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Representation and Mind-Body Identity in Spinoza's Philosophy

KAROLINA HÜBNER*

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

I . INTRODUCTION

SPINOZA'S CLAIM THAT MINDS AND BODIES are "one and the same thing [*una eademque res*]" (*E IIP7S*), 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, and so on. 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*]" (*E VPref/G 2:280*).²

¹I will often speak of "minds" simpliciter, but more precisely the identity asserted in *E IIP7S* holds between *human* minds and bodies. (As a panpsychist, Spinoza allows for other kinds of minds [*E IIP13S*, Ep 66/G 4:280].) In citing Spinoza, I use the pagination for the source of the passage in the Gebhardt edition of Spinoza's *Opera* (G) when that is helpful in locating the exact passage.

²Of 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, "Spinoza on Essences."

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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 *intentionally*³ related, insofar as human minds for Spinoza are essentially complex ideas of bodies (*E IIP11*, *E IIP13*, *E III GenDefAff /G 2:204*, *Ep 64/G 4:277–78*). But why should a mind represent what it is identical with, or be identical with what it represents? Why, more generally, relate minds and bodies in these two different ways? This puzzle is all too often overlooked by Spinoza's readers.⁴ And yet our failure to find a solution to it threatens to saddle Spinoza's metaphysics with a glaringly brute fact, in violation of his well-known commitment to universal intelligibility (*E IA2*, *E IPI1 AltDem*).

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 *salva veritate*. Here is the difficulty: if mind_i is numerically identical with body_i , such that $\langle \text{mind}_i \rangle$ and $\langle \text{body}_i \rangle$ corefer, and body_i causes movement_i , we might have expected to be able to conclude that mind_i causes movement_i , given the numerical identity of $\langle \text{mind}_i \rangle$ and $\langle \text{body}_i \rangle$. 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 (*E IIP5–6*, *E IIIP2S*).⁵

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 $\langle \text{mind} \rangle$ and $\langle \text{body} \rangle$ pick out a single referent under two different descriptions or presentations, just as, in Frege's well-known example, $\langle \text{Morning Star} \rangle$ and $\langle \text{Evening Star} \rangle$ pick out the same celestial body under two different guises.⁶ In this vein Michael Della Rocca, for example, proposes that

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

⁴But see Bennett, *Study*, 155; and Garrett, "Representation, Misrepresentation," "Indiscernibility of Identicals." As Bennett notes, in a trivial sense any correlation can of course represent (*Study*, 154–55).

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" (*E IIP7*) (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.

⁵For the classic formulation of this problem, see Bennett, *Study*, §34.2; Delahunty, *Spinoza*, 195–97. For discussion, see e.g. Della Rocca, *Representation*, 144–150; Garrett, "Indiscernibility of Identicals," 30; Jarrett, "Spinoza's Denial," 470–72; Marshall, "Mind and Body"; Morrison, "Two Puzzles."

⁶Frege, "On Sense and Reference."

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.⁷

In short, what I am 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—<extension> and its derivatives (<motion>, <size>, <speed>, etc.) on the one hand; <thought> and its derivatives (<affirmation>, <negation>, <doubt>, 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 <mind> and <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 will not 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.

⁷Della Rocca, *Representation*, 19, 125, 139; cf. e.g. Jarrett, “Spinoza's Denial,” 470–72; Lin, “The Power of Reason in Spinoza,” 261; Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics*, 129; Nelson, “Descartes's Dualism,” 288; Newlands, *Reconceiving Spinoza*, 45–50; Pauen, “Spinoza and the Theory of Identity,” 85; Rice, “Paradoxes of Parallelism in Spinoza,” 51; and Shein, “False Dichotomy,” 513, 530. For an explicit analogy with Frege, see e.g. Nelson, “Descartes's Dualism,” 288; Shein, “False Dichotomy,” 530. For denials that *EIP7S* asserts an identity, see e.g. Delahunty, *Spinoza*, 197; Donagan, *Spinoza*; Gueroult, *Spinoza*, 2:86; Marshall, “Mind and Body.”

⁸See e.g. Della Rocca, *Representation*; Jarrett, “Spinoza's Denial,” 470–72; 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 Mates has shown in *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*.

⁹See e.g. Marshall, “Mind and Body.”

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. This is 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." It does so 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 does *not* 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. 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 section 3, I show that these general commitments imply the existence of an intentionally grounded identity of minds and bodies. In section 4, I flesh out my account by considering some potential objections. Finally, in section 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 *EIIIP7S*, the locus classicus of his identity doctrine.

2. SPINOZA ON IDEAS

In this section I 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."¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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/CSM 2:74; cf. AT 7.161/CSM 2:113–14)

So on this model of representation, my idea of my cat represents him by virtue of being *identical* to him. More generally, representing any extramental¹³ object

¹⁰Bennett, *Study*, §34.1.

¹¹E.g. Allison, *Benedict de Spinoza*, 89; Ayers, "Ideas and Objective Being," 1077; Carriero, "Conatus and Perfection in Spinoza," 77; Donagan, *Spinoza*; Garrett, "Representation and Consciousness," "Representation, Misrepresentation," "Indiscernibility of Identicals"; Lin, "Spinoza and the Mark of the Mental"; Malinowski-Charles, "Rationalism versus Subjective Experience"; Morrison, "Truth in the *Emendation*"; Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics*, 124–25. For discussion of this theory of representation in Spinoza's predecessors, see e.g. Alanen, "Sensory Ideas, Objective Reality, and Material Falsity"; Ayers, "Ideas and Objective Being"; Brown, "Objective Being in Descartes"; Clemenson, *Descartes's Theory of Ideas*; Hoffman, "Direct Realism"; Kaufman, "Objective Reality"; King, "Rethinking Representation in the Middle Ages"; Nadler, *Arnauld and the Cartesian Philosophy of Ideas*; Normore "Meaning and Objective Being"; Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*; Schmitter, "Third Meditation on Objective Being."

¹²I tend to agree with scholars who regard this model as a *direct realist* model: the sun-as-objectively real is not merely some intermediate object of perception by *means* of which we think of the real sun. For discussion of this issue in relation to Spinoza, see Koistinen, "Spinoza on the Mind"; in relation to Descartes, see e.g. Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism*, 134; Brown, "Objective Being in Descartes"; Clemenson, *Descartes's Theory of Ideas*; Hoffman, "Direct Realism"; Nadler, *Arnauld and the Cartesian Philosophy of Ideas*; Wilson, *Descartes*.

¹³I use 'extramental' here to mean the referent external to the *idea* in question, in contrast to the *immanent* intentional object of an idea (i.e. its representational content). 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.

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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

Now Spinoza clearly endorses this Cartesian, and quasi-Aristotelian, model of representation (and he is not alone among Cartesians to do so).¹⁶ 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” (*E IIP7C*; cf. *E IIP32*).¹⁷

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 or less complete “parts” of this perfect representation of all things in the divine intellect (*E IIP11C*). And, as befits Spinoza’s naturalistic demand for a single, uniform explanatory model (*E IIIPref/G 2:138*), the mechanism of representation is the same for God the thinker as for finite thinking things.¹⁸ Indeed 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”:

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

¹⁵Cf. 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*, 132–41). For discussion, see e.g. Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism*; Hoffman “Direct Realism”; Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*; Schmitter, “Third Meditation on Objective Being.” See also Aristotle, *Met* 12.7 1072b19–21; *De Anima* ii.12.

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

¹⁷Cf. *E IIP5–8*, *E IVP8Dem*; *Ep 32*; *TIE* [34]; *KV App2*, [3–4, 6–7, 9, 15].

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

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 [*obiective*]. (*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 [E1]A6), 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*]. (*EIP3oDem*; 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” (*E IIP43S*): they are not merely *like*, or similar to, 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” (*EIP3oDem*) 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 is 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 do not 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

¹⁹For a correspondence reading of Spinoza, see e.g. Bennett, *Study*, 170; Della Rocca, *Representation*, 107; Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics*, 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 Ideas of Imagination.”

²⁰The other and arguably primary sense is that Spinozistic ideas intrinsically have a volitional element, affirming or negating their content (*E IIP49*). For discussion of that doctrine, see e.g. Steinberg, “Two Puzzles Concerning Spinoza's Conception of Belief.”

Second, although thus far I have 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

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*, namely, 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” (*E IIP13S*).

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*]” (*E III GenDefAff/G 2:204*), that is, 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” (*E IIDef2*). (And, in Spinoza’s ontology, ideas count as *res*.) So if, as suggested by *E IIP13S*, 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.

Consequently, I also wish to suggest that we understand what Spinoza calls “objects” in the above passage (*E IIP13S*) not as the (often extramental)²³ *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 a purely mental kind of being (my cat insofar as he has objective reality in my ideas whenever

²²See e.g. Aristotle, *Met* Γ.2; Heidegger, *Being and Time*; McDaniel, “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*, in the sense of thought-dependent, distinction between different ways of being. (Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me on this.)

²⁴Thanks for this point to an anonymous reviewer. See e.g. Braun, “Russellianism and Explanation.”

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

I think of him).²⁴ Since for Spinoza the essence of a particular thing is unique to that thing, such that neither can exist without the other (*E IID2*), 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 is Spinoza's version of the so-called "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") (*E IIP15*, *E IIP49*).²⁵ Human minds²⁶ 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" (*E IIP15*). 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 (e.g. 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 actually existing 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*]. (*E IIP11*)

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*]. (*E IIP13*)²⁷ The essence of the Mind consists in this (by *IIP11* and *P13*), that it affirms the actual existence of its body [*essentia mentis in hoc consistit . . . quod sui corporis actualem existentiam affirmat*]. (*E III GenDefAff*)

²⁴Garrett 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; Steinberg, "Imitation, Representation, and Humanity in Spinoza's *Ethics*," 387–89). I tend to agree with Barker, "Notes on the Second Part of Spinoza's *Ethics*," that Spinoza treats *ideatum* and *obiectum* interchangeably (164) or at least nonsystematically. For example, in *E IIDef3Expl*, he describes the external object of the idea as *obiectum*. See also e.g. *E IIP5* and *E IIP5Dem*, where Spinoza switches between the two terms. On my account, the distinction Garrett highlights collapses.

²⁵For discussion, see e.g. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, 277; Barker, "Notes on the Second Part of Spinoza's *Ethics*," 418; Della Rocca, *Representation*, 41–42; Parkinson, *Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge*, 102–5; Renz, "Definition of Human Mind"; Steinberg, *On Spinoza*, 34; Taylor, "Some Incoherencies in Spinozism"; Wilson, *Ideas and Mechanism*, 126–40.

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

²⁷Since *E IIP13*'s demonstration appeals to *E IIA5*, '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*, 25–28; 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."

Now, a human *body*, for Spinoza, is essentially a particular kind of composite of simpler bodies, communicating motions in a stable manner (*EII*Def[8]/*G* 2:100, *EIIP*15Dem). Thus, a durationally existing idea will count as a “human mind” if it is essentially *of* some such durationally existing extended thing. This idea is then what constitutes the *essence* of an existing human mind, namely, what is necessary and sufficient for this mind to be “given” (cf. *EII*Def2), or actualized, as an entity in duration. And there *must* be an idea of the body for the same reason that there must be an idea of *every* existing thing in Spinoza’s framework: namely, by virtue of divine omniscience (*EIIP*8).²⁸

In short, for Spinoza, the mind-body relation turns out to be itself—perhaps unintuitively—an instance of an *intentional* relation. The mind, reduced to a complex idea, is itself essentially intentionally related to an object, rather than merely *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 [*unitam*] to the Body from the fact that the Body is the object [*objectum*] of the Mind” (*EIIP*21Dem; cf. *KVII*App7–8, *KVI*.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

More specifically, arguably, the essential component of the human mind is a “perception” (or, equivalently, a “cognition [*cognitio*]” [*EIIP*19Dem]) of how a body is *modified* or affected, most often by other bodies in its surroundings. I propose that we take Spinoza’s pronouncements that “we feel that a certain [NS: our] body is affected in many ways [*Nos corpus quoddam multis modis affici sentimus*]” (*EIIA*4) and likewise that “whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human mind must be perceived by the human mind [*Quicquid in obiecto ideae humanam mentem constituentis contingit, id ab humana mente debet percipi*]” (*EIIP*12Dem) to be propositional expressions of the content of this essential idea.³²

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

²⁸Spinoza gives an analogous account of what is required for the human mind to exist *eternally* (in the second sense of “actuality” he allows for): it is to be an idea of the *essence* of a human body. In this paper, I am concerned only with *durationally* existing minds; but, for the sake of readability, I will not always make this explicit and instead speak of minds *simpliciter*.

I will also not address 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*.

²⁹This has been rightly stressed recently by Renz, “Definition of Human Mind,” 102; cf. Ayers, “Ideas and Objective Being,” 1077; and Parkinson, *Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge*, 105.

³⁰Cf. Jarrett, “Rejection of Spinozistic Dualism,” 172; Malinowski-Charles, “Rationalism versus Subjective Experience,” 126. On Spinoza’s notion of mind-body union, see also Delahunty, *Spinoza*; Hübner, “Spinoza on Materialism, Intentionality, and Mind-Body Relations”; Marshall, “Mind and Body”; Morrison, “Two Puzzles.”

³¹For recent accounts of Spinoza on kinds, see e.g. Carriero, “Spinoza on Final Causality”; Hübner, “Spinoza on Essences,” “Spinoza on Universals”; Newlands, “Spinoza’s Early Anti-Abstractionism.”

³²Cf. *EIIP*19. See Renz, *Explainability of Experience*, for a detailed study of this part of Spinoza’s picture.

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, how they represent the things they represent, and what it takes to compose human minds. With these background commitments in place, let us 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 an actually existing 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 have ascribed to Spinoza thus far. First, as we saw in section 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 have also put it, immanent intentional objects). In this sense, for Spinoza representation is sufficient for identity.

Second, as we saw in section 2.3, Spinoza also holds that any durationally existing human mind is essentially an idea of some durationally 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 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*. That is, both the human mind and the human body are a complex and modified body existing with two different kinds of "reality": qua formally real, extramental 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, extramental, 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 what I called the Fregean understanding of that identity (section 3.3); answer potential objections (section 4); and finally substantiate the representational account on textual grounds (section 5). But first I would like to 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 has to do 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,³³ that the identity Spinoza has in view when he describes minds and bodies as "one and the same thing" in *E IIP7S* is meant to hold across *all* attributes, or all qualitative kinds of being essential 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 [*E 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 and thought. Spinoza is explicit about this: "The object [*objectum*] of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body . . . and *nothing else*" (*E IIP13*, emphasis added); and "We neither feel nor perceive any singular things [*NS*: or anything of *natura naturata*], except bodies and modes of thinking" (*E IIA5*). So if, as I propose, Spinozistic mind-body identity is the result of the existence 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.³⁴

³³E.g. Aquila, "Identity of Thought and Object in Spinoza," 277; Deleuze, *Expressionism*, 99; Gueroult, *Spinoza*, 2:76–89; Delahunty, *Spinoza*, 199; and Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 139–45. For a recent defense, see Morrison, "Two Puzzles."

³⁴Given divine omniscience, modes of attributes other than extension will also be represented in the divine intellect and so will constitute other (nonhuman) kinds of minds (*E IIP13S*, Ep 66).

3.2. *Representational vs. Fregean Identity*

Let me now flesh out my preliminary sketch of the representational account of Spinozistic mind-body identity by highlighting three ways it parts ways with Fregean readings of that identity. As we shall see, these non-Fregean elements allow the representational account to solve the two remaining problems dogging Spinoza's doctrine: the problem of the 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 the 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 is not 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, that is, existing with two different kinds of being or reality. And what explains why, despite this ontological difference, minds and bodies can nonetheless also be 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 the identity of a thing (and, more precisely, of a particular body) with itself. This identity is qualitative, in the sense that 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.³⁵ (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 would not be an idea of the sun.³⁶)

³⁵So 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*.

³⁶This is one way my representational reading differs from Garrett's: I do *not* 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

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”: on the representational account this description holds because the minds and bodies in question are not just numerically identical (“one”) but also qualitatively identical (“same”) by virtue of sharing *all* their properties (albeit not the manners 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 a qualitative “sameness” of minds and bodies only to a very 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 a body as a determinate bit of extension, and a human mind as a bundle of occurrent mental acts of affirmation or negation.³⁷ 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 mind. Another way to put this is that the relevant identity relation holds 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 fundamentally identical to is, again, not a formally real human mind simpliciter, or tout court—that is, 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.³⁸

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 are no longer two formally real entities, but instead a certain formally real thing (a body in nature) and some merely objectively real representational content. And, arguably, we cannot expect substitutability on the grounds of an identity of a certain thing with its representation. To be sure, if we also assume (1) 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*

attributes, insofar as these are ways of existing formally. (3) Garrett’s account of identity continues to appeal to “correspondence” and “parallelism” relations (27), whereas my account explains the identity on the basis of the intentional relation alone. (4) Given *E IIP7c*’s stress on the “equality” of formal and objective reality, I have doubts about Garrett’s claim that the distinction is “hierarchical” (32).

³⁷E.g. Bennett, *Study*, 155; Pauen, “Spinoza and the Theory of Identity,” 84.

³⁸I say “fundamentally” because, if we also assume 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).

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 does not, it seems, 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, namely, what ideas it can produce. In short, the derivative *partial* identity of formally real human minds and formally real human bodies also does not 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.³⁹

Finally, the two readings of mind-body identity disagree not merely, as already noted, about the *grounds* of the relevant identity relation (grounds that, for proponents of the Fregean approach, consist in a shared referent describable with attribute-neutral predicates; and, for the proponent of the representational account, in 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. For example, when I think of my cat qua <cat> simpliciter, that is, 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 an instance of numerical identity, insofar

³⁹However, 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; and (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, but the body cannot (cf. *EIP10*). 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.”

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.⁴⁰) Certainly, for Spinoza the mind-body union 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.⁴¹ 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, qualitative, 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 (*E IDef3*, *E IDef5*).⁴²

I do not 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*, that is, 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 (see *E ID6*, *E IIP3*, *E*

⁴⁰Thanks to Lloyd Gerson and Josefine Klingspor for discussion of this issue.

⁴¹I 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.

⁴²Cf. Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, for this objection.

IIP46–47). 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 (*E* IP4Dem), 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 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 (*E* IIP17S). This suggests that my mind’s relation to its own body is *unlike* its relation to every other body it may represent. So it may seem that my account goes wrong both in thinking that representing is sufficient for identity for Spinoza generally, and, more specifically, that it is the representational or intentional relation of human minds to bodies that explains Spinoza’s claim that minds and bodies are “one and the same thing.”⁴³

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 do not think that this result is obviously objectionable. As already noted, the Aristotelian tradition took thinking to entail this kind of identity. As we have also seen, Descartes likewise granted it explicitly.

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, that is, to the rule that human beings are made intelligible by the very same explanatory principles as other kinds of things (*E* 3Pref/G 2:138). The intentionality that explains the existence of our mind-body “union” should not be an exception to the way that intentionality generally works in Spinoza’s view, even if we also want to be able to account for the sense of uniqueness that any particular mind has to “its” body. (I return to this issue below.)

⁴³I developed this objection thanks to an anonymous reviewer.

Moreover, I do not 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.⁴⁴ It is 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 do *not* 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 scholastics 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),⁴⁵ 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, does *not* 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. As noted above, we want Spinoza to be able to account for the uniqueness of the relation that any human mind has to “its” body among all the bodies it represents. And Spinoza accounts for this uniqueness in several ways. First, arguably it follows from the first-person access I have to my body’s modifications: while my mind is essentially constituted by first-personal experience of what happens to a certain body, I do not have this sort of first-person access to what happens to other bodies, even if I can observe them.⁴⁶ Second, only in the case of my mind’s relation to my own body is the cognitive identity with what I represent *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 the difference between the manner in which Peter’s mind is identical to his own body—essentially so—and the manner in which Peter’s mind *can also* be identical to Paul’s body—namely, only if and

⁴⁴Spinoza 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 (*E IIP49Dem*).

⁴⁵Of 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).

⁴⁶See Hübner, “Spinoza on Intentionality, Materialism, and Mind-Body Relations,” for more detailed discussion.

when it is determined to represent Paul's body. Since the "ideas which we have of external bodies indicate the condition of our own body more than the nature of external bodies" (*E IIP16C2*), Peter's mind always *de re* represents *at least* his own body. That is, Peter's body is the bit of extension Peter's mind *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 to it but also indirect: if and when it is formed, it is *de re* of Peter's *own* body as affected by Paul's body.

In short, the representational account can honor both 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, Spinoza may have also wanted to stress, rhetorically, the existence of an essential cognitive identity between my mind and my body, without denying that cognitive identity obtains, nonessentially, much more pervasively.

4.3. *Confused Ideas and Identity*

One final way to object to my proposal that for Spinoza representation suffices for identity is to argue that this conclusion is undermined by other claims he makes about the human mind. For in section 2.3 I claimed that the idea that is essential to a human mind consists in a perception of how the body is affected, usually by other bodies. But, by Spinoza's own lights, such an idea is a *confused* idea, insofar as it fails to distinguish my body from the external causes of its affections (*E IIP16*). (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" [*E IIP28S*].) But *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 only *adequate* ideas can be identical with their purported referents, then a human mind's essential but confused representation of its body will not introduce identity with that body. If that is right, then, contrary to the representational account, the existence of an intentional relation between the human mind and the human body *cannot* explain their identity.

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 *inadequate* ideas represent? Do we want to understand this model as asserting that any idea *de re* of *x*, no matter how confused or inadequate, is also identical with *x*?⁴⁷ However we answer this question for Descartes and other

⁴⁷This is a reason to adopt Carriero's restricted version of this model (see note 18).

adherents of this model,⁴⁸ 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 (*E IIP11C*). 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*]" (*E IIP32*). I take that to mean that for any *x*, an idea of *x* will be true 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 (*E IA4*, *E IIP11C*, *E IIP28Dem*). 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—and so on.⁴⁹

The important point here 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.⁵⁰ For example, we can describe the subset of divine ideas that constitutes "Paul's mind" as "confused" only if we are considering solely the ideas of Paul's bodily affections, without integrating them into—"referring" them to—the larger set of divine ideas, the 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" (*E IIP28S*, emphasis added).⁵¹

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, and is ontologically and explanatorily dependent on that adequate idea. So we are able to properly 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 a part of a much more comprehensive adequate idea that substance has of all things.⁵² On Spinoza's Cartesian model of representation, this infinite, necessarily true substantial idea is certainly identical (cognitively, qualitatively, and numerically) with its object—that is, with the whole

⁴⁸For proposals, see e.g. Brown, "Objective Being in Descartes"; Kaufman, "Objective Reality."

⁴⁹See Della Rocca, *Representation*, for a more detailed discussion of how Spinozistic ideas may have different contents in different minds. See also Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*, 68, for discussion of how human and divine ideas of the human body differ.

⁵⁰Cf. Newlands, *Reconceiving Spinoza*. See also Renz, *Explainability of Experience*, for a very different take on the relation between the human mind and divine thought.

⁵¹So 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" (*E IIP35S*).

⁵²Alternatively, we can deny that it can be made fully intelligible; see Della Rocca, *Spinoza*.

of formal reality. 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 understands my body—a particular, transient wrinkle of infinite extension—in its essence, together with all its causes and constituents, and *this* adequate idea of my body is perfectly identical to that body.⁵³ I certainly do not understand my body as God understands it. But even in understanding only some of that body’s modifications, I understand *something* of that body, and so to some degree my mind participates in—is a partial ground of—the identity relation that, in its entirety, is grounded 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 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 (*EIP15*).

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.⁵⁴ 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” (*EIP25C*). Spinoza appears to perform this derivation explicitly in *EIP7S*, 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 apparent violation of *EIP7S*.

I agree that my reading requires a rethinking of how Spinoza understands the relation between mind-body identity on the one hand and the identity of substance under different attributes on the other. But I disagree that we are left with no

⁵³Presumably this is why Spinoza can say that the essence of Peter’s mind “directly explains the essence of Peter’s body” (*EIP17S*), not merely the way that body is affected (cf. *EIVP1S*), despite the fact that this essence consists only in confused ideas.

⁵⁴See e.g. Newlands, *Reconceiving Spinoza*, 48, 53.

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 or mental state 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 (*E IIP31*).⁵⁵ 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. In short, 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 am 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 *E IIP7S*, 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 have 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 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 *E IIP7S* and related passages in the *Ethics*, and thus that my account has not only a systematic basis in Spinoza's epistemological doctrines but is also well-grounded textually.

I briefly mentioned one textual consideration already: in section 3.2, I argued that my account does a better job than the Fregean one in explaining in what sense Spinoza can hold that human minds and bodies are not just "one" thing—that is, numerically identical, but also the "same thing"—that is, arguably, also *qualitatively* identical. What I would like to do in this final section is show that other key passages not only fit well with the representational reading, but also often *cannot* in fact be understood in the Fregean manner. I will also answer the objection left over from the previous section, by showing that, also 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. *E IIP7S*

I will start with *E IIP7S*, the scholium where Spinoza first describes minds and bodies as "one and the same thing," and which remains the primary reference point for

⁵⁵This point is rightly stressed also by Lærke, "Spinoza's Cosmological Argument in the *Ethics*."

debates about the meaning of mind-body identity in Spinoza's philosophy.⁵⁶ The scholium is immediately preceded by a corollary we have already come across, *E IIP7C*, 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 [*iam sub hoc iam 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*].⁵⁷ [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. (*E IIP7S*; letters in square brackets added)

I want to draw 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.⁵⁸ 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 section 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).

⁵⁶More precisely, *E IIP7S* refers not to "minds," but to the infinite intellect's "ideas" of "modes of extension." But later Spinoza explicitly confirms that *E IIP7S* concerns human minds: "In [*E II*]P7S . . . we have shown that the idea of the Body and the Body, i.e. [*hoc est*] (by [*E II*]P13), the Mind and the Body, are one and the same Individual" (*E IIP21S*).

⁵⁷On "expression" as a conceptual relation, see e.g. Deleuze, *Expressionism*.

⁵⁸E.g. Gueroult, *Spinoza*, 2:85n74; Jarrett, "Rejection of Spinozistic Dualism," 166; and Wolfson, *Philosophy of Spinoza*, 2.24–26. On Spinoza's debt to Maimonides, see e.g. Nadler, *Spinoza and Medieval Jewish Philosophy*; and Ravven and Goodman, *Jewish Themes in Spinoza's Philosophy*.

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.”⁵⁹) This is presumably at least partly why Spinoza says that his predecessors saw the truth only “as if through a cloud.”⁶⁰ 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,”⁶¹ when Spinoza turns to describing the body that is the essential intentional object of the human mind in the so-called Physical Digression (*E II/G 2:97–103*), he focuses on explaining the conditions under which this body’s “form” remains the same [*E III.4–7*]. I suggest that it is precisely because Spinoza is drawing on the Aristotelian 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, that is, of the idea that is essentially “cognition” of the body (*E IIP19Dem*).

Proponents of Fregean readings of *E IIP7S* 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”).⁶² 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

⁵⁹Cf. Wolfson, *Philosophy of Spinoza*, 2.26. Spinoza also of course explicitly rejects the idea of a potential or material intellect (*E IP3 1S*).

⁶⁰Since 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 intellect relates to what it understands.

⁶¹See *Ep 13/G 4:64*.

⁶²See e.g. Della Rocca, *Representation*, 129–130; Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, 153n13; Allison, *Spinoza*, 85–86. Cf. Bennett, *Study*, 142; Aquila, “Identity of Thought and Object in Spinoza,” 272–73.

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 *E IIP7S*—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, specifically, the negative point that such a multiplicity of veridical predications does not suffice to establish numerical multiplicity.⁶³ This, it seems to me, is the lesson we are instructed to “recall” from part 1 of the *Ethics* in [a]: Spinoza’s criticism, in *E IP10S*, of Descartes’s inference from the conceptual independence of the attributes to a numerical distinction of substances. This principle applies equally (hence, “so also” in [b]) to modes: modifications of substance can also be “explained” or “conceived” through irreducibly different concepts without thereby being rendered *many* “things.” For example, “a circle existing in nature”—such as 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 one case, and from <thought> in the other). But again, this is merely a 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 *E IIP7S* 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).

What about the objection that Spinoza’s use of “so also” in [b] 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 constitutes very weak counterevidence to the representational reading. In particular, Spinoza’s use of “so also” leaves underdetermined both what relata he is trying to compare, and how great a degree of similarity he is trying to assert. It

⁶³In *E IIP2Dem*, 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.”

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 do not 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 should not 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 difference between “thing” and “substance” might seem minor, 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 *E IIP7S*, I do not think this particular objection has much ground to stand on.⁶⁴

5.2. *E IIP12S* and *E IIP21S*

Should one still harbor doubts about the representational reading of *E IIP7S*, 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, *E IIP12S*. There Spinoza notes that the following proposition is made “evident and more clearly understood” by *E IIP7S*: “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” (*E IIP12*). This proposition—the one Spinoza thinks is illuminated by *E IIP7S*—bears on what the human mind “perceives,” and on the “object [*objectum*]” of its constituent ideas. In other words, what *E IIP7S* makes clear, in Spinoza’s own view, is a human mind’s *representational* relation to its object. So Spinoza’s own gloss of *E IIP7S* in this passage confirms that when in *E IIP7S* 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 the fact that what happens in the mind’s intentional object is perceived by that mind.

Spinoza’s second gloss of *E IIP7S*, in *E IIP21S*, likewise confirms the representational reading while remaining difficult to reconcile with a Fregean reading:

⁶⁴On 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”), on which attributes would be merely the ideas of finite thinkers.

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 [E II]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 [E II]P7S; for there we have shown that the idea of the body and the body, i.e. (by [E II]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. (E IIP21)

The subjects 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 E IIP7S, which, Spinoza explains, shows that the “idea of the body and the body,” that is, the mind and the body, are one and the same Individual,” but one that can also be “conceived” in two different ways (E IIP21S). Once again therefore, Spinoza himself clearly characterizes the mind-body relation established in E IIP7S 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 E IIP21S, or into “one and the same thing” of the sort at stake in E IIP7S, 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—that, again, is the result of an intentional relation.

Fregean readings of mind-body identity will, in contrast, have trouble explaining Spinoza’s reasoning in E IIP21S. For what that scholium shows very clearly is that for Spinoza a difference in *attribute*—and so in kinds of predicates or descriptions that we can apply to something—is simply *irrelevant* to this sort of “oneness and sameness” or “union” obtaining. The same sort of “union” obtains whether what is “one and the same” are two modes of thought (so a mind and an idea of that mind), or a mode of extension and a mode of thought (so 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 E IIP7S *cannot* be understood as fundamentally an identity under two different descriptions—under descriptions that differ in attribute—as Fregean readings allege. This seems to me to be quite decisive textual evidence against Fregean accounts.

I conclude, therefore, that there is overwhelming textual evidence corroborating my proposal, on purely doctrinal and systematic grounds, 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 *E IIP7S*.⁶⁵

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Individual works of Spinoza are abbreviated as follows:

<i>E</i>	<i>Ethics</i>
Ep	Letters
KV	<i>Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being</i> , with square brackets indicating paragraphs
TIE	<i>Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect</i> , with square brackets indicating paragraphs

In citing from the *Ethics*, I use the following abbreviations:

A	Axiom
AltDem	Alternative Demonstration
App	Appendix
C	Corollary
Def	Definition
Dem	Demonstration
Expl	Explanation
Gen. Def. Aff.	General Definition of the Affects
L	Lemma
NS	<i>De Nagelate Schriften van B.D.S.</i> (alternative formulation from a posthumous Dutch edition)
P	Proposition
Pref	Preface
S	Scholium

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