Abstract: The paper offers a new reading of Spinoza's claim that minds and bodies are “one and the same thing”, commonly understood as a claim about the identity of a referent under two different descriptions. This paper proposes instead that Spinoza's texts and his larger epistemological commitments show that he takes mind-body identity to be 1) an identity grounded in an intentional relation, and 2) an identity of one thing existing in two different ways.

Keywords: Spinoza, Thought, Representation, Identity, Mind-body relations, Parallelism, Intentionality

1. Introduction

Spinoza’s claim that minds and bodies are “one and the same thing [una eademque res]” (Ethics 2p7s), most often discussed under the umbrella term of his ‘parallelism’, is one of his more controversial doctrines.1 Given Spinoza’s other commitments, the alleged “oneness and sameness” of minds and bodies generates a host of interpretative difficulties. One basic problem is that it is simply not clear in what sense Spinozistic minds and bodies even could be “one and the same”, since they fail to share most of their fundamental properties: a mind can think but cannot move; a body can move but cannot think, etc. Spinoza rejects much of Descartes’s ontology, but he is a dyed-in-the-wool Cartesian when it comes to the disparateness of mental and physical realms. In his terminology, fundamental qualitative kinds of being, or “attributes”, have “no common measure [ratio]” (5pref; G II/280).2

Another interpretive puzzle generated by Spinoza’s commitment to mind-body identity is the fact that Spinoza relates human minds and bodies in two very different ways: human minds and bodies are not merely “one and the same thing”, they are also essentially intentionally3 related, insofar as human minds for Spinoza are essentially complex ideas of bodies (2pu&13, 3GenDefAff [G II/204], Ep64). But why should a mind represent what it is identical with, or be identical with what it represents? Why, in short, relate minds and bodies in these two different ways? This puzzle is all too often
overlooked by Spinoza's readers. And yet our failure to find a solution to it threatens to saddle Spinoza's metaphysics with a brute fact, in violation of his well-known commitment to universal intelligibility (1ax2, spuluatltd).

Finally, probably the most notorious interpretative problem stemming from Spinoza's commitment to mind-body identity concerns reconciling this commitment with his denial that in causal contexts we can substitute minds and bodies \textit{salva veritate}. Here is the difficulty: if mind, is numerically identical with body, such that \(<\text{mind}, \text{body}>\) co-refer, and body, causes movement, we might have expected to be able to conclude that mind, causes movement, given the numerical identity of \(<\text{mind}, \text{body}>\). That is, we might have expected Spinoza to hold, \(a=b \rightarrow (F(a) \rightarrow F(b))\). But, contrary to such expectations, Spinoza restricts metaphysically possible causal relations to entities of the same attribute-kind: in his view, only minds can causally determine minds; and only bodies can causally determine bodies (2p5-6, 3p2s).

Arguably the most influential interpretation of Spinoza's claim that minds and bodies are "one and the same thing" has been what I will call here the 'Fregean' reading of this identity. On this interpretation, token Spinozistic minds and bodies are numerically identical insofar as \(<\text{mind}, \text{body}>\) pick out a single referent under two different descriptions or presentations, just as, in Frege's well-known example, \(<\text{Morning Star}>\) and \(<\text{Evening Star}>\) pick out the same celestial body under two different guises. In this vein Michael Della Rocca for example proposes,

the duality in Spinoza's [doctrine] is not one between distinct things but between distinct descriptions or ways of conceiving of things...[W]hether a mode is extended [or thinking] depends on how that mode is conceived of or described....An object has, for example, the property of being physical, only relative to a certain manner of conceiving or describing it.

In short, what I'm calling here Fregean readings of Spinozistic mind-body identity treat the difference between minds and bodies as fundamentally a difference in conceptualizations or descriptions and in possession of description-sensitive, or intensional, properties. On such readings, veridical descriptions of a given mind and the body numerically identical to it will employ irreducibly distinct predicates – \(<\text{extension}>\) and its derivatives \(<\text{motion}, \text{size}, \text{speed}, \text{etc}>\) on the one hand; \(<\text{thought}>\) and its derivatives \(<\text{affirmation}, \text{negation}, \text{doubt}, \text{etc}>\), etc) on the other. Nonetheless, for any mind/body pair, the relevant mind and body will also be veridically considered as "one and the same thing" insofar as the shared referent of \(<\text{mind}>\) and \(<\text{body}>\) will have the very same attribute-neutral, or extensional, properties (such as the number of effects, the number of causes, length of duration, and so on), identifiable by attribute-neutral predicates (such as those used to pick out the number of its causes, the number of its effects, the length of its duration in existence, and so on). This interpretation of mind-body identity then opens up a possible solution to the aforementioned problem of
failures of substitutability in causal contexts: we can explain such failures by treating causal contexts as referentially opaque, such that only things that fall under the same attribute-specific predicates can enter into causal relations.8

There is disagreement about the viability of this solution (in particular, one may wonder whether the fact that a causal relation obtains can really be description-sensitive in the way suggested).9 In this paper, I won’t enter into this particular controversy. For it seems to me that, more fundamentally, in taking Spinoza’s doctrine of mind-body identity to establish an identity of a numerically identical referent under two different descriptions, Fregean readings fundamentally misconstrue what Spinoza has in view when he describes minds and bodies as “one and the same thing”. Fregean readings of that claim are wrong, I think, about the nature of the identity in question, about the grounds of the identity, and finally about its intended relata. So in this paper I want to propose a wholesale alternative to Fregean interpretations of mind-body identity in Spinoza’s philosophy.

To anticipate, briefly, on this alternative proposal, the identity between Spinozistic minds and bodies is fundamentally an identity that obtains in virtue of an intentional or representational relation between human minds and bodies. In what follows I will argue, first, that such a conclusion follows directly from Spinoza’s more general commitments about the nature of mindedness and representation because for Spinoza representation is sufficient for identity: an idea of x is itself x, existing in the manner of an immanent, purely mental object (that is, to use Spinoza’s Scholastic terminology, existing with merely “objective reality”). So, if for Spinoza the human mind is essentially of a body, it also essentially is that body qua objectively real. And it is this identity of a body existing in two different ways – with “formal” reality as an existent in nature, and with objective reality as the essential representational content of a human mind – that, I will argue, Spinoza has in view when he characterizes minds and bodies as “one and the same thing”.

Second, I will argue that my alternative interpretation is also textually better grounded than Fregean readings. In particular, we shall see that Spinoza regards differences in attribute-specific predicates or descriptions as irrelevant to the nature of the kind of identity that obtains between minds and bodies.

Finally, among the virtues of my proposal is that it also solves the three aforementioned puzzles about Spinozistic mind-body identity. First, it answers the basic problem of the sense in which minds and bodies could be described as the “same”, by showing that the identity in question is a qualitative identity, insofar as the formally-real body in nature and the objectively-real body that is the essence of the human mind are describable by the very same concepts. Second, the proposal also shows that mind-body identity as Spinoza understands it doesn’t in fact generate failures of substitutability in causal contexts, insofar as we no longer have grounds on which to expect such substitutability. Third, the proposal explains why Spinozistic minds and bodies not only can but must be related in the two different ways that Spinoza relates them, insofar as
the intentional relation between human minds and bodies necessitates their identity.

Here is how the paper is organized. The next section (§2) lays out the general background commitments of Spinoza’s theory of ideas needed to get his doctrine of mind-body identity into proper view. In the section that follows (§3) I show that these general commitments imply the existence of an intentionally-grounded identity of minds and bodies. In §4 I flesh out my account by considering some potential objections. Finally, in §5, through a close reading of key passages, I confirm on textual grounds that it is precisely an intentionally-grounded identity that Spinoza has in view when he describes minds and bodies as “one and the same thing” in 2p7s, the locus classicus of his identity doctrine.

2. Spinoza on Ideas

In this section I want to briefly outline three Spinozistic claims about ideas that will help illuminate his doctrine of mind-body identity. The three claims bear on how ideas represent, how they are individuated, and finally how they come to constitute human minds.

2.1. How Ideas Represent

Spinoza scholarship has made quite a bit of headway on the question of what it means, for Spinoza, for an idea to be of something, since Jonathan Bennett’s gloomy conclusion that “Spinoza gives no content to the notion that I(x) [=idea of x] represents x”. In particular, many readers have recognized that Spinoza, like Descartes, explains how ideas can be of or about things by appealing to a Scholastic distinction between two kinds of reality or being. As anyone familiar with Descartes’s proofs of God’s existence in the Third Meditation will recall, on this model of representation, “formal reality” refers to the being of something qua existent in nature, whereas “objective reality” refers to the being of a thing qua represented by a mind. For example, my cat has formal reality as a determinate bit of extension; Pegasus has no formal reality whatsoever; whenever I form an idea of my cat or of Pegasus, these ideas have formal reality as occurrent mental acts; finally, both my cat and Pegasus have objective reality, as constituents of my ideas, whenever I think about them.

What is most germane for our purposes is the further claim that, on this model of representation, to have an idea of some thing is for this very thing to exist in thought – no longer with the formal reality it has qua existent in nature (as something intrinsically physical or mental), but rather with the kind of being or reality that, on this view, characterizes purely mental objects. Here is Descartes’s famous illustration of
this theory from his Reply to Caterus:

an idea is the thing which is thought of insofar as it has objective being in the intellect...[T]he idea of the sun is the sun itself existing in the intellect—not...formally existing, as it does in the heavens, but objectively existing, i.e. in the way in which objects normally are in the intellect [eo modo quo objecta in intellectu esse solent] (AT 7.102; cf. 7.161)

So on this model of representation, my idea of my cat represents him by virtue of being identical to him. More generally, representing any extramental object will involve an identity of thought, and so also of the thinker, with that extramental object. On this model, representation is thus sufficient for identity; more specifically, representation is sufficient for qualitative identity: since an idea of $x$ is $x$ itself existing in a particular way (namely, with objective reality), then, for any $x$, an idea of $x$ is itself identical to $x$. I describe this identity as qualitative because both $x$ and $x$-as-represented, or as $x$ as existing with objective reality, will be describable with the same predicates – otherwise, presumably the idea would not be of $x$. Call this kind of identity, which obtains in virtue of a representational or intentional relation, cognitive identity.

It is worth noting here that Descartes's theory is continuous in important ways with Aristotelian accounts of representation, on which, in thinking of a thing, the intellect becomes identical with the intelligible “form” of this thing. This is presumably why, in replying to Caterus in the passage above, Descartes refers to how objects “normally are in the intellect”: he is counting, it seems, on his objector's Scholastic assumptions about mental existence to do some of the explanatory heavy-lifting.

Now Spinoza clearly endorses this Cartesian, and quasi-Aristotelian, model of representation (and he is not alone among Cartesians to do so). In particular, he uses the distinction between formal and objective reality to characterize the nature of thought in its fundamental instance, that of divine substance’s necessarily veridical ideas:

God’s [NS: actual] power of thinking is equal to his actual power of acting. I.e., whatever follows formally [formaliter] from God’s infinite nature follows objectively [objective] in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection. (2p7c; cf. 2p32)

As this passage indicates, for Spinoza “reality” itself comes in two varieties: 1) the “formal” reality things have as produced by substance, and constituting what we might call the realm of nature, and 2) the “objective” reality these same things have as thought of by an unlimited ens cogitans. For substance to think what it brings into being is for those very things to have being in a certain way: not merely with the formal reality they have qua existents in nature, but also with the kind of being that, to use Descartes’s phrase, is
proper to objects existing in the intellect.

Now, as is well known, in Spinoza’s substance-monistic framework, all *creaturely* ideas are merely more less complete “parts” of this perfect representation of all things in the divine intellect (2p1uc). And, as befits Spinoza’s naturalistic demand for a single, uniform explanatory model (3pref; G II/138), the mechanism of representation is the same for God the thinker as for finite thinking things.18 Spinoza explicitly applies the formal/objective reality distinction to creaturely ideas in the following passage, which describes imperfect human efforts to grasp nature “as much as possible”:

As for order, to unite and order all our perceptions, it is required, and reason demands, that we ask...whether there is a certain being...which is the cause of all things, so that its objective essence [*essentia obiectiva*] may also be the cause of all our ideas [*nostrarum idearum*], and then our mind [*mens nostra*] will...reproduce Nature as much as possible. For it will have Nature’s essence, order, and unity objectively [*objeicive*]. (TIE[99])

The importance of the formal/objective reality distinction for Spinoza’s understanding of representation can also be gleaned from the fact that he appeals to this distinction at crucial turns when laying out his fundamental epistemological commitments – for example, when glossing truth as “agreement” of an idea with its extramental “object”:

a true idea must agree with its object (by [1]ax6), i.e. (as is known through itself), what is contained objectively in the intellect must necessarily be in nature [*Idea vera debet convenire cum suo ideato (per axiom. 6), hoc est (ut per se notum) id, quod in intellectu obiective continetur, debet necessario in natura dari*]. (1p3od, cf. TIE[41])

Talk of “agreement” in epistemological contexts often gets Spinoza classified as a correspondence theorist of truth,19 but it seems to me that he has something stronger in mind here: not just mere correspondence but an *identity* of what exists in nature with what exists in the mind. Arguably this is a further sense in which for Spinoza ideas are not mere “picture[s] on a tablet” (2p43s): they are not merely like, resembling, extramental things.20 Instead, Spinozistic ideas present us with things themselves.

The preceding discussion shows how crucial the formal/objective reality distinction is for Spinoza’s epistemology: it underpins his accounts of representation, truth, and divine omniscience. Faced with this claim of the epistemological significance of different kinds of reality one might, however, object as follows. Even if this distinction appeared “self-evident” (1p3od) to Spinoza, today such talk seems to be the murkiest sort of Scholastic baggage – the sort of “occult” notions that the “new philosophers” were supposed to have done away with. It’s odd to propose different ways of being as an
epistemological model, and the proposal is also at odds with our now-customary univocal representation of existence by means of the existential quantifier. Given that the stated aim of this paper is to offer an allegedly superior interpretation of a Spinozistic doctrine, one might worry that any interpretation that has to appeal to different ways of being to cash out representing is unlikely to come out superior.

This sort of worry is natural, but I think ultimately misguided, for several reasons. First, I don’t think that talk of different “ways of being” or “kinds of reality” is irreparably murky. This kind of ontological pluralism is a philosophical position with both an illustrious ancient pedigree and contemporary enthusiasts.21 Second, although thus far I’ve been relying on an ontologically robust – rather literal – interpretation of Spinoza’s talk of different kinds of “reality”, this is not the only way to interpret that talk. We can also gloss it phenomenologically, in a way that arguably has more intuitive appeal. On such a reading, “objective reality” would mean something like being for, or making something present to, a mind. Despite appearances, the basic point behind Spinoza’s picture of representation is, I take it, relatively intuitive and uncontroversial: a true idea of x must in some sense be identical to, or nothing other than, x itself, for otherwise it would not be a true idea of that thing. Indeed, something like Spinoza’s picture, albeit without the commitment to ontological pluralism, is endorsed by contemporary Russellians: they too hold that the thing an idea represents is itself part of the representational content of that idea.22 What Spinoza adds to this way of thinking about representation is the requirement that being part of the representational content of an idea is tantamount to a different way of existing.

2.2. The Individuation of Ideas

Let me turn to the second Spinozistic claim about ideas that is germane to our inquiry. This is the claim that any idea can be understood as the idea it is, distinct from other ideas, only if its “object [objectum]” is understood. In other words, what epistemically individuates an idea is what it is of, i.e. what it represents. Hence,

we...cannot deny that ideas differ among themselves, as the objects themselves do [ideas inter se ut ipsa objecta differre], and that one is more excellent than the other, and contains more reality, just as the object of the one is more excellent...and contains more reality. (2p13s)

I suggest that, for Spinoza, the “objects” of ideas are able to individuate the relevant ideas insofar as they constitute their essential representational contents. As Spinoza notes elsewhere, the “essence” of an idea is what it “affirms [affirmat]” (3GenDefAff; G II/204), i.e. what it is of. This is in line with how Spinoza thinks generally about the significance of essences of things for our ideas of things. In his view, no “thing
“res” can be “conceived” unless its “essence” is “conceived” (2def2). (And, in Spinoza's ontology, ideas count as res.) So if, as suggested by 2p13s, we can only conceive distinctly of a given idea when we conceive of its intentional “object”, then it seems to follow that for Spinoza having a certain intentional “object” counts as essential to an idea.

I also wish to suggest that we understand what Spinoza calls “objects” in the above passage (2p13s) not as the (often extramental) referent of the idea (say, my cat as an actually existing, meowing and furry extended particular) but rather as the immanent intentional object, endowed with purely mental kind of being (my cat insofar as he has objective reality in my ideas whenever I think of him). Since for Spinoza the essence of a particular thing is unique to that thing, such that neither can exist without the other (2def2), the essence of an idea cannot be some external referent capable of existing independently of that particular idea.

2.3. Minds

The final Spinozistic doctrine about ideas I want to bring to our attention here is Spinoza’s version of the bundle theory of mind. According to Spinoza, ontologically there is nothing more to a “mind [mens]” than more or less complex ideas (or, more precisely, particular mental acts of “affirmation” and “negation”) (2p15, 2p49). Human minds are particularly complex bundles: the “idea that constitutes the formal being [esse formale] of the human mind is not simple, but composed of a great many ideas” (2p15). This is a claim about the formal reality of the human mind: about what the human mind is as a thing produced by God, constituting a part of the realm of nature, and endowed with certain kinds of intrinsic properties (for example, certain causal powers), properties that mark it out as a thinking, rather than an extended, kind of thing.

Like all ideas, a human mind will be distinguished from other kinds of ideas (including other highly complex bundles) by what it represents. More precisely, Spinoza proposes that an idea counts as a human mind iff it is essentially of some actually existing, sufficiently complex body:

The first thing that constitutes the actual being of a human Mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which actually exists [Primum, quod actuale mentis humanae esse constituit, nihil aliud est, quam idea rei alicuius singularis actu existentis]. (2p11)

The object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and nothing else [Obiectum ideae humanam mentem constituentis est corpus, sive certus extensionis modus actu existens, et nihil aliud]. (2p13) 

the essence of the Mind consists in this (by 2p11 and p13), that it affirms the actual
existence of its body \( \text{essentia mentis in hoc consistit ... quod sui corporis actualem existentiam affirmat} \) (3GenDefAff; G II/204)

Now, a human body, for Spinoza, is essentially a particular kind of composite of simpler bodies, communicating motions in a stable manner (2def [G II/100], 2p15d). Thus an idea will count as a “human mind” if it is essentially \text{of} some such durationally existing extended thing. This idea is then what constitutes the \text{essence} of a human mind, i.e. what is necessary and sufficient for this mind to be “given” (cf. 2def2), or actualized, in duration an entity. And there must be an idea of the body for the same reason that there must be an idea of every existing thing is in Spinoza’s framework: by virtue of divine omniscience (2p8).28

In short, for Spinoza the mind-body relation turns out to be itself – perhaps unintuitively – an instance of an \text{intentional} relation. The mind, reduced to a complex idea, is itself essentially intentionally related to an object, rather than merely \text{having} intentional states, or being their substratum.29 Indeed, for Spinoza, it is in this intentional relation that the mind-body “union” consists: “We have shown that the Mind is united \([\text{unitam}]\) to the Body from the fact that the Body is the object \([\text{objectum}]\) of the Mind” (2p21d; cf. KV2app[7-8], 1.19[11]).30 Presumably Spinoza’s thesis is meant to hold both at the level of concrete particulars (my mind is essentially of my body) and the level of kinds (human minds in general essentially bear intentional relations to certain kinds of bodies).31

To be clear, it is not just \text{any} idea of a complex, durationally existing body that can constitute the essence of a human mind.32 Rather, arguably, this essential component of the human mind is a “perception” (or, as Spinoza also puts it, a “cognition \([\text{cognitio}]\)” [2p19d]) of how a body is \text{modified} or affected, most often by other bodies in its surroundings. I propose that we take Spinoza’s pronouncements that, “We feel our body being affected in many ways \([\text{Nos corpus quoddam multis modis affici sentimus}]\)” (2ax4, transl. alt), and likewise that “Whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human mind must be perceived by the human Mind \([\text{Quicquid in obiecto ideae humanam mentem constituentes contingit, id ab humana mente debet percipi}]\)” (2p12d) to be propositional expressions of the content of this essential idea.33 So although the intentional “union” between human minds and bodies obtains fundamentally because of divine omniscience, from the perspective of the human mind in question – or, to put it using Spinoza’s language, if we “relate” (2p32) the body in question only to that infinitesimal “part” (2p13c) of the divine idea that is the human mind – the body with which this mind is intentionally united is an affected or modified body as perceived by a finite human mind, and not this body as it is also and – from a metaphysical rather than phenomenological perspective – more fundamentally perceived by an omniscient intellect.34

Of course, in the course of durational existence, other ideas will come to co-constitute the human mind: necessarily but non-essentially, that mind will also be of
many other things (other bodies, memories, universals, etc) besides the complex, existing, variously modified and incompletely perceived body that is its essential intentional object.

3. A Non-Fregean Identity of Minds and Bodies

The previous section outlined the background commitments needed to get Spinoza's doctrine of mind-body identity into view – namely, his views about how ideas are individuated, and how they represent the things they represent, and what it takes to compose human minds. With these background commitments in view, let’s return to the problem of the nature of his commitment to mind-body identity. In this section, I will show that putting Spinoza's account of the constitution of the human mind together with his views about the nature of representation results directly in a further commitment to an intentionally grounded, non-Fregean identity of human minds and bodies.

3.1. The View in a Nutshell

Let me start by summarizing the commitments I’ve ascribed to Spinoza thus far. First, as we saw in §2.1, Spinoza holds that to have an idea of \( x \) is for \( x \) itself to be or be given in a particular way, namely with the being or reality proper to purely mental objects (or, as I’ve also put it, immanent intentional objects). In this sense for Spinoza representation is sufficient for identity.

Second, as we saw in §2.3, Spinoza also holds that any human mind is essentially an idea of some existing, sufficiently complex body. That is, on Spinoza’s theory of mind, the existence of an idea essentially of a certain kind of body (namely, of a complex, existing, and modified body) is necessary and sufficient for the durational existence of a human mind.

Now if we put these two commitments together, it follows that for Spinoza what a human mind is essentially is a complex, existing, modified body existing with the being proper to a purely mental object. That is, it follows that for Spinoza a human mind is essentially a certain kind of body-qua-represented, or, to put it using Spinoza’s Scholastic terminology, a human mind is essentially a certain kind of body existing with merely objective reality.

It follows that the human mind in its essential constitution on the one hand, and the formally-real (actually extended) body in nature of which this mind is essentially an idea on the other, are one thing existing in two different ways. I.e. both the human mind and the human body are a complex and modified body existing with two different kinds of “reality”: qua formally-real, extra-mental existent in nature, on the one hand, and qua
mental object, or qua objectively-real, on the other. That is, by virtue of the fact that any human mind is essentially of a certain kind of body, and by virtue of Spinoza’s understanding of what it means to be of something, there is also an identity between the essence of the human mind and a complex, extra-mental, formally-real body in nature: they are both one and the same body existing in two different ways. Mind-body identity for Spinoza is thus more specifically a matter of an identity of a particular body with itself, insofar as this body exists in two ways – formally (i.e., as a composite of simpler, mobile, constituent bodies in nature) and objectively (i.e., as the essential representational content of the human mind). Mind-body identity so understood is an identity of a thing with itself, with the relata distinguished by their ways of existing alone. It is a matter of one and the same ratio of motion and rest existing in two different ways: formally and objectively. Finally, it is fundamentally an identity grounded in an intentional or representational relation, insofar as the identity obtains because, in virtue of being represented, a formally-real body in nature comes to exist, or have being, in a new and distinct way.

This, in a nutshell, is the account of mind-body identity that, I believe, follows from Spinoza’s more general epistemological and mind-theoretic commitments. Call this interpretation a representational account of Spinozistic mind-body identity.

In the remainder of this paper I will flesh out the details of this account by expounding on the ways the picture of mind-body identity it proposes differs from the Fregean understanding of that identity (§3.3); answer potential objections (§4); and finally substantiate the representational account on textual grounds through a close reading of key passages (§5). But first I’d like to quickly point out two important implications of the representational reading of mind-body identity.

The first implication has to do with that account’s ability to solve the second of the three puzzles about Spinoza’s identity doctrine identified in the introduction to this paper, namely the ‘neglected’ puzzle of the two different relations – identity and intentionality – that Spinoza posits between minds and bodies. To recall, the puzzle was, why should a Spinozistic mind represent what it is identical with, or be identical with what it represents? The representational account explains why Spinozistic minds and bodies not only can but must be related in these two different ways: given Spinoza’s understanding of the nature of representation, the intentional relation between human minds and bodies also necessitates their identity.

The second implication I want to draw our attention to here has to with a frequently made assumption about the scope of Spinoza’s identity claim. Namely, if the representational reading of Spinozistic mind-body identity is correct, then it cannot be the case, as is usually assumed by scholars,35 that the identity Spinoza has in view when he describes as minds and bodies as “one and the same thing” in 2p7s is meant to hold across all attributes, or all qualitative kinds of being proper to substance, such that my mind and my body would be identical not merely to one other but also to some thing or mode under every attribute. (Spinoza allows for an “infinity” of attributes [idef6]). This
is because, in Spinoza's view, the human mind cannot stand in an intentional or representational relation to things in any attribute other than extension or thought. Spinoza is explicit about this: "The object [objectum] of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body...and nothing else" (2p13; emphasis added); and "We neither feel nor perceive any singular things [NS: or anything of natura naturata], except bodies and modes of thinking" (2ax5). So if, as I propose, Spinozistic mind-body identity is the result of an intentional or representational relation, the grounds for an identity of the human mind with modifications of attributes other than extension are simply missing.36

3.2. Representational v Fregean Identity
Let me now flesh out my initial sketch of the representational account of Spinozistic mind-body identity by highlighting three key ways it departs from Fregean readings. As we shall see, these non-Fregean turns allow the representational account to solve the two remaining problems dogging Spinoza's doctrine, the problem of nature of mind and body "sameness" and the problem of failures of substitutability in causal contexts.

To recall, Fregean readings gloss the difference between Spinozistic minds and bodies as fundamentally a difference in descriptions or conceptions. Such readings treat token human minds and bodies as "one and the same thing" insofar as the difference between them is merely a difference in the ways that a numerically identical referent, endowed with certain extensional properties, is represented.

Here is the first way the representational account of Spinozistic mind-body identity departs from this Fregean one. On the representational account, the difference between the relata of the identity relation at stake in Spinoza's talk of minds and bodies "being one and the same thing" is fundamentally ontological or existential, rather than fundamentally epistemic. That is, the difference between the relata isn't reducible, as on Fregean readings, to a difference in conceptualizations, descriptions, or predicates applicable to some shared referent. On the representational reading, mind and bodies are "one and the same thing" in the sense that they are a single entity existing in two different ways, i.e. existing with two different kinds of being or reality. And what explains why, despite this ontological difference, minds and bodies can be nonetheless be also considered as "one and the same thing" is not that, as on the Fregean readings, they share some extensional (attribute- or description-neutral) properties, such as the same number of causes, or number of effects, or length of duration. Rather, what grounds the claim of their oneness and sameness is an identity of a thing (and, more precisely, of a particular body) with itself. This identity is, moreover, qualitative, insofar as the formally-real body and the objectively-real body that is the essence of the human mind are describable by the very same concepts (<body>, <rest>, <motion>, etc.), and in this sense can be described as not just "one" thing but also the "same" thing.37 (Descartes would presumably agree that <sun> applies to both the massive star and a certain representational content in the mind; otherwise his idea of the sun wouldn't be an idea
of the sun.)

The representational account thus has an answer to what, in the introduction, I called the “basic problem” plaguing Spinoza’s doctrine of mind-body identity, namely the problem of articulating the sense in which Spinozistic minds and bodies could be described as “one and the same thing”, that is, arguably, as not just numerically (“one”) but also qualitatively (“same”) identical by virtue of sharing all their properties (albeit not the manner of these properties’ existence: the formally-real body will possess a certain proportion of motion and rest as a formally-real property; the corresponding objectively-real body will possess that same proportion qua an objectively-real property). In contrast, Fregean readings can admit the existence of the qualitative “sameness” of minds and bodies only to a limited degree, namely only insofar as a mind and a body can share certain attribute-neutral, or extensional, properties.

The representational account rejects the Fregean account of the relata of the identity relation in a second way as well. Fregean readings implicitly assume that the identity Spinoza has in view when he describes minds and bodies as “one and the same thing” is meant to hold between two formally-real entities – that is, between bodies as determinate bits of extension, and minds as bundles of occurrent mental acts of affirmation or negation. On the representational account, the identity Spinoza has in view holds fundamentally between a formally-real body in nature and an objectively-real body that is the essence of a formally-real human mind. So the relevant identity relation is not simply between two formally-real things, as on Fregean readings, but rather between a formally-real thing (a body in nature) and the essence of another formally-real thing (of a mind). And what the formally-real body in nature is identical to is, again, not a formally-real mind simpliciter, or tout court, i.e. this mind as a totality of essential and nonessential mental properties or states, a totality that presumably also varies over time – but just the essence of that mind.

For this reason the representational account of mind-body identity does not raise the problem of failures of substitutability in causal contexts that, as noted in the introduction, long have been the bane of Fregean readings. This is because, on the representational account, the fundamental relata of the relevant identity relation aren’t two formally-real entities, but instead a certain formally-real thing (a body in nature) and its representation. And, arguably, we shouldn’t expect substitutability on the grounds of an identity of a certain thing with its representation. To be sure, if we also assume (i) the transitivity of identity and (2) that any idea is numerically identical with its own representational content, on the representational account a further identity will derivatively obtain between the formally-real body in nature and the essential part of the formally-real human mind, namely with the idea of a complex existing body that is essential to that mind. But an identity of a formally-real thing (a human body) with a part of another formally-real thing (a human mind), even an essential part, also doesn’t give us grounds for expecting substitutability in causal contexts between the human body and the human mind as a whole. This is because the causal properties of the human
mind are not determined by its essence alone: the non-essential parts of that mind – the ideas it acquires and produces in the course of its durational existence – will contribute to determining that mind’s causal properties, i.e., what ideas it can produce. In short, the derivative partial identity of formally-real human minds and formally-real human bodies also doesn’t entitle us to expect substitutability in causal contexts. More generally, Spinoza’s doctrine of mind-body identity, properly understood, does not, I suggest, create a problem of failures of substitutability, as it has long been assumed to do. 41

Finally, the two readings disagree not merely, as already noted, about the grounds of the relevant identity relation (grounds which, for proponents of the Fregean approach, are a shared referent describable with attribute-neutral predicates; and for the proponent of the representational account, are the existence of an intentional or representational relation between a particular mind and a particular body) but also about the kind of identity Spinoza has in view when he describes minds and bodies as “one and the same thing”. On Fregean readings, the identity in question is fundamentally a numerical identity. In contrast, on the representational account, the relevant identity is instead first and foremost a cognitive identity, that is, the kind of identity that obtains in virtue of a representational or intentional relation. Cognitive identity of course can, and indeed often does, also involve numerical identity – namely, whenever what is represented is a particular qua this particular – but not necessarily so. For example, when I think of my cat qua <cat> simpliciter, i.e. under the aspect of feline nature generally, the cognitive identity of my idea with its extramental object will not also be a case of numerical identity, since (however inflated my cat’s self-conception), general feline nature, even if only objectively real, is not numerically identical to the concrete particular sitting on my keyboard. (Compare the Aristotelian picture, with which the Cartesian model is, as already noted, importantly continuous: cognitively grounded identity as an Aristotelian would understand it would also not count as instance of numerical identity, insofar as, in the paradigmatic case, the form that exists extramentally in a real thing in nature is particular, but in the mind it exists as general.) 42

Certainly, for Spinoza the mind-body relation will count as a case of thinking of a particular qua particular: any human mind is essentially an idea of some particular body. So mind-body identity will be not only a cognitive identity (by virtue of being grounded in a representational or intentional relation), but also, in second place, a numerical identity. 43 But again, it is not a necessary or essential feature of this kind of identity that it be numerical.

4. Objections

Before I move on to consider, in the last section of the paper, the textual evidence for the representational account just outlined, let me pause here to briefly consider four potential objections to that account. The first three objections target my claim that for
Spinoza a representational or intentional relation suffices for a certain kind of identity
(namely for cognitive and oftentimes also numerical identity); the final one questions
the consistency of my account of mind-body identity with Spinoza’s theory of attributes.

4.1. Idea of God

The first way one could object to my account is by claiming that the consequences of
saddling Spinoza with the view that representation suffices for identity are inconsistent
with other Spinozistic commitments. In particular, if representation suffices for identity,
it follows that any idea of God will also be identical to God, an absolutely infinite
substance. But such an idea, like any idea, is just a mode, and a mode cannot, it seems,
be identical to a substance, on pain of contravening the most basic distinction of
Spinoza’s ontology (1def3,5).44

I don’t find this objection compelling, for the following reason. On the
representational reading, in the case of any idea of God, the intentional relation
fundamentally establishes a cognitive identity of the formally-real substance with the
objectively-real substance, i.e. with substance-as-represented. So the problem of
confusing substances with modes does not yet arise at this stage. It may be thought that
we arrive at a problematic conclusion when we consider that, derivatively, the
objectively-real substance – the representational content of a certain mode, or act, of
thought – is also numerically identical with that mode of thought, insofar as any act of
thinking is presumably numerically identical with its own representational content.
This step may be thought problematic because it leads us to assert the numerical identity
of (the objectively-real) substance with a mere mode. But if this is indeed a problem, it
is a problem for any interpretation of Spinoza that allows there to be modes of thought
representing substance. But no plausible interpretation can deny that Spinoza allows for
there to be ideas of God (see1def6, 2p3, 2p46-7). So, although we certainly should not
confuse substance and modes as they exist “outside the intellect [extra intellectum],” as
Spinoza puts it in a different context (1p4d), it seems to me that any plausible
interpretation of Spinoza has to allow for the numerical identity of modes of thought
and objectively-real substance.

4.2. Peter’s Idea of Paul

Here is a second potential reason to worry that my claim that for Spinoza representing x
is a sufficient condition for being identical with x is not just inconsistent with other
Spinozistic claims but independently implausible.

If Spinoza indeed holds that representing x is a sufficient condition for being
identical with x, then a particular human mind – say, Peter’s mind – will be identical not
just with Peter's own body but with every other extended thing Peter perceives or thinks about. In this sense the representational account of Spinoza's identity doctrine seems to simply prove too much, insofar as it establishes identities all over the place – as far as thought can reach. This seems to be not only independently implausible as a view, but textually is also a bad fit with Spinoza's actual claims: although Spinoza describes my mind as “one and the same thing” as my body, he never says that my mind is “one and the same thing” as all the other bodies that I represent. Indeed, he goes out of his way to distinguish the way Peter’s mind represents Peter’s own body and the way Paul’s mind represents Peter’s body (2p17s). This suggests that my mind’s relation to its own body is unlike its relation to every other body it may represent.45

Certainly, the representational account of Spinozistic mind-body identity leads to some unintuitive results. If my account is correct, Spinoza does indeed hold that there are identities as far as thought can reach. But I don’t think that this result is obviously objectionable. As already noted, the Aristotelian tradition took thinking to entail this kind of identity. As we’ve also seen, Descartes likewise granted it explicitly. Closer to our own time, contemporary Russelians would also agree with Spinoza that if an idea represents x, then the representational content of that idea is identical to x, such that, in virtue of thinking, identities do obtain pervasively.46

Likewise, the allegedly objectionable result that, on the representational account, there is nothing special or unique about the way my mind relates intentionally to ‘its’ body, as opposed to other bodies, seems to me to fit well with Spinoza’s commitment to explanatory naturalism, i.e. the rule that human beings are made intelligible by the very same explanatory principles as other kinds of things. The intentionality that explains the existence of our mind-body “union” should not be an exception to the way that intentionality generally works, even if we also want to be able to account for the sense of uniqueness that any particular mind has to ‘its’ body.

Moreover, I don’t think that the objector is right that Spinoza never indicates that my mind is identical to other extended things it perceives. He writes for instance that when "our mind...reproduce[s] Nature...it will have Nature’s essence, order, and unity objectively" (TIE[99]). This “having” of the essences of natural things by the mind “objectively” is, it seems to me, another way of saying that the human mind will objectively be those things, and so also will be identical to them as they exist in nature.47 It’s true that Spinoza never uses the exact phrase, “one and the same thing”, to describe my intentional or representational relation to things other than my body. But I don’t think that Spinoza reserves this phrase for a description of my mind’s relation to my body because he wishes to deny that my mind is “one and the same thing” as all the other things that I represent. Rather, I think that he is trying to stress, rhetorically, the existence of an identity also in the context of my mind’s relation to my own body. As I understand Spinoza, his major philosophical innovation when it comes to thinking about intentionality was to add a new item – one’s own body – to the list of things with which, on the then-pervasive model of representation (familiar from Aristotelian
scho
tics and Descartes alike) a mind is acknowledged to be identical, in virtue of representing them. Spinoza's philosophical innovation was to reinterpret the nature of the mind-body "union" as fundamentally a representational relation (and not, for example, fundamentally a causal relation, as it was for Descartes),\textsuperscript{48} and as an identity in virtue of this representational relation (and not, for example, an identity in virtue of a hylomorphic relation, as for orthodox Aristotelians).

To be clear, the fact that for Spinoza I am identical to my own body in the same sense, and for the same reason, that I am identical to anything else I represent, \textit{doesn't} mean that there is no difference between my mind's relation to my own body and its relation to other extended things, as the objector suggests. For only in the case of my mind's relation to my own body is the cognitive identity with what I represent \textit{essential} to my mind. My idea of my own body, unlike my idea of any other thing, is the necessary and sufficient condition of my mind's existence, but all my ideas of other bodies can come and go without my mind ceasing to be. This is also the difference, from Spinoza's point of view, between the manner in which Peter's mind is identical to his own body – essentially so – and the manner in which Peter's mind \textit{can also} be identical to Paul's body – namely, only if and when it is determined to represent Paul's body. Moreover, the distinctiveness of Peter's mind's relation to Peter's own body doesn't end here: since the "ideas which we have of external bodies indicate the condition of our own body more than the nature of external bodies" (2p16c2), \textit{de re} Peter's mind always represents at least his own body. That is, Peter's body is the bit of extension Peter's mind \textit{always} represents, no matter what other things Peter may also be thinking about. In contrast, Peter's idea of Paul's body is not only nonessential but occasional but also indirect: when it is formed, it is of Peter's own body as affected by Paul's body.

In short, the representational account can both honor Spinoza's commitment to explanatory naturalism in its treatment of intentional relations, and the phenomenological datum of the existence of a distinct kind of intentional relation to one's own body. As I have also suggested, there are reasons why Spinoza may have wanted to stress, rhetorically, the existence of an essential cognitive identity between my mind and my body, without denying that for any particular mind cognitive identity obtains, nonessentially so, much more pervasively.

4.3. \textit{Confused Ideas and Identity}

One final way one could object to my proposal that for Spinoza representation suffices for identity is on the grounds that this conclusion is undermined by my own interpretation of his other claims about the human mind. For in §2.3 I claimed that the idea that is essential to a human mind consists in a perception of how the body is \textit{affected}, usually by other bodies. But, by Spinoza's own lights, such an idea is a \textit{confused} idea, insofar as it fails to distinguish my body from the external causes of its affections (2p16).
(Indeed Spinoza is explicit that the essence of the human mind consists in a confused idea: the “idea that constitutes the nature of the human Mind is not, considered in itself alone, clear and distinct” [2p28s].) The problem this seems to create for the representational reading is that if representation ever suffices for identity, as I propose, this would only seem to be true of adequate, or true, ideas. Perhaps an astrophysicist’s idea of the sun can be considered identical to the formally-real sphere of hot plasma, at least insofar as otherwise it would not be an idea of the sun. But do we really also want to say that, say, a child’s confused idea of the sun as a flat orange disk (an idea that, for Spinoza, in fact represents only how this child’s own body has been affected by the sun) is likewise identical with the formally-real sun? (And, assuming transitivity of identity, that this child’s idea is identical also with the astrophysicist’s idea of the sun)? Surely these are implausible results. But if, given this implausibility, we opt to say that on Spinoza’s view only adequate ideas can be identical with their purported referents, then a human mind’s essential but confused representation of its body won’t introduce identity with that body. If that’s right, then, contrary to my account, the existence of an intentional relation between the human mind and the human body cannot explain their identity.49

I think this objection touches on a genuinely difficult problem with Spinoza’s (and Descartes’s) preferred model of representation: How, on this model, do we explain how false and inadequate ideas represent? Do we want to understand this model as asserting that any idea de re of x, not matter how confused or inadequate, is also identical with x?50 However we answer this question for Descartes and other adherents of this model,51 it seems to me that a good case can be made that, for Spinoza at least, even a confused idea of a thing establishes that idea’s cognitive identity with what it represents.

Here is why. Recall that Spinoza regards all creaturely ideas (and so also creaturely minds) as “parts” of substance’s infinite idea (2p1c). As we have also seen, one of the properties of substantial thought is that it is necessarily true: any idea is true if “related to God [ad Deum referuntur]” (2p32). I take that to mean that for any x, an idea of x will be true and adequate if considered together with all other divine ideas, insofar as this set of ideas will include ideas of all of x’s causes and constituents, on which, according to Spinoza, true understanding of x depends (1ax4, 2p1c, 2p28d). So, for example, even Paul’s confused idea of Peter’s body (an idea that is de dicto of Peter’s body, but de re of Paul’s own body as affected by Peter’s body) will be true when “related to God”. This is because, qua omniscient, God necessarily has ideas of all the causes and all the constituents of Peter’s body, as well as of all the causes of all the affections of Paul’s body, and of all the causes and constituents of those causes and constituents – etc.

The important point is that in Spinoza’s epistemological framework, “confusion” does not pick out some independent metaphysical reality with its own positive characterization. Ultimately, there are only divine ideas, but these can be regarded or considered in more or less complete ways; accordingly we can ascribe to them different
degrees of adequacy and, conversely, of confusion. For example, we can describe the subset of divine ideas that constitutes Paul's mind at a particular time as "confused" if we are considering only the ideas of Paul's bodily affections, without integrating them into – "referring" them to – the larger set of divine ideas, a set that also includes ideas of all the causes of those affections. This is the sense in which the "idea that constitutes the nature of the human Mind is not, considered in itself alone, clear and distinct" (2p28s, emphasis added).

In short, for Spinoza, the confused idea of bodily affections that essentially constitutes a human mind ultimately exists only as a "part" of an infinite adequate idea formed by substance; it is ontologically and explanatorily dependent on this adequate idea. That is, we are able to understand the existence and properties of any human mind – including the intentional relation this mind essentially bears to some body – only if we understand that this mind is part of a much more comprehensive adequate idea that substance has of all things. On Spinoza's Cartesian model of representation, this infinite, necessarily true substantial idea is certainly identical (cognitively and numerically) with its object – that is, with the whole of formal reality – if any idea is identical with its object. So my mind is part of a more comprehensive idea identical with its formally-real object (an object under all attributes) of which my own formally-real body is in turn an extended "part". God grasps my body – a particular, transient wrinkle of infinite extension – in its essence, and together with all its causes and constituents, and this idea of my body is perfectly identical to that body. I certainly do not grasp my body as God grasps it. But even in grasping only some of that body's modifications, I grasp something of that body, and so to some degree my mind participates – is a partial cause of – the identity relation that, in its entirety, is caused by God's intentional relation to the whole of formal reality.

So it seems to me that, contrary to the objection, even my confused idea of my body introduces an identity with that body – even if to fully understand this identity fully we must consider this mind and this body in terms of their relations to substance. But that is true of all understanding for Spinoza: all things can only be conceived through substance (1p15).

4.4. Mind-body Identity and the Attributes

There is one more objection one could make: that the representational reading of mind-body identity is simply inconsistent with another major commitment of Spinoza's metaphysics, namely with how Spinoza understands how attributes relate to substance. More specifically, on the usual reading of Spinoza's metaphysics, the mind-body relation is thought to be the same as the relation between the attributes of thought and extension. Namely, just as (on the Fregean reading) minds and bodies are two ways of conceiving of a single mode, thought and extension, whatever else they may be, are two ways of
conceiving of a single substance. Indeed, more precisely minds and bodies are supposed to be two different ways of thinking about one thing because thought and extension are two different ways of thinking about substance, and modes are “affections of attributes” (1p25c). Spinoza performs this derivation explicitly in 2p7s, inferring the mind-body relation from the attribute-to-attribute relation with the help of a “so also [sic etiam]”. My account makes this elegant picture of Spinoza’s ontology impossible, leaving us with two, arguably equally unpalatable, interpretative options. Either the relation between minds and bodies is the same as the relation between the attributes of thought and extension, in which case, if my reading of mind-body identity is correct, the attribute of extension is the intentional object of the attribute of thought; or, the relation between minds and bodies is not the same as, and cannot be derived from, the relation between thought and extension, in violation of Spinoza’s explicit derivation of 2p7s.

I agree that my reading requires a rethinking of how Spinoza understands the relation between mind-body identity and the identity of substance under different attributes. But I disagree that, in such circumstances, we are left with no palatable options. The first option adumbrated above is, granted, a nonstarter: thought as an attribute is a fundamental way of being and a qualitative nature, not an act of thinking that could bear an intentional relation to an object it represents. In Spinoza’s framework, we have to descend to the level of modes to get to actual ideas of things (2p31). So extension cannot be an object represented by thought in the same sense in which, I have suggested, bodies are objects represented by human minds and thus identical to them: intentional relations cannot explain the identity of substance under different attributes.

But the second interpretative option sketched above is, I think, not merely palatable, but to my mind at least correct. If I’m right that the intentional relation between minds and bodies grounds their identity, then the identity of extension and thought as attributes with substance and with one another simply cannot be of the same kind, since it cannot stem from an intentional relation. In other words, it seems to me that we have to rethink the long-standing assumption that Spinoza intends mind-body identity and the identity of substance under different attributes to be the same kind of identity. Since as far as I can tell the principal reason for the assumption is Spinoza’s use of the phrase “so also” in 2p7s, I will examine the textual grounds of this assumption in the next and final section of the paper, alongside other textual evidence about the nature of mind-body identity.

5. The textual case

Thus far I’ve argued that Spinoza’s views about the nature of representation and mindedness commit him to mind-body identity understood not as the identity of referent under two different descriptions (as on Fregean readings of the doctrine) but as
an intentionally-grounded identity, an identity in the sense in which a true idea of a
ting thing just is that thing. It remains to be shown that it is precisely this kind of identity-
in-virtue-of-intentionality that Spinoza has in view when he writes that minds and
bodies are “one and the same thing” in 2p7s and related passages in the Ethics, and thus
that my account is also well-grounded textually. (I briefly mentioned one textual
consideration already: in §3.2, I argued that my account does a better job than the
Fregian one in explaining in what sense Spinoza can hold that human minds and bodies
are not just “one” thing – i.e. numerically identical, but also the “same thing” – i.e.,
arguably, also qualitatively identical.)

What I’d like to do in this final section is show that the passages in question not
only fit well with my proposed representational reading, but often cannot in fact be
understood in Fregean manner. I also will answer the remaining objection from the
previous section, by showing that textually there is no defeasible pressure to identify the
mind-body relation of identity with the relation of identity between substance and
attributes.

5.1. 2p7s

I will start with 2p7s, the scholium where Spinoza first describes minds and bodies as
“one and the same thing”, and which remains the primary reference point for debates
about the meaning of mind-body identity in Spinoza’s philosophy. The scholium is
immediately preceded by a corollary we have already come across, 2p7c, which explicitly
appeals to the distinction between formal and objective reality to characterize divine
omniscience: “whatever follows formally from God’s infinite nature follows objectively
in God from his idea in the same order and with the same connection”. The opening lines
of the scholium follow immediately upon this sentence:

[a] 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 [quicquid
ab infinito intellectu percipi potest] 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 [jam sub hoc jam sub illo
attributo comprehenditur]. [b] 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
extensionis et idea illius modi una eademque est res sed duobus modis expressa].
[c] 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 [quod quidam Hebraeorum quasi per nebulam vidisse videntur,
qui scilicet statuunt Deum, Dei intellectum resque ab ipso intellectas unum et
idem esse. [d] 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 [explicatur] through different attributes. (2p7s)

I want to draw our attention first to the historical clue in sentence [c], which ties Spinoza’s assertion that a mode of extension and its idea are “one and the same thing” to the “Hebrew” insight into how the divine intellect relates to the things it understands, and, more specifically, to the insight that “God, God’s intellect, and the things understood by him are one and the same” [c]. As others have suggested, the insightful “Hebrews” Spinoza is alluding to here are medieval Jewish Aristotelians such as Maimonides.60 So the doctrine Spinoza identifies in the scholium as the precursor to his own conception of mind-body identity – the Hebrew insight that helps illuminate the sense in which “a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways”– is thus arguably the Aristotelian doctrine that in thinking a thing the intellect becomes identical with the intelligible form of this thing. As I suggested in §2.1, Spinoza’s (and Descartes’s) way of thinking about representation seems to be importantly continuous with medieval Aristotelian accounts on which there is a cognitive identity between the thinker and the thing thought. Here is how Maimonides for instance expresses this thesis:

God is the intellectus, the ens intelligens, and the ens intelligibile. These three things are in God one and the same, and do not in any way constitute a plurality...The intellect, that which comprehends and that which is comprehended, are therefore the same, whenever a real comprehension takes place. (GP 1.68)

Spinoza cannot, of course, subscribe to the Maimonidean account chapter and verse. (In particular, for Spinoza the “things” comprehended are no longer finite substances endowed with abstractable “forms”;)6 This is presumably at least partly why Spinoza says that his predecessors saw the truth only “as if through a cloud”. 62 What Spinoza can and I suggest does endorse of the Aristotelian picture, is the general principle that veridical representation involves an identity of the intellect with what this intellect represents. For Maimonides, this is the case because the intellect becomes identical with the intelligible forms of things represented; for Spinoza, it is the case because things represented – including human bodies – become objectively real. (Indeed, for all his professed distaste for any talk of “forms”,63 when Spinoza turns to describing the body that is the essential intentional object of the human mind in the Physical digression, he focuses on explaining under what conditions this physical individual’s essential “form” remains the same (2L4-7; G II/100-2). I suggest that it is precisely because Spinoza is drawing on this tradition of thinking about intentionality that he chooses to rely on the otherwise unusual for him vocabulary of “form” when
explaining the distinctive nature of the human mind, i.e. an idea that is essentially “cognition” (2p19d) of a body.)

Proponents of Fregean readings of 2p7s focus neither on the formal/objective reality distinction invoked in the corollary, nor on the appeal to Aristotelian cognitive identity in the scholium itself. Instead, they emphasize Spinoza’s claim in [a] that the “thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that”, and his extension of this claim to modes in [b] (“So also a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways”). Deprived of context, [a] and [b] can indeed be easily read as making a point simply about the sameness of a referent under different descriptions. But by ignoring the corollary and the Aristotelian reference, such readings end up misidentifying, it seems to me, Spinoza’s grounds for concluding that minds and bodies are identical. As noted, both the reference to the Hebrews in [c], and the formal/objective reality distinction invoked in the immediately preceding corollary, suggest that Spinozistic minds and bodies are “one and the same” by virtue of the fact that the “infinite intellect” [a] forms an idea of an existing mode of extension, thereby giving rise to that body’s existence qua objectively real. On the Fregean readings, both of these features of the text remain either otiose or inexplicable: proponents of such readings will be hard-pressed to say what purpose Spinoza’s references to formal and objective reality and to Aristotelian identity-through-intentionality serve in the passage.

One could object that my representational reading renders other parts of 2p7s – in particular, its references to different ways of “perceiving,” “comprehending” [a] and “explaining” [d] – equally inexplicable or otiose. But that would be inaccurate. My account simply does not take these references to have been intended to explain why identity obtains (either mind-body or substantial identity). In my view, the point of the references is the negative one that numerical identity (whether of substance or mode) is not undermined by a diversity of predicates and descriptions that veridically apply to it – descriptions involving <thought> as well as <extension>. However an infinite intellect may “comprehend” or “perceive” substantial essence, all these diverse conceptions and perceptions are all conceptions and perceptions of a single substance. In other words, I take Spinoza’s comments about the diversity of perceptions and explanations in the scholium to establish a point downstream from establishing numerical identity, the negative point that such a multiplicity of veridical predicas does not suffice to establish numerical multiplicity. This, it seems to me, is the lesson we are instructed to “recall” from Part 1 in [a]: Spinoza’s criticism in 1p10s of Descartes’s conclusion on the grounds of the conceptual independence of the attributes to a numerical distinction of substances. This applies equally (hence, “so also” in [b]) to modes: modifications of substance can also be “explained” or “conceived” through irreducibly different concepts without being rendered many “things”. For example, “a circle existing in nature” – for example, the sun – is not rendered numerically distinct from an idea of this sun simply by virtue of applicability of distinct predicates (namely
those derived from <extension> in the first case, and from <thought> in the latter case). But again, this is a merely negative point about what descriptions and explanations cannot accomplish. It does not explain in what sense and on what grounds the sun and its idea are identical. That is, I do not take the different kinds of “comprehension” or description invoked in 2p7s to have been intended by Spinoza to establish that identity holds, nor to explain the nature of this identity, either in the case of substance or the case of modes (namely, by explaining it as an identity of a referent under different descriptions, as Fregean readings propose). If the representational reading is correct, the identity relation is not in the first place between the sun and an idea of the sun qua subject to different predicates, that is between the sun and the formally-real act of thinking of the sun. Rather the identity obtains because a given body comes to exist objectively, as a thing describable with the same predicates as in its formal existence (precisely as a <body>).

5.2. “So also”

As noted in the previous section, the “so also” clause in [b] gives rise to a potential objection to the representational reading that remains to be addressed. To recall, the objection is that Spinoza’s use of this phrase shows that he takes the identity of thinking and extended substance to be of the same kind as the identity of thinking and extended modes, and indeed that he derives the latter from the former.

It seems to me that, given its vagueness and brevity, this phrase in question in fact constitutes very weak counter-evidence to the representational reading. Spinoza’s use of “so also” seems to leave underdetermined what he is trying to compare, and how great a degree of similarity he is trying to assert. It seems to me that it is at least as plausible to read the phrase as referring only to the fact that substance and modes alike can be described in different ways. In short, I don’t think that the clause in question unambiguously shows that Spinoza intended to derive the nature of mode identity from the nature of substantial identity. Indeed, we shouldn’t overlook the fact that, in the two sentences joined by “so also”, Spinoza describes the two cases of identity using different terminology: “thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance [substantia]”, minds and bodies are “one and the same thing [res]”. The terminological difference – between “thing” and “substance” – might seem insignificant, but presumably insisting on its significance is as much a case of making a mountain out of a molehill as insisting on the significance of “so also”.

So if one wishes to object to the representational reading that it goes against the long-standing assumption that Spinoza intends mind-body identity to be the same kind of identity as that of extended substance to thinking substance, insofar as this assumption seems to rest solely on Spinoza’s use of the phrase “so also” in 2p7s, I don’t think this particular objection has much of a ground to stand on.65
5.3. 2p12s and 2p21s

Should one still harbors doubts about the representational reading of 2p7s, Spinoza's own glosses of that scholium later in the Ethics ought to dispel them. They corroborate my proposal that Spinoza understands mind-body identity as cognitive identity, and offer further evidence that the Fregean readings of mind-body identity miss the mark.

Consider, first, 2p12s. There Spinoza notes that the following proposition is made “evident and more clearly understood” by 2p7s:

Whatever happens in the object of the idea [in objecto ideae] constituting the human Mind must be perceived [percipi] by the human Mind, or there will necessarily be an idea of that thing in the Mind (2p12).

The above proposition – the one Spinoza thinks is illuminated by 2p7s – bears on what the human mind “perceives”, and on the “object” [objectum] of its constituent ideas. In other words, what 2p7s makes clear, in Spinoza’s view, is a human mind's representational relation to its object. So Spinoza’s own gloss of 2p7s in this passage confirms that when in 2p7s Spinoza describes mind and body as “one and the same thing” – there is no other mention of mind-body relations in that scholium – this “oneness and sameness” must bear on how a mind relates to its intentional object. And this of course is in line with my reading of mind-body identity as cognitive identity. A Fregean interpretation, in contrast, will have trouble explaining in what way the identity of a referent under two different descriptions sheds light on what a mind “perceives” of its own intentional object.

Spinoza’s second gloss of 2p7s, in 2p21s, likewise confirms my reading of mind-body while remaining difficult to reconcile with a Fregean reading:

This idea of the Mind is united to the Mind in the same way as the Mind is united to the Body [Haec mentis idea eodem modo unita est menti, ac ipsa mens unita est corpori].

Dem.: We have shown that the Mind is united to the Body from the fact that the Body is the object of the Mind (see [2]p12 and 13); and so by the same reasoning the idea of the Mind must be united with its own object, i.e., with the Mind itself, in the same way as the Mind is united with the Body [Mentem unitam esse corpori ex eo ostendimus, quod scilicet corpus mentis sit obiectum (vide prop. 12. et 13. huius); adeoque per eandem illam rationem idea mentis cum suo obiecto, hoc est, cum ipsa mente eodem modo unita esse debet, ac ipsa mens unita est corpori], q.e.d.

Schol.: This proposition is understood far more clearly from what is said
in [2]p7s; for there we have shown that the idea of the Body and the Body, i.e. (by [2]p13), the Mind and the Body, are one and the same Individual [unum et idem...individuum], which is conceived now under the attribute of Thought, now under the attribute of Extension (2p21)

The subject of the above passage are the “unions” of minds and bodies, and of minds and ideas of minds. Spinoza’s claim is that in both cases the nature and grounds of this union are the same: it is a union of an idea to its intentional object – of a mind as the idea of body to that body in one case; and of a higher-order idea to the mind itself in the other. The scholium adds that the sameness of these two “unions” is even clearer from 2p7s, which Spinoza explains, shows that the “idea of the Body and the Body, i.e. (by [2]p13)” – namely, by the proposition that the “object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body” – “the Mind and the Body, are one and the same Individual”, but one which can also be “conceived” in two different ways (2p21s). Once again therefore, Spinoza himself clearly characterizes the mind-body relation established in 2p7s in explicitly intentional terms: what makes modes, whether of extension or thought, into one “individual”, or into a “union”, of the sort at stake in 2p21s, or into “one and the same thing” of the sort at stake in 2p7s, is the presence of an idea’s intentional or representational relation to its object. The possibility of diverse attribute-relative descriptions is mentioned only at the last stage, and not in order to explain how the identity obtains in the first place – which, again, is the result of an intentional relation.

Again, Fregean readings of mind-body identity will have trouble explaining why an intentional relation between the relata of the identity relation should be relevant at all if the identity in question is, as they claim, the identity of a referent under two different descriptions. But this is not the only problem that such readings face when confronted with 2p21s. For what that scholium also shows very clearly is that for Spinoza a difference in attribute – and so in kinds of predicates or descriptions we can apply to something – is simply irrelevant to this sort of “oneness and sameness” or “union” obtaining. This is because the same sort of “union” obtains whether what is “one and the same” are two modes of thought (a mind and its idea), or a mode of extension and a mode of thought (a body and its mind). That is, the very same kind of identity that holds between things that do differ in attribute-relative predicates (minds and bodies) also obtains between two ideas (so between two things that fall under the same attribute descriptions). Thus the identity at stake in 2p7s cannot be understood as fundamentally an identity under two different descriptions – under descriptions that differ in attribute – as Fregean readings allege.

I conclude, therefore, that there is overwhelming textual evidence corroborating my proposal that Spinoza’s commitment to mind-body identity should be understood as commitment to an intentionally-grounded identity and that it is this kind of identity-in-virtue-of-intentionality that Spinoza has in view when he describes minds and bodies as “one and the same thing” in 2p7s.66
Bibliography and Abbreviations


———. Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza’s Philosophy of Mind.” in Della Rocca, *Oxford Handbook to Spinoza*, 190-203. [“Representation, Misrepresentation”]

———. “The Indiscernibility of Identicals and the Transitivity of Identity in Spinoza’s Logic of the Attributes.” In Melamed, *Critical Guide*, 1-42. [“Indiscernibility of Identicals”]


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King, Peter. “Rethinking Representation in the Middle Ages.” In Lagerlund, Objects of Thought, 81–100.
———. “Spinoza on mind”. In Della Rocca, Oxford Handbook to Spinoza, 273-94.
———. “Two Puzzles about Thought and Identity in Spinoza.” In Melamed, Critical Guide, 56-81. [“Two Puzzles”]


———. “The problem of true ideas in Spinoza’s *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect.*” In Melamed, *Young Spinoza*, 52-65. [“Problem of true ideas”]


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I will often speak of “minds” simpliciter, but more precisely the identity asserted in 2p7s holds between human minds and bodies. (As a panpsychist, Spinoza allows for other kinds of minds [2p135, Ep. 66].)

In citing from Spinoza’s Ethics I use the following abbreviations: app=appendix, ax=axiom, c=corollary, def=definition, d=demonstration, expl=explanation pref=preface, p=proposition, s=scholium, followed by volume and page references to the Latin Gebhardt edition. For Spinoza’s other works, I use the following abbreviations: Ep=Letters, KV=Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-being, NS=De Nagelate Schriften van B.D.S. (posthumous Dutch edition), TIE=Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect.

2 Of course there are some abstract predicates that hold veridically of both thought and extension (such as, precisely, being an <attribute>). On how such predicates are constructed and how they relate to real beings according to Spinoza see Hübner 2015, Hübner forthcoming.

3 Neither ‘intentionality’ nor ‘representation’ are Spinoza’s terms; I will use these terms interchangeably here as synonyms for Spinoza’s ‘idea’ + genitive.

4 But see Jonathan Bennett, Study, 155, Don Garrett, “Representation, Misrepresentation”, “Indiscernibility of Identicals”. As Bennett notes, in a trivial sense any correlation can of course represent (Study, 154-5).

Here is a possible, robustly idealist, solution to this puzzle: if for Spinoza a human body is the essential intentional object of a human mind in the sense that it is reducible to this mind’s representational contents, then arguably mind-body identity obtains trivially, simply in virtue of any mind’s numerical identity with its own representational contents. Something similar is suggested by Husserl, to explain why for Spinoza the order of “things” is correlative with the order of “ideas” (2p7) (Edmund Husserl, Theory of Knowledge, 52n; thanks to Clinton Tolley for referring me to this text). But the interpretative costs of endorsing this idealist solution are quite high: Spinoza’s metaphysics would no longer have room for a self-sufficient realm of physical things, i.e. for a genuine “attribute” of extension. This interpretative cost justifies us, I think, in looking for other explanations of why Spinoza systematically relates human minds and bodies in two radically different ways.

5 For the classic formulation of this problem see Bennett, Study, §34.2, R.J. Delahunty, Spinoza, 195-7. For discussion see e.g. Michael Della Rocca, Representation, 144-150; Garrett, “Indiscernibility of Identicals”, 30; Charles Jarrett, “Spinoza’s denial,” 470-2, Colin Marshall, “Mind and Body”, John Morrison, “Two Puzzles.”

6 Gottlob Frege, Philosophical Writings.

See e.g. Della Rocca, *Representation*, Jarrett, “Spinoza’s denial,” 470-2, Newlands, “Thinking, Conceiving, and Idealism in Spinoza,” 33; Rice, “Paradoxes of Parallelism in Spinoza,” 51. One can find antecedents of this solution in medieval discussions of reduplicative propositions. As Benson Mates has shown (*The Philosophy of Leibniz*), Leibniz endorses a similar exception to the substitutability of predicates, in contexts that include the qualifier often used by Spinoza to distinguish attribute contexts: *quatenus*.

8 See e.g. Marshall, “Mind and Body”.

9 See e.g. Marshall, “Mind and Body”.

10 Study, 34.1.


13 I use ‘extramental’ here to mean external to the *idea* in question, in contrast to *immanent* intentional objects of ideas (i.e. their representational contents). For example, the sun as the physical star is the extramental object of my idea of the sun, but the objectively-real sun, i.e. the sun as represented, is the immanent intentional object (the representational content) of
that same idea.

14 I am grateful for this formulation to an anonymous reviewer.

15 Cf. Adriaenssen, Representation and Scepticism, 134.

Commentators are divided on whether Descartes’s theory more closely resembles Thomistic or Scotist accounts, which differ on the question whether we should identify 1) the being of the form of the object in the intellect with 2) the objective being of that object in the intellect (Adriaenssen, Representation and Scepticism, 132-141). For discussion see e.g. Adriaenssen, Representation and Scepticism, Hoffman “Direct Realism,” Pasnau, Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages, 295ff, Schmitter, “The Third Meditation on Objective Being.” See also Aristotle Met 12.7 1072b19-21, De Anima ii.12.

16 Cf. e.g. Antoine Arnauld, Ouevres, 38.251; for discussion see e.g. Adriaenssen, Representation and Scepticism, Nadler, Arnauld and the Cartesian Philosophy of Ideas.

17 Cf. 2p5-8, 4p8d, Ep32, TIE[34], KVapp2[3-4, 6-7, 9, 15].

18 Hence I disagree with Carriero’s suggestion that Spinoza doesn’t wish to apply the formal/objective reality model to sensory, and possibly false, ideas (“Remarks on Cognition”, 142n10).

19 For a correspondence reading of Spinoza see e.g. Bennett, Study, 170, Della Rocca, Representation, 107; Nadler, Spinoza’s Ethics: An Introduction, 161. For criticisms of such readings, see e.g. Allison, Benedict De Spinoza, 102, Morrison, “Truth in the Emendation” For other interpretations of Spinoza on truth see e.g. Garrett, “Truth and Imagination”.

20 The other and arguably primary sense is that Spinozistic ideas intrinsically have a volitional element, affirming or negating their content (2p49).

21 See e.g. Aristotle, Met Γ.2; Martin Heidegger, Being and Time; Kris McDaniel, “A Return to the Analogy of Being.” For an application of the label ‘ontological pluralism’ to Spinoza’s philosophy in a different sense see Garrett, “Indiscernibility of Identicals”, 27-30.

Any ‘ontological pluralism’ we could attribute to Spinoza on the basis of the distinction between formal and objective reality (as I am doing in this section) will be very weak, since it requires only a conceptual distinction between different ways of being. (Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me on this.)

22 Thanks for this point to an anonymous reviewer.

23 I say ‘often extramental’ since of course one can also think of one’s own ideas, not just of what is outside the mind.

24 Garrett proposes that Spinoza distinguishes between obiectum as what an idea is identical with, and ideatum as what it is of (“Representation, Misrepresentation”; cf. Morrison, “Truth in the Emendation”, 68, Justin Steinberg, “Imitation, Representation, and Humanity in Spinoza’s Ethics,” 387-9). I tend to agree with H. Barker (“Notes on the Second Part of Spinoza’s Ethics”) that Spinoza treats ideatum and objectum interchangeably (i64) or at least nonsystematically. For example in zdefjexmpl, he describes the external object as objectum. See also e.g. 2p5&d, where Spinoza switches between the two terms. On my account, the distinction Garrett highlights collapses.

25 For discussion see e.g. Leibniz, Philosophical Essays, 277; Barker, “Notes on the Second Part

26 In this paper I limit myself to Spinoza's account of the essential constitution of human minds as actual existents – thus I won't discuss human minds qua eternal, nor any of the ideas (including sensory ones) that also come to included in human minds in the course of durational existence.

27 Since 2p13's demonstration appeals to 2ax5, "nothing else" presumably refers to things under attributes other than thought and extension. For discussion see e.g. Allison, Benedict De Spinoza, 96; Della Rocca, Representation, 25-8; Yitzhak Melamed, Spinoza's Metaphysics, Renz, "Definition of Human Mind".

For a different recent account of the essences of minds and bodies, see e.g. Morrison, "Two Puzzles."

28 I will take for granted in this paper the difficulties of reducing minds to ideas, and to divine ideas in particular. For classic articulation of objections see Leibniz, Philosophical Essays, 272-80, and Wilson, Ideas and Mechanism.

29 This has been rightly stressed recently by Renz, "Definition of Human Mind", 102; cf. Ayers, "Ideas and objective being," 1077, Parkinson, Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge, 105.


31 For recent accounts of Spinoza on kinds, see e.g. Carriero, "Spinoza on final causality," Hübner, "Spinoza on Essences" and "Spinoza on Universals"; Newlands, "Spinoza's Early Anti-abstractionism".

32 This allows Spinoza to block at least in part the conclusion that (for example) my idea of my neighbor's existing and complex body constitutes either my mind or her mind. See Hübner, "Spinoza on Intentionality, Materialism, and Mind-Body Relations" for more detailed discussion.

33 Cf. 2p19. See Renz, Explainability of Experience, for a detailed study of this part of Spinoza's picture.

I thus disagree with Matheron (endorsed in Donagan, Spinoza) that this mind-constituting idea of a body is had only by God and is not cognitively accessible to the human subject (Alexandre Matheron, Individu et communauté chez Spinoza). The Matheron-Donagan reading seems ruled out, e.g., by 2p12d: "whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human Mind" – i.e., however it is affected – "the knowledge of it is necessarily in God insofar as he constitutes the nature of the human Mind, i.e....the Mind will perceive it" (emphasis added).

34 On this reading 2p12 doesn't, implausibly, ascribe omniscience to human knowers (for discussion of this problem, see e.g. Della Rocca, Spinoza, Michael LeBuffe, "Theories about Consciousness in Spinoza's Ethics"). I return to these two perspectives on the human body in 4.3. See Renz, Explainability of Experience for an alternative account on which the divine
perspective on the human body is irrelevant. See Della Rocca, *Representation*, for discussion of how Spinoza allows ideas to have different contents in different minds.


36 Given divine omniscience, modes of attributes other than extension will also be represented in the divine intellect and so will constitute other (non-human) kinds of minds (2p13s, Ep66).

37 So rather than saying, as a proponent of Fregean readings would, that for Spinoza minds and bodies are different insofar as they are subjects to different descriptions, the representational account can appeal to claims about descriptions to explain the sense in which minds and bodies are the same.

38 This is one way my representational reading differs from Garrett’s: I don’t think that the difference in formal/objective reality is significant because of the different sorts of predications it grounds (“Representation, Misrepresentation”). There are at least four other points of disagreement: (1) Garrett proposes that Spinozistic intentionality is “reduced to an aspect of identity” (“Representation, Misrepresentation”; cf. “Indiscernibility of Identicals”, 25). In my view, this gets the order of dependence and explanation backward: it is the intentional relation that establishes and explains the identity. (2) Unlike Garrett’s account (“Indiscernibility of Identicals”, 27), my account is not also an account of the relation between the attributes of thought and extension, since the relation between a body existing formally and this body existing objectively does not generalize into an account of the attributes, insofar as these are ways of existing formally. (3) Garrett’s account of identity continues to appeal to “correspondence” and “[p]arallelism” relations (“Indiscernibility of Identicals”, 27), whereas my account explains the identity on the basis of the intentional relation alone. (4) Given 2p7c’s stress on the “equality” of formal and objective reality, I have doubts about Garrett’s claim that the distinction is “hierarchical” (“Indiscernibility of Identicals”, 32).


40 I say ‘fundamentally’ because, assuming that the essence of a mind is numerically identical to the mind, and assuming also the transitivity of identity, the formally-real body in nature will also be derivatively identical to the mind (and not just its essence).

41 However, on the representational account, like the Fregean one, Spinoza’s mind-body identity doctrine violates the principle of indiscernibility of identicals (PII), if we assume that a human mind is derivatively numerically identical also with the formally-real body in nature, given (1) the transitivity of identity, (2) the identity of the objectively-real body that is the essence of the human mind with the formally-real body in nature; (3) the numerical identity of a mind with its own essence. PII will be violated in this case because not all predicates true of the human mind will be true of the formally-real body. For example, a mind can affirm and doubt, the body cannot (cf. 1p10). However, it seems to me that there are no compelling reasons to conclude that Spinoza endorses PII, and plenty of counterindications
– not least his claim that “mind and body are one the same thing”, however we interpret it.
(Cognitive identity as Aristotelians understand it, where a universal form in the mind is
nonetheless identical to a particular form in nature also violates PII.) (I am grateful to an
anonymous referee for pressing me on this issue.) On Spinoza and PII see e.g. Garrett,
“Indiscernibility of Identicals”, Morrison, “Two Puzzles”.

Thanks to Lloyd Gerson and Josefine Klingspor for discussion of this issue.

I am assuming here that the notion of numerical identity is not just consistent with a notion
of a plurality of ways of existing but required by it, insofar as we want to be able to talk about
one thing existing in different ways, as opposed to a plurality of existents.

Cf. Melamed, Spinoza’s Metaphysics for a similar worry in a different context.

I developed this objection thanks to an anonymous reviewer.

I am grateful for this point to an anonymous reviewer.

Spinoza also allows for other instances of two things being “one and the same” on the grounds
of a conceptual relation; for example, “ideas” and “affirmations” are “one and the same
insofar as one cannot be conceived without the other (2p49d).

Of course Descartes also acknowledges a representative element in my mind’s relation to my
body, in particular when he distinguishes how my mind feels, rather than merely
intellectually observes, the state of its body (e.g. Med. 6).

One could meet this objection easily by opting for the Matheron-Donagan interpretation of
human minds (see my note 33), on which the idea essential to the human mind is had only
by God and so necessarily adequate.

This is a reason to adopt Carriero’s restricted version of this model (see note 18).

For proposals see e.g. Brown, “Objective Being in Descartes,” Kaufman, “Objective Reality”.

Cf. Newlands, Reconceiving Spinoza.

See also Renz, Explainability of Experience for a very different take on the relation
between human mind and divine thought.

So also a child’s confused idea of the sun “as about 200 feet away” is an idea of an “affection
of her body that “involves the essence of the sun insofar as [her] body is affected by the sun”
only; this idea is not joined with or “related” to an idea of the sun’s “true distance and of the
cause of this imagining” (2p35s).

Alternatively, we can deny that it can be made fully intelligible. See Della Rocca, Spinoza.

Presumably this is why Spinoza can say that the essence of Peter’s mind “directly explains
the essence of Peter’s body” (2p7s), not merely the way that body is affected (cf. 4p1s [G
II/211]), despite the fact that this essence consists only in confused ideas.

See e.g. Newlands, Reconceiving Spinoza, 48, 53.

This point is rightly stressed also by Mogens Laerke, “Spinoza’s Cosmological Argument in
the Ethics.”

More precisely 2p7s refers not to “minds”, but to the infinite intellect’s “ideas” of “modes of
extension”. But later Spinoza explicitly confirms that 2p7s concerns human minds: “in
[2]p7s...we have shown that the idea of the Body and the Body, i.e. [hoc est] (by [2]p13), the
Mind and the Body, are one and the same Individual” (2p21s).
On “expression” as a conceptual relation see e.g. Deleuze, *Expressionism*.


Spinoza also of course explicitly rejects the idea of a potential or material intellect (1p31s).

Since arguably for Aristotelians souls and bodies are also one insofar as the soul is the substantial form of the body, from Spinoza’s perspective their second error is not seeing the connection between this soul-body identity and their theory of representation: unlike Spinoza, the Aristotelians did not grasp that the soul is “one and the same thing” as the body because of how the divine intellect relates to what it understands.

See Ep. 13 (G IV/64).

In 3p2d, the priority of identity to description is perhaps even clearer: “the decision of the Mind and the appetite and the determination of the Body by nature exist together—or rather are one and the same thing, which we call a decision when it is considered under, and explained through, the attribute of Thought, and which we call a determination when it is considered under the attribute of Extension” (G II/144).

On the representational reading, there is a cognitive identity between my idea of substance (whether as extended or as thinking or as substance simpliciter, abstractly) and substance itself. But this is orthogonal to the question of identity of attributes with substance, unless we subscribe to subjectivist interpretations of attributes (see e.g. Shein, “False Dichotomy”).

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