
Socializing Minds, Socializing Bodies: The Implications of the Bodily Side of Lenz's Spinozist Theory of Mind

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Abstract

Martin Lenz introduces Spinoza to us as a bundle theorist of mind, for whom there cannot be a single finite mind. Since Spinoza conceives of the mind as the idea of the body, there will be a bodily side to any reinterpretation of his theory of mind. This contribution embarks on what could be characterized as a corporeal interlude to Lenz's Spinozist theory of mind. I investigate what follows for Lenz's theory if one takes into account more explicitly the structural complexity of the attribute of extension, expressing itself in the plurality and variability of bodies. While Lenz reads Spinoza through a lens of intersubjectivity and parallelism, my reflection leads to the consideration that the plurality and variability of bodies might call for a transindividual rather than an intersubjective account and suggests conceiving of body and mind as equal rather than parallel. This could complicate Lenz's account of the identity of the mind over time. But such a complication would be a boon rather than a problem. It invites developing Lenz's thought beyond what the context of his book allows, helping us to navigate the intricate dynamics in which we strive for our bodies to become more capable and our minds more eternal.

Keywords: Spinoza, Martin Lenz, body, mind, bundle theory of mind, identity, intersubjectivity, transindividuality, parallelism, equality

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1 Introduction

The idea that “our minds are intersubjective or social”¹ seems to be fairly recent, assumingly developed “against the individualism of early modern philosophers.”² Martin Lenz shows that, to the contrary, this thought is in fact what at least Spinoza, Locke and Hume “even started from.”³ He introduces Spinoza to us as a bundle theorist of mind,⁴ for whom there cannot *be* a single finite mind, that is, who cannot think of minds but as socialized.⁵ Such an interpretation, it seems to me, is rare: while philosophers working on Spinoza’s theory of mind often do so within an individualist paradigm,⁶ scholars questioning individualist premises in materialist and feminist readings tend to focus, at least in Hasana Sharp’s assessment, more on bodies and affects than on minds and ideas.⁷

Lenz’s rational reconstruction obviously appeals historically: it inverts the common picture of Spinoza as an individualist rationalist. Yet I think it also unfolds considerable systematic potential, which I would like to explore. To do so, I pursue what could be characterized as a corporeal interlude to Lenz’s Spinozist theory of mind. When developing his understanding of the mind as the idea of the body (E2p11-13), Spinoza interrupts himself to “premise a few things on the nature of bodies” (E2p13s). In the wake of this way of proceeding, I interrupt Lenz’s enquiry of Spinoza’s oeuvre “[v]iewed under the attribute of thought” with a view to the bodily side.⁸ Bringing into sight more explicitly the structural complexity of the attribute of extension, expressing itself in the plurality and variability of bodies, might complicate Lenz’s account of the mind and its identity over time. But such complication would be a boon rather than a problem. It invites developing Lenz’s interpretation of Spinoza beyond what the context of his book allows, helping us to navigate the intricate dynamics in which we strive for our bodies to become more capable and our minds more eternal.

To start, (1) I explain why it is plausible to transpose Lenz’s interpretation of (human) minds to (human) bodies. Subsequently, (2) I enquire how Lenz speaks about the body and, in turn, (3) outline how Spinoza’s notion of the body concurs with Lenz’s account of the mind. I then (4) probe in what sense considering the former more explicitly could complicate the latter. My reflection leads to (5) the consideration that the plurality and variability of bodies might call for a transindividual rather than an intersubjective account of the mind, and suggests conceiving of body and mind as equal rather than parallel. Developing Lenz’s account further in this vein might help us (6) understand rather than mourn the challenge of ourselves and of living good lives.

1 Martin Lenz, *Socializing Minds: Intersubjectivity in Early Modern Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 17.

2 Ibid., 1.

3 Ibid., 1.

4 Ibid., 31.

5 Ibid., 12.

6 Lenz refers, for example, to Diane Steinberg (Ibid., 66f) and Dominik Perler (Ibid., 88).

7 See Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 62, cf. Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 6.

8 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 78.

2 Transposing Lenz's interpretation of (human) minds to (human) bodies

My starting point is that since body and mind are “one and the same thing” (E3p2s) for Spinoza, any reinterpretation of his theory of mind should be plausible with a view to the body. Lenz subscribes to a parallelist reading of the famous proposition that lays the ground for conceiving of body and mind as one and the same thing, namely, that “[t]he order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (E2p7). It is questionable whether this starting point is as innocent as he assumes,⁹ because conceiving of the attributes as “parallel lines” renders them, “[e]xcept for their position in space,” as “similar and interchangeable.”¹⁰ One risks interpreting “unity as uniformity” and being hardly able to grasp nature's diversity.¹¹ Chantal Jaquet instead suggests conceiving of mind and body as equal, rendering the “body's power of acting and the mind's power of thinking” as an “equality of aptitudes to express all the diversity contained in each person's nature.”¹² As I will suggest towards the end, such an interpretation could serve as a starting point to get the specific structural complexities of the attributes, and thus of body and mind, into sight.

Yet, also in a parallelist reading one should be able to desist a plausible view of the body from a reinterpretation of Spinoza's concept of mind. That is, if a body is the same modal expression of substance as a mind, comprehended differently, then it should be possible to transpose Lenz's interpretation of (human) minds to (human) bodies. Even more so, if we consider that he gains his explanation of what governs the striving of ideas via physics. In both Aristotelian and Cartesian natural philosophy, contrariety is an important explanatory factor for change and motion. Spinoza, Lenz holds, “blends the opposition of physical forces into the contrariety of ideas.”¹³ That is, he renders ideas as forces that, as all things (E3p6), strive with and against other ideas for their perseverance, thereby fighting each other, enforcing one another, and causing further ideas,¹⁴ “like memes that can spread across our minds and coordinate our mental and social lives.”¹⁵ Arguably, what is transposed from physics to the thought of thought should continue to count for the thought of extension. If ideas are conative forces interacting with other ideas contrarily and cooperatively across minds, as Lenz holds, then one will assume bodies to be conative forces interacting with other bodies contrarily and cooperatively across bodies.

Spinoza, as I will argue, indeed conceptualizes bodies in such a vein. Thus, Lenz's account of the mind does not create interpretative problems with regard to the body. Yet, how does Lenz himself speak about the human body? Could his writing display implicit assumptions about the body working to safeguard a more metaphysically robust sense of the identity of the mind over time than his account—for good reasons—lends itself to? To probe this suspicion, I will, in a next step, sketch how Lenz conceives of the body.

9 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 12, 59, but see 52.

10 Chantal Jaquet, *Affects, Actions and Passions in Spinoza. The Unity of Body and Mind* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 17.

11 Ibid 17.

12 Ibid., 24.

13 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 68.

14 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 68-9.

15 Ibid., 85.

3 How does Lenz speak about the body?—The object of triangulation

As Lenz rationally reconstructs Spinoza to provide a case study for intersubjectivity in early modern accounts of mind, he does not focus on the (human) body. Yet, since the latter is “the object of the idea constituting the human mind” for Spinoza (E2p13), it obviously figures in Lenz’s reading of Spinoza’s theory of mind. Let us see how.

Lenz’s argumentation gets off the ground by way of solving a puzzle that has been troubling interpreters for a long time. How do we square the common experience that we often entertain ideas that considerably lessen our body’s power to act with Spinoza’s conviction that “[a]n idea that excludes the existence of our body cannot be in our mind but is contrary to it” (E3p10)? If “the first and principal [tendency] of the striving of our mind [...] is to affirm the existence of our body” (E3p10d),¹⁶ why are we so easily mistaken about what is beneficial for ourselves?¹⁷ This puzzle can be solved within Lenz’s intersubjectively interactionist account of Spinoza’s theory of mind. He presents a gradual—one could maybe even say vitalist—reading of the proposition at stake. Since Spinoza conceives of the sets of ideas “affirming and those denying something’s existence [...] not only as logical but as physical relations,” Lenz argues, “it makes sense to assume that logical contradictions [...] can be cashed out as contraries. [...] The ‘negation’ of one’s existence could then be ‘performed’ by any predication that indicates a decrease of one’s power of acting or conatus.”¹⁸ On this basis, he explains how ideas decreasing one’s body’s power to act can arise in one’s mind: ideas in the mind, Lenz holds, do not (necessarily) strive for the sake *of* the mind, but, as all things (E3p6), for their *own* perseverance. That is, he renders the mind less a steerer than a bundle of ideas within an “ecosystem of ideas”¹⁹ across minds. He invites us to conceive of the attribute of thought as a network of ideational forces competing and combining with one another across individuals. In these dynamics, it can happen that ideas which are not conducive to a certain individual’s striving gain currency and strength. As a result, they will likely also take effect in the bundle of ideas which is the mind of the respective individual. In other words, we can conceive of the human body as an object over which a plethora of ideas triangulate, some (more or less) strengthening the respective individual’s striving to persevere in being, some (more or less) weakening it. With a view to the above-mentioned puzzle: all ideas triangulating over our (human) body arise in our mind. But not necessarily all of them are ideas “in our mind” in the strong sense of furthering the power to act of the object of our mind, i.e., our body (E3p10).²⁰

To ward off the worry that “this holistic picture of minds as dynamic and interactive bundles” leaves “no sense left in which we can reasonably talk about our own minds,” Lenz labors to show the “systematic place of a self” in the conatus doctrine.²¹ *Our* mind is what strives “to affirm the existence of our body” (E3p10d), that is, pursue ideas that increase or aid *our* body’s power to act

16 Cf. *Ibid.*, 65.

17 *Ibid.*, 64.

18 *Ibid.*, 70. Vice versa, any idea furthering one’s power to act would affirm one’s existence.

19 Lenz gains this notion Hasana Sharp, “The Force of Ideas in Spinoza”, *Political Theory* 35, no. 6 (2007): 745, see Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 94-5.

20 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 75-6.

21 *Ibid.*, 79, 80, and 81 respectively.

(E3p12). Thus, there is, Lenz holds, a sense of identity in Spinoza's thought, but it amounts less to a fixed self than to a belonging, a relational identity.²² Given that we will always be part of nature (E4p2-5) and thus in interaction²³ and that we can only track ourselves via affection (E2p19, E2p23),²⁴ our emotions track interactions which are in agreement with our nature, that is, aid our body's power to act (see E4p29d). In pursuing ideas stemming from these interactions, we are (rather more) active (than passive) (E3d1-2).²⁵ Thus, we can distinguish which ideas of all those triangulating over our body are our own—and thus identify our mind—through their expression in our body's power to act.

This picture, painting ideas as memes striving to flourish while competing and cooperating with other ideas in the ecosystem of thought, easily lends itself to rendering bodies as centers of gravity over which fluctuating ideas triangulate. Bodies, it seems, amount to solid reference points for our identity vis-à-vis the dazzling dynamic of ideas. Concerning ideas, Lenz underlines that they strive for their own perseverance rather than for the perseverance of a larger unit such as the mind.²⁶ Minds thus have their ideational content determined in a dynamic play of forces across minds. They therefore cannot be conceived of in the singular but only as socialized.²⁷ In contrast, Lenz usually does not hesitate to speak about the body in the singular.²⁸ I will only give two examples. By way of introducing his Davidsonian notion of triangulation, he holds “that bodies *other than my own* can very well be the object of *my ideas*.”²⁹ And, to mark the rhetorical contrast, he holds that “the distinction between ideas through contrariety is [...] a distinction [...] between *two kinds of ideas*: between *an idea that denies the existence of our body* and *an idea affirming this existence*.”³⁰

To be fair, Lenz's writing also exhibits a tendency to conceive of bodies in a similar way as we think of minds. It might be best visible where he parallels Spinoza's concepts of mind and individual with reference to the physical interlude:

So [...] for instance, *the idea that affirms the existence of my right foot, strives in unison with other ideas that affirm the existence of other parts of my body*. In view of what Spinoza says about the composition of individuals (L5 following E II p 13) we can think of the mind as composed of smaller individuals [...]. In this sense, we might consider the mind a functional union in the way that is suggested in the ‘physical interlude’ [...]:

22 Ibid., 83.

23 Ibid., 89.

24 Ibid., 81.

25 Contrarily, ideas restraining our body's power to act “follow from interaction in disagreement with [...] our] nature” (ibid., 89); in pursuing them, we are (rather more) passive (than active).

26 Ibid., 62.

27 Ibid., 12.

28 One could argue that Lenz's rhetoric mirrors Spinoza's, who often speaks about the human body (“our body”) in the singular (e.g., E2p17). Yet, in Spinoza's text, this is paralleled by his usual reference to the human mind (“our mind”). Conceiving of minds as socialized bundles of ideas is Lenz's interpretative gesture. Since I find it plausible, I investigate it with a view to the object of the idea that is the mind, i.e., the body. Spinoza, in fact, points to a bundle account of the body almost more explicitly than that of the mind; see the postulates after E2p13s. He however does refer to this concerning the mind, too (E2p15).

29 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 74, emphasis added.

30 Ibid., 70, emphasis added.

parallel to the individual parts that form the body of a human being, the individual ideas that affirm the individual ideas that strive in unison and affirm the existence of my whole body.³¹

Yet, Lenz makes it abundantly clear that “it would certainly be equally superstitious to assume that individual ideas are made for the sake of a human mind” as “to assume that things in nature are arranged for the sake of humans.”³² By contrast, he does not direct this critique of teleology from the appendix to the first part of the *Ethics* against the notion of the body.³³ I think this is not by accident. It could complicate his account considerably if he were. To probe this conjecture, I next outline how Spinoza conceives of the body and show that this is structurally similar to the way in which Lenz conceives of the mind. Subsequently, I will discuss how such an account of the body might complicate the picture Lenz draws of the mind.

4 How to conceive of individuals?—Bundles of ideas, bundles of bodies

In Spinoza’s thought, bodies, generally speaking, are finite things (E1d2) that in a certain and determinate way express nature insofar as it is considered extended (E2d1). For all finite things it obtains that if several of them so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, they can be considered one singular thing (E2d7). If bodies so concur, “communicating their motions to each other in a certain fixed manner,” Spinoza considers them to jointly compose one body (definition following E2p13s): a simple body, if the composing bodies are only distinguished from one another by motion and rest, speed and slowness; a complex body when “composed of a number of individuals of a different nature” (E2lemma7s). Human bodies, for Spinoza, are such complex bodies. They are “composed of a great many individuals of different natures, each of which is highly composite” (E2post1). Each of these highly composite bodies composing a human body is “affected by external bodies in very many ways,” which is “consequently” also the case for “the human body itself” (E2post3). Such a human body “to be preserved, requires a great many other bodies, by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated” (E2post4). In correspondence with Lenz’s account of the mind, a human body, and the diverse bodies composing, affecting, and regenerating it, are continuously in interaction with further bodies. Spinoza indicates this by holding, for example, that bodies are continuously affected by other bodies (E2post3), which they affect (E2p14d) and are able to “move and dispose” in a great many ways (E2post6).

With a view to the ideational side of the picture, the diverse bodies composing, affecting, and regenerating a human body are all objects of ideas. Thus, Lenz’s hypothesis of ideas triangulating over bodies is plausible from the perspective of extension, too: indeed, numerous ideas, corresponding to numerous smaller and larger bodies, triangulate over a human body. Yet, in contrast to Lenz’s rhetoric, Spinoza’s notion of human bodies invites a pluralizing account no less than, as Lenz shows, his notions of ideas and minds. Considering that human bodies continuously affect other bodies and

31 Ibid., 62, emphasis added.

32 Ibid., 63.

33 Ibid., 63.

are affected by them, which counts for the bodies composing and regenerating them too, it is plausible to assume an ecosystem of extension, mirroring the ecosystem of thought. Therein, bodies, as physical forces, constantly interact with other bodies, plausibly joining forces with some in some instances, fighting some in others.

Such a pluralizing view of the human body makes Lenz's claim that ideas do not strive for the sake of minds even more plausible. They are, as it were, ideas of smaller and larger bodies involved in the composition, affection, and regeneration of a human body. And, as "it would be wholly un-Spinozistic to say that certain individuals are designed to strive for the sake of the greater whole,"³⁴ why should we believe all the bodies involved would strive for the sake of a unit, a respective human body? Rather, these bodies—like ideas and all things (E3p6)—strive to persevere in their *own* being. Thus, transposing Lenz's text, we can say that although my body "can be rightly called an individual,"³⁵ the bodies making up my body are individuals, too."³⁶ And "there is no reason to suppose that smaller individual modes strive for the sake of larger individual modes," so, "the question of what governs the striving" of bodies "should not be seen as a teleological issue."³⁷ While some of the bodies composing a human body might be aiding the respective individual in its striving to persevere in being, others might be constraining or even endangering it. And in both aiding and constraining, the bodies involved can be aided or constrained by further bodies they are interacting with, within and across the human body we are looking at. The dynamics of cellular growth in the development of cancer is an obvious example. Now, the diverse bodies involved in the composition, regeneration, and affection of a human body, be they aiding or constraining the individual's striving, will all have an ideational expression. These ideas affirm *their* object, that is, a specific smaller or larger body—fighting against and joining forces with other smaller or larger bodies—and not, necessarily, the human body as a whole. For example, think of the psychophysical constellation of the competition between drives to control and drives to survive in cases of anorexia.

So, it seems plausible to say that Spinoza conceives of the body in a similar way as Lenz conceives of the mind. (Human) minds, according to Lenz, are bundles of ideas striving for their own (and not the mind's) perseverance,³⁸ within an ecosystem of ideas that spans across individuals.³⁹ (Human) bodies for Spinoza, it seems to me, are bundles of bodily elements striving for their own, not the (human) body's perseverance, within an ecosystem of bodies spanning across individuals. As seen, this concept of the body even strengthens Lenz's claim that ideas do not strive for the sake of the mind but of themselves. However, it could also complicate his picture of the mind and its identity over time in two ways, which we can dub *plurality* and *variability*.

34 Ibid., 63.

35 Ibid., 63.

36 Ibid., 63.

37 Ibid., 63.

38 Ibid., 58.

39 Ibid., 78.

5 How does a bundle account of the body complicate Lenz's story?—Plurality, variability

Extending Lenz's account of the mind with a similar view of the body amounts to conceiving of the human individual as a bundle of bodies and of ideas, respectively. The bodies and ideas so bundled interact with further bodies or ideas, which again interact with further bodies or ideas, and so on. In these dynamics of bodily and ideational interaction, and this points to a *first complication* for Lenz's account, an idea can increase the force of parts of a human body, without aiding the overall striving of the individual. In cases of anorexia, parts of an individual strive to exert control by starving other parts, while the latter, in turn, strive to survive, often in ways not conducive to the overall striving of the individual either. Vice versa, ideas can decrease the force of parts of a human body whilst affirming the striving of the respective individual. Furthermore, the bodies and corresponding ideas involved in interactions can strengthen some bodily elements composing the individual while lessening others. Thus, there can be conflicts within and across the bundles of bodies—and, concurrently, the bundles of ideas—we are. That is, the *plurality* of Spinoza's notion of the human body might make it even more complex to distinguish between active ideas (conducive to an individual's striving to persevere in being) and passive ones than Lenz assumes when he counters the objection that his account might not be truly interactive in the end. It is not, he holds, as if interaction would always lead to inadequate ideas, rendering the individual passive, while adequate ideas would arise from their inner nature alone, in the pursuit of which the individual is active. If we consider that we will always be part of nature (E4p29d), we cannot retreat from interaction. Rather, what we have to do is to seek activity in interactions in agreement with our nature, while avoiding interactions in disagreement with our nature, which render us (more) passive.⁴⁰ Now, if, as I have argued, it would be hardly less un-Spinozist to assume bodies strive for the sake of a larger unit than ideas strive for the sake of minds, distinguishing between active and passive ideas comes down to assessing, in each respective case, which ideas affirm bodily elements that enhance our striving rather than hinder it.

How would we navigate such complexity? We could orient ourselves by how Spinoza assesses the excellence of minds (E2p13s). All that makes a body more capable of “doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once,” and thus makes a mind more capable “of perceiving many things at once” (E2p13s), enhances the individual's striving. The same applies to all that contributes to “the actions of a body depend[ing] more on itself alone,” thus rendering the “mind more capable of understanding distinctly” (ibid). We have a reflexive structure at hand: what increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, a body's power to act, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, a mind's power to think (E3p11, see E4p38d). Therefore, a mind strives to imagine what increases or aids the body's power of acting (E3p12). It is all the more successful in this the greater the body's power is to act, because increases in the body's power to act are increases in the mind's power to think (E3p11). The extent of the body's power to act, in turn, is linked to how constructively it is regenerated (see E2post4) and affected (see E2post3) in its interactions with further bodies (E4p2-5, E4p26d).⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid., 89-90.

⁴¹ Ibid., 89.

Now, and this leads us to the *second complication* for Lenz's account, what composes, regenerates, and affects a human body in a way that is conducive to its power to act (and thus to the mind's power to think) can be subject to change.⁴² As "we live in continuous change" (E5p39s), Spinoza holds, we aim at changing for the better, which makes us happy (rather than for the worse, making us unhappy). Thus, he continues, "we strive in our lives" that our body "may change" towards being more "capable of a great many things and related to a mind very much conscious of itself, of God, and of things" (ibid.).⁴³ That is, considering that we aim at "what leads to understanding" (E4p26d) and that our mind's power to think is increased by what increases our body's power to act (E3p11), *regenerating* the body can amount to striving that our body *changes*. In this case, what the body, "composed of a great many parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment" (E4p45s) needs in its composition, regeneration, and affection to continuously "be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature" (E4p45s), will change. And that means, which interactions will yield activity for an individual, that is, which interactions are in agreement with its striving, will change too. Sometimes, something which previously was conducive to composing and regenerating a body needs to be terminated in the course of the individual's striving.⁴⁴ Sometimes, what had been affecting it with joy becomes hindering. For instance, a bodily figure and its characteristic postures might have been good for an individual when performing a specific social role that he has grown into. They might no longer be good but hindering when, in the course of striving for a body more capable of acting, a mind more capable of thinking, he begins to assume different social roles. In this process, the kinds of nourishment and exercise needed to regenerate his body change, as do the habits of affecting and being affected. In the same way, the contexts in which being embedded is conducive to his flourishing are changing and, thus, his *ratio vivendi* (E4p45s). That is, the sets of interactions that are in agreement with his nature underlie *variability*. If some interactions were helpful in maintaining the formerly characteristic bodily figure, they can now become hindering. Ideas springing from such interactions were once active but have become passive. Ideas still affirming something that the body is striving to discontinue had been in agreement with the nature of the individual and were thus active. But they have come more and more into disagreement with it and have thus become passive—whilst still affirming something that, as it is not possible for him "to suddenly make a clean sweep of all his behavioral patterns,"⁴⁵ is still involved in his composition.

Thus, due to the *plurality* and *variability* of the body, it might always be a question of specific conjunctures which interactions yield ideas that affirm the existence of bodily parts which at this specific point in time contribute to an increase in my power to act, i.e., which are in agreement with

42 Lenz's account shows sensitivity for such changes concerning the mind (ibid., 84).

43 This sentence relates to striving that the infant body may change towards a body more capable of many things. Yet, Spinoza, in the same vein, generalizes the condition of infancy: "And really, he who, *like* an infant or child, has a body capable of very few things, and very heavily dependent on external causes, has a mind which considered solely in itself is conscious of almost nothing of itself, or of God, or of things" (E5p39s, emphasis added).

44 For aspects of this, see Pascal Sévérac, *Renaitre. Enfance et éducation à partir de Spinoza* (Paris: Hermann, 2021), 47-83, e.g., his distinction between organic and affective death, 71.

45 Chantal Jaquet, *Zwischen den Klassen. Über die Nicht-Reproduktion sozialer Macht* (Göttingen: Konstanz University Press, 2018), 125, my own translation. For a conceptual reading of how Jack London's character, Martin Eden, transforms from a muscular sailor successful with women to a cultivated and well-dressed writer, see ibid., 111ff.

my nature. Thus, what interactions yield ideas in the pursuit of which I am active is variable. The task of differentiating them from those rendering me passive must consider this variability. That is, due to the variability of (my) nature, which ideas “are essentially in my mind” is subject to change.⁴⁶ This suggests that explicating a bundle theory of the body corresponding to Lenz’s bundle theory of mind could make it even harder to indicate in which sense “we can reasonably talk about our own minds”⁴⁷—a worry Lenz is visibly troubled with. To see why, we must make explicit what we tapped into, namely, what the structural complexity of the attribute of extension, expressing itself in the plurality and variability of bodies, implies for the human mind.

6 The implications of the structural complexity of the body for the (identity of the) mind—Transindividuality, equality

To assess the excellence of minds, Spinoza tasks us with studying bodies (E2p13s). Thus, he refers the complex idea that a mind is to its object, a body (E2p15). In the two preceding sections, we have begun to circumscribe the structural complexity of the attribute of extension that expresses itself in the body. If we now refer our corporeal digression back to the reality of the mind, the latter emerges as even more complex than Lenz’s reading can unveil. Working on the premise that mind and body might be equal rather than parallel, we can now sketch the implications of the complexity of the body for conceiving of the mind.

Lenz holds that ideas decreasing our body’s power to act are not in our mind essentially.⁴⁸ Rather, they triangulate over our body while decreasing or restraining its power to act. Following my reflection, there can be bodily elements *involved* in composing, regenerating, and affecting our body without increasing our power to act—think of the example of anorexia. Moreover, there can be bodily elements that had been increasing our power to act but do so, while still being involved in composing, regenerating, and affecting our body—think of the example of changing postures. In other words, the “internal-external boundary” might be at least as “dynamic” for the body as for the mind.⁴⁹ That is, it could be only half the story to hold, as Lenz does, that we can learn more and more what is *really* good for us and thus internalize what we formerly deemed external. Rather, firstly, the inner plurality of our bodies implies degrees of *conflictuality* between bodily elements and thus between ideas triangulating over a body. While a drive to control as a sense of how much of certain things is conducive to one’s striving is beneficial, a drive to control as the reduction of more and more of one’s interaction with things to digest can become severely harmful. Secondly, as we live in continuous *change*, we cannot know at a certain point in time what will be truly beneficial for us sustainably. When embedded in an affectionate context, being disposed to hold one’s hands similarly as the other family members at the dinner table aids one’s power to act, as feeling at home strengthens one’s confidence. Yet, when getting culturally involved in ways differing from the familial context, because one senses this will help in gaining a better understanding of oneself and

46 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 76.

47 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 80.

48 Ibid., 76.

49 Ibid., 84.

things, the same bodily posture might easily become an obstacle when trying to engage in relationships that could contribute to one's effort with respect to living within this new context.⁵⁰

Looking to the bodily side of Lenz's picture, emotionally tracking interactions that lead to active rather than passive ideas presents itself as a conjunctural task. Such tracking is the way in which, according to Lenz, individuals gain a sense of their own mind: by tracking interactions agreeing with their nature, they learn who they are.⁵¹ Thus, as the structural complexity of the body renders the distinction between interactions yielding active ideas from interactions yielding passive ideas conjunctural, the complex idea that is our mind amounts to a snapshot in time of our diverse and changing body. That is, the plurality and variability of the corporeal ratios of movement and rest unfolding over time do not seem to have a *parallel 1:1* mental correspondence. However, seen within a framework of attributive *equality in diversity*,⁵² we could say that it concurs with the challenge of *identity*—a challenge that visibly troubles Lenz. As indicated, he labors to show that his account does not lose a “robust metaphysical ground for the identity of minds.”⁵³ He argues that we gain ownership of our ideas, and thus our minds, through emotionally tracking interactions that enhance our power to act.⁵⁴ However, as we have seen, what is being tracked here can be conflictual and underlie variation over time. We might be emotionally attached to contexts that had been good for our flourishing but no longer are, and feel lonely in contexts contributing to our effort at enhancing our power to think. Thus, the “sense of *belonging*” that according to Lenz affords us ownership of our mental lives could be “under pressure.”⁵⁵ Determining what ideas are *my* ideas refers me to identifying what bodily elements—within the dynamics of interaction among and across bodies—involved in my composition, regeneration, and affection they concur with, and sensing how well the latter contribute, at this specific point in time, to my striving to persevere in being. In other words, which ideas are “essentially in my mind”⁵⁶ could be subject to *conflict* and *change*.⁵⁷ Thus, maybe the ground that emotional tracking provides for the identity of the mind, if considered as identity over time, is rather semi-robust. What remains identical over time is a striving movement to persevere in one's being. But what this amounts to—e.g., postures, tastes, habits and all the ideas concurring with these bodily characteristics—might change so much over time that we could ask ourselves “whether the idea of an ego that remains identical with itself through all transformations does not lose all plausibility.”⁵⁸

Thus, it seems to me, asking “[w]here is my mind?” with Spinoza could call for a much more conjunctural answer than Lenz explicates.⁵⁹ In fact, what hinders him from such explication could be his very endeavor to present Spinoza's account as intersubjective. When conceiving

50 For an illustrative autobiographic example, see Édouard Louis, *Anleitung ein anderer zu werden* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2022), 65ff.

51 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 80ff.

52 See Jaquet, *Affects*, 156.

53 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 83.

54 Ibid., 81ff.

55 Ibid., 83; see the notion of a “complexion [*ingenium*] under pressure” in Jaquet, *Klassen* 153ff, my own translation.

56 Ibid., 76.

57 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 83.

58 Jaquet, *Klassen*, 106, my own translation.

59 Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, 79.

individuals—which is the term Spinoza uses much more than subjects—as *subjects* entertaining relations *between* each other, one is inclined to provide—as *relata*—some kind of stable reference points between which relations unfold. This might be perfectly adequate to make sense of Locke who, as Lenz puts it, “sounds more individualistic than Spinoza and Hume.”⁶⁰ As far as Spinoza is concerned, on Lenz’s reading, minds are less steerers than bundles of ideas. In the same way, the bodily object over which such ideas triangulate is more a bundle than a whole, constantly abandoning “certain parts of itself, while constantly incorporating some parts from others,”⁶¹ as Etienne Balibar puts it. Individuals are thus always co-constituted within plural and variable dynamics of forces; they mutually

‘mingle’ with one another because they exchange constituent parts [...], or because they are constantly ‘analysed’ and ‘synthesised’, decomposing into more basic parts and recomposed into relatively autonomous units.⁶²

Rather than *entertaining relations between each other*, as the notion of intersubjectivity implies, individuals mutually *implicate one another in what they are*. That is, reconstructing Spinoza’s theory of mind and body might call for a transindividual rather than an intersubjective account.⁶³

7 Cum Lenz towards interactions yielding activity

I suggested that in contrast to Lenz’s rhetoric, Spinoza conceives of the body similar to how Lenz renders his account of the mind, that is, as a bundle of bodies. This is good news for the interpretative plausibility of Lenz’s reconstruction, given that body and mind are “one and the same thing” for Spinoza (E3p2s). Yet it might complicate Lenz’s account of the identity of the mind over time. Considering that *our* mind is what strives “to affirm the existence of our body” (E3p10d), Lenz argues that we gain such a sense of identity by distinguishing which ideas of all those triangulating over our body—within the play of ideational forces across minds—are our own via their expression in our body’s power to act. Yet, if our bodies are plural, we can be right about something aiding parts of our bodies, whilst nevertheless being wrong about whether it enhances our striving. And if our bodies are variable, we continuously need to learn anew what—within the play of corporeal forces—aids our bodies’ power to act. That is, what ideas are ours in the strong sense of affirming our nature, and, thus, what constitutes our mind, is subject to conflict and change.

The complexities this implies for conceiving of what we are might be just what follows from the fact that the idea that is the human mind has such a structurally complex object as the human body. If we strive not to mourn but understand things as they are (TP I.4/G III 274, see E3pref, E4p26), the complications that the structural richness of the attribute of extension could imply for

⁶⁰ Ibid., 12.

⁶¹ Etienne Balibar, “Individuality and Transindividuality in Spinoza,” in: *Spinoza, the Transindividual* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 53, with reference to E2p24d.

⁶² Ibid., 55.

⁶³ For an account of the alternative between intersubjectivity and transindividuality in the history of philosophy, see Vittorio Morfino, *Intersoggettività o transindividualità. Materiali per un’alternativa* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2022).

Lenz's account might be a boon rather than a problem. Driving further on the path he lays out might allow us to get a more adequate understanding of how to discern and foster interactions that yield active ideas aiding the power to act. It might, for instance, push us to undertake conjunctural analyses of what interactions of bodies and ideas to foster when, where, and for whom. Thus, explicating what Lenz's reconstruction amounts to when seen under the attributes of both thought and extension is not only important for making sure Lenz is in line with the parallelism he subscribes to. It could also help us navigate the dynamics within which we strive for our bodies to become more capable, our minds more eternal (E5p39), and "lead us by the hand, as it were, to the knowledge of the human mind and its highest blessedness" (E2pref).

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