

5 Roots of Reality

The Philosophy of Foundation in Spinoza's and Śrīnivāsa's Monisms

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You should recognize this as a bud that has come out. It cannot be without a root... The existent, my son, is the root of all these creatures—the existent is their resting place, the existent is their foundation.

(Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.8.3-4)

5.1 Substance, Divinity, and the Reality at the Root of the World

The idea that there is a unified reality at the root of the changing, moving, manifold world has been a central motivation for many philosophers. In the scholastic thought of both India and Europe, this idea became linked to a technical notion of a special kind of specifically *foundational* reality, a substance (*substantia*) or prime matter (*pradhāna*), performing a similar function in both traditions.¹ This reality was understood to elude the forms of dependence to which all worldly things are subject: it must exist without being caused, it must be constituted of no underlying thing but itself, it must wholly shape itself without reference to any other forces or factors. In short it had to have a nature with 'grounding' features, thereby able to end the infinite regresses of the world, and provide a comprehensive explanation. Thus, for monists like Spinoza and thinkers of the Bhedābheda Vedānta school like Śrīnivāsa, substance possessed a curious dual nature. On the one hand, it is the constitutive, formative power that is immanent in all changing entities of our spatial, temporal, and mental reality, constantly underpinning the world we know. But on the other hand, it was thought to exist by virtue of a mysterious nature – an independent power of self-existence that is quite different from anything we know, indicating a more-than-worldly metaphysical nature that does not need to be caused or constituted through some particular process. Accordingly, in the idea of substance, philosophers, physicists, and theologians alike strove to imagine an ontological nature that is both all-generating and self-grounded, pervading the world yet exceeding it. For some thinkers in history,

the most certain truth was that there must be such a thing. This in turn led to a special understanding of life in the world and our place within it. For others – including sceptics from Dharmakīrti to Bertrand Russell – it was a doubtful postulate based on questionable processes of inference. Thus speculation on these matters led both to a blind materialism in some cases and, in others, to an idea of some unified and extraordinary reality with qualities that many consider divine; indeed, it prompts questions about the very definition of divinity.

In the following sections we will look at two philosophies – of Śrīnivāsa (c.12–14th centuries)² and Spinoza (1632–1677) – both of whom gave arguments for a single substance underpinning all things. They both advocated this on the basis of two key ideas: (i) properties cannot exist in total autonomous independence and must relate to some underlying anchoring substrate (we will generally call this the Dependence Argument), and (ii) where we see a continuous ordered formation or pattern in what would otherwise be an open, chaotic system, there must be a *Formal Cause* spanning the range of that order (we will generally call this the Coherence Argument). In deriving from this a single self-existing reality that ontologically underpins all changing entities, they both attribute to it a profound *foundational* power to ground contingent things, and a profound causal power to materially constitute, efficiently generate and formally shape the world's beings. This is what Spinoza calls an 'indwelling' or 'immanent' ground, a form of omni-causation. We will see that where Spinoza relies in his argumentation on the Dependence Argument, Śrīnivāsa was pushed by his interaction with the reductive materialist school of Sāṃkhya to focus on the Coherence Argument because it eludes the kind of inherence-scepticism we see among many eliminativist metaphysicians, including the Buddhist philosophers of his time.

But both traditions also grapple with the problems raised by these ideas. The world has being *in God* in Spinoza's terms, or being *from* and *in* Brahman, as Vedānta's frequent use of the ablative and locative suggests. But these very relations are riddled with philosophical controversy. As Clare Carlisle notes of Spinoza (2021, 56–57), the 'in' relation seems to denote dependence rather than parthood or spatio-temporal location. As Bhedābheda Vedāntins put it, it indicates both 'difference and identity'. As a result the relation of the world with the total ground that forms it has become a kind of puzzle, an 'open question'; India's Vedāntic tradition debated it for two millennia, and Spinoza's modern interpreters still struggle with it. The rationale for a fundamental 'substance' remains tied up with controversial intuitions about what kinds of things are ontologically in need of being grounded in some more robust foundation, and whether we need to explain apparently contingent circumstances. Substance's promise of massive causal and explanatory power lies behind the reasons it has been repeatedly taken as, *in some sense*, 'divine'.

In what follows, we will see why both thinkers thought that existence *must* require a single substance at its root, pointing to a lacuna that can only be fulfilled by something extraordinary with a nature both in and beyond the world we know. We will look at the way that these theories answer critiques from both ancient and modern anti-foundationalists. And we will also see how re-uniting the roles of material, efficient, and formal or teleological causation can strike at the attribution of the world to ‘merely contingent causation’ that lies at the heart of reductionism.

5.2 Pluralism, Monism, and Pantheism

There is a tacit affinity between Spinoza’s philosophically informed dive into pantheism, and Vedānta’s theology of a divine ground of all being. Already, 140 years after his death, Schopenhauer wrote of Spinoza (and of Giordano Bruno) that they were like tropical plants misplaced in Europe; ‘The banks of the Ganges were their spiritual home; there they would have led a peaceful and honoured life among men of like mind’.³ Many have, indeed, noted the similarities between Spinoza’s monism⁴ and the various Vedāntic traditions.⁵ Spinoza may be the best example of a Western philosopher tracing the philosophical implications of the notion of substance and arriving at a theory of ontological unity. As we will see, this is also a driving motivation of the Bhedābheda branch of the Vedāntic tradition of Indian philosophy, which sees the diverse world as transformations (*pariṇāma*) of a single reality (*satya*) with a shared foundation (*adhiṣṭhāna*) that it reveres as *Brahman*.

Yet the association with Spinoza has often served Vedānta badly. The many accusations levelled at Spinoza in the long-running Pantheism Controversy cast him as the epitome of godless materialism, and absurdly simplistic metaphysics. Via its association with him, these were projected onto Vedānta, and pantheism in both systems was taken to entail an insentient, impersonal conception of the divine that is equivalent to mere matter. It seemed to imply determinism, no afterlife, and no possibility of spiritual relationship. Pantheism became a dangerous word in the 18th and 19th centuries, and monism drew philosophical accusations that it was both counter-intuitive and anti-empirical or anti-realist. Reductionistic pantheism became the straw man against which modern Western theism defined itself – insisting that the divine cannot be reduced *merely* to nature.

This conception of pantheism was artificial – its earliest use by Joseph Raphson in *De Spatio Reali seu Ente Infinito* was meant precisely to combat a view that all the world is merely material stuff (which he called panhyleism). In contrast, it proposed a view that the world is a product of something divine out of its own nature. The world, accordingly, contains both material and intelligent elements, generating all kinds of thing from

its essence. This was quite different from the reductionist thesis that the physical world is *merely* all that the divine is; it allowed for realms of being beyond the visible, including that which generates and pervades the world. It was on a continuum with ‘panentheism’ – the idea of something continuous with the world but exceeding it.

In line with the original meaning of ‘pan-theism’, defenders of Spinoza have worked to clarify the nuances of his position. Karl Jaspers (1974) distinguished Spinoza’s dynamically creative *natura naturans* from the passively material *natura naturata*. In the 20th century, Einstein famously advocated Spinozism, and for some it became the spiritual face of physical materialism. The system has recently been revived as a religious solution for modernity, offering a non-dogmatic citizen-ideology of flourishing (Huenemann 2014), and a ‘spiritual’ cosmology affirming that nature possesses features we see as divine (Carlisle 2021), as well as a philosophy that allows for postmodernism-inflected approaches to truth and being (Deleuze 1992).⁶ Martial Gueroult⁷ suggested that Spinoza be reclassified as a pantheist as this later term helpfully emphasizes that if it exists, the ground of being *may*, or even *must*, go beyond the material world.

But philosophical problems remain even in conceiving of the ‘ground’. How could something have such grounding qualities, and what kind of thing would it then be? Is such a thing *possible*; does it *make sense*? Those who claim there is an element of being that goes beyond the empirical realm often fail to define it clearly. Or alternatively, they deem it inconceivable, offering no further explanation of how it might fulfil the functions claimed for it. Many have been sceptical about the whole idea. In what follows we see that Śrīnivāsa and Spinoza both argue that there must be a kind of being that reaches *through* empirical reality into the roots of the world. Their arguments about substance are a framework for thinking about the nature, ground, and provenance of being.

5.3 Europe and the Problem of Dependence

The Aristotelian conception of substance that Spinoza inherited was intended to serve as a cornerstone of the whole architecture of reality. Thinkers like Aquinas and Descartes had employed ‘substance’ as a necessary foundation for entities, something that upholds the dynamically shifting properties that we perceive. But one of the most distinctive features of Spinoza’s use of the concept was that it paved a royal road straight to monism. This was due to a number of key metaphysical assumptions – some of which were also important in the Vedāntic tradition.

According to the scholastic manner of parsing reality, the notion of substance is conceived as that which stands ‘under’ distinct and changing qualities, as the ontological ground in which they inhere (yielding

the word ‘*sub-stantia*’). The differentiated empirical world we perceive is characterized by instances; these could be understood as mere ‘tropes’ of qualitatively distinct character, or as ‘properties’ that typically characterize some more enduring ‘thing’. In India this view was exemplified by the Vaiśeṣika atomist tradition’s category of properties (*viśeṣas*), the Abhidharma Buddhist notion of fleeting mere characteristics (*dharmas*), and Vedānta’s designation of the perceptible world as variegated *nāma-rūpa* (name and form) with distinct qualities (*guṇas*). One reason for seeing the changing qualities as features of *something* is that we tend to feel that qualities – of colour, number, etc. – cannot simply float around on their own. This was based on experience: insofar as we are able to identify *changing* properties, they seem to be attached to *stable* entities, ‘hooks’ on which those properties are held together in a structured way that characterizes a ‘world’. Empirical precedent thus motivated a central assumption – that properties are variable, finite, contingent, and dependent features of reality which must inhere in something. Substance served as that ‘hook’.

Accordingly, Descartes insisted that things need a robust ontological substrate as their foundation. He wrote that:

By *substance* we can understand nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence. And there is only one substance which can be understood to depend on no other thing whatsoever, namely God. In the case of all other substances, we perceive that they can exist only with the help of God’s concurrence.

(Descartes’ *Principles*, CSM I 210)

Later, Leibniz would also maintain the centrality of ontological dependence in his conception of the divine, arguing that ‘created substances depend on God, who conserves them and indeed who produces them continuously by a kind of emanation, just as we produce our thoughts’.⁸ For these thinkers it was clear that not only did properties depend on substances, but some substances depended on others – leading to a model of a pyramid of transitive dependencies. So from the central belief that properties are dependent came the apparent implication that there must be a final non-dependent ground.

But if substances could themselves be sometimes dependent, could they not *all* be dependent, descending in a regressive ladder with no bottom – leading to an ontologically anti-foundationalist picture? Indeed, some have argued that such a view would seem more in keeping with our empirical evidence, since we arguably have never seen a substance that is not visibly constituted, caused, or affected by some other thing. We have not even *seen* a substance, but have only posited substances due to the persistence of properties; perhaps not only the ultimate ground, but *all* dependence could

apparently be dispensed with. In India, Madhyamaka Buddhist thinkers took this view, marrying epistemic anti-foundationalism that rejected the possibility of certain knowledge, with metaphysical anti-foundationalism holding that there are no real things, and consequently no mereological, constitutive or causal grounds for things (Westerhoff 2017, 95).⁹ Yet for those who found the idea of an ungrounded world to be impossible or explanatorily inadequate, an ultimate independent substance was needed to provide a foundation.

Importantly, the dependence idea did not function alone: the argument for properties' dependence concerned the *structure* in which they appear in the world. Substance accounted for the inherence-tethering of properties to something more ontologically robust. But it was less clear what accounted for the shaping, selection, and continuous structuring of those properties in such a way that they form a meaningful cosmos of time, space, and ideas. Why are *these* qualities attached to each thing, and whence their *consistent formation* over time? If they float independently, why do they not form a freely arising chaotic 'static' existence without structure? A key function of substance was to provide some kind of underlying generative pattern – that is, a formal or teleological cause (to borrow Aristotle's typology of causes), as well as an ontological ground.

Aristotle had tried to address this to some extent through his theory of categories, and the complementary distinction between the essential and accidental properties that accrue to each category of being. Aristotle's categories picked out basic characteristics natural to different kinds of entities, as did the categories of India's Vaiśeṣika atomist school and even the complex taxonomy of trope-types proposed by Abhidharma Buddhists who denied the existence of real entities. In each case, some *coherent structure of reality* had to be acknowledged in order to account for the world as we perceive it. But this idea of cosmic structure also faced its critics. In late classical India, Madhyamaka Buddhism was particularly sceptical about this idea of distinct essence (*svabhāva*), and in medieval Europe, William of Ockham was an early critic of the idea of essence, offering instead a mereological account of properties coming together in a bundle to form apparent 'things'. He derived from this the possibility of conventionalism about identities, unrestricted composition, and other counter-intuitive ways of seeing the world that cast doubt on the substantialist vision. Thus the model of properties as requiring an anchoring substance had both advocates and detractors in India and Europe alike. In both cultures, the one-foundation view that all phenomena are ultimately grounded in a single self-existent generative reality needed a particularly convincing counterargument to scepticism about dependence in order to sustain its unified vision of reality.

5.4 Spinoza and the Dependence Problem

Spinoza used the dependence-motivated conception of substance to argue for a single foundation of all reality in his *Ethics* (on which we will focus here). He sees ‘being caused’ and ‘being limited by any other existent’ as key indicators of dependence – and these two features he identifies within everything around us. From apples to events to numbers, all empirically accessible phenomena seem subject to those conditions, and so are *dependents* in one sense or another. This is the first step in his reasoning towards a single foundation. The second is his acceptance of the foundationalist intuition that one cannot have a world of *only dependents*; they must have a self-caused, unlimited ultimate foundation. He assumes that this kind of thing exists, and reasons that it must be so because of its nature, since otherwise it would be existent in a way that is dependent on something causing it to be or become that way: thus it is existent by essence. Further, he interprets potential influence from other things as a kind of dependence, and so reasons that a non-dependent thing must be autonomous from the very existence of anything else: consequently, it has to be the sole real thing, the sole substance.

By that which is self-caused, I mean that of which the essence involves existence, or that of which the nature is only conceivable as existent... there cannot be conceived one substance different from another, that is (by Prop. iv), there cannot be granted several substances, but one substance only.¹⁰

With this, Spinoza radicalizes the two-story architecture of *dependence* in such a way as to bring out the implication that, unless we accept an infinite regress of dependent things upon still more dependencies, the world requires a foundational level that – because it can suffer no inter-relational dependence – must be single. Further, this foundation must have such an extraordinary character that he identifies it as ‘God’. When he writes that except God no substance can be or can be conceived (proposition 14), this may be unpacked into the idea that the only substance that can be conceived is something (a) existent by nature, (b) not limited by anything else, and (following from b) (c) all-grounding so that nothing is excised from it that would contravene its independence. Thus ‘whatever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be or be conceived’.¹¹

Ring-fencing the autonomy of substance, Spinoza assimilated any temporary, partial, and contingent forms of existence into his system as ‘modes’ – an idea that seems to imply a relation to something that they are modes of. As Huenemann puts it, ‘modes cannot march around by themselves’ (Huenemann 2014, 63). This perspective encourages us to see finite

things as aspects of an underlying substrate actively instantiating itself in that way. If we could see all of the ways (or things, situations, phenomena) that have, do, or will exist, then we would see what Spinoza calls ‘the face of the whole universe’ (see Spinoza’s *Short Treatise*).

But subsequently Spinoza scholars have found the assimilation of all dependent features to an underlying ultimate substance to be controversial. As Curley writes:

...it is difficult to know what it would mean to say that particular things inhere in substance. When qualities are said to inhere in substance, this may be viewed as a way of saying that they are predicated of it. What it would mean to say that one thing is predicated of another is a mystery that needs solving.

(Curley 1988, 6–7)

The very notion of the inherence of features being anchored in things is at stake here. Melamed notes that Spinoza assumes that everyday entities are already the kind of thing that needs support, and shows how this implicit ontological assumption leads to a principle he calls ‘the priority of the infinite’ (Melamed 2015, xv–xvii). This was the idea that all things must be known through their causes (*Ethics* part I, axiom iv) precisely because what we perceive is never really the whole thing; identities reach back into what grounds their existence, and the smaller the thing, the more a mere ‘part’ it is. For Spinoza the world is really just a hierarchy of aspects that, like Russian dolls, assimilate to the larger, more pervasive, more fundamental thing that is their ‘cause’.¹² We see from this that for Spinoza, dependence was not only a theory of ontological dependence structures; it was also a theory of dependence-as-identity, a prioritization of the largest identity, and an account of what explanation *per se* really tells us.

5.5 *Conatus* and Universal Immanent Causation

This view, placed so prominently at the beginning of the *Ethics*, was augmented by another argument focused on causal formation rather than constitutive dependence. In addition to being a deeper level of identity, Spinoza implied that the foundational substance is a *formal cause* of the world, ordering the properties into a structured cosmos. In axioms 3 and 4 he claimed that ‘from a given definite cause an effect necessarily follows; and, on the other hand, if no definite cause be granted, it is impossible that an effect can follow. The knowledge of an effect depends on and involves the knowledge of a cause’. In this he radically disagrees with the kind of Humean scepticism that would later question the validity of causation-based inferences. It is precisely the causal conditions that bring a thing

into being that allow us to know it. Further, in his preface to part three, he identified the consistency of natural laws which are ‘always the same, and everywhere one’ as evidence for some ‘universal’ formal causation based on a reason or nature behind all things:

Nothing comes to pass in nature which can be set down to a flaw therein; for nature is always the same, and everywhere one and the same in her efficacy and power of action; that is, nature’s laws and ordinances, whereby all things come to pass and change from one form to another, are everywhere and always the same; so that there should be one and the same method of understanding the nature of all things whatsoever, namely through nature’s universal laws and rules.

(*Ethics*, Preface to part III)¹³

He asserted that God is the *indwelling* formal cause of all things, something that propels them into being as part of itself, and not a *transient* cause that causes them to be by interacting with some other thing which is their material nature.¹⁴ Garrett and Melamed highlight the importance of this union of inherence and causation into a single kind of relation, treating it as essential to a proper understanding of Spinoza’s monism (see Melamed 2015, 62–66). Indeed, the shift from substance as a ‘material cause’ to substance as indwelling immanent cause is important for why we might see both Spinoza’s and Śrīnivāsa’s monisms as more than mere pantheism. Here the source is more than merely an inert form of ‘prime matter’ or extended ‘stuff’ that gets shaped by other ‘accidental’ forces into the world. Instead, substance has *conatus*, a natural impulse to express its nature in a trajectory of development. More than Dependence Arguments for monism, *conatus* aims to explain all reality.

Yet in the *Ethics*, Spinoza often seems to emphasize the ubiquity of dependence, rather than the unity of causation. But it is dependence that brings out the creative dimension of the world’s foundation. While Spinoza’s substance may seem no more than glorified *matter* – leaving all real agency to natural laws and minds who must do the work of knowing and valuing – some have highlighted its creative element. In his reconstruction of Spinoza’s thought as a ‘radical theology’, Huenemann shows how ‘from God’s nature all things have necessarily flowed’ with, as he puts it, ‘stark raving *geometrical* necessity’. Substance here is ‘the productive core of existence’ (Huenemann 2014, 60–61). Spinoza might, conceivably, have ignored the generative dimension of substance monism by claiming that change or difference is illusory, as in some constructions of Parmenidean monism (see Della Rocca’s [2020] account) or an Advaita illusionist model of reality. But instead – like Śrīnivāsa, as we will see – he places the dynamic formation of all things at the heart of what he calls ‘God’.

Ultimately Spinoza's account of divine causation became controversial because it implied that God has no freedom, acting only from its nature and not out of choice. Indeed, Spinoza gives an exasperated explanation in Part Two of the *Ethics* that 'In God there is necessarily the idea not only of his essence, but also of all things which necessarily follow from his essence' (part II, prop.iii), so that 'all that is necessarily in the power of God necessarily is' (part II, prop.iii proof). This was in contrast to the popular view that God has powers which may *not* be activated – a view that Spinoza rejects as an attribution of *impotency* rather than the reverse.¹⁵ Nevertheless, his apparent rejection of anthropomorphic theism became the centre of attention.

Overall, the Dependence Argument for the existence of God evoked the classical divine attributes of aseity, necessity, and sovereignty. Yet it was vulnerable to the claim that the perceived qualities of the world that lead us to infer a fundamental ground for them might need no foundation and be able to exist autonomously. But around 300 years earlier, Śrīnivāsa had developed a version of substance monism that, instead of dependence and the single step in inherence relations required to ground properties in a substance, used multi-step causation over time, yielding a pattern of causal development, as a core motivation for believing in substance. This (a) offered a more robust riposte to scepticism about inherence, (b) hit back at materialistic reductionists, and (c) took greater account of the world's rich emergent forms – including consciousness and its contents.

5.6 India's Arguments for Coherence: From Dependence to Causal Determination

India had long been fascinated by the idea that a single divine foundation must underlie all the world's forms. India's earliest writings in the Ṛg and Atharva Vedas (c.8000 BCE) explored the idea of a single fabric, source, or subject of everything.¹⁶ Early philosophical narratives like Yājñavalkya's debate in Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (Chapters 3–4) weighed competing candidates for an ultimate element that could explain all things.¹⁷ This was combined with a method that promised to expand one's knowledge beyond immediate empirical limits: inference to a substrate (see Chāndogya Upaniṣad Chapter 6.2). This led early Vedāntic thinkers to posit a pervasive ultimate reality, *Brahman*, of which the varying names and forms we see are only temporary modifications. A competing pluralistic way of seeing the world was proposed by India's atomist (Vaiśeṣika) and phenomenalist (Abhidharma) schools. But the Vedic tradition employed the same imagery of malleable substances like clay or bronze that Aristotle had used (see Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.1.4–6 and *Metaphysics* 5.1013a 1 b) to show how natural this way of thinking about reality seemed to be.

These early intuitions were given a new philosophical direction by the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* (SK), a text of India's classical Sāṃkhya school of metaphysics. It posited a prime material (*pradhāna*) of empirical reality called *prakṛti* (literally 'the Procreative') that also came to be known as 'that which is inferred' (*anumānika*).¹⁸ But what was important was that the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* changed the game with a new counterfactual argument focused on the *modal constraints* that appear to be evident in the empirical world.

First, it argued for a substrate. The basis for this was empirical: we never see things arise from nothing, but always in connection with some identifiable source; i.e. 'because of non-being not being a cause [of anything]' and 'from grasping that there is [always] a material cause' (SK 8–9). Therefore, temporally limited things are really present latently within the more pervasive substrates (material causes) seen before they become visible. This view was known as the Satkārya doctrine.

Second, it observed that phenomena in the world happen with striking typological regularity, such that the same *sorts* of effects arise from the same sorts of causes. The best explanation seemed to be that some invisible underlying basis – the substrate – causes this regularity in causation. Thus, we can infer 'from it not being the case that everything comes to be' and 'from [a thing's own] capacity's power to do [only] what is possible [to it]' (SK 9) that the underlying substrate must not only contain the new forms *in potentio*, but also constrain the nature of the changes they thereby undergo.

Third, it observed that these regularities take place in all cases, so that milk never turns into an elephant, however assiduously you churn it, and seeds never sprout into ready-made clay pots. This implied a coherent metaphysical connection of consistent directional arising – what we might call a unified teleological cause shaping things from moment to moment across the whole of the empirical world.

One of Sāṃkhya's main competitors was the Vedānta tradition of belief in a single divine foundation of all reality known as Brahman. The *Brahmasūtras* was the core texts of this monistic school, and it picked up on this terse core argument among its dualistic Sāṃkhya competitors, deploying for its own use. As monists they emphasized the way that Sāṃkhya's ideas seem to imply a single unified causal order for all empirical reality. As we will see, counterfactually, if a shared causal factor were *not* in play then we would see a world of unrestricted modal development. A substanceless world would be wholly modally open at every moment and in every place, with cows sprouting from seeds and milk pouring from the sky, and, strictly speaking, nothing recognizable as itself for even a fleeting instant; there would be no selves, no identities. This seemed to refute the metaphysical pluralism (or even nihilism) proposed by other competing schools like the atomists (Vaiśeṣika), phenomenologists (Abhidharma), various idealists

(Yogācāra, Pratyabhijñā, and Advaita), and non-realist conventionalists (Madhyamika; see *Brahma Sūtras* 2.2, and Frazier 2022a).¹⁹

Sāṃkhya's idea of *prakṛti* and Vedānta's Brahman competed as theories of a single substance that grounds all worldly forms. Each school offered counterarguments to the other in their classical treatises, and their competition was reflected in the *Brahmasūtras*' repeated attempts to distinguish Brahman from its all-too similar twin concept (e.g. sections 1.1.5–18, 1.4.1–16, 2.2.1–10). Each school promoted its own associated form of spiritual goal and practice.

Interestingly, what differentiated the two Indian theories was whether the unified causal ground constituted mere materialism or divinity. Sāṃkhya saw *prakṛti* as insentient, blind, and lacking in impetus; it was effectively an atheist philosophy proposing a purely mechanistic material causation, free from the 'superfluity of God' as Nicholson put it (2010, 67–70). By contrast, even the least theistic of Vedāntic schools saw Brahman as responsible for the world's development. Even a non-personal conception of the divine Brahman *encompassed* the realm of consciousness, rather than being divided from it by a Cartesian style of dualistic metaphysics. It was full of creative catalysing power that the notion of prime matter alone seemed ill-prepared to explain. *Prakṛti* was not worthy of veneration to followers of Sāṃkhya; but for Vedāntins, Brahman was considered bright, blissful, full, and divine.

Thus, in a sense, the Brahman vs *prakṛti* debate was an ancient version of the recurrent struggle between reductionist materialism and belief in a divine ground of reality. Philosophically, both foreshadowed modern monism, metaphysical systems focused on 'powers', and panpsychist ideas that the basic stuff of reality must somehow 'include' consciousness as part of its nature. In many respects Bhedābheda shared with Spinoza a drive to reform the shallow conception of a world made of mere matter into a world of divine powers. In the process it reformed definitions of 'divinity' itself, emphasizing the omni-causal ontological power able to constitute, impel, and form the cosmos.

5.7 Beyond Materialism: Śrīnivāsa's Defence of a Complex Cause

We turn now to Śrīnivāsa's development of the idea of a single substance underlying reality, and the way he emphasized the implications of the Coherence Argument (rather than the Dependence Argument) as a way to help combat anti-foundation and material reductionism. Śrīnivāsa was a medieval member of what has been called the '*svābhāvika*' Bhedābheda or '*essential* difference-within-difference' school. This was generally seen as the earliest branch of Vedānta,²⁰ and the one most committed to the idea that

Brahman really (but not exhaustively) transforms into the diverse world we know.²¹ Like earlier Bhedābheda thinkers Yādavaprakāśa, Nimbārka, and like the subsequent thinker Vijñānabhikṣu, Śrīnivāsa advocated a single dynamic, complex substance, and he cites arguments from dependence, coherence, and also spatial extension and mereological connection to support this idea (see Frazier 2021, 10–11 on the standard Vedāntic argument from connection). Yet for him, the coherent telos of the whole cosmos did not just support monism; it also revealed something important about the dynamic and generative nature which – in his mind – distinguished that fundamental reality from inactive, insentient (*jaḍa*) matter.

5.8 Properties as Markers of Levels within a Complex Identity

The first thing that leads him to develop a new conception of divine unity is that he must combat the *satkārya* doctrine's main competing theory, *asatkārya*, or 'the non-existence of effects in their cause [before they become empirically apparent]'. This view, held by the Atomist school, said that new forms arise from aggregations, compounds, or cognitive juxtapositions, and constitute something wholly different from their source materials. Śrīnivāsa opposes this by bringing out the non-difference of a substance and its modes, emphasizing that change in a thing's character (e.g. a seed becoming an apple, and apple becoming pie-filling) does not contravene its unity as a single stuff. Thus, of the ultimate reality he writes:

... from that Brahman [which is the] highest cause, [possessed of] powers of sentience and non-sentience, undivided, indicated by the terms 'one' and 'non-dual' etc., able to take up the state of being a cause and being an effect of its own accord, situated prior to all manifestation, there is non-difference from the effect [which has] the form of what is sentient and non-sentient, is not contiguous, is multiply named, and depends on others.

(*Vedānta Kaustubha* 2.1.14)²²

Here Śrīnivāsa assumed a natural complementarity between being a single coherent entity with powers and having effects that are dependent and limited each in themselves, yet are the diverse expression of those powers. In this he defended a 'one being in many ways' view of reality (against the extreme Advaitic view that Brahman is characterized by radical simplicity, and is unrelated to the world's changing forms). Mirroring Spinoza's 'priority of the infinite' idea, he seems to take this structure of levels, divided into substrates and effects, to characterize all identity: we can only properly understand a thing in terms of the underlying causes of which it is a part (citing ChU 6.1.3). He adduces empirical examples of perceiving a single

nature beneath changing forms as a way to shore up the reasonableness of seeing identity as something that naturally spans different manifestations:

...in ordinary life pots, plates and so on, having the lump of clay as their material cause; bracelets, ear-rings and so on, having gold as their material cause, foam, waves and so on having the sea as their material cause; and fruit, leaves and so on, having the tree as their material cause, are all non-different from their causes [although] they are mutually distinguished from each other... Thus between Brahman and the soul there is a relation of intrinsic difference-and-non-difference.

(*Vedānta Kaustubha* 2.1.13)²³

Diverse forms and functions should be no objection to the singleness of any identity, provided we also see pervasive features which signal that there is also a shared ontological level. The examples he gives are meant to fill out our intuitions about what kind of thing a contingent reality – what Spinoza calls a mode – is, and how it may be attached to quite different realities (as waves to foam, for instance) in a way that constitutes a kind of shared identity. In a sense Śrīnivāsa builds on the image of clay in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad to point to the way that we do indeed see relative degrees of pervasiveness among co-appearing properties. This appears to indicate a structure of more and less pervasive levels of identity; the pattern of properties thus functions as an indicator of what Ted Sider (2020, 747) has called metaphysical ‘structure’. What else are we to think when we see the quality of gold in both bracelets and earrings alike, or subtle water-properties present in foam and waves and clouds? Buddhism had no obvious answer to this beyond a vague Humean-sounding ‘regularity’ in the way tropes occur.²⁴ But the Vedāntic approach traded on empirical evidence for a multi-levelled structure in entities, as well as assumptions about property dependence. In this way he sought to uphold the metaphysical persuasiveness of a single substance.

5.9 Arguing for an Immanent Cause of All

But this view was not enough to combat the materialists of his time who wanted to reduce reality to mere *hyle*, a clay-like passive stuff that constitutes the world’s objects but has no deeper connection to what really matters: the patterns that matter adopts. Almost like Spinoza responding to accusations of material reductionism, he was opposed to the idea that Brahman is just a version of *prakṛti*: a bland matter combining and recombining blindly. By his time, Bhedābheda Vedānta seems to have been feeling criticism from Sāṃkhya materialists, Advaita pure-monists, and possibly Dvaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita theist competitors. While he was deeply

committed to the ‘transforming substance’ view of Brahman, Śrīnivāsa was eager to emphasize that he is talking about something far more profound than mere materiality. His strategy for differentiating divine Brahman from *prakṛti* was to highlight that the former must (a) furnish the adequate *pattern* and impetus of all things’ development, and (b) encompass consciousness as well as physical objects.

Śrīnivāsa sketched out the Sāṃkhya-derived ‘coherence’ argument that there would be no order to the world without the constraint of an underlying ground:

There is no ability to manifest or conceive of a pot in things like wind that are different from clay; if things arose from non-being then it would happen that everywhere everything would arise, and the function of agency would be obsolete.

(*Vedānta Kaustubha* 2.1.14)²⁵

Here he briefly notes that only certain materials generate certain effects, and that some material is needed for any effect to arise. This version of the argument may have seemed more necessary to Vedāntins than to Spinoza because in India Buddhists had already brought the property-dependence assumption into question by insisting that there can, in fact, be ungrounded floating phenomena. A cart can as easily be seen as a collection of parts or a single vehicle, suggesting that unrestricted composition (the arbitrary determination of wholes) is acceptable, and objects might well be arbitrary bundles of properties that create the illusion of a world.

The Coherence Argument shifted the weight of the debate from the need for a foundation, to the need for something that explains the continuing structured nature of the world’s formation. It was not enough to argue, as Hindu atomists and Buddhist phenomenologists did, that the pattern of the world’s development flowed from the disposition of the multiple materials themselves – the atoms, for instance. Each would follow its nature again and again, repeating the same effect rather than developing into a coherent arc of manifestations over time: so that the world as a whole would never develop. The atoms might be said to contain a whole telic arc, but this too could not make sense of the way that – for most of the world’s developments, they must combine or interact with other atoms so that the nature of the evolved forms we see are contained in the whole group, not in the single atom. Only a single overarching nature – powerful, constantly active, formative, and indwelling or ‘immanent’ – could yield the many-levelled complex world. As Srinivasacari puts it:

The [Sāṃkhya] theory of *pariṇāmavāda* [blind material transformation] gives a mechanical account of causality and fails to explain the

teleological nature of evolution, and the idea of a soulless *pradhāna* passing from the potential into the actual lacks spiritual spontaneity and the creative urge... [Sāṃkhya] finds no place for the idea of immanent causality.

(Srinivasacari 1950, 22)

Śrīnivāsa's differentiation of Brahman from the idea of a prime material is worth giving at length. He first points out that mere matter is not enough to explain all things; to do this it would need to be fully adequate for the production of its effects and so include *formal* and *efficient*, as well as *material* causation:

‘[Objection: you should] be happy to follow the path of Sāṃkhya, since you admit the causality of prime matter (*pradhāna*).’

[Bhedābheda response:] In ordinary experience, without connection to a sentient principle an insentient stuff [*dravya*, here literally a malleable material], cannot explain the production of an effect and so cannot have that meaning. It does not happen that a lump of clay becomes a pot by itself. Thus, prime matter as envisioned by Sāṃkhya, having no connection with a sentient principle and itself non-sentient, is not adequate for the production of effects; hence it lacks [this] meaning. The prime matter of the Upaniṣads, however, has meaning; its meaning lies in the goal of giving rise to all effects from primal material (*mahat*) to a tuft of grass. How so? “On account of dependence on that”...

But the dependence of *pradhāna* on Brahman is not like the dependence of atoms on God as held by the logicians [*īśvara* or the personal deity was seen as the formal cause of the ordered aggregation of atoms], but is due to the relation between a power and its possessor, as established in the scriptural text saying: ‘The innate power of the deity, hidden by his own qualities’,²⁶ and so on.

(Vedānta Kaustubha 1.4.3)²⁷

He sets aside the idea of the world being formed by a formal/efficient cause acting *on something else* that is the material, since this would require plural separate substances. Instead, he defends the oneness of the substance with its power (*śakti*), designing (*kalpana*), and effects (*kārya*).

The meaning intended here comes from the teaching of the creation of all things from Brahman through subtle powers. Matter [*prakṛti*], unmanifest, subtle in form, and a power of Brahman, is said to be eternally unborn because of being Brahman's power. That very power, by the state of secondary creation which is itself an effect, is said to proceed from Brahman.

(Vedānta Kaustubha 1.4.10)²⁸

He reminds us that the one ‘transforms itself’ through infinite powers rather than being ‘transiently’ impelled by anything external. We can note a shift in metaphysics here: it is *powers* that are possessed here, rather than modes or attributes as in Spinoza. This reflects the Satkārya theory’s teleological idea that whole trajectories are contained in the substrate and not just individual properties. In a sense, then, this form of generativity contains all Aristotle’s kinds of causation and not only one – it is material, efficient, and also formal and teleological.²⁹

Śrīnivāsa here builds upon his teacher Nimbārka who had written that:

Brahman alone is the efficient and material cause of the world. Why? From being self-created [as in the passage] “on account of creating Himself”.³⁰ [If it is objected:] How can the creator be the object of [its] creation? [then the reply is:] through *transformation*.

(*Vedānta Parijāta Saurabha* 1.4.26)³¹

Śrīnivāsa quotes his teacher’s first line, and then takes this as the starting point for a more developed consideration of the power of *self*-transformation. Immanent causation is shown to entail the innate possession of potential forms and self-catalysing force (*sarvaśaktibrahmasvaśaktivikṣepa*):

It is itself indicated to be its own creator, the object of creation; for this reason ‘kṛti’ (making) here means cause. Indeed, how can it go together that one is a creator, and one’s own self is also the object of the act of creation? The reply is “from its being transformation”. The Supreme Soul which is omniscient, possessed of all powers, and unwavering in its intrinsic nature, causes its own transformation into the form of the world through the projection of its own innate and self-directed power... It projects [its powers] in the beginning of creation.

(*Vedānta Kaustubha* 1.4.26)³²

In seeking to further prevent substance from being reduced to a blind, inert stuff, Śrīnivāsa also made the point that consciousness must be included as an effect of this omni-causal activity and thus as one of the innate powers of the underlying substance. In 1.1.5–18 he uses the Upaniṣadic reference to Brahman seeing and reflecting (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.2.3, backed up by Aitareya Upaniṣad 1.1.1) to argue that something wholly divorced from consciousness like Sāṃkhya’s *prakṛti* would not be able to take on the characteristic of knowledge (i.e. consciousness) through any feature arising from it (like *sattva*) or through association with a separate ‘conscious’ substance (like *puruṣa*). That would introduce a dualistic metaphysic and bring into play the standard counterarguments against pluralistic systems. He also points to the way that our own alternation between awareness and

unconsciousness (in waking and sleep) suggests that consciousness must be immanent *in potentio* in our underlying base, available to be rekindled (see VK 1.1.10). His arguments on this point are brief but can be seen as an important refusal to reduce metaphysical substance to anything like the more basic hyletic materials that we see in the world – clay, atoms, matter. Consciousness is as real as colours, particles, energy, or number, and the ground of the world must be able to account for it fully. Here Śrīnivāsa both defends the presence of consciousness in Brahman (and elsewhere would go on to use this to support his own theistic beliefs), and also accords full ontological weight to what we see as epiphenomenal, emergent levels of reality as well as the basic ones.

5.10 One Root of Reality, beyond Scepticism and Reductionism

Spinoza and Śrīnivāsa both shared the intuition that there must be something underlying what we see of the empirical world, grounding and shaping it. In this they combatted the substance-sceptics' idea of a world with forms but no foundations. In certain respects, Vedānta's focus on the pervasion of certain properties and the coherence of causal development may be seen as yielding stronger arguments than those that Spinoza emphasized. These arguments could play out separately of assumptions about contingencies, dependence, and inherence. The latter also introduced talk of generalized 'powers' (*śakti*) into Indian thought about the foundation of the world and the nature of the divine. Such powers were becoming important to the medieval Vedānta of theistic texts like the *Purāṇas* and theistic theologians like the Gosvāmīs who were keen to celebrate reality's innate capacity to become consciousness, persons, complex relationships, aesthetic forms, and emotional responses (see Frazier 2019b).

But Śrīnivāsa sought to elude the net not only of sceptics about the *existence* of substance but also of reductionists who minimized its *significance*. Bhedābheda's competition with Sāṃkhya led him to bring out the otherworldly character of substance more explicitly than Spinoza. His approach tells us something interesting about the nature of reductionism and its effect on our evaluation of the universe. In reductionist models like *prakṛti* or the wholly materialist version of Spinoza's monism, the 'stuff' that constitutes reality does so in a way that seems to bear little meaningful relation to the qualities which emerge at higher levels. The Big Bang and some subsequently formed atoms may somehow ground Dickens, or Tagore's songs, or Satyajit Ray's bittersweet wisdom, or the ideal of humanism that informs the French constitution. But we feel that they bear no real responsibility for them, because it was random mechanical chance-driven interactions that did the important formative work in-between levels. Nothing is really responsible for the world's rich range of emergent features.

Yet in cases where we are looking at a complete system with no external influences from outside, then what emerges really *is* a direct product of the most basic level, expressing it in a way that is not contingent on something else. The ‘world’, as Śrīnivāsa and Spinoza see it, is a closed system where all that emerges can be directly traced to the unified causation that flows from the foundational level.

We learn from this that separating out the different kinds of causation, and alienating them from the most basic level of reality, is one route to reductionism. It may seem innocuous to explain the world through, for instance, particles as the material cause, natural law as the formative cause, and some energetic force as the efficient catalyst. But this fragmented attribution of causes can occlude the way they all operate in concert with combined power. We may miss the presence of a larger identity by focusing only on its lower level aspects, as if we saw only my feet, my kinetic energy, and my tastes, but failed to comprehend their union in what we conventionally call *me*. So too, fragmenting a thing’s causation can veil its emergent sophistication: if we only looked at the way my cells materially generate organic waste, or efficiently interact with my chemical environment, but never looked at the thoughts, social interactions, or creative output they ground at higher emergent levels, then we would have a limited – indeed, an *inadequate* – idea of those cells. And the same, on this argument, goes for the basic substance of the world.

Hence, although it can seem that ‘several of Spinoza’s arguments for the existence of God can be used to prove the existence of a non-divine substance instead’ (Noorloos, 2021, 656), in fact a fuller understanding sees these arguments as proving (or at least implying as a best explanation of reality) the existence of something with qualities of self-existence and creativity beyond anything we know within the bounds of contingently formed spatio-temporal reality. As Noorloos notes, a real substance able to perform all these functions would have qualities that are *extra*-ordinary (2021, 656–657); it is for this reason that many have felt that ‘non-divine substances are inconceivable’. Further, because for Spinoza in particular, only something necessary could have the qualities of independence and aseity, by these lights such a substance *must* exist.

Of course, in order to fulfil the functions accorded by Spinoza and Śrīnivāsa, the one substance would have to meet massive requirements: it would exist without being caused by anything, possess form and causal disposition without itself having been ‘formed’, and unfold dynamically without any external input. There are heated controversies about what kind of thing might play this role. It could be a raw material, or its generative character might indicate that it is more like a ‘seed’ or singularity vibrating with energies. In constraining change, it might be a kind of vast primordial pattern, or for a theist it might be a divine mind full of creative

imagining or *māyā*. Melamed notes that Curley’s substance-avoidant interpretation of Spinoza takes ‘God’ less as a person or material, and more as the spur to laws of nature, “‘the most general principles of order’ ...a principle or *lex*, rather than an *ens* or *res*’ (Melamed 2013, 10 on Curley 1988, 42) – not merely as a substance in which the changes inhere. Some modern critics of monism have suggested that it shows something more like a ‘statespace structure’ than a reifiable ‘stuff’ (Sider 2008). There is not scope here to address all of these concerns, but after more than 2,000 years of reflection in multiple traditions, substance remains both a skeleton key to a number of metaphysical locks and an open question awaiting fuller exposition.

Finally, for those who want to see ‘God’ here, the open question about the nature of substance may seem to take us away from traditional personalist pictures. It certainly widens the scope for thinking about what a ‘divine nature’ would be like. But here ‘It should be obvious that “impersonal” does not imply “subpersonal”’ (Maharaj 2018, 34) in this case. This ‘all-inclusive unity’ includes pattern, impetus, and consciousness, and cannot be reduced to the present concrete world of nature. Spinoza and Śrīnivāsa paint a picture of a reality in which all that is or happens, all momentum, all that evolves, emerges out of an underlying ordered nature from which the future continues to flow.

Notes

- 1 The concept of substance was central for many of the philosophers who shaped European thought, including Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, and Locke. A philosophical overview can be found in Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (1996), Lin (2009), and Nadler (2013); an overview of 17th-century approaches in Woolhouse (1993); a study of substance’s relation to other ontological categories in Hoffman (1995); and a defence of substance from an analytical perspective in Wiggan (2008) and Lowe (1998). Studies of the Indian notion (including prime matter (*pradhāna*, *prakṛti*), malleable stuff (*dravya*), and foundation (*adhiṣṭhāna*, *āśraya*, *avasthā*)) are more rare, but it was central to the Sāṃkhya and Vedānta traditions, and a target of extensive critique by Buddhist sceptics. A history of the notion of *prakṛti* or ‘prime matter’ is set out in Jacobsen (1999).
- 2 The dates of Nimbārka and Śrīnivāsa are a matter of debate; Bose puts Nimbārka in the 1200s and Dasgupta (1921) in the mid-14th century, seeing him as part of bhakti-oriented Vedānta with Madhva’s Dvaita, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s Advaita, and the Acintya Bhedābheda of the Gosvāmīs. Others have placed him before or alongside Rāmānuja, dealing with similar issues of real but qualified transformation of the divine (e.g. Bhandarkar 1913, Satyanand 1997).
- 3 Arthur Schopenhauer in the *World as Will and Representation*, 1.422. note 2.
- 4 Here we will define monism simply as a metaphysical view that all things are part of, aspects of, or otherwise identified as a single reality. The word ‘non-dualism’ is often used to translate *advaita*: although this is more literal it is also

more philosophically ambiguous since non-dualism can imply metaphysical ‘simplicity’ (the state of being undivided) as well as the state of unity (being unified in complexity). Ontological simplicity is not claimed in most monisms nor Vedāntic views. Different Indian thinkers spoke both of reality being eka, one, and separately of it being advitīya, non-divided, all within the semantic remit of advaita. To avoid confusion, since here we are concerned not with the claim that reality is simple but that it is ontologically unified despite its complexities, we used the term ‘monism’.

- 5 Muller (1894, 123–126), Kurt Leidecker (1934), Melamed (1933), P.N. Srinivasacari (1950), Ramakanta Tripathi (1957), Noah Forslund (2018), and others have all noted the similarity between Spinozist and Hindu metaphysics, and Srinivasacari (1950, 236–245) particularly notes the similarity of Bhedābheda and Spinozism. A number of thinkers embroiled in Europe’s pantheism controversy (e.g. August Schlegel and Wilhelm von Humboldt in their correspondence) argued that classic texts like the *Bhagavad Gītā* are similar but do *not* fall under the reductionist pantheism negatively associated with Spinoza.
- 6 Panentheism has been presented as a needful corrective to Christianity in Clayton (2004), a key feature of process theology (Griffin 2014), a way to engage with contemporary science (e.g. Bruntrup, Gocke and Jaskolla 2020), and a theory in need of updating (e.g. in the light of emergence as a form of divine action in Tabaczek 2021).
- 7 See Smith (2014).
- 8 See Leibniz in *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1998, 66).
- 9 See also Westerhoff’s (2009, 2010, 2018) detailed accounts of Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka’s anti-foundationalism, and his own close arguments for this position (Westerhoff 2005, 2020).
- 10 Per causam sui intelligo id cuius essentia involvit existentiam sive id cuius natura non potest concipi nisi existens ... non poterit concipi ab alia distingui hoc est (per propositionem praecedentem) non poterunt dari plures sed tantum una. *Ethics*, Definition 1-Proposition 5, proof.
- 11 Quicquid est, in Deo est et nihil sine Deo esse neque concipi potest. *Ethics*, Proposition 15.
- 12 Whether this is what Spinoza really meant has been the subject of much debate, with William Curley countering it with a reinterpretation of substance as ‘efficient cause’, and Melamed defending the traditional inheritance view. See the first section of chapter 1 in Melamed (2015). In effect the ‘priority of the infinite’ signals a relation of identity similar to the Indian *Satkārya* theory of the Sāṃkhya school; see below.
- 13 Nihil in natura fit quod ipsius vitio possit tribui; est namque natura semper eadem et ubique una eademque ejus virtus et agendi potentia hoc est naturae leges et regulae secundum quas omnia fiunt et ex unis formis in alias mutantur, sunt ubique et semper eadem atque adeo una eademque etiam debet esse rerum qualiumcunque naturam intelligendi nempe per leges et regulas naturae universales. *Ethics*, Preface to Part 3.
- 14 Deus est omnium rerum causa immanens, non vero transiens. *Ethics*, Proposition 18.
- 15 In Deo datur necessario idea tam ejus essentiae quam omnium quae ex ipsius essentiali necessario sequuntur... Atque omne id quod in Dei potestate est, necessario est... Deus infinita infinitis modis agat.
- 16 See Frazier (2022b, 423–429).
- 17 See Frazier (2019).

- 18 See Burley (2007) for a detailed study of this school, and the issues raised by its relating of empirical forms to consciousness. It was situated within a dualistic metaphysical scheme along with a principle of pure consciousness (*puruṣa*).
- 19 See Gauḍapāda's commentary on the Sāṃkhya Kārikā for one of the earliest systematic developments of this idea, which was followed by Śaṅkara despite his being an idealist and sceptic *vis-à-vis* the phenomenal world.
- 20 Some have identified this school with the thought of Āśmarathya mentioned in the *Brahma Sūtras*, and with that text's author Badarāyana himself. The 'real transformation' view would then seem to flow through the thought of Bhartṛprapañca, Yadavaprakāśa, Śrīnivāsa, Nimbārka, Vijñānabhikṣu, and others. See Srinivasacari (1950), part II for a fairly thorough history (albeit one biased towards the view of Bhāskara).
- 21 Srinivasacari (1950, 6) and Nicholson (2010) following him, divide Bhedābheda Vedānta thinkers into a Svabhāvika branch advocating the real transformation of Brahman, and an Aupādhika branch which approximates Advaita by attributing transformation to selective (*upādhi*) perceptions. Srinivasacari bases this on the distinction between Yadavaprakāśa and Bhāskara, taking them as approximate contemporaries responding to the Advaitic challenge.
- 22 *tasmāt paramakāraṇac cidacīc chaktim ato 'pariccinnādekādvitīyādi śabdārthāt kāraṇāvasthayā kāryāvasthayā ca svecchayaiva sthātum samārthāt sarvaprapañcapūrvavarttino brahmaṇaḥ sakāśac cidacīdrūpasya paricchinnasyānekanāmarūpasya paritantrasya kāryasyānanyatvam (Vedānta Kaustubha 2.1.14, in Bose 1940, 403).*
- 23 *...loke mṛtṭpīṇḍopādānakānām ghaṭaśarāvādīnām sukarnopādānakānām kaṭakakuṇḍalādīnām samudropādānakānām phenatarāṅgādīnām vṛkṣopādānakānām phalapatrādīnām ca kāraṇānanyatve 'pi parasparam vibhāgo 'sti /... tathā brahmajīvayor apī svābhāvīkōbhedābhedasambandhaḥ // (Vedānta Kaustubha 2.1.13, 399–400).*
- 24 The Chāndogya Upaniṣad seems to trade on this issue of the relative scope of *perceived* properties, when it talks about identifying something present by tasting dissolved salt in different parts of a bowl of water (CU 6.13.1–2).
- 25 *nāhi mṛdbhinne vātāḍau ghaṭavyaktibuddhādīkālpanāśakyā kartum / yady asad eva kāryam utpadyate tarhi sarvatra sarvotpattiprasaṅgaḥ kāravayāpāra vaiyarthya-prasaṅgaś ca // (Vedānta Kaustubha in 404).*
- 26 Quotation from *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 1.3.
- 27 *...tarhipraviṣṭāḥsāṅkhyānāmpathīsukhinobhanantubhavantah/pradhānakāraṇāvād āṅgīkārādīty... loke hi cetanasambandhahīnam acetanaṃ dravyaṃ kāryotpādane 'samarthatvād arthavan na bhavati / nāhi svatomṛtṭpīṇḍoghaṭabhāvam āpadyate / tathā cetanasambandhahīnam sāṅkhyābhīmatam pradhānam svayam acetanaṃ kāryotpādanakṣamaṃ na bhavaty ato 'narthakam eva / āupaniṣadam tu pradhānam arthavad bhavati mahadāditṭmāntakāryajananaṃ arthaḥ prayojanaṃ yatra tadarthavat / kutaḥ? "tadadhīnatvāt" ... pradhānasya brahmādhīnatvam tu tārīkābhīmatam paramāñūnām īśvarādhīnatvam yathā tathā nāsti kin tu "devātmaśaktim svaguṇair nirgūḍām" ityādiśāstrasiddham śaktiśaktimad bhava nibandhanam / (Vedānta Kaustubha 1.4.3, 280–281).*
- 28 *sūkṣmaśaktikād brahmaṇovīśvasṣṭyupadeśād ity arthaḥ / avyākr̥tā sūkṣmarūpā brahmaśaktiḥ prakṛtir brahmaśaktivābrahmavan nityājety ucyate saiva śaktim atā viśṣṭā kāryātmanā sthītā sato(ī) brahmopakramety ucyate (Vedānta Kaustubha 1.4.10, 299).*
- 29 See Nicholson (2007, 394–402) on the later thinkers Vijñānabhikṣu. Appaya Dikṣita, and Prakāśānanda, regarding their attempts to resolve these issues with a notion of locus causation (*adhiṣṭhāna* or *mūla kāraṇa*).

- 30 Quoted from *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.7.
- 31 brahmaiva nimittam upādānaṃ ca / kutaḥ / “tad ātmānaṃ svayam akuruta” ity ātmakṛteḥ / nanu kartuḥ kutaḥ kṛtviṣayatvaṃ pariṇāmāt (*Vedānta Kaustubha* 1.4.26, 356).
- 32 ātmanah karmabhūtasya kṛtviṣayasya svayaṃ kṛtimān nirdiśayate kṛtiḥ karaṇam ato hetor ity arthaḥ / nanu svasya kṛtim ataḥ svātmaiva kṛtviṣayatvena katham saṅgacchate / tatrāha “pariṇāmāt” sarvajñaḥ sarvaśaktir apracyutasvarūpaḥ paramātmā svātmākasvadiṣṭitanijaśaktivikṣepeṇa jagadākāraṃ svātmānaṃ pariṇamayatīty... tāsāṃ srṣṭy ādau vikṣepaṃ karoti / (*Vedānta Kaustubha* 1.4.26, 357–358).

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