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Spinoza's Argument for the Identity Theory

Michael Della Rocca

It seems evident that *any* success in understanding Spinoza is going to require working one's way through a thicket of intentionality of which only the bare outlines have so far been discerned.

—Margaret D. Wilson¹

1. Introduction

Does Spinoza hold an identity theory of the mind-body relation? He certainly seems to. Consider these passages:

The mind and the body are one and the same thing, which is conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension. (3p2s)

A mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways. (2p7s)²

The second passage entails mind-body identity because for Spinoza the body is a mode of extension and the mind is the idea of that mode (see 2p13). It seems difficult not to interpret such passages as directly committing Spinoza to a numerical identity between the mind and body. After all, to be one and the same thing is, it seems, to be numerically identical.

I accept this literal interpretation, which I will call the numerical identity interpretation. In this paper, I will continue a project of defending this reading of Spinoza. In a previous paper, I showed that a numerical identity position is not, contrary to what some have thought, incompatible with certain basic features of Spinoza's system (see my 1991). However, even if Spinoza can consistently

¹Wilson 1975, 24–25.

²See also 2p21s. Translations from Spinoza are from Curley's *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1. Quotes from Spinoza's Latin are from Gebhardt. I have followed Curley's system of numbering passages from the *Ethics*.

hold a numerical identity position and even if this literal interpretation of Spinoza is correct, the proponent of this interpretation faces a challenge concerning its significance. That Spinoza consistently holds an identity theory would not in itself be of much interest unless there is in Spinoza an interesting and important way of *arguing* for an identity theory. We need to be given good reasons to hold that a numerical identity position grows out of, and is not simply superadded to, Spinoza's system.³ In what follows, I provide such reasons.

It might seem that the claim of numerical identity follows from Spinoza's view that the thinking substance and the extended substance are identical.⁴ For Spinoza, there is only one substance, God,

³Commentators have not, I believe, handled this issue adequately. Although many have recognized that Spinoza holds some form of an identity position, these interpreters have often failed to investigate in any detailed way how he might argue for this position. See, for example, the otherwise helpful accounts by Allison (1987, chap. 4, pt. 1), Hampshire (1971), Matson (1975), and Odegard (1975). Those who do attempt to spell out a Spinozistic argument fail in various ways. Jonathan Bennett, for example, presents an intricate characterization of, and argument for, some version of an identity position that he finds in Spinoza. Unfortunately, among other difficulties, Bennett's interpretation attributes to Spinoza some highly anti-Spinozistic claims. For example, Bennett attributes to Spinoza the view that the infinite intellect of God misconstrues God's own essence (see Bennett 1984, 139–51). I intend to present my criticisms of Bennett in a future paper. Richard E. Aquila also presents a subtle interpretation according to which Spinoza's claim of identity "follows in a certain way from principles central to his philosophy" (1978, 285). However, the kind of identity between mind and body that Aquila's Spinoza winds up with is something short of the numerical identity that Spinoza seems to emphasize (see especially 1978, 282). Throughout his article, Aquila employs scare quotes when talking about the identity of Spinozistic modes of thought and modes of extension. Finally, Curley claims that he is able to show why Spinoza affirms a numerical identity position (1988, 68). But the reasons Curley offers in the immediately following passage at most show that a mode of extension cannot exist without the idea of that mode and vice versa. As Curley himself admits (69), this falls short of a claim of identity. Curley also asserts that Spinoza "came to see [the identity thesis] as providing a metaphysical explanation, not only of the mind's awareness of and concern for the body, but also of its dependence on the body for its knowledge of other things" (159 n. 18; see also 62). But Curley does not make clear how an identity of mind and body, as opposed to mere necessary correlation, provides such an explanation.

⁴Curley endorses something like this interpretation (1988, 153 n. 13). See also von Leyden 1968, 21; Allison 1987, 85–86; Aquila 1978, 272–73.

and this substance has infinitely many basic features or attributes, including thought and extension.⁵ Thus for Spinoza the one thinking substance is identical with the one extended substance. The modes of thought, which include all the particular, finite thinking things, and the modes of extension, which include all the particular, finite extended things, are not themselves substances, but are somehow dependent on the one substance. When Spinoza introduces his claim about identity of modes, he seems to be drawing an inference from the identity of the thinking substance and the extended substance to the identity of modes of thought and modes of extension:

The thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that. So also [*sic etiam*] a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways. (2p7s)

However, it is not clear whether Spinoza intends to be drawing an inference here. Bennett, for one, thinks that Spinoza's '*sic etiam*' signals merely an analogy and not an inference (1984, 142). And even if Spinoza is drawing an inference here, it is not clear whether such an inference would be valid. Bennett expresses some doubts on this point: "Mind-body identity is not entailed by the thesis that thought and extension are attributes of a single substance. Why should not a thinking and extended substance have details under one attribute which are not also details under the other?" (1984, 142).

To resolve these issues would require an investigation of Spinoza's notion of attribute and of his claim that the thinking substance is identical with the extended substance. I intend, however, to avoid that cluster of difficult issues here since I think we can approach our topic from a separate and perhaps more promising angle. Independently of any particular understanding of the no-

⁵There is, of course, a debate as to whether when Spinoza says that substance has infinitely many attributes he means that substance has a literal infinity of attributes (in our sense of 'infinite') or that substance simply has all possible attributes. This issue does not affect my interpretation or arguments in this paper.

tion of the attributes of substance, I will show how Spinoza could support the claim of numerical identity. I will focus on some explicit and some less than explicit considerations at work in the text. In particular, I will argue that Spinoza regards certain causal contexts as referentially opaque. With the help of what I will call the Opacity Transmission Principle, we can see that the opacity of these contexts in Spinoza shows that he also would accept the opacity of a wide variety of other contexts—ones involving the attributes of thought and extension. This broad range of opaque contexts in Spinoza is the key to the Spinozistic argument for the claim of numerical identity that I will present. Not only will I show that this argument is one that Spinoza could provide, but I will also show that there is evidence that Spinoza is actually relying on such an argument in making his claim of numerical identity. In the final section of the paper, I will question Spinoza's reasons for holding that so many contexts are opaque.

2. Opacity in Spinoza⁶

The best way to introduce the elements of Spinoza's argument for the Identity Theory is to neutralize an important objection to interpreting Spinoza as holding that mind and body are identical. The objection, which comes from R. J. Delahunty, goes as follows:⁷ If my mind is identical with my body and if my body causally interacts with another body, say mode of extension A, then it follows that my mind causally interacts with mode of extension A. But such interaction goes against Spinoza's oft-repeated ban on causal interaction between attributes. For example, Spinoza says, "The body cannot determine the mind to thinking and the mind cannot

⁶Charles Jarrett, in several stimulating papers which I saw only after completing the initial versions of this paper, also emphasizes the importance of referential opacity in understanding Spinoza's position on the mind-body problem (see the three papers by Jarrett listed among the references). However, his development of this theme differs from mine, and he does not employ the notion of referential opacity as I do later in the paper to show how Spinoza might argue for his version of the Identity Theory.

⁷See Delahunty 1985, 197. My response to Delahunty stems from section 1 of my "Causation and Spinoza's Claim of Identity."

determine the body to motion, to rest or to anything else (if there is anything else)" (3p2; see also the second half of 2p7s). Thus Delahunty concludes that Spinoza cannot coherently accept mind-body identity.

This objection works only if Spinoza takes certain causal contexts to be referentially transparent, for the objection relies upon the validity of the inference

- (1) My body causally interacts with mode of extension A.
 - (2) My body = my mind.
- So
- (3) My mind causally interacts with mode of extension A.

However, there is good reason to think that Spinoza does *not* regard the relevant causal contexts as transparent.

Spinoza recognizes two different kinds of causal relation: immanent and transitive. Transitive causation occurs between different finite things. Immanent causation occurs between God, the one substance, and finite things. Spinoza says quite clearly that whether it's true to say that God is the (immanent) cause of a finite mode depends on how God is conceived. Thus: "The modes of each attribute have God for their cause only insofar as he is considered under the attribute of which they are modes, and not insofar as he is considered under any other attribute" (2p6). This suggests that for Spinoza

- (a) The thinking substance causes mode of thought 1

is true, while

- (b) The extended substance causes mode of thought 1

is false. The fact that Spinoza sees (a) as true and (b) as false, despite the identity of the thinking substance and the extended substance, shows that for Spinoza contexts involving immanent causation are referentially opaque. Specifically, this shows that the position within such sentences for the term picking out the immanent cause is referentially opaque. Spinoza thinks that the truth value of certain immanent causal claims is sensitive to the way in which the immanent cause is described.

Spinoza's basis for holding that the truth value of certain immanent causal claims is sensitive to the way in which the immanent cause is described shows that he would also be committed to treating certain transitive causal claims as involving referential opacity.

Here is Spinoza's basis in 2p6d for holding that the truth value of certain immanent causal claims is sensitive to the way the immanent cause is described:

[E]ach attribute is conceived through itself without any other (by 1p10). So the modes of each attribute involve the concept of their own attribute, but not of another one; and so (by 1ax4) they have God for their cause only insofar as he is considered under the attribute of which they are modes, and not insofar as he is considered under any other.

1ax4, which Spinoza relies on here, is the important claim: "The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause." 1ax4 is relevant to this proof since, for Spinoza, the claim that the idea of the effect depends on and involves the idea of the cause entails that the effect is conceived through the cause (see, e.g., 1p3d, 1p6cd2). Thus Spinoza is saying here that if mode of thought 1, say, were immanently caused by the extended substance, then mode of thought 1 would be conceived through the extended substance. This, Spinoza claims, would violate the conceptual separation of the attributes.

A similar proof could be provided for the conclusion that a given mode has another mode for a cause only insofar as the latter mode is considered under the attribute of which the first mode is a mode.⁸ This would be a claim of the opacity of transitive causal contexts. The proof would go as follows:

Each attribute is conceived through itself without any other (by 1p10). So a mode of a particular attribute involves the concept of its own attribute, and not that of any other. Therefore (by 1ax4) it has another mode for its cause only insofar as that other mode is considered under the attribute of which the first

⁸Spinoza allows that modes are considered under attributes—see, for example, 2p21s.

mode is a mode and not insofar as that other mode is considered under any other attribute.⁹

Just as 2p6d indicates that Spinoza would regard (a) as true and (b) as false, despite the identity of the thinking substance and the extended substance, the analogous proof just given suggests that Spinoza would regard

(c) Mode of extension A causally interacts with mode of extension B

as true, and

(d) Mode of thought 1 causally interacts with mode of extension B

as false, even if mode of extension A = mode of thought 1. Such a position would amount to the referential opacity of certain causal contexts.

Thus, Spinoza's basis for saying that certain immanent causal contexts are opaque shows that he would have the same basis for saying that certain transitive causal contexts are opaque. The point here is not that the opacity of certain transitive causal contexts is entailed by the opacity of certain immanent causal contexts,¹⁰ but rather that Spinoza's basis for asserting the opacity of the latter contexts shows that he is committed to a similar basis for asserting the opacity of the former contexts.

This opacity of certain transitive causal contexts in Spinoza shows that the numerical identity interpretation can successfully avoid Delahunty's objection. Given this opacity, Spinoza can affirm an identity of modes of thought and modes of extension even while maintaining that there is no causal interaction across attributes.

⁹1ax4 plays a similar role in this proof as in 2p6d itself. If mode of thought 1 were caused by a mode of extension, then, since (according to 1ax4) effects are conceived through causes, mode of thought 1 would be conceived through a mode of extension. Such a conclusion, however, would go against Spinoza's conceptual separation of the attributes.

¹⁰We will see shortly cases in which the opacity of one context *does* entail the opacity of another context.

The same considerations suggest that Spinoza would regard the following contexts as referentially opaque:

- '... is caused by the extended substance'
- '... is caused by the thinking substance'.

These are immanent causal contexts where the position for the term picking out the *effect* of the immanent cause is opaque. By contrast, 2p6, as I claimed above, is a statement to the effect that in sentences concerning immanent causation, the position for the term picking out the immanent cause itself is referentially opaque.

The fact that for Spinoza certain causal contexts are opaque implies that for him a vast number of other contexts are opaque as well. This underappreciated fact about the extent of opacity in Spinoza's system is essential to understanding his argument for the Identity Theory. These additional kinds of opaque contexts involve the attribution of mental or physical properties to an object.

Spinoza holds that each thing is caused by God (1p25). But, as Spinoza claims in a passage I quoted earlier, modes that are extended are caused by God only insofar as God is considered as the extended substance and modes that are thinking are caused by God only insofar as God is considered as the thinking substance (2p6). It follows that

- (e) mode x is extended only if mode x is caused by the extended substance
- and
- (f) mode x is thinking only if mode x is caused by the thinking substance.

Earlier I noted that the context '... is caused by the extended substance' is, for Spinoza, opaque. Given the dependence, which (e) reveals, of the property of being extended on the property of being caused by the extended substance, and given the opacity of the context '... is caused by the extended substance', it follows that the context '... is extended' is also opaque. One way of bringing this conclusion out is as follows. (e) shows that whether a mode is extended depends on whether it is caused by the extended substance. But, as we saw earlier, whether a mode is caused by the extended substance depends on how that mode is conceived of or

described. Thus, by the transitivity of this dependence relation, whether a mode is extended depends on how that mode is conceived of or described. This conclusion, however, is just the claim that the context '. . . is extended' is opaque. A similar line of reasoning would show that the context '. . . is thinking' is also opaque. This line of reasoning would rely upon the entailment (f) above.

My point here can be made more formally with the help of the Opacity Transmission Principle.¹¹

If

- (i) for any term 't', 'F(t)' entails 'G(t)
 - (ii) there are possible situations in which $G(t)$, $t=t^*$, and $\neg G(t^*)$ and
 - (iii) in at least some of those situations $F(t)$,
- then
there are possible situations in which $F(t)$, $t=t^*$, and $\neg F(t^*)$.

Condition (ii) is just the claim that the context 'G(. . .)' is opaque and the conclusion is just the claim that the context 'F(. . .)' is opaque. Thus the principle says that in the case of an entailment of the form 'F(t) \rightarrow G(t)', if the position for 't' in the entire context of the consequent is opaque and if condition (iii) is also met, then the position for 't' in the entire context of the antecedent is opaque.

The proof of the principle is straightforward. Consider a possible situation in which $G(a)$, $a=b$, and $\neg G(b)$ and in which $F(a)$. Conditions (ii) and (iii) assert that there is such a situation. Since $a=b$, 'a' and 'b' are coreferring terms. Now let's say that substitution of coreferring terms within the context 'F(. . .)' is legitimate. If we allow such substitutions, then we can substitute 'b' for 'a' in that context and thus we arrive at the claim 'F(b)'. But now recall condition (i): For any term 't', 'F(t)' entails 'G(t)'. From this and the claim 'F(b)' we reach the conclusion that in this situation 'G(b)' is true. But, ex hypothesi, this is a situation in which $\neg G(b)$. Thus given the initial description of this situation we reach a contradiction once we make the further assumption that we can validly substitute for coreferring terms in the context 'F(. . .)'. Thus we must conclude that given conditions (i)–(iii), we cannot validly substitute

¹¹I am indebted here to Jamie Dreier's extremely helpful comments.

within the context 'F(. . .)' and thus that that context is opaque. In this way, under the conditions (i)–(iii), opacity would be transmitted from the context 'G(. . .)' to the context 'F(. . .)'.

These three conditions are met for the context from Spinoza we are considering, namely the context '. . . is extended'. For Spinoza the following claims are true:

- (i') For any term 't', 't is extended' entails 't is caused by the extended substance'.
- (ii') There are possible situations in which t is caused by the extended substance, $t = t^*$, and it is not the case that t^* is caused by the extended substance.
- (iii') In at least some of those situations t is extended.

(i') simply follows from claim (e) above:

- (e) Mode x is extended only if mode x is caused by the extended substance.

Spinoza would regard (ii') as true since his view that certain causal contexts are referentially opaque commits him to the view that it is possible that a mode, under a physical description such as 'mode of extension A', is caused by the extended substance, but that same mode, under a mental description such as 'mode of thought 1', is not caused by the extended substance.¹² This also leads to the claim that for Spinoza (iii') is true. The possible situations which make (ii') true are ones in which a mode, under a physical description such as 'mode of extension A', is caused by the extended substance. Thus the relevant term 't' in those situations is 'mode of extension A' or some similar physical term. Now 'mode of extension A is extended' is trivially true for Spinoza as long as we are considering a situation in which there is a mode referred to by that description (or by a similar physical description). Thus in those situations that make (ii') true, 't is extended' is also true and so condition (iii') is also met.

Since the above three conditions are met for the context '. . . is extended', the Opacity Transmission Principle applies here and

¹²In the last section of this paper, I will explore ways in which Spinoza might support this view.

thus, for Spinoza, the context '... is extended' is opaque. A parallel application of the principle would show that '... is thinking' is opaque. Since, for Spinoza, thought and extension are attributes, I will call these contexts "attribute contexts."

The opacity of attribute contexts enables us to obviate another objection to the interpretation of Spinoza as holding that mind and body are identical. The objection is based on the fact that while Spinoza holds that modes of thought are thinking and modes of extension are extended, he also holds that modes of extension are *not* thinking and modes of thought are *not* extended.¹³ This disparity between modes of thought and modes of extension might seem to preclude any mode of extension from being identical with a mode of thought. But such a conclusion is not warranted since, for Spinoza, the contexts '... is thinking' and '... is extended' are opaque. The opacity of these contexts would mean that from the fact that a given mode of extension is extended and a given mode of thought is not extended we cannot validly infer that that mode of extension is not identical with that mode of thought.

I will call a property an *intensional* property when (and only when) contexts involving the attribution of that property to objects are opaque. I will call all other properties *extensional* properties. Thus the properties of being thinking and being extended are intensional properties since attribute contexts are opaque. If the general properties of being thinking and being extended are intensional, then so too are all the more particular properties that presuppose one or the other of these general properties. The proof of this point relies upon the Opacity Transmission Principle.

¹³For the claim that a mode of thought is thinking, see 2def3 where Spinoza calls the mind (which, according to 2p11, is a mode of thought) a thinking thing (*res cogitans*). I see no reason why Spinoza would not make a parallel claim about modes of extension.

Spinoza's attack against Cartesian interactionism is premised on the claim that mental and physical things have nothing in common and thus that, in particular, mental things are not physical and physical things are not mental. See Spinoza's critique of Descartes in the preface to part 5. Many other passages also indicate that Spinoza holds this view. See *Short Treatise*, book 2, appendix 2 (Gebhardt 1:118) where Spinoza says that the object of an idea (for example, a mode of extension) "has nothing of thought." In the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, para. 58, he says that the idea that a soul (a particular mode of thought) is extended is fictitious. See also para. 33, 74, and *Ethics* 2p49s (Gebhardt 2:132).

Take a particular property that presupposes the general property of being extended, for example, being five feet long. Notice that ‘t is five feet long’ entails ‘t is extended’. Since, for Spinoza, the latter context is opaque (and since nothing seems to preclude the possibility that in some of those situations in which t is extended, $t = t^*$, but t^* is not extended, it is also true that t is five feet long) it follows, by virtue of the Opacity Transmission Principle, that the former context, ‘. . . is five feet long’, is also opaque. The same holds for any other particular property that presupposes extension or for one that presupposes thought (such as “being a thought about the Olympics”). Thus all these particular properties, like their general counterparts, are intensional. In effect, for Spinoza, all physical and all mental properties, as well as the causal properties mentioned earlier, are intensional. But what properties then, if any, are extensional? Spinoza’s system seems to leave no room for transparent contexts. There is, however, a small, but important class of extensional properties—important because, as we will now see, these properties enable Spinoza to argue for mind-body identity.

3. The Argument for Identity

With this background concerning the prevalence of opaque contexts in Spinoza, the argument for the claim of numerical identity can proceed. I will start by introducing an intuitively appealing principle of identity (often called “Leibniz’s Law”):

$a = b$ iff a and b have all their properties in common.¹⁴

As Leibniz himself and others have recognized, however, this principle does not hold in complete generality.¹⁵ There are certain kinds of properties that are such that the fact that a has a property of that kind and b does not does not by itself undermine the claim that $a = b$. These properties not included within the scope of the

¹⁴For this formulation of Leibniz’s Law, see Mates 1986, 123, and Feldman 1970, 510. Feldman, however, does not attribute this version of the principle to Leibniz himself.

¹⁵For an illuminating discussion of Leibniz’s awareness of this point, see Mates 1986, 130–32.

above principle are, of course, the intensional properties. Since intensional properties are not covered by Leibniz's Law, we can formulate a version of Leibniz's Law that is exceptionless:

$a=b$ iff a and b have all their extensional properties in common.¹⁶

Throughout the rest of this paper, I will use the label "Leibniz's Law" for this version of the principle.

Does Spinoza hold Leibniz's Law? 1p4 shows that he accepts the right-to-left half of this principle. In 1p4 he says:

Two or more distinct things are distinguished from one another, either by a difference in the attributes of the substances or by a difference in their affections.

Part of what 1p4 involves is the assumption that there must be a way of distinguishing two distinct things. There must be some difference between them by which they can be distinguished.¹⁷ That this assumption is at work here is made clear by 1p4d, where Spinoza says that there must be something "outside the intellect through which a number of things can be distinguished from one another." This assumption amounts to the right-to-left half of Leibniz's Law. Spinoza does not here explicitly restrict this principle to extensional properties, but, given his implicit reliance on the notion of intensional and extensional properties, this is a restriction that he is committed to accepting.

Spinoza does not argue for the claim that there must be a way of distinguishing two distinct things. 1p4 takes this claim for granted

¹⁶This principle must, in order not to be trivial, include further restrictions. In the right-to-left direction, the above biconditional would be trivially satisfied if we count "being identical with a " as a property. I think that the proper restrictions can be formulated, but I will not go into such complications here. On this kind of problem, see Black 1952, 153–55.

¹⁷Although in 1p4 and the surrounding passages Spinoza is primarily interested in the issue of the identity and distinctness of *substances*, the general term 'thing' (*res*) in 1p4 and its demonstration shows that his claim would apply to modes as well as substances. (See Garrett 1990, 99–100.) This broad application is significant because of my focus on the issue of *mode* identity.

and merely goes on to argue that the difference between two distinct things must come down to either a difference in attributes or a difference in modes. What, then, entitles Spinoza to this claim behind 1p4? Although Spinoza does not address this issue explicitly, it is not hard to see how he would argue here.

Consider what would be the case if the above assumption were false, that is, if there could be two distinct but qualitatively identical things, *a* and *b*.¹⁸ Of such a situation, Spinoza would ask: what *accounts for* the fact that *a* is not identical with *b*? What *makes* a distinct from *b*? It seems that there could be no answer to these questions. If *a* and *b* are qualitatively identical, yet numerically distinct, then there would be no way to explain their distinctness. A difference in properties is precisely the kind of thing needed to provide a foothold for an explanation of their distinctness. Without such an explanation, we would be forced to the conclusion that it is simply a brute fact that *a* is distinct from *b*: *a* would be distinct from *b* but there would be no way to explain this fact or make it intelligible. Such a conclusion, however, is one that Spinoza would reject. Spinoza strongly adheres to the Principle of Sufficient Reason (see 1p11d2 and Garrett 1979, 202–3) and so he would not tolerate such a brute fact.¹⁹

Thus Spinoza does clearly state in 1p4 and 1p4d that there must be a way of distinguishing distinct things. And there seems to be good reason within Spinoza's system for holding this view, which, as I noted, amounts to the right-to-left half of Leibniz's Law.

Does Spinoza accept the other half: the claim that if $a = b$, then they have all their extensional properties in common? This claim is far less controversial than its converse. Indeed, it is trivially true: for an extensional property is, by definition, a property that a thing has under any description. So it could not be the case that $a = b$, *a* has extensional property *F*, and *b* does not. Spinoza does not explicitly discuss this principle, but given its triviality, it seems legitimate to attribute this principle to him. We could not, I think, coherently see Spinoza as denying this principle.

¹⁸Again, we are omitting properties such as being identical with *a*—*a* and *b* obviously do not share this property.

¹⁹Leibniz also derives the claim that there must be a difference between distinct things from the Principle of Sufficient Reason. See Leibniz's Correspondence with Clarke in Leibniz 1989, 327, 333, 334.

Thus we have a good basis for saying that Spinoza holds Leibniz's Law. Armed with this principle we can construct the Spinozistic argument for the claim of identity. I will first show that this argument is one that Spinoza is committed to accepting. At the end of this section, I will provide evidence that such an argument is not only one that Spinoza is committed to, but also one that is actually at work in Spinoza.

According to Leibniz's Law, we can determine whether a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are numerically identical by determining whether they have all their extensional properties in common. Intensional properties are irrelevant in deciding the issue of identity. Thus since Spinoza regards the properties of being extended and being thinking as intensional, these properties can be left to the side for the purposes of my argument here, and so can all the particular properties that presuppose one or the other of these general properties. Any conclusion about the identity of a mode of thought and a mode of extension will have to be reached on the basis of a relatively impoverished class of properties.

The properties in this class must all be neutral. A neutral property is one that does not presuppose that the item with that property is of a particular attribute. Thus, for example, being extended and being five feet long are non-neutral properties since they presuppose that the item that has these properties is extended. Since all non-neutral properties are intensional, the class of extensional properties, the class of those properties relevant to the issues of identity and distinctness, must be drawn from the class of neutral properties.

I will present the Spinozistic argument for the identity of mind and body in the following way. Since all extensional properties must, for Spinoza, be neutral, I will investigate what kinds of properties Spinoza would regard as neutral. By eliciting these neutral properties, it will become evident that for Spinoza mind and body share all their neutral properties. From this fact, it follows that mind and body share all their extensional properties and are thus identical. Throughout this section, Spinoza's parallelism helps us to see what properties are neutral and why mind and body share them. Thus parallelism provides the basis for concluding that mind and body are identical.

Spinoza states the thesis of parallelism in 2p7: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of

things.” Part of what this thesis entails is that there is a one-to-one correspondence between ideas and extended things.²⁰ But parallelism goes well beyond such a claim. For Spinoza, the fact that the order and connection within the two series is the same entails that certain neutral properties are shared by parallel modes. To see what kinds of neutral properties are covered in this way, let’s turn to some of the ways Spinoza applies the thesis of parallelism.

The notion of the same order and connection suggests immediately that the causes and effects of a mode of extension and a parallel mode of thought are themselves parallel to one another. This is implicit throughout Spinoza’s discussion of parallelism in 2p7s (see also Bennett 1984, 127). From this it follows that if a mode of extension has a certain number of immediate effects (say, five immediate effects) then the parallel mode of thought will have the same number of immediate effects and these effects of the mode of thought will be parallel to the effects of the mode of extension. So, an example of a neutral feature that is shared by parallel modes is the feature ‘having five immediate effects’. Each mode will have very many neutral features of this kind—features that specify the number of causes or effects a given mode has at a certain remove. All of these neutral features are, by virtue of parallelism, shared by each mode and its parallel counterpart. Since these neutral properties are covered by parallelism—the thesis that the order and connection in the two series are the same—we can say that these neutral properties contribute to the order and connection within each of the two series.

For Spinoza, neutral temporal properties are also covered by parallelism. Neutral temporal properties are properties of the kinds: “began to exist at t1,” “exists at t2,” “ceases to exist at t3,” etc. Spinoza thinks that parallel modes share all the same neutral temporal properties:

[W]hen singular things are said to exist, not only insofar as they are comprehended in God’s attributes, but insofar as they are said to have duration, their ideas also involve the existence through which they are said to have duration. (2p8c)

²⁰The thesis also entails that for each mode of an attribute besides extension there is an idea of that mode and vice versa. Since we are interested here in the relation between thought and extension in particular, we will pass over this important ramification of parallelism.

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The meaning of this claim becomes clear when we see how Spinoza applies it to the case of the human mind and the body that is parallel to it: "we do not attribute duration to [the mind] except while the body endures" (5p23d). This claim, which depends on 2p8c, indicates that the mind and body (and parallel modes generally) endure for the same period of time and thus share all the same neutral temporal properties.²¹ This sharing is guaranteed by parallelism since 2p8c follows solely from 2p8, which in turn follows solely from the statement of parallelism in 2p7. Spinoza obviously sees the neutral temporal properties of modes as contributing to the order and connection of series of modes.

Another neutral property that modes can have is the property of being a complex individual. For Spinoza, certain collections of modes unite to form a single individual. This phenomenon occurs both in the realm of extension and in the realm of thought and thus the property of being a complex individual is neutral. Further, Spinoza thinks that if a mode of one attribute is a complex individual, then the parallel mode of another attribute must also be a complex individual. When Spinoza makes this claim in 2p15d, he relies on 2p7, the statement of parallelism. This indicates that Spinoza sees the fact that certain modes unite to form a single individual as an aspect of the way in which a series of modes is ordered and connected.²²

So Spinoza explicitly claims that parallelism guarantees that modes of extension and modes of thought share a wide range of neutral properties. Since these neutral properties are covered by parallelism, we can say that they contribute to the order and connection of a series of modes. Given the emphasis in Spinoza's account of parallelism on neutral properties that contribute to order and connection, I think we can say that for Spinoza, parallelism guarantees in general that any neutral property that contributes to the order and connection of a series of modes is shared by parallel

²¹This commitment on Spinoza's part may or may not be compatible with his views on the eternity of the mind. I will not explore this matter here.

²²A related neutral property is the power of a mode of extension or of a mode of thought. Spinoza thinks that the power of the mind and the power of the body rise and fall together. See 3p11, which relies on the parallelism of 2p7.

modes.²³ If a neutral property that contributes to order and connection is not shared by a particular mode of extension and a particular mode of thought, then there would be grounds for saying that these modes are not parallel to one another.

But this is not to say that *all* neutral properties are covered by parallelism. Can we give a general criterion by which to tell whether a given neutral property contributes to order and connection and is thus covered by parallelism? Spinoza's broad use of the parallelism thesis to show that certain neutral properties are shared indicates that he would accept a certain general principle. This principle makes use of the claim that for each mode of a certain attribute there is a point that it occupies in the chain of modes of that attribute and for each such point there is a different mode. I will say that a property F appears at a certain point in a chain of modes if the mode at that point in the chain has that property. The principle is as follows:

If the fact that neutral property F appears at a certain point in the chain of modes of a certain attribute is explained by the fact that a certain feature appears at another point in that chain, then F is a neutral property that contributes to order and connection.

We can see why this is so in the following way. Let's say that F is a neutral property that appears at a certain point in the chain of modes of extension and that the fact that F appears at that point in the chain is explained by the fact that a certain feature appears at another point in the chain of modes of extension.²⁴ Since the fact that F appears at a certain point in the chain is explained by the fact that a certain feature appears at another point in the chain, it follows that neutral property F contributes to the way in which the modes at those two different points are connected. To say that the fact that F appears at one point in the series of modes of extension is explained by a feature that appears at another point is to say that there is a respect in which the mode at the former point depends

²³For this characterization of parallelism, see Bennett 1984, 360.

²⁴For our purposes, it is irrelevant whether the other feature is neutral or not.

on the mode at the latter point. The neutral property F that the first mode has plays a crucial role in this relation of dependence. Thus F contributes to the kind of connection there is between the two modes and so contributes to the order and connection that obtains in the series of extended modes generally.

Since neutral property F of a certain mode of extension contributes to the order and connection of the extended series, there must be a parallel mode of thought that also has property F. The fact that F appears at this point in the chain of modes of thought must be explained by the fact that a certain feature appears at another point in the chain of modes of thought. If there were no parallel mode of thought that had feature F or if the fact that feature F is present at that point were not explained by a certain feature of another mode of thought, then the order and connection of the mental series would be different in a certain respect from the order and connection of the physical series. This would be a violation of parallelism. Thus any neutral property of a given mode that is explained by a feature of a different mode contributes to the order and connection of a given series and is thus shared by parallel modes.

The legitimacy of this general principle is confirmed by the fact that the neutral properties that Spinoza explicitly regards as covered by parallelism meet the condition laid down in the above principle. For example, consider the property of being a complex individual. The fact that the mode at a certain point in the chain of modes of extension is a complex individual depends on features of other modes, in particular features of the modes that constitute it and also features of other modes that provide the setting for such a complex individual to appear. Thus the feature of being a complex individual is covered by the above principle. Similar points would apply to the other neutral properties already discussed.

Thus all neutral properties of modes that enter into explanatory relations in this way with other modes are covered by parallelism. Are there any neutral properties not covered by parallelism? A neutral property F that appears at a certain point in the chain of modes of extension would not be covered by parallelism only if one of the following two scenarios were the case: (1) The fact that F appears at that point has no explanation at all. (2) The fact that F appears at that point, although explainable, is not explained by facts concerning other modes.

We can see right away that the former scenario is illegitimate. This is because, as we have seen, Spinoza holds the Principle of Sufficient Reason and thus, for him, every fact must be explainable.

Are there any neutral properties that conform to the second scenario? This would be the case only if the fact that F appears at that point, though explainable, is not explained by any facts concerning modes other than the mode that occupies that point in the chain. In such a case, the fact that F appears at that point would be explanatorily restricted to the mode of which it is a feature. In general, for a neutral property to fail to be covered by parallelism, the fact that that property appears at that point must be explanatorily isolated in this way from other modes.²⁵

An example of such an isolated feature would be the feature of not-(existing at t2 while also not existing at t2). This feature appears at each point in the chain of modes of extension. For each such point, there is an explanation of why the feature appears at this point. But this explanation does not require citing facts about what is the case at other points in the series. To explain why this feature appears at a given point, we do not appeal to other modes, we simply appeal to the necessary truth that nothing can instantiate incompatible properties.

In general, the neutral properties that are explanatorily isolated in this way from other modes are, like not-(existing at t2 and not existing at t2), necessarily universal. If a neutral property is not necessarily universal, if it is not guaranteed to be instantiated by everything, then there must be an explanation of *why* it appears at some particular point in the causal chain (and not at another). To know why a thing with this property appears at this juncture, we need to know other facts about the situation that allow for and require the existence of a thing with that feature. Such facts will include facts about other modes. And thus the neutral property in question will not be explanatorily isolated. It will be a feature that contributes to the order and connection of a series, and thus it will be shared by parallel modes.

²⁵This is a necessary condition for a neutral property to fail to be covered by parallelism. It may not be sufficient. That is, it could well be the case that even a neutral property that is explanatorily isolated in this way is still covered by parallelism.

So the only neutral properties that are, potentially, *not* covered by parallelism are the necessarily universal neutral properties. But this fact does not affect the ability of parallelism to help us show that mind and body are identical. This is because the universal neutral properties are, by virtue of their universality, irrelevant to deciding questions of identity. Since all things have them (whether the things are thinking or extended), it follows that the fact that X and Y have them goes no distance toward showing that $X = Y$. The universal properties also cannot be used to determine nonidentity, since there could not be a case in which one object had a particular universal neutral property and another did not.

Thus we can safely ignore these properties when deciding issues of identity. The only neutral properties that could be relevant to identity are the ones that are not necessarily universal and, as we have seen, parallelism guarantees that these are shared by parallel modes. So, although parallelism may not itself guarantee that all neutral properties are shared by parallel modes, the ones it might not cover are necessarily shared. Thus a mode of extension and the parallel mode of thought share all their neutral properties.

For this sharing of all neutral properties to guarantee that parallel modes are identical, we need to show that the neutral properties encompass all the extensional properties. We saw earlier that if there are to be any extensional properties at all, they must be neutral. So, since mind and body share all their neutral properties, they share all their extensional properties, *if* there are any extensional properties to be shared. But are there any extensional properties? Spinoza's commitment to Leibniz's Law shows that there must be. If there were no extensional properties at all, that is, if all properties were intensional, then there would be no way to determine that one mode is not identical with another. This is because the nature of intensional properties is such that a difference between a and b in intensional properties does not show that $a \neq b$. Thus, if all properties were intensional, there would be no legitimate way to distinguish nonidentical things. This would be intolerable to Spinoza since he clearly thinks that there are nonidentical things and he is clearly committed to there being a basis for such nonidentity in each case. Thus there must be some extensional properties. Since all extensional properties are neutral and since parallel modes share all their neutral properties, it follows that the

body and the idea of the body, that is, the body and the mind, share all their extensional properties and, hence, are identical.

Let me approach from a different angle the claim that at least some neutral properties are extensional. Consider the causal property, discussed earlier, of having five immediate effects. We would expect Spinoza to regard this property as extensional for the following reason. When Spinoza relies on the notion of the opacity of certain causal contexts, he is concerned about those causal contexts that, we might say, are vulnerable to attribute mismatch. These are causal contexts that can be completed in such a way that in the resulting sentence the cause is represented as being of one attribute and the effect of another.²⁶ '... causes mode of thought 1' is such a context. If this context is completed with the term 'the extended substance', the resulting sentence, 'The extended substance causes mode of thought 1', contains an attribute mismatch in a causal context. As 2p6d indicates, it is because of such a mismatch that Spinoza regards this sentence as false even though it is true that the thinking substance does cause mode of thought 1 and that the thinking substance = the extended substance.

This kind of mismatch is not possible with the neutral causal context '... has five immediate effects'. No substitution here would result in a claim that something extended is causally related to something thinking. Since such neutral causal contexts are not vulnerable to attribute mismatch, and since Spinoza seems primarily concerned with such mismatch when he relies on the claim that certain contexts are opaque, it seems likely that for him the neutral causal contexts are transparent and thus that the neutral causal properties are extensional. Similar points would apply to most, if not all, of the other neutral properties we have discussed.²⁷ And

²⁶Spinoza would also be concerned about certain noncausal contexts that are vulnerable to attribute mismatches.

²⁷There may be reasons (independent of a concern about attribute mismatches) for thinking that *some* neutral properties *are* intensional. For example, one might argue that temporal properties are intensional since we could have a case in which the ring = the piece of gold, the ring ceases to exist at t1 (because it is crushed and destroyed), but the piece of gold does not cease to exist at t1 (since it survives the crushing). If in such a case the ring really is identical with the piece of gold, then we might have reason to see certain neutral temporal properties as intensional. However, Spinoza does not give any indication as to whether he would say that in

thus, once again, we have a Spinozistic basis for the conclusion that there are at least some extensional properties.

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

An immediate objection, however, arises. Let's grant that there are some extensional properties. Let's even grant that *all* neutral properties are extensional. Even so, how can we be sure that the fact that mind and body share all their neutral properties and extensional properties provides a sufficient basis for saying that they are identical? The sharing of all these properties would not provide such a sufficient basis if it is possible for two distinct, non-identical things to have all the same neutral properties and hence all the same extensional properties.

The worry here is that the class of neutral properties might not be rich enough to guarantee that there are no duplications of sets of neutral properties. To see the force of this problem, consider neutral temporal properties which are a subset of the neutral properties and which, let us assume, are extensional. Now from the fact that mode X and mode Y share all their neutral temporal properties, we would not want to conclude that mode X and mode Y are identical. This is because it seems quite possible that two distinct things share all their neutral temporal properties. Such a scenario is especially plausible if we include, as Spinoza does,²⁸ events among things. The same kind of objection would arise in the case of neutral properties generally: how can we be sure that two distinct things cannot have *all* their neutral properties in common?

Spinoza would answer by again invoking what I have called Leibniz's Law. If two distinct things shared all their neutral properties and extensional properties, then there would be no legitimate way

such a case the ring is identical with the piece of gold, and so we cannot be sure as to whether Spinoza would, on this basis, hold that neutral temporal properties are intensional. (The above example is adapted from Jarrett 1982a.)

²⁸See 2p12, where Spinoza speaks of things that happen (*contingit*) in the body.

to distinguish them. We could not turn to the non-neutral properties since these are intensional and thus do not provide an appropriate basis for distinguishing things. So we would be left without a way to distinguish the two distinct things and this would violate Spinoza's commitment to the intelligibility of all facts, including the intelligibility of the distinction between two distinct things. Thus Spinoza is committed to the view that no two distinct things share all their neutral properties.

The above argument for the identity of mind and body is a Spinozistic one that proceeds from Spinoza's acceptance of Leibniz's Law, from his central thesis of parallelism, and from his commitment to the view that non-neutral properties are intensional. So far, all I have claimed is that Spinoza is committed to this argument. This is in itself an important fact since it shows that Spinoza's claim of identity is not a mere addition to his system, but instead is a position that grows out of what we can now see as the rich resources of that system.

Still, I think we can go further. There is evidence for seeing Spinoza not merely as committed to the above argument, but as actually relying on such an argument. This evidence emerges from a single passage—the crucial 2p7s—but it should not surprise us that there is only one passage that provides evidence on this point. Spinoza, after all, says very little about his identity position.

The passage in question is this:

[W]hether we consider nature under the attribute of extension, or under the attribute of thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find one and the same order, or one and the same connection of causes, i.e. [*hoc est*] that the same things follow one another.

Here Spinoza seems to regard the thesis of parallelism as equivalent to the claim of trans-attribute mode identity. Stating such an equivalence is exactly what we would expect Spinoza to do if he were relying on an argument like the one I gave above. For by means of that argument, we can see that such an equivalence holds. The argument contends that given other aspects of Spinoza's system, the fact that parallelism holds entails that the idea of a given mode of extension is identical with that mode of extension. And, of course, this entailment works in the other direction as well: identity of modes across attributes entails sameness of order and connec-

tion. (Recall that the features having to do with order and connection are neutral and, it seems, extensional. Hence they would be shared by identical modes.) Thus the argument I have given helps to show that, for Spinoza, the thesis of parallelism is equivalent to the claim of trans-attribute mode identity, and this is precisely what Spinoza says in 2p7s.

Further, and more significantly, Spinoza can assert such an equivalence *only if* he is relying on something like the above argument. Parallelism guarantees that a mode of extension and the idea of that mode share certain neutral properties. For Spinoza to treat parallelism as entailing the identity thesis, he would have to see the sharing of these neutral properties as a sufficient basis for determining that these modes are identical. If Spinoza did not regard the sameness of order and connection as providing a sufficient ground for the claim of identity, then his assertion of the equivalence in 2p7s would be unjustified. So, in asserting that equivalence in 2p7s, Spinoza is, in part, claiming that the neutral properties covered by parallelism show that the modes in question are identical. And this is precisely how the Spinozistic argument that I have presented proceeds.

The points in the previous two paragraphs indicate that the above argument is not only a Spinozistic argument, but also that it may actually be Spinoza's.

4. Why Opacity?

Spinoza's argument for the Identity Theory turns upon his view that mental properties and physical properties are intensional. I established that for Spinoza these properties are intensional by showing that he accepts the following entailments:

- (e) Mode x is extended only if mode x is caused by the extended substance.
- (f) Mode x is thinking only if mode x is caused by the thinking substance.

Because Spinoza regards the latter context within each conditional as opaque, he is committed to seeing the former context within each conditional as opaque as well. The opacity is transmitted from

the causal contexts to the attribute contexts. Thus one way to defend the view that attribute contexts are opaque is to support both the claim that the relevant causal contexts are opaque and the claim that the entailments (e) and (f) hold.

I have doubts on both of these points. I don't think that Spinoza gives sufficient justification for regarding the relevant causal contexts as opaque. It is fairly commonplace in current philosophy to regard causal contexts as referentially *transparent*.²⁹ The intuition here is that whether or not it's true to say that one item causes another is not dependent on how those things are described. This seems right; there are, though, some demurrals. According to Mackie (1974, chap. 10) and Anscombe (1981), at least some causal contexts are opaque. The basis for their views is the notion that the truth of certain causal claims requires that those claims have explanatory value. These causal claims must, in order to be true, explain *why* the effect occurred. Now it is widely agreed that explanatory contexts are opaque. Searle gives a clear example of the failure of the principle of substitutivity in the context of explanation:

[I]f Jones's eating the poisoned fish causally explains his death and the event of Jones's eating the poisoned fish is identical with the event of his eating rainbow trout with sauce béarnaise for the first time in his life, it does not follow that his eating rainbow trout with sauce béarnaise for the first time in his life causally explains his death. (1983, 117)

Since explanatory contexts are opaque, if, as Mackie and Anscombe hold, certain causal claims must count as explanations in order to be true, then those causal claims will contain opaque contexts.

Spinoza may also hold that certain causal claims must count as explanations in order to be true, and I suspect that such a link between causation and explanation is importantly connected with what commentators often see as Spinoza's assimilation of causal and logical relations. That Spinoza holds that certain causal claims

²⁹See, for example, Davidson's "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," "Causal Relations," and "Mental Events," in Davidson 1980.

must have explanatory value in order to be true is evident from the fact that Spinoza accepts the following conditional:

(g) If x is caused by y then x is conceived through y.³⁰

The claim that x is conceived through y is plausibly seen as a claim about the explanation of x. This is indicated by the second half of 2p7s where Spinoza says that when we perceive effects through their causes, we are explaining the order of nature. Spinoza sometimes uses 'perceives' and 'conceives' interchangeably in these contexts (see, e.g., 2p38d), so we can say that for him when we conceive effects through their causes we are explaining the order of nature. This shows that Spinoza regards claims about conceiving one thing through another as claims about the explanation of one thing by another (see also 2p5). Thus the above conditional indicates that Spinoza sees certain causal claims as entailing explanatory claims. If Spinoza does link certain causal claims with explanatory claims in this way, then, we can see why, for him, certain causal contexts would be opaque as well. This is because *if* (g) is true and if conceptual or explanatory contexts are opaque, then, by virtue of the Opacity Transmission Principle, it follows that certain causal contexts are opaque.

Unfortunately, although Spinoza's acceptance of (g) may account for his acceptance of the opacity of certain causal contexts, I see no argument in Spinoza for this conditional, and thus I do not see any argument in Spinoza for the view that certain causal contexts are opaque. Let's assume that the relevant conceptual contexts are opaque. On this assumption, if 'x is caused by y' does entail 'x is conceived through y' then the context '. . . is caused by . . .' would be opaque. But why should the entailment hold? Even if x is conceived through y only under particular descriptions of x and y, why can't it be the case that *under any* descriptions of x and y it is true to say that x is caused by y? Even if being conceived through something else depends on how the relevant things are described, I see no reason why it should follow that simply being caused by some other thing also depends on how the things are described. So Spinoza has not shown us why we should think that (g) holds and

³⁰See 1p3d and 1p6cd2.

thus why we should think that since the relevant conceptual contexts are opaque, then so too are certain causal contexts.

For a similar reason, I also think that Spinoza fails to show that the entailments (e) and (f) hold. Let's assume, as Spinoza must, that the relevant causal contexts are opaque. On this assumption, if 'x is extended' does entail 'x is caused by the extended substance' then the context '. . . is extended' would be opaque. (Again, this follows by virtue of the Opacity Transmission Principle.) But why should this entailment hold? Even if being caused by the extended substance depends on how things are conceived or described, I see no reason why it should follow that simply being extended also depends on how things are described. So, Spinoza has not shown us why we should think the entailment holds and thus why we should think that if the relevant causal contexts are opaque then so too must be the contexts '. . . is extended' and '. . . is thinking'.

There is, in principle, another way to demonstrate the opacity of attribute contexts. If Spinoza were justified in holding that it is *possible* for a mental thing to be identical with a physical thing, then he could be justified in holding that attribute contexts are opaque. This opacity in turn would, as we have seen, help to establish that mental things are actually identical with physical things. So we would be relying on the possibility of trans-attribute identity of modes to establish the actuality of such identity.

The possibility of trans-attribute identity of modes would lead to the conclusion that attribute contexts are opaque in the following way. We would be convinced that the context '. . . is extended' is opaque if an inference of the following form were invalid:

- (4) Mode of extension A is extended.
 - (5) Mode of extension A = mode of thought 1.
- Therefore,
- (6) Mode of thought 1 is extended.

This kind of inference would, of course, be invalid if there is a possible situation in which the premises are true and the conclusion false. This would show that the premises do not entail the conclusion. The first premise, 'mode of extension A is extended', is necessarily true since it follows from the notion of a mode of extension that each such mode is extended. The conclusion, 'mode of

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thought 1 is extended', is false, according to Spinoza, and I think necessarily so. Thus if it is merely *possible* for a mode of extension to be identical with a mode of thought, then it would be possible for both premises to be true and the conclusion false. This is because if it is possible for (5) to be true, then there is a possible situation in which a mode of thought is identical with a mode of extension. In that situation (4) would also be true and (6) would be false. This is because (4) is necessarily true and (6) is necessarily false. Thus if it is possible for (5) to be true, then there is a possible situation in which both premises are true and the conclusion false. But this is just to say that the argument is invalid. But if the argument is invalid then the context '. . . is extended' would be opaque.

A similar line of reasoning would show that the context '. . . is thinking' is opaque.

This would be a legitimate way to show the opacity of attribute contexts, but is it available to Spinoza? It would be available only if Spinoza were to provide a reason for holding that trans-attribute identity of modes is possible. This is something that Spinoza cannot just *assume*, especially in light of the fact that Descartes, to whom Spinoza is to a large extent responding here, has a famous argument for the conclusion that such identity is *impossible*. What then could justify belief in this possibility?

One potential justification is the following. Spinoza holds, as we have seen, that the extended substance is identical with the thinking substance. Now although the substance and the modes of that substance belong to distinct ontological categories for Spinoza, they are each in some broad sense things or individuals (see 2p1 and 2p2 and 2lemma7s). Thus the fact that, according to Spinoza, the extended substance is identical with the thinking substance shows that it is at least possible for a thinking thing to be identical with an extended thing. This possibility might give us confidence in holding that it is possible for a thinking *mode* to be identical with an extended *mode*. Thus, on this line of thought, the identity of the thinking substance and the extended substance would lead to the *possibility* of trans-attribute identity of modes. This possibility would lead to the opacity of attribute contexts and this opacity in turn would undergird Spinoza's argument for the *actuality* of trans-attribute identity of modes. Thus substance identity would lead to a claim of mode identity and, in particular, mind-body identity.

Whether we can be persuaded of the mode identity claim on this basis depends in part on whether Spinoza has good reasons for his claim of substance identity. This is an issue I will not explore here.

At the beginning of this paper, I noted that Spinoza may be drawing an inference from substance identity to mode identity. Now, in investigating the basis for the opacity of attribute contexts, I have again arrived at the issue of the connection between substance identity and mode identity. So, in one sense, we are back where we started. But I believe our journey has not been fruitless. I have defended the numerical identity interpretation of Spinoza from some important objections and I have uncovered an intriguing argument for mind-body identity that may be at work in Spinoza. Equally important, perhaps, is the fact that throughout this process I have taken some steps toward discerning the structure of what Wilson calls Spinoza's "thicket of intensionality."³¹

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