

Because of the use of E1a4 in E2p7 causation and conception are the same in different attributes: if mode A is caused by mode B in the attribute of extension, then mode A is explained by or conceived through mode B, therefore self-caused beings are conceived through themselves.<sup>33</sup> Spinoza makes it clear in the formulation and uses of E1a4 that dependence in this case is the same metaphysical dependence as what is expressed in the relationship of inherence: the substance does not depend on anything, it is in itself, conceived through itself and caused by itself, while modes depend on the substance, are in the substance, conceived through the substance and caused by the substance.

Thus, inherence implies freedom because it is a dependency relationship; inherence implies conception and causation because the effect depends for its conception and existence on its cause and therefore the effect inheres in the cause. Since in the case of partial causation the effect only partially inheres in the cause, it cannot be conceived fully through it and therefore its idea will be inadequate. Since there is always a singular thing which is an adequate cause, and in which the effect fully inheres, inadequate causation is only the product of our inadequate ideas that individuate the causes erroneously.

These considerations can be summed up in the Transitivity of Adequacy Doctrine:

(TAD): Inherence implies adequate causation, which implies action, which implies having an adequate idea, which implies freedom.

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<sup>33</sup> It is important to note that neither causation is identical to what is normally called causation in contemporary analytic philosophy, nor conceived through relation can be understood as logical entailment. Both relationships are closer to the notions of grounding and essential dependence as it is evident from the role inherence plays in these relations.

## 2.6 Imagination

Spinoza defines the three kinds of knowledge in E2p40s2 as the following: the first kind of knowledge, or imagination, is knowledge from the senses or from signs and recollection; the second kind of knowledge or reason is knowledge about properties of particulars from common notions; and the third kind of knowledge or intuitive knowledge is knowledge about the formal essence of things from the “adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God”. We know from E2p41 that the first kind of knowledge necessarily produces false ideas,<sup>34</sup> while the second and third kinds necessarily produce adequate ones. Therefore, because of TAD by virtue of the first kind of knowledge we are always acted upon and are subject to the bondage of affects.<sup>35</sup>

Spinoza treats E2p17s as the official definition of imagination.<sup>36</sup> The proposition to which it is a scholium, runs as follows:

If the human body is affected with a mode that involves the nature of an external body, the human mind will regard the same external body as actually existing, or as present to it, until the body is affected by an affect that excludes the existence or presence of that body. (E2p17)

The proposition, together with E2p16, states that the basic model of imagination is the following: an external object affects the human body in such a way that the resulting affection is jointly caused by the human body and the external object; that is, both the external object and the human body are partial causes of the affection. From E2p16 we know that the idea of the resulting affection will involve both the nature of the human body and the external object. We also know from E2p17s and

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<sup>34</sup> The notion that a kind of knowledge is false may sound paradoxical, therefore some interpreters following Bennett suggested translating *cognition* as cognition (Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*). Without descending into the philological depths, I would like to point out that according to Spinoza there is nothing positive in any idea that would make it false, and all falsity is a privation, therefore even if the first kind of knowledge is the limiting case of knowledge, it still merits the name of knowledge (for example, since it necessarily involves adequate ideas of the common notions).

<sup>35</sup> The same point is made by Spinoza in E5p40c.

<sup>36</sup> Spinoza explicitly calls E2p17s that way in E4p9, E5p21d and E5p34d, for similar uses see: E2p26d, E3p12d and E3p56d.



E2p16c2 that the resulting images will resemble more the nature of our body than the nature of the external body. Also, as long as another idea does not exclude the existence of the external body represented by the idea of imagination, the mind will consider it to be present.<sup>37</sup>

## 2.7 Idea, affirmation and the will

Spinoza presents his claim about the specific nature of ideas in E2p49s where he distinguishes between images of imagination and ideas, and also between words with which we signify and ideas. The difference between words and images is not significant for the topic of the present thesis, since both are extended counterparts of ideas. What is of interest now is the difference between ideas that are modes of thought, and images or words that are modes of extension.

As Spinoza writes:

Indeed, those who think that ideas consist in images which are formed in us from encounters with [NS: external] bodies, are convinced that those ideas of things [NS: which can make no trace in our brains, or] of which we can form no similar image [NS: in our brain] are not ideas, but only fictions which we feign from a free choice of the will. They look on ideas, therefore, as mute pictures on a panel, and preoccupied with this prejudice, do not see that an idea, insofar as it is an idea, involves an affirmation or negation.

And then, those who confuse words with the idea, or with the very affirmation which the idea involves, think that they can will something contrary to what they are aware of, when they only affirm or deny with words something contrary to what they are aware of. [...] For the essence of words and of images is constituted only by corporeal motions, which do not at all involve the concept of thought. (E2p49s)

This scholium is part of the greater argument that the “will and the intellect are one and the same” (E2p49c) and mainly formulates the distinction of images and ideas in order to refute Descartes<sup>38</sup> and Hobbes’ theory of knowledge.<sup>39</sup> According to the Cartesian theory there are three kinds of

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<sup>37</sup> There are two terms related to imagination: memory and recollection. E2p18 seems to be the definition of recollection, while E2p18s is explicitly called the definition of memory in E5p21. The relationship of memory, recollection and imagination is vague, but it is clear that memory and recollection are somehow special kinds of imagination. Because of space consideration, in this thesis I will only focus imagination as such, and won’t be able to discuss these special cases.

<sup>38</sup> Lloyd, “Spinoza on the Distinction between Intellect and Will.”

<sup>39</sup> Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol. 1.*, 486 n. 74-75.

ideas: ideas proper, affections and judgments. From these, only judgments but not ideas proper and affections can be called true or false, since only judgments are propositional in their form. In this account, then, falsity arises when will surpasses knowledge and the mind judges ideas to be true or false without knowing clearly and distinctly its epistemic status.<sup>40</sup>

Spinoza wants to reject this notion and therefore he claims that images or words, which are “mute pictures” in the Cartesian theory, are bodily modifications, and ideas proper are what the Cartesian theory called judgments. Therefore ideas are propositional in their character, they can be true or false, justified or unjustified.<sup>41</sup>

Spinoza wants to reject Descartes’s theory on an additional level. He not only asserts that ideas are propositional, but also that they contain affirmation; every idea affirms its object. As we have seen, this means that what the idea affirms primarily is the bodily modification with which it is identical – therefore Spinoza is able to claim that no idea is false in itself – but in case other ideas are not present – which ideas can be distinct parts of the idea making it adequate – the mind will erroneously affirm the idea as a whole. Since as E2a3 states affects are also special, dependent kinds of ideas, and since according to E2p49 the will is the experience of affirmation involved in such ideas, Spinoza assimilates the concept of will and affirmation into the concept of idea.

In the case of an inadequate idea of a pineapple the mind has an idea that represents the affection of the body that is caused by the pineapple, other external circumstances and the body. This idea affirms the existence of the singular thing formed by the causes of the affection of the bodily modification, and since the human mind knows that pineapples are delicious and their consumption increases the power of acting of its body, the mind wills the pineapple. This will may persist even

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<sup>40</sup> Curley, “Descartes, Spinoza, and the Ethics of Belief.”

<sup>41</sup> Della Rocca, “Rationalism Run Amok: Representation and the Reality of Emotions in Spinoza,” 31.

when the pineapple is destroyed – for example because someone else eat it – since the affirmation involved by the idea of the body (which is constituent of the inadequate idea) makes the mind falsely affirm the existence of the whole object of the inadequate idea, which includes the now gone pineapple. This false affirmation will be the basis of one source of error analyzed in the following two chapters.

### 3. The source of error: existing interpretations

In this chapter I review the already existing interpretations of the source of error. I argue that most of them belong to the group of what I claim to be Cartesian interpretations, which interpretations try to present Spinoza's account of epistemic error along Cartesian lines and claim that ideas are wrong because the mind confuses what the idea is about. Due to space considerations, I only focus on authors who are relevant for the present argument.<sup>42</sup> In this chapter I consistently number the most important puzzles or questions that a successful interpretation of the source of error must address. After presenting my interpretation, I will come back to these questions in the concluding chapter of the thesis and present my solution to them.

#### 3.1 Don Garrett's interpretation

Don Garrett presents his interpretation about the source of error in two articles: his 2008 article "Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza's Naturalistic Theory of Imagination"<sup>43</sup> focuses on the role imagination plays in Spinoza's philosophy of mind and how it can fit into his overall theory of knowledge, while his 2013 article "Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind"<sup>44</sup> focuses more on the source of error and presents a Cartesian reading of it.

Garrett's most important theoretical approach to Spinoza's philosophy, which is consistent throughout his both articles, is what he calls "incremental naturalism": there is a basic bifurcation between what is in itself – the substance and its attributes – and what is in another – the modes. According to this view modes of different types (humans, animals, plants, objects and properties) belong to the same ontological category and have the same metaphysical properties but for a

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<sup>42</sup> Miscellaneous interpretation which are not relevant enough to be included here are: Blair, "Spinoza's Account of Imagination"; Steinberg, "Knowledge in Spinoza's Ethics"; Verbeek, "Imagination and Reason in Spinoza"; Bennett, "Spinoza on Error"; Deugd, *The Significance of Spinoza's First Kind of Knowledge*.

<sup>43</sup> Garrett, "Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza's Naturalistic Theory of the Imagination."

<sup>44</sup> Garrett, "Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind."

different degree. The color of my skin has the same metaphysical properties as myself, including having a mind, but in a very rudimentary form.<sup>45</sup>

According to his 2008 interpretation incremental naturalism can solve four puzzles: (1) that imagination belongs to every finite mode (the toaster imagines too) and imagination makes perceivable everything that happens in the mode (I have an imaginative idea of the working of my pancreas); (2) that imagination represents more than what happens in the mode (by the change of my body I sense external bodies); (3) that imagination produces ideas that we are conscious of; and (4) that most of its products are not expressed in behavior (we do not perceive that the toaster behaves differently on imagining different things).<sup>46</sup>

In his 2008 article Garrett accepts that the same idea can be adequate in God's intellect and confused in the finite mind, and locates two sources of error in Spinoza's theory of imagination: on the one hand he accepts Della Rocca's interpretation that the source of error is that an idea of imagination "represents both an internal state of the body and the external cause of that state in such a way that the mind cannot distinguish between them";<sup>47</sup> on the other hand he proposes his own account according to which an idea of imagination is confused because it "represents its object's causes in a way that does not allow them to be distinguished from one another *or from other possible causes.*"<sup>48</sup> That is, in his 2008 account the most important source of error is not that confused ideas of imagination do not allow the distinct cognition of the external object which they represent, but rather that they can have multiple possible sources, not just my body and the external

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<sup>45</sup> Garrett, "Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza's Naturalistic Theory of the Imagination," 19.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–10.

<sup>47</sup> For more on Della Rocca's interpretation, see section 3.5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 italics mine.

object causing it. That the apple has the exact same bruise can be the effect of it falling down from the tree or being pressed by other apples in the basket.

He must have found his 2008 interpretation unsatisfying, since though he did not revoke his earlier interpretation, he claimed to have solved two more puzzles in his 2013 article on the same topic. The first of the two puzzles is: (5) how ideas can be false, if everything there is is in God (E1p15) and according to E2p32 all ideas of God are true. According to the second puzzle (6) since imagination according to puzzle (1) produces ideas about just anything that either happens in the mode or affects the mode from outside, and since according to E1a4 the knowledge of the effect depends on the knowledge of the cause, therefore imagination seem to produce ideas that will somehow involve the knowledge of everything that had causal relationship to the mode, including the idea of the great-grandparents of a random person who the mode happened to see on the street.<sup>49</sup>

According to Garrett's 2013 proposal, there are many sources of errors, but there is one which is the most fundamental one, namely misrepresentation.<sup>50</sup> Ideas have an *objectum*, which is the mode with which they are identical – in the case of my idea of my neighbor's body the *objectum* is the affection of my body caused by my body and my neighbor's body<sup>51</sup> – and an *ideatum*, which they purport to represent – in the case of my idea of my neighbor's body the neighbor's body. The idea contains the actual reality of its *objectum* objectively, and therefore may fail to comprehend the full reality of its *ideatum*. This interpretation ingeniously exploits the tension between E1a6, which states that a true idea agrees with its *ideatum*, and E2d4, which states that an adequate idea is true

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<sup>49</sup> Garrett, "Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind."

<sup>50</sup> The same interpretation was proposed by Radner thirty years earlier, though Garrett fails to cite her: Radner, "Spinoza's Theory of Ideas."; Bennett's direct and indirect representation also resembles this solution: Bennett, "Spinoza on Error."

<sup>51</sup> This is a simplified analysis: in reality the external cause of my idea of my neighbor's body is itself composed of several different causally efficacious elements, like the rays of light that reflect on the surface of my neighbor's body, the air that transmits and distort those rays etc.

independently of its relation to its *objectum*. The adequate idea in this view is that which fully corresponds to its *ideatum*, that is, if its *ideatum* and *objectum* coincide. According to Garrett in God all ideas have the same *objectum* and *ideatum*, while these two may differ in cases of imaginative ideas.

As I will show in the next chapter, though the distinction between *objectum* and *ideatum* is valid, it is certainly a distinction that is in itself unable to explain the source of error, let alone to be the most fundamental source of error, because it is a distinction that the mind cannot on its own make or fail to make. Contrary to what Garrett proposes, the mind cannot confuse the two or fail to notice the distinction, since – as we have seen in section 2.7 – affirmation and idea are the same. Garrett’s proposed 2013 solution is characteristically Cartesian in the sense that it wants to locate the error not in the idea itself, but rather in the relationship of the idea to its object. His 2008 view is much closer to what I take to be the case, since there he locates the source of error in the idea itself, namely in that it is indeterminately representing its object. However, his solution is ungrounded in Spinoza’s metaphysics, as I will show with the help of Wilson’s distinction of involvement and explanation which I will present in section 3.3. On the other hand, I think that his incremental naturalism is a very useful interpretative approach not only on inanimate cognition, but also on the relationship of finite and infinite cognition which was analyzed with this conceptual tool by Della Rocca. On Della Rocca’s interpretation and on his distinction between finite and infinite cognition I will elaborate more in section 3.5.

### 3.2 Edwin M. Curley’s interpretation

Edwin M. Curley presents his most comprehensive account of error in his 1973 article “Experience in Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge”, in which he focuses on the role of experience in the formation

of the three kinds of knowledge.<sup>52</sup> In this article his general concern was to attack the so called rationalist account which downplays the significance of experience in the formation of knowledge. He compares the three kinds of knowledge with Plato's distinction of the four types of knowledge and emphasizes that while in Plato we have different degrees of knowledge about different objects of knowledge, in Spinoza's account we have three different degrees of knowledge about the same objects.<sup>53</sup> He also highlights the two different sources of knowledge that are classified under the label imagination: knowledge from report or signs and knowledge from vagrant experience.<sup>54</sup> Knowledge from report or signs is mostly about habituation: when I see an object or hear an utterance I cannot but form an idea that I was habituated to form in a similar case.<sup>55</sup> Knowledge from vagrant experience "may be of singular or general propositions, may or may not involve sense experience, may or may not be inferential, and may or may not depend on some other kind of knowledge."<sup>56</sup> By citing Ep. 10 (1663) he highlights that we already have knowledge of the essences independently of our experience which is only needed in order to determine which essences are actualized and which ones are not.<sup>57</sup>

In his tentative conclusion citing the example of the sun: "[t]here is nothing [...] erroneous in that judgment [that produces an inadequate idea] taken by itself. The error consists in the fact that [the agent who errs] does not also make a further judgment about the true distance of the sun and the true cause this particular modification of our body,"<sup>58</sup> Thus, he adopts the standard Cartesian theory, very similar to the one adopted by Garrett, in which the mind's irresponsible judgment

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<sup>52</sup> Curley, "Experience in Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge."

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>54</sup> Vagrant experience is Curley's preferred translation of *experientia vaga*, which he later translated as "random experience" (E2p40s2). He uses vagrant experience in this article because he wants to emphasize the Baconian heritage of the first kind of knowledge: Ibid., 35–36.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 39.



about ideas of dubious pedigree is the ultimate source of error, though because of his emphasis on the role of experience he tentatively proposes that the inadequate ideas of the first kind of knowledge can be converted into adequate ideas of the higher kinds.<sup>59</sup>

In his 1975 article on the ethics of belief he claimed that in Spinoza there is no ethics of belief for precisely those reasons that I have presented in section 2.7, which indicates that maybe he meant by judgment ideas, in which case his interpretation is less Cartesian, but does not solve the problem of the source of error either because he cannot point to the reason why the mind forms inadequate rather than adequate ideas.<sup>60</sup>

Curley's interpretation has two very important virtues: first, it emphasizes the fact that the three kinds of knowledge are about the same objects; second, it highlights experience's role in both adequate and inadequate knowledge. These two statements combined produce the claim, for which I will argue in the next chapter, that both adequate and inadequate ideas are about the same finite modes, and both are produced by the same process of perception, albeit used in different ways.

### 3.3 Margaret D. Wilson's interpretation

Margaret D. Wilson presents her interpretation in her contribution on "Spinoza's theory of knowledge" to *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*.<sup>61</sup> She believes that we should not interpret Spinoza's theory of knowledge in a too Cartesian manner because it is embedded in his metaphysical and ethical theories much more deeply than in the case of Descartes; also it rests on the fundamental assumption that the world was not created by God's radically free act and therefore the dependence of modes on the substance is an intelligible relation.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>60</sup> Curley, "Descartes, Spinoza, and the Ethics of Belief."

<sup>61</sup> Wilson, "Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge."

Wilson solves (1) the problem of the scope of imagination in a very similar manner to Garrett, and proposes that the level of consciousness of an idea depends on the power of that idea, that is on the relative independence of that idea.<sup>62</sup> She identifies imagination as regarding “an external body as present, as a result of its *earlier* effects on the human body”, and memory as the habituated association which happens when perception of an idea triggers the imagination of another idea.<sup>63</sup> She also emphasizes two distinction that Spinoza makes. First, she distinguishes those ideas which explicate the nature of their object and those which involve the nature of their object. Second she differentiates the order or linking of ideas according to the common order of nature and the order or linking of ideas according to the order of intellect.<sup>64</sup> The first distinction will be important for my interpretation of the source of error: according to Wilson, every idea involves the ideas of the essences of its causes because the ideas of those essences are constituting the idea of the essence of the effect (E1a4). However, there are those ideas in which these constituting ideas are present in a distinct manner and therefore the idea explicates these constituting ideas— which enables the mind to conceive these constituting ideas distinctly –, while in other cases though the idea involves the constituting ideas, but does not explicate them. I think this distinction can be a much more fruitful approach on the (3) problem of the consciousness of inadequate ideas and on the source of error than other approaches and also more than Wilson herself recognizes.

Wilson, in a similar manner to Garrett (see above), detects the tension between E1a6 and E2d4 and also calls into attention the fact that since the idea and its object are one and the same it seems that all ideas are adequate.<sup>65</sup> Therefore she distinguishes, after E2d4, intrinsic and extrinsic denominations of an idea: its intrinsic denomination – i.e. a denomination within the attribute of

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 103. Because of space considerations the latter distinction cannot be discussed in this thesis.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 108.

thought – is its place in the infinite intellect, while its extrinsic denomination – i.e. a cross-attribute denomination about both the attribute of extension and thought – is its relationship in the finite mind to its object.<sup>66</sup>

In Wilson’s interpretation the inadequacy of an idea stems from the distinction between “what is available to the human mind, with regard to the various objects of knowledge in question [...] and the system of ideas in infinite intellect that constitutes knowledge of those objects according to the order of their causes.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, in her view error arises from “my lack of other relevant ideas needed to ‘place’ the sensory idea in an intellectually adequate causal system”,<sup>68</sup> that is from the wrong ordering of ideas, from the fact that ideas are not linked with their proper causal source and are thus “like conclusions without premises” (E2p28d).<sup>69</sup>

She also cites the example of the two concepts of the sun and claims that the imaginative idea of the sun is inadequate in the perceiver because “[h]er judgments about the sun’s size and distance will reflect only the contents of the sensory idea itself”, while the same idea is adequate in God, since he will understand the causal history that led to the formation of that idea.<sup>70</sup> Though, she admits that she is tempted to claim that the idea that the sun is 200 feet away is false, period, which idea is however in God, since everything is in God and this contradiction seemed to her to be a (7) puzzle that she was unable to resolve.

Wilson is also very close to the Cartesian interpretation in a very similar manner to Curley when she describes error as a relationship between the finite mind’s idea and the object of that idea. Similarly to Curley if she is taking judgment to mean something else than an idea, she is embracing

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>69</sup> Wilson’s mistakenly cites E2p28s Ibid., 106.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 110.

a full blooded Cartesian solution, and if she takes judgment to mean nothing over and above an idea, she does not present the source of error. I think that her distinction of the idea's involvement and explication of natures is a very fruitful one, which I will use in the next chapter.

### 3.4 Filippo Mignini's interpretation

Filippo Mignini presents his interpretation, developing Deugd's research,<sup>71</sup> on the role of imagination in Spinoza's philosophy and on the possibility of a Spinozistic aesthetics in his book *Ars imaginandi*.<sup>72</sup> The main framework used by him is one of history and philosophy of science, and he argues based on Spinoza's alleged treatise on the formation of rainbow<sup>73</sup> that Spinoza was interested and informed on the most notable developments in optics.<sup>74</sup> Thus, he argues, Spinoza rejected Descartes's theory of knowledge and optics at the same time and claimed that a scientific approach on the science of vision is possible, because visual experience is determined by natural laws of the same necessity as of the substance.<sup>75</sup> Therefore the *ars cogitandi* and *ars imaginandi*, the art of thinking and the art of perceiving are not two distinct realms, but constitute a common continuum, and the human mind should enjoy the products of imagination in order to gain knowledge.<sup>76</sup>

His interpretation is heavily influenced by authors of German Idealism to the degree that Spinoza's works at some points seem to be rather a source of inspiration than to be source texts to be interpreted. In this vein he claims that the mental with its conceptual determinations – that are eternal truths – are a priori and necessary and also structure our experience about the physical and

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<sup>71</sup> Deugd, *The Significance of Spinoza's First Kind of Knowledge*.

<sup>72</sup> Mignini, *Ars Imaginandi: Apparenza e Rappresentazione in Spinoza*.

<sup>73</sup> According to Nadler "it seems fairly certain that Spinoza is not the author of the work." Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life*, 264.

<sup>74</sup> Mignini, *Ars Imaginandi: Apparenza E Rappresentazione in Spinoza*, 23–83.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

contingent world;<sup>77</sup> that the conceptual a priori realm cannot produce content without the aid of imagination, while imagination cannot produce structure without the concepts;<sup>78</sup> and that in experience there is always an unrepresentable remainder that is subject to further interpretation because representation is a kind of revelation, and art is thus the cult of nature which is evident from the cultic origins of ancient Greek tragedy.<sup>79</sup>

Mignini's work is also part of the tradition of Cartesian interpretation of the source of error in Spinoza's philosophy, and he tries to solve the puzzle (5) that all ideas seem to be true by claiming: "it is thus necessary that representations of imagination are true with respect to their cause, because these can be false with respect to the object represented."<sup>80</sup> This is the same *objectum-ideatum* distinction which I presented as Garrett's 2013 solution in chapter 3.1, though it emphasizes, in my view rightly, the crucial role of causation in the veracity of ideas. Also, in other places he rightly highlights the role of imagination as the basis of all knowledge: since all our knowledge is gained via modifications of our bodies, every adequate idea had to first be an idea of imagination, i.e. of perception.<sup>81</sup>

In my opinion, Mignini's work is highly inspiring in the sense that it sets up a very different framework than those of the analytic tradition. However, his metaphysical and epistemological interpretation is characteristically un-Spinozistic, which deems Mignini's project to be a failure – if the aim of the project was to present views that Spinoza would have accepted. On the other hand, he emphasizes rightly the role of causation in adequacy, and also the fact that as far as ideas are adequate, a true science of perception is attainable.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 177–179.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 94. translation is mine.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 109.

### 3.5 Michael Della Rocca's interpretation

Michael Della Rocca presents two slightly different accounts in his 1996 book *Representation and the Body-Mind Problem in Spinoza*<sup>82</sup> and in his 2008 book *Spinoza*.<sup>83</sup> His earlier view was heavily influenced by his background of Quinean philosophy and representational theory of the mind, and as a result attributed some distinctly un-Spinozistic notions to Spinoza, such as a coherentist theory of truth, which is clearly incompatible with E2d4.<sup>84</sup> Although I am not aware that he explicitly revoked his 1996 position, it is in plain contradiction with his 2008 position too.<sup>85</sup> Thus, I take his 2008 stance, where he already uses his famous PSR principle,<sup>86</sup> to be his mature view, and I only turn to the 1996 book for clarification on his interpretation of representation.

Della Rocca has a unique and – in my view – very fruitful approach to Spinoza's philosophy: using Garrett's notion of incrementalist naturalism (and the PSR) Della Rocca manages to equate existence, inherence, intelligibility, conceivability, causation, consciousness and goodness.<sup>87</sup> Also, by presenting a representational theory of the mind, Della Rocca is able to present his claim that all ideas are representational; therefore they have a propositional form and can be true or false, justified or unjustified.<sup>88</sup> His view is in my opinion the best available, though I will show below that it is still unsatisfactory.

His interpretation of the source of error is admirably straightforward and uncompromising: every idea has its extended counterpart (which Garrett called *objectum*) and its cause (roughly what

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<sup>82</sup> Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*.

<sup>83</sup> Della Rocca, *Spinoza*.

<sup>84</sup> Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*, 77.

<sup>85</sup> For example in 1996 he did not admit degrees of adequacy: Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 112.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Della Rocca, "PSR."

<sup>87</sup> Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 263. As I have argued in the previous chapter and will argue in the next chapter, this equation is for a large part justified, but rather because of the TAD – which is based on textual evidence – than because of the PSR, which in my view lacks necessary textual support.

<sup>88</sup> Della Rocca, "Rationalism Run Amok: Representation and the Reality of Emotions in Spinoza," 31.

Garrett called *ideatum*). An idea is caused adequately (insofar as it is in the human mind) if the cause of its extended counterpart inheres in the extended counterpart of the mind, which is the human body. What is called causation in the extended attribute is a conception or an explanation in the attribute of thought, therefore the requirement of E1a4 – that the (adequate) knowledge of the effect involves the (adequate) knowledge of the cause – implies that adequate causation of the effect involves the adequate causation of the cause. In the case of the human mind we arrive to such causes in very few steps which are only partially inhering in the body, and which are therefore inadequately caused by the body and thus can only be known inadequately by the mind. Since Della Rocca upholds the transitivity of inadequacy, this will render most the ideas of any finite mind inadequate. On the other hand, since in God everything inheres, the numerically same idea can be adequate in him, since no matter how many times the requirement of E1a4 is iterated, there won't be an inadequate cause.<sup>89</sup>

Since Della Rocca was influenced by Garrett's claim that the infinite individual is an eternal infinite mode,<sup>90</sup> he is able to present the following argument: Spinoza states that the mind knows itself, its body and all the external objects through the ideas of the affections of the body only. Since the affections of the body are caused at least in part by an external object, they are only inadequately caused by the human body. In addition, the causes of these affections are not inhering fully in any series of finite modes, therefore they are only inhering fully in the universal individual, which is an eternal infinite mode. Since these affections are not inhering fully, they are not fully intelligible

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<sup>89</sup> Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*, 69–93.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism."

and are not fully existing.<sup>91</sup> According to this view inherence is a matter of degrees, therefore all other properties in the equation also come in degrees, including adequacy and existence.<sup>92</sup>

He introduces two further puzzles: (8) he asserts that partially existing modes are somehow mysterious entities and he admits that he cannot present a full account of how partially existing is even possible. He also accepts that (9) it seems to be problematic that according to his explanation of the double epistemic value of ideas a partially existing and a fully existing idea has to be identical; he tentatively proposes the view that perhaps an account of identity as a degreed property can be constructed, but he cannot present any justification for that proposal.<sup>93</sup>

In my opinion Della Rocca's interpretation is groundbreaking because of its identification of existence, intelligibility and inherence, and because he (at least in his 2008 account) tries to break away from the Cartesian accounts and proposes one in which it is not the relationship of the idea, but rather the intrinsic features of the idea which are responsible for its adequacy or inadequacy.

However, there are two serious problems with Della Rocca's view. First, in my opinion inherence in itself cannot be a viable criterion of adequacy. In order to show this, I propose the following thought experiment: let's imagine that there is a world in which there is a human being, and nothing is outside of her. Let's suppose that in this world she lives in such a symbiotic community with some other life form which lives inside her and which enables her to survive without oxygen and nutrition, and they together form one individual (like lichen is a symbiotic community of a fungus and an alga). Let's suppose that the world is uncreated: maybe this individual has not been existing from eternity (though she will certainly exist eternally, since there is nothing outside her to destroy

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<sup>91</sup> Della Rocca, "Rationalism Run Amok: Representation and the Reality of Emotions in Spinoza"; Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 266–270.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.



her), but because all matter is within her, the cause of her existence must also inhere in her.<sup>94</sup> While in this case every cause of the events happening in her pancreas would per definition inhere in this individual, I doubt that Della Rocca would concede that these events are fully conscious and adequately known by this unfortunate human being, though I admit that the thought experiment is farfetched enough to enable him to defend his view. A further problem with this criterion of adequacy is that its direct consequence is that we cannot have any adequate ideas about external objects, which he admits halfheartedly.<sup>95</sup>

Second, I think that Garrett's claim that the infinite individual is an infinite mode, on which Della Rocca's inherence criterion depends heavily, cannot be sustained. I would like to point out that Garrett himself seem to have abandoned this position: in his "Spinoza's Necessitarianism"<sup>96</sup> he was arguing that the universal individual is an infinite mode, while his later account<sup>97</sup> – in my opinion correctly – only admits the formal essence of the universal individual to be an infinite mode. This is an important distinction, even though Garrett accepts the possibility that formal and actual essences can fall together. He can claim that the universal individual is infinite in its own kind spatially and does not change over time (since change would require external affection) and therefore it is very close to the metaphysical properties of its formal essence which is also spatially and temporally omnipresent and immutable. However, their causal history differ radically, since the universal individual as a finite mode has been caused by another finite mode, while its formal essence as an infinite mode has been caused by another infinite mode.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> In fact, since in this world she is the universal individual, she has to be eternal.

<sup>95</sup> Garrett, "Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind," 56 fn. 29.

<sup>96</sup> Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism."

<sup>97</sup> Garrett, "Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That Is Eternal."

<sup>98</sup> Garrett, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism"; Garrett, "Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That Is Eternal."

A point closely connected to this one is that Della Rocca simply cannot claim that there is no series of finite modes in which the cause of any finite mode inheres, since, as I have shown above, the singular thing was precisely defined by causation in such a way that the bundle of individuals that together cause one effect are one singular thing. And even if Della Rocca wants to claim that the universal individual is an infinite mode, it cannot be causally efficacious in the causation of any finite mode, since the singular thing is a finite mode. I will base my interpretation of the source of error in the next chapter on the correction of this mistake of Della Rocca.

#### 4. The source of error: a proposed interpretation

As I have shown in the previous chapter, most of the existing views are interpreting Spinoza along Cartesian lines and try to understand his notion of inadequacy as a relationship between the idea and its object or *ideatum*. In this chapter I propose my own solution for the problem of the source of error in Spinoza's theory of knowledge as a development of Della Rocca's interpretation. I argue that Della Rocca's claim that there is no finite thing which causes inadequate ideas adequately is simply false, since singular things were defined precisely by their causing together one effect. Della Rocca might of course argue that there is no *individual* that causes the inadequate idea adequately, but as I have shown in section 2.3 the individuation of individuals is very weak – i.e. it does not take too much to count as a singular thing –, to say the least, and since singular things have formal essences too, irrelevant. In order to ward off the temptation of the Cartesian solution, I use Wilson's distinction of involving and explaining because, as Della Rocca also argued, inadequate ideas are such that from them the ideas composing them cannot be derived. I also argue for the phenomenal nature of inadequate knowledge.

In the first section I will juxtapose Descartes's and Spinoza's notion of the two conceptions of the sun and show that the Cartesian interpretation fails in Spinoza's case; also I introduce Della Rocca's distinction of standard falsity – the falsity of false belief – and non-standard falsity – the general falsity of perception. In the second section I argue for my interpretation of the source of error in the case of the non-standard falsity, and in section three and four I show that standard falsity and the falsity of universal notions is reducible to non-standard falsity, respectively. In the final section I will show how error generates phenomenal states.

#### 4.1 Two conceptions of the sun: the failure of the Cartesian interpretation

Descartes tells the story in the Third Meditation that there are in him two different ideas of the sun: the one that shows the sun to be small and close and the other that shows the sun to be large and far away. Both ideas cannot resemble the actual sun, and his innate ideas and reason tell him that he should accept the astronomical idea and reject the sensory one.<sup>99</sup> This description matches Descartes's claim that there are three types of ideas: images or ideas proper, affections and judgments, out of which only judgments can be true or false, since the error does not come from the fact that I imagine a unicorn, but rather from the fact that I judge it to be a true representation of something outside of me.<sup>100</sup>

Spinoza uses the same example twice: in E2p35s and E4p1s. I quote both occasions and in order to make the similarities more visible, I quote them side by side.

##### **E2p35s**

[...] when we look at the sun, we imagine it as about two hundred 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 six hundred diameters of the earth away from us, we nevertheless imagine it as near.

For we imagine the sun so near not because we do not know its true distance, but because

##### **E4p1s**

[...] when we look at the sun, we imagine it to be about two hundred feet away from us.

In this we are deceived so long as we are ignorant of its true distance; but when its distance is known, the error is removed, not the imagination, that is, the idea of the sun, which explains its nature only so far as the body is affected by it.

And so, although we come to know the true distance, we shall nevertheless imagine it as near us.

For as we said in IIP35S, we do not imagine the sun to be so near because we

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<sup>99</sup> Descartes, "Meditations on the First Philosophy," 27.

<sup>100</sup> Curley, "Descartes, Spinoza, and the Ethics of Belief."

an affection of our body involves the essence of the sun insofar as our body is affected by the sun

are ignorant of its true distance, but because the mind conceives the sun's size insofar as the body is affected by the sun.

Thus, when the rays of the sun, falling on the surface of the water, are reflected to our eyes, we imagine it as if it were in the water, even if we know its true place.

And so it is with the other imaginations by which the mind is deceived, whether they indicate the natural constitution of the body, or that its power of acting is increased or diminished: they are not contrary to the true, and do not disappear on its presence.

It is a very important difference that Spinoza does not talk about two ideas of the sun, but rather about different aspects of the same idea. Moreover, he emphasizes that what according to Descartes should be rejected cannot be discarded because even though we learn in elementary school that the sun is far away that does not change how the rays of light interact with our visual sensory system and we still perceive the sun to be small and close. Therefore, the standard Cartesian interpretation of Spinoza, as presented by Garrett,<sup>101</sup> Curley<sup>102</sup> and Wilson,<sup>103</sup> according to which the source of error is the mind's ill-judgment about the object or *ideatum* of the idea is simply false, since in this example the idea will be still inadequate even though that error is removed, even though it knows that its idea is inadequate. Certainly, Spinoza tells us that the error is removed, but he also tells us

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<sup>101</sup> Garrett, "Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind"; Garrett, "Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza's Naturalistic Theory of the Imagination."

<sup>102</sup> Curley, "Experience in Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge."

<sup>103</sup> Wilson, "Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge."

that imagination remains, which is synonymous with the inadequate idea.<sup>104</sup> Thus, even though the mind is aware of the fact that its idea is not the idea of the sun, it still has the inadequate idea.<sup>105</sup>

Della Rocca proposes a very fruitful twofold standard of error for his interpretation of this place. According to him two conditions of error are used here: on the one hand the sun is not 200 feet away, and on the other hand we do not know this.<sup>106</sup> Thus in order to err we have to have an inadequate idea and lack the idea that excludes that inadequate idea. He cannot claim that we lack the idea which excludes the existence of the object of the inadequate idea, since this description would fall back on the Cartesian term, according to which the relation of the idea and its object is the source of error. Note that since the idea is similar to what Descartes described as judgment, this exclusion is similar to the Cartesian solution as far as error as judgment is concerned.<sup>107</sup> Della Rocca accepts, in a similar manner to Wilson, that both sources of error are important, since somehow our idea that the sun is 200 feet away is inadequate no matter what other ideas we have. Thus, he concludes:

So it seems that the best understanding of each of 2p35 and 2p35s precludes a univocal reading of the pair. The former [that we have inadequate idea of the sun] is concerned with non-standard falsity and with a kind of privation all inadequate and confused ideas involve. The latter [that we do not know that our idea is inadequate] is concerned with standard falsity and with a kind of privation that only some inadequate and confused ideas involve.<sup>108</sup>

From this quote it is clear that Della Rocca concludes first that somehow all ideas that involve perception are confused, and second that the latter source of falsity is somehow a different source

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<sup>104</sup> As I have argued in chapters 2.5–2.6.

<sup>105</sup> The error here removed is what Della Rocca calls “standard falsity” and what remains in the imagination considered in itself and containing no error has the “non-standard falsity”. For the distinction see below.

<sup>106</sup> Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*, 116.

<sup>107</sup> But not as far as the object and motivation of this judgment is concerned.

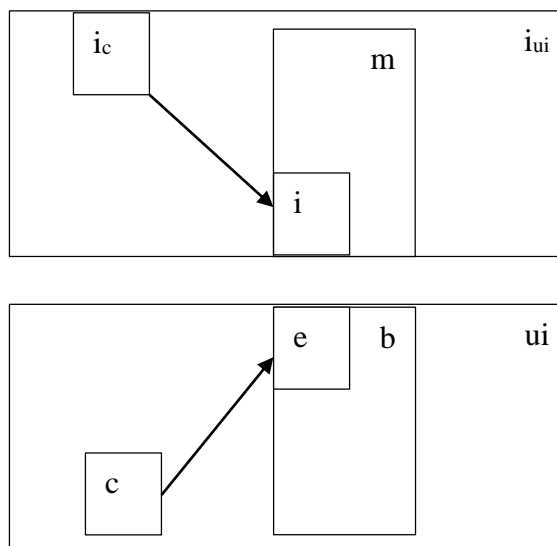
<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

of falsity. In the next sections of this chapter I will show that both claims are wrong: the mind can form adequate ideas of finite modes, and these two sources of errors can be conflated.

#### 4.2 Representation of the external object

I first present my general interpretation of imagination and account for what Della Rocca calls the “non-standard falsity”. As we have seen above, imagination occurs when the mind perceives something through an affection of his body which the body is partial cause of.

**Fig. 1. Della Rocca’s Simplest Model of Imagination**

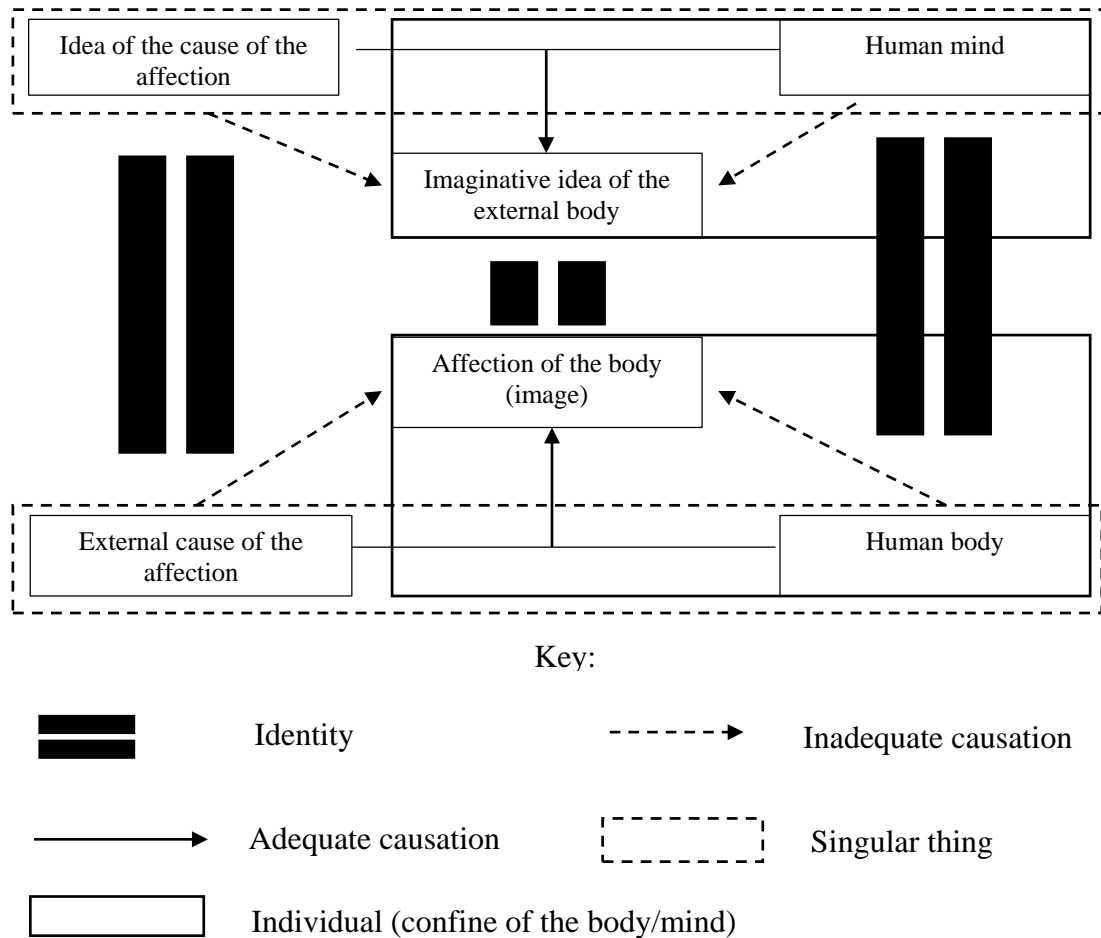


*i* – idea; *m* – mind; *e* – extended counterpart;  
*b* – body; *c* – cause of the extended counterpart;  
*ic* – idea of the cause; *ui* – universal individual;  
*iui* – idea of the universal individual

Figure 1 shows the simplest model of imagination presented by Della Rocca: confusion and inadequacy arise because the idea *i* represents *e* and *c* in such a manner that the two objects are “blended” together. He concluded that *e* does not inhere fully either in *b*, or *c*, or in *b* and *c*, only in the universal individual *ui*, and therefore *i* is inadequate. My claim is that there is no such a thing

as partial inherence, *c* and *b* together create a singular thing in which the cause of *e* can fully inhere. This view – which is contrary to Della Rocca’s – I will outline in Figure 2.

**Fig. 2. The Proposed Model**



In this model the image formed by perception (i.e. imagination) – of which idea is my imaginative idea about the sun – is caused inadequately by my body and the external cause of the image – the bundle of the sun, the rays of light transmitting the visual image etc. – (as indicated by the dashed arrows), but it is caused adequately by a singular thing (as indicated by the normal arrow), which is defined as the bundle of individuals that together cause the idea of imagination (as indicated by



the dashed rectangle). As I have argued, the universal individual might be part of this bundle,<sup>109</sup> but even if it is so, the point is that there is a finite mode which causes my idea of imagination adequately, in which the effect can fully inhere. Referring back to Figure 1, the singular thing formed by the causes of *e* is *b* and *c*, which is not identical with *ui*. In this way the same idea can be adequate and inadequate: it will be an inadequate idea of all of its inadequate causes (the external causes and my body) – in a finite mind – and an adequate idea of its adequate cause (the singular thing formed by my body and the external causes) – in the infinite intellect, or in a well-informed finite mind. Of course that the idea is inadequate and that it was caused inadequately is only a mind-dependent phenomenal belief, since objectively there are only adequate ideas and adequate causes.

This inadequacy is only relevant as far as the mind lacks the information about the true distance of the sun: as soon as the mind is informed that the sun is not 200 feet away, this error is removed and the mind won't consider this idea to be an idea of the sun strictly speaking. However, its idea will not become an adequate idea of its inadequate causes just because of this new information.

In order to understand the true source of inadequacy we should recall that, according to Spinoza, ideas are composites just as objects are. Let's suppose for the sake of simplicity that my imaginative idea of the sun was only caused by the sun and my body. In this case my imaginative idea will be composed of the idea of my body and the idea of the sun. Therefore when we say that my

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<sup>109</sup> I doubt that water molecules in the oceans of Jupiter's moon Europa actively participate in the causation of my sensory experience of the sun, and contrary to Della Rocca's view I doubt too that this would be Spinoza's view. As I have argued in section 3.5 it is not relevant for my account of source of error how extended the external cause of my affection will be, since error does not originate from partial inherence in any series of finite modes. However, if the literally the whole universe causally participates in the creation of my sensory experience of the sun, it will render very hard to achieve an adequate idea of even my sensory experience, not to mention an adequate idea of the sun proper. In this case the ideas of very numerous constituents of the singular thing that forms the adequate cause of my sensory experience should be conceived distinctly in order to have an adequate idea of the sensory experience, which is close to impossible.

imaginative idea of the sun was caused by the singular thing that is composed of my body and the sun, it will be an idea of not the idea of my body and the sun, but rather of my-body-and-the-sun. To state it in Wilson’s terms:<sup>110</sup> it will explicate only the idea of the singular thing composed of the sun and my body but not the idea of the sun and the idea of my body, which it only involves.<sup>111</sup>

**Fig. 3. Levels of Adequacy**

*(Lines represent the distinctness of ideas)*

<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Idea of the nature of the external cause</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Idea of the sun</td> <td>Idea of the rays of light</td> </tr> </table>	Idea of the nature of the external cause		Idea of the sun	Idea of the rays of light	<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Idea of the nature of my body</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Ideas of events in my pancreas</td> </tr> </table>	Idea of the nature of my body		Ideas of events in my pancreas		<p>A: Inadequate idea of imagination: no idea that is involved is also explicated</p>
Idea of the nature of the external cause										
Idea of the sun	Idea of the rays of light									
Idea of the nature of my body										
Ideas of events in my pancreas										
<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Idea of the nature of the external cause</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Idea of the sun</td> <td>Idea of the rays of light</td> </tr> </table>	Idea of the nature of the external cause		Idea of the sun	Idea of the rays of light	<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Idea of the nature of my body</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Ideas of events in my pancreas</td> </tr> </table>	Idea of the nature of my body		Ideas of events in my pancreas		<p>B: Adequate idea of the finite mind: the idea of the external cause is explicated, which involves but not explicates its constituent ideas</p>
Idea of the nature of the external cause										
Idea of the sun	Idea of the rays of light									
Idea of the nature of my body										
Ideas of events in my pancreas										
<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Idea of the nature of the external cause</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Idea of the sun</td> <td>Idea of the rays of light</td> </tr> </table>	Idea of the nature of the external cause		Idea of the sun	Idea of the rays of light	<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Idea of the nature of my body</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Ideas of events in my pancreas</td> </tr> </table>	Idea of the nature of my body		Ideas of events in my pancreas		<p>C: Adequate idea in the infinite intellect: all ideas that are involved are also explicated</p>
Idea of the nature of the external cause										
Idea of the sun	Idea of the rays of light									
Idea of the nature of my body										
Ideas of events in my pancreas										

Of course the situation is more complicated, as shown in Figure 3, since the external cause of my sensory experience is not the sun itself, but rather is composed of many different parts – like the sun, the rays of light, the air transmitting the ray etc.; however, the basic model is the same in this

<sup>110</sup> Wilson, “Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge,” 103.

<sup>111</sup> Originally Spinoza talked about explicating and involving the natures of the causes and of constituent ideas, which meant that the essences of the causes ground the essence of the effect. Since in my interpretation ideas are representing essences and the relation of that essence to other essences, for the sake of simplicity, I can talk about explication and involvement of ideas. Unfortunately, because of space considerations I cannot argue for my interpretation in more detail.

case. My inadequate idea of imagination will involve the idea of my body and the external cause confusedly. If I form an adequate idea of my sensory experience, my distinctly involved idea of external cause again involves many more ideas confusedly and therefore my adequate idea of the external cause of my sensory experience of the sun itself needs to be broken down into distinct and adequate ideas in order to reach the adequate idea of the sun.

And this error of confusion is much harder to remove: in order to understand how that is possible, we should recall that according to the identity thesis each idea is at the same time an extended mode. As I have shown, the immediate infinite mode and the notion of formal essences indicate that essences are described in terms of motion and rest. Therefore when we have the imaginative idea of the sun, we have an image formed in our body that involves the essence of the external cause and of my body, of which counterpart in the attribute of thought will be an idea of imagination. Therefore in order to form an adequate idea of the sun we need to have an image that neither does involve the essence of our body, nor the essence of the other external causes, which is the same as having an idea in my mind which explicates the ideas of the sun, of the external causes and of my body.

As Figure 3 shows, there are three levels of adequacy. First (A) is an inadequate idea, which only involves but does not explicate its constituent parts. When we have these ideas, we cannot distinguish those features of the idea that represent my body and those which represent the external cause.

Second, (B) when in my body I will be able to form the bodily movement to which the distinct idea of the external cause corresponds and we can say that I have a distinct idea of the external cause, then my imaginative idea of my sensory experience involving but not explicating the idea of the external cause will turn into an idea of a higher kind of knowledge that both involves and explicates

the idea of the external cause. This does not have to mean that I will have an adequate idea of all the atoms' movement in the sun or even of the sun itself, since these are involved in the idea of the external cause, but in order to have an adequate idea of my sensory experience I do not have to have an adequate ideas of its composites, such as of the external cause. Of course, this idea won't be absolutely adequate in the sense that it won't satisfy completely the criterion of E1a4 – which states that the knowledge of the effect depends on the knowledge of the cause – but it will be at least adequate in its own level and satisfy the criterion of E1a4 in its own level. Thus, adequate ideas of this level (B) are constituted by distinct inadequate ideas.

The third level of adequacy (C) is divine or absolute knowledge which can only be attained by the substance: in this case all involvement relations are explication relations at the same time and all adequate ideas are constituted by distinct and adequate ideas.

I do not claim that adequacy is a degreed property. I argue that adequacy is not transitive and therefore the criterion of E1a4 cannot be iterated: my idea of my sensory experience will be adequate if it explicates the idea of the external cause and the idea of the body as two distinct ideas, but it is not required that these ideas should be adequate on their own right. An inadequate idea of the external cause, that is one which only involves but does not explicate the idea of the sun, of the rays of light etc., can very well constitute an adequate idea of my sensory experience. This way, the adequacy of ideas always has to be assessed in its own level: the idea of my sensory experience of the sun is inadequate in (A); the idea of my sensory experience but not the idea of the external cause and my body is adequate in (B); and the idea of my sensory experience, as well as the idea of the external cause and my body are adequate in (C).

Thus, I claim that the error – which according to Spinoza is removed – is the confusion of the idea of the cause and the idea of the effect: after the mind is informed about the true distance of the sun

the mind won't consider the idea of the sensory experience to be an idea of its cause (the external cause and the body) rather than of its object (the affection). The imagination on the other hand – which according to Spinoza remains – is the inadequacy of the resulting idea, since in the idea of the sensory experience will involve the constituting ideas nonetheless in an inadequate manner.

In order to argue for the adequacy of the idea of the external cause on its own level, I have to first present how the mind can form adequate ideas, since as we have seen in the case of Della Rocca, some interpretations fail at this point. The more basic model is the second kind of knowledge, which will suffice for now: in this case the mind is capable of forming adequate ideas because its body in some respect accords with the external thing of which it forms the idea. As Spinoza states in E2p39, the more one body has in common with the external mode, the more it will be able to know it adequately. If a mode has five properties (p1, p2... p5) and another has five other properties (p6, p7...p10), they will have nothing in common and therefore cannot know each other.<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, if a mode has five properties (p1, p2...p5) and another mode also has five properties (p4, p5...p8) they will know each other adequately as far as p4 and p5 are concerned (B). Therefore, if a mode has ten properties (p1, p2...p10) and the other five properties (p1, p2...p5), the first will know the second absolutely adequately (C), but not the other way around. In this way when I say that the mind can have an adequate idea of the external cause, I claim not that the human body should share all the properties of the external cause, only those properties that are relevant for its relevant qualities.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Of course this is impossible, since they are modes of the same attribute and therefore share at least one property, that they are extended (or in the case when they are modes of different attributes they indeed cannot know each other directly because they do not share any property). In more fortunate cases the more properties they have in common, the more they will be able to know each other adequately.

<sup>113</sup> Due to space considerations I am unable to take a stance on the questions what are the relevant properties needed to be known distinctly in order to have an adequate idea of the external cause, but I am sure that very farfetched properties (causal history of its atoms etc.) are not among them.

A nice example can be drawn from Ep. 17 (1664) in which Spinoza tries to explain the case when Pieter Balling<sup>114</sup> heard the groans of his son when the son was still healthy. In his explanation Spinoza claims that the father can love his son so much that they are “as it were, one and the same” and the father will involve the formal essence of the son. Therefore – as Spinoza’s explanation goes – the imagination of the father was able to produce images that were involved in his inadequate idea of the formal essence of his son, but which were not known to him distinctly.<sup>115</sup> The example shows nicely how the father may be able to have an adequate idea of his sensory experience of his son, which explains the idea of the son, which idea is, however, an inadequate idea that involves other ideas that it does not explicate.<sup>116</sup>

In order to support my interpretation of the source of error, I would like to cite a further locus, where Spinoza describes what error looks like from the divine perspective:

[...] 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 idea; and 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. (E2p11c)

Thus, in the case of inadequate ideas inadequacy arises from the fact that God does not have the idea of an external cause insofar as he constitutes the finite mind, but he has it together with the

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<sup>114</sup> Balling was an educated Mennonite merchant, who became one of Spinoza’s closest friends and disciples who served as a courier when Spinoza was not living in Amsterdam. Balling translated Spinoza’s *The Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* and the first two parts of the *Ethics*. Balling himself composed a Spinozistic treatise, in which he argued for greater religious freedom and claimed that through his or her rational faculty everyone can have an intuitive inner experience of God. Balling’s son died from the plague, of which he himself probably died “within a year.” Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life*, 169, 194, 211–213, 225.

<sup>115</sup> The example is problematic in light of Spinoza’s mature view, because it does not explain in detail what is the relationship between the formal essence of the son and his death, which is supposed to follow from the formal essence and its affections, even though the *conatus* doctrine (E3p4–5) would rule out that the destruction of the son would follow from its formal essence. Also, it is not explicitly stated whether Balling had an adequate idea, and if he did, it was an idea of what and of which kind. These problems do not affect the use of the example here.

<sup>116</sup> I do not think that there is any contemporary physical theory capable of supporting Spinoza’s claim, but I do not think that it has any philosophical importance.

idea of the mind insofar as he constitutes the finite mind. However – in my interpretation – in that adequate idea God will have the ideas of the constituents of that adequate idea together insofar as he constitutes the finite mind. Otherwise, as we have seen in Della Rocca, it would be impossible for the finite mind to have adequate ideas because the adequate idea of the sun would involve the full causal history of all its constituent parts. A possible objection to this claim would be that the finite mind is only capable of forming very simple adequate ideas, like the adequate idea of extension, of being constituted by parts, of being formed of matter etc., which are properties that all extended things share, but that seems to go against Spinoza’s assertion of the third kind of knowledge.

In the case of the third kind of knowledge the mind achieves the knowledge of the formal essence of the thing, which is basically the knowledge of the infinite mode which constitutes God’s knowledge about the particular singular thing. This means that when the mind knows according to the third kind of knowledge, it will instantiate the idea as it is in the infinite intellect. This does not mean that the idea according to the third kind of knowledge is an idea which explains all the ideas that are involved in the idea, but rather that it is an idea that is distinct, which means that is coextensive with the idea of that particular thing in God’s infinite intellect. In order to support my argument, I would like to discuss the formation of knowledge by the three kinds of knowledge in more detail.

**Fig. 4. The First Kind of Knowledge**

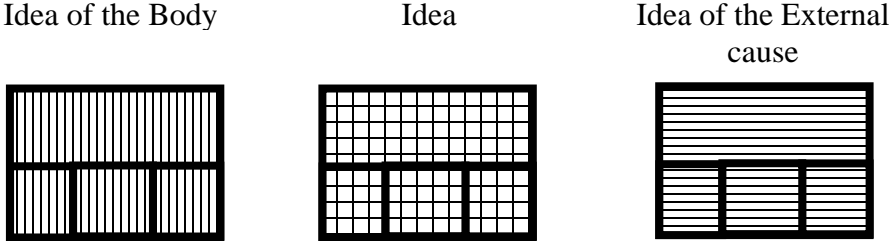


Figure 4 illustrates the formation of ideas of the first kind of knowledge when the body and the external cause accord in so few properties that the resulting idea will be inadequate, involving but not explicating the idea of the body and the external cause. The figure shows that the ideas of patterns of motion and rest that form the essence of the body and the external cause and the constituting ideas of the body and the external cause are blended together in the inadequate idea of which constituting ideas are also inadequate. Of course, even in this case there are properties which are known adequately to the mind through this inadequate idea – like extension, motion and rest etc. – but these properties are such that do not pertain to the essence of any mode. As shown in Figure 3 above in this case the constituting ideas are only involved but not explicated by the inadequate idea therefore the mind will be unable to conceive the constituting ideas distinctly (A).

**Fig. 5. The Second Kind of Knowledge**

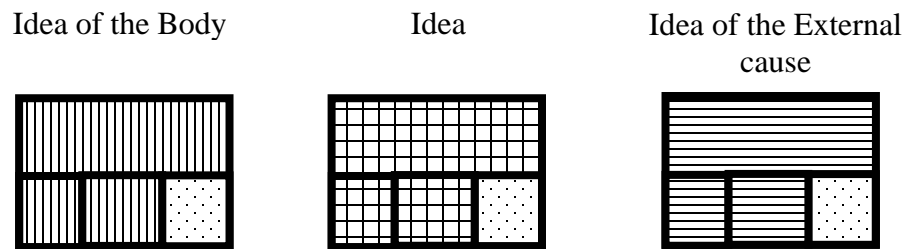


Figure 5 shows that the ideas of patterns of motion and rest that form the essence of the body and the external cause and most of the constituting ideas of the body and the external cause are blended together in inadequate ideas, but in the case of the idea of one property the idea of the body and the idea of the external cause accord and therefore the mind is able to form an adequate idea of it. In the case of the second kind of knowledge the body and the external cause accords in some respect, and the mind is able to form adequate ideas of properties of the external cause. These properties are not those common notions, which do not form the essence of anything, these are full blooded modes of modes having an essence. These modes known adequately are constituted by lower level



modes, which are known distinctly by the mind – since according to the second kind of knowledge it has produced an adequate idea – but those distinct ideas are not necessarily adequate, that is, do not always explicate further lower level constituents.

**Fig. 6. The Third Kind of Knowledge**

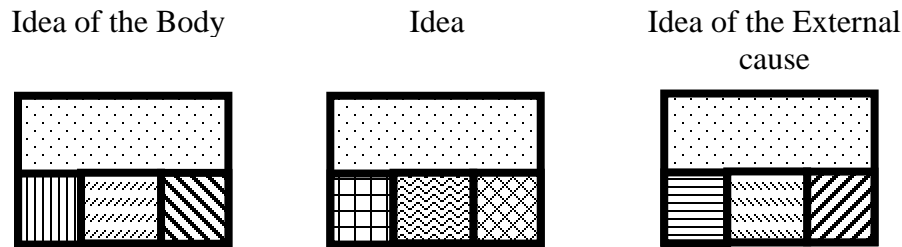


Figure 6 shows that the ideas of patterns of motion and rest that form the essence of the body and the external cause accord and therefore they will be known adequately, but the constituting ideas of the body and the external cause are blended together in distinct though inadequate ideas. In the case of the third kind of knowledge the mind will be able to form an adequate idea of the formal and actual essence of the external cause, and therefore it will have distinct ideas of its constituent ideas, though those ideas need not be adequate.<sup>117</sup>

In order to make my point more visual, I draw the example of the boardgame Blokus, where the board consists of tiny squares and the players can place on the board geometrical figures which cover the area of one or more squares. In this example, shown in Figure 7, the board would be God's infinite intellect, which has the adequate idea of every possible singular thing, and the geometrical figures are the ideas of finite minds. These ideas are adequate insofar as they represent an idea that God has too, since God has the idea of every possible singular thing (every possible

<sup>117</sup> It may be surprising that the mind is able to know the actual essence of the external cause, but the external cause is a singular thing which is therefore so weakly individuated that there is nothing in its actual essence that its formal essence does not involve. Also, in order to form an adequate idea of an external cause it is not required that the essence of the body and the essence of the external cause accord, but only that the mind involve the idea of the essence of the external cause and therefore the body be capable of according with the external cause.

**Fig. 7. Boardgame Blokus**



(Source:

[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_IIIq3KHs4ic/TRggO4gj\\_2I/AAAAAAAAAD2M/28DcKzQuVjY/s1600/blokus.JPG](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_IIIq3KHs4ic/TRggO4gj_2I/AAAAAAAAAD2M/28DcKzQuVjY/s1600/blokus.JPG)  
[http://2.bp.blogspot.com/\\_IIIq3KHs4ic/TRggO4gj\\_2I/AAAAAAAAAD2M/28DcKzQuVjY/s1600/blokus.JPG](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_IIIq3KHs4ic/TRggO4gj_2I/AAAAAAAAAD2M/28DcKzQuVjY/s1600/blokus.JPG))

combination of squares in the example), but they will be inadequate insofar as they group together multiple squares. In God's infinite intellect, however, the board would be multi-level, because every square would consist of many smaller squares (I hope to have shown above that the simplest bodies are theoretical and not real entities.

Thus – as shown on Figure 3 – every idea can have adequacy on three different levels: first, it can be an adequate idea in the strict sense, which means that it is such an idea that it explicates those ideas that constitute it (B). Second, it can be adequate in the further sense, that it is constituted by adequate lower level ideas (C). Third, even if an idea is inadequate it may very well form part of a higher level adequate idea, and it will be necessarily adequate in the very weak sense that it will be part of an idea that is coextensive with an idea in the infinite intellect (A).<sup>118</sup> The idea of the property in the case of the second kind of knowledge – as shown on Figure 5 – and the idea of the actual and formal essence in the case of the third kind of knowledge – as shown on Figure 6 – are

<sup>118</sup> This coextension is the sense in which we can talk about innate ideas in Spinoza, and not in the sense of common notions, as was claimed by Stuart Hampshire. Hampshire, "Truth and Correspondence in Spinoza."

adequate in the (B) proper sense; and the idea of the first and second kind of knowledge – as shown of Figures 4 and 5 –, as well as the ideas of the properties of the case of the third kind of knowledge – as shown on Figure 6 – are adequate in the (A) very weak sense. In this way, every idea is adequate in the latter, very weak sense, but not in the former proper sense. Every geometrical figure in the boardgame Blokus fits into the grid of small squares of the board, but not all geometrical figures are composed of smaller geometrical figures.

#### 4.3 Existence of the external object

Now I turn to the source of error which Della Rocca calls “standard falsity” and which arises when the mind errs. This falsity is what most resembles the Cartesian model, since in this case the mind – because of its lack of other ideas – attributes properties to an external object that it does not have, like it believes that the sun is 200 feet away or considers someone to be existing even though she is not. This error is formulated by Spinoza in the claim that the source of error is the lack of another idea that excludes the existence of affirmation of the external object or false property attribution to the external object.

Spinoza discusses this question in most detail as a refutation of the Cartesian claim that we are free to suspend judgment:

To understand this [i.e. the impossibility of suspending judgment by free will] clearly, let us conceive a child imagining a winged horse, and not perceiving anything else. Since this imagination involves the existence of the horse (by [2]P17C), and the child does not perceive anything else which excludes the existence of the horse, he will necessarily regard the horse as present. Nor will he be able to doubt its existence, though he will not be certain of it.

[...]

Next, I grant that no one is deceived insofar as he perceives, that is, I grant that the imaginations of the mind, considered in themselves, involve no error. But I deny that a man affirms nothing insofar as he perceives. For what is perceiving a winged horse other than affirming wings of the horse? For if the mind perceived nothing else except the winged horse, it would regard it as present to itself, and would not have any cause of doubting its existence, or any faculty of dissenting, unless either the imagination of the winged horse were joined to an idea which excluded the existence of the same horse, or the mind perceived that its idea of a winged horse was inadequate. And then either it will necessarily deny the horse's existence, or it will necessarily doubt it. (E2p49cs)

Although the second part of the section is a bit cryptic,<sup>119</sup> the case is pretty clear: anyone is free to imagine the winged horse, but either the idea will be so inadequate that it does not explicate its constituent parts and therefore the agent will consider it to be present – because the affirmation of the real existence involved in the idea of the body will be attributed to the idea of the winged horse – or it will explicate its parts and therefore the agent will know that the idea was the product of his fancy. The fact that Spinoza always talks about a second idea excluding the existence of the object of the first idea might seem to contradict my interpretation, but in fact it does not: just as we would not say that my idea of imagination about the sun and the idea of my body are the same, even though the idea of my body is constituent part of my imaginative idea of the sun in this Spinozistic sense, we would also not say that a constituent part of an idea in this sense could not be referred to as another idea. Thus, when Spinoza says that error arises because the mind lacks another idea that excludes the existence of the affirmed object of imagination (E2p17s) he says – using his vocabulary – that the idea of imagination does not explicate its constituent ideas which are determining its existence or nonexistence. What Della Rocca calls “standard falsity” is thus only another expression of the same “non-standard falsity”, when ideas only involve but do not explicate ideas they involve.

It is important to emphasize that since Spinoza’s modes are not objects but rather properties,<sup>120</sup> one and the same property can play different roles in different other properties, which we would imagine to be in different places. For example in the case of the formation of adequate ideas according to the second kind of knowledge – as shown on Figure 5 –, although the two causes of the property of which the mind forms the adequate idea are spatially in different places, they count

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<sup>119</sup> According to Renz this scholium is obscure because it was originally a dialogue which was later rephrased by Spinoza as a prose: Renz, *Die Erklärbarkeit von Erfahrung*, 107 fn. 74.

<sup>120</sup> I agree with Carriero on this question: Carriero, “On the Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza’s Metaphysics.”

as if they were one and the same adequate cause. Since the idea of that property is adequate, the property of the body and the property of the external cause not only accord, but are literally the same in the sense that the effects of that property will be actions of both the body and of the external cause, and also, those effects can be conceived fully either through the body or through the external cause.

#### 4.4 Universal notions

There is a further source of error – from forming universal notions – which I argue is not different from the source of error I have presented in this chapter. The formation of universal notions is described in E2p40s1 and it arises because the body has a limited capacity of storing images. Therefore images start to “blend” together and they form “composite” images that combine the properties of these images into one (and therefore of course the ideas that correspond to these images blend too).<sup>121</sup>

Consider Spinoza’s example of the idea of man, which has different meanings – “animal of erect stature”, “animal capable of laughter”, “featherless biped” or “rational animal” – depending on what past experiences created what images that were blended together to the idea of man (E2p40s1). In this case the cause of the extended counterpart of the idea, which is the blended image in our body, has its adequate cause, namely the singular thing that consists of the bundle of men which I have perceived. In this case the error is twofold: on the one hand I may have the “standard falsity” and not be aware of the fact that this idea is not applicable to the particular man I encounter on the street, and on the other hand the idea itself has the “non-standard falsity” and does not explicate the ideas it involves. However, as I have shown in the previous section the

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<sup>121</sup> Cf. Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*, 59–61.

“standard falsity” is actually derivative of the “non-standard falsity” and both arise because of the inadequacy of the idea that does not explicate its relation to its constituents.

Della Rocca draws the example of the universal notion “Senator McCarthy” which is created by blending the idea of Senator Joseph McCarthy (of Wisconsin) and Senator Eugene McCarthy (of Minnesota).<sup>122</sup> The idea will contain the properties that are common to both and those that are peculiar to one, like having three children. In this case when I claim, let’s say, that Eugene McCarthy has three children, while actually only Joseph McCarthy does, the error does not arise from the fact that I have an idea that refers to both senators (for some reason it may be useful to refer to them at once), but rather from the fact that the idea does not explicate its constituents, does not show its relation to them.

The same story can be told about the idea of a parliamentary group: it is in this case useful to form the universal notion of the given parliamentary group because the singular thing that corresponds to this universal notion causes more than just my universal idea. The bundle of people constituting the parliamentary group as one singular thing does many things, like votes or does not vote for laws in the parliament. Of course, nothing guarantees that the idea I form about the parliamentary group will be adequate in the sense that it will be coextensive with the idea of its formal essence, since maybe I only know some members of the group but not all. Still, the universal idea of the given parliamentary group will be adequate as far as it explicates its relation to its constituents. If not, I will make hasty judgments about individuals based on their party membership which is the same error which gives rise to many controversies “among the philosophers, who have wished to explain natural things by mere images of things.” (E2p40s1)

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 61.

Thus, to make my point clear: I do not think that Spinoza would hold that there is any difference between the universal idea of man, the idea of a given parliamentary group, as well as the imaginative idea and the adequate idea of the sun, other than utility for the agent and adequacy in terms of explanation of ideas involved in the idea, since all refer to a real singular thing.

#### 4.5 Mind-independent and mind-dependent qualities

Before concluding this chapter I present an important ramification of my interpretation on the phenomenal character of error. As I have shown, Spinoza rejects the Cartesian description of the source of error as an ill-grounded judgment, which many commentators tried to read into Spinoza. Contrary to Descartes, Spinoza claims that we cannot judge against our ideas, and even if *prima facie* it seems that we do so, in reality something else explains the phenomenon. This is evident from his discussion of error, when he states that:

[...] most errors consist only in our not rightly applying names to things. For when someone says that the lines which are drawn from the center of a circle to its circumference are unequal, he surely understands (then at least) by a circle something different from what mathematicians understand. Similarly, when men err in calculating, they have certain numbers in their mind and different ones on the paper. So if you consider what they have in mind, they really do not err, though they seem to err because we think they have in their mind the numbers which are on the paper. If this were not so, we would not believe that they were erring, just as I did not believe that he was erring whom I recently heard cry out that his courtyard had flown into his neighbor's hen [NS: although his words were absurd], because what he had in mind seemed sufficiently clear to me [viz. that his hen had flown into his neighbor's courtyard]. (E2p47s)

In this description no ideas are erroneous in themselves, but only when we believe them to be applicable to some external object. This belief is, however, not a Cartesian judgment that the mind is free to make, but rather a consequence of the adequacy or inadequacy of ideas, of the difference between the singular thing that is represented in the idea of one person – the hen flying into the neighbor's courtyard – and the singular thing that is represented in the idea in the another person's mind – the courtyard flying into the neighbor's hen. The error is not in the judgment, the error is in the idea's intrinsic confusion.

As we have seen, Della Rocca asserts that inadequate ideas qua inadequate ideas are not fully existing because they are not fully inhering in anything. I have shown that they are inhering fully in the singular thing which is the bundle of the partial causes of the effect. This way every singular thing and every adequate causation is mind-independently real, while every inadequate idea and every inadequate causation is only a mind-dependent phenomenal state created by the lack of adequacy of our ideas: our inadequate idea of the sun may not explicate the idea of my body and the idea of the external cause, but in reality these are involved in this idea and my inadequate idea is coextensive with the idea of the infinite intellect (i.e. it is adequate in the very weak sense).

As we have also seen, the phenomenal quality that is experienced by the subject when having the inadequate idea is mind-dependent, that is, a nonexistent and totally irrational experience which cannot be explained in terms of adequate ideas and does not exist from the divine perspective (as I have shown in discussing E2p11c in section 4.2). Therefore, there is an explanation for the visual experience we have when we have the inadequate idea of the sun, because it is described in terms of a mind-independent causation, but the experience that I have in the first perspective is not explicable in mind-independent, i.e. rational and real terms and cannot be restated in third person perspective.

The same point is made in Ep. 23 (1665), where Spinoza asserts that evil deeds, as far as they are evil, do not express essence, and as far as they express essence they are not evil. Therefore every singular thing as it is in the infinite intellect has the mind-independent perfection of full existence, but it also has mind-dependent properties: a flower may have the mind-independent perfections that results from the fact that it was caused by God, and also the mind-independent perfection that its mutilated perception creates pleasure in a particular human individual, but the experience created by the mutilated perception is a mind-dependent phenomenal state. Thus, an idea as far as



it is true – i.e. the aspect of the idea which is adequate – exists and is rational, and as far as it is false – i.e. the aspect of the idea which is inadequate – is an inexplicable phenomenal state.

## 5. Conclusion

In this thesis I have presented the problem of the source of error in Spinoza's *Ethics* and the existing interpretations of it. I have shown that they are inconsistent and fail to account for the error in Spinoza's philosophy. The reason behind their failure is that they try to interpret Spinoza according to Cartesian lines and claimed that error arises because of a wrong kind of relationship between the idea and its object which was clearly rejected by Spinoza. I presented my interpretation according to which adequacy is an intrinsic property of the idea, and I argued that falsity is therefore a mind-dependent phenomenal property.

Now I want to go back to the nine puzzles introduced in chapter 2 and present them in thematic order. About the (1) puzzle concerning the scope of imagination I have shown that imaginative ideas are inadequate because they involve many lower level ideas as constituent parts of which ideas they do not explicate; therefore, the mind is unable to perceive these ideas distinctly. In this way it is the most common function of the finite mind that it has ideas about more things than which it is able to conceive distinctly. Thus (5) the same idea can be false in the finite mind and true in the infinite intellect, since ideas are not false by virtue of their positive properties, but by virtue of the privation in them and of their explicatory relationship to their constituent parts. Therefore the same idea can involve the same constituent ideas, and explicate their constituents in the infinite intellect and not explicate them in the finite mind.

Concerning the question (4) about expression in behavior: since imagination is produced by the inability of the subject to order the parts of its body according to the intellect – which is necessary to accord with external objects –, most beings can only have imaginative mental life and therefore

it is reasonable that the more a mode imagines, the less it will be able to express its experience in behavior.<sup>123</sup>

I argued (3) that we are conscious of all ideas, but not necessarily conscious of them distinctly. Therefore I may consciously know the events happening in my pancreas, but because my knowledge about these events is part of a very mixed idea, I cannot distinctly conceive my idea of the event in my pancreas without the other parts of the confused higher level idea.

I have demonstrated (6) that adequate knowledge is possible, since when the finite mind has adequate knowledge it always has distinct ideas about the constituents of that idea, which constituent ideas do not need to be adequate. I can have an adequate idea of my visual perception of the sun, if that idea explicates the idea of the external cause of my visual perception and the idea of my body. I have also claimed (7) that the idea that the sun is 200 feet away is not an idea of the sun strictly speaking, but rather an idea about the visual experience that is produced in our nervous system and thus the idea is representing this fact adequately even when the mind is unaware of this fact.

I have also shown, contrary to Della Rocca, that (8) there are no partially existing modes strictly speaking, only different modes conceived together and not distinctly, while inadequate ideas are only existing as mind-dependent phenomenal states. Therefore differing from Della Rocca's view (9) adequate ideas in the infinite intellect and inadequate ideas in the finite mind are only identical as far as the idea in the finite mind is adequate. However, as far as that idea is inadequate, it will be different from the adequate idea of the infinite intellect, since the idea in the intellect is an existing thing, while the inadequate idea is a mind-dependent phenomenal belief.

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<sup>123</sup> The defense of Spinoza's panpsychism falls outside of the scope of the present thesis.

Finally, I summarize (2) the representational character of imagination. Knowledge of the first kind is produced when the cause of the idea is not inhering fully either in the subject or in the *ideatum*, but rather inheres in a singular thing that is partially overlapping with the subject and the *ideatum* and therefore both the *ideatum* and the *objectum* of the idea are partially outside of the mode. Imagination thus produces inadequate ideas because the ideas produced are involving but not explicating its constituents – namely both the body and the *ideatum* – and therefore the mind applies these ideas to objects which are only partial but not adequate causes of the idea and which are therefore confusedly and not distinctly represented in it.

**Appendix 1: Number of occurrences of central terms related to imagination in the text**

	Imagine, imagination, imaginary	Image	Memory	Recollect, recollection
1p8s2	1			
1p15s	2[1]			
1App	17			
2p17s	9	1		
2p18	4	2	1	2
2p25	3			
2p35	6			
2p40s1	7	11		1
2p40s2	2			1
2p44c1	14			1
2p47s	1	1		
2p48s		1		
2p49s1-2	5	6		
3Post2		2		

3p2	1	1	3	5
3p11s	2			1
3p12	4			
3p13	7			2
3p14	2			1
3p15cd	2			
3p16	1	1		
3p17	3			
3p18	1	15		
3p19	6	1		
3p20	3	1		
3p21	3	2		
3p22	4			
3p23	8			
3p24	2			
3p25	5			
3p26	3			
3p27	9	1		

3p28	6			
3p29	5			
3p30	9			
3p31	4			
3p32	5	1		
3p33	1			
3p34	3			
3p35	7	6		
3p36	2			1
3p39	1			
3p40	12			
3p41	3			
3p42	2			
3p43	3			
3p45	3			
3p47	3	4	2	2
3p48	1			
3p49	6			

3p51	1			
3p52	7			1
3p53	4			
3p54	2			
3p55	9			
3p56	1			
3p59s	2	2		
DefAff	21[2]	5	1	2
4Pre	1			
4d6	8			
4p1	9			
4p9	11	3		
4p10	8		1	
4p11	4			
4p12	15	1		
4p13	4	2	1	
3p16	1			
4p20s	1			



4p34s	1			
4p57s	1			
4p59s		3		
4p62s	2	2		
4App	1	1		
5p1		1		
5p5	8			
5p6s	1			
5p7	2			
5p10s	4	2	1	
5p11		2		
5p12		3[1]		
5p13		4		
5p14		1		
5p20	3			
5p21	3		1	2
5p23			1	2
5p32s	1			

5p34	3		1	
5p39	1		1	
5p40c	1			
$\Sigma$	354	89	14	24

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