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Philosophy, Vol. 6, No. 24. (Oct., 1931), pp. 446-458.

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SPINOZISTIC SUBSTANCE AND UPANISHADIC SELF¹

A COMPARATIVE STUDY

M. S. MODAK, M.A., Ph.D.

THE Upanishadic thinkers arrived at the conception of the Atman—the self—through psychological reflection. By an analysis of consciousness, they concluded that the self was the primary reality. Further, they discovered that it was the same primary reality—the same principle—that formed the basis of the Universe. In this capacity the self was called the *Brahman*. This psychological approach to the problem of ultimate reality is characteristic of the Upanishadic philosophy. It is interesting to note that the writers of the Upanishads have also offered cosmological speculations which led them independently to the positing of absolute existence. A passage in the Taittiriya Upanishad says, “that from which all these beings come into existence, that by which they live, that into which they are finally absorbed, know that to be the eternal verity, the Absolute.”¹ The writer of the Chandogya² Upanishad expresses this conception by means of one word, “Tajjalan,” which means “that it is from the Absolute that the world has sprung, it is into it that it is dissolved, and it is by means of it that it lives.” “It is indeed the power of the Brahman which manifests itself as the motion of the Soul in us and bethinks itself,”³ says the Kenopanishad. This Absolute existence posited by the Upanishads is identical with pure consciousness, which is the *Atman*. The identity of consciousness and existence from the point of view of pure reason is the most fundamental fact of the Upanishadic Philosophy. Absolute existence is Being which knows no determination. Vedanta starts with the concept of indeterminate Being in the solution of the ontological problem of reality. The philosophy of Spinoza also starts with the concept of indeterminate Being. The cosmology of the Upanishads is not a systematic and rational attempt towards the construction of the Universe. This task has been accomplished in greater details by writers of later Vedantic books. The Upanishadic thinkers were bold speculators, who lived in a free atmosphere.

¹ A part of a chapter in the writer's thesis on *Spinoza and the Upanishads*, approved for the Doctorate degree by the University of London.

² Taittiriya, III. 1 (Yato vā imāni Bhūtāni jāyante, etc.).

³ Chandogya, III. 14. 1.

⁴ Kena, III. iv.

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To them, creation out of nothing seemed an impossibility. Theirs was not the age of science. Yet the doctrine of creation of the Universe appeared to them to conflict with rational thinking. For Spinoza, too, the idea of creation out of nothing seemed absurd. His thoroughgoing rationalism would revolt against such a notion. The Upanishadic conclusion was that the Absolute was the source of the Universe. The indeterminate Being, which is absolute reality in Spinoza's system, was the substance which is self-dependent and unconditioned. All things depend on this Absolute. The manner of dependence of all things on substance and on the Upanishadic Absolute will be considered later on. Both the Upanishadic thinkers and Spinoza start with the conception of the self-dependent unconditioned Being which is the reality, and as such the ground of all things. What is this indeterminate Being? How is it related to the world? In what sense is it the source of all things? The possibility of an external creator being ruled out at the very outset, the explanation of the problems raised above, is given by Spinoza and the Upanishadic thinkers by making reality immanent. To Spinoza reality is all-comprehensive. It is the cosmic system itself.

The Spinozistic conception of cosmic Unity has a grandeur about it. It is not the grandeur of poetic fancy. Spinoza's conception of reality as "one organic cosmos" has its roots in the mystic vision, which, far from being hampered by scientific conceptions, was mainly based on them, especially on certain conceptions in physics and mathematics. He conceived "Reality as one organically interconnected Universe in which everything is and happens according to law and order, and not as the result of mere chance or mere caprice."¹

Whatever was real was within the cosmos. The Upanishadic thinkers conceive reality as both immanent and transcendent at the same time. The reality in their view is not only immanent in the cosmos but at the same time also transcends it.

Although self-dependent and unconditioned Being was posited both by Spinoza and the Upanishadic thinkers, the former conceived it as a *Universe* systematically interconnected within itself, while the latter conceived it as the underlying principle—in man and the Universe.

"I maintain that God is . . . the immanent cause of all things, but not the transient cause. Like Paul, and perhaps also like all ancient philosophers, though in another way, I assert that all things live and move in God. . . . However, those who think that God and Nature (by which they mean a certain mass or corporeal matter) are one and the same, are entirely mistaken."² With such an explicit

¹ *Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. II, p. 5, "Spinoza," by Professor A. Wolf.

² *Vide* p. 343, *Correspondence of Spinoza*, A. Wolf.

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statement from Spinoza, the exact sense in which he can be called a pantheist cannot be misunderstood. God is not merely matter. Spinoza was a pantheist in the sense that "the one-and-all is God and God is the one-and-all" ; and the one-and-all is the cosmos which our intellect truly perceives as extended and as thinking. *Pan*, *i.e.* all, taken as the unique completeness of Being was God to Spinoza, not that "All" in the sense of every individual thing, was God. This conception of one-and-all was a positive one. It is a Being completely real and hence indeterminate. It must be conceived through itself as it is self-dependent. Things in this world are seen to depend on many other things, and these in turn depend on many another. The primary Being which must be self-dependent, and which could not have been created, must have also an eternal existence. Eternity is in fact existence itself.

One of the features of pantheistic thought is the positing of an impersonal reality. The God of pantheism is not conceived after human values. Spinozistic substance and Upanishadic self are both conceived impersonally. The popular human attributes of God, *viz.* love, power, greatness, etc., cannot characterize either. Not that either of them is lacking in any positive being. That cannot be, for they are perfectly real. They are impersonal in the sense that they are supra-personal. When Spinoza says that God is the immanent cause of all things and not transient, he accepts another feature of pantheistic philosophy. But let it be understood that this is higher pantheism. He does not equate matter with God. He does not deify nature, understood in the popular sense. Nature, in the sense of cosmic system whose attributes are extension and thought, *i.e.* physical energy and mental energy respectively, is God, and there is nothing real beyond the cosmic system. Hence God is not the transient cause of the world. Upanishadic position in this respect is different. The Self is both at the same time the immanent and the transient cause of the Universe. These two aspects of the Self, *viz.* immanence and transcendence, cannot be separated.

In Spinoza's philosophy we have seen that the one-and-all is God and God is one-and-all. This one-and-all is a system. The Upanishadic position is that the all, *i.e.* the cosmos, indicates the presence of the *One*, *i.e.* the self behind it. This *One* cannot be ("phenomenalized") reduced to many. For it is the presupposition of the "all." The presence and operation of the *One* are necessary to connect the "all" to it. And the "all" which is not of equal reality as compared to the *One* is, however, inseparable from the *One*. And as the *One* cannot be entirely reduced to many, Sankar, like Spinoza, says that it is wrong to identify individual things with Brahman.

The Brahman was not merely an empirical concept. It arose out

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of a perception of "the manifold of the world" and "the diversity of Soul-functions," both of which indicated the Unity underlying them. The material world was conceived by the Upanishadic thinkers as filled by spiritual presence, as in fact "a manifestation of Brahman." The vexed question of the relation between matter and spirit did not, therefore, arise for the Upanishadic thinkers. The concept of Brahman, which is the all-pervading and all-producing Absolute, solves the problem of the relation between matter and spirit. This duality of matter and spirit was the stumbling-block of the Cartesian School. It was overcome by Spinoza more or less in the same way as by the Upanishadic thinkers. For the concept "substance" or "God" is also an all-pervading and all-producing Absolute.

The first notion of Brahman is that it is Existence. Since ultimate reality is existence, we cannot conceive the absolute as limitation of existence, for limitation is determination and determination is negation; Being and non-Being are utterly contradictory conceptions. Hence Being is Truth. True Being, therefore, is Absolute Being. It excludes all relativity. It denies all dependency. It is absolutely positive, *i.e.* without the slightest possibility of negation or limitation which would cancel absoluteness. With Spinoza also the first notion of substance is that it is existence. For Existence pertains to the essence of substance. Substance cannot be conceived unless as existing. It is, therefore, self-existent. And as its essence involves existence, substance is *all* being. That is to say, it is so completely real or positive that it cannot be determined by any other thing, for determination implies negation. It is, therefore, indeterminate Being.

Again, absolute Being or existence must transcend time. It is therefore eternal. This is the Upanishadic position. Spinoza understands "Eternity to be existence itself in so far as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition of an eternal thing." For him Existence and eternity were identical conceptions. Eternity to both Spinoza and the Upanishadic thinkers was not indefinite duration. Both have conceived the ultimate reality as transcending the conception of time altogether.

Further, if Being is Absolute, it must be one, for the very conception of a multiplicity of absolutes is self-contradictory. For the positing of a Second Absolute negates the very essence of the absolute itself. Therefore Brahman is one and Brahman alone is. Spinoza, differing radically from Descartes, asserts that there can only be *one substance*. Substance being absolutely infinite, a plurality of Substances cannot be conceived. "In the nature of things," says Spinoza, "there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attributes. For if the substances are distinct, they must

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differ either in their modes or states or in their nature or Attributes. But a difference in Attributes is excluded *ex hypothesi*. And if they differ only in their modes, then they are really the same, *i.e.* the same in their permanent nature, the same *qua* substances." The agreement here really depends upon the relation between substance and Attributes, as has been pointed out by Professor Joachim.¹

The Upanishadic Brahman is not a system. It is the integral substance—a subtle and unmanifest essence underlying everything that is manifested. It is consciousness, for it is identical with the *Atman* or the self. It is the eternal subject of knowledge. It is not a thinking being, but thought itself. Spinoza conceives substance as a self-dependent Being whose essence is Thought and Extension, and upon whom the modes are made to depend. This Substance, therefore, is the "Unified totality of Attributes" with modes entirely depending upon it. Substance, of course, is conceived through itself; but that does not make the modes unreal; for substance must exist in a state of itself, and this gives a certain reality to the modes. Though the idea of substance is entirely self-dependent, the idea of a mode involves the idea of substance, "because the reality of a mode involves the reality of substance." Substance therefore is a reality that exists as *the system*.

At this stage the doctrine of causality in Spinozism and the Upanishads would have to be considered. What is the immanent causality of Spinozistic Substance? God is the immanent cause of all things, and Spinoza categorically rejects the view that God created the Universe or that God is the transient cause of all things. We have seen that the Upanishadic thinkers reject the theory of creation of the Universe. Creation out of nothing seemed absurd both to Spinoza and the Upanishadic thinkers. A self-subsistent Being is the only and the one Cause. So far the agreement between the two systems of thought is complete. When substance is stated to be the immanent cause of all things, the relation implied between substance and the modes has to be determined with due regard to the nature Spinoza ascribes to substance. Critics who interpret the immanent causality in Spinoza as indicating a geometrical relation between substance and modes have overlooked this consideration, and consequently, as Professor Wolf has pointed out,² Spinoza has been misunderstood. The frequent use Spinoza makes of geometrical figures to illustrate his philosophical conceptions seems to have misled these critics. The proposition that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right-angles can be deduced from the very nature of the triangle,

¹ *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, p. 38.

² *Vide Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1927.

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and Spinoza often uses this metaphor in support of the propositions he wants to deduce, as obvious from his fundamental philosophical conceptions. This has led to the supposition that for Spinoza there was only one kind of relationship in the Universe, namely the purely rational or logico-mathematical relationship. But nothing can be further from such a supposition, particularly when we take into consideration Spinoza's conception of matter. This is where he differs from Descartes, and differs so fundamentally that he cannot be called a Cartesian in any material sense. To Descartes matter was inert, and as for Motion, he brought in God to explain it. Spinoza's conception of matter is essentially dynamic. Matter was not inert. Matter which he termed as extension was physical energy expressing itself in the infinite mode of motion and rest. Substance or God, therefore, was a dynamic conception, not static. As Existence, so action too is the essence of God. "The more perfect a thing is, the more reality it possesses, and consequently acts more."¹ Substance being a dynamic conception, its immanence in all things—the immanent causality of substance—cannot be taken as merely expressing a logico-mathematical relation. Substance or God as *the active or efficient, the dynamic cause of all things*, is immanent in them. Further, even the use of geometrical figures to illustrate his philosophical conceptions does not support the view that for Spinoza, only one relation, viz. the logico-mathematical, existed in the Universe. "The idea or definition of the thing should express its *efficient* cause." The really adequate definition of a circle therefore is that it is "the space which is described by a line of which one point is fixed and the other movable. Since this definition expresses the efficient cause, I know that I can deduce from it all the properties of a circle, etc."² It is clear from the above definition of circle that "Spinoza regarded geometrical figures as effects produced by certain movements."³ The immanence of God in all things is therefore dynamic and not logico-mathematical.

The Brahman, which is both the immanent and transcendent source at the same time, of all things, is also conceived dynamically in the Upanishads. Sankar insists that the immanent and the transcendent aspects of Brahman as the cause of all things must not be taken separately. Brahman is both *the efficient* and *material* cause of the Universe (Abhinn-nimitta-Upādāna-Karanam). It is obvious, therefore, that the Upanishadic conception of reality is dynamic. "If logical account is permitted, then we may say that the Brahman of the Upanishads is no metaphysical abstraction, no

¹ *Ethics*, Part V, Prop. 40.

² *The Correspondence of Spinoza*, Professor Wolf, p. 301.

³ P. 60, *vide supra*.

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indeterminate identity, no void of silence. It is the fullest and the most real Being. *It is a living dynamic spirit*, the source and container of the infinitely varied forms of reality.”¹

Why is it that men fail to see the Reality—to know the Truth—which, as both Spinoza and the Upanishadic thinkers have made out, is so very obvious? The Isopanishad tells us that truth is veiled in this Universe by a vessel of gold (Hiranmayen Patrena Satyasyā-pihitam mukham).² The Kathopanishad³ says that people live in ignorance and yet think themselves wise—blind leading the blind—they would have easily seen the reality had they “lived in knowledge” instead of in ignorance. The Chandogya Upanishad⁴ declares that knowledge is power, while ignorance is impotence. The Brihadaranyaka⁵ compares unreality to non-Being. It is in these passages that the origin of the doctrine of Maya could be traced. Actually the word Maya is used in the Upanishads in more than one sense. In the Prasna and the Swetaswatara Upanishads the word Maya is used in the sense of illusion.

In the Swataswatara, again, Maya is used in the sense of “power.” It was used in a similar sense in a passage in Rigveda quoted by Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Maya in the sense of *power* or “fields of Force”—God being described as having produced all things by His “powers”—very nearly approaches the Attributes of Spinoza as interpreted by Kuno Fischer.⁶ These two senses in which the word Maya has been used in the Upanishads have been pressed into the service of their own theories by writers on vedanta. Gaudapada, the forerunner of Sankar, maintains that the world was not created at all!

He argues, “If there were a Universe, then only a question might arise whether it would hide from our view, but the Universe is not; duality is only Maya, *i.e.* illusion. Non-duality is the only reality.” For Gaudapada, therefore, there are no degrees of reality, since the world does not exist at all. In trying to explain the Universe, he arrived at a position where the world itself was explained away. The knotty problem of the one and the many does not arise for him. To Sankar the world is real, but not *sub specie æternitatis*. The important distinction that Sankara draws between the “Pāramārthika” noumenal- and Vyāvahārika-phenomenal views of reality must not be lost sight of. The doctrine of degrees of reality is throughout implied in Sankara’s philosophy. The world is real in the relative sense. Since it cannot be conceived independent of Brahman, it cannot be real in the sense in which Brahman is real.

¹ P. 172, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, Radhakrishnan.

² Isa. 15.

³ Katha. 1-2. 4. 5.

⁴ Chandogya I. I. 10.

⁵ Brih. I. 3. 28.

⁶ *Vide* Professor Wolf’s paper on Spinoza in the *Proceedings* of the Aristotelian Society, 1927; Ranade, *Constructive Survey of the Upanishadic Philosophy*, p. 227.

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Nor can it be said to be absolutely unreal or (a total illusion), since it is inseparably connected with Brahman. Sankara does not deny the existence of the world as such. He only maintains that it cannot be treated as separate from Brahman or as something self-existent and independent. It is an "illusion" to think that the world is an independent entity. It is entirely dependent on the underlying reality, and further is inseparable from it.

Maya in the sense of "power" of Brahman closely resembles the attributes of Spinoza. In a letter to Oldenburg,¹ Spinoza writes: "There exists in Nature an infinite power of thought." In the *Short Treatise* the attribute of thought is spoken of as "thinking power." The attribute of Extension is also considered as a power in Nature, which produces Motion and Rest²—effects which necessarily depend on the attribute of Extension. Attributes therefore are "powers," "lines of force"—in substance or Nature. So also Brahman, by its power (*i.e.* through Maya), produces all things which necessarily depend on its Maya. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the relation of the attributes to Substance and that of Maya to Brahman. Attributes are essentially related to Substance.

In some places Spinoza has used the words Substance and Attribute in identical sense. In a letter to De Vries³ Spinoza writes: "By Substance I mean that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, whose conception does not involve the conception of some other thing. I mean the same by attribute, except that it is called attribute with respect to the intellect which attributes such and such a nature to substance." In *Ethics*, however, he distinguishes attribute from substance. The former is only one aspect of the latter. That aspect, it must be noted, is *real* and *ultimate*. The Attribute is defined in the *Ethics* as "that which the intellect perceives of Substance, as constituting its Essence." Since, according to Spinoza, the intellect leads us to the knowledge of the real, the attribute—*i.e.* that which the intellect perceives of substance—is a real and ultimate aspect of Substance. Not that it is what only *appears* to our intellect, but is not in Substance. This interpretation after Kantian terminology is inapplicable to Spinoza's attribute. Substance is known by intellect as it exists in itself, as it really is. The unified totality of attributes—the togetherness of attributes—is substance. "Attribute, as the what of Substance, is not excluded from Reality." Attribute can be said to be the essential nature of substance. The relation between Brahman and Maya is not one of essence. We shall first see what the Upanishadic position is in this respect, and then proceed to Sankara's view.

¹ P. 212, *Correspondence of Spinoza*, A. Wolf.

² P. 120, *Short Treatise*, A. Wolf.

³ P. 108, *Correspondence of Spinoza*, A. Wolf.

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The Upanishads, as we have seen, use the word Maya in two senses, viz. (i) illusion and (ii) Power. The latter sense of Maya is predominant so far as the Upanishads are concerned. The world they explain is the effect of Brahman's "power" or Maya. Brahman, though an immanent cause of the Universe, is not identical with it. For Brahman is at the same time the transcendental cause of the Universe. When the transcendental aspect of Brahman as the cause is considered, Maya in the sense of "illusion" is made to explain the appearance of the many. *Though immanent in all things, Brahman must not be identified with the Universe, and though it transcends the Universe, the latter must not be separated from Brahman.* This can be said to represent the Upanishadic view. And although the Universe cannot be separated from Brahman, it does not mean that the relation between them is one of essence. Brahman is an independent reality. Its power, *i.e.* Maya, which is responsible for the appearance of the universe, is not essential for Brahman's reality.

From the point of view of logic, the Upanishadic position in this respect seems unsatisfactory. Sankara's view of the Maya doctrine is much the same. Only when pressed to explain as to why Brahman should have this concomitant of Maya, Sankar says "it is inexplicable" (Anirvachaniyam). "It is inexplicable because it is neither absolutely real (Sat, *i.e.* Brahman) nor unreal (*i.e.* something absolutely different from Brahman), and therefore it is inexplicable"¹ The world, therefore, is inexplicable.

Substance necessarily expresses itself in infinite attributes, but Brahman is not bound by any such necessity. Brahman is the source of all things both immanently and transcendently at the same time. All things are effects of its power, but Brahman is not resolved into these effects, for it has transcendental existence also. Hence its "power" to produce all things, *i.e.* Maya, cannot constitute its *essence*, though it inseparably goes with it.

Spinoza's reality cannot exclude the attributes, since they express its essential nature, while the Upanishadic Brahman has no *essential* relation with Maya. The reality of Brahman is quite independent of Maya or the power (which is responsible for the appearance of the many). If the cosmic system is the reality for Spinoza, what is the position of individual things in Spinoza's reality? Individual things or modes depend upon substance. They are included within the reality. It is their relation with substance that we are now considering. The relation between Maya, *i.e.* the world, and Brahman, and that between modes and substance, afford an interesting comparison. We will thus know how the world of individual things is deduced from ultimate reality both in Spinoza and in the Upani-

¹ *Vide* p. 136, *Adwaita Philosophy*, K. Sastri.

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shads. "Spinoza works on the hypothesis of modification as the Vedanta works on the theory of Maya."¹ The appearance of finite things, Spinoza takes as a *fact* much in the same way as Sankar looks to the fact that the world does appear. How it comes about that there is a world of finite things is "inexplicable," says Sankar. The inexplicability lies in the fact that the world is neither absolutely real nor is it absolutely non-real. Spinoza does attempt to explain the relation or dependence of things finite on substance.

The purpose of Spinoza's hypothesis of modification is the same as that of the Vedantin's theory of Maya. Both have the explanation of finite things in view. How does substance as the cause work?

Substance is the free cause of itself and of all things. It is a free cause because it is a necessary cause. It is necessary in the sense that it is the nature of substance to act. Its essence has action with it. Substance as the free causality of itself and of all things is *Natura Naturans*. It is the eternally-active absolute power that is acting in (infinite) all ways. And as the necessary consequent of its own free causality, substance is *natura naturata*, an ordered system of modes following with coherent necessity from *Natura Naturans*. *Natura Naturata*—God as the consequent of His own free causality—is not merely the world of sense-perception. God viewed as the eternal system of modes—a necessary consequent of His free causality—is *Natura Naturata*, and viewed as a free cause of itself and of all things is *Natura Naturans*. But Finite things, according to Spinoza, owe their coming to be and their persistence in being to God. That is God, the immanent and first cause is both the efficient and essential cause of all things. How does this causality of God work? God as *Natura Naturata* is not merely the world of individual things, world of sense-perception. There must be some way, therefore, by which the dependence of finite modes on God is explained. Substance as Extended and Thinking has to account for finite things. The infinite has to link the finite with itself, without losing its essence, and at the same time the finite must not be pushed out of the circumference of reality, for the finite is entirely caused by the infinite.

Spinoza links the finite to the infinite, the modes to the Attributes, by means of the conception of *infinite modes*. The corresponding conception in the vedanta, that attempts the linking of the finite with the infinite, is that of Maya. It has already been pointed out that Vedantic reality does not negate the world. The world is not an illusion. It is not false. It is relatively real. That is at least the Upanishadic view. And even Sankar cannot be interpreted to mean that the world is an illusion. Mr. Kokileshwar Sastri, in his book

¹ *Vide* p. 12, *Spinoza*, by Sorley.

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on Advaita philosophy, has shown that the falsity of the world was not maintained by Sankar. The realistic element in Sankar is very well brought out in the book which quotes original passages from Sankara's commentaries. The mediating link between the one and the many is Maya in the Upanishads and infinite modes in Spinoza. Spinozistic attributes of extension and thought would be also covered by Maya. The Upanishadic One, unlike Spinoza, was not conceived with attributes as its essence, and hence Maya covers the ground that is covered in Spinoza's philosophy by both the attributes and the modes. But in Spinoza the position between the attributes and modes is that between infinite and finite, and the mediating link of the infinite mode can therefore be said to correspond to the conception of Maya.

A direct product of an Attribute of Substance carries with it the character of infinity and eternity. This product, though a modification of the Attribute, is the *immediate* modification. Consequently it shares the nature of attribute in so far as it lies within the attribute's field. Motion, for instance, is an immediate infinite and eternal mode of the attribute of Extension, because it follows directly from Extension. There cannot be anything extended which is not in motion. All the modes of extension, therefore, are linked to the Attribute of Extension by the infinite mode of motion. When this attribute of Extension is modified by an infinite mode, anything that follows from the attribute under this modification must also be infinite and eternal. For "its being and its existence will be co-extensive with motion and rest, and so far with the Attribute."¹ This mode, therefore, though *mediate*, is eternal and infinite.

"The face of the whole Universe"—*Facies totius Universi*—is the mediate infinite eternal mode.² In the Scholium Lemma, VII, the idea is clearly explained. To conceive "the whole of nature to be one individual whose parts, that is to say all bodies, differ in infinite ways without any change of the whole individual," is to conceive the face of the whole Universe. The immediate modification of Extension is motion and rest, from which follows the conception of the whole of Nature as one individual. Both these immediate and mediate modes are eternal and infinite in so far as they lie within the attribute "Extension." We have now reached the stage of finite modes. Spinoza has so far prepared the ground for their explanation. The causality of God works through the mediation of these infinite modes; its consequences, therefore, must themselves be eternal and infinite. Individual things, therefore, which all are the effects of God's causality, are infinite and eternal—in a sense.

"Their reality in that dependence (on substance) is timelessly

¹ *Vide* p. 75, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, by Joachim.

² *Vide* p. 308, *Correspondence of Spinoza*, A. Wolf.

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actual; their essence *in and through the modal system or the attribute* involves their existence; and in and through the modal system their essence is complete or infinite.”¹ Individual or particular things, in so far as they are viewed under their modal system, are infinite and eternal. “Their timeless actuality, eternity, follows inevitably from the substance in which the essences of all particular things are sustained.”² This view of particular things as infinite and eternal can be put in another way. We can say that all things are in God in so far as their essences partake of God’s essence. This is not to identify God with all individual things. For not individual things but the cosmic system is God.

This real—infinite and eternal—aspect of particular things is, however, not generally comprehended. Things are taken out of the modal system, and we imagine that we shall thus understand them best. That is the reverse of truth. Particular things—when thus viewed—are finite and transitory. Not that the world of sense-perception is an illusion. Our imaginative experience is partially true. It must be realized that although the essence of particular things inevitably has to assert itself, that does not mean that particular things abstracted from their modal system can claim the same reality which would belong to them when viewed under the modal system.

The world of sense-perception is real according to Spinoza, for things are modifications *of the original reality*; but they appear to us as finite because of our partial understanding of them. If we overcome this defect in our understanding, there is no danger of our misconstruing them. The world, therefore, is no distortion of reality. We must understand things in the right perspective. The relatively real is a true modification of the original reality. We think it as relatively real because we tear it off from the modal system, and view it as substantial entity. If it is viewed from its proper place within the modal system, it is infinite and eternal.

What does the relative reality of the world in the Upanishads mean? The Upanishadic Brahman, we have seen, is not a cosmic system. It is both immanent and transcendent as the cause. One must therefore penetrate *beyond* the world of sense-perception to attain the real. Particular things, therefore, are real in so far as they depend upon Brahman. To view them as independent of Brahman is to err. They are the modes of Brahman, produced by its power—Maya. But Brahman cannot be identified with them, nor do they form part of Brahman, for Brahman is absolutely real and independent. The substance of Spinoza, though self-dependent, has to include within itself the modes, for it is a system. This is

¹ *Vide* p. 76, *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*, Joachim.

² *Vide supra*.

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not the case with Brahman. Therefore the infinite and eternal, being attributed to particular things by Spinoza is inapplicable to them in the Upanishadic philosophy. The essences of particular things in Spinoza are sustained in substance, and only in this substance they are infinite and eternal. The essence of particular things according to the Upanishads is one and the same, that is, Brahman, which *underlies* them, and at the same time *transcends* them. The Upanishads do not regard the world as a mere human presentation by the genuine reality. It is objective and independent of the finite individual. The Kantian view of the world of ordinary experience is rejected both by Spinoza and the Upanishads. The relative reality of particular things is therefore admitted by both Spinoza and the Upanishadic thinkers. But the causality of substance being thoroughly immanent, Spinoza's reality becomes a system that has a rightful place for particular things, and, in this light, a certain infinity and eternity attaches to these particular things. Here there is divergence between Spinoza and the Upanishads. The latter lay down a doctrine of causality which is both immanent and transcendent at the same time, and particular things therefore do not receive that importance which they receive in Spinoza's philosophy. The Upanishadic view taken here is the same as Sankar held later on.¹ There are passages in the Upanishadic literature which declare that all this is Brahman (Sarvam khaluidam Brahma). It will be wrong to identify Brahman with all things on the strength of this expression. Sankar expressly warns us against any such interpretation. Individual things do not constitute the Brahman. The causal reality is not identified with its effects. For the real nature of the cause is transcendental (Kootastha) in the system of Sankar, although the cause underlies all its products. Therefore the particular things (the world of sense-perception) are not given the same position as they are given in Spinoza *when viewed under the modal system*.

¹ *Vide Advaita Philosophy*, by K. Sastri.