

**"something of it remains":
thought, individuation and the
eternity of the mind**

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INTRODUCTION

This paper weaves together three different theses that are necessary conditions for us to understand and believe Spinoza's notorious claim that: "the human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal" which is made in *Ethics* V, P23.¹ I can't claim to be the originator of any of these theses that I'm going to discuss, but to my knowledge nobody has tried to combine all three of them in order to make sense of *E V*, P23.

This paper will try to help us understand the otherwise "incomprehensible," "dangerous rubbish" of *E V*, P23. "Incomprehensible" and "dangerous rubbish" (familiar terms to all readers of the secondary literature on Spinoza) are the two summary judgements of Edwin Curley and Jonathan Bennett respectively. I think it's useful to treat these as two quite separate objections to the claim made in *E V*, P23 (and to the second half of book five more generally, inasmuch as it follows from *E V*, P23). The Curley objection is that, "in spite of many years of study, I still do not feel that I understand this part of the *Ethics* at all adequately. I feel the freedom to confess that, of course, because I also believe that no one else understands it adequately either."² Or more simply: nobody has a clue what is going on because the second half of Part V from *E V*, P23 onwards is *incomprehensible*. The

Bennett objection is that some people *do* think that they know what is going on, that it is comprehensible, and their attempts to explain how both *E V*, P23 and the identity of mind and body are simultaneously true, makes people write *rubbish* because you can't explain away this kind of fundamental contradiction. In his own words, "it is dangerous: it is rubbish which causes others to write rubbish."³ The reason for Bennett's belief that *E V*, P23 introduces a fundamental contradiction into the *Ethics* is simple enough. Part II of the *Ethics* examines some of the consequences of Spinoza's substance monism. In particular it considers the relationship between our minds and our bodies and insists that: "a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are *one and the same thing*, but expressed in two ways" (*E II*, P7S, emphasis added). This quote is from a scholium (the scholium that immediately follows the 'parallelism doctrine' given by *E II*, P7) because it is the clearest statement of a consequence of the substance monism that underlies the infinity of the attributes. The quote is from the scholium, not because I think this identity claim is in any way peripheral to the *Ethics*, but because both the demonstration and corollary to *E II*, P7 are significantly less clear than the scholium. We can put it this way: my mind and body are the same modification or affection of substance but different modes of Thought and Extension. Bennett argues that the claim in *E V*, P23 that "the human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal" contradicts Spinoza's whole monistic enterprise. He concludes that this claim simply cannot be true, given this modal identity of mind and body.

Anyone, therefore, trying to tackle *E V*, P23, needs to respond to two quite separate charges that require two quite different arguments, in both aim and scope. Sufficient historical context is needed, so that Curley-style bafflement is removed. We also have to deal with Bennett's objection: that even if we can understand what Spinoza is trying to do from *E V*, P23 onwards (and why he is trying to do it), he shouldn't have, because it introduces a glaring contradiction into the *Ethics*. So whereas I think we can remove Curley-style bafflement with historical context alone, Bennett's charge of flagrant contradiction will require both broad historical context and close textual argumentation. The first part of this paper will deal with the Curley-style problem by sketching out some of the historical detail to at least make sense of what is being attempted in the second half of Part V of the *Ethics*. I am confident that what I'm going to argue for in the second half of this paper answers Bennett's charge of contradiction, but this is the beginning of a larger project, and trying to circumvent the law of identity is always a delicate, dialectical, dance.

The first part of the paper follows the path laid down first by Steven Nadler in his *Spinoza's Heresy* and "Eternity and Immortality in Spinoza's *Ethics*."⁴ It supplements Nadler's work with extra detail from Adler's more recent "Mortality of the soul from Alexander of Aphrodisias to Spinoza."⁵ This section will sketch out, in a massively condensed manner, the various twists and turns in a lineage sometimes referred to as Alexandrian, sometimes, perhaps more familiarly, as Averroist, but if we wish a more conceptual, less personal label, we can call it *monopsychist*. But in following the work of Nadler and Adler, it is important to recognize the (explicit and self-imposed) limits of their work. Nadler in his book, *Spinoza's Heresy*, is specifically addressing the mystery of why Spinoza was thrown out of the Jewish community in Amsterdam and why the *cherem* was so severe and never revoked. His answer, which I find compelling, is that Spinoza was (even at that early part of his life) denying the truth of personal immortality. This denial, as Nadler makes clear, was not an aberration or innovation of Spinoza's. It follows in the (Rabbinically) acceptable footsteps of Maimonides and the less acceptable ones of Gersonides. Why then was Spinoza treated so harshly? Nadler's answer is twofold. The group of rabbis in Amsterdam had all argued strongly for a concept of personal immortality. Arguing against it was therefore a direct challenge to their authority. This, on its own though, is not sufficient to explain the severity of the *cherem*. As Nadler points out, questions about the soul and its survival after death are "a matter not of *halachah*, of law and prescribed ritual, but of *aggadah* (storytelling)."⁶ The second part of the answer has to lie in the theological-political situation of the Netherlands and of the Jewish community within it. Spinoza's denial of personal immortality was not merely a challenge to the authority of the rabbis in Amsterdam, it was also a potential threat to the status of the Jewish community in Amsterdam itself. This may seem like an over-the-top possibility but it was one that was felt to be very real.

The use of the ban, then, in addition to its internal social function in regulating conduct among the congregation's members, was a public—indeed, political—act that was meant to communicate to the Dutch authorities the message that the Jews ran a well-ordered community; that they—in accordance with the conditions laid down by the city when it granted them the right to practice openly—tolerated no breaches in proper Jewish behavior or doctrine.⁷

Complicating the theological-political situation still further was the question of those *conversos* who remained still on the Iberian peninsula. The question of their salvation or not was a live and bitter debate amongst the Marranos in Amsterdam.

Spinoza's denial of personal immortality was not simply an abstract philosophical point. It managed to intersect with every point of personal, political and theological tension within the Jewish community in Amsterdam.

But if the two objections to the second part of Part V of the *Ethics* are that it is on the one hand incomprehensible, and on the other hand dangerous rubbish, then Nadler and Adler's works only really address the former worry. They provide much desperately needed historical context for what Spinoza was trying to do. Nevertheless, Spinoza, unlike *any* of the monopsychists before him argues for the *identity* of mind and body. In other words, Nadler and Adler may now help us to reach a position where we understand what Spinoza was trying to do, whilst still agreeing with Bennett that the very attempt is "dangerous nonsense." We may have to choose: we can be a monopsychist, or a substance monist, but not both. There is, after all, historical precedent for Bennett's intemperance in an important figure in Spinoza's thought, that is mostly absent from both Nadler and Adler's accounts: Hesdai Crescas, and he was both *not* an Aristotelian *and* thought monopsychism was dangerous rubbish.

The second part of the paper therefore needs to address the problem that the claim, "The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal" (*E V*, P23) seems to contradict the identity of mind and body. If my mind and my body are the same thing, then surely destroying one, destroys the other. The first part of the paper gives an historical context to see why Spinoza might have wanted to make this claim. The second part needs to show why it is not nonsense. In order to do so, it will first discuss the knotty issue of the diversity of the attributes. How can they constitute the essence of the same substance without simply being the same? The real puzzle of the attributes is not: how can there be an infinity of them when we perceive only two? The real puzzle is: how can there be more than one of them and not more than one substance? Once that has been addressed, then I will turn to focus on the attribute of Extension. I will do so in order to argue that what Extension does is provide us with a *ground of individuation*. It is by understanding how bodies are *numerically* individuated by the attribute of Extension, as they previously had been by the accidental form of Quantity in scholastic Aristotelianism, and what this means for the ideas that they are, that we can start to address the second worry, that *E V*, P23 is comprehensible, yes, but still dangerous, contradictory, rubbish.

PART ONE: MONOPSYCHISM

In his article, “Gersonides on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Agent Intellect” Feldman gives the best introduction that I could hope for, to the first story that I need to tell:

In *De anima* book three, chapter five Aristotle distinguished two aspects in the activity of intellection or knowing: one active, the other passive. His remarks are notoriously obscure, and they have occasioned an enormous exegetical literature from antiquity to our own day. Besides laying the foundations of an epistemological edifice that remained intact for many centuries, Aristotle also suggested that the active factor in knowing is eternal and immortal. Thus, he retained in some form Plato’s belief that there is a link between knowledge and immortality. Several of the leading ancient and medieval interpreters of Aristotle developed this suggestion into a complex doctrine of immortality, the main thesis of which was the idea that human perfection consists in union or conjunction with the active power in knowledge.⁸

Four things are worth highlighting here. Firstly, Feldman goes on to argue that Gersonides does *not* have a doctrine of union, or conjunction with the Agent Intellect. According to Feldman, Gersonides held that such a union was impossible. What we could strive for is a strictly intellectual *imitation* of the truths known by the Agent Intellect. Nothing of us lives on. Our true ideas as contemplated by the Agent Intellect do. Secondly, I’m still not exactly sure what is meant by this denial of conjunction with the Agent Intellect. Conjunction is an incredibly obscure term—not helped by it being one of those terms that traces its lineage back to both an Aristotelian *and* a neo-Platonic heritage. For a term that becomes so important to rationalist Aristotelians, it has some seriously mystical Plotinian roots. I find this fascinating but have only just begun to scratch the surface of this particular problem of what we are supposed to think conjunction is. I’m going to return to this point very shortly, but first I need to finish my remarks on the Feldman quote. So, to return to that: thirdly, describing the passage from *De anima* as “obscure” is supremely kind. If it had been written by anybody other than Aristotle, nobody would have tried to decode it. Fourthly: to say that the medieval commentators used this passage from Aristotle to develop a ‘complex’ theory of immortality is a masterpiece of understatement. And on top of this, it’s not like there’s any contemporary fixed scholarly consensus on any of the “complex doc-

trines” of Averroës, Maimonides, or Gersonides to name just three of the relevant main players. Disagreement built on complexity founded on obscurity is a not unkind way to see the debates around the Agent Intellect.

The Agent Intellect

In the title of his article, Feldman writes of ‘the Agent Intellect.’ What does this refer to? Recall that Aristotle had introduced a distinction between “two aspects in the activity of intellection or knowing: one active, the other passive.” We need to jump forwards 500 years to Alexander of Aphrodisias, a major commentator on Aristotle (in fact, until Averroës, it was Alexander who was known as ‘The Commentator’). It was Alexander who

introduced terminology that set the terms for later discussions of the soul and its fate. The soul in its initial form [that is, its passive aspect is] is called the *material* (or *hylic*) intellect, which is no more than a disposition or potentiality to understand. Being merely a disposition, the material intellect perishes when the body perishes. This potentiality can only be actualised by something that is itself [always-already] in act, namely, the *agent* (or *active*) intellect. If this intellectual potentiality becomes sufficiently developed, the person attains an *acquired intellect*, which is not subject to decay, and is thus immortal. For Alexander, it does this by achieving what is called conjunction with the *agent intellect*. Alexander himself identifies this agent intellect with God, though others describe it otherwise: for Thomas Aquinas, it is part of the human soul; for Gersonides it is the separate intellect governing the sublunary realm. This theory of the soul in its various manifestations came to be known as the theory of the acquired intellect.⁹

What the inclusion of Aquinas on this list shows, is that a belief in the Agent Intellect does not *necessarily* lead to a denial of personal immortality. In 1270, Aquinas publishes a text, *On the Unity of the Intellect: Against the Averroists* precisely attacking this denial.¹⁰ But this belief *can* lead to a denial of personal immortality, and, unless you’re being very careful, the history of philosophy shows that it often does. Averroës and Averroism do seem to remain an ever-present problem for Christian Aristotelians. The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) was merely the latest attempt to stamp it out following the three prior Paris Condemnations (of 1210, 1270 and 1277); though its requirement for philosophers to defend the

theory of personal immortality was new. We can see the long shadow Averroism and the Fifth Lateran Council cast even in Descartes' *Meditations*, its subtitle being, "in which are demonstrated the existence of God and the immortality of the soul." You don't need to demonstrate the immortality of the soul, unless there is some debate and doubt that it might not be immortal. Jumping back two hundred and some years, the 1270 Paris condemnation gives us a usefully condensed list of the problematic claims that Averroists were committed to:

1. The claim of the unicity of the intellect in all human beings;
2. the related denial that an individual human being understands;
3. the rejection of human freedom;
4. whether based on determinism by heavenly bodies;
8. or by the object desired;
5. the affirmation of the eternity of the world (denial of creationism);
6. and of human beings;
7. the mortality of the human soul;
8. a denial that it suffers from fire after death;
10. the rejection of God's knowledge of individuals;
11. or of things other than himself;
12. or of his providence;
13. or of his power to endow a mortal body with the gift of immortality.¹¹

I think it isn't much of a stretch to see all of these theses to a greater or lesser extent recapitulated, or explicitly rejected in Spinoza's own thought. The interesting ones of course, are the first two. One immediate difference between this condemned Averroism and Spinoza is that in the *Ethics*, despite being finite in power and duration, individual humans do manage to understand. Consequently, the relationship of the infinite intellect, the immediate infinite mode of Thought to finite thoughts, is not the Aristotelian one of actuality to potentiality or form to matter. Nor (and this is one area where I remain in absolute agreement with Deleuze's reading of Spinoza) is an immanent cause the same as an emanative one. To put it utterly schematically: finite modes are *modifications* of the infinite, not *creatures* of the infinite. *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata* is a purely conceptual distinction, not a real one. As Hallett puts it, substance is "not a 'thing' but self-realizing and self-manifesting agency," and "agency involves both a power of *acting* and the expression of that power in something enacted, a doing and a deed, and in action *par excellence* that which is enacted is the exhaustive expression of the potency."¹² Substance as infinite acting-action, not merely infinite being. It is

the task of the final section to show how Spinoza can use his own metaphysics of substance, attributes, infinite and finite modes to achieve the results that were striven for by Alexander, Averroës and their heirs.

Conclusion to the first part

This first part has sketched out an historical narrative whereby an Aristotelian distinction between an aspect of the intellect that is both mortal and passive and an aspect that is eternal and active gets taken up and developed by a series of Greek, Arabic, and Christian thinkers. The most important consequence of this Aristotelian heritage was the continuing denial, in various forms, of personal immortality. This denial of personal immortality, from Alexander of Aphrodisias, through Averroës, simultaneously though esoterically in Maimonides, openly discussed and transformed by Gersonides and Narboni, and firmly rejected by Crescas, was still a live issue in the Dutch Republic such that it had to be denied in 1619 as part of the political settlement of Jews in Amsterdam. Spinoza's denial of personal immortality may not have strictly been unorthodox for a Jew but his *cherem* was an explicable reaction from a precarious minority community that was always nervous about heterodoxy and that was being led by a group of rabbis who had personally argued against denials of personal immortality.

PART TWO: THE IDENTITY CATASTROPHE

Although I often think of *E V*, P23, "The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal," as breaking the *parallelism* of *E II*, P7,¹³ which affirms that the, "order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things," it actually violates a more fundamental idea, the law of identity:

a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same *thing*,
but expressed in two ways.
(*E II*, P7S, emphasis added)

I don't want to get entangled in the question of whether ideas are primarily representational or not. That would be a whole different paper. When Spinoza writes that "the idea that constitutes the formal being of the human mind is the idea of a body" in the demonstration to *E II*, P15, this means that whatever it is that we think that ideas do (e.g., represent, plan, think, contemplate), putting that prob-

lem to one side, we know that whatever the mind *is*, it is the same *thing* as some particular, singular, body. This means that if a body is destroyed, the idea that that body *is*, is destroyed too. That's just how identity is supposed to work. Except that *E V*, P23 says, no: that "something of it remains, that is eternal." We need to strictly separate these two claims, that something remains and that it is eternal. When Spinoza says that eternity has nothing to do with time or duration, he is not trying to smuggle in concepts like sempiternity. "By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing" (*E I*, D8). In logic, what are referred to as 'modal properties' are the concepts of necessity and possibility. Eternity then is a modal property in *that* sense; it means a kind of necessity that follows from a definition of an eternal thing.¹⁴ "Feeling and experiencing that we are eternal" as Spinoza claims we do in the scholium to *E V*, P23,¹⁵ does not license claims about either immortality or sempiternity. To move from eternity in Spinoza's sense, to claims around immortality or sempiternity, such claims involve a logical error. This claim about knowing that we are eternal is the best, if still thin, evidence that Spinoza had read Moses of Narbonne's *Treatise on the Perfection of the Soul*.¹⁶ This matters as it is a commentary of Averroës' claim that we can achieve conjunction with the Agent Intellect whilst alive. I don't believe either Maimonides or Gersonides make this kind of claim, and so, assuming that this is not simply an original deduction of Spinoza's, this would be evidence that he was familiar with Narbonne's work and by extension, at least via this intermediary, with Averroës too.

Back to trying not to violate the law of identity: we know that when it comes to intentional systems and descriptions, the law of identity *is* routinely violated. I can know that Venus is hot, but not know that Phosphorus (the Ancient Greek name for the planet Venus) is hot too.¹⁷ But the latter is an epistemic problem, not an ontological one. When it comes to the laws of logic, we have developed intuitionist logics that do not use the law of the excluded middle; we can employ dialethic logics that cautiously abandons the rule of non-contradiction.¹⁸ The three fundamental laws of logic after Aristotle of identity, non-contradiction and the excluded middle are now taken to be, with appropriate care and technical caveats, not quite as binding as Aristotle thought. So it's not like there isn't some available conceptual wriggle room *vis à vis* Spinoza's mind-body identity. However, as much as I dislike readings of Spinoza that prioritise the principle of sufficient reason, I'm not going to argue that Spinoza is a dialethic, dialectical intuitionist thinker of vague predicates; these simply are not options conceptually available to the seventeenth century.

But if we turn to the history of philosophy *before* the seventeenth century, is there anything there we could deploy, or argue that Spinoza could deploy, to loosen the iron bonds of identity? Well, with some caution, yes. That something is Scotus' concept of formal distinction. Before explaining what this concept is, I need to describe the problem that the concept was invented to resolve. This problem follows from the Scholastic belief that God is *simple*. What does it mean to say that God is simple? It means that a number of distinctions, e.g. between form and matter, act and potency, essence and existence, do not apply. It also means that God does not have parts. Most problematically (for this discussion), it means that there is no difference between a property and the subject of that property. I may be essentially human, essentially both an animal and rational but even in the case of essential properties there is a difference between the subject and the properties. The subject is that which has those properties. In the case of God, this is no longer true. When we say that God is good, we are not predicating a property of God because to do so would be to make God complex. He would be a Subject that *has* properties. There would be an ontological difference between God and one of his properties. Apart from the general oddity of this position on God's simplicity (we are so used to having a subject-property distinction that not having one is hard to imagine), it raises the question of the distinction of God's attributes. If God *is* good and God *is* wise then because of the transitivity of identity (if A=B and A=C, then B=C) then goodness and wisdom must be the same. But they're not. An almost equivalent problem arises with regard to the Trinity. How is it "possible to have a trinity of Persons with a unity of essence"?¹⁹ As I remarked at the start of this paper, readers of Spinoza have wondered about why we know only two attributes when there are meant to be an infinity of them. Does this mean that there are only two attributes because infinite really means 'all' not 'uncountably many'? An equally pressing problem though, is: how can there be more than one attribute when they constitute the essence of the same substance?

I'm not the first person to suggest that Scotus' concept of formal distinction might be helpful in understanding the diversity of attributes and the unity of substance. Although I think he gets some of the details wrong, I think Deleuze is the first one to argue for this idea in his book *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*.²⁰ More recently, there's a convincing article by Andreas Schmidt in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics* that also argues for the attributes being formally distinct from one another.²¹ I also have to mention Thomas Carson Mark's scandalously under-utilised "The Spinozistic Attributes" which, although it mentions neither Scotus nor formal distinction, does give the best non-theological account of how

we should understand the diversity of the attributes and their relationship to substance and to each other.²² The importance of the concept of formal distinction is, as Schmidt notes, twofold:

The formal difference of divine attributes is, however, not to be mistaken for a conceptual difference, viz., with differences that exist only *in mente*; rather, the different predications have different ‘truth makers’ in the thing itself. ... Duns Scotus’s radical thesis seems to commit him to suspending the converse of the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles—the *Principle of the Indiscernibility of Identicals*—so that it is possible that, although x and y are identical, x has different properties from y.²³

I think we need to pause for a moment and repeat that final sentence in order to recognise how far from a commonsensical solution Scotus’ concept of formal distinction is: “it is possible that, although x and y are identical, x has different properties from y.” I really like how Schmidt puts this with this suspension of the ‘principle of the indiscernibility of identicals.’ X and Y can be *identical* and yet X may have different properties from Y. Recall that earlier I pointed out a problem that follows from the transitivity of identity: if A=B and A=C, then B=C. The simplest way of understanding what suspending the ‘principle of the indiscernibility of identicals’ (the converse of Leibniz’s ‘identity of indiscernibles’) means, is that this transitivity of identity no longer holds; although God is good and God is wise, His goodness and wisdom are not identical and are discernible. If the principle of the identity of indiscernibles is refereed to as Leibniz’s Law, I’m going to name the suspension of the transitivity of identity, Duns’ Law.

Just how far does Duns’ Law stretch? If we think that the difference between the attributes is a formal one, then it stretches as far as everything but that is not quite what I meant. Broadie suggests that even a thing, and that thing’s existence could be formally distinct.²⁴ Does this mean that we could say: yes, a body and its mind are the same modification of substance; however: because the attributes through which these modifications of substance are perceived are only formally distinct, we can say that one exists and one does not? And this is the problem with formal distinction: it can appear to be ‘magic juice’ that solves all the problems one may have without making anything clearer. To put it another way, there remains an important and difficult open question: just how *far* can formal distinction violate Leibniz’s Law before it becomes “dangerous rubbish”? We may want to immediately insist that Duns’ Law is “dangerous rubbish.” Ockham did so. We may accept

that the Father is not the same Person as the Son whilst insisting that they share the same essence. But we may also insist that formal distinction only applies in this very specific and restricted claim. Spinoza, though, needs parts of a mind to exist once its body has been destroyed, despite them being the same thing. I'll return to this later. Turning back to Schmidt, I'll note that he makes no mention of Mark's paper on the Spinozistic attributes. This is unfortunate because Mark offers us a model, a non-theological example, of how on earth Duns' Law can actually apply to things other than God and thereby showing that formal distinction is a viable concept. It is Mark's account of the attributes that I will discuss next.

Mark points to a number of examples where we can sensibly talk of 'the same thing' being expressed in different ways which do not commit us to saying that there is an extra hidden term, the thing that is being expressed. Different performances of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony express the same thing: Beethoven's Fifth, without there needing to be this thing, Beethoven's Fifth, that exists in any way separate from its performances. We can also have texts stored in different mediums: physically as human readable text, pits in a CD-Rom, electron potentials in RAM, in the cloud, etc. Most interesting is Mark's suggestion that the attributes function analogously to languages. We can think of English as Extension and Latin as Thought. If we take something complicated like a philosophical treatise written in Latin and translate it into English, although the order and connection of the concepts are the same, individual words and phrases will differ. Or more simply: *nix alba est* if and only if "snow is white." These two sentences mean the same thing. They have the same meaning. We can say that they are essentially the same thing, expressed in different ways (modes). Mark's point is that there is an analogy between the way substance is fully expressed in each attribute and meaning is fully expressed in each language so that a mode of one attribute is the same thing as a mode of another attribute in an analogous way to how a sentence in one language is the same sentence in another language.

These non-theological examples matter precisely because Scotus thought his formal distinction only applied to the divine persons. But we can also provide a more seventeenth century example. Descartes' realisation of the identity of geometry and algebra offers us both a clear and historically relevant example of regimes that are formally distinct yet essentially identical. However, formal distinction and Duns' Law is still not yet enough to give us an adequate response to Bennett's objection, though I do think it's another vital piece of the argument.

Intermediate conclusion

So where have we got to so far? There are two kinds of objections to the eternity of parts of the mind after the death of the body. Curley's "incomprehensible" and Bennett's "dangerous rubbish." The historical work done so far has, I hope, moved us out of Curley's fog. It has also, I hope at least, weakened Bennett's worries. *E V*, P23 may still *fail*, but hopefully it is not rubbish; this kind of historical work can only ever be a necessary step, it can't be sufficient in the sense of replacing a careful reading of the text. However, I don't think this is the complete story—we need one more piece of the puzzle to help mitigate Bennett's criticism.

Extension and Individuality

Taking on board the work of Nadler and Adler moves the problem of the eternity of the mind away from being both incomprehensible and nonsense. It moves it into a complicated historical lineage of monopsychism that goes back to Aristotle. Recognising this gives rise to a new problem. The monopsychist lineage is conceptually beholden to an Aristotelian framework. But Spinoza is not an Aristotelian. Actually that's probably putting it too strongly. I think we can safely describe Hume, for example, as not an Aristotelian, but Spinoza, like Descartes and Leibniz are *post*-Aristotelian. Their philosophies are still defined in many ways by their reactions *to* Aristotelian scholasticism as well as their borrowings *from* it and rejections *of* it. As Wolfson so memorably puts it:

In the case of the *Ethics* of Spinoza, there is, on the one hand, an explicit Spinoza, whom we shall call Benedictus. It is he who speaks in definitions, axioms, and propositions; it is he, too, who reasons according to the rigid method of the geometer. Then there is, on the other hand, the implicit Spinoza, who lurks behind these definitions, axioms, and propositions, only occasionally revealing himself in the scholia; his mind is crammed with traditional philosophic lore and his thought turns along the beaten logical paths of mediaeval reasoning. Him we shall call Baruch. Benedictus is the first of the moderns; Baruch is the last of the mediaevals.²⁵

We need to balance, or combine, our reading of the *Ethics* so that Baruch and Benedictus produce one, consistent doctrine. We need then to move from the first stage of historical reconstruction in which we can now recognise in broad brush terms what it is that Spinoza might be trying to theorise in the second half

of Part V of the *Ethics*, to slightly more detailed questions about *how* he might think that, “something of the mind remains that is eternal.” To do that we need to talk still more about the attributes. Although the concept of formal distinction and the more contemporary analogy with geometry and algebra gives us vital conceptual tools to understand how Thought and Extension relate to one another, above all, we need to understand what it is that Extension *does*. We need to do this extra work because although placing Spinoza’s discussion of the eternity of the mind in this monopsychist lineage helps to make sense of what it is that Spinoza is trying to do in the second half of Part V of the *Ethics*, it does not show us that he succeeds; where succeeding would mean that the eternity of the mind after the destruction of the body contradicts neither the identity of the mind and its body, nor that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of causes.

Quantity

There are a number of clues as to how we should understand what it is that the attribute of Extension *does*, especially if we don’t just think of it as a passive container on the model of Newton’s Absolute Space. If Thought thinks, can we say that Extension extends? Yes, but only in a highly specific way. So what are these clues? Well the biggest clue is Spinoza’s account of the common notions, specifically in his use of the phrase “equally in the part as in the whole.” This is not a uniquely Spinozist turn of phrase. In fact, the use of this phrase strongly indicates that Spinoza was both aware of, and making use of, a particular set of ideas from scholastic philosophy. The doctrine that encapsulates these ideas can be traced back to (at least) Plotinus and Augustine. The label by which this doctrine is now known, ‘holenmerism,’ originates with Henry More, the Cambridge, seventeenth-century, Platonist. He coined it in chapter 28 of his *Enchiridion metaphysicum*.²⁶ *This is published in 1671, so it’s extremely doubtful that Spinoza would have read it, but as I just said, although the term for the doctrine is modern, the doctrine itself is not. What are these ideas that make up the doctrine of holenmerism?* They are summarised in the following eight points:²⁷

1. Scholastic Aristotelianism happily includes both material and immaterial entities.
2. What makes an entity material is that it depends on prime matter, immaterial ones do not.
3. Immaterial entities include God, human souls and angels.

4. We now may think of immaterial entities as transcendent to the world lacking any place in it; this is not the scholastic view. On the contrary, for a scholastic Aristotelian, immaterial entities absolutely have a *place* and *location* and are *extended* in the world, just not in the way material bodies are.
5. Material bodies, formed from prime matter, are extended in the world such that they are composed of ‘parts *outside* of parts’ (think Lego).
6. What makes prime matter extended, what gives things ‘parts outside of parts’, is the accidental form of QUANTITY.
7. Holenmerism is a doctrine about how immaterial entities are also extended but in a different way to material bodies. To take the example of a human soul: it is located in the human body, but it is located *wholly in each part of the body and wholly in the whole of the body*; or, as Spinoza will put it: “equally in the part and in the whole.”
8. Some scholastics try to extend the idea of holenmerism to material entities. Descartes runs with this usage and suggests that the “form of heaviness” is present equally in any part of a body as it is in the whole of it.²⁸

Given Spinoza’s use of the phrase “equally in the part and in the whole” in Part II, Propositions 37–39 of the *Ethics*, I think Spinoza’s account of the common notions is derived from the doctrine of holenmerism (via Descartes but also Heereboord). That the framework that Spinoza employs to create the common notions borrows from the scholastic tradition of ‘holenmerism’ is something I have argued for elsewhere.²⁹ For the purposes of this paper, I will take it as a given. The central thesis of the argument is that a particularly obscure phrase—“equally in the part and in the whole”—as the constitutive feature of the common notions is made intelligible by understanding it as Spinoza’s version of the doctrine of holenmerism. What this implies is that the attribute of Extension has taken the place of the Aristotelian category of quantity. The attribute of Extension is what makes substance corporeal in the sense of being composed of ‘parts outside of parts.’ This is, I recognise, a bold claim. Do I have any additional textual evidence? I think there is, in the scholium to *E I*, P15 (emphasis added):

by body we understand any *quantity*, with length, breadth, and depth, limited by some certain figure [*quod per corpus intelligimus quamcunque quantitatem, longam, latam et profundam, certa aliqua figura terminatam*]

This is I suggest, a very odd formulation. What is the word ‘quantity’ doing here? Why isn’t it just *res*, thing, as he says in *E II*, D1:

By body I understand a mode that in a certain and determinate way expresses God's essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing (*res extensa*)

Note also, that it's not: "by body I understand any quantity *of things*." To speak of quantity in this manner, as a noun, rather than an adjective, would have had an obvious meaning to Spinoza's seventeenth-century readers. We may now think that to write 'extended body' is otiose. An unextended body is a *contradictio in adjecto*. This was not the case (or not necessarily the case, it was a matter of debate) for scholastic philosophy. A body became an extended body only when it involved the form of quantity. Spinoza is alluding to—and in the context of the people he is discussing, I think that this would have been obvious to his contemporaries—the form of quantity, that which gives things their extension.

Let us assume that the attribute of Extension replaces the category of quantity and does the same job (at least with regard to the finite modes). How does this help with *E V, P23*? If modifications of substance *qua* bodies are extended by the attribute of extension, this means that ideas are *not*. Does this mean that ideas are unlocated, unplaced, dimensionless and even transcendent? No. To repeat the fourth point of my list: immaterial entities absolutely have a *place* and *location* and are *extended* in the world, just not in the way material bodies are. Bodies are extended *partes extra partes*. Ideas are extended "*tota in toto corpore et tota in qualibet parte*" which translates as "wholly in the whole body and wholly in each part."³⁰ This has some weird consequences.³¹ The soul, as form of the body, is understood to exist equally in any part of the body as in the whole of the body. This has the slightly odd, or counter-intuitive (at least to our modern intuitions) result that if I lose, for example, a finger, I don't lose any part of my soul, because my soul isn't made up of parts such that it can be divided in that way. Whereas extended things can have bits snapped off them, immaterial entities cannot. I'd say this is true for Spinoza's mind too. But doesn't Spinoza's mind have parts—presumably as many parts as the body that it is the idea of does? Yes. But these will be intensively, not extensively, individuated in terms of function. There's one final weird consequence of ideas not being extended. Yes, ideas still have location, they are co-extensive with the body that they are, but they are not thereby limited to just the one body. I think that when two people have the same adequate idea, they really do have the *same* (i.e. numerically identical) adequate idea. I need to correct something I just said. It would be more accurate to say that yes, an adequate idea has a location but I should have said: they are co-extensive with the *bodies* that

they are. Ideas, both adequate and inadequate constitute our essence. We therefore cannot say that an idea belongs to any person, they make up part of the mind of a person. An adequate idea constitutes a part of any mind that has attained it; an adequate idea constitutes a part of any *minds* that attain it. Adequate ideas are not *mine*, they are always-already *us*.

This is the final piece of the puzzle. The destruction of my body no more destroys an adequate idea, than the loss of a finger destroys part of a soul.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that there are two quite separate categories of problem with *E V*, P23 which are respectively formulated by Curley and Bennett. Curley's incomprehension can be addressed by a recognition that what Spinoza is attempting to do fits within a long lineage of monopsychism that originates with Alexander of Aphrodisias and was still a live, or at least a recognisable option in the seventeenth century. Leibniz saw this clearly and put Spinoza in this tradition.³² But recognising that Spinoza is part of a monopsychist or Averroist tradition is not the same as saying that he should have been, or that he was a successful part of this tradition. Bennett's objection is that the identity of mind and body means that we simply cannot make sense of the claim that when one is destroyed, something of the other remains. I have focused primarily on this part of the claim, rather than the eternity part of the claim. In order to make sense of this, we do always run the risk of writing rubbish. But what I have argued for in the second half of the paper is that the identity of mind and body has considerably more wriggle room than that simple assertion of identity might make one think. In particular, the non-corporeal nature of ideas, their hollenmeric nature means that adequate ideas never simply belong to, or make up, me alone. Whereas inadequate ideas, or passions, individuated as they are by the body that I am, are uniquely and strictly dependent on the continued existence of my body, my adequate ideas are not. In conclusion then: what makes me, *me* cannot be my adequate ideas. Spinoza is at great pains to stress that the more adequate ideas two people have, the more they agree in nature. In a very real sense although adequate ideas may be part of me (and the ethical project is for as much as our mind as possible to be adequate), they aren't *mine*.

This is what it means to truly reject an account of personal immortality: It is only our inadequacies that define us.

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NOTES

1. Mens humana non potest cum corpore absolute destrui; sed ejus aliquid remanet, quod aeternum est.
2. Edwin M. Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza's Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, 84.
3. Jonathan Francis Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 374.
4. Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind*. Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 2001, and idem, "Eternity and Immortality in Spinoza's *Ethics*." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 26:1 (2002, 40-52).
5. Jacob Adler, "Mortality of the Soul from Alexander of Aphrodisias to Spinoza." *Spinoza and Medieval Jewish Studies*. Ed. Steven Nadler. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 13-35.
6. Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy*, 42.
7. Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy*, 21.
8. Seymour Feldman, "Gersonides on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Agent Intellect." *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 3 (April 1978, 99). Seymour is referring to the following passage: "Thought, as we have described it, is what it is by virtue of becoming all things, while there is another which is what it is by virtue of making all things: this is a sort of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential colours into actual colours. Thought in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity (for always the active is superior to the passive factor, the originating force to the matter). Actual knowledge is identical with its object: in the individual, potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge, but absolutely it is not prior even in time. It does not sometimes think and sometimes not think. When separated it is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal (we do not remember because, while this is impassible, passive thought is perishable); and without this nothing thinks." Aristotle, "On the Soul [De Anima]." *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Ed. by Jonathan Barnes. Trans. J. A. Smith. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984, bk. 3.5.
9. Adler, "Mortality of the Soul," 17; emphasis in italics is original, I've highlighted the phrase "agent intellect."
10. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists*. Trans. Beatrice H. Zedler. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1968.
11. John Wippel, "The Parisian Condemnations of 1270 and 1277." *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. Eds Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2003, 65; the non-sequential ordering is due to Wippel.
12. Harold Foster Hallett, *Benedict de Spinoza: The Elements of His Philosophy*. Bristol: Thoemmes, 1957, 13 and 9 (emphasis in original).
13. The term 'parallelism' as a description of Spinoza's system always puts me in mind of Churchill's comment about democracy. We can say that parallelism is the worst possible description of Spinoza's system, apart from all the others. As a term it clearly has a better resonance with Leibniz's pre-established harmony and it should be no surprise that it seems to have been first coined by a nineteenth century Leibnizian, Alexandre Louis Foucher de Careil, who was attempting to show how mistaken all of Spinoza's ideas were. Alexandre Louis Foucher de Careil, *Réfutation Inédite de Spinoza, Précédée d'Un Mémoire Par A. Foucher de Careil*, 1854. <https://philpapers.org/rec/LEIRID-3>. First translated as *A Refutation Recently Discovered of Spinoza by Leibnitz*. Trans. Octavius Freire Owen. Edinburgh: T. Constable and co, 1855.
14. For an excellent discussion of this idea in its historical context see Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "Eternity in Early Modern Philosophy." *Eternity*. Ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 129-67.
15. For a truly thorough discussion of the linkage between experience and eternity, see Pierre-François Moreau, *Spinoza: l'expérience et l'éternité*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994.
16. See Alfred L. Ivry, "Moses of Narbonne's Treatise, 'The Perfection of the Soul.' A Partial Edition from the Paris Ms., with Translation and Notes." Dissertations submitted at Brandeis University, Philosophy Department, 1963. See

- also Alfred L. Ivry, "Moses of Narbonne's 'Treatise on the Perfection of the Soul': A Methodological and Conceptual Analysis." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57:4 (1967, 271–97).
17. Sometimes Spinoza does seem to treat the attributes as if they were names.
18. There are some readings of dialectics that suggest it's what a logic without the law of identity would look like.
19. R. G. Wengert, "The Development of the Doctrine of the Formal Distinction in the 'Lectura Prima' of John Duns Scotus." *The Monist* 49 :4 (1965, 573).
20. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*. Paris: Ed. de Minuit, 1968. Translated as *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Zone Books, 1990, chap. 3.
21. Andreas Schmidt, "Substance Monism and Identity Theory in Spinoza." *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics*. Ed. Olli Koistinen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. My preceding discussion of God's simplicity is indebted to Schmidt's account.
22. Thomas Carson Mark, "The Spinozistic Attributes." *Philosophia* 7:1 (1977, 55–82).
23. Schmidt, "Substance Monism and Identity Theory in Spinoza," 92. This is not something I will discuss any further, but it is worth noting that having Spinoza employ formal distinction and therefore deny the complete applicability of the Identity of Indiscernibles, is a serious and so far previously unrecognized problem for those interpreters who stress Spinoza's use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason.
24. Alexander Broadie, "Scotus on God's Relation to the World." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 7:1 (1999, 10).
25. Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934, Vol. I, vii.
26. More, Henry More, *Enchiridion metaphysicum, sive, De rebus incorporeis succincta & luculenta dissertatio. Pars prima de exsistentia & natura rerum incorporearum in genere: in qua quamplurima mundi phaenomena ad leges Cartesii mechanicas obiter expenduntur illiusque philosophiae & aliorum omnino omnium qui mundana phaenomena in causas purè mechanicas solvi posse supponunt vanitas falsitasque detegitur*. Londini: Typis E. Flesher : Prostat apud Guilielmum Morden, 1671.
27. This summary is entirely indebted to the following works: Robert Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes, 1274-1671*. Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 2011, and Pasnau, "On Existing All at Once." *God, Eternity, and Time*. Ed. Christian Tapp. Burlington: Ashgate, 11-28, 2011. Marleen Rozemond, "Descartes, Mind-Body Union, and Holenmerism." *Philosophical Topics* 31:1/2 (2003, 343-67), and Rozemond, "Pasnau on the Material-Immaterial Divide in Early Modern Philosophy." *Philosophical Studies* 171:1 (2014, 3-16). The extension of the idea of holonmerism to Spinoza's common notions is my own.
28. "I conceived of heaviness [*gravitas*] as if it were some sort of real quality, which inhered in solid bodies [...] And although I imagined heaviness to be scattered throughout the whole body that is heavy, I still did not attribute to it the extension which constitutes the nature of a body. For the true extension of a body is such as to exclude any interpenetration of the parts, whereas I thought that there was the same amount of heaviness in a ten foot piece of wood as in one foot lump of gold or other metal – indeed I thought that the whole of the heaviness could be contracted to a mathematical point. Moreover, I saw that the heaviness, while remaining coextensive with the heavy body, could exercise all its force in any one part of the body; for if the body were hung from a rope attached to any part of it, it would still pull the rope down with all its force, just as if all the heaviness existed in the part actually touching the rope instead of being scattered through the remaining parts. This is exactly the way in which I now understand the mind to be coextensive with the body—the whole mind in the whole body and the whole mind in any one of its parts." René

Descartes, "Author's Replies to the Sixth Set of Objections." *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Trans. John Cottingham. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 2:297–98; emphasis added and translation slightly modified.

29. Jon Rubin, "Spinoza, holism and the common notions 2p37-2p39." (https://www.academia.edu/35270798/Spinoza_holism_and_the_common_notions_2p37-2p39_1)

30. William Ockham, "Tract. de Corp. Christi." *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1967, chap. 12, and idem, *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1967, Vol. X, 114. Cited in Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 56.

31. Calling it weird is not anachronistic. Plenty of scholastic *and* early modern thinkers thought the doctrine of holism made no sense.

32. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy. Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*. Ed. Austin Farrer. Trans. Eveleen M. Huggard. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951, 81. My thanks to Joe Hughes for pointing this reference out to me.