

SPINOZA'S BUNDLE ANALYSIS OF SUBSTANCES HAVING ATTRIBUTES

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Abstract: Considered in its absolute nature, Spinoza's God is nothing more than the total collection of self-sufficient attributes. God is nothing more than the total collection of self-sufficient attributes in the sense that no attribute is a function of anything ontologically prior to it, and whatever may be in excess to the attributes is entirely a function of the attributes themselves. My bundle interpretation of the substance-attribute relationship in Spinoza's thought harmonizes, so I argue in this paper, with various Spinozistic positions said to be in tension with it: God's simplicity and nonderivativeness, the «sameness» of God's attributes, the unity of parallel modes of different attributes, our being able to know God by knowing just one of his attributes, and so on. Through the help of mapping out how God's attributes relate to one another in terms of Suárez's famous taxonomy of distinctions, I explain, moreover, how my interpretation provides solutions to certain famous criticisms of Spinoza's philosophy, perhaps most importantly Leibniz's objection to Spinoza's ontological argument and Tschirnhaus's puzzlement over Spinoza's claim that Thought is the same as any other attribute even though it is more replete than any other attribute.

Keywords: Spinoza; Substance-attribute relationship; Bundle theory; Substratum; God.

1. Introductory remarks

Any thoughtful consideration of Spinoza's metaphysics demands an understanding of the substance-attribute relationship in his thought. Elsewhere I have argued that Spinoza endorses a constituent analysis of substances having attributes, an interpretation simply according to which the attributes of substances are ontologically authentic or, as it is commonly put, objective¹. In the paper at hand, which builds on

¹ See M. A. ISTVAN Jr., *Spinoza and the problem of universals: a study and research guide*, Dissertation, Texas A&M University 2015, ch. 3. Since such an interpretation – the objectivist interpretation – is dominant anyway, I assume it to be true here. If the reader, however, is reluctant

the findings of the previous, I argue that Spinoza endorses specifically a *bundle* interpretation of substances having attributes, an interpretation according to which a substance is nothing exceeding the sum of its principal attributes. Spinoza's God, according to this picture, is but the total collection of its attributes in the sense that no attribute is a function of anything ontologically prior to it, and whatever may be in excess to the attributes is entirely a function of the attributes². Since the bundle interpretation is a species of constituent interpretation, this paper incidentally serves as additional evidence for the ontological authenticity of the attributes.

Commentators have raised objections to my interpretation that Spinoza's God, considered as ontologically prior to its modes, is nothing but the total plurality of its attributes. Aside from the claim that the attributes are not even ontologically authentic to begin with (a claim that I address fully in the aforementioned paper and only incidentally here)³, the central charge is that the bundle interpretation contradicts God's simplicity, indivisibility, unity, and nonderivativeness⁴. In addition to arguing that Spinoza is explicit in his endorsement of the bundle interpretation to which his system commits him, in this paper I explain how such an interpretation harmonizes with various Spinozistic positions said to be in tension with it – the ones just mentioned as

to accept that interpretation, they can simply read my paper as defending the following conditional claim: *if* the attributes of substances are ontologically authentic, then substances are nothing but their attributes; that is, if the constituent interpretation is right, then particularly the bundle version of that interpretation is right.

² For more on how the attributes are sufficient for absolutely everything, see M. A. ISTVAN Jr., *The sufficiency of Spinozistic attributes for their finite modes*, in "Sintesis: Revista de Filosofia", forthcoming.

³ See H. A. WOLFSON, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1934, pp. 142ff; Jonathan ADLER, *Divine attributes in Spinoza: intrinsic and relational*, in "Philosophy and Theology", n. 4, v. 1, 1989; John CARRIERO, *Spinoza on final causality*, in D. Garber and S. Nadler (eds.), *Oxford studies in early modern philosophy*, vol. 2, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, pp. 127-131; Sherry DEVEAUX, *The role of god in Spinoza's metaphysics*, Continuum, London 2007, p. 40; Paul EISENBERG, *On the attributes and their alleged independence of one another: a commentary on Spinoza's "Ethics" 1p10*, in E. Curley and P-F. Moreau (eds.), *Spinoza: issues and directions*, E. J. Brill, New York 1990, p. 2.

⁴ See Jonathan BENNETT, *A study of Spinoza's "Ethics"*, Hackett, Indianapolis 1984, p. 64; Francesca DI POPPA, *Spinoza's concept of substance and attribute: a reading of the "Short Treatise"*, in "British Journal for the History of Philosophy", n. 17, v. 5, 2009, pp. 924, 925, 925n15; Steven PARCHMENT *The god/attribute distinction in Spinoza's metaphysics: a defense of causal objectivism*, in "History of Philosophy Quarterly", n. 13, v. 1, 1996, p. 55n4; Noa SHEIN, *The false dichotomy between objective and subjective interpretations of Spinoza's theory of attributes*, in "British Journal for the History of Philosophy" n. 17, v. 3, 2009, pp. 511-512.

well as others related: the «sameness» of God’s attributes, the unity of parallel modes of different attributes, our being able to know God by knowing just one of his attributes, and so on. Through the help of mapping out how God’s attributes relate to one another in terms of Suárez’s famous taxonomy of distinctions, I explain, moreover, how my interpretation provides solutions to certain famous criticisms of Spinoza’s philosophy, perhaps most importantly Leibniz’s objection to Spinoza’s ontological argument and Tschirnhaus’s puzzlement over Spinoza’s claim that Thought is the same as any other attribute even though it is more replete than any other attribute.

2. Core argument

2.1. Background

There are two main brands of constituent interpretation of substances having attributes. There are two basic ways, in other words, to understand the relationship between ontologically genuine attributes and the substance said to have them. On the bundle interpretation, a substance is nothing but, nothing in excess to, its attributes, in which case talk of substance *x* is merely compendious talk of all the attributes of *x* (whether there be many attributes or even just one)⁵. On the anti-bundle interpretation, a substance is not nothing but its attributes; a substance has some attributeless something in excess to – even if inseparable from – its attributes. The most historically popular form of the anti-bundle interpretation is known as the substratum interpretation. On the substratum interpretation, standing “beneath” or “behind” or “at the back of” a substance’s attributes, and also in support of those attributes, is an attributeless something – a substratum – that has an identity all its own⁶.

Where does Spinoza stand? Spinoza endorses a bundle interpretation of substances having attributes. For Spinoza, substances considered truly, that is, as ontologically anterior to their modes (see 1p5d), are nothing but the totality of their attributes. In effect, any aspect of the core of a substance in excess to that totality must be entirely qualitative (rather than some bare substratum) and be entirely a function of the

⁵ See J. P. MORELAND, *Universals*, Acumen, Chesham 2001, pp. 57-58.

⁶ Michael LOUX, *Metaphysics: a contemporary introduction*, Routledge, New York 2006, p. 84.

attributes themselves⁷. In the two subsections that follow, I will lay out the two central reasons in support of this view: Spinoza says as much and his system demands as much. The reader should note that – unless flagged otherwise – I follow Spinoza’s use of the term «substance» (especially in early parts of the *Ethics*) as shorthand for “substance considered truly”. *Substance considered truly* is substance considered merely as it is in its most fundamental sense – ontologically prior to, and so stripped of, the only other things in Spinoza’s ontology: modes (see 1p5d).

2.2. Spinoza says that substances are just their attributes

Spinoza says that substances are nothing but their attributes (see 1d6, 1p4d, 1p10s, 1p14c2 in light of 1p4d-1p6c-1p15d-1p28d, 1p19, 1p20c2, 1p28d, 1p29s, 1p30d; Ep. 9 IV/45; DPP 1p7s; KV 2pref4 I/53/10-13). Here are eight passages to that effect.

1. Whatever is either in itself or in another, that is, outside the intellect there is nothing except substances and their affections. Therefore, there is nothing outside the intellect through which a number of things can be distinguished from one another except [(1)] substances, or *what is the same*, their attributes, and [(2)] their affections. (my emphasis 1p4d)
2. By *God* I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a *substance* consisting of an infinity of attributes [...]. God, that is, all the attributes of God, are eternal. (my emphasis 1d6-1p19)

⁷ All Spinoza citations are from *Spinoza Opera*, Gebhardt’s Latin critical edition. The citations use the following format: abbreviated work title followed by part, chapter, and section (when applicable), and then *Opera* volume number, page number, and line number (when applicable). The title abbreviations are standard: *Letters and Replies* (Ep); *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (TdIE); *Short Treatise* (KV); *Appendix Containing Metaphysical Thoughts* (CM); *Theological-Political Treatise* (TTP); *Political Treatise* (TP); *Hebrew Grammar* (HG); *Descartes’s Principles of Philosophy* (DPP). So, for example, “CM 2.7 I/263/5” is part 2, chapter 7 of the *Appendix Containing Metaphysical Thoughts*, which is volume 1, page 263, line 5 of the *Opera*. Following standard practice, citations from the *Ethics* refer to the formal apparatus of the *Ethics* itself followed by the volume number, page number, and line number of *Opera* (when needed). The first Arabic numeral indicates the *part* of the book and the following letter abbreviations indicate the *type* of passage: “a” for *axiom*; “app” for *appendix*; “c” for *corollary*; “d” for *definition* (when it comes right after the part numeral) or *demonstration* (for most, but not all, of the other positions); “p” for *proposition*; “pref” for *preface*; “s” for *scholium*; “exp” for *explication*. Hence “3p59sd4exp” is the explication of the fourth definition of the scholium to the fifty-ninth proposition of *Ethics* part three. With exception to the occasional modification of my own, translations are from Curley’s *The Complete Works of Spinoza* (vol. 1). For letters 29-84, TP, TTP, and HG I refer to Shirley’s translation.

3. By *God* I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a *substance* consisting of an infinity of attributes [...]. God, that is, all the attributes of God, are immutable. (my emphasis 1d6-1p20c2)
4. By *Natura Naturans* we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself [(substance, by 1d3)], that is, the attributes of substance. (1p29s)
5. But in Nature (by 1p14c1) there is only one substance, namely, God [(a substance constituted by all the attributes)], and there are no other affections other than those which are in God (by 1p15) and can neither be nor be conceived without God (by 1p15). Therefore, an actual intellect, whether finite or infinite, must comprehend God's attributes and God's affections, and nothing else. (1p30d)
6. [T]he attributes [of substance are that] which we ourselves concede to be [te] substance. (KV 2pref4 I/53/10-13)
7. It follows, second, that an extended thing and a thinking thing are either attributes of God, or (by 1a1) affections of God's attributes [...]. But except for substances and modes there is nothing (by 1a1). (1p14c2 and 1p15d)
8. For there is nothing except substance and its modes (by 1a1, 1d3, and 1d5) and modes [of substances (see 1d3)] are (by 1p25c) nothing but affections of God's attributes. (1p28d II/69/19-20)

Quotes 2-4 are quite poignant when one considers that Spinoza uses the term «*sive*» to link *God* (a *substance* consisting of all the attributes) with *the totality of God's attributes*.

Deus sive omnia Dei attributa sunt aeterna. (1p19)

Deum sive omnia Dei attributa esse immutabilia. (1p20c2)

Per Naturam naturantem nobis intelligendum est id, quod in se est et per se concipitur, sive substantiae attributa. (1p29s)

“*Sive*” is a term that Spinoza uses to indicate identity. As with the term “*seu*”, “or” is the standard translation of “*sive*”. Nevertheless, to bring out the strict equivalence between God and the totality of God's attributes, I use “that is” as opposed to “or” here. Even using “that is” perhaps unwarrantedly understates the point. After all, since what follows “*sive*” is typically for Spinoza a more precise and thorough expression of what precedes it, it seems best to translate it as “or better yet”⁸. Spinoza uses “*sive*” to identify a substance with the totality of a substance's attributes outside of the *Ethics* too. When discussing single-attribute substances with De Vries, for example, Spinoza says «substance *sive* attribute» (Ep. 9 IV/46).

⁸ Samuel NEWLANDS, *Spinoza's modal metaphysics*, in E. N. Zalta (ed.), “Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy”, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza-modal/>.

Quote 1 drives home the identification of substance with all its attributes. The basis for Spinoza's claim that there are only substances and modes (affections) is the following two points. (1) Each thing is either in itself or in another (1a1). (2) Only substances are in themselves (1d3) and only modes are in another (1d5). There is only one explanation, then, for why in the *first* sentence of 1p4d Spinoza does not list as part of his ontology items – namely, attributes – that definitely are part of his ontology and, in fact, are *in themselves* (1p29s; Ep. 2 IV/7/25-29), *conceived through themselves* (1p29s; 1p10s; Ep. 2, IV/7/25-29, Ep. 8 IV/41; KV 1.7 I/47/1-3, KV 1.8 I/47/20-25), and thus (by 1a4) *self-caused* (Ep. 10 IV/47/15-16; 1p20d in light of 1d8 and 1d1, 1p10s, 1p29s; KV 1.2 I/32/27ff; KV 1.7 I/47/1-3, KV app2 I/119/15-20). The explanation is that a substance (understood in its «absolute nature», that is, understood as ontologically prior to its modes), is just is the totality of its attributes. In the second sentence Spinoza explicitly states the identity of substances and their attributes, explaining that outside of the intellect there is nothing but substances, *or what is the same*, their attributes (1p4d; see 1p14c2 in light of 1p4d-1p6c-1p15d-1p28d, 1p19, 1p20c2, 1p28d, 1p29s, 1p30d; Ep. 9 IV/45). Not only does Spinoza use his gold-standard word for identity, “*sive*”, to link the term “substances” with the phrase «their attributes». Next to the “*sive*” he adds «*quod idem est*», which means “what is the same”. Moreover, he makes sure to add a comma after the word “attributes” in order to make clear that he is identifying a substance (considered truly) with merely its attributes (rather than with its attributes *and* modes). These additions, on top of the fact that in the first sentence Spinoza says that there are nothing but substances and affections while in the second sentence he says that there are nothing but attributes and affections, are meant to make unequivocal the following sentiment: «I am not just speaking loosely and popularly here; a substance is – literally – nothing but its attributes».

Quote 7 is subtle, but poignant. When Spinoza says, at 1p14c2, that what is, say, extended is either the attribute of Extension or a mode of Extension he cites 1a1, the axiom that what exists is either in itself or in another. As 1p15d makes explicit, 1a1 amounts to the claim (in light of the definitions of substance and mode: 1d3 and 1d5) that there is nothing but substances and modes. Hence 1p14c2, when taken in light of 1p15d, makes it clear that for Spinoza a substance just is its attributes. Indeed, Spinoza uses 1a1 several times as justification (in light of 1d3 and 1d5) for the claim that there are only substances and modes. He does for example at 1p4d, 1p6c, and 1p28d. By

using 1a1 at 1p14c2 to claim, in effect, that the only options for what exists are *attributes* or their modes, Spinoza makes it clear that a substance just is its attributes⁹.

Quote 5 is powerful as well. Even the infinite intellect's true, clear and distinct, and absolutely complete idea of God is of nothing more than every one of God's modes and every one – not merely some (Ep. 56, Ep. 32; 1d6 in light of 1d2) – of God's attributes (of which there is an infinite number)¹⁰. That the infinite intellect's *complete* idea of God refers *only* to attributes and modes means that there is nothing else to God than these. Hence there is nothing else to God *considered truly*, that is, stripped of its modes (1p5d), than attributes. God considered truly, that is to say, is nothing but an infinite number of attributes. – If there were something in excess to the attributes when it comes to God considered truly (a substratum in which those attributes inhere, say), then the infinite intellect's complete idea of God considered truly would have to refer as well to that something in excess. Since the infinite intellect's complete idea of God considered truly does not refer to anything in excess to the attributes, there is nothing in excess to the attributes when it comes to God considered truly.

The above interpretation of Quote 5 is corroborated by different means in Quote 5 itself. Quote 5 says that since there is only (a) God and (b) God's modes, it follows that infinite intellect can comprehend nothing but (c) God's attributes and (d) God's modes. It is obvious that a equals c, just as b equals d. The strict equality is what allows Spinoza to infer that infinite intellect – which comprehends absolutely everything – can comprehend nothing but God's attributes and God's modes from the mere claim that there is only God and God's modes. If there were not this strict equality, then the

⁹ At KV 1.2 I/29/20-23 Spinoza does talk about a substance *supporting* its attributes. But this is often construed as a «mistranslation from the Latin original or a copyist's omission» (Edwin CURLEY, *The collected works of Spinoza vol. 1*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1985, 75n8). And even if it is correct, I assume that the sense of *support* in question is compatible with substances being the totality of their attributes.

¹⁰ Spinoza holds there to be an infinite number of attributes, not just Thought and Extension. Not only is Spinoza always careful to leave open the possibility for attributes in addition to Thought and Extension (see Ep. 64), he also is convinced that there are more attributes than these two. In the *Short Treatise* he writes, «[W]e find in ourselves something which openly indicates to us not only that there are more [attributes besides Thought and Extension], but also that there are infinite perfect attributes which must pertain to this perfect being before it can be called perfect» (KV 1.1 I/17/35-43). Indeed, in the *Short Treatise* he suggests that someday humans might come to know other attributes of God (KV 1.7 I/44/25-26). Spinoza also says in Letter 56 that we do not know «the greater part of God's attributes» (Ep. 56 IV/261/13).

inference would be illicit. – The same parallel, by the way, between (a) substance and (b) substance’s modes, on the one hand, and (c) substance’s attributes and (d) substance’s modes, on the other hand, appears in several places throughout Spinoza’s corpus. We see it, for example, in Quote 7 and 8.

2.3. Spinoza’s system demands that substances are just their attributes

If a substance were not merely the totality of its attributes, then a substance would have something in excess to the totality of its attributes; it would not be exhausted by its attributes. It is clear, however, that a substance does not have something in excess to the totality of its attributes; a substance is exhausted by its attributes. That is why Spinoza, for whom the entirety of reality is intelligible, says that the only knowledge possible is knowledge of either the attributes or the modes of the one and only true substance (God) (1p30d; see Ep. 56), and thus that the only knowledge of God *considered truly* is of God’s attributes (see 1p30d in light of 1p5d). That is also why Spinoza says, and indeed requires, that things are ontologically individuated only by difference in modes or difference in attributes, and not as well by a difference in some-things beyond their attributes and their modes – their substrata, say (1p4d). If there were these extra some-things that things had for Spinoza, then things could be ontologically individuated not only in terms of attribute or mode but as well in terms of these extra some-things. Indeed, Spinoza argues in 1p5d that, since modes cannot individuate substances, if two substances are not ontologically individuated in terms of attribute, then they are numerically identical. Surely he would have known not to say this if he accepted that there were attributeless some-things that could numerically differentiate substances (substances considered truly, remember). It is clear, therefore, that a Spinozistic substance is nothing but the totality of its attributes.

Look at it this way. According to Spinoza, a substance is intelligible only through its attributes; the intellect’s comprehension of a substance is nothing but its comprehension of the attributes (1p30d; Ep. 56; see DPP 1p6s)¹¹. Since the intellect’s comprehension

¹¹ Ep. 56 suggests, in a subtle way, that knowing God is nothing but knowing God’s attributes. Here it should also be observed that I do not claim to have complete knowledge of God, but that I do understand *some* of his attributes – not indeed all of them, or the greater part – and it is certain that

of a substance is nothing but its comprehension of the attributes (1p30d; Ep. 56; see DPP 1p6s), if substance had something over and above its attributes, that is, if substance were not exhausted by the totality of its attributes, then there would be something about substance that would evade any intellect – some natureless core to substance, if you will, that is incomprehensible, ineffable (as is the interpretation of Spinoza’s God that Zacharias Grapo defends early in the 18th Century)¹². But adequate knowledge of God is possible for Spinoza (2p47, 2p47s). Infinite intellect has complete knowledge of reality. Therefore, substance is not something over and above its attributes; it is exhausted by the totality of its attributes.

Here is another reason why Spinoza’s system is committed to the view that a substance is nothing but the totality of its attributes. If a substance were not exhausted by the totality of its attributes (if it had some attribute-free substratum, say), then the attributes would be in, attached to, something that does not belong to the same ontological category as them. But the attributes of God are in themselves – indeed, and as I flesh out elsewhere, they are utterly self-sufficient¹³: in themselves (1p29s; Ep. 2 IV/7/25-29), conceived through themselves (1p29s; 1p10s; Ep. 2, IV/7/25-29, Ep. 8 IV/41; KV 1.7 I/47/1-3, KV 1.8 I/47/20-25), and thus (by 1a4) self-caused (Ep. 10 IV/47/15-16; 1p20d in light of 1d8 and 1d1, 1p10s, 1p29s; KV 1.2 I/32/27ff; KV 1.7 I/47/1-3, KV app2 I/119/15-20). It is inappropriate, then, to say that the attributes are in, attached to, something that does not belong to the same ontological category as them.

Spinoza does say that the attributes are *in* God, no doubt (KV 1.1 I/17/34-35). We need not regard this as in tension with the fact that attributes are in themselves and indeed self-sufficient, though (see Section 4 below). For, on the view that substances are nothing but their attributes, any given attribute does not inhere in something of a different ontological category. An attribute is simply part of a package of other

my ignorance of very many attributes does not prevent me from having knowledge of some of them. Notice that Spinoza analyses his lack of complete knowledge of God as his ignorance of many of God’s attributes. This suggests that knowing God is nothing but knowing God’s attributes.

¹² Zacharias GRAPO, *Theologia recens controversa*, Johannes Bernard Hartung, Leipsiz und Rostack 1719, p. 1.62f.

¹³ ISTVAN, *Spinoza and the problem of universals*, ch. 3. See also Edwin CURLEY, *Behind the geometrical method: a reading of Spinoza’s “Ethics”*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1988, p. 30; W. N. A. KLEVER, *Hudde’s question on god’s uniqueness: a reconstruction on the basis of Van Limborch’s correspondence with John Locke*, in “Studia Spinozana” n. 5, 1989, pp. 330, 347-348; Wiep VAN BUNGE, *Spinoza past and present: essays on Spinoza, Spinozism, and Spinoza scholarship*. Brill, Leiden 2012, pp. 17-34.

attributes. An attribute is *in* God only in the sense that it belongs to a cluster of attributes over and above which God is nothing. There would be contradiction only if what the attributes are *in* is of an ontological category other than the category of the attributes (the «*qualitas* category»), such as would be something in excess to all attributes. But what the attributes are in is not of another ontological category. As D. C. Williams explains, «everybody agrees that a sum is of the same type with its [logical] terms»¹⁴.

Here is one last thing to consider. The attributes constitute God's essence. Infinite intellect perceives this to be the case, and so it must be the case (which is one of the major reasons why the objectivist interpretation of the attributes reigns). God considered truly is identical with his essence (1p5d; 1p11s II/54/25-26; 1p20). This alone suggests the correctness of the bundle interpretation. But to drive the point home, consider this as well. For Spinoza, to constitute (*constituere*) is at once to occupy (*occupare*) (5p39) and to beget-institute-make (*creare*) (TTP 17n37). Thus all the attributes jointly beget-institute-make God. The only way for this to be compatible with the nonderivativeness of God, which is something that Spinoza holds to be true (as we will see in further detail later in this paper), is that God is simply all the attributes.

3. Mapping onto Suárez's Taxonomy of Distinctions

3.1. Introduction

I have argued that Spinoza endorses a bundle analysis of substances having attributes. Considered truly, that is, in its absolute nature, that is, as ontologically prior to its modes, God is, in effect, nothing more than the totality of an infinite number of attributes – attributes that in no sense are a function of anything ontologically prior to them, but rather are that of which absolutely everything else is a function. Before discussing the chief objections to my interpretation, I want to explain how Spinozistic substances relate to their attributes, as well as how attributes of the same substance relate to each other, in terms of Suárez's famous taxonomy of distinctions. This will provide a helpful resource as I respond to objections in the next section.

¹⁴ D. C. Williams, *The elements of being*, in *Principles of empirical realism: philosophical essays*, Charles C. Thomas, Springfield 1966, p. 81.

3.2. God is merely rationally distinct from the totality of its attributes

A substance is nothing more than the totality of its attributes. There is, in effect, no unqualified and inaccessible *res* beneath the *cogitans* in the case of, for example, a thinking substance. It follows, therefore, that there is a mere *distinction of reason* between a substance and its attributes (where A and B differ merely by a distinction of reason only if A is strictly identical to B)¹⁵. The distinction between a substance and the totality of its attributes is merely mental, in other words.

Nothing more than this needs to be said when it comes to describing how Spinozistic substances relate to their attributes in terms of Suárez's taxonomy of distinctions. However, it would be informative to explain why Spinoza feels the need to express the same thing in two different ways: with substance speak, on the one hand, and with attribute speak, on the other. Why does Spinoza not simply pick one side or the other of the God-sive-all-the-attributes equation in order to avoid confusion?

First, note that Spinoza makes these sorts of equivalence claims all over the place. And it is not alien to his way of philosophizing for him to use one side of an equation in some circumstances and the other side in other circumstances. We see this especially in the case of Spinoza's most famous equivalence claim: God *sive* Nature.

Second, in Letter 9 Spinoza explains why he has two names – “substance” and “totality of attributes” – for the same thing. When we refer to a thing as a substance, we are stressing the fact that it is a *thing* or, perhaps more appropriate for Spinoza, a

¹⁵ See Abraham WOLF, *The correspondence of Spinoza*, Russell and Russell, New York 1966, p. 59. – There are two sorts of conceptual distinctions, that is, two sorts of distinctions of reason: that of reasoning reason (*distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*) and that of the reasoned reason (*distinctio rationis ratiocinatae*) (see Ephraim CHAMBERS, *Cyclopædia, or an universal dictionary of arts and sciences*. James and John Knapton, London 1728; MORELAND, *Universals*, pp. 57-58; Francisco SUÁREZ, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, G. Olms, Hildesheim 1988, 7.1.4). The first arises merely from the temporal unfolding of a thought process, as in when we refer to Spinoza twice, once as subject and once as object, in thinking to ourselves «Spinoza is Spinoza». Spinoza's distinction from himself in this way is by no means secured by Spinoza himself, and Suárez tells us generally that this first distinction of reason is not secured by the thing under consideration. The second sort of distinction of reason, although secured by or rooted in the thing under consideration, arises nevertheless merely from an inadequate conception of the thing. The common example, although not one agreed by all as a viable example, is the distinction between the mercy of the Christian God and the justice of the Christian God. Since this God is simple, it is commonly said that there must be merely a distinction of reason, of the second sort, between justice and mercy.

being (*ens*) (see 1d6, 1p10s, 1p11s, 1p14d, 4p28; Ep. 36) – a thing-being that is causally independent, constant through change, and ontologically prior to its affections. When we refer to the same thing as a totality of attributes, we are stressing the fact that the thing in question is nothing but the most fundamental determinable natures (of which all affections of that nature are determinate expressions). Far from trying to be confusing with his moving back and forth between both sides of the equation, Spinoza is trying to be clear.

The following considerations especially highlight that *clarity* is what motivates Spinoza to avoid going exclusively with one side or the other of the equation. Attributes have *traditionally* been considered other-dependent beings. By flipping back and forth (*substance* here, *all the attributes* there), Spinoza is indicating that he does not ascribe to such a view. The attributes in question are self-dependent (in themselves, conceived through themselves, self-caused); they are in no way other-dependent beings. On the other hand, substances have traditionally been regarded as beings that are *in themselves* attributeless, that are in some way in excess to their attributes¹⁶. By flipping back and forth (*substance* here, *all the attributes* there), Spinoza is indicating that he does not ascribe to such a view. To distinguish a substance from its attributes is nothing more than to distinguish mentally and such a distinction, like all mere mental distinctions, reflects an inadequate conception of the thing.

In the end, and especially keeping in mind that “*sive*” is best translated for Spinoza as “or better yet”, such that when Spinoza repeatedly says «substance *sive* all the attributes» he means «substance or, better yet, all the attributes», what Daniel describes as being the case with Berkeley goes equally for Spinoza.

As is obvious from his published work as well, he is not at all reluctant to appropriate the vocabulary of substance, even as he dispenses with the traditional understanding of substance as a [...] substratum.¹⁷

¹⁶ See George Stuart FULLERTON, *On Spinozistic immortality*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1899, p. 50.

¹⁷ Stephen DANIEL, *Berkeley's doctrine of mind and the "black list hypothesis": a dialogue*, in “Southern Journal of Philosophy” n. 51, v. 1, 2013, p. 28.

3.3. Attributes of God are formally distinct

It is clear how we are to understand the relation between a Spinozistic substance and its attributes in terms of Suárez's taxonomy of distinctions. A substance is merely conceptually distinct from the totality of its attributes. But how are we to understand the relation between the attributes of a given substance in terms of Suárez's taxonomy?

There cannot be a mere conceptual distinction between the attributes of a multiple-attribute substance such as God (who is the only true substance in Spinoza's ontology). To affirm that there is a mere conceptual distinction between the attributes of God is to affirm that there is not an ontological plurality of attributes. To affirm that there is not an ontological plurality of attributes is to reject the dominant objectivist view, which I have defended extensively in another paper¹⁸. An intellect's conception of God's being constituted by a plurality of attributes is, as I argue in that paper, an adequate conception, one that matches reality. But if, in addition to the mere mental distinction between a substance and the totality of its attributes, there were a mere mental distinction between the attributes themselves, that conception would be inadequate; that conception would not match reality. The infinite intellect would be perceiving plurality where there is none. That cannot be. There are several corroborating checks to this interpretation. One that stands out is that each attribute is individually self-sufficient and utterly isolated from any other attribute.

There also cannot be a modal distinction between the attributes of God. A modal distinction is a distinction between an entity and its mode. If A is the entity and B is its mode, then A and B are not identical and B is dependent on A whereas A is not dependent on B¹⁹. A given attribute is not a mode or affection of any other attribute and each attribute is self-sufficient, requiring the aid of nothing else to exist or to be conceived. Therefore, the distinction between the attributes of God cannot be modal.

There also cannot be a real distinction – *at least in the following sense* – between the attributes of God. Things really distinct are, according to Suárez, capable of existing

¹⁸ See ISTVAN, *Spinoza and the problem of universals*, ch. 3.

¹⁹ See CHAMBERS, *Cyclopædia*; Richard CROSS, *Medieval theories of haecceity*, in E. N. Zalta (ed.), "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy", <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/medieval-haecceity/>.

without the other²⁰. That is to say, things really distinct are mutually separable²¹. In Spinoza's words, «of things which are really distinct from one another, one can be, and remain in its condition, without the other» (1p15s II/59/14-16; see DPP1d10 I/151/3-4; CM 2.5 I/259/7-8). The very fact that each eternal and immutable attribute of God, the substance constituted by all the attributes, is individually self-sufficient – self-caused, conceived through itself, and in itself – guarantees that no one attribute can exist without the others. Therefore, the attributes of God cannot be really distinct.

An important clarification is needed here, however. In line with the fact that each attribute is self-caused, conceived through itself, and in itself, there is indeed a *sense* in which each attribute of God *is* really distinct from each other attribute of God²². What sense is that? It is the sense in which no one attribute depends on any other attribute. It is the sense in which the conception of one attribute of God in no way involves or invokes a conception of any other attribute of God (1p10s; KV 1.2 I/23/16; Ep. 8), in which case each can exist without the help of any other (CM 2.5). It is the sense that

²⁰ See CHAMBERS, *Cyclopædia*; Paul HOFFMAN, *Descartes's theory of distinction*, in "Philosophy and Phenomenological Research", n. 64, v. 1, 2002, p. 67n10; MORELAND, *Universals*, p. 57; Marleen ROZEMOND, *Real distinction, separability, and corporeal substance in Descartes*, in "Midwest Studies in Philosophy", n. 25, 2011, pp. 240-258.

²¹ Marilyn McCord ADAMS, *William Ockham*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1987, p.17; Richard GLAUSER, *Descartes, Suárez and the theory of distinctions*, in R. E. Auxier and L. E. Hahn (eds.), *The philosophy of Marjorie Grene*, Open Court, Chicago 2002, pp. 423-424. According to Adams, it was a widely held assumption among medievals that real distinction goes hand in hand with separability, understood as the logical possibility of separate existence. Both Suárez and Descartes appear to share this assumption. For them, if A and B are really distinct, they are mutually separable (see GLAUSER, *Descartes, Suárez and the theory of distinctions*, pp. 423-424 and *Principles* 1.60). As Suárez puts the point, «this is usually called a distinction between thing and thing [*res*]». (SUÁREZ, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, 7.1.1). Real distinction is therefore reciprocal for Suárez and Descartes.

²² Several commentators apparently hold it to be the case that the attributes are really distinct. See BENNETT, *A study of Spinoza's "Ethics"*, p. 147; William CHARLTON, *Spinoza's monism*, in "Philosophical Review", n. 90, v. 4, 1981, p. 526; Gilles DELEUZE, *Expressionism in philosophy: Spinoza*, Zone Books, New York 1992, pp. 79-80; Michael DELLA ROCCA, *Representation and the mind-body problem in Spinoza*, Oxford University Press, New York 1996, p. 157, 167; DEVEAUX, *The role of god in Spinoza's metaphysics*, p. 106; Steven NADLER, *Spinoza's Ethics: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006. p. 130; PARCHMENT *The god/attribute distinction in Spinoza's metaphysics*, pp. 57-59, 62; Edwin CURLEY, *Donagan's Spinoza*, in "Ethics", n. 104, v. 1, 1993, p. 128.

allows Spinoza in fact to claim that the divine attributes *are* really distinct (1p10s)²³, in which case «each can be conceived, and consequently can exist, without the help of the other» (CM 2.5). Indeed, the real distinction between the attributes is precisely what makes it the case that the infinite number of attributes do not contradict one another even when each is an element of one and the same being. The real distinction between the attributes is thus precisely what provides an answer to Leibniz's complaint that Spinoza says nothing to assure us that the infinitely many attributes predicated of his God are compatible with each other. The real distinction between the attributes provides an answer, in effect, to Leibniz's objection to Spinoza's ontological argument for God: Spinoza says nothing to prove that a substance with all the attributes, God, is even possible, in which case his ontological argument proves merely that God exists if God is possible. Deleuze makes the point well.

Because attributes are really distinct, irreducible one to the others, ultimate in their respective forms or in their kinds, because each is conceived through itself, they cannot contradict one another. They are necessarily compatible, and the substance they form is possible [...]. In the attributes we reach prime and substantial elements [...]. The irreducibility of the attributes not only proves, but constitutes the nonimpossibility of God [...]. There cannot be contradiction except between terms of which one, at least, is not conceived through itself. [But we do not have that here. For each attribute is conceived through itself and not through any other attribute (or anything else, of course).]²⁴

How are we to describe the sense of real distinction according to which the attributes of God are really distinct? Leibniz sometimes suggests that there is a real distinction between A and B if and only if each is independent-in-being from the other, that is, if

²³ Technically, Spinoza claims here at 1p10s that the attributes of God are *conceived to be* really distinct, not that they *are* really distinct. But we know that what the *intellect* conceives to be the case is the case (see R. J. DELAHUNTY, *Spinoza*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston 1985, p. 120). Della Rocca makes the point well.

Spinoza does, after all, insist that the attributes are conceived to be really distinct (1p10s). Such a conception is certainly, for Spinoza, one that the infinite intellect has, for in 2p7s Spinoza speaks of the infinite intellect perceiving attributes as constituting the essence of substance [...]. [T]he conceptions of an infinite intellect must all be true. Thus, in conceiving the attributes as distinct, the infinite intellect is conceiving them truly. (*Representation and the mind-body problem in Spinoza*, p. 157)

²⁴ DELEUZE, *Expressionism in philosophy*, pp. 77-80. As Deleuze points out in line with Donagan (Alan DONAGAN, *Spinoza*, University of Chicago, Chicago 1988, p. 79), Leibniz ought to accept this explanation – the explanation that, merely because each attribute is self-sufficient and thus really distinct (in the weak sense), all the attributes are compatible. After all, Leibniz himself appeals to the real distinction of perfections in order to explain their compatibility.

and only if «neither stands in need of the other for its own *esse*»²⁵. Not only does Spinoza himself utter like-sounding formulae as well, it is precisely the independence-in-being of each attribute that has Spinoza explicitly claim that the attributes of God are really distinct from one another other (1p10s). I will call the following characterizations of the real distinction «weak real distinction» or «real distinction by mere independence of being» or «real distinction by mere existing without the help of the other».

[R]eally distinct (that is, one may be conceived without the aid of the other). (1p10s)

[B]ecause they are necessarily distinct from one another in reality, then necessarily each of them can also exist through itself without the help of the others. (CM 2.5)

This distinction is recognized from the fact that each of the two can be conceived, and consequently can exist, without the help of the other. (CM 2.5)

When I say above that the attributes of God are *not* really distinct, I do not mean in the “weak” sense just stated, the sense in which real distinction between A and B is understood as A and B being merely independent in being from one another (existing without the help of the other). I mean, instead, that each attribute is incapable of existing while the other attributes do not. Such an understanding of real distinction is evident in CM 2.5 as well, but more poignant in the following two places. I will call this characterization «strong real distinction» or, in line with the description of real distinction with which I opened this discussion, «real distinction by being able to exist without each other existing» or «real distinction by being able to exist while the other does not» (or perhaps «real distinction by mutual separability»).

[O]f things which are really distinct from one another, one can be, and remain in its condition, without the other. (1p15s II/59/14-16)

Two substances are said to be really distinct when each of them can exist without the other. (DPP1d10 I/151/3-4)

Once again, the divine attributes are incapable of existing without each other existing precisely because, in addition to the fact that a being with all the attributes (God) must exist, the self-sufficiency of each attribute guarantees that each one exists, such that there is no real possibility that any one of them exists without the others. It is according

²⁵ Gottfried Wilhelm LEIBNIZ, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, G. Olms: Hildesheim 1965, IV 25.23; see McCullough 1996, 65.

to this sense of real distinction, strong real distinction (real distinction by being able to exist without each other), that the attributes of God fail to be really distinct.

In order to root this discussion in history, we might ask for an answer to the following. How might *Suárez*, who at least appears to think of real distinction merely in the strong sense, categorize the distinction between the self-sufficient attributes of Spinoza's God? How might Suárez, in effect, categorize a distinction that is at once a real distinction in the weak (or mere-existing-without-the-help-of-the-other) sense (since each of the attributes of God are self-sufficient) and yet not a real distinction in the strong (or able-to-exist-without-the-others-existing) sense (since each of the attributes – being self-caused and constituting the same being – necessarily come together as a package)?

One final relevant distinction remains: the formal distinction. Although often suspicious about this distinction as marking out something that the other three distinctions cannot²⁶, Suárez does appear to utilize it himself on occasion (and I think it makes sense for him to do so in light of the strong and weak division I have brought up above)²⁷. More important for my purpose here is to note that Suárez, like Scotus before him, is unequivocal about the formal distinction being a middle way between the real distinction (in the strong sense) and the mere mental distinction. Here are the words of Suárez concerning how formally distinct entities are neither really distinct, that is, able to exist without the others existing, nor merely mentally distinct, that is, one and the same in reality despite the difference suggested by the classifying mind.

[T]here is [said to be] in things prior to intellectual activity a certain actual distinction, which accordingly is greater than a mental distinction but still not so great as the real distinction.²⁸

Elements formally distinct are genuinely, objectively, extramentally distinct (unlike mere mental distinctions). That is, their difference holds prior to any action of the classifying mind. On the other hand, elements formally distinct are inseparable in reality (unlike real distinctions in the *strong* sense) and yet do not depend on each other

²⁶ See Alexei CHERNIAKOV, *The ontology of time: being and time in the philosophies of Aristotle, Husserl, and Heidegger*, Kluwer Academic, Dordrecht 2002, p. 86; DELEUZE, *Expressionism in philosophy*, p. 65.

²⁷ See J. Martin BAC, *Perfect will theology: divine agency in reformed scholasticism as against Suárez, Episcopius, Descartes, and Spinoza*, Brill, Leiden 2010, p. 234n76.

²⁸ SUÁREZ, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, 7.1.13.

(unlike modal distinctions)²⁹. So long as they are inseparable, items can be formally distinct even if each is self-caused, in itself, and conceived through itself. The mark of the formal distinction, the only relevant distinction left that allows for extramental plurality, is inseparability – necessary togetherness – despite objective difference of such a grade that they do not depend on each other (the one is not ontologically prior to the other and the other is not ontologically prior to the one).

So if we are going to employ Suárez's taxonomy of distinctions in order to help us understand the distinction between the attributes of Spinoza's God, then it seems best to describe the attributes of God as formally distinct³⁰. This positioning in Suárez's taxonomy best honors four important facts. First, Spinoza's God is nothing but a totality of attributes, all of which – «each one individually», Spinoza makes it clear (Ep. 8 IV/41) – are self-sufficient and thus *are* really distinct in the weak sense, the mere-independence-in-being or mere-existing-without-the-help-of-the-other sense. Second, the attributes of God necessarily come together as a package and thus are *not* really distinct in the strong sense, the able-to-exist-without-the-others-existing or the able-to-exist-while-the-others-do-not sense. Third, it is standard, historically, to classify as *formally distinct* those objectively distinct properties of God that are (a) inseparable from one another (in each's being essential to God) and that are (b) on ontological even-footing with one another³¹. Fourth, Spinoza says on some occasions that the attributes are *not* really distinct (CM 2.5 I/259) and on other occasions that they *are* really distinct (1p10s)³². It seems best to regard the distinction between the attributes, therefore, as a formal distinction, the only distinction open enough to be described seriously as both a real distinction in a one sense and yet not a real distinction in another sense³³.

²⁹ See ADAMS, *William Ockham*, 24; David Malet ARMSTRONG, *Universals and scientific realism*, vol. 1: *nominalism and realism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1978, pp. 109-110; CROSS, *Medieval theories of haecceity*; Peter KING, *Scotus on metaphysics*, in T. Williams (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Duns Scotus*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003, p. 23.

³⁰ See John CARRIERO, *On the theological roots of Spinoza's argument for monism*, in "Faith and Philosophy", n. 11, v. 4, 1994; DELEUZE, *Expressionism in philosophy*; F. MANZINI, *Spinoza en scotiste: étude de quelques questions communes à Duns Scot et Spinoza*, in "Quaestio", n. 8, 2008; Jason WALLER, *Spinoza's attributes and the "intermediate" distinctions of Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus*, in "Florida Philosophical Review", n. 9, v. 1, 2009, pp. 91-105.

³¹ CROSS, *Medieval theories of haecceity*.

³² See DELAHUNTY, *Spinoza*, p. 119.

³³ See DELEUZE, *Expressionism in philosophy*, pp. 63-67; T. B. Noone, *La distinction formelle dans l'école scotiste*, in "Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques", n. 83, 1999, pp. 53-72.

In what amounts to alluring additional evidence, compare what Spinoza says at 1p10s with what Scotus says about the formal distinction. First Spinoza.

[A]lthough two attributes may be conceived to be really distinct (that is, one may be conceived [and consequently can exist (CM 2.5)] without the aid of the other), we still cannot infer from that that they constitute two beings, or two different substances. For [...] all the attributes [...] have always been in [God] together. (1p10s)

The following, which concerns Scotus on the formal distinction between divine justice and divine mercy, is quoted by Caterus in his objections against Descartes. Caterus's point here is that even if, as Descartes says, the soul and body can be conceived apart from each other, that does not necessary entail that they are separable, that one is able to exist while the other does not.

[Divine mercy and divine justice] are distinct prior to any operation of the intellect, so that one is not the same as the other. Yet it does not follow that because justice and mercy can be conceived apart from one another that they can therefore exist apart.³⁴

It is quite telling to observe that (1) Scotus is here describing the *formal* distinction, as Caterus acknowledges, and that (2) Spinoza and Scotus are making essentially the same point: just because God is composed of a real plurality of attributes on ontologically even-footing, that does not mean that one attribute can exist while not together with the other attributes.

In the end, then, I take it that what Copleston describes about Scotus's radical decision to regard the divine attributes of justice and mercy as formally distinct, rather than merely mentally distinct or really distinct (in the strong sense), holds true in the case of how Spinoza, in line with Crescas³⁵, understands the relation between the attributes of God.

[The formal distinction is a distinction that is] less than the real distinction and more objective than a [mental] distinction. A real distinction [(in the strong sense)] obtains between two things which are [...] separable [in the sense that once can exist without the others] [...]. A purely mental distinction signifies a distinction made by the mind when there is no corresponding objective distinction in the thing itself [...]. A formal distinction obtains when [...] two or more *formalitates* [...] are objectively distinct, but which are

³⁴ René DESCARTES, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985, AT VII 100.

³⁵ See DELEUZE, *Expressionism in philosophy*, p. 359n28.

inseparable from one another [...]. For instance, Scotus asserted a formal distinction between the divine attributes. Mercy and justice are formally distinct, though the divine justice and the divine mercy are inseparable [...]. Why did Scotus assert the existence of this formal distinction [...]? The ultimate reason was, of course, that he thought the distinction to be not only warranted, but also demanded by the nature of knowledge and the nature of the object of knowledge. Knowledge is the apprehension of being, and if the mind is forced, so to speak, to recognize distinctions in the object, that is, if it does not simply construct actively a distinction in the object, but finds the recognition of a distinction imposed on it, the distinction cannot be simply a mental distinction, and the foundation of the distinction in the mind must be an objective distinction in the object. On the other hand, there are cases when the foundation of the distinction cannot be the existence of distinct separable factors in the object [(as in the case of factors really distinct (in the strong sense))]. It is necessary to find room for a distinction which is less than a real distinction [(in the strong sense)] [...] but which at the same time is founded on an objective distinction in the object, a distinction which can be only between different, but not separable formalities of one and the same object.³⁶

³⁶ Frederick COPLESTON, *A history of philosophy, vol. 2: Augustine to Scotus*, Burns Oates & Washbourne, London 1950, pp. 508-509. There is an important piece of apparent counterevidence to my claim that the attributes of Spinoza's God are formally distinct. In his reflections on the philosophy of Descartes Spinoza notes that the attributes of God are rationally distinct (CM 2.5 I/259).

What do I have to say in response? Well, when Spinoza says that God's attributes are merely mentally distinct in this passage he means simply that they are *not really distinct*. And on the assumption that his thought is logically consistent across his works, by "really distinct" he must mean in the *strong* sense that we see stated especially at 1p15s and DPP 1d10.

[T]he distinctions we make between the attributes of God are only distinctions of reason – the attributes are not really distinguished from one another (CM 2.5 I/259).

This is a broad construal of the distinction of reason, typical among Descartes and his followers (see BAC, *Perfect will theology*, p. 234; DELEUZE, *Expressionism in philosophy*, p. 65; DESCARTES, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, AT IV 349; AT VIIIA 62). It is so broad that it encompasses the Scotian formal distinction, such that mere inseparability of diverse items counts as their being conceptually distinct. After all, things formally distinct are *not* really distinct in the strong sense; one is not capable of existing without the other existing. Hence Spinoza can maintain that the attributes are formally distinct and, committing no inconsistency, assert, as he does in the *Short Treatise* and following Descartes (see AT IX 94-95), that «[t]hings which are different are distinguished either really or modally» (Spinoza KV app1a2; CM 1.6 I/248).

So again, when Spinoza says that God's attributes are merely mentally distinct in the CM passage he means simply that they are *not really distinct in the strong sense*. This negative characterization of what Spinoza means when he says that God's attributes are merely mentally distinct suffices for my purposes, but there is also a reasonable *positive* characterization of what he means. When Spinoza says that God's attributes are merely mentally distinct in this passage he positively means, so it seems most reasonable to conclude, that it is only in the mind that each attribute can be considered as if not necessarily part of the rest of the package of other attributes.

4. Objections and replies

4.1. Simple and indivisible, but a bundle nonetheless

One might raise the following objection to the bundle interpretation, the interpretation according to which Spinozistic substances – considered truly, remember – are nothing but their attributes. If God is nothing but its attributes, then God is not simple and indivisible. But God is simple and indivisible (1p12-1p13c, 1app; Ep. 35; KV 1.2 I/24/10ff; CM 2.5)³⁷. Therefore, it is not the case that God is nothing more than his attributes³⁸.

As it turns out, however, God's simplicity and indivisibility is compatible with God's being nothing but a bundle of many self-sufficient attributes – compatible, at least as far as Spinoza is concerned. Here is the quick and simple explanation (see 1p14, 1p10s, 1d6, 1d11 plus 1p15s II/59/14-16; DPP 1d10 I/151/3-4; CM 2.5 I/259/5-8). A substance for Spinoza is simple and indivisible so long as none of its attributes are able to exist without the others. Since the attributes are individually self-sufficient and thus really distinct (in the weak sense), and since these attributes necessarily pertain to God, no attribute of God is able to exist without the others. God, therefore, is simple and indivisible despite being nothing but the bundle of many individually self-sufficient and thus really distinct attributes. This is what Deleuze means, I think, when he says that, paradoxical as it may sound, it is precisely the «real distinction between attributes that excludes all division of substance»³⁹.

Here are the details for this basic explanation.

³⁷ See DELAHUNTY, *Spinoza*, p. 118; DI POPPA, *Spinoza's concept of substance and attribute*, p. 924n12.

³⁸ Bennett, Wolfson, Parchment, and others might raise such an objection. See BENNETT, *A study of Spinoza's "Ethics"*, p. 64; WOLFSON, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, pp. 146-157; PARCHMENT *The god/attribute distinction in Spinoza's metaphysics*, pp. 55, 65; see DEVEAUX, *The role of god in Spinoza's metaphysics*, pp. 28, 30, 55-56, 105-106, 122n10; DI POPPA, *Spinoza's concept of substance and attribute*, pp. 924, 925, 925n15; M. GLOUBERMAN, *A stratified bundle theory*, in "Synthese", n. 42, v. 3, 1979, p. 398; Yitzak MELAMED, *Spinoza's metaphysics of substance: the substance-mode relation as a relation of inherence and predication*, in "Philosophy and Phenomenological Research" n. 78, v. 1, 2009, pp. 73-74; Pierfrancesco BASILE, *Russell on Spinoza's substance monism*, in "Metaphysica", n. 13, v. 1, 2012, pp. 35.

³⁹ DELEUZE, *Expressionism in philosophy*, p. 80.

(Premise 1) The attributes of God are inseparable, that is, each is incapable of existing without the others existing.

Here is the evidence for this first premise. There can be only one substance: God (1p14). God is constituted by every possible attribute (1p10s in light of 1d6 and 1d11). Each of these attributes are self-sufficient. Therefore, it cannot be that one of them exists while the others do not. Curley describes the view well.

[Since] the existence of each of the attributes is necessary, then it is not possible that one of them should exist without the others. For if we said it was possible that one should exist without the others, that would imply that it was possible for the others not to exist. And that *isn't* really possible, not if each of the others exists in itself and is conceived through itself. The very self-sufficiency of each of the attributes, the fact that it is true of each of them that it does not need the others in order to exist, implies that there is no real possibility that at any time any one of them does exist without the others [...]. Paraphrasing what Spinoza says in 1p10s, all the attributes of substance have always been in it together. Since each of them, considered separately, exists in itself and is conceived through itself, they always *had* to be in it together.⁴⁰

(Premise 2) If each attribute of God is incapable of existing without the others existing, then that to which each belongs is simple (and thus I assume indivisible). The inability of the attributes to exist without each other, in other words, is sufficient for that to which they belong being simple (and indivisible).

Here is the evidence for the second premise. It comes in two steps. (a) If each attribute of God is incapable of existing without the others existing, then there is not a real distinction (in the strong sense) between the attributes. That claim-a is true for Spinoza is guaranteed by Spinoza's belief in the following claim (see, for example, 1p15s II/59/14-16; DPP 1d10 I/151/3-4; CM 2.5 I/259/7-8), which is simply the contrapositive of claim-a: if there is a real distinction (in the strong sense) between items, then each item is able to exist without the other existing.

⁴⁰ CURLEY, *Behind the geometrical method*, p. 30.

[O]f things which are really distinct from one another, one can be, and remain in its condition, without the other. (1p15s II/59/14-16)⁴¹

(b) For Spinoza, if each attribute of God is not really distinct (in the strong sense), then that to which each belongs is simple (and thus I assume indivisible).

[T]he attributes are not really distinguished from one another [...]. So we conclude that God is a most simple being. (CM 2.5 I/259/5-8)

From claim-a and claim-b, premise 2 follows by hypothetical syllogism.

(Conclusion) From premises 1 and 2 it follows that a substance is simple and indivisible even though it is nothing but a totality of self-sufficient attributes. – Even though God is nothing but attributes that are indeed really distinct (in the weak sense), the necessary coextensiveness of the attributes guarantees, according to Spinoza, that God is nevertheless simple and indivisible⁴².

4.2. United, but a bundle nonetheless

We have seen that God, despite being nothing but its distinct attributes, is simple in that no one of its attributes can exist while the others do not. But to say that God is simple in this necessary-coextensiveness sense, one may argue, is not satisfying. As

⁴¹ The idea that things being inseparable is sufficient for their not being really distinct (in the strong sense) is, by the way, true of Scotus (see COPLESTON, *A history of philosophy*, pp. 508-509; CROSS, *Medieval theories of haecceity*). Cross puts the point well.

[R]eal separability is necessary and sufficient for real distinction. More precisely, two objects *x* and *y* are inseparable if and only if, both, it is not possible for *x* to exist without *y*, and it is not possible for *y* to exist without *x*; conversely, two objects *x* and *y* are separable if and only if at least one of *x* and *y* can exist without the other. (Richard CROSS, *Duns Scotus*, Oxford University Press, New York 1999, p. 149)

⁴² The following should – but in my experience does not – go without saying. However absurd the notion that simplicity is compatible with inner plurality may seem to *you* (see Plato *Parmenides* 129b-c) that is no argument against the interpretation that *Spinoza* holds it to be the case (see Alan DONAGAN, *Essence and the distinction of attributes in Spinoza's metaphysics*, in M. Grene (ed.), *Spinoza: a collection of critical essays*, Anchor Books, Garden City 1973, p. 177). Sober, by the way, can find in Spinoza, if I am right in my interpretation here, a historical precedent for his view that it is possible for necessarily coextensive properties to be distinct (Elliot SOBER, *Why logically equivalent predicates may pick out different properties*, in “American Philosophical Quarterly”, n. 19, 1982, pp. 183-189). Indeed, Sober says that the distinctness of certain coextensive properties is indicated when those properties have different causal effects. This is relevant in the case of Spinoza, of course. For Extension, unlike Thought, does not produce ideas, for example.

Hudde brings up in his conversation with Spinoza (see Ep. 34-36), how is it that the attributes of God are *unified* when each is self-sufficient? This is considered «a very difficult problem» in the Spinoza literature⁴³. Smith puts the point well.

Accounting for the unity of Spinoza's God – a being that, on anyone's view, is constituted by really distinct attributes – is recognised as a problem by almost every interpreter of Spinoza.⁴⁴

Spinoza has various explanations for the unity of a being that is nothing but its many self-caused attributes. The above explanation for the simplicity of a being that is nothing but its many self-caused attributes is one. Here is another.

(Premise 1) Even though God is nothing but the totality of its self-sufficient attributes, God is *one* substance as opposed to a collection of *many* substances called «one substance» merely in name.

Here is why. It is not absurd to attribute many attributes to *one* substance. *One* substance can have many attributes. For, in line with the Aristotelian principle stated at *Categories* 10 (13b15-19), the more reality that *one* substance has, the more attributes that it must have (1p9 and 1p10s); «the more it is Something, the more attributes it must have» (KV 1.2 I/19/14-15). Now, “God” is the name we give to *one* being that has the most reality. Thus the *one* being we call “God” must have a maximal amount of attributes.

[A]lthough nature has different attributes, it is nevertheless only one unique Being of which all these attributes are predicated. (KV 2.20.4)

(Premise 2) God cannot be divided (1p12-1p13).

Here is why. As Spinoza suggests at 1p12d, if we can divide God, then the components into which it could be divided would either retain the nature of God or not (see 1p12d). If they do retain the nature of God, then many substances could be formed from one. But to say that many substances could be formed from one is absurd

⁴³ Margaret WILSON, *Ideas and mechanism: essays on early modern philosophy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1999, 166; see KLEVER, *Hudde's question on god's uniqueness*, pp. 330, 347-348.

⁴⁴ A. D. SMITH, *Spinoza, Gueroult, and substance*, in “Philosophy and Phenomenological Research”, n. 88, v. 3, 2014, pp. 672-673; see VAN BUNGE, *Spinoza past and present*, p. 23.

since substances cannot produce each other (see 1p6). If the components do not retain the nature of God, then that means that God ceases to be after the division. But to say that God ceases to be is absurd since God necessarily exists (see 1p11).

These two points guarantee that the attributes are «fundamentally tied», as it were. Even though God is a totality of *self-sufficient* attributes, these attributes as they are in God cannot be divided from one another. Unable to be divided from one another, the attributes are united. Since God is nothing but all the attributes, God is thus united. Inseparable and on ontological even-footing, the attributes are merely formally distinct. That is significant because, historically, it is the formal distinction that allows for unity even in the case of an authentic plurality of ontologically even-footed attributes. Deleuze seems right, therefore, to say the following.

It is formal distinction that provides an absolutely coherent concept of the unity of substance and the plurality of attributes.⁴⁵

In the end, the unity of Spinoza's God poses no threat to my view that Spinoza's God is nothing but its many genuinely distinct attributes.⁴⁶ To ask Spinoza for a more satisfactory account of how God can be united when God is nothing but its many individually self-sufficient attributes is, perhaps, to ask too much from Spinoza. Spinoza himself essentially pieces together the same account that I just gave as to why each attribute is unified in one single being (God) (despite the fact each attribute is self-sufficient and really distinct from any other attribute).

The reasons why we have said that all these attributes which are in Nature are only one, single being, and by no means different ones (though we can clearly and distinctly understand one without an other), are as follows: 1. Because we have already found previously that there must be an infinite and perfect being, by which nothing else can be understood but a being of which all in all must be predicated. For of a being which has some essence, attributes must be predicated, and the more essence one ascribes to it, the more attributes one must also ascribe to it [...]. 2. Because of the unity which we see everywhere in nature [...]. 3. Because, as we have already seen, one substance cannot

⁴⁵ DELEUZE, *Expressionism in philosophy*, p. 66.

⁴⁶ «The tension between holding onto the objectivity of the attributes, on the one hand, and maintaining the unity of the substance, on the other, manifests itself in the literature in several much discussed debates» (SHEIN, *The false dichotomy between objective and subjective interpretations of Spinoza's theory of attributes*, pp. 511-512).

produce another, and if a substance does not exist, it is impossible for it to begin to exist.
(KV 1.2 I/23-I/24)

4.3. Nonderivative, but a bundle nonetheless

Someone might raise the following related worry. If God is the totality of its self-sufficient attributes, then Spinoza's system must be contradictory. For Spinoza denies that God is a sum of parts in his 1663 work on Descartes. Spinoza's rationale is this. Since parts are ontologically prior to their wholes, since wholes depend on their parts, to say that God has parts is to say something absurd: that God depends on entities ontologically prior to him, and thus that God is derivative⁴⁷.

God is not a composite thing [...]. Because it is self-evident that component parts are prior at least by nature to the composite whole, then of necessity those substances from whose coalescence and union God is composed will be prior to God by nature. (CM 2.5)

Spinoza seconds the rationale in a 1666 letter to Hudde.

It is simple, and not composed of parts. For in respect of their nature and our knowledge of them component parts would have to be prior to that which they compose. In the case of that which is eternal by its own nature, this cannot be so. (Ep. 35)

Spinoza holds this to be true of Descartes as well.

If God were composed of parts, the parts would have to be at least prior in nature to God [...]. But that is absurd. (DPP 1p17d)

An easy fix to the problem is to say that Spinoza changed his mind by the time of the completion of the *Ethics* in 1675. I am not one to pull the shift-in-thought card so quickly, however (as this can easily become an impediment to deeper investigation if not used with care). And as it turns out, there seems to be a less drastic solution at my disposal. Since the attributes of God are fundamentally tied in God, they are always already united in a bundle-package, the bundle-package of attributes that is God. Since each attribute of God is self-sufficient, one attribute exists only if all the others exist (but

⁴⁷ Several commentators regard the bundle interpretation as a nonstarter on grounds that it makes Spinoza's God "derivative". See DEVEAUX, *The role of god in Spinoza's metaphysics*, p. 55; DI POPPA, *Spinoza's concept of substance and attribute*, p. 924; BASILE, *Russell on Spinoza's substance monism*, 35.

where this does not mean that each attribute requires the help of the other attributes in order to exist, or that any attribute has a causal influence on the being of the other attributes). The existence of any one implies the existence of all the others in the sense that «p implies q» means *merely* that it is not possible for p to be true and q not to be true. Therefore, God – the whole package of attributes – is, so we are entitled to say, implied by any one of its attributes. In that sense, no attribute is ontologically prior to God even though God is the totality of the attributes.

We might conclude, then, that Spinoza had some *other* sort of composition in mind in, say, the CM passage. What other sort of composition could that be? The CM passage, recall, rejects a composite of the sort where the elements of God each deserve to be called “substances”. But since a substance just is the totality of the attributes, only the whole nature of a given substance deserves to be called “substance”. The composite view that Spinoza eschews in CM rejects the idea that only the *totality* of God’s attributes deserves to be called “substance”. However, to reject this sort of composite is not to reject a composite where the elements of God do *not* each deserve to be called “substances”.

Let me put this another way, in terms of earlier discussion. We know that there is a «composite view» compatible with simplicity (see previous sections). And we know that there is a composite view incompatible with simplicity. Consider what Spinoza says in the following.

If God were composed of parts, the parts would have to be at least prior in nature to God [...]. But that is absurd. Therefore, he is an entirely *simple* being. (my emphasis DPP 1p17d)

It should be said, then, that the composite view rejected at CM 2.5 is *not* the sort compatible with simplicity. When Spinoza claims here that parts must be prior to the whole and in effect that the whole derives from the parts, he is discussing only *really distinct* parts. Since the attributes are, as I argued above, really distinct *in the weak sense* (the mere existing-without-the-help-of-the-others sense) presumably he is discussing, more specifically, parts that are really distinct *in the strong sense* (the being-able-to-exist-without-the-others-existing sense). There are various ways that things can be distinct from each other, as we saw. There are, in parallel, various ways that parts can constitute the whole. As Spinoza makes clear when he calls the parts with which he is dealing “substances”, Spinoza is rejecting only *one* sort of composite conception

of God: that conception where the parts are really distinct *in the strong sense*. So if we are going to insist on calling attributes “parts” and God “a whole”, then we must be careful not to read the part-whole relation in question as the one that Spinoza shoots down: the one where the parts are really distinct in the strong sense. Since God is nothing but the totality of its many attributes, to do so would be to ensnare Spinoza in contradiction: Spinoza at once rejects the view that God is a totality of parts and accepts the view that God is a totality of parts. Instead we must keep in mind that the “attribute-parts” constitute the whole in the way that merely *formally distinct* “parts” constitute “the whole”. That is, attributes constitute God in the way that mere formalities constitute God. Spinoza does not reject *that* sort of part-whole relationship, the sort of relationship between a substance and its fundamental formalities⁴⁸.

In the end, there is no tension between God’s being nothing but the complete package of individual self-sufficient attributes and his being nonderivative, his being ontologically prior to all else. In effect, the nonderivativeness of Spinoza’s God poses no threat to my view that Spinoza’s God is nothing but its attributes. The attributes are the most fundamental and God just is the attributes.

To say that the nonderivativeness of God is compatible with the bundle interpretation is, upon consideration, perhaps to understate the case. It would perhaps be most accurate to say, in addition, that the nonderivativeness of God *demand*s the bundle interpretation. Since the attributes truly do constitute God (as I argued earlier), and since “to constitute” is, for Spinoza, not simply “to make up” but also “to beget” (as I pointed out earlier), the attributes of God *beget* God. The only way for the attributes to beget God without God’s being derivative is if God is *exhausted* by the attributes. For in this case, to say that the attributes beget God is nothing more than to say that God begets himself.

4.4. Conceived through itself, but a bundle nonetheless

Here is another related problem that one might raise. Understanding a substance requires understanding each of its attributes (see 1p30d). Now, a multiple-attribute substance is not strictly identical to each of its attributes individually. Thus we

⁴⁸ I gather that a similar solution will work in the case of the equally vexing issue of how to reconcile Spinoza’s claim that parts are ontologically prior than their wholes and his claim that finite modes are parts of infinite modes: see Ep. 32; 2p11c, 4p4d.

seemingly would have to say that this substance must be understood through something that it is not, through some other, insofar as it must be understood through *one* of its attributes. But to say that a substance must be understood through some other is in violation of the definition of substance: a substance is that which is understood through itself (1d3).

The strategy for responding to this objection will be the same as that for explaining how the bundle interpretation is compatible with God's simplicity. There is a violation of 1d3 only if a substance must be understood through an other that is really distinct from that substance *in the strong sense*. When Spinoza says that a substance is not understood through an other, he means that it is not understood through something really distinct from that substance *in the strong sense*. Since a substance is the sum of its attributes, and since the attributes are really distinct in the weak sense but not as well in the strong sense (in which case they are formally distinct), a particular attribute is not something that is *other* to substance in any way that contradicts Spinoza's position that a substance is conceived through itself.

4.5. We can know God by knowing just one of his attributes

Consider a related objection. Spinoza suggests that the conception of more than one attribute is not required for the conception of God (2p1s): «we can conceive of an infinite Being by attending to thought alone». But if God is the sum of his many attributes, then the conception of God does indeed require the conception of more than one attribute. Deveaux, a steadfast opponent to the bundle interpretation, states this objection with great force.

Spinoza claims in 2p1s that we can conceive an infinite being (God) through only one attribute. This conflicts with the view of God [...] as the collection of attributes. It seems that on this view the *de re* idea of God would be the idea of the collection of attributes (since the collection of attributes is identical with God) [...]. [T]he interpretation [...] of God as the collection of attributes is not viable since, according to 2p1s, the conception of more than one attribute is not necessary for the conception of God. Hence [...] God cannot be the collection of attributes.⁴⁹

Here is my response. If the attributes were really distinct in the strong sense, then to conceive of one attribute on the bundle interpretation would not be to conceive of

⁴⁹ DEVEAUX, *The role of god in Spinoza's metaphysics*, pp. 135n18 and 136n22.

God. But since the attributes of God are really distinct merely in the weak sense, since they are merely formally distinct, it is in fact true to say that to conceive of merely one attribute is to conceive of God even on the bundle interpretation (2p1s). It is just not true to say, of course, that to conceive of merely one attribute is to conceive of God *in his completeness*. And as Spinoza makes clear to Boxel in 1674, we never want to say that to conceive of merely one attribute is to conceive of God in his completeness (1d6 in light of 1d2; Ep. 32, Ep. 56).

Here it should also be observed that I do not claim to have *complete* knowledge of God, but that I do understand *some* of his attributes – not indeed all of them, or the greater part – and it is certain that my ignorance of very many attributes does not prevent me from having knowledge of some of them. (my emphasis Ep. 56)

4.6. God's attributes are supposed to be the same

One might raise the following problem. Spinoza says that God's attribute of Thought and God's attribute of Extension are the same (2p1s, 2p7s). Indeed, the suggestion is that all the attributes are the same. These rules out the view that God is the totality of *many* self-sufficient attributes.

Here is my response. First, in the passages cited Spinoza says that thinking substance and extended substance are one and the same. He does not explicitly say that Thought and Extension are one and the same. These passages, then, may just amount to the relatively innocuous claim that the substance that is extended is the very same substance that is thinking.

Second, it should be noted that there not being a plurality of ontological attributes would not be enough to rule out all bundle interpretations. After all, to say that a single-attribute substance is nothing but it is one attribute is still to endorse a bundle interpretation. One has a bundle interpretation of substances having attributes if and only if there is nothing of substance in excess to its attributes (whether one or many). As I have argued, however, God is in actual fact nothing but the *many* – indeed, *infinitely* many – attributes of which absolutely everything is a function. Therefore, I must offer a different response to the above objection. In particular, I must explain how God's being a bundle of *many* ontological attributes is compatible with each of those attributes being "the same".

That the attributes are merely formally distinct suffices to explain the compatibility. Spinoza is entitled to say that God's attribute of Thought and God's attribute of

Extension are the same without contradicting his commitment to God's being nothing but his many attributes. The attributes of God, such as Thought and Extension, are the same merely in the way that formally distinct things are the same: they are inseparable, they are unable to exist while the others do not exist. Cross puts the point well when it comes to Scotus.

Scotus's criterion for real identity is real inseparability. In fact, real inseparability (such that the real separation of two or more realities is logically impossible) is necessary and sufficient for real identity [...]. [T]wo really identical but formally distinct realities will [thus] be something like distinct essential (i.e., inseparable) properties of a thing.⁵⁰

«The attributes or properties [or qualities] of substance» (DPP 1p7s I/161/2 in light of DPP 1d5 I/150/14-16; see Ep. 56)⁵¹, such as Thought and Extension, are (in Scotus's terms) the «formalities» or «realities» or «formal aspects» or «real aspects» or «thinglets» of God – objectively different but inseparable and on ontological even-footing⁵².

Since Spinoza is committed to a true plurality of attributes that are really distinct (in the weak sense) (1p10s), and since he is thus committed to the fact that any mode of one attribute is really distinct (in the weak sense) from any mode of another attribute (2p6d in light of 1p10s) (as in fact he is rather explicit about: 5pref II/280; KV 2.16 I/81/39, KV 2.16 I/82/17, KV 2.20.3 in light of 1a5, KV app2.8; TdIE 33, TdIE 34, TdIE 58, TdIE 68, TdIE 74), this is the strongest sort of sameness that he is entitled to. It is just enough sameness that, as I explained above, we do not violate 1d3 when we say that God, a plurality of attributes, must be conceived through one of his attributes. Yet it is just enough sameness that simplicity is preserved. It is just enough sameness that Spinoza is able to say some of the following sorts of things even as he holds that God is nothing but the totality of attributes that are really distinct (in the weak sense). (1) We can conceive God when we conceive of a given attribute (2p1s). (2) Thought and Extension are one and the same substance (2p7s). (3) Circle A and the idea of circle A

⁵⁰ CROSS, *Duns Scotus*, p. 149. There should be no worry about the fact that Cross is talking about properties here whereas Spinoza is talking about attributes. Properties, attributes, natures, essences are all *qualitates*. Spinoza does draw a difference between these terms, especially that between essences and properties. But for most of my project, what I am concerned with is the fact that all these are *qualitates*. Now, if the reader wants something more specific to relate properties and attributes, realize that Spinoza equates them on several occasions (DPP 1p7s I/161/2; Ep. 56)

⁵¹ See Emilia GIANCOTTI BOSCHERINI, *Lexicon Spinozanum*, Martinus Nijhoff, La Haye 1970, p. 893.

⁵² See Adams 1987, 24; KING, *Scotus on metaphysics*, p. 23.

are one and the same thing (2p7s) (2p21s, 2p7s; KV 2.20.3c2opening). Let me explain, one by one, how Spinoza is entitled to say these three things.

First, why is Spinoza entitled to say that we conceive God by apprehending Thought alone, even as he holds that God is nothing but the totality of attributes that are really distinct (in the weak sense)? Because any one attribute in the package of attributes that is God cannot be an element of any other package. That is why Spinoza can hold, at the very same time without contradicting himself, that to conceive of any one attribute of God is *not* to conceive of God in his entirety (Ep. 56; see 1d6 in light of 1d2; Ep. 32).

Second, why is Spinoza entitled to say that Thought and Extension are one and the same substance, even as he holds that God is nothing but the totality of attributes that are really distinct (in the weak sense) and even as he holds that the attributes are different enough that to conceive of one is not to conceive of God in his *entirety*? Because these attributes are inseparable elements of one and the same substance: God, the only substance there is – and one that is nothing but the sum of inseparable attributes (attributes that cannot exist without each other existing).

[W]e must recall here what we showed [NS: in the First Part], namely, that [each attribute] pertains to one substance only, and consequently that the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance. (2p7; see my arguments above)

Thought and Extension are formalities of the same substance. So whether referring to this attribute or some other attribute, we are referring to one and the same *substance*: God, the sum of all formally distinct attributes.

Third, why is Spinoza entitled to say that the corporeal circle A and the idea of corporeal circle A are «one and the same thing», even as he holds that God is nothing but the totality of attributes that are really distinct (in the weak sense) and so even as he holds that corporeal circle A and the idea of corporeal circle A are really distinct (in the weak sense)? Because corporeal circle A and the idea of corporeal circle A are inseparable elements of one and the same “Individual”: Circle A, the sum of all parallel inseparable modes – corporeal circle A and the idea of corporeal circle A and so on (2p21s, 2p7s; KV 2.20.3c2opening). The idea of corporeal circle A and corporeal circle A are formalities of one and the same thing, which is why Spinoza says that «a mode of Extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same *thing* but expressed in

two modes» (my emphasis 2p7s)⁵³. So whether referring to the mode of Extension that is corporeal circle A or the mode of Thought that is the idea of corporeal circle A, we are referring to one and the same “Individual” or sum of formally distinct parallel modes, modes that include: corporeal circle A, ideational circle A, and so on.

This seems to be the right interpretation. After all, and regarding merely the last point, Spinoza holds at the same time that «there is no comparison between the power, or forces, of the [idea of the circle] and those of the [corporeal circle]» (5pref II/280/14-16). There is no comparison because those two modes, being of two «really distinct» and incommensurable attributes (1p10s), have «nothing in common» (KV 2.20.3). Those two modes have nothing in common to such a strict extent that one «differs *infinitely* from the other» (my emphasis KV 2.20.3). Hence we are entitled to say, for Spinoza, that «a circle is one thing and an idea of the circle another» thing (TdIE 33) – another thing that is «really distinct» (KV app2.8; KV app1p4d) and in fact «altogether different» (see TdIE 33 and TdIE 34) and between which, again, «there is no comparison» (5pref; see 3p59s and 2p35d in light of 4p1s). Moreover, throughout his works Spinoza suggests that just as God is a collection of attributes, a collection of parallel modes across all the attributes *together* make one, as Spinoza likes to say, “Individual”. Consider just two passages, for example.

The object of the idea constituting [or, more precisely, simply is (see 2p26d)] the human Mind is the Body [...]. From this it follows that man *consists of* a Mind *and* a Body. (my emphasis 2p13-2p13c; see 2p19d, 4p18s II/223, 4app30)
[T]he soul, being an Idea of this body, is so united with it, that it and this body, so constituted *together make a whole*. (my emphasis KV 2.19.9)

Spinoza emphasizes this point again and again. First, he says that the attribute of Thought alone is the cause of the mind and that the attribute of Extension alone is the cause of the body. And yet at the end of 2p7s he says that there is an individual whose cause is God considered as the *full* collection of the attributes rather than just one⁵⁴. It follows that the «whole» «individual» (KV 2.19.9 and 2p13-2p13c) in question at 2p7s is the collection of parallel modes across all the attributes. There is the same relationship

⁵³ As Della Rocca himself admits, to claim that Spinoza is asserting in this quote that the mind and the body are strictly identical in their entirety is to bite at least a small bullet: we must agree that «Spinoza could not possibly be more misleading here» (DELLA ROCCA, *Representation and the mind-body problem in Spinoza*, p. 120).

⁵⁴ See Martial GUEROUULT, *Spinoza 2: l'ame*, Aubier, Paris 1974, 87.

between parallel modes as there are between parallel attributes, each complete collection being a whole thing for Spinoza⁵⁵.

Some may want to overlook the claim that the attributes are really distinct on grounds that they are merely described as *conceived* to be really distinct (1p10s). But, as I already explained, that reference to «conceived to be» has no efficacy against my interpretation because, after all, the *infallible intellect* is doing the conceiving. Some may want to write off Spinoza’s explicit remarks about how the corporeal circle and the idea of the corporeal circle, or the mind and the body, are really distinct (2p6d in light of 1a5 and 5pref II/280; KV 2.16 I/81/39, KV 2.16 I/82/17, KV 2.20.3c2opening, KV app2.8, KV 2/20; TdIE 33, TdIE 58, TdIE 68, TdIE 74) as just the underdeveloped claims of a thinker at a low point of immaturity.

[Nevertheless,] the object [of an idea] has nothing of thought, and is *really distinct* from the soul [(that is, the Idea)]. (my emphasis KV app2.8)

The true essence of an object is something which is really distinct from the idea of that object. (KV app1p4d)

Some may want to write off those passages where the “union” of the corporeal circle and the idea of the corporeal circle, or the mind and the body, is analyzed simply as their being really distinct parallel modes «that cannot exist without [each] other» (KV 2.20.3 I/97/25-30, KV app2.8; TdIE 21; 2p21d) as just the over-green remarks of a thinker in his early phase.

The soul [...] has *nothing in common* with the body [...]. [In fact, the one] differs *infinitely* from the other [...]. Between the Idea [(the soul)] and the object [(the body)] there must necessarily be a union, [though], [merely] because the one cannot exist without the other [(see 2p21d)]. For there is no thing of which there is not an Idea in the thinking thing, and no idea can exist unless the thing also exists. Further, the object cannot be changed unless

⁵⁵ For this reason, by the way, the following remarks from Shein seem off the mark, however understandable they may be prior to thorough consideration.

[W]hat accounts for one of the most fundamental features of Spinoza’s metaphysical system, namely the unity of the modes of different attributes, is rendered unknowable in principle on the objectivist interpretation. (SHEIN, *The false dichotomy between objective and subjective interpretations of Spinoza’s theory of attributes*, p. 512)

the Idea is also changed, and vice versa, so that no third thing is necessary here which would produce the union of soul and body. (KV 2.20.3)⁵⁶

If the object changes or is destroyed, the Idea itself also changes or is destroyed in the same degree; and [merely] in this its union with the object consists [...]. [For] the object has nothing of thought, and is really distinct from the soul [(that is, the idea of it)] (KV app2.8)

To reject these passages as, if you will, anomalous-by-immaturity would be a mistake, however. First, and recall from earlier, even in the *Ethics* Spinoza analyzes the union of mind and body simply as their being parallel modes that cannot exist without the other existing since (a) one is the idea and one is the *ideatum* and (b) for *every* object there is an idea.

The Mind is united to the Body [merely] from the fact that the Body is the object of the Mind [...]. [In effect,] the idea of the Body and the Body, that is, the Mind and the Body, are one and the same Individual. (2p21-2p21s)

This is what we would expect since Spinoza indicates that, just as God is a collection of attributes, a collection of parallel modes across all the attributes together make one «whole» «Individual» (2p13-2p13c and KV 2.19.9; see 2p19d, 4p18s II/223, 4app30). Second, the “mature” thesis of the real distinction between the *attributes* (1p10s) spells – for the “mature” Spinoza – a real distinction between a mode of one attribute and a mode of an other attribute (2p6d in light of 1p10s; see 1a5 plus KV 2.20.3). Third, simply consider Spinoza’s following claims: (a) «man consists [(*constare*)] of a mind and a body» (2p13c), (b) «the human mind is united [(*unitam*)] to the body» (2p13s II/96/21-22), and (c) there is a «union [(*unionem*)] of mind and body» (2p13s II/96/22). The natural understanding of what Spinoza is saying here, even bracketing off earlier points, is that the mind and the body are nonidentical elements that make up one “whole” “Individual”: a human being. That this is the right understanding in the case of Spinoza is clear in light of the earlier points (now unbracketed). That this is the right understanding in the case of Spinoza is also clear, or at least suggested, by how Spinoza elsewhere uses the key terms of a, b, and c: “*constare*”, “*unio*”, and “*unire*”. Regarding first the notion of *consisting*, Spinoza characterizes God as «a substance consisting

⁵⁶ Spinoza speaks in these passages of the mind acting on this body. Some may take this as a sign that these passages are not to be trusted as the considered mature view of Spinoza. But Léon explains away this appearance of true causality here in such passages (see A. LÉON, *Les éléments Cartésiens de la doctrine Spinoziste sur les rapports de la pensée et de son objet*. F. Alcan, Paris 1907, p. 200).

[[*constantem*]] of an infinity of attributes» (1d6). As I have argued, the attributes of God are not identical; they are really distinct (in the weak sense) and together make up, constitute, God. Regarding now the notion of *union*, Spinoza tells us that a composite body is a “union” (*unionem*) of *various* bodies; it is a whole “Individual” composed of *nonidentical* corporeal modes (2p13s II/100/1-5). Especially telling here is that Spinoza also describes the Cartesian view of the mind-body relationship, which Spinoza knows not to be a relationship of identity, as one where there is merely a “union” (*unionem*) of mind and body (5pref II/279-II/280).

Even if it were reasonable to write off the aforementioned claims as anomalous-by-immaturity, my interpretation would still be preferred. After all, my interpretation reconciles *all* the works. It requires no appeal to shifts in thought and stages of development⁵⁷. It requires no appeal to the notion that Spinoza was being misleading in certain passages. It simply sees no tension between, for example, passages 1 and 2, on the one hand, and passages 3 and 4, on the other hand.

1. [A] circle existing in Nature and the idea of the existing circle, which is also in God, are one and the same thing, which is explained through different attributes. (2p7s)
2. [T]he Mind and Body are one and the same thing, which is conceived now under the attribute of Thought, now under the attribute of Extension. (3p2s)
3. A true idea [...] is something [altogether] different from its object. For a circle is one thing and an idea of the circle another – the idea of the circle is not something which has a circumference and a center, as a circle does. Nor is an idea of the body the body itself. And since it is something different from its object, it will also be something intelligible through itself [...]. Peter, for example, is something real; but a true idea of Peter is an objective essence of Peter, and something real in itself, and *altogether* different from Peter himself [...]. From this it is evident that to understand the essence of Peter, it is not necessary to understand an idea of Peter. (my emphasis TdIE 33-34)
4. The soul [...] has *nothing in common* with the body [...]. [In fact, the one] differs *infinitely* from the other [...]. [T]he object [(that is, the body)] has nothing of thought, and

⁵⁷ Claims of shifts in thought, stages in the thinker’s development, are to be expected and are no doubt reasonable. Such claims are as expected and as reasonable as claims of contradiction in a thinker’s thought. As Deigh puts it, it is hard enough to achieve «constancy and unity of thought» over the course of «a single work produced in a comparatively short time» let alone over the course of «various works [...] produced over many years» (John DEIGH, *Reason and ethics in Hobbes’s Leviathan*, in “Journal of the History of Philosophy”, n. 34, v. 1, 1996, p. 35n6). Nevertheless, appeals to shifts in thought are, just like admissions of contradiction, last resort options in my view. They are especially last resort in circumstances where the thinker eschews contradiction and does not himself think there were any such stages of development.

is *really distinct* from the soul. (my emphasis KV 2.20.3 and KV app2.8; see 5pref II/280/14-16)

To attribute to Spinoza a stronger sort of sameness than the sort on my interpretation could only be to say that the attributes, rather than being objectively distinct but inseparable formalities of one and the same substance, are strictly identical – strictly identical such that there is no ontological attribute-plurality. But to deny ontological attribute-plurality is, on top of being wrong (for reasons explored here in greater depth elsewhere), to generate tensions that Spinoza otherwise would not face.

One of the most famous of these tensions, and one that several commentators suggest to be irresolvable⁵⁸, is how Thought and Extension can be the same when Thought, although on ontological even-footing with the other attributes, is more replete with modes than any other attribute. «[T]he attribute of Thought is given a much wider scope», as Tschirnhaus was the first to notice, because for each mode of Thought there is a mode of Thought that refers to that mode of Thought (ideas of ideas: see 2p7 and 2p21s) and because there is a mode of Thought for every mode not only of Extension but also for every other mode of the infinite number of attributes (see 2p7 and Ep. 70)⁵⁹. Spinoza's comments in the KV indicate that Tschirnhaus was guilty of no misreading in finding Spinoza's God to be "lopsided" in this way.

And since, as a matter of fact, Nature or God is one being of which infinite attributes are predicated, and which contains in itself all the essences of created things, it necessarily follows that of all this there is produced in Thought an infinite Idea, which comprehends objectively the whole of Nature just as it is realiter. (KV app2.4 I/117/25-30; see KV 2pref I/51)

[T]he modes of all the infinite attributes [...] have a soul [(that is, an idea)] just as much as those of extension do. (KV app2.9)

And here are Spinoza's words from the *Ethics*, which indicate the same.

⁵⁸ See Harold Henry JOACHIM, *A study of "the Ethics" of Spinoza*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1901, pp. 136-137.

⁵⁹ For more discussion of this issue, see the following. Samuel ALEXANDER, *Spinoza and time*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1921; Michael DELLA ROCCA, *Spinoza's argument for identity theory*, in "Philosophical Review", n. 102, v. 2, 1993; Joel FRIEDMAN, *Spinoza's problem of «other minds»*, in "Synthese", n. 57, v. 1, 1983; H. F. HALLETT, *Aeternitas: a Spinozistic study*, Clarendon Press, Gloucestershire 1930, p. 54; E. E. HARRIS. *The problem of the attributes in Spinoza's system*, in "Idealistic Studies", n. 25, v. 2, 1995.

In God there is necessarily an idea, both of his essence and of everything that necessarily follows from his essence. (2p3)

Since the view that thought has a wider scope than any one of the other attributes of God was an acknowledged part of Spinoza's vision from the time of the *Short Treatise* (see KV app2.4 I/117/25-30, KV app2.9 I/119/10-14; see TdIE 99) to the time of the *Ethics* (see 2p3 and 2p7), it would be strange – even independent of all my arguments to the effect that God is bundle of self-sufficient attributes really distinct in the weak (but not strong) sense – to saddle Spinoza with any stronger sort of identity between the attributes than that which obtains between formalities of one substance. With enough cleverness, and perhaps utilization of findings from contemporary philosophy, one can perhaps dodge this problem without accepting my interpretation. But, as far as I can see, my interpretation, which reconciles the full range of Spinoza's works, is independently right and is, in light of how steeped Spinoza was in the Scotian way of thinking⁶⁰, in harmony with Spinoza's mindset and epoch.

It is understandable that some commentators would read Spinoza's talk of the divine attributes being the same as talk of their being strictly identical. After all, the term "same" has a range of meanings (especially in Spinoza's case) and strict identity is one of them – perhaps one of the more usual (at least in philosophical contexts). Moreover, Spinoza's language sometimes suggests as much. For example, his claim at 2p7s that Extension and Thought are «*one and the same* substance» might be taken as entailing the denial of my claim that Thought and Extension are really distinct, really distinct in the weak (but not strong) sense (my emphasis). However, and even bracketing off my arguments elsewhere to the effect that the plurality of God's attributes is objective, such innocence threatens to transform into something more negative. Such innocence

⁶⁰ See DELEUZE, *Expressionism in philosophy*, p. 359n28. Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel is often considered to have been a major influence on Spinoza (Steven NADLER, *Spinoza: a life*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, p. 93; CURLEY, *Donagan's Spinoza*, p. 128) and Menasseh seemed to have known Scotus, as well as Aristotle and Aquinas, very well (see Susanna ÅKERMAN, *Queen Christina of Sweden and messianic thought*, in D. S. Katz, J. I. Israel, and R. H. Popkin (eds.), *Sceptics, Millenarians, and Jews*. E. J. Brill, Leiden 1990, pp. 154; M. IDEL, *Kabbalah, platonism, and prisca theologica*, in Y. Kaplan, H. Méchoulán, R. H. Popkin (eds.), *Menasseh ben Israel and his world*, Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden 1989, pp. 208-209; C. ROTH, *The life of Menasseh ben Israel*, Arno Press, New York 1975, pp. 87-89). Spinoza likely engaged personally with Manasseh (NADLER, *Spinoza: a life*, pp. 99-100). Spinoza «certainly read El Conciliador closely» (pp. 100, 270). In this work, which attempts to explain away biblical inconsistencies, Menasseh discusses Scotus's views in detail.

threatens to transform into something more negative when these very commentators turn around and say that, in light of such strict identity, Spinoza makes a *fatal* admission by allowing that Thought is more replete with modes than any other attribute (or that modes of one attribute are insusceptible to influence by modes of another attribute or so on). Turning around and saying this is like saying that Leibniz, who holds that Caesar crossed the Rubicon *freely*, made a *fatal* admission by holding that in the remote past before Caesar's birth it was *predetermined* that Caesar would cross the Rubicon. Just as the apparent discrepancy between Caesar's freedom and Caesar's being determined from the remote past ought to be regarded as an occasion for going back and seeing if Leibniz understands freedom in some weaker sense than that of the incompatibilist, the apparent discrepancy between the sameness of the attributes and the fact that Thought is the most replete of the attributes ought to be regarded as an occasion for going back and seeing if Spinoza understands the attributes to be the same in some weaker sense than that of strict identity. And just as it turns out that Leibniz understands freedom in a weaker sense than that of the incompatibilist, it turns out that Spinoza understands the attributes to be the same in a weaker sense than that of strict identity. For Leibniz (see *Theodicy* 34, 45), Caesar crossed the Rubicon freely merely in the sense that it had been predetermined that he would *choose* to do so. For Spinoza, the divine attributes are the same merely in the sense that they are formally distinct. That is to say, they are the same merely in the sense that, although they are ontologically different and on ontological even-footing, one cannot exist without the others existing (which is why it is true in some sense – albeit a sense that must be compatible with each attribute's being self-sufficient – to say that any one is a necessary and sufficient condition for the others)⁶¹.

4.7. A bundle, but not of substances

One may raise the following worry. It has been argued that each distinct attribute of God is self-sufficient: in itself, conceived through itself, and self-caused. Each attribute, therefore, meets the definition of substance (1d3). In this case, the bundle interpretation, according to which God is the totality of attributes, is committed to the view that God as the totality of *substances*⁶². There are two related problems with this. First, such a

⁶¹ See DELAHUNTY, *Spinoza*, p. 121.

⁶² See DEVEAUX, *The role of god in Spinoza's metaphysics*, pp. 56-57.

conclusion entails a «radical revision in our understanding of Spinoza» in that, according to that conclusion, «Spinoza is not really a substance monist»⁶³. Second, and more importantly, Spinoza explicitly denies that each of God's attributes is its own substance.

From these propositions it is evident that although two attributes may be conceived to be really distinct (that is, one may be conceived [and consequently can exist (CM 2.5)] without the aid of the other), we can still not infer from that that they constitute two beings, or two different substances. (1p10s; see Ep. 8)

Here is my response. From 1d3 alone, plucked from the vision of the entire *Ethics*, we might be enticed to say that each self-sufficient attribute is a substance such that God is the totality of *substances*. But the correct vantage point is from the whole. And what we learn as the argument of the *Ethics* unfolds is that, in the case of God, what deserves the title of substance is the totality of the attributes. The totality deserves the title because the attributes all come together in one package of inseparable elements. A substance, as Spinoza tells us many times over throughout his body of works, is *all* its attributes. That is the full detail of what he means by “substance”. So when Spinoza talks about a single-attribute substance, he is saying that the attribute in question is a substance. And when he talks about a multiple-attribute substance, he is saying that the many *together* are the substance (but not each one individually).

1d3 does not state that a substance is *all* its attributes, to be sure. But that detail is brought out in the course of the unfolding of Spinoza's argument. Just as we must attend to the whole picture to see why there are not many substances (even though early on in the *Ethics* the reality of multiple substances is assumed), we must attend to the whole picture to see why Spinoza would not call one of God's attributes a substance.

The *Short Treatise* does present an apparent problem for the view that I just expressed, however. Perhaps motivating De Volder, Wittichius, Gueroult, and Loeb's interpretation that Spinoza's God is the totality of an infinite number of *substances* (such that 1p14, the proposition that God is the only substance, should be understood

⁶³ Martin LIN, *Substance, attribute, and mode in Spinoza*, in “*Philosophy Compass*”, n. 1, v. 2, 2006, p. 149.

as meaning that «God is the only substance *that is not a constituent of a substance*»⁶⁴, Spinoza does suggest that each attribute is in fact a substance.

Every attribute, or substance, is by its nature infinite, and supremely perfect in its kind.
(KV app1p3)

As a last resort, I could always say that this was one of Spinoza's immature expressions. Perhaps that is the case. In the context of the passage, however, I see no reason why it should not simply be assumed that when Spinoza is considering attributes here he is thinking of them on their own, rather than together and inseparable as they are in the case of God. In other words, I see no reason why we should not simply assume that Spinoza is thinking of single-attribute substances here, as he does for example in the early movement of the *Ethics* Part 1: «A substance of one attribute» (1p7d). That is an understatement, in fact. For when we turn to the KV appendix from which the threatening passage is taken, we are confronted with what is obviously a draft of the early movement of the *Ethics* Part 1, where multiple substances – of any number of attributes – are in play⁶⁵. The first proposition of the appendix mirrors 1p5. The second mirrors 1p6. The third mirrors 1p8. The fourth mirrors 1p7. In the end, then, we do not need to conclude, to use the words of Wittichius, that since «God [...] is a substance constituted by infinite attributes, God is a substance consisting of infinite substances»⁶⁶.

⁶⁴ See LIN, *Substance, attribute, and mode in Spinoza*, p. 148; VAN BUNGE, *Spinoza past and present*, p. 27; Christophorus WITTICHIUS, *Ondersoek van de zede-konst van Benedictus de Spinoza en een verhandeling van god en desselfs eigenschappen*, Vertaald doot Abraham van poot, Amsterdam 1695, pp. 65-66; Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza 1: dieu*, Aubier, Paris 1968, p. 161; Louis LOEB, *From Descartes to Hume*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1981, pp. 160-166.

⁶⁵ For these reasons I do not like the phrase «substantival interpretation of Spinozistic attributes» that Lin (*Substance, attribute, and mode in Spinoza*, p. 148) uses to describe the bundle interpretation that I endorse along with Curley (Edwin CURLEY, *Spinoza's metaphysics: an essay in interpretation*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1969, pp. 16-17, 91), Donagan (*Spinoza*, pp. 88-89), Gueroult (Gueroult, *Spinoza 1: dieu*), Loeb (*From Descartes to Hume*, pp. 160-166), and Wolf (*The correspondence of Spinoza*, p. 59).

⁶⁶ WITTICHIUS, *Ondersoek van de zede-konst van Benedictus de Spinoza*, p. 66.

4.8. In God, but still self-sufficient

Here is a worry that might come to mind even to those who know little about Spinoza's thought. God is the totality of self-sufficient attributes. Each self-sufficient attribute is in God the way that an element of a grouping is in that grouping. The grouping itself deserves the title God. Since it is right to say that any given element of a grouping is *in* that grouping, it is right to say that any given attribute of God is in God. It turns out, however, that an attribute cannot be in God. For that which is in another is dependent on that other and is not self-caused (see TdIE 92).

The response to this should be clear. An attribute is not in God in the sense that what is not in itself is in God, that is (by 1a1 and 1d5; see 1p4d and 1p6c), in the way that a mode is in God. Moreover, God – or the complete grouping of attributes – is no other to a given attribute in such a way that an attribute's being *in* God amounts to its being in an *other* in the sense meant in 1a1, that is (and in light of 1d5: see 1p4d and 1p6c), in the sense in which a mode is in another. God is not the totality of its modes for Spinoza. God is ontologically prior to its modes (see TTP 4.8; 1p1, 1p5d, 1p10; KV 1.2 I/25/35). God is not, however, ontologically prior to a given attribute. God just is the totality of its attributes. The in-relation in question when we say that a given *attribute* is in God is not the in-relation in question when we say that a given *mode* is in God. A mode's being in God is its being in something ontologically prior. An attribute's being in God is its being in something that is *not* ontologically prior. That is the key to seeing why an attribute's being in God does not contradict the self-sufficiency of each attribute. That is the key to avoid letting the fact that Spinoza will say that attributes are in God confuse one into thinking that the being-in in question in such a remark is the being-in in question at 1a1.

4.9. Had by a bundle

Let me ease us out of the discussion by addressing the following worry⁶⁷. Spinoza describes God as a *substance* that *has* attributes or that attributes *belong to*. This is a clear violation of bundle theory.

⁶⁷ See D. A. ODEGARD, *The body identical with the human mind: a problem in Spinoza's philosophy*, in E. Freeman and M. Mandelbaum (eds.), *Spinoza: essays in interpretation*, Open Court, La Salle, 1975.

The response should be clear. Since the bundle interpretation has already been established, the question is simply whether Spinoza's system is contradictory on the matter. The same charge of inconsistency has been raised against Hume, who says that ideas *belong to* the mind or that the mind *has* ideas even though he understands the mind to be a bundle of ideas⁶⁸. Such a charge of inconsistency is puerile (in the case of both Spinoza and Hume)⁶⁹. Bundle theorists are allowed to talk about substances having attributes and the like. One must understand, however, that the substance has an attribute not in the way that an underlying substratum has a property inhering in it, but rather in the way that a collection of properties has a property as an element.

4.10. Bundle interpretation is bold

Let me bring this to a close with perhaps the weakest objection. Some say that if Spinoza endorsed the bundle interpretation of God having attributes, then he would have been more explicit about doing so – bold as that view is. Since he is not explicit about being committed to such a view, there is good reason to be suspicious of the idea that Spinozistic substances are nothing but their principal attributes. Indeed, one of the commentators who takes this line, even insinuates that the mere boldness of the view alone is some sort of grounds for not attributing it to Spinoza.

It seems that if Spinoza had been making this strong claim (i.e., that God is identical with the bundle or collection of distinct attributes) then he would have been more explicit and forward about his stance. Indeed, it would have been philosophically bold for Spinoza to suggest that a thing can be identified with its [...] attributes.⁷⁰

This objection fails for several reasons. First, the notion that the unpalatableness of a claim amounts to some sort of reason for not thinking it to be true of another can be obstructive when learning the thoughts of another. Second, the claim is not as bold as it is made out to be. Descartes may have held the view, for example (DPP 1p7s I/63/5). The view has various other precedents throughout the history of philosophy, such as

⁶⁸ For more info, see DELLA ROCCA, *Representation and the mind-body problem in Spinoza*, p. 181n64.

⁶⁹ See DELLA ROCCA, *Representation and the mind-body problem in Spinoza*, p. 42.

⁷⁰ DEVEAUX, *The role of god in Spinoza's metaphysics*, p. 122n10.

in Porphyry and Plotinus⁷¹. Third, Spinoza was extremely explicit that substances are nothing but the totality of their attributes, as I made clear in great detail in section 2 above. The demand that he be more explicit is unreasonable. It would be reasonable only if he knew the degree to which he would be misunderstood. But he could not have known the degree to which he would be misunderstood (or, for that matter, that promoting misunderstanding is incentivized especially under the current careerist orientation of the disciple).

5. Concluding remarks

In this paper I have argued that Spinoza endorses a bundle analysis of substances having attributes. Spinoza says that substances are just their attributes and his system demands that substances are just their attributes. In effect, God is nothing more than the totality of self-sufficient attributes in the sense that no attribute is a function of, or inheres in, anything ontologically prior to it, and whatever may be in excess to the attributes is entirely a function of the attributes themselves. I have also argued that this particular constituent analysis harmonizes with various Spinozistic positions that might seem to be in tension with it: God's simplicity and indivisibility, the "sameness" of God's attributes, God's being conceived through itself, the unity of parallel modes of different attributes, and so on. To be sure, objections remain. But I have expressed the fundamentals of my interpretation sufficiently enough that it should be clear how a response from me might look.

My interpretation might be somewhat hard to swallow. We all want Spinoza to be endorsing a view according to which the bedrock of reality serving as the sufficient condition for absolutely everything is one absolutely simple being – perhaps, we might say, being itself, the being of all possible beings, the isness of whatever is; the realness of the real (οὐσία of τὸ ὄν). My account seems to upset that narrative to some extent. Deep down we all feel that there must be something more substantial to account for the attributes being bounded together. How are the attributes cemented together as one and the same God?

⁷¹ Peter ADAMSON, *One of a kind: unique instantiation in Plotinus and Porphyry*, in R. Chiaradonna, G. Galluzzo (eds.), *Universals in Ancient Philosophy*, Edizioni della Scuola Normale, Pisa 2013, pp. 335; Jonathan BARNES, *Porphyry: introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003, pp. 151-154; Riccardo CHIARADONNA, *La teoria dell'individuo in Porfirio e l'ιδίως ποιόν stoico*, in "Elenchos", n. 21, v. 2, 2000.

There are ways to make my interpretation at least *sound* easier to swallow. First, I could tone down my talk of each attribute being *causa sui*, existing by the necessity of its own nature. Second, I could say that, even though God at its core is the sum of these individually self-necessary attributes, each attribute is substantially glued to one another in the sense that each expresses the common essence of God. Is it not true that each attribute expresses the common essence of God? Yes, it is true. Of course, each attribute expresses the common essence of God in *irreducibly distinct* ways, which means that the essence of God itself is cleaved *to the very bottom* along the lines of the attributes, which means that the essence of God is *nothing but the total collection of the attributes*, which means that *we are back at my original formulation*. Nevertheless, at least packaging my interpretation in such a way where I stress how each attribute expresses the essence of God (*sotto voce*: in irreducibly distinct ways) can settle people down a bit.

Are we really stuck, though, merely with the deflated sense in which the self-necessary attributes are united in God? Perhaps not. When my paper is understood in the context of my much larger project on Spinoza, there might be a way to make my interpretation *actually easier* to swallow, rather than just *sound* easier to swallow. The paper at hand is a key step towards establishing, against the ruthless guards of Spinoza orthodoxy, that Spinoza is a realist concerning universals – indeed, that Spinoza endorses a radical form of realism known as “universalism”: the view whatever is ontologically authentic is a universal. As I argue elsewhere, in fact, Spinoza’s bundle view of substances (substances are nothing more than *qualitas* entities) plus his realist view of attributes (attributes are universals and so one and the same in each of their purported instantiations) grounds his endorsement of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles and entitles him to say, in particular, that qualitatively indiscernible substances are identical, as he does at a key stage in his proof for substance monism: 1p5⁷².

How might understanding that Spinoza is a realist concerning universals open up a way to satisfy our craving for a more penetrative unity among the attributes? Since this paper is merely a step towards establishing the controversial thesis that Spinoza is a realist concerning universals, I do not want to make much use of that thesis here. In closing, however, let me answer the question in broad strokes.

⁷² See ISTVAN, *Spinoza and the problem of universals*, esp. ch. 5.

Realism concerning universals has been attractive to various figures throughout the history of philosophy precisely because of the unique unifying role that universals play, allowing distinct things to be literally identical in some respect. As a *qualitas* entity – a property or nature – that is said *wholly* and *equally* whether it be of one or several individuals (2p49s, II/134/8-10; 4p4d II/213/15-19) such that it «must be in each» individual of which it is said, «the same in all» individuals to which it pertains (2p49s, II/135/5ff; 3pref II/138/12-18; see TdIE 76; TP 3.18), a universal provides the unity of strict equality in diversity or, as Leibniz describes the unique service of the universal, the unity of «identity in variety»⁷³. Church fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa and philosophers such as Henry of Ghent embraced realism concerning universals for that very reason⁷⁴. Realism concerning universals allowed them to say, among other things, that the divine nature is literally one and the same, wholly and undividedly present, in each member of the trinity. Jaspers puts the point well in describing Anselm’s thinking on the matter.

In Anselm’s dogmatic attacks on Roscellinus [...] the rejection of nominalistic thinking plays an essential role. If a thinker declares [...] the three persons, God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Ghost, to be [nonuniversals], he is thinking like a nominalist and has three Gods. But if the universal, God, is Himself reality, then God is one, and the three persons are forms of the one: this idea is “realist”, because it upholds the reality of the universals. Church dogma seems to demand “realist” thinking. Anyone, says Anselm, who fails to understand that several people are, as to species, *one* man, will surely not be able to understand that in the most mysterious of beings the three persons [...] are nevertheless only *one* God.⁷⁵

The general point when it comes to Spinoza might go something like this. There is something that each really distinct and self-necessary attribute has in common. That something we might call “power” or “being” or “reality”. Spinoza understands what it means for things to have something in common in the manner of a realist concerning universals. That is to say, when items really do have something in common for Spinoza,

⁷³ Gottfried Wilhelm LEIBNIZ, *Briefwechsel zwischen Leibniz und Christian Wolf*, H. W. Schmidt, Halle 1860, pp. 172 and 161; Leibniz A VI, 3, 122.14-17; Leibniz G II 256. See also Gregory BROWN, *Leibniz’s theodicy and the confluence of worldly goods*, in “Journal of the History of Philosophy” n. 26, v. 4, 1988, p. 588 in light of 571n1; Fullerton 1899, 27.

⁷⁴ See S. M. Williams, *Henry of Ghent on real relations and the trinity: the case for numerical sameness without identity*, in “Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales”, n. 79, v. 1, 2012, pp. 140, 145, 147.

⁷⁵ Karl JASPERS, *The great philosophers (vol. 2)*, Harcourt, New York 1966, 2.112.

one and the same something is wholly present in each of those items. Therefore, power-reality-being – indeed, infinite-eternal power-reality-being – is wholly (and so undividedly and univocally) present in each attribute. In effect, infinite-eternal power-reality-being – and any other “neutral property” between the attributes, for that matter – unifies the really distinct attributes in the strongest sense, a sense tighter than the tightest of extrinsic attachments among things even in the most perfect operational harmony, a sense that only realism concerning universals can allow: strict identity in variety⁷⁶. Rather than being divvied up or portioned out among the attributes⁷⁷, the divine essence – infinite-eternal power-reality-being – would be one and the same in each attribute.

To have the divine essence wholly present in each attribute is perfectly aligned with my bundle interpretation. First, since such a common nature is a *qualitas* entity, it still will be the case that God is nothing but a *qualitas* entity, which is what the bundle interpretation demands. Second, and more importantly, realize that such a common nature cannot be a Platonic universal, transcending the attributes in such a way that it can be conceived stripped of the attributes. If the divine essence transcended the attributes in such a way, each attribute would depend on that which is nonidentical to it and so would not be an absolutely self-necessary bedrock element of reality. Instead, the divine essence – the common nature that provides the genuine cement between the attributes – would have to be an Aristotelian universal, obtaining only through the attributes and in such a way compatible with the attributes being individually self-necessary, really distinct, and absolutely prime elements of which God at its core is nothing but. In effect, God would be a bundle of its attributes not just *in a sense*. Rather, God would be *nothing but* a bundle of its attributes. For the essence that is *absolutely one and the same in each attribute is part of the very identity of each attribute and by no means ontological prior to each attribute*.

Spinoza being a realist concerning universals need not entail such a picture. But since such a picture might make my bundle interpretation more palatable, it seems important to mention in closing. One who advocates such a picture is going to have to

⁷⁶ See SUÁREZ, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, 5.2.8, 6.1.12-15, 6.2.1-2, 6.2.13, 6.5.3, 6.6.5, 6.6.12, 6.7.2; see Burns 1914, 82; Ross 1962, 743.

⁷⁷ See *Meno 77a*. Socrates tells Meno: «tell me what virtue is as a universal. And stop making one [(the singular)] into many [(the plural)] as the joke goes when someone breaks something. Leave virtue whole and sound, not broken up into a number of pieces».

contend with at least two major textual worries, though. First, Spinoza seems to reject that there is anything like power itself or reality itself or being itself (2p40s1) and so seems to reject the option of saying that each attribute instantiates anything of that sort. One might get out of this problem using the same strategy I use to reconcile Spinoza's realism concerning universals with his famous rejection of universals. Namely, perhaps at 2p40s1 Spinoza is merely talking about *being itself* in the pejorative sense, that is, a universal merely apprehended by the imagination, which leaves open the option that there is *being itself* in a true sense, a universal as apprehended by pure reason: infinite-eternal power-reality-being. Second, and as I mentioned in section 4.6, Spinoza repeatedly insists that there is absolutely «nothing in common» between the «really distinct» attributes, that the attributes are «altogether different» and absolutely «incommensurable», that there is «no comparison» between the power or nature of one attribute and the power or nature of another attribute, that the attributes «differ infinitely» from one another (TdIE 33-34; KV 2.20.3, KV app2.8; 5pref II/280/14-16). One might get out of this problem by saying that Spinoza means merely that they share nothing, *except for the fact that they are*. Since *that they are*, since each *having being*, is so obvious, Spinoza perhaps felt that readers would understand him to be saying that they have nothing *else* in common besides that.

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