The Limits of Ratio (and the Power of Scientia Intuitiva)

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1. How can reason be adequate and yet still not as great as scientia intuitiva?

2. Some conclusions:
   a. Reason is cognition limited to objectively real, clear and distinct, and adequate representations of how things necessarily are (if they are). Scientia intuitiva enables a cognizer to know (from the first-personal perspective) that those representations of reason correspond to formally real ideata.
   b. The requisite intuition is not a sudden apprehension of the infinitely complex causal structure of all of nature. It is also not a temporally immediate insight into how some (infinite or finite) mode can be “deduced” from the essence of God. So what’s the content of the intuition? There is just one substance and its modes (and that the one substance and its modes can be considered under different attributes).
   c. Take-away point: beatitude is within reach!
   d. Spinoza has been long misunderstood re adequacy and truth.
   e. Spinoza’s scientia intuitiva can be seen as a descendent of Descartes’ scientia. (The big difference is that there is no transcendent, benevolent God)

3. Reason
   a. 2p40s2’s taxonomy
   b. “We perceive many things, and form universal notions…from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things.” A merchant cognizes in this way when he multiplies the second number by the third, and divides the product by the first “from the force of the demonstration of P19 in Book VII of Euclid, namely, the common property of proportionals.”
   c. Question: how has the merchant come to have an idea of the common property of proportionals in the first place?
   d. Any cognizer must start from confused ideas of the affections of the body, but human beings can bring some clarity to the confusion.
      i. Forming such higher-order representations is more likely the more the “body depends on itself alone” and the less other things concur with it in acting (E2p13s).
      ii. A suitably situated mind can “understand the agreements, differences, and oppositions” among the first-order representations it regards (E2p29s).
         1. From representations of bodily affections (or representations of those representations), a mind discerns more and less general properties that are wholly present in each considered part of what is represented.
         2. The idea seems to be this: that the mind is discerning what is wholly present in the part ensures that representations of such properties —e.g. body is extended—are adequate (because one need not advert to anything outside the cognizer’s mind to explain the representative content body is extended). Body is extended is a necessary and sub specie aeternitatis representation: any body whatsoever and whenever is represented as extended.
      iii. Some common notions: all bodies must be either at motion or at rest (E2a1’);
things must be “either in itself or in another” (E1a1); nothing can come from nothing; something cannot at the same time both be and not be; “Cognition of an effect depends on, and implicates [involvit], cognition of its cause” (E1a4); “things that have nothing in common with one another also cannot be understood [intelligi] through one another, that is, the concept of the one does not implicate [involvit] the concept of the other” (E1a5).

iv. More obscure: the adequate representations of what is “common to, and peculiar to, the human body and certain external bodies by which the human body is usually affected, and is equally in the part and in the whole of each of them” (E2p39, my emphasis).

1. “the idea of any way in which the human body is affected by external bodies must implicate [involvere] the nature of the human body and at the same time the nature of the external body” (E2p16).

2. If a mind represents a causal affection of its body, then there is, implicated in that representation, a commonality between the represented nature of the human body and the represented affecting body that can, at least in principle, be discerned.

3. The extent to which a mind can discern and clearly and distinctly represent the commonalities depends not only on the features of the body, but also on the body’s ability to control its own activities.

v. In grasping the common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things, a cognizer has grasped how all of extension, or particular things in extension, must be (but I do not think that our reasoning cognizer grasps these features as modes of extended substance at this point!).

1. She has acquired what is needed to form universals representing necessary relations between things.

2. In grasping a necessary property of extension—the common property of all proportional lines—the merchant sees why the rule he uses to calculate is a universal rule that applies to any proportional whatsoever. The universal notion seems to be an idea of a function: given some proportional p, another proportional q necessarily follows. Given an adequate input, a cognizer can then infer other adequate ideas using this universal notion.

e. The limits of reason

i. Reason is not limited to cognition from effects to causes

ii. The account I’ve presented so far suggests another possibility: reason is limited to representations.

iii. From considering representations of effects on her body, a reasoning cognizer can have adequate ideas representing how bodies must be—but these are representations of how bodies must be if they are. She has, and can know she has, objectively real representations of bodies.

1. Note: It seems Spinoza would say that it is manifest to a carefully introspecting cognizer that all her clear and distinct representations are ultimately based in representations of bodily affections.

2. Also: I do not think Spinoza assumes it will be phenomenologically manifest that what the mind is is just the representation of the body with which it is one and the same (“The objectum of the idea constituting the
human mind is the body, or a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and nothing else” (E2p13)).

f. The natural next questions: are there formally real bodies corresponding to her clear and distinct representations? How do you get the sort of certainty that makes it impossible to entertain Cartesian doubts?
   i. What about E2p34 (“every idea which in us is absolute, that is, adequate and perfect, is true”)? Or E1a6 (the axiom that true ideas agree with their ideata)?
   ii. From what I have said so far, a cognizer’s claim that her adequate representations of reason are true would be objectionably dogmatic.
      1. ...Some inchoate thoughts about the interesting structure of the Ethics (and the role of the scholia)...

4. Scientia intuitiva
   a. “proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate cognition of the [NS formal] essence of things.”
   b. Family resemblance to Descartes’ scientia:
      i. Descartes: once we know the true metaphysical foundation of our being (the sustaining activity of a benevolent God who wouldn’t create creatures incapable of having any true ideas), we can be certain that the ideas judged best by an internalist criterion (clarity and distinctness) are also best by an externalist epistemic criterion (they are true of an extra-mental reality).
      ii. Spinoza: once we know the metaphysical foundation of our being (the substance’s sustaining activity of its modes), we can be certain that the ideas judged best by an internalist criterion (adequacy, as “intrinsic denominations” excluding “what is extrinsic, namely the agreement of an idea with its ideatum” (2d4)) are also best by an externalist epistemic criterion (adequate ideas are true because they agree with their ideata).
   c. How does this work? A little story:
      i. Consider a cognizer who has come to see that what is common to “the part and the whole” of any of her representations is extension.
         1. what is presupposed by any of her representations of body is not an indefinitely extensible, divisible-into-parts, 3-D grid in which one can imagine bodies placed; such an imaginative representation itself presupposes a conception of infinite, unique, and indivisible extension. This ur-conception of extension is an idea (because anything in the mind is an idea), but it is difficult to say more about what sort of representation it is (and it is a representation, as all ideas are).
      ii. Now our cognizer may realize that this conception of extension has objective reality; in this case, infinitie objective reality.
         1. She may run a sort of Third Meditation causal argument for the existence of God
         2. However, even if she realizes that God is prior to and is the cause of what is finite or indefinite, she might still wonder what this causal priority is like.
      iii. Now suppose that our cognizer realizes that what she learned in Sunday school is all wrong: there is no benevolent, transcendent God transmitting esse across a void. She sees, in a flash, that the one God sustains the being of things by being
the substance in which those things inhere. There is just one substance, this
substance necessarily exists, all that is not substance are modes caused by and
inhering in the one substance, and that the one substance and its modes can be
considered under different attributes.

iv. It seems plausible that all of these aspects could be apprehended by a finite
human mind in a flash.

d. How does this enable a reasoning cognizer to be certain that formal reality agrees with
her adequate, clear and distinct representations?

i. Our cognizer can now see that her conception of infinite extension just is a
conception of God, or substance, considered under the attribute of extension.
Substance necessarily exists, and so substance considered under the attribute of
extension has formal reality.

1. Some of her cognitions of the second kind enabled her to have adequate
representations of how all of extension (or any extended thing) must be if
it has formal reality. If she knows that extension necessarily has formal
reality, then she can know her representations of the necessary structural
features of extension are true: formally-real extension is modified in just
the ways she had (adequately) represented it to be. She can know
formally real extension is such that any body must be a certain way if it
has formal reality.

ii. But can the cognizer know that any particular body has formal reality? It can
seem to a cognizer that she has a body, but can we take that seeming to be an
indicator of truth?

1. Note that the cognizer has also realized that one and the same substance
(and one and the same mode) can be considered under different
attributes.

2. She sees infinite extension as formally real substance, but she also sees
infinite thought as formally-real substance, and importantly, that
formally-real infinite thought and formally-real infinite extension are the
one and the same formally-real substance considered under different
attributes. Any idea is just a formally real mode of substance considered
under the attribute of thought, and the very same formally real mode can
also be considered under the attribute of extension (as body). Our
cognizer can see that her mind is formally real and is one and the same
mode as her body. And if she knows her mind is formally real, then she
knows her body is too.

iii. This is a powerful insight!

1. All the content of our cognizer’s representations of reasons can be traced
to the mind’s consideration of the agreements, differences, and
oppositions of representations of her body’s affections.

2. Universals of reason, formed from common notions and adequate ideas
of the properties of things, represent necessary transitions between
representations. Our cognizer could infer from an adequate
representation of a bodily affection how an external body must be. Now
she can see that those adequate representations of bodily affects are true
because they agree with a formally real ideatum (that is, the body with
which her mind is one and the same).

3. Her adequate higher-order representations based on the ideas of
affections of her body will also be true, as will any representations of what is necessarily implicated by adequate representations of her body.

4. She can now use whatever universals of reason she has come to have to deduce other adequate and true ideas. She can see that adequate ideas and true ideas are coextensive.

5. Discussion
   a. “Formal essences” in E2p40s2 is a clue and not an erratum
      i. The usual interpretation of E2p8: two different essences are contrasted. The *actual* essence of a thing, its conatus (E3p7), is such that when it is given as existing, the thing is posited as actually existing, while a *formal* essence of a thing is something such that when it is given as existing, the thing is posited as possible.
      ii. I think Spinoza is saying something simpler: in the perfect infinite intellect, *every* objectively real representation of something, *even of non-durational things*, corresponds to something *formally* real.
         1. Formal reality already salient. E2p5 and E2p6 (about the formal reality of ideas and other modes of thought)
         2. Makes sense for him to bring up the perfect correspondence of the infinite intellect’s objectively real representations and formally real *ideata*. E2p7 states that “the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things,” and its corollary makes it explicit that there is some *thing* (finite or infinite mode, either of thought or of extension) matching each idea in God’s infinite intellect.
         3. E2p8 is an extension of E2p7 that clarifies what exactly a perfect, infinite intellect represents.
            a. An objectively real representation of an actually drawn line will agree with something formally real: an *actually drawn line*. But it will also be the case that an objectively-real representation of a never-to-be-actually-drawn lines will also agree with something formally real: in this case, a *potential-but-never-actual line*.
            b. Question: are truthmakers for counterfactual conditionals also part of the structure of nature?
      iii. If “formal essences” are what has formal reality corresponding to objectively real representations, then there will be both formal essences of actually drawn lines and formal essences of forever-merely-potential lines. There can be a *formal* essence of a thing that when given as existing, the thing is posited as *actually* existing.
      iv. E2p8 underscores that in the perfect intellect, there is agreement between representations and formal reality. *Scientia intuitiva* is the best sort of cognition a human being can achieve. Doesn’t it make sense to think that *scientia intuitiva* also has something to do with such agreement?
   b. *Scientia intuitiva* is also presented as cognition of *essences*, not just of “formal reality.”
      Two ways to understand “essences”?
         i. *the essence of each thing that is sufficient to individuate it from all other things.*
         ii. “essence of things” as the essence of *things* (plural). What all *things* are are *modes of substance caused by and inhering in the one substance*. The “what something really, fundamentally is” sense of “essence.”
1. Cognition of the third kind results in an adequate cognition of what things really are (modes) rather than, say, Aristotelian or Cartesian substances.

c. “Same content” and “different content” views of scientia intuitiva: both are sort of right.
   i. “Same content” advocates got something right: you don’t uncover new details about bodies with cognition of the third kind. You just see that whatever adequate ideas you had are true.
   ii. “different content” advocates got something right: the difference between reason and scientia intuitiva is not just a difference in, say, the “direction” of cognition

d. Reason as a prerequisite for scientia intuitiva
   i. Not just a matter of cognitive sophistication
   ii. how many things a cognizer can know by the third kind of cognition (and know to be true) depends on how many common notions, adequate ideas of the properties of things, and universals she has. Once she has the intuition of monism, she can form the universal all adequate representations are true. This, along with reason’s adequate representations of how things must be, enables her to deduce “a great many things which we know adequately,” and so can form third kind of cognition (E2p47d).
   iii. The more our cognizer knows, the more she knows what God—substance—is (formally) really like: i.e. how the one substance is necessarily modified.

e. Both are kinds of causal cognition
   i. Cognition of the second kind: the ways things must be if they are. Causae secundum fieri?
   ii. Cognition of the third kind: what the causa secundum esse is.

f. Both are guides to truth (E2p42)
   i. whether one has adequate representations of some thing as formally real or just has adequate representations of how some thing is, any further investigations on the basis of those representations will be on the right track.

gh. What about E2p43 and E2p43s? “He who has a true idea at the same time knows that he has a true idea and cannot doubt the truth of the thing”
   i. Having true ideas means having the “highest certainty” (E2p43s), but one only has the highest certainty with the third kind of cognition. Once one does see that all of one’s adequate ideas must be true, then a cognizer is in a position to affirm, from the first-person perspective, E2p34: every idea which in us is absolute, or adequate and perfect, is true. And so such a cognizer has a true idea and at the same time knows she has a true idea.

h. The intuition of monism has to be an adequate idea as well.
   i. Another reason reason is a prerequisite
   ii. The role of the Ethics as a primer (but not every reader will be able to have the intuition! Merely following the force of the demonstrations isn’t enough for intellectual love of God and beatitude. Darn.