

The Metaphysics of Substance and the Metaphysics of Thought in Spinoza

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by

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Abstract

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In the first two chapters of the dissertation I propose a new interpretation of the metaphysics of substance in Spinoza. Against Curley's influential interpretation of the substance-modes relation, I argue that for Spinoza, modes both inhere in, and are predicated of God. Relying on extensive textual evidence I show that Spinoza considered modes to be God's *propria*. Against the claim that it is a category-mistake to consider things as properties, I argue that the distinction between things and properties has been thoroughly undermined both in the early modern period (primarily, in the works of Descartes, Arnauld & Nicole, Leibniz, and Hume) and in contemporary metaphysics (in bundle theories, and some versions of trope theory). Following this elucidation of the substance-mode relation, I explain Spinoza's concept of "immanent cause" (an efficient cause, whose effect inheres in it), and explain why the interpretation of Spinoza's modes as merely illusory beings (an interpretation which was propagated by the German Idealists) is wrong.

In the last two chapters of the dissertation, I put forward two interrelated theses about the structure of the attribute of thought and its overarching role in Spinoza's metaphysics. First, I show that our current understanding of Spinoza's pivotal doctrine of parallelism is inaccurate. I argue that Spinoza had not one, but two independent doctrines of parallelism. The *Ideas-Things Parallelism* stipulates an isomorphism between the *order of ideas* in the attribute of thought and the *order of things* in nature. The *Inter-Attributes Parallelism* establishes an isomorphism among the *order of modes* in each of the infinitely many attributes. I show that these two doctrines are independent of each other and that each has different implications.

Relying on my clarification of the doctrines of parallelism, I develop my second main thesis. Here I argue that, for Spinoza, ideas have multifaceted (in fact, infinitely-faceted) structure that allows one and the same idea to represent the infinitely many modes which are parallel to it in the infinitely many attributes; each idea has infinitely many aspects and each aspect represents the same mode of God under a different attribute. To that extent, Thought turns out to be coextensive with the whole of nature. Spinoza cannot embrace an idealist reduction of Extension to Thought because of his commitment to the conceptual separation of the attributes. Yet, within Spinoza's metaphysics, Thought has a clear *primacy* over the other attributes insofar as it is the only attribute which is as elaborate, complex and, in some sense, powerful as God (or as Spinoza puts it: "God's power of thinking is equal to his power of acting").

For Sophy and Neta

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openness, sharpness, little appreciation of “common sense”, real desire to find oneself challenged by a good argument, and an enormous care for one’s students. To Oded Schechter I also owe a great debt for our numerous conversations on Spinoza (and for many years of friendship). Neta, my spouse, and our kids, Yonathan-Moshe and Alma-Eva filled my life with love (not to mention lovely noises). To my mom, Sophy, and my brother, Arie, I owe a great debt for many things. In a paraphrase on the famous talmudic story of Akiva, I should honestly confess that “whatever is mine – is theirs.”

Introduction

In this brief introduction I would like to, (1) present my interpretive principles, (2) point out the two metaphysical principles which do much of the work behind the scenes of Spinoza's system, and (3) provide an outline of the chapters of this work.

Interpretive Principles:

A. Why History of Philosophy? – It is a mark of maturity when a discipline begins to question its own assumptions. Indeed, over the past twenty years there has been a considerable controversy among Anglo-American scholars over the proper method for doing history of philosophy. One attitude took history of philosophy to be of interest only to the extent that it could help us in current philosophical debates. In most cases, this demand for relevance was translated into claims of the form: “Descartes/Spinoza/Leibniz/etc. is a philosopher worth reading because already in the ... th century he suggested views which have only recently been developed by contemporary scientists or philosophers”. Not wishing to make generalizations, I believe that at least some versions of this attitude are foolish. For example, if Spinoza developed views of space and time which resemble some implications of the theory of relativity, it would tell us nothing in favor of his philosophy. Obviously, Spinoza knew nothing about the speed of light and its being the upper limit of velocity. In the absence of this knowledge, he would have no reason to believe in the theory of relativity. Yet, I do tend to agree that philosophical relevance is important. However, unlike those who scan the history of philosophy for precursors to, or confirmation of, their views, I believe that the history of philosophy provides us with numerous *challenges* to our current views. If we do not adopt a certain teleological (roughly, Hegelian) view of history which assumes a necessary progression of human thought, we have to acknowledge the possibility of well-founded views which were never incorporated into the mainstream of philosophy due to their boldness, the marginal social status of their authors, or even luck. If we look to the history of philosophy in order to find such unjustly rejected views we can generate an interesting

dialogue with contemporary views. Yet, the first stage which must prepare the ground for any such dialogue is a clear and historically precise reconstruction of the relevant view. In my work on Spinoza, I found many claims which seem bizarre to our common sense. Yet, as long as these claims are well-argued I find their surprising nature a merit rather than a blemish insofar as they force a fundamental review of our basic intuitions.

B. The Development of Spinoza's Views. – Spinoza, like many other philosophical authors, changed and developed his views throughout his life. Obviously, my thesis concentrates primarily on Spinoza's main work, the *Ethics*. Although I do believe that Spinoza's early works, and the enigmatic *Short Treatise*, are of considerable importance, I tried not to substantiate any major claim of mine with texts that are not from the *Ethics* or Spinoza's late correspondence. Indeed, Spinoza's correspondence could provide the skeleton for a much needed work, on the genesis of the *Ethics*, i.e., the story of the development of this book and its various drafts. Although I make some suggestions about the development of Spinoza's views, this is not the primarily topic of my work.

C. The Historical Background. – Another significant controversy among Spinoza scholars concerns the proper historical context for Spinoza's views. Usually, this controversy is guided primarily by the scholarly expertise of the scholars involved: scholars of Jewish philosophy (who can work easily with medieval Hebrew texts) regard the medieval Jewish context as decisive, Dutch scholars choose the political and intellectual climate of seventeenth century Holland as the appropriate context, and most of the other scholars (being professional early modernists, trained in Latin, but not in Hebrew or Dutch) stress the influence of Descartes, and sometimes other contemporary figures (such as Suarez). Obviously, this is just another example of the old story about the three blind zoologists who were examining different limbs of an elephant and concluded decisively that the animal at stake “is just a snake”, “clearly a hippopotamus”, and “undoubtedly a rhinoceros”. As one can see from these remarks, I believe that *all* these contexts (i.e., medieval Jewish philosophy, Descartes and Cartesianism, seventeenth century Dutch

philosophy and politics) are important. Since I am not versed in Dutch, and in spite of my belief that the Dutch context is not of prime importance to the issues I discuss, it is still possible that my elephant may well be somewhat snakish.

The Metaphysical Principles behind the Scene of Spinoza's System:

A. The Principle of Sufficient Reason. – In the past few years, Michael Della Rocca developed a view of Spinoza as the strictest rationalist, insofar as Spinoza accepts the principle of sufficient reason without any limitation, and allows for no brute facts. On this issue (as on many others), I completely agree with him. Two central places where Spinoza strongly endorses the principle of sufficient reason are E1a2 – “What cannot be conceived through another, must be conceived through itself” (the implication being that everything is conceivable and explainable), and E1p8s2, where Spinoza claims that for everything that is or is not, there must be a reason (or cause) for its existence or non-existence. The importance of the PSR in Spinoza can hardly be overstated; this principle motivates many of the boldest claims of the *Ethics* (such as, necessitarianism, the identity of indiscernibles (E1p4), and to a certain extent, the *conatus*). In this work I will frequently appeal to Spinoza's strict endorsement of the principle of sufficient reason.

B. The Priority of the Infinite over the Finite. – In Letter 2 Spinoza argues that the infinite is prior to the finite both in nature and in knowledge. Spinoza adheres to this claim throughout his life, and he repeats it in numerous other texts. At first sight, it may appear as a trivial claim, which was equally endorsed by other early modern figures (such as Descartes), but this is not the case. First, let me point out that for Spinoza the infinite (i.e., God) is prior to all things not only ontologically (“in the order of nature”), but also epistemologically. Accordingly nothing can be known unless we first know God's essence. Hence, when Spinoza makes the seemingly trivial stipulation that “the knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its

cause” (E1d4), he in fact tells us that nothing can be known, unless we first know the cause of all things, i.e., God’s essence (E1p16). An immediate theorem of this axiom is that if we do not want to get stuck with skepticism, we have to have a clear knowledge of God’s essence. Hence, in E2p47s, Spinoza makes the bold claim that “God’s infinite essence and his eternity are known *to all*” - Would Descartes make statements of that sort? Secondly, it is important to note that for Spinoza, as I understand him, there is no distinction between “the order of knowledge” and “the order of discovery”. In other words, not only does knowledge of finite things depend in some way (perhaps unknown to us) on the knowledge of God’s essence, but even when we philosophize and try to learn about the nature of God and natures of modes, it is vital that we begin with the understanding of God’s essence. If we try to understand God through his creation (i.e., the modes) we will be engaged in anthropomorphic thinking and some form of idolatry. In that sense Spinoza continues a very important line in the Jewish critique of Christianity. In this context the following passage from E2p10s is crucial. Here Spinoza rebukes the philosophers who “did not observe the [proper] order of Philosophizing. For they believed that the divine nature, which they should have contemplated before all else (because it is prior both in knowledge and in nature) is last in the order of knowledge, and that the things that are called objects of the senses are prior to all. That is why, when they contemplated natural things, they thought of nothing less than they did of the divine nature; and when afterwards they directed their minds to contemplating the divine nature, they could think of nothing less than of their first fictions, on which they had built the knowledge of natural things, because these could not assist knowledge of the divine nature.” For Spinoza, when we philosophize by understanding first the nature of finite things (chairs, tables, human beings) and then try to ascend from this knowledge to the knowledge of the infinite, we will end up committing two crucial errors. First, we will conceive God in terms of the finite things to which we become accustomed by contemplating first the finite things. And since the “best” finite thing we know are human beings, we will conceive God as perfect, eternal, powerful, omniscient, yet, human-

like, being. Second, we will have no knowledge of the finite things since in order to know them we must first know God as their (ultimate) cause, whereas the anthropomorphic conception of God (which results from our conception of God through the finite thing) provides us with a radically misconceived notion of God.

There is much more to be said about the interrelations between the principles of sufficient reason and the priority of the infinite over the finite in Spinoza's system. In most cases, these two principles work harmoniously to produce certain bold results (such as in the claim that two substances cannot be distinguished by their modes), but on a few other occasions the two principles seem to push in opposite directions (such as in the issue of necessitarianism). These conflicts can provide us with real insights into the innermost workings of Spinoza's systems, and I hope to study them in the future.

An Outline of the Chapters.

Just as its title indicates, this work is composed of two main parts. The first two chapters deal with the metaphysics of substance in Spinoza, the last two chapters with the metaphysics of thought. In the first chapter I criticize Curley's influential interpretation of the substance-mode relation in Spinoza, and argue that Spinozistic modes both inhere in and are predicated of the substance. I also argue that this view of Spinoza – in spite of its bold implications – is consistent and involves no category mistake. In the second chapter I study additional issues related to the substance-mode relation: What is the nature of immanent causation in Spinoza? What is the relation between efficient causation and inherence in Spinoza? Are modes real entities? Are individuals well-distinguished units in Spinoza's system? And if not, does this imply that individuals and finite things are mere illusions? Finally, I clarify and redraw a distinction between “modes of God” (modes under all the attributes), and “modes of an attribute” (modes of a particular attribute) in Spinoza.

In chapter three I argue that Spinoza's celebrated doctrine of parallelism is in fact a confusion (generated and adopted by virtually the entire scholarly community since the mid-nineteenth century) between two separate and independent doctrines of parallelism: the one between the order of ideas and the order of things, the other between the order of modes among the infinitely many attributes. In the fourth and last chapter, I study the structure of ideas in Spinoza's system and explain how Thought can be isomorphic with the order of all things (according to the ideas-things parallelism), and yet be isomorphic with the order of modes in every single attribute (according to the inter-attributes parallelism), i.e., not being numerically richer than any other attribute. I show that Spinoza endorses the view that ideas, unlike modes of any other attribute, are infinitely faceted, so that one and the same idea represents the infinitely many modes which parallel it, by having infinitely many facets. Finally, I argue that Spinoza was not a metaphysical idealist because of his commitment to the conceptual separation between the attributes. Rather, I suggest that Spinoza assigns clear primacy to the attribute of thought, and by this provides us with very surprising views of the mind-body issue and of the nature of thought.

CHAPTER ONE: THE METAPHYSICS OF SUBSTANCE I: THE SUBSTANCE-MODE RELATION AS A RELATION OF INHERENCE AND PREDICATION

- 1.1 Strategy.
- 1.2 Curley's Interpretation of the Substance-Mode Relation in Spinoza
- 1.3 The Aristotelian and Cartesian background of Spinoza's discussion of Substance.
- 1.4 Arguments against Curley's Interpretation.
- 1.5 Replies to Bayle's Arguments.
- 1.6 "Wrong logical type", Charitable Interpretation, and Spinoza's Mereology.
- 1.7 Modes, Tropes and other Things (or Properties).

In his groundbreaking work of 1969, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation*, Edwin Curley attacked the traditional understanding of the substance-mode relation in Spinoza, which makes modes inhere in the substance. Curley argued that such an interpretation generates insurmountable problems, as had been already claimed by Pierre Bayle in his famous entry on Spinoza.¹ Instead of having the modes inhere in the substance Curley suggested that the modes' dependence upon the substance should be interpreted in terms of (efficient)² causation, i.e., as

¹ In quoting texts from Bayle's Dictionary, I rely on the fifth French edition (*Dictionnaire historique et critique par Mr. Pierre Bayle*, Amsterdam: Compagnie des Libraires, 1734), and on Popkin's English translation (Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selection*, translated by Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991). I will refer to Bayle's entry by the page number in Popkin's translation followed by the page number in the above French edition (the Spinoza entry appears in the fifth volume of the French edition). Whenever I diverge from Popkin's translation I will mention this fact. Unless otherwise marked, all references to the *Ethics*, the early works of Spinoza, and Letters 1-29 are to Curley's translation (henceforth, C]. In references to the other letters of Spinoza I have used Shirley's translation (henceforward, S). Passages in the *Ethics* will be referred to by means of the following abbreviations: a(-xiom), c(-orollary), p(-roposition), s(-cholium) and app(-endix); 'd' stands for either 'definition' (when it appears immediately to the right of the part of the book), or 'demonstration' (in all other cases). Hence, E1d3 is the third definition of part 1 and E1p16d is the demonstration of proposition 16 of part 1.

² Only occasionally does Curley qualify the substance-mode causality as *efficient* causation. Yet, the terminology he uses in this context is clearly one of efficient causation. For example, in *Behind the Geometrical Method*, Curley claims that God "produces and acts on things other than God" (38), and that the substance-mode relation "turns out to be a form of the doctrine of determinism" (50). Cf. John Carriero's "Mode and Substance in Spinoza" (p. 254) for a similar point.

committing Spinoza to nothing over and above the claim that the substance is the (efficient) cause of the modes. These bold and fascinating claims generated one of the most important scholarly controversies in Spinoza scholarship of the past thirty-five years.³

In this chapter I argue against Curley's interpretation and attempt to reestablish the traditional understanding of Spinozistic modes as inhering in God and as predicated of God. I also criticize Curley's philosophical motivation for suggesting this interpretation. I do believe, however, that Curley is right about the existence of an intimate connection between the substance-mode relation and causation in Spinoza. In the next chapter I will study the notion of 'immanent cause', which merges *efficient causality* and inherence. I will clarify the relation between immanent, efficient and material causation, and show where precisely Spinoza diverged from the traditional Aristotelian taxonomy of causes. In the second chapter I also discuss the German Idealists' view of Spinoza as an 'acosmist'. Under this interpretation Spinoza was a modern reviver of Eleatic monism, who allegedly asserts the mere existence of God, and denies the reality of the world of particular things. Spinozistic modes - according to this reading - are nothing but passing and unreal phenomena. Though this view of Spinoza as an 'acosmist' can be supported by *some* lines in Spinoza's thought, I believe it should be rejected since it is not consistent with some of the most central doctrines of the *Ethics*. In the final part of the second chapter I discuss the relation between modes and the attributes under which they fall, and suggest a terminological distinction between a 'mode of God' (i.e., a mode under all attributes) and a 'mode of an attribute' (i.e., a mode under a specific attribute), a distinction which can help us avoid some common confusions in the treatment of the issue.

1.1 *Strategy*. - In order to show that, for Spinoza, modes are predicated of - and inhere in - the substance, I will proceed in the following manner. First, I will summarize Curley's arguments against substance-mode inherence and present his alternative interpretation of the substance-mode relation.

³ In this chapter I will discuss several arguments of Curley's critics (primarily, those of Bennett, Carriero, Della Rocca, and Jarrett). Among the notable scholars who are sympathetic to Curley's interpretation, one should mention Woolhouse (*The Concept of Substance in Seventeenth Century Metaphysics*, 51) and Mason (*The God of Spinoza*, 30-32). Schmaltz ("Spinoza on the Vacuum") tends to accept Curley's critique of the traditional reading, yet he suggests an interesting alternative to both the traditional and Curley's approach to the substance-mode relation, according to which, the substance is the eternal and indivisible essence that "grounds" the modes (p. 177).

Then, I will present what I consider to be the most compelling arguments against Curley's interpretation. Some of these arguments have already been suggested in the literature of the past thirty years (and by Bayle); yet, most of these arguments are, as far as I can tell, presented here for the first time. Relying on these arguments, I will establish that Spinoza did actually consider modes to inhere in the substance. In the following section I will respond to each of the objections which Curley and Bayle advance against Spinoza's view of God as the substratum in which all things inhere. Finally, I will address the questions of whether Spinozistic modes are *predicated of* (and not only *inhere in*) the substance, and whether Spinoza considered modes to be particular properties, or "tropes", as the common jargon in contemporary metaphysics goes.

Since Bayle's claims are going to be used both in support of and against Curley's interpretation, it would be in place to say a few words on Bayle's stance on the issue. In his Spinoza entry, Bayle criticizes Spinoza's claim that all things are modes of God, claiming that it "is the most monstrous hypothesis that could be imagined, the most absurd, and the most diametrically opposed to the most evident notions of our mind".⁴ Bayle, however, has no doubts that when Spinoza claims that all things are modes of God, Spinoza means that all things inhere in God. Curley embraces Bayle's arguments against Spinoza, but uses them in order to claim that we should not ascribe to Spinoza a view which is allegedly shown by Bayle to be absurd. What we should do, Curley argues, is to reinterpret the substance-mode relation as a relation of causal dependence, so that Spinoza would be set free from Bayle's hook. Interestingly, as we shall soon see, Bayle himself discusses and rejects a very similar revisionary interpretation of the substance-mode relation.

1.2 *Curley's Interpretation of the Substance-Mode Relation in Spinoza.* - At the opening of the *Ethics*, Spinoza defines substance and mode in the following manner.

E1d3: By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e., that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed [*Per substantiam intelligo id quod in se est et per se concipitur; hoc est id cuius conceptus non indiget conceptu alterius rei, a quo formari debeat*].

⁴ Bayle, *Dictionary* 296-97 | *Dictionnaire* V 210.

E1d5: By mode I understand the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived [*Per modum intelligo substantiae affectiones, sive id quod in alio est, per quod etiam concipitur*].

A few lines below, Spinoza presents his first axiom:

E1a1: Whatever is, is either in itself or in another [*Omnia, quae sunt, vel in se, vel in alio sunt*]

From these two definitions and the axiom it follows that all things ("whatever is") are either substances or modes of the substances.⁵ In the middle of the first part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza proves that God is the only substance (E1p14: "Except God, no substance can be or be conceived"), and thus he concludes that all other things apart from God are God's modes:

Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God. (E1p15).

That means that the Atlantic Ocean, Napoleon and every rhinoceros are all *in* God, and are *modes* of God. The traditional understanding of this doctrine was that, for Spinoza, Napoleon, the rhinoceroses and all other modes *inhere* in God and are *states* of God. This interpretation took it for granted that Spinoza's concept of a mode was on a par with his contemporaries' (primarily, Descartes and his followers) understanding of this notion.

In *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, Curley forcefully and interestingly challenged the interpretation of the substance-mode relation in Spinoza as a relation of inherence. First, he argued, it was difficult to make sense of the claim that particular *things*, like Napoleon, are merely modes of God:

Spinoza's modes are, *prima facie*, of the wrong logical type to be related to substance in the same way Descartes' modes are related to the substance, for they are particular things (E1p25c), not qualities. And it is difficult to know what it would mean to say that particular things *inhere* in substance. When qualities are said to *inhere* in substance, this may be viewed as a way of saying that they are predicated of it. What it would mean to say that one thing is predicated of another is a mystery that needs solving.⁶

⁵ Note, however, that on the modes side of this dichotomy there might also be modes of modes (as I will further point out later in this chapter).

⁶ *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 18. Cf. Curley's *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 31.

Already at this early stage it is important to note Curley's strategy in this passage, and specifically, how he links the relations of *inherence* and *predication*. In the third sentence of the passage Curley claims that inherence "may be viewed" as a relation of predication. This clearly allows for the possibility of other understandings (or other kinds) of inherence. In the first sentence of the passage, Curley hints that to consider particular things as predicated upon God is to make a category mistake. Of course, one can avoid making the alleged category mistake by rejecting the assimilation of inherence and predication (i.e., by holding that modes *inhere in*, but are not *predicated of* God). Curley does not originate this assimilation and he rightly points out both Bayle and Joachim as making this assimilation and as taking modes to both inhere in and be predicated of God.⁷ The strategy which divorces inherence from predication was nicely developed in some recent studies, however, in this chapter I will defend the stronger claim, i.e., that Spinozistic modes both inhere in and are predicated of the substance.⁸

In addition to the above argument Curley advances three other arguments which were originally presented by Pierre Bayle in order to show the absurdity of Spinoza's metaphysics.⁹ I

⁷ See *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 12-22. Cf. Curley's "On Bennett's Interpretation", 36. Indeed, Joachim is quite explicit in claiming that modes are states of the substance and are predicated thereof: "We begin therefore with the anti-thesis of Substance and its states or modifications - a more precise formulation of the popular antithesis of thing and properties, the metaphysical (though not coextensive) correlate of the logical antithesis of subject and predicates (*A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, 15). Bayle's claims will be discussed below.

⁸ This strategy is developed in two important articles by Jarrett ("The Concepts of Substance and Mode in Spinoza", see specifically, p. 85: "The difficulty... can be solved by distinguishing inherence from predication, which is not without precedent") and Carriero ("On the Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza". See specifically, p. 259). Yet, both scholars seem to occasionally suggest that modes are properties of the substance (presumably, they might have reservations about predicating properties which are not universals). Carriero (p. 258) argues against the view that "the notion of a .. particular property [is] absurd on its face" and considers Curley's disregard for particular properties as one of the main reasons for Curley's going off track. For Carriero, Spinozistic modes are particular *properties* (and hence are predicated of God). Jarrett concludes that " 'Being in', as found in Spinoza, expresses a relation of ontological dependence that is modeled after the dependence of an 'individual *property*' on its bearer" (103. My emphasis). Both Jarrett and Carriero take modes as tropes, yet both are somewhat ambiguous on whether tropes are particular abstract *things* inhering in the substance, or particular *properties* predicated of the substance. See section 1.7 below.

⁹ For Curley's presentation and concise discussion of these three arguments, see *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 12-3.

will present here the outline of these arguments. Further elucidation will follow when we discuss the validity of the arguments.¹⁰

(i) *If all things were modes, or properties, of God, then God, the subject of all things, would have contradictory properties.* - When we attribute properties to things or persons, what we are really doing, according to Bayle's understanding of Spinoza, is to attribute properties to God, insofar as the said things or persons are themselves properties of God:

[According to Spinoza] one would speak falsely when one said, "Peter denies this, he wants that, he affirms such and such a thing"; for in actuality, according to [Spinoza], it is God who denies, wants, affirms.¹¹

In nature, there are things whose properties are opposed to each other, and according to Bayle, these opposite properties should be truly attributed to the one Spinozistic substance underlying all things, i.e., God. If, for instance, Napoleon loves honey, while Josephine hates it, and if both Napoleon and Josephine are modes of God, it will follow that, "God hates and loves, denies and affirms, the same things, at the same time". Thus, Bayle argues, Spinoza's metaphysics violates the law of non-contradiction.¹²

(ii) *If particular things were modes of God, then God would not be immutable.* - The world we encounter is filled with particular things, which are in constant change, and Spinoza does not seem to deny the reality of change and motion.¹³ These things come into and out of being, and change their properties. If these particulars were modes of God, God would gain and lose

¹⁰ See section 1.5 below.

¹¹ Bayle, *Dictionary* 309-10 (Remark N) | *Dictionnaire*, V 212. It is likely that this argument of Bayle draws upon a similar argument of Malebranche, in which the latter claims that concurrentism ascribes to God cooperation with contrary actions. See, *The Search After Truth*, Elucidation Fifteen, p. 664.

¹² Bayle, *Dictionary* 310 (Remark N) | *Dictionnaire*, V 212. "Two contradictory terms are then true of [God], which is the overthrow of the first principles of metaphysics." (Ibid). Note that this argument is potent only against those who take Spinozistic modes to be predicated of God. The other two arguments of Bayle, discussed below, can target also the view that Spinozistic modes inhere in but are not predicated of God.

¹³ The reality of motion in Spinoza is supported by the fact that 'Motion and rest' is the immediate infinite mode of Extension (Letter 64). Later, I will discuss - and argue against - the acosmist interpretation, which takes Spinoza to be a modern Eleatic who denies the reality of any plurality and change.

modes, and thus, be in motion.¹⁴ But if God changes, claims Bayle, he is “not at all the supremely perfect being, ‘with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning’ (James, 1:17).”¹⁵ Following Bayle, Curley adds that God’s immutability is not just a traditional theological view, but also a view openly endorsed by Spinoza in Ep20c2.¹⁶ Hence, Curley argues the inherence of modes generates an internal inconsistency within Spinoza’s system.

(iii) *If all things were modes of God, then God would be directly responsible for all the evil in the world.*

- Traditional theology finds it hard to explain how can God be the omnipotent and omniscient cause of all things, and yet not be responsible for evil. According to Bayle, Spinoza’s view that all things are modes of God connects God far more intimately to evil, and makes him the real agent of all crimes.

Several great philosophers, not being able to comprehend how is it consistent with the nature of the supremely perfect being to allow men to be so wicked and miserable, have supposed two principles, one good, and the other bad; and here is a Philosopher, who finds it good that God be both the agent and the victim [*le patient*], of all the crimes and miseries of man.¹⁷

In order to avoid these absurdities, so skillfully pointed out by Bayle, Curley suggests that we should do away with the traditional interpretation of the substance-mode relation in Spinoza as a relation of inherence. Curley proposes that by using the substance-mode terminology Spinoza primarily meant to point out a certain asymmetric dependence of the modes on the substance. While modes are entities which depend on the substance and its attributes, the substance is a completely independent entity. In order to preserve this asymmetric dependence, there is no need to conceive modes as inhering in the substance.¹⁸ The very fact that modes are *caused* by the substance suffices to establish this asymmetric dependence. Thus, the claim that Napoleon is a mode of God should, according to Curley, amount to nothing over and above the claim that

¹⁴ “[T]he God of the Spinozist is a nature actually changing, and which continually passes through different states that differ from one another internally and actually.” Bayle, *Dictionary*, 308 | *Dictionnaire* V 211.

¹⁵ Bayle, *Dictionary*, 308 | *Dictionnaire* V 211.

¹⁶ Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 13.

¹⁷ Bayle, *Dictionary*, 311 | *Dictionnaire*, V 213.

¹⁸ Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 37.

God is the (efficient) cause of Napoleon.¹⁹ Under this interpretation, the claim that all things are modes of God appears to be completely innocent (in fact, too innocent), insofar as it ascribes to Spinoza a common theistic view, i.e., that God is just the cause of all things.

Interestingly, Bayle explicitly addresses such an attempt to take Spinoza off the hook. In a note to his Spinoza article he relates to those who claim that he “has not understood Spinoza’s theory at all”.²⁰ Particularly, Bayle addresses the claim of those who insist that,

Spinoza only rejected the designation of, “substance,” given to beings dependent on another cause with respect to their production, their conservation, and their operation. They could say that, while retaining the entire reality of the thing, [Spinoza] avoids using the word, because he thought that a being so dependent on its cause could not be called... “a being subsisting by itself” which is the definition of substance.²¹

Bayle criticizes and rejects the view according to which Spinozistic modes are the equivalents to Cartesian “created substances” (being causally dependent on God), rather than the Cartesian modes.²² In an ironic concluding note, Bayle announces his willingness to “admit” his mistake, if Spinoza indeed meant his modes to be the equivalent of Cartesian “created substances.” If this is the case, then Spinoza is indeed “an orthodox philosopher who did not deserve to have the objections made against him.. , and who only deserves to have been reproached for having gone through so much trouble to embrace a view that everyone knows.”²³ We will return to this

¹⁹ “[T]he relation of mode to substance is one of causal dependence, not one of inherence in a subject.” Curley, “On Bennett’s Interpretation”, 37. Cf. *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 40: “[T]he relation of mode to substance is a relation of causal dependence, which is unlike the relation of predicate and subject”, and *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 31.

²⁰ Bayle, *Dictionary*, 329 (Remark DD) | *Dictionnaire*, V 222.

²¹ Bayle, *Dictionary*, 333 (Remark DD) | *Dictionnaire*, V 224. Cf. “If [Spinoza] did not want to ascribe the status of substance either to extension or to our souls, because he believed that a substance is a being that does not depend on any cause, I admit that I have attacked him without grounds, have attributed to him a view that he does not hold” (*Dictionary* 332 | *Dictionnaire*, V 223). Descartes’ definition of substance, which is at the background of these claims, will be discussed in the next section.

²² *Dictionary*, 335 (Remark DD) | *Dictionnaire*, V 224.

²³ Bayle, *Dictionary*, 334 (Remark DD) | *Dictionnaire*, V 224.

important point later. Let us complete first our presentation of Curley's view by pointing out briefly another component of his interpretation.

If, as Curley suggests, God is not the subject of inherence of all things, then the common attribution of pantheism to Spinoza turns out to be just another myth. Curley's God is simply not identical with the totality of nature. What is then God?

[Spinoza] rejected the notion of God as a personal creator and identified God with (the attributes in which are inscribed) the fundamental laws of nature, which provide the ultimate explanation for everything that happens in nature. That is, *he identifies God with Nature, not conceived as the totality of things, but conceived as the most general principles of order exemplified by things.* [Italics in origin]²⁴

Curley's claim that God is just "the most general principle of order" is quite astonishing, since it seems to make God into a principle or *lex* rather than an *ens* or *res*. Given this daring claim, one expects Curley to provide textual support for such an innovation (and a detailed explanation of Spinoza's understanding of laws of nature). Curley admits that such an understanding of God is hard to find in the first part of the *Ethics* (where Spinoza lays out the foundations of his metaphysics), yet Curley suggests that a later passage does support his interpretation.

If you do not find this as explicit as you might like it to be in Part 1 of the *Ethics*, consider what Spinoza writes in the Preface of Part III:

"[N]ature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same i.e., the laws and rules of nature, according to which all things happen, and change from one form to another, are always and everywhere the same. So the way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same, viz. through the universal laws and rules of nature."²⁵

²⁴ *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 42.

²⁵ *Behind the Geometric Method*, 42-3. The Latin text reads: "[Nihil in natura fit, quod ipsius vitio possit tribui:] est namque natura semper eadem et ubique una eademque eius virtus et agendi potentia, hoc est, naturae leges et regulae, secundum quas omnia fiunt et ex unis formis in alias mutantur, sunt ubique et semper eadem, atque adeo una eademque etiam debet esse ratio rerum qualiumcumque naturam intelligendi, nempe per leges et regulas naturae universales".

If I understand him correctly,²⁶ Curley is taking the equivalence of ‘*natura*’ and ‘*naturae leges et regulae*’ (in the first sentence of the passage) as implying the identification of the two. But, this is at most one possible way of explaining the equivalent structure of the sentence. Alternative readings will take the equivalence as making the point that the *constancy* (being the same) of nature, is identical to, or exemplified by, the *constancy* of the laws and rules of nature, or even that the constancy of “nature’s virtue and power of acting” is identical to, or exemplified by, the constancy of the laws and rules of nature.²⁷ In other words, this textual source seems to be too equivocal to support the weight of the bold suggestion that God is the most general law (or principle) of nature.

One cluster of problems which this identification faces is that it seems not to fit the properties Spinoza assigns to God. Take, for example, indivisibility (E 1p12&13): what does it mean that a law is indivisible? Surprisingly, most of Curley’s critics did not target this aspect of his interpretation.²⁸ One can easily see why a twentieth (or twenty-first) century scholar would be tempted by such an interpretation - it bestows upon Spinoza a certain aura of modernity and philosophical respectability - yet, as far as I can see (and I might well be wrong), it is hard to find it in the text.²⁹ In the following, I will concentrate my discussion on Curley’s explanation of the

²⁶ One may cite Spinoza’s claim that the laws of nature are “inscribed in [the fixed and eternal things]” (TdIE, § 101) as supporting the identification of the laws of nature with the attributes (assuming (wrongly, I think) that the “fixed and eternal things” are the attributes and not the infinite modes). Yet, the inscription metaphor, though indicative of an intimate connection between a thing and what is inscribed in it, does not support an identity between the two things (the relation ‘x is inscribed in y’, seems to be asymmetric, unlike, the identity relation).

²⁷ Furthermore, the context of this discussion is Spinoza’s claim that human beings and their affects are not a “dominion within dominion” in nature, that the same constancy and necessity which governs the rest of nature applies equally to the human psyche.

²⁸ Curley, however, is aware of the threat posed by God’s indivisibility (E1pp12-13) to his interpretation. See *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 78.

²⁹ To what extent Spinoza’s view of natural laws (even the physical ones) is modern is a truly difficult issue. Spinoza’s view of the nature of mathematical entities is both surprising and difficult. Arguably, Spinoza did not share with Galileo (and Descartes) the view that “the book of nature is written in mathematical script”, and, it is at least questionable whether he understood the laws of nature as quantitative or not (see Gueroult, “Spinoza’s Letter on the Infinite”, Gilead, *The Way of Spinoza’s Philosophy*, 284, Gilead, “The Order and Connection of Things”, and my paper, “On the Exact Science of Non-Beings: Spinoza’s view of Mathematics”).

substance-mode relation as a causal relation, and leave aside this more problematic aspect of Curley's interpretation.

Curley openly admits that although his interpretation "makes sense of a great many passages in [Spinoza's] work, it will not deal equally well with all of them."³⁰ However, the fact that his interpretation solves the problems we have just discussed makes Curley believe that the allegedly minor discord between his interpretation and some other texts of Spinoza is a price worth paying.

1.3 *The Aristotelian and Cartesian background of Spinoza's discussion of Substance and Mode.* -

Before we turn to examine the validity of Curley's interpretation it is important to have a concise overview of the historical background of Spinoza's discussion of substance. This is so not only because of the obvious reason that Spinoza was not working in a void, but also because the two competing theories of substance which were clearly available to Spinoza - those of Aristotle and Descartes - point out the two main ways of understanding Spinoza's own concept of substance. Obviously, what we can do here is only to provide a very general outline of these delicate issues.

The two main *loci* for Aristotle's discussion of substance are the *Categories*, and the *Metaphysics*. In the *Categories* Aristotle discusses substance [*ousia*] while explicating the ten categories of being, of which 'substance' is the first and most important. Here is how Aristotle defines substance:

A substance - that which is called a substance most strictly, and most of all - is that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject, e.g., the individual man or the individual horse. The species in which the things primary called substances are, are called *secondary* substances, as also the genera of these species.³¹

For Aristotle, the term 'substance', in the full sense of the word, applies only to particular things, such as a particular horse or a particular man. Whatever is not a particular thing, can either be 'said of' a particular thing, or 'be in' a particular thing. To the first group belong the genera and

³⁰ Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 78.

³¹ *Categories*, 2a12-2a17.

species under which particular things fall (such as ‘man’, ‘animal’, etc). Examples of the second group are ‘red’ or ‘hot’ which describe particular things, yet, do not constitute genera or species. In broad terms, we can say that the distinction between ‘being in’ and ‘being said of’ a subject is a distinction between accidental vs. essential predication.³² Now, Aristotle allows for the existence of secondary substances; these are the genera and species which are said of (but are not in) the primary substances. Hence, whatever is not a primary substance depends on a primary substance, since it has to either be in a primary substance, or be said of a primary substance.³³

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle claims that the substratum [*hypokeimenon*] “which underlies a thing primarily is thought to be in the truest sense its substance.” The substratum itself is defined as

[T]hat of which the other things are predicated, while it is not itself predicated of anything else.³⁴

Clearly the element which is stressed in the discussions of substance in both the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics* is the *independence* of the substance, and in both texts this independence is cashed out in terms of *predication*, i.e., (primary) substances do not depend on anything else of which they are said to be predicated. Let’s mark this understanding of substance as the *predication*

³² The further question whether what is *in* a substance (such as whiteness) is repeatable or not, is a subject of a major controversy among scholars. For two opposite views see Ackrill (Aristotle, *Categories and De Interpretatione*), and Owen (“Inherence”).

³³ For Aristotle, the relation ‘y is said of x’ is transitive. Hence, the genus which is said of an individual’s species, is also (transitively) said of the individual itself.

³⁴ *Metaphysics VII (Z)*, 1028b36.

definition of substance. A is a (primary) substance iff it is a subject of predication³⁵ and it is not predicated of anything else.³⁶

What is Descartes' conception of substance? First, it is clear that the Aristotelian definition of substance was not alien to Descartes' contemporaries.³⁷ Descartes himself, in the Second Set of Replies which he appends to the *Meditations*, defines substance in terms that are quite close to Aristotle's view:³⁸

Substance. This term applies to every thing in which whatever we perceive immediately resides, as in a subject, or to every thing by means of which whatever we perceive exists. By 'what we perceive' is meant any property, quality or attribute of which we have a real idea (CSM II, 114)

Unlike Aristotle's characterization of primary substance, Descartes does not stipulate here that a substance should not be predicated of anything else.³⁹ Yet, it is clear that what makes something a substance is the fact that it is a subject of which properties are predicated. Following his definition of substance, Descartes defines God as "the substance which we understand to be supremely perfect, and in which we conceive absolutely nothing that implies any defect or limitation in that perfection" (CSM II, 114). What is interesting in this definition is that in spite

³⁵ An interesting question, which I will not discuss here, is whether an Aristotelian substance has to have properties. On the one hand if the substance were to have no properties it would be unintelligible (in fact, it would be very much like an Aristotelian 'prime matter'). On the other hand, if a substance must have properties, it would make the substance dependent (admittedly, in a weak sense) on the properties, which seems to conflict with the independence of substance. We will encounter a similar problem later in this chapter, when we address the question why Spinoza's God must have modes.

³⁶ For a detailed discussion of the Aristotelian and Scholastic understanding of substance and its relation to Spinoza's views, see Carriero's excellent article, "On the Relationship between Mode and Substance in Spinoza".

³⁷ See, for example, Arnauld and Nicole's characterization of substance: "I call whatever is conceived as subsisting by itself and as the subject of everything conceived about it, a thing. It is otherwise called a substance (*Logic or the Art of Thinking*, Part I, Chapter 2 (p. 30 in Buroker's translation)).

³⁸ Cf. Rozemond (*Descartes's Dualism*, 7) for a similar stress on the continuity between the Scholastic and Cartesian views of substance.

³⁹ In fact, in the Sixth Set of Replies, Descartes seems to allow for one substance to be predicated of another substance, though only in a loose manner of speech (CSM II, 293). We will return to this text, when we discuss the question whether the traditional interpretation of the substance-mode relation in Spinoza ascribes to Spinoza a category mistake.

of the fact it makes God supremely perfect, it does not say that God is *more of a substance* than other (finite) substances. Such a distinction between God, the substance in the strict sense of the word, and finite substances does appear in Descartes' most famous discussion of the topic, in section 51 of the first part of the *Principles*:

By *substance* we can understand nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence. And there is only one substance which can be understood to depend on no other thing whatsoever, namely God. In the case of all other substances, we perceive that they can exist only with the help of God's concurrence. Hence the term 'substance' does not apply univocally, as they say in the Schools, to God and to other things; that is, there is no distinctly intelligible meaning of the term which is common to God and his creatures. <In the case of created things, some are of such a nature that they cannot exist without other things, while some need only the ordinary concurrence of God in order to exist. We make this distinction by calling the latter 'substances' and the former 'qualities' or 'attributes' of those substances.>(CSM I, 210)

Several prominent scholars suggested that in this passage Descartes introduced a new definition of substance as an 'independent being'. This, I believe, is somewhat imprecise, since the independence of substance is also stressed by the Aristotelian definition of substance.⁴⁰ Where Descartes diverges from Aristotle is in the way he cashes this independence. While, for Aristotle the independence of (primary) substance is defined solely in terms of *predication*, Descartes stipulates that substance in the full sense of the word must also be *causally* independent. Hence, in addition to being self-subsisting, a full-fledged Cartesian substance must also fit the *causation stipulation of substance*: 'x is a (full-fledged) substance only if it is not caused by anything else'. Created substances are self-subsisting, yet externally caused by God. As a result, they are not substances in the full sense of the word.

⁴⁰ Garber (*Descartes' Metaphysical Physics*, 328, n.7) points out that, in the Second Set of Replies, Descartes' definition of *real distinction* between substances (definition X on AT VII 162) seems "to allow for the possibility that there may be substances that are not really distinct from one another", by implying that some substances may not be really distinct from each other. Whether this was a mere slip of pen on Descartes' side, or a genuine view (perhaps related to Descartes' claim that in some manner, clothes can be predicated of man) is an interesting issue that cannot be adequately discussed here.

This brings us to an interesting asymmetry between causation and predication in Descartes' view of substance. While Descartes is willing to grant the title 'substance' to things which are *causally* dependent only on God, he does not seem to be willing to make the same compromise with regard to *predication*. Things which depend only on God in terms of predication (i.e., God's attributes) are not recognized in this passage (or, as far as I know, in any other text of Descartes) as substances even in the weaker sense of word (i.e., as being dependent only on God).⁴¹ This seems to indicate that even for Descartes, the *sine qua non* condition for substantiality is still independence in terms of *predication* (i.e., self-subsistence), and only once this necessary condition is satisfied, *causal* self-sufficiency distinguishes between God, the substance in the full sense of word, and finite, created, substances.⁴²

What are Cartesian modes? Shortly after presenting his definition of substance in *Principles* I, 51, Descartes defines 'mode' as "what is elsewhere meant by an *attribute* or *quality*". Yet, attributes, as opposed to modes, are general and unchanging characteristics of substances (*Principles* I, 56).⁴³ Modes are also asymmetrically dependent on their substance, both for their existence and for their conceivability.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Of course, for Descartes the distinction between a substance and its principal attribute (i.e., the attribute which constitutes its essence) is only a distinction of reason. Still, this does not make the attributes of *God* into substances (at least not any more than the attributes of any *finite* substance).

⁴² In the Third Set of Replies Descartes suggests that reality or 'thinghood' admits of degrees: "A substance is more of a thing than a mode; if there are real qualities or incomplete substances, they are things to a greater extent than modes, but to a lesser extent than complete substances; and, finally, if there is an infinite and independent substance, it is more of a thing than a finite and dependent substance" (CSM II 130). The "finite substances" of the third set of replies are presumably the "created substances" of *Principles* I, 51. This text as well accepts self-subsistence as the *sine qua non* criterion for being a substance.

⁴³ On the distinction between attributes and modes, see *Comments on a Certain Broadsheet* (CSM I 297 | AT VIII B 348). Cf. Garber (*Descartes' Metaphysical Physics*, 65) for an illuminating discussion of the development of the distinction between 'attribute' and 'mode' in Descartes' later work.

⁴⁴ For the conceptual dependence of modes on their substances, see Descartes' *Principles* I, 61 (CSM I 214 | AT VIII A 29) and *Comments on a Certain Broadsheet* (CSM I 298 | AT VIII B 35). For the ontological dependence of modes or accidents on their substances, see Descartes' Fifth Set of Replies (CSM II 251 | AT VII 364). Cf. Sixth Set of Replies (CSM II 293 | AT VII 435).

Later in this paper we will discuss some further issues in Descartes' view of substance (such as the question whether for Descartes there is only one or many extended substances). But before we return to our main issue - the substance-mode relation in Spinoza - let's see how would Curley relate to this Aristotelian and Cartesian background. From the point of view of Curley's interpretation,⁴⁵ Descartes represents the crucial middle link in the transition from substance as a self-subsisting being (the Aristotelian notion of substance) to substance as causally independent being (the Spinozistic view of substance according to Curley). According to this historical scheme, Descartes begins a move (the introduction of the causal notion of substance) which is completed by Spinoza (in the elimination of self-subsistence from the definition of substance).

1.4 *Arguments against Curley's Interpretation.* - Curley's bold thesis has drawn substantial and interesting criticism over the years. In what follows I will point out and further develop three arguments of Curley's critics, which I find most powerful. Later, I will add some further arguments, which, I believe, are presented here for the first time.

(i) *Pantheism.* - One crucial implication of Curley's interpretation is that Spinoza's famous pantheism is nothing but a myth.⁴⁶ According to Curley, Spinoza identifies God not with nature *simpliciter*, but with *Natura naturans*, the active aspect of nature which includes the substance and its attributes. *Natura naturata*, the passive aspect of nature which is the domain of modes, is, according

⁴⁵ Curley concentrates on the Cartesian background of Spinoza's understanding of substance and suggests that the Cartesian distinction between substance and modes "involved two elements: a distinction between independent and dependent being and distinction between subject and predicate" (*Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 37). Spinoza, according to Curley adopts only the first Cartesian distinction. As I mentioned earlier, I believe that the independence/dependence dichotomy underlies both distinctions, which differ in terms of their explication of the independence of substance and dependence of modes. In general, Curley hardly deals with the Aristotelian discussion of substance. Hence, the present paragraph presents what I believe Curley *should have said* had he examined Spinoza's view against the background of both Aristotle and Descartes. In fact, a very similar historical scheme appears in Gueroult (*Spinoza I*, 63), though Gueroult does not deny that Spinozistic modes inhere in the substance.

⁴⁶ See *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 42 and "On Bennett's Interpretation", 45.

to Curley, external to God, and is merely caused by God.⁴⁷ This view does not easily make sense of Spinoza's reference to *Deus sive Natura* (E4pref and E4p4d), by which he seems to identify God with nature (and not just with *Natura naturans*). Similarly, it would make little sense for Curley's Spinoza to say that there is nothing outside God, a claim which Spinoza repeats more than once.⁴⁸

Yet, Curley interestingly argues that in the key passage in the *Ethics*, in which Spinoza officially introduces the distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, he identifies God only with the former.⁴⁹

[B]y *Natura naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, i.e. [*hoc est*] (by P14C1 and P17C2), God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause.

But by *Natura naturata* I understand whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature, or from any of God's attributes, i.e., all the modes of God's attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God [E1p29s].

At first sight, the definition of *Natura naturans* as “God insofar as he is considered as a free cause” seems to provide a clear endorsement of Curley's position. Yet, when we read it more closely it turns out, I believe, to make quite an opposite point. According to the passage, *Natura naturans* is not God *simpliciter*, but rather “God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause” [*Deus, quatenus, ut causa libera, consideratur*].⁵⁰ Why would Curley's Spinoza make any qualification of the identity of God and *Natura naturans*? If *Natura naturans* is identical with God only “insofar as he

⁴⁷ Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 19. On the history of the distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, see Idel, “*Deus sive Natura*”, 102-7.

⁴⁸ See, for example, KV I, ii (I/26/17); KV I, iii (I/35/19), and the NS version of E1p18d (“God is not a cause of anything outside him” [C 428, n. 52]). Similarly, in Letter 75, when Spinoza answers Oldenburg's persistent queries about Spinoza's true view of Christ, he replies with words which could hardly be interpreted in a non-pantheistic manner: “I will add only this,... that God is not in any one place but is everywhere in accordance with his essence, that matter is everywhere the same, that God does not manifest himself in some imaginary space beyond the world.” (Ep. 75 | Shirley 338).

⁴⁹ Curley, “On Bennett's Interpretation”, 47. Cf. *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 37, 42-3.

⁵⁰ Michael Della Rocca makes this point in his unpublished manuscript, “Predication and Pantheism in Spinoza”.

is considered as a free cause”, it is at least possible that in another respect, God is not identical with *Natura naturans*.

In several places in the *Ethics*, Spinoza speaks of God “not insofar as he is infinite” (see, for example, E4p4d).⁵¹ Apparently, he uses this roundabout language in these texts because he feels uncomfortable to describe God as finite or compelled. Yet, Spinoza leaves no doubt that he takes the finite modes to be God in some sense or respect. One such a text is E1p29d, the demonstration that comes just before E1p29s (where Spinoza introduces the distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*):

[T]he modes of the divine nature have also followed from [the divine nature] necessarily and not contingently (by P16) - either [~~æ~~] insofar as the divine nature is considered absolutely (by P21) or insofar as the divine nature is considered to be determined to act in a certain way (by P28).

In E1p21, Spinoza discusses the immediate infinite modes which “follow the absolute nature of any of God’s attributes.” These are the modes which follow from the divine nature “insofar as he is considered absolutely” (E1p29d). But, what is the divine nature insofar as it “is considered to be determined to act in a certain way”? Let’s look at E1p28, the proposition Spinoza cites in support of this claim.

E1p28 attempts to explain how can God be considered the cause of finite modes. In E1p21, Spinoza states and proves that the modes which follow directly from God or the attributes are infinite.⁵² In E1p22, he proves that only infinite modes can follow from infinite modes.⁵³ This leaves us wondering in what sense God is said to be the cause of the finite modes (as E1p16&c1 and E1p25 claim). Spinoza answers:

Whatever has been determined to exist and produce an effect has been so determined by God (by P26 and P24C). But what is finite and has a determinate existence could not have been produced

⁵¹ In “Predication and Pantheism in Spinoza”, Della Rocca discusses E2p9 in this context and cites E2p9c, E2p12d, E2p19d and E2p20d, as further examples. My argument, though aiming at the same conclusion, relies on E1p28.

⁵² “E1p21: All the things which follow from the absolute nature of any of God’s attribute have always had to exist and be infinite, or are, through the same attribute, eternal and infinite.”

⁵³ “E1p22: Whatever follows from some attribute of God insofar as it is modified by a modification which, through the same attribute, exists necessarily and is infinite, must also exist necessarily and be infinite.”

by the absolute nature of an attribute of God; for whatever follows from the absolute nature of an attribute of God is eternal and infinite (by P21).⁵⁴ It had, therefore, to follow either from God or from an attribute of God insofar as it is considered to be affected by some mode. For there is nothing except substance and its modes (by A1, D3, and D5) and modes (by P25c) are nothing but affections of God's attributes. But it also could not follow from God, or from an attribute of God, insofar as it is affected by a modification which is eternal and infinite (by P22). It had, therefore, to follow from, or to be determined to exist and produce an effect by *God or an attribute of God insofar as it is modified by a modification which is finite and has a determinate existence*. [E1p28d. Italics mine].

God "insofar as it is modified by modification which is finite and has a determinate existence" is clearly not *Natura naturans*, since the latter is neither finite nor has a determinate existence. This passage leaves little doubt that to follow from a finite mode of God is to follow from God. This is, in fact, the whole point of the demonstration of E1p28. Since finite modes can follow *only* from finite modes, God *has* to be the finite modes ("God insofar as it is modified by modification which is finite") if he is to be the cause of all things, including finite modes.⁵⁵ Hence, we must conclude that insofar as God "is considered as a free cause" he is *Natura naturans*, but insofar as he "is modified by a modification which is finite and has a determinate existence," God is *Natura naturata*. Thus, if pantheism is the view that identifies God with nature, Spinoza *is* a pantheist.⁵⁶

(ii) *The definition of 'mode'*. - Curley's interpretation makes some claims of Spinoza poorly formulated. Particularly disturbing is the fact that Curley's Spinoza must have been careless not

⁵⁴ The "absolute nature of an attribute" is the attribute when it is not modified at all. What follows from the absolute nature, is an immediate infinite mode of the same attribute.

⁵⁵ Curley believes that finite modes follow both from God and from other finite modes, and he might respond by suggesting that God is the cause of finite modes only insofar as he is the cause of certain infinite modes which includes the finite mode. The argument of E1p28d shows clearly that Spinoza's view is much stronger and that he takes God to be the cause of every finite mode in its particularity, and this is fulfilled by taking finite mode x which causes finite mode y as God "modified by a modification which is finite".

⁵⁶ In section 1.6 below, I will suggest another argument, based on Spinoza's definition of God in favor of ascribing pantheism to God.

only in his regular talk about the substance-mode relation but even the very *definition* of mode seems to be highly misleading. The definition (E1d5) tells us that

By mode I understand the affections of a substance, or that which is in another through which it is also conceived [*Per modum intelligo substantiae affectiones, sive id quod in alio est, per quod etiam concipitur*].⁵⁷

According to Curley this definition amounts to nothing over above the claim that modes are causally dependent on something else. Interestingly, this definition (as well as the definition of substance) does not mention at all the term ‘cause’ [*causa*]. For the time being, let’s just note that it appears somewhat odd that a philosopher who makes an extremely powerful and wide use of the notion of causality fails to mention it in the place where it, allegedly, most properly belongs. How does Curley infer causal dependence from the definition of mode? Presumably, it is the ‘*in alio est*’ phrase in that definition which Curley understands as designating the causal dependence of modes.⁵⁸ Yet, another question emerges: why then define modes as ‘affections’? Bennett has rightly points out that the Latin ‘*affectio*’ means “quality, or property or state”.⁵⁹ Now, even if

⁵⁷ Cf. Ep. 12 [IV/54/9 | Shirley 102]: “The affections of Substance I call Modes.”

⁵⁸ It would be unreasonable for Curley to interpret the ‘conceived through another’ clause of the definition of mode as designating the causal dependence of modes, since in such a case he will have to address two problems. Firstly, he would have to explain the ‘*in alio est*’ clause. Secondly, he would have to point out a textual source for the conceptual dependence of modes.

⁵⁹ Bennett, *Study*, 93. Cf. Bennett, *Six Philosophers*, I 142. Cf. Garrett, “Spinoza’s *conatus* argument”, 135. That Spinoza understands ‘affections’ to be *properties* one can see from the following passage from the *Cogitata Metaphysica* where Spinoza defines affections as the *attributes* of a thing.

“*The definition of affections*: Let us, therefore, attend to our own business. We say that affections of being are certain attributes, under which we understand the essence or existence of each thing, [the attributes,] nevertheless, being distinguished from [being] only by reason. I shall try here to explain certain things concerning these attributes (for I do not undertake to treat them all), and also to distinguish them from denominations, which are affections of no being.” [I/240/15-20 | C 306].

It is not clear to me whether in this early text ‘attribute’ designates any property of a real thing, or only attributes in the strong sense of the properties which constitute the essence of thing. The claim that the attributes “are distinguished from being only by reason” seems to support the latter. In any case, it is clear, I think that the attributes - and hence also affections - are taken here as properties.

Spinoza used *affectio* in some idiosyncratic sense,⁶⁰ it would still seem to be redundant, since the idea of the modes' dependence is clearly stated in the rest of the definition (i.e., that the mode is "in another"). Why then add the misleading (according to Curley's Spinoza) claim that modes are *substantiae affectiones*?

(iii) *E 1p15 and E 1p16*. - We have seen that according to Curley the substance-mode relation amounts to nothing over and above the asymmetric dependence of an effect on its cause. Now, in *E 1p15*, Spinoza states and proves that all things are modes of God:

Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God [*Quicquid est in Deo est, et nihil sine Deo esse neque concipi potest*]

In the following proposition, Spinoza states and proves that

⁶⁰ Here I agree with Bennett's judgement that according to Curley's interpretation "Spinoza has defined 'mode' just about as misleadingly as he could possibly have done" (Study, 93). Curley would have to explain many passages in Spinoza's works where 'affection' seems to indicate inherence (and predication). Here are three examples. 1) One group of texts where 'affection' involves clearly inherence is in Spinoza's discussion of the affection of the body in part three of the *Ethics*. See, for example, *E3p32s*: "the images of things are the very affections of the human Body, or modes by which the human Body is affected by external causes, and disposes to do this or that." Would Curley deny that the images of things are in the human body? 2) In Letter 12 Spinoza claims that "from the fact that we *separate* the affections of Substance from Substance itself, and arrange them in classes so that we can easily imagine them, there arises Number" [*IV/57/3-4* | S 104. Italics mine]. For Spinoza, numbers are merely "aids of the imagination" and our knowledge of numbers belongs to the distorting first kind of knowledge (see Gueroult, "Spinoza's Letter on the Infinite", Ramond, *Qualité et quantité dans la philosophie de Spinoza*, and my own article, "The Exact Science of Nonbeings: Spinoza's view of Mathematics"). If our (distorted) conception of numbers results from the separation of affections from the substance, it would seem that otherwise these affections *are not* separate from the substance. 3) Later, in the same letter, Spinoza argues that if one thinks that there is a definite number for all the motions of matter that have ever been (i.e., if one thinks that matter could exist prior to the beginning of movement), "he would surely be attempting to *deprive* [*priver*] corporeal Substance, which we cannot conceive other than existing, *of its affections*, and to bring it about that Substance should not possess the nature that it does possess" [*IV/60/12-15* | Shirley 106. Italics mine]. Now, if the affections at stake are the non-essential properties of the substance, we can, I think, make sense of these claims. The argument seems to be roughly this: if the number of motions till now were finite, it would seem that before the earliest movement, substance existed without having a multiplicity of modes (assuming that the multiplicity of modes can only result from change and motion). Spinoza rejects this possibility by insisting that the substance cannot exist without its modes (on the threat this claim presents to the substance-mode asymmetry, see part 3 of this chapter). This explanation follows the traditional understanding of modes and affections as inhering in the substance. But, if we accept Curley's view, it is not clear what is the deprivation at stake and why should such a deprivation of (what Curley consider to be merely) an effect of the substance make the substance "not possess the nature that it does possess."

From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect) (E1p16).

And from E1p16, Spinoza derives E1p16c1:

From this it follows that God is the efficient cause of all things which can fall under an infinite intellect [*Hinc sequitur, Deum omnium rerum, quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt, esse causam efficientem*].

Both Jarrett and Carriero make the cogent point that if, for Spinoza, the substance-mode relation amounted to nothing over and above causation, it would seem odd that after stating this relation in E1p15 Spinoza repeats it (redundantly) in E1p16c1, without making the slightest claim that E1p16c1 (or E1p16) is derived from, or is a restatement of, E1p15. Moreover, in his further references to the two propositions Spinoza does *not* treat the two propositions as equivalent.⁶¹

I found the aforementioned arguments convincing and powerful. To those, I wish to add the following points.

(iv) *Can Curley's God know anything?* - One underlying concern for Curley is to secure Spinoza's "impersonal conception of God, according to which God will have nothing in common with man, but will have enough in common with the God of the Philosophers to justifiably be called God."⁶² Though one may doubt whether the phrase "the God of the Philosophers" has any univocal meaning, I think Curley's main point is definitely right. Spinoza consciously attempts to preserve *some* continuity between the philosophical terminology with which he was acquainted and his own use of philosophical terminology.⁶³ One property which is traditionally ascribed to God is omniscience, and in E2p3 and E2p4 Spinoza seems to ascribe omniscience to God. Yet, when we examine carefully Curley's understanding of the substance-

⁶¹ See Jarrett ("The Concept of Substance and Mode in Spinoza", 92) and Carriero ("On the Relation Between Mode and Substance in Spinoza's Metaphysics", 255-6).

⁶² Curley, "On Bennett's Interpretation," 40.

⁶³ In an important note in the third part of the *Ethics* (definition of affects, 20) Spinoza lets his readers know that although his use of words does not necessarily follow the common use, still his terminology "is not entirely opposed" to the common usage.

mode relation it leads, I believe, to the conclusion that not only is Curley's God not omniscient, but even that this God is completely ignorant.

Arguably, Spinoza accepts the following two theses:

(1) A has knowledge of x, iff she has an idea of x. ⁶⁴

(2) All ideas are modes of Thought. ⁶⁵

From which we can infer that,

(3) If God has knowledge of x, God must have a mode of Thought.

Now, what does 'having a mode of Thought' mean? According to the traditional understanding of the substance-mode relation it means that ideas (modes of Thought), inhere in God. According to Curley's view it means that God is merely the cause of certain ideas. Since Curley agrees with Bayle's claim that having modes (in the traditional sense) entails mutability, he should deny that any idea inheres in God. Hence, Curley's God has no ideas - and no knowledge - *within* himself. All that Curley's God does is to cause or produce ideas, but to say that when someone produces an idea of x, she has knowledge of x, seems to be an extremely odd criterion

⁶⁴ In E2p7d Spinoza rephrases E1a4, by replacing 'knowledge' [*cognitio*] by 'idea'. In several other places he relates to "idea or [*sive*] knowledge" as equivalent terms. See, for example, E2p19d "God has the idea of the human body, or knows the human body". Cf. E2p20d, E2p23d, Ep. 72 (Shirley 290).

⁶⁵ See the end of E2a3: "[I]here can be an idea, even though there is no *other* mode of thinking" (Italics mine). I expand on this issue in the last chapter.

for knowledge. *Prima facie*, it seems that Curley makes God know things without endowing him with any internal mentality, or representational capacities.⁶⁶

Can Spinoza accept a God that is ignorant? In numerous places Spinoza assigns to God thinking [*cogitans*], knowledge [*cognitio*], and understanding [*intelligere*],⁶⁷ and it is hard to make sense of the claims that God thinks, knows and understands, while denying that God has any ideas within him.

(v) *Inherence in Letter 12*. - Though Spinoza does not frequently use the term ‘inherence’ (Latin: *inhaerere*) he does use it in a very crucial place. At the end of his discussion of kinds of infinities in Letter 12, Spinoza writes:

From all that I have said one can clearly see that certain things are infinite by their own nature and cannot in any way be conceived as finite, while other things are infinite by virtue of the cause in which they inhere [*causae cui inhaerent*]; and when they are conceived in abstraction, they can be divided into parts and be regarded as finite. [IV/60/17-61/3 | Shirley 106].

⁶⁶ Perhaps Curley could resort to the claim that divine knowledge is very different from human knowledge. Spinoza could be read as expressing such a view in the *Cogitata Metaphysica* (II, xi | I/274/34): “God’s knowledge agree no more with human knowledge than the dog that is a heavenly constellation agrees with the dog that is a barking animal.” I believe that this line of defense would not work for three reasons. First, the *Cogitata Metaphysica* passage is a restatement of a very similar claim by Maimonides (who used the same example of the heavenly dog and the barking dog). In the *Ethics* (E1p17s), Spinoza claims that *if* intellect and will pertained to God’s essence, God’s intellect would have nothing in common with the human intellect (II/62-3). Spinoza rejects the antecedent of this conditional in E1p31, and the context of the discussion in E1p17s clearly shows that the claim that there is nothing in common between the divine and human intellect represents views other than his own (perhaps Maimonides’, or Spinoza’s early views). Spinoza frequently criticizes those who say that God’s actions and considerations are unintelligible to finite minds like ours. For Spinoza, this is merely a “shelter of ignorance”. The *Cogitata Metaphysica* claim should be subject to the same harsh judgement. Second, even if God’s knowledge is utterly different from ours, the mystery still remains why *causing* ideas should be considered as *having* (divine) *knowledge* (rather than divine planning or any other action of God). Finally, even if God’s knowledge is essentially different from ours, it is doubtful that Spinoza would deny that God (internally) has adequate ideas. We have, for example, an adequate idea of God’s essence (E2p47). According to Curley’s view, God has an idea of his essence only insofar as he causes this idea, but he does not have internally an adequate idea which represents his essence. But, why should God not have (internally) an adequate idea of himself, in addition to him being the cause of that idea?

⁶⁷ See, for example, E2p3s and E2p5,d.

I cannot dwell here on Spinoza's complicated and intriguing taxonomy of infinities.⁶⁸ Yet, it is not difficult to see that the distinction at stake in this passage is between attributes and infinite modes. In Spinoza's ontology, the *only* infinite things which can "have a cause in which they inhere" are the infinite modes; attributes do not have causes (apart from themselves), and they are far too closely related to their substance, to inhere in it.⁶⁹ Attributes are also indivisible (E1p12).

Spinoza's main point in this passage is that while both the attributes and the infinite modes are infinite, their infinities are of different kinds and have opposite characteristics. The infinity of the attributes is due to their nature, or definition (see E1d4), and is absolutely indivisible. The infinity of the mode has nothing to do with the nature, or definition of the mode, but rather results from the fact that it *inheres* in (and, in a certain way, caused by) the substance (or, as Spinoza puts it in E1p22-23 that it "follows" from an attribute).

It is important to stress that this passage cannot be explained away as a marginal text, since we know that even in his late period Spinoza kept circulating copies of this letter among his friends.⁷⁰

(vi) "*In Deo moveri*". - In Letter 71, Henry Oldenburg, the secretary of the Royal Society in London, asks Spinoza "to elucidate and moderate those passages in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, which have proved a stumbling-block to readers". Oldenburg was particularly bothered by the passages which "appear to treat in ambiguous way of God and Nature, which many people consider you have confused with each other."⁷¹ To this charge Spinoza replies:

I entertain an opinion on God and Nature far different from that which modern Christians are wont to uphold. I maintain that God is the immanent cause, as the phrase is, of all things, and not the transitive cause. All things, I say, are in God and *moue in God* [*in Deo esse & in Deo moveri*], and this I affirm together with Paul and perhaps together with all the ancient philosophers, though

⁶⁸ I will discuss this taxonomy in the second chapter.

⁶⁹ For Spinoza, like Descartes, the distinction between a substance and its attributes is only a distinction of reason.

⁷⁰ See Ep. 81 (Shirley 352).

⁷¹ Ep. 71 (IV/304/9-11 | Shirley 329).

expressed in a different way, and I would even venture to say together with all the ancient Hebrews, as far as may be conjectured from certain traditions, though these have suffered much corruption. However, as to the view of certain people that the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* rests on the identification of God with Nature (by the latter of which they understand a kind of mass or corporeal matter) they are quite mistaken [S 332. My emphases.]

The last sentence of the passage may appear at first glance as a rejection of pantheism. But, as far as I can see, it is not so. The sentence does not reject *any* identification of God with Nature, but only the identification of God with Nature, considered as “mass or corporeal matter.” The latter identification would be faulty for Spinoza on two counts. First, it ascribes to God only one attribute, Extension, while, for Spinoza, Thought, and all the other attributes are by no means less real than Extension. Second, even the identification of Extension with “mass or corporeal matter” is imprecise. In Letter 81, Spinoza criticizes Descartes precisely because of this point, i.e., because Descartes conceives extension as “an inert mass.”⁷²

When we turn our attention to the rest of this passage, it seems to present two significant challenges to Curley’s interpretation. First, Spinoza’s claim that “all things move in God” seems to be unintelligible on Curley’s reading. Second, it is hard to figure out why Spinoza invokes the “ancient philosophers” as supporters of the view that all things are in God, since this doctrine - which, according to Curley, means only that all things are caused by God - was accepted by virtually all of Spinoza’s contemporaries. I have already pointed out that Curley’s interpretation of the substance-mode relation in causal terms makes Spinoza much closer to the

⁷² Ep. 81 (Shirley 352). Of course, Spinoza *intentionally* phrases these lines (in Letter 71) so that a naive reader would take it as a rejection of pantheism, and given the political context of his writing this seems to be a reasonable practice.

good old theist position. Why then invoke the distant shadows of the Eleatics, the Stoics, or the mysterious traditions of “the Ancient Hebrews”?⁷³

This passage as well cannot be explained easily away since it appears in one of Spinoza’s latest letters, and clearly reflects his mature thought.

(vii) *Immanent Cause*. - Both in the *Ethics* and in his other writings Spinoza suggests an important distinction between *immanent* [*causa immanens* | *inblijvende oorzaak*] and *transient* cause [*causa transiens* | *overgaande oorzaak*], and stresses that “God is the immanent and not the transitive cause of all things” (E1p18d). Spinoza’s main discussion of this distinction appears in the *Short Treatise*, and it seems to me undeniable that in this text the claim that God is the immanent cause of all things means that all things are *within* God.

In the *Short Treatise* Spinoza characterizes the immanent cause as one in which the agent and the one acted on are not different,⁷⁴ as one in which the agent “acts on himself”,⁷⁵ as one whose effect “is not outside itself,”⁷⁶ and one in which the effect is part of the cause.⁷⁷ Transitive (or transient) cause has the precisely opposite characteristics. Spinoza’s paradigmatic

⁷³ It is quite likely that these “ancient Hebrew” traditions [*traditionibus*] are nothing but the pantheistic teachings of the *Kabbalah*. In pre-modern Hebrew, the word ‘*Kabbalah*’ means tradition, and it was a common practice of the medieval Kabbalists to attribute their works to ancient sources (though recent studies of the Kabbalistic literature suggest that some sources of the main Kabbalistic works might indeed go back to pre-medieval times). Spinoza’s talk about the corruption of these traditions is in line with the views of some early modern Jewish philosophers, such as Salomon Maimon and Moses Mendelssohn, who saw the Kabbalah as founded upon a rationalist (one may say, Neo-Platonic) core, which was enveloped in, and corrupted, by mythical presentation.

⁷⁴ KV I, ii [I/26/19 | C 72].

⁷⁵ KV I, ii [I/26/25 | C 72].

⁷⁶ KV I, ii [I/30/23-25 | C 76] and KV I, iii [I/35/25 | C 80].

⁷⁷ KV I, ii [I/30/29-31 | C 76]. The tension between God’s indivisibility and the existence of particular things in God seems to occupy Spinoza throughout his life. As I will later argue, the mature Spinoza solved this problem by relating particular things to God not as *parts* of a whole, but rather as *modes* of an indivisible substance

example of an immanent cause is the relation of an intellect to the concepts which constitute it.⁷⁸ These claims make clear that the effects of an immanent cause are *within* the cause.⁷⁹

The other two places where Spinoza discusses the immanent cause are Letter 73 and the *Ethics*. Does Spinoza's understanding of the immanent cause in these two later texts not involve the thesis that its effect is within the cause? We have no indication which supports this possibility. On the contrary, when we look carefully at the relevant passage of Letter 73 (see the quotation above) we find that Spinoza interrupts with a short remark indicating that he is not using the notion in any new manner: "I maintain that God is the immanent cause, *as the phrase is*, of all things, and not the transitive cause." (Italics mine). The *Ethics* passage simply states that all things are in God,⁸⁰ and at first sight, seems to provide no proof, either for or against Curley's interpretation. Still, why should we ascribe to Spinoza a change in the use of his terminology, when there is no indication that such a change took place (and, when a very late text, Letter 73 (1675), seems to indicate a continuity in Spinoza's use of this terminology)? But let's assume for the moment that Spinoza did change his use of 'immanent cause' and that in the *Ethics* it means nothing over and above simple (efficient) causation, i.e., the only point it makes is that God is the efficient cause of all things. Yet, here's a new problem that needs solving. If the immanent cause is just the common efficient cause by which Curley connects the substance to its modes,

⁷⁸ KV I, ii [I/26/26 | C 72] and [I/30/25 | C 76].

⁷⁹ Whether these effects also inhere in their cause depends on whether we take parts to inhere in their cause. For Aristotle, the "being in" relation is distinct from the part-whole relation. Inherence can be taken as merely the relation of an accident or state to its subject (roughly, Aristotle's "being in" relation), or alternatively, it might include the part-whole relation as well. One crucial distinction between the two relations is that traditionally the "being in" relation grants priority to the subject (over its accidents), while in the whole-part relation, the whole is taken as secondary to the parts. Spinoza's discussion of immanent causation in the KV makes clear that the effect depends on the cause (notwithstanding the fact that in general the whole depends on its parts). Hence, it is most likely that for Spinoza the effect of an immanent cause does inhere in its cause (see also Letter 12, where Spinoza speaks explicitly of modes as inhering in their cause. I will later suggest that Spinoza's immanent cause have a close affinity to Aristotle's 'material cause.'

⁸⁰ "E1p18: God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things. Dem.: Everything that is, is in God, and must be conceived through God (by P15), and so (by P16C1) God is the cause of [NS: all] things, which are in him. That is the first [thing to be proven]. And then outside God there can be no substance (by P14), i.e. (by D3), thing which is in itself outside God. That was the second. God, therefore, is the immanent, not the transitive cause of all things, q.e.d."

what is then the ‘transitive cause’? According to E1p18, an effect of a transitive cause is not *in* the cause. Yet, how can Curley allow for such a chimerical notion? Was it not Curley’s position that ‘to be in x’ is just to be caused by x? If so, then the notion of a transitive cause turns out to be a blunt contradiction in terms.

(viii) *Modes of Modes*. - Do Spinozistic modes, such as particular bodies and minds, themselves have modes? In E3d3 Spinoza affirms precisely the existence of such entities:

By affect [*affectum*] I understand the affections of the body [*corporis affectiones*] by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained..

Recall that Spinoza defines a mode as “the affections of substance” [*substantiae affectiones*]. Since the body itself is a mode of God, affects must be modes of a mode. The notion of a mode of a mode appears in several other places in the *Ethics*.⁸¹ I doubt anyone would deny that affects such as joy, lust and anger are states, which inhere in the body (or in the mind). Hence, Curley has, I think, to concede that in some places Spinoza is using ‘modes’ and ‘affections’ in the traditional sense of these terms. It is indeed possible that a writer uses a certain term in several different senses. We would like the author to indicate when he is using a term in an uncommon way, but obviously authors are not perfect beings. Yet, it is, I believe, fair to say that Spinoza is a relatively careful writer. When he uses a term like ‘love’ in a sense different from his regular use he explicitly warns the reader.⁸² This, of course, does not mean that Spinoza could not fail to warn the reader in other cases of equivocal use of a term. Yet, we always approach a text assuming that its terminology is not constantly changing (otherwise, any attempt to understand a text, would be hopeless), and it is, I think, a clear deficiency of an interpretation when it forces the text to be read as containing an equivocal use of crucial terminology.

(ix) *Leibniz’s Report on his Conversations with Spinoza*. - Between the 18th and the 21st of November 1676, Leibniz visited Spinoza at the Hague. Before visiting Holland, Leibniz lived for

⁸¹ See, for example, E3p32s: “The images of things are the very affections of the human body, or modes by which the human body is affected by external causes, and disposed to do this or that’. E2p4 also seems to relate to modes of a mode (in this case, modes of God’s idea).

⁸² When in E5p17c Spinoza claims that “*strictly speaking*, God loves no one..” he arguably prepares his readers for a different use of the term ‘love’ which would allow God to love.

a while in Paris, where he met Baron Ehrenfried Walter von Tschirnhaus, one of Spinoza's most acute correspondents, and we know that Tschirnhaus and Leibniz discussed Spinoza's views in detail.⁸³ Hence, it is clear that Leibniz was well prepared for his meeting with Spinoza. Here is Leibniz's summary of his discussions with Spinoza:

I saw [Spinoza] while passing through Holland, and I spoke with him several times and at great length. He has a strange metaphysics, full of paradoxes. Among other things, he believes that the world and God are but *a single substantial thing*, that God is *the substance of all things*, and that creatures are only modes or accidents [*Il a une étrange Metaphysique, pleine de paradoxes. Entre autres il croit, que le monde et Dieu n'est qu'une même chose en substance, que Dieu est la substance de toutes choses, et que les creatures ne sont que des Modes ou accidens.*]. But I noticed that some of his purported demonstrations, that he showed me, are not exactly right. It is not as easy as one thinks to provide true demonstrations in metaphysics [*Italics mine*].⁸⁴

As one can easily see from this passage Leibniz understood Spinoza as a pantheist (“*the world and God are but a single substantial thing*”) and as taking finite things to be God's *accidents*. Furthermore, he considers this view as “strange” and paradoxical. There is nothing strange or paradoxical in the view that God is the cause of all things (as Curley interprets the substance-mode relation). Could Leibniz misunderstand Spinoza? This is very unlikely given the fact that the two spoke “several times” and “at great length”, and that Leibniz was intrigued by Spinoza's view of God as the substance of all creatures. Curley's interpretation of the substance-mode relation is not especially difficult to grasp and it should not take Spinoza much time to explain it. Could Spinoza intentionally conceal his true understanding of the substance-mode relation? No. Why should he? Why should Spinoza conceal his rather innocent and orthodox view of God's relation to creatures, by making Leibniz believe that he embraces the strange and unorthodox view that all creatures are just accidents in God?

(x) *Modifications or Accidents*. - Letter 4, addressed to Henry Oldenburg, provides us with precious information about the very early (1661) drafts of the *Ethics*.

⁸³ See Nadler, *Spinoza - A Life*, 300-2, 341. Cf. Section 2.2 of Chapter 4 below. *

⁸⁴ The translation is by Nadler (*Spinoza - A Life*, 341). The original French is in *Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, I, p. 118.

[P]lease attend to my definitions of substance and accident..:

(1) For by substance I understand that which is conceived through itself and in itself, that is, that whose conception does not involve the conception of another thing;

(2) and by modification or accident I understand that which is in something else and is conceived through that in which it is [*per modificationem autem, sive per Accidens id, quod in alio est, & per id, in quo est, concipitur*].

Hence, it is clearly established that,

(3) first, that substance is prior in nature to its accidents; for without it these can neither exist nor be conceived.

(4) Secondly, beside substance and accidents nothing exists in reality, or externally to the intellect.⁸⁵

There seems to be little doubt that (1)-(4) are the early formulations of E1a3, E1a5, E1p1 and E1p4d in the published version of the *Ethics*. The main difference between the two texts is that in Letter 4 Spinoza in one place identifies modifications with accidents (see claim 2 above), and in other places uses ‘accidents’ instead of ‘modes.’⁸⁶ Accidents are commonly considered to both inhere in, and be predicated of, their subject.⁸⁷ Hence, Letter 4 seems to provide strong support for the claim that Spinoza’s modes *sive* accidents are properties of the substance.⁸⁸ Curley could of course respond by saying that the very fact that Spinoza abandoned the identification of modes and accidents shows that at least in the *Ethics* modes are not conceived as properties. Fortunately, Spinoza provided us with an explanation of why he did stop using the ‘accident’ terminology (which appears quite rarely in his late writings). The passage below is taken from the *Cogitata Metaphysica*, the appendix to Spinoza’s 1663 book, *Descartes’ Principle of Philosophy*.

⁸⁵ Shirley 68 (IV/13/30-14/6). The numeration of the claims is mine.

⁸⁶ Similarly, one of Spinoza’s correspondents, Hugo Boxel, relates to ‘accident’ and ‘mode’ as synonymous. See Ep. 55 (Shirley 274).

⁸⁷ See Van Cleve, “Essence/Accident” in *A Companion to Metaphysics*, 136.

⁸⁸ Note that Leibniz too ascribes to Spinoza the view that creatures are “modes or accidents” of God (see above Leibniz’s report on his conversations with Spinoza).

I only wish it to be noted, concerning [the division of being], that we say expressly that being is divided into Substance and Mode, and not into Substance and Accident. For an Accident is nothing but a mode of thinking [*nam Accidentis nihil est praeter modum cogitandi*], inasmuch as it denotes what is only a respect, E.g., when I say that the triangle is moved, *the motion is not a mode of the triangle, but of the body which is moved*. Hence the motion is called an accident with respect to the triangle. But with respect to the body, it is called a real being. For the motion cannot be conceived without the body, though it can without the triangle [I/236/31-237/5 | C 303. Italics mine].⁸⁹

The passage is not easy to decipher, but it seems that Spinoza's distinction between accident and mode is related to the strength of the dependence of each upon its subject. While a mode cannot be conceived independently from its substance, an accident can be so conceived.⁹⁰ Since the movement can be conceived independently from the triangle, but not without the body, the movement is a mode of the body but only an accident of the triangle.⁹¹ Whether we accept this explanation or not, it is clear that in this passage Spinoza takes *modes* to be *states* of the substance ("the motion is a mode... of the triangle which is moved"). Hence, the rejection of the accident

⁸⁹ The motion of the triangle example follows Descartes' *Principles*, I, 61 [CSM I, 214]. Though, unlike Descartes, Spinoza would deny that a figure is a mode of a body. For Spinoza, geometrical figures are merely abstractions or *entia rationis*. See Letter 12 [IV/57/7], and Letter 83 ("... or in the case of mental constructs [*entia rationis*] in which I include *figures*, but not in the case of real things.").

⁹⁰ See Gueroult (*Spinoza I*, 65 n. 193) for a similar explanation of this distinction. Cf. Des Chene, *Physiologia*, 132. Presumably, the accidents which Spinoza had here in mind are what was otherwise called 'real accidents', i.e., accident which are capable of existing independently of their substance.

⁹¹ According to Bayle the term 'mode' became widely used instead of 'accident' following the transubstantiation controversy. The official Catholic doctrine holds that after the consecration of the bread and wine in the Eucharist, the accidents of the bread and wine remain without their substances (the original substances turn into the blood and body of Christ). Those philosophers like "Descartes, Gassendi, and, in general, all those who have abandoned Scholastic philosophy, have denied that an accident is separable from its subject in such a way that it could subsist after its separation" and began employing the less common term 'mode' instead of 'accident' to make clear that the qualities at stake are inseparable from their substance (*Dictionary* 331-2 | *Dictionnaire* 224). For the various Cartesian accounts of the transubstantiation, see Tad Schmaltz, *Radical Cartesianism*, 27-74. Bayle's explanation is consistent with Spinoza's distinction between accident and mode in the *Cogitata Metaphysica*. The Port-Royal Logic's distinction between mode and accident is slightly different. Accidents are distinct ideas of modes which are joined with "the confused and indeterminate idea of a substance" (*Logic*, 44). Yet, it is clear that for Nicole and Arnauld both modes and accidents are predicated of and inhere in their substances.

terminology seems to have nothing to do with predication, since even *after* the rejection of the synonymy of ‘mode’ and ‘accident’, Spinoza understands mode as a state or a property of a thing and clearly not as an effect.

(xi) *Modes and Participles*. - Spinoza’s *Compendium of the Hebrew Grammar* was written at the end of his life. Regrettably, this work has been largely neglected by Spinoza scholars. I say regrettably, because between the lines of this text one can easily find some of Spinoza’s most crucial metaphysical doctrines. One example is a certain analogy Spinoza draws between the parts of speech - noun (or, the substantive noun), adjective, participles, and the metaphysical terms they denote - substance, attribute, modes.⁹² A fragment of this analogy appears first in the fifth chapter of the work:

The noun Ish is a man [*uir*]; hacham [learned, *doctus*], gadol [big, *magnus*], etc. are attributes of a man; holech [walking, *ambularis*], yodea [knowing, *sciens*], are modes. [G I/303/20 | B 28].⁹³

That ‘Ish’ [‘Man’] is a noun seems to be straightforward, but how does Spinoza distinguish between ‘gadol’ [‘big’] on the one hand, and ‘holech’ [‘walking’] on the other? - What makes the first (signify) an *attribute*, and the second (signify) merely a *mode*? Spinoza answers these questions explicitly at the 33rd and last chapter of the work:

I call these participles since they signify a mode [*modum significanti*] by which a thing is considered as in the present. But they [the participles] themselves are frequently changed into pure adjectives which signify the attributes of things; for example, ‘sofer’ is a participle, which means *a counting man* [*hominem numerantem*], that is *who is now occupied in counting* [*qui jam in numerando est occupans*], but most frequently it is used as an attribute without any relationship to time, and signifies a man *who has the job of counting* [*qui officium habet numerandi*], namely *a scribe* [*scribam*]..... So the passive participle ‘nivhar’ (‘chosen’ [*electus*], that is *a man or a thing which is now actually chosen* [*quae jam actu eligitur*]) is frequently attributed to a thing *distinguished*, namely of things *chosen above all*; and **in this manner intensive participles and others change often in attributes, that is into adjectives which have no relationship to time whatever** [Bold letters mine]. [G I/396/20 | B 150].

⁹² I am indebted to Warren Zev Harvey for pointing out this crucial passage to me. Harvey discusses this passage - though not in the context of Curley’s reading of Spinoza - in his recent article, “Spinoza’s Metaphysical Hebraism”.

⁹³ I have underlined the transliterated Hebrew words and put the Latin translation in italics.

As the two quoted examples show, the distinction between adjectives and participles is one of generality. While participles reflect temporally specified properties (such as being chosen *now*), adjectives signify general properties which are not related to time (such as “being the chosen man”, or “the chosen people”).⁹⁴ The text leaves little room for doubt that Spinoza considers the distinction between attributes and modes (signified by adjectives and participles) to be of the same kind, i.e., modes are, local, or temporally specified properties, while attributes are general properties, which have no relation to time. This seems to be as explicit as a text can be in making the point that modes are local *properties*.

(xi) *E 1p4*. - In *E 1p4*, Spinoza presents and proves his own formulation of the identity of indiscernibles.⁹⁵ The proposition reads:

P4: 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.

The individuation principle suggested by this proposition stipulates that,

(1) If $x \neq y$, then there is some property (either essential or accidental) which belongs to the one but not to the other.

The proof of the proposition is relatively simple.

E1p4d: Whatever is, is either in itself or in another (by A1), i.e. (by D3 and D5), outside the intellect there is nothing except substances and their affections. Therefore, there is nothing outside the intellect through which a number of things can be distinguished from one another except substances, or what is the same (by D4), their attributes, and their affections,⁹⁶ q.e.d.

This reading of *E1p4* relies on the understanding of modes (‘affections’ and ‘things which are in another’ in this passage) as non-essential properties, inhering in the substance. Obviously, Curley must read this proposition differently.⁹⁶ For Curley, modes (‘affections’) are *effects*, and not properties

⁹⁴ The attribute/adjective analogy appears also in the *Short Treatise* I, i [I/18/32 | C 64]. For Spinoza’s discussion of whether the election of the Hebrews was a temporal or eternal matter, see TTP, Chapter 3 (S2 44).

⁹⁵ See Della Rocca, *Representation*, 131-2.

⁹⁶ In *Behind the Geometrical Method*, Curley discusses *E1p4* extensively (pp. 12-15). His discussion, however, concentrates on the relation between a substance and its attributes, and does not provide an explanation for the clauses in *E1p4* which

of the substance. What is ‘in itself’ is self-caused, and what is ‘in another’ is caused by another. Hence, according to Curley’s view, the proposition should be read in the following manner:

E1p4 (according to Curley): 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 [effects].

Dem: Whatever is, is either [self-caused] or [caused by another] (by A1), i.e. (by D3 and D5), outside the intellect there is nothing except substances and their [effects]. Therefore, there is nothing outside the intellect through which a number of things can be distinguished from one another except substances, or what is the same (by D4), their attributes, and their [effects] q.e.d.

Clearly, Curley’s reading of the passage does not ascribe to it the statement of the identity of indiscernibles insofar as it allows for two things to be distinguished by their effects (and not merely by their internal properties). Yet, in itself, this does not seem to be a problem. The problems arise when we look carefully at the principle which is stated in Curley’s version. The principle states that

(2) If $x \neq y$, then either there is an attribute which belongs to the one but not to the other, or there is an effect which results from the one and not from the other.

There seems to be something awkward in a principle which takes *attributes* and *effects* on a par by saying that things can be individuated through either one (It is far more natural to treat *attributes* and *modes* (in their traditional sense) on a par). Still, perhaps (2) is stating some innovative and surprising principle of individuation?⁹⁷ I think it does not. One possibility which (2) neglects is that two things could be individuated by their *causes*. If, as (2) states, two things can be individuated by their *effects*, why can they not be individuated by their *causes*? This question gains more force once we pay attention to the fact that in E1a4 Spinoza explicitly claims that the explanatory power of an effect depends on the explanatory power of its cause. But, if things could be individuated by their causes, then clearly the proof of E1p4 is invalid.

deal with modes. In the following, I consider the explanation of these clauses which I believe Curley could suggest, given his interpretation of the definition of mode.

⁹⁷ Cf. Leibniz’s discussion in *De Summa Rerum* of a similar idea, i.e., that the principle of individuation of a thing might be “outside the thing, in its cause” (A VI /3, 491).

(xiii) *Does Spinoza prove his Definition of Substance?* - I have mentioned earlier that Curley takes the 'in se' clause in the definition of substance (E1d3) to mean causal self-sufficiency. According to Curley, "a substance is, *by definition*, something causally self-sufficient, and a mode is, by definition, something causally dependent on something else, ultimately on substance."⁹⁸ Now, if causal self-sufficiency were part of the definition of substance (as Curley thinks), it would be an odd methodological practice on Spinoza's side, had he tried to *prove* the causal self-sufficiency of substance; if causal self-sufficiency belongs to the definition of substance, then proving that this property belongs to substance is both redundant and circular. Yet, the fact is that Spinoza leaves no doubt that he takes the causal self-sufficiency of substance to be a *demonstrable* property. In E1p15s, Spinoza states: "I have *demonstrated* clearly enough [*Ego saltem satis clarè demonstravi*] - in my judgement, at least - that no substance can be produced or created by any other" [italics mine]. And indeed, in E1p6, Spinoza states and proves that

One substance cannot be produced [*non potest produci*] by another.

Spinoza provides two detailed proofs for this proposition.

Dem.: In Nature there cannot be two substances of the same attribute (by P5), that is, (by P2), which have something in common with each other. Therefore (by P3) one cannot be the cause of the other, or cannot be produced by another, q.e.d...

Alternatively: This is demonstrated even more easily from the absurdity of its contradictory. For if a substance could be produced by something else, the knowledge of it would have to depend on the knowledge of its cause (by A4). And so (by D3) it would not be a substance.

These two proofs would, I think, be completely redundant were Curley right. What is the point in providing a proof for the characteristic by which substance is defined?⁹⁹

Note further that the first proof in E1p6d makes no reference to the definition of substance (E1d3). The second proof does rely on the definition of substance, yet even this proof relates only to the '*per se concipitur*' clause, and not to the '*in se*' clause of E1d3. The '*per se concipitur*' clause together with E1a4 yield the absurdity of the contradictory of E1p6. Now, if the

⁹⁸ Curley, "On Bennett's Interpretation", 48 (Italics mine.).

⁹⁹ In the *Short Treatise* as well Spinoza provides a detailed *proof* for the claim that one substance cannot be produced by another. See KV I, ii [I/20/34].

'*in se*' clause in E1d3 meant (as Curley claims) causal self-sufficiency, Spinoza's practice in E1p6 would be very odd. He proves what needs not to be proved, and simply refuses to cite the clause which (according to Curley) could prove his point immediately.¹⁰⁰

I believe that the arguments I have discussed so far make a strong case against Curley's interpretation of the substance-mode relation. What remains to be done is to answer the interesting objections raised by Curley and Bayle. I turn to this task in the next section.

1.5 Replies to Bayle's Arguments.

(i) *Does God have contradictory properties?* - The traditional formulation of the law of non-contradiction states that two opposite terms cannot be affirmed of the same subject, at the same time and *in the same respect*. Indeed when Bayle cites the law of non-contradiction in order to make the point that Spinoza's modes violate it, he includes the "same respect" clause in the formulation of the law.¹⁰¹ Obviously, for Spinoza, it is *not* in the same respect that God loves and hates honey. While God *qua* Napoleon loves it, God *qua* Josephine hates it. Spinoza developed this respects-analysis into a genuine art. In numerous places he asserts that a thing may have a certain property *quatenus* (insofar as) it is X, and a different (or even opposite) property *quatenus* it is Y. Thus, I can have causal relationship with a certain body, say a flamingo, *insofar as I am an extended thing*, but, *insofar as I am a mind*, I have no causal relationship with any body (but only with ideas of bodies). It is

¹⁰⁰ One last remark in this context. If (as the traditional interpretation of substance-mode relation suggests), the definition of substance (E1d3) says that substance does not inhere in something else and is not conceived through something else, then Spinoza's argumentative strategy here makes good sense. Assuming that Spinoza's primary target audience is the Cartesians, it would make sense for Spinoza to begin with a definition of substance which would be accepted by his audience, and then show that given this definition, certain surprising conclusions necessarily follow. As we have seen earlier, the Cartesian never deserted the predication definition of substance, and for Descartes, the *sine qua non* condition for substantiality was the stipulation that substance is the subject of predication. What Spinoza does in E1p6, is to show that given certain assumptions, which he expects the Cartesians to share with him, he can prove that substance must be causally self-sufficient. Had he stipulated the causal self-sufficiency of substance already in the definition, the Cartesians could most easily defend their view by rejecting the suggested definition.

¹⁰¹ Bayle, *Dictionary*, 309 (remark N) | *Dictionnaire*, V 212.

simply not in the same respect that I am, and I am not, causally related to (the body of) the flamingo.

This response might suffice to discharge Bayle's argument, as I, following Curley, have presented it. But Bayle's actual argument is subtler. It relies heavily on Spinoza's crucial claim that God is indivisible. Since God has no parts - says Bayle - every property of God must belong to Him in His entirety, i.e., if Napoleon is a mode of God, the entire God, and not only a part of God, must be Napoleon.¹⁰² Though one may, perhaps, get away from this argument by using again Spinoza's different respects analysis (i.e., by saying that in one respect God is entirely Napoleon, and that in another respect, God is entirely not Napoleon), I think we should not adopt this answer, since Spinoza would never, I believe, agree to the claim that "God is entirely Napoleon".¹⁰³ In order to provide an adequate and complete answer to Bayle's objection we will need to clarify the precise sense and scope of God's indivisibility. This I shall do in the second chapter. For the time being, let me just provide a rough outline of such an explanation. Finite modes are just parts of certain infinite totalities which Spinoza calls "infinite modes." These infinite modes, as opposed to the substance and attributes, are divisible. Napoleon is neither a part of God, nor is he God entirely. Napoleon (and any other finite mode) is just a part of a property, an infinite mode, which belongs to God entirely. In the present case, Napoleon's body is part of "motion and rest", the totality of bodies and the immediate infinite mode of Extension,¹⁰⁴ and "motion and rest" is a property which belongs to God entirely. Similarly, Napoleon's mind is part of the infinite intellect, the totality of ideas and the infinite mode of Thought; the infinite intellect is a property which belongs to God entirely.

(ii) *Spinoza's Radical Theodicy*. - The claim that Spinoza's God is responsible for the most horrendous evils insofar as He is the direct agent of these evils seems to me of much lesser weight. In fact, I would venture to say that Spinoza could not care less about ascribing evil to God. For Spinoza good and evil are merely mutilated human constructs.

¹⁰² "This is the picture of the God of Spinoza; he has the power to change or modify himself into earth, moon, sea, tree, and so on, and he is absolutely one and not composed of any parts. It is then true that it can be asserted ... that God entirely is the earth, that God entirely is the moon" (*Dictionary*, 336 (remark DD) | *Dictionnaire*, V 225).

¹⁰³ For this would amount to making Napoleon into an infinite mode.

¹⁰⁴ See Letter 64

Whatever seems immoral, dreadful, unjust, and dishonorable, arises from the fact that [one] conceives the things themselves in a way which is distorted, mutilated and confused (E4p73s).¹⁰⁵

In the appendix to the first part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza includes ‘good and evil [*Bonus et Malus* ¹⁰⁶]’ in the list of notions which are “*entia, non rationis, sed imaginationis*”.¹⁰⁷ If men were born free, they would form no concepts of good and evil (E4p68).¹⁰⁸ Spinoza provides a fascinating cognitive genealogy of evil which is based on his nominalism. We conceive things as evil by comparing them with things we consider similar and then judging how much better things could have been. When making this comparison we rely on universals. For example, when we think of Dostoevski’s Raskolnikov murdering his landlady, we compare him with other men by using the universal of ‘human being’. We see that most particulars which fall under this universal are capable of mercy and do not kill old ladies. Thus, we conclude that Raskolnikov’s act was evil, insofar as it is less perfect (i.e., deprived of a perfection which naturally belongs to it) than our notion of ‘human being’ (the universal itself being merely an abstraction from the particulars we encounter). In a similar way we conclude that the earthquake in Lisbon was evil, since other parts of land do not cause such devastation. Now, for Spinoza all this is just illusionary thinking resulting from our natural drive to self-centered, anthropomorphic, thinking. When we take God to consider anything as evil, we err in thinking that God “*just like his creatures*, felt sympathy with some things and antipathy to others” (Letter 19 | S 134.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. TTP Chapter 16 (S 180-1).

¹⁰⁶ In an important editorial note, Curley remarks: “*Malus* can be translated by either *bad* or *evil*. At one stage I preferred *bad* wherever possible, since *evil* has connotations which seem inappropriate to Spinoza’s to Spinoza’s philosophy. I now think it is best to retain the term and to regard Spinoza’s definition as deflationary. Like Nietzsche’s, Spinoza’s philosophy is, in some sense, beyond good and evil.”

¹⁰⁷ E1app [II/81/30, 82/17 and 83/15]. Similar claims appear in the *Cogitata Metaphysica* II, vii (I/262/2-21) (“Good and Evil are nothing in Things, but only in the human mind which compares things one with another”), Letter 32 (Shirley 192), Letter 54 (S 269), and in the TTP Chapter 16 (Shirley 180), Chapter 17 (Shirley 193). On the Maimonidean background of Spinoza’s view, see Harvey, “A Portrait of Spinoza as a Maimonidean”, 158-60. Harvey rightly points out the influence of Maimonides’ view according to which “through the intellect one distinguishes between true and false [but] good and evil belong to the popularly accepted notions” (*Guide of the Perplexed*, I, 2).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. E4p64c: “if the human mind had only adequate knowledge, it would form no notion of evil.”

Italics mine). From the objective and true perspective of God, there is no evil.¹⁰⁹ God knows every entity in its very particularity, and not through universals. “God does not know things in abstraction, nor does he formulate general definitions of that sort” (Letter 19. IV/91-92 | S 134). There was no evil in the occurrence of the earthquake in Lisbon because this piece of land was not deprived of any perfection which God endowed it. It was as perfect as any other event on earth. From the point of view of Spinoza’s Christian contemporaries, Spinoza’s “solution” to the problem of evil may seem quite astonishing, even devastating, but this is a direct result of one of the main lines of Spinoza’s thought: his battle against anthropomorphism and the demand that the “proper order of philosophizing” is to contemplate first the divine nature, and then try to understand particular things from that perspective (E2p10s | II/93).¹¹⁰ From that divine and objective perspective, there is nothing imperfect or evil.¹¹¹

(iii) *Spinoza’s Deflationary Account of God’s Immutability*. - On the face of it, the issue of divine immutability poses an unsolvable dilemma for Spinoza: either God is simple, immutable being, or he

¹⁰⁹ In contemporary scholarship there is a tendency to associate Spinoza’s view of good and evil with Nietzsche’s relativist perspectivism. This comparison is valid, but only to a certain point. Spinoza does treat good and evil as relative to the individual (see E3p51d and *Cogitata Metaphysica* I, iv (I/247/24)). As such, good and evil are synonymous to the useful and harmful (E1app (81/35), E3p39s, E4d1&2, E4p29d, and E4p30d). But, when things are considered from an *objective* perspective - and for Spinoza, unlike Nietzsche - there *is* an objective perspective (i.e., the perspective of God and of men, had they been born free (E4p68) and had adequate knowledge (E4p64)) - good or evil are just meaningless. In this context, it is worth mentioning Spinoza’s claim in the TTP (Chapter 4. Shirley 55-6) that describing God as ‘just’ is an anthropomorphism.

¹¹⁰ Cf. TTP, Chapter 2 (Shirley 22). Curley is in fact the contemporary commentator who is most attentive to the importance of this line in Spinoza thought (see his “Man and Nature in Spinoza”, 21, and “On Bennett’s Interpretation”, 40). Curley is also the scholar who analyzed most beautifully Spinoza’s anti-moralism in his “Kissinger, Spinoza and Genghis Khan” and it is somewhat surprising that he assigns *any* value to Bayle’s rather popular “evil” objection.

¹¹¹ It is important to note that Spinoza’s “solution” to the problem of evil is far more radical than Leibniz’s. One crucial issue where Spinoza’s view strongly conflicts with Leibniz’s theodicy is in the question of *local* evil (another important point is Leibniz’s affirmation and Spinoza’s denial that ‘good’ can be truly ascribed to God). While for Leibniz, limited segments of the world may appear evil, yet, they contribute to the overall greatest good, Spinoza would deny that even the slightest segment of the picture, even when taken in isolation, is, in any sense, evil. On this issue I disagree with Carriero’s line of defense against Bayle’s argument, which contends that “since it is impossible to make local assessments of evil and perfection, it is impossible to pin responsibility for *local evil* on God” (“Mode and Substance in Spinoza”, 272-3. Italics mine). Unlike this Leibnizian line of defense which Carriero suggests, I do not think that the *locality* of evil is the issue here.

has modes, and is thus changing. In his early period, Spinoza seems to take this dilemma as a real one. Thus, he writes in the *Cogitata Metaphysica* (1663):

That there is also in God *no composition from different modes* is sufficiently demonstrated from the fact that *there are no modes in God*. For modes arise from the alteration of substance (*Principles* I, 56).
(Italics mine. I/258/30 | C 324) ¹¹²

The reference at the end of this passage is to Descartes' claim that

[W]e do not, strictly speaking, say that there are modes or qualities in God, but simply attributes, since in the case of God, any variation is unintelligible (*Principles of Philosophy*, I, 56 | AT VIII A, 26 | CSM I, 211).

For both Descartes and the early Spinoza, God cannot have modes insofar as modes are by-products of alterations in the substance, while God is immutable.¹¹³ The Spinoza of the *Ethics* clearly holds that there *are* modes in God, and I have argued that Spinoza conceives modes just like Descartes, i.e., as non-essential properties inhering in their substance. Consequently, it would seem that God changes. But, does not the Spinoza (of the *Ethics*) openly deny *any* change in God? According to Curley, Spinoza states this very claim in E1p20c2:¹¹⁴

God, or all of God's attributes, are immutable [*Deum, sive omnia Dei attributa esse immutabilia*].

Let's look at this text carefully. Firstly, note that in E1p20c2 Spinoza explicates God's immutability by the claim that the *attributes* are immutable. Why does Spinoza make this qualification (and does not state simply that 'God is immutable'. Period.)? Secondly, compare E1p20c2 with Spinoza's treatment of the same topic in the *Cogitata Metaphysica*:

¹¹² This passage may provide another argument against Curley's interpretation of the substance-modes relation. When Spinoza claims, in this passage, that God is not composed "from different modes" he clearly takes modes as inhering in the substance, and not as effects. I have not discussed this passage among the other arguments against Curley's interpretation since it belongs to Spinoza's early period and the extent to which it represents Spinoza's own position is unclear.

¹¹³ In his early (as well as later) period Spinoza seems to maintain the biconditional 'x is immutable if and only if x is simple'. Spinoza states the right-to-left side of the biconditional in *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*, Ip18 (I/178/3-7). The passage I have just quoted from the *Cogitata Metaphysica* relies on God's immutability in order to prove divine simplicity, viz. it states the left-to-right side of the biconditional.

¹¹⁴ "It is clear that Spinoza will not allow that God can change (E1p20c2)", *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 34.

By *change* we understand here whatever variation there can be in a subject while the very essence of the subject remains intact. (CM II, iv | I/255/25)

The last sentence begins a chapter whose title is “Of God’s Immutability”. In this chapter Spinoza proves that *no* change can occur in God. Now, E1p20c2 and the passage from the *Cogitata Metaphysica* seem to make very different claims. Both passages claim that God is immutable, but the two passages have opposite explications of what God’s immutability is. E1p20c2 equates God’s immutability with no change in God’s *essence* (i.e., the attributes). The CM passage makes a far stronger claim, i.e., that there is not any *non-essential* variation in God. Neither in E1p20c2, nor (as far as I know¹¹⁵) in any other passage in the *Ethics* does Spinoza make the claim that there is no non-essential variation in God. The question arises, why does Spinoza limit himself only to the weaker explication of divine immutability in the *Ethics*? Finally, it seems that within the Cartesian framework, in which Spinoza was working, E1p20c2 amounts to nothing over and above a simple tautology. For Descartes, *all* essential attributes are immutable.¹¹⁶ The essence (i.e., the essential attributes) of the mouse is not less immutable than God’s; why then make such a fuss about divine immutability which is shared by everyone else?

My answer to these questions is that in the *Ethics* (unlike his early period when he was just restating the Cartesian view that God has no modes and is truly immutable) Spinoza accepts change and movement in God. I am not aware of *any* late text which contradicts this conclusion.¹¹⁷ What Spinoza was doing in E1p20c2 is just to re-define divine immutability

¹¹⁵ Spinoza employs ‘*immutabilis*’ only in another two places in the *Ethics*. In E1p21d, he claims that “since Thought is supposed to be an attribute of God, it must exist necessarily and be immutable” [II/66/6]. In the fifth part of the *Ethics*, immutability plays a role in Spinoza’s account of blessedness, which “begets a Love toward a thing immutable and eternal” [E5p20s. II/294/12]. In both cases it is employed in relation to *Natura naturans*.

¹¹⁶ “We must take care here not to understand the word ‘attribute’ to mean simply ‘mode’, for we term an ‘attribute’ whatever we recognize as being naturally ascribable to something, whether it be a mode which is susceptible of change, or *the absolutely immutable essence of the thing* in question” *Comments on a Certain Broadsheet* (AT VIIIIB 348 | CSM I 297). Italics mine.

¹¹⁷ Carriero arrives at a similar conclusion, though he considers the mutability of Spinoza’s God “an unavoidable cost” (“Mode and Substance in Spinoza”, 266). I do not think God’s mutability is an undesired cost for Spinoza. Bennett’s “field metaphysics” also appears to approve divine mutability.

according to his own views, a practice in which Spinoza is frequently engaged in the *Ethics*.¹¹⁸ Indeed, the immutability of essential attributes is not something that is unique to God. E1p20c2 provides a deflationary definition of divine immutability.¹¹⁹ Obviously, the claim that the mouse's essence is as immutable as God's is quite daring. Yet, given Spinoza's strict naturalism and his decrying of the shelter of ignorance on which traditional explanations of God's nature rely, it is precisely what we should expect him to do.

Finally, we may wish to consider Curley's claim that ascribing change to God goes against the dominant philosophical and theological tradition in western thought. We could argue whether there is such a general agreement on the issue,¹²⁰ but this would be beside the point. Suppose there is such a consensus. Still, why can Spinoza not be innovative on that issue? (Especially, once we have plenty of evidence that he was considered as such by his contemporaries, and that he was well aware of this conception of himself). In fact, the issue of divine immutability seems to stand or fall together with that of Spinoza's pantheism. It is claimed (whether rightly or not) that the mainstream of western thought (if there is anything like this) rejects the identification of God with nature. I have argued that the textual evidence show categorically that Spinoza embraces pantheism. Even if Spinoza's pantheism places him *against* the mainstream, it should by no means count as evidence against ascribing pantheism to Spinoza, since we have plenty of testimonies which show that this is indeed how he was considered both by himself and by his contemporaries. The same applies to the issue of divine immutability.

¹¹⁸ Take, for example, Spinoza's redefinition of divine eternity in E1p19 (upon which E1p20c2 relies): "*Deus, sive omnia Dei attributa sunt aeterna*". Note the similarity of the Latin sentences of E1p19 and E1p20c2. Arguably, for Spinoza, eternity (timelessness) as well belongs to God only under certain qualifications.

¹¹⁹ For a similar view according to which Spinoza's modes are changing non-identifying characteristics, whereas attributes are identifying immutable characteristics, see Keith Campbell, *Metaphysics*, 79-81 (I am indebted to John Heil for pointing out to me Campbell's insightful discussion of Spinoza).

¹²⁰ In fact, it seems to me that religious thought that was less influenced by Greek philosophy (which commonly associates change with imperfection) does assign change to God. The common Talmudic and Rabbinic perception of God clearly takes God as deliberating, responding, and even regretting his acts toward creatures, not to mention the Christian belief that God was walking on earth.

1.6 “Wrong logical type,” Charitable Interpretation, and Spinoza on Part and Whole

At the beginning of this chapter we have encountered Curley’s main argument that to consider mountains, animals and other bodies as modes (in the traditional sense of the term) is to commit a category mistake:

Spinoza’s modes are, *prima facie*, of the wrong logical type to be related to substance in the same way Descartes’ modes are related to the substance, for they are particular things (E1p25c), not qualities.¹²¹

By these claims, Curley was not criticizing Spinoza, but rather arguing that Spinoza’s understanding of the substance-mode relation cannot be identified with the common, Cartesian, understanding of this relation, since this would ascribe to Spinoza a view which is extremely implausible, bordering on nonsense. Clearly, these claims rely on a *charity principle*. It is more charitable, one may argue, to interpret a speaker in a way which will not assign to him/her committing a category mistake. In a well-known example, Quine argues that were we to meet a speaker who explicitly asserts a contradictory sentence, such as, ‘It is and it is not raining now’, we should “impose our logic upon [the speaker]” and avoid ascribing to him the literal and illogical meaning of the sentence (e.g., by taking it to mean “it’s just dripping”).¹²² Though one may question the validity and usefulness of such a principle in general, my aim here is much more modest. I want to show that the principle of charity can be used only in a very limited and careful manner once we are engaged in fundamental theoretical thinking (and that Curley’s interpretation of the nature of Spinozistic modes fails to do just that). Here are two illustrations of questionable use of the principle.

In his *Politics*, Aristotle famously asserts that slavery is natural and that it is right and natural for some people to be slaves and for others to be masters.¹²³ Now, suppose a certain scholar would argue that we should interpret the terms ‘slave’ and ‘master’ in a sense different

¹²¹ Spinoza’s *Metaphysics*, 18

¹²² Quine, *Word and Object*, 58.

¹²³ *Politics*, 1255b7-10.

from the usual (perhaps, as designating an employee and an employer), since it is not charitable to ascribe support of slavery to a great moral philosopher such as Aristotle. This scholar might add that perhaps his view does not fit all the relevant Aristotelian texts, but given the attractiveness of Aristotle's position under the new interpretation, it is worth bending the texts in order to absolve Aristotle from such an unreasonable position.¹²⁴

Take another example. In *The Concept of Mind* (1949), Gilbert Ryle argued that Cartesian dualism which claims that both minds and bodies exist commits a category mistake by presupposing that there is a logical type under which both minds and bodies fall and that 'existence' can be univocally ascribed to both kinds of things.¹²⁵ Now, suppose Ryle's argument were slightly different. Instead of criticizing the Cartesian position, he would suggest that we should reinterpret Descartes in a way that rids him of the alleged category mistake imbedded in dualism. Here again, one could argue that the revisionist interpretation may not fit all the texts, but it might worth bending some texts in order not to suppose that a great philosopher like Descartes committed a category mistake.

I believe that in both cases, as long as the more charitable interpretation contrasts with a significant corpus of the author's texts, it would not be right to adopt such an interpretation only because it makes the author's view more attractive. Were we to accept these charitable interpretations, we would not only be arguing from authority, not only be engaged in a historically anachronistic practice, but most importantly, we would miss the opportunity to challenge our own fundamental conceptions against those held by other intelligent people of the past. This point is most crucial when we deal with alleged category mistakes in texts dealing with foundational issues since quite a few philosophical and scientific breakthroughs resulted from category mistakes (from the point of view of the old system). A Newtonian or medieval physical

¹²⁴ The fact that unlike the case of slavery which was embraced by most of Aristotle's contemporaries, the view of particular things as properties inhering in God was not widely embraced by Spinoza's contemporaries, this dissimilarity does not seem to me to wreck the analogy. The comparison, I think, is still valid since we have clear evidence that Spinoza was considered by his contemporaries to have a very unusual view on the relation of particular things to God. Hence, the historical context in *both* cases (i.e., Aristotle's view of slavery and Spinoza's view of modes), supports an interpretation of these philosophers as making claims that are inconsistent with our, so called, "common-sense."

¹²⁵ *The Concept of Mind*, 16-22

theorist would most likely consider the concept of time of the theory of relativity as such a mistake. Of course, this does not mean that *every* category mistake leads to a theoretical breakthrough, but only that we must be open to the possibility that what we see *might* be a genuine and new way of understanding things.

When we do history of philosophy and encounter a claim that *prima facie* seems to be a category mistake we should listen to Nietzsche's old advice that a philosopher must know how to ruminate thoughts. We should ask ourselves questions such as, how central is the claim to the wider system of that philosopher? To what extent was he aware of the innovative nature of his claim? And is the said claim consistent with the rest of his system? These questions will help us decide whether the claim is a mere slip of pen, or one which adequately represents the considered view of that philosopher. In the next stage, we should openly consider the *plausibility* of that view against our own intuitions. If we find that the alleged category mistake is well supported by the texts of the relevant writer and we remain convinced of the nonsensical nature of the claim - we should simply conclude that this writer/philosopher was wrong.¹²⁶

When we apply these methodological suggestions to the case of Spinoza's understanding of the substance-mode relation, we find that the text is hardly reconcilable with Curley's reading (or at least that's what I was trying to show so far). If so, we can either reject Spinoza's position (that particular things, like mountains, are modes) as a category mistake, or reconsider our own views.

In the rest of this section, I will try to help make intelligible Spinoza's claim that things, such as Mt. Rushmore, are modes inhering in God (the issue of predication will be discussed in the following section). I will do that in two ways. First, I will argue that though Spinoza's metaphysics was definitely innovative to his contemporaries, the specific claim that things can be considered as modes of other things was not an anathema in the seventeenth century. Second, I will suggest an explanation as to what brought Spinoza to view particular things as modes of God, and how this claim is related to pantheism and to God's indivisibility. Yet, before I turn to these tasks, let me add briefly one more point regarding charitable interpretation.

¹²⁶ To take the other venue, and reinterpret the text so that it will fit our intuitions would devoid us of the greatest philosophical benefit of doing history of philosophy, the ability to challenge our own well-established beliefs.

One could, and I think should, argue that considerations of charity work *against* Curley's position. If, as Curley suggests, Spinoza takes modes to be just effects of the substance, then (as I have already mentioned) Spinoza turns out to be much closer to good old theism.¹²⁷ For many, this may seem as disappointingly flattening Spinoza's far more interesting position.¹²⁸ The price we pay for making Spinoza *like us* is that it is no longer clear why should we have an interest in Spinoza (we have plenty of ourselves even without Spinoza, and we have plenty of other theists in the seventeenth century).

I turn now to examine Spinoza's view of the substance-mode relation in the context of his contemporaries. Arguably, it is not at all clear that to consider things as modes is indeed such an uncommon view which is not to be found among Spinoza's contemporaries.¹²⁹ Clearly many philosophers adhered to the view that a *mental* thing can inhere in another thing (either mental or physical).¹³⁰ This is most evident when we consider views which take the mind to be a *simple*. In such a case whatever is in the mind cannot be *part* of the mind, and hence one natural way of explaining mental change and the internal working of the mind is by taking intra-mental items as qualities or modes of the mind (rather than parts). An example of such a view is Leibniz's claim that the perceptions of the monads are the *affections* (or as Ariew and Garber translate it, "properties") of the monads.¹³¹ But even when we deal with physical things, it is not clear that

¹²⁷ Or, as Curley puts it, a "good Cartesian" (*Behind the Geometrical Method*, 12).

¹²⁸ See Carriero, "Mode and Substance in Spinoza", 254.

¹²⁹ Note, however, that I do not intend these examples to show that this view is not committing a category mistake. It may well be that many philosophers committed such a mistake, just as it *may* happen that all people but you commit a category mistake.

¹³⁰ In his unpublished paper "Predication and Pantheism in Spinoza", Della Rocca rightly points out that to view modes as inhering in the substance is hardly problematic as long as we deal with the attribute of thought (i.e., the relation of modes of Thought to the thinking substance). In other words, Curley's problem seems to be not so much about how can Spinozistic modes (in general) inhere in, and be predicated of, the substance, but rather how can *bodies* inhere in, and be predicated of, anything.

¹³¹ See *Monadology*, sections 13 ("there must be a plurality of properties [*affections*] and relations in the simple substance, although it has no parts") and 17 ("...this is all one can find in the simple substance - that is, perceptions and their changes") (Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, pp. 214-5). It is possible that Leibniz's use of '*affections*' follows Spinoza's definition of mode (E1d5).

one physical thing cannot be considered as a mode of another thing. In his correspondence with Arnauld, Leibniz suggests that beings through aggregation [*entia per aggregationem*], i.e., bodies, are only states or modes of the substances which constitute them.¹³²

Even more telling are the following two passages from Arnauld and Nicole's *Logic*. The first passage presents a three-fold distinction between kinds of modes, of which the first is *substantial modes*:

We should note further that some modes can be called substantial [*substanciels*] because they represent true substances applied to other substances as modes and manners [*parcequ'ils nous représentent de véritables substances appliquées à d'autres substances, comme des modes & des manières*]. Being clothed and being armed are modes of this sort

Other modes can be called simply real. These are true modes which are not substances but manners of a substance.

Finally, some can be called negative because they represent the substance with a negation of some real or substantial modes. (*Logic or the Art of Thinking*, Part 1, Chapter 2)

[W]hen two substances are considered together, one can be viewed as a mode of the other [*quand on considère deux substances ensemble, on peut en considérer une comme mode de l'autre*]. Thus a clothed person could be considered as a whole composed of the person and the clothing. But with respect to the person, being clothed is only a mode or a manner of being under which one is considered, although the clothes are substances (Part 1, Chapter 7).

At the background of these two passages are similar - though significantly different - claims of Descartes in the Sixth Set of Replies:

I do admit that one substance can be attributed to another substance; yet when this happens it is not the substance itself which has the form of an accident, but only the mode of attribution. Thus when clothing is the attribute of a man, it is not the clothing itself which is the accident, but merely 'being clothed' (AT VIII 435 | CSM II 293).

¹³² "What constitutes the essence of a being through aggregation is only a state of being of its constituent beings" (*The Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence*, p. 121). See Donald Rutherford, "Leibniz's 'Analysis of Multitude and Phenomena into Unities and Reality' ", p. 531.

For Descartes, the claim ‘clothing is a mode or accident of person x’ is merely a loose formulation of the claim ‘x is being clothed’. This does not seem to be the case with Arnauld and Nicole’s discussion of the issue. Unlike Descartes, they do *not* deny that the clothes (and not just ‘being clothed’) are modes of the person. They seem to acknowledge the existence of a genuine class of ‘substantial modes’, i.e., modes which “represent true substances applied to other substances as modes and manners.”¹³³

Finally, we should consider Descartes’ claim in the Synopsis to the *Meditations* that only “body, taken in the general sense, is a substance, so that it never perishes”. Unlike this “body in the general sense”, the human body (and other particular bodies) is just “made up of certain configurations of limbs and other accidents of that sort [*non nisi ex certâ membrorum configuratione aliique ejusmodi accidentibus constare*]” (AT VII 14 | CSM II 10). The passage takes the whole physical realm as one indestructible substance,¹³⁴ and it can be read as considering particular bodies and their parts as accidents of the one extended substance. While some scholars dispute the claim this passage takes finite bodies as modes or accidents,¹³⁵ Curley, in an impressive expression of intellectual honesty, takes it to make this proto-Spinozistic claim. Curley is clearly

¹³³ Whether one substance can be a mode of another substance is a function of one’s definition of substance. As we have seen above (§1.3), Arnauld and Nicole define ‘substance’ as identical with ‘thing’. Substance is said to be “conceived as subsisting by itself”, but this does *not* rule out the possibility of that substance being a mode of another on certain occasions (as are clothes to man). See *Logic or the Art of Thinking*, Part I, Chapter ii. In the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza himself suggests that the thinking *substance* and extended *substance* are *modes* of God (i.e., that substances can be considered as modes of another substance). In the first dialogue of the book, *Reason [Reede]*, which usually presents the author’s views, claims: “And if you want to call the corporeal and the intellectual substances in respect to the modes which depend on them, you must equally call them modes too, in relation to the substance on which they depend. For you do not conceive them as existing through themselves. In the same way that you call willing, sensing, understanding, loving, etc., different modes of what you call a thinking substance (all of which you lead back to one, making one of them all), so I also infer, by your own proof, that infinite extension and thought, together with other infinite attributes (or as you would say, substances) are nothing but modes of that unique, eternal, infinite Being, existing through itself” (I/29/24-34). I do not place much weight on this passage since it is clear that in his mature period Spinoza would not maintain this position. The substance’s definition in the *Ethics* clearly cannot tolerate one substance being dependent on another substance. Note, however, that this is a change in the criteria for *substantiality* (not of *thinghood*); we have no indication that in his mature period a *thing [res]* could not be a mode of a substance.

¹³⁴ Cf. Gueroult, *Spinoza I*, 63.

¹³⁵ See Woolhouse, *The Concept of Substance in Seventeenth Century Metaphysics*, p. 53, n. 36.

bothered by this precedent,¹³⁶ yet he points out that in many other texts Descartes refers to particular bodies as substances, and hence suggests that the Synopsis passage (and a similar text in the *Principles* ¹³⁷) do not represent Descartes' considered view. While I tend to agree with Curley as to Descartes' considered view, I still think that the very fact that Descartes seriously weighed this Spinozistic path, shows that it was not taken as a senseless category mistake.

I return to Spinoza. Having encountered passages of this sort,¹³⁸ Spinoza could have been triggered to boldly pursue this line, especially if it could solve one of the major problems he was facing in the development of his system. In the following I will suggest an outline of the reasoning which could have motivated Spinoza to view particular things as modes. The way I present this outline is close, but not identical, to Spinoza's actual argumentation in the *Ethics*. In a sense, I would try to explain what motivated Spinoza to define substance and modes the way he did. We will consider Spinoza's arguments in two stages.

First Stage: From Absolute Infinity to Pantheism We begin with the definition of God (E1d6) - perhaps the most important text in the book - as a "being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence". For Spinoza, infinity entails unlimitedness (See E1d2 and E1d6e). For God to be absolutely unlimited, he must be everywhere; he must have the attribute of extension, and cannot be external to - or limited by - anything extended.¹³⁹ In other words, the mere absolute

¹³⁶ Curley refers to this passage in virtually all of his discussions of the substance-mode relation. See "On Bennett's Interpretation", 50 n. 10, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 32-3, 142 n. 9, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 646.

¹³⁷ Descartes, *Principles*, II, i, 23. Cf. Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Order*, 142 n. 9.

¹³⁸ Obviously, Spinoza was well acquainted with Descartes' works. Spinoza's relation to the Port-Royal Logic is an intriguing issue which was hardly studied. The first three editions of the Logic appeared during Spinoza's lifetime (the first in 1662), and immediately became highly influential. The list of Spinoza's personal library includes a copy of the Logic in the original French. Yet, as far as I know, Spinoza did not know French. The story is even more interesting since the Logic seems to be the only French item in Spinoza's library (in fact, the only item in a language Spinoza did not know). I *suspect* that Spinoza became interested in the book from what he heard from his friends, and that he was studying it relying on his extensive knowledge of other romance languages. He could also rely on friends for translation and study of the book.

¹³⁹ According to E1p6e, God is absolutely infinite while the attributes are only infinite in their own kind. The latter infinity is constituted by the fact that it is possible "to deny infinite attributes" (i.e., all the other attributes) of each

infinity of God commits Spinoza to pantheism.¹⁴⁰ If, as Curley suggested God were identical with *Natura naturans*, but not with *Natura naturata*, God would be limited by *Natura naturata*, and hence, not be infinite.¹⁴¹

Second Stage: From the Priority of God to the Rejection of Whole-Part Pantheism If God is identical with nature, or with existence in general,¹⁴² the question arises how finite things are related to God. One natural path is to consider particular things as parts of God. I will call this view ‘Whole-Part Pantheism’. Spinoza cannot embrace whole-part pantheism because of the following considerations. Spinoza’s understanding of the part-whole relation is quite traditional. Parts are prior to their whole, both in nature and in our knowledge.¹⁴³ In E1p12d, Spinoza states that it would be absurd to think that “the whole could both be and be conceived without its parts”. Similarly, in Letter 35 Spinoza argues that the being which includes necessary existence (i.e., God) “is simple and not composed of parts. For in respect of *their nature* and *our knowledge* of

attribute. Of God’s absolute infinity it is impossible to deny any attribute. Hence, *no thing under any attribute* can limit God. Cf. Letter 36 where Spinoza replaces his usual distinction between the absolute infinity of God and the infinity in its own kind of the attributes by the claim that God is absolutely indeterminate while the attribute are indeterminate in their own kind.

¹⁴⁰ Here one may object that many other philosophers ascribe infinity to God without thereby endorsing pantheism. Spinoza’s view, is however, different. For Spinoza, God’s absolute infinity entails that he must have all the attributes (including Extension), and that in each attribute, God must be infinite in its kind, i.e., completely unlimited. Perhaps one could still argue that limitation should not be construed as mutual exclusion. The Cartesian God, is not identical to other thinking substances, but Descartes would clearly try to reject the conclusion that God is limited by the other thinking substances. Descartes might suggest that *x* is limited by *y* if and only if $x \neq y$ and *x* is caused by *y*. It is obvious however that Spinoza does define limitation in terms of mutual exclusion (see E1d2), and that for Spinoza limitation cannot be defined by causal relations. The attributes are causally independent of each other, yet in Letter 36 Spinoza strongly hints that the attributes limit each other (in this letter God is taken as *absolutely* unlimited, while Thought and Extension are merely *unlimited in their kinds*. Presumably the reason why Thought and Extension are absolutely unlimited is because they limit).

¹⁴¹ Spinoza does not use this short argument for pantheism when he proves that all things are in God (E1p15). Presumably, this is so because E1p15 attempts to prove not only pantheism, but also that all things are modes of God.

¹⁴² I avoid explaining pantheism as claiming that God is identical with the *totality* of things (or the totality of existing things), since the notion of totality may imply accumulation while God (qua *Natura naturans*) is indivisible.

¹⁴³ For some twentieth century endorsements of the priority of parts to their wholes, see G.E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies*, 287-8, and McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, 108. Cf. Chisholm, “Parts as essential to their Wholes”, 582-3.

them component parts¹⁴⁴ would have to be prior to that which they compose” (Shirley 203. *Italics mine*).¹⁴⁵ Given the ontological and epistemological priorities Spinoza assigns to parts, he would have to hold that parts of God, such as finite things, are prior to God (both in nature and in knowledge), were he to embrace whole-part pantheism. The latter, however, would bluntly conflict with one of the deepest and most important tenets of his philosophy - the strict priority of the infinite over the finite.¹⁴⁶ A nice illustration of this unyielding spirit is Spinoza’s rebuke of his philosophical predecessors who

did not observe the [proper] order of philosophizing. For they believed that the divine nature, which they should have contemplated before all else (because it is *prior both in knowledge and in nature*) is last in the order of knowledge, and that the things which are called objects of the senses are prior to all (E2p10s2. *Italics mine*).

Obviously, if God is prior (both in knowledge and in nature) to the finite things, and parts are prior (both in knowledge and in nature) to their whole, then finite things cannot be parts of God. But if God is everything that is, then finite things cannot be external to God either. What can they be then?¹⁴⁷

Well, let’s see. Finite things are in God, but they are not parts of God (since God is indivisible). The relation of ‘being in x but not as its part’ has a clear precedent in the history of

¹⁴⁴ It is not clear to me what Spinoza has in mind when he speaks of ‘*component parts*’. He might be referring to what we currently call ‘actual parts.’ (For an interesting discussion of the priority of actual parts to their whole in early modern philosophy, see Thomas Holden, ‘Bayle and the Case for Actual Parts’, 148-51). Yet, one may wonder whether Spinoza can accommodate the notion of potential parts given his strict necessitarianism. These interesting questions, however, are not crucial to my current discussion given Spinoza’s insistence on the strict impossibility of dividing substance, which rules out even potential division (See E1p12, E1p13 and E1p15s).

¹⁴⁵ In the early *Cogitata Metaphysica* I, v [I/258/15 | C 324], Spinoza makes the slightly more moderate claim that “component parts are prior in nature at least to the thing composed.”

¹⁴⁶ See the Introduction to this work.

¹⁴⁷ One interesting answer that I am going to consider at the end of the chapter is that for Spinoza finite things are illusions. This is the interpretation which ascribes to Spinoza ‘acosmism’. I will later argue that though this interpretation has some support in Spinoza’s thought, it conflicts with too important doctrines and hence, in the end, should be rejected.

philosophy.¹⁴⁸ This is precisely how Aristotle defines ‘being in a subject’, the relation which holds between an accident and the subject in which it inheres.

By ‘in a subject’, I mean what is in something, not as a part, and cannot exist separately from what it is in (*Categories* 1a20).

Accidents, but not substances, are in something else.¹⁴⁹ A traditional example in this context is the relation of knowledge-of-grammar to the soul; it is *in* the soul, but not *part of* the soul. Earlier in this chapter we have seen that in the early modern period many philosophers started using ‘mode’ instead of ‘accident’ to make clear that a mode/accident cannot exist independently from its subject.¹⁵⁰ Given this state of affairs, the substance-mode relation was the perfect solution to the problem of relating particular things to the infinite and indivisible God/Nature. They are *in* God, but are *not parts* of God. They are *modes* of God.

Indeed, Bayle who was one of Spinoza’s most careful readers, observes this point very clearly:

[Spinoza] taught not that two trees were two parts of extension, but two modifications...One of the principle pillars [of Spinoza’s system] was the alleged difference between the word ‘part’ and the word ‘modification’.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ For this distinction between ‘being part of x’ and ‘being a mode x’, see Descartes’ claim in the Sixth Set of Replies that “a mode cannot be part of a substance” (CSM II 292 | AT VII 433). Although the stipulation that the mode is not part of the substance does not appear explicitly in some seventeenth century *definitions* of the term, it is implicitly stated by the standard stipulation that modes cannot be and be conceived without their substance (in conjunction with the common view that parts are conceived prior to their whole). See, for example, the Port Royal stipulation that a mode is “not able to subsist without [its substance]” (*Logic, or the Art of Thinking*, First part, Chapter 2, p. 30). Cf. Descartes’ *Principles of Philosophy* I 64 (AT VIII A31 | CSM I 216).

¹⁴⁹ See Carriero, “Substance and Mode in Spinoza”, 247, 256.

¹⁵⁰ See section 1.4, argument (x) above.

¹⁵¹ *Dictionary*, 306 (remark N) | *Dictionnaire*, V 211. Bayle, however, misunderstood the scope of the indivisibility which Spinoza ascribed to God, i.e., he did not pay attention to the divisibility of the infinite modes (see my second chapter).¹⁵² In the following I will treat ‘being predicated of x’ and ‘being a property of x’ as roughly the same. Properties are commonly taken as metaphysical entities. Predicates are taken to be linguistic expressions, though occasionally also the entities designated by the expressions. Whether predicates designate properties or other entities (such as, sets, or relations between objects in possible worlds) is a controversial issue. Ramsey has also pointed out that the same content can be expressed by sentences which switch the roles of subject and predicate (as in “Socrates is wise” and “Wisdom is a

1.7 Modes, Tropes and other Things (or Properties)

I have argued that Spinoza's pantheism and the indivisibility of God could explain his motivation to view particular things (such as Mt. Rushmore) as being in God the way a mode inheres in a substance. In other words, though the common view of Spinoza as a pantheist is correct, it is important to make clear that Spinoza's is a Substance-Mode Pantheism and not a Whole-Part Pantheism.

At this point we should consider one further question. Are Spinozistic modes *predicated of* - or are they *properties of*¹⁵² - God? I have so far argued that for Spinoza modes *inhere in* God. Cartesian modes are also *predicated of* their substance. Yet, several scholars have interestingly suggested that Spinoza divorces inherence from predication, and hence that Curley's query about the mystery of "how one thing is predicated of another"¹⁵³ is ill-targeted since Spinoza takes particular things to inhere in, but not to be predicated of, the substance.¹⁵⁴

Although this may appear quite daring I believe that for Spinoza modes not only inhere in God, but are also properties predicated of God. In order to present my argument I will proceed in

characteristic of Socrates". See Ramsey, "Universals", p. 60). All this should not concern us here, since it is clear that Curley's query does not deal with the expression 'Mt. Rushmore' but rather with the question whether it is not a category mistake to take a *body* like this mountain as a property of God. We will later see that in E3p55c2d, Spinoza takes powers to be *predicated* of the subject (body or mind) to which they belong, i.e., he uses predication in the metaphysical, rather than linguistic, sense. Finally, being in agreement with Garrett's note that describing the relation of modes to substance as "adjectival" is too linguistic "to match Spinoza's primary metaphysical concerns" ("Spinoza's *Conatus* Argument", p. 156, n. 16), I will avoid the adjectival terminology.

¹⁵³ Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 18.

¹⁵⁴ "I conclude that the objection that ... modes are of the 'wrong logical type' to be particulars rests on an assimilation of inherence with predication and a closely related dismissal of the notion of an individual accident..." (Carriero, "Mode and Substance in Spinoza", 256-9). Similarly, see Jarrett, "Substance and Mode in Spinoza", 85. The issue of individual accidents (tropes) will be discussed later in this section.

the following manner. First, I will present the textual evidence in Spinoza's writings which support my claim. At the second stage, I will argue that there is no category mistake involved in the claim that Mt. Rushmore is a property of God, that Curley's attempt to mark a clear dichotomy between things and properties was not generally accepted by Spinoza's contemporaries, and that this dichotomy is not left unchallenged in metaphysical discussions of our present day.

I turn first to the text. A crucial piece of evidence is E1p16:

P16: From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect.) [*Ex necessitate divinae naturae infinita infinitis modis (hoc est, omnia, quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt) sequi debent*].¹⁵⁵

Dem.: This Proposition must be plain to anyone, provided he attends to the fact that the intellect infers from the given definition of any thing a number of *properties* [*plures proprietates*] that really do follow necessarily from it (i.e., from the very essence of the thing); and that it infers more *properties* the more the definition of the thing expresses reality, i.e., the more reality the essence of the defined thing involves.... (Italics mine)

The key questions for our query is what are the *properties* which, according to the demonstration, the intellect infers from the *definition* of any thing, and how is this inference related to the flow of the infinitely many things in infinitely many ways from God's essence. But before we approach these questions let me begin with a short clarification of the proposition itself. Some readers of this proposition tend to see it as claiming that the *infinita infinitis modis* which follow from the necessity of God's nature are the infinite attributes (each of which having infinitely many modes).¹⁵⁶ This does not seem to be the case. According to E1p29s, what "follows from the necessity of God's nature" is *Natura naturata*, i.e. the modes, while the substance and attributes *are* *Natura naturans* (roughly, the sphere of God's essence). The attributes do *not* follow from God's nature; they *are* God's nature. Hence, E1p16 must be read as dealing with the infinite

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Ep. 43 (IV/223/6) where Spinoza suggests that the modes emanate [*emanare*] from God's nature.

¹⁵⁶ Note that the Latin does not mention 'things'.

infinity of *modes* which follows from God's essence (since only modes follow from God's essence or nature).¹⁵⁷

I turn now to the question of the 'properties' in the demonstration of E1p16. In order to understand the demonstration we must first clarify Spinoza's criteria for the appropriateness of definitions. A detailed discussion of the issue appears in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. Here Spinoza stipulates:

To be called perfect, a definition will have to explain the inmost essence of the thing [*intimum essentiam rei*], and to take care not to use certain *propria* [*propria*] in its place. (TdIE § 95 | I/3429)

Indeed, in several places Spinoza stresses that a good definition must point out the essence of the thing defined,¹⁵⁸ so much so that in some places he takes 'essence, 'nature' and 'definition' of a thing to be interchangeable.¹⁵⁹ But what are the *propria* which Spinoza warns us not to confuse with the essence of the thing? Here, Spinoza follows a common Scholastic (and ultimately Aristotelian) threefold distinction between qualities which make the thing to be what it is (these are the qualities which constitute the *essence* of the thing), qualities which necessarily *follow from* the essence of the thing, but do not constitute the essence itself (these are the *propria*), and qualities which are at least partly caused by a source external to the thing, and which are termed 'accidents' (or 'extraneous accidents').¹⁶⁰ Though a thing has necessarily both its essential qualities and its *propria*,¹⁶¹ it is only the former that provide us with an explanation of the nature

¹⁵⁷ For a clarification of how the infinity which follows from God's essence is modified infinitely, see Chapter 3 (3.3) below.

¹⁵⁸ See Ep. 8 (IV/42/30), Ep. 34 (Shirley 201)..

¹⁵⁹ See, for example, Ep. 12 (IV/53/3-5).

¹⁶⁰ 'Extraneous accidents' is the term used by Aquinas to relate to these qualities (see Carriero, "Spinoza's view on Necessity", p. 69). Garrett uses simply 'accidents' instead (see his "Spinoza's Necessitarianism", p. 201).

¹⁶¹ In fact, even some accidents are inseparable from their substratum despite the fact that these accidents do not follow from the thing's essence. A common example of such accidents is the blackness of the crow (see Porphyry, *Isagoge*, 12-13). However, in the case of inseparable accidents, the substratum can be *conceived* without the accidents (*Isagoge*, *ibid.*). Another important difference between *propria* and inseparable accidents is that accidents, but not *propria*, admit of more or less (i.e., a crow can be more or less black, but risibility (like rationality) is shared equally by all the particulars who have it. See *Isagoge*, 9/18 and 22/10).

of the thing, and hence should be included in the definition. Spinoza explains that the reason why it is important that the definition should capture the essence of the thing rather than its *propria* is “because the properties of things [*proprietates rerum*] are not understood so long as their essences are not known” (TdIE §95 | II/35/6-7).¹⁶² Notice that in this passage the word ‘*proprietates*’ has the technical sense of *propria* rather than property in general. In fact, in his discussion of definitions in sections 95-97 of the IdIE, Spinoza uses explicate the term ‘*propria*’ only once (II/34/30). In all other cases (35/4, 35/6, 35/18, and 36/1) he uses ‘*proprietates*’ (properties) but in the narrow sense of *propria* (rather than properties in general).

Following the stipulation that a perfect definition should explain the essence and not the *propria* of the thing defined, Spinoza provides an example of the distinction between essence and *propria*,¹⁶³ and then splits his discussion to point out the requirement for a perfect definition of a created thing, as opposed to the requirement for a definition of an uncreated thing. In *both* cases, however, Spinoza stipulates that “all the thing’s properties” [*omnes proprietates rei*] be inferred [*concludantur*] from the definition (insofar as the definition states the essence).¹⁶⁴

Let us return now to E1p16 and its demonstration. Since the definition states the essence or nature of a thing, it is clear that what follows from God’s *essence* in E1p16 is what the intellect infers [*concludit*] from the *definition* of God in E1p16d. The ‘properties’ in E1p16d cannot be God’s attributes, since the latter constitute God’s essence rather than follow from it. What follows from God’s essence, or what the intellect infers from God’s definition are only the entities belonging to *Natura naturata*, i.e. the modes, and in E1p16d Spinoza explicitly terms them ‘properties’ [*proprietates*]. Properties which follow necessarily from the essence of a thing *must* be understood in the narrow sense of *propria*.¹⁶⁵ Indeed the modes stand in the very same

¹⁶² See *Short Treatise*, I iii, note a (I/34/30) for a similar point regarding God’s *propria*.

¹⁶³ “ If a circle, for example, is defined as a figure in which the lines drawn from the center to the circumference are equal, no one fails to see that such a definition does not at all explain the essence of the circle, but only a property [*proprietatem*] of it” (TdIE § 95 | II/35/1-3). Spinoza For a discussion of Descartes’ view of the relation between substance and its *propria*, see Garber, *Descartes’ Metaphysical Physics*, 68-9.

¹⁶⁴ TdIE § 96 (II/35/19), and § 97 (II/36/1).

¹⁶⁵ In other words, non-*propria* qualities (such as accidents) do not follow from a thing’s essence.

relation to God's essence as the *propria* of a thing relate to the thing's essence. They cannot be understood without God's essence (E1d5), and according to E1p16, all the modes follow (or can be deduced) from God's essence. In other words, the modes *are* God's *propria*.¹⁶⁶

E1p16 is a very central proposition in the *Ethics*, and numerous later propositions rely on it. It is not a proposition which one can dispense with and leave the rest of the book intact. Hence, the fact that in this text Spinoza explicitly considers modes as properties of God, should count as very strong evidence that modes not only inhere in God, but are also properties of God. But, we have some further texts which support that conclusion. First, let us recall some of the texts which we have discussed earlier when we tried to show that modes inhere in God. Some of these texts clearly support the further claim that modes are also properties of God. The passage from Spinoza's *Compendium of the Hebrew Grammar* in which Spinoza claims that participles relate to modes just as adjectives relates to attributes clearly implies that modes are (local) properties.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, Leibniz's report on his conversations with Spinoza in which he ascribes to Spinoza the "paradoxical" view that apart from God all other things are "only modes or accidents" of God, implies that Leibniz takes Spinoza's modes to be properties predicated of God (since, for Leibniz, accidents are properties predicated of their subject¹⁶⁸). Finally, we have seen that the same relation which holds between God and his affections (i.e., modes), must also

¹⁶⁶ Spinoza uses 'properties' in the technical sense of *propria* in at least another three places in the *Ethics* (E1app [II/77/22], E3defAff6e [II/192/24], and E3defAff22e), in the fourth chapter of the TTP [III/60/9], and in Letter 60. It is also likely that E2d3 uses '*proprietates*' in the technical sense. Among modern translations of the *Ethics*, Jakob Klatzkin's extraordinary Hebrew translation (1923) stands out in its explicit and systematic detection of the technical use of '*proprietates*' in the *Ethics*. Klatzkin translates '*proprietates*' in E1p16d (and in the other texts mentioned above) by '*Segulot*' which is the technical medieval Hebrew term for *propria* (I am indebted to Zeev Harvey for pointing this out to me). For reference to some medieval Hebrew uses of this notion, see Klatzkin's *Thesaurus philosophicus linguae Hebraicae et veteris recentioris* (1928), 91-2. See also Curley's helpful discussion of *proprium* in the glossary to his translation (Spinoza, *Collected Works I*, 652), and Garrett, "Spinoza's *conatus* Argument, p. 156-7, n. 24). My account of E1p16d is very close to Garrett's reading of this crucial text (in his "Spinoza's Necessitarianism" and "Spinoza's *conatus* Argument").

¹⁶⁷ See § 1.4 argument (xi) above.

¹⁶⁸ See § 1.4 argument (ix) above, and cf. argument (x). In *De Summa Rerum* 574, Leibniz defines an "accident of a thing" [*Accidens rei*] as a contingent predicate [*praedicatum contingens*]. Similarly, in the *Addenda to the Specimen of the Universal Calculus*, Leibniz defines 'accident' as "the adjectival predicate of a substantival subject in a particular affirmation proposition only" (Leibniz, *Logical Papers*, 46).

hold between the body and the affections of the body [*corporis affectiones*], i.e., between modes of modes and the modes they modify.¹⁶⁹ Now, in E3p55c2d Spinoza considers affects ¹⁷⁰ such as the powers of the body or mind to be *predicated* [*praedicare*] of human beings.¹⁷¹ But if affections, such as these powers, are predicated of the body, the same should hold as to the relation of the affections of God to God.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ See § 1.4 argument (viii) above.

¹⁷⁰ An affect [*affectus*] is an affection (i.e., a mode) [*affectio*] of the body or of the mind which increases or diminishes its power of acting (E3d3).

¹⁷¹ “So no man desires that there be predicated of him [*praedicari cupiet*] any power of acting, or (what is the same) virtue, which is peculiar to another’s nature and alien to his own”. The issue at stake is jealousy, so the desire to have certain powers predicated of oneself is not a desire to be known as having these powers, but rather the desire to actually have the powers. Hence, the predication is a predication of the powers themselves rather than the reputation of having the powers (i.e., being known or being described as having the powers).

¹⁷² The last piece of evidence which I wish to consider here is E3p5, a crucial proposition in the development of the doctrine of the *conatus*. I will not discuss this text in detail because this will push us into the issue of Spinoza’s view of logic, an issue which is as fascinating as it is difficult.

P5: Things are of a contrary nature, i.e., cannot be in the same subject, insofar as one can destroy the other [*Res eatenus contrariae sunt naturae, hoc est, eatenus in eodem subiecto esse nequeunt, quatenus una alteram potest destruere*].

Dem.: For if they could agree with one another, or be in the same subject at once, then there could be something in the same subject which could destroy it, which (by P4) is absurd. Therefore, things etc., q.e.d.

Two questions suggest themselves regarding this text. First, what does Spinoza mean here by the relation of ‘being in the same subject’? Obviously, he cannot mean that two conflicting *parts* cannot be in the same whole, since he openly discusses various conflicts between opposite forces which are parts of the same whole (such as opposite parties in the state). Second, why does Spinoza use the logical term ‘*subiectum*’ to describe the relation of one *thing* being in another? Prima facie, one may argue, ‘things’ are of the wrong logical type to be in a logical subject (what is in a subject should be properties).

If I understand Spinoza correctly this proposition does in fact deal with a logical subject, and what he is asserting here is that a subject cannot have opposite properties or modes *because* (that’s how I understand the role of ‘*quatenus*’ here) this would cause an internal destruction of the subject. Modes are ‘in a subject’. When two opposite things are both internal to a certain third thing, they cannot be modes of that thing, but only parts of it (as in the relation of two parties to their state). Were the subject to have two opposite modes, a logical contradiction would entail since a subject will have opposite properties (note Spinoza’s use of the clause “at the same time” [*simul*], which seems to be modeled after the common formulation of the law of non-contradiction). What is most fascinating in

One last note on this issue. Spinoza is commonly considered as assimilating causality with conceptual derivation.¹⁷³ Once we realize that for Spinoza particular things are properties, much of the mystery about this assimilation disappears since it is much easier to explain causal relations between qualities (such as essence and *propria*) as conceptual derivations than to consider causal relation between things as conceptual derivations. Indeed, the first conclusion that Spinoza draws from his claim in E1p16d that all particular things follow from God's essence as his *propria* is that God is the efficient cause of all things (E1p6c1). Of course, there is much more to be said on this issue, especially on whether and how the causal relation between two *propria* (two modes) can be explained in terms of conceptual derivation, but this should not concern us here.

Once we have arrived at the conclusion that for Spinoza modes are properties, we should address the question whether Spinoza committed a category mistake by having this position. As one can expect from the line of argumentation I have been developing so far, I do not think that Spinoza committed such a mistake. His view of particular things as God's *propria* is bold, innovative and counter-commonsense (all of which might well be characteristics of good philosophy, depending on what one seeks when she engages in philosophizing), but as far as I can see, no category mistake has been committed. In order for particular things to be of the wrong logical kind to serve as properties, there should at least be two well-distinguished and

E3p5d is that the mere fact that certain state of affairs (in our case, a subject having opposite modes) constitutes a contradiction does not seem to suffice in order to show that this state of affairs cannot obtain. It is only by virtue of the further result that a contradiction would yield an internally caused destruction of the subject (the impossibility of which Spinoza proved in E3p4) that bares the possibility of the contradictory state of affairs. Hence, I suspect that for Spinoza the law of non-contradiction is an implication of the more fundamental principle of the *conatus* (E3p4). This daring view needs to be carefully examined and clarified, and that should not be carried out here. Yet, even our preliminary discussion of E3p5, seems to show quite clearly that for Spinoza things (just like properties) can be in a subject, and that having two opposite things in the same subject (just as having two opposite properties in the same subject), yields a contradiction. In other words, Spinoza does not seem to reject the possibility that things, at least in certain contexts, function as properties of other things. For an illuminating and comprehensive discussion of the doctrine of the *conatus*, see Don Garrett's article "Spinoza's *conatus* Argument." I believe that the few suggestions I sketched in this footnote are mostly in agreement with his interpretation. Particularly, I believe Garrett is right in reading the '*in se*' clause in E3p6 in its technical sense.

¹⁷³ See, for example, Curley, "On Bennett's Interpretation", 48.

mutually irreducible categories of properties and things.¹⁷⁴ Although such a distinction is present in our colloquial talk, it was thoroughly undermined by the philosophers of the early modern period, and is further challenged in contemporary discussions of the metaphysics of properties.

We can begin with Descartes' claim that entities have different degrees of reality or thinghood, and that "real qualities or incomplete substances" (if there are any) are more real than modes and less real than complete substances.

I have also made it quite clear how reality admits of more and less. A substance is more of a thing than a mode; if there are real qualities or incomplete substances, they are things to a greater extent than modes, but to a lesser extent than complete substances; and, finally, if there is an infinite and independent substance, it is more of a thing than a finite and dependent substance. All this is completely self-evident." (Third Set of Replies (AT VII 185 | CSM II 130)).

Descartes does not say this explicitly, but the logic of his text seems to commit him to the claim that the more complete a substance becomes, the more real it is and the more it is a thing [res]. Hence, the distinction between qualities and things seems to be one of degree and not an unbridgeable dichotomy. Similarly, Arnauld and Nicole's talk about "substantial modes"¹⁷⁵ clearly rejects any clear-cut distinction between substances and modes (a distinction which should have barred one kind of things from functioning as the other). The most famous early modern attack on the distinction between things and qualities was launched by Hume's critique of the notion of substance. According to Hume, substances are nothing but bundles of qualities, and any theory that assumes a bare particular underlying these qualities is just playing with unwarranted fiction.¹⁷⁶ Finally, certain texts of Descartes¹⁷⁷ and of Leibniz¹⁷⁸ seem to suggest

¹⁷⁴ If things like Mt. Rushmore are reducible to certain properties, then there should not be any problem in saying that Mt. Rushmore is a property.

¹⁷⁵ See § 1.6 above.

¹⁷⁶ "We have therefore no idea of substance, distinct from that of a collection of particular qualities, nor have we any other meaning when we either talk or reason concerning it" (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part I, Section VI). Cf. Book I, Part IV, Section VI.

¹⁷⁷ See Descartes' *Conversation with Burman*, §22: "It is true that the attributes are the same as the substance, but this is when they are taken together, not when they are taken individually, one by one". In the very same conversation, however, Descartes seems to make the opposite claim, i.e., that "in addition to the attribute which specifies the

that at least at some period of their philosophical development, each of the two considered substances to be identical with the totality of their essential properties.

In the twentieth century the view of things as bundles of qualities was argued by several notable scholars.¹⁷⁹ In his *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, Russell argued that “what is commonly called a ‘thing’ is nothing but a bundle of coexisting qualities such as redness, hardness, etc.”¹⁸⁰ Among contemporary trope theories,¹⁸¹ the bolder (and arguably, more interesting¹⁸²) cluster of theories takes both universals and individuals to be constructs of tropes.¹⁸³ Universals are bundles of tropes which *exactly resemble* each other; individuals are bundles of *compresent* (or

substance, one must think of the substance itself which is the substrate of that attribute” (§ 25). In his editorial comments, John Cottingham makes, I think, a good case for the view that “Descartes did not subscribe to the real existence, behind observable qualities, of a ‘naked and hidden substance’ “ and that, for Descartes, “when you have created all the attributes of a thing you have *eo ipso* created the substance.” See pp. 78-9.

¹⁷⁸ According to some interpreters, Leibniz’s doctrine of the “predicate in concept” (see §8 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686)) makes substances to be just “the totality of their predicates” (see Ian Hacking, “Individual Substance”, 138. Cf. Bigelow’s view of Leibnizian Monads as “unshareable conjunctions of severally-shareable properties” (“Particulars”, § 3)), though, of course, not every aggregation of predicates constitutes a substance. This line of thought was adopted by Leibniz’s eighteenth century successors, Wolff and Baumgarten.

¹⁷⁹ Of course, many modern philosophers defended the view that things and properties do belong to distinct types. See, for example, Frege’s distinction between “unsaturated functions” (or concepts) and “saturated arguments” (or objects). See Frege, “Function and Concept”. Similarly, Berkeley and perhaps Locke (if indeed he considered substance as a bare substratum) seem to take things and properties as belonging to distinct types.

¹⁸⁰ Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, p. 97.

¹⁸¹ The term ‘trope’ was coined by D.C. Williams (see his “On the Element of Being: I”, p. 115). Other terms used to designate these entities are ‘moments’, ‘abstract particulars’, ‘particular properties’, and ‘particular qualities’.

¹⁸² The main motivation for trope theories (at least in contemporary discussions) is ontological parsimony. Hence, theories which reduce both individuals and universals to tropes (perhaps, together with the two universals of compresence and precise resemblance), have the significant advantage of being most parsimonious (assuming that this reduction turn us out to be successful). For a similar argument against theories which assume as primitive *both* universals and tropes, see Armstrong, “Properties”, 168.

¹⁸³ See D.C. Williams, “The Elements of Being: I”. Cf. Bacon, “Tropes”. Keith Campbell (“The Metaphysic of Abstract Particulars”) endorses Williams’s claim that individuals are bundles of tropes, though he is less optimistic about trope theory account for the problem of universals (p. 133-5).

concurrent) tropes.¹⁸⁴ Hence, to predicate a property ϕ of an individual a is nothing but saying that ϕ is part of the compresent cluster of tropes a .¹⁸⁵

If individuals are bundles of qualities (either particular or universal properties), the alleged clear-cut distinction between things (individuals) and properties is thoroughly undermined.¹⁸⁶ Clearly, Spinoza would reject many of the views we have just surveyed.¹⁸⁷ Particularly, Spinoza would strongly reject the suggestion that the *indivisible* substance (qua thing) is a bundle of properties.¹⁸⁸ But this is beside the point. I did not point out these theories in order to show their “support” of Spinoza’s views, but rather in order to argue that a view which takes things - like Mt. Rushmore - as properties is far from being a category mistake. If Curley wishes to substantiate his claims, he would have to, first, provide a detailed defense of the view

¹⁸⁴ In many trope theories the relations of ‘exact resemblance’ and ‘compresence’ are defined in a second-order language (though Williams (“On the Elements of Being: I”, p. 120) rejects this suggestion).

¹⁸⁵ Williams, “The Elements of Being: I”, 113, 117-9.

¹⁸⁶ Mellor and Oliver suggest that trope theories “accept that particulars and universals differ in kind” (p. 17). As far as I can see, this does not seem to be the case, at least not with regard to trope theories which take tropes to be *parts* of the individual they constitute. Indeed, D.C. Williams is quite explicit on this issue: “What a difference of logical ‘type’ amounts to, particularly in the philosophy of tropes, is far from clear, but everybody agrees that a sum is of the same type with its terms, as whole is of the same type with its parts, a man of the same type with his arms and legs” (“Elements of Being: I”, p. 117). A few lines down, Williams argues that tropes relate to individuals as parts to a whole (pp. 117-8), though he leaves open the question whether the relation of tropes to universals is a part-whole relation or that of member to its set. The general tone of William’s claims is quite critical of logical types theories. See particularly his criticism of the view which holds that “if y can be ‘predicated’ of x , or ‘inheres in’ or ‘characterizes’ x , or if x is an instance’ of y , then x and y must be sundered by a unique logical and ontological abyss” (p. 119). In Campbell’s theory the issue is somewhat less clear. Campbell sometimes seems to take the distinction between ‘abstract’ and ‘concrete’ entities to be clear-cut, though he still maintains that concrete particulars (individuals) are just sums of abstract particulars (tropes) (see p. 128).

¹⁸⁷ And it is also the case that for Spinoza ordinary objects (e.g., chairs, gorillas, kings of France) are *each* a property of God (and not each a *bundle* of properties), but this dissimilarity with contemporary bundle theorists does not undermine my main point, i.e., that there is no category mistake involved in conceiving things as properties.

¹⁸⁸ Campbell points out the “long-standing and deeply ingrained prejudice” according to which individual things are “the minimal beings capable of independent existence” (p. 127). Obviously, Spinoza shares this “prejudice” against the self-subsistence of tropes (since modes depend on the substance). Another possible conflict between Spinoza’s view and trope theory is the issue of the possibility of perfectly similar tropes, which Spinoza, following his endorsement of the Identity of Indiscernibles (E1p4) would be pressed to reject.

that things and properties belong to two irreducible categories, or types, and, second, show that Spinoza accepts this clear-cut distinction between things and properties. As far as I can see, there are clear indications that Spinoza rejected this distinction.

One important element which Spinoza did have in common with the theories we have just surveyed is the rejection of bare particulars. If particular things are not reducible to their qualities, then (insofar as the non-reducible residue is quality free) we seem to be committed to the existence of the notorious, bare substratum. An entity of that sort, whose essence and existence cannot be explained (insofar as it has no qualities) is intolerable for an unyielding rationalist like Spinoza.¹⁸⁹ Indeed when Spinoza encounters Aristotelian prime matter - the oldest member of the bare particulars clan - he has nothing but ridicule to offer. For him, “extended thing without extension”, just like “thinking thing without any thought” (i.e., will) are simply contradictions in terms.¹⁹⁰

Before we approach the summary of our discussion of Curley’s interpretation, let me address briefly two other attitudes of scholars who attempted to defend the traditional view of modes. Charles Jarrett and John Carriero suggested (independently) that Spinozistic modes are particular qualities (or tropes) which inhere in the substance.¹⁹¹ I agree with them that Spinozistic modes are properties of the substance, and it is also clear that Spinoza does not

¹⁸⁹ For this point, I am indebted to several discussions with Michael Della Rocca and particularly to his explication of Spinozistic rationalism.

¹⁹⁰ See CM II, xii | I/280/18-32. For a similar twentieth century criticism of bare particulars see Sellars’ claim (*Science, Perception, and Reality*, 282-3) that proponents of the bare particulars endorse the contradictory view that the things which possess attributes have in fact no attributes.

¹⁹¹ See Jarrett, “Substance and Mode”, p. 86, and Carriero, “Mode and Substance in Spinoza”, pp. 256-9. As I mentioned above Jarrett and Carriero have also argued (again, independently from each other) that Curley wrongly assimilates inherence with predication, and that, if I understand them correctly, modes inhere in the substance but are not predicated of the substance. Presumably, they distinguish ‘being predicated of x’ and ‘being a property of x’ (perhaps they consider only universals to be predicated of things). Yet, it appears to me that given Spinoza’s explicit use of *predicere* in E3p55c2d, we cannot ascribe to Spinoza such a distinction.

Bennett had originally rejected the very concept of particular qualities as “non-sense” as well as the attribution of this doctrine to Spinoza (*A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, p. 94). Recently, he seemed to change his views and escort both (*Learning from Six Philosophers*, I 145).

believe in the reality of universals. For Spinoza, universals are mere mental abstractions, which compensate the limited capacities of our imagination by allowing it to represent a large number of things through one vague representation (E2p40s1).¹⁹² If modes are properties and are not universals, it would seem obvious that they are particular properties. Yet, the issue is somewhat more complicated. I have earlier noted that Spinoza cannot accept most modern trope theories, since he will clearly deny that the substance is a bundle of modes or tropes. But even if we consider the view of particular accidents as it was articulated by the Scholastics (and suggested by Jarrett and Carriero as an explanation of Spinozistic modes),¹⁹³ there are still issues that need to be addressed. Since for Spinoza there is only one ultimate subject of predication (i.e., God), one may wonder whether the distinction between particular and universal properties has any place in such a theory. The distinction between universals and particular properties is commonly viewed as a distinction between repeatable and unrepeatable properties. Obviously, a Spinozistic mode does not repeat itself in two substances because there are no two substances,¹⁹⁴ but perhaps it would have been repeatable had there been more than two substances.¹⁹⁵

One way to approach this problem is to consider whether for Spinoza modes of modes are repeatable, i.e., whether two modes of God, can share the same mode of a mode. Although I tend to believe that for Spinoza two bodies cannot have the very same affection, I am not aware of any explicit text that rules out this possibility.¹⁹⁶ Another way to resolve the issue is by

¹⁹² Cf. Ep. 2 (IV/9/12-15), Ep. 19 (IV/91-92), CMI, i (I/235/14-15), CMII, vii (I/263/8), TdIE 99 (I/36/18).

¹⁹³ Whether Aristotelian non-substantial particulars are tropes is a subject of a major scholarly dispute. For three different opinions, see Ackrill (*Categories and De Interpretatione*), Owen ("Inherence"), and Frede (*Essays*).

¹⁹⁴ Similarly, one cannot say that the same mode of God repeats itself in two temporal locations, since in such a case the two alleged mode-instances will be distinguished only by their temporal indexicals, while Spinoza denies that time, duration (and number) belong to the essence of anything (E1p8s2 and E3p4d), and holds that things can be distinguished from each other only by their essences (E1p5).

¹⁹⁵ In such a case, a mode would seem to be a universal, yet Spinoza's critique of universals would not apply to it insofar as it is not an abstraction which aids our limited memory.

¹⁹⁶ E3p57s seems to be a crucial passage in this context, but it is quite ambivalent. On the one hand Spinoza talks here about affections belonging to certain kinds of things, such as 'human lust' and 'equine lust' (presumably allowing the same lust to repeat itself within the domain of the same genus), but on the other hand he claims that "the gladness of one [individual] differs from the gladness of the other as much the essence of the one differs from the essence of the

looking more carefully at the alleged possibility of two substances A and B, sharing a mode *m*. Let's assume now that there's a change in mode *m*. The cause of the change can come from either one of the two substances. However, if A is the cause of the change in *m*, it would seem that substance A caused a change in substance B (since *m* is also a mode of B), whereas Spinoza strictly rejects any causal interaction between substances (E 1p6d). We therefore conclude that a mode cannot be shared by two substances, and, thus, is an irrepeatable property.

Yet, before we endorse the conclusion that modes are tropes, we should clarify our understanding of the concept of 'trope' in relation to the things vs. properties distinction. If tropes are taken to be on the side of properties in a clear-cut distinction between the categories of things and properties, then it will seem that we cannot aptly describe Spinozistic modes as tropes. All the evidence that we have show that Spinoza takes modes to be *both* things and properties, i.e., that he is consciously undermining the distinction between things and properties. But, if one takes tropes to be entities which bridge over, or even undermine, the distinction between things and properties (and that's how I think D.C. Williams considered them¹⁹⁷), then modes can be identified with tropes.

We can conclude that modes may be identified with tropes, depending on our understanding of the nature of tropes.

Another interesting attitude which tried to defend the view of modes as predicated of the substance is Bennett's *field-metaphysic*. Bennett attempts to explain how bodies can be reasonably considered as predicated of the substance by suggesting that extended modes are continuous strings of place-times. Just as the motion of a storm is nothing but a (continuous) temporally spread string of (spatially continuous) regions of space having certain property, so are

other", a claims which seems to make each affection particularized to its individual. I tend to see Spinoza's talk about 'equine lust' as merely loose (or perhaps he takes 'equine lust' as a mere abstraction from the variety of lusts we have encountered in horses), but I would be somewhat hesitant to rely merely on this text in order to resolve the issue of whether modes of modes are repeatable. If I am not mistaken, part of the problem here lies in the fact that Spinoza does not clearly distinguish between modes of the body which are the bodies *propria* (these should be unrepeatable), and modes of the body of which the body is only a partial cause. In the latter case, one can read the first axiom of the short physical discussion in part 2 (II/99), as allowing modes of modes (which are not *propria*) to be in more than one subject.

¹⁹⁷ See footnote 183 above.

Napoleon and Mt. Rushmore nothing but temporally-spread strings of regions of space having certain properties.¹⁹⁸ Now, I think that something like that should be true of the way Spinoza considered extended modes to be properties of the substance.¹⁹⁹ I also agree with Bennett's recent claim that his field-metaphysic interpretation is consistent with the view of modes as particular properties.²⁰⁰ However, Bennett's field-metaphysic provides an explanation as to how modes can be considered as properties of the substance only with regard to one out of infinitely many attributes, i.e., Extension. A far more general explanation of the issue is needed, and I hope that in the work we have done so far, we have made a significant progress in providing it.²⁰¹

Let me pause here for tentative summary of my arguments so far. Following a close examination of several texts, we have concluded that the textual evidence shows that Spinoza considers particular things, such as Mt. Rushmore and Napoleon, as modes inhering in God, and that Spinoza is a pantheist. We have discussed Bayle's three objections to Spinoza's view of particular things as modes of God, and I have suggested that these arguments rely on certain misunderstandings of Spinoza and on the attribution to Spinoza of traditional views regarding evil and divine immutability, which Spinoza in fact rejected. I have also argued that Spinoza

¹⁹⁸ See Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 89-90 and *Learning from Six Philosophers*, I 142-4.

¹⁹⁹ I do not agree with Bennett's identification of the extended substance with space. Space, insofar as it has regions, is divisible. The account of the indivisibility of space which Bennett develops (*Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 85-8) seems to me much weaker than Spinoza's actual view as to the indivisibility of substance (the issue of indivisibility will be discussed in Chapter 2 below. For a similar criticism of Bennett, see Schmaltz, "Spinoza on Vacuum"). As far as I can see, Extension has neither actual nor potential parts, whereas regions of space seem to be potential parts of space. If I understand Spinoza correctly, space is just an infinite mode (either immediate or not) of Extension. Hence, though I agree with the basic idea of explaining extended modes through the field-metaphysic, I think it should be applied merely to the infinite mode of Extension, while keeping the attribute of extension completely indivisible. Under this account, regions of space (like, bodies) are just parts of a property, i.e., parts of an infinite mode of Extension. More on this issue, in the second chapter.

²⁰⁰ See Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers*, I 145.

²⁰¹ Another point where I somewhat disagree with Bennett is in his view of 'Spinozistic 'modes' as belonging to the property side of the line between things and properties" (*A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 92). As I have already mentioned I do not see any reason to believe that Spinoza marked any clear line between things and properties, and he certainly never hesitated to relate to modes as 'things'.

considered modes - such as Mt. Rushmore - not only to inhere in God but also to be a property of God. Specifically, I suggested that for Spinoza, Mt. Rushmore and all other finite modes are God's *propria*. Finally, I have claimed that Spinoza's view of Mt. Rushmore as inhering in, and being a property of, God does not commit any category mistake. It is certainly a bold and interesting view, but it is far from being nonsense. Even if Spinoza's metaphysics is wild, it is, I believe, far more interesting and instructive to observe the beast rather than domesticate it.

The historical and philosophical import of Curley's bold interpretation of the substance-mode relation in Spinoza could hardly be overestimated. It was not only crucial insofar as it made Spinoza a respectable philosopher within the community of analytic philosophy, and set clear demands for clarity and precision, but most importantly, it was powerful enough to make people think - rather than recite - Spinoza. As one can see from my arguments, I have some significant disagreements with his interpretation. Yet, as basic fairness demands acknowledgement of one's debts, it would not be inappropriate to say - using a phrase which was originally said of the great Russian writer, Gogol - that "we all came out of his overcoat".

CHAPTER TWO: THE METAPHYSICS OF SUBSTANCE II: IMMANENT CAUSE, ACOSMISM AND THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ‘MODES OF GOD’ AND ‘MODES OF AN ATTRIBUTE’

2.1 *Causa immanens*

2.2 The Acosmist Reading of Spinoza, and Why it is Wrong

2.3 Modes of God vs. Modes of the Attributes

2.1 *Causa immanens*

In addition to the “wrong logical type” argument and the three arguments cited from Bayle, Curley suggests that to view particular things as God’s properties would result in a certain odd conclusion given Spinoza’s view of God as the cause of all things (E1p16c1). If a mode is a property of God and God is the cause of all modes, then God turns out to be the cause of his own properties. Yet, asks Curley,

[H]ow can a subject cause itself to have the properties it has? how can the relation of inherence which a property has to its subject be anything like the relation an effect has to its cause? ²⁰²

Now, one can say that there is not much of a mystery in a subject’s ability to cause itself to have the properties it has. I can press my nose, and hence, cause a change in one of my properties.²⁰³ Yet, if I understand Curley’s point correctly, the issue is not the possibility of some *coincidental* overlap between the two relations, but rather what appears to be a *systematic* overlap of the substance-mode relation and (a certain type of) causality in Spinoza. Of course, one can claim that God is *both* the subject of inherence of all modes and the cause of all modes, and yet that

²⁰² *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 36.

²⁰³ In “On Bennett’s Interpretation” Curley presents the same question in a slightly different manner. “[I]f a substance is by definition, something causally self-sufficient, and a mode is, by definition, something causally dependent on something else, ultimately on the substance, we need some explanation of just how it is that a substance is a cause of its mode... One thing every interpreter of Spinoza agrees on is that Spinoza connects the causal relation with the relation of logical consequence, and it is not easy to see how the properties of a thing could be thought to follow from the thing itself, conceived simply as a subject of predication (p. 48).” This stronger version of the question (“how the properties of a thing could be thought to follow from the thing itself, conceived simply as a subject of predication”) would be difficult to answer were Spinoza’s substance a formless, bare, substratum. However, as I will argue below, Spinoza’s substance cannot be detached from its attributes insofar as this will make the substance unintelligible.

the two roles are completely separate.²⁰⁴ Though such a coincidence may seem atypical for a strict rationalist like Spinoza (insofar as this alleged coincidence must be explained), it should not be rejected outright.

Don Garrett makes a sensible suggestion in claiming that “what Spinoza calls ‘immanent causation’ implies inherence, but what he called ‘transient causation’ does not”.²⁰⁵ Thus, according to Garrett, the answer to Curley’s question is rather simple. *Causa immanens* is a notion which unifies inherence and causation. Garrett’s view is supported by the *Ethics*’ distinction between immanent and transitive [*transiens*] cause.²⁰⁶

E1P18: God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things.

Dem.: Everything that is, is in God, and must be conceived through God (by P15), and so (by P16C1) God is the cause of [NS: all] things, which are in him. That is the first [thing to be proven].

And then outside God there can be no substance (by P14), i.e. (by D3), thing which is in itself outside God. That was the second. God, therefore, is the immanent, not the transitive cause of all things. q.e.d.

“The first thing to be proven” - i.e., that God is the immanent cause of all things - relies on two previous claims: that all things are (i.e., inhere) in God (E1p15), and that God is the efficient cause of all things (E1p16c1). Hence, *causa immanens* seems to be the merging of *inherence* and *efficient causation*.²⁰⁷ Similarly, in the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza presents an eight-fold taxonomy of the

²⁰⁴ See Carriero, “Mode and Substance”, 260.

²⁰⁵ Don Garrett, “Spinoza’s *Conatus* argument”, p. 157 n. 31.

²⁰⁶ The Latin ‘*causa transiens*’ is rendered by Curley as ‘transitive cause’. Garrett differs slightly in translating it as ‘transient cause’.

²⁰⁷ Similarly, at the end of Letter 12 we find Spinoza talking about things which are infinite “by the force of the cause in which they inhere” (IV/61/2-3), making the same assimilation of inherence and causation.

kinds of efficient causes that was common in his days.²⁰⁸ One of these is the distinction between immanent and transitive causes.²⁰⁹ Hence, there seems to be little doubt that *causa immanens* is just a species of efficient causation. Here, however, we reach a certain perplexity. As John Carriero has pointed out, the inherence of modes (or accidents) in their subject was traditionally allied with *material* causation.²¹⁰ Suarez, for example, suggests that “God supplies the dependence of an accident on a subject, even though [the dependence of an accident on a subject] is in the genus of material cause”.²¹¹ Indeed, some of Spinoza’s readers in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ascribed to him the notoriously heretical view of God as the material cause of the world precisely because Spinoza’s God is the subject of inherence of all things. Bayle writes that

[A]ccording to Spinoza, creatures are in God either as an effect in its material cause, or [ou] as an accident in its subject of inhesion, or [ou] as the form of a candle stick is in the pewter of which it is composed.²¹²

²⁰⁸ KV, I, iii [I/35/20]. The distinction appears in Burgersdijck’s popular manual, *Institutionum Logicarum*. See Wolf, *Spinoza’s Short Treatise*, pp. 190-3 (I am indebted to Tammy Nyden-Bullock for pointing this out to me). The Port-Royal Logic (III, 18) presents a taxonomy of efficient causes which partly overlaps with that of Burgersdijck’s, though unlike the latter, it does not include the distinction between transitive and immanent causes. According to Robert Wisnovsky’s persuasive article (“Avicenna’s Distinction between Immanent and Transcendent Causes”), the distinction between immanent and transcendent efficient causes appears already in Aristotle’s *Generation of Animals* (724a31-35) and variations of this distinction (though not always as a distinction *internal* to the category of efficient causation) were widely discussed among the Neo-Platonic commentators. This should lead us to a wider review of the history of the distinction, and particularly to a study of Burgersdijck’s sources.

²⁰⁹ KV I, iii (I/35/20).

²¹⁰ Carriero, “Mode and Substance in Spinoza”, pp. 254 and 260.

²¹¹ Suarez, *On the Formal Cause of Substance - Metaphysical Disputation XV*, p. 119. For a discussion of a similar view in Thomas, see Carriero (“Mode and substance”, p. 254 n. 18 and p. 260) and John F. Wippel (“[Aquinas] Metaphysics”, p. 109).

²¹² Bayle, *Dictionary* 336 (Remark DD) | *Dictionnaire*, V 225. Note that the connective ‘or’ [ou] in this passage does distinguish exclusive alternative, but different ways of making the same point. In Remark A to the Spinoza entry, Bayle argues that Spinoza’s view of God as the subject of inherence of all things is not new, and traces it back to several philosophers who considered God ‘the matter’ of all things. Among these philosophers Bayle mentions, Alexander the Epicurean, Theophrastus’ disciple, Strato, and David of Dinant. Giordano Bruno’s absence from this glorious list of heretics is salient. (Remark A is not translated in Popkin’s selection).

Similarly, the less known but not less fascinating philosopher, Salomon Maimon (1753-1800) suggested that Spinoza, like the Kabbalists, made God the material cause of all things insofar as Spinoza considered God as “the ultimate subject ... of all things.”²¹³ Interestingly, we can find *some* traces of this view in Spinoza. In the early *Short Treatise* Spinoza suggests that modes relate to their attributes as their genera.²¹⁴ Now, for Aristotle, “the genus is the matter of that which it is called the genus” (Met. 1058a22-3),²¹⁵ and the same view seems to be widely held in the early modern period.²¹⁶ Yet, Spinoza *never* claims that the substance (or the attributes) is the material cause (or the matter) of the modes. In fact, Spinoza never explicitly uses the terminology of material cause [*causa materialis*].²¹⁷

In assimilating inherence with *efficient* causation - through the notion of the immanent cause - Spinoza seems to be breaking with the Aristotelian tradition. The Aristotelians

²¹³ Maimon, *Lebensgeschichte*, 84 | *Autobiography*, 105. Maimon himself endorsed the view of God as the material cause of the world in his early Kabbalistic manuscripts, as well as in his commentary on Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed*. See my article, “Salomon Maimon and the Rise of Spinozism in German Idealism”, pp. 79-88. In 1676, Leibniz also mentions the view of “those who believed that God himself is the matter of all things” (A VI, iii, 392, translated and quoted in Adams, *Leibniz*, 124). Whether Leibniz had Spinoza in mind, or other philosophers (perhaps the stoics), is hard to tell. Among modern scholars, Charles Jarrett comes very close to the view of Spinoza’s God as a material cause. Jarrett claims that “there is no doubt, then, that Spinoza’s unique substance is matter.” Jarrett speculates that perhaps “thoughts are composed of mental stuff, or energy, in the same way that physical objects are composed of matter” (“Substance and Mode”, 102).

²¹⁴ In the context of his discussion of definitions Spinoza distinguishes between the definition of attributes and the definition “of those things which do not exist through themselves, but only through the attributes of which they are modes, and through which, *as their genus*, they must be understood” (K V I, vii | I/47/4-6. Italics mine).

²¹⁵ Similarly, see Porphyry’s *Isagoge* 15/7: “[t]he genus is like matter, but the difference like form”. Cf. Ibid, 11/15-17.

²¹⁶ See Goclenius, *Lexicon Philosophicum*, 669 (“Analogice Materia est Genus Logicum”). Similarly, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant notes, “The logicians formerly called the universal the matter, but the specific difference the form” (A266/B322).

²¹⁷ In the *Cogitata Metaphysica* (II, vii), Spinoza contrasts a builder who “is forced to seek suitable material outside himself” with God who “sought no matter outside himself” since “both the essence and the existence of things have been made from his intellect *or will*” (I/262/13-5). The last claim can be read as making God’s intellect or will the matter from which the world was created. Arnauld and Nicole’s contemporary definition of ‘material cause’ takes it to be “that *out of which* things are formed” (*Logic or the Art of Thinking*, III, 18). This seems to be Spinoza’s closest approximation to the view of God as the material cause of the world.

considered the efficient and final causes as *external* causes, while the material and formal causes were *internal* causes.²¹⁸ In contrast, Spinoza claims: “I take it that an efficient cause can be internal as well as external”.²¹⁹ Spinoza’s reasons for this extension of the notion of efficient causality are not quite clear. One may think that this extension was motivated by the need to make God the efficient cause of the modes (which are *internal* to God). Yet, as Carriero pointed out, Aquinas and other medieval Aristotelians considered substance to be “sufficiently external to its accidents to support the intelligibility of [the substance’s] efficiently causing an accident.”²²⁰ Spinoza might have rejected such a weak criterion of externality, and as a result had to allow efficient causality to be internal.

One may also wonder why Spinoza avoided the notion of material causality which was traditionally associated with inherence. I suspect that for Spinoza the material causality terminology was too closely related to the Aristotelian notion of prime matter, a notion which Spinoza despised and ridiculed as a fictional and self-contradictory “extended thing without extension” (CM II, xii | I/280/19&32. Cf. CM II, x | I/270/13).²²¹ Had Spinoza claimed that God is the material cause of the world, one could understand this claim as making God a bare and formless substratum (like prime matter). This would have been a deep misunderstanding of Spinoza’s views. Indeed, as we shall see in the next section, such an interpretation of Spinoza’s God as free from any determination was widely accepted among the German Idealists. But before we proceed to the clarification of this “error”, let us summarize what we have learned in this section.

²¹⁸ See, for example, Suarez, *On Efficient Causality - Metaphysical Disputation 17*, 3.

²¹⁹ Ep. 60 (Shirley, p. 290).

²²⁰ See Carriero, “Mode and Substance”, p. 259-60.

²²¹ Alternatively, one may suggest that were Spinoza to claim that God is the material cause of the world he would make God deprived of any activity since matter was traditionally conceived as passive. Yet, when we look carefully at sixteenth century discussions of matter, we find that more and more activity ascribed to it. This is so not only in the works of a heretic like Bruno (who makes matter divine and the generator of forms), but even in mainstream works, such as Suarez’s. For Bruno’s discussion of matter, see the fourth dialogue of *Cause, Principle and Unity*. For Suarez on matter’s power of causing and influence, see *On the Formal Cause of Substance*, pp. 54-5.

Spinoza's notion of immanent cause falls under the genus of efficient causality, and assimilates the latter with inherence. It is important to note that efficient causality does not have to be accompanied by inherence, as Spinoza recognizes a different kind of efficient causality - transitive cause - where the effect is *not* in the cause (or at least not fully in the cause²²²). Hence, efficient causality is not necessarily linked with inherence. Let us now consider the converse. Does inherence imply efficient causation? It depends on the nature of the properties which inhere in the subject. We have seen that according to E1p16 modes are *propria* which follow from God's essence. In E1p16c1 Spinoza derives from this that God is the efficient cause of the modes. It would seem therefore that for Spinoza the relation of "*x* follows from *y*" entails efficient causation between *x* and *y*.²²³ We may conclude that for any thing *x*, *x*'s *propria* are efficiently caused by *x*'s essence. Yet, apart from God, all things have properties which do not follow only from their essence (but rather from external causes). The latter properties, though they inhere in their subject,²²⁴ are only partially caused by their subject's essence.²²⁵ Hence, it seems that inherence entails at least partial efficient causation.²²⁶

Returning now to Curley's original question we can summarize by suggesting that the relation of inherence overlaps with the relation an effect has to its cause in the case of immanent causation. Indeed, God must be an immanent, and not transitive, cause, "since he does everything in himself, and not outside himself because outside him there is nothing." ²²⁷

²²² In the *Short Treatise* Spinoza seems to take the immanent vs. transient cause distinction to be a matter of degree (see KV, II, xxvi [I/111/29-30]: "... they are nearest to internal effects.").

²²³ This also indicates that for Spinoza efficient causation can be simultaneous, i.e., cause and effect do not have to differ in time.

²²⁴ Do these properties inhere *fully*, or only *partially*, in their subject? If the latter, does this mean that externally caused properties inhere partly in their subject, and partly in their external cause? I have not come yet to a firm conclusion with regard to these issues.

²²⁵ See E3d2 where Spinoza states that even when we are acted on, our nature is still a partial cause.

²²⁶ In other words, inherence appears to be sub-species of efficient causation. This tentative conclusion, however, generates further problems. If a thing's essence is always at least a partial cause of its states, then any act of self-annihilation (like suicide), will be partially caused by the essence of the thing. This seems to contradict Spinoza's claim E3p4d that the essence of a thing can never contribute to its annihilation.

²²⁷ KV I, iii [I/35/20].

2.2 *The Acosmist Reading of Spinoza, and Why it is Wrong*

2.2.1 *Benedict of Elea*. - Already a short time after Spinoza's death, several writers suggested that Spinoza's philosophy was a revival of ancient Eleatic monism which rejects the reality of change and diversification. Bayle makes this association quite explicitly in several passages of his dictionary,²²⁸ while Leibniz argues (against Malebranche) that to consider all things as "some evanescent or flowing modifications and phantasms, so to speak, of the one permanent divine substance" is to endorse "that doctrine of most evil repute, which a writer who was subtle indeed but irreligious, in recent years imposed upon the world, or at least *revived*".²²⁹ There is little doubt that the "subtle but irreligious writer" at stake is Spinoza, and it is quite plausible that the revived doctrines are those of the Eleatics.

Almost a century later, with the emergence of German Idealism, the identification of Spinoza with Eleatic monism became the standard view.²³⁰ Hegel, for example, announces,

Parmenides has to reckon with illusion and opinion, the opposites of being and truth; Spinoza likewise, with attributes, modes, extension, movement, understanding, will, and so on.²³¹

²²⁸ See the entries 'Xenophanes' and 'Zeno of Elea' (remark K). Spinoza's own claim in Letter 73 that he sides "with all the ancient philosophers [*cum omnibus antiquis Philosophis*]" in asserting that all things are in God might tempt the reader to think that Spinoza himself associated his views with the Eleatics. However, Spinoza's discussion of Zeno's argument against the reality of motion is highly critical (DPP IIP6s | I/192-6) and clearly defends the reality of movement and change.

²²⁹ Italics mine. "On Nature itself, or On the Inherent Force and Actions of Created Things" (1698) (Gerhardt IV, 508 | Loemker, 502). Cf. Adams, *Leibniz*, 132.

²³⁰ See for example Maimon's *Streifereien*, 40-1 (*Gesammelte Werke* IV 62-3): "Spinoza behauptet nach dem Parmenides 'nur das Reelle, vom Verstande begriffene existirt, was mit dem Reellen in einem endlichen Wesen verknüpft ist, ist bloß die Einschränkung des Reellen, eine Negation, der keine Existenz beigelegt werden kann' ". Similarly, Schopenhauer repeatedly claims that "Spinoza was a mere reviver of the Eleatics" (*Parerga and Paralipomena*, vol. 1, 71, 76-77). An interesting work in this context is *Natur und Gott nach Spinoza* by Karl Heinrich Heydenreich (1789. Reprinted in the *Aetas Kantiana* series (Num. 98), Brussels 1973). The book discusses at length Spinoza's philosophy and its contemporary interpretation in a form of a dialogue between Parmenides and Xenophanes. I am unaware of any major discussion of Spinoza in this period (roughly 1790 to 1840) which fails to make this association.

²³¹ Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 98. Cf. 84.

Taken as a whole this constitutes the Idea of Spinoza, and it just what was 'to *on*' to the Eleatics.... Spinoza is far from having proved this unity as convincingly as was done by the ancients; but what constitutes the grandeur of Spinoza's manner of thought is that he is able to renounce all that is determinate and particular, and restrict himself to the One, giving heed to this alone. ²³²

A crucial impetus to the propagation of this view was the new understanding of Spinoza as a radical religious thinker, whose position was the complete opposite of atheism. According to this understanding - first suggested by Salomon Maimon in 1792 - Spinoza does not deny the reality of God, but rather the reality of the world ('cosmos') of finite things and diversification.²³³

In Spinoza's system the unity is real while the diversity is merely ideal. In the atheistic system it is just the other way around. *The diversity is real* and grounded in the very nature of things, while the unity, which one observes in the order and regularity of nature, is consequently only coincidental; through this unity we determine our arbitrary system for the sake of our knowledge.

It is inconceivable how one could turn the Spinozistic system into atheism since these two systems are the exact opposites of each other [My emphases]. Atheism denies the existence of *God*, Spinozism denies the existence of the *world*. Rather, Spinozism should be called 'acosmism'.²³⁴

Interestingly, Maimon contrasts Spinoza's position not only with atheism but also with Leibniz's view. The latter is taken to be a mere compromise between Spinozism and atheism, a

²³² Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3 pp. 257-8, cf. the same lectures, vol. 1 p. 244, and Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol.1, 376.

²³³ Maimon himself endorsed the very same view (i.e., 'acosmism') in his early Hebrew manuscript, written (mostly) in 1778 before his migration to Germany and his first encounter with Spinoza's writings: "It is impossible to conceive any other existence but His, may he be blessed, no matter whether it is a substantial or an accidental existence. And this is the secret of the aforementioned unity [that God is the cause of world in all four respects: formally, materially, efficiently and finally], namely, *that only God, may he be blessed, exists, and that nothing but him has any existence at all*". (*Hesbeq Shelomo* (Hebrew: Solomon's Desire), 139. My emphasis) Cf. my article, "Salomon Maimon and the Rise of Spinozism in German Idealism", 79-80.

²³⁴ "Es ist unbegreiflich, wie man das spinozistische System zum atheistischen machen konnte, da sie doch einander gerade entgegengesetzt sind. In diesem wird das Dasein *Gottes*, in jenem aber das Dasein der *Welt* geleugnet. Es müßte also eher das akosmische System heißen." (*Lebensgeschichte*, 217. This passage, like many other theoretical passages, is omitted in Murray's translation. The present translation is mine).

compromise which asserts the reality of both God and the diversified world.²³⁵ (Doubtless few Leibnizians would be happy to find themselves described as more atheistic than Spinoza). These claims of Maimon initiated a radical change in the perception of Spinoza and in the next four decades we find them echoed time and again.²³⁶ The person who throughout the eighteenth century was unquestionably taken as a damned atheist, became a “God intoxicated man”,²³⁷ in whose system there is “too much God [*zu viel Gott*]”.²³⁸ Hegel’s endorsement of the acosmist interpretation of Spinoza had an enormous and lasting impact on nineteenth and early twentieth century perceptions of Spinoza both on the continent and in England.²³⁹

In order to identify Spinoza with Eleatic monism it was necessary to disqualify any element of diversification in Spinoza’s text, and that is precisely what the German Idealists did.²⁴⁰ The plurality of attributes was taken to be merely subjective, related to the human

²³⁵ Maimon, *Lebensgeschichte*, 217.

²³⁶ “For Spinoza the absolute is substance, and no being is ascribed to the finite; his position is therefore monotheism and acosmism. So strictly is there only God, that there is no world at all; in this [position] the finite has no genuine actuality” (*Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1, 432). For similar claims by Hegel, see the same work, page 377, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, page 281, and *The Encyclopedia Logic*, pages 10, 97 and 226-7. For Hegel’s criticism of the “popular” view which asserts the reality of both God and the world of finite things, see *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 280-1: “Reason cannot remain satisfied with this “also”, with indifference like this” [*Die Vernunft kann bei solchem auch, solcher Gleichgültigkeit nicht stehenbleiben*]”.

²³⁷ *Novulis Schriften*, III 651.

²³⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 282.

²³⁹ Among the British Idealists there was a tendency to moderate *some* aspects of the acosmist reading (Joachim, for example, occasionally claims that modes are only “in part illusory” (*A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, 112), but the general outline of this interpretation was endorsed by both Caird and Joachim. For Caird’s and Joachim’s Hegelian readings of Spinoza, see Parkinson, “Spinoza and British Idealism.” The identification of Spinoza with Eleatic philosophy reaches its peak in Kojève’s discussion of the “acosmism of Parmenides-Spinoza” (*Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 106 (n. 3), 123-5). A surprising implicit endorsement of the acosmist reading of Spinoza is to be found in Robert Pippin’s work, *Hegel’s Idealism* (p. 4). Pippin justly criticizes a certain simplistic textbook view of Hegel as a radical monist, but in order to distance Hegel from Spinoza he adopts a similar textbook view of Spinoza.

²⁴⁰ In the following I will concentrate on Hegel’s discussion of Spinoza because it is the most elaborated as well as the most influential. However, there are very few divergences on this issue between Hegel and his German contemporaries.

intellect and having no true ground in reality.²⁴¹ Time, becoming and change were ruled out (partly because they were allegedly inconsistent with Spinoza's endorsement of *ex nihilo nihil fit*),²⁴² and finally - what is most relevant to our topic - Spinozistic modes were reckoned mere fictions. When we examine Hegel's reasons for viewing Spinozistic modes as illusory it seems that the main justification was the following.²⁴³ Hegel repeatedly stresses that for Spinoza modes have no *independent* existence or reality.²⁴⁴ Clearly this claim of Hegel is correct. According to Hegel, a crucial aspect of the modes' dependence on the substance is that in order for modes to

²⁴¹ See Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 269; *The Science of Logic*, 98 and 538.

²⁴² *The Science of Logic*, 84. On the "mere appearance" of time in Spinoza, see Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, 105-6. Cf. Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, 121.

²⁴³ Another text of Spinoza which can be read as supporting the acosmist interpretation is the following passage from the Letter on the Infinite (Letter 12. As far as I know, Hegel does not discuss this passage in spite of his clear interest in the letter and rather detailed discussion of other parts of it (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 261-3, *Faith and Knowledge*, 106-11, and *Encyclopedia Logic*, 166 (§104a2)). Caird points out this passage in support of his claim that there is a strong acosmist line in Spinoza (Caird, *Spinoza*, 163-4), which conflicts with an equally important line which takes modes to be true expressions of God's essence (*ibid.*, 174-5). I turn now to the relevant passage in Letter 12 (Note that Hegel and Caird use the pre-Gebhardt numeration of the letters, in which the same letter appears as the 29th):

"But if you ask why we are so inclined, by a natural impulse, to divide extended substance, I reply that we conceive quantity in two ways: *either abstractly, or superficially, as we have it in the imagination with the aid of the senses; or as substance, which is done by the intellect alone.* So if we attend to quantity as it is in the imagination, which is what we do most often and most easily, we find it to be divisible, finite, composed of parts, and one of many. But if we attend to it as it is in the intellect, and perceive the thing as it is in itself, which is very difficult, then we find it to be infinite, indivisible and unique, as [NS: if I am not mistaken] I have already demonstrated sufficiently to you before now". (IV/56/5-15 | C 202-3. Italics mine.)

Since the intellect conceives quantity only as substance, one might be tempted to take this passage to assert that modes can be conceived only by the imagination, and as such cannot be real. However, in two other passages in the same letter Spinoza states that modes can be conceived *either by the intellect* (when we consider the modes in relation to the substance) *or by the imagination* (when we detach the modes from the substance) (IV/53/9 and IV/57/3-6). Therefore it seems that the long passage just quoted should be read differently. Arguably, when Spinoza talks about the intellect's conception of quantity as substance, this conception *includes* the modes of the substance. Indeed earlier in this letter (54/10) Spinoza says that in a sense modes are defined by the very definition of substance.

²⁴⁴ See *Faith and Knowledge*, 106: "...things outside God are nothing in themselves", and *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 281: "Spinoza maintains that there is no such thing as what is known as the world; it is merely a form of God, and *in and for itself it is nothing.*" (Italics mine.)

be real their existence must have been *derived* from the substance (a claim which is equally innocuous). Yet, Hegel argues, Spinoza failed to derive (both the attributes and) the modes from substance. Spinoza simply *states* the existence of modes, without ever showing how they are derived from the substance.²⁴⁵ Following his explanation of Spinoza's definitions of substance, attribute and mode, Hegel remarks:

These last three moments [Substance, Attribute, Mode] Spinoza ought not merely to have established in this way as conceptions, *he ought to have deduced them*.²⁴⁶

And a few pages below he states:

Absolute substance, attribute and mode, Spinoza allows to follow one another as definitions, he adopts them ready-made, without the attributes being developed from the substance, or the modes from the attributes.²⁴⁷

As we have seen earlier, in E1p16d Spinoza takes modes to be God's *propria* which follow [*condundit*] necessarily from God's essence. This flow of modes from God's essence might not be the dialectical self-negating unfolding by which - Hegel claims - modes should have been derived as the opposite moments of substance.²⁴⁸ It seems, however, that Hegel's complaint about the lack of derivation of modes is unjustified, and that with it falls Hegel's main justification for viewing modes as unreal entities. Nevertheless, there is another crucial line in Spinoza (of which Hegel was not completely unaware²⁴⁹) - his weak and functional view of individuality - which might support the acosmist reading, and it is to this issue that we now turn.

²⁴⁵ For a similar point, see Joachim, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, 111-2.

²⁴⁶ *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 260 (Italics mine).

²⁴⁷ *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 269. Cf. page 273 in the same work where Hegel complains that in Spinoza individuality "is not deduced, it is found." Further texts in which Hegel makes similar complaints are *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 264, 273, 285 and 288; *Science of Logic*, 537-8.

²⁴⁸ Obviously, Spinoza would have no sympathy with Hegel's self-negating dialectic insofar as the latter strongly conflicts with the doctrine of the *conatus*. These opposing views of self-negating activity (an impossibility for Spinoza and an essential vehicle of thought for Hegel) might be the rock-bottom difference between the two systems.

²⁴⁹ See *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 272-5.

2.2.2. The *Weakness of Individuality in Spinoza*. - In our daily experience we dissect the world we encounter according to what appears to us natural units, such as, chairs, windows, zebras, prime-ministers, porcupines, clouds, etc. Similarly, we “dissect” time into years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes and seconds. Although in our daily experience we hardly think of the way we measure and “dissect” time, it is clear that our temporal units are simply arbitrary. A day could have been divided into ten hours, rather than twenty-four, and an hour could have consisted of, say, five hundred and three, rather than sixty, minutes. Indeed, in cultures other than our own (or even in earlier periods of the western culture), we could easily find other temporal divisions. Apart from dividing time arbitrarily, we also designate certain periods of time as “special” times, i.e., festivals, birthdays, days of mourning, etc.²⁵⁰ When one disregards the significance of these dates to the human-centered point of view (as Spinoza would do), it appears that all these taxonomies and designations of times are baseless, i.e., they have no true ground in the real nature of time.²⁵¹

Similar problems arise with regard to our way of dissecting space.²⁵² Our customs, laws, and moral intuitions treat certain regions of space as real units (e.g., cities, states, families, human beings, and cats). Obviously, for us, a human being and a sausage made out of that human being are not the same unit or the same individual (even if precisely the same atoms constituted both). But if we could ask the lion’s opinion, it would probably care little about the fact that the former

²⁵⁰ One occasion in which one can truly experience this estrangement from the way we construct our time is when one stays in a foreign country during one’s own festival times, or during the holiday period of the host country.

²⁵¹ One framework which *might* allow for non-arbitrary temporal units is the cluster of theories which reduce temporal relations to other, more basic, ones. If, for example, succession is reduced to causality, one could think of a theory in which two temporal locations could be considered as constituting a non-arbitrary temporal unit insofar as these two temporal locations are causally connected. Note well, however, that the temporal units I am talking about are not identical to the temporal parts of the perdurantists theories of time. Unlike the latter, temporal units are said to be the parts of time itself, and not of the perduring objects (just as non-arbitrary parts of space are supposed to give us the real structure of space (if there is any)).

²⁵² One can of course raise the issue of non-arbitrary distinctions with regard to the mental as well, though here it seems that our commonsensical intuitions are rooted rather deeply. This does not mean that these intuitions are right (i.e., that there are clear-cut mental units), but only that the task of undermining them is more difficult. For the sake of brevity, we will concentrate on the physical.

had self-consciousness, while the latter lacks it. From the lion's point of view it may well be that a human being, a corpse, and a human sausage are the same individual. It may also be that from the lion's point of view three and a half human beings and one monkey would together constitute one individual (wouldn't three tomatoes and half an onion constitute one salad for us?).

Where this leads to is quite obvious. If reality cannot be dissected in an objective manner, and if any designation of individuals depend on the interests (and measurement capabilities) of the designator, then it may seem that reality, in itself, is just undifferentiated stuff. From one point of view this stuff is divided in a certain way, from another point of view it is divided in an entirely different way.²⁵³

In Hegel's discussion of Spinoza, he frequently accuses Spinoza of rejecting the reality of any diversification, which, for Hegel, amounts to the denial of the reality of the world of finite things. Hence, in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel claims that Spinoza's substance is a "dark shapeless abyss, so to speak, in which all determinate content is swallowed up as radically null and void [*finstere, gestaltlose Abgrund, der allen bestimmten Inhalt als von Haus aus nichtig in sich verschlingt*]" (EL 227 | §151A).²⁵⁴ This last complaint of Hegel seems to me justified in part, since as we shall now see, Spinoza's criteria of the individuality of finite things are indeed very weak.

A common way to make a non-arbitrary distinction between two things is by showing that the two things are each self-subsisting units, or substances. Obviously, this venue is not open for Spinoza. God is the only substance and neither bodies nor minds are substances for Spinoza.²⁵⁵ Spinoza does, however, use two other terms to designate finite units, *singular things* [*res singulares*] and *individuals* [*individua*].

²⁵³ A nice statement of this undermining view of individuality is suggested by John Bigelow: "Particulars are only shadows cast by quirks of Indo-European syntax, with no more substantiality than the 'It' in 'It is raining'" (Bigelow, "Particulars"). On individuality and substantiality, see below.

²⁵⁴ This criticism is closely related to Hegel's famous critique of Schelling's philosophy as "the night in which all cows are black."

²⁵⁵ See Lemma 1 of the Physical Digression in *Ethics*, Part 2: "Bodies are distinguished [*distinguntur*] from one another by reason of motion and rest, speed and slowness, and no by reason of substance [*ratione substantiae*]" (II/97/25-6). For a similar point, see Garrett, "Spinoza's Theory of Metaphysical Individuation", 77.

Singular things are defined in the seventh definition of part two of the *E thics*:

By singular things I understand things that are finite and have a determinate existence. And if a number of Individuals so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, I consider them all, *to that extent*, as one singular thing. [My emphasis]

[*Per res singulares intelligo res, quae finitae sunt et determinatam habent existentiam. Quod si plura individua in una actione ita concurrant, ut omnia simul unius effectus sint causa, eadem omnia eatenus ut unam rem singularem considero*].

That singular things are the modes, we can learn from the identification of the two in E2p8.²⁵⁶ The latter text also makes an important point in clarifying that non-existing things constitute singular things as well.²⁵⁷ But obviously, the most striking point in the definition is its very loose criterion for constituting a singular thing (and apparently, deliberately so). Let's consider an example.

Suppose Josephine is hesitating as to whether to accept Bonaparte's marriage proposal. She calls her mom to ask for advice. A fly lands on her nose, consequently, she gets annoyed. Her mom answers and starts preaching (again!). Then, the floor moves. After a few minutes of confusion and anxiety, Josephine grasps that this movement was just a mild earthquake. A few minutes later she picks up the phone, and tells Bonaparte that she (accepts/rejects) his proposal. Among the causes of Josephine's decision one should include the fly's presence, the earthquake, and her mother's preaching. Now, according to E2d7 the three constitute one and the same singular thing insofar as they "concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect." Neither physical proximity (it may well be that Josephine and the fly were on Saturn and her mother were on Mars) nor belonging to the same kind of things (presumably the earthquake and the mother's preaching do not belong to the same category) is necessary in order to

²⁵⁶ "The ideas of singular things, or [*size*] of modes, that do not exist must be comprehended in God's infinite idea in the same way as the formal essences of the singular things, or [*size*] modes, are contained in God's attributes."

²⁵⁷ What Spinoza means by this non-existence is an interesting question. One possible reading is to take it to refer to things which do not exist in the present (but either existed or will exist). Alternatively, it might relate to things which never have existed and will never exist, i.e., to non-instantiated essences. These essences are internally coherent, but are ruled out of existence by considerations of compossibility (e.g., the essence of Napoleon, the victor in Waterloo).

constitute a singular thing. But if the fly, the earthquake and the mother's preaching constitute a singular thing for Spinoza, then it seems that it is merely a matter of coming up with the matching story in order to show that *any* aggregate of things, under certain circumstances, constitute a singular thing.²⁵⁸ It also seems that an entity can be part of numerous, in fact infinitely many, singular things, "to that extent" [*extens ut*] that it is taking part in the causation of various things.²⁵⁹

The situation is not much better with the other term Spinoza uses to designate finite things: an individual [*individuum*]. Occasionally, Spinoza uses '*individuum*' in a loose and non-technical sense,²⁶⁰ but in the Physical Digression, following proposition 13 of part two of the *Ethics*, Spinoza provides an explicit definition for his technical use of this term.

Definition: When a number of bodies, whether of the same or of different size, are so constrained by other bodies that they lie upon one another, or if they so move, whether with the same degree or different degrees of speed, that they communicate their motions 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 [*omnia simul unum corpus, sive individuum componere*], which is distinguished from the others by this union of bodies.

²⁵⁸ While the substance itself cannot be a singular thing insofar as it is indivisible (and hence cannot have constituting parts), and is neither finite nor has determinate existence, it might seem that the substance is a part of all singular things insofar as it contributes to the causation of all effects. However, if we take E2d7 as making the stipulation that only individuals can collaborate in constituting a singular thing, it would seem that God could be part of a singular things only insofar as he is an individual (i.e., God qua finite things).

²⁵⁹ It also seems that entities can belong to the same individual in various degrees according to the importance of their share in the causation of the common effect.

²⁶⁰ See E1p8c where Spinoza states that "if, in nature, a certain number of individuals exist, there must be a cause why those individuals, and neither more nor fewer, exist" (II/50/34). Later in the same corollary Spinoza relies on this claim in order to argue that there cannot be a plurality of substances sharing the same nature. This argument presupposes that substances are individuals, but this use of '*individuum*' does not seem to be the same as in part two of the *Ethics*, since in the latter case an individual is supposed to be a composite, while Spinoza's substance is indivisible. See further Don Garrett's helpful note that the NS (the 1677 Dutch translation of Spinoza's writings) adds to the relevant passage in E1p8c, "by individuals are understood particular things which belong under a genus". According to Garrett this sentence is inserted "presumably in order to distinguish this sense of the term from that introduced in Part II" (Garrett, "Spinoza's Theory of Metaphysical Individuation", 87).

In the lemmas following this definition Spinoza elaborates his theory of individuality. He attempts to explain in particular what is the “fixed manner” in which the parts of the individual “communicate their motion to each other”. Lemma four suggests that a part of an individual can be replaced by another part of the same nature “without any change in the form”²⁶¹ of the individual, i.e., without the individual’s ceasing to be the same individual. Lemma five suggests that an individual can retain its nature even if its component parts change in size provided that the parts still keep “the same ratio of motion and rest to each other as before”. Lemmas six and seven claim that any change in the movement of the individual as a whole does not affect its identity as long as the internal relation between the parts of the individual are conserved.

Although the definition of an individual identifies it with body (“*unum corpus, sine individuum componere*”), and the ensuing elaboration of this concept in the lemmas treats individuals as composite bodies it is at least possible, that Spinoza’s notion of an individual applies to modes of other attributes as well. This is so primarily because the parallelism among the attributes (E2p7s) commits him to the existence of parallel composite entities in the other attributes. In fact, in E2p21s Spinoza seems to accept explicitly that minds, too, are individuals by claiming that “the Mind and the Body are one and the same Individual, which is conceived now under the attribute of Thought, now under the attribute of Extension.”²⁶² For the sake of simplicity, however, we will focus our discussion on extended individuals, or bodies.²⁶³

What is the relation (if any) between the notions of ‘an individual’ and ‘a singular thing’ in Spinoza? It is tempting to try to identify the two insofar as both are *system*s of finite things which are unified by a certain formula.²⁶⁴ Yet, the unifying formulae seem to be quite different. We can easily think of a state of affairs in which a group of things constitute a singular thing, but

²⁶¹ The same phrase (“*absque ulla eius formae mutatione*”) appears at the end of lemmas five and six as well. For Matheron’s distinction between the formal and materials elements of individuals see his *Individu*, 38f.

²⁶² Yet, it is possible that in this passage Spinoza is using ‘individual’ in a loose, non-technical, sense.

²⁶³ For an interesting attempt to provide a unifying criterion for mental individuals (parallel to the preservation of the proportion of motion and rest in extended individuals) see, Della Rocca, *Representation*, 29-40.

²⁶⁴ In his *Study of Spinoza’s Ethics* (p. 138), Bennett claims that Spinoza reserves the notion of an individual only to entities with a fair degree of complexity. I am not aware of any text that supports this claim.

not an individual.²⁶⁵ Take, for example, Josephine's story. We saw that under certain circumstances, her mom's preaching, the earthquake, and the fly constituted a singular thing, but it seems unlikely that these three are united by a fixed proportion of motion and rest.²⁶⁶

When we look carefully at Spinoza's criterion as to what constitute an *individuum*, it seems almost as permissive as that of a singular thing. Prima facies, it seems to allow for one individual to be part of another individual. Take for example the present Queen of England, who is clearly a Spinozistic individual insofar as she has a fixed ratio of motion and rest. Now, when eventually the great revolution comes and the mighty Queen is sent to receive proper re-education in the best schools of Siberia, she might be tied to the current King of France. If the two are tied tightly enough, there seems to be no reason to deny that we have a new royal individual whose parts have a fixed proportion of motion and rest. Yet, the original two individuals do not cease to exist insofar as the original fixed proportions of motion and rest between the parts of each are still intact. Indeed, Spinoza explicitly allows for the possibility of one individual being part of another individual when he suggests that "the whole of nature is one individual, whose parts, that is, all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole individual" (E2PhysDigL7d| II/102).²⁶⁷

Spinoza also seems to allow for scattered (i.e., spatially discontinuous) individuals. In E4p18s he says,

For if, for example, two individuals of entirely the same nature are joined to one another, they compose an individual twice as powerful as each one. To man, then, there is nothing more useful than man. Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all should *so agree in all things that the Minds and Bodies of all would compose, as it were, one Mind and one*

²⁶⁵ The reverse claim seems to be false. Since for Spinoza, "nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow" (E1p36), it seems that every individual is also a singular thing insofar as this individual has an effect.

²⁶⁶ See, however, Don Garrett ("Spinoza's Theory of Metaphysical Individuation", 90) for a consideration of the possibility that scattered individuals may communicate their motions through a medium which is not part of the individuals.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Letter 32 (S 193-4). It also seems that bodies which attract or repulse each other should constitute one individual insofar as the forces of attraction and repulsion make them "communicate their motions".

Bod̄y; that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all, together, should seek for themselves the common advantage of all. [Italics mine.]²⁶⁸

If (1) individuals can have scattered parts, and (2) the fact that a certain area of space constitutes a specific individual does not exclude the possibility that the same area (at the same time) be part of infinitely many other individuals, it would seem that Spinoza's notion of an individual is almost as weak as that of a singular thing. The stipulation that parts of the same individual "communicate their motions to each other" and preserve the same proportion of motion and rest, does not tell us *how long* these parts should preserve the same proportion in order to be counted as genuine individuals. In fact Spinoza *cannot* name any particular period of time as such a minimum criterion without resorting to the human-centered perspective. If we disregard the human point of view, there is nothing more natural in a temporal scale which measures things by billions of years, or billionths of a second, than the temporal units we are accustomed to. Hence, even the tiniest period of time in which two bodies communicate their motion in a fixed manner, seems to be enough to qualify these two bodies as a genuine individual.

2.2.3. *Why not 'acosmism'?* - At this point one might wonder whether Hegel was not correct in describing Spinoza as an acosmist and in characterizing the state of finite things in Spinoza's system as being in "a dark shapeless abyss... in which all determinate content is swallowed up as radically null and void". For the following reasons, I believe that the answer to this question should probably be in the negative. First, the weakness of individuality in Spinoza might undermine the reality of finite modes, but not of that of the infinite modes. But if the infinite modes are real, then substance stops being a shapeless abyss, since at least the distinction between the substance and its infinite modes turns out to be real. Secondly, I have already noted

²⁶⁸ For an interesting reading of this passage which takes it as a mere counterfactual, i.e., as denying that any group of people can constitute a true individual, see Barbone, "What counts as an individual for Spinoza?", 100-106. Barbone's analysis relies, at least in part, on the claim that two things cannot share the same nature (101). To my mind the issue needs further clarification since on several occasions Spinoza seems to claim that numerically distinct particulars can share the same nature or essence (see, for example, E1p17s [II/63/20], and E4p35c1). It is also noteworthy that in the last paragraph of Chapter 18 of the *Theological-Political Treatise* Spinoza ascribes *conatus* and a unifying form to the state: "every state must necessarily preserve its form, and cannot be changed without incurring the danger of utter ruin". This being said I still find Barbone's challenge to the standard reading of this passage quite interesting.

that Spinoza seems to be talking about *different degrees* in which one thing can be part of another singular thing (see E2d7). Were the modes illusory or even all delineations of individuals equally arbitrary, then there would be no point in marking the degrees to which things are truly parts of a certain singular thing.²⁶⁹ Thirdly, the acosmist reading of Spinoza conflicts with several other crucial doctrines of the *Ethics*. If we accept these doctrines, we will have to re-interpret Spinoza's claims about metaphysical individuation so that the latter fit the former. The doctrines that I have in mind are the following:

A. Third Kind of Knowledge. - The third kind of knowledge "proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (E2p40s2). Spinoza's discussion of the third kind of knowledge in part five of the *Ethics* makes clear that it pertains to the knowledge of finite modes as well (see, for example, E5p22 and E5p23). But were the finite modes merely illusory, then how could we adequately know them?

B. E1p16. - We have seen that in E1p16 Spinoza claims that the modes are just what follows necessarily from God's nature. Furthermore, E1p36 makes clear that everything, including God's nature, must have some effects. But, if the modes (i.e., the effects of God's nature) were illusory, then God's nature would not really have any effects.²⁷⁰

C. The Parallelism among the Attributes. - In E2p7s Spinoza argues that the order of modes in all attributes is the same. This seems to demand the existence of well-defined units which are connected by the same order. It is true that one can claim that just as individuals of Extension can be delineated in various ways, so too individuals of Thought can be delineated in various ways, i.e., that the weakness of Extended individuals is paralleled in Thought by equally weak Thought individuals. In such a case whenever we suggest a new way of dissecting space, we simultaneously have also a new dissection of the mental realm, and with each such new delineation of individuals we have a new causal structure. This picture of parallelism between

²⁶⁹ I am indebted to Michael Della Rocca for this point.

²⁷⁰ See Parkinson ("Hegel, Pantheism and Spinoza", 455) for a similar argument.

weakly defined units is, I think, consistent, but it results in a far more complicated picture than the common view of the parallelism as being between discrete units.

D. Knowledge of God *via* Nature. - In chapter four of the TTP, Spinoza claims that “we acquire a greater and more perfect knowledge of God as we gain more knowledge of natural phenomena”.²⁷¹ But were finite things (“natural phenomena”) merely illusory, it would make little sense that by engaging with such illusions we could promote our knowledge of God.

Following these considerations I believe we should reject the view of modes as illusions. The essential question is how to make Spinoza’s weak notion of individuality consistent with the reality of finite modes. A simple, perhaps too simple, solution is to claim that Spinoza did not properly develop his theory of metaphysical individuation. Although one might find some support to this claim by the fact that Spinoza provided two such competing theories (of singular things and of individuals), this solution appears to me somewhat problematic since it may well be the case that Spinoza intentionally designed the building blocks of his finite world as fuzzy units in order to stress their inferiority.

2.3 *Modes of God vs. Modes of the Attributes.*

In the current and previous chapters I have studied Spinoza’s metaphysics of substance. In the first chapter I have argued that for Spinoza modes both inhere in and are predicated of the substance. In the current chapter, I suggested that the notion of the immanent cause unify inherence and efficient causation. Finally, I have argued that in spite of the weakness of the delineation of boundaries between finite things, Spinoza did not consider finite things mere illusions and hence recognized the reality of diversity and change.

Before we end this part of the dissertation, I would like to add two brief, though important, clarifications regarding the nature of modes. In his *Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, Jonathan Bennett suggested that in addition to the modes of the attributes Spinoza’s ontology includes modes which are attribute-neutral, i.e., modes which do not belong to any attribute. These trans-attribute modes - or *differentiae*, as Bennett calls them - are the underlying units which are shared

²⁷¹ Shirley 51. Spinoza makes similar claims in several other texts. See, for example, E5p24.

by parallel modes of different attributes.²⁷² If we take for example the parallel pair of my mind and my body, there is, according to Bennett, a D_1 that is shared by both my mind and my body. My body would then be D_1 plus Extension (or D_1 under Extension), and my mind, D_1 plus Thought (or D_1 under Thought). Because the *differentiae* are not conceived under any attribute, Bennett (rightly) concludes that “it is absolutely impossible for any mind, however powerful, to have thought of [the *differentiae*] in abstraction from both thought and extension”.²⁷³ Bennett goes as far as to argue that the inconceivable *differentiae* are in some sense “the most basic properties of the substance”, and that they are even more fundamental than the attributes.²⁷⁴

As far as I can see, this imaginative suggestion of Bennett is wrong for a very trivial reason: for Spinoza nothing can be inconceivable. In E 1a2, Spinoza stipulates that “What cannot be conceived through another, must be conceived through itself [*Id quod per aliud non potest concipi, per se concipi debet*]”. Because Bennett’s *differentiae* cannot be conceived either through themselves or through another, E 1a2 rules out their very possibility.

I do agree with Bennett about the need to postulate some trans-attribute units of modes. However, unlike Bennett I think that we cannot speak of modes under *no attributes*, but only of either modes of *a specific attribute*, or modes under *all attributes*. Let us call the former ‘Modes of an Attribute’ and the latter, ‘Modes of God’. An example of a mode of an attribute would be Napoleon’s body, or, another example, Napoleon’s mind. Similarly, the modes belonging to the unknown attributes which parallel Napoleon’s body are each ‘mode of an attribute’, i.e., modes belonging to the specific attribute under which they are conceived. A mode of God is a mode under all the attributes, hence we can roughly say that Napoleon’s body

²⁷² Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 143-9.

²⁷³ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 144. Cf. p. 145: “the trans-attribute *differentiae* cannot be intellectually grasped or conceived, i.e., there are no concepts of them”.

²⁷⁴ Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics*, 146.

together with Napoleon's mind and all the other modes (of the unknown attributes) which parallel Napoleon's body, constitute one single mode of God.²⁷⁵

This distinction is well observed in the existing literature on Spinoza, and several other terms were used to designate it. Sometimes the term 'mode' is used to designate the entity I call 'a mode of God', while 'modal expression' is used instead of my 'mode of an attribute.' It is important to point out that Spinoza himself never made this distinction explicit.²⁷⁶ In most cases, he uses 'modus' to refer to a mode of a specific attribute, though on several other occasions, primarily at the beginning of the *Ethics*, he seems to be relating to modes of God.²⁷⁷ This equivocal use of the term by Spinoza caused quite a few confusions in the existing literature. In order to avoid such confusions, I will henceforward distinguish between 'modes of an attribute' and 'modes of God', where such a distinction is of any significance.

²⁷⁵ In order to avoid the undesired and erroneous implication that God is in some way just an accumulation of the infinite attributes, it would be better say that each mode of God has infinitely many aspects, which are each, a mode of an attribute. As we have seen earlier, *natura naturans* is indivisible and hence cannot be the sum of any accumulation.

²⁷⁶ Deleuze (*Expressionism*, 110) claims that in principle a mode is an affection of an attribute, whereas a modification is an affection of the substance. Deleuze provides no textual support for this claim, and as far I can see, Curley is just right in claiming that 'mode' and 'modification' are interchangeable for Spinoza (see Spinoza, *Collected Works*, 413 n. 15, and 646). See, for example, E1p8s2 (II/50/7) where 'modification' is defined just like mode in E1d5. Cf. E1p22 where a modification is said to be "through the same attribute". On the other hand, 'mode' in E1d5 is not attribute specific.

²⁷⁷ See, for example, E1d4: "nothing but substances.... and *their* affections [*earumque affectiones*]", and E2p4d "...nothing except God's attributes and *his* affections [*praeter Dei attributa, ejusque affectiones*]"

CHAPTER THREE: THE METAPHYSICS OF THOUGHT I: SPINOZA'S TWO DOCTRINES OF PARALLELISM

“Dei cogitandi potentia aequalis est ipsius actuali agendi potentiae” (*Ethics* II, Prop. 7, Corollary)

- 3.1 The Ideas-Things Parallelism and the Inter-Attributes Parallelism
- 3.2 Four crucial Observations
- 3.3 Spinoza's Justification for the Ideas-Things Parallelism and the Inter-attributes Parallelism
- 3.4 The Employment of the Two Doctrines
- 3.5 Summary

In the following two chapters I argue for three interrelated theses about the structure of the attribute of thought and its overarching role in Spinoza's metaphysics. In the present chapter I develop the first thesis. I suggest a new interpretation of Spinoza's pivotal doctrine of parallelism. Against the standard interpretation which takes Spinoza's parallelism to be a doctrine about the isomorphism between God's attributes, I argue that Spinoza had, not one, but two independent doctrines of parallelism. The one, and the more important, stipulates an isomorphism between the order of *ideas* in the attribute of thought, on the one hand, and the order of *things* in the whole substance, on the other hand. The other doctrine claims an isomorphism between the order of *modes* in the infinitely many attributes (this is what the standard reading takes to be *the* doctrine of parallelism).

In the next chapter I will present my second and third theses. The second thesis suggests a solution to one of the most intriguing and long-lasting problems in Spinoza's metaphysics: why the human mind can know only modes of Thought and Extension but not modes of any other of God's infinitely many attributes.

In the third thesis, I argue that the attribute of Thought has a clear primacy in Spinoza's metaphysics insofar as it is isomorphic with the whole substance (and thus, shares all the structural features of the substance itself), and since it harbors God's absolutely infinite idea.

3.1 The Ideas-Things Parallelism and the Inter-Attributes Parallelism - The doctrine of parallelism is widely acknowledged as one of the most central doctrines of the *Ethics*. Since this doctrine is the focal point of the current chapter, it might be helpful to have the whole of E2p7, the *locus classicus* of the doctrine, before our eyes.

P7: The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.

Dem.: This is clear from IA4. For the idea of each thing caused depends on the knowledge of the cause of which it is the effect.

Cor.: From this it follows that God's [NS: actual] power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting. I.e., whatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection.

Schol.: Before we proceed further, we must recall here what we showed [NS: in the First Part], viz. that whatever can be perceived by an infinite intellect as constituting an essence of substance pertains to one substance only, and consequently that the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that. So also a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways. Some of the Hebrews seem to have seen this, as if through a cloud, when they maintained that God, God's intellect, and the things understood by him are one and the same. For example, a circle existing in nature and the idea of the existing circle, which is also in God, are one and the same thing, which is explained through different attributes. Therefore, whether we conceive nature under the attribute of Extension, or under the attribute of Thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find one and the same order, or one and the same connection of causes, i.e., that the same things follow one another.

When I said [NS: before] that God is the cause of the idea, say of a circle, only insofar as he is a thinking thing, and [the cause] of the circle, only insofar as he is an extended thing, this was for no other reason than because the formal being of the idea of the circle can be perceived only through another mode of thinking, as its proximate cause, and that mode again through another, and so on,

to infinity. Hence, so long as things are considered as modes of thinking, we must explain the order of the whole of nature, or the connection of causes, through the attribute of Thought alone. And insofar as they are considered as modes of Extension, the order of the whole of nature must be explained through the attribute of Extension alone. I understand the same concerning the other attributes.

So of things as they are in themselves, God is really the cause insofar as he consists of infinite attributes. For the present, I cannot explain these matters more clearly.

The standard reading of this doctrine is that it asserts the existence of an isomorphism between all the attributes. Each attribute has infinitely many modes, and in each attribute we find the same structure, or order, which connects all the modes of the attribute. This kind of parallelism is indeed asserted by Spinoza in the Scholium:

[W]hether we conceive Nature under the attribute of extension, or under the attribute of thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find *one and the same order*, or *one and the same connection* of causes, that is, the same things follow one another [*unum, eundemque ordinem, sive unam, eandemque causarum connexionem, hoc est, easdem res invicem sequi reperiemus*] [Emphasis mine].

Yet, we must pay attention to the fact that this is just one out of three (or four²⁷⁸) formulations in the very same proposition which relate to two (or more, as in the passage just quoted) classes of things having “*the same order and the same connection*.” The other two formulas are the proposition itself (E2p7),

The order and connection of ideas is *the same as the order and connection* of things [*Ordo et connexio idearum idem est, ac ordo et connexio rerum*] [Italics mine].

and E2p7c, where Spinoza states,

²⁷⁸ The fourth text appears at the end of the demonstration: “[S]o long as things are considered as modes of thinking, we must explain the *order of the whole Nature, or the connection of causes*, through the attribute of thought alone. And insofar as they are considered as modes of extension, the order of the whole Nature must be explained through the attribute of extension alone. I understand the same concerning the other attributes” [Italics mine]. This passage repeats and explicates the inter-attributes parallelism which was asserted a few lines earlier in the same demonstration.

[W]hatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively in God from his idea in *the same order and with the same connection* [*eodem ordine, eademque conexione sequitur*] [Emphasis mine].

All three texts claim that the entities in apparently several distinct domains have “the same order and the same connection.” Yet, it is not clear that it is the same domains which are said to share the same structure in all three texts. Arguably, there are two distinct parallelisms at stake here: the one asserted by E2p7 and E2p7c (second and third passage above), the other in the scholium (the first passage).

E2p7 asserts an isomorphism between *two* classes of entities: *ideas* and *things*.²⁷⁹ Since, for Spinoza, all things follow from God's infinite nature [E1p16], and since the conceptual separation of the attributes commits him to the view that only ideas can follow from God's idea, it seems that E2p7c amounts to the same ideas-things parallelism as E2p7.²⁸⁰ Unlike the proposition and the corollary, the scholium asserts an isomorphism between *infinite* - not *two* - classes of entities, i.e., between the modes of all the attributes. In order to make clear the distinction between the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7 and E2p7c, and the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s, it might be helpful to consider the following two cases in which one of these two claims obtains while the other does not.

Let *A* be an attribute of God, other than Thought and Extension, i.e., *A* is one of the infinitely many attributes unknown to the human mind. According to the inter-attributes parallelism, attribute *A* is isomorphic to Extension. Yet, the ideas-things parallelism seems to say nothing about *A*'s relation to Extension. All that the ideas-things parallelism demands is an isomorphism between all *ideas* (modes of Thought) and all *things*. The ideas-things parallelism says nothing about how different kinds of things (i.e., modes of the various attributes) are to be

²⁷⁹ These classes are not mutually exclusive since for Spinoza ideas *are* (mental) *things*. See the discussion of ideas of ideas in Chapter 4 (4.3) below.

²⁸⁰ I will return to E2p7c's formulation of the ideas-things parallelism when I discuss my own, and Gueroult's, interpretation of this doctrine later in the present chapter.

related among themselves. The ideas-things parallelism seems - at least at first sight - to be perfectly compatible with a state of affairs in which two (non-Thought) attributes are not isomorphic with each other.²⁸¹ In such a case, *the ideas-things parallelism will obtain while the inter-attributes parallelism will be violated.*

Now, let's check whether the opposite case, in which the inter-attributes parallelism but not the ideas-things parallelism obtains, is possible. In numerous places in the *Ethics* Spinoza refers to the substance as "the thinking thing" [*res cogitans*] and "the extended thing" [*res extensa*], thus, making clear that God, or the Substance, is a *thing*. According to the ideas-things parallelism, the attribute of Thought must have an idea for that thing, i.e., the idea of God. Since I (a thing) am causally related to God (another thing), there must be a causal relation between two ideas which is parallel to my relation to God; this causal relation is the relation of the idea of me to the idea of God.²⁸² In E2p3-4, Spinoza explicitly proves the existence of this idea which represents "both [God's] essence and everything which necessarily follows from his essence". Now, the idea of God is the immediate infinite mode of Thought.²⁸³ Hence, according to the inter-attributes parallelism, the idea of God parallels all the immediate infinite modes of all the other attributes. This is all that the inter-attributes parallelism stipulates with regard to the idea of God. Consider, however, the following possibility. Suppose the immediate infinite mode of Thought were not the idea of God, but merely the idea of all modes under all attributes (i.e., the idea of *Natura Naturata*). In such a case the inter-attributes parallelism would obtain since for every immediate infinite mode under any attribute there would be a parallel in Thought. Would

²⁸¹ Yet, in Chapter 4 (4.4) below we will examine the possibility of deriving the inter-attributes parallelism from the ideas-things parallelism by transitivity (i.e., insofar as both all bodies and all modes of the third attribute are parallel to the order of ideas).

²⁸² Spinoza also holds that in Thought there are ideas of God's attributes. See, for example, E2p3, E2p5 and E2p20d. The ideas of God and his attributes will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 (4.4).

²⁸³ See E1p21d.

the ideas-things parallelism obtain in such a case? I think not. In this case, there would be no idea which parallels God. The idea which parallels God must be the most extensive and comprehensive idea insofar as all things are in God. Yet, the place of the most comprehensive idea - the immediate infinite mode of Thought - would already be occupied by the idea of *Natura Naturata*. Now, one can of course object that the immediate infinite mode of Thought must be the idea of God, and this is indeed true. Yet, the reason *why* the immediate infinite mode is God's idea does not lie in the inter-attributes parallelism (but rather in the ideas-things parallelism). It is indeed a difficult question how can the immediate infinite mode of Thought represent both *Natura Naturata* and *Natura Naturans*, while the inter-attributes parallelism makes it parallel only to the immediate infinite modes of the other attributes (i.e., only to *Natura Naturata*).²⁸⁴ In 4.4 below, I will suggest a solution to this problem. Right now, however, all I want to do is to point out that the inter-attributes parallelism does not stipulate that the immediate infinite mode of Thought be the idea of God. Hence, if the immediate infinite mode of Thought were not the idea of God, the inter-attributes parallelism would obtain while the ideas-things parallelism would be violated.

A similar case is the one of ideas of ideas, or in general terms, higher order ideas. The ideas-things parallelism demands that insofar as ideas too are things, there must be ideas parallel to them, namely, Thought must have ideas of ideas. The inter-attributes parallelism is indifferent to the question of the existence of ideas of ideas.²⁸⁵ Thus, if there were no ideas of ideas, the ideas-things parallelism would be violated, but not the inter-attributes parallelism. Hence, we may tentatively conclude that the two doctrines are, apparently, independent, and that Spinoza had not one but two doctrines of parallelism.

²⁸⁴ Apparently, this difficulty made some scholars claim that the idea of God does not represent God. I think this view is wrong. See Chapter 4 (4.4) below.

²⁸⁵ Later we will see that the inter-attributes parallelism has something important to say about the relation of ideas of ideas (once their existence is established by the ideas-things parallelism) to the original ideas.

3.2 *Four Crucial Observations.* - Before we proceed any further we must register a few crucial observations. Firstly, we should note that the term ‘parallelism’, though commonly employed in the scholarly literature, was never used by Spinoza.²⁸⁶ We may keep on using it if we are careful to avoid one undesirable connotation. ‘Parallelism’ commonly implies a relation between two classes of objects, which are *distinct* from each other. This is not the case with Spinoza’s parallelisms, since in the case of the inter-attributes parallelism, the modes which are parallel to each other are also *identical* with each other. Thus, we should keep the term ‘parallelism’ neutral as to whether things that are parallel to each other are also distinct from each other.

This brings us to the second point. In the scholium, Spinoza claims that parallel modes in different attributes are “one and the same thing [*una, eademque est*].” Hence, the inter-attributes parallelism involves identity. Spinoza makes no similar claim about the ideas-things parallelism. Are (the first order) idea *I* and the (second order) idea of *I* ‘one and the same thing’? Are God and the idea of God ‘one and the same thing’? In E2p21s, Spinoza explicitly answers the first

²⁸⁶ Gueroult (*Spinoza II*, 64 n. 39) and Macherey (*Introduction II*, 72, n. 1) point out that Leibniz was the first to use the term ‘parallelism’ in philosophical context. Note, however, that Leibniz uses this term to describe his own (and not Spinoza’s) doctrines of “the *harmonic parallelism* of the Realms of Nature and Grace” (*Theodicy*, § 18, p. 134 in Huggard’s translation | *Philosophischen Schriften*, vol. 6, 113) and of the parallelism of soul and body (“Reflections on the Doctrine of a single Universal Spirit” in Loemker, p. 556 | *Philosophischen Schriften*, vol. 6, 533). I do not know when precisely the use of this term as a description of Spinoza’s view of the relation between ideas and things, or as the relation between the modes of the various attributes begins. Hegel, who was well versed in his own time literature on Spinoza, does not mention any ‘parallelism’ in his discussion of the relation of mind and body in Spinoza (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 271-4), but rather claims that, for Spinoza, mind (or, consciousness) and body are both identical and separate. I assume that the term ‘parallelism’ began being employed to describe the doctrine stated by Spinoza in E2p7 sometime in the middle of the 19th century.

question in the positive.²⁸⁷ Later, in the next chapter (4.4), I will argue that the answer to the second question has to be negative. What needs to be clarified at present is that E2p7 and E2p7c leave both possibilities open.

Thirdly, we should note another crucial difference between the two doctrines of parallelism. The ideas-things parallelism is a *representational* parallelism, i.e., the idea of a thing X not only *corresponds to* X but is also an idea *about* X, i.e., an idea which represents X.²⁸⁸ This is not necessarily the case with the inter-attributes parallelism. The idea which corresponds to Napoleon's body is indeed an idea *about* Napoleon, but the mode of the third (and unknown) attribute which corresponds to Napoleon's body is not about Napoleon, nor is Napoleon's body about this mode of the third attribute. This is so because representation is an essential property of modes of Thought and only modes of Thought. Thus, unlike the representational parallelism of the ideas-things parallelism, the inter-attributes parallelism is merely a bare, or 'blind', parallelism.²⁸⁹

Finally, we should notice that *both* the inter-attributes parallelism and the ideas-things parallelism entail an isomorphism between modes of Thought (ideas) and modes of Extension (bodies). For this reason, the isomorphism between modes of Thought and modes Extension

²⁸⁷ Later I will show that Spinoza's justification for the *identity* of ideas with their higher order ideas results from an application of inter-attributes parallelism (which can be carried out only once the ideas-things parallelism secures the *existence* of these higher order ideas). Thus, the ideas-things parallelism is the reason for the emergence (or existence) of higher order ideas, while the inter-attributes parallelism serves to prove the identity of each idea with its higher order ideas. Hence, though idea *I* and the idea of *I* are identical, they are not identical by virtue of the ideas-things parallelism.

²⁸⁸ This point is made clear in the demonstration of E2p7 which relates to the idea which corresponds to a thing as "the knowledge of" that thing. Further support comes from the corollary which explicates the ideas-things parallelism as a relation between the *objective* content of ideas and the *formal* being of things external to Thought.

²⁸⁹ For a discussion of the distinction between representational and bare (or 'blind') parallelism, see Della Rocca (*Representation*, 19) and Gueroult (*Spinoza II*, 76)

exemplifies the characteristics of *both* parallelisms. Insofar as the relation between modes of Thought and modes of Extension is a relation between ideas and things, the parallelism between them is representational; insofar as modes of Thought and modes of Extension are modes of two attributes, each mode of Thought is identical with its parallel mode of Extension. Yet, we should be careful to distinguish the different sources for these two properties of the ideas-bodies parallelism (i.e., its representational character and the identity of parallel pairs). Since the parallelism between ideas and bodies is by far the most *visible* manifestation of *both* doctrines, we can understand the tendency to confound the two doctrines into one and ascribe to it both representational character and identity of parallel items.

3.3 Spinoza's Justifications for the Ideas-Things Parallelism and the Inter-Attributes Parallelism -

So far I have argued that the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7 (and its corollary) and the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s, though closely related, are two distinct doctrines. It is now time to see to what extent Spinoza treats them as such. In order to do that we should first examine the proofs Spinoza provides for each of the doctrines. Spinoza's demonstration of E2p7 is extremely short: "*This is clear from IA 4. For the idea of each thing caused depends on the knowledge of the cause of which it is the effect*". E1a4, to which Spinoza appeals here, reads: "*The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause*" [*Effectus cognitio a cognitione causae dependet et eandem involvit*]. Despite the cryptic nature of this argument, it seems that we can rescue its basic meaning if we interpret the dependence relations at E2p7d and E1a4 as causal relations.²⁹⁰ Under this interpretation E1a4 stipulates that the idea of an effect is caused by the idea of the cause. An iteration of this demand generates two parallel chains of *things* and *ideas*.

²⁹⁰ As Michael Della Rocca points out (*Representation*, 22), in E2p9d Spinoza explicitly identifies the order of ideas as a causal order. Spinoza's support for this claim by a reference to E2p7 shows that he understands E2p7 as claiming that ideas are causally connected. That the term 'knowledge' [*cognitio*] in E1a4 relates to ideas can be seen from Spinoza's rephrasing of this axiom in Letter 72: "the knowledge or idea of an effect depends on the knowledge or idea of the cause" (Shirley, 330)

Though the demonstration of E2p7 may at first sight seem straightforward, it involves quite a lot of problems and there seem to be quite a few gaps in the argument which need to be filled.²⁹¹ Furthermore, Spinoza's rephrasing of this proposition in E5p1 ("the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things, and vice versa, the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas"), seems to show that Spinoza meant E2p7 to state only one of two sides of the parallelism.²⁹² These difficulties deserve a careful and detailed examination, but need not concern us here. For our purpose, it is sufficient to make clear that Spinoza's justification for the ideas-things parallelism does not rely on or appeal to the inter-attributes parallelism.

Does the inter-attributes parallelism rely on the ideas-thing parallelism? Unlike many commentators, I think the answer to this question is in the negative since there is no way to derive from E1a4 or E2p7 the parallelism between modes of Extension and the modes of the third attribute (to which Spinoza explicitly commits himself in E2p7S in claiming that even when we consider nature "under any other attribute" we will find the same order and connection of causes).

How does Spinoza derive the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s? The text of E2p7s provides no explicit demonstration for the inter-attributes parallelism. At the beginning of the scholium, Spinoza asks the reader to recall two doctrines, the definition of attribute (E1a4) and

²⁹¹ See Bennett (*Spinoza's Ethics*, 127-30) and Della Rocca (*Representation*, 22-3).

²⁹² Note that in E5p1, Spinoza supports the duplicated formulation of the parallelism by reference to both E2p7 and E2p6c. This seems to indicate that the other side of the parallelism ("the order and connection of things is the order and connection of ideas"), which is not claimed in E2p7, is stipulated by E2p6c. Indeed, the second half of E2p6c reads "the objects of ideas follow and are inferred from their attributes *in the same way* and by the same necessity as that which we have shown ideas to follow from the attribute of thought" [Emphasis mine]. Once we acknowledge this role of E2p6c, it seems that at least one of the alleged gaps in Spinoza's argument for the ideas-things parallelism is filled. Yet, we still have to examine whether the derivation of E2p6c is valid.

substance monism (E1p14). It is clear, I think, that the inter-attributes parallelism somehow relies on these two doctrines, but the question is how.

It also seems that the middle link between these two doctrines and the inter-attributes parallelism is the identity of modes under different attributes (i.e., the claim that modes under different attributes are “one and the same thing”). From the identity of modes under different attributes, Spinoza derives the inter-attributes parallelism.²⁹³ Note the Latin ‘*ideo*’ which appears before the first statement of this doctrine:

For example, a circle existing in nature and the idea of the existing circle, which is also in God, are one and the same thing, which is explained through different attributes. Therefore [*et ideo*],²⁹⁴ whether we conceive nature under the attribute of Extension, or under the attribute of Thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find one and the same order, or one and the same connection of causes, i.e., that the same things follow one another.

If each thing in God has infinitely many expressions, each under one of the infinitely many attributes, then the parallelism between the expressions of these things under different attributes seems to be not difficult to derive.²⁹⁵ The title ‘inter-attributes parallelism’ is a bit of an understatement since Spinoza commits himself here to a far stronger claim: inter-attributes mode *identity*. The real question, however, is how Spinoza derives the mode-identity thesis.

²⁹³ On this point I agree with Bennett (*Spinoza's Ethics*, 142).

²⁹⁴ Shirley translates ‘*et ideo*’ as ‘so that’ and Parkinson by merely ‘so.’ The French translations of Pautrat and Misrahi have it as ‘*et ainsi*’. All these translations preserve the meaning which indicates a derivation.

²⁹⁵ Here is an outline of such a derivation. Suppose (1) J, a mode of God under all attributes, is the cause of N, another mode of God under all attributes. From (1) we will prove that (2) any expression (‘expression’ here being the relation of a mode of God to one of its aspects, a mode of a certain attribute) J under any attribute A, must also be the cause of the expression of N under A, in the following manner. If under some attributes the expression of J were the cause of the expression of N (under the same attribute), but under some other attributes, the expression of J would *not* be the cause of the expression of N (under the same attribute), then it would be impossible to determine whether J under all attributes is or is not the cause of N under all attributes. An iteration of this procedure generates infinite chains within each attribute, which must exemplify the same causal order as the order of the modes under all attributes.

As I have already said, the text itself provides only very vague clues and most of the work in filling up this gap is quite speculative. I will not attempt here to provide a full reconstruction of Spinoza's proof of the identity of the modes because it would again carry us far away from our topic. Yet, because the independence of the two doctrines of parallelism plays an important role in this chapter, I find it necessary to provide an outline of a possible argument for the mode identity thesis which does not rely on the ideas-things parallelism.

Many commentators take the mode identity thesis (or the inter-attributes parallelism) to be merely superadded to Spinoza's system without any adequate justification.²⁹⁶ Whether this is historically true or not, one still wonders whether Spinoza could not legitimately fill this crucial gap in the structure of the book. The more interesting attempt to provide a justification for the inter-attribute parallelism seems to me that of Della Rocca. In the following passage, Della Rocca provides a summary of his proof of the mode identity thesis. Note that according to Della Rocca, the mode identity thesis relies on E2p7 (the ideas-things parallelism):

So the argument, in brief, is this: Parallelism helps us see that mind and body share all their neutral properties.²⁹⁷ Since all extensional properties are neutral, and since the mind and the body must have some extensional properties, it follows that mind and body share all their extensional properties. By Leibniz's Law, we can, therefore, conclude that mind = body (p. 137).

I believe this derivation *is* valid and that its premises would be clearly accepted by Spinoza. Yet, I do think that its claim that the mode identity thesis relies on E2p7 yields a significant problem which we have already encountered: the proof is limited merely to the identity of bodies and minds. Spinoza clearly holds that modes of other attributes also fall within the scope of the mode identity thesis, but, as I have mentioned more than once, E2p7 seems to say nothing about the relation between modes of attributes other than Thought. We may attempt to prove the identity (or parallelism) of Extension and any of the unknown attributes relying on transitivity (since both Extension and every unknown attribute are said to be isomorphic with

²⁹⁶ See Della Rocca, *Representation*, p. 197 n. 37.

Thought according to E2p7), however, as I will later argue, such a derivation involves a *petitio principii*, and hence, should be rejected.²⁹⁸

What is then the alternative? I am not sure, but here is an outline of perhaps one possible way to reconstruct the relevant proof. Let's look carefully at the first paragraph of E2p7s where Spinoza seems to introduce the mode identity thesis:

Before we proceed further, we must recall here what we showed [NS: in the First Part], viz. that whatever can be perceived by an infinite intellect as constituting an essence of substance pertains to one substance only, and consequently that the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that. So also [*sic etiam*] a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways.

In the first sentence of this passage Spinoza reminds the reader of the definition of attribute and of the identity of the thinking and extended substance. In the second and last sentence he moves from substance identity to mode identity. The question, however, is why the substance identity entails mode identity, or, more specifically, as Bennett puts it, “Why should not a thinking and extended substance have details under one attribute which are not also details under the other?”²⁹⁹

In order to answer this question, we should look at the substance identity thesis from a slightly different angle. Spinoza's God is the ultimately real being which has infinitely many aspects, or attributes: it can be conceived as the extended substance, the thinking substance, etc. All these attributes of substance are aspects, or ways, of conceiving God. The only difference between the extended and thinking substance is by the attribute under which they fall, and for Spinoza two things which differ merely by their attributes are numerically identical.

²⁹⁷ 'Neutral properties' are properties which are shared by all attributes.

²⁹⁸ See Chapter 4 (4.4) below.

²⁹⁹ Bennett, *Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 142.

In the first paragraph of E2p7s, Spinoza invokes the identity of substances in order to point out this multi - or rather, infinite - faceted nature of God, and then suggests (without any detailed proof) not only that God has infinitely many aspects (i.e., all the substances), but that the same is the case with any thing which inheres in God, i.e., with any of God's modes. The thesis that each mode of God has infinitely many aspects (together with the identity of items which are distinguished only by their attributes) yields mode identity: for any mode under any attribute, there must be an identical item in each of the other attributes. Thus, the infinite-faceted nature of God's modes rules out the problem pointed out by Bennett. There cannot be items, or modes of God, which fall under one attribute but not under another, because each such item must fall under all the infinite attributes (i.e., it must have all the infinite aspects). The question, however, is whether Spinoza can prove that each mode of God has infinitely many aspects, and whether he is entitled to claim that in E2p7s.

I think the answer to both questions is probably positive. Arguably, Spinoza presents the infinite-faceted nature of God's modes already in E1p16 - "From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many *modi* [*infinita infinitis modis sequi debent*]"'. The common reading takes E1p16 to claim that infinite attributes follow from God's nature and that each attribute has infinite modes. This reading is at most one possible way to understand E1p16, and arguably a very problematic one. For Spinoza, the attributes do not *follow* from God's nature, but *are* God's nature. What follows from God's essence, or nature, are the modes.³⁰⁰ Hence, the alternative, and better, reading of E1p16 is that it states that infinitely many modes (or things, but *not* attributes) follow from God's nature, and that each of these modes of God has infinitely many modes.³⁰¹ According to E1p16 my body and my mind are just

³⁰⁰ "[B]y *Natura naturata* I understand whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature, or from any of God's attributes, all the modes of God's attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God" [E1p29s].

³⁰¹ Indeed, this is exactly how Tschirnhaus understood E1p16. See his claim in Letter 65 (below) that 'each single things is expressed in infinite modes'.

two out of the infinite ways, or modes, by which a certain thing follows from God's nature.³⁰² Each way is just the very thing which follows from God's nature, as conceived under a certain attribute. Thus, for each way there must be infinite other ways which are distinguished from each other only by their attributes. Now, in E1p16 Spinoza is already committed to the view that *a distinction in attributes does not constitute a numeric distinction* (otherwise the identity of the thinking and extended substances and the substance monism (E1p14), would not hold). Hence, the infinite ways, by which each thing follows from God, must be identical with each other. In other words, *it would seem that the inter-attributes mode identity* (and consequently, the inter-attributes parallelism) *was introduced already in E 1p16 and only invoked in E 2p7s.*

We can and should inquire further about Spinoza's reasons for accepting E1p16. An adequate explication of this important question will carry us further away from our topic since it seems to be grounded in the definition of God and in the infinity of the attributes (see Spinoza's demonstration of E1p16).³⁰³

I have tried to provide here an outline of an argument which proves the mode identity thesis without relying on the ideas-things parallelism. The main advantage of this argument is that, if it is valid, it proves the identity (and, therefore, parallelism) of modes of all attributes and not only of Thought and Extension. Admittedly, this argument needs further examination and development.

³⁰² Of course, at E1p16 Spinoza cannot speak of mind-body identity because he has not proven yet that Thought and Extension are attributes, and hence, he cannot claim at that stage (in E1p16) that the difference between each body and a certain idea is merely a difference of attributes (and hence that these two items are identical). Yet, Spinoza must have accepted the underlying principle that a difference in terms of attributes does not constitute a numerical difference, since otherwise, the numerical identity of substances would be undermined.

³⁰³ Apparently, a case in which a certain mode of God is instantiated in all the attributes but one would not be consistent with the infinity of that attribute. Specifically, I think Spinoza could press for an explanation why this mode was not instantiated under the said attribute, and show that nothing within the relevant attribute can exclude the instantiation of that mode.

In this section I have argued that Spinoza had different reasons for accepting the two doctrines of parallelism, and that neither of these two doctrines can yield the other, in its full scope (yet, they do overlap in the mind-body parallelism,). It is also important to note that in E2p7s, Spinoza makes no reference to E2p7 or E2p7c, which one would expect had the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s relied on the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7.³⁰⁴ If my arguments in this section are correct, we can, I think, conclude that not only are these two doctrines of parallelism independent from each other, but also that Spinoza's reasons for holding the doctrines are different.

3.4 *The Employment of the Two Doctrines.* - An examination of Spinoza's applications of E2p7, E2p7c and E2p7d in the rest of the *Ethics*, though not very informative, is consistent and even tends to support the claim that Spinoza consciously distinguished between the two kinds of parallelism. Since almost all of the applications of these doctrines in the later parts of the *Ethics* pertain to the relation between minds and bodies, and since the parallelism between minds and bodies is a direct result of both the ideas-things parallelism and the inter-attributes parallelism, it is hard to draw any conclusions from these applications. It is, however, clear that Spinoza does not confuse the doctrines, and *he never refers to E2p7 in claiming that two parallel items are "one and the same thing"*.³⁰⁵ This point is quite important since, as I have already implied, it seems that it is only in the case of inter-attributes parallelism that parallel items are identical with each other.

One interesting case in this context is that of ideas of ideas, because in this case Spinoza relies on both E2p7 and E2p7s, but for different purposes. In E2p20d, Spinoza relies on God's omniscience (E2p3) in order to show that God has ideas of the modes of Thought, and then he

³⁰⁴ In many other places in the *Ethics* where the scholium relies on the proposition, Spinoza explicitly cites the proposition.

³⁰⁵ See, for example, E2p21s and E2P2s.

points to E2p7 and argues that these ideas are *parallel* to the first order ideas.³⁰⁶ Yet, it is only in E2p21d, and by a reference to E2p7s, that he proves the *identity* of first and higher order ideas. Note Spinoza's care not to confuse E2p7 and E2p7s. He invokes E2p7 in proving the *parallelism* between ideas of different orders, and E2p7s in proving the *identity* of ideas of different orders. This delicate employment of the two doctrines of parallelism supports my claim that the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s does not entail a parallelism between ideas of different orders, and that the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7 does not involve an identity of parallel items. It also seems to indicate that Spinoza was fully aware of the distinction between the two doctrines. Only once the parallelism between ideas of different orders is proven, relying on God's omniscience and the ideas-things parallelism, can Spinoza show the identity of different orders of ideas by invoking the inter-attributes mode identity.³⁰⁷

This might also be an appropriate place to say a few words about E2p3, where Spinoza asserts God's omniscience.³⁰⁸ The proposition itself reads:

In God there is necessarily an idea, both of his essence and of everything which necessarily follows from his essence.

³⁰⁶ In fact, Spinoza could have relied on E2p7 alone in proving the existence of ideas of ideas since ideas are things and therefore ideas too must be reflected in Thought.

³⁰⁷ Strictly speaking, this derivation could not follow since ideas of different orders do not belong to different attributes. Yet, Spinoza thinks that he can extrapolate from inter-attributes mode identity to the identity of ideas of different orders: "[I]n E2p7s... we have shown that the idea of the body and the body, that is, the mind and the body, are one and the same individual, which is conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension. So the idea of the mind and the mind itself are one and the same thing, which is conceived under one and the same attribute, namely, thought. The idea of the mind, I say, and the mind itself follow in God from the same power of thinking and by the same necessity." Whether this extrapolation is justified or not I will discuss in section 3 below.

³⁰⁸ God's omniscience is stated already in E1p16 ("From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, (i.e., everything, which can fall under an infinite intellect)"). In E2p3, Spinoza makes this point explicit, and introduces it officially.

We will discuss this doctrine later. At this point it is important to note that like the ideas-things parallelism, this proposition demands the existence of an idea for any thing in Nature, or in God.³⁰⁹ What E2p7 adds to E2p3 is that the ideas which represent all things have to share the same order as that of things.

3.5 *Summary*. - In this chapter I have argued that Spinoza had not one but two doctrines of parallelism, and that the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7 and E2p7c is a doctrine independent from the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s. Furthermore, the parallelisms claimed by each doctrine have characteristics that are not shared by the other doctrine. The ideas-things parallelism of E2p7 and E2p7c is essentially a representational parallelism, but it does not entail the identity of parallel items. The inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s stipulates that parallel items in the various attributes are identical, yet this parallelism does not involve any representational relation between items which parallel each other. I have also argued that the two doctrines are derived from different sources in the *Ethics*, and that Spinoza seems to be quite careful in not blurring the two doctrines. The temptation to merge the doctrines results from the fact that both doctrines entail the mind-body parallelism which is a major theme in books 2 through 5 of the *Ethics*, and is clearly the most visible application of both doctrines from the perspective of the human mind.

Spinoza assigns much more importance to the ideas-things parallelism than to the inter-attributes parallelism. The ideas-things parallelism appears as a proposition, and Spinoza provides an explicit justification for it in the demonstration. The inter-attributes parallelism appears in a scholium, and Spinoza provides no explicit proof for it. Furthermore, in the rest of the *Ethics*, Spinoza refers far more frequently to the ideas-things parallelism than to the inter-attributes parallelism. The fact that Spinoza assigns more importance to the ideas-things parallelism is significant because, as I have claimed at the beginning of this part, the standard

³⁰⁹ Indeed it was frequently, and I think rightly, claimed that E2p7 assumes E2p3, though Spinoza does not explicitly mention it in the demonstration of E2p7. See Bennett (*Spinoza's Ethics*, 130) and Della Rocca (*Representation*, 22)

reading of “Spinoza’s parallelism” identifies it with the (less important) inter-attributes parallelism.

If my analysis is correct, it sheds a new light on Spinoza’s pivotal doctrines of parallelism and clarifies a central aspect of Spinoza’s metaphysics, which, as far as I know, has so far been overlooked. These findings will have further implications as they will assist us in the next chapter in establishing the primacy of the attribute of thought. Already at this stage, we can have some sense as to why my interpretation of “Spinoza’s Parallelism” leads to the priority of Thought, if we pay attention to the fact that insofar as ‘things’ cover the range of all items in the substance, and ‘ideas’ cover the range of all items in Thought, the ideas-things parallelism is in fact a parallelism between the order of Thought and the order of the whole substance. This implication will be developed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE METAPHYSICS OF THOUGHT II: THE MULTIFACETED STRUCTURE OF IDEAS AND THE PRIORITY OF THOUGHT

- 4.1 The other Minds of the other Attributes
- 4.2 The Multifaceted Structure of Spinoza's Ideas
- 4.3 Ideas of Ideas, or, Thought's Crystal Palace
- 4.4 *Idea Dei*, sive, *intellectus absolute infinitus*
- 4.5 Gueroult and Joel Friedman on the Order of Ideas
- 4.6 The Priority of Thought in Spinoza's Metaphysics
- 4.7 Why Spinoza cannot be a reductive idealist.
- 4.8 Back to E1d4: What are 'Intellect' and 'Attribute'?
- 4.9 Spinoza's Dualism of Thought and Being

Following our clarification of the distinction between the two doctrines of parallelism in the previous chapter, we turn to the study of the structure of Thought and ideas in Spinoza. We will begin with the problem of our ignorance of the other attributes as it was suggested to Spinoza by von Tschirnhaus(4.1). In the part that follows (4.2), I offer a closer reading of Spinoza's response and argue that Spinozistic ideas have multifaceted structure just like the multifaceted structure of the substance and its modes. In 4.3 I address the issue of higher order ideas ("Ideas of Ideas"), and show how it is consistent with my claim about the multifaceted nature of ideas. The following part discusses the difficult issue of God's idea and of ideas of *Natura naturans*. In 4.5 I discuss two noteworthy attempts by Martial Gueroult and Joel Friedman to explain Thought's relation to the other attributes. Both these scholars suggest solutions which share some of the features of my interpretation. I will point out the places where our attitudes diverge and show why, I believe, my solution is preferable. Following a summarizing discussion of the primacy of Thought among the other attributes (4.6), I explain why Spinoza cannot embrace (reductive) idealism (4.7). In 4.8 I rely on the preceding work in order to suggest a new - and admittedly, still speculative - reading of Spinoza's definition of attribute (E1d4). In the last part of the chapter, I suggest that side by side with its radical substance monism and (equally

radical) attributes pluralism, Spinoza's philosophy constitutes a dualism of Substance (or Being) and Thought.

4.1 *The other Minds of the other Attributes.*

4.1.1 - What kind of relations and properties are said to be shared by 'ideas' and 'things' according to E2p7? At first sight, it seems that it is merely a *causal* isomorphism which E2p7 claims, since E1a4, upon which the demonstration of E2p7 relies, deals with causal relations. Yet, it is clear that Spinoza understands E2p7 to claim a parallelism between ideas and things regarding a much wider variety of relations and properties. Of such a kind are, for example, the relations of part-whole ('*x is part of y, iff the idea of x is part of the idea of y*'³¹⁰), excellency ('*x is more excellent than y, iff the idea of x is more excellent than the idea of y*'³¹¹), and the property of having duration ('*x has duration, iff the idea of x has duration*'³¹²).³¹³ While the parallelism in respect to the first two relations seems to be reducible to the parallelism of causal relations, this seems to be somewhat less clear with regard to the property of having duration.³¹⁴ Whether Spinoza is justified in extending the parallelism beyond mere causal relations and how he can justify such an extension are weighty questions which I prefer not to take up here, for the obvious reason that this digression would take us far from our main

³¹⁰ E2p15d.

³¹¹ E2p13s. Cf. the end of "general definition of the affects" at the end of part 3.

³¹² E2p8c.

³¹³ One might be tempted to think that it is only the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s which extends beyond mere causal relation. Yet, since Spinoza takes the parallelism of having duration (E2p8&c) to be a result of both E2p7 and E2p7s (each entailing it independently), this temptation must be resisted.

³¹⁴ For an attempt to derive the parallelism of the part-whole relation from causal parallelism, see Della Rocca (*Representation*, 35-6). The relation of excellency may be derived from the part-whole relation since for Spinoza the excellency of things is measured by their complexity (E2p13s).

concern. In agreement with the existing scholarship, I will take E2p7 to extend beyond mere causal relations³¹⁵ and assume that the parallelism between ideas and things extends to all relations and properties, excluding those that are peculiar to Thought and are derived from the nature of this attribute (such as having a mental content). Thus, if aRb is a relation between any two items in the substance (and aRb is not a relation peculiar to Thought), aRb obtains iff (i) $aR(i)b$ (' $i(x)$ ' being defined as the idea of x).³¹⁶ As I have noted earlier, the two sides of the biconditional are explicitly claimed by E5p1.³¹⁷

This isomorphism generates a crucial problem. Insofar as modes are things, Thought must have an idea for every mode. Since in each attribute there are infinitely many modes, and since Spinoza holds that there are infinitely many attributes, it turns out that Thought is far more populated than any other attribute; this would clearly violate the inter-attributes parallelism. While the inter-attributes parallelism claims that in every attribute we must find "one and the same order, or one

³¹⁵ See, for example, Bennett's rather vague claim (*Spinoza's Ethics*, 127): "The parallelism thesis says that if x resembles y then the idea of x resembles the idea of y , and if x causes y then the idea of x causes the idea of y ." Bennett provides no explanation as to nature of the "resemblance" at stake.

³¹⁶ I.e., the relation between a and b is not reflected in Thought by a special idea of that relation, but rather by the relation between the ideas of a and b . Given Spinoza's functional definition of an individual, or a singular thing (E2d7 and E2p13def), one may consider aRb as an individual, or as a complex unit, in which case the idea of this individual would be the composed idea whose components relate to each other just as the components of the individual relate to each other. However, a relation between modes which is abstracted from its components should fall under the category of *entia rationis*.

³¹⁷ "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things (by IIp7), and vice versa, the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas (by IIp6c and Ip7)."

and the same connection of causes,” Thought turns out to be far richer than Extension, insofar as it has a mode for any mode of extension, *and* for any mode of the other infinitely many attributes.³¹⁸

A closely related problem emerges if we pay attention to the relation between the ideas which represent modes of different attributes. If Thought represents all the modes of all the attributes, then Thought will be populated by infinitely many infinite chains of ideas, so that each chain represents all the modes of a given attribute. How are these infinite chains of ideas related to each other? - Are they causally and conceptually related to each other? Whatever answer we give to these questions, we run into a problem.³¹⁹ If the chains of ideas of modes of attribute *A* are causally connected to the chains of ideas of modes of attribute *B*, then so should their *ideata*, i.e., the modes of *A* and *B*. This would definitively ruin the causal and conceptual separation of the attributes. If the two infinite chains of ideas are causally and conceptually separate from each other, it would seem that we have not one but two attributes of thought, or, in other words, it would not be clear why we should assume that these independent and infinite chains of ideas belong to the same attribute.³²⁰

³¹⁸ Compare with Curley’s note to E2p9c (C 450. n. 9): “Spinoza is not very explicit on this point in the *Ethics*, but it seems from other works that we are to assume a distinct idea in thought for every mode of every other attribute, with the result that the attribute of thought appears to be ‘more extensive’ than the other attributes.” Cf. Allison (*Benedict de Spinoza*, 232 n. 5) and Donagan (*Spinoza*, 119).

³¹⁹ Cf. Curley, *Spinoza’s Metaphysics*, 145-6: “[T]he attribute of thought has a peculiar status. Each alternative description of the world will generate, not one, but a pair of attributes. For every time we reconstruct the facts which make up the totality of facts, we get a new set of propositions corresponding to those facts. The result is that we shall have to say either (1) that the attribute of thought is coextensive with all of the other attributes combined, or (2) that just as there is an attribute of thought corresponding to the attribute of extension, so there are infinitely many other attributes of thought corresponding to some one of the other unknown attributes.... Neither of these pictures is the one we should expect”.

³²⁰ Curley, Gueroult (*Spinoza II*, 46), Deleuze (*Expressionism*, 124) and Matheron (*Individu*, 31) accept the latter alternative, and rightly so (see Letter 66 quoted below). Yet, they do not explain what makes the infinite chains of ideas belong to one, rather than infinite, attributes. The solution I will shortly suggest will fill this gap.

Fortunately, these problems - though from a slightly different perspective - were raised by one of Spinoza's most acute correspondents, Baron Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus, and it is this dialogue between Spinoza and Tschirnhaus which is the subject of the current part of the chapter.³²¹ Our good fortune, however, is still limited since the exchange between Tschirnhaus and Spinoza, and especially Spinoza's replies to Tschirnhaus, are some of the most difficult and enigmatic texts of Spinoza.

4.1.2 - In E2a5, Spinoza claims that

We neither feel nor perceive any singular things [NS: or anything of *Natura naturata*], except bodies and modes of thinking.

It is this limitation of human knowledge to modes of Extension and Thought which bothers Tschirnhaus. On the 25th of July 1675, G.H. Schuller, a friend of both Spinoza and Tschirnhaus, sent to Spinoza a letter in which he forwards a number of questions by Tschirnhaus. The first of these questions is the following:

Would you, Sir, please convince him [Tschirnhaus] by a positive proof, and not by *reductio ad absurdum*,³²² that we cannot know any more attributes of God than Thought and Extension? Further, does it follow from this that creatures constituted by other attributes cannot on their side have any idea of Extension? If so, it would seem that there must be constituted as many worlds as there are attributes of God... And just as we perceive apart from Thought, only Extension, so the creatures of those worlds must perceive nothing but their own world's attribute, and Thought.

(Letter 63)³²³

³²¹ On Tschirnhaus see Georges Friedman (*Leibniz et Spinoza*, 71-2), Jonathan Israel (*Radical Enlightenment*, 637-41), C.A. van Peursen ("E.W. von Tschirnhaus and the *Arts Inveniendi*") and E. Winter (*E.W. Tschirnhaus und die Frühaufklärung in Mittel und Osteuropa*)

³²² It is intriguing what is the *reductio* proof which Tschirnhaus has in mind here (if he was indeed relating to a specific proof, rather than expressing dissatisfaction with certain kind of proofs Spinoza was using). I am not aware of any convincing explanation of this brief note.

³²³ Tschirnhaus was one of the most important correspondents of the early Leibniz. The similarity between Tschirnhaus's claim that the infinite attributes constitute infinite worlds, and the possible worlds theory Leibniz was just

Four days later, Spinoza replies,

[T]he human mind can acquire knowledge only of those things which the idea of an actually existing body involves, or what can be inferred from this idea. For the power of any thing is defined solely by its essence (E3p7), and the essence of the mind consists (E2p13) solely in its being an idea of an actually existing body. Therefore the mind's power of understanding extends only as far as that which this idea of the body contains within itself, or which follows therefrom. Now this idea of the body involves and expresses no other attribute of God than Extension and Thought. For its ideate [*ideatum*], to wit, the body (E2p6) has God for its cause insofar as he is considered under the attribute of Extension, and not under any other attribute. So (E1a6)³²⁴ this idea of the body involves knowledge of God only insofar as he is considered under the attribute of extension. Again, this idea, insofar as it is a mode of thinking, also has God for its cause insofar as he is a thinking thing, and not insofar as he is considered under any other attribute [E2p6]. Therefore the idea of this idea involves knowledge of God insofar as he is considered under the

about to develop, is quite intriguing. Both Tschirnhaus and Leibniz relativize the notion of a 'world'. As it will be seen from Spinoza's reply to Tschirnhaus in Letter 64, Spinoza understands the notion of 'world' in a much more conservative way, and rules out the possibility of 'other worlds.' For an informative discussion of this topic and of the Spinoza-Tschirnhaus-Leibniz triangle, see Kulstad ("Leibniz, Spinoza, and Tschirnhaus: Metaphysics à Trois, 1675-1676"). There is one sense in which Spinoza allows for the existence of non-actual things; traces of this view can be found in E2p8 and its corollary, but this difficult text deserves a detailed discussion of its own.

³²⁴ It is not clear how E1a6 ("A true idea must agree with its object") is relevant to the issue at stake. Perhaps what Spinoza had here in mind is that insofar as the object of the idea of a body (namely, the body) is caused only by extended things, the true idea of the body (and all of God's ideas are true) must agree with its object by involving only ideas of extended things. Alternatively, the reference to E1a6 could have been a printing error, and the original reference might have been to E2p6, ("The modes of each attribute have God for their cause only insofar as he is considered under the attribute of which they are modes, and not insofar as he is considered under any other attribute"). Though the second suggestion accords perfectly with the context of the citation, I tend to prefer the first because given the careful editorial work performed by the OP editors, I believe we should emend the text only as a last resort. Also, the second citation of E1a6 in Letter 64 (a few lines below) seems somewhat more in line with the first suggestion. If we accept the first suggestion, E1a6 turns to be a much more significant text than how it is commonly considered to be. Under this reading it appears to be the first statement in the *Ethics* of the ideas-things parallelism.

attribute of thought, and not under any other attribute [E1a6]. It is thus clear that the human mind - i.e., the idea of the human body - involves and expresses no other attributes of God except these two. Now [by E1p10³²⁵], *no other attribute of God can be inferred or conceived from these two attributes [nullum aliud Dei attributum concludi, neque concipi potest]*, or from their affection. So I conclude that the human mind can attain knowledge of no other attribute of God than these two, which was the point at issue. With regard to your further question as to whether there must therefore be constituted as many worlds as there are attributes, I refer you to the Scholium on Proposition 7, II of the *Ethis*. [Letter 64. Italics mine].

In this passage Spinoza claims that the human mind is nothing but the idea of the (human) body. More importantly, Spinoza makes clear that from ideas of bodies we cannot derive knowledge, or ideas, of any other attributes other than Thought and Extension. Spinoza justifies the last claim by pointing to the conceptual separation of the attributes (E1p10). Spinoza's invoking of E1p10 in the context of our possibility of having knowledge or ideas of other attributes seems to imply that not only modes of different attributes are separate from each other, but also *ideas of modes of different attributes* - though belonging to the *same* attribute - *are separate from each other*. This interesting point will become explicit in Spinoza's next letter. Note that Spinoza's reply to Tschirnhaus provides an explanation for the in principle *impossibility* of knowing modes of other attributes just as Tschirnhaus requested.³²⁶

³²⁵ In Shirley's translation, which I quote here, Spinoza refers to E2p10, rather than to E1p10. This seems to be a mistake since E2p10, which reads "the being of substance does not pertain to the essence of man, or substance does not constitute the form of man," is irrelevant to the current issue. E1p10, which states the conceptual separation of the attributes, fits the text perfectly. Gebhardt's edition mentions E1p10 in this place (IV/278/3), and his notes to the letter (p. 424) do not mention special difficulty in the original Latin or Dutch editions. The same is the case with the Van Vloten and Land edition. Finally, I have checked Yale's library copy of the *Opera Posthuma* and it also has E1p10 in this place (p. 592).

³²⁶ "The inconceivability of those attributes which escape us is not simply a truth of fact, but rather a truth of reason, deduced *a priori* from the adequate idea of God's essence" (Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, 46).

On his side, Tschirnhaus seems to be unsatisfied with Spinoza's reply, and presents Spinoza with an excellent objection. If my mind knows my body, and my body is identical with a mode of the third attribute (as Spinoza claims in E2p7s), i.e., they are "one and the same thing," how can I know my body and yet be completely ignorant of the corresponding mode in the third attribute?

Will you please let me have a proof of your assertion that the soul [*animu*] cannot perceive any more attributes of God than Extension and Thought. Although I can understand this quite clearly, yet I think that the contrary can be deduced from the Scholium or Proposition 7, Part II of the *Ethics*... Although I do indeed gather from your text that the world is one, it is also no less clear therefrom that the world is expressed in infinite modes, and that therefore each single thing is expressed in infinite modes. Hence it seems to follow that, although the particular modification which constitutes my mind and the particular modification which expresses my body are one and the same modification, this is expressed in infinite modes - in one mode through thought, in another through extension, in a third through some attribute of God unknown to me, and so to infinity. For there are infinite attributes of God, and the order and connection of their modification seems to be the same in all cases. Hence there now arises the question as to why the mind, which represents a particular modification - which same modification is expressed not only by extension but by infinite other modes ³²⁷ - why, I ask, does the mind perceive only the particular modification expressed through extension, that is, the human body, and not any other expression through other attributes? (Letter 65).

To this question Spinoza replies:

... However, in reply to your objection, I say that although each thing is expressed in infinite modes in the infinite intellect of God, the infinite ideas in which it is expressed cannot constitute one and the same mind of a singular thing [*unam eandemque rei singularis Mentem*], but a infinity of minds. For *each of these infinite ideas has no connection with the others* [*quandoque unaquaeque harum infinitarum idearum nullam connexionem invicem habent*], as I have explained in that same Scholium to Proposition 7, Part II of the *Ethics*, and as is evident from Proposition 10, Part I. If you give a little attention to these, you will see that no difficulty remains, etc. (Letter 66. Italics added).

³²⁷ Tschirnhaus is confusing here attributes and modes (something that Descartes to tend to do occasionally as well).

Commenting on this, and the previous, letters, Jonathan Bennett writes: “In the two late letters he tries to avoid this conclusion [that we must know modes of the third attribute, if such an attribute exists] by a move which is so abrupt, ad hoc, and unexplained that we cannot even be sure whether it is a retraction of the metaphysics or of the epistemology.”³²⁸ Joachim’s judgement, though less harsh and self-confident, seems to be utterly desperate: “Nobody has yet succeeded in elucidating Spinoza’s reply[to Tschirnhaus in] Letter 66.”³²⁹

One point which we must note in regard to the last letter is that it is apparently only a remaining fragment of a longer letter (my quote contains the remaining text in its entirety).³³⁰ But this still does not help us answer the crucial questions raised by the existing content. How can a thing be “expressed in infinite modes in the infinite intellect of God?” Why do the infinite ideas, which are the infinite expression of the same thing, have no connection with each other? Why can the infinite ideas of a singular thing not constitute “one and the same mind” of that thing? How are these infinite ideas related to God’s infinite intellect? And, finally, how does Spinoza derive his claims from E1p10 (the conceptual barrier) and E2p7s (the inter-attributes modes identity)? We may add a further question regarding Letter 64: what exactly was Spinoza’s reply to Tschirnhaus’s suggestion that there are “as many worlds as there are attributes of God”?

Apparently, Tschirnhaus was not satisfied with Spinoza’s answer, and he tries to address the same issue from a slightly different angle:

The second cause which has prevented me from following his explanation as set out is this, that in this way the attribute of Thought is given a much wider scope than the other attributes. Now since

³²⁸ Bennett, *Spinoza’s Ethics*, 78.

³²⁹ Joachim, *Spinoza’s Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*, 76 n. 1.

³³⁰ Joachim, *Spinoza’s Tractatus*, 76 n. 1. Cf. Errol E. Harris, *Infinity of Attributes*, 10.

See Pollock, *Spinoza*, 160. The original letter is lost. The existing text appears as Letter 68 of the *Opera Posthuma*. See Gebhardt’s notes to this letter (IV/424).

each of the attributes constitutes the essence of God, I fail to see how the one thing does not contradict the other. (Letter 70)

Tschirnhaus's objection is clearly appropriate. If the infinite ideas which represent all bodies are not connected to the infinite ideas which represent all the modes of the third attribute, it would seem that Thought has more modes (i.e., ideas) than Extension. In fact, insofar as Thought has infinitely many infinite chains of ideas, representing all the modes of the infinitely many attributes, it would seem that Thought is infinitely more extensive than any other attribute.

Unfortunately, however, Tschirnhaus prefaced this good objection by another objection which is based on a misunderstanding of E2p5. Most likely, this misunderstanding resulted from a textual corruption in Tschirnhaus's manuscript of the *Ethics* (or from a mistake in Schuller's report of Tschirnhaus's objection). This allowed Spinoza to answer Tschirnhaus's first question (regarding E2p5) by pointing out the error in Tschirnhaus's text, and avoid the far more important second question.³³¹

There is one more important issue in Letter 70, which is relevant to our inquiry. In Letter 70, Tschirnhaus asks Spinoza's consent to "have Spinoza's writings communicated to Leibniz" with whom Tschirnhaus has recently struck up a friendship.³³² Spinoza, being extremely cautious at this period of his life, refused to grant this consent, as long as Tschirnhaus did not know Leibniz long enough to be able to trust him and be assured of his open minded views.³³³ As we shall soon see, Tschirnhaus did not keep his commitment to Spinoza and shared with Leibniz his knowledge of the *Ethics*. Indeed, one of the more important sources which will help us clarify the doctrines Spinoza expresses in letters 64 and 66 is Leibniz's report on a conversation he had with Tschirnhaus about Spinoza's philosophy.

³³¹ Letter 72. Shirley 330.

³³² Shirley 327.

4.2 *The Multifaceted Structure of Spinoza's Ideas*

4.2.1 Here is how I suggest we reconstruct the exchange between Tschirnhaus and Spinoza. First, we will assign numbers to each of the attributes. Extension will be the first attribute, Thought, the second, and in a similar way we will assign numbers to all the other infinite attributes, which are unknown to human beings. Now, let N_1 be the body of Napoleon, N_2 be Napoleon's mind (i.e., the idea of his body) and N_3 be a mode of attribute 3 (unknown to human beings), which is identical with N_1 . Tschirnhaus argues against Spinoza that if:

(1) N_1 (Napoleon's body) is identical with N_3 .

and

(2) N_2 (Napoleon's mind) is the idea of N_1 .

Then:

(3) N_2 must also be the idea of N_3 (insofar as $N_1 = N_3$)

Spinoza's answer to this argument is that the idea of N_1 (Napoleon's mind), and the idea of N_3 (the mind of mode N_3) are conceptually independent from one another, i.e., instead of having one single idea N_2 , we have infinite N_2 ideas: N_2^1 (the idea of N_1), N_2^3 (the idea of N_3), N_2^4 (the idea of N_4 , a mode of attribute 4 which is identical with Napoleon's body), and so ad infinitum. N_2^1 and N_2^3 are taken by Spinoza as separate minds which have "no connection with each other" though they are both modes of Thought. Since a similar consideration would hold for any other mode of extension, it seems that the picture we get is of Thought containing infinitely many infinite chains of modes. Each chain represents the modes of another attribute, and each chain is conceptually and causally separate from all other chains. To put it a bit more rigorously, if ' X_2^y ' is the schema of modes of Thought so that ' X ' (in the first position from the left) denotes the relevant trans-attribute particular, ' 2 ' (in the second position from the left) designates that it is an idea, or a mode of

Thought, and 'y' designates the attribute under which the *object* of the relevant idea is instantiated (Extension (=1), Thought (=2), etc.), then all the ideas which share the same 'y number' are parts of a single chain. The conceptual and causal separation *within* Thought would simply mean that ideas with different 'y numbers' are causally and conceptually separate.

4.2.2 What is the relation between ideas which share the same X number (e.g., the mind of Napoleon's body, and the mind of N₃)? - The answer to this question might seem surprising at first: these ideas are causally and conceptually separate from each other, and thus, they are... *identical*. In the same way that the body of Napoleon and N₃ are *one and the same thing* conceived under different attributes (or two aspects of the same mode of God), so are the idea of Napoleon's body and the idea of N₃ *one and the same idea* (in God), reflecting modes of different attributes. *God's idea of mode N seems to have the same multifaceted nature as N itself.*

The doctrine of parallelism [E2p7] stipulates that *things* and *ideas* share the same order. N₁, N₂, N₃,...N_n... (the various expressions of N under all attributes) are *things* which have a very specific order: they are conceptually and causally independent from each other, and are one and the same *thing* expressed under different attributes. E2p7 stipulates that the order of the *ideas* of N₁, N₂, N₃,...N_n... is the same as the order of these things themselves: these ideas are conceptually and causally independent from each other, and are one and the same *idea* representing things expressed under different attributes. N is instantiated in all the attributes, or in other words, N₁, N₂, N₃,...N_n are the infinite *aspects* of N (each aspect being conceived under another attribute). Similarly, God's idea of N consists of infinitely many idea-aspects, each of which reflects N as conceived under another attribute.³³⁴

³³⁴ We may even say that these infinitely many idea-aspects (i.e., N₂¹, N₂², N₂³,...) - which reflect the infinite instantiations of N in all the attributes (i.e., N₁, N₂, N₃,...) - are just infinite *modifications* of N₂, the comprehensive idea of N in God's mind. This interpretation is also suggested by Gueroult (Spinoza II, 84). See part 6 of this chapter.

At this point we may need a short clarification. Recall that in Chapter 2 (2.3) we saw that Spinoza's use of the term 'mode' is equivocal insofar as it designates both modes of a specific attribute, and modes of God (i.e., modes under *all* attributes).³³⁵ Similarly Spinoza uses the term 'an idea of mode x' as relating both to ideas of modes under specific attributes, and to ideas of modes of God (being under all attributes). In order to retain the distinction between ideas of modes of God and ideas of modes under specific attributes, I will try from now on to call the latter 'idea-aspects', while the former will be simply 'ideas'.³³⁶ Thus, $X_2^1, X_2^2, X_2^3 \dots X_2^n$ are the ideas-aspects of the idea X_2 . Yet, in some cases (such as 'the idea of Napoleon's body', rather than 'the idea-aspect of Napoleon's body', which is quite confusing) it will be preferable not to stick to this terminological distinction.

We will soon turn to the examination of some textual support which will show that Spinoza's claims in Letters 64 and 66 were not a result of temporary insanity as some commentators take them to be. But, before we turn to that task, it might be helpful to see how our interpretation answers the questions regarding Letter 66, raised in the previous section.

4.2.3 I. *How can a thing be "expressed in infinite modes in the infinite intellect of God"?* N, a mode of God, is expressed, or instantiated, under all attributes. In the above sentence, Spinoza is claiming that N_2 , the idea of N - as it is in God - has infinitely many aspects (or perhaps even infinitely many modes) just like the multifaceted structure of N itself. Spinoza stresses that the idea of N has infinitely many aspects only in God's infinite intellect which conceives N under all the attributes. The idea of N, as it is in the human mind which knows only modes of Thought and Extension, is

³³⁵ See 2.3. In some cases Spinoza calls the trans-attributes modes (i.e., God's modes) 'things'. Yet, this is not always the case. See, for example, E1d5 and E1p4 where Spinoza refers the trans-attribute modes simply as 'modes'. This point is also noted by Joel Friedman ("Spinoza's Problem of Other Minds", 103).

³³⁶ I am indebted to Bob Adams for suggesting to me the 'idea-aspect' terminology.

limited to only two aspects of God's idea of N: the idea of N under Extension (N_2^1) and the idea of that idea.³³⁷

II. *Why do the infinite ideas, which are the infinite expressions of the same thing, have no connection with each other?*

Just as $N_1, N_2, N_3, \dots, N_n$, which are the various expressions of N under all attributes have no -causal or conceptual - connection with each other, so too $N_2^1, N_2^2, N_2^3, \dots, N_2^n$, which are the ideas of these things, have to have no - causal or conceptual - connection with each other (according to E2p7).³³⁸

Thus, in addition to the causal and conceptual separation of the attributes, there is a parallel barrier *within* Thought which separates ideas of different attributes.³³⁹

III. *Why can the infinite ideas of a singular thing not constitute "one and the same mind" of that thing?*

$N_2^1, N_2^2, N_2^3, \dots, N_2^n$ are the infinite aspects of N_2 (God's idea of N). They do not constitute "one and the same mind of a singular thing" because the mind of a mode (i.e., a singular thing) is only one of these infinite aspects of God's idea of N. These infinite aspects constitute God's idea of N, but not any kind of *divine mind* of N (which would, as it were, conceive N under all attributes) because for Spinoza the term '*mens*' connotes finitude, which cannot be ascribed to God. Throughout his writings Spinoza never uses the term '*mens Dei*'. Indeed, in the TTP, Spinoza explicitly criticizes scriptural reference to God's mind, claiming that this is a mere anthropomorphism.³⁴⁰ In the *Ethics*,

³³⁷ As we shall see in the next part, N_2^2 , the idea of the idea of N, has infinitely many aspects as well. The idea of the idea of N_1 (i.e., the idea of Napoleon's mind) is just one out of the infinitely many aspects of N_2^2 .

³³⁸ See, however, section 4.2.6 below for a mild moderation of the conceptual barrier between aspects of the same idea.

³³⁹ See Deleuze (*Expressionism*, 124) for a similar point.

³⁴⁰ "[S]ince Scripture, in concession to the frailty of the multitude, is wont to depict God in the likeness of man and to attribute to him mind, heart, emotions, and even body and breath, the Spirit of God is often used in the Bible to mean the mind, disposition, emotion, strength and breath of God... The Spirit of God may also mean, as we have seen, the

Spinoza does attribute ‘intellect’ to God,³⁴¹ and we may wonder why an infinite being can have an intellect but not a mind. Though Spinoza never addresses this question explicitly I think he considered the term ‘mind’ to include mental operations such as imagination, which cannot be ascribed to God due to its distorting nature.³⁴²

Thus, the infinite ideas of a singular thing do not constitute “one and the same mind” because it is only the idea of N in a *finite* intellect that constitutes a mind (N_2^1 , the idea of Napoleon’s body, is Napoleon’s mind (i.e., N_1 ’s mind), and N_2^3 , the idea of N_3 , is N_3 ’s mind).

IV. *How are the infinite ideas related to God’s infinite intellect?*

$N_2^1, N_2^2, N_2^3, \dots, N_2^n$ are infinite idea-aspects of N_2 , the idea of N in God’s intellect. Like N_2 , every idea in God’s absolutely infinite intellect has infinitely many aspects, each of which represents N under a different attribute. Note, that God’s idea (which, as I will later show, is identical with God’s absolutely infinite intellect) is infinite in two distinct respects: (1) it is composed of infinitely many ideas (which represent all of God’s modes), and (2) each of these ideas has infinitely many aspects.

breath of God; for breath, too, just like mind, heart and body is incorrectly attributed to God” (*Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter 1, pp. 18-19). Cf. E1p15s where Spinoza criticizes “those who feign a God, like man, consisting of a body and a mind, and subject to passions”. Leibniz was clearly aware of Spinoza’s view that mind cannot be ascribed to God. See Adams, *Leibniz*, 126. Cf. Letter 2 (Shirley 63) where Spinoza criticizes Bacon and claims that Bacon “frequently takes intellect for mind.”

³⁴¹ See, however, Letter 54 (Shirley 268): “I, too, to avoid confusing the divine nature with human nature, do not ascribe to God human attributes – will, intellect, attention, hearing, etc.” The letter belongs to Spinoza’s late period (end of 1674), and thus cannot be explained away as an immature text. Perhaps, what Spinoza had in mind in this letter is that intellect does not belong to God’s essence or nature. This would leave open the possibility of intellect belonging to *natura naturata*, as E1p31 claims.

³⁴² Cf. *Cogitata Metaphysica* II, x [I/270/3-4], where Spinoza stresses a closely related distinction between the passivity of human thought against the pure activity of God’s thought: “We do not ascribe to God a thought such as ours, i.e., susceptible of being acted on, and being limited by the nature of things, but one that is pure act.”

Each idea-aspect is also a part of an infinite chain of idea-aspects which represent all the modes of a certain attribute.³⁴³ Thus, N_2^1 , J_2^1 (the idea of Josephine's body), and R_2^1 (the idea of Robespierre's body) are all parts of an infinite chain of idea-aspects within the attribute of thought. The current chain is the chain of all idea-aspects which represent all extended things (or the minds of all the bodies³⁴⁴). N_2^3 , J_2^3 (the idea of the mode of the third attribute which is identical with Josephine's body), and R_2^3 (the idea of the mode of the third attribute which is identical with Robespierre's body) are part of the infinite chain of idea-aspects which represent all things under the third attribute. These infinite chains of ideas are causally and conceptually independent from each other just like their *ideata*. Each infinite chain of idea-aspects is an aspect of God's absolutely infinite intellect, just as each infinite chain of *things* under a specific attribute is an expression (or an aspect) of the infinite chain of God's modes (being under all attributes). Thus, God's absolutely infinite intellect is isomorphic with God himself.³⁴⁵ We will return to the elaborated structure of God's infinite intellect when we discuss God's idea of himself (which is God's intellect) in part 5 below.

V. How does Spinoza derive his claims in Letter 66 from E 1p10 and E 2p7s?

E1p10 stipulates the conceptual separation of the attributes. E2p7s claims that paralleling modes of different attributes are identical with each other. Now, both E1p10 and E2p7s constitute a certain order in the substance. In Letter 66, Spinoza says that these two stipulations should also hold with regard to *representations* of modes from different attributes. Minds of modes of different attributes have no – causal or conceptual - connection with each other (this is the reflection within Thought of E1p10). The minds of N under different attributes, i.e., the ideas of modes which parallel and are

³⁴³ Cf. Pollock (*Spinoza*, 161), Gueroult (*Spinoza II*, 46) and Matheron (*Individu*, 31).

³⁴⁴ With the exception of the idea-aspect which represents the whole extended universe, which is a body as well (an infinite mode of Extension). Yet, its idea cannot be a mind insofar as it is infinite.

identical with each other, constitute one and the same idea in God's intellect (this is the reflection in Thought of the order constituted by E2p7s).

VI. *What exactly was Spinoza's reply in letter 64 to Tschirnhaus's suggestion that there are "as many worlds as there are attributes of God?"*

If ideas of modes of different attributes "have no connection with each other," one might think that each attribute and its representation in Thought (i.e., the infinite chain of idea-aspects which represent it) constitute a separate world. Thus, N_1, J_1, R_1 , and the rest of bodies together with their representations in Thought (N_2^1, J_2^1, R_2^1 , etc.) would constitute one world: the world of bodies and their minds. Similarly, N_3, J_3, R_3 , and the rest of the modes of the third attribute together with their representations (N_2^3, J_2^3, R_2^3 , etc.) would constitute another world; the world of modes of the third attributes and their minds. It seems that the reason why Tschirnhaus was tempted to conceive the pair of each attribute and its representation in Thought as a separate world was the strong separation between the minds of modes of different attributes. If minds of modes of different attributes are not accessible to each other, one might think that these minds (and their object) belong to different worlds. Spinoza's only objection to this description was that it fails to recognize that N under the various attributes is still "one and the same thing," that the attributes are only different ways to conceive one and the same world.³⁴⁶ In order to make this point clear, Spinoza asks Tschirnhaus to consult E2p7s which states that parallel modes under different attributes are "one and the same thing", and thus, belong to one and the same world.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ In 4.4 I will address several possible objections to this last claim, and provide further textual support for it.

³⁴⁶ "We said that although Nature has different attributes, it is nevertheless only one unique Being, of which all these attributes are predicated" (*Short Treatise*, II xx §4 [G I/97/11 | C 137]). Cf. Lewis Robinson, *Kommentar zu Spinozas Ethik*, 282.

³⁴⁷ This claim makes clear that Spinoza takes 'world' in strict ontological terms.

4.2.4 I turn now to provide textual support that corroborates the following two claims of Spinoza in Letters 64 and 66:

(1) The modes of the unknown attributes have ideas which are their minds, just as the idea of our body is the mind of our body, and,

(2) Minds, or ideas, of modes of different attributes have “no connection with each other.”

By showing that Spinoza held both doctrines throughout his writings, I wish to block any attempt to disqualify Letters 63-66 as eccentric texts which have nothing to do with the core of Spinoza’s metaphysics. After I accomplish this task, I will turn to provide textual support for the even stronger claim:

(3) If A and B are the same mode of God being conceived under different attributes, then the idea of A is also identical with the idea of B; the ideas of A and B are just two aspects of the same idea in God’s intellect (just as A and B are two aspects of the same mode of God).

In the following passage from *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, Spinoza commits himself only to (2). The passage relies on the parallelism between things and ideas (“objective essences”) in order to conclude that things do not interact with each other iff their ideas do not interact with each other.

[T]he idea is objectively in the same way as its object is really. So if there were something in Nature that did not interact with other things, and if there were an objective essence of that thing which would have to agree completely with its formal essence, then that objective essence would not interact with other ideas, i.e., we could not infer anything about it. And conversely, those things that do interact with other things (as everything that exists in Nature does) will be understood, and their objective essences will also have the same interaction, i.e., other ideas will be deduced from them, and these again will interact with other ideas.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁸ TdIE § 41 [G II/16/27-17/1 | C 20]. Note that the subject of this passage is not the issue of the ideas of the unknown attributes. Yet, it clearly commits Spinoza to the position that ideas of modes of different attributes do not interact with each other.

The next passage, from the *Short Treatise*, claims explicitly that modes of attributes, other than extension, also have a ‘soul’ (which seems to mean the same as ‘mind’ in the other texts).

[T]he essence of the soul [*dan zoo*] consists only in the being of an Idea, or objective essence, in the thinking attribute, arising from the essence of an object which in fact exists in Nature. I say *of an object that really exists*, etc., without further particulars, in order to include here not only the modes of extension, but also the modes of all the infinite attributes, which have a soul just as much as those of extension do.³⁴⁹

A few paragraphs below Spinoza concludes his discussion of the nature of the soul, and repeats the claim that modes of the unknown attributes also have a soul.

This is why we have used these words in the definition, that *the soul is an Idea arising from an object which exists in Nature*. And with this we consider that we have sufficiently explained what kind of thing the soul is in general, understanding by this expression not only the Ideas that arise from corporeal modes, but also those that arise from the existence of each mode of the remaining attributes.³⁵⁰

The most intriguing point about Spinoza’s discussion of the other attributes in the *Short Treatise* is that in this text Spinoza is *not* certain that we cannot know any attributes other than Thought and Extension. In a famous note at the beginning of the *Treatise* he says;

After the preceding reflection on Nature *we have not yet* been able to find in it more than two attributes that belong to this all-perfect being. And these give us nothing by which we can satisfy

³⁴⁹ KV Appendix II, § 9 [G I/119/6-13 | C 154]. In an editorial note to this passage, Edwin Curley writes: “This suggests that as early as the *Short Treatise* Spinoza conceived of thought as coextensive with all other attributes, and hence more ‘extensive’ than any other taken singly - i.e., that what some have seen as a damaging admission made in response to the criticism of Tschirnhaus was an acknowledged part of the theory all along” [C 154, n. 5]. I think Curley is making here a very important historical point, though, unlike Curley, I believe the problem of the wider extension of Thought is solvable by the identification of paralleling ideas of modes of different attributes, and that most likely this was also Spinoza’s position.

³⁵⁰ KV, Appendix II, § 12 [G I/120/1-6 | C 155]. Cf. KV II, xxii [G I/101/15 | C 139]: “[T]here can be nothing in Nature of which there is not an idea in the soul of the same thing.”

ourselves that these would be the only ones of which this perfect being would consist. On the contrary, we find in ourselves something which openly indicates to us not only that there are more, but also that there are infinite perfect attributes which must pertain to this perfect being before it can be called perfect. (Italics mine) ³⁵¹

This tentativeness of our ignorance of other attributes seems to be related to another peculiar feature of the *Treatise*. It is well known that in the *Treatise* the barrier between the attributes is much weaker than in the *Ethics* (if it exists at all);³⁵² in various places in the *Treatise*, Spinoza takes ideas to be caused by their objects.³⁵³ Now, once we undermine the barrier between the attributes, we cannot be sure any more that one attribute cannot be conceived through another. And thus, the possibility that at some point in time we could gain knowledge of other attributes through our knowledge of Extension and Thought turns out to be no longer blocked.

The next texts I wish to consider are some notes written by Leibniz following a conversation he had with Tschirnhaus about the doctrines of the *Ethics*.

He [Spinoza] thinks that there are infinite other positive attributes besides thought and extension. But in all of them there is thought, as here [in this world] there is in extension. What they are like is not conceivable by us; every one is infinite in its own kind, like space here [in this world].³⁵⁴

Putat infinita alia esse attributa affirmativa praeter cogitationem et extensionem, sed in omnibus esse cogitationem ut hic in extensione; qualia autem sint illa a nobis concipi non posse, unumquodque in suo genere esse infinitum, ut hic spatium. ³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ KV I, i note d [G I/17/35-43 | C 63-4].

³⁵² See Della Rocca, *Representation*, 12, 100. In the *Short Treatise* (and in his other early writings), Spinoza is much closer to Descartes, who maintain a less rigorous distinction between the attributes. Cf. Donagan, *Spinoza's Dualism*, 101.

³⁵³ See, for example, the two passages just cited from Appendix II where Spinoza claims that the soul 'arises' from its object.

³⁵⁴ Pollock, *Spinoza*, 161. The translation is by Pollock. I slightly amended his translation by replacing 'in this world' by 'here', which is more loyal to the Latin '*hic*'.

There is a clear similarity between these notes of Leibniz and Tschirnhaus's claims in Letters 63 and 65.³⁵⁶ Both understand Thought to be preeminent to the extent that it has ideas which correspond to each of the attributes, and both understand the pair of any extra-Thought attribute together with its representation in Thought to constitute a separate world or realm (note Leibniz's use of the demonstrative "like space here"). And finally, both Leibniz and Tschirnhaus understand Spinoza as claiming that these 'worlds' are not accessible to each other. Thus, Leibniz too understands Spinoza as claiming that (1) modes of other attributes have ideas, and (2) these ideas are separate from each other.³⁵⁷

As I have already claimed, Spinoza's only reservation about this description of his views is that he does not accept Tschirnhaus's rather weak understanding of the term 'world', and that he denies the existence of any plurality of worlds.³⁵⁸ Yet, since these notes are mediated through the interpretations of both Tschirnhaus and Leibniz one may, reasonably, demand that we should treat them cautiously. We will therefore turn to a text that undoubtedly attests to Spinoza's views, the *Ethics*.

Proposition 13 of part two of the *Ethics* reads,

³⁵⁵ Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften*, 6th Series, Volume 3, 385 (lines 12-15).

³⁵⁶ According to the Academy editors, the notes were written sometime between October 1675 and February 1676, probably at the end of this period. This makes them later than Letter 66 (dated August 1675) and probably later than Letters 70 (Tschirnhaus to Spinoza through Schuller, undated, but apparently from October-November 1675) and 72 (Spinoza's reply, dated November 1675).

³⁵⁷ Of course, that Leibniz understood Spinoza in a way very similar to Tschirnhaus is not a surprise, because at this point in time most of his knowledge of the *Ethics* came through Tschirnhaus.

³⁵⁸ For a discussion of this issue and its relation to the emergence of Leibniz's theory of possible worlds, see Kulstad (*Metaphysics à Trois*, 226-34).

The object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the [/a] Body, or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and nothing else [*Objectum ideae, humanam Mentem constituentis, est Corpus, sive certus Extensionis modus actu existens, et nihil aliud*]

In other words this proposition attempts to exclude two cases: (1) that the object of the human mind is a something other than the body, and (2) that the object of the human mind is the body *and* some other thing too. But what is this ‘*aliud*’, or, ‘other thing’ of which Spinoza attempts to prove its inability to constitute the object of the human mind? There seem to be two main ways to read this passage: either it attempts to exclude a situation in which the human mind has ideas of other bodies, or it attempts to exclude a case where the objects of the human mind are modes, other than bodies, i.e., modes of other attributes. It may also be the case (and I think it is the case) that Spinoza uses this proposition for both purposes (whether justly or not). In the following, I will limit myself to showing that in this proposition the exclusion of modes of other attributes was at least part of Spinoza’s intention.³⁵⁹ Here is how Spinoza proves this proposition:

Dem.: For if the object of the human Mind were not the Body, the ideas of the affections of the Body would not be in God (by P9C) insofar as he constituted our Mind, but insofar as he constituted the mind of another thing, i.e. (by P11C), the ideas of the affections of the Body would not be in our Mind; but (by A4) we have ideas of the affections of the body. Therefore, the object of the idea that constitutes the human Mind is the Body, and it (by P11) actually exists.

Next, if the object of the Mind were something else also, in addition to the Body, then since (by IP36) nothing exists from which there does not follow some effect, there would necessarily (by P12) be an idea in our Mind of some effect of it. But (by A5) there is no idea of it. Therefore, the object of our Mind is the existing Body and nothing else, q.e.d.

³⁵⁹ Spinoza’s use of ‘*sive*’ in the first sentence seems to equate the body at stake with “a certain mode of Extension.” Thus, not identifying “the Body” with, specifically, the human body. Yet, see Della Rocca (*Representation*, 26 and 178 n. 20) who points out that in the rest of part 2 Spinoza cites E2p13 as relating specifically to the human body.

I turn first to the second part of the demonstration. Here Spinoza attempts to show that the object of the human mind cannot be something else, in addition to the body. Spinoza's proof relies on E2a5 which reads:

We neither feel nor perceive any singular things [NS; or anything of *natura naturata*], except bodies and modes of thinking.

E2a5 excludes the possibility of us perceiving modes of any attributes other than Extension and Thought. Spinoza's invoking of this axiom makes sense only if he attempts to prove by it that we do not have ideas of things other than bodies (and ideas), i.e., that these things cannot be the objects of the ideas which constitute our mind.³⁶⁰ E2a5 seems to be irrelevant to the question whether other bodies can be the objects of the human mind.

I turn now to the first part of the demonstration which aims at showing that the body must be the object of the human mind. Here is, roughly, how the demonstration goes. If the body were not the object of the human mind, then (given God's omniscience and the parallelism) it would have to be in the mind "of another thing" and not in our mind. But this cannot be the case since according to E2a4 we do have ideas of the body. Note that Spinoza does not say that if the body were not the object of our mind it would be in the mind "of another *body*", but rather "of another *thing*." This seems to imply that Spinoza attempts here to exclude a situation where the human body is perceived by the mind of another *thing*, whether this thing is a body or not.

But let's assume for a moment that this "other thing" is a body. Let's say a certain turtle. In this case, E2a4 is supposed to exclude the possibility that my body is conceived by the turtle's mind and not by my mind. Yet, E2a4 says only "We feel a certain body is affected in many ways." From this we can conclude that we have knowledge of *a body*, but perhaps the body we feel is the turtle's body (while the turtle's mind 'feels' our body)? This possibility seems to me consistent with E2a4, and thus invoking E2a4 seems to aim at another target. Furthermore, why should Spinoza be

³⁶⁰ See Della Rocca (*Representation*, 28) who makes this point.

bothered by the quite odd possibility that my body is the object of a mind of another body (while I have no knowledge of my body). Of course Spinoza *can* address this odd possibility, but I think that it is much more likely that what he had in mind (in both parts of the demonstration) is primarily - though not exclusively³⁶¹ - the following. Since my body, my mind, the mode of the third attribute which is identical with my body, and the mind of that mode, are all parallel to each other, we should be bothered by the possibility of a mismatch between minds and their objects. The possibility of this mismatch is excluded once we take into account E2a4 and E2a5 (i.e., that the human mind knows bodies and only bodies). If this was the aim of Spinoza in E2p13, then we can understand why he relates to the “mind of another thing” rather than “another body” in the first part of the demonstration. The mind, Spinoza considers here, is a mind of a mode of an attribute unknown to the human mind.

The last text I wish to consider in this section appears in the scholium to E2p13, just before the beginning of the digression about the nature of bodies:

[T]he things we have shown so far are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate [*animata*]. For of each thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause in the same way as he is of the idea of the human Body. And so, whatever we have said of the idea of the human Body must also be said of the idea of any thing [*de cujuscunque rei idea necessario dicendum est*].

Notice that in this passage Spinoza speaks about the animation of all things or all individuals, and not merely all bodies. The claim that *all things* - such as, humans, rocks, bananas, as well as every mode of the 27th attribute - are animated may strike many as extremely counter-intuitive, but given Spinoza’s justification for this claim I think it is unavoidable. In God, there is an idea for every thing, and this is all that is needed in order to make a thing animated or in order for it to have a mind. Just

³⁶¹ The use to which Spinoza puts E2p13 in later propositions seems to show that E2p13 is aimed for both purposes.

as God's idea of the human body *is* the human mind, so too God's idea of any other *res is* the mind of that *res*. Spinoza's argument seems to be quite simple here.

In this section we have seen several texts which corroborate Spinoza's views in Letters 64 and 66 that (1) modes of other attributes have minds just like bodies do, and that (2) minds of modes of different attributes are not connected with each other ((2) is in fact a generalization of E2a5, which we have just discussed). In the next section we will discuss the textual evidence which support the claim that (3) if A and B are modes of different attributes and A is identical with B, then the idea of A is also identical with the idea of B.

4.2.5 As we have already seen in Letter 66 Spinoza claims that "although each thing is expressed in infinite modes in the infinite intellect of God [*quantis unaquaeque res infinitis modis expressa sit in infinito Dei intellectu*], the infinite ideas in which it is expressed cannot constitute one and the same mind of a singular thing, but an infinity of minds." The meaning of '*expressa*' in this passage is not easy to decipher. The closest formulation we find in the *Ethics* is in E2p7s. "So also a mode of Extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways" [*Sic etiam modus extesionis, et idea illius modi una, eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa*]. Given Spinoza's reference to E2p7s in the sentence that follows, it is very likely that Spinoza uses the word in both texts with the same meaning. The meaning of '*expressa*' in E2p7s seems to be more accessible. This phrase in E2p7s seems to say that a body and its idea are two instantiations of the same thing in different attributes. Or, in other words, if N is a mode of God (instantiated in all the attributes) N₁ is the expression of N in Extension and N₂¹ is an expression of N in Thought. Thus, 'to express' designates the relation of a mode of God to its instantiations (or to its aspects) in the variety of attributes. Now, how does this apply to Letter 66?

The "infinite modes in the infinite intellect of God" are clearly the infinite ideas which represent N's instantiations under each attribute (the only modes in an intellect are ideas). Note, however, that it is not the infinite instantiations of N that are in God's intellect, but rather the *ideas*

of these instantiations. If we read the term ‘modi’ in this phrase non-technically (i.e., “each thing is expressed in infinite *ways* in the infinite intellect of God”), then the infinite aspects of the idea of N turn out to be the infinite ways by which it is expressed. Alternatively, we can read this phrase from Letter 66 as being elliptical, and that its full version should read: “although each thing is expressed in infinite modes [whose ideas are] in the infinite intellect of God”. According to both alternatives, the representations of N under the various attributes are numerically identical, and each is merely an aspect of God’s idea of N. We can tentatively conclude that the identity of ideas of different attributes is, *at least*, one possible way to read Spinoza’s claims in Letter 66.

Another text which provides considerable support for the identification of ideas of modes of different attributes is E2p4:

God’s idea, from which infinitely many things follow in infinitely many modes, must be unique

[*Idea Dei, ex qua infinita infinitis modis sequuntur, unica tantum esse potest*].

Since God’s idea is a mode of Thought, there is only one kind of thing which can follow from it: ideas. Indeed, infinitely many ideas follow from God’s idea, but what is the meaning of the additional infinity which is asserted here [i.e., “in infinitely many modes”, or alternatively, “in infinitely many ways”³⁶²]? - I would suggest that the “infinitely many modes” are indeed the infinite aspects (or, perhaps even the infinite modification) of *the same idea* in God’s mind, by which it can represent modes from different attributes. In several places in the *Ethics*, Spinoza assigns to the attribute of Thought in general, or to God’s idea in particular, this double infinity (“infinitely many things in infinitely many ways”).³⁶³ In all these places, he is, arguably, assuming this multi-faceted nature of modes of Thought: their ability to represent modes of different attributes by one and the same idea.

³⁶² Parkinson, Shirley and White translate the second infinity “in infinite ways.” I do not think there is much of a difference between the two translations.

³⁶³ See, for example, E2p1s and E2p3d.

Furthermore, E2p4 seems to be closely related to, and phrased to accord with, E1p16 where Spinoza asserts that,

From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes [*infinita infinitis modis sequi debent*], (i.e., everything which can fall under an infinite intellect).

In fact, E2p4 is already implied by the phrase in the parenthesis of E1p16. Now, it is commonly agreed that what E1p16 is saying is that each thing, or mode of God, has infinitely many aspects, so that each aspect is an instantiation of that thing under a certain attribute. Now, since E2p4 attributes to God's idea the very double infinity which E1p16 assigns to God, it will be quite natural to read the "*infinita infinitis modi*" clause in E2p4 in the same way we read it in E1p16, i.e., as claiming that infinitely many ideas in infinitely many aspects (or modes of ideas) follow from God's idea.

The only place I know of where Spinoza explicitly claims that ideas of identical modes are also identical, is in his discussion of ideas of ideas. To some extent, this is the most natural place for Spinoza to discuss it since already at the preface to second part of the *Ethics*, he tells his readers that from now on he will discuss,

those things which must necessarily follow from the essence of God, or the infinite eternal Being - *not, indeed, all of them*, for as we have demonstrated (1p16) that infinitely many things must follow in infinite many modes, but *only those that can lead us*, by the hand, as it were, to the *knowledge of the human Mind and its highest blessedness*. (Emphases mine)

Spinoza's concentration in the rest of the *Ethics* on the human mind and its blessedness makes the issue of minds of other attributes hardly relevant to his main line of investigation. The human mind "has no connection" with these other minds, and therefore they appear only occasionally as a side issue (like in E2p13) in the rest of *Ethics*. Within the realm of Thought and Extension, the identity of ideas of different attributes is exhibited only in the identity of ideas of modes of Extension and Thought (which are identical with each other). But, since the mode of Thought which is identical with a certain body is the idea *of* that body, the parallel identity of ideas will appear as the identity of an idea with the idea of that idea.

Spinoza claims this identity in E2p21:

This idea of the Mind is united to the Mind in the same way as the Mind is united to the Body.

In the scholium to this proposition, Spinoza claims explicitly that the identity of an idea with the idea of that idea is a parallel to the identity of a body with its idea, which was asserted in E2p7s:

This proposition is understood far more clearly from what is said in P7S; for there we have shown that the idea of the Body and the Body, i.e. (by P13), the Mind and the Body, are one and the same Individual, which is conceived now under the attribute of Thought, now under the attribute of Extension. *So the idea of the Mind and the Mind itself are one and the same thing, which is conceived under one and the same attribute, viz. Thought.* (Italics mine)

Now, I would be happier if Spinoza would have said, “the idea of the Mind and the Mind itself are one and the same *idea*.” Furthermore, in its existing form this argument seems to be lacking; if the mind and its idea are the same thing under the same attribute, then how are they distinguished at all? (They are distinguished by their *ideata*; the one is an idea of a body, the other an idea of a mind.) But, at any rate, I think that it is clear that in this scholium Spinoza assumes that if A and B are modes of different attributes and A is identical with B, then ideas of these modes must also be identical.

I will tentatively summarize by saying that the identification of ideas of identical modes solves several weighty problems in his metaphysics: it keeps Thought equally extensive as the rest of the attributes (which would otherwise violate the inter-attributes parallelism), and provides an order or relation *within* Thought which mirrors the relation of identical modes of different attributes. To what extent Spinoza consciously held this view is not easy to say. The most I can say is that I think he assumes it in a couple of crucial texts.

4.2.6 There is one more point which I would like to discuss in this part of the chapter. So far we have found that within the attribute of thought there are infinitely many chains of ideas (or rather, idea-aspects), so that each chain represents all the modes of a certain attribute. Arguably, these infinite chains stand in the same relation of identity with each other as do the infinite modes which they represent. We also saw that these infinite chains of idea-aspects are causally and

conceptually separate. At this point one may wonder why these infinite chains do not constitute infinite *attributes of thought*. Attributes are conceptually and causally independent, and since these chains are, presumably, causally and conceptually independent, one may conclude that they should be considered as full-fledged independent attributes.

While this suggestion will turn out to be wrong it may teach us an interesting point about the conceptual barrier *within* thought, i.e., that this barrier is *slightly weaker* than the original barrier between the attributes.

The infinite chains of idea-aspects (or modifications of ideas) cannot constitute infinite attributes because they share with each other their essential property of being thoughts, or modes of the attribute of thought, and as such they are not *as independent* from each other as are the modes of different attributes.

Modes of different attributes are independent from each other, yet, there are certain structural facts that cut through all the attributes: all the attributes are self-conceived, and all share the fact that their modes are ordered in causal and temporal relations. Spinoza clearly allows the existence of such trans-attribute facts, and does not take them to be a threat to the conceptual barrier between the attributes. In a similar way, we can conceive the relation between the chains of modification of ideas as adding *one* - yet, crucial - component to this common layer. The chains not only share with each other the structural properties of being in a certain temporal and causal order, but also *the essential fact that they are all modes of Thought*.³⁶⁴ Thus, although the idea-aspects which represent different attributes are causally and conceptually separate, the barrier between them is *weaker* than the original conceptual barrier between modes of different attributes. Having a full-fledged conceptual barrier within Thought would imply that the chains of ideas which represent

³⁶⁴ Cf. E2p13lem2 where Spinoza makes a similar claim about modes of Extension: "All bodies agree in certain things. Dem.: For all bodies agree in that they involve the concept of one and the same attribute."

different attributes are of a *completely* different nature. This, however, is false since all these modifications share the fact - or rather, the essential fact - that they are all modes of Thought.

The parallelism between ideas and things provides another consideration which goes against making the infinite chains of ideas into full-fledged attributes. Yet, since we have not yet discussed the nature of God's idea, we can only hint at it at this stage. Since the order of all things must be mirrored in Thought, we must also allow for the relation between the infinitely many modes in each attribute, on the one hand, and the substance, on the other hand, to be mirrored in Thought. The modes of each attribute are represented in Thought by the infinite chains of ideas. Were the infinite chains independent of one another, there would be no parallel in Thought to the fact that all the modes of the attributes belong to the same substance. The infinite chains must share *something* in common just as the modes of the various attributes they represent share *something* in common (i.e., the fact that they are all modes of the same substance). In other words, within the attribute of thought, there must be an element which relates to the infinite chains in the same way as the substance relates to the infinitely many modes of each of the attributes. Spinoza names this element 'God's Idea' [*idea Dei*], and assigns to it the properties of *absolute* infinity³⁶⁵ and uniqueness which otherwise belong only to God. We will soon turn to discuss this unusual idea, but before we do that I would like to show how Spinoza's doctrine of ideas of ideas fits into the picture we have developed so far.

4.3 *Ideas of Ideas, or, Thought's Crystal Palace*

4.3.1 In the previous part I have argued that N_2^1 (the idea of Napoleon's body) and N_2^3 (the idea of the mode of the third attribute which is identical with Napoleon's body) are two aspects of N_2 (the idea of N as a mode of God, i.e., under all attributes). I postponed the discussion of N_2^2 ,

³⁶⁵ Cf. Letter 64 [IV/278/25] where Spinoza points out the '*absolutely* infinite intellect' [*intellectus absolute infinitus*] as the immediate infinite mode of Thought

and it is now time to address it. N_2^2 is an idea of an idea. But, notice that its object is not merely the idea of Napoleon's body (which is N_2^1), but rather N_2 , the idea of N under all attributes (N_2^1 is merely one aspect of N_2). Now, if N_2^2 is supposed to reflect *adequately* N_2 (and it must be adequate since infinitely-faceted ideas exist only in *God's* intellect), then (1) it must represent each of the aspects of N_2 , and (2) the representations of each aspect must not be connected with each other (just like the aspects of N_2). Thus, it turns out that N_2^2 has also infinitely many aspects. N_2^{21} is the aspect which parallels and represents N_2^1 , the idea of Napoleon's body.³⁶⁶ Hence, N_2^{21} is the idea of the idea of Napoleon's body, or the idea of Napoleon's mind. N_2^{23} is the aspect of N_2^2 which parallels and represents N_2^3 , the idea of the modes of the third attribute which is identical with Napoleon's body (or the idea of the mind of this mode of the third attribute). N_2^{24} will be the idea of N_2^4 , and in general, N_2^{2x} will be the idea of N_2^x , and the idea of the idea of N_x .

Let's take one step further. What about N_2^{22} ? Well, according to the formula we just saw, N_2^{22} is the idea of N_2^2 and the idea of the idea of N_2 . Now, since N_2^{22} parallels N_2^2 (and N_2), and since N_2^2 (and N_2) has infinitely many aspects, the same must be true about N_2^{22} . At this point one can easily see that, for each mode, in each level, there is an infinitely-faceted idea. The emerging picture is of an additional dimension of infinity within Thought. Not only that Thought represents the infinitely many modes of each of the infinitely many attributes, but also the idea of each mode is itself the object of infinitely many ideas of higher orders (one idea in each level). In each of these orders there is an idea with infinitely many aspects, and this idea is the one which parallels N_2 , or God's idea of a certain mode under all attributes (according to the notation I was using, all such ideas have only 2s to the right of the letter which designates the specific mode of God).

Spinoza does not develop this implication of the parallelism, primarily, I think, because only one column of these ideas is at all relevant to the topic of books 2-5 of the *Ethics*, which is the

³⁶⁶ In ' N_2^{21} ', '1' (in the fourth position from the left) designates the attribute to which the ultimate object of this idea of idea (in this case N_1) belongs.

nature and blessedness of the human mind.³⁶⁷ Spinoza also does not develop, at least in any detail, his views about the minds of non-human bodies. Yet, we can - with some careful reading - infer his views about this subject, and I think the same is the case with the issue of higher order ideas of non-extended modes.

Spinoza clearly acknowledged that reflexivity generates infinite orders of ideas. In E2p21s, he writes:

[A]s soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows it, and at the same time knows that he knows, and so on, *to infinity*. (Italics mine)

A very similar passage appears also in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*.³⁶⁸ Once this infinite reflexivity of Thought is granted, we can quite simply infer the existence of an idea of infinitely many aspects in each level by appealing to the doctrine of parallelism. Of course, these ideas of infinitely many aspects are nothing but the higher order instantiations of God's idea of the specific mode (i.e., the idea of God's idea, the idea of the idea of God's idea, etc.). The picture we get, I think, is quite beautiful: God's ideas of things refract infinitely, time and again, just like a ray of light entering a stark crystal palace.

4.3.2 At this point I would like to address a few problems which arise from Spinoza's account of higher order ideas. I have no pretension to provide a complete account of the issue, but only to address the few problems which are directly relevant to my interpretation of the nature and structure of the attribute of Thought. The first problem is the following: are there any higher orders ideas which are not at bottom (i.e., in the lowest order) ideas of modes of other attributes? At first sight this question seems to put Spinoza in a difficult position. If there were such ideas, they would

³⁶⁷ Lee Rice suggests (*Reflexive Ideas*, 207, 210) that of the four propositions that discuss the issue of ideas of ideas in the second part of the *Ethics* (E2p20-23), the first two relate to these ideas of ideas as they are in God's intellect, while the other two relate to these ideas as they are in the human mind. Yet, I think that E2p20-21, which discuss ideas of ideas of bodies, provide only a small part of the picture of higher order ideas in God's intellect.

³⁶⁸ TdIE § 34 [G II/14/26-8 | C 18]

seem to violate the ideas-things parallelism. Suppose A is such an idea which belongs to the lowest and most basic order, and suppose A does not have an object or a parallel thing. We can describe it as an “empty”, or bare, idea. Of course, A would be the object of ideas at higher levels insofar as A, like all ideas, is also a *thing*. Yet, in its function as an *idea*, A would be left without any object external to Thought, and thus, without any object at all. Now, if we deny the existence of such ideas (as I think we should) we may run into the objection that by this we deny the self-sufficiency of Thought, i.e., that Thought would seem to be dependent on external content. This dilemma becomes even more important because for Spinoza, having self-consciousness amounts to nothing beyond having an idea of the mind, or having an idea of an idea.³⁶⁹ We can easily imagine the idealist’s revolt against making self-consciousness always a self-consciousness *of* certain kind of modes (bodies, modes of the third attributes, etc.), or even in the noble case of God’s idea, self-consciousness of all kinds of modes. In all these cases, Thought would presumably not be self-sufficient.

Spinoza addresses the possibility of empty ideas and any kind of pure self-consciousness which they might bring about in E2p23.

The Mind does not know itself, except insofar as it perceives the ideas of the affection of the Body.

Spinoza’s justification for this proposition relies on general considerations related to the parallelism and seems to be perfectly applicable to modes of any other attribute. The proposition excludes the possibility of any self-consciousness that does not represent something outside of Thought. Yet, I think Spinoza cannot be charged with denying the self-sufficiency of Thought. The conceptual barrier stipulates that ideas are neither the cause nor the effect of their objects. In fact Spinoza seems to hold a certain equilibrium between ideas and their objects, by denying both the idealist claim that ideas are the causes of things, and the materialist (or the x-attribute reductionist) claim that ideas are caused by their objects. For Spinoza, the representational quality of ideas is not something that is imported from outside but rather belongs to the very nature of being an idea.

³⁶⁹ See E2p23 (quoted below) and E3p53d.

Thus, the notion of an empty idea is for Spinoza nothing less than a contradiction in terms.³⁷⁰ Ideas must have content, but not because they are affected externally or must import this content, but rather because it belongs to their very nature. This content can be of infinitely many kinds, but even this variety of possible kinds of content is embedded *within* Thought and does not have to be imported from outside. It seems that it is precisely this equilibrium between Thought and its objects which Spinoza asserts by saying that: “God’s actual power of Thinking is equal to his actual power of acting” [E2p7c]. We will return to this equilibrium toward the end of the chapter, where I will suggest that Spinoza held a very unusual dualism of Thought and Being.

4.3.3 Another objection I would like to address here is the one which claims that for Spinoza there is only *one* reflective idea in each order, i.e., only one idea of an idea, only one idea of an idea of an idea, etc. This objection relies on Spinoza’s claim in E2p21s that

[T]he idea of the Mind, i.e., the idea of the idea, is nothing but *the form* of the idea insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object. [Italics mine]

One way to understand the claim, that an idea of idea X is the form of idea X, is to see it as claiming that an idea of an idea is simply *what makes a certain thing an idea*. According to this view ideas differ among themselves only by virtue of their content, or “objective essence;” however, their formal essence is completely the same in all ideas. If an idea of an idea is just this form, it turns out that there is only one idea of idea insofar as, presumably, there is only formal essence for all ideas.³⁷¹

I see three main reasons to reject this objection. One is related to Spinoza’s strong nominalist tendencies which I am not sure would allow him to speak of the general notion of ‘an

³⁷⁰ In the *Cogitata Metaphysica* (II, xii) Spinoza criticizes the view of the will as “a blank tablet, lacking all thought, and capable of receiving any picture whatever” [I/279/23]. Against this view Spinoza claims that “to conceive a thinking thing without any thought is the same as wishing to conceive an extended thing without extension.” [I/280/31]. This criticism of thoughtless will seems to be equally applicable to any notion of an empty idea.

³⁷¹ One scholar who tends to accept this view is Richard Aquila. See his interesting and challenging article, “The Identity of Thought and Object in Spinoza” (p. 280).

idea' as nothing beyond *entia rationis*. But since the issue of Spinoza's nominalism is extremely complicated and disputed, I would concentrate on the other reasons which seem to me much clearer.

If all ideas had the same formal being and were distinguished only by their objective essence, Spinoza would seem to commit himself to the very radical view that our mind knows our body just as well as the snail's mind knows the snail's body. Now, Spinoza does think that the snail's (and the rock's) mind knows its body, but he also recognizes a gradual - not qualitative - difference of mental *capacities* between human beings and other animals, between adults and children, and in general, between any two individuals. This is not just a difference in terms of the content of what two individuals perceive, but also in terms of their representational capacities. One place where Spinoza asserts this difference is E2p13s:

However, we also cannot deny that ideas differ among themselves, as the objects themselves do, and that one is more excellent than the other, and contains more reality, just as the object of the one is more excellent than the object of the other and contains more reality. And so to determine what is the difference between the human Mind and the others, and how it surpasses them, it is necessary for us, as we have said, to know the nature of its object, i.e., of the human Body... I say this in general, that in proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. And in proportion as the actions of a body depend more on itself alone, and as other bodies concur with it less in acting, so its mind is more capable of understanding distinctly. And from these [truths] we can know the excellence of one mind over the others, and also see the cause why we have only a completely confused knowledge of our Body, and many other things which I shall deduce from them in the following [propositions].³⁷²

Notice, that Spinoza does not claim here that the human mind is more excellent than other minds *because* its body is more capable of doing many things (this would be a clear violation of the

³⁷² Spinoza makes similar claims in E2p14 and in the "General Definition of the Affects" section at the end of book three of the *Ethics* [G II/204/20-3 | C 543].

conceptual barrier), but rather that there is a correspondence between the excellence of minds and bodies. Nevertheless, the excellence of neither is the reason, or cause, of the excellence of the other. At any rate, this passage makes clear that minds differ also in terms of their representational *capacities*, and not just in the representations they have. Thus, though both Napoleon and his hat have an idea of God,³⁷³ their ideas of God differ not in content but in the excellency of the ideas' representational capacities. Similarly, God's idea of me and the table and my idea of myself and the table, though both ideas are *of* the same things (and thus have the same representational content), clearly differ insofar as my representational abilities are far worse than God's. The resulting conclusion that God's idea of idea is far better than (and hence distinct from) the idea of the idea of any finite being, is claimed explicitly by Spinoza in his discussion of the topic in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*.

Since the relation between the two ideas is the same as the relation between the formal essences of those ideas, it follows that the reflexive knowledge of the idea of the most perfect Being will be more excellent than the reflexive knowledge of any other ideas.³⁷⁴

If ideas differ among themselves not just in terms of their content but also by their “excellency” or representational capacities, we have to deny that there is only one idea of an idea,

³⁷³ See E2p47s: “God’s infinite essence is known to all.” Though E2p47 explicitly relates to the human knowledge of God, it can be generalized to all things because its demonstration relies on general considerations, none of which is peculiar to the human mind. That all things know God is a result of (1) Spinoza’s views that all things are animated (E2p13s, which in itself is derived from the parallelism), and of (2) the modes’ dependence on the substance, which makes the knowledge of anything involve the knowledge of God (E2p45). Furthermore, the cat’s idea of God seems to be *adequate* since the knowledge of God does not presuppose the knowledge of any other thing, and thus cannot be inadequately conceived. Indeed, Spinoza explicitly states that the knowledge of the “common notions” (among which are the attributes) can only be adequately conceived (E2p38). I intend to discuss this interesting implication of Spinoza’s epistemology in another place since the development of the subject here will take us too far afield.

³⁷⁴ TdIE § 38 [G II/16/5-8 | C 19]

since the forms of the ideas in each order (which should include the idea's representational capacities) distinguish one n -order idea from another.³⁷⁵ I think that what Spinoza tried to do by claiming that the idea of an idea is “nothing but the form of the idea insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object,” is to create *some* gap between the contents of (first level) ideas and ideas of ideas, a gap which is necessary in order to have high order ideas at all (i.e., had the idea of idea A had the same representational content, it would have been completely indiscernible from A).

The third, and last, reason to deny that there is only one idea of an idea is that it can hardly be consistent with Spinoza's explanation of self-consciousness as nothing beyond having an idea of our mind (See E2p23). If there is only one idea of an idea, then we should all share the same self-consciousness. As far as I can see, Spinoza never hints at this very odd view, not even in his discussion of self-consciousness in the context of the enigmatic third kind of knowledge at the very end of the *Ethics* (E5p30, E5p31s, E5p32d, and E5p42s).

4.3.4 In E2p20, Spinoza relies on the doctrine of parallelism [E2p7] in order to prove the existence of higher order ideas; ideas are things, and therefore they must be represented by higher order ideas. Now, we may wonder how the relation between idea N_2^x and the idea of that idea, N_2^{2x} , is reflected *within* Thought. The answer to this question is not very difficult. N_2^{2x} is the idea of N_2^x . The idea of N_2^{2x} is the idea that is one order higher, $N_2^{2^2x}$. Hence, the relation between N_2^x and its idea, N_2^{2x} , is reflected by the relation between N_2^{2x} and $N_2^{2^2x}$.

Let's go one step further. Since N_2^x is causally independent from its object, N_x , it seems that parallelism will demand that the idea of N_2^x would also be causally independent from its object, or in plain words, it will stipulate that ideas are causally independent from their own ideas. Yet, in the

³⁷⁵ The idea of idea A would have the same excellence as A, just as idea A shares the same excellence with its object. Thus, all ideas which are reflections of the same (extra-Thought) mode have the same excellence. They differ only in their content (the content of each is the form of the idea which is its object).

following passage Spinoza makes a claim that can be read as saying that an idea is the *cause* of its idea:

[A]s soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows [*eo ipso scit*] that he knows it, and at the same time [*simul*] knows that he knows that he knows, and so on to infinity[E2p21s].³⁷⁶

How are we to understand the *eo ipso*? If it entails a causal relation, we would seem to run into trouble. Fortunately, it seems that this was not Spinoza's view. In his discussion of higher order ideas in the *Treatise on Emendation of the Intellect*, a discussion which is consistent with the discussion of the topic in the *Ethics*, Spinoza presents the following claims:

From this it is evident that to understand the essence of Peter, it is not necessary to understand an idea of Peter, much less an idea of an idea of Peter. This is the same as if I said that, in order for me to know, it is not necessary to know that I know, much less necessary to know that I know that I know - no more than it is necessary to understand the essence of a circle in order to understand the essence of a triangle. Indeed, in these ideas the opposite is the case. For to know that I know, I must first know.³⁷⁷

And a few passages later, he writes,

[T]here is no idea of an idea, unless there is first an idea.³⁷⁸

The picture we get from these passages is that an idea of an idea is not *caused* by the original idea, but rather *presupposes* it. In the long passage I have just quoted, Spinoza could be responding to Descartes' *cogito* and the view that knowledge of one's mind is prior to the knowledge of bodies. Spinoza takes the exact opposite view. Yet, he does not claim that our knowledge of the mind is caused by our knowledge of bodies.

³⁷⁶ Spinoza seems to present a similar claim in E2p13s where he says that, "no one will be able to understand [the union of Mind and Body] adequately, or distinctly, unless he first knows adequately the nature of the Body."

³⁷⁷ TdIE § 34 [G II/14/30-15/6 | C 18]

³⁷⁸ TdIE § 38 [G II/16/1-2 | C 19]

The *eo ipso* in E2p21s should be read in the same way, i.e., as denying that the knowledge of the mind must precede the knowledge of the body and as suggesting that the knowledge of the mind presupposes knowledge of the body. Here, we may ask: why does Spinoza claim that the idea of the mind *presupposes* the idea of the body? Furthermore, one may argue that presupposition is a relation of dependence, which is inconsistent with the independence of the attributes (which entails the independence of the representations of different attributes). I think that the answer to both questions lies in the following. By claiming that knowledge of the mind presupposes knowledge of the body Spinoza meant nothing over and above his rejection of empty, or free-floating, ideas. An idea must always be an idea of something; yet, it must be so by its very nature and not because it is dependent on anything else.

4.3.5 In this part, I have shown some of the implications of my interpretation of the nature of ideas to the issue of higher order ideas. We have seen that for every thing, in each order, there is one idea, God's idea of that thing, which refracts into infinitely many aspects (just like the rest of God's ideas). This adds a third dimension of infinity into Thought, in addition to Thought's ability to represent the infinite modes of the infinite attributes. I have also discussed a few problems that emerge within Spinoza's discussion of higher order ideas. I have concentrated on the problems that are most relevant - and pose the strongest threat, I think - to my interpretation. Now, we will turn to the discussion of the most perfect being within Thought - God's Idea.

4.4 *Idea Dei, sive, intellectus absolute infinitus*

In this part I discuss the nature and structure of God's idea [*Idea Dei*] of himself, the mode which arguably parallels God, and the only mode to which Spinoza assigns, in some respect, absolute infinity. This part will also complete the explication of the structure of ideas within Thought which I have begun in part three. In the rest of this part I will address several important objections to my interpretation of the order of ideas and of the two doctrines of parallelism

4.4.1 *God, God's Idea, and the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7.* - E2p7 states that “the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” [*Ordo et connexio idearum idem est, ac ordo et connexio rerum*]. One question we may ask ourselves in regard to this proposition is: what kind of entities fall under the term ‘things’? More specifically, we may wonder whether only modes are ‘things’ or if perhaps God himself is also a thing. That the latter is the case can be inferred from numerous passages in the *Ethics* where Spinoza explicitly relates to God as a thing. See, for example, E2p1 which states that “God is a thinking thing [*res cogitans*]” and E2p2 which states that “God is an extended thing [*res extensa*].”³⁷⁹ Furthermore, Spinoza is usually very careful to distinguish between ‘things’ *simpliciter* and ‘singular things’ by which he refers to modes. Thus, for example, in E2a5 he claims:

We neither feel nor perceive any singular things [NS: or anything of *natura naturata*], except bodies and modes of thinking.³⁸⁰

If God is a ‘*res*’, then there must be an idea which parallels and represents this ‘*res*’.³⁸¹ Indeed, the idea of God (and the ideas of his attributes³⁸²) plays a crucial role in Spinoza’s metaphysics. It is this idea which I am going to discuss in this part.

³⁷⁹ Other passages in the *Ethics* where Spinoza relates to God as ‘*res*’ are: E1p14c2, E2d1, E2p5, E2p7s, and E2p9d.

³⁸⁰ *Natura naturata* is the realm of modes (both finite and infinite) and is opposed to *Natura naturans* which is the realm of God and his attributes. The NS version makes clear that for Spinoza all modes are singular things. For a similar identification of modes with ‘singular things’, see E2p1d and E2p8.

³⁸¹ Note that Spinoza does not derive the idea of God from the parallelism. In fact, he introduces the idea of God in E2p3, before the discussion of the parallelism, and as I have mentioned in my discussion of the doctrine of parallelism, Spinoza seems to rely on E2p3 and his demonstration of parallelism. I mention here God’s idea as being entailed by the parallelism only in order to strengthen my claim that the parallelism of E2p7 is not limited to modes.

One text which strongly indicates that God and God's idea (of himself) fall within the scope of the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7 is the corollary to E2p8.³⁸³ E2p8 itself is one of the most fascinating and enigmatic texts in the *Ethics*, and I do not intend to provide here an interpretation of this text, beyond what is needed to make my point. Here is the proposition, its demonstration, and the first half of the corollary:

P8: The ideas of singular things, or of modes, that do not exist must be comprehended in God's infinite idea in the same way as the formal essences of the singular things, or modes, are contained in God's attributes.

Dem.: This Proposition is evident from the preceding one, but is understood more clearly from the preceding scholium.

Cor.: From this it follows that so long as singular things do not exist, except insofar as they are comprehended in God's attributes, their objective being, or ideas, do not exist except insofar as God's infinite idea exists.

The basic idea behind this proposition is that the ideas of non-existing modes (such as the idea of 'Napoleon, the victor at Waterloo') are "comprehended" in God's idea, just as the objects of these ideas (or perhaps, their in principle possibility) are "contained" in the attributes of these objects. However we interpret this enigmatic doctrine, two points seem to be clear. First, Spinoza derives this doctrine from E2p7 (see the demonstration). Second, he draws here a parallel between God's idea and its relation to the ideas of non-existing things, on the one hand, and all of God's attributes and their relation to the non-existing things, on the other hand. Whatever interpretation we are going to give to this doctrine, I think it is safe to say that it must assume that God (and his attributes) and God's idea fall within the scope of the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7, and that in

³⁸² For ideas of God's attributes, see E2p3, E2p5, E2p20d and E2p38d&c. Once we grant the existence of ideas of attribute, it would seem that (given E2p7) attributes too should be 'things', since they are the entities that parallel these ideas. See, however, Friedman (*Other minds*, 101), for an opposite view.

³⁸³ Another text which shows clearly that Spinoza considered the relation between God's idea and God as part of the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7 is the corollary of E2p7.

the absence of such an assumption Spinoza's citing of E2p7 in the demonstration makes hardly any sense.

Now, it is not obvious, at least at first glance, that there is only one idea of God. I have an idea of God, you have an idea of God, God has an idea of himself, and it is not clear how these ideas are related to each other, especially since there is a strong pressure within Spinoza's system to say that God and his attributes can be conceived only adequately.³⁸⁴ Yet, I will not discuss here this important question because such a digression will take us too far afield. Instead, I will concentrate on the entity which is obviously the most perfect idea of God, i.e., God's idea of himself.

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza officially introduces God's idea in E2p3:

In God there is necessarily an idea, both of his essence and of everything that necessarily follows from his essence.

Dem.: For God (by P1) can think infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, or (what is the same, by IP16) can form the idea of his essence and of all the things which necessarily follow from it. But whatever is in God's power necessarily exists (by IP35); therefore, there is necessarily such an idea, and (by IP15) it is only in God, q.e.d.

Both in the *Ethics* and in his other writings, Spinoza stresses time and again the all inclusive nature of God's idea. Since all things are in God, God's idea of himself is the idea of all things:

And since Nature or God is one being, of which infinite attributes are said, and which contains in itself all essences of created things, it is necessary that of all of this there is produced in thought an infinite Idea, which contains in itself objectively the whole of Nature, as it is in itself. ³⁸⁵

I hold that in Nature there also exists an infinite power of thinking which, insofar as it is infinite, contains within itself the whole of Nature ideally [*continet in se objective totam naturam*], and whose thoughts proceed in the same manner as does nature, which is in fact the object of his thought. ³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ See E2p38 and E5p4d.

³⁸⁵ KV, Appendix II § 4 [G I/117/25-9 | C 153].

³⁸⁶ Letter 32 [G IV/172-173 | S 195-5].

At this point one may wonder what is the difference between God's idea and the attribute of Thought; both are infinite and both contain all the ideas of all things. Before we answer this question, we should take note of Spinoza's identification of God's idea (of himself) with God's infinite intellect; in E2p4d, Spinoza uses these two notions interchangeably.³⁸⁷ In the *Short Treatise* [G I/48/6] and in Letter 64, Spinoza claims that the (absolutely) infinite intellect is the immediate infinite mode of Thought. Since God's idea is identical with the infinite intellect, it seems that God's idea is a mode. Indeed, in E1p21d, Spinoza explicitly says that God's idea is the immediate infinite *mode* of Thought. Unless we attribute to Spinoza gross inconsistencies (and provide an explanation as to the difference between the two), I think we should conclude that God's idea is the infinite mode of Thought, or God's (absolutely) infinite intellect.³⁸⁸

Ideas are modes of Thought, but Spinoza never says explicitly that *all* ideas are modes,³⁸⁹ and his definition of 'idea', in E2d3, does not address the issue (perhaps because it is too obvious). Yet, one can read several passages in the *Ethics* as strongly suggesting that all ideas are modes. Consider, for example, the last sentence of the following passage:

There are no modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever is designated by the word affects of the mind, unless there is in the same Individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. But there can be an *idea*, even though there is no *other* mode of thinking (E2a3. Italics mine).

At any rate, if any idea could be anything beyond a mode, it seems that the leading candidate would be God's idea. Now, in respect to God's idea, we have sufficient textual sources which show that it is merely a mode (though an infinite one). I have already mentioned E1p21d where Spinoza discusses God's idea as the immediate infinite *mode* of Thought. The identification of God's

³⁸⁷ Spinoza also uses the two notions interchangeably in the *Short Treatise* (II, xxii, note a [G I/101/29-33 | C 139]).

³⁸⁸ Cf. Wolfson (*The Philosophy of Spinoza*, vol. 1, 238) on this point.

³⁸⁹ The closest Spinoza comes to such an explicit claim is in E2p5d where he says that "the formal being of ideas is a mode of thinking."

(absolutely) infinite intellect with God's idea is also of much help, since Spinoza stresses that an intellect, whether finite or infinite, is merely a mode:

The actual intellect, whether finite or infinite, like will, desire, love, etc., must be referred to *Natura naturata*, not to *Natura naturans* (E1p31).³⁹⁰

Thus, we can conclude that God's idea, or the (absolutely) infinite intellect, is merely a mode. This gives a clear and simple answer to the question of the difference between the attribute of Thought and God's idea. The former is an attribute and thus belongs to *Natura naturans*; the latter is merely a mode and belongs to *Natura naturata*. We should notice that the infinity of Thought, insofar as it belongs to *Natura naturans*, precludes any divisibility, while the infinity of God's idea allows divisibility. Indeed, Spinoza clearly claims that the human mind is part of God's intellect,³⁹¹ but he never says that the human mind, or any other entity, is part of the *attribute* of thought. Thinking things which belong to *Natura naturata* are *parts* of God's idea (i.e., the infinite mode of Thought by which God knows all things), but they are *modes* of the attribute of thought.

4.4.2 *The uniqueness and absolute infinity of God's idea.* - In E2p3 Spinoza officially introduces God's idea. In the following proposition, he goes one step further and ascribes to this idea two striking qualifications.

God's idea, from which infinitely many things follow in infinitely many modes, must be unique.

In E1p14c1, Spinoza derives God's uniqueness, and in E1p16, he proves that "from the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes". Both properties are attributed in E2p3 to God's idea in a way that stresses the parallels between God and

³⁹⁰ Cf. Letter 9: "[t]he intellect, even though infinite, belongs to *Natura naturata*, not to *Natura naturans*" [S 93]. I assume this is what Spinoza meant when he claimed in E1p17s1 that intellect does not pertain to God's "nature" [II/62/3], or to God's "eternal essence" [II/62/33].

³⁹¹ See E2p9c, E2p11c, E5p40s and Letter 32 (S 195).

God's idea. Spinoza never assigns either one of these two properties to any other infinite mode, and it is truly remarkable that he assigns to God's idea properties that otherwise belong only to God.

The double infinity of God's idea ("infinitely many things in infinitely many modes") seems to make this idea *absolutely* infinite just as the double infinity of God makes God absolutely infinite (see E1d6). Furthermore, when Spinoza explains God's uniqueness in E1p14c1, he cashes it out by the claims that "in Nature there is only one substance, and that it is absolutely infinite." A similar explication of the uniqueness of God's idea would suggest that also God's idea is absolutely infinite. Indeed, in Letter 64, Spinoza openly ascribes such infinity to God's intellect. In the following passage, Spinoza replies to Tschirnhaus's request to provide examples of immediate and mediate infinite modes.

Lastly, the examples you ask for of the first kind [i.e., immediate infinite modes -Y.M.] are: in the case of thought, absolutely infinite intellect [*intellectus absolute infinitus*]; in the case of extension, motion and rest.³⁹²

In order to understand why Spinoza assigns absolute infinity to God's idea it would be helpful to clarify the content and structure of God's idea.

4.4.3 *The Structure of God's Idea and its absolute Infinity.* - According to E1p16, E2p3, and E2p4, God's intellect, or idea, comprehends all the infinitely many modes of all the infinite attributes. E2p9c ("Whatever happens in the singular object of any idea, there is knowledge of it in God, only insofar as he has the idea of the same object") makes clear that God knows things only by having ideas thereof. If God did not have an idea of a certain object, he would not know or comprehend this object. Thus, God's idea must contain all ideas. E2p7 makes the totality of ideas isomorphic with the totality of nature. Hence, God's idea, which is the totality of ideas, is isomorphic with God himself.³⁹³

³⁹² Letter 64 (S 299).

³⁹³ Cf. the two passages from KV, Appendix II and Letter 32 cited in § 5.1 above.

We have already seen that in Thought there are infinitely many ideas representing the infinitely many modes of God. Each of these ideas has infinitely many aspects representing the infinite instantiations of each mode of God under the infinitely many attributes. Unlike Extension, whose modes do not refract into infinitely many aspects, Thought is said to contain “infinitely many things in infinitely many modes” [E2p4]. This, I think, explains why Spinoza attributes to God’s idea *absolute* infinity. In E1d6, Spinoza distinguishes between the infinity “in its own kind” of each of the attributes and the “absolute infinity” of God. Insofar as God’s idea contains *objectively* everything that is in God, Spinoza assigns to it the same infinity as God’s. Yet, I think, it is much less likely that God’s idea could be said to be “absolutely infinite” *formally*. According to E1d6, a thing which is “absolutely infinite” is such that “whatever expresses essence and involves no negation pertains to its essence”. Now, it is true that, in some sense, all things [“whatever expresses essence and involves no negation”] pertain to God’s idea insofar as this idea represents all things. But do they pertain to its *essence*? Does Napoleon’s body pertain to the essence of God’s idea? If we answer this question positively, we are breaking the conceptual barrier between the attributes. According to Spinoza’s definition of essence [E2d2], there is a strong conceptual dependence between a thing and its essence, a dependence which the conceptual separation of the attribute cannot allow between modes of different attributes. Hence, we should, I think, deny that God’s idea is formally “absolutely infinite.” By making God’s idea “absolutely infinite” but only *objectively*, Spinoza does not break the conceptual barrier between the attributes, since “whatever expresses essence” pertains to the *objective* essence of God’s idea, i.e., to God.

4.4.4 *God’s Idea of Idea*. - At this point I would like to address three crucial questions which emerge from the parallelism between God’s idea and God himself.

I. How is the idea of God represented in Thought and how is this representation related to the idea of God?

II. Is God’s idea divisible or simple?

III. What is the relation between ideas of *Natura naturata* and ideas of *Natura naturans*?

As far as I know, Spinoza never addressed the first and third questions, and his few remarks on the second question appear to be inconsistent, at least at first sight. All we can do is try to carefully reconstruct the answers to these questions based on positions he openly held. I will begin with the first question and answer the next two questions in the following section.

The idea of God is the totality of all ideas. The idea of the idea of God is the totality of all second-order ideas. The idea of the idea of the idea of God is the totality of all third-order ideas. In that respect, the idea of God is not different from any other idea. Its representation in Thought is simply its higher order idea.

4.4.5 *Ideas of Natura Naturans and Natura Naturata*. - I have earlier mentioned Spinoza's claim that the human intellect is *part* of the infinite intellect. Thus, it would seem that the infinite intellect, or God's idea, is divisible. Yet, it is not clear how God's idea could be divisible while its object is indivisible. Suppose God's idea has n parts. It would seem that all these parts would have to have the same object, i.e., God. The parts of God's idea could not represent parts of God because God does not have any parts. But if all the parts of God's idea have the same object, how are they going to be distinguished from one another?

Either because of this pressure, or because of another reason, in his early period Spinoza thought that God's idea must be simple.

[W]e must deal satisfactorily with the question whether there is more than one idea in God, or only one, absolutely simple idea. To this I reply that the idea of God in virtue of which he is called omniscient is unique and absolutely simple. For really, God is called omniscient only because he has the idea of himself, which idea or knowledge has always existed with God.³⁹⁴

³⁹⁴ *Cogitata Metaphysica* II, vii [G I/263/11-17 | C 328-9]. Apparently, Spinoza's view of divine omniscience in this passage is influenced by Maimonides' claim that "God knows everything by knowing himself for everything's being leans [*nismach*] upon God" [*Book of Knowledge*, Foundations of the Law, II 10]. In his discussion of God's knowledge in the *Book of Knowledge* Maimonides is very anxious to deny any plurality in God's thought.

Spinoza clearly did not adhere to this view when he was writing the *Ethics*, since in this text, as we have already seen, he explicitly speaks about finite ideas or intellects being parts of God's infinite idea or intellect. So how are we to account for the divisibility of God's idea and the indivisibility of its object?

Recall E2p3:

In God there is necessary an idea, both of his essence and of everything that necessarily follows from his essence.

The idea of God represents both "God's essence" (*Natura naturans*) and "everything that necessarily follow from his essence" (*Natura naturata*), i.e., it represents both indivisible and divisible things. Insofar as God's idea represents divisible things, it may be itself divisible as well. Yet, the element of God's idea which represents *Natura naturans* has to be indivisible.

Notice, that in E2p4, Spinoza claims that "God's idea, from which [*ex qua*] infinitely many things follow in infinitely many modes, must be unique." He does not say that the infinitely many things in infinitely many modes follow *in* God's idea, but rather *from* God's idea. The same is the case in E2p7c: "[W]hatever follows formally from God's infinite nature follows objectively *in* God from [*ex Dei idea*] his idea in the same order and with the same connection." Arguably, in these two passages, the term 'Idea Dei' has a slightly different meaning from what we have seen so far. It is not the idea of God as both *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, but rather it is the idea of only *Natura naturans*. According to E2p7c, the objective being, or representation, of *Natura naturata*, follows *from* God's idea. Hence, the representation of *Natura naturata* must be somewhat distinct from God's idea. What Spinoza seems to be saying in E2p7c and E2p4 is that the ideas of *Natura naturata* follow from the idea(s) of *Natura naturans* (i.e., the idea(s) of God and his attributes"). Indeed, E2p7c stresses that this process perfectly parallels ("in the same order and with the same nature") the flow of *Natura naturata* from *Natura naturans*. Thus, *the relation between the ideas of Natura naturata and Natura naturans must perfectly match the relation between their objects*. The idea of the attribute of Thought (or of the thinking substance) would be one aspect of the idea of God *qua* God, and the same would be

true about the rest of the attributes. Hence, it would seem that there is only one idea of *Natura naturans*, and the ideas of the attributes are just various aspects of this idea. The idea of the collection of all bodies (which is an infinite mode of Extension) would have to follow from the idea of Extension just as the infinite mode of Extension follows from its attributes (and the same would be true about the ideas of all other infinite modes). Finally, the idea of N would turn out to be a mode of the idea of God just as N itself is a mode of God. All these ideas are in God's idea, just as all things are in God.

This description allows us, I think, to answer the question whether God's idea is divisible. Apparently, in God's idea there is an indivisible kernel, i.e., the idea of *Natura naturans*. Just as God has infinite modes which are divisible, and yet, God qua *Natura naturans* is indivisible, so the idea of God has elements representing the divisible infinite modes, and it is these elements (or God's idea qua the idea of *Natura naturata*) which the human mind is said to be part of.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ Yet, a difficulty still remains here. Though God's infinite modes are divisible, we do not say that this makes God divisible, and similarly the divisibility of the ideas of the infinite modes should not make the idea of God divisible. But this would make the idea of God the only infinite mode which is indivisible, just like *Natura naturans*. It is true that if any mode could have been indivisible, than the idea of God would certainly be the leading candidate to gain this status, since it is the only mode that in some aspect is absolutely infinite. Yet, I strongly doubt whether such an exception is justified. The only solution to this problem which appears to me to be consistent with Spinoza's dichotomy of infinities in Letter 12 is the following: Modes - both finite and infinite - are by their nature divisible. In each attribute, there are different characteristics through which the division is carried out. In Thought the division is carried out through the content of ideas (though note that this content is internal to Thought and is not externally caused). In the case of God's idea, the mode at stake is *formally* divisible, but since the content of this idea is indivisible, the formal divisibility of God's idea cannot be carried out. In other words, the formal divisibility of ideas can be explained as the conditional stating that "if the content of an idea is divisible, the idea itself will divide along the line of its content." This weak understanding of the divisibility of ideas, allows God's idea to be divisible but in a trivial sense, i.e., it is true that if the content of this idea were divisible, the idea itself would also be (formally) divisible.

This interpretation is admittedly speculative, but given Spinoza's repeated stress that the ideas in Thought, or in God's idea, follow "in the same order and with the same connection" as their objects, I think we should take this parallelism as strictly as possible.

4.4.6 *Is God's idea identical with God?* - Another crucial question which we should address is whether the parallelism between God and God's idea entails the identity of these two entities. Of course, there is one sense in which this identity is completely trivial: the objective, or representational content of God's idea is God. Yet, the identity question could and should be pressed further: is God's idea *the very same thing* as God (just as Napoleon's body and mind are "the very same thing")?

Were God and God's idea the very same thing, it would mean that a mode is numerically identical with the substance. This, I think, is a highly implausible position since these two entities differ in their most essential properties. The one is self-caused; the other is not. The one is self-conceived; the other is not, etc. Fortunately, I think, there is no reason to push Spinoza toward this implausible position. In my discussion of the two doctrines of parallelism, I have argued that the ideas-things parallelism is neutral as to the question whether ideas are identical with the things they represent (namely, some ideas are, other ideas - the idea(s) of *Natura naturans* - are not, identical with their *ideata*). It is only the conflation of the doctrines of the ideas-things parallelism and the inter-attributes parallelism (in which Spinoza claims that a thing under different attributes is "one and the same thing") which brings about the identity of *all* ideas with their objects.

Spinoza presents the identity claim only in the context of the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s. In this scholium, Spinoza claims that two things that differ only by the attributes under which they are conceived are numerically identical. Thus, a thinking mode is identical with its parallel mode in Extension just as the thinking substance is identical with the extended substance. The crucial difference between God and God's idea is not, however, a difference in attributes, but in the one's being a substance and the other's being a mode. The inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s

does entail that God is numerically identical with a certain entity in Thought; this entity is the thinking *substance* (and not God's idea which is merely a *mode*). The difference between God and the thinking substance is indeed a difference only in terms of the attributes under which they are conceived. God is conceived under infinitely many attributes; the thinking substance is conceived under Thought alone. Hence, these two entities are "one and the same thing." Similarly, God's idea, being the immediate infinite mode in Thought is identical with the immediate infinite mode of Extension (and the immediate infinite mode of the unknown third attribute, etc.). Spinoza never speaks of God's infinite modes, i.e., the infinite modes *under all attributes* (when he speaks of *Natura naturata* he treats it as a realm rather than as an entity).³⁹⁶ Yet, I think, one can consistently conceive of such an entity within the framework of Spinoza's metaphysics. Suppose 'Nicolai' is the name of the immediate infinite mode under all attributes. E2p7s stipulates that Nicolai is numerically identical with God's idea and with all the immediate infinite modes under each attribute; the only difference between these entities is a difference in attributes. Notice, however, that Nicolai is *not* God. Though, like God, Nicolai is under all attributes, it is still a mode, and as such it differs from God in the most crucial properties. Similarly, God's idea is not identical with God, not because unlike God it is only under Thought, but rather because it is a mode, and God is a substance. For Spinoza, there cannot be a difference deeper than that.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ Though the notion of an infinite mode under all attributes seems to me meaningful and consistent within Spinoza's metaphysics, there seem to be two reasons which could have pushed Spinoza to avoid explicating this notion. First, as I have mentioned earlier, Spinoza does not get into the details of the universe, as it is perceived by God. He provides a very general picture and the main principles of such a universe in Book I of the *Ethics*, but the rest of the book limits its discussion to that part of the picture which can be useful for "human salvation." Second, the notion of an infinite mode of God might be a cause of confusion by making one think that there can be modes of God free from any attribute. As I have argued in Chapter 2 (2.3), Spinoza cannot accept such modes because the lack of attributes renders them unintelligible.

³⁹⁷ Thus, God's idea is identical with Nicolai, but it is a representation of God. This may seem odd at first glance, but this is so only because we tend to melt together the representational parallelism between ideas and things with the

4.4.7 *Objection: Does God, like God's idea, follow from Thought?* - In the last section, I have argued against the numerical identity of God and God's idea. A closely related problem is the following. In E1p21, Spinoza claims that God's idea (being an immediate infinite mode) follows from Thought. Yet, one may object, God himself does not follow from anything (but himself), and therefore, we have a relational fact about God's idea which has no parallel in God's case. This would seem to undermine the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7.

Though at first sight this objection may seem devastating, I think it is solvable. E2p7 asserts an isomorphism between ideas and things. I have shown that Spinoza takes God's idea (of himself) to be the same item in the domain of *ideas* which parallels God in the domain of *things*. Now, just as God is not caused by any *thing* but himself, so is God's idea not caused by any other *idea*. Within the domain of ideas, the idea of God parallels all the relations that God has. When we talk about the relation between the attribute of thought and the idea of God, we deal with a relation between two *things* (the attribute of Thought is not an idea); hence, E2p7 does not stipulate that this relation would parallel a relation between two things, but rather a relation between two ideas. This parallel relation (in the domain of ideas) is simply the relation between the idea of the attribute of thought

identity parallelism between the attributes. Otherwise, this position seems to be consistent. The idea which represents Nicolai is the immediate mode of God's idea (just as Nicolai is the immediate mode of God). The idea of Nicolai is not identical with Nicolai, but rather with the mediate infinite mode which is Nicolai's immediate effect. Within the realm of the infinite modes, there is always a one-step gap between the object of the idea and the thing which is identical with that idea. This seems to be an unavoidable result of the fact that God's idea (being a mode) cannot be identical with God. Note, however, that this one-step gap is limited to the realm of the infinite modes (insofar as E1p22 denies the possibility of a descent from the infinite modes to the finite modes). We would have a substantial problem if *finite* ideas were not identical with the objects they represent, since Spinoza is clearly committed to the view that the human mind is a representation of the body and is identical with the body. Spinoza's claim in E1p22 seems to provide an assurance that such a situation cannot obtain. The one-step gap within the realm of the infinite modes can progress infinitely within this realm. The view that in each attribute there are only two infinite modes is a misinterpretation of Spinoza, who never committed himself to the claim that in each attribute there is only one mediate infinite mode.

and the idea of the idea of God (i.e., the idea of the idea of God “follows” from the idea of Thought). All we need in order to sustain the idea-things parallelism is that *within the domain of ideas* the idea of God will be self-caused (just as its object is self-caused within the domain of things). The relation between the idea of God and Thought is not a relation between two *ideas* (Thought is an attribute belonging to *Natura naturans*, while ideas are modes), and therefore there is no need to have two *things* parallel to this relation. Thought and the idea of God are two *things*, and therefore there must be two *ideas* whose relation parallels the relation of Thought to the idea of God. As I have already suggested, this is the relation between the idea of Thought and the idea of the idea of God.

4.4.8 *Does the Idea of God violate the inter-attributes parallelism?* - God’s idea represents God; according to the ideas-things parallelism, the thing which parallels this idea is none but God. Yet, no other attribute has a mode which parallels God. Would this not be a violation of the inter-attributes parallelism? I think not.

At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that Spinoza has two distinct doctrines of parallelism, and that each of these doctrines has some characteristics that the other lacks. This distinction between the two doctrines becomes more visible when we examine the idea of God. The idea of God parallels different entities according to each of these doctrines. According to the ideas-things parallelism the idea of God parallels God himself. According to the inter-attributes parallelism, the idea of God parallels all the immediate infinite modes of each attribute. Are these two situations consistent? I think they are. Recall that each of these parallelisms has different properties. The parallelism between ideas and things is representational, i.e., every pair of items are a thing and its representation. The inter-attributes parallelism is an identity relation, i.e., all items that parallel each other are “one and the same thing.” When we apply these characterizations to the case of God’s idea we get that God’s idea represents God (according to the ideas-things parallelism) and that it is identical with all the immediate infinite modes of each attribute (according to the inter-attributes parallelism). Thus, although God’s idea parallels two different items (God and the immediate infinite modes) there is no way to derive transitively a (false) parallelism between God

and the immediate infinite modes because it is not in the same sense that God's idea parallels both items. Though at first sight this result appears unusual, I think it provides a significant support to my claim that there are two distinct doctrines of parallelism in E2p7 and its scholium. Proponents of the standard reading (which takes E2p7 as asserting merely the inter-attributes parallelism) face, I believe, a very difficult challenge in addressing God's idea. Some of them simply deny that God's idea is an idea *of* anything (but how else can God be known?); others think that the idea of God has a privileged place which allows it to break the parallelism between the attributes. The reading I suggest preserves the literal meaning of God's idea as the representation of God (see E2p3&4); it does not violate the ideas-things parallelism, and avoids the extremely problematic identification of God's idea with its object.

4.4.9 *Is the inter-attributes parallelism derivable from the ideas-things parallelism?* - In Chapter 3 (3.3)

I have argued that the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7 and the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s are two distinct doctrines that are not derivable from each other. Now, once we have the full picture of the structure of the attribute of Thought, we can address one important objection to the claim that the two doctrines are not independent from each other. This objection will suggest that assuming the ideas-things parallelism we could derive the inter-attributes parallelism by transitivity. If a series of modes under Extension, (A₁, B₁, C₁, D₁) parallels a series of ideas in Thought (A₂, B₂, C₂, D₂), and if a series of modes of third attribute (A₃, B₃, C₃, D₃) parallel the same series of ideas, it would seem that we could derive the parallelism between the modes of Extension and the third attribute by transitivity (insofar as both parallel the series of ideas). If this derivation through transitivity is valid, it would seem that we can derive the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s from the ideas-things parallelism of E2p7.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ As I have pointed in section 3.3 this is not Spinoza's official explanation for the inter-attributes parallelism. Yet, if this argument turns out to be valid, it would clearly undermine the independence of the two doctrines.

The obvious problem with such a derivation is that it may violate the conceptual and causal separation of the attributes. If Extension and the third attribute parallel each other *because* of their relation to Thought, it would seem that two facts about Thought (its correspondence with both Extension and the third attribute) would explain the relation between two attributes external to Thought, and hence some facts about these two attributes would turn out to depend on Thought.

But are we sure that this transitive derivation violates the conceptual barrier? Here is a possible line of defense in favor of the derivation.³⁹⁹ Ideas and things do share some structural features. According to E2p8, for example, ideas of things that do not have duration, are ideas that also do not have duration. Once we know that “Napoleon the victor at Waterloo” is a thing that does not have duration, we can conclude that “the idea of Napoleon the victor at Waterloo” does not have duration. Spinoza clearly does not take such an inference to be a violation of the conceptual barrier. What an inference of that sort does is merely to point out the structural similarity between the order of ideas and the order of things. Yet, the explanation for either kind of items lies within its own order (i.e., the non-durational nature of “the idea of Napoleon the victor at Waterloo” is explained only through other *ideas*). Now, one can argue that the derivation of the inter-attributes parallelism from the ideas-things parallelism relies on a similar consideration of the structural similarity between Thought and Extension and Thought and the third attribute and as such it should be considered as a violation of the conceptual barrier.

So are we to finally conclude that the transitive derivation of the inter-attributes parallelism from the ideas-things parallelism is acceptable? I think not. Here is why. In the original presentation of this argument, I suggested that the modes of Extension (A_1, B_1, C_1, D_1) parallel the ideas (A_2, B_2, C_2, D_2) and that these are the very same ideas which also parallel the modes of the third attribute (A_3, B_3, C_3, D_3). Yet, it is not clear that we were entitled to assume the identity, or even parallelism, between ideas of different attributes. All that E2p7 claims is that ideas have the same

³⁹⁹ See Della Rocca (*Representation*, 20) for a similar argument.

order as their objects. If A_1 and A_3 are identical (or parallel each other), then E2p7 stipulates that the ideas of A_1 (A_2^1) and A_3 (A_2^3) also be identical (or parallel each other). Now, Spinoza does think that A_1 and A_3 are identical and parallel each other, but this identity and parallelism is stipulated *only by the inter-attributes parallelism*. Since we now attempt to prove the inter-attributes parallelism, we will be committing an obvious *petitio principii*, if we rely on the same doctrine we try to prove. In the absence of inter-attributes parallelism, there seems to be no reason to assume that the chains of ideas of different attributes parallel each other. In other word, if body A_1 were the cause of body B_1 , E2p7 would stipulate that the idea of Body A has to be the cause of the idea of body B . Similarly, if the mode of third attribute A_3 were the cause of the mode of the third attribute B_3 , the idea of A_3 would have to be the cause of the idea of B_3 . Yet, when we ask ourselves how does the idea of A_1 relate to the idea of A_3 , we are left without any answer (as long as we do not appeal to the inter-attributes parallelism of E2p7s). The idea of A_1 can parallel the idea of A_3 , the idea of B_3 , or neither of the two (all we know is that the ideas of A_1 and A_3 are not causally connected to each other). If there is no parallelism between ideas of different attributes, then the transitivity argument seems to fail.⁴⁰⁰

4.4.10 *Summary*. - In this part I have discussed the nature and structure of God's idea. Admittedly, there is a genuine tension in the very notion of this being, which on the one hand is merely a mode, but on the other hand, contains objectively God himself. Yet, it is clear that Spinoza is committed to the existence of this idea, and as far as I can see, I think he succeeds in shaping his

⁴⁰⁰ Michael Della Rocca suggested to me that perhaps the identity of ideas of modes of different attributes (and as a result, the derivation of the inter-attributes parallelism from the ideas-things parallelism) could be proved in the following way. If the infinite pairs of an attribute and its representation in Thought were not identical with each other, one could argue that each such a pair constitutes a separate substance. I tend to think that this cannot be the case since the representations of different attributes share their essential property of being representational, and hence, they must belong to the same attribute. But, substances cannot share the same attribute [E1p5], and therefore, these infinite pairs cannot constitute independent substances

system so as to allow the existence of this unusual being. Spinoza's phrasing of his claim in E2p5d that "the *formal* being on ideas is a mode of thinking" [italics mine] seems to imply that the objective being of an idea does not have to be a mode. In fact, Spinoza must allow for ideas whose objective being is not a mode in order to retain his frequent talk about ideas of God and his attributes meaningful. I will soon turn to the establishment of the claim that the multifaceted nature of ideas and Thought's ability to harbor the idea of God grants Thought a clear priority over the rest of the attributes. But before I turn to this task, I would like to consider two interpretations of the relation between ideas of different attributes, which are the closest to mine.

4.5 *Gueroult and Joel Friedman on the Order of Ideas*

Some time after I have completed developing the outline of my solution to the problem of the ideas of other attributes and of the order of ideas in Thought, I found out that two of the most acute works on Spinoza - by Martial Gueroult and Joel Friedman - developed similar ideas. There are, however, still very considerable differences between my reading and those of Friedman and Gueroult, and neither Gueroult nor Friedman develop their interpretations in detail.⁴⁰¹ Neither of the two provides much textual support beyond Letters 63-66 (such as the identity of an idea with its idea), and neither one accepts the claim that Spinoza had two independent doctrines of parallelism. Yet, the similarities between the interpretations may make a comparative discussion interesting and fruitful. Hence, in this part, I will discuss these two interpretations.

4.5.1 *Joel Friedman's Weak Parallelism Solution.* - For Friedman the doctrine of parallelism is a doctrine which stipulates a strict isomorphism among the attributes (this is the same doctrine which

⁴⁰¹ Friedman does not do so because he eventually favors another solution to the problem, while Gueroult does not dedicate a special study to the problem, but only discusses it in a few passages of his second book.

I termed the ‘inter-attribute parallelism’).⁴⁰² Friedman rightly points out that Spinoza’s counter-intuitive claim that the human mind has ideas of everything that happens in the body (E2p12) indicates the strictness of Spinoza’s commitment to the isomorphism between the attributes.⁴⁰³ Friedman apparently accepts the view that there is a tension between the doctrines of God’s omniscience and of the parallelism between the attributes insofar as the former seems to make Thought equal in its extent to sum-total of all modes of all attributes.⁴⁰⁴ Yet, he rejects Curley’s (and many other commentators’) conclusion that “the attribute of thought does extend more widely than any of the other [attributes]” insofar as this violates the strict parallelism between the attributes, and arguably generates a bold inconsistency at the very heart of the system.⁴⁰⁵

Friedman develops two possible solutions to the problem of ideas of other attributes and to the tension between God’s omniscience and the inter-attributes parallelism. His two solutions rely on the conjecture that both ideas and modes of any other attribute have a multifaceted structure; bodies as well as modes of any other attribute have infinitely many aspects, just like ideas.⁴⁰⁶ In the very

⁴⁰² Friedman, *Other Minds*, 101. Friedman and I use different terminology to refer to the same things. In the following, I will translate Friedman’s claims into my own terminology in order to avoid confusion.

⁴⁰³ Friedman, *Other Minds*, 103-4.

⁴⁰⁴ Friedman, *Other Minds*, 109.

⁴⁰⁵ Friedman, *Other Minds*, 110.

⁴⁰⁶ The main difference between Friedman’s two solutions seems to be that the second rejects Spinoza’s alleged claim in Letter 66 that ideas of the same mode under different attributes do not constitute a single idea in God’s mind (p. 115. See my criticism of Friedman’s reading of Letter 66 below). Friedman suggests two possible responses to the obvious objection that his solutions do not allow God to know more than just one attribute (Making the modes both of Thought and of the other attributes equally multifaceted renders Thought equal in its extent to any other attribute. Hence, the question: how can Thought represent more than one attribute?). Friedman’s second response to this objection simply weakens God’s omniscience by denying that “Spinoza’s God has a direct knowledge of absolutely all the detailed modal expressions in Nature” (113. Friedman distinction between ‘modes’

conclusion of the paper, Friedman mentions briefly another solution he terms “Weak Parallelism” according to which only ideas, but not modes of any other attribute, have infinitely many aspects, and admits that the “Weak Parallelism” solution “deserves a more thorough treatment than is given in this paper”.⁴⁰⁷ Friedman clearly prefers one of the other two solutions which he develops in detail. His main objection to the “Weak Parallelism” solution seems to be that it is not consistent with the parallelism among the attributes since it grants Thought a special place among the attributes.⁴⁰⁸ The solution I suggest in this work is quite close to Friedman’s “Weak Parallelism.” Yet, I do not agree with Friedman that the special place of Thought among the attributes and the multifaceted nature of ideas undermines the parallelism between the attributes. As I have already argued, the multifaceted structure of ideas seems to me to be the *only* position which allows the

vs. ‘modal expressions’ is equivalent to my distinction between ‘modes of God’ vs. ‘modes’ (or ‘modes of an attribute’). Friedman’s first response develops a beautiful (though, I think, untenable) regression of infinities in Thought (and as a result also external to Thought - see pages 110-112). I cannot discuss here in detail these suggestions, I will only suggest the following preliminary objections to the main assumption underlying all the solutions Friedman develops. Firstly, as far as I know, there is not even the slightest hint in Spinoza’s writings that any mode of an attribute (other than ideas) may have a plurality of facets. Nowhere does Spinoza say that the infinite mode of Extension is absolutely infinite, or that “infinitely many things in infinitely many ways” follow from it. Secondly, Friedman admits (p. 112) that if bodies were multifaceted then we might not be able to know all the aspects of bodies which do not correspond to our mind. Yet, whenever Spinoza speaks of minds which are not accessible to each other, he always speaks of minds (or ideas) of modes of *different* attributes, and never considers the possibility that some bodies are *in principle* unknowable. Thirdly, if bodies were multifaceted just like ideas, it would seem that the extended entity which corresponds to an idea of an idea is ‘a body of a body.’ Friedman hints at this possibility (see page 121), but it is difficult to conceive what this entity could be.

⁴⁰⁷ Friedman, *Other Minds*, 120.

⁴⁰⁸ Friedman, *Other Minds*, 97, 108, and 120.

coexistence between the inter-attributes parallelism and the ideas-things parallelism.⁴⁰⁹ I also differ from Friedman in understanding Spinoza's claim in Letter 66 that the ideas of modes of different attributes do not constitute "one and the same mind of a particular thing." Friedman understands this claim as denying that the ideas of the same mode under different attributes constitute one and the same idea in God's intellect, and thus he is (unnecessarily, I think) forced to admit that one of his own two solutions goes against this letter (and surely he could press the same criticism against my solution).⁴¹⁰ Yet, as I have argued earlier, I think Spinoza never rejected the identity of ideas of modes of different attributes in God's intellect. The only thing Spinoza rejects in Letter 66 is that these infinite ideas constitute "the same mind of a particular thing." But God is not a *particular* thing, and his intellect is not a *mind*, and therefore this claim says nothing against the identity of the ideas in God's intellect, or idea. There is another important difference between our readings insofar as Friedman holds that "neither God, nor God's essence, nor God's Extension can ever literally be the object of some idea."⁴¹¹ This difference is rooted in our different readings of E2p7 and its scholium (which overall, I think, is the fundamental difference between our attitudes).

4.5.2 *Gueroult on the Refraction of Ideas.* - In the corollary to E2p7, Spinoza claims that "God's [NS; actual] power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting," and it is this bold announcement which triggers Gueroult's discussion of the structure of Thought. He understands E2p1s, E2p3d and E2pd as claiming that "the thinking thing, which produces as many ideas as the number of modes which are formally in the entire Nature, must produce alone as many modes as

⁴⁰⁹ Surprisingly, Friedman's impressive work pays very little attention to the parallelism between ideas and things in E2p7.

⁴¹⁰ Friedman, *Other Minds*, 106-7.

⁴¹¹ Friedman, *Other Minds*, 114. Friedman apparently holds that the passages which speak of ideas of *Natura naturans* should not be literally read, though he does not provide such an alternative reading.

God, i.e., an infinity, infinitely infinite.”⁴¹² Gueroult is not content with Spinoza’s equation of God’s power of acting with his power of thinking: “since God’s power of thinking is his very essence (E1p24), the essence of the attribute of thought must be equal to the essence of the divine substance.”⁴¹³ This last conclusion appears to Gueroult as absurd. In his first attempt to reinterpret the identity of God’s power of acting and his power of thinking, Gueroult suggests that “when Spinoza declares that in God the power of thinking is equal to the power of acting, he could not be saying that the former constitutes in itself a power as big as the latter, but simply that as big as one conceives the latter, the former equals it, not absolutely, but in its class [*genre*], having as many modes in its class, as God has in all classes.”⁴¹⁴ Absolutely, Gueroult argues, God’s power is infinitely bigger than that of Thought alone.⁴¹⁵

Yet, Gueroult argues that this solution still leaves Thought far more extensive than any other *attribute*, and hence, he suggests, also more perfect: “it seems impossible to pretend that the infinitely infinite infinity of modes of Thought does not constitute a better perfection and reality than the simple infinity of each of the other attributes.”⁴¹⁶ In order to render all attributes equally extensive and powerful, Gueroult presents his second solution which is based on a distinction between Thought’s power of acting and its power of thinking. Thought’s power of acting is equal to that of any other attribute. Thought produces infinite formal essences, just like the other attributes. Each of these formal essences, however, “refracts an infinity of objective refractions” which represent the mode of the infinite attributes. Yet, this refraction of each idea changes nothing in its formal

⁴¹² Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, 78.

⁴¹³ Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, 79.

⁴¹⁴ Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, 80.

⁴¹⁵ Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, 80-81. I do not see how Gueroult arrives at his conclusion; if Thought has “as many modes in its class, as God has in all classes” what prevents its power from being absolutely equal to God?

⁴¹⁶ Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, 81.

reality.⁴¹⁷ As a result, he can claim that “Thought’s power of acting is equal to that of any other attribute; yet, its power of thinking seems to be infinitely larger because it refracts into an infinity of objective essences each of the formal essences it produces; in that sense it can be said to be equal to God’s power of acting.”⁴¹⁸ Gueroult adds that this same result can be reached from another angle.

If there is in [Thought] an infinite infinity of things it is in virtue of the infinitely infinite nature of the divine substance which necessarily produces them and not in virtue of the attribute which thinks them. Therefore, the infinitely infinite infinity of objective essences which represents the things is not founded upon the infinite nature of the attribute of Thought, but on the infinitely infinite nature of the divine substance, which, through its power of thinking, the attribute of Thought necessarily knows through God’s idea. This is why [the infinite infinity of ideas] is deduced from the idea of God which represents the divine substance and its modes, and not from the nature of the attribute of thought, which considered in itself, independently from the things to be represented, produces an infinity, and not an infinitely infinite infinity, of formal essences, or causes.⁴¹⁹

Now, where do I agree and disagree with Gueroult? It would be hardly surprising if I say that I agree with Gueroult’s view that each idea refracts into infinite aspects, which allow it to represent all the modes paralleling it in the other attributes.

One suggestion of Gueroult which I tend to accept is that the infinite refractions of each idea constitute infinite modes of that idea (and hence, they are modes of modes).⁴²⁰ This suggestion is consistent with my own conclusion in Chapter 1 that Spinoza allows for the existence of modes of modes.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁷ Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, 83.

⁴¹⁸ Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, 84.

⁴¹⁹ Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, 84.

⁴²⁰ See Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, 84.

⁴²¹ See 1.4.

I also find Gueroult's distinction between Thought's power of acting and its power of thinking interesting. Yet, we must note that Gueroult provides no textual documentation for his interpretation. That the objective essence of God's idea is identical to God is, I think, clearly true, but unlike Gueroult I do not think that the equation of God's power of thinking with his power of acting leaves all attributes on a par. Spinoza does not say that God's power of movement and rest (the essential characteristic of bodies in Spinoza's physics) is equal to God's power of acting, and I do not think this is a mere coincidence. By claiming that God's power of thinking is equal to his power of acting, Spinoza was, arguably, trying to draw our attention to the crucial fact that though Thought is merely an attribute, it is the only attribute which *in some sense* is on a par with God. As we have already seen, Thought is the only attribute which is said to harbor an infinity which, in some sense, is equal to God's infinity. This brings us to my second point of disagreement with Gueroult's interpretation of the place of Thought in Spinoza's metaphysics.

In the long passage I have just quoted, Gueroult claims that "the infinitely infinite infinity of objective essences which represents the things is not founded upon the infinite nature of the attribute of Thought, but on the infinitely infinite nature of the divine substance." This claim seems to me to be a clear violation of the conceptual separation of the attributes. If we are to retain the separation of the attributes, we should hold that both God and (the objective content of) God's idea are absolutely infinite, but neither one is such because of the other. Just as the representational content of Thought must be internal to Thought, so too must the absolute infinity of God's idea. If God's idea were caused by God not only insofar as he is a thinking thing, there will be little left of the conceptual barrier between the attributes.

A third point where I tend to disagree with Gueroult is his claim that all the "refractions" of the idea which represent the same mode of God share the same form, while their objective essences differ. Though this is an interesting suggestion, I am not sure it is consistent with Spinoza's understanding of ideas of ideas, and particularly with Spinoza's claim that the idea of an idea X is X's form. If all the ideas of N (being a mode of God under all attributes) are distinguished only by

their representational content but not by their form, then they would seem to have the same idea of idea (which is nothing but the form of the ideas of N). This, however, seems to violate the ideas-things parallelism since the infinite ideas representing N, *once they are taken as things*, must be represented by *infinite* ideas of ideas (which though are aspects of one and the same idea of idea, they are still distinguished as aspects of that idea of idea). Therefore, it would seem that the ideas of N₁ and of N₃ should be distinguished not just objectively but also formally, i.e., the *form* of the one would contain the characteristic that it is an idea *of a body* (the *content* would specify the *particular body*), while the other's form would include the fact that it is an idea of a mode of the third attribute.⁴²²

Overall, I think that the main difference between Gueroult's and my reading is that Gueroult attempts to place Thought completely on a par with the rest of the attributes, while I believe that in spite of the inter-attributes parallelism, Thought does have a clear priority among the attributes. How this is possible and what exactly is the priority of Thought in Spinoza's metaphysics is the subject of the next part.

4.6 *The Priority of Thought in Spinoza's Metaphysics*

4.6.1 *What is Thought's Priority among the Attributes?* - Throughout the last two chapters I implied that, for Spinoza, Thought has a clear priority over the other attributes. It is now time to discuss explicitly what constitutes this priority. But first I would like to make clear what it is not: Thought is not prior to the other attributes in the sense that the other attributes depend on Thought, or are reducible to Thought. Spinoza's rejection of such a reduction will be discussed in the next part of the chapter.

⁴²² Errol Harris criticizes the very same claim of Gueroult from a slightly different angle. He claims that if all the ideas of the same mode of God shared the same form, these ideas or minds would have to know about each other, and particularly, we would have to be able know the modes of the other attributes ("Infinity of Attributes", 13-14).

What then is the primacy of Thought? We can reach this characteristic of Thought which grants it priority among the attributes in a couple of different ways, but essentially, it is one and the same characteristic. Thought is preeminent among the attributes insofar as it parallels not only the modes of each of the attributes, but also God himself. It is the only attribute which can harbor a mode which, in some sense, shares the unique properties of God (such as uniqueness and absolute infinity). Thought is also the only attribute whose modes are multifaceted just like the modes of God (being modes under all attributes). The preeminence of Thought was well captured by Tschirnhaus and Leibniz when they understood Spinoza as claiming the existence of infinite worlds, in each of which there is Thought and another attribute. As we have already seen Spinoza rejects such an understanding of the term 'world,' but Tschirnhaus's reasons for suggesting this term are quite clear. Within Spinoza's universe, particular things are nothing but pairs of (extra-Thought) modes and their minds, and as we saw earlier, minds of modes different attributes cannot access each other. As a result, we get infinitely many domains constituted by each attribute and its representation in Thought. Inhabitants of distinct domains of such a kind cannot access each other, yet *they all share the fact they are animated and have minds*. In that sense, the representation in Thought becomes one of the few properties in Spinoza's metaphysics that run across all the attributes; just as all attributes are ordered in causal relations, so are all attributes represented in Thought. ⁴²³

We can also see the primacy of Thought from the following angle. Each attribute mirrors one chain of ideas (or rather, one chain of idea-aspects). Yet, the only thing which mirrors Thought

⁴²³ In other words, representability in Thought is an attribute-neutral feature of all things. One might object that being parallel to Extension is also an attribute-natural feature, shared by all attributes. Yet, in the case of Thought, all attributes are not only *parallel* to Thought, but are also *represented* by Thought. Thus, each attribute generates the attribute-natural feature that all attributes parallel it, but Thought generates in addition the attribute-natural feature of representability in Thought.

in its *entire* complexity is God alone, or the substance.⁴²⁴ Finally, as I have already pointed out, Thought is the only attribute whose power - Spinoza claims - is equal to the power of God himself.

4.6.2 *Can there be another all-encompassing attribute just like Thought?* - At this point we may consider the following objection. As E2a5 stresses, “we” know only two attributes and their modes. But perhaps one of the unknown attributes has just the same all-encompassing abilities as Thought and could therefore challenge Thought’s priority. What we know about the other attributes are certain structural features that cut across all the attributes (such as being causally - and probably also temporally - ordered). Granted that all these attributes are represented in Thought, yet how can we exclude the possibility that perhaps one of these attributes can mirror the whole substance, as in the case of Thought?

I see two possible replies to this question. The first suggests that if any unknown attribute *A* “contained” the whole of nature in some sense (just like Thought), it would in fact be a representational attribute, and hence, identical with Thought. I am quite hesitant in accepting this reply, because we can always ask how we know that an attribute can “contain” or relate to all the modes of all the other attributes *only* by representing them. The second answer seems to me somewhat better, yet still not perfect. Suppose *A* is an unknown attribute that in a certain way (unknown to us) “contains” all the modes of all the attributes. In such a case, a competition between *A* and Thought would immediately emerge; each would claim to “contain” the other. Yet, a basic consideration of part-whole relations tells us that no two things can be real parts of each other. Hence, if we wish to avoid this paradox, we must deny that any other attribute can “contain” Thought. The main problem I see with this last argument is that as long as we do not know the nature of the other attribute and the sense in which it “contains” the whole of nature (just as Thought “contains” the whole of nature *objectively*), we might not be sure that such two containment relations really exclude each other. Though the mature Spinoza, unlike Spinoza of the *Short Treatise*,

⁴²⁴ This last point is recognized and stressed by both Pollock (*Spinoza*, 161-2) and Hallett (*Elements*, 41)

has no illusions about future revelations about the nature of the unknown attribute, I see no other way but to leave this problem for “further research” (or perhaps for the Spinoza scholars of the other attributes).

4.7 *Why Spinoza cannot be a reductive idealist.*

4.7.1 Given the special structure, role and power Spinoza ascribes to Thought one may be tempted to make Spinoza into an idealist.⁴²⁵ Insofar as Thought is coextensive with God (i.e., for everything that is, there must be a parallel mode in Thought) then why not take the further step and say that Thought not only represents all things, but is also the *origin* of all things? If Spinoza is taking the relation between Thought and the other attributes to be asymmetric insofar as Thought is both more complex and has the unique ability to harbor absolute infinity, why not take a further step and explain this asymmetry in terms of Thought being the origin of the other attributes?

As if aware of this temptation, Spinoza openly raises the possibility and rejects it outright:

[T]he formal being of things which are not modes of thinking [*esse formale rerum, quae modi non sunt cogitandi*] does not follow from the divine nature because [God] has first known the things; rather the objects of ideas follow and are inferred from their attributes in the same way and by the same necessity as that with which we have shown ideas to follow from the attribute of thought (E2p6c).

Interestingly, the target of this warning seems to be none other than the young Spinoza. Compare E2p6c with the following passage from the *Cogitata Metaphysica*:

The objects of God's knowledge are not things outside God

It also follows from God's perfection that his ideas are not determined, as ours are, by objects placed outside God. On the contrary, the things which have been created outside God by God are determined by God's intellect. For otherwise the objects [of his knowledge] would have their own

⁴²⁵ See Pollock's conclusion (*Spinoza*, 162): “The ground is cut from the apparent equality of the attributes; and, though the system escapes the snares of subjective idealism, it does not escape idealism altogether.”

nature and essence through themselves, and would be prior, at least in nature, to the divine intellect. But that is absurd.⁴²⁶

Note that in both texts the idealism at stake is not one in which a *finite* intellect creates its objects (a view sometimes termed ‘subjective idealism’), but rather an idealism in which the *infinite* intellect creates the objects (a view sometimes termed ‘objective idealism’). Obviously, if the *infinite* intellect is not the origin of things, then the *finite* intellect clearly cannot have such creative capacities. Now, why does Spinoza reject idealism so easily in spite of the primacy he ascribes to Thought? The answer seems to be quite simple: Spinoza could not embrace idealism because of his commitment to the conceptual separation of the attributes. Had any of the other attributes been reduced to Thought, this attribute would not be “conceived through itself” (E 1p10), and hence, it would cease to be an attribute. The conceptual barrier between the attributes blocks the possibility of reducing any of the attributes to another attribute.

Notice that the main threat to the barrier between the attributes comes from the side of Thought. Since Thought has capacities beyond any of the other attributes (e.g., it is the only attribute whose modes parallel the relations *between* the attributes), it appears as the most natural candidate to which all other attributes could have been reduced.⁴²⁷ Spinoza’s doctrine of the conceptual barrier between the attributes precludes this reduction. As a result, we obtain a radical pluralism of attributes side by side with the substance monism. Yet, Spinoza’s position seems to be far closer to idealism than to materialism. This of course provides little satisfaction for the idealist. In fact, Spinoza’s position places the idealist in a tormenting position: in it, he can see the land from afar, but he will never reach it.

⁴²⁶ *Cogitata Metaphysica* II, vii [G I/261/22-28 | C 327].

⁴²⁷ In other words, even in the absence of the conceptual barrier, it is unlikely that a materialist reduction would have been feasible within Spinoza’s system, because Extension is simply not rich enough: how could extension, for example, account for the relation between the attributes?

4.8 Back to E 1d4: What are 'Intellect' and 'Attribute'?

4.8.1 What is 'an intellect'? - One of the main motivations to read Spinoza as an idealist comes from his definition of 'attribute' (E1d4) which can be seen as making the attributes dependent upon God's intellect.⁴²⁸ Here, I would like to develop one line of interpretation of the definition of attribute which is consistent with our findings regarding the multifaceted nature of ideas. Admittedly, this interpretation is quite speculative, yet I think it does have *some* support in the text, and provides a very fresh perspective on this crucial definition. Therefore, I will first develop this reading of E1d4 and then evaluate its plausibility. It is important to make clear, however, that this reading of E1d4 is not necessitated by my view of the order of ideas, and the latter will not collapse if the former turns out to be implausible. I will begin by addressing the notion of 'intellect', and then turn to the definition of attribute.

As we have already seen, there are, at least,⁴²⁹ *two* dimensions of infinity in the order of ideas in Thought. First, there are infinite ideas corresponding to the infinite modes of God (i.e., the modes under all attributes). Second, each idea has infinite aspects, each of which represents the same mode of God under a different attribute. Some commentators who take notice of this double infinity, suggest that each chain of idea-aspects which represents all the modes of a certain attribute constitutes a separate *infinite intellect* of God.⁴³⁰ So far, this suggestion relies merely on Spinoza's mentioning in Letter 64 God's *absolutely* infinite intellect, which apparently makes a distinction between *an* infinite intellect, and *the absolutely* infinite intellect. The former is taken to be the chain of

⁴²⁸ See Pollock, *Spinoza*, 162. Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 260, 269-70; *Science of Logic*, 537.

⁴²⁹ I say "at least" because in some sense the infinite levels of higher order ideas provides a third dimension of infinity within Thought

⁴³⁰ See Harris, "Infinity of Attributes", 10 n.1, and Donagan, *Spinoza*, 119. Donagan, however, speaks of infinite "infinite minds". As I have pointed out earlier in this chapter, Spinoza never assigns a mind to an *infinite* being.

ideas (or in my terminology, the chain of idea-aspects) which represent all the modes of a certain attribute, while the latter is said to be identical with God's idea representing all the modes under all attributes. Thus, the absolutely infinite intellect turns out to consist of infinitely many infinite intellects.

I find this interpretation quite stimulating and think that there are some additional texts and considerations which might support it. Consider the following passage from E1p32c2. Pay particular attention to the phrase "from a *given* will, or intellect" [*ex data voluntate, sive intellectus*]:

It follows, secondly, that will and intellect are related to God's nature as motion and rest are, and as are absolutely all natural things, which (by P29) must be determined by God to exist and produce an effect in a certain way. For the will, like all other things, requires a cause by which it is determined to exist and produce an effect in a certain way. And although from a *given will, or intellect* infinitely many things may follow, God still cannot be said, on that account, to act from freedom of the will, any more than he can be said to act from freedom of motion and rest on account of those things that follow from motion and rest (for infinitely many things also follow from motion and rest). (Italics mine)

The intellect and will at stake are God's, and Spinoza argues here that God's will and intellect, though infinite, are not free. The use of the participle "given" would have been highly unreasonable if the infinite intellect at stake were unique.⁴³¹ When we speak of a "given X," we imply that there are other Xs. Hence, Spinoza's use of the phrase "given intellect" in the context of an infinite intellect, strongly suggests that there are other infinite intellects.

Note also that in this passage Spinoza claims that from the infinite intellect "infinitely many things follow," though in other passages in the *Ethics* he claims that from God's intellect or idea "infinitely many things in infinitely many ways" follow (E2p3). This discrepancy could be easily

⁴³¹ Spinoza clearly could not talk of a "given God." Since God's idea is unique like God, it would be also unreasonable for Spinoza to talk of a "given idea of God". We saw earlier that God's idea is his intellect. Hence, we must conclude that the infinite intellect of E1p32c2 cannot be the one which is identical with God's idea.

explained if we understand E1p32c2 as referring to just one, out of the infinite, infinite chains of idea-aspects representing all the modes of a certain attribute. By contrast, from the idea of God, which contains all the ideas in their infinite aspects, follow “infinitely many things in infinitely many ways”.

4.8.2 *The Definition of ‘Attribute’*. - Classical Latin has no articles. A reader of a translation of the *Ethics* in any language that does have articles is quite likely to find references to the infinite intellect following an indefinite article, which seems to imply the existence of a plurality of infinite intellects. In Curley’s English translation we find no less than 5 cases of that sort.⁴³² In some of these cases the use of the indefinite article relies on the *Nagelate Schriften*, the early Dutch translation of Spinoza’s works which was published simultaneously with the *Opera Posthuma* shortly after Spinoza’s death.⁴³³ The common view among scholars of this text is that the *Ethics* part of the NS relies on an early translation (by Pieter Balling) that was circulating among Spinoza’s friends already in the early 1660s, and that it was significantly edited after Spinoza’s death by Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker (1619/1620-1682).⁴³⁴ Most scholars believe that Spinoza did not put much effort into correcting the Dutch translation, and that the NS version has only a limited value in interpreting the text of the *Opera Posthuma*.⁴³⁵ In other cases, the translator’s employment of the indefinite article

⁴³² E1p16, E1p16c, E1app [G II/83/32 | C 446], E2p4d, and E2p7s.

⁴³³ In E1p16 and E2pd, the NS renders *Intellectus infinitus* with the indefinite article.

⁴³⁴ For a discussion of the NS translation of the *Ethics*, see Fokke Akkerman, *Studies in the Posthumous Works of Spinoza*, 95-101 and 126-76.

⁴³⁵ In a private correspondence, Piet Steenbakkers, a leading scholar of Spinoza’s manuscripts and early editions writes: “[The NS] reading cannot be considered as decisive in any way: it is an interpretation by a translator. Although Spinoza knew about the translation of parts 1 and 2, he does not seem to have been correcting it, certainly not on the level of articles. For him, it was the Latin text that was authoritative.” Cf. Curley, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, xv.

before ‘infinite intellect’ relies on the presence of the Latin *aliqui*, which in medieval Latin sometimes functions as an indefinite article (as opposed to *ille* which functions as a definite article).⁴³⁶

As we have seen in chapter 3, the exact meaning of Spinoza’s definition of attribute - “*Per attributum intelligo id, quod intellectus de substantia percipit, tanquam ejusdem essentiam constituens*” - is a topic of great dispute. Yet, there is almost a consensus that this definition should be read as relating to ‘the intellect’ with a definite article.⁴³⁷ The only exception I know of is Parkinson’s translation which leaves ‘intellect’ with no article at all.

By attribute I understand that which intellect perceives of substance, as constituting its essence.

Curley translates the definition with a definite article:

By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence.

Yet, in E2p7s where Spinoza restates this definition, Curley translates it with an indefinite article:

[W]e must recall here what we showed [NS: in the First Part], viz. that whatever can be perceived by an infinite intellect as constituting an essence of substance pertains to one substance only [*quicquid ab infinito intellectu percipi potest, tanquam substantiae essentiam constituens, id omne ad unicam tantum substantiam pertinet*].

It seems that from the pure linguistic point of view, it is possible to read ‘intellect’ in E1d4 with an indefinite article, but what would be the meaning of such a reading?

If we accept the suggestion that in Thought there are infinitely many infinite intellects, so that each infinite chain of idea-aspects constitutes a distinct infinite intellect, the meaning of E1d4 seems to be the following: Every infinite intellect perceives only *one* attribute “as constituting the essence of the substance.” The infinite intellect (i.e., the infinite chain of ideas-aspect) representing all modes of Extension perceives only Extension as constituting the essence - or perhaps, an essence

⁴³⁶ See Curley, *Collected Works*, xv, note 13.

⁴³⁷ The NS renders *intellectus* in this definition as *bet verstant*, i.e., with a definite article. Yet, we must recall that the NS has a very limited authority on such issues.

- of the substance. The infinite intellect representing the modes of the third attribute perceives only the third attribute as constituting the substance's essence, etc.

This reading might provide an interesting answer to the problem facing any non-subjectivist reading of this definition: why does Spinoza modify Descartes' definition of attribute by introducing the role of (the) infinite intellect into the definition? The answer we get from our reading is that the introduction of the infinite intellect stresses the one-to-one correlation between infinite intellects and attributes and the opacity of the barrier between attributes as well as between intellects; no infinite intellect can conceive an attribute other than the one whose modes it represents.⁴³⁸ The only intellect which has a complete representation of all modes under all attributes is God's *absolutely* infinite intellect (or God's idea). Unlike the other infinite intellects which perceive the substance under one attribute, the absolutely infinite intellect perceives the substance *qua* God, i.e., as a substance having an infinity of attributes.

Admittedly, this is quite a speculative interpretation. If Spinoza had in mind this one-to-one correlation between infinite intellects and attributes, he should have been much more explicit and clear about this issue. Yet, as we have seen, there is some non-negligible support to the view that Spinoza recognizes the existence of a plurality of infinite intellects. Once we accept the last view, the reading of E1d4 which I have just outlined seems, I think, more reasonable. Admittedly, it needs further support. But since in the extensive discussions of this definition there was hardly any attempt to examine the possibility of reading 'intellect' with an indefinite article, I think it is worth mentioning this route at least as a possibility that should be kept in mind.

4.9 Spinoza's *Dualism of Thought and Being*

⁴³⁸ Obviously this is just one possible explanation. Alternatively, it is that E1d4 targets Descartes' view that God cannot be fully grasped by the intellect

4.9.1 Spinoza as a Substance Monist and an Attributes Pluralist. - In the history of philosophy, Spinoza is commonly considered as the great monist of the modern era. In the first chapter of this work we have encountered the German Idealists' characterization of Spinoza's philosophy as 'acosmism', or as a revival of the Eleatic affirmation of the sole existence of Being, and denial of any multiplicity, particularity, and change. I have argued there that the reading of Spinoza as an 'acosmist', though supported by some lines in Spinoza's thought, is inconsistent with the foundations of his philosophy. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Spinoza *is* a radical monist, i.e., a *substance monist* who denies the existence of any substance other than God.

But Spinoza is also a radical pluralist insofar as he claims the existence of infinitely many infinite and mutually independent attributes of the substance. Each of these attributes constitutes a realm as infinite as our physical world. The pivotal doctrine of conceptual separation between the attributes fortifies this radical plurality of attributes by excluding the possibility of any reduction of one attribute to another.⁴³⁹ Thus, side by side with his substance monism, Spinoza is also a radical *attribute pluralist*. His success in merging these two apparently opposed tendencies is one of the most fascinating achievements of his system.

4.9.2 *Spinoza's Dualism* - From a third perspective, Spinoza is a dualist. This may seem, at first sight, as a very trivial characterization since many commentators take Spinoza to be a mind-body (or Thought-Extension) dualist. Yet, this last characterization of Spinoza as a mind-body dualist is imprecise insofar as it fails to appreciate Thought's preeminence in Spinoza's metaphysics. Spinoza does not take Thought to be coextensive with the physical realm but rather with the whole substance. In this sense, Spinoza is a *Thought-Being dualist*; every single entity, including God, has its parallel in Thought. Indeed, as we have already seen, Spinoza openly proclaims: "God's actual power of thinking is equal to his power of acting." This dualism is indeed quite surprising because

⁴³⁹ It is not surprising therefore that among the German Idealists who read Spinoza as a reviver of the Eleatic monism, there was a strong tendency to downplay the importance and strictness of the separation of the attributes. See sections 2.4 and 2.5 of my article "Salomon Maimon and the Emergence of Spinozism in German Idealism."

Thought is just one aspect of the universe, and yet, I believe it is a consistent position, and in the current chapter I tried to elucidate and defend this position.⁴⁴⁰

Spinoza's Thought-Being dualism may also shed some interesting light on Spinoza's practice of providing duplicated definitions - once in ontological terms and then in terms of conceivability - for the basic concepts of his ontology at the opening of *Ethics*.⁴⁴¹ Thus, for example, 'cause of itself' is defined first ontologically as "that whose essence involves existence" and then in terms of its conceivability as "that whose nature cannot be conceived except as existing" (E1d1). Similarly, 'substance' is defined as "what is in itself" and then as what "is conceived through itself" (E1d3). Apparently, for Spinoza, being thought, or being conceivable, is a feature as deep and basic as the very existence of things.

4.9.3 *Philosophical Import.* – Clarifying and correcting our understanding of Spinoza's metaphysics is an important achievement in itself. Yet, Spinoza's understanding of the role and structure of Thought brings forth two innovative and deep philosophical challenges to the way we tend to see things. Firstly, Spinoza's notion of Thought extends *far* beyond anything we would understand by this term. For Spinoza, Thought belongs not only to God and human beings, not only to all living beings, and not even to all extended things, but rather it accompanies *everything that is*, whether it is accessible to our minds or not. What we, human beings, understand by the term 'Thought' (i.e., ideas of extended things) is just a tiny fraction of its actual realm. In accordance with Spinoza's deep

⁴⁴⁰ In a short note Gueroult comments on a view similar to the one I am presenting here: "Ce n'est plus Spinoza, c'est Schelling" [*Spinoza II*, 79]. Well, perhaps Schelling was a good Spinozist after all

⁴⁴¹ Leibniz (Loemker 196) complains that Spinoza's definition of substance is obscure insofar as it does not explain how the two parts of the definition ('to be in itself' and 'to be conceived through itself') relate to each other. According to my reading this manner of parallel definitions is adequate since it stresses the equal power of existence and thought. Had Spinoza used only the conceivability part of the definition we would have been inclined to read him as a reductive idealist. Had he defined his basic terminology only in ontological terms, Thought's place in his system would be downgraded, and it would be taken as merely one out of the infinitely many attributes.

critique of anthropomorphism and of the human *hubris* which evaluates all things from its limited perspective, Spinoza would view our notion of Thought, as “human, all too human”.

Secondly, Spinoza’s view of Thought as being more complex and powerful than any other attribute presents us with a surprising position on the mind-body issue. Spinoza is neither a materialist, nor a reductive idealist, and even the “double-aspect theorist” label would not adequately fit him. His view is one that grants clear primacy to Thought without adopting reductive idealism. Here perhaps lies Spinoza’s real philosophical genius, in the fact that he forces us to suspend the traditional ways of addressing the issue, and consider it anew and from a not-so-familiar perspective.

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