

**WOOLHOUSE, ROGER.** *Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz: The Concept of Substance in Seventeenth Century Metaphysics.* London & New York: Routledge, 1993. 214 pp. ISBN 0-415-09022-9.

René Descartes (1596-1650), 'the father of philosophy,' set the scene for much philosophy from the seventeenth century to the present day. In particular, his metaphysical scheme with its distinction between extended substance and thinking substance, and his mechanical conception of the physical world greatly influenced the work of the two great mainland European philosophers who followed him: Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677) and Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716). This book introduces and explains the metaphysics of these three thinkers on the assumptions that they are best understood via the concept of substance.

Roger Woolhouse provides a systematic treatment of the central metaphysical views of these important and interrelated philosophers, considering their area of agreement and disagreement. Going beyond the conventional classification of the three as 'The Rationalists,' he explores their accounts of what is real and how these lie at the heart of their philosophies. In particular, he shows how they provided conceptual foundations for the seventeenth-century science of mechanics.

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