

Here is what we don't yet understand. If our necessary entanglement in the physical world makes pure, intuitive knowledge of our own bodies impossible, how can it *also* be true that the mind perceives everything that happens to the body (P12)? To reiterate the question that we asked earlier, if the mind is the idea of the body (P13), and if the mind has knowledge of everything that happens to the body (P12), then why is it that we understand so little of what actually goes on in our bodies? There seems to be a distinction between the mind's true and complete knowledge of the body on one level and its partial, empirical understanding of the body on another.

Your mind does indeed exist on two distinct 'levels'. *In its essence*, your mind is the true and complete idea of your body. But *in its finite existence*, your mind is the partial consciousness of your body's affect-*edness*. The former is God's idea in the infinite intellect: here, the mind is not a finite mode, but part of an infinite mode. The *essence* of your mind is therefore to be part of the infinite intellect and to be the clear, distinct and complete idea of your body, as described in P12. But when it is expressed as an *actually existing finite mode*, your mind is expressed *along with* the other finite modes that you constantly interact with. Here, God actively conceives your mind together with 'a great many other ideas' (P19Dem). From God's perspective, each idea is conceived distinctly. But our finite minds are *being conceived* along with many other ideas, meaning that our own thinking is necessarily entangled with those other ideas. Your mind, in its finite existence, is *necessarily entangled with* the ideas of external things; in Spinoza's phrase, it is 'confused' with them.

As an example, take the experience you are having right now: the experience of reading this book. In essence, you and the book are distinct modes, the ideas of which exist distinctly in the infinite intellect. But in existence, you and the book are not distinct: your hands, eyes and brain are being physically affected and changed by the book, and your mind is being impressed with an image of the book's idea. This experience can be described as God conceiving your mind *together with* the idea of the book (see P11C); although God understands both you

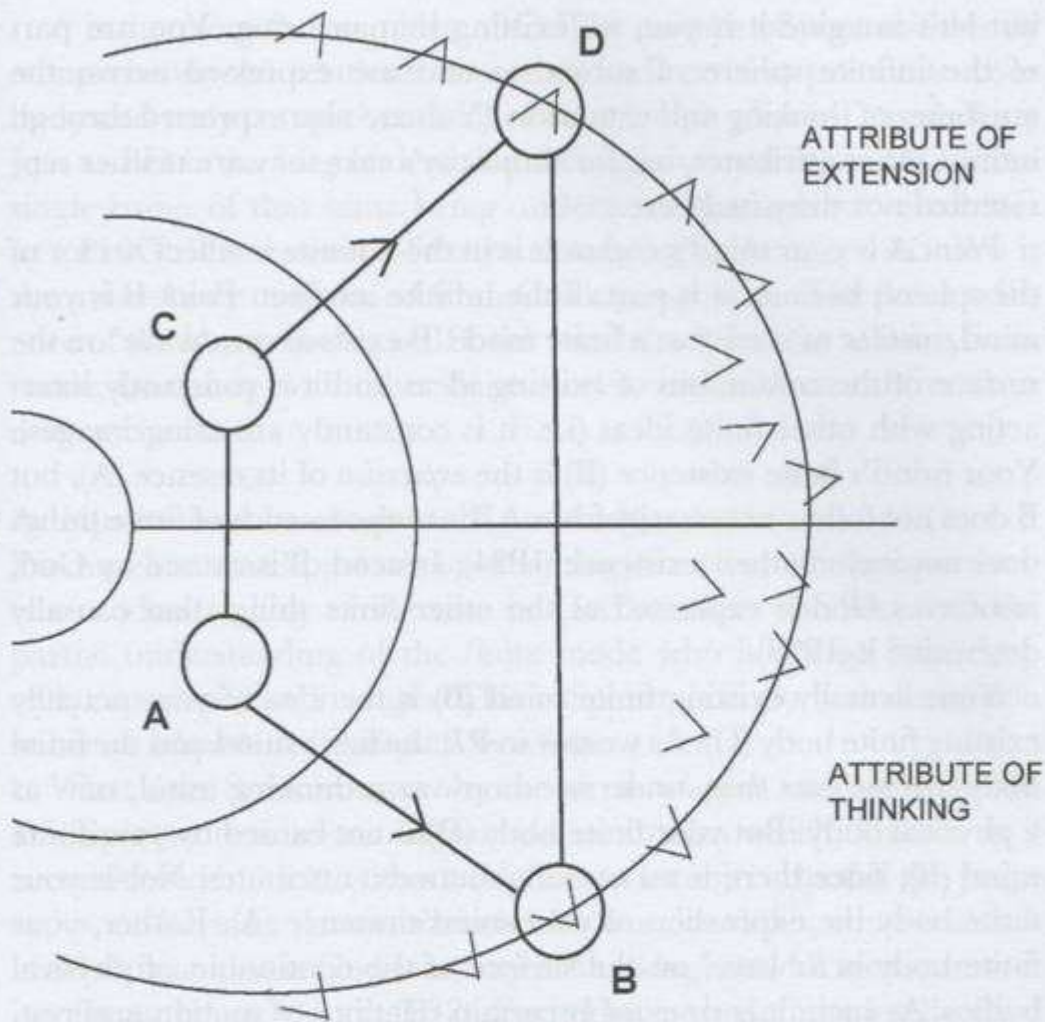


Figure 2.2 The structure of the finite individual

and the book clearly and distinctly, *you* cannot understand the nature of the book distinctly from your own senses, nor can you understand your body distinctly from the book you hold. Being a finite mode necessarily involves this physical and mental ‘confusion’ with other finite modes, and thus your finite mind cannot *exist as* the full, true, ‘clear and distinct’ idea of the body, which it is in its essence.

So, how do we exist at both of these ‘levels’ simultaneously? Figure 2.2 illustrates how our essence is *expressed* as our finite existence and how the human mind–body fits into the structure of reality as I explained it in ‘Part I: Being, Substance, God, Nature.’ (Figure 2.2 builds on Figure 1.5.)

ABDC represents one finite individual. It could be any individual,

but let's imagine it is you, an existing human being. You are part of the infinite sphere of substance and are expressed across the attributes of thinking and extension. (You are also expressed through infinite other attributes, but for simplicity's sake they are neither represented nor discussed here.)

Point A is your mind's *essence*. It is in the 'infinite intellect' sector of the sphere, because it is part of the infinite intellect. Point B is your mind, insofar as it *exists* as a finite mode. B exists as one 'wave' on the surface of the continuum of existing ideas and it is constantly interacting with other finite ideas (i.e. it is constantly amassing images). Your mind's finite existence (B) is the *expression* of its essence (A), but B does not follow necessarily from A, since the essence of finite things does not include their existence (IP24). Instead, B is caused by God, insofar as God is expressed as the other finite things that causally determine it (IP28).

Your actually existing finite mind (B) is the idea of your actually existing finite body (D). As we saw in P7, the finite mind and the finite body are *the same thing*, understood now as a thinking mind, now as a physical body. But your finite body (D) is not caused by your finite mind (B), since there is no causality between attributes. Nor is your finite body the expression of your mind's essence (A). Rather, your finite body is a 'wave' on the surface of the continuum of physical bodies. As such, it is *expressed by* certain relations of motion and rest, relations which are part of the infinite mode of 'motion and rest'. There is a certain set of relations of motion and rest that pertains specifically to your body and that determines you as the individual that you are (see L1). That set of relations is represented by Point C. Your actual body (D) is not caused by C, for the same reason that B is not caused by A.

Point C can therefore be understood as the 'essence' of your body: the complete set of relations of motion that your body is capable of. Just as your actually existing mind (B) is the partial expression of its essence (A), 'confused' with many other ideas, your actually existing body (D) is the partial expression of *its* essence (C), 'confused' with many other bodies. Your finite body is constantly interacting with other finite bodies, some of which preserve your body, others of which decompose it. The bodily interactions that happen at D correspond to the images amassed at B.

A is therefore the true idea of C. The essence of your mind truly comprehends the relations of motion and rest that pertain to your body and truly comprehends all of your body's physical capabilities. Just as BD is *one being* understood through two attributes, AC is the single *essence* of that same being understood through two attributes (see P10C). The essence of the human being is therefore AC: this is the mind-body understood from God's perspective. The finite existence of the human being is BD: the mind-body insofar as it is a finite mode, bound up with other finite modes, and understood from our own perspective.

Adequate and Inadequate Knowledge

We now see that Spinoza's epistemology involves two perspectives: true understanding as it exists in God's infinite intellect and the partial understanding of the finite mode who is always bound up with experience and images. This is Spinoza's important distinction between *adequate and inadequate knowledge*.

What does Spinoza mean by the terms *adequate* and *inadequate*? In D4, Spinoza defined an *adequate idea* as an idea which, 'insofar as it is considered in itself, without relation to an object, has all the properties, or intrinsic denominations of a true idea'. So, what is a true idea? A true idea is God's activity of thinking, and all ideas are true insofar as they are God's (P32). Each idea in the infinite intellect is a true idea *of* some object (see IA6). But it is not their correspondence to an object that makes ideas true. Rather, it is the intrinsic truth of the ideas that allows us to understand their correspondence (P43S). Here is an example Spinoza gives to clarify this in his earlier text, the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*:

If an architect conceives a building in proper fashion, although such a building has never existed nor is ever likely to exist, his thought is nevertheless a true thought, and the thought is the same whether the building exists or not. On the other hand, if someone says, for example, that Peter exists, while yet not knowing that Peter exists, that thought in respect to the speaker is false, or, if you prefer, not true, although Peter really exists. The statement 'Peter exists' is true only in respect of one who knows for certain that Peter exists. (TEI 69, CW 19)