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The Part-Whole Relation in Spinoza's Concept of the Individual

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The question about parts and whole might be regarded as the most basic question of metaphysics. In this presentation, I will discuss this question in connection with the problem of persistence through change. For this purpose, I want to clarify Spinoza's view to the part-whole relation by focusing on his concept of the individual. Since this concept has an idea about the relation: Spinoza supposes that the individual as a whole does not change even though its parts change. However, philosophers of Mechanism in 17th century must not have allowed this supposition. It is because one think that, in Mechanism, a composite is made of parts and conceived through them, and then the composite's identity depends on its parts. From this it follows that any change of parts means the change of its whole, which is the individual. That is problem of persistence through change. But Spinoza seems not to think like this. To explain its persistence through change, he introduces the notion of "form" of the individual. In my opinion, Spinoza's concept of the individual elaborated by the form can reply this problem.

Before discussing the definition of the individual, I show what he says about parts and whole in general. This is to be find in Spinoza's correspondence with Oldenburg, Letter 32. He says "[concerning whole and parts, I consider things as parts of some whole insofar as the nature of the one so adapts itself to the nature of the other that so far as possible they are all in harmony with one another. But insofar as they are out of harmony with one another, to that extent each forms an idea distinct from the others in our mind, and therefore it is considered as a whole and not as a part," and then "every body, insofar as it exists modified in a certain way, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, must agree with the whole to which it belongs, and must cohere with the remaining bodies (tr. Curley, in *A Spinoza Reader*, 1994, Princeton University Press.)" In this text, we must pay attention to two words: "adapt" and "agree." From these words I want to derive Spinoza's idea about parts and the whole.

The definition of individual, in the texts following scholium of proposition 13 in part 2 of Spinoza's *Ethics*, states "[w]hen a number of bodies, ...are so constrained by other bodies (composing the same individual) ...if they so move, whether with the same degree or different degrees of speed, that they communicate their motion to each other in a certain fixed manner, we shall say that those bodies are united with one another and that they all together compose one body or individual (*ibid.* emphasis added.)" I will demonstrate that the definition involves the part-whole relation. For this purpose, I reconsider the references to this in Lemmas and proposition 24 in the same part of the *Ethics*. So, it might be clear that the form of the individual, also called *certa ratio*, is placed in the particular position, and therefore it functions to avoid the problem.