IDENTITY AND DISTINCTION IN SPINOZA'S *ETHICS*[1]

BY

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Abstract: In *Ethics* 1p5, Spinoza asserts that "In Nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute". This claim serves as a crucial premise in Spinoza's argument for substance monism, yet Spinoza's demonstration of the 1p5 claim is surprisingly brief and appears to have obvious difficulties. This paper answers the principle difficulties that have been raised in response to Spinoza's argument for 1p5. The key to understanding the 1p5 argument lies in a proper understanding of the substance-attribute relationship and the principles of metaphysical individuation that Spinoza accepts.

Introduction

In proposition five of the first part of the *Ethics* Spinoza asserts that "In Nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute."[2] This claim serves as a crucial premise in Spinoza's argument for substance monism.[3] It enables him to move from the proposition that God – "a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence"[4] – exists to the proposition that there can be no other substance besides God.[5] However, Spinoza scholars have found it both surprising and puzzling that Spinoza should claim that there cannot be two substances with the same nature or attribute. They find it surprising because many early modern thinkers had no difficulty with distinct substances sharing attributes. Locke, for example, maintained that there is a plurality of extended substances as well as mental ones; and Descartes accepted a plurality of mental substances (and on some accounts a plurality of extended substances as well). They find it

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puzzling because the argument for this crucial and controversial claim is both brief and appears to have obvious difficulties. But of course Spinoza was too rigorous a thinker to overlook or fail to address clear difficulties in an argument for a central thesis. The argument for 1p5 has therefore served as a tantalizing puzzle for Spinoza scholars. Henry Allison, Jonathan Bennett, Edwin Curley, Michael Della Rocca, Alan Donagan, Don Garrett and Michael Hooker[6] (among others) have each wondered what it is about Spinoza's metaphysics such that the 1p5 proof is not subject to the obvious difficulties. Some of these commentators – for example, Garrett, Curley, Allison and Della Rocca – believe that Spinoza's metaphysics has the resources to adequately address the apparent difficulties. Other commentators – for example, Bennett, Hooker and Leibniz[7] – believe that it does not, and Spinoza has simply blundered. Well, we too have been compelled by the question 'what is it that we are missing that explains away the difficulties in the 1p5 proof?' And we have come to believe that there is something, and that the previous attempts to identify it miss the mark.[8] In the next section we will lay out Spinoza's argument for 1p5. We will then discuss the two apparent difficulties with the argument that have preoccupied commentators, before presenting what we believe to be the proper resolution of those difficulties. We will argue that the difficulties are resolved by a proper understanding of Spinoza's conception of the substance-attribute relationship and the principles of metaphysical individuation that Spinoza accepts.

The 1p5 argument

Spinoza's argument, as it appears in 1p5d, for the claim that "In Nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute" is as follows:

(1) Distinct substances must be distinguished from one another by "a difference in their attributes, or by a difference in their affections."
(2) If distinct substances are distinguished "only by a difference in their attributes, then it will be conceded that there is only one of the same attribute."
(3) If distinct substances are distinguished by a "difference in their affections, then since a substance is prior in nature to its affections (by 1p1), if the affections are put to one side and [the substance] is considered in itself, i.e. (by 1d3 and 1a6), considered truly, one cannot be conceived to be distinguished from another."
(4) Therefore, there cannot be more than one distinct substance of the same nature or attribute.

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The general argumentative strategy is straightforward enough. From the previous proposition, 1p4, Spinoza has the claim that there are only two ways that distinct things can be metaphysically individuated: by a difference in attributes or by a difference in affections. Spinoza then argues that neither of those ways applied to the individuation of substances allows for the possibility of distinct substances sharing the same attribute. In the case of individuation by difference in attribute it will be the case that the individuated substances simply have different attributes from one another – that, after all, is what individuates them – so they don't share an attribute. In the case of individuation by difference in affection, it turns out that – because a substance is prior in nature to its affects and substance considered truly is considered independently of its affections – a difference in affection cannot individuate substances. *A fortiori*, it cannot individuate substances that share an attribute. So in either case – individuation by attributes or individuation by affection – there can be no distinct substances that share the same attribute.

The Leibniz-Bennett objection[9]

Leibniz and Bennett (among others) have been critical of Spinoza's argument that a difference in attributes cannot suffice to distinguish two substances with an attribute in common. That is, they are not convinced by premise (2) above. Premise (2) claims that if two substances are distinguished by a difference in attributes then *ex hypothesis* they are not two distinct substances that share an attribute. But (2) seems correct only so long as substances are capable of having no more than one attribute. If substances can have no more than one attribute then if one substance has an attribute and another substance is distinguished from it by a difference in attribute then the two substances must have different attributes. But if substances can have more than one attribute, why should they not be distinguished by their combinations of attributes even while they share some particular attribute? A substance with attributes A1 and A2 could in this way be distinguished from a substance with attributes A2 and A3, and it would thus be possible for distinct substances to have an attribute in common. So Spinoza's argument either requires that substances are incapable of having more than one attribute or appears to overlook a rather obvious set of possibilities that render premise (2) false. Spinoza explicitly denies that a substance can have only one attribute – he later argues for the existence of God,[10] a substance with an infinite number of attributes. Therefore Spinoza's argument that a difference in attributes cannot suffice to distinguish two substances that share an attribute appears to overlook a range of obvious possibilities.

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The Hooker-Bennett objection[11]

Hooker and Bennett (among others) have been critical of Spinoza's argument that a difference in affections cannot individuate substances. That is, they are not convinced by premise (3) above. They wonder why it should be that the "priority" of a substance over its affections entitles one to, as Spinoza says, "put to one side" the affections in order to consider the substance "truly." After all, if two distinct substances were capable of sharing the same attribute or nature, the plausible candidate for what differentiates, for example, the extension of the one from the extension of the other is their having different affections, i.e., their extensions being expressed through different modes.[12] So what is this "priority" of a substance over its affections that justifies setting them aside? And why should considering a substance truly require considering it separately from its modes? Does not a substance truly have affections? And so would not conceiving a substance without its affections be conceiving it falsely? Without some principled answer to these questions, Spinoza appears to be begging the question on why a difference in affections is not sufficient for individuating substances.

Solution to the Leibniz-Bennett problem

The Leibniz-Bennett problem arises from the possibility of two distinct substances being distinguished by their combination of attributes even while the two substances have an attribute in common. Spinoza appears to have no argument against the possibility that substance S1 with attributes A1 and A2 is distinct from substance S2 with attributes A2 and A3 in virtue of their having different combinations of attributes. This possibility, however, supposes a certain sort of relationship between a substance and its attributes. An attribute is "what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence."[13] So Leibniz-Bennett possibilities require that substances with different combinations of attributes have different essences, even while they have (at least) one attribute in common.[14] It is this possibility that we will deny. We maintain that for Spinoza, two substances with different essences cannot have even one attribute in common. And we will establish this by appealing to the following theses, which we shall argue are both Spinozistic and available to Spinoza prior to 1p5:

A. Each attribute of a substance is itself a complete expression of the essence of the substance.
B. Two things are not metaphysically distinct if they completely express the same essence.

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These two theses work to establish that two substances with different essences cannot have any attribute in common, and thus resolve the Leibniz-Bennett problem in the following way:

(1) Suppose that substance S1 with attributes A1 and A2 and substance S2 with attributes A2 and A3 are distinct substances, i.e., have distinct essences, in virtue of their having different combinations of attributes constituting their essences, even though they have an attribute in common. (Assumption for *reductio ad absurdum*)
(2) A1 and A2 are each complete expressions of the same essence, the essence of S1. (From 1 and Thesis A above)
(3) A1 and A2 are not metaphysically distinct. (From 2 and Thesis B)
(4) A2 and A3 are each complete expressions of the same essence, the essence of S2. (From 1 and Thesis A above)
(5) A2 and A3 are not metaphysically distinct. (From 4 and Thesis B)
(6) A1, A2 and A3 are not metaphysically distinct. (From 3, 5, and the transitivity of identity.)
(7) S1 and S2 have the same essence. (From 2, 4, and 6)
(8) S1 and S2 have distinct essences. (From 1)
(9) Therefore, two substances with an attribute in common cannot have different attributes constituting their essences. (By *reductio ad absurdum*, 1, 7, 8)
(10) Leibniz-Bennett possibilities require that substances with different combinations of attributes have different essences, even though they have an attribute in common.
(11) Therefore, Leibniz-Bennett "possibilities" are not really possible. (From 9, 10)

This strategy for resolving the Leibniz-Bennett objection is clearly only as good as our arguments that A and B are Spinozistic principles that Spinoza is entitled to prior to 1p5. This is what we aim to establish in the remainder of this section. We begin with Thesis A.

Spinoza says concerning the essence of a thing that "the power, *or* striving, by which it strives to persevere in its being, is nothing but the given, *or* actual, essence of the thing itself."[15] So the essence of each thing is its particular striving. That is to say, there is a particular and unique striving – the power of that thing – and that is its essence. These considerations establish that the "actual essence" of a thing is its power. However, Spinoza's reliance on 3p6 – which is explicitly concerned with only singular things – in the demonstration for the essence is power thesis suggests that Spinoza's use of the term 'actual essence' might refer only to the

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essences of singular things or modes. Substances are not modes, so it is reasonable to wonder if the conclusion applies to things generally (including substances) or modes exclusively. We believe the conclusion is justifiably extended to apply to substances in virtue of Spinoza's claim that "God's power is his essence itself."[16] Since God is a substance rather than a mode, the claim seems to be a clear application of the essence is power thesis well beyond singular things. We are thus comfortable extending the thesis to the essences of substances. So the essence of a substance is its power.

An attribute is "what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence." Substituting the essence is power thesis we get the thesis that an attribute is what the intellect perceives of a substance as constituting its power. This gets us closer to Thesis A, though not yet all the way. Thesis A claims that according to Spinoza each attribute of a substance is itself a complete expression of the essence of the substance. What we need to get the rest of the way to this claim is that each attribute is itself a complete expression of the power of its substance.

The claim that each attribute is itself a complete expression of the power of the substance whose attribute it is perceived to constitute is an unorthodox view. Many Spinoza scholars believe that the essence, and therefore power, of a substance is in some manner a combination of all of its attributes.[17] However, Sherry Deveaux[18] has argued persuasively against the combination thesis. If the combination thesis is that the essence of God and thereby God's power is constituted by the entire collection of the attributes, then the thesis is incompatible with Spinoza's claim that we can conceive an infinite being through one attribute alone.[19] And if the combination thesis is that God's essence is an amalgamated totality of God's attributes, then the thesis is incompatible with Spinoza's claims that each attribute is conceived as distinct from one another.[20] So in the process of explicating Spinoza's definition of God[21] (and resolving a series of puzzles concerning it), Deveaux establishes that "the essence of God can be conceived in different ways precisely because the essence of God is *expressed* in particular ways or kinds."[22] Those different ways of conceiving God are the different attributes of God.[23] Deveaux concludes that each of God's attributes is a distinct expression of God's power.[24] The attributes are not (collectively or singly) God's essence. They are each one a complete and independent expression of it.

Given Deveaux's arguments, we need only generalize from the relationship between God and his attributes to the relationship between any substance and its attributes in order to establish Thesis A. This generalization seems appropriate given that whatever the nature of the substance-attribute relationship, it will be exemplified in each instance. We thus conclude that according to Spinoza each attribute of a substance is itself a complete expression of the essence of the substance.

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We take the above considerations to show that Thesis A is Spinozistic. We do, however, rely on several post 1p5 propositions in establishing the claim. Doesn't that imply it is out of order for us to use it to resolve the 1p5 puzzles? We do not think so. We are not using propositions that employ 1p5 in their proofs in order to prove 1p5. Rather, we are looking at later claims that are derived from earlier claims in order to better understand the content of those earlier claims. We want to know the proper way to understand the substance-attribute relationship. The relationship is not clear from what Spinoza says prior to 1p5. We must, therefore, look for clarification from how the relationship functions and what Spinoza has to say about it later in the *Ethics*. This methodology seems to us to be non-circular and appropriate. We now turn to Thesis B.

According to Spinoza, the essence of a thing provides the identity conditions of that thing.

> I say that to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing.[25]

So if E is the essence of thing T then (1) if T exists then E is instantiated, and (2) if E is instantiated then T exists. The instantiation of the essence of a thing is the necessary and sufficient existential condition for the thing. It follows from this that each thing has its own essence, and that no essence is instantiated twice. If it were, then there would be two numerically distinct things that share the same identity, and that is absurd.[26]

Because essences provide metaphysical identity conditions, if two things completely express the essence of the same thing, then there is exactly one essence being expressed. Moreover, if there is exactly one essence being expressed, there can be no metaphysical distinction between its expressions. For although we conceive of the two expressions as distinct, conceiving them as distinct is no basis for metaphysical distinction. Spinoza counts such differences in conception as mere distinctions of reason (*distinctio rationis*), and (as we shall argue in the next section) Spinoza does not consider such distinctions to be metaphysically individuating. Given this (provisionally), Spinoza accepts and establishes prior to 1p5, Thesis B: Two things are not metaphysically distinct if they completely express the same essence.

If we are right about Spinoza's views regarding *distinctio rationis*, then Thesis B, like Thesis A, is Spinozistic and available to Spinoza prior to 1p5. They thus provide a solution to the Leibniz-Bennett Problem. We now turn to our solution to the Hooker-Bennett problem, where we will also defend our interpretation of Spinoza's views on *distinctio rationis*.

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Solution to the Hooker-Bennett problem: Spinoza and Descartes on real distinctions

In 1p4 of the *Ethics* Spinoza claims that "Two or more distinct things are distinguished from one another, either by a difference in the attributes of the substances or by a difference in their affections." Spinoza thus accepts a general formulation of the Identity of Indiscernibles: Two metaphysically distinct things must be distinguishable. Spinoza is further claiming that a metaphysical distinction requires the *right sort of difference*. And in 1p5 Spinoza tells us that in regards to the individuation of substances, a difference in affection cannot do the work. The question that gives rise to the Hooker-Bennett problem is: Why is it that a difference in affections cannot provide metaphysical individuation between substances? In response to this question Spinoza must accept a principle of metaphysical distinction that justifies his setting aside affections when considering the identity of substances.

Spinoza's views on distinction are best understood in light of Descartes' discussion of three kinds of distinction in his *Principles of Philosophy*. There can be no doubt that Descartes' work informed Spinoza's thinking on this issue. Descartes' account of "real distinction" is explicitly addressed by Spinoza in 1p10s. Spinoza also discusses Descartes' three types of distinction in his *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy Demonstrated in the Geometric Manner*.

In *Principles* I, 60–62, Descartes introduces real distinctions, modal distinctions, and conceptual distinctions.[27] Only his discussions of the real distinction and the conceptual distinction are relevant here. For Descartes, we have epistemic access to these distinctions by reflecting on what we can (or cannot) clearly and distinctly understand. As we shall see, it is not the distinctions themselves that Spinoza rejects, but Descartes' account of our epistemic access to them.

A "real distinction" for Descartes is a distinction between two things capable of separate existence.[28] We perceive a real distinction when one thing can be clearly and distinctly understood apart from another. For Descartes, this conceptual independence shows that there are two distinct substances capable of separate existence, since it implies that God could separate them. In addition, there is a sense in which a real distinction can obtain between modes of two distinct substances, since each mode can be understood without the other. While these modes can exist apart from each other, they are not capable of separate existence in the sense that each depends on a substance for its existence, and it is not possible to conceive them except through a substance. According to Descartes, it is appropriate to call such a distinction between modes a real distinction since "the modes in question cannot be clearly understood apart from the really distinct substances of which they are modes".[29] Really distinct

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modes are distinguished only derivatively from a real distinction between substances.

For Descartes a conceptual distinction (*distinctio rationis*) is perceived when neither of two things can be clearly and distinctly understood apart from the other.[30] Descartes believes such conceptual dependence shows that neither thing can exist independently of the other. Hence conceptual dependence indicates either a distinction between a substance and one of its attributes, or a distinction between two attributes of the same substance. For Descartes, attributes are distinguished from modes precisely by the fact that they remain "unmodified."[31] Thus a substance and its attribute cannot exist independently of each other, nor can they be conceived separately. For example, a thinking substance cannot be clearly and distinctly understood apart from the attribute of thought, nor can this attribute be understood apart from a substance that thinks. Descartes writes that thought and extension are "nothing else but thinking substance itself and extended substance itself."[32] In other words, the distinction between substance and attribute is not a real distinction but merely a conceptual distinction. In addition, the various attributes of a single substance are not clearly and distinctly understood apart from each other, and therefore cannot exist independently of each other. For example, we can have separate thoughts of extension, divisibility and duration, but none is clearly and distinctly perceived apart from the others – one cannot conceive of extension without divisibility or duration – and therefore they cannot exist independently of each other.

Only the real distinction is a metaphysical distinction, that is, a numerical distinction between things capable of separate existence. We believe that Spinoza accepts this aspect of Descartes' view. In particular, Spinoza makes plain in *Descartes' Principles* that he regards the conceptual distinction (*distinctio rationis*) as not a distinction at all. A *distinctio rationis* is a merely verbal and consequently a deceptive distinction. Things distinguished in this way are "not in any way distinct."[33]

Spinoza does not, however, accept Descartes' claim that conceptual independence is sufficient for metaphysical distinction. In rejecting this claim Spinoza denies a critical premise in the Cartesian argument for substance dualism, thereby clearing the way for his monism. The denial that conceptual independence implies metaphysical distinction is made explicitly by Spinoza in 1p10s.

> From these propositions it is evident that although two attributes may be conceived to be really distinct (i.e., one may be conceived without the aid of the other), we still can not infer from that that they constitute two beings, *or* two different substances.

So according to Spinoza, different attributes of the same substance are not metaphysically distinct even if they are conceived independently.[34] We

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have thus made good on our promise – made during the defense of our solution to the Leibniz-Bennett problem – that a distinction between attributes is a mere *distinctio rationis* and therefore not sufficient for metaphysical individuation. We are now prepared to present our solution to the Hooker-Bennett objection.

In the Demonstration of 1p4, Spinoza emphasizes that for two things to be distinct in the sense he is looking for they must be distinguished by something *outside the intellect*. Since there are only modes and substances outside the intellect, these are the only means "through which a number of things can be distinguished from one another." Any other distinction, one internal to the intellect, would be a *distinctio rationis*. So Spinoza's account of what is necessary for metaphysical individuation corresponds with the Cartesian account of real distinctions. However, when we attend closely to the Cartesian account of a real distinction (discussed above) we find that affections can provide a real distinction only derivatively, that is, only given a prior distinction between substances. So in response to the Hooker-Bennett problem we suggest that Spinoza accepts the following Cartesian thesis concerning real distinctions between affections.

C. Two affections are metaphysically distinct only if they are understood through separate substances that are metaphysically distinct.

C explains what Spinoza means by substances being "prior" to their affections in a way that makes it appropriate for Spinoza to "set aside" the affections when considering whether two substances that share an attribute can be metaphysically distinct. Since a real distinction between affections presupposes a real distinction between substances, it would be circular to infer a real distinction between substances by claiming a real distinction between their affections. A real distinction between affections of distinct substances cannot work to establish a real distinction between substances.

Conclusion

In his discussion of the Hooker-Bennett and Leibniz-Bennett problems Don Garrett[35] emphasizes two desiderata for evaluating any proposed solutions to the problems: they must answer the objections using resources available to Spinoza before his demonstration of 1p5, and they must be likely interpretations of Spinoza's intentions. In addition to these, we would add a third. Given the brevity of Spinoza's argument in 1p5 an adequate understanding of it must be relatively straightforward and uncontrived. How do our solutions measure on these criteria?

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First, the three theses on which our solutions rely are available to Spinoza at 1p5. The substance-attribute relationship (of which Thesis A is concerned) is expounded by Spinoza in Part One. Spinoza's conception of the essence of a thing (on which Thesis B depends) is employed by Spinoza in that exposition, and it is given explicit formulation in the Part Two definitions. It is, therefore, not derivative on any claims subsequent to 1p5. And Spinoza's views on real distinctions (of which Thesis C is a part and on which Thesis B also depends) are at work already in 1p4.

Second, the three theses are Spinozistic. They just are part of Spinoza's views on the substance-attribute relationship, the nature of essences, and metaphysical individuation.

Third, given the three theses the resolutions of the problems are readily apparent. Once Spinoza's views on metaphysical individuation and real distinctions are made explicit it is clear why Spinoza feels justified in setting aside the affections when considering the individuation of substances. And once Spinoza's understanding of the substance-attribute relationship is made explicit it is simply a matter applying his definition of essence and the principle of transitivity of identity to see why two substances cannot have an attribute in common. So it seems that our solutions to the Hooker-Bennett and Leibniz-Bennett problems score well on each of the standards against which proposed solutions to the problems are to be judged.

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NOTES

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Pacific Division Meeting of the North American Spinoza Society. The authors would like to thank their commentators at that meeting, Debra Nails and Joe VanZandt, as well as the session's audience, particularly Lee Rice and Michael Della Rocca, for their helpful and constructive comments. We also thank Tom Paxson and Ezio Vailati for comments and discussions on earlier drafts of this paper.

[2] All quoted passages from the *Ethics* are taken from Edwin Curley (ed. and tr.) (1985), *The Collected Works of Spinoza, Volume I*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Throughout, we use the standard notation to refer to passages of Spinoza's *Ethics*. The initial number refers to the Part number; 'p' refers to 'Proposition'; 'a' refers to 'axiom'; 'd' after the initial part number refers to 'definition'; 'd' after the proposition number refers to 'demonstration', 's' after the proposition number refers to 'scholium'.

[3] It is also employed in the demonstrations of 1p6, 1p8, 1p12, and 1p13.

[4] 1p11.

[5] 1p14: "Except God, no substance can be or be conceived".

[6] Allison, Henry (1987) *Benedict de Spinoza: An Introduction, revised edition*, New Haven: Yale University Press; Bennett, Jonathan (1984) *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*,

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Indianapolis: Hackett; Curley, Edwin (1988) *Behind the Geometric Method: A Reading of Spinoza's Ethics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Della Rocca, Michael (2002) "Spinoza's Substance Monism", in Olli Koistinen and John Biro (eds.) *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 11–37; Donagan, Alan (1988) *Spinoza*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Garrett, Don (1990) "*Ethics* 1p5: Shared Attributes and the Basis of Spinoza's Monism," in J. A. Cover and Mark Kulstad (eds.) *Central Themes in Early Modern Philosophy*, Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing, pp. 69–107; Hooker, Michael (1980) "The Deductive Character of Spinoza's Metaphysics," in Richard Kennington (ed.) *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza*, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, pp. 17–34.

[7] See Leibniz' reading notes (1678) to Part I of the *Ethics*, in Leroy E. Loemker (ed.) *Philosophical Papers and Letters, 2nd ed*, Dordrecht: Reidel pp. 198–99.

[8] We will not here be recounting the previous attempts to resolve the 1p5 puzzles. A clear and comprehensive review has already been provided by Garrett, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–79, 83–94.

[9] This name for this objection is given by Garrett, *op. cit.*

[10] 1p11. And in 1p10 he says, "it is far from absurd to attribute many attributes to one substance."

[11] This name is also given by Garrett, *op. cit.*

[12] It should be noted that the 1p5 argument is given before Spinoza identifies any particular attributes.

[13] 1d4.

[14] This could be the case by the attributes constituting the essence of the substances to which they belong being taken either as a collection or as an amalgamated whole.

[15] *Ethics*, 3p7d.

[16] *Ethics*, 1p34.

[17] See, for example, Curley, E. (1969) *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, Boston: Harvard University Press and Parchment, Steve (1996) "The God/Attribute Distinction in Spinoza's Metaphysics: A Defense of Causal Objections," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 13.

[18] "Spinoza's Definition of God," presented at the 2002 Pacific Division Meeting of the North American Spinoza Society.

[19] In 2p1s, for example, Spinoza claims that "Since we can conceive of an infinite Being by attending to thought alone, Thought is necessarily one of God's infinite attributes."

[20] In 1p10, for example, Spinoza claims that "Each attribute of a substance must be conceived through itself."

[21] Spinoza defines God as "a being absolutely infinite, i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence" (1d6).

[22] Deveaux, p. 15. In the course of defending this claim Deveaux also considers and rejects the many essences view of God according to which each attribute is a separate, distinct, or different essence of God, as opposed to a separate expression of God's one essence. Deveaux finds that this interpretation violates Spinoza's definition of an essence (2d2) according to which a thing's essence establishes the necessary and sufficient identity conditions of a thing. If one thing has two or more distinct essences, then it must have two or more distinct sets of necessary and sufficient existential conditions. But that of course implies a contradiction. We shall say more about Spinoza's definition of essence below.

[23] *Ethics*, 1d4.

[24] Deveaux, p. 16.

[25] *Ethics*, 2d2. There is an ambiguity in this definition that merits noting, since it pertains to the extension of the definition. Most commentators take this definition to quantify over all things – substances included – and we are here following this accepted interpretation. In fact, such an interpretation is required by our argument. However the Latin translated as

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"any thing" is "*alicuius rei*" and it is at least possible to read it as quantifying only over finite modes. We thank Lee Rice for bringing this possibility to our attention. The standard interpretation does, however, find additional support in the fact that it is required for resolving the 1p5 difficulties.

[26] *Ethics*, 1p4.

[27] Quoted passages from the *Principles* are taken from Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch (tr.) (1985) *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[28] *Principles*, I, 60. See also Spinoza's definition of "really distinct" in *Descartes' Principles*: "Two substances are said to be really distinct when each of them can exist without the other" (1d10).

[29] *Principles*, I, 61.

[30] *Principles*, I, 62.

[31] *Principles*, I, 56.

[32] *Principles*, I, 63.

[33] *Descartes' Principles*, I, 4, appendix. Later in the exposition, Spinoza discusses the types of composition that correspond to Descartes' types of distinction. The type of composition corresponding to a *distinctio rationis*, "does not occur, but is only conceived by reason as if it occurred" (*Descartes' Principles*, II, 5, appendix).

[34] Correlatively, for Spinoza conceptual dependence is not necessary for a *distinctio rationis*: attributes of the same substance are merely conceptually distinct even though they are conceived independently.

[35] Garrett, o*p. cit.*

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