

INHERENCE OF FALSE BELIEFS IN SPINOZA'S *ETHICS*

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Abstract. In this paper I argue, based on a comparison of Spinoza's and Descartes's discussion of error, that beliefs are affirmations of the content of imagination that is not false in itself, only in relation to the object. This interpretation is an improvement both on the winning ideas reading and on the interpretation reading of beliefs. Contrary to the winning ideas reading it is able to explain belief revision concerning the same representation. Also, it does not need the assumption that I misinterpret my otherwise correct ideas as the interpretation reading would have it. In the first section I will provide a brief overview of the notion of inherence and its role in Spinoza's discussion of the status of finite minds. Then by examining the relation between Spinoza's and Descartes' distinction of representations and attitudes, I show that affirmation can be identified with beliefs in Spinoza. Next, I will take a closer look at the identification of intellect and will and argue that Spinoza's identification of the two is based on the fact that Spinoza sees both as the active aspect of the mind. After that, I analyze Spinoza's comments on the different scopes of will and intellect, and argue that beliefs are affirmations of the imaginative content of the idea. Finally, through Spinoza's example of the utterance of mathematical error, I present my solution to the problem of inherence of false beliefs.

Keywords: Spinoza, Descartes, belief, inherence, intellect, will, imagination, affirmation, error, falsity

Introduction

The status of false beliefs – as opposed to the status of inadequate ideas – is a hotly debated topic in Spinoza scholarship. The question of inadequacy on its own does not seem to pose a problem: the sun seems to be small and close because the celestial body affects my body in a specific manner. Since this idea showing the sun to be small and close is an idea of imagination and not complete, it is inadequate. But what is the status of my false belief that the sun not only seems to be small and close, but it is indeed small and 200 feet away (cf. E2p35s, E4p1s)?¹

Concerning this question there have been two radically different answers. On the one hand, there are those who argue that the very distinction that this question

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presupposes, namely the distinction between ideas and beliefs, is incomprehensible in Spinoza's philosophical framework. In E2p48-49, among others, Spinoza famously maintains that all ideas involve affirmation or negation, they are not like mute pictures. That is, my belief that the sun is 200 feet away is just my idea showing the sun to be 200 feet away.² On the other hand, there are those who argue that the distinction between ideas and beliefs is intelligible in Spinoza and we should read beliefs as interpretations of ideas. That is, when I erroneously believe the sun to be 200 feet away I interpret my idea showing the sun to be small and close – possibly in light of my other ideas – as involving the affirmation that the sun is 200 feet away.³

As I will argue later in this article, both interpretations are problematic for a number of reasons. However, the problem affecting both interpretations, on which I will focus in this article, is the question of the inherence of these false beliefs. False beliefs – be simply ideas, or interpretations of ideas – are modes of thinking that are false. However, everything is in (or to use the technical term: inheres in) God, including these false beliefs (E1p15). And ideas are supposed to be true insofar as they are related to God (E2p32). And this has unwelcome ramifications for both interpretations: on the one hand, if the false belief is just the idea, as the first interpretation maintains, and every idea inheres in God, then one has to be able to explain how false ideas can inhere in God. On the other hand, if false beliefs are interpretations of ideas, these interpretations are presumably also modes of thinking, which have to inhere ultimately in God and therefore, again, it needs to be explained how false ideas can inhere in God.

In this paper I argue, based on a comparison of Spinoza's and Descartes's discussion of error, that in Spinoza beliefs are affirmations⁴ of the content of imagination. On my reading actually there are no false beliefs, only beliefs that are inadequate in relation to their object. In the first section I will provide a brief overview of the notion of inherence and its role in Spinoza's discussion of the status of finite minds. In the second section by examining the relation between Spinoza's and Descartes' distinction of representations and attitudes I show that affirmation can be identified with beliefs in Spinoza. In the third section I will take a closer look at the identification of intellect and will, and argue that Spinoza's identification of the two is based on the fact that Spinoza sees both as the active aspect of the mind. In the fourth section I analyze Spinoza's comments on the different scopes of will and intellect, and argue that beliefs are affirmations of the imaginative content of the idea. In the fifth section through Spinoza's example of the utterance of mathematical error I present my solution to the problem of inherence of false beliefs. In the conclusion I summarize my argument and how it improves on the existing interpretations.

Inherence and finite minds

Spinoza defines the substance as what is in itself (inheres in itself) and the modes as what is in another (inheres in something else) (E1d3, E1d5). Historically inherence is a relation between a substance and its accidents, and it has been claimed that this relation is defined by predication: substances cannot be predicated of other things, while accidents can be predicated of other things.⁵ As Curley noted, however, "ordinary finite things are of the wrong logical type to be predicable of anything".⁶

Therefore, he interpreted inherence relation as efficient causation: the mode is in the substance because the substance is the efficient cause of the mode.

This interpretation has been challenged both on historical⁷ and textual grounds,⁸ and it has been argued that inherence should be understood along the traditional lines. This understanding, however, raises the problem of partial inherence: what do inadequately caused modes inhere in? Two different interpretations have been proposed in order to answer this question. First, according to Della Rocca, inherence, causation and existence are just different expressions of conceptual dependence, and therefore the effect inheres partially in its partial causes.⁹ Second, according to Garrett and Melamed, there are two different kinds of inherence: causation by eternal entities implies inherence (immanent causation), while causation by finite entities does not (transient causation). When the substance causes its infinite or finite modes, these modes are in the substance, but when a number of finite modes cause another finite mode together, the effect is not in its causes: there is no way in which we could make sense of the claim that the table is partially in the carpenter.¹⁰

Both readings have advantages: Della Rocca's is more consistent with other aspects of Spinoza's metaphysics,¹¹ while Garrett and Melamed are historically better situated. However, the problem of inherence is not only a metaphysical problem, it is also a problem about the unity of nature in Spinoza. According to Spinoza's philosophy of mind there is an idea of my body in God which is supposedly adequate given the fact that it is in God (E2p32). Also, there is an idea of my body that constitutes my mind and that we know to be very confused (E2p23, E2p27). This presents the problem of "two minds" and of the validity of subjective experience: what do the ideas of the finite mind inhere in and what is their relation to the ideas in the infinite intellect?¹²

There are three possible answers. First, on Della Rocca's reading the inadequate idea is a less perfect and less real version of God's idea only partially inhering in anything, and what really exists is the idea as it is in God. The inadequacy that essentially belongs to the finite perspective becomes a principle of non-being.¹³ Second, there is a similar possible position, according to which although there are no degrees of existence finite modes do not inhere in anything fully because all finite modes exist for the same degree as illusions. What really exists is the one substance: the idea as it is in God exists, the idea as it is in my subjective experience is an appearance. On both of these views, as I acquire adequate ideas and see things under a species of eternity, I become more real, but at the same time I also lose my finite perspective and subjectivity. These readings have a strong idealist undertone which was mainstream in the 19th century, but few would accept today.¹⁴ Third, the most widely accepted option is to claim that both the idea of the finite subject and the idea of God are real.¹⁵ This option, however, is only available if we can explain either what are inadequate ideas inhering in, or how can they inhere in God.

This is a problem because on the one hand, everything is supposed to inhere ultimately in God, and on the other hand, in God there are supposedly no inadequate ideas.¹⁶ The description of E2p11c would naturally imply that when I have an inadequate idea what I have is a partial grasp on the idea. However, my idea that the sun is 200 feet away is not a partial truth, it represents something that is not the case.¹⁷

This problem can be most naturally solved by appealing to different interpretations of the same idea: the idea in me actually represents the modification of my body, however, it can be interpreted as being about the external object,¹⁸ or I cannot distinguish the properties that it acquires in virtue of being my idea and in virtue of being my idea of its object,¹⁹ or in light of my social and historical context and the other ideas I have it acquires a fictitious interpretation.²⁰

This line of interpretation can easily account for the fact that a misrepresenting idea inheres in God: in imagination²¹ the natures of different bodies are necessarily mixed, and therefore I acquire a bodily modification that presents the sun as being small and close.²² However, as I have argued in the introduction, these interpretations need to account for the metaphysical status of beliefs. So, what I analyze in this paper is not how the misrepresenting idea is brought about, but rather the questions: what is the metaphysical status of my erroneous assent to a false interpretation of this idea (is this assent an idea, an aspect of an idea or a relation between different ideas etc.?) and how this assent can inhere in God given that all ideas are adequate in God and there is no form of falsity (E2p32)? In the next section I justify my claim that beliefs and ideas can – at least conceptually – be distinguished in Spinoza.

Beliefs and affirmations

In Spinoza's philosophy of mind the status of beliefs is unfortunately not as clear as one could wish for. In Descartes it is more or less uncontroversial that there are two types of ideas: first, ideas that are representations, and, second, attitudes toward these representations. These attitudes involve emotions, desires and volitions, as well as judgments. To this category belong modes of thought by which the mind judges about the content of the representations. This is what we would call today beliefs. This distinction has been most famously articulated in the *Meditations*:

Some of my thoughts are as it were the images of things, and it is only in these cases that the term 'idea' is strictly appropriate – for example, when I think of a man, or a chimera, or the sky, or an angel, or God. Other thoughts have various additional forms: thus when I will, or am afraid, or affirm, or deny, there is always a particular thing which I take as the object of my thought, but my thought includes something more than the likeness of that thing. Some thoughts in this category are called volitions or emotions, while others are called judgements.²³

This distinction is followed by Descartes's important claim that our representations are not erroneous in themselves: error only arises when the scope of my will is greater than the scope of my intellect.²⁴ In this case I affirm a representation as veridical even though it is not a clear and distinct idea, and therefore it can be misrepresenting. He has coupled this approach with a distinction between the free and active intellectual faculty²⁵ of will and the passive embodied faculty of representations and passions that became more pronounced in his later *The Passions of the Soul*.²⁶ On this view, since what is up to us is really our affirmation provided by our will, our moral responsibility is

grounded in this faculty.²⁷ This implies that on Descartes's view on theoretical philosophy (1) I should suspend my judgment concerning my ideas that are not clear and distinct, (2) affirm those ideas that are clear and distinct and use them to produce more clear and distinct ideas. This is exemplified by his famous example of the sun – also used by Spinoza, which I will discuss later –: although I have an imaginative idea of the sun, there (1) is no error in it as long as I do not affirm it as veridical. What I should do instead is (2) construct a different, intellectual idea of the sun which being clear and distinct I can affirm.²⁸

Spinoza modifies this picture in at least two important ways. First, he argues that free will is an illusion, and even what Descartes regarded as the active aspect of my mind is determined (E1app, E2p35s, E3p2s, E4prae).²⁹ Second, he argues that every idea, insofar as it is an idea, involves affirmation or negation (E2p49).³⁰ These two claims taken together might suggest the view that Spinoza simply rejects Descartes's distinction between the two classes of ideas and he held the view that mental life is “one dimensional”: representations are at the same time attitudes.

The general claim that Spinoza identifies beliefs with affirmations included in every idea is supported by Spinoza's discussion of the relationship of will and intellect in E2p48-49 where he explicitly engages the Cartesian doctrine. For example, in E2p49cs he claims to have rejected “what is commonly maintained to be the cause of error”, that is, by showing that intellect and will are identical he refutes the Cartesian claim that the will's free affirming of the ideas of the intellect is the source of error. Later in the same scholium he addresses the objections that a Cartesian is expected to raise, among which there are two objections that are relevant for our purposes: (1) that we know from experience that our will has a greater scope than our intellect and (2) that we know from experience that we can suspend judgment. I will come back to the discussion of this scholium later, but what I want to establish here is that while Spinoza tries to clarify the difference between his position and Descartes's position and calls attention to changes in his vocabulary (e.g. concerning the intellect), he is quite happy to identify affirmation with beliefs in the Cartesian sense.³¹ This seems to fit very well with the “one dimensional” reading of Spinoza.

If, however, we take a closer look at Spinoza's use of the idea of the sun – which is an obvious reference to Descartes' discussion of the same problem in the *Meditations* –, this reading becomes problematic.

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

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. (E4p1s, cf. E2p35s)³²

Here Spinoza refers to our everyday experience that even though as a child we might have believed that the sun is small and close, and later as an adult we believe that it is a huge star very far away, we nevertheless see the sun the same way. That is, we have different beliefs concerning the content of the same experience. And this is described in Spinoza as the claim that "the error is removed, not the imagination". Here, the perplexing claim is that imagination, which is "the idea of the sun, which explains its nature only so far as the body is affected by it", is "not contrary to the true, and do not disappear on its presence". In the Cartesian framework this would have been a standard claim: as we have seen the imaginative idea of the sun is not erroneous in Descartes's example, it is our judgment about it that can be true or false. However, as we have seen, one of Spinoza's central modifications of Descartes's theory was precisely the claim that every idea as an idea involves affirmation or negation.³³

In order to answer the question about how imaginations are not erroneous in themselves when every idea involves an affirmation two general lines of interpretation have been proposed, both of which presuppose a very different interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy of mind and ethics. Although different proponents of each line vary significantly, I will not be able to engage with every interpretation in detail. What I would like to show in the following is that there are those who try to maintain the identity of the representational content of ideas and beliefs, even in face of the difficulties described, and those who try to somehow reintroduce a distinction between representative ideas and judgments, even in face of Spinoza's apparent denial of this distinction. As I will argue, both general lines of interpretation have merits, but neither of them can account for the inherence of false beliefs.

According to the first line of interpretation, ideas have a potentially unlimited, externally directed motivating force. On this view we may not necessarily be able to talk about beliefs in the traditional sense in Spinoza because our will is just the set of winning ideas – the effects of stronger causes – on which the subject acts. This means that deciding what we want is not an all-or-nothing issue, rather a matter of degrees. When I am deliberating whether to drink the liquid in the cup in front of me, I have two – or potentially infinite number of – ideas concerning the nature of the liquid. One idea holds that it is water, the other idea that it is plutonium. Both ideas have some power, and the more powerful idea will be the winning idea on which I act and therefore it will qualify as my belief. The power of each idea is mostly determined by its causes, but of course its compatibility with my other powerful ideas also plays a role. I may have powerful ideas about my environment being a fairly normal household where the likelihood of a cup containing plutonium is relatively small. Even if the idea that the liquid is plutonium was originally very powerful because of my slightly paranoid mindset, the idea concerning my environment reduces the chance of its winning.³⁴

The problem with this reading is that it implies that the human mind has an infinite number of misrepresenting ideas involving false judgments. There is no problem in explaining how these ideas are formed: partial causation is ubiquitous and they can produce a number of different modes. But the problem is that on this interpretation, it is not the case that actually I have a veridical idea (e.g. that there is a cup of water in front of me or an idea that I have a bodily modification showing a cup of plutonium in front of me) that is then misinterpreted by my mind because of its lack of knowledge. I actually have an idea that there is a cup of plutonium in front of me, since the representational content of the given idea is just the judgment. This, however, raises the question: how can this idea be true insofar as it is related to God? Of course, Della Rocca can avoid the question by his notion of partial inherence which implies partial existence: my idea that there is a cup of plutonium in front of me is just less real than my idea that there is a cup of water in front of me. However consistent and ingenious this solution is, I agree with Melamed that as an interpretation of Spinoza, this is not a viable option: partial inherence and partial existence are notions widespread in German Idealism, but totally foreign in the early modern context generally, and in Spinoza's philosophy specifically.³⁵ Also, I do not see how this reading can maintain that imaginations are not erroneous in themselves: even if my idea that there is a cup of plutonium in front of me is a losing idea, the judgment involved in the idea is strictly speaking false.

According to the second line of interpretation, ideas are ultimately about ourselves and it is central for Spinoza's ethical project to limit the scope of our volitions to the actual object of our ideas, namely to our own body. On this interpretation, every externally oriented motivation is just the result of our will being corrupted by epistemically deficient inadequate ideas. Thus, beliefs are interpretations of ideas, or aspects of the ideas that are linked to the essence of the human mind. The central claim of this interpretation is that we can distinguish between two objects of the idea. On the one hand, there is the actual object (*objectum*) and content of the idea, which is the bodily modification with which the idea is identical. On the other hand, there is the interpretation of its content that is causally efficacious in the mind, and which identifies what the subject takes to be the object of the idea (*ideatum*).³⁶ That is, when I form the belief that there is a cup of plutonium in front of me, actually I have an idea that my body is modified by external causes in such a way that it presents the image of a cup of plutonium. However, it can happen that because of my less than perfect knowledge concerning the causes of this idea I interpret it as not being about the modification of my body, but rather about an external object, namely about the cup in front of me.³⁷

I argue that this reading does not solve the problem of false belief, since it did not provide a clear answer to the question what are false beliefs and what do they inhere in? On the winning idea reading beliefs were powerful ideas, on the interpretation reading they are interpretations: but what are actually these interpretations? On Spinoza's metaphysics the natural candidates are: an idea, a relation of ideas and an aspect of the idea.

First, the belief can be another idea about the original idea, but then in the case of false beliefs we have the same problem that apparently there is an idea in God

which is plainly false. Second, Malinowski-Charles has proposed that belief is the relation between the human mind and the idea that can either confirm the order of intellect or not.³⁸ However, on Spinoza's metaphysics "except for substances and modes there is nothing" (E1p15d) which claim is reflected in the basic commitment of Spinoza's philosophy of mind that there is no substrate behind its acts.³⁹ This is supported by Spinoza positively stating that the will and intellect are modes of thinking (E1p32d). Therefore, if relations are indeed beliefs, we need an account how relations can qualify as modes and then why it is not problematic that these apparently false modes of thought inhere in God. Third, belief could be an aspect of the idea. If it is an aspect of an idea, it is either a mode of thought, or not. If it is a mode of thought, then even if we don't call it an idea we have the original problem that there is a false mode of thought in God. If it is not a mode of thought, then we have the same problem confronted by Malinowski-Charles's interpretation that there does not seem to be metaphysical room for other entities than modes.⁴⁰

Identity of intellect and will

So far we have seen that the status of beliefs as affirmation poses a problem for Spinoza because of his commitment to two claims concerning the relation of affirmation and ideas. On the one hand, he has embraced the Cartesian view that imaginations are not erroneous in themselves, on the other hand, he has presented his revisionary view that every idea insofar as it is an idea involves affirmation. We have seen that two lines of interpretation tried to solve the problem. One line argued that beliefs are winning ideas, while a second line argued that beliefs are interpretations of ideas. As we have seen, neither interpretation could explain how false beliefs can inhere in God. On the idealist reading this is the result we could expect, since falsity is privation of not just knowledge, but also of existence: false ideas are strictly speaking illusions or non-beings. This position, however, entails the acosmist reading, according to which the subjective experience amounts to nothing, which is according to the majority of scholars foreign to Spinoza. This motivates the search for a better interpretation that can reconcile the existence of false beliefs with their inherence in God. I argue that the best place to look for such an interpretation is Spinoza's revisionary claim about the identity of intellect and will.

Spinoza's discussion of the identity of intellect and will is presented in E2p48-49. These propositions introduce a new topic relative to the earlier propositions, as it is evident from the fact that earlier propositions build upon one another, while the proposition closest to E2p48 cited in E2p48d is E2p11.⁴¹ E2p48 presents the claim that there is no free will in the mind. This is derived from the fact that every finite mode is caused by another finite mode (E1p28). In the scholium Spinoza situates E2p48-49 in his general attack on the Cartesian account. On his description, in E2p48 he has established that affirmations are modes of thought and as such determined. Next, in E2p49 Spinoza is set to elaborate on the question whether affirmations and ideas are two different things as Descartes held, or affirmations are nothing "beyond the very ideas of things." (E2p48s)⁴²

In E2p49 Spinoza answers this question negatively and presents his claim that in the mind affirmations and ideas are identical. The demonstration uses the example

of the affirmation of the sum of the angles of the triangle: in the first step Spinoza uses E2p48 in order to establish that affirmations are modes of thought. Then, he cites E2a3 to establish that for every affirmation there must be an idea. Then, he simply states that the given idea must involve the affirmation, from which he concludes by the definition of essence (E2d2) that: “affirmation pertains to the essence of the idea of the triangle and is nothing beyond it [and] it is nothing apart from the idea.” (E2p49d)⁴³ From the proposition the corollary is derived: since according to E2p48 “will and the intellect are nothing apart from the singular volitions and ideas themselves”⁴⁴ and by E2p49 “singular volitions and ideas are one and the same”⁴⁵ therefore intellect and will are one and the same.

In order to support his account and to highlight the difference between his and Descartes's notion of idea, Spinoza repeatedly rejects the “mute picture” view of ideas. In E2p48s Spinoza states that since ideas (as defined in E2d3) are conceptions of the mind, they are different from mere representations. Spinoza later elaborates:

I begin, therefore, by warning my readers, first, to distinguish accurately between an idea, *or* concept, of the mind, and the images of things which we imagine. [...] 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. [...] He will then understand clearly that an idea (since it is a mode of thinking) consists neither in the image of anything, nor in words. For the essence of words and of images is constituted only by corporeal motions, which do not at all involve the concept of thought. (E2p49cs)⁴⁶

It is obvious from the context that Spinoza's criticism is intended to be directed against Descartes's distinction between the two types of ideas when distinguishing between ideas and images, even though it is not obvious that Spinoza's criticism is well grounded.⁴⁷ The essence of images, we are told, is constituted by corporeal motion. This passage can be read as the claim that images are bodily modifications, while ideas are modes of thought, and Spinoza warns us that we should not confuse bodies with ideas. While this might be part of the story,⁴⁸ I think that there is more to this distinction. This is indicated by the use of the term imagination, which refers to mental entities.⁴⁹

I argue that Spinoza here distinguishes between the aspect of the idea that represents the bodily modification and the aspect of the idea that is the judgment about the representation. E2p17cs defined imagination as the use of ideas that present external bodies as present to us. On that description ideas of imagination are able to present external bodies to us because they are ideas of modifications of the body that

are caused by external bodies (cf. E2p16). If we read this description together with Spinoza's statement that imaginations are not erroneous in themselves (E2p17cs, E2p35s, E2p49cs, E4p1s),⁵⁰ then we can see Spinoza's point: namely that the representational content of the idea comes from the fact that it is the idea of a modification of the body, and therefore it is not erroneous. Spinoza therefore does not warn us that we should not confuse bodies with ideas, but rather that we should not think that there is nothing over and above the representation in the ideas.⁵¹

Thus, Spinoza's claim about the identity of will and intellect amounts to the claim that in every idea necessarily there is affirmation where the affirmation is the affirmation of the imaginative content. What remains to be seen is the question why does he formulate his claim about the parts or aspects of the ideas as a claim about the relation of will and intellect. In the next section I will focus on this problem.

Ideas, imagination and the intellect

In order to specify the relationship of intellect and will, I would like to focus first on Spinoza's discussion of the scope of will and intellect:

I say that I grant that the will extends more widely than the intellect, if by intellect they understand only clear and distinct ideas. But I deny that the will extends more widely than perceptions, *or* the faculty of conceiving. (E2p49cs)⁵²

Here, Spinoza immediately concedes that if we understand intellect as Descartes did, namely as the set of clear and distinct ideas, then the will has a wider reach than the intellect. However, he defines the intellect as all the ideas in virtue of being conceptions of the mind.⁵³ At this point, however, we should ask whether Spinoza is allowed to identify the intellect with all ideas we have and not just the clear and distinct ideas? After all, Spinoza states that:

The eternal part of the mind (by P23 and P29) is the intellect, through which alone we are said to act (by IIP3). But what we have shown to perish is the imagination (by P21), through which alone we are said to be acted on (by IIP3 and the Gen. Def. Aff.). (E5p40c)⁵⁴

E3p3 identifies ideas of bodily modifications adequately caused by us with our adequate ideas, therefore the reference to it suggests that the adequate ideas we have constitute the intellect, while the inadequate ideas we have constitute the imagination. If we also identify adequacy with clarity and distinctness, then Spinoza cannot make the move in E2p49cs and identify intellect with all ideas.⁵⁵ One could write this single locus off as either a claim made in an argumentative context, or as a slip of pen.

However, there are some reasons to doubt the interpretation that intellect and imagination are bifurcating sets of ideas. (1) First, this interpretation of distinct ideas of imagination and intellect implies that ideas of imagination are inadequate, which seems to be supported by the identification of the first kind of knowledge with imagination in E2p40s2. However, we have seen that Spinoza repeatedly stresses that

imaginings are not false in themselves. (2) Second, in E3p2s Spinoza refers back to E2p49 in order to support his claim that volitions do not differ from the imagination, which implies by transitivity of identity that the intellect does not differ from the imaginings; unless we are ready to write off the use of the term intellect in the whole of E2p49 as idiosyncratic to the argumentative context. (3) Third, in E5p7d Spinoza cites E2p38 to support his claim that we always imagine common notions in the same way. Common notions form the basis of our reason and the second kind of knowledge, and are necessarily adequate ideas (E2p38-39, E2p40s2). If, however, imaginings and intellect are the sets of inadequate and adequate ideas, respectively, how can we imagine adequate ideas?

In order to solve the problem, I argue, we should go back to the Cartesian context. As we have seen, in Descartes the will is the free faculty of our mind by which we are said to act. On Spinoza's characterization the same properties belong to the intellect: it is the principle of our freedom constituted by the mind's actions. Also, just as in Descartes our will is the source of our moral responsibility, in Spinoza the activity of the intellect is the source of our ethical good.⁵⁶ That the intellect is the activity of the mind is the common point in the use of the intellect in the two argumentative contexts: in E5p40cs the intellect is the action of the mind and in E2p49 intellect and will are the active affirmations that render the mute picture into a conception. And now, we should recall Spinoza's distinction of will and desire: there he states that the will is the affirmation of truth or falsity concerning some content, that is, he accepts the Cartesian definition of will.

In this context it is less surprising that will, understood as affirming, and intellect, understood as an active faculty, are identical. What is novel compared to the Cartesian account is the activity of intellect. On Descartes's description it was the passive faculty of perceiving. Let us recall: in Descartes the imagination and the intellect were the mind's passive powers by which the mind perceives things, while the will is the active power by which the mind judges of the representations and understandings provided by the imagination and intellect, respectively.⁵⁷

I argue that Spinoza's reformulation of this division in the *Ethics* in his identification of will and intellect amounts to the claim that both the intellect and the will are active powers of the mind and the only passive aspect is the imagination providing the representational content. Thus, I agree with Lenz's claim that Spinoza is committed to the view that beliefs are the minimal units of awareness.⁵⁸ However, I argue that Lenz's commitment to Della Rocca's interpretation of beliefs as winning ideas⁵⁹ invites the same objections as the one dimensional view. Even though he distinguishes representations and judgments, on his reading these two are necessarily related: there can be no change in judgment without change in representation. Consequently, in his interpretation of the example of the sun there are two conflicting ideas (one showing the sun to be small and close and the other huge and far away) and one of them is winning.

However, if this interpretation were correct, there would be no way in which Spinoza's claim that the imaginings are not false in themselves and contrary to the truth would be correct. If I have an idea which has the content that the sun is 200 feet away, and this idea necessarily involves the affirmation that this is the case, even

though this affirmation may be defeated by the affirmation of other more powerful ideas, then this idea is false – even though it is not necessarily acted on. My reading therefore improves on Lenz's analysis on this point: I take Spinoza to say that the same representation (or imagination) can instantiate different judgements depending on the other ideas I have. When I learn the true distance of the sun, then it is not the case that I believe the sun to be 200 feet and 600 Earth diameters away at the same time, but act only on the latter belief. Rather, the judgment or interpretation attached to the same imagination has changed: although I still see the sun to be small and close, now I believe it to be huge and far away.

To summarize, Spinoza has reformulated the distinction between active and passive powers of the mind present in Descartes. In Descartes the passive faculties were the imagination and intellect, while the active faculty was the will. In Spinoza only the imagination is the passive faculty: intellect and will are both active and identical. This also solves the problem, how can intellect not only include the clear and distinct ideas, since on Spinoza's formulation every idea involves an affirmation. This affirmation I have shown to be an activity of the will and the intellect, by which the mind understands and affirms it. In the case of the idea that there is a cup of water in front of me, the imagination presents the content which I by the same act understand as a cup of water in front of me and affirm it. Depending on my other ideas this affirmation might be disbelief, or a belief that can lend motivation to action (e.g. to drink it if I am thirsty). In the case of the inadequate idea of the sun the same process is going on, with the one important distinction that the resulting affirmation produces a false belief. Now, the questions that remain to be answered is this: how can I form this false belief given that the intellect is supposed to be the action of my mind, and what does this false belief inhere in?

Inherence of false beliefs in Spinoza

In order to answer these questions, I would like to take a closer look at the locus where Spinoza discusses the problem of error:

And indeed, 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. (E2p47s)⁶⁰

Here, Spinoza presents the example of an error committed during calculation. On his example, the affirmation of the subject is not erroneous, rather the problem is with the fact that the subject identifies the object of his affirmation with the external object. Reading the example in the context of the previous discussion concerning the relationship of active and passive faculties of the mind, it suggests the following

picture. The act by which the intellect understands the representational content of imagination, which is identical to the act by which the will affirms the content, is not erroneous: even though the subject affirms that the radii of the circle are unequal, this affirmation itself is not wrong, simply the subject has chosen a bad word for her concept. Similarly, in the case of the sun, when the subject affirms that the sun is 200 feet away, she does not err, only she has chosen the reference of the affirmation badly.

Thus, I argue that Spinoza wants to develop the Cartesian claim that imaginations are not erroneous in themselves by adding the claim that neither are affirmations in themselves. This development is necessitated by his substance monism concerning mental states: Descartes was able to hold the view that while imaginations are produced according to the natural laws⁶¹ created by and depending on God, and are therefore not prone to error, judgments are produced by our free will and depend exclusively on us and therefore can be true or false. However, this option is not open for Spinoza: on the one hand, he denies the existence of free will, and therefore both our judgments and our imaginations are produced in accordance with the laws of nature; on the other hand, he denies that there are mental states that are not in some sense in God and therefore depend on us exclusively.⁶² Thus, Spinoza needs an account on which the affirmations are not prone to error in themselves – in the same fashion as imaginations were immune to error in Descartes. This is expressed by Spinoza's claim that there is no positive form of falsity (E2p33) and that error does not express essence.⁶³ Also, this connection is behind E2p33d, where Spinoza demonstrates the impossibility of a form of falsity by appealing on the fact that the form of falsity could not inhere in God. If, however, neither imaginations, nor affirmations are false, then what does error consists in?

The answer to this question is to be found in the example just provided: error consists in the object of the affirmation, that is, in the relationship between the imagination and the affirmation. There are three elements that produce the state of affairs that someone utters the claim “the radii of the circle are unequal”.

First, there is the bodily modification caused by the external object, namely the circle on the paper. This bodily modification is identical to an imagination in the mind presenting the external object. Since this is an imagination, this representation of the external object is veridical (E2p16c2). Still, it is not erroneous in itself, since imagination does not contain error. Second, the active affirmation of the mind that understands the representation and affirms it. In this case since the imagination is not veridical, the will can truly affirm that the geometrical shape has unequal radii. This affirmation is not erroneous since it is true about what is in the mind. Third, because of the other ideas that the subject has she *acts* as if the geometrical shape of which the true affirmation that it has unequal radii was made and the external object of its imagination, namely the circle were identical. Since she was told that there is a circle on the paper, she forms the false utterance that the circle has unequal radii. This utterance is an act, no less than killing one's mother⁶⁴ or moving one's arm up and down forcefully (E4p59s).

So, the imagination, the product of inadequate causation, as a representation is not true or false in itself. It shows an ellipsis to be on the paper. Also, there is an affirmation that the object of the given idea has unequal radii. This in itself is also not

true or false, since there could a possible situation where it would be true; e.g. if the shape on the paper would not be a circle, but rather an ellipsis. Finally, there is the state of affairs that the object of the affirmation (the ellipsis) has different properties than the object of the idea (the circle on the paper). Because of this when I say that the radii of the shape on the paper are unequal, I will meet with disapproval from my peers. And this amounts to a decrease of my power of acting (conatus) and in this sense this belief is false. This provides a solution to the problem presented by substance monism for Spinoza. Neither imaginations, nor affirmations are erroneous in themselves, and therefore there are no false ideas in God. Rather, epistemic error is a result of the wrong combination of an imagination and affirmation, that is, the inadequate use of ideas, like affirming the inequality of radii in the case where actually there is a circle, or affirming the equality of radii in the case where actually there is an ellipsis. Neither the imaginations representing a circle or an ellipsis, nor the affirmation that the shape has equal of unequal radii is erroneous in itself. The error lies in the relationship of the idea and the external object.

I think that this analysis of falsity is quite close to Lenz's because on both accounts epistemic normativity is the product of the intersection of two non-normative orders depending on the conative aspect of the idea. However, while on his reading this normative pressure differentiates between different ideas (e.g. rendering the idea that the radii of the shape on the paper are unequal less powerful, and the idea that the radii of the shape on the paper are equal more powerful), on my reading it necessitates the reinterpretation of my imaginations by recasting my ideas (e.g. by turning my idea that the radii of the shape on the paper are unequal into the idea that the radii of the shape on the paper though seem to be unequal are in fact equal).

Conclusion

In this paper I have set out to answer the question what do false beliefs inhere in. We have seen that Spinoza follows Descartes's terminology in his usage of affirmations, imaginations and the intellect. We can therefore call the representational content of an idea imagination, and the affirmation produced by the will belief. We have seen that Spinoza maintains following Descartes that imaginations are not erroneous in themselves. However, he had a revisionary claim, namely, that every idea involves an affirmation. Also, we have seen in the example of the error done in calculation that Spinoza wants to deny that our beliefs in themselves are false.

I have argued that this is possible because the error does not come from the imagination we have, or from the belief we have about the imagination, but rather from the fact that we act as if our belief was about the external cause and not about what was presented by the imagination. While Descartes has maintained that imaginations in themselves are not false and only our affirmation and negation can be false, Spinoza maintained that both beliefs and imaginations are not false in themselves which was required by his substance monism. Therefore he has located error in the relation between the idea and its external object which is a relation and not a belief.

This interpretation is an improvement to the winning idea reading in that beliefs do not necessarily involve the external cause, they are about the

representational content of imagination. I do not have a belief that there is a cup of plutonium in front of me; I believe that I perceive a cup of plutonium being in front of me and I hold this perception to be veridical. This is important because the former belief can never be true if it is not the case that there is a cup of plutonium in front of me. The latter belief is underdetermined in this sense: the very same belief can be true or not in a different contexts.

This interpretation is also an improvement to the interpretation reading in that it does not imply that there are misinterpretations. When I form the belief that the geometrical shape I perceive has unequal radii, it is not a misinterpretation of the idea, it is the case. There is no further refining this belief, only belief revision: by the same act that I realize that the geometrical shape I perceive has equal radii, I realize that what I perceive is a circle. Similarly, my belief that the sun is 200 feet away and my belief that the sun is 600 Earth diameter away are not the same belief differently interpreted, they are different beliefs of the same object. It is not the case that I realize that my belief was not about the external object, but rather about my bodily modification: actually I change my belief.

References

¹ All references to the English translation of works by Spinoza are from Curley's edition with the usual abbreviation: praef – preface, a – axiom, p – proposition, s – scholium, c – corollary, app – appendix, d – definition if it is immediately after the number of the part and demonstration in all other cases. Spinoza, B. d., *The Collected Works of Spinoza Vol. I–II*, ed. and trans. E. Curley, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, 2016). The Latin text is quoted from Gebhardt's edition with the usual abbreviation referring to volume, page number and line. Spinoza, B. d. and Gebhardt, C., *Spinoza opera* (Heidelberg: C. Winters Universitätsbuchh., 1925).

² Della Rocca, M., "The Power of an Idea: Spinoza's Critique of Pure Will," *Nous* 37/2 (2003): 200–231.; Lenz, M., "Ideas as Thick Beliefs: Spinoza on the Normativity of Ideas," in *Contemporary Perspectives on Early Modern Philosophy: Nature and Norms in Thought*, ed. M. Lenz and A. Waldow (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 37–50.; Steinberg, D., "Belief, Affirmation, and the Doctrine of Conatus in Spinoza," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 43/1 (2005): 147–58.

³ Garrett, D., "Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind," in *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, ed. M. Della Rocca (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Della Rocca, M., *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Renz, U., *Die Erklärbarkeit von Erfahrung* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2010).

⁴ In this paper I use affirmation as a shorthand for affirmation or negation. I use judgment as synonymous to affirmation. However, I call belief only judgments that the subject endorses and would actually act on.

⁵ For the identification of inherence and predication, see e.g.: Pini, G., "Scotus on Assertion and the Copula: A Comparison with Aquinas" in: *Medieval Theories of Assertive and Non-Assertive Language*, ed. A. Maierù and L. Valente (Firenze: Olschki, 2004), 307–331. For a differing view see: Carriero, J. P., "On the Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza's Metaphysics," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 33/ 2 (1995): 245–273.

⁶ Curley, E., *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza's Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 31.

⁷ Carriero, J. (1995).

⁸ Della Rocca, M., *Spinoza* (New York: Routledge, 2008a); Della Rocca, M. "Rationalism Run Amok: Representation and the Reality of Emotions in Spinoza," in *Interpreting Spinoza: Critical Essays*, ed. C. Huenemann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008b), 26–52.

⁹ Della Rocca, M. (2008a); Della Rocca, M. (2008b).

¹⁰ Garrett, D., "Spinoza's Conatus Argument," in *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes*, ed. O. Koistinen and J. Biro (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 127–158.; Melamed, Y. Y., "Inherence and the Immanent Cause in Spinoza," *Leibniz Review* 16 (2006): 43–52.; Melamed, Y. Y. "Spinoza on Inherence, Causation, and Conception," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 50/ 3 (2012): 365–386.; Melamed, Y.Y., *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹¹ On my view, it can better account for the close relation that Spinoza seems to postulate between inherence, causation and conception. In order to preserve the claim that knowledge of the effect involves knowledge of the cause without the claim that the effect inheres in the cause, Melamed and Garrett have to accept the view that adequate knowledge is ultimately about infinite modes (essences) and not about finite modes. I think that this approach is contrary to what I take to be the project of Spinoza's philosophy of mind and his commitment to experimental science, but here I cannot pursue this line of argument. For the role of experience and experimental science in his philosophy, see: Curley, E. "Experience in Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge," in *Spinoza: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. M. Grene (Garden City: Doubleday-Anchor Press, 1973), 25–59.; Gabbey, A., "Spinoza's Natural Science and Methodology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. D. Garrett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142–191.

¹² Bartuschat, W. "The Infinite Intellect and Human Knowledge," in *Spinoza on Knowledge and the Human Mind* ed. Y. Yovel (Leiden-New York-Koln: Brill, 1994); Zigouras, J. "Spinoza and the Possibility of Error," *Forum Philosophicum* 12/1 (2007): 105–118; Renz, U. (2010); Malinowski-Charles, S., "Rationalism Versus Subjective Experience: The Problem of the Two Minds in Spinoza," in *The Rationalists: Between Tradition and Innovation*, ed. C. Fraenkel, D. Perinetti, and J. E. H. Smith, The New Synthese Historical Library 65 (Springer Netherlands, 2010), 123–43.; Renz, U., "The Definition of the Human Mind and the Numerical Difference between Subjects (2P11-2P13S)," in *Spinoza's Ethics. A Collective Commentary*, ed. M. Hampe, U. Renz, and R. Schnepf (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 99–118. Note, that this problem presupposes the more robust, traditional understanding of inherence. While efficient causation does not imply that the inadequate idea belongs to God in any sense, the traditional understanding implies that it is God's idea as well. On the question what does it mean that God has ideas and whether he is an epistemic subject, see: Renz, U. (2010); Renz, U. (2011); Renz, U., "Spinoza's Epistemology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. D. Garrett, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

¹³ Della Rocca, M. (2008a), 267 ff.

¹⁴ On my view, Della Rocca's reading has strong similarities to the interpretation of Spinoza's pantheism presented by Schelling in a particular period of his philosophical career, but I cannot argue for this here in detail: Schelling, F. W. J., *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. J. Love and J. Schmidt (Albany: State University Of New York Press, 2006).

The second reading has been propagated by Hegel: Hegel, G. W. F., *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, (Berlin: Hegel-Institut, 1998). For a critical discussion of Hegel's interpretation of Spinoza in relation to the metaphysical question of inherence, see: Melamed, Y. Y., "Acosmism of Weak Individuals? Hegel, Spinoza, and the Reality of the Finite," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 48/1 (2010): 77–92.; Melamed, Y. Y., "Spinoza's

Anti-Humanism: An Outline,” in *The Rationalists: Between Tradition and Innovation*, ed. C. Fraenkel, D. Perinetti, and J. E. H. Smith (Dordrecht-Heidelberg-London-New York: Springer, 2011), 147–166.; Melamed, Y. Y., “The Sirens of Elea: Rationalism, Monism and Idealism in Spinoza,” in *Debates in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. A. Lolordo and D. Stewart (London and New York: Blackwell, 2012); Melamed, Y. Y., “‘Omnis Determinatio Est Negatio’: Determination, Negation and Self-Negation in Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel,” in *Spinoza and German Idealism*, ed. E. Förster and Y. Y. Melamed (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 175–196.

Hegel’s reading, of course was inspired by Bayle’s and Jacobi’s earlier criticism of Spinoza: Bayle, P., *Historical and Critical Dictionary. Selections*, trans. R. H. Popkin (Indianapolis, New York and Kansas City: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965); Jacobi, F. H., “Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn,” in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. and trans. G. Di Giovanni (Montreal and Kingston-London-Buffalo: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 173–252. For a rare contemporary discussion of the validity of Bayle’s argument see: Carriero, J. (1995). For a good overview on the reception of Spinoza in German Idealism see: Di Giovanni, G., “The First Twenty Years of Critique: The Spinoza Connection,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. P. Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 417–448.; Di Giovanni, G., “The New Spinozism,” in *The Edinburgh Critical History of Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. A. Stone (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 13–28.

¹⁵ There are two varieties of this option: one according to which this introduces an unresolvable contradiction in the system, and another according to which the two perspectives can be reconciled. In this paper I will argue that the second interpretation is viable. For the first option see: Bartuschat, W. (1994); Boros, G., *Spinoza és a filozófiai etika programja* (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1997); Alanen, L., “Spinoza on the Human Mind,” *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 35/ 1 (2011): 4–25.

¹⁶ The solution that God has adequate ideas of inadequate ideas is not available for two reasons. First, every idea is a mode of thinking, and there are no modes outside of God, so even these inadequate ideas are in God (E1p15). Second, ideas of ideas and their respective first order ideas are identical, so if there is in God an adequate idea of an inadequate idea, the inadequate idea is also in God (E2p21s). The solution that my inadequate idea is part of God’s adequate idea is only available if we accept partial inherence and the claim that partially inhering ideas are not fully inhering in anything. Otherwise my inadequate ideas would be ultimately inhering in God just the same, since everything is in the substance (E1p15). I would like to thank my anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point.

¹⁷ Garrett, D., (2014).

¹⁸ Curley, E., (1973); Garrett, D., (2014).

¹⁹ Della Rocca, M., (1996).

²⁰ Wilson, M. D., “Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. D. Garrett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 89–141.; Renz, U., (2010); Lenz, M., “Intentionality without Objectivity? Spinoza’s Theory of Intentionality,” in *Intentionality*, ed. A. Salice (Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 2012), 29–58.; Lenz, M., (2013).

²¹ In this paper I will use imagination not in the meaning of the first kind of knowledge, but rather as defined in E2p17cs: an idea of a bodily modification caused by an external body that presents an external body to the mind. I will discuss later the relationship of imagination in this sense and the first kind of knowledge.

²² For an elaboration on the physical background of this feature of Spinoza’s theory of knowledge: Shein, N., “Causation and Determinate Existence of Finite Modes in Spinoza,” *Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie* 97/3 (2015): 334–357.

²³ I will cite Descartes's work from the following edition: Descartes, R. et al., *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1–3 (Cambridge University Press, 1985). I will cite this edition with the standard abbreviation of CSM which will be followed by the reference to the French edition of Adam and Tannery abbreviated as AT: Descartes, R., *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. C. Adam and P. Tannery (Paris: Leopold Cerf, 1897). CSM II. 25 / AT 37. Cf. CSM I. 203–204 / AT 17.

²⁴ Even in cases where my representing idea is misleading, the idea itself is not false because it does not involve judgment. When I suffer from dropsy and have an urge to drink, there is no error in my urge – just as there is no error in my idea representing the sun to be small and close, or in my idea representing a unicorn –: I only commit error when I judge this idea to be veridical and I act on it, even though it is not a clear and distinct idea (CSM 58–62 / AT 84–90). I would like to thank my anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point.

²⁵ I do not claim that either Descartes, or Spinoza actually engaged in faculty psychology. Concerning both authors I will simply use them to refer to mental events falling in the same category.

²⁶ cf. CSM I. 335 / AT 343, CSM I. 346 / AT 366.

²⁷ Clarke, D., *Descartes's Theory of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 135 ff.

²⁸ CSM II. 27 / AT 39.

²⁹ Concerning the role of this claim in the development of Spinoza's philosophy see: Renz, U., "From the Passive to the Active Intellect," in *The Young Spinoza*, ed. Y. Y. Melamed (Oxford University Press, 2015).

³⁰ Although the proposition is formulated in just one direction (every affirmation is involved by an idea), as it is evident from the demonstration and the scholium, the claim is understood to be true in both directions (every affirmation is involved by an idea and every idea involves an affirmation): cf. "[t]hey 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." (E2p49cs) As I will show, this is how the scholarship reads Spinoza.

³¹ Cf. "it should be noted here that by will I understand a faculty of affirming and denying, and not desire. I say that I understand the faculty by which the mind affirms or denies something true or something false, and not the desire by which the mind wants a thing or avoids it." (E2p48s)

³² "Exempli gratia cum solem intuemur, eundem ducentos circiter pedes a nobis distare imaginamur, in quo tamdiu fallimur quamdiu veram ejus distantiam ignoramus sed cognita ejusdem distantia tollitur quidem error sed non imaginatio hoc est idea solis quæ ejusdem naturam eatenus tantum explicat quatenus corpus ab eodem afficitur adeoque quamvis veram ejusdem distantiam noscamus, ipsum nihilominus prope nobis adesse imaginabimur. Nam ut in scholio propositionis 35 partis II diximus, non ea de causa solem adeo propinquum imaginamur quia ejus veram distantiam ignoramus sed quia mens eatenus magnitudinem solis concipit quatenus corpus ab eodem afficitur. [...] et sic reliquæ imaginationes quibus mens fallitur, sive eæ naturalem corporis constitutionem sive quod ejusdem agendi potentiam augeri vel minui indicant, vero non sunt contrariæ nec ejusdem præsentia evanescent." (II/211/18–212/1)

³³ Arguing that Spinoza is equivocating on some terms is not an option here. He repeats his commitment both to the claim that imaginations are not erroneous in themselves and to the claim that every idea involves affirmation in the context of his engagement with the Cartesian theory of belief. When rejecting the possibility of suspension of judgment, he states: "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.” (E2p49cs)

³⁴ The example and the general description comes from: Della Rocca, M., (2003). The “belief as winning idea” view has been also embraced in very different contexts by: Matson, W. “Spinoza on Belief,” in *Spinoza on Knowledge and the Human Mind* (Leiden-New York-Koln: Brill, 1994), 67–82; Steinberg, D., (2005); Alanen, L., (2011); Lenz, M., (2013); Schmid, S., “Spinoza on the Unity of Will and Intellect,” in *Partitioning the Soul Debates from Plato to Leibniz*, ed. K. Corcilius and D. Perler (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014).

³⁵ Melamed, Y. Y. (2013). Of course, someone can accept that there is tension in Spinoza’s philosophy and argue that my false beliefs are not inhering in God: Alanen, L., (2011).

³⁶ For a discussion of this view of intentionality in Spinoza see: Lenz, M., (2012).

³⁷ The objectum-ideatum description and the main line of interpretation comes from: Garrett, D., (2014). His article is greatly influenced by the analysis of error in: Della Rocca, M., (1996). Also, Ursula Renz has accepted a similar interpretation view of beliefs, but it is a distinct variety that is grounded in her intentionality based interpretation of individuation of ideas: Renz, U., (2010); Renz, U., (2011).

³⁸ Malinowski-Charles, S., (2010).

³⁹ Renz, U., (2011); Schmid, S. (2014).

⁴⁰ Actually there is a fourth option, namely that the idea is just the interpretation, but it is not an interpretation of an idea, but rather an interpretation of a bodily state: Renz, U., (2010). This option, however, presupposes a very liberal understanding of the identity doctrine that I reject. In this paper, however, I cannot present the full details of this problem.

⁴¹ Indeed, the hypothesis has been presented that E2p49cs is actually the incorporation of an earlier work by Spinoza written in dialogical form: Ibid., 107 fn. 47. If this is true, then E2p48-49 can be read as an extended elaboration on the themes presented in the dialogue.

⁴² “præter ipsas rerum ideas” (II/130/5)

⁴³ “adeoque (per definitionem 2 hujus) hæc affirmatio ad essentiam ideæ trianguli pertinet nec aliud præter ipsam est [et] quod præter ideam nihil sit.” (II/130/31–33, 35)

⁴⁴ “Voluntas et intellectus nihil præter ipsas singulares volitiones et ideas sunt” (II/131/4–5)

⁴⁵ “At singularis volitio et idea [...] unum et idem sunt” (II/131/5–6)

⁴⁶ “Incipio igitur a primo lectoresque moneo ut accurate distinguant inter ideam sive mentis conceptum et inter imagines rerum quas imaginamur. [...] Quippe qui putant ideas consistere in imaginibus quæ in nobis ex corporum occursu formantur, sibi persuadent ideas illas rerum quarum similem nullam imaginem formare possumus, non esse ideas sed tantum figmenta quæ ex libero voluntatis arbitrio fingimus; ideas igitur veluti picturas in tabula mutas aspiciunt et hoc præjudicio præoccupati non vident ideam quatenus idea est, affirmationem aut negationem involvere. [...] atque adeo clare intelliget ideam (quandoquidem modus cogitandi est) neque in rei alicujus imagine neque in verbis consistere. Verborum namque et imaginum essentia a solis motibus corporeis constituitur, qui cogitationis conceptum minime involvunt.” (II/131/30–132/21)

⁴⁷ cf. Donagan, A., “Homo Cogitat: Spinoza’s Doctrine and Some Recent Commentators,” in *Spinoza: Issues and Directions*, ed. E. Curley and P.-F. Moreau (Brill, 1990), 102–12. That Descartes did not think that representational ideas are corporeal or image-like is non-contentious. The real question is whether Spinoza by making the claim that the essence of images is constituted by corporeal motions really wants to say that images belong to the extended thing on the criticized view, or wants to say that the content of representations is determined by corporeal motions. In the first case if he wants to use this as a criticism of

Descartes he is certainly mistaken. In the second case arguably he has a good point against Descartes, since representations are produced by the union of body and mind and as such they require the movement of the corporeal animal spirits with which they are in some naturally, or what is the same, divinely determined correspondence. And in this sense it might be true that on Descartes' view the content of representations is determined by corporeal motion, even though representations themselves are not physical, but rather mental entities. However, in this paper I do not intend to evaluate Spinoza's assessment of Descartes's theory of ideas, which would require at least another article, but rather to argue for my claim that the metaphysical status of false beliefs in Spinoza is best assessed in comparison to the status of affirmations in Descartes. And for this argument I only need the uncontentious claim that both Spinoza and Descartes distinguished images and affirmations and that they had differing views on the relation of the two. I would like to think my anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this point. cf. Sutton, J., "The Body and the Brain," in *Descartes' Natural Philosophy*, ed. S. Gaukroger, J. Schuster, and J. Sutton (Routledge, 2000), 697–722.; Szalai, J., "A test lélek problematika fő descartes-i megközelítései," *Kellék*, no. 32 (2007): 7–16; Paul Hoffman, "The Unity of Descartes's Man," *The Philosophical Review* 95/ 3 (1986): 339–70.; Rozemond, M., *Descartes's Dualism* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁴⁸ Images are indeed bodily modifications as defined in E2p17cs.

⁴⁹ As defined in E2p17cs: "Next, to retain the customary words, the affections of the human body whose ideas present external bodies as present to us, we shall call images of things, though they do not reproduce the [NS: external] figures of things. And when the mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it imagines."

⁵⁰ It is important to emphasize that Spinoza does not claim that images are not erroneous in themselves, since images are extended modes. Spinoza claims that imaginations, ideas representing images, are not erroneous in themselves.

⁵¹ This is the crucial aspect of Spinoza's notion of idea: as the explanation of the definition of idea emphasizes (E2d3e), ideas are not the passive perceptions (as representations in Descartes), but rather active perceptions (as attitudes in Descartes). His claim that every idea involves affirmation is already present in the definition of idea. This emphasis on conceiving is invoked in both uses of the mute picture objection. In E2p48s he states that ideas are not mere representations because they are conceived and what differentiates between mute pictures and ideas is that ideas involve affirmations. In E2p49cs also the fact that the idea is a concept of the mind is invoked to support the claim that ideas involve affirmation.

⁵² "me concedere voluntatem latius se extendere quam intellectum si per intellectum claras tantummodo et distinctas ideas intelligent sed nego voluntatem latius se extendere quam perceptiones sive concipiendi facultatem." (II/133/23–26)

⁵³ If we take into consideration that according to Spinoza the mute picture view is both theoretically and practically disadvantageous we can infer that Spinoza's main objection against Descartes's project was not that it was metaphysically untenable, but rather that it was practically unviable. On this reading while it is metaphysically impossible to suspend judgment, it is quite possible to negate every idea that is not clear and distinct, but this negation is either done only as utterance and not as belief, or it necessarily leads to a rather radical skepticism. I do not argue that this is a correct reading of Descartes's project, or that this is Spinoza's last word on it, I am just presenting an interpretation of Spinoza's criticism concerning Descartes's position on the relationship of will and intellect according to which the distinction he tries to make either implies self-deception, or skepticism.

“[...] they have been completely ignorant of this doctrine concerning the will. But it is quite necessary to know it, both for the sake of speculation and in order to arrange one's life wisely.” (E2p49cs)

On the role of the refutation of skepticism in different periods of Spinoza's philosophy: Renz, U., “Finite Subjects in the Ethics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, ed. M. Della Rocca (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Renz, U., (forthcoming).

⁵⁴ “Nam pars mentis æterna (per propositiones 23 et 29 hujus) est intellectus per quem solum nos agere dicimur (per propositionem 3 partis III); illa autem quam perire ostendimus, est ipsa imaginatio (per propositionem 21 hujus) per quam solam dicimur pati (per propositionem 3 partis III et generalem affectuum definitionem)” (II/306/12–16)

⁵⁵ The interpretation that there are two distinct sets of ideas, namely ideas of imagination and ideas of intellect, is embraced by the following authors: Wilson, M. D., (1996); Boros, G. (1997); Steinberg, D., (2005); Marshall, E., “Adequacy and Innateness in Spinoza,” in *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy IV*, ed. D. Garber and S. Nadler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 51–88.; Schliesser, E., *Spinoza and the Philosophy of Science*, ed. M. Della Rocca (Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵⁶ The intellect provides knowledge, which is the only thing we know certainly to be good (E4p27); in perfecting our intellect consists man's highest happiness (E4app4); knowledge of the affects and ordering our ideas according to the order of intellect features in four of the five remedies against the power of affects (E5p20s); in this life we strive that “whatever is related to its memory or imagination is of hardly any moment in relation to the intellect” (E5p39s); finally, our salvation, blessedness and freedom consists in the intellectual love of God (E5p36cs).

⁵⁷ CSM I. 203-204 / AT 17.

⁵⁸ Lenz, M., (2013), 41.

⁵⁹ Belief understood as what is acted on, since on both Della Rocca's and Lenz's view one always has conflicting beliefs and there is no qualitative difference between the winning and the losing idea.

⁶⁰ “Et profecto plerique errores in hoc solo consistunt quod scilicet nomina rebus non recte applicamus. Cum enim aliquis ait lineas quæ ex centro circuli ad ejusdem circumferentiam ducuntur esse inæquales, ille sane aliud tum saltem per circulum intelligit quam mathematici. Sic cum homines in calculo errant, alios numeros in mente, alios in charta habent.” (II/128/23–29)

⁶¹ I have used this awkward term in order to signal that correspondences between physical states and mental states determined by nature but not covered by the concept laws of nature are included.

⁶² On my view even if something follows from our essence adequately, since our essence depends on God, it will follow from God. As Spinoza has replied to Blijenbergh: by becoming more perfect we can be knowing servants of God instead of being mere tools of God, but we do God's bidding nonetheless (Ep. 19 1665). Unfortunately, due to space considerations I am unable to elaborate on Spinoza's notion of freedom.

⁶³ Ep.23, 1665.

⁶⁴ Ep.23, 1665.