

# The World, Seen From Within (I) On the Enminded Body: Spinoza, Descartes, and the Philosophy of Cognition

## *Abstract*

Ontologically, Baruch Spinoza and René Descartes take significantly different stands on truth, mind and meaning. In this respect, the latter can be regarded as the founder of modern epistemology, phenomenology, and scientific thinking. Nevertheless, Spinoza's mysticism and certain resounding Spinozist rejections of Cartesian rationalism can be found at the root of modern analytic philosophy and, even more surprisingly, in most basic assumptions of current cognitive science. The main issue of this "metaphysical" debate is the status of mind, consciousness, mental representations, truth, and meaning in general, and therefore the debate concerns the possibility of a cognitive semantics.

*Keywords: monism, dualism, Spinozism, Cartesianism, cognitive ontologies, metaphysics of meaning*

*I hate Descartes!*

—Semir Zeki, in a conference debate, 2013

## 1. Introduction

For some time,<sup>1</sup> modern neuro-cognitive research has been facing a curious theoretical problem: it is philosophically inconsistent. It cannot be *hermeneutic*, in the sense of "continental" historicism, since it has to acknowledge the existence of evolutionary properties of the human mind and its hosting brain (meaning, that is, mental content, intended to be remembered or communicated, can therefore not be seen as created by human history alone). Nor can neuro-cognitive research overtly endorse *analytic* philosophy, since it cannot limit itself to the critical study of language and linguistically manifested concepts, or in practical terms, of propositions and propositional logic (meaning cannot be reduced to inter-propositional consistency and truth conditions). It cannot subscribe to classical *phenomenology*, whether existential or formal, because this approach would rule out any empirically specialised research, from semiotics to neuroscience (where the phenomenological reduction would not work). In the actual panorama, there

is no consensus to adopt any coherent “cognitive philosophy”, or “neuro-philosophy”, or “naturalised philosophy of meaning”, and the realism of ordinary philosophy of natural science does not suffice for the study of the human world, including human intentional structures of meaning, narrative meaning, emotional meaning, aesthetic meaning, etc.

The cognitive sciences emerged in a late 20th century atmosphere of anti-hermeneutic thinking and computational scientism. Occasionally, cognitive strains of thought and research alluded to phenomenological or phenomenalist motives, encouraged by the fact that the study of cognition is inherently connected to studies of perception and consciousness; but in the last instance, in the absence of alternatives, the cognitive sciences often gave in to an all-pervasive *analytic* philosophy that had determined much of the academic life and the style of thinking in the disciplines affected by this research.<sup>2</sup> They stayed inhabited and inhibited by the meaning scepticism and the logical dogmatism of a long analytic century. In this paper, I will address the problem of cognitive Spinozism and discuss some possible ways to rethink it.

## 2. The Divide

It can in fact be claimed that in essential respects, analytic philosophy is not soundly connected to the study of “mind and brain”, and in particular not compatible with the study of cognitive semantics, which has to rely on introspection and interpretation of meaning in communication, and therefore cannot use a truth-conditional semantics. However, it should also be acknowledged that analytic philosophy is organically linked to the history of the cognitive disciplines, in particular to Anglo-Saxon neuro-behaviorism and neuro-psychology. It is not inclined to leave the discourse of these areas of research, unless new and very strong arguments enter the debate.

By contrast, the sort of structural research (including structuralism in anthropology, linguistics, literary criticism, psychology etc.) which in Europe has been associated with studies of cognition—since Jean Piaget—is often philosophically anchored more or less explicitly in variants of formal Husserlian or Merleau-Pontyan *phenomenology*. In such a framework, semantics is free to distinguish signified meaning from referential (vericonditional) meaning, and to localize the former in the human mind, not in the archive or protocol of truths of the outer world. The actual project of elaborating a “cognitive semiotics”, in which the overall study of *meaning* and *mind*, and of *culture* and *communication*, still in the perspective of *cognition* and *consciousness*, is approached both from the angle of the neurosciences and from that of a structural and cognitive semantics, thus in a sense, *both* from the neural “outside” *and* from the mental “inside”, (thus admitting a form of practical dualism), is therefore presently both an inspiringly productive laboratory and yet still a philosophical battlefield: especially opposing reductive analytic and anti-reductionist phenomenological motives; hermeneutics has already left the field, since History is not considered a structural cause in itself.

My claim here is that such battles can be viewed as basically opposing Baruch

Spinoza's and René Descartes' heirs. *Spinoza is*, I propose to think, *the father of analytic philosophy*, as *Descartes is the father of phenomenology*. This historical state of affairs is by no means evident, so I shall try to sketch out some of my reasons for suggesting this genealogy. Descartes the "dualist" distinguishes categorically meaning and matter: thought and extension, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, ideas and spatio-temporal things. Spinoza the "monist" decides that these two sorts of "*res*" are properties, or attributes, of one and the same substantial *res*—because God is in the nature of this *res*. So for Spinoza, things and ideas of things are the same, ideas of things are attributes of the things they are attributes of; and the meaning of an idea is *its* thing itself, which is *its inherent truth* (hence modern truth-conditional semantics). But since for both thinkers, meaning and the mind are *res cogitans*, not definable by space and time, whereas brains, bodies, and behaviors are *res extensa*, given in space and time, which are thus either the same or different *res* (substances), the metaphysical differences between these rationalist masters concern directly our contemporary and cognitive research and debate on minds, bodies, and embodiment.

The historical divide that disconnects analytic and "continental" thinking thus separates monism and dualism. Monists believe that meaning is in the material world, while dualists believe that it resides in immaterial minds. In semantics, dualists distinguish meaning and reference, whereas monists insist that meaning *is* reference. Dualists understand meaning in terms of mental representations; monists are by contrast ready to reject the notion of mental representations and "inner life" in general.

### 3. Realities

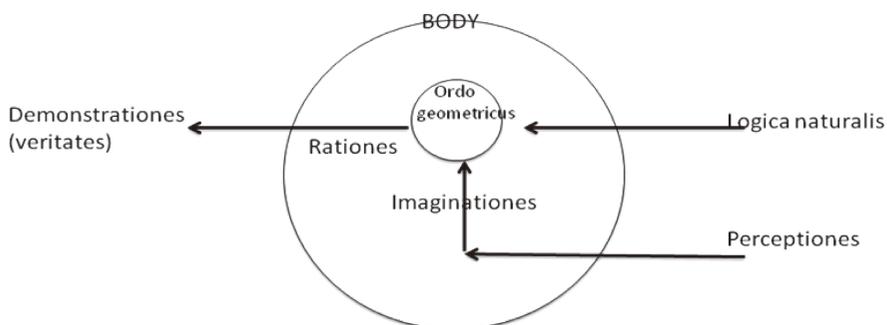
Historically, it may thus be argued that contemporary phenomenological philosophy is rooted in René Descartes' experiential rationalism, allowing and inviting both introspection and extrospection; and that the analytic, or logicist or logico-empiricist, movement in contemporary philosophy stems from the "geometric" style and the epistemological doctrine developed by Descartes' first popularizer and then critic, Baruch Spinoza. Descartes had founded a science-oriented philosophy where intentionality and mental events could be acknowledged as *real* in a key distinct from the reality of physical causality, and where these two reality variants could be examined in their connexions. There were, as the mathematician René Thom would say, distinct "regions" in reality, notably an immaterial and a material region, and there were certain causal paths between them, in both directions. Thought and extended matter, though ontologically or regionally distinct, were contingent and could thus *causally affect* each other.<sup>4</sup> Descartes' experiential rationalism admitted *causal interaction between mind and body* and initiated the technical study of this interaction (in *Le Traité des passions*, 1649, his last published work); strictly speaking, his philosophy is therefore a *causal monism*.<sup>5</sup> His Dutch critic, however, felt that thought and extension must be aspects or attributes of one and the same substance, which consequentially had to be *dual*, namely immediately both material and spiritual,

both ideational (conceptual, in today’s terms) and physical, idea and thing in one. Spinoza’s famous “monism” substantially identified mind and body and so had to rule out such causal relations between mind and body, stating<sup>6</sup> instead that a mind *is* nothing but the idea (or essence) *of* (or *in*) a body, it is the idea that this body *has* of itself, in the same way that any other object must contain its own idea, or mind, as a natural and divine part of itself, as a being.<sup>7</sup> Since things must also contain ideas, and ideas in themselves are not things, Spinoza’s thinking is, strictly—substantially—speaking, in fact an ontological, causal, *dualism*.

In the causal respect—and which other respect could matter more to ontology?—we will have to say that *Descartes is the monist, and Spinoza the dualist*. This may look and sound confusing, but it does not dissolve the divide, on the contrary. Either ideas presuppose minds and brains, or they do not.

In terms of epistemology, Spinoza further tried to prove that while minds *think of* the bodies whose minds they are, they can think of objects different from their own bodies in so far as they, being bodies, are *affected by* other bodies (things) that they encounter physically, through sensory *perception*. But such thoughts, he says, in his *Ethics*, are originally nothing but vague, chaotic, and meaningless impressions: imaginations (*imaginatioes*, versus *rationes*). In order to overcome this imaginary condition and become real and meaningful ideas, or *thoughts*, these impressions are further to be ordered formally, logically, or “geometrically”, today we could say “analytically”, in terms of a formal and propositional demonstration, a proof. Only in this way can they become real ideas (of these other things), ideas whose *meaning* consists in the *truth* they are part of in the world they are about; without such an ordering, they will just stay *imaginatioes* and vague images, idle noises from the sensory organs, and will have no cognitive value, no meaning, no truth.<sup>8</sup> We might summarize this view in a little diagram such as the following:

Figure 1. Spinoza’s view of the constitution of meaning as truth



Imaginations are still meaningless. Ideas are truths that the body produces out of sensory impressions, *if* it applies to them its logical capacity, which it somehow inherits from Nature (God). Unclear imaginations can thus be transformed into clear ideas, if they can be ordered logically. Logic is God’s language, *sive natura*, it is in the things and is

therefore achieved by our bodies through their contact with the natural world. Nature thinks, reasons, and humans “pick up” the principles of this reasoning, while also perceiving things and their inherent ideas (ideational attributes).

Spinoza’s epistemology was therefore to become a “meaning scepticism”, since meanings are imaginations, but not a science scepticism: natural science was to him an all-important moral enterprise, and a means of achieving happiness and, in a sense, eternity of the soul (active participation in *Deus sive Natura*), based on “empirical” reasoning through observation and demonstration only.<sup>9</sup> The feeling of discovering a truth is for him a mystical experience of beatitude, divine grace, since the idea filling one’s truthful thought is God’s natural presence. False thoughts, which would be ideas of nothing, of no real existing things, by definition do not exist; they may seem to be false but are only meaningless. There are no false things in nature. Such apparent meanings are just instances of noisy mechanical imagery: unstable and dreamlike nonsense. Therefore, there are no stable and clear, but purely hypothetical representations in the mind, no stable and meaningful mental pictures of real possibilities that could be false: possible and fallible ideas are not truths, and so cannot exist, because what is (and is true), *is so by necessity*. Spinoza’s explicit *necessitarianism* does not admit arbitrary, hypothetical meanings, or uncertain reasoning, let alone counterfactual thinking.<sup>10</sup> Thinking, if ordered logically, axiomatically, is literally identical to a bodily state of being, divinely inhabited by the things thought of. Representation is nothing in itself and cannot be distinguished from perception, which is “picking up” from the world. Phenomenology is therefore impossible in Spinoza’s perspective.<sup>11</sup> In Descartes’ philosophy, by contrast, free and hypothetical imagination is an evident and prominent part of human reality; otherwise, systematic doubt would be impossible. The relation of correspondence between thought and extension is as solidly established as later the relation of reference underlying the Saussurean linguistic sign relation between the *signified* (meaning) supported by its *signifier* (a concept of an expressive event) on the one hand, and the acoustic sounds used in communication and the worldly states of affairs *referred* to in communication, on the other hand. Language can be meaningful and still express thoughts turning out to be wrong. Cartesian and, later, Saussurian “semiology” therefore finds no difficulty in distinguishing the *signified* (conceptual) meaning (*—le sens*) from the *referential* (veridical) import of signs (*—la signification*); meaning is here the signified aspect of the sign, *le signifié*, a mental concept, whereas the truth of the meaning is an independent matter of correspondence between signified concepts and referential “things” in the mental or material world.

Simply speaking, for Descartes meaning is not necessarily truth, while for Spinoza it is. More strictly speaking, for Spinoza it is not even meaning but a chunk of the mind of the world.

#### 4. So What?

Spinoza’s line of philosophizing is, in this view, the real historical origin of the immensely

influential positivist, empiricist and analytic movement in modern philosophy. This line of thinking is inherently at odds with elementary phenomenological observation (of the human imaginary), and also with the neuroscientific project (exploring the correlations between mental content and brain states). It is particularly reluctant to admit and support the study of meaning as such, meaning in itself, the cognitive structures of signified content, that is, the objective field of the humanities and the social sciences, from cultural or political studies to linguistics and semiotics.

Descartes' line of thought, ontologically monistic in the sense that thought and extended things such as our bodies are predicted to causally affect each other, has stimulated research into the interaction of mind and brain, for example in *agency* and in *emotional states*. Still it is Spinoza's "monism", which is ontologically speaking dualistic and mystically ascribes thought to extended things<sup>12</sup>, rejecting the principle of an *interaction* of mind and brain (since the brain *is* the mind), that has become predominant in modern behavioral thinking and research, even in the humanistic and social domains, where, e. g., literary criticism is then reduced to the biographical, or to "reader response", and sociology to the statistics of poll responses.

Curiously but characteristically, there is no reference in Spinoza to the nervous system, only to the body: ideas in principle need no nerves, not even heads, since they emanate from the substance of natural things and bodies. All existing things, or modes of substance, have—as the German idealists would say—a *für sich* embedded in their *an sich*, so there is no need to look for special devices like neural processes in order to follow the neuro-mental or psycho-somatic paths of correlation and interaction between *an sich* and *für sich*.

The Spinozan inspiration is clearly present in the physicalist Vienna Circle and in early—as well as late—Wittgenstein, whose *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), named (apparently on G. Moore's suggestion) after Spinoza's *Tractatus Teologico-Politicus* (1670), contended<sup>13</sup>, and did so in its very numerical composition "ordine geometrico", that the propositional structure of language, if organized axiomatically, and as a "language" in the sense of formal logic, then directly would reveal the structure of reality, or the world. This is a view that gained considerable influence within the Circle and would continue to do so in the subsequent spreading and development of logical positivism. Projects like R. Carnap's *Logical Construction of the World* [Der logische Aufbau der Welt] are characteristic. The line starting in Spinoza's mysticism—and, I would therefore venture to say, Spinoza's early *logical empiricism*—leads through the hard-core empiricist bishop Berkeley and the idealists of the 19th century, including F. H. Bradley and J. Ward, through the all-important psychologist W. James, to Russell, Moore, Ayer, etc. The militant behaviorism of J. B. Watson and B. F. Skinner and their followers in "behavioral science" is another direct consequence of the rejection of the epistemic autonomy of meaning. Behaviorism is necessarily a meaning scepticism. We could by the way add C. S. Peirce to the list of Spinozist and "dualistically monist" thinkers led toward basically the same religiously motivated cult of a logic-of-the-

world.<sup>14</sup> Characteristics of this line are: the truth-conditional conception of semantics<sup>15</sup>; the rejection of representations and of imagistic models of meaning or of their relevance to the study of meaning; the principle of a behavioral *embodiment* of meaning (note that the general theme of embodiment<sup>16</sup> in the cognitive sciences is a Spinozist motive, rather than a phenomenological product); and in particular this strange and stubbornly absolute belief in formal logic as the “language” or expression of reality, and therefore, implicitly the idiom of the Divinity itself<sup>17</sup>, an idea forcefully professed by G. Frege, whose *Begriffsschrift* (Concept-notation, 1879) was—after Peirce’s diagrams—a direct modern translation of Spinoza’s “geometrical order”, and who believed that formal logic was a real language (though unspoken), but a language in which formal laws would be laws of empirical truth. Philosophy therefore could have direct access to profound knowledge of the world through logic alone, and would not need any academic disciplines (such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc., let alone linguistics) in order to produce valid statements on language, meaning, and concepts, and even on political, ethical or cultural issues. The Spinozan conviction is that for the human body to organize perceptions logically in terms of formal axiomatic systems of propositions is *per se* to understand the world, since the order of a formal logic supposedly *is* the world order. Frege influentially redefined “analytic” to mean “provable from logical laws and definitions”, which was further believed to mean: true about the world, E. Kant would say, synthetically true. In this philosophy, analytic and synthetic are merged, or rather, the Kantian synthetic is absorbed by the analytic.

## 5. Now What?

To summarize again: in Spinoza’s epistemology, perception gives rise to two distinct forms of mental activity, *imagination* (“*imaginatio*”) and *reasoning* (“*ratio*”). The former consists of blurred superpositions of perceptions, forming images of no order or value, thus of no meaning (i.e. of no truth), despite the fact that people confusedly think they are indeed meaningful. By contrast, the latter mental activity, real thinking, consists of imageless ideas—expressed by symbols—by which we participate in the (mentally equipped) things of nature.<sup>18</sup> Ideas are meaningful because they are *in*, or are *part of*, the substance of their objects. Truth is of course not correspondence (between a statement and the state it states), in this perspective: it is essential *identity*. This explains the ontological importance of logic here; the natural order of ideas is formal logic, not people’s vernacular tongues, their miserably confused colloquial and chaotic pseudo-languages, which must be corrected. Logic therefore becomes the “Language” of truth, and a source of truth in itself. No philological grammar is needed in order to understand “Language” in this sense. Occurring mental contents, life-related experiences, and generally all modes of phenomenological presence<sup>19</sup>, presence-to-the-mind, are radically dissociated from meaning, that is, they are meaningless, since “meaningful” now exclusively means “logical”, which in turn means “real”, belonging to the natural, physical world. This strong turn of *naturalization*

(and referentialization) of meaning, as mentioned, had to wipe out of its horizon all representational philosophies,<sup>20</sup> and correspondingly, to isolate itself from the (Husserlian, Cassirerian or otherwise) life-world oriented phenomenological philosophies and claims to the semiotic autonomy of meaning in the human imaginary—as those held by the modern, and in a sense neo-Cartesian, continental structuralists. Modern Jakobsonian or Lévi-Straussian structuralism would evidently admit the principle of possible causal connections between mind and body. Freudian and Lacanian views most certainly also do, albeit in the framework of a peculiar methodological solipsism. Structuralism was regularly rejected by anti-representationalist naturalizers of many kinds.

The recent robotic elucidations on “symbol grounding”—S. Harnad and L. Steels—tend to argue that meaning has none of the iconic, representational properties of human consciousness but is a question of anchoring “internal” symbolic signs in “external” things by a learning process of naming, as if the “external” things categorized themselves beforehand. In a different key, Andy Clark’s “extended mind” thinks that the world we experience *is* in itself our representation of it; we don’t need a “Cartesian theater” in the mind, since the world is its own divine Spinozan theater. In fact, we wouldn’t need to have individual minds at all, since the world is its own mind in which we simply participate. By contrast, the neuro-psychologist and philosopher Merlin Donald, who emphasizes the evolutionary importance of external techniques of symbolization, the materialization of symbols, for example in libraries, argues that these techniques allow our minds to build both external and internal semiotic supports for the enlarged realms of reference that culture presupposes; but in this view, consciousness is where the meaning of these references has to unfold, giving rise to the *sharing of meaning* we call communication.

Artificial intelligence—A. Newell and H. Simon’s project—led to the zombie antinomy: if something looks like intelligence, it “is” intelligence, even if this cannot be true, but who cares?<sup>21</sup> We may acknowledge that “intelligent” behavior comes with an epiphenomenal supplement called consciousness in the human case, but it needs not be significant, since all things can think anyway, according to Spinoza (some just a little more than others)...

As mentioned, Spinoza’s radically and drastically mono-dualistic view of the mind-body relation as a strict two-in-one identity has turned out to be not only acceptable but positively attractive to some, perhaps even most cognitive scholars. In most cases, I think, it is just tacitly assumed, because it is part of modern education in the analytic culture. As also mentioned, this is due to one essential motive, namely that its principle of *embodiment* of thought seems to suit the need for explaining thought and representation away by reference to an “embodied mind” in the sense of the mind’s being identical with the physiological body of the biological organism having or hosting it. The mind *is* this body, according to the Spinozio-cognitive claim. Rather than an embodied mind, which would be a Cartesian concept, we have an *enminded body* here. Where the phenomenological notion of body—cf. Merleau-Ponty’s use of the term “flesh” (*la chair*)—sharply distinguishes the experiencing-experienced body (my experiencing

body as experienced by me and my “other”), that is, the experiential, *phenomenological body*, from the physiologically given body, the Spinozan notion of body instead directly *identifies experience and physiology* (cf. in this respect the Spinozan cognitive linguist G. Lakoff’s so-called neuro-linguistic program and its use of the embodiment principle: here, image schemas simply *are* motor programs).

Contemporary cognitive understandings of mental “embodiment” are nevertheless often challenged by this extremely strong claim of “enmindment” of the body and its radical referentialization or naturalization of meaning. For instance, the conceptual entities we call *metaphors* are incompatible with such claims, since the metaphor’s source (imagery) and target (reference) differ as to their *semantic domains* and apparently have to contradict each other’s ideational reference, truth, and meaning. They therefore ought to be generically meaningless, as analytic philosophy originally thought and declared they were, and no doubt basically still suspect they are. However, the meaningfulness of metaphors in natural language was thought to perhaps be saved, analytically speaking, if it were shown that they have a *logical*, propositional format which is predicative (A IS B), yielding a logical *inference*, thereby assisting the mind in building a *true idea* out of the imagistic magma of imagination, that is, if it were shown that metaphor lets the mind connect a concrete and bodily source (B) to the abstract ideational target (A), establishing by inference from B to A a truth which would still indeed be “of the body”, by B, since the body is a body of mind. This is mainly, but implicitly, what Spinozist cognitive theories of conceptual metaphor have tried to do. The theory of mapping and conceptual integration (blending) is another example, I think.<sup>22</sup> These follow-ups on George Lakoff’s conceptual embodiments still want to show that abstract notions can be derived from concrete ideas that our bodies have.

Semiotic analysis<sup>23</sup> tends to show, however, that metaphors are not simple factories of concepts, but that they instead, through their unrealistic imagery, express judgements, evaluations, emotions, and speech acts *about* the ideas or states of affairs they refer to; metaphors therefore can not be reduced to their inferential concept, but have to be seen as meaningfully structured imaginations that express thinking *about* their deictic content, instead of just constituting or construing that content.<sup>24</sup> This “aboutness”—Searle’s term—is a major problem in analytic cognitivism, because it is representational. It is nevertheless a basic fact of the human imaginary, which prefers to “see” and say—represent—the same affairs in many ways (cf. Aristotle’s *to einai pollakos legomenon*).

## 6. Concluding

I think it is necessary to realize that truth-conditional semantics does not serve the analysis of the human imaginary.<sup>25</sup> It is not a fruitful assumption that ideas are or consists in the real things they are the truths of. Ideas are often of non-existing things-in-the-world, and still these ideas exist. Ideas are even mostly ‘about’ each other (this is their critical dimension). Ideas can exist as such, because they are made of immaterial, *representational*

*reality*—and this expression does not have to be an oxymoron. In the mental life of humans there is a neutral medium that makes it possible to seamlessly combine imagined, dreamt, remembered, expected, perceived, and communicated contents in one and the same representation and representational *format*. The human mind can even simulate all these content sources in a pure imaginary form as a narrative or theatrical *fiction* that has all the features of ordinary belief-related (remembered, expected, perceived, or communicated) contents but still has no ontological grounds other than that of being imagined in this format.<sup>26</sup> How does this seamless integration of heterogeneous elements happen? The only rational answer to this question is that these heterogeneous elements are all representationally structured and thus obey the same structural principles that are principles of the human representational, theatrical, imagining *mind*.<sup>27</sup> The simple point I want to make is that this mental format of imagination, neither true nor false but just heuristic, and given as a result of our symbolic evolution, can be explained by the existence of an autonomous structural capacity of this human mind, and that a philosophy is needed that could acknowledge this possibility in order to invite us to explore it, instead of anathematizing it.

Such a philosophy could start from some simple assumptions. Firstly that the content of *inner experience* is as ontologically (though not materially) real as the commonly observable and measurable outer world—even if we still do not know technically how inner experience comes about and is staged as consciousness by our brains. Secondly that the experiential systems and processes of meaning production are capable, at least in certain respects, of being *structurally stable* in human minds, and that such structural stability of meaning implies a representational format, an internal semiosis, so to speak.<sup>28</sup> If internal and external semiotic processes (i.e. thinking and communication) cooperate, these dual semiotic processes may further become culturally stabilized through intermental attunement and communication using conventionalized external *semioses*, from gesture to music—written, drawn, played, enacted—that allow an ongoing *semantization* of the experienced outer macro-physical (pheno-physical) world in terms of inner schemas so that it can be experienced as a multiple cultural and potentially shared human reality.

A philosophy of this form might be termed a semiotic phenomenology, a cognitive semiotics, or something else. And as Ferdinand de Saussure ventured, referring to semiology: *puisqu'elle n'existe pas encore, on ne peut dire ce qu'elle sera; mais elle a droit à l'existence, sa place est déterminée d'avance* (CLG III, §3).

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### **Notes**

1 The following pages reflect my first, passionate, and somewhat juvenile take on the huge

problem announced; some years have passed, and I now find them to be on the right path but running it too fast. I am going to slow down subsequently.

- 2 For a critical approach to this philosophical situation in cognitive science, see Line Brandt, 2013.
- 3 See, for example, the Cleveland-founded journal *Cognitive Semiotics* (2007 -).
- 4 Antonio Damasio opposes Descartes and Spinoza in his book titles and comments in ways that do not contribute to clarification, see Geir Kirkebøen (2001) on Damasio's Descartes. Heidi M. Ravven criticizes Antonio Damasio in "Spinoza and the Education of Desire", *Neuro-Psychoanalysis*, 2003, 5(2), for not being sufficiently Spinozan in his new book *Looking for Spinoza* (2003); he still separates mind and body. Damasio replies: "Ravven takes Spinoza's identity of body and mind quite literally". My view, however, is that Spinoza would have liked to know how that single natural substance managed to produce within itself what we call mind. The Spinozan "identity" of mind and body to which Ravven refers is no more a scientific fact than my saying that emotion plays out in the theater of the body and feeling in the theater of the mind. In both instances, these are modes of expression. They are meant to dramatize a certain historical moment in the understanding of a complicated problem given the knowledge of the time. Three-and-a-half centuries later, I believe Spinoza would have wanted to know, chapter and verse, how that "idea of the body which constitutes the human mind" comes about in neurobiological terms.—The centuries would thus clearly have turned Spinoza back into Descartes! Rather, Damasio is showing us that his view is in fact Cartesian: the body *produces* the mind, as a causal fact of neurobiology; Spinoza couldn't care less, and would even strongly disagree, since for him, the body, *any* body and thing, already *is* or *has* mind.

The same Geir Kirkebøen (2000) offers a masterful account of Descartes' mind-body thinking in his article "Descartes's Regulae, Mathematics, and Modern Psychology: 'The Noblest Example of All' in Light of Turing's (1936) on Computable Numbers".

- 5 *Substantial* dualism or monism is one thing; *causal* dualism or monism quite another. Two substances can be causally connected; two attributes of one substance cannot.
- 6 As M. D. Wilson says in Garrett (1996): "[Spinoza's] proposition [is] that the mind is 'the idea of' the body (or the body 'the object of' the mind)." (pp. 100-101).
- 7 Again: bodies must have minds, in Spinoza's view, because bodies are part of nature, which is God; so God is in every body, or existing thing, giving it a mind. This mind is not due to any cause; so, nervous systems, neurons, brains or whatever may be causally involved, have nothing to do with there being a mind in a thing. The human body in particular is supposed to host a vivid and migratory mind, a soul; by the way, this supposition was already stated in the Torah. Jews express gratitude to God every morning for renewal of both body and soul: "I offer thanks to You, living and everlasting King, for having returned to me my soul with compassion and great faithfulness" (the *Modeh Ani* prayer).
- 8 One of the remarkable consequences of this view is that representations cannot be false, but only meaningless, that is, fuzzy, unclear. This was to become the great call of analytic philosophy: to raise a campaign against meaningless ideas expressed by only apparently meaningful language, philosophy of "language".

- 9 This is of course the central and rather direct link from Spinoza to the scientific Vienna Circle inspired by the results of Max Planck and animated by Schlick, Neurath, etc. Wittgenstein, after Russell, is no doubt the culmination of this trend of modern mysticism. Russell's famous attempt, with Whitehead, to unify logic and mathematics, expresses the notion that the logic of thinking and the mathematics of nature must be one. Still, mathematics is a science, and logic is not; they remain ontologically distinct.
- 10 Negation in the sense of "not true" is not admissible, strictly speaking; Spinoza would say: "no" must mean "not clear, ergo nonsense".
- 11 Spinoza makes it attractive both to believe in natural science and in God, but not to believe in the cultural and social autonomy of a human mind and a life-world of meanings built up and maintained by consciousness and communication.
- 12 The modern French philosopher Gilles Deleuze thus famously ascribed "desire" and "intensities" to machines and saw "streams" of meaning flowing through networks of machinery and people; he criticized the Freudians for being too Cartesian. Deleuze and Guattari, 1972.
- 13 Cf. J. Heil in Audi 1995.
- 14 There is even a contemporary Danish strand of radical world-logicians, including Peter Øhrstrøm (1995) and Carsten Hvidtfelt Nielsen (2003); Hvidtfelt Nielsen understands that consistent meaning scepticism cannot be stated without being self-defeating, so he suggests in his doctoral thesis a logical calculus, a "formal theory" to do the job, thus hoping to avoid self-defeating *language*.
- 15 In Peirce, it has never been clear if the Object in the sign relation is a signified or a referent; the answer is, I think, that it is a referent-signified. The Representamen is its idea, and the Interpretant is another idea, namely an idea of the first idea in its relation to the Object; the Interpretant idea is something like a thought (ratio) in Spinoza's sense. Therefore, the Interpretant is also a thing to be interpreted. Things thus interpret each other. And the idea of an idea is the same idea, following Spinoza's logic.
- 16 In conceptual metaphor theory, it is thus plainly believed that the human body contains an idea of itself, namely the *container*, which becomes an image schema that can serve as a source structure in ontological metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). P. 29: "Each of us is a container...". Our body knows what it is, because it knows itself. The container schema is the idea *of* the container body.
- 17 Behind Spinoza's logicism there is probably a kabbalistic mysticism; this mysticism is in harmony with modern forms of religious sensitivity, in which the divinity is identified with the physical world, and experimental science therefore is a form of religious ceremony—science, that is, but not the humanities, built on human knowledge of signified meanings, so-called scholarship.
- 18 Hofstadter, in *I am a strange loop* (2007, p. 294), lets his avatar #641 explain his view of consciousness: "The basic idea is that the dance of symbols in a brain is itself perceived by symbols, and that step extends the dance, and so round and round it goes. That, in a nutshell, is what consciousness is." And since symbols are made of nonsymbolic neural activity, there is no way that there can be a self, a conscious agent deciding what a person should do—no room

- left for “downward activity”, i.e. determination “downwards” from mind to body. There goes the free will, and this is Hofstadter’s alternative: neural determinism versus (other) religious beliefs.—It does not occur to him that the alternative to this trivial opposition is the view that *meaning* is what the consciousness debate must address. His substantialist monism does not account for the existence of immaterial realia such as ideas, poems, melodies, equations, things that can travel from person to person and be shared, whereas neurons cannot; those things are what cognition is about, and of course also what personal identity, hence also ethics, esthetics, politics, and philosophy is made of.
- 19 Jacques Derrida’s anti-presence philosophy was of course as well received in the Spinozan tradition as his meaning scepticism.
- 20 By contrast, J. A. Fodor, in his recent defense of a representationalist, Cartesian view and his vivid critique of monist reductionism (2008), writes: “I think we’re overdue for a counterrevolution both in cognitive science and in the philosophy of mind. It’s a Cartesian truism that minds are for thinking, and... that concepts are for thinking with. For all sorts of bad reasons... the twentieth century came to flout these truisms; indeed, to think that flouting them is a condition for responsible theorizing about the mind. So, by and large, the twentieth century thought that mental states are dispositions, typically the kinds of dispositions that get manifested by behavior ...” However, he continues (p. 48), “Mental states have causal power.” Fodor’s position calls for reconsideration; he is no doubt among the most lucid cognitive philosophers of the contemporary panorama.
- 21 Well, J. R. Searle certainly does care: this is what his famous Chinese Room imaginary experiment was all about. Meaning and sense-making do make a difference. See for instance one of his Chinese Rooms and the critique of Simon and Newell in the chapter “Can computers think?” in *Minds, Brains and Science* (1989). I suspect that Searle is at least a hesitant Cartesian...
- 22 Fauconnier’s “mappings” look representational but are still just logical operations, and the meaning emerging in conceptual blends is supposed to be some sort of truth, not representational meaning. Fauconnier (1997) and Fauconnier and Turner (2002).
- 23 Cf. Brandt (2004). Brandt & Brandt (2005). Line Brandt (2013).
- 24 Instead of Lakoff’s A IS B, we would have to say, at least, that B IS ABOUT A—and that what B has to say about A is C, different from A itself.
- 25 In Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think* (2002), truth-conditional semantics is explicitly rejected, but implicitly reinstated. The models of conceptual blending offered seem to extract ideas directly out of the external world, disregarding their semiotic status as communicated meanings.
- 26 Fictions are representations of representations: they represent a narrator representing some “world”. Human minds are deeply in love with fictions, since these mental creations offer us lively as-if experiences, allowing us to learn without imposing the burden of perception.
- 27 This format may be diagrammatic; the diagrams we spontaneously draw for all sorts of purposes may reveal a thought-constitutive graphic-symbolic talent of our mind that urgently calls for study. (See note 26).—In *LOT2*, see note 20, Fodor insists on the representational character of mind; it is noticeable, though hardly surprising, to see how his overtly Cartesian

stance, rather carefully argued and revised to include all sorts of formats, is received by the cognitive community: visceral rejection.

- 28 It is likely that the format of inner representations is diagrammatic—halfway between symbols and images (icons)—, and that linguistic semantics, utterance meanings and meaning in discourse, are connected to this diagrammatic format and its extremely variable but still stabilizable patterns, thereby constituting a continuity between language and thought.