

**SUBSTANCEHOOD IN LOCKE,  
SPINOZA, AND KANT**

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*Aristotle is credited with the first full-fledged robust philosophical discussion and presentation of substance. His account of substance presents different notions of substance, which were elaborated on and modified in the medieval and modern periods. Among those that elaborated on the conception of substance in the modern period are Rene Descartes, John Locke, Baruch or Benedict de Spinoza, George Berkeley, Gottfried Leibniz, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. What is the nature of substance and how is it understood by these philosophers? In this paper I examine the notions of substance in the philosophical systems of Locke, Spinoza, and Kant. I go beyond this comparative and exploratory exercise to show why Kant takes on a more expansive notion of substance. In particular, for Kant the conceptions of substance we find in Locke and Spinoza do not allow the idea of substance to do the work that substance as a pure concept of the understanding should do.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Philosophically, the concept of substance has a long history, which goes back to Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> In the *Categories*, Aristotle (1938) defines substance as a real being, which is neither predicated of anything nor present in anything as a property of it.<sup>2</sup> In this conception, substances, for instance, individual human and individual horse (Aristotle's primary examples) are contrasted with other logical categories or properties, modes, or accidents, e.g., shape and size of a human or color of a horse. Whereas substances exist primarily in their own right, modes or nonsubstantial things do not, but are "predicated" of substances, as transient and ephemeral entities not capable of subsisting by themselves.

The Aristotelian conception of substance primarily leaves us with two notions of substance. First, a substance is that which other things (like qualities and modes) are attached to, and which has an independent existence, that is, it depends on nothing else for its existence, and it is not predicated of other things. Let us call this notion of substance S1. The second notion of substance, which we shall refer to as S2, takes substance to be a persisting thing, which retains its identity and remains the same through qualitative alteration. There are two other notions of substance that do not feature in Aristotle's *Categories*. One is the view that a substance is the fundamental stuff of the universe, which underlies all alteration. Let us call this S3. A fourth conception of substance, S4, takes substance in

relational terms, according to which we suppose that qualities do not exist on their own but rather inhere in some *thing*—a thing which is neither a quality nor has any essential qualities. Of course, this idea of substance is close to S1 except that it does not take substance as having any independent existence.

The concept of substance features prominently in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries metaphysics, and this is understandably so, the philosophy of this period being largely influenced by the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition. Most of the philosophers of this period have one thing or another to say about substance, and for the most part, are influenced by the Aristotelian conception of substance. Rene Descartes, John Locke, Baruch or Benedict de Spinoza, George Berkeley, Gottfried Leibniz, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant made different use of it in their philosophy, but as is often the case with most concepts in metaphysics, there is much disagreement among them regarding the nature of substance, what counts as substances, and how many substances there are in the world. This paper explores the notions of substance in Locke, Spinoza, and Kant. I have two aims in such an explorative exercise of substancehood. The first is to explain how Locke, Spinoza, and Kant conceive of the nature of substance. Secondly, to show that the conceptions of substance we find in Locke and Spinoza do not allow to do the work that Kant thinks a pure concept of the understanding, such as substance, does.

#### WHY FOCUS ON LOCKE'S, SPINOZA'S AND KANT'S ACCOUNTS OF SUBSTANCE?

Before I proceed I will like to address two related worries regarding the focus of this paper. The general thrust of both worries has to do with my choice of analyzing the concepts of substance of Locke, Spinoza, and Kant. The first worry is about the exclusion of the concept of substance advocated by medieval philosophers such as St. Augustine, William of Ockham, St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus et al. The second worry concerns the noninclusion of the accounts of substance by other modern philosophers such as Descartes, Berkeley, Hume, Leibniz et al. In what follows I will briefly address both worries.

Let me begin first with a general response to both worries. Although it is generally claimed that the notion of substance in the history of Western metaphysics goes back to Aristotle in actual fact the concept of substance predates Aristotle. In particular, in the literature one finds that many of the presocratic philosophers like Thales, Anaximenes, Anaximander, Democritus et al. had a view of substance. According to Howard Robinson (2014), the concept of substance of the pre-Socratic is closer to the one we generally find in chemistry, according to which substances are ontologically basic and refer to “the things from which everything else is made or by which it is metaphysically sustained.” The point here is that we find notions of substance in various periods in the history of philosophy: presocratic, Socratic (the period that includes Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and so on), medieval, modern, postmodern, and contemporary. Given how extensive one finds the treatment of substance in the history of philosophy it is not possible for a work to cover all of these notions. A work must, therefore, be selective of what to cover not just in respect of the period but also in the philosophers to investigate, unless of course the work is a survey of the history of substance, of which my work is not. I now proceed to some more specific response to the worries raised above.

As part of my particular response to the first worry, that is, the exclusion from my discussion the concept of substance advocated by medieval philosophers, I will go about it in a somewhat roundabout way. I will address this worry by saying something positive as to why I choose to rather focus on the concept of substance that we find in modern philosophy. In the history of substance it seems to me that the modern period of philosophy was one where there was much excitement and controversies surrounding the treatment of substance. Although a number of the modern philosophers shared a basic conception of substance inherited from the scholastic-Aristotelian tradition, they widely questioned the notion of substance that is confidently used throughout the medieval period.<sup>3</sup> So while part of my interest is to engage with some of these controversies, the general focus and interest in the modern period is underpinned by the fact that the treatment of substance in this period has been quite influential in contemporary metaphysics and philosophy of mind, together with the topics like personhood, personal identity, and immortality of the soul.

I now come to the second worry, namely, the query as to why I have chosen to limit my treatment of substance to that provided by Locke, Spinoza, and Kant and not also that of other modern philosophers like Descartes, Berkeley, Hume, Leibniz et al.? The primary reason for limiting my discussion to Locke, Spinoza, and Kant has to do with what I take to be some broad characteristics of the notions of substance that one can attribute to modern philosophers—characteristics that are linked to the epistemological commitments of these philosophers. In general, the rationalist modern philosophers share a view of substance that is qualitatively and significantly different from that of the empiricist modern philosophers. As Robinson (2014) has noted, the notion “of substance figures centrally in a positive way for the rationalist philosophers, in a way that it does not for the empiricists.” The point is that substance plays a more foundational role in the metaphysical schemes of rationalist modern philosophers than it does for empiricist modern philosophers. Furthermore, for the rationalist modern philosophers their use of substance provides them a way of working out some dual commitments that Tad Robison (n.d.) calls “a commitment to substance as an ultimate subject and a commitment to the existence of God as a substance.” One way of expressing the view that the concept of substance does not fundamentally play a positive role in the metaphysics of empiricist modern philosophers is that they either expressed the idea of substance negatively or are skeptical at some level about it (we find this in Locke) or are reductionist or nihilist about it (we find this in Hume). Given these broad characteristics and given that my work is not intended to be a survey of the concept of substance in the modern period I had to make a decision regarding who among the modern philosophers to focus on. On the basis of this consideration I choose to focus on one empiricist modern philosopher (e.g., Locke) and one rationalist modern philosopher (e.g., Spinoza). The choice of Spinoza, rather than Descartes or Leibniz, has to do more with the fact that Spinoza’s metaphysics and his consequent notion of substance seems more mysterious and esoteric than those of Descartes and Leibniz. Finally, the choice to include Kant is dictated by the fact that his philosophy, for the most part, attempts to bridge the differences between both rationalism and empiricism or to reconcile both camps/schools of thoughts. In other words, it is important to include Kant’s view of substance in my discussion given that his philosophy brings together elements of rationalist’ metaphysics and epistemology with elements of empiricists’ metaphysics and epistemology. The point is that Kant’s notion of substance fundamentally shares certain characteristics that are common to both rationalism and empiricism.

But one may ask why Locke and not Hume? My answer is twofold. Firstly, Locke's account of substance is more influential than that of Hume. Secondly, although Locke was skeptical about substance or either expressed the idea of substance negatively his account of substance has some positive elements. This contrast with that of Hume which is straightforwardly reductionist or even nihilist (Robinson 2014). It must be noted that Hume's treatment of substance is similar to his treatment of causation. In other words, he takes our notions of substance and causation as tendencies or habits of our minds in projecting certain things onto the world either in passing from one thing to another (as in the case of substance) or in associating them in some way (as in causation). The point is that Hume did not believe in the Aristotelian account of substance. In the *Treatise of human nature*, Hume (1978) takes our belief in substance as the result of a mistake or illusion and that there is no evidence for the existence of substances. Hume (1978, 220) presents us the reason for rejecting substance thus:

When we gradually follow an object in its successive changes, the smooth progress of the thought makes us ascribe an identity to the succession. . . . When we compare its situation after a considerable change the progress of the thought is broken; and consequently we are presented with the idea of diversity: In order to reconcile which contradictions, the imagination is apt to feign something unknown and invisible, which it supposes to continue the same under all these variations; and this unintelligible something it calls a *substance*, or *original and first matter*.

Hume's argument for rejecting substance is straightforward and unpretentious. Our experience, he says, tells us that there are various qualities in the world, that the world undergoes changes, and in our attempt to explain these changes we (our minds) postulate something called substance. Take the example of size or shape (primary qualities) and color (secondary qualities). Our experience tells us that the ball is both spherical and red. In Hume's view, we associate the color red with the shape of the ball, i.e., sphere and proceed by calling that a ball. Redness, sphericity or sphericity and whatever else that can be said of the ball or properties that can be ascribed to it is the same as being a ball. There is no one thing left when we subtract everything else that can be said about the ball; that is, nothing else there to talk about the ball besides being spherical or sphericity and redness (and perhaps with other qualities). The point is that speaking about the shape, color, and other properties of the ball exhaust *all* notion of the ball, such that it is otiose to postulate a remainder or stuff, namely, some substance (as in Aristotelian metaphysics).

### LOCKE'S "SKEPTICISM" OF SUBSTANCE AS "SUPPORT OF QUALITIES"

Given Locke's (1979) discussion of substance throughout *An essay concerning human understanding*, may not be entirely wrong to describe his treatment of the concept of substance as a little ambivalent. According to him (see Nidditch 1989, II xxiii 2 and II xxiii 3), we have two conceptions of substance. One is a "*notion of pure substance in general*" and the other "*ideas of particular sorts of substance.*" Both these conceptions of substance, as H. Robinson (2014) quite rightly points out, provide difficulties of interpretation.

To say that Locke's concept of substance is ambiguous is to suggest that there does not seem to be a unified doctrine of substance in his philosophy. Keeping this ambiguity in mind it is less surprising that commentators have interpreted Locke as having several notions of substance. Many scholars have suggested that there exist in Locke at least three distinct notions of substance. The first conception, which we shall call the real essences notion of substance, holds that when Locke refers to the real essence of a thing what he has in mind is its substratum. This interpretation of substance in Locke has been defended by Nicholas Jolley (1984, 77) and to some extent by Michael Ayers (1975, 16-17; 1993) and Roger Woolhouse (1969, 153-67; 1971; 1972, 417-24). On this interpretation, "real essence" and "substratum" are not to be understood as equivalent for Locke. However, they do pick out the same thing. The point is that they both differ in intension but not extension. The second notion of substance defended by people like Jonathan Bennett (1971, 62), James Porter Moreland (2001, 153), and Matthew Carey Jordan (2008, 8-26) is the relational view of substance that supports qualities (S4 above). On this interpretation, Locke's substances in general do not have any properties; rather they consist of "bare particulars" and because they consist of such bare particulars no positive content could be included in our idea of them. A third conception of substance is the general essences view defended by Peter Alexander. According to Alexander (1980, 97), Locke's ontology includes two ultimate, irreducible kinds of substance: material and immaterial, hence when Locke speaks of substance in general he has in mind one of these kinds of stuff. On this understanding, material substance, for Locke, is essentially a solid stuff of which all material things are composed and perceptivity constitutes its defining characteristic. As will be clear from my exploration, it seems that the most plausible account is the relational view of substance. This is supported in many passages in Locke (1979, I.i.2) and the interpretation makes sense in light of his explicit concern to give an "Account of the Ways, whereby our Understandings come to attain those Notions of Things we have."

It appears Locke employs the idea of substance negatively: first, he expresses skepticism about its usefulness, and then calls it an obscure and relative idea, and next he says it is an unknowable substratum, which supports qualities or simple ideas.<sup>4</sup> So while, on the one hand, Locke seems to poke fun of the idea of substance by calling its usefulness into question, on the other hand, he gives the impression that the idea of substance plays an important explanatory role. I shall call these different (or ambiguous) uses of substance in Locke his *negative thesis* and *positive thesis*. I take the former to be his denial of the idea of substance in general, assigning to it an obscure and relative status, and the latter, the explanatory role Locke thinks the idea of substance plays in our instantiation of different qualities and powers in things.

Locke's (1979, I.iv.18) first tack on the nature of substance is when he glosses over the *negative thesis*, "I confess, there is another *Idea*, which would be of general use to mankind...and that is the *Idea of Substance*, which we neither have, nor can have, by *Sensation* or *Reflection*." However, his more extended discussion of substance in both the chapters on space and on substance is also found in the *Essay* (1979, I.xiii.17-20 and II.xxiii). In these chapters, Locke develops a more detailed account of the negative thesis, focusing on specific aspects of the origin of the idea of substance in general. Locke's (1979, II.xiii.18) skepticism of the idea of substance in general begins with his argument that the application of substance to different things vacillates: it means different things when it is

applied to God, finite spirit, and bodies; hence, they ought not to be referred to by the same word. He (1979, II.xiii. 19) takes this point further in the next section with his account of the Indian philosopher who supports the world by an elephant and the elephant by a tortoise—an account that emerges again in II.xxiii. Locke follows this account by calling into question the usefulness of substance and accidents as well as their role. As he (1979, II.xiii.20) says:

But were the Latin words, *Inhaerentia* and *Substantia*, put into plain English ones that answer them, and were called *Sticking on* and *Under-propping*, they would better discover to us the very great clearness there is in the Doctrine of *Substance* and *Accidents*, and show of what use they are in deciding of Questions in Philosophy.

We can best understand Locke's skeptical posture of substance in general by partially running over his theory of idea and idea acquisition. For Locke, there are no innate ideas and an idea can only be acquired by sensation and reflection. Ideas, in Locke's account, originate through a three-step schema: (1) through perception via the five senses, (2) by reflection, i.e., the operations of the mind, and (3) through the manipulative employment of the mind in compounding and comparing ideas already acquired through perception and reflection. The first two (perception and reflection), which Locke calls the two fountains of knowledge generate simple ideas, while the third (the manipulative use of the mind) gives us complex ideas, which are a combination of simple ideas. Obviously for Locke the idea of substance is not a product of this three-step schema.<sup>5</sup>

Locke's (1979, II.xxiii) more elaborate treatment of the negative thesis lies with his extensive discussion of substance in general and substances (material and immaterial), where he argues against two robust views of substance. The first is that substance has a steady existence and subsists by itself as a support of qualities, and the second is that our idea of substance in general is among the ideas of sensible qualities. Locke (1979, II.xxiii. 20) expresses skepticism regarding the first view and using the example of the Indian philosopher he pokes fun at the idea of imagining that since sensible qualities are in need of support because they cannot subsist by themselves we *must* posit a thing call "*Substantia*; which according to the true import of the Word, is in plain *English*, *standing under*, or *upholding*." Locke denies the second view in several places in the *Essay*, emphasizing that our idea of substance in general is a construction of the mind and not one among the ideas of sensible qualities that are directly derived from experience. The idea of substance is not a product of the three-step schema of idea acquisition. He (1979, II.xxiii) strengthens this thesis, which he had already outlined in I.iv. 18 and in II.xiii. 17-20, by calling the idea of substance in general relative and obscure.

Locke's point about our idea of substance in general being a construction of the mind and not one among the ideas of sensible qualities that are directly derived from experience supports firmly the relational view of substance. In pursuit of this idea it is important to emphasize that while the notion of substance in general is not a product of Locke's three-step schema, the idea is suggested by experience, albeit *negatively*. We come to have ideas of various qualities, both primary and secondary, through sensation and reflection. But we cannot conceive of such qualities existing on their own, therefore, we suppose that there must be some *thing* in which they inhere. Substance as bare particular has no independent existence.

Although a number of philosophers defend the relational interpretation of substance *qua* bare particulars in Locke, this is not to suggest that there is unanimity concerning the nature of bare particulars. Advocates of the relational view of substance disagree in several areas of the nature of the bare particulars. For example, Moreland (2001, 153) describes bare particulars as things which do not *have* qualities in the usual sense; rather, they are things to which qualities are *tied*.<sup>6</sup> Others like Bennett (1971, 62) takes bare particulars as having properties, although “Lockean substratum-substance *cannot have a ‘nature’ at all.*” For Bennett, there is no property *X* such that it is essential to a bare particular that in order for it to exist it must have *X*.

Locke’s (1979, II.xxiii.3) overt criticism of pure substance in general is clearly brought out in his contrast of the relative and obscure idea of substance in general with our ideas of particular sorts of substances, which he thinks are derived from experience. By “collecting such Combinations of simple *Ideas*, as are by Experience and Observation of Men’s Senses taken notice of to exist together.” Locke says that we form the ideas of substances. Locke explicitly reiterates the same point in sections 6 and 7. For example, in section 6 he (1979) describes the ideas of substances as “nothing but several Combinations of simple ideas, coexisting in such though unknown, Cause of their union, as makes the whole subsist itself.”<sup>7</sup> Locke’s point here seems to be that the only idea of substance we have, let us say of gold for example, are those composed wholly of certain “simple ideas” or qualities: its yellowness, malleability, heaviness, fusibility, which all attach to a something we “know not what.”

In any case, notwithstanding the ambiguity associated with Locke’s tack and use of substance there is however one thing that seems less ambiguous in him—the nature of substance, as that which glues together or provides support for sensible qualities. The idea of substance may be obscure or relative but Locke thinks that it is a support of qualities, modes, etc. Locke does not seem to be denying the being or nature of substance as a support, but what he denies is our knowledge of substance. We are unable to have knowledge or a clear and distinct idea of substance because the idea does not derive from the three-step schema of idea acquisition. However, a substance is a support of qualities. Locke (1979, II.xxiii.4) maintains:

...when we talk or think of any particular sort of corporeal Substances, as *Horse*, *Stone*, etc. through the *Idea*, we have of either of them, be but the Complication, or Collection of those several simple *Ideas* of sensible Qualities, which we use to find united in the thing called *Horse*, or *Stone*, yet because we cannot conceive, how they should subsist alone, nor one in another, we suppose them existing in, and supported by some common subject; *which Support we denote by the name Substance*, though it be certain, we have no clear, or distinct *Idea* of that *thing* we suppose a Support.

With the way I have interpreted Locke, his notion of substance as a support of qualities fits in with S4—the relational nature of substance. Even though we may have knowledge of properties or qualities as those entities that are combined together or inhere in something we call a substance, substance itself is unknowable. Locke thinks that substance or substratum itself is unobservable (and given his empiricism it is unknowable). It is unknowable because it itself cannot have observable qualities and rather it is the thing in

which observable qualities inhere. On this understanding, substance itself does not inhere in anything, it is not predicated of other things, rather others things, properties, qualities are predicated of it or inhere in it. Furthermore, it does not have an independent existence in the Aristotelian first sense of substance.

### SPINOZA'S ONE-SUBSTANCE VIEW

My discussion of Spinoza will begin by pitching Locke against Spinoza in at least three areas of difference. I will briefly summarize and run the main argument that Spinoza presents for the one substance view. Spinoza, unlike Locke, conceives of the nature of substance in terms of S1. That is, he takes substance as having an independent existence; it is a thing that does not depend on anything else for its existence. But for Locke, as we have seen he understands substance in terms of S4—substance in relational terms, according to which we suppose that qualities do not exist on their own but rather inhere in some *thing*.

Besides this difference, Spinoza also differs from Locke (and Aristotle) with regard to how many substances there are, that is, the quantity of substance that exists or can possibly exist. Whereas, in Locke's philosophical system there can be infinite number of substances (the world is simply populated with substances), in Spinoza's system the world has only one substance. According to Jason Waller (n.d.), the most distinctive aspect of Spinoza's philosophical system is his substance monism. In Spinoza's substance monism there is only one infinite substance—God or Nature—that exists. In the *Ethics* Spinoza (1677) provides a long argument why he thinks only one substance exists and why that substance has to be God. He sets out his argument in Part I of the *Ethics* (E1), as follows:

- P1: Every substance has at least one attribute (E1D4)<sup>8</sup>
- P2: Two substances cannot share the same nature or attribute (E1D5)
- P3 God has all possible attributes (E1D6)
- P4: God exists (E1P11)
- C: Therefore, no other substance other than God can exist (From P1-P4, E1P14)

Spinoza's argument thus tries to establish not only that there is one substance, which is called God or Nature but that this one substance has all possible attributes, where an attribute simply means an essence, that is, *what it is to be* a particular kind of thing or stuff. As Spinoza defines it, an attribute simply refers to the essence of substance under some way of conceiving or describing that substance (E1D4).

In defending the view that the one substance has all possible attributes Spinoza thus disagrees substantially with Descartes, who holds that every substance has only one attribute. For Descartes, material substances (or bodies) have the attribute of extension, while the other material substances (or minds) have the attribute of thought. On Spinoza's absolutely infinite-substance view, substance exists in every way that something can exist.<sup>9</sup> For although substance has an infinite number of different attributes, we only know about two of them. For Spinoza, these attributes are extension and thought. We take the essence of substance as extension when we consider substance one way, and we take its essence as thought when we conceive substance another way. But why must only one substance exist? Spinoza's thought seems to be that for any other substance to exist it would have to share

an attribute with God since God has all possible attributes. But this cannot be since both conceptually and logically, it is impossible for two different substances to both have the same attribute.<sup>10</sup>

A third area of difference between Spinoza and Locke (and also Aristotle) on substance is in respect of what counts as substance and how it is conceived. A substance, for Spinoza, is conceived through attributes, and these attributes constitute the essence of substance. Since there is only one substance, which is God or Nature how is he conceived?<sup>11</sup> Substance, he says, is “that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, that which does not need the concept of another thing” (*EID3*). In saying that a substance is “conceived through itself,” Spinoza no doubt takes the view that a substance necessarily has an independent existence, and suggests that the nature of substance is such that in thinking about it we do not have to think of anything else. A substance, in this conception, does not require the concept or “knowledge of another thing” (*EIP8S2*) for us to think of it.

To recap briefly. For Locke, a substance is a support of all apparent and variable accidents (qualities as well as modes), for Spinoza, a substance is a being that is dependent for existence on itself alone, and whose existence is, in fact, identical with its essence. The language of “support and inhere” that is central in Locke’s substance drops out in Spinoza. In the first 16 propositions in the *Ethics* (Part 1), Spinoza examines the nature of a substance, and he says it belongs to the nature of substance to have an absolutely independent existence, that is, in itself. Propositions 1-8 lead Spinoza to the conclusion that there exists only one substance. Roughly the argument goes like this:

- P1: A substance is in itself and is conceived through itself
- P2: Attributes constitute the essence of a substance, i.e., a substance is known through its attributes
- P3: Multiple things are distinguished by differences in the attributes or affections of their substances
- C1: Therefore, two substances cannot have the same attributes or nature, otherwise they would be the same substance.
  
- PP1: A substance cannot produce or cause another substance (given P1)
- PP2: It belongs to the nature of a substance to exist (given P1), i.e., its essence necessarily involves existence since a substance is the cause of itself
- PP3: A substance is either infinite (unlimited/unconditioned) or finite (limited/conditioned)
- PP4: It cannot be finite because that would mean it has to be limited by another substance of the same nature,<sup>12</sup> which would have to exist necessarily (given what follows from P2)
- PP5: A substance is necessarily infinite
- C2: Therefore, there can only exist in the universe one and not two or more substances.

From propositions 9-16 of *Ethics*, Spinoza reiterates his argument for the existence of one substance, which he identifies with God, a being that is indivisible and consists of

infinite attributes. Nothing exists besides this absolutely infinite substance and its modes. So whatever exists, i.e., all individual things exist in God. Later in the book (*E2P1*, P2) Spinoza would argue that although this absolutely infinite substance has an infinity of attributes, only two of them—thought and extension—are really known. Even though he recognizes thought and extension as the known attributes of the one infinite substance, he differs from someone like Descartes concerning the status of thought and extension. Thought and extension are not different substances, nor different attributes of two different substance—mental and physical, but different attributes of the same substance, God. Also, whereas Descartes limited each created substance to one principal attribute, Spinoza claims that the only one substance has infinite attributes, even though only two can be known by humans. Like Descartes, though Spinoza believes that each attribute must be “conceived through itself” (*E1P10S*).

Individual things of the world like—for example, this human or this horse, which Aristotle regards as substances, or this gold, this lead, this stone, which Locke’s regards as individual substances—are modes of the one infinite substance conceived under either the attribute of extension or that of thought. But since all individual things exist in this one absolutely infinite substance how do we distinguish them? According to Spinoza, individual particular things are differentiated from one another by their essence or nature explicable in terms of the thing’s particular characteristic pattern and its mechanisms to endure, i.e., to persist in its very existence or “preserve in its being” (*E3P6*). Spinoza calls this tendency of a thing toward its own self-preservation *conatus* or endeavor.

Spinoza’s *dual-attribute theory of substance*, that is his view that thought and extension are two attributes not of different substances but of one absolutely infinite substance, has certain implications for his view about reality. It means, for instance, that Spinoza would reject two very common views about reality: (1) that everything is mind or mental (matter being in some sense mind), or (2) that everything is matter (mind being in some sense material). In this view, God is neither matter nor mind, or put crudely God, is matter even though not entirely matter, or God is mind, even though not exclusively mind.

## KANT: SUBSTANCE AS A PURE CONCEPT OF THE UNDERSTANDING

In discussing Kant’s view of substance as a pure concept of the understanding, it may be helpful to bifurcate his discussion of substance into two broad frames: his own concept of substance (namely, his category of substance) and his precritical concept of substance. It is generally taken that both views of substance are related. In what way are they related? Or how do we determine this relationship remains one of disputation in Kant’s scholarship. Partly, the debate has turned on what Kant scholars consider as ambiguity in Kant’s conception of substance. In view of this ambiguous determination of substance, many claim to have found various problems and contradictions concerning the Kantian concept of substance. Let me highlight two aspects of the contradictions.<sup>13</sup>

The first aspect relate to the worry that there are at least two contradictory concepts of substance in Kant. There is substance as a single object and substance whose quantity in nature can neither be increased nor diminished. Bennett (1966, 182-84; 197-98) clarifies these two notions of substance in terms of *Substance 1*, i.e., the idea of substance as a

bearer of qualities and *Substance 2*, which is an absolute permanent thing.<sup>14</sup> The second aspect which has been discussed extensively by Bryan Hall (2011, 79-109) and, which is related to the first, is about the category of substance. This category applies to an omnipresent and sempiternal substance, and the other category applies to ordinary empirical objects. Here is the problem. If we take the category of substance as applying to an omnipresent and sempiternal substance it would provide for all experiences of empirical objects taking place in a common spatiotemporal framework. But then it would be impossible to individuate these empirical objects and experience their alterations. On the other hand, if the application of the category of substance is to ordinary empirical objects, we would resolve the above problem, namely, individuate these substances and experience their alterations. However, we will be faced with a different problem or dilemma, namely, the category of substance would be unable to pick out a common spatiotemporal framework for these experiences.<sup>15</sup>

To understand Kant's own concept of substance it has to be contextualized within his schematization of the pure categories of understanding. Such contextualization has to be done in ways that make them applicable to intuition and to the schema of substance. The idea of substance in appearance is determined by Kant's (1998, A136/B175) application of the category of substance in the First Analogy of Experience within the schema. This is because the application yields *a priori* the synthetic judgments in the Principles of Pure Understanding. It is important to note that these *a priori* synthetic judgments flow, according to Kant, "*a priori* from pure concepts of the understanding...and ground all other cognitions *a priori*."<sup>16</sup>

The possibility of any experience or knowledge, according to Kant (1998, A39/B56), requires two faculties: sensibility and understanding. Sensibility is the faculty of intuition while understanding is the faculty of concepts. Since sensibility is the faculty of intuition, while space and time are "pure forms of all sensible intuitions," then we can take the latter as belonging to the faculty of sensibility. Kant (1998, A24/B38 and A27/B43) defines space as "a necessary representation, *a priori* which is the ground of all outer intuitions," or "the form of all appearances of outer sense." By outer sense I take Kant to mean experiences of sense-impression, i.e., our awareness of external objects, while by inner sense I understand him to mean experiences in general, namely, "the subjective condition of sensibility." Time, for Kant (1998, B50/A34), is "the form of inner sense," the subjective condition of all appearances in general. That is to say, as "a necessary representation that grounds all intuitions." By presenting space and time as forms of our sensibility, then the pure forms of intuition are contributed by the faculty of sensibility. Kant makes two related claims.

First, *we could not perceive objects at all unless they were in time and space*. Spatiotemporality is the condition under which objects of experience can be given at all. The condition for the possibility of perceiving objects is the fundamental principle of the representation of objects of experience. Second, space and time for Kant are not independent or external to us, but "in us." They are the cognitive templates used by our minds to construct a picture of external things. This is obvious from the fact that Kant calls them "pure forms of intuition," and not pure forms of the objects of intuition. In this way, Kant blocks any move of drawing a distinction between perceptions and objects perceived. Space and time do not exist independently of the perceiver; rather, they are modifications of our sensibility. They are forms which we project upon the world, forms according to which our mind constructs the external world. *If we could not perceive objects at all unless they were in time and space* and if space and time are forms of intuition dependent on us or our

perception, then Kant has made a radical claim. Spatiotemporal features do not apply to objects separate of our forms of intuition, that is, they are transcendently ideal. Spatiotemporal features are not features of things in themselves but only indeterminate features of our experience.

However, it belongs to the nature of the faculty of sensibility to produce a manifold of intuitions. Without unifying this manifold of intuitions, they would exist only as a disorganized rhapsody of perceptions, or mere impressions, scattered in an incoherent or unintelligible manifold. But this does not happen because the faculty of understanding performs a unification by bringing this manifold of intuitions into concepts, and it is only then that cognition or knowledge is possible. As Kant (1998, A50/B74 and A50/B74) says, “[N]either concepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition”; for “[t]houghts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.” The process of bringing the sensible representations under concepts is, for Kant, through judgment.

If a fundamental requirement in judgment is that intuitions must be brought under concepts, then we would need some justifying proof to show how this works. Kant discusses this process both in the transcendental deduction of categories (or the pure concepts of the understanding) and in the analogies of experience. Earlier, in the first chapter of the “Analytic of concepts,” Kant has given twelve concepts in a table of the categories (or pure concepts), and claims that they are derivable from the table of twelve necessary forms of judgment. Kant’s task is to show that the concepts of pure understanding necessarily follow from the forms of judgment by showing that the forms of judgment apply necessarily to experience.

Among the pure concepts of understanding is the concept of substance. As is obvious from Kant’s discussion of this concept of substance, his aim is to demonstrate that spatiotemporal unity is grounded in judgment. The possibility of our judging objects objectively in time requires three *a priori* principles. One of these is the principle of the persistence of substance. (The other two do not concern us here, the relational categories of causality and of community). Thus, as Kant demonstrates, substance, as a pure concept, like all other pure concepts of the understanding, plays a major role in any judgment. It provides the possibility of our judging objects to be determined in an objective position in the unity of time. To help us understand the nature of substance in Kant, let us outline the structure of his argument in the first analogy:

P1: “All appearances are in time, in which as substratum (as persistent form of intuition), both simultaneity as well as Succession can alone be represented.”

P2: “[T]ime cannot be perceived by itself.”

C1: “Consequently it is in the objects of perception, i.e., the appearances, that the substratum must be encountered that represents time in general and in which all change or simultaneity can be perceived in apprehension through the relations of appearances to it.”

PP1: But “the substratum of everything real, i.e., everything that belongs to the existence of things, is substance, of which everything that belongs to existence can be thought only as a determination.”

C2: “Consequently that which persists, in relation to which alone all temporal relations of appearances can be determined, is substance.”

PPP1: “[T]he real in appearance, which as the substratum of all change always remains the same.”

C3: Therefore, “this . . . cannot change in existence, its quantum in nature can also be neither increased nor diminished.”

Without worrying so much about the details of the argument, we can isolate its soundness or validity from what Kant thinks constitute the nature of substance. First, Kant attempts a somewhat difficult task of managing to unite together the different notions of substance (S1-S4). We would notice that C1 concerns the fourth sense of substance (S4), the sense of a substratum combining together our appearances as represented in some substratum. C2 conceives of substance in the second sense (S2), that is, a substance as a persisting thing, which retains its identity and remains the same through qualitative alteration. C3 takes substance as the basic stuff of the universe, which underlies all alteration (S3). C3 also gives us S1, for if we think of substance as some substratum in nature, then its independent existence is implied. On this view, a substance is not the subject of predication, but exists independently of other things, modes, and properties, which are represented in substance.

If we focus on the first part of the argument in the first analogy, then it seems to be the case that Kant is using substance as a pure concept of understanding to justify our conception of time. The point is that if every appearance is in time and understood in terms of substratum (that is, as persistent form of inner intuition), then both simultaneity as well as succession can alone be represented (P1). If it is clearly the case that time cannot be perceived by itself (P2), then substratum can only be encountered in the objects of perception, i.e., in appearances, as substratum represents time in general and which all change or simultaneity can be perceived in apprehension through the relations of appearances (C1).

Kant has earlier told us that objects can only exist in space and time, but how do we, for example, justify our conception of time? How is time possible? How is it possible for us to judge objects as determined in an objective position in the unity of time? Time cannot be perceived, for the temporal features of things do not reveal themselves to us. It is here that substance does its work as the ground of time. Simply put, Kant then appears to be arguing that we must understand time in terms of the regular changes of a permanent thing, that permanent thing being substance. The pure concept of substance does ground the *a priori* unity of time.

### KANT’S INTEGRATION OF LOCKE’S AND SPINOZA’S NOTIONS OF SUBSTANCE

Both Locke and Spinoza, as we have already seen, conceive of substance differently—Locke in the fourth sense (S4) and Spinoza in the first sense (S1). However, for Kant these two notions of substance would not do the job that substance, as a pure concept of the understanding, is required to do. For Locke, substance is that something which mode or qualities inhere in; it unifies our simple ideas or qualities as the condition for the possibility

of their existence. That is, it is the glue that holds together qualities, although we may not have any clear idea of it. And for Spinoza, substance has an independent existence; it is indivisible and has infinite attributes. Kant agrees with Locke and Spinoza in terms of substance construed along S1 and S4. For although substance, the *noumenon* or the thing-in-itself, needs to have an independent existence, it has to be independent of the *phenomena*, and all appearances have to exist in it, i.e., be represented in it, but that is not all. Locke's concept of substance as support of qualities presupposes that a substance belongs to experience, rather than, as Kant maintains, it is the pure concept of the understanding, which grounds the *a priori* unity of time.

To employ the concept of substance in the above sense, i.e., as grounding the *a priori* unity of time, Kant builds on the notion of substance presented by Locke and Spinoza. In addition to S1 and S4, Kant appropriates S2 and S3 as necessary notions of substance, that is, substance for him has to be a persisting thing and the fundamental stuff of the universe, which underlies all alteration. To justify our use of time, since time can only be understood in terms of the regular alterations of persistent things, we need a notion of substance that goes beyond that of Locke and Spinoza. We need to conceive of substance as a persisting thing which retains its identity and remains the same through qualitative alterations, as an all-embracing, absolute, and permanent thing which underlies all change, all events in the world. It should be noted that although substance is taken to be an all-embracing, absolute and permanent "thing" or "stuff" it is still subjective in the sense that it exists by underlying all events in the world *for us*, or in our experience.

Conceiving of substance in this way, as embracing S1-S4, is important for the epistemological project that Kant thinks is necessary to reconcile empiricism and rationalism. More importantly, it enables all appearances in general to be unified in time, and we would in this way bring intuition under concept. Kant has already said that judgment or cognition requires both concepts and intuitions in that knowledge is only possible when concepts grasp sensible representations. Like other concepts of pure understanding, substance makes it possible for the manifold of intuitions to be unified, to be made coherent and intelligible, rather than just being mere impressions or disorganized rhapsody of perceptions. It makes us to be able to judge how objects can be determined in an objective position in the unity of time. For if we conceive of substance as the all embracing permanent thing that underlies all changes. This guarantees the unity of time. Substance as a pure concept of the understanding must, therefore, be considered as incorporating not just S1 and S2 but also S3 and S4.

## CONCLUSION

Locke does not appear to have a robust view of the nature of substance, as that which supports qualities, modes, etc. His notion of substance is not clear and distinct although its nature is that it is a thing that supports qualities. And for Spinoza, the nature of substance is that it exists necessarily with many attributes and can only be conceived through itself. Although there are differences between both of them when it comes to theorizing about the independent nature of substance, what counts as substances, and how many substances there are, they both seem to fundamentally agree on the point about qualities being unified by some substratum. Kant employs the concept of substance in ways that include the notions of substance of both Locke and Spinoza. Obviously, this has to be if Kant's entire project is to argue that cognition or

knowledge requires both concepts and intuitions is plausible. Kant's view of substance ties together the various notions of the nature of substance, but he goes beyond these notions to conceive of substance as a pure concept of the understanding. This enables him to employ the concept of substance in ways that go beyond S1, S2, S3, and S4 individually. That is, S1, S2, S3, and S4 considered discreetly or separately do not constitute the notion of substance. However, when jointly considered or taken together they provide us the notion of substance as a pure concept of understanding. Substance is given *a priori* and not from experience, and because substance belongs to our understanding, it enables us to structure our experience in time in general. A striking point to note about Kant's concept of substance is that, like Spinoza, he speaks of one substance. We need substance as a pure concept of the understanding to represent time in general. But to be able to do this we must understand time in terms of the regular changes of a substratum, or the single permanent all-embracing world-substance.

## NOTES

1. The term substance is used in relation to *hypokeimenon* and derived from the Latin *substantia*, which is the Greek term for *substrate*.

2. Aristotle used the term *ousia* for substance.

3. For some discussion of the notion of substance among the medieval philosophers, see Henrik Lagerlund (2012, 468-85).

4. Although Locke (1979, xii and xxiii) sometimes speaks as if simple ideas inhere in substance, this should not be taken literally in view of what he (1979, II.viii.8) later speaks of ideas as "in the things themselves." He should rather be "understood to mean those qualities in the objects which produce them in us." This seems sensible because it would be ridiculous for one to hold the view that a simple idea can inhere in say this table, or that it can be a property of gold, assuming we take these to be substances. So in view of this we should understand Locke to be saying that it is qualities that inhere in things, that is, it is qualities that are supported by substances.

5. Locke (1979, II.xiii.18) clearly says that the idea of substance is not a clear and distinct one, "If it be demanded. . . whether this *Space*, void of *Body*, be *Substance* or *Accident*, I shall readily answer I know not; nor shall be ashamed to own my ignorance, till they that ask show me a clear distinct *Idea* of *Substance*." And immediately following this he dismisses the claim to knowledge of substance by those who use it as "making a noise with sounds, without clear and distinct significations."

6. It is important to point out that for Moreland (2001), the bare particulars are to be understood as genuinely *bare* in the sense that the "tied to" relation is unanalyzable.

7. Locke (1979, II.xiii.6) also says the same thing in that "combinations of simple ideas as are taken to represent distinct *particular* things subsisting by themselves."

8. General note on Spinoza and notations. *E* stands for Spinoza's *Ethics* and the number following it stands for the part in the book. So, for example, *E1* means Part 1 of the *Ethics*. D, P and S (as used by Spinoza) stand for definition, proposition, and solution, respectively, and the numbers following the letters refer to the definition, proposition, and solution numbers. So, for instance, D4, P10, and S2, respectively, mean definition 4, proposition 10, and solution 2. With regard to notations, as used by me in constructing Spinoza's

argument P and PP stand for premise(s) and C for conclusion, and the number following P, PP, and C refer to the number of the premise(s) or conclusion.

9. See Bennett (1984, 88-92) for a discussion of space and the extended substance in Spinoza. It is interesting to note that Bennett's work is a very influential study on Spinoza and for the most part very critical of Spinoza's philosophical system. Much of the contemporary work and scholarship on Spinoza aim to defend Spinoza against the criticisms of Bennett.

10. See Della Rocca (1996, 164-67) for a new interpretation of attributes of substance in Spinoza's philosophical system and defense of the mind-body identity thesis.

11. For a forceful defense of Spinoza's argument for substance monism from a number of common objections, see Della Rocca (2002, 11-37).

12. For Spinoza, Nature is split into two: God as *Natura naturans* and the universe of things as *Natura naturata*.

13. Spinoza's assumption here reflects what he takes to follow from definition 2 in E1 that only a thing (e.g., body, thought) of similar nature can limit a thing. In this sense, a body cannot limit thought, the same way thought cannot limit a body, but a body can limit another body and thought another thought, for we can always conceive of a body or thought that is greater than another.

14. For discussion on the ambiguous determination of substance and the problems and contradictions concerning the Kantian concept of substance, see Robert Hanna (2006, 388-95), James Van Cleve (1999, xii-340), Peter F. Strawson (1997, 268-79), and Bran Hall (2011, 79-109).

15. Other scholars like Van Cleve (1999), Georges Dicker (2004), and Jay F. Rosenberg (2005) are in broad agreement with Bennett although they adopt a modified view of the distinction that Bennett draws between *Substance 1* and *Substance 2*.

16. One approach to resolving both aspects of the contradiction is probably to begin by clarifying the different spheres and referents of the Kantian concept of substance in ways that support a unification of the concept of substance under one schemata. Of importance here is that Kant's critical project eventually leads to the obliteration of what Kant himself and others before him formerly understood by substance (see Hall 2011, 79-109), for his argument that the dilemma can be resolved and overcome by probing and exploring the development of Kant's (1995) notion of substance in *Opus postumum*, his final work.

17. By outer sense I take Kant to mean experiences of sense-impression, i.e., our awareness of external objects, while by inner sense I understand him to mean experiences in general.

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*Submitted: 21 June 2015; revised: 13 November 2016*