



Māyā and Becoming: Deleuze and Vedānta on Attributes, Acosmism, and Parallelism in Spinoza

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares two readings of Baruch Spinoza – those of Gilles Deleuze and Rama Kanta Tripathi – with a particular focus on three features of Spinoza’s philosophy: the relationship between substance and attribute; the problem of acosmism and unity; and the problem of the parallelism of attributes. Deleuze and Tripathi’s understanding of these three issues in Spinoza’s thought illustrates for us their own concerns with becoming over substance (in the non-Spinozistic sense) and *māyā*, respectively. This investigation provides not just two interesting and contradictory interpretations of Spinoza, but also gives us insight into Deleuze’s metaphysics and Tripathi’s Vedāntic philosophy.

KEYWORDS

Deleuze; Vedānta; Spinoza; *māyā*; becoming

Interpreting historical thinkers often brings with it the concerns and preconceptions of those engaged in the reading. As such, in considering the views of later interpreters of a philosopher or philosophy, we can sometimes learn just as much about the views of those doing the interpreting as we can about the “correct” way of reading the original philosopher. A good example of this appears in contemporary readings of Baruch Spinoza. In this paper, I look at Spinoza through the eyes of Gilles Deleuze and Rama Kanta Tripathi. Their interpretations of Spinoza help to illuminate some of the concerns and presuppositions in their own thought and help us further understand their own philosophical positions. In the first case, Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza provides insight into ideas – such as the concept of “expression” – that ultimately constitute his own metaphysics. For Tripathi, a scholar of Vedānta, we can gain a further appreciation of the concept of transcendence, and most particularly of the idea of *māyā* (cosmic nescience), which forms the cornerstone of Vedāntic thought.

In this paper, I will compare these two readings of Spinoza, with a particular focus on three features of Spinoza’s philosophy: the relationship between substance and attribute; the problem of acosmism; and the problem of the parallelism of attributes. Deleuze and Tripathi’s understandings of these three issues in Spinoza’s thought illustrate for us their concerns with becoming and expression and *māyā*, respectively.

Attributes

In Spinoza's thought, there are three levels of reality: substance, attribute, and mode. Substance is unified, but it is articulated in attributes, which are potentially infinite in number (though we are only aware of the attributes of Thought and Extension). These attributes are then further articulated as modes, or as the concrete things (physical or mental) that we encounter in the world.

The first contrast between the Tripathi's Vedāntic reading and Deleuze's reading of Spinoza concerns the relationship between the attributes and substance, and the nature of the attributes and substance themselves. That is, Tripathi and Deleuze disagree about exactly how we ought to describe substance's articulation or expression as attributes. On the one hand, Deleuze puts forward a view based on his well-known idea of "expression," and argues that substance is entirely immanent and not at all transcendent. On the other hand, Tripathi sees Spinozism as an "absolutism," and suggests that substance is both immanent and transcendent. We should therefore hold only substance as real, and we should treat attributes as ascriptions only. These conflicting views reflect very different overall concerns: the first wants to place emphasis on the idea of becoming, and the second on the transcendental nature of the absolute and on our ignorance in being unable to perceive it due to *māyā*.

Deleuze

In Deleuze's view, substance expresses itself in the attributes, and it "remains involved in what expresses it, imprinted in what unfolds it, immanent in whatever manifests it: expression is in this respect an involvement" (1990a, 16). In other words, we cannot easily distinguish between what manifests and what is manifested. According to Deleuze, "expression in general involves and implicates what it expresses, while also explicating and evolving it" (1990a, 16). If substance *expresses* itself in attributes, then it is fully implicated in it. That is, there is no transcendence of substance: "what is expressed has no existence outside its expressions; each expression is, as it were, the existence of what is expressed" (Deleuze 1990a, 42). We might say, therefore, that attributes such as Thought and Extension are what constitute the nature of substance (Deleuze 1990a, 55); it is difficult to see substance as anything *beyond* its expressions as attribute, and it is therefore the essence of substance itself that is expressed in the attributes (Wasser 2007, 4).

The same process occurs in the relationship between attribute and mode: a mode is an *expression* of an attribute, as an attribute is an expression of substance. As with the step from substance to attribute, attributes are fully implicated in the modes, and cannot be understood as separate from them (Deleuze 1990a, 14). Miguel De Beistegui describes this as follows:

The first [step] is qualitative expression through which substance renders itself determinate in certain (infinite) forms. The second is quantitative expression, through which these forms express themselves in turn through the production of particular modes. Expression comprises both determination and differentiation. (2010, 37)

Through the notion of "expression," which "involves and implicates what it expresses," Deleuze can maintain that substance, attribute, and mode are all of equal status: there

is no reason to privilege one or the other as more important, as they are inseparable. Accordingly, substance is not “transcendent”; it does not exist over and above its qualitative expression as attributes (or, ultimately, its quantitative expression as modes). We can see, then, the central role that becoming plays in this interpretation: as attributes are the expressions of substance in which substance is fully implicated, substance only finds existence *in* this expression.

Tripathi

Tripathi’s Vedāntic interpretation of Spinoza argues, contrary to Deleuze’s view, that we should privilege one level – substance – over the others. Understood as fully-implicated expression, as Deleuze does, we cannot possibly say that substance is more important than attribute, as substance only exists through its expression as attribute. Conversely, we cannot say that attributes are more important than substance, as attributes *are* they expression of substance, and are nothing but this.

For Tripathi, however, we must approach our understanding of the attributes with a fixed notion of substance as “unique and absolutely indeterminate, pure, Being” (1957, 118). Tripathi views Spinoza, therefore, as an absolutist philosopher (1957, 68), one who proposes a system of philosophy in which “the reality of the absolute is affirmed and that of the relative is denied” (1957, 69). For substance to be unique and pure, it must have some kind of transcendence from attribute and mode, even if it is also in some sense immanent in them as well. Tripathi does not deny, therefore, that substance is immanent, but he also insists that we emphasize the *transcendence* of substance as much as we note the immanence of substance in attributes (1957, 69). According to Tripathi:

The transcendence of God does not mean that He is external to the world or separate from it; He is all-pervasive. [In Spinoza’s philosophy] God transcends the world in the same sense in which space transcends the objects in it, and also pervades the universe in the same sense in which space pervades objects. The notions of immanence and transcendence are not exclusive of each other; as indeterminate and unrelated substance is transcendent, but as the ground of everything, it is immanent. (1957, 95)

The world-affirming expressions of Spinoza should not be taken literally, he claims. Typically, Spinoza is interpreted as pantheistic or monistic rather than absolutist (Tripathi 1957, 96). So, on the one hand:

God is the immanent and not the transeunt cause of things, because there is nothing outside Him. He is not only the efficient, effecting cause of the existence of things, but also of their essence. He is both the material and the efficient cause. All that is possible is actual, because there is nothing to prevent God from creating. Nothing is contingent; “things could not have been produced in any other manner or order than that in which they were produced.” (Tripathi 1957, 93)

However, on the other hand, Tripathi sees Spinoza, in emphasizing substance, as regarding the empirical world as the “world of opinion and imagination,” and substance as being ultimately indeterminate (1957, 70). For instance, Spinoza asserts that “we can form no general idea of [God’s] essence” (Spinoza 1928, Letter L). God/substance “pervades the universe and is yet beyond it; substance cannot be said to be outside the universe, and yet being absolutely indeterminate it is also not identical with it” (Tripathi 1957, 71).

Hence, we should recognize, too, that while substance is immanent in the world, it also transcends it at the same time through its absolute infinity and indeterminacy. As such, we should consider substance as *both* immanent and transcendent.

Deleuze argues that substance “only finds its existence *in* each of the attributes which express it” (Wasser 2007, 5), and he is therefore utterly opposed to the idea of transcendence in Spinoza’s philosophy. He focuses entirely on immanence: he holds that “what is expressed has no existence outside its expressions; each expression is the existence of what is expressed” (Deleuze 1990a, 42). Tripathi, on the other hand, argues that substance *transcends* the attributes (1957, 118). Substance is, of course, immanent in the attributes, but it is nevertheless not *limited by* them. So, while Deleuze sees the expression of substance in attributes as constituting the essence of substance in a real sense, Tripathi argues that we should understand the nature of attributes only through the notion of absolute, infinite, indeterminate substance, interpreting the idea that the essence of substance is manifest in the attributes as merely *ascriptive* rather than actual. For Tripathi, “ascriptions are not existences.” That is, we might ascribe attributes to substance, but we are not thereby claiming that substance *is* the attributes. In other words, “existence is only one but it is differently perceived” (Tripathi 1957, 162).

Since substance is absolutely indeterminate, we can only ascribe attributes *to* it; we cannot *find* the attributes *in* it. Hence, attributes are subjectively superimposed onto an absolutely indeterminable substance (Tripathi 1957, 160). This further reinforces the idea that attributes and modes are of a different status than substance: rather than understanding substance through its attributes, we must, according to the Vedāntic view, deny that attributes have any kind of ontological status other than that of substance: “substance and attribute are the same ontologically but different epistemically” (Tripathi 1957, 162). That is, attributes are substance, merely perceived from a different (and, importantly, inferior) position. When Spinoza says that intellect “attributes such and such a nature to substance” (Spinoza 1928, Letter IX), Tripathi takes him to mean that attributes are what the intellect takes substance’s essence to be, but that attributes are not “in the being of substance.” Attributes are superimposed, and so in Vedāntic terms we can understand them as “*Upādhis*” (limitations/qualifications) of substance: “*Upādhis* do not constitute the inner being of [God] in a particular way; they may at best indicate the existence of [God], but do not enter into the constitution of [God]” (Tripathi 1957, 89). Hence, Tripathi concludes that the idea of substance as “indeterminate pure Being” requires that we view attributes only as ascriptions, and not as constituting the real nature of substance, or as having an ontological status of their own (Tripathi 1957, 161). This goes sharply against Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, which holds that “in demonstrating that something is an attribute, we demonstrate, *a priori*, its existence” (1990a, 44), and which takes substance’s involvement in and explication of attributes as evidence that attributes have some kind of reality (Deleuze 1990a, 16).

In the Vedāntic view, an infinity of attributes exists, all of which are themselves infinite: “all attributes ... are by their nature infinite and supremely perfect in their kind” (Spinoza 1909, Appendix 3, 158). However, these attributes are only relatively, rather than absolutely, infinite, because while attributes express the essence of substance, they are not, unlike substance, absolutely infinite themselves. Tripathi thinks that we could not treat attributes as absolutely infinite “without dethroning substance itself and usurping its place” (1957, 161). So, while substance is “constituted by an infinite number of expressive

forms – thought and extension are two examples, while others are beyond the reach of human intellect – ” (Wasser 2007, 4), it also exists prior to this production. As Tripathi puts it: “the indeterminate cannot resist determination, in fact it lends itself freely to be determined in infinite ways. Thus we have an infinite number of determinations or attributes” (Tripathi 1957, 161). That is, the absolutely infinite, being infinite, can produce infinite attributes. Nevertheless, each of these attributes is relatively infinite; only substance is absolutely infinite.

If substance is composed of an infinite number of determinate attributes, then when Spinoza says that “the more reality or being a thing possesses, the more attributes belong to it,” Tripathi interprets this as meaning that the more real something is, the more indeterminate it is (Tripathi 1957, 118–119). Attributes do not give reality to substance; rather, Spinoza here means that we can tell that substance is ultimately real because the infinite number of (relatively infinite, determinate) attributes ascribable to it renders it utterly indescribable and indeterminate. As substance is, according to Tripathi’s interpretation, transcendent as well as immanent, saying that the more attributes something has the more real it is, is another way of saying that the more attributes it has the closer it comes to being indescribable and indeterminate, and hence the closer it comes to the transcendent, real substance. However, this does *not* mean that attributes are somehow giving reality to substance. Rather, “the attributes super-imposed on substance are only subjective and hence illusory” (Tripathi 1957, 159). That is, attributes do not have the absolute infinity of substance, and in fact we only perceive them as existing in the first place due to our own partial subjectivity.

Here we can see clearly the role that *māyā* plays in Tripathi’s interpretation of Spinoza: attributes, not to mention modes, are only ascriptions; we superimpose attributes onto substance (and modes onto attributes) due to our subjectivity. Neither attributes nor modes are *really* there. Rather, the more determinate something is, the *farther* we are from perceiving the way things really are. As attributes are more determinate than substance (which is completely *indeterminate*) and as modes are more determinate yet again, they can only be the consequence of our fallible, partial subjectivity.

Acosmism and Unity

Another issue in Spinoza’s view that leads to different, and illustrative, responses on the part of Deleuze and Tripathi is that of acosmism. That is, Spinoza asserts that substance is pure unity. However, in doing so, he has difficulty avoiding Hegel’s charge of acosmism which, in the words of G. H. R. Parkinson, has two elements, negative and positive:

The negative element is the view that the world, the “cosmos,” does not exist; it is a mere phenomenon, lacking in true reality. When Hegel speaks of “the world” in this context he has in mind the totality of individual things; Spinoza’s acosmism, seen from its negative side, is the denial of the real existence of individual things. Individuality, and indeed distinction of all kind is obliterated; everything is thrown in an abyss of annihilation. (1977, 449–459)

So if Spinoza is to hold that substance is pure unity, then some means must be found by which we can still have a world at all. Both Deleuze and Tripathi, however, have responses

to Hegel's objection, though their replies take their theories in quite different directions that are reflective of their own concerns and presuppositions.

Deleuze

If we take Deleuze's view, that substance is what is denoted by the attributes and what is manifested in them, and that the essence of substance is the "sense of a substance's self-expression" (Wasser 2007, 5) which "has no existence outside the attributes that express it" (Deleuze 1990a, 42), then we can avoid the problem of acosmism. We can distinguish between the essence of substance and the attributes that express it if we "discard the notion of a real being of *sense* which is irreducible either to what the expression designates or to the form of the expression itself" (Wasser 2007, 5). Sense, therefore,

is an entity that is neither not identical to what the proposition denotes (the real object or referent) or manifests (the speaking subject), or signifies (other propositions or concepts), but is in addition to these forms a wholly other entity that can be said to inhere in the proposition. (Wasser 2007, 4)

According to Deleuze, the expressed sense "[engenders] the other dimensions of the proposition (signification, manifestation, and denotation)" (Deleuze 1990b, 95–96). Hence, substance self-expresses in the attributes; the sense of substance's self-expression is its essence; and this essence inheres or subsists in the attributes in the same way that sense "inheres or subsists in a proposition" (Wasser 2007, 4). But sense is reducible to attributes or substance – it is an entity, but it has no independent reality. As such, sense is not something we have to explain as problematic for the unity of substance. Through substance's self-expression as sense/essence, which inheres in attributes, we are not required to conclude that the existence of attributes is a threat to substance's unity; the relationship between attributes and substance approaches "a kind of mutual dependence of cause and effect" (Wasser 2007, 4), which makes distinguishing between the two – saying that one causes the other and that their creation undoes unity – a mistake.

In short, a substance self-expresses in attributes, and the essence of substance is the sense of this self-expression. This sense, and therefore the essence of substance, inheres in the attributes. However, because the sense of this self-expression only exists insofar as it is expressed in the attributes, it does not undermine the unity of substance. The essence of substance inheres in the attributes, and the attributes express substance, but we cannot privilege one or the other, saying that substance has caused attributes, or that attributes create substance. The attributes express the essence of substance through the sense of substance's self-expression that inheres in them, and substance, because the sense of the self-expression has no reality aside from the form of the expression, is expressed without a loss of unity.

Once again, this response illustrates Deleuze's concern with becoming and expression. Attributes contain the sense – the essence – of substance, but substance can only be said to have this essence insofar as it is being expressed in an attribute. We cannot say that attributes exist on their own, as static entities; nor can we say that substance exists before and separate from attributes. Rather, substance exists as it becomes attributes, and attributes exist as substance is expressed within them.

Tripathi

Deleuze's approach responds to Hegel's charge of acosmism by putting substance and attribute on equal footing. This, for Tripathi's Vedāntic interpretation of Spinoza, is completely unacceptable, as it rejects the transcendence of substance. How, then, according to Tripathi, can we explain the cosmos – the world of change – if we are to maintain that substance is pure unity? This is of special concern in the case of Tripathi's view, as it seems that we cannot say that the indeterminate – substance – and the determinate – the modes, the phenomenal world – are related. As Tripathi points out:

if [the determinate and indeterminate] are conceived as necessarily related, they cannot be distinguished. A reciprocal relation between the determinate and the indeterminate is impossible since the two cannot be had simultaneously: the one excludes the other. (Tripathi 1957, 156)

Nevertheless, Tripathi claims that the Vedāntic reading of Spinoza does not fall into the difficulty of acosmism. Or, rather, it does not see it as a problem to begin with. The reason for this is that Tripathi's approach privileges absolute substance and dismisses what is merely relative. This conception sees Hegel's acosmic criticism as proceeding from a mistaken basis. Hegel is

uncritically [taking] for granted the reality of appearance and then [trying] to find a place for it in the bosom of the Absolute. But the Advaitins point out that if the world of plurality cannot be consistently harmonised with the concept of the Absolute, it should be relegated to illusion. The theory of Vivartavāda [unreal manifestation] which is intended to explain change and multiplicity really means that there is no creation and no dissolution; the perception of change is illusory. Thus in a very real sense the concept of the absolute is both the end and the beginning of all philosophy. (Tripathi 1957, 156)

From the perspective of a Vedāntic reading of Spinoza, we should not be overly concerned with how we can derive the conditioned and determinate from the unconditioned and indeterminate. On the contrary, Tripathi is not sure why we should ask Spinoza's philosophical system to do such a thing to begin with: it is simply not of interest (1957, 156).

A critic might point out, however, that if substance is ultimately real and unchanging, so that change in the phenomenal world, and the phenomenal world itself, are illusory, then there does not seem to be any good reason for Spinoza to bring up the doctrine of attributes in the first place. But Spinoza *does* discuss the doctrine of the attributes, and he goes on to discuss the phenomenal world in terms of modes: he does not simply dismiss the phenomenal world as unreal; he discusses how to explain and understand it based on his theory of an immanent, single substance. How do we explain Spinoza's concern with attributes and modes, if we ought to read Spinoza as saying that both are fundamentally unreal?

Tripathi's response to this is that though, in a technical sense, the Vedāntic interpretation of Spinoza *does* lead to acosmism, in that the phenomenal world is seen as unreal, this is of no concern. Acosmism is only a problem if it means that we *should not* discuss the existence of the cosmos. The issue of acosmism is not whether or not the cosmos *really* exists, but whether or not we need to discuss the apparently real phenomenal world, or whether such discussions are beside the point. Tripathi argues that, though the cosmos is unreal, it is nevertheless essential to discuss the phenomenal world, and hence the

Vedāntic interpretation of Spinoza does not lead us to a situation whereby we ignore the phenomenal world entirely and debate the absolute only.

If the Vedāntic reading bites the bullet, however, and accepts the unreality of the phenomenal world, then how can it justify discussing the phenomenal world? Tripathi argues that we must do so because “it is indispensable to show the dependence of the conditioned on the unconditioned” (1957, 157). This is due to the general emphasis in Vedāntic philosophy on the rejection of the unreal and the importance of perceiving the real, that is, substance/God/Brahman. Tripathi suggests that the *a priori* conditions of knowledge are due to ignorance, and hence freedom from them is possible. It is possible, according to this view, for us to gain immediate knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-sākṣātkāra*), which Tripathi relates to Spinoza’s *scientia intuitiva* (1957, 165).

Because the dependence of the world itself is its illusoriness, “unless the world is *shown* to be dependent, it cannot be rejected” (Tripathi 1957, 157, emphasis mine). Hence, it is necessary to engage in cosmology, even from within Vedānta’s absolutist framework, to illuminate us regarding the dependence of the physical world (Tripathi 1957, 158). For Vedāntins, cosmology exists purely to fulfill this function: it is only ever symbolic. So long as the absoluteness of substance is not undermined, we are free to understand the world in a range of ways. This means that, from a Vedāntic perspective, a Spinozistic understanding of the dependence of the world on the Absolute is merely one of the ways we might understand this relationship (Tripathi 1957, 158).

Tripathi thinks there are some textual justifications for why we ought to read Spinoza in this way: first, Tripathi states that Spinoza’s explicit assertion that “time” is merely an aid to our imagination means that change is not inherent in reality, as the idea of change without time is unthinkable (Tripathi 1957, 159). Hence, we have reason to think that the phenomenal world is unreal, as the phenomenal world is one of change. Secondly, Tripathi argues that Spinoza also suggests that attributes are products of the intellect – ascriptions rather than perceptions – as they contain an element of negation. That is, they are only relatively infinite; they can be said to be “not this” or “not that”; and since the intellect is “always relational and ... necessarily involve[s] an element of negation” (Tripathi 1957, 161), it follows that, in Spinoza’s words, “the finite understanding can not of itself understand anything except that which is limited by something outside” (Spinoza 1909, I. i. (3), 5). Thus, we ought to conclude that attributes are products of the intellect and not real.

However, this does not mean that it is the empirical mind of the individual that ascribes attributes to substance. If this were the case, Tripathi thinks that we would be conscious of doing the ascribing, and hence it should be simple for us to perceive substance as being free from ascriptions (1957, 164–165). Clearly this is not the case: we can only perceive substance as either Thought or Extension and comprehending substance as being neither thinking nor extended is impossible for the empirical mind. Hence, attributes should be considered *a priori* forms of the understanding: “attributes are not of the empirical order of subjectivity but of the transcendental order” (Tripathi 1957, 165), and “they are really of a transcendental origin, which is ignorance” (Tripathi 1957, 164–165).

With this in mind, Tripathi connects Spinoza’s doctrine of the attributes directly to Vedānta’s doctrine of *māyā*: that is, cosmic nescience. According to the doctrine of *māyā*, *Brahman* causes the world, but He does not do so as the absolute, but as *Īśvara*, which is *Brahman* modified by an *Upādhi* (limitation). The *Upādhi* of *Īśvara* is *māyā*, and through being qualified or limited by *māyā*, *Brahman* is creative and

self-differentiating. So, it is not *Brahman*/substance/God which is self-differentiating, but rather the *penultimate* reality of *Ísvāra* – substance qualified by illusion – that is self-differentiating. Hence, there is no need to harmonize identity and difference in substance, because it is only in the penultimate reality of *Ísvāra* that both identity and difference exist: in the ultimate reality of *Brahman* we have only identity (Tripathi 1957, 164). In Tripathi's words:

The attributes may best be understood as the *Upādhis* of substance. An *Upādhi* does not add anything to substance; it only limits it or determines it in a particular way. The first *Upādhi* of Brahman is *māyā* which gives rise to all other *Upādhis* such as those of *Nāma* and *Rūpa* (name and form). Hence *māyā* is the *Kāraṇa Upādhi* [limitation giving rise to cause] and everything else is *Kārya Upādhi* [limitation giving rise to effect]. The attributes of Spinoza correspond to the *Kāraṇa Upādhi* while the modes may be called *Kārya Upādhi*. Thought may be said to correspond to *Nāma* and Extension to *Rūpa*. (Tripathi 1957, 164)

This is not to say that *māyā* has its own existence. *Māyā* is merely an “epistemic principle ... and is destroyed without residue by knowledge” (Tripathi 1957, 187). That is, it consists only in a particular form of ignorance, and is not a positive entity itself. Similarly, *Ísvāra* should not be considered as a separate entity. It is important, therefore, to distinguish between “substance in itself” and “substance associated with attributes” (Tripathi 1957, 185). “*Brahman*” is the former, and “*Ísvāra*” the latter. Tripathi relates the idea of *Ísvāra* to Spinoza's “*Natura Naturans*,” arguing that *Natura Naturans* “may be said to mark the distinction between the Absolute in itself and the Absolute considered as a free cause” (Tripathi 1957, 186).

Though Spinoza never explicitly discusses a concept such as *māyā*, Tripathi insists that this idea is consistent with his view. Substance is qualified by transcendental illusion, which gives rise to the perception of attributes, ascribed by us to substance. We cannot see substance as being anything other than composed of attributes, particularly the two we are familiar with – Thought and Extension – because the illusion giving rise to their unreal existence does not occur on the empirical level, but rather the transcendental. It therefore cannot be thought to be the same kind of mistake as taking a rope to be a snake, which is an error that can be corrected by our understanding.

Attributes and Parallelism

The final feature of Spinoza I will discuss is that of parallelism of the attributes. Parallelism is the explanation in Spinoza's thought for the fact that while “things which have different attributes, as well as those which belong to different attributes, have nothing in common with one another” (Spinoza 1909, Axiom 4, 157), there is nevertheless a relationship between the modes of different attributes. This is not a causal relationship, but rather things in different attributes “bear to each other a constant relation” (Deleuze 1990a, 107), even though there is nothing in the mode belonging to one attribute that is present in the mode belonging to the other attribute. So, there is no real causality between modes of different attributes, yet there is somehow a relationship of correspondence between them.

As James Martineau points out, “close correspondency between two independent series without causality is an unsolved mystery” (1886, 306). That is, it is hard to see what the relationship is between the two attributes that we are of – Thought and Extension – if

they have nothing in common. As everything that is extended is also represented in the attribute of Thought, and vice versa, how is it that an occurrence in one attribute can be simultaneously represented in the other, when both attributes are unrelated and there can be no causal connection between the two? After all, Spinoza does state that “neither can body determine mind to think, nor mind determine body to motion or rest, or anything else, if anything there is” (Spinoza 2001, Part 3, prop. 2), indicating that there is no causal relationship between Thought and Extension, and that they should be considered as entirely separate.

Furthermore, it is not just Thought and Extension that have this status; there are after all an infinity of attributes, therefore “all the attributes are without intercommunication; each producing its own infinity of modes, in order and connection keeping time with the others, but with no contact below the point of origin” (Martineau 1885, 183). So, if each mode belonging to each attribute “has in it nothing of another thing,” and therefore “can not be the cause of the existence of that other thing” (Spinoza 1909, Axiom 5, 157) (meaning that “finite modes can only be in causal relation with other finite modes of the same attribute” [Howie 2002, 98]) then how do we explain the close correspondence between modes of different attributes?

Deleuze

We can begin Deleuze’s explanation of the fact that modes of different attributes parallel each other in terms of the idea of an “identity of order” between the attributes. What this means is that God produces things concurrently in all of the attributes, and in doing so ensures that all of the attributes express themselves in “one and the same order, down to the level of finite modes” (Deleuze 1990a, 106). Between the infinity of attributes there is an identity in terms of the order of production, and this identity means that, even though attributes are “mutually irreducible and really distinct,” and despite the fact that “none is the cause of another, or of anything whatever in another” (Deleuze 1990a, 106), it is nonetheless the case that the identity of order in production makes sure that modes in different attributes correspond in a parallel series. According to Spinoza,

Whether we conceive of nature under the attribute of extension, or under the attribute of thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find one and the same order, or one and the same connection of causes, that is, that the same things follow one another. (Spinoza 2001, Part 2, prop. 7s)

Put in terms of the two familiar attributes, Michael Della Rocca explains it as follows:

There is a causal chain of modes of extension ... For any extended thing, x , which is caused by another extended thing, y , there is an idea of x that is about or represents x . This idea is caused by the idea of y which, in turn, is caused by the idea of y ’s cause, etc. Similar claims would hold for each extended thing, and thus there is a causal chain of ideas that is isomorphic with, that parallels, that has the same order and connection as, the chain of extended things represented by these ideas. (Della Rocca 2008, 90)

If a mode of Extension has certain effects and a certain degree of power, then the parallel mode in the attribute of Thought also has the same effects, and the same power (Della Rocca 2008, 100). The same applies to the infinity of other attributes. So, for example, for each attribute there are parallel ideas that represent the modes of this

attribute in the attribute of Thought, and these ideas have relations that are isomorphic with the causal relations that obtain between the modes of the unfamiliar attribute (Della Rocca 2008, 90).

This correspondence rests on the equality of attributes: that is there is not *just* an identity of order (*isomorphism*), but that there is “also an identity of ‘connection’ between the two series (*isonomy or equivalence*)”. That is to say, both Thought and Extension have an equality of principle, so that there is an “equal valence ... between what occurs in one and in the other” (Deleuze 1988, 87–88). If the attributes were not equal, and one was “in some way eminent in relation to that of the other,” then there would be an identity of order, but not an identity of connection (Deleuze 1990a, 108). So, Deleuze claims that: “when Spinoza asserts that modes of different attributes have not only the same order, but also the same connection or concatenation, he means that the principles on which they depend are themselves equal” (Deleuze 1990a, 108). Here we can see Deleuze’s metaphysics once again. Deleuze’s solution to the parallelism of the attributes places the emphasis not on the static nature of the substance as absolute, as the Vedāntic interpretation does, but rather on the process of causation; each attribute is a causal chain, and it is the *becoming* of the attributes that warrants our attention.

Tripathi

The Vedāntic explanation of this difficulty stems from the now-familiar idea that both attributes and modes are illusory; products of our ignorance. As we ascribe attributes to substance, we also conceive modes through one attribute or the other. So, when we perceive a thing, the issue is not whether it belongs to one attribute or another, ontologically speaking, but which attribute we happen to be conceiving it through: saying that it belongs to Thought or Extension is providing two different descriptions, but there is only one thing being described (Deleuze 1990a, 73). In the words of Gillian Howie: “an individual ... is one thing and two descriptions: in the attribute of Thought and the attribute of Extension” (Howie 2002, 88).

This subjective view of the attributes means that we have little difficulty explaining parallelism between attributes. Parallelism does not exist anymore than attributes do: things “exist” in all of the attributes simultaneously, and whether we end up saying that it is in one or the other is purely a matter of description. Things are “parallel,” then, in the sense that the attributes are merely a means through which we can conceive substance, and so modes do not have a real existence *in* various attributes, or *aside from* substance, but are rather substance covered by *māyā*, perceived *through* one or the other of the infinite number of attributes that we could ascribe to substance: in other words, “all parallels meet at infinity” (Tripathi 1957, 173).

Conclusion

We have looked here at three aspects of Spinoza’s metaphysics through the eyes of Deleuze and Tripathi: the relationship between attributes and substance, the problem of acosmism, and the issue of parallelism. Both thinkers have distinct views on these three topics, and in both cases their understanding of these issues illuminates as much about the concerns that structure their own philosophies as it does about Spinoza’s own views.

Deleuze, for his part, insists on substance being immanent, with no transcendence whatsoever. Substance “expresses” itself in the attributes, which in turn “express” themselves in modes, and at each stage expression involves and implicates what is expressing in what is expressed. Substance self-expresses, and the sense of such self-expressions is substance’s essence, which inheres in the attributes. There is, furthermore, an identity of order and connection between modes in parallel attributes. Each of these solutions emphasizes the process of *becoming*: substance only exists in its expression as attributes, and attributes only exist as they express themselves, as they become, modes. The essence of substance is in its becoming; it does not exist above and beyond its process of expression. Similarly, the identity of order and connection between attributes emphasizes the processual nature of substance’s expression as attribute.

According to Tripathi’s Vedāntic interpretation of Spinoza, on the other hand, substance is both immanent *and* transcendent. Substance is considered “absolute” and is of higher status than attributes and modes. In fact, according to this reading, we only *ascribe* attributes to substance; we do not *find* them *in* substance: attributes and modes are illusory, only substance is real. Attributes are superimposed on substance; they are *Upādhis* of substance. The Vedāntic reading, therefore (and unsurprisingly) foregrounds the relevance of the concept of *māyā*; the principle of illusion that has us see substance as creative of the universe. Due to the existence of *māyā*, parallel modes in different attributes meet in the infinity of substance but are unreal aside from this. Hence, they are only different insofar as we ascribe a certain attribute to substance and conceive them through this attribute.

To conclude, Spinoza’s philosophy, like other rich philosophical views, can sustain multiple, contradictory readings. As illustrated by Deleuze and Tripathi, these contradictory readings are, however, just as illuminative of the broader views of Spinoza’s interpreters as they are of Spinoza himself. By looking at Deleuze’s account of Spinoza, we can appreciate further the development of his own metaphysical views. Similarly, we can gain insights into the central concerns and concepts in Vedāntic philosophy through a consideration of Tripathi’s interpretation of Spinoza.

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