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Spinoza's God Has Parts: The Mereological Reading of the Substance-Mode Relation

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Although there are several passages in which Spinoza ascribes parts to God, scholarship has refused to take these texts seriously. The reason for this refusal lies in four key characteristics of God that seem to contradict mereological complexity: (i) indivisibility, (ii) infinity, (iii) perfection, and (iv) simplicity. But are these properties really incompatible with mereological complexity? (i) Given Spinoza's position that abstract quantity is 'divisible' and real quantity is 'indivisible', 'indivisibility' cannot be understood as the complete absence of parts without saying that for Spinoza all mereological complexity is merely 'abstract'. Furthermore, a close reading of Spinoza's texts on indivisibility and mereology show that he is merely rejecting the existence of separable parts. (ii) Another popular argument is that God's infinity forbids him from having parts due to the famous paradoxes of infinity. However, this is not the conclusion that Spinoza takes from these paradoxes. Spinoza says infinity, at least in one of its conceptualizations, can have parts 'without contradictions'. The argument of Letter 12 is similar to Crescas' argument against the paradox of infinity. I shows that infinity, rightly conceived, can be limited and have parts without any contradictions. (iii) But maybe God's mereological complexity is impossible because of his perfection? Mereological complexity is then said to imply a form of passibility which contradicts God's autonomy and perfection. However, Spinoza argues that 'being acted on' only constitutes imperfection if the actor is external. When God acts on himself, his passibility is not an imperfection. Since Spinoza reconceives parts as

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variations and modifications of the whole, mereological complexity coincides with a form of self-affection which is a perfection rather than an imperfection. (iv) Finally, Spinoza's specification of the notion of 'simplicity' shows that, in his mereological model, parts do not contradict simplicity. All issues barring us from taking Spinoza seriously when he writes that God has parts have thus been resolved.

> *This which is really a whole has not been put together out of its parts, but has produced its parts itself.*
>
> — Plotinus, *Ennead* III.7.4

Introduction

A widely accepted view in Spinoza scholarship is that the relationship between God and modes is not mereological, since God is believed to lack parts. While some scholars reject parts entirely in Spinoza's metaphysics,[1] most take the moderate stance that only modes have parts.[2] The shared premise, however, is that neither God nor any of his attributes can possess mereological complexity. I challenge this idea. Specifically, I will argue that God's modes can be seen as his parts.[3]

Although controversial, this interpretation is not entirely new. There is a history of unorthodox Spinoza readers who identify God with the mereological whole of nature. In his *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza* (1785), Jacobi argues that the relation between finite particular things and the infinite God is mereological:

> VI. Hence the finite is in the infinite, so that the sum of all finite things, equally containing within itself the whole of eternity at every moment, past and future, is one and the same as the infinite thing itself.

1. For example, Guigon (2011), Rosenthal (2019), and Mátyási (2020) argue against real mereology in Spinoza's work. There is some textual evidence for this view in Spinoza's early writings (KV I ii §19; TIE §87). The *Ethics*, however, never states that mereological complexity is not real. Instead, as we will see, mereology plays an important part in its metaphysical framework. The argument for rejecting the reality of mereology in the *Ethics* often begins with the idea that Spinoza adopts a traditional model where parts are prior to their whole. The fact that such a bottom-up mereology leads to paradoxes when applied to infinity is then used to prove that neither modes (given that they can be infinite) nor substance can have parts (e.g., Mátyási 2020). However, Spinoza's reversal of the priority relation (see Section 2.2) undermines this argument. As shown in Section 3, infinity can be mereologically complex when wholes are prior to parts.

2. Some prominent examples of this widespread reading are Gueroult (1968: 212–16, 508–13, 526–28), Bennett (1984: 81–83), Melamed (2011; 2013: 126–29; 2022: 88–89), Schmaltz (2021a; 2021b: 261–65), and Garrett (2021: 50–51).

3. Borge (2025) argues that attributes rather than modes are parts of God. However, the fact that attributes are somehow identical to one another indicates, I believe, that they are better conceptualized as aspects. Regardless, this debate lies outside the present inquiry.

> VII. This sum is not an absurd combination of finite things, together constituting an infinite, but a whole in the strictest sense, whose parts can only be thought within it and according to it. (Jacobi 1994: 127–28)[4]

This reading became common ground among the British Idealist Spinoza commentators at the start of the 20th century. For instance, Harold H. Joachim argues that 'God is conceived by him [Spinoza] as a whole, the totality of all being; though the "parts' are not independent"' (1901: 43).[5] A similar idea can be found in the works of Samuel Alexander (1921: 25) and Harold Foster Hallett (1930).

To my knowledge, this interpretation was absent from Spinoza scholarship for the rest of the 20th century. However, it has recently begun to attract renewed attention. Compared with the earlier commentaries, these newer studies offer stronger supporting evidence.[6] This evidence is largely systematic: Kay Malte Bischof (2024) argues that for God to truly be extended, he needs to have parts. Ilgin Aksoy (2025) problematizes the dominant reading of Spinoza's philosophy as a two-category ontology in which two kinds of entities exist, a bare substratum (God) and its modes. He demonstrates how the mereological reading of the substance-mode relation helps to avoid the issues raised by the traditional reading. Elsewhere (Vermeiren 2024: 33–36, chap. 7), I have argued for God's mereological complexity, mainly in the context of an examination of Spinoza's theory of quantity. Here, I want to address this topic more directly by showing where Spinoza ascribes parts to God and why we have no reason to dismiss these passages.

As we will see in Section 1, there are several passages in which Spinoza says that modes are parts of God. A part of this textual evidence has been overlooked—even by Bischof and Aksoy. And the passages that are better known are usually disregarded. The main reason for this dismissal is that mereological complexity seems irreconcilable with four of God's key characteristics: indivis-

4. 'The infinite thing itself' here refers to God. This is clear from how the preceding passage discusses how this 'infinite thing' causes the world.

5. The citation continues with 'in fact not *as parts* real'. Therefore, although he sees modes as parts of God, Joachim follows Hegel and takes Spinoza to be an acosmist who ultimately denies the reality of modes as particular things.

6. However, the first authors revisiting this interpretation do not provide that much evidence or arguments. Jonathan Schaffer (2010) invokes Spinoza as a forerunner of his 'priority monism'—the idea that reality is one whole which is ontologically prior to the particular things that are its parts. However, Schaffer's work is first and foremost an exercise in contemporary metaphysics rather than a study in the history of philosophy. Therefore, his text lacks substantial historiographical evidence and is thus vulnerable to criticism by Spinoza scholars (see Garrett 2021: 50–52; Guigon 2011; Melamed 2022: 89–97; Schmaltz 2021b: 225–26, 261–63). In his *Kant's Critique of Spinoza*, Omri Boehm (2014: 40, 79, 89, 131–32, 150) argues that Spinoza's God is a *totum analyticum* that ontologically precedes its parts. However, Boehm's book is mainly an interpretation of Kant and thus also lacks substantial argumentation for this view on Spinoza.

ibility, infinity, perfection, and simplicity. Sections 2 to 5 examine, one by one, whether these characteristics truly rule out the possibility of God having parts. My most fundamental contention is that Spinoza reconceives mereology in such a way that having parts is not inconsistent with God's indivisibility, infinity, perfection, and even his simplicity. As we will see, God is not composed of modes as a wall is built from bricks. The mereological complexity of God has a very specific meaning.

However, even with this restricted meaning, the mereological interpretation of God offers a valuable addition to our understanding of Spinoza's metaphysics. While much has been written on the different aspects of the substance-mode relation, I believe one crucial aspect remains missing. When we understand the substance-mode relation in terms of causation, conception, and even inherence, we leave too much distance between modes and substance. Recognizing that modes are mereologically contained in substance underscores their immanence more profoundly than the existing interpretations. The mereological perspective shows that God, although prior in every way, *consists* of his modes. As we will see, Spinoza states that God is both a cause and a whole because he both *causes* modes and *consists* of them, just like an intellect causes the concepts it consists of (KV I 1st dialogue §12, G I.30/C I.76; see also KV II xxiv §3, G I.104/C I.142). The fact that God consists of his modes is an important point to emphasize. Of course, it cannot mean that modes are prior to God. However, it does mean that *when God is causing modes, he is causing himself*. As I will argue in Section 4, Spinoza conceives immanent causation and self-causation through the model of a mereological whole complexifying itself and producing the parts it consists of. In comparison with the other interpretations, the mereological reading can thereby make better sense of Spinoza's theory of causation. As Mogens Lærke (2008: 656–57; 2013: 71–74) argues, passages like 'God must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which he is called cause of himself' (E1P25S; see also KV I iii §2), 'this necessity of things is the very necessity of God's eternal nature' (E2P44C2D), and 'God was not before his decrees, and cannot be without them' (E1P33S2) indicate that God's self-causation is identical to his causation of modes (see also Vermeiren 2022: 6–7). Indeed, given that Spinoza's *causa sui* is an efficient cause (Lærke 2013: 68–70; Melamed 2021: 121–23), I find it difficult to conceive what God's self-causation could consist of if not the production of modes, that is, self-modification. The other interpretations of the substance-mode relation (causation, conception, inherence) cannot fully account for the identity of God's self-causation and immanent causation. It is in light of this interpretation of God's self-causation that the mereological meaning of the substance-mode relation is of such importance: *the ultimate foundation of reality is self-causation; nature creates itself because it mereologically consists of its effects.* We will return to this idea in Section 4.

In sum, the interpretation presented here is not solely motivated by the textual and systematic arguments laid out in the following sections. The underlying rationale is that this mereological interpretation is essential for fully appreciating the immanence of modes and the self-causation of God. However, this deeper rationale is not the focus of this article. The following sections primarily aim to show that Spinoza often ascribes parts to God and that he can do so without contradicting God's indivisibility, infinity, perfection, and simplicity.

1. The Textual Evidence

Spinoza ascribes parts to God in several texts. First, in the *Short Treatise* (KV), Spinoza states that 'the whole of Nature is one unique substance, whose essence is infinite' (KV II xxii §4, G I.101/C I.139), and that 'we are part of the whole, i.e., of him [God]' (KV II xviii §2, G I.87/C I.128). In the first dialogue in Part 1, Spinoza (in the character of *Reason*) explains how we should understand this:

> For example, the intellect is the cause of its concepts; that is why I called the intellect a cause (insofar as, or in the respect that its concepts depend on it); and on the other hand, I call it a whole, because it consists of [*bestaat van*] its concepts. Similarly, God is, in relation to his effects or creatures, no other than an immanent cause and also a whole, because of the second consideration [i.e., because he consists of his creatures]. (KV I 1st dialogue §12, G I.30/C I.76)

Not only does Spinoza here explicitly state that God is a mereological whole; he also clarifies that this means that God *consists of* his modes. A later passage says the same thing: 'man together with all there is, is so in God, and God so *consists* of all of these [*van deze alle zondanig bestaat*]' (KV II xxiv §3, G I.104/C I.142; my emphasis).[7] In Section 4, we will see how this can help us make sense of God's self-causation.

Admittedly, the *Short Treatise* is not consistent on the theme of mereology. The text points in three different directions: first, the just-cited passages take God as a mereological whole; second, other passages say that mereological complexity pertains to modes only (KV I ii §§21–22; G I.26/C I.72); a final passage completely denies the existence of any mereological complexity (KV I ii §19, G I.24–25/C I.71). However, as I will argue in this section and throughout the article, Spinoza's later texts more consistently defend the first position.

7. I thank an anonymous reviewer of this journal for drawing my attention to this passage.

Letter 32 to Oldenburg is the most prominent example. The letter's main claim is that 'the human Body [and mind] is a part of Nature' (G IV.173a/C II.20). Some scholars (e.g., Schmaltz 2021a: 142) argue that Spinoza is here only attributing parts to nature as an infinite mode. One passage seems to support this view: 'every body, insofar as it exists modified in a definite way, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, must agree with its whole and must cohere with the remaining bodies' (G IV.173a/C II.19). The preceding sentence says that, in 'the whole universe', 'the same ratio of motion and rest [is] always being preserved', suggesting that it refers to the physical universe as one individual body, as discussed in E2PDL7S.

Spinoza then adds, however, that 'the nature of the universe is not limited […] but is absolutely infinite' (G IV.173a/C II.19–20). But by Spinoza's explanation of this terminology in E1D6exp, the universe as an infinite mode is at best 'infinite in its own kind' and not 'absolutely infinite'. The latter term seems to be reserved for God, having an infinity of infinite attributes (E1D6).[8] Therefore, Spinoza's use of 'absolutely infinite' in Letter 32 suggests that 'the whole universe' refers to God.[9] Spinoza confirms this when he states that 'in relation to substance [i.e., God], I conceive each part to have closer union with its whole' (G IV.173a/C II.20). And he removes all remaining doubt when he writes: 'For since it is of the nature of substance to be infinite, […] it follows from this that *each part of the whole of corporeal substance* pertains to the whole substance, and can neither be nor be conceived without the rest of the substance' (C II.20; my emphasis).[10]

8. The sole exception can be found in Ep. 64, where Spinoza talks about the 'absolutely infinite intellect' (G IV.278/C II.439). As Melamed argues (2013: 83–184), the reason for this exception is probably that the attribute of thought mirrors the absolute infinity of God objectively. But the latter is not the case for the attribute of extension or for the infinite physical universe.

9. One might object here that 'the nature of the universe' refers to substance as the underlying nature of the universe rather than the universe itself. This would mean that 'the universe' can still be read as an infinite mode, with substance as the deeper 'nature' of the universe—its absolutely infinite foundation. Yet this interpretation falters when Spinoza distinguishes the nature of the universe from that of the blood: 'And since the nature of the universe is not limited, as the nature of the blood is, but is absolutely infinite, the variations of its parts which can follow from this infinite power must be infinite' (Ep. 32, C II.20). If 'the nature of the universe' refers to substance as the foundational nature of the universe as a mode, 'the nature of the blood' too should refer to substance, for the blood is also a mode of substance. But Spinoza clearly distinguishes the two natures. Therefore, 'the nature of the universe' —which is said to be absolutely infinite and must, by E1D6, be identical to God—must refer to the universe itself (rather than its foundational nature). In sum, when Spinoza says that the universe, which has an absolutely infinite nature, has parts, he says that God has parts.

10. This is how the passage reads in the *original* letter, which is in the possession of the Royal Society of London, of which Oldenburg was the secretary at the time of the correspondence. The version in the *Opera Posthuma* (and the Gebhardt edition) reads as follows: 'since it is of the nature of substance to be infinite, it follows that each part pertains to the nature of corporeal substance, and can neither be nor be conceived without it' (G IV.173a/C II.20).

Several authors have dismissed Spinoza's reference to modes as parts of God in Letter 32 as an anomaly that does not reflect his views in the *Ethics*. Don Garrett suggests that in this letter, 'Spinoza appears to use "parts" nontechnically to include what he would more technically call modes' (2021: 58n35). However, dismissing Spinoza's use of 'parts' as nontechnical is odd, as this letter is the only text where Spinoza explicitly defines the concepts of 'part' and 'whole' (G IV.170a/C II.18). This indicates that he was using the terms with technical precision. Samuel Newlands (2018: 140) argues that Spinoza was compelled by his correspondent to adopt part-whole terminology in this letter. Yet this dismissal is equally unpersuasive because Spinoza is the one who first introduces this mereological language in the correspondence (see Ep. 30).

In line with the interpretation of Garrett and Newlands, Yitzhak Melamed (2022: 97) claims that Spinoza drops this mereological terminology in the *Ethics* and replaces it with the more adequate terminology of modes.[11] However, as we will see in Section 4, the *Ethics* often uses 'being a part of' interchangeably with 'being a mode of', showing that mereological terminology remains integral to Spinoza's metaphysical framework. In fact, just like Letter 32, the *Ethics* contains passages that ascribe parts to God.

In E1P15S's so-called 'vacuum argument', Spinoza employs mereological terminology to defend God's corporeality, arguing that 'all its [nature's] parts must so concur that there is no vacuum' (G II.59/C I.423). Contrary to what is often assumed, this argument *must* refer to nature as corporeal substance, instead of nature as an infinite mode, because the concurrence of parts is here meant to demonstrate the indivisibility of corporeal substance. If Spinoza were only addressing the parts of an infinite mode, the vacuum argument would fail to meet its purpose. The argument will be further discussed in Section 2.2.

The central claim of Letter 32 that 'the human body [and the human mind] is a part of Nature' (G IV.173a/C II.20) is often repeated in the *Ethics* (E3P3S; E4P2; E4P4; E4App, G II.266/C I.588, G II. 267/C I.589). Of course, it is again uncertain what Spinoza means by 'Nature'. The statement is also repeated in the *Theological-Political Treatise* (TTP III §9) and the *Political Treatise* (TP II §5). However, in these texts, Spinoza explains what he means: Our parthood of *nature* implies that our power is the power of *God*. But, of course, the power of God is identical to his essence (E1P34). Therefore, our power is said to be part of the essence of God. The *Ethics* states this explicitly: '[M]an's power, therefore, insofar as it is explained through his actual essence, is part of God or Nature's infinite power,

11. Note, however, that when writing this letter in 1665, Spinoza already had his concept of mode at hand (see Ep. 12 dated 1663).

that is (by IP34), of its essence' (E4P4D). Spinoza is here, again, quite explicit: God's essence—which is identical to his existence (E1P20)—has parts.[12]

In conclusion, there is a decent amount of textual evidence for the claim that Spinoza's God has parts. Why, then, is this reading so contentious? The answer lies in the apparent conflict with four key characteristics of God: indivisibility, infinity, perfection, and simplicity. However, as the subsequent sections will demonstrate, Spinoza redefines mereology in a way that resolves this tension. Mereological complexity is thus fully compatible with these characteristics of God.

2. Is God's Indivisibility Incompatible with Having Parts?

The main reason why scholars have discarded the textual evidence for the mereological structure of God is that Spinoza forcefully argues against the *divisibility* of God (E1P13; E1P15S; Ep. 35).[13] The unspoken assumption is that indivisibility entails the absence of parts. But is this what Spinoza means by 'indivisibility'? Let us examine Spinoza's usage of this notion.

2.1. Why 'indivisibility' cannot mean 'without parts'

Spinoza uses the notion of divisibility to make a distinction between two forms of quantity in a passage (henceforth 'the passage on quantity') that we can find in Letter 12:

> But if you ask why we are so inclined, by a natural impulse, to divide extended substance, I reply that we conceive quantity in two ways: either abstractly, or superficially, as we have it in the imagination with the aid of the senses; or as substance, which is done by the intellect alone. So if we attend to quantity as it is in the imagination, which is what we do most often and most easily, we find it to be divisible, finite, composed of parts, and one of many. But if we attend to it as it is in the intellect, and perceive the thing as it is in itself, which is very difficult, then we find it to be infinite, indivisible and unique. (Ep. 12, G IV.56/C I.202–203)

12. At first sight, however, the *Ethics* might seem to share in the *Short Treatise*'s inconsistency regarding mereology. But the complete denial of mereology, still present in the *Short Treatise*, is textually absent from the *Ethics*. As will be shown, there are some passages, however, that suggest the restriction of mereological complexity to modes.

13. For example, Melamed (2013: 126–29) and Schmaltz (2021a).

This passage is repeated almost *verbatim* in E1P15S (G II.59/C I.423–424). Spinoza here describes divisibility as pertaining to the abstract notion of quantity (henceforth 'abstract quantity'), whereas non-abstract quantity (henceforth 'real quantity') is indivisible. But does 'indivisible' mean a complete absence of parts? If so, the nasty implication is that real quantity would completely lack mereological complexity, thereby confining all such complexity to abstract quantity—a problematic view given Spinoza's frequent use of parthood throughout his philosophy. This is why most scholars[14] understand indivisible, real quantity as something that only applies to substance. This would allow us to interpret 'indivisibility' as the absence of parts without thereby denying the mereological structure of modes. However, there are quite a few reasons why real quantity cannot be limited to substance:

First, the passage itself does not oppose the two types of quantity in terms of the substance-mode distinction. Instead, Spinoza says that he opposes quantity as it is understood 'by the intellect' to quantity as it is understood 'in the imagination'. Therefore, Spinoza's defended notion of quantity applies to all things insofar as they are rightly understood by the intellect, that is, as Spinoza writes, insofar as we 'perceive the thing as it is in itself'. In short, *all real things*, insofar as they are known by the intellect and insofar 'as they are in themselves' are characterized by the indivisibility of this real quantity.

Second, Spinoza's characterization of real quantity clearly applies to modes, as shown in the rest of Letter 12. He critiques the common understanding of particular 'things' (i.e., modes) through abstract quantity, arguing that those who view things this way are 'ignorant of the true nature of things' (G IV.59/C I.204). Modes, he explains, 'can never be rightly understood' when interpreted using 'aids of the imagination', such as notions of number and measure—examples of abstract quantity (G IV.57/C I.203). In sum, it is not only the correct conception of substance that is at stake in Spinoza's reconception of quantity, but also the correct conception of modes.

Third, if the second kind of quantity (i.e., real quantity) is understood to only apply to substance, the quantitative nature of modes becomes a problem. There are three options: option one is that modes have no quantitative nature. This conflicts with Spinoza's references to their (in)finitude and mereological structure throughout the *Ethics*. Option two is that the first kind of quantity (i.e., abstract quantity) pertains to modes. However, this implies that modes, or at

14. For example, according to Leibniz, Spinoza's reconception of quantity 'demonstrates that substance [and only substance] is infinite, indivisible and unique' (A VI iii.275/LC 101). Most contemporary scholars follow this reading (e.g., Nachtomy 2011; Nachtomy 2018; Schmaltz 2021b: chap. 7). Alison Peterman (2015) is one of the rare scholars who recognizes that Spinoza's reconception of quantity applies to both modes and substance.

least their finitude and their mereological structure, are nothing but abstractions pertaining to the imagination, which ultimately leads to an 'acosmist' interpretation of Spinoza.[15] The third option is that modes possess a quantitative nature distinct from the two listed by Spinoza. This means that there are actually three types of quantity: abstract quantity (pertaining to the imagination), real quantity (pertaining to substance), and another form of real quantity (pertaining to modes). Tad Schmaltz (2021b: 234–37) defends such a reading. However, there appears to be no clear textual basis for a third kind of quantity, and Spinoza explicitly distinguishes only two types in both the *Ethics* and Letter 12.

Fourth, the restriction of mereological structure to modes, by reserving the indivisibility of real quantity for substance, does not solve the paradoxes of infinite quantity because modes too (at least some of them) are said to be infinite (see E1P21–23). In E1P15S, Spinoza responds to those who have used the paradoxes that result from dividing infinite quantity as an argument for the incorporeality of God. But if Spinoza's response would only consist of saying that substance does not have parts, then his reply would be insufficient because he clearly accepts that modes too can be infinite. Schmaltz thereby needs to add to the distinction between the non-mereological nature of substance and the mereological nature of modes a second distinction between the mereology of *finite* modes and the mereology of *infinite* modes (Schmaltz 2021b: 258).[16] But, again, no such distinction can be found in the texts. Furthermore, when one attributes a different *mereological* structure to infinite modes, one also attributes a different *quantitative* nature. Such an interpretation thus ultimately leads to four kinds of quantity: one pertaining to abstractions, one pertaining to substance, one pertaining to infinite modes, and one pertaining to finite modes. However, again, given Spinoza's repeated statement that there are only two kinds of quantity, postulating extra kinds of quantity is problematic. Therefore, I believe that the 'indivisibility' of real quantity applies to modes just as much as to substance.

15. For such a reading of this passage, see Della Rocca (2013: 296). This is a high price to pay because such an interpretation also comes with a long list of problems (see Melamed 2011; Melamed 2022: 89–97).

16. The distinction between finite and infinite modes is absent from the analysis developed here of the substance-mode relation. The reason for this is simple: I do not accept such a distinction. I thereby follow the interpretation of Kristin Primus (2019; 2023a; 2023b). She extensively argues against the wide-spread idea that there are two types of modes (finite and infinite). Ultimately, all modes, as modification of God, are infinite. She shows that we should place E1P21–23 in the context of Descartes' doctrine that in addition to contingent truths, God also created eternal truths. Read in this light, Spinoza's argument that only the infinite can follow from infinity (E1P21) does not describe the causation of a separate class of modes. Instead, Spinoza responds in E1P21–23 to the Cartesian doctrine by showing how *everything* which follows from God must be an eternal truth.

To be fair, the passage on quantity does state that when we conceive quantity through the intellect, we conceive it 'as substance'. This has led many to conclude that Spinoza's reconception of quantity pertains only to substance. However, conceiving something 'as substance' here just means conceiving it *through* substance. This is indicated by the broader context of Letter 12, where quantity 'as substance' is contrasted with 'Quantity abstracted from Substance' (IV.56/C I.203). The latter is the abstract conception of quantity in which we 'separate the Affections of Substance from Substance itself' and 'from the way they flow from eternity' (G IV.57/C I.203). Thus, understanding things 'as substance' through the notion of real quantity should be seen as the opposite of 'separating them from substance' when conceived through the abstract notion of quantity. With the correct concept of quantity, things are modes of substance rather than independent entities. Consequently, the distinction between the two types of quantity does not reflect a substance-mode divide but rather the contrast between understanding things as modes of substance and misconceiving them as separate from it.

In conclusion, in the context of the passage on quantity, we simply cannot understand 'indivisible' as 'without parts' without stripping modes of their mereological complexity. For if we then take *indivisible* quantity to pertain to modes, all modes lack parts, but if we take *divisible* quantity to pertain to modes, the quantitative and mereological nature of modes falls under abstract quantity. I believe there is only one way out of this conundrum: as Letter 12 says, real, indivisible quantity also applies to modes. But given the clear and widely accepted mereological complexity of modes, the 'indivisibility' of real quantity must somehow be reconcilable with such complexity. As we will see now, indivisibility does not entail the complete absence of parts but only the absence of *separable* parts. In other words, something is 'indivisible' insofar as its parts are inseparable. And this applies to modes just as much as to substance.

2.2. Indivisibility as the inseparability of parts

Both in Letter 12 and in E1P15S, the passage on quantity is meant to defend the corporeality of God against those who 'try to show that corporeal substance is unworthy of divine nature, and cannot pertain to it' (G II.58/C I.422). Critics of divine corporeality contend that the quantitative properties of extension are incompatible with God's nature. In Letter 12 and E1P15S, Spinoza reconceives quantity so that God can be quantitative and corporeal. Divisibility is one of the key features of the traditional notion of quantity that needs to be reconceived in order for God to be quantitative and corporeal. Opponents of divine corporeality assume that what is corporeal and quantitative is also divisible. Spinoza

counters this by arguing that correctly understood, quantity—and thus corporeality—does not imply divisibility. However, upon examining his arguments, it is clear that he does not reject the general idea that quantity has parts. Instead, he challenges a *specific* conception of mereology.

In E1P15S, Spinoza argues that objections to God's corporeality are 'founded only on the supposition that corporeal substance is *composed* of parts' (G II.58/C I.422; my emphasis). Throughout the scholium, he emphasizes that the idea of extension being 'put together' (*conflare*) or 'composed' (*componere*) of parts is problematic.[17] But what exactly does Spinoza mean by 'composition'?

Spinoza clarifies this concept in the *Short Treatise*: 'A thing composed (*tezamen gezet*) of different parts must be such that each singular part can be conceived and understood without the others' (KV I ii §19; G I.25/C I.71). In other words, in composition, the parts are independent from the whole (i.e., the other parts), while the whole depends on the parts from which it is constructed. This meaning of 'composition' is confirmed in Letter 35: 'For component parts must be prior in nature and knowledge to what is composed of them whole' (Ep. 35, G IV.181/C II.27). Spinoza's specific wording in E1P15S indicates that in order to defend the corporeality of God, he rejects the idea that quantity has the structure of composition. In summary, when Spinoza asserts that God is indivisible, he does not deny the existence of parts, but rather the existence of independent parts that are prior to their whole.

It is also evident from Letter 12 that 'indivisible' has the narrower meaning of 'without independent parts'. In the passage on quantity, where Spinoza argues that the real quantity of God is 'indivisible', this argument is directly preceded by a passage clarifying what he specifically opposes:

> Hence they talk utter nonsense, not to say madness, who hold that Extended Substance is *put together of parts*, or bodies, *really distinct from one another*. This is just the same as if someone should try, merely by adding and accumulating many circles, to put together a square or a triangle or something else completely different in its essence. So that whole array of arguments by which Philosophers ordinarily labour to show that Extended Substance is finite falls of its own weight. For they all suppose that corporeal Substance is composed of parts. (Ep. 12, G IV.55–56/C I.202; my emphasis)

17. '[F]or corporeal substance, which cannot be conceived except as infinite, unique, and indivisible (see P8, 5, and 12), they conceive to be *composed of* finite parts' (G II.58–59/C I.423; my emphasis). '[I]ndeed it is no less absurd to assert that corporeal substance is *composed of* bodies, or parts, than that a body is *composed of* surfaces, the surfaces of lines, and the lines, finally, of points' (G II.59/C I.423; my emphasis).

Once again, it is clear that 'divisibility', which cannot be attributed to God, refers to a bottom-up mereological structure where the whole is 'put together of parts'. In this type of structure, the parts are independent from one another and 'really distinct from one another'. Spinoza here applies Descartes' theory of distinctions to mereology. For Descartes, a *real* distinction is a distinction between substances.[18] In other words, as Spinoza writes, elements are 'really distinct' when 'each can be conceived, and consequently can exist, without the aid of the other' (CM II v, G I.257/C I.323). Therefore, the rejection of really distinct parts (see also TIE §87) amounts to a rejection of the structure of composition in which parts are prior and independent (i.e., substantial). In sum, Spinoza uses the term 'divisible' in the narrow meaning of 'divisible into really distinct parts', that is, 'divisible into separable parts'. In that sense, and only in that sense, God is 'indivisible', that is, his parts cannot be separated (i.e., *divided*).[19]

The fact that divisibility does not refer to the existence of parts, but more specifically to the existence of separable or 'really distinct' parts is also clear from the already mentioned vacuum argument:

> For if corporeal substance could be so divided that its parts were really distinct, why, then, could one part not be annihilated, the rest remaining connected with one another as before? And why must they all be so fitted together that there is no vacuum? Truly, of things which are really distinct from one another, one can be, and remain in its condition, without the other. Since, therefore, there is no vacuum in nature (a subject I discuss elsewhere), but *all its parts must so concur that there is no vacuum*, it follows also that *they cannot be really distinguished*, i.e., that corporeal substance, insofar as it is a substance, cannot be divided. (E1P15S, G II.59/C I.423; my emphasis)

Separable parts would make possible the absurdity of a vacuum, i.e., the existence of an emptiness within the extended world. Therefore, again, it is clear that Spinoza specifically rejects the existence of these independent and separable parts.[20]

18. For Descartes' theory of distinctions, see his *Principles of Philosophy* (Part I, §§60–62, AT VIIIA.28–30/CSM I.213–215). Spinoza summarizes this theory in his CM (II v, G I.257–258/C I.323).

19. This narrower meaning of 'indivisible' is not so peculiar. Descartes too, in the *Passions of the Soul*, uses the term to describe a mereologically complex but inseparable whole: 'For the body is a unity which is in a sense indivisible because of the arrangement of its organs, these being so related to one another that the removal of any one of them renders the whole body defective' (Part I, §30, AT XI.251/CSM I.339).

20. For a similar interpretation of the vacuum argument as only criticizing the existence of *independent* parts but not parts in general, see Robinson (2009).

However, Spinoza endorses another kind of mereology in the passage just cited. He says that parts 'so concur' that they cannot be separated. In an early letter, Spinoza says that the parts of matter are so intertwined that 'if one part of matter were annihilated, the whole of Extension would also vanish at the same time' (Ep. 4; G IV.14/C I.172). Likewise, in Letter 32, Spinoza defines parts in terms of mutual coherence and agreement: 'I consider things as parts of some whole to the extent that the nature of the one adapts itself to that of the other so that they agree with one another as far as possible' (G IV.170a/C II.18; see also Ep. 30, G IV.166/C II.14). The same idea is expressed in the *Ethics*:

> It is impossible that a man should not be a part of Nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his own nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause. (E4P4, G II.212/C I.548)

But parthood does not only imply causal dependence on other parts. It also implies a logical or conceptual dependence. Throughout the *Ethics*, Spinoza notes that we 'are a part of Nature which cannot be conceived through itself, without the others' (E4P2; see also E3P3S; E4P4; E4App, G II.266/C I.588). But this logical and ontological dependence on other parts is ultimately a dependence on the whole of which they are a part.

Spinoza's mereological model can be illustrated with the example of a liver as part of a human body. The liver is not a *compositional* part because, as Spinoza explains, composition implies the part's priority over the whole. The liver, however, cannot be what it is, it cannot have its defining function, without the blood, the stomach, and other organs. Thus, while the body mereologically contains its organs, it is not *composed* of them. I believe Spinoza has such an organicist model in mind when he emphasises the dependence and inseparability of parts.

In summary (see **Table 1**), Spinoza rejects compositional mereology, where parts are prior to the whole, and instead proposes a mereology in which the whole is logically and ontologically prior to its parts.[21] Thus, when Spinoza describes God as indivisible, he does not mean that God lacks parts. Rather, he emphasizes that 'each part of the whole of corporeal substance pertains to the

21. I therefore reject those who ascribe a traditional mereology to Spinoza by which parts are prior to the whole (e.g., Mátyási 2020: 2–5; Melamed 2013: 47). The best accounts of Spinoza's reversal of the traditional mereological model can be found in Sacksteder (1978; 1985; 1991) and Laveran (2014: 145–205). Similarly, Boehm (2014) argues that because of the posteriority of parts, Spinoza's mereology should be understood as a *totum analyticum* (and not a *totum syntheticum*). Bischof (2024) understands Spinoza's mereology of posterior wholes in terms of 'intellectual divisibility'.

whole substance, and can neither be nor be conceived without the rest of the substance' (Ep. 32, C II.20). God's indivisibility thereby reflects the inseparability and interdependence of his parts.

Compositional mereology	**Spinoza's mereology**
Divisible whole	Indivisible whole
Priority of part	Posteriority of parts
Independence of parts	Interdependence of parts
Separable part	Inseparable parts
Abstract quantity	Real quantity

Table 1: Types of Mereology.

Lastly, the fact that Spinoza's notion of indivisibility is opposed to a compositional mereological structure, rather than to mereological structure in general, can be inferred from the manner in which Spinoza proves the indivisibility of God in E1P12D, E1P13D, and Letter 35 (G IV.181–2/C II.27).[22] These passages reiterate different versions of the same dilemma: if God is divided, the substantial nature is either retained or not. In the first case, substances would result from the decomposition of another substance, meaning 'so many substances will be able to be formed from one' (E1P12D). This contradicts the causal isolation (E1P6) and the uniqueness of substance (E1P14). In the second case (i.e., substance is divided into non-substantial parts), substance 'would lose the nature of substance, and would cease to be' (E1P12D). This, of course, contradicts the indestructibility of substance (E1P7).

However, the absurdity of both options in this dilemma relies on the compositional model of mereology.[23] The first option is absurd because it assumes that a whole can be *decomposed* into independent or substantial parts. Likewise, the second option is absurd because it presumes that a whole is *composed* of parts and thus depends on those parts for its existence. In summary, these absurdities

22. An earlier version of this proof can be found in the 'alternative demonstration' of DPP1P16. However, here the demonstration is used to prove the incorporeality of God. The underlying assumption is that through proving that God is indivisible, it is also proven that he is incorporeal.

23. For a similar analysis of E1P12D, see Bischof (2024: 6–7).

stem from the notion of substance as a *composite* whole, and it is this specific idea that Spinoza rejects when he proves God's indivisibility in these passages.[24]

In conclusion, the passages in Section 1, where Spinoza attributes parts to God, are perfectly consistent with God's indivisibility. Indivisibility only opposes a mereological structure of separable parts. When parts are seen as interdependent and secondary to the whole, God can be both indivisible and mereologically complex.

2.3. Modal division

A likely objection to my reading of the indivisibility of corporeal substance is that it contradicts Spinoza's idea that in matter 'parts are distinguished only modally, but not really' (E1P15S, G II.59/C I.424). This is often read as a confirmation of the idea that mereological complexity is limited to modes. Schmaltz, for example, understands this mereology of modal distinction as referring to the mereological structure of modal wholes (2021b: chap. 7).[25] Conversely, the rejection of *real* (i.e., substantial) distinction is read as the rejection of mereological structure of substance. The *modal/real* qualification of a distinction is thus understood to refer to the thing that is divided. *Modally distinct* parts are thereby taken to be parts of *modes*; and *really distinct* parts are then parts of *substance*.

But Descartes' theory of distinctions, invoked by Spinoza, tells us something different: a modal distinction is a distinction that holds *between* modes rather than *within* a mode.[26] So when the parts of matter are modally distinct, this does not mean that the parts are part of a modal whole but that the parts are themselves modes. In short, the *modal/real* qualification refers to the status of the things that are distinguished from each other: *modally* distinct parts are *modes*; *really* distinct parts are *substances*. So, in light of Descartes' theory of distinctions, Spinoza's claim that there is only modal distinction in matter is a further confirmation of

24. This also seems to be the case for E1P13S, where Spinoza argues for the indivisibility of substance from the fact that 'by a part of substance nothing can be understood except a finite substance, which (by P8) implies a plain contradiction'. Again, the enemy is a compositional model of mereology, according to which God would be divisible into separable parts. I believe this is indicated by the fact that Spinoza here assumes that parts are substantial (i.e., really distinct).

25. Other examples of this popular reading can be found in Gueroult (1968, 212–16) and Melamed (2013: 127–29).

26. Descartes (and Spinoza) write (see note 18) that a modal distinction can either refer to a horizontal distinction between different modes of one substance or to a vertical distinction between a mode and its substance. But when Spinoza uses this notion to discuss the nature of parts, it clearly has the horizontal meaning because it would be absurd to say that the parts of matter are distinguished from each other as a mode is distinguished from its substance.

the inseparability (i.e., the non-substantiality) of parts and of the fact that the parts of matter are secondary to their whole.

Although the Cartesian theory of distinction cannot be invoked to *prove* Schmaltz's claim that modally distinct parts are parts of a modal whole, neither does it *contradict* his view. One could concede to my point that modally distinct parts are modes and still argue that such modal parts must compose a modal whole, which would mean that Spinoza's modally distinct parts are still not parts of God.[27] However, in addition to all of the systematic and textual arguments for my idea that modes are parts of God, there is one passage from *Metaphysical Thoughts* (CM) that shows that Spinoza understands 'modally distinct parts' in a manner that contradicts Schmaltz' reading. Of course, the CM does not represent Spinoza's own ideas; but it does often clarify the meaning of his terminology—in this case, the meaning that he gives to the Cartesian theory of distinction.

The passage is entitled 'That God is a most simple Being' (CM I v, G I.258/C I.324). The simplicity of God is here proven by considering two manners in which God could be composite—for, as Spinoza writes, 'Whatever is not composed in these first two ways should be called simple' (G I.258/C I.324). The preceding passage derives these two options for being composed from the Cartesian theory of distinctions: Option one is that God's complexity involves parts that are 'really distinct', that is, 'substances by whose coalition and union God is composed' (G I.258/C I.324). It is clear from this that Spinoza, following Descartes, does not understand really distinct parts as 'parts of a substantial whole' but rather as 'substantial parts'. In other words, as I have been arguing, the substantiality of the distinction clearly refers to the substantiality of the parts and not to the substantiality of the whole. Option two is that God's complexity involves parts that are 'modally distinct', which means that there is 'in God […] a composition from different modes' (G I.258/C I.324). One could object here that Spinoza's wording does not make clear that (as I argue) God is the one that is composed of those modally distinct parts. In other words, it might seem that Schmaltz's idea that modally distinct parts are parts of a modal whole is still not really disproven. But of course, the whole point of the passage is to invalidate the two options for *God* to be composite. The CM thus treats composition by modally distinct parts as a potential form of God's complexity, implying that such modes are indeed considered parts of the divine whole. If Schmaltz is right and modally distinct parts are parts of a modal whole, such a form of composition would be wholly irrelevant here. As Schmaltz himself argues (2021b: 251–52), the existence of modal wholes in God leaves his simplicity intact. Therefore, the fact that composition by modally distinct parts is considered a possible threat to God's simplicity in

27. I thank the anonymous reviewer of this journal for pointing this out.

the CM proves that these parts would be parts of God. Conversely, if 'really distinct parts' would mean 'parts of substance', then this would be the only possible meaning of God's complexity, and Spinoza would not have to consider and disprove two options for the complexity of God.

However, the *Ethics* contains one passage that undeniably supports Schmaltz's reading. Near the end of E1P15S, Spinoza offers the example of water, which is divided 'insofar as it is water, but not insofar as it is corporeal substance' (E1P15S, G II.59/C I.424). I believe this passage is a remnant of the KV. As noted in Section 1, the KV explores three different views on mereology: one passage argues that there are no parts in nature; several others argue that God is a whole composed of his creatures; and still others argue that only modes can have parts. One of the passages in this last group explicitly states that 'division never occurs in substance' and then gives the same water example. I therefore believe that the water example in the *Ethics* is a residue of one of Spinoza's earlier views. Consequently, the inconsistency concerning mereology present in the KV has not completely disappeared in the *Ethics*. Nevertheless, as I have argued, the *Ethics* is still largely consistent with the mereological view of God found in the KV and Letter 32.

3. Is God's Infinity Incompatible with Having Parts?

God's infinity is another important fact that has been invoked against the idea that God has parts.[28] The underlying thought is that infinity cannot be understood to have parts without getting entangled in paradoxes. But as I argue here (and elsewhere[29]), this is not the conclusion that Spinoza takes from these paradoxes.

3.1. Which infinite can and which infinite cannot have parts

In E1P15S, Spinoza lists a number of paradoxes that result from dividing infinity:

> If corporeal substance is infinite, they say, let us conceive it to be divided in two parts. Each part will be either finite or infinite. If the former, then an infinite is composed of two finite parts, which is absurd. If the latter [NS: i.e., if each part is infinite], then there is one infinite twice as large as another, which is also absurd. Again, if an infinite quantity is measured

28. For example, Guigon (2011: 198) and Mátyási (2020: 5–6).

29. See Vermeiren (2024 : 154–64). In Vermeiren (forthcoming), I give a detailed reading of Letter 12 as an attempt to solve the paradoxes of infinity.

> by parts [each] equal to a foot, it will consist of infinitely many such parts, as it will also, if it is measured by parts [each] equal to an inch. And therefore, one infinite number will be twelve times greater than another [NS: which is no less absurd]. (E1P15S, G II.57/C I.442)

As we have seen, E1P15S is meant to defend the corporeality of God against its deniers. One of the arguments invoked against the corporeality of God is based on these paradoxes of infinity. As Spinoza says, 'since these absurdities follow—so they [his adversaries] think—from the fact that an infinite quantity is supposed, they infer that corporeal substance must be finite, and consequently cannot pertain to God's essence' (E1P15S, G II.58/C I.422). Spinoza argues, however, that these paradoxes do not result from the idea of corporeal substance being infinite, but from a flawed conception of quantity: 'So from the absurdities which follow from that they can infer only that infinite quantity is not measurable, and that it is not composed of finite parts' (E1P15S, G II.58/C I.423). Recognizing the true quantitative nature of corporeal substance reveals it can be both infinite and divine.

But what is the error in our conception of quantity that leads to the paradoxes of infinity? Spinoza writes that the absurdities result from conceiving infinite quantity to be 'measurable' and 'composed of parts'. Now, in accordance with the common idea that God does not have parts, most commentators have assumed that the error here simply lies in attributing parts to infinite quantity and thus to corporeal substance. However, I believe that things are not so simple. For, as I will try to show here, Spinoza believes that infinity *can* have parts.

In Letter 12, Spinoza says that we should distinguish different concepts of infinity so that we can understand 'what kind of Infinite [henceforth 'Infinity^{1}'] cannot be divided into parts, or cannot have any parts, and, what kind of Infinite [henceforth 'Infinity^{2}'] can, without contradictions' (G IV.53; my translation). The original Latin here reads '*quale Infinitum in nullas partes dividi, seu nullas partes habere potest; quale vero contra, idque sine contradictio*'. Curley translates this as 'what kind of Infinite cannot be divided into any parts, or cannot have any parts, and what kind of Infinite can, on the other hand, be divided into parts without contradiction' (C I.201). But the Latin passage does not specify whether Infinity^{2} is opposed to Infinity^{1} in terms of its capacity to be *divided* into parts or in terms of its mere capacity to *have* parts.

The traditional reading is that Infinity^{2} is divisible, which means that it corresponds to the abstract notion of quantity in the passage on quantity (see Section 2.1). Infinity^{2} is thus taken to be an abstract misconception of infinity (e.g., Nachtomy 2011: 948; Nachtomy 2018: 149; Schmaltz 2021b: 251). However, E1P15S contradicts this interpretation. As I said, Spinoza there argues that the paradoxes of infinity do not disprove the corporeality of God. He says that these paradoxes do not result from the idea of corporeal substance being infinite, but merely from

a flawed conception of quantity. This is then followed by the passage on quantity, distinguishing abstract from real quantity. As shown above, the passage on quantity clearly describes abstract quantity as 'composed of parts'. And in the subsequent paragraph of Letter 12, 'measure' is given as a key example of abstract quantity. In other words, there is no denying that when Spinoza writes that the paradoxes show that we cannot conceive infinite quantity to be 'measurable' and 'composed of parts', he argues that the paradoxes follow from conceiving infinity through the *abstract* notion of quantity. Therefore, *when Spinoza says that Infinity² is capable of having parts 'without contradiction', this cannot refer to an abstract conception of infinity because, as he argues in E1P15S, this abstract notion of quantity precisely* causes *paradoxes when applied to infinity.* This also means that, contrary to Curley's translation, Infinity² cannot be opposed to Infinity¹ in terms of its divisibility. The opposition to which Spinoza refers must be between the *inability* to have parts of Infinity¹ and the *ability* to have parts (without contradiction) of Infinity².

In sum, given the fact that Infinity² cannot be the abstract notion of infinity, it must be the notion of infinity that Spinoza *defends* (i.e., infinity conceived in terms of the real notion of quantity). In fact, as we will see, the rest of Letter 12 confirms that he understands infinity to have parts 'without contradiction'.

Letter 12's idea of an infinite that allows parts likely draws from Hasdai Crescas' defence of actual infinity. We know that this author was on Spinoza's mind when he wrote the letter because near the end of the text, he explicitly refers to Crescas' cosmological proof of God (G IV.61–62/C I.205). One of Crescas' main philosophical aims was the vindication of actual infinity. His strategy for this was to resolve the paradoxes of infinity, on the basis of which Jewish and Arabic Aristotelians have refuted actual infinity. Like Crescas, Spinoza opposes this traditional Aristotelian rejection of actual infinity. In the letter, Spinoza rejects those who, because 'they were ignorant of the true nature of things, denied an actual Infinite' (G IV.59/204). And like Crescas, his defence of actual infinity relies on resolving the paradoxes of infinity, which he refers to as 'great crowd of difficulties' (G IV.53/C I.201) that make up 'the problem of the Infinite' (G IV.53/C I.201; G IV.61/C I.205). As shown, the central element in these paradoxes is the contradictions that result from partitioning infinity. Therefore, Infinity² , which can have parts 'without contradiction', belongs to Spinoza's attempt to solve the paradoxes of infinity by reconceiving infinite quantity.

3.2. A quantity is not infinite because of the multiplicity of its parts

A detailed analysis of the rejected 'abstract' notion of (infinite) quantity in Letter 12 can provide additional evidence for the fact that Spinoza's defended notion of infinity allows parts.

Spinoza identifies three examples of abstract quantity: number, measure, and time. Number is the foundational concept from which the others derive. Measure expresses continuous quantity in terms of numbered parts, or units of measurement, while time measures duration. Thus, both measure and time reduce quantities to numerical terms (CM I i, G I.234/C I.300). In summary, number represents the most basic form of abstract quantity. Consequently, the abstract notion of infinity, criticized in Letter 12, is fundamentally a *numerical* conception.[30]

Spinoza invokes the judgement of 'mathematicians', without giving names, who have perceived 'clearly and distinctly' the inaptitude of number to grasp infinity:

> For not only have they discovered many things which cannot be explained by any Number—which makes quite plain the inability of numbers to determine all things—they also know many things which cannot be equated with any number, but exceed any number that can be given. Still they do not infer that such things exceed every number because of the multiplicity of their parts, but because the nature of the things cannot admit any number without a manifest contradiction. (Ep. 12, G IV.59/C I.204)

Infinity cannot be expressed by any number. As Spinoza states, infinity 'exceed[s] every number'. This is obvious. However, the numerical conception of infinity targeted by Spinoza also includes the idea that infinity 'exceed[s] every number because of the multiplicity of its parts'. This resembles what we now call a 'countable' or 'denumerable' infinity: a countable series of elements exceeding any finite number. Although no single number can express it, this multiplicity is still numerical because it shares the countable structure of numbers. Here, infinite quantity differs from finite quantity not in structure but in being endless. This corresponds to Spinoza's description of infinity as 'what is called infinite

30. Ohad Nachtomy (2011: 945, 947, 949, 951; 2018: 147) reads Spinoza's critique of the numerical conceptions of infinity in Letter 12 as an argument that substance and its infinity are 'non-quantitative'. Such a reading overlooks the fact that Spinoza detaches the notion of quantity from its traditional association with number. Spinoza does this precisely to save the notion of infinite quantity from paradoxes so that God can be both infinite *and* extended (i.e., quantitative). Moreover, Spinoza's distinction of a proper concept of quantity from the abstract notion of quantity in Letter 12 (see Section 2.1) indicates that he proposes an alternative notion of infinite quantity rather than a non-quantitative conception of infinity. Furthermore, as we will see, the letter says, in line with Crescas, that infinite quantities should not all be equal (G IV.61/C I.205), that is, under the right conception, they can be larger and smaller than each other without any contradictions (G IV.53/C I.201). In other words, infinities can clearly have quantitative relations to each other. Therefore, Spinoza's notion of infinity is still quantitative.

because it has no limits' (Ep. 12, G IV.53/C I.201). But, as Spinoza argues, such a conception remains vulnerable to paradoxes, or 'manifest contradiction'.

In the paragraph immediately following this statement, Spinoza illustrates this 'manifest contradiction' through his example of the non-concentric circles:

> For example [see **Figure 1**], all the inequalities of the space between two circles, A and B, and all the variations which the matter moving in it must undergo, exceed every number. That is not inferred from the excessive size of the intervening space. For however small a portion of it we take, the inequalities of this small portion will still exceed every number. Nor is it inferred because, as happens in other cases, we do not know its maximum and minimum. For we know both in this example of ours: AB is the maximum and CD is the minimum. Instead it is inferred simply from the fact that the nature of the space between two non-concentric circles does not admit anything of the kind. So if anyone should wish to determine all those inequalities by some definite number, he will, at the same time, have to bring it about that a circle is not a circle. (Ep. 12, G IV.59–60/C I.204)[31]

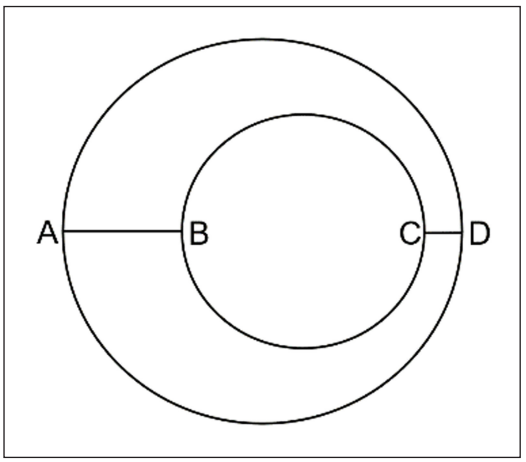

Figure 1: Geometrical drawing in Ep. 12.

31. The example of the non-concentric circles is almost certainly a reference to Descartes' vortex argument for the indefinite divisibility of matter (PP II §33, AT VIIIA.58–59/CSM I.237–238; see also Gueroult 1968: 524). In his theory of a material plenum, Descartes argues that the movements of matter are necessarily circular, otherwise there would be a vacuum. But in the special case of an irregular vortical ring, matter must take on an infinity of different speeds to accommodate the continual narrowing of the vortex. As the differences in speed divide matter, the matter moving through the irregular vortex is thereby infinitely divided (see also Spinoza's presentation of this argument in DPP2P9D, with an illustration similar to the one in Letter 12).

This example clearly aims to demonstrate that, as Spinoza asserts, the infinite inequalities between the two circles are 'not inferred from the excessive size of the intervening space'. In other words, this falsifies the definition of infinity in terms of the absence of limits. However, at first sight, the example does not discredit the idea of infinity as a denumerable set of elements. In other words, the limited space between the two circles still seems to be infinite 'because of the multiplicity of its parts'. Both Leibniz (A VI iii.281/LC 113) and Tschirnhaus make this objection. The latter addresses this issue in his correspondence with Spinoza:

> And in the example of the two circles which you use there, you do not seem to show what you had undertaken to show. For there you show only that they do not infer this from the excessive size of the intervening space, and that they do not infer it from the fact 'that we do not know its maximum and minimum'. But you do not demonstrate as you wanted to, that they do not infer it from the multiplicity of the parts. (Ep. 80, G IV.331/C II.484)

Spinoza replies:

> What I said in my Letter concerning the Infinite, that [Mathematicians] do not infer the infinity of the parts from their multiplicity, is evident from the fact that if they inferred it from their multiplicity, we could not conceive a greater multiplicity of parts, but their multiplicity would have to be greater than any given multiplicity, which is false. For in the whole space between two circles having different centres we conceive twice as great a multiplicity of parts as in half of the same space. Nevertheless, the number of parts, both in the half and in the whole space, is greater than every assignable number. (Ep. 81, G IV.332–333/C II.484–485)

The idea that a quantity is infinite due to the multiplicity of its parts assumes that this multiplicity is endless—without limits. In this conception, infinite quantity differs from finite quantity not by structure but by being an unlimited, *unexceedable* countable series. However, this creates a contradiction: take half the space between two circles. This space contains an infinite quantity of inequalities and is considered infinite because its multiplicity is unexceedable. Yet, as this quantity is only part of the complete space between the circles, it *is* exceeded by the multiplicity contained in the full space. Hence the contradiction.

According to Spinoza, the source of this issue lies in the fact that, in this conception of infinity, quantity is still defined by the multiplicity of its parts. He does not reject the idea that infinite quantities have an innumerable multitude of parts. However—and this is crucial—according to Spinoza, the *infinitude of a quantity does not result from this multiplicity*. This is what he claims 'the mathematicians' know:

> They also know many things which cannot be equated with any number, but exceed every number that can be given. *Still they do not infer that such things exceed every number because of the multiplicity of their parts*, but because the nature of the thing cannot admit number without manifest contradictions. (Ep. 12, G IV.59/C I.204; my emphasis)[32]

What Spinoza says here is that infinite quantities should be understood to be infinite *by their nature* and not by the multiplicity of their parts. Although their infinite nature does entail an innumerable amount of parts, quantity is not *defined* by that. It is not infinite *because* of that.[33]

Let us connect this to E1P15S and Spinoza's rejection of composition. Addressing the paradoxes of infinity, Spinoza writes: 'from the absurdities which follow from that they can infer only that infinite quantity is not measurable, and that it is not composed of finite parts' (E1P15S, G II.58/C I.423). As we have seen, measure, a derivative of the numerical conception of quantity, involves dividing continuous quantity into units of measurement and numbering them. Therefore, Spinoza's claim that infinite quantity is not *measurable* implies that it is not *numerical*. Number, as the most fundamental form of abstract quantity, is 'composed of parts'. This compositional structure—a quantity defined by a multiplicity of parts—is precisely what Spinoza rejects for infinity. The paradoxes of infinity arise not from conceiving infinite quantity to have parts, but from assuming it has a numerical, measurable structure, which is infinite 'because of the multiplicity of its parts'. This rejection aligns with Spinoza's broader critique of divisibility and bottom-up mereology. Parts are neither logically nor ontologically prior to their whole. Infinite quantities are not *defined* or *explained* by their multiplicity of parts because they are not *composed* of them. In this way, E1P15S is perfectly consistent with the theory of infinity in Letter 12.

32. The 'manifest contradiction' to which he refers is the one that he illustrates in the geometric example of the non-concentric circles immediately following this passage.

33. As Deleuze writes in his analysis of Letter 12: '[I]t is not from the number of its parts that the quantity is infinite, but rather because it is infinite that it divides into a multitude of parts exceeding any number' (1990: 203).

One might object that the idea that infinity has parts, even if it is not composed or defined by them, does not completely invalidate the paradox of infinity. Let us look again at the paradox in its most simple form:

> If corporeal substance is infinite, they say, let us conceive it to be divided in two parts. Each part will be either finite or infinite. If the former, then an infinite is composed of two finite parts, which is absurd. If the latter [NS: i.e., if each part is infinite], then there is one infinite twice as large as another, which is also absurd. (E1P15S, G II.57/C I.442)

As discussed earlier, Spinoza argues that this paradox results from conceiving infinity through the abstract notion of quantity. According to my reading, Spinoza thereby rejects the idea that infinity is *divisible* or *composed* of parts, but not the idea that infinity *has* parts. A large part of the paradox is nullified when infinity is not divisible or composed. However, one could argue that the mere idea of infinity *having* parts still causes some absurdity. Take the example of the circles: even if infinity is not divisible into parts nor composed of then, the mere fact that the infinity of inequalities in half of the space between the two circles is part of the infinity of inequalities in the complete space still means that 'there is one infinite twice as large as another, which is also absurd' (E1P15S, G II.57/C I.442). Therefore, one could wonder, does the paradox of infinity not also invalidate my reading of Letter 12 as a defence of an infinite with parts? But this part of the paradox assumes that unequal infinities are absurd. Spinoza, however, rejects this assumption. This is something that he probably learned from Crescas's response to al-Tabrizi's proof for the impossibility of actual infinity. The proof involves two infinite lines. One line is infinite in both directions; the other line is infinite in one direction and limited in the other. This is meant to show that the idea of (corporeal) actual infinity leads to the absurdity of one infinite being greater than another. But Crescas argues that it is only impossible for one infinite to be greater than another when this quantity is taken to be measurable:

> The impossibility of one infinite being greater than another is true only with respect to measurability, that is to say, when we use the term greater in the sense of being greater by a certain measure, and that indeed is impossible because an infinite is immeasurable.[34]

34. Cited from Wolfson's partial translation of Crescas' *Light of the Lord* (Wolfson 1929: 190–92). For a more extensive discussion of Crescas' response to al-Tabrizi's proof, see Wolfson (1929: 433; 1934: 290–91).

Crescas then continues to argue that although the lines cannot be said to be greater or smaller in terms of measurability, the first infinite line does 'extend beyond' the other infinite line.

Spinoza's response to the paradoxes of infinity thereby resembles the solution proposed by Crescas and others.[35] Spinoza identifies the paradoxes as arising from applying measure to infinite quantity: 'So from the absurdities which follow from that they can infer only that infinite quantity is not measurable' (E1P15S, G II.58/C I.423). Measure, as shown above, is a form of abstract quantity. But by abandoning the idea of measure and adopting the correct conception of quantity, Spinoza argues that 'one infinite can be conceived to be greater than another Infinite' (Ep. 12, G IV.53/C I.201). This is reaffirmed at the letter's conclusion, where Spinoza explains, 'if things cannot be equated by a number [i.e., when they are infinite], it does not follow that they must be equal' (G IV.61/C I.205). The fact that one infinite is larger than another, if the first mereologically contains the latter, is thereby no longer an absurdity. Therefore, infinity, rightly conceived, can have parts 'without any contradiction'.

In sum, when Spinoza writes that God has parts, this is not inconsistent with the infinity of God. Infinity is only inconsistent with a countable, bottom-up mereology that we find in numbers. Therefore, the interpretation that Spinoza's God has parts, supported by the textual evidence presented in Section 1, cannot be refuted by the argument that mereological complexity contradicts God's infinity.

4. Is God's Perfection Incompatible with Having Parts?

Another possible problem with the idea that Spinoza's God has parts is that this seems to contradict divine perfection. Descartes argues in the *Principle of Philosophy* that 'since being divisible is an imperfection, it is certain that God is not a body' (Part I §23, AT VIIIA.13/CSM I.201).[36] I will call this 'the Cartesian imperfection argument'. Spinoza's defence of God's corporeality in the *Ethics* refers to this argument:

> Their second argument is also drawn from God's supreme perfection. For God, they say, since he is a supremely perfect being, cannot be acted on [*pati non potest*]. But corporeal substance, since it is divisible, can be

35. For example, Gregory of Rimini also argued that while the size of infinities cannot be compared through counting (or measuring), one infinite can be said to be larger than another infinite if the former *contains* the latter (Moore 2019: 51).

36. Spinoza reproduces this argument in his *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy* (DPP1P16D).

> acted on [*pati potest*]. It follows, therefore, that it does not pertain to God's essence. (E1P15S, G II.58/C I.422)[37]

Here it is made clear that the imperfection involved in divisibility is 'passibility' or the capacity 'to be acted on'. A divisible whole can undergo the act of division. Of course, I have been arguing that for Spinoza, divisibility specifically refers to a mereological structure in which the parts are separable. The inseparability of God's parts thus makes him immune to the act of division. But is my interpretation thereby really shielded from the Cartesian imperfection argument? Is it not so that even a whole with inseparable parts is 'acted on' in the sense that it undergoes complexification? If mereological complexity necessarily entails passibility and thus imperfection, divine perfection might be a good reason to reject the idea that God has parts (of any kind).

4.1. The perfect form of passibility

In his response to the Cartesian imperfection argument, Spinoza argues that the passibility implied by extension, even if we assume it to be divisible, does not pose a problem to the idea of a corporeal God:

> I do not know why [matter] would be unworthy of the divine nature. For (by P14) apart from God there can be no substance by which [the divine nature] would be acted on. All things, I say, are in God, and all things that happen, happen only through the laws of God's infinite nature and follow (as I shall show) from the necessity of his essence. So it cannot be said in any way that God is acted on by another, or that extended substance is unworthy of the divine nature, even if it is supposed to be divisible, so long as it is granted to be eternal and infinite. (E1P15S, G II.60/C I.424)

The passibility implied by corporeality does not pose a threat to God's imperfection because there is no outside actor to act on God. As Spinoza explains in the *Short Treatise*, so long as God is not acted on by an external actor, passibility is not an imperfection:

> [B]eing acted on, when the agent and the one acted on are different, is a palpable imperfection. For the one acted on must necessarily depend

37. A similar presentation of the Cartesian argument against divine corporeality is given in the *Short Treatise* (I ii, G I.24/C I.70).

> on what, outside him, has produced this state of being acted on. In God, who is perfect, this cannot happen.
>
> Further, one can never say of such an agent, which acts in himself, that he has the imperfection of being acted on, because he is not acted on by another; similarly, the intellect, as the Philosophers also say, is a cause of its concepts. But since it is an immanent cause, who would dare say that it is imperfect when it is acted on by itself. (KV I ii §§23–24, G I.26/C I.72)

In other words, since God is a *causa immanens,* his passibility does not amount to imperfection. Being acted on only constitutes imperfection if it is a form of dependence, that is, if the actor is an external thing.[38]

These two passages together suggest that, for Spinoza, the corporeality of God involves a form of passibility that is not an imperfection because there is nothing outside God. Now the true cause of this passibility must be God's mereological structure, for this has been the target of the Cartesian imperfection argument. Therefore, Spinoza seems to argue that although the mereological complexity of corporeal substance entails passibility, it is a perfect form of passibility (i.e., being acted on by itself). So, the mereological structure of God constitutes an action of God on himself. This is more explicitly confirmed in a passage already cited in Section 1, which again uses the intellect as an example:

> For example, the intellect is the cause of its concepts; that is why I called the intellect a cause (insofar as, or in the respect that its concepts depend on it); and on the other hand, I call it a whole, because it consists of its concepts. Similarly, God is, in relation to his effects or creatures, no other than an immanent cause and also a whole, because of the second consideration [i.e., because he consists of his creatures]. (KV I 1st dialogue §12, G I.30/C I.76)

The concepts of the intellect are its mereological parts (see also E2P11C; E2P15). However, this mereological complexity attests to the activity of the intellect; for the intellect *causes* the concepts it *consists* of. The passibility entailed by its mereological complexity is thus a perfect form of passibility, that is, being acted on by itself. And as Spinoza writes here, it is precisely in this sense that God is the whole of its creatures. In sum, God acts on himself, and causes himself, by mereologically complexifying himself.

As I wrote in the Introduction, I believe that the mereological reading of the substance-mode relation thereby offers a crucial element for making sense of

38. See Zylstra (2020) for a discussion of the form of passibility that is involved in immanent causation and how it constitutes a form of perfection.

Spinoza's theory of self-causation. Self-causation is not mere conceptual self-containment. It is not being conceived through itself. Nor is it mere formal causation. Instead, it is *efficient* causation (Lærke 2013: 68–70; Melamed 2021: 121–23). God *produces* himself. But this production process seems incomprehensible if it is not identical to immanent causation, that is, the production of modes. As E1P25S says, God is the cause of himself 'in the same sense' that he is the cause of all things. Therefore, as Lærke writes, 'the divine cause causing effects is in fact just the divine cause causing (modifications of) itself' (2013: 71). However, I believe that one element is missing to make this case: for God to produce himself through the production of modes, he must *consist* of these modes. If God would be a bare substratum, underlying its modes, God would not be able to produce himself by producing modes.[39] There is much more to be said on this topic, but I will save this for another text.

4.1. How mereological complexity attests to power and activity

In the traditional bottom-up model, parts are independent of each other and prior to the whole. The whole is then dependent on the parts. But in Spinoza's reversed mereological model, parts are dependent on each other, that is, they depend on the whole, and, as Spinoza argues in Letter 32, the whole now enjoys independence.[40]

God not only enjoys independence by being a whole, his mereological structure is also an expression of his activity and power. Again, the key is to grasp that parts are not compositional elements. Instead, Spinoza understands them as *variations* or *modifications* of the whole.[41] In E1P15S, Spinoza writes that 'parts are distinguished in it [matter] only insofar as we conceive matter to be affected in different ways' (G II.60/C I.424). In Letter 32, he writes that 'every body, insofar as it exists *modified* in a definite way, must be considered as a part of the whole universe' (G IV.173a/C II.19; my emphasis). In other words, it is by being *affections* or *modifications*[42] of nature that things are *parts* of nature.

39. Aksoy (2025: 13–16) extensively argues against the interpretation of Spinoza's God as a bare substratum.

40. In Letter 32, Spinoza explains that conceiving something as a 'whole' implies conceiving it to be causally independent: 'For if we should feign that there are no causes outside the blood which would communicate new motions to the blood, and no space outside the blood, nor any other bodies to which the particles of blood could transfer their motion, it is certain that the blood would always remain in the same state, and its particles would undergo no variations other than those which can be conceived from the given relation of the motion of the blood to the lymph, chyle, etc. Thus, the blood would always have to be considered as a whole and not as a part' (G IV.172a/C II.19).

41. For an opposing view, see Schmaltz (2021b: 259).

42. 'Affections' and 'modes' seem to be equivalent for Spinoza (see Ep. 12, G IV.54/C I.202).

Many passages support the equivalence of parts and modes. Spinoza often equates 'being part of (the intellect or power or love of) God' with 'being God not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained through the human mind (or the human essence)' (see E2P11C; E4P4D; E5P36; E5P36D). But 'being God not insofar as he is infinite but insofar as he is explained through X' is also one of Spinoza's standard ways of describing X as a mode of God. In sum, there seems to be a conceptual equivalence between 'being a part of Y' and 'being a mode of Y'. A very straightforward example is this: Spinoza both writes that 'the essence of man is constituted by certain *modifications of God*'s attributes [i.e., his essence]' (E2P10C; my emphasis) and that 'man's power, […] insofar as it is explained through his actual essence, is *part of God* or Nature's infinite power, that is (by IP34), of its essence' (E4P4D; my emphasis). This, again, suggests that in Spinoza's conceptual apparatus 'being part of God's essence' is equivalent to 'being a modification of God's essence (or attribute)'.[43]

In short, instead of understanding partition as dissection, it should be understood as a form of internal differentiation or modification. To explain this with an image, for Spinoza mereological complexity does not have the structure of a wall built from bricks but of an embryogenic cell differentiating itself through self-complexification. As such, mereological complexity attests to a form of power.

As parts are understood as modifications or internal differentiations of the whole, the mereological complexity of nature expresses God's modifiability. But God's power is his power to create modes, that is, his power to modify himself. In Letter 32, Spinoza writes that because '[nature] is absolutely infinite, the variations of its parts which can follow from this infinite power must be infinite' (C II.20).[44] In other words, the endless mereological complexity of nature expresses

43. An objection might be raised that modes cannot equate to parts because the mutual dependence and adaptation of parts, emphasized in Section 2.2, conflicts with the eternity and adequacy of modes in Part V of the *Ethics*. This tension, however, lies within Spinoza's broader system rather than my interpretation. For example, when Spinoza states 'We are acted on, insofar as we are part of Nature, which cannot be conceived through itself, without the others' (E4P2) and adds that 'it is impossible that a man should not be a part of nature' (E4P4), he seems to negate human freedom, activity, and eternity. A possible solution can be found in how humans, being part of nature, are more active when they associate with others of similar nature. In the appendix to Part IV, Spinoza explains: 'It is impossible for man not to be a part of nature and not to follow the common order of nature. But if he lives among such individuals as agree with his nature, his power of acting will thereby be aided and encouraged' (E4App, G II.268/C I.589). When parts agree in nature, mutual adaptation becomes mutual affirmation, enhancing activity (see Laveran 2014: 277–82). Thus, the inner nature of a part can remain the adequate cause of itself when it agrees with the nature of the surrounding parts.

44. This is how this passage (translated by Curley) reads in the original letter in the possession of the Royal Society of London. The version in the *Opera Posthuma* (and the Gebhardt edition) reads as follows: 'is absolutely infinite, its parts are regulated in infinite ways by this nature of the infinite power and compelled to undergo infinitely many variations' (G IV.173a/C II.20).

the infinite power of God.[45] And each quantum of nature participates in this divine infinity by being itself infinitely modifiable and having infinite mereological complexity.[46]

As Spinoza explains right after the passage on the two non-concentric circles in Letter 12, this correspondence between mereological complexity and power is why the finite mereological complexity of nature would contradict God's power:

> Similarly, to return to our theme, if someone should wish to determine all the motions of matter there have been up to now by reducing them and their Duration to a definite number and time, he will certainly be striving for nothing but depriving corporeal Substance (which we cannot conceive except as existing) of its Affections and bringing it about that it does not have the nature which it has. (G IV.60/C I.204)

As the example of the circles indicates (see note 31), Spinoza here follows Cartesian tradition and understands the complexity of matter in terms of motions in the material plenum. If we would limit those motions partitioning matter to a definite (i.e., finite) number, we would limit the modifiability of nature. But, again, since God's power is his power to create modes, limiting the modifiability of nature amounts to limiting the power of God.

So, while mereological complexity, in Spinoza's theory, does in fact attest to a form of passibility—namely, undergoing the action of complexification—it constitutes a 'being acted on by itself', which is a form of perfection and power rather than imperfection and passivity. Therefore, God's perfection does not forbid him from having parts.

5. Is God's Simplicity Incompatible with Having Parts?

Finally, we come to what might appear to be the trickiest obstacle to my interpretation: God is said to be 'simple'. At first sight, simplicity is the most direct denial of mereological complexity. Luckily, in the texts expressing his own ideas, I find only one instance where Spinoza says that God is simple: 'That it [substance] is simple, and not composed of parts. For component parts must be prior in nature

45. For similar readings, see Deleuze (1990: 205) and Gueroult (1968: 510–13). However, Gueroult understands this in terms of a radical heterogeneity between substance and modes. According to him, the infinite divisibility of modes expresses the indivisibility of substance. According to my reading, the infinite divisibility of nature is the modifiability of nature which pertains both to modes and to substance.

46. For a similar interpretation, see Rivaud (1906: 142). As Laveran (2014) shows, Spinoza is a fierce critic of atomism, and thereby of finite mereological structure.

and knowledge to what is composed of them. In a being eternal by its nature this cannot be' (Ep. 35, G IV.181/C II.27). Not only is this passage a unique exception found in a letter, it also immediately makes clear what Spinoza understands under 'simplicity', namely, the absence of 'component parts' which 'must be prior in nature'. Likewise, in the following letter, Spinoza specifies that 'by "simple" I understand nothing but what is not composite' (Ep. 36, G IV.184/C I.29). Therefore, simplicity specifically opposes a bottom-up mereology where parts are prior to the whole. Spinoza's specification appears to allow that something can be simple despite having parts as long as those are not compositional parts with priority over their whole. I believe this is in line with how he understands parts as variations and modifications of the whole. As Leibniz says about his monads, 'the simplicity of substance does not prevent a multiplicity of modifications' (GP VI.598/AG 207). I believe the same applies to Spinoza's substance. If parts are understood as modifications, God can have parts without losing his simplicity.

Conclusion

There is significant textual evidence supporting the idea that Spinoza's God has parts, yet most scholars have rejected this idea, citing four key characteristics of God—indivisibility, infinity, perfection, and simplicity—as incompatible with mereological complexity. My argument is that none of these properties conflict with the idea that God has parts. First, a close reading of Spinoza's passage on quantity shows that 'indivisibility' cannot mean the denial of parts as this would lead to complete mereological nihilism. Key texts such as E1P15S, Letter 12, and Letter 32 reveal that Spinoza sees parts as inseparable, and in that sense 'indivisible'. In this mereological model, something can have parts while remaining indivisible. Second, Spinoza's discussion of infinity in Letter 12 demonstrates that, under the correct concept of quantity, infinity can have parts without resulting in contradictions. Third, Spinoza equates parts with modifications, affections, and variations. Thus, God's mereological complexity expresses his power to modify himself—a perfection rather than an imperfection. We can thus understand God's self-causation as a form of self-complexification. Fourth, parts understood as modifications do not threaten the simplicity of substance. I believe that we have thereby resolved all issues barring us from taking Spinoza seriously when he writes that God has parts.

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Abbreviations for references to Spinoza: E = *Ethica* (*Ethics*), followed by D = Definition (when it appears immediately after the part number), P = Proposition, D = Demonstration, C = Corollary, S = Scholium, L = Lemma, PD = Physical Digression following E2P13; DPP = *Renati des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae* (*Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*), references in the same manner as E; CM = *Cogitata metaphysica* (*Metaphysical Thoughts*), followed by the part and chapter; Ep. = *Epistolae*, followed by the number of the letter; KV = *Korte verhandeling* (*Short Treatise*), followed by part, chapter, and paragraph; TIE = *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, followed by the paragraph number; TTP = *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, followed by the chapter and Bruder paragraph number; TP = *Tractatus Politicus*, followed by chapter and paragraph; G = *Spinoza's opera*, edited by Carl Gebhardt, followed by volume and page; C = *The Collected Works of Spinoza,* translated and edited by Edwin Curley, followed by volume and page. Page numbers are provided for references to CM, KV, Ep., and prefaces, appendices, and longer scholia of the *Ethics*.

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