

The Content of the Mystical Experience of the Brahman-World Relation in Upanishads based on Ibn ‘Arabi’s Nondelimited Oneness of Being

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Abstract

The Upanishads incorporate different interpretations of the relation between Brahman and the world, a difference that gives some people a reason to deny the existence of a unique philosophical doctrine in these texts. This article aims to note the internal consistency in the Upanishads with a view to analyzing their content in the words of Ibn ‘Arabi and his commentators concerning the doctrine of the nondelimited oneness of being. For him, being is endowed with nondelimited oneness, and the world and multiple existing things limit this absolute reality, and this unique truth manifests itself within their framework, and therefore, it acquires multiplicity at the level of manifestation. In mystical experiences, when a mystic unites himself with God, he would either witness the oneness of being and have an acquaintance with the world as God, or consider the multiplicity within oneness, and hence, find the world distinct from Him. If we consider various Upanishadic phrases as expressions of such dual perspectives, then we will find a more precise understanding of, and we will have sufficient reasons to accept, their internal consistency.

Keywords: Upanishads, Brahman, theism, Oneness of being, mystical experience, Ibn ‘Arabi.

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Introduction

A pivotal topic in the Upanishads is the reality of Brahman and its relation with the world and other existing things. This relation is elucidated in the Upanishads in various forms of expressions and parables. Sometimes it is said that everything other than Brahman represents various forms of a unique reality; in other instances, the world is known as a reality born out of Brahma, where it lives up to self-annihilation. In some other passages, it may be perceived that not only is the world real, but Brahma is also a congregation of mundane phenomena. This difference in interpretations has led those who adopt a philosophical approach to these texts to interpret them as internally inconsistent and devoid of any philosophical doctrine. A case in point is Frederick Copleston who sees the Upanishads as a collection of sacred texts, saying: “There was no ready-made uniform philosophical system in the Upanishads” (Copleston 2003, 70-71).

Robert Hume, in the introduction to his translation of the *Thirteen Maha Upanishads*, refers to such exegetical disagreements, concluding: “Upanishads are not homogeneous product cogently presenting a philosophical theory, but that they are compilations from different sources recording the guesses at the truth of the early Indians” (Hume 1921, 9).

The alleged non-existence of a unique doctrine and theory in the Upanishadic texts relies on an intellectual view that prescribes compliance with logical rules and internal consistency for the authenticity and veracity of a theory. However, if we consider the Upanishads as a product of mystical experience and attribute the object of such experience to levels other than the visible level of the Universe, as expressed by Stace, compliance with logic is not required for the significance of the statements born out of such experience, because logic applies only to some actual and possible worlds, not to all possible worlds. We should say rather that it would apply to a world in which there exists multiplicity, and multiplicity exists wherever there is a principle of individuation. Accordingly, the most common individuations are space and time, so logic is necessarily applicable to the space-time world (Stace 1961, 272). Criticizing the philosophical approach to the Upanishadic statements, Dasgupta also suggests that

the Upanishads reveal to us different phases of thought and experience, not a consistent dogmatic philosophy... The different phases of

experience are lived through and enjoyed as inalienable parts of one great experience. When attempts are made to describe any particular phase of this experience it will naturally seem to conflict with the other phases in the eyes of those who have not the capacity of realizing concrete whole experience and who can only look at the phases from an external and a purely intellectual point of view where distinctions cannot be obliterated. (Dasgupta 1922, 54)

In this article, after highlighting the existing experience of a union in the Upanishadic texts, which symbolize them as mystical, the contents of these experiences are analyzed based on the doctrine of nondelimited oneness of being, developed by the great Muslim mystic Ibn 'Arabi. This doctrine can prove that the content of the experience of union in the Upanishadic texts symbolizes the nondelimited oneness of being, and the various Upanishadic statements about the relation between Brahman and the world are in fact interpretations of this experience from various aspects, in each of which either oneness or multiplicity may dominate. The conclusion of such analysis may justify the internal consistency of these texts and bear proof to their compliance with a single doctrine.

1.1. Upanishads and Mystical Experience

Mystical experiences are distinguished from experiences like sensory experiences and esoteric feelings. William James describes these experiences as “states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect” (James 2004, 295-96).

Based on James' definition, he who experiences mysticism would achieve two categories of insight—one being “insight into depths of truth” or direct insight of the truth and one being logical insight or a conceptual interpretation of mystics' inexpressible experience of the depth of truth that would allow for mental perception after contemplating the truth. James refers to the first perception as “knowledge about” and the second as “knowledge by” (Barnard 1997, 14).

It may be argued that the difference between mystical and non-mystical experiences lies in the possibility of obtaining “knowledge about,” i.e., without the intervention of mental concepts. Generally, philosophers describe the “insight into the depth of realities,” which James deems the very nature of

mystical experiences, as the “pure consciousness event (PCE)” and cast doubt on its possibility (Godby 2002, 233), but such experiences in various religious traditions like “emptiness” in Buddhist Mahayana or “mystical oblivion” in Christian and Islamic mysticism has prompted such perennialists as Robert Forman to focus on justifying PCE. An experience considered as an example of PCE is the union of Atman with Brahman and knowledge about Brahman’s union with the world. Description of such union provides the main content of Upanishadic texts. In the second part of his book, *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness*, Forman touches on this experience of union, citing experiences in various religious traditions. Quoting Maitreya Upanishad, he notes that such statements point to mystical notions like mediation, the unthinkable supreme mystery, and experience of the unity of One. Finally, he considers the experience of the union in this text as an example of PCE, and by analyzing its content, he concludes that this union is a state without any sensory or mental content or intentional content for the awareness (Forman 1999, 13).

As Foreman has noted, the Upanishadic description of truth mirrors an experience lacking any mental content. In other words, it may not be categorized as intellectual perceptions or mental reflections.

For his part, Evelyn Underhill touches upon the existing experience of the union in the Upanishads, defining it as a stage following the two stages of intellectual perception; i.e., attention to, and contemplation over, reality. He considers this experience as an instance of mystical experience and the common element of most mystical experiences in the East and the West (Underhill 1920, 7).

Emptying the mind of the contents of mental notions and crossing the stages of intellectual perception, as described by Forman and Underhill, is a necessary condition for union with knowledge in mystical experiences, because as Stace said, the object of mystical experiences is a reality lacking personhood, thereby offering no mental perception (Stace 1961, 272). In fact, in order to obtain such knowledge of this reality, the mind has to be erased off all concepts that impose limited personalized objects thereon. In Katha Upanishad, a passage may touch such knowledge and how to distinguish it from intellectual and conceptual knowledge: “This Soul (Atman) is not to be obtained by instruction nor by intellect, nor by much learning. He is to be obtained only by the one whom He chooses. To such a one that Soul (Atman) reveals His own person” (Hume 1921, 350).

This passage implies that knowledge about Atman would not be conceptual and intellectual to be achievable through learning and intellectual meditation and reasoning; rather it is the product of revelation of Atman to select persons who can perceive it directly.

In the Upanishadic texts, knowledge about Brahman as a non-personal reality is an instance of such knowledge that is achieved through union with it. Dasgupta deals with the divine aspects of the Upanishadic oneness of being, concluding that the object of the spiritual quest by Upanishadic mystics is not just a personal reality but a principle “which is at once the ultimate essence of our self and the highest principle of the universe” and therefore “it is rather a totality of partless simple and undifferentiated experience which is the root of all our ordinary knowledge and experience” (Dasgupta 1922, 42).

Now it may be said that experiences of the union have turned Upanishadic texts into mystic ones, and therefore, the contents are products of such experiences. On this account, in order to understand them, one has to analyze the contents of these experiences based on the doctrines defining an esoteric and unique structure and consider the multiple worlds as levels of its manifestations and disclosures. In what follows, we highlight Ibn ‘Arabi’s specific account of the doctrine of Oneness of Being that can effectively elucidate the existence of creatures and the visible world in order to lay the groundwork for analyzing Upanishadic texts on the relation between Brahman and the world.

1.2. Nondelimited Oneness of Being

For Ibn ‘Arabi, being incorporates a sort of oneness that his commentators have described as nondelimited oneness. This category of oneness incorporates multiplicity in a way that, while recognizing a sort of reality for the world and existing things, maintains that its being would not harm the nondelimited oneness of being. Ibn ‘Arabi’s views may be interpreted as proof of oneness, which differs from pantheism or panentheism. Pantheism means that all is God and Panentheism means that all is in God (Hartshorne 1987, 10:6960). In the doctrine of nondelimited oneness of being, existence is a unique truth and everything else—either material or spiritual—would be a manifestation and symbol of that unique reality.

Fusus al-hikam is a work in which Ibn ‘Arabi explains his view of the relation between God and the world. In one chapter about Prophet Noah, he offers an esoteric interpretation of the prophet’s dialogue with God to tackle the multiplicity that exists in the Universe and the fact that existing things are manifestations of the nondelimited reality. Later on, his commentators effectively used it to elucidate Ibn ‘Arabi’s specific description of Oneness of being. He interprets the Quranic verse “And already they have misled many. And, [my Lord], do not increase the wrongdoers except in error” (Quran 71:24) as follows: Meaning they have confused them regarding the continuing of the one through aspects and attributions (Abrahamov 2015, 41).

By *multiple aspects and attributions*, Ibn ‘Arabi refers to every being other than God. Such aspects and attributions may be multiple; however, their multiplicity would not add anything to the unique truth, nor does it harm its oneness because their reality emanates from relation and attribution without having any independent existence. Nevertheless, some people attribute real existence to them, thereby describing the one being as multiple.

In order to explain how to acknowledge the multiplicity of being, and at the same time, recognize the unity dominating existence, Ibn ‘Arabi cites parables for a better understanding of the nature of existing things.

The story of Prophet Joseph’s dream and relevant interpretations enabled Ibn ‘Arabi to use parables for disclosing the reality of the world’s entity and introduce it as God’s shadow and imagination. In the chapter on Prophet Joseph, he uses “shadow” to describe things other than God, assimilating God-world relation to person-shadow relation: “Know that which is said ‘other than real’ or that which is called the cosmos relates to the real as the shadow relates to the person. The cosmos is God’s shadows. This relationship is the same as that of existence to the cosmos; for the shadow undoubtedly exists in the senses” (Abrahamov 2015, 480).

Ibn ‘Arabi tries to explain that as a shadow has some sort of realization in the faculties of sensory perception, while it has no existence in the outside world, all existing things enjoy such realization vis-à-vis God. In other words, while they are not real out of mind, they enjoy some sort of realization. Therefore, the world and existing things in it may not be considered real existence, nor may one deny their existence to consider them non-existent.

In the same chapter, he uses the parable of imagination to point out this characteristic of existing things that enjoy a sort of reality between existence and non-existence. He views the world as a real imagination, saying that “All existence is imagination within the imagination. The only true existence is God, especially as regards His Essence and his Reality not as regards His names” (Abrahamov 2015, 72).

Ibn ‘Arabi’s description of the world as imaginal should not be construed as its non-existence; rather it implies a relational existence that would make sense in the shadow of God. Ibn ‘Arabi has his own account as follows: “The cosmos is an illusion, having no real existence. This is the meaning of imagination. You imagine that cosmos is something separate, existing by virtue of itself (*qā’im bi-nafsihi*) and unconnected to the Real, but actually this is not so” (Abrahamov 2015, 71).

In fact, it may be said that for Ibn ‘Arabi, imagination is a state between existence and non-existence. It may not be seen as absolutely non-existent, nor could it be deemed real and self-subsistent.

An understanding of this parable is instrumental in understanding Ibn ‘Arabi’s view of the reality of this world, distinguishing him from pure hallucination, which may be seen in some interpretations of the oneness of being, like Shankara’s. Shankara believed the world to be the product of Maya, which he described as “the will of God to create the appearance” and “an illusion-producing ignorance” that would give a realistic appearance to what is unreal—just like a conjurer who makes spectators mistake a string for a snake (Chatterjee & Datta 1954, 309-10). Such difference has caused his commentators as well as researchers of Ibn ‘Arabi’s mysticism to lay emphasis on his view that the world is not non-existent. Kashani, a commentator of Ibn ‘Arabi, explains that the imaginal attribution of cosmos means that the existence other than God has been added to the existence of God. In other words, such existence is nothing over and above divine manifestation (Kashani 1991, 144).

Izutsu notes that Ibn ‘Arabi’s imagination does not imply “something valueless or false,” describing it as “being a symbolic reflection of something truly real”: “... in his view ‘dream’, ‘illusion’ or ‘imagination’ does not mean something valueless or false; it simply means ‘being a symbolic reflection of something truly real’. The so-called ‘reality’ certainly is not a true reality, but

this must not be taken to mean it is merely a vain and groundless thing” (Izutsu 1984, 7).

William Chittick also justifies Ibn ‘Arabi’s imaginal description of the world because the world, like imaginal things, is neither existent nor non-existent; rather it is both existent and non-existent because it manifests and discloses God (Chittick 1994, 70).

Although due to the conflict between existence and non-existence, it would be impossible to imagine a reasonable state between the two, Ibn ‘Arabi’s commentators have sought to offer a rational explanation in philosophical terms. One of them was Sa’in al-Din Muhammad Turka Isfahani, a mystic in the fourteenth century AH, who turned to mysticism after studying philosophy for many years. His book, *Qawa‘id al-tawhid* (Rules of monotheism) was instrumental in the philosophical interpretation of Ibn ‘Arabi’s thoughts. He uses “nondelimited being”—a purely philosophical concept—to refer to the being of God. For him, truth is the same as the nondelimited being, and all qualities, names, and instructions attributed to God are entifications of this nondelimited being (Ibn Turka 1981, 118). He wrote a book titled *al-Wujud al-mutlaq* (Nondelimited being) (Sayyid Haydar Amuli 1989, 13).

Furthermore, Ibn Turka’s grandson Sa’in al-Din ‘Ali ibn Muhammad Turka (835 AH), in his *Tamhid al-qawa‘id*, explains the essence of absolute being in philosophical terms. According to him, nondelimited being, in which there is no multiplicity and diversity, is endowed in nature with the exigency of a true natural being. Even if there is multiplicity, such multiplicity and diversity exist in degrees of self-disclosure in accordance with its intrinsic attributes and states. He believed that the nondelimited existence is clothed with the robe of multiplicities non-identical to itself, explaining that since the nondelimited being has not been attributed any specific quality it may then be attributed opposing qualities (Sayyid Haydar Amuli 1989, 13).

Muhammad Turka’s explanation is a way to prove and deny the existence of beings other than God at the same time. He describes existing things as limits to the nondelimited being, explaining that the non-delimited being manifests itself in their forms and is recognized by their intermediary. These existing things are therefore real without harming the nondelimited oneness of being, because these limits add attributions to the nondelimited being, and attribution is metaphorical (Sayyid Haydar Amuli 1989, 13).

Based on explanations provided by Ibn 'Arabi's commentators about the existence of the nondelimited being, it may be concluded that he developed the idea of nondelimited oneness of being to refrain from negating the nondelimited existence of the world and things other than God, while considering some sort of dependent existence for multiple existing things in the world, because they manifest that nondelimited being. The observed effects of diverse manifestations of this unique reality is cited as evidence for their realization.

A case that can effectively explain the typology of the existence of creatures and their relationship with God can be found in the words of Mulla Hadi Sabzawari (d. 1289 AH). In his explanation of the relation between the soul and diverse psychic faculties, he uses an expression that was described by other mystics as the best interpretation of oneness-multiplicity relation as well as God-Universe relation. His poetic expression is as follows: "The soul, in its oneness, contains all its faculties, and the soul's action is encompassed in the action of its faculties" (Sabzawari 2001, 5:181).

What Sabzawari means is that the soul is absolute and expansive, and therefore, it encompasses all of its abodes and grades, including the faculty of intellect, the faculty of imagination, and sensory faculties, and at each level, it manifests the same level. In the meantime, this reality, i.e., the soul, is limited to none of these faculties. In fact, each faculty of the soul is other than the soul *per se*, and each of the faculties of intellect, estimation, and sense are entirely states of the soul, without undermining the absolute and expansive nature of the soul, despite having their specific functions. In the same manner, existing things can be described as states of the absolute divine being that are non-self-subsistent with their own qualities and effects, but are not separate from the absolute being and their being is encompassed in the integrated being of God who is present at all of those levels and disclosures.

The significant point in Sabzawari's account pertains to the fact that, besides the absence of any differentiation between the one being and its states, this relation may be viewed from two epistemological aspects. It would be possible to witness oneness within multiplicity and multiplicity within oneness.

In the chapter on Prophet Enoch, one may witness the worldly multiple existing things in the unique mirror of unique reality, while seeing the unique

reality of being in the multiple mirrors of existing things. Then Ibn ‘Arabi explains that it leads mystics toward perplexity: “He considered the intuition of the existence with two different approaches as the factor rendering mystics perplexed” (Sayyid Haydar Amuli 1989, 48).

It may therefore be said that when a mystic witnesses the essence of existence, he may be dominated in a state by the perception of oneness, which makes him see the entire being encompassed by God’s oneness. In another state, however, he may be dominated by the perception of multiplicity, in which case he would see nothing but manifestations of that one being and multiple states of truth. Finally, in a third state, he may witness multiplicity within oneness; that is, he might simultaneously observe oneness and multiplicity. Such diversity in intuition is not merely subjective and is rooted in the very essence of being, i.e., the trilogy of states exists in the essence of being, and therefore, existence is incorporated with perplexity.

Now it is clear that if in mystical experiences, we assume that mystics witness the nondelimited one being, and disagreement in the interpretation of this experience could not be ruled out. Although logically speaking, oneness and multiplicity could not be the same, mystically speaking, oneness may incorporate multiplicity due to its nondelimited status. For this reason, Qaysari says that those who rely on intellect to understand the special relationship between God and His creatures could not realize it, noting that they have followed their intellect, and thus, they realized whatever matched their own capacity of understanding, while negating what others understood (Qaysari 1996, 526).

If we accept Ibn ‘Arabi’s peculiar elucidation of the relation between God and the world, we can then apply it to the texts governing experiences of union and reflecting mystical experiences.

In what follows, we consider some Upanishadic passages showing conflicting descriptions of the Brahman-world relation, aiming to use the doctrine of nondelimited oneness of being to understand those passages.

1.3. Nondelimited Oneness of Being and the Brahman-World Relation

In his introduction to the Upanishads, Hume suggests that two general currents have been pursued in accounting for the Brahma-world relation. In

some Upanishads, Brahma is the primary truth and the creator of the Universe; nonetheless, it is separate from the Universe, despite incarnating some beings like heat, water, and food (Hume 1921, 21).

These two different interpretations of the God-world relation may result from the specific property of being, which Ibn 'Arabi and his commentators describe as nondelimited oneness of being. On the same basis, it can be said that being is nothing more than one unique reality, which is Brahman. However, it does not mean the absolute negation of being for non-Brahman and the world. Rather, the Universe and the creatures serve as attributions and relations for Brahman's nondelimited being. Accordingly, as mystics may witness the unique truth or Brahman beyond multiple existing things in the world, in a similar vein, the manifestations and limits of that reality, which are the existing things in this world, will be the focus of his intuition.

In some Upanishads, the border between God and the world becomes so insignificant that they are considered one, while at the same time they are described as separate. For instance, in the Chandogya Upanishad, a passage puts it as follows: "Verily, this whole world is Brahma. Tranquil, let one worship It as that from which he came forth, as that into which he will be dissolved, as that in which he breathes" (Hume 1921, 209).

First, Brahma and the world are said to be identical, but immediately there is talk of Brahma coming out of the world and its dissolution, which implies multiplicity. The world must be existent so that it can be dissolved into Brahma. This different view of the world and existing things in it are seen in Taittiriya Upanishad as well. According to this Upanishadic text, Bhṛigu Vallī went to his father Varuṇa, saying: "Let me know Brahma." He was taught that it is like food, like breath, like sight, like hearing, like mind, like speech. Then he said: "That, verily, whence beings here are born, that by which when born they live, that into which on deceasing they enter" (Hume 1921, 290).

This text also lays emphasis on Brahma and worldly phenomena being the same, but it immediately notes that the world is born out of Brahma, lives in it, and enters it on deceasing. Logically speaking, when two objects are identical, emanation, survival, and dissolution of one in another, which is necessary for distinguishing them from one another, would make no sense. However, if we see Brahma as the same as a nondelimited being, while being identical with its own manifestations, in terms of which it would manifest itself and which it

would make real, such passages would become understandable because when intuition of nondelimited being becomes possible, the multiplicity of existing things is witnessed in the heart of this oneness and for its interpretation, such terms as emanation, survival, and dissolution of the world would be used.

In addition to emanation, survival and dissolution, another term used in some Upanishads regarding the Brahman-world relation, which highlights the existence of a multiple world, is “penetration.” In other words, Brahman penetrates every existing thing and is present therein. In chapter four of Brihadaranyaka’s third book, the student asks his teacher Yājñvalkyka: “Explain to me him who is the Brahma present and not beyond our ken, him who is the Soul in all things.” The teacher replies: “He is your soul (ātman), which is in all things. Which one, O Yājñvalkyka, is in all things? (Hume 1921, 111-12).

Brahma’s penetration has been interpreted in the famous parable of the sixth book of Chāndogya Upanishad, where Brahman’s relation with the world is compared with solving the salt into the water (Hume 1921, 248). In the same book, Brahman’s immanence in the world is visible more clearly and it is suggested that Brahma penetrates the world after the creation of fire and water as two of the major elements in the world (Hume 1921, 242).

Interpreting the multiplicity out of oneness takes a more precise shape in other Upanishadic texts as, instead of indications of a real existence for the world and the creatures, some parables are used to explain the very existence of creatures without undercutting the sameness of Brahman and the world. For instance, in chapter six of Maitri Upanishad, we read: “There are, assuredly, two forms of Brahma: the formed and the formless, Now, that which is formed is unreal; that which is formless is real, is Brahma, is light” (Hume 1921, 425).

In the above passage, the world is the form of formless Brahma. More precisely, Brahma has two shapes: one formless, which is real, and one formed, which is unreal and is the mundane world. In fact, Brahma appears in both of these forms. Clearly, oneness of being is highlighted in the aforesaid passage, and while noting multiplicity, some interpretations are used to preserve the sameness and union of Brahma and the world. That may be similar to Ibn ‘Arabi’s account of the relation between the nondelimited oneness and the world, because Ibn ‘Arabi considered the world and its creatures as relations and attributions, in which it manifests its nondelimited being.

Brahma's appearance in the form of worldly creatures has been pursued differently in the second section of Mundaka Upanishad. In a parable, truth, i.e., Brahman-Atman, is likened to a fire: "This is the truth: As, from a well-blazing fire, sparks By the thousand issue forth of like form, So from the Imperishable, my friend, beings manifold Are produced, and thither also go" (Hume 1921, 370).

Using the "blazing fire" to portray the Brahma-world relation is a good parable to point out the nondelimited oneness of being and Brahma's relation with others, because manifolds of the blazing fire, albeit not independent of fire, have their own independent real forms and represent the reality of fire. This parable can effectively elucidate the vision that does not recognize the oneness that dominates being, the world, and its multiple creatures as nondelimited nonexistence.

What was said was a collection of passages from some of the main Upanishadic texts that emphasize the Brahma-world union while using interpretations and parables showing their alterity. These two interpretations are deemed incompatible with a philosophical approach, but if we see them as results of Upanishadic scholars' intuition of the nondelimited oneness of being—oneness incorporating multiplicity—it will be possible to understand them. In other words, experience of the nondelimited being incorporates smaller experiences about the intuition of the manifestations and limits of this nondelimited reality. Dasgupta touches on these minor experiences achieved during an intuition of the reality of being, suggesting that different phases of experience are lived through and enjoyed as inalienable parts of one great experience. When attempts are made to describe any particular phase of this experience, it will naturally seem to conflict with other phases in the eyes of those who lack the capacity for a concrete whole experience and who can only look at the phases from an external and purely intellectual point of view, where distinctions cannot be obliterated (Dasgupta 1983, 54).

1.4. Conclusion

The Upanishads have point to the God-world relation using diverse expressions and parables. Some Upanishadic texts consider Brahma and the world as identical, while others speak of Brahma's immanence and penetration into the world, creating the impression that the world has an existence other than Brahma's. Although these expressions may be considered inconsistent

with each other from a philosophical perspective, but Ibn 'Arabi's account of the oneness of being can explain these differences effectively, bringing out the internal consistency of these texts. On the doctrine of nondelimited oneness of being, the Universe and its creatures limit the nondelimited unity of God. In other words, God, as the absolute and nondelimited being, manifests Himself in the form of these limits by means of which He is known. Therefore, creatures self-realize without undermining the nondelimited oneness of being. When a mystic unites with God through his mystical experience he may witness only the unity of existence or witness the multiplicity within the unity. When he starts interpreting these experiences, certain expressions and statements take shape, whose content may imply either the sameness of God and the Universe or their difference. If we accept that Upanishadic expressions reflect the experience of union with Brahman and that the content of these experiences is the intuition of nondelimited oneness of being, then we may thereby express the different interpretations of the Brahman-world relation in these texts, while preserving their inner consistency.

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