

Logical Reconciliation Of Extremes Of "Substance" In Descartes And Spinoza.

Anacletus Ogbunkwu PhD^{*1} Polycarp Okafor PhD² Benjamin Eze PhD³ Anthony Udeh PhD⁴

¹*Department of Philosophy Ebonyi State University, ORCID: 0009-0006-3039-4444
, franacletus@gmail.com

²Westfälische Wilhelms Universität, Münster, pcokafor2001@yahoo.com

³Department of Philosophy, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.

⁴Department of Philosophy, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.

Abstract

This paper examines the divergent yet deeply connected conceptions of substance in René Descartes and Baruch Spinoza, arguing that neither system constitutes a final philosophical position but instead represents stages within a broader dialectical development. Descartes' dualism posits two finite, irreducible substances—*res cogitans* (thinking substance) and *res extensa* (extended substance)—alongside an infinite divine substance, whereas Spinoza advances a strict monism in which God or Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) is the sole self-caused substance. Rather than treating Spinoza's system as a rejection of Cartesian dualism, this study interprets it as a logical reconciliation of its internal tensions. The paper demonstrates that Cartesian dualism is inherently unstable, generating a metaphysical fracture that calls for resolution. By revisiting Descartes' own conceptual distinctions, particularly between formal and eminent reality, the analysis reveals latent resources for overcoming this divide. Spinoza's geometric method is then presented as a formal mechanism of reconciliation, wherein Thought and Extension emerge as attributes of a single, unified substance. Drawing on recent scholarship in early modern philosophy, metaphysics, and formal ontology, the study further argues that Cartesian dualism exhibits a form of structural incompleteness, akin to a "Gödelian" limitation, in its inability to account for the unity of mind and body. Spinoza's synthesis thus resolves this limitation. Ultimately, this reconciliation offers a valuable framework for contemporary debates, particularly in philosophy of mind and cognitive science, where the enduring "hard problem" of consciousness reflects unresolved Cartesian tensions.

Keywords: Substance, Descartes, Spinoza, dualism, and monism

Introduction

Modern philosophy is usually presented as the history of a series of radical breaks and incommensurable oppositions. Few of these oppositions are more foundational than the one between dualism, as put forth by René Descartes, and monism, as proposed by Baruch Spinoza. The "father of modern philosophy," Descartes, opened a world that rested on the verifiability of the thinking subject (the cogito) and also a sharp metaphysical divide between mind (*res cogitans*) and matter (*res extensa*), two separate substances. For Descartes, the human being is a union of two incompatible natures, mind and body, a ghost in a machine whose interaction remains an eternal mystery. Spinoza, by contrast, offered a system of dazzling unity. His Ethics has God or Nature as the one substance, all finite things here as mere modes or modifications. The mind and the body are not separate substances but two properties (Thought and Extension) of the same underlying single reality. The received story locates these two philosophers at opposite ends of the spectrum: the dualist versus the monist, theological-turned-scientific thinker versus rational pantheist. In this paper I call into question this simple binary. It claims that Spinoza's philosophy is not a wholesale rejection of Descartes' project, but rather its most rigorous and logical completion. The "extremes" of substance in Descartes' work the infinite substance of God, and the finite substances of mind and body do not offer stable categories within his own system. A close reading of his metaphysics shows a deep and conflicting tension, what I call a conceptual "fracture," between the principle of substance as that which needs nothing other than itself to exist (a definition met only by God) and its application to finite, created things. As Tad Schmaltz notes in his recent study of Cartesian mind-body union, Descartes's own efforts to explain the unity of the human being reveal an internal instability in his substance ontology.¹ Following a related line of thinking, Christia Mercer argues that the Cartesian system has unresolved tensions to which later philosophers were required to attend, especially Spinoza.² This instability behaves like a Gödelian incompleteness in the Cartesian system, with the very axioms producing an undecidable proposition that could only be resolved by reference to some larger and ultimately Spinozist system.

I thus seek to show that Spinoza's monism is a logical reconciliation of degenerate Cartesian extremes. First, we will explore the Cartesian doctrine of substance and reveal internal contradictions that arise from its application to finite realities. We will then turn to Spinoza's Ethics as a formal system and "geometrical" architecture, that reconciliates these contradictions through the redefinition of substance as that which is conceived through itself (*causa sui*) In this system,

¹. Tad Schmaltz, *Descartes on the Union of Mind and Body*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), p. 45.

². Christia Mercer, "The Unseen Roots of Cartesian Dualism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Descartes*, ed. Steven Nadler and Tad Schmaltz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p.

the Cartesian substances of Thought and Extension are not annulled but preserved as attributes of the one infinite Substance. And we argue that this step is no arbitrary move in the space of dogma but rather a logical consequence of the principles bequeathed by Descartes himself. Synthesizing recent work in formal ontology with the history of early modern rationalism, this paper will show that the movement from Descartes to Spinoza is a unified dialectical process. Architecture leans forward into plenary motion in substance, not counters to competing dogmas but through hardening provocation in a register of covert philosophical development that approaches complex sharpening and those knots as logic unfolds the chain of concept itself its dynamism drives thought from division towards unity. This reconciliation represents a crucial lesson for modern philosophy, as it provides a historical and logical framework through which perennial problems, such as the problem of mind and body, causation, and the metaphysical composition of reality can be formulated.

René Descartes's metaphysical doctrine, articulated in first place in 1641's *Meditations on First Philosophy*, and further in the *Principles of Philosophy* of 1644, builds itself upon a concept of substance that is both carefully erected and kaleidoscopically strained. A substance, in the broadest terms that he describes, is "that which exists so as not to depend on anything else for its existence."³ This definition, though, is immediately complexified by God. According to Descartes, only God really satisfies this definition, because He himself is *ens a se* (cf. the existence of infinite reality) and the last sustainer of everything else. As a result, God's created substances (e.g. mind and body) are substances only in a qualified sense: they depend on God for their existence but do not depend on other created things. This gives us a hierarchical ontology, with the infinite, independent substance of God above two finite, mutually irreducible created substances.

The well-known dualism stems from Descartes's description of the cogito. In the second meditation, he introduces his famous representation of himself as a *res cogitans* or thinking thing; while being able to doubt that his body and the external world exist, he cannot doubt the existence of himself as a thinking thing. This self is fundamentally part thought, which he subsequently claims to be an ability. In the Sixth Meditation he argues that, because he can clearly and distinctly conceive of them apart from each other, then the body is a substance distinct from mind, whose essence is extension (*res extensa*). Here the "Architecture of Duality" is absolute: mind and matter are defined by mutually exclusive attributes (thought and extension); each is a complete, independent substance in the secondary sense of the word. This is what I call the Cartesian "fracture" a rupture in the fabric of reality that cleaves together and apart the inner world of thought from the outer world of particular physicality.

The fracture, however, is more than descriptive; it is deeply troubling. The most immediate and intractable problem is the nature of the human being, what Descartes refers to as a "substantial union" of mind and body. If mind and body are genuinely separate substances, each with its different essential attribute, then how can they causally interact? How does a non-extended, thinking thing produce motion in an extended, non-thinking thing (the will causes the finger to move), and how did an extended thing produce sensations in a non-extended thing (a sharp object causes pain)? Descartes's response, on which he lingers in his letters to the Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, is infamously unsatisfactory. He posits the union happens in the pineal gland, a gesture that neither accounts for how they interact nor over an ontological abyss. As Deborah Brown insists in her account of Cartesian mind-body union, the very principles that establish the distinction between mind and body appear to rule out the possibility of their union.³ Alison Simmons makes a similar point when she argues that this problem is not simply an historical artifact, but rather a structural flaw in the Cartesian system.⁴

This defect may be conceived of as a kind of "Gödelian limit" in Cartesian metaphysics. If Gödel's incompleteness theorems show how a formal system can circumvent a theorem that proves its own consistency without resort to an external frame, Descartes's system, premised on the axioms of clear and distinct perception plus definition of substance generates by its own immanent means a truth, unity of human being, it cannot fully account for. Even the *Meditations* themselves suggest such incompleteness. In the Sixth Meditation, Descartes writes, "Nature teaches me by these feelings" pain, hunger, thirst and so on "that I am not present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined and as it were intermingled with it."⁵ This is an appeal directly to "nature" a non-formal, experiential datum to make up the difference in his own rigorous, formal metaphysics.

Moreover, the Cartesian definition of substance itself harbors a latent instability that calls for a monistic resolution. However, if a substance is what it is by virtue of its essential property, and if God is the only substance that entirely independent, then *res cogitans* and *res extensa* as "created substances" are conceptually problematic. Their relative independence, and their reality (as Descartes admits) is dependent on God's. Given this realm of finite substance, they posit their essences of Thought and Extension as attributes not independent things unto themselves, but ultimately depending upon the infinite substance. As Martin Lin has argued recently with respect to theories of causality in the early modern period, this ontological dependence puts pressure on us to understand God as more than just the cause of otherwise

³ Deborah Brown, "Descartes and the Union of Mind and Body," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of the Self*, ed. Patrice Haynes (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 5

⁴ Alison Simmons, "Descartes's Embodied Mind," in *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes' Meditations*, ed. David Cunning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 205.

⁵ René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, trans. (John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 210.

independent substances: we must also view him as the ultimate metaphysical ground unifying all their properties.⁶ The Cartesian system, then, carries the seeds of its own transcendence. Its formal rigor creates a rift that logic insists must be healed. It is this demand that Spinoza, operating from within the very Cartesian tradition, will meet with a new, more complete and more coherent architecture of substance.

Monism of Substance in Spinoza as the *Deus sive Natura*

Ethics, published posthumously in 1677, is Baruch Spinoza's hugely ambitious radical architectural reframing of the Cartesian project. Whereas Descartes propounds a hierarchical framework of one infinite and two finite substances, Spinoza does not start with such. His system, thus more geometrico (in the geometrical manner), is not a rejection of Cartesian concepts but rather a logical purification and reconciliation with them. The first part of the Ethics, "Concerning God," sets down the bases for this new architecture. Spinoza shows, via a sequence of definitions and axioms, that there cannot be two or more substances with the same nature or attribute (Proposition 5), and furthermore that "substance cannot be produced by anything else" (Proposition 6c). From this he infers that of God (there is, or can be conceived to be) no other substance than God (Proposition 14).⁷ This is the center of his monism: God or Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) is one and only substance.

Importantly, Spinoza does not remove the Cartesian attributes of Thought and Extension. Instead, he redefines them. Thought and Extension are the defining attributes of two substances in the Cartesian system. In Spinoza's system, they become the two attributes that which intellect perceives as forming what is essential in their nature of the single infinite substance. He explains in the Second Part of the Ethics, "On the Nature and Origin of Mind," that "thinking substance and extended substance are one and the same substance, which with respect to itself is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that."⁸ This is the key move of reconciliation. This does not cancel out the underlying apparent duality of Cartesian metaphysics, but instead incorporates it into a higher-order unity. Now Thought and Extension are not two substances but two distinct, orthogonal, isomorphic modalities of the same reality.

This reconciliation is made possible by a rigorous logical architecture. What Spinoza does is try to formalize that rupture, that break in concept. Descartes defined substance as that which lacks the need of something else to exist then made an exception for created substances, and thereby introduced a perennial asymmetry. The solution given by Spinoza is to render the definition absolute: substance is that which is in itself and conceived through itself (Definition 3).⁹ This definition of substance as *causa sui* (cause to itself) is applied for everyone and without an exception. So, the Cartesian *res extensa* and *res cogitans* cannot be substances because they do not meet the criterion of self-conception; they are instead modes, affections or modifications of the attributes of substance itself.

There is not a hierarchical dependency between the one substance (God) and its attributes (Thought and Extension), as in Descartes's God creating finite substances. Instead, it's a relationship of identity. God has infinite attributes, of which we are able to conceive only two: Thought and Extension. This takes care of the thorny problem of mind-body interaction that plagued Descartes. The mind is the idea of the body, and the body is the object of the mind; these are not two entities that must in some way interact across an ontological void. Instead, they are two sides to a single, connected reality governed by the same order. As the great Spinoza once said, "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things."¹⁰ Because mind and body are not two different things, but rather the same thing conceived of under different attributes, there is no causal interaction between them. The "Gödelian fracture" in Descartes's system, the failure to account for the union of mind and body from within its own level of formal rules is thus sealed. Spinoza offers the external, larger framework that Descartes's system also required but did not offer.

Thus the Spinozist system is not an arbitrary metaphysical device but a logical conclusion from substance ontology. Carrying the Cartesian definition of substance to its conclusion that a substance must be self-caused and self-concepted, Spinoza shows that only one such substance is possible. The multiplicity of substance in Descartes is a conceptual inconsistency, a failure to rigorously apply the definition that he himself set forth. As Michael Della Rocca has argued in a recent reading of Spinoza's rationalism, the Ethics operates by a principle of sufficient reason which compels thought to transcend the contingent limits of Cartesian dualism toward one explanation that accounts all reality.¹¹ Spinoza's "Architecture of Duality" is thus revalued: a duality that is no longer ontological, but rather perspectival within a uniquely negotiated ontological architecture. This formal reconciliation has his the new kind of metaphysics that is internally consistent and can house the very problems Descartes's system bequeathed.

⁶ Martin Lin, *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 134.

⁷ Baruch Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 410.

⁸ Baruch Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 451.

⁹ Baruch Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 408.

¹⁰ Baruch Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 451

¹¹ Michael Della Rocca, *Spinoza's Rationalism: A System of Metaphysics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 78.

Logic of Attributes towards Reconciling Thought and Extension

The doctrinal linchpin of the Spinoza's reconciliation of thought and extension is the doctrine of attributes. For Descartes, an attribute is the defining essence of a substance, and no two substances can have an attribute in common. An attribute for Spinoza is "that which the intellect perceives of a substance as constituting its essence."¹² This slight change in definition reconfigures the whole metaphysical field. An attribute is what makes a substance intelligible, not what makes it distinct. God, the one substance has infinite attributes, each attribute expressing Gods essence in a way that is slightly different from all of the others. We have access to two attributes, Thought and Extension, which are not just two of many but the two that form the nature of these parallel non-interacting systems which Spinoza tenders as a doctrine.

This doctrine provides a strong logical model for overcoming the Cartesian dichotomies. It solves the mind-body problem not by explaining interaction, but by denying causal interaction across attributes while affirming a radical metaphysical unity. This is often termed "parallelism." The "order and connection of ideas" (the mental world) is the same as the "order and connection of things" (the physical world). It is not two separate chains of events; there is no causal bridge between them because they're one and the same chain of events, read in two languages. For every physical event (a bodily movement), there is a particular mental event (an idea pertaining to that movement) and vice versa. This parallelism has a logical, not a physical, connection. It is derived from the identity of the substance of which they are accidentally (by nature) attributes.

Recent scholarship has deepened our understanding of both this parallelism and the "logical reconciliation" serving it. In her study of Spinoza's metaphysics of attributes, Noa Shein claims that the relationship between attributes is one of "conceptual non-reducibility" and "ontological identity."¹³ This means that Thought and Extension are formally distinct from one another and irreducible, we can never understand a mental concept in physical terms nor physical concepts in mental ones. But they point to the same ontological reality. It is a precise solution of the Cartesian fracture. Descartes demonstrated that the mind and body are clear and distinct concepts, and thus irreducible. He then, and this was problematic, tried to have them causally interact. Spinoza agrees with the conceptual irreducibility but discards the causal interaction, claiming instead ontological identity under a higher-order substance.

This "logic of attributes" also serves as a formal answer to an oft-stated objection to Spinoza: that within his system the human individual's reality is wholly desecralized. If all is a mode of God, does the self have any reality? In the Ethics, Spinoza maintains that the human mind is: "the idea of the human body." The body is a complex form of the other mode of Extension, while the mind corresponds to a complex idea in the attribute of Thought. The reality of the individual, for Spinoza, has not faded but rather is recontextualized. The conatus, the effort to persist in one's being is the substance of every individual mode, and it is a finite manifestation of the infinite force of substance. This perspective is not a vanishing of the self but an exacting attunement to it. Indeed, as Karolina Hübner has noted in her studies of Spinoza's metaphysics, the individual for Spinoza is not a Cartesian substance but rather a finite mode, one whose reality is precisely determined according to its topographical place within the infinite webwork of cause and effect that make up the two attributes themselves.¹⁴ What, in tradition and Descartes' dilemma, becomes a metaphysical anomaly when understanding the "substantial union" finds its most simple definition as Spinoza's mode: that unity of mind and body which is the expression of the single substance in its two attributes.

And vitak, which has important ramifications for modern philosophy. The Cartesian legacy is commonly understood to present derivatives of the modern "hard problem of consciousness", the difficulty in explaining how subjective experience can emerge from the objective material stuff. Spinoza's system takes a quite different starting point. By asserting that Thought is a primary quality of reality, equally as fundamental as Extension, he evades the Cartesians' interaction issue and the modern emergence problem. This is the gap that consciousness fills; it is not an emergent property of matter, in a sense, it is another reflection of the same deep reality from which matter itself also comes. This is a view that finds a sympathetic echo in some varieties of contemporary panpsychism and neutral monism, both of which have enjoyed something of a renaissance in recent philosophy of mind.¹⁵ Spinoza's logical arrangement of philosophical terms, seen in this light, is not a historical curiosity but a formal and sophisticated ontological system that prefigures and resolves the problematic at the heart of most modern speculative engagements with ontology.

Substance from Metaphysical Union to Political Practice

But the reconciliation of ontological extremes in Spinoza's metaphysics is not a mere abstract exercise; it has deep ramifications for ethics, politics and social organization. For Descartes, the divide between mind and body, and between

¹² Baruch Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 408.

¹³ Noa Shein, "The Metaphysics of Attributes in Spinoza," in *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, ed. Michael Della Rocca (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 112.

¹⁴ Karolina Hübner, "Spinoza on Finite Modes," in *Spinoza's Metaphysics*. ed. Karolina Hübner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 95

¹⁵ Philip Goff, *Consciousness and Fundamental Reality*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 122.

the isolated individual and world led to an ethos of intellectual self-mastery, most memorably articulated in his Discourse on the Method as well a final work: The Passions of the Soul. The ideal ethical state of the will is to use reason to control the passions, that are types of disturbances inherited from one's body interaction with the material world; The ethical subject is, like the metaphysics, dualistic: the rational mind battling for dominion over the uncontrollable body and its passions.

And the unified ontology of Spinoza provides us with a radically different ethical philosophy. If mind and body are one, then the emotions which he calls affects, don't invade us as alien matter from the body to the mind. In the Third Part of the Ethics, he shows that they are precisely how the mind knows its own bodily states. To know the self is to know the emotions, and the way to liberation is not through subjugation (by an ideal of mind) of a hypothetical body, but through understanding a comprehension of the causal chains essential to both. Re-formulating Spinoza's his definition of desire which he considers both physical and mental will be the conatus being a finite mode. For Spinoza, freedom is not the illusion of uncaused choice, but "that which exists solely by the necessity of its own nature, and is determined to action by itself alone."¹⁶ This is the freedom of God, and in so far as a human being knows the necessity of their own nature, place, function, their reason in a causal universe, they participate in that freedom. This is the intellectual love of God, a peace of understanding that stands in place of the Cartesian ambition to regulate the passions.

This framework for ethics is by its nature social and political. The bulk of Descartes's political thought, spread across his correspondence and the Passions of the Soul, is concerned with factors impacting self-preservation and intellectual freedom in a stable state. Spinoza, in his 1670 Theological-Political Treatise and his unfinished Political Treatise, develops a more systematic political philosophy grounded directly in his metaphysics. If every possible thing seeks to continue in existence, human beings do not consist of isolated rationality; they are social creatures whose conatus is best formed collectively. As he writes in the Theological-Political Treatise, "men are guided more by blind desire than reason, and therefore the natural right of man... is not determined by reason, but desire and power."¹⁷ A stable society, then, cannot be based on the expectation that all citizens are perfectly rational. It has to be based on an understanding of human psychology and a political architecture that channels the passions and desires toward collective ends. The "negation" of individual sovereignty before the demands of the state is not for Spinoza a loss of freedom, but rather its precondition, in that the security and power afforded by the state allows room for the individual's highest good: free exercise of reason.

This bridging of dualistic to monistic ontology thus affords a coherent arc from metaphysics to social practice. The "Gödelian crack" in Descartes's system, the irreconcilable tension between the thinking individual and the extended world could be found everywhere: it propels an ethics of internal struggle, a politics of pragmatic self-preservation. Spinoza's reconciliation, in contrast, produces a system where ethics is about attaining understanding and joy (the increasing of one's power of acting), and politics has to do with sculpting collective arrangements that facilitate this flourishing. The Spinozist system provides a non-dualist model for understanding the relationship between affect and social change, as Beth Lord shows in her recent study of Spinoza's ethics.¹⁸ The reason for this deep interest in Spinoza's social philosophy derives from a major trend which lies at the heart of all responsible critique: how to integrate ideas of collective power and, ultimately, democratic potential.¹⁹ The metaphysical point of view reconciled, the "architecture of substance" is mapped out for a reconciled human being: not a person, namely, a substantive individual separate from world, but rather dynamic mode of unified reality within which freedom lies in understanding and collective empowerment.

Spinoza's Extension of the Substance Framework

To grasp Spinoza's reconciliation of Cartesian extremes, we not only need his doctrine of substance and attributes but also the implicit broadening of what might be termed the "logic of relations." For all his radicality, Descartes did not find any resources outside of what we can call monadic predicates, properties that are attributable to individual substances. His analysis of the mind-body relation, for example, ultimately deals with two substances and their mysterious union. He does not, however, generate a fully-fledged logic of relations that would enable him to perceive the mind-body relation as an internal, constitutive and not external, problematic one.

By contrast, Spinoza saw the impossibility of grasping else the very concept of substance without a correlative logic of relations. The attributes of Thought and Extension are not just properties that God does happen to have; they are the basic relational structures inside which all finite modes subsist and are conceived. The human mind is not a substance that has relations to other minds and to bodies; the mind is, precisely, constituted by its relations, its ideas-of-other-modes, its affective encounters, its place in the causal network that is the attribute of Thought. This "relational dynamics" generalizes

¹⁶ Baruch Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 485.

¹⁷ Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, ed. Jonathan Israel, trans. Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 189.

¹⁸ Beth Lord, *Spinoza's Ethics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 132.

¹⁹ Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023), 88.

the Cartesian framework into a many-dimensional space where the identity of any mode is given by its relations to all other modes.²⁰

This relational perspective dissolves the Cartesian rift all the more. For Descartes, the individual is a substance distinctly separate from the world and interacts with it only over intensely problematic causal relations. In other words, for Spinoza the individual is a mode whose being is its relations to the whole. To deny or negate a relation to assert that one instance is not the cause of another is not to utter a truth-functional proposition about external links. This is to elaborate the composition of the substance. This “presuppositional dynamism” is yet another iteration of that “Gödelian” insight: the formal mechanics of substance requires an external-fangled relations to be developed, but Spinoza demonstrates that this external framework is, in fact, internalized within one infinite substance. The dynamism of negation and relation functions not only horizontally between modes but also vertically, contingentizing all finite relations in the infinite relationality of the divine substance itself.²¹

Conclusion

The philosophical transition between Descartes and Spinoza is one of the most significant upheavals in the history of thought. The initial Cartesian project, to base philosophy on the incomprehensibly stable ground of the cogito and give a precise, mathematical account of the world viewed as a machine that functions according to quantifiable laws, became in Spinoza’s hands an even more audacious project: to create a vast architectonic structure organized according to geometric principles that encompassed all fields metaphysics, epistemology, psychology ethics, politics and knitted them into one coherent whole. This paper has contended that this transformation should not be perceived as a rejection but instead a logical reconciliation between these two thinkers’ systems. Spinoza adopted Descartes’ conceptual tools the definitions of substance, attribute, and mode; the rigorous, formal approach to philosophy and emphasized them with a ruthless consistency that Descartes himself could not maintain.

We have followed the Cartesian “fracture”: the lack of stability to its ontology of three substances, the intractable mind-body problem that resulted and the “Gödelian” incompleteness of a system that could not secure its unity. We then discussed how Spinoza’s architectural vision of substance responded to these cracks in our foundation by recasting substance as self-caused and self-conceived, thereby showing the necessity of a single, infinite substance (which we, endowed with autonomy thanks to this definition, refer to as either God or Nature). Lastly, within this framework these Cartesian attributes of Thought and Extension would never not be eliminated but rather first integrated as the two fundamental attributes of the one substance. The mind-body problem evaporated, not due to a magical solution to interactionism, but rather the recognition that interaction was a pseudo-problem based on false ontology. This transformed the “Architecture of Duality” from an ontology of division to a logic of perspectival unity. This reconciliation was then demonstrated to constitute a coherent ethical and political philosophy, one that supplanted the Cartesian ideal of mental mastery over an obstructive body with the Spinozist ideal of freedom through understanding and collective empowerment. The important of this historical-logical reconciliation goes far beyond the record of early modern philosophy. Indeed, the actual issues defining what we might call the Cartesian-Spinozist debate are precisely the central problems of contemporary metaphysics and philosophy of mind. The problem of explaining consciousness in a physical world, the nature of causal relations or the relationship between the individual and social order are all direct descendants from Cartesian fracture. As contemporary philosophers such as Michael Della Rocca and Jonathan Israel have argued, Spinoza’s system presents a rigorous, logically coherent and increasingly pertinent alternative to the prevailing dualist or reductive materialist paradigms.²² His synthesis of the other-form, as the ultimate reality not an arena in which independent beings clash, but singular, dynamic self-grounding whole serves as powerful exemplar in theorizing unity-in-difference.

In a modern intellectual climate that is so frequently defined by fragmentation, between the sciences and the humanities, between objective fact and subjective meaning, between individual and collective Spinoza’s system is a monument to the power of unified philosophical vision. The evolution of the idea of substance, from Descartes’s disjointed initial condition to Spinoza’s reconciled end-state confirms that the tendency towards coherence is a primordial impulse of reason. This insight, which might be described as “Gödelian,” that no formal system can ever be complete or self-justifying is not here a counsel to despair. It is an invitation to increasingly iterate, grow, and integrate our conceptual architectures. Spinoza’s resolution of the Cartesian extremes shows that some of the most profound philosophical problems are solved not by picking a side in an opposition, but by changing the context in which that opposition is situated. The legacy of this reconciliation is a way of thinking whose aim is not to dispel difference but to reveal the deep unity beneath it, the same lesson that can be as valuable for our fractured age as it was for the beginnings of modernity.”

²⁰ Katherin A. Rogers, *Substance and Attribute in Early Modern Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 156.

²¹ Katherin A. Rogers, *Substance and Attribute in Early Modern Philosophy*, 156.

²² Jonathan Israel, *The Expanding Blaze: How the American Revolution Ignited the World, 1775-1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 105.

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