

SPINOZA Ethics- I -P7

I -P7 It pertains to the nature of a substance to exist.

The basic point to be made is that there is no substance. If there is no substance then it has no nature and it does not exist. The point will be made by examining a number of concrete areas which are generally thought to have substantial elements, or loosely to be substantial in nature. The substantial aspects of these areas of experience are basically conceptual extra baggage that do not add to our understanding and therefore can be discarded. These concrete experiential areas are space and time, person, social objects and God. Having explored concrete areas in which substance does not exist, the generalization will be made that substance does not exist.

Space and Time

Leibnitz starts the attack on substance when he states in his correspondence with Clarke (1) that there is no reason for God to create here rather than there or now rather than then if space and time are absolute rather than relative. This is especially true of God's first act of creation; there is no preceding cause. But it is also true that in any act of isolated creation, absolute time and space operating independently of things. Time and space are to be filled up by spacial and temporal objects being placed in them like objects in a jar.

A relative property depends on circumstances. Einstein put forth a Special Theory of Relativity in 1905 that states that time and space are relative to inertial frames of reference. If you are within a frame of reference, for instance, seeing two firecrackers explode at opposite ends of a train in which you are in the middle, the separate activities are seen as simultaneous. From a frame of reference at a distance the nearer firecracker will seem to go off first. In his General Theory of Relativity of 1915 gravity or acceleration affect time such that time is slowed down by a sufficiently heavy object or at a sufficiently fast speed away from an object.

Also, Einstein puts forward the hole argument against substantial space and time.

In a hole in space, a section of space with nothing in it, a substantivalist would say there is something in the hole, space and time, and what and where in the hole is automatic and absolute. The theories of relativity prove that what is outside the hole does not determine a unique structure within the hole. The hole is seen differently from different places and at different speeds outside the hole. So there must be absolute and at the same time varying timespace occurrences within the hole. The hole seems to have determinate and indeterminate properties at the same time. Determinism holds and does not hold in the hole at the same time and this is impossible.

Addis has an argument against absolute time:

A substance, being a continuant, may have a property at one moment and not have it at another. Let 'a' name the substance, 'f' the property. Then 'f(a)' and ' \sim f(a)' are both true. But this is a contradiction. The only way out is to add time in a way that makes f a relation between a and a moment. That yields 'f(a,t1)' and ' \sim f(a,t2)' which of course do not contradict each other. But this also shows that the price is absolute time. (177)

In a recent book, Possibly writing a newer version of Leibniz's monad, Julian Barbour an English physicist, has an alternative to absolute time and space.

A radical alternative put forward by Newton's rival Leibniz provides my central idea. The world is to be understood, not in the dualistic terms of atoms (things of one kind) that move in a framework and container of space and time (another quite different kind of thing), but in terms of more fundamental entities that fuse space and matter into the single notion of a possible arrangement, or configuration, of the entire universe. Such configurations, which can be fabulously richly structured, are the ultimate things. There are infinitely many of them; they are all different instances of a common principle of construction; and they are all, in my view, the different instants of time. In fact, many people who have written about time have conceived of instants of time in a somewhat similar way, and have called them 'nows'. (11)

Laird Addis and Gustav Bergmann are providing the subjective aspects of a

relativistic universe.

As I see the matter, the basic truth in phenomenalism, as an analysis of physical objects, is that everything can be analyzed ontologically into momentary particulars with their properties and standing in certain relations to each other, that is, into entities that are like sense data in themselves. (16)

I shall state it for a sense data language, that is, for a language whose particulars (proper names) refer to the sort of momentary givenness many philosophers call sense data and whose undefined predicates (of the first type) designate qualities of and relations between sense data. (17)

Person

Below is the picture of a human being as Bergmann and Addis see him or her.

A world in which there are minds contains not only characteristic "existents" but also a characteristic logical constituent. This constituent is expressed by 'means', whenever it is used in such sentences as '(the thought that) Peter is blond means that Peter blond.' (18)

Sensing, perceiving, thinking, remembering, imagining are kinds of an act. What is sensed, perceived, thought of, and so on, is the intention of an act. (19)

...that the greatest gulf is not that between the mental and the physical but that between the intentional and the nonintentional. (20)

The above quotes give us a picture of a person that is aware of intentional things in the various modes of perceiving, thinking, remembering, etc. , momentarily or in 'nows'.

And the biggest problem with this is as Addis says:

.. a misleading assumption, to put it rather roughly and somewhat paradoxically, that the "I" who knows what is being imagined is the same "I" who is imagining. (16)

God

Addis presents the substance ontology:

A kind of doing or activity (or the disposition to it) is part of the nature of substance. A substance generating its own accidents is a case of what was known as immanent causality.

(17)

Transeunt causality, the thrust of one substance producing accidents in another, was introduced by some philosophers into the substance metaphysics. (18)

And Addis calls for a solution an inadequate ontology that leaves too much confusion.

As long as one works with an anthropomorphic (voluntaristic) notion of cause, the mind/body problem will remain a mystery...The solution of the problem requires the rejection of that notion of cause which traditionally goes with substance ontology's. (19)

But giving up immanent causality for transeunt causality has been resisted:

Why have substance philosophers always felt uneasy about transeunt causality?...The very model of explanation on such a scheme is an appeal to the nature of the thing undergoing change. Within this kind of metaphysics it is therefore "counterstructural" or ad hoc to explain a change in one substance by appealing to another substance or to its nature. (20)

The resistance has come notably by the Catholic Church (and Possibly Aristotelian

Moslems ?). Maybe the choice of DesCartes and Newton in combination with the present inadequate state of psychological research is part of the problem. The solution may be more along the lines of Leibnitz and Spinoza. The world works by a combination of transeunt causality and immanent causality. Immanent causality is vertical causality. Transeunt causality is horizontal causality. But vertical causality is not anthropomorphic. The anthropomorphic aspects of God are gone. God is vertical causality. Ideas have been replaced by natural signs that are coordinated and dependent on brain states. Free floating ideas no longer exist in the universe or in God. God is vertical causality. Change is now more complicated involving legal structures internal to all things and interactions among things. This is the definition of relativity. Spontaneous self generating change has been discarded. Unconnected sponteneity-substance-has been discarded from our understanding of spacetime, person, God, social objects, each concrete objective context of substance and in the redefinition of how the world works substance has disappeared.

Natural Signs vs Ideal Language

There seems to be disagreement on the ontological status of non veridical acts and also one would think possibly of the ontological status of counterfactuals between Bergmann and Addis.

What is the connection between these odd properties of the sort that-Stassen-is-President and the (in this case non-existent) fact which is object of the act? Bergmann has claimed it to be a meaning connection, a logical relation such that any true statement to the effect that a certain character means a certain state of affairs, e.g., 'that-Stassen-is-President means Stassen is President,' is analytic and any false one contradictory....he (Bergmann) still seems to feel that the dialectic forces one to grant some ontological status to the nonexistent states of affairs which are the intentions of non veridical acts. ~~(//)~~

Art and religion seem opposed to science and mathematics. Logical positivism seems opposed to existentialism. An ideal language pinpoints exact meanings;

properties and relations of particulars. There is nothing left over in an ideal language description. But, I think it could be said that, Addis and Bergmann do not see the world as represented by an ideal language as the most accurate picture of the world that is represented in the human mind. Addis has given us the concept of natural signs as the best way of getting at how the mind works. Natural signs have the ability of symbolizing non-existent things.

It seems impossible that human beings should be able to have an idea of something that does not exist, a counterfactual, if that idea must be a representation produced in the mind directly by the thing that is represented. An intermediate entity, which Addis calls a natural sign (2), seems needed. These natural signs are of the mind and stand between the world and the body. More recently (3) following Susan Langer and in the company of Ernst Cassirer and Charles Sanders Peirce (?), Addis has called for a redirection of the science of psychology toward a thorough investigation of the realm of mental symbolism. Art, religion, ethics, and more mundane areas of human experience will remain a mystery until this science progresses, he believes. Ultimately, the task of such a science, which has eluded psychology to date, would be to formulate laws. Substance ontology draws directly from the insufficiently, as evidenced by the disagreement of Addis and Bergmann, as yet understood capacity of natural signs to represent the non-existent. As the science of signs progresses we will clarify the issue further.

Just an extra note, Addis dealt with social objects like marriage, family, church, state, labor unions, political parties etc., objects we might call quasi-substantial in his book The Logic of Society. He adopted a view he called descriptive individualism, a view that:

...there are no social objects, that is, that all properties of social objects can be defined in terms of the properties of individual persons and things... (4)

Substance

Addis gives us a picture of the substance ontology below:

Two kinds of substances. A physical substance is one which is in both space and time; a mental or nonphysical substance is one only in time. Substances are said to have natures. The two kinds of substances distinguished above were said to have spacial extension and thinking as their respective natures or "essences." (11)

Think of "kinds of substance" as a way that makes men, lions and elm trees all different kinds of substances. One important feature of nature is that it is or "contains" the "defining" properties of a substance-kind. For example, the nature of man (so we are told) is his rationality and his animality...A substance is said to act or react or do by it's nature. the is, or is the seat of, certain dispositions to act or behave in certain ways. (11)

The problem with the substance ontology is:

In barest outline, the argument is that a contradiction arises from the conjunction of the two propositions (1) that literally the same particular at one time exemplifies a certain property and at another time does not exemplify that same property and (2) that there are no moments. If one wants to preserve the second of these propositions, one must reject the first and conclude that no particular undergoes change of property, that is that there are no substances in the ontological sense. (11)

Page 1 and 2

* A side note might be stated. Spinoza is going from nature to existence in P7, but if substance does not exist then the specifics of how it might have existed can be seen as of secondary interest.

* The background of the relativist vs absolutist notion of time and space and a preference for a configuration of richly structured instants of time or 'nows' is given by Julian Barbour in his recent new theory of timespace. It is reminiscent of Sartre's current instants of consciousness cut off from the past and future that he talks about in Being and Nothingness.

(X)

Ideal Language (Person)

What a person is are concrete acts of understanding . We remember or perceive things in the world and these acts are momentary as we said above.

A problem coexists with our use of vernacular languages as opposed to mathematics or ideal languages in that words and sentences are not specific enough. For instance, the word black means many things at once, always. Black means a color, and a feeling of oppressiveness, and the opposite of white, and a wavelength, and night, and a cat, and darkness, and emptiness, and a formal dress color, etc. A word means as many associations that a person or a culture have given it and when words are combined for the sake of specificity at the same time imprecision grows, for instance in the phrase, "in the

black of night the water.” With each added word more associations grow around the described situation to be specified.

The person and self grows out of and is sustained by all this imprecision of language. In a sense any language statement other than in an ideal language which always means exactly what it says (and to a lesser degree mathematics) is always poetry (art) and is always being put together by that very indistinct entity the person or poet. But as Addis and Bergmann described what is really happening in each concrete moment or ‘now’ of consciousness we do not see this poet.

The quotes above give us a picture of a person that is aware of intentional things in various modes of perceiving, thinking, remembering, etc. , momentarily or in ‘nows’.

God

It seems impossible that human beings should be able to have an idea of something that does not exist, a counterfactual, if that idea must be a representation produced directly by the thing that is represented. Since this seems impossible, in intermediate entity, which Addis calls a natural sign seems needed. These natural signs are of the mind and stand between the world and the body. But also Spinoza says of ideas in Ethics, II, P7 stand in the same order and connection as things. It seems that the contents of our minds stand in a parallelism with brain states of our bodies. Evidence for this is that we seem to think of nothing when we are knocked out. We do dream when we sleep, but we know the difference between dreaming and being awake. We know of no entity connected to a physical structure including possibly an artificial physical structure that displays the conditions we call thinking.

Consciousness is a psycho physical parallelism. Spinoza and all who use the term idea in a free floating way of describing what minds do rather than as natural signs tied to brain states create another substantial entity beyond the actually functioning operating processes that are going on. The grandest (by definition and association) substantial entity ever created God. Examined as a functioning process we see the laws of the universe or vertical causality. And humans use the concept to explore our human condition

when we make the "God who made man" as Fierbach discovered. We continue to explore all the profound relations such as space, time, person, state, family, etc. that mark off areas of human to reality interaction. But the substantial God no longer adds anything to the discussion. Only relational concrete descriptions of human interactions with other entities and their properties in the world or in our minds any longer advances God.

Social Objects

The above is the position of Addis on social objects in his book Logic of Society. Marriage, family, state, church, labor unions, and political parties all fall before it. We might call these quasi-substantial or second order substantial entities. They are twice removed from reality. The self we have said is extra baggage over and above experienced momentary particulars in whatever mode they are experienced. Social objects have no existence beyond individual persons and things. What does coupleness of a couple add to the interactions of two people? Where is the family or state when individuals are subtracted from the concept?

And on the negative side of thinking of social objects as entities in their own rights is the problem that something does not exist, but is believed in can be used to support anything, as it really has no characteristics of its own, characteristics can be created for it and then used as they are for every above concept to enforce an allegiance to authority. If something has no real properties but those that are supplied it in order to gain allegiance and conformity, how can it be reasonably argued against? Obedience not understanding is the point of their existence. The cult of the existence of non-existents.

It is not that there will be no marriage, family, state, church, labor unions, political parties, etc. But that our understanding of what they are changes. We might say when thinking of each of them that their sum is not greater than their parts. Each of the above is a label for a group of the properties and relation of individual persons and things, but there is nothing left over once those properties and relations have been described.

Quasi substantial objects often collect emotions and confusion (mystery). Something seems to collect around any actual empirical description of properties and

relations. Gender with sex, race with geography and biology, art with science. When we look at here vs. there, now vs. then, this vs. that, we seem to be unable not to absolutize the relative. Concrete properties and relations of situations become ethical systems. It seems to me Wagner is no less at fault in this than Luther or the pope

What is the connection between these odd properties of the sort that-Stassen-is-President and the (in this case non-existent) fact which is object of the act? Bergmann has claimed it to be a meaning connection, a logical relation such that any true statement to the effect that a certain character means a certain state of affairs, e.g., 'that-Stassen-is-President means Stassen is President,' is analytic and any false one contradictory....he (Bergmann) still seems to feel that the dialectic forces one to grant some ontological status to the nonexistent states of affairs which are the intention..

s of non veridical acts. (U)

There seems to be disagreement on the ontological status of non veridical acts and also one would think possibly of the ontological status of counterfactuals between Bergmann and Addis. What effect the reality behind this disagreement would have on our topic of the ` of substance is unclear and call for further investigation. I am noting this but also ignoring it presently

REFERENCES

- Alexander, H. G., editor. 1956. *Leibnitz Correspondence with Clarke*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Addis, Laird. 1989. *Natural Signs: A Theory of Intentionality*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Addis, Laird. 1999. *Of Mind and Music*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Addis, Laird. 1965. *Ryle's Ontology of Mind*. In *Moore and Ryle: Two Ontologists*. Laird Addis and Douglas Lewis, Editors. Iowa City: University of Iowa.
- Addis, Laird. 1975. *The Logic of Society*. St. Paul: North Central Publishing Co.
- Barbour, Julian. 2000. *The End of Time: The Next Revolution in Physics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bergmann, Gustav. 1964. *Logic and Reality*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Bergmann, Gustav. 1954. *Metaphysics of Logical Positivism*. New York: Langmans, Green and Co.