

JOHANNES BRONKHORST

## THE SELF AS AGENT a review article.\*

(published in: *Études Asiatiques / Asiatische Studien* 50(3), 1996, pp. 603-621)

Out of the Kashmiri Śaivite school of non-dualism which follows the Bhairava Tantras, whose adepts often devoted themselves to extreme Tantric practices, there arose "an extraordinary series of works and masters that between the ninth and twelfth centuries constituted one of the highest achievements of Indian speculation and spirituality of all time". One of these masters is Utpaladeva, and the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* is his most important work. Utpaladeva, following in the footsteps of his teacher Somānanda, finds a place for his tradition of thought ("Pratyabhijñā") among the philosophical schools, by presenting its doctrines in a rational way, and entering into discussion with the other Indian schools of thought.<sup>1</sup>

The transition is remarkable, and Torella comments on it as follows (p. XII-XIII): "This 'school' ... would probably have been destined to remain one of the many Kashmiri schools whose names we hardly know and whose outlines are blurred, had it not been for the development, mainly within it, of the first seeds of what was to become the flowering of an extraordinary series of works and masters ... [as above]. The complex work of exegesis of the scriptures, the reformulation of their teaching and the organizing and hierarchizing of their contents indicate first and foremost its decision to emerge into the open, to escape from the dimension of a restricted circle of adepts — which is what must have been the original nature of these schools — ... . In order to do this it was necessary to extract a homogeneous though varied teaching from the diverse texts; to purge it, without changing its essential nature, of all that it was felt could not be proposed to a wider circle — in other words, of all that was bound to create an instinctive and insurmountable resistance — by attenuating the sharper [604] points or removing every actually concrete aspect, and finally translating it into a discourse whose categories were shared by its addressees and engaging in a dialogue that would not be afraid to confront rival doctrines."

---

\* Raffaele Torella: *The Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā of Utpaladeva with the author's Vṛtti*. Critical edition and annotated translation. Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente. 1994. (Serie Orientale Roma, LXXI.)

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Utpaladeva's remark in the *Vṛtti* on *kārikā* IV.16: "I have here furnished a logical justification of this path" (p. 218; Sanskrit p. 80).

The Pratyabhijñā school demonstrates, through its transition, how strong must have been the attraction to join the rational tradition that had united, at least since the beginning of the common era, a variety of mutually opposing schools of thought in India. Brahmanical thinkers, Buddhists and Jainas had opposed and sometimes viciously attacked each other, without ever desisting from paying heed to each other, and trying to defend their own points of view against the attacks directed against them. The very existence of such a rational tradition in India has never received the attention it deserves, and it goes without saying that not all religious movements chose to be part of it. Pratyabhijñā is an example of a school which originally remained aloof from these discussions, but — in the persons of Somānanda, Utpaladeva and others — felt the need to join in. One of the results is the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*.

The *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* is "a purely theoretical and rigorously argued work, though based on a scriptural background". Its main opponent is Buddhism, esp. the Buddhist logicians. Here Torella observes: "This lengthy examination and criticism of the teaching of the Buddhist logicians resulted in, or at least was accompanied by, the peculiar phenomenon of a more or less conscious absorption of their doctrines and their terminology, that was to leave substantial traces in the structure of the Pratyabhijñā" (p. XXII). However, I do not think that this phenomenon is all that peculiar. It is the unavoidable outcome of a rational tradition that its participants will be influenced by each other, even borrow from each other, in spite of whatever fundamental differences may oppose them. Pratyabhijñā could remain "pure" as long as it did not try to show that the Buddhists were wrong. The moment they entered into discussion, their "purity" could not but be the first victim. This general observation leaves, of course, place for the possibility that Utpaladeva borrowed from the Buddhist logicians "to increase his own prestige by assuming the ways and forms of a philosophical school which was perhaps the most respected and feared, even by the many who did not agree with it", as Torella suggests.

Another author who has exerted a strong influence on Pratyabhijñā is Bhartṛhari, as Torella points out in the Introduction (p. XXIII f.). Here he makes the interesting observation that this author, who was still severely [605] criticized by Somānanda, has become a major inspirer for Utpaladeva. It is from Bhartṛhari that Utpaladeva borrows — or rather: adapts — the concept of *vimarśa*, which for him is "the spark that causes this luminous structure [of *prakāśa*] to pulsate by introducing self-awareness, dynamism, freedom of intervention, of self-assertion, thus expressing in theoretical terms what is the nature of an unpredictable divine personality". Bhartṛhari's teaching on the all-pervasive power of the word furnished, moreover, an argument in the dispute against the Buddhist

logicians, one of whose basic theses was precisely the absolute otherness of direct sensation from determinate knowledge (p. XXV). Again we see that a school can only enter a rational tradition at a price: it may not be able to resist for long the intrusion of foreign elements.

Utpaladeva himself wrote two commentaries on his *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*, the short *Vṛtti* and the long *Vivṛti*. The former is here edited along with the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*. Both had been edited before (see Bibliographic note, p. XLV). The earlier edition of the *Vṛtti* (in the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, no. XXXIV, Srinagar 1921) was not however complete. The present edition is based on nine Mss, one of which (T) comes from Kerala and is in Malayalam characters. It is the only Ms which contains the full text of the *Vṛtti*.<sup>2</sup> Of the remaining eight Mss, which are all in *Śāradā* and can be shown to belong to one group, one (J) stands out in having a considerable amount of readings identical with, or sometimes similar to, those only found in the Ms from Kerala. This information allows Torella to outline a *stemma codicum* of the Mss, which is the basis of his edition.<sup>3</sup>

Another important source of information for the readings of the *Vṛtti* is the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivismarśinī* of Abhinavagupta, "which sometimes quotes literally, sometimes paraphrases or simply gives the contents of the *Vṛtti*" (p. XLVIII). The editor has decided to include the information derived from that text in the critical apparatus. Users of his edition will be grateful for this.

The Sanskrit text — which covers 81 pages — has been meticulously edited, and is printed in Devanagari script. This fact, which will certainly be [606] welcomed especially by Indian scholars, may nonetheless be responsible for some misprints. The ones that I noticed have been collected in the Appendix. An English translation follows (pp. 83-219), which is reliable and competent. It is also extremely helpful, for the Sanskrit text is not easy to read. The style is condensed, and it is not always clear where and when an opponent suddenly takes over.

Users of the book will be particularly impressed by the notes to the translation, which often cover half or more of the pages concerned, and which are a veritable mine of information on any number of issues dealt with by Utpaladeva. References to Buddhist and Brahmanical authors, discussions of the way Abhinavagupta deals with this or that problem, etc., add greatly to the value of this book. Equally informative is the Introduction,

<sup>2</sup> Note 2 on pp. LIII-LIV contains "a very instructive story", which I strongly recommend to all those who wish to use Mss written in scripts they do not know.

<sup>3</sup> The critical apparatus frequently uses the abbreviation E, whose meaning does not appear to be explained in the book.

which covers 46 pages. A page of Abbreviations (unfortunately not strictly alphabetical), a Bibliography, an Index of important words in the text, and a general Index conclude this work, which will no doubt remain the standard edition of Utpaladeva's text.

A few relatively minor points concerning the translation may here be mentioned. Some compounds in *-vapus* and *-rūpa* are translated with the verb "inform": *vāgvapuḥ* (kārikā I.6.1) becomes "informed by the word" (p. 128); *parāvāgrūpatvāt* (Vṛtti on k. I.6.1) "since the word that informs it is the supreme word"; *pūrvānubhavarūpa* (k. I.6.9) "is informed by a former perception" (p. 134). In such cases "form°" rather than "inform°" may have been intended.

The Vṛtti on kārikā I.7.10 reads (p. 35): *pradeśeṣv ālokapūraṃ santamase mṛdum uṣṇādikaṃ sparśam vā ghaṭarūpasparśābhāvātmakam anubhūyālokādi ghaṭābhāvo 'trāsti, ghaṭo nāstīti vyavahartuṃ yuktam*. The central part of this sentence is: *ālokādi "... vyavahartuṃ yuktam*. Torella translates this (p. 144): "The verbal formulation and relative behaviour (*vyavahartum*) '...' can be legitimately brought about by sight or another sense (*ālokādi*)". This can hardly be correct. The fact that a footnote specifies "that here the word *āloka* is used in the same sentence first in the sense of 'light', then in that of 'sight'", hardly improves the situation. Nor is there any reference to Abhinavagupta or any other authority that might justify this interpretation. I am not in a position to give a final interpretation to this sentence, but something along the following lines would seem to be worth considering: "It is legitimate to treat light and [touch] as 'there is the absence of the jar on this [surface], there is no jar', once one has directly [607] perceived in the places in question a beam of light or, in the case of darkness, a soft and warm etc. tactile sensation constituting in the first case the absence of the shape of the jar, and in the second of its tangible form." The fact that the beam of light is said to constitute the absence of the shape of the jar, would seem to justify that it is legitimate to treat light in the manner described. (The case of touch is analogous.) Further confirmation appears to come from the Vṛtti on the immediately following kārikā I.7.11, which Torella translates as follows: "On the basis of what has been said, the fact that light is a different thing from the *piśāca* does not entail the negation of its presence (*na ... piśācāniṣedhaprasaṅga*) within the light. The *piśāca* is, in fact, invisible and, though it is different from the light, it can reside within the light, in the same way in which it can without any difficulty also reside within a ball of clay." Here, then, it is not legitimate to treat light as "there is the absence of a *piśāca* here, there is no *piśāca*", and nor does light in this case constitute the absence of a *piśāca*.

The translation is sometimes rather free, and this is often necessary in order to make a difficult passage intelligible. Occasionally, however, the free translation would seem to

make the text even more difficult to understand. An example is the translation of *kārikās* II.3.8 and 9, which reads as follows (p. 168-169): "8. Faced with a non-specific manifestation of 'fire' etc., a single means of knowledge knows what the outcome or cause of it is, its being hot, its being able to be denoted by this or that word and so on. 9. On the contrary, it happens differently in the case of the activity that starts at that moment in the subject who aims at producing certain effects, as regards a particular, individual object, differentiated by various, specific sensations of place etc., and also [in the case of that activity promoted] by inference." The translation of *kārikā* 8 is free, but seems to give the meaning of the original. The intention of *kārikā* 9 is however difficult to grasp on the basis of this translation. A comparison with the Sanskrit shows that the part "it happens differently in the case of" does not translate anything at all. Yet these added words render the meaning of the original obscurer than it is. *Kārikā* 9 reads, in Sanskrit (p. 52): *sā tu deśādikādhyakṣāntarabhinne svalakṣaṇe/ tātkaṅkī pravṛttiḥ syād arthino 'py anumānataḥ//*. The initial *sā* is puzzling, yet something like the following translation seems possible: "But immediate activity with regard to a particular, individual object, differentiated by various specific sensations of place etc., may take place in [608] the case of someone who aims at producing certain effects<sup>4</sup>; also as a result of inference."

Āhnika I.3 contains, primarily in the *Vṛtti*, a number of derivatives of what would seem to be the causative of the root *vid*. They are: *vedaka* (*kārikā* 1), *saṃvedikā* (*Vṛtti* on k. 1), *saṃvedana* (*Vṛtti* on k. 2), *vedana* (*Vṛtti* on k. 2), *asaṃvedyamāna* (*Vṛtti* on k. 3). Some of these forms may be ambiguous, in that they may express a non-causative meaning, but surprisingly Torella translates them all as if they express no causative meaning. Yet a causative meaning would seem to fit all the contexts. *Kārikā* 1 speaks of the "form of cognition which is memory" (*smṛtijñāna*), and states that it is not *ādyānubhavavedaka*. Torella translates "does not know the original perception", but "does not make known the original perception" would seem to be preferable. The *Vṛtti* explains, in Torella's translation: "Memory, though arising from the reawakening of the latent impression deposited by the former perception, because it is restricted to itself exclusively, knows only its own form (*svarūpasamvedikaiva*)." I would prefer "makes only its own form known", for unlike the Buddhists, Utpaladeva certainly does not look upon knowledge, or cognition, or memory, as the subject or agent of the activity of knowing. This is confirmed by the use of the word *jñapti* "cognitive act" in the *Vṛtti* on *kārikā* 2. This word betrays its causative meaning by its form; it is derived from *jñāpayati*, which is the causative of *jñā* "to know".

<sup>4</sup> This translates *arthino*. The corresponding expression *tadarthitayā* in the commentary seems to have been overlooked in the translation.

And indeed, the word occurs in the sentence *sarvā hi jñaptiḥ svasaṃvedanaikarūpānanyasaṃvidvedyā, rūparasajñānāyor anyonyavedane 'nyonyaviśayavedanam api syāt*. This means no doubt: "For every cognitive act makes by nature only itself known, and is not made known by another cognition: if the cognition of shape could make known the cognition of taste and vice versa, then the one would make known the object of the other." Torella translates all this in a non-causative manner ("is ... only aware of itself", "does not become the object of another cognition", etc.), but this may have to be corrected. Perhaps the clinching case is the word *asaṃvedyamāna* in the Vṛtti on kārīkā I.3.3, which cannot but be a causative form. Yet Torella translates, in keeping with his earlier translations, "which are not experienced", where something like "which are not made known" would be required.

[609]

The Vṛtti on kārīkā IV.3 contains the following sentence: *pratyagātmāno bahavaḥ, teṣu pramāṭṛrūpeṣu maheśvareṇa svānandaḥ svakriyāikakarṭṛtānusārīṇī nirmitā*. Torella translates (p. 211): "The individual selves are many; in them — who are manifested as knowing subjects — Maheśvara creates his own beatitude and activity, which are themselves inherent in the only real agency." The last part of this translation is problematic, for *ekakarṭṛtānusārīṇī nirmitā* is feminine singular, and qualifies only *svakriyā*. Two ways are open from here. One might think that the context requires that "and" be supplied; after all, the kārīkā has dual *kriyānandau*. In that case the translation becomes something like: "in them [reside Maheśvara's] own beatitude [and] his own activity which Maheśvara has created following (°*anusārīṇī*) his single agency". However, another (and probably better) interpretation can be proposed in the light of the Vṛtti on kārīkā IV.6, which says (p. 212): "In the Lord, the infinite agency (°*karṭṛtā*)... is called activity (*kriyā*) and consists of supreme light and beatitude (°*ānandamayī*)." This allows us **not** to supply "and" in the sentence under consideration, and to translate: "The individual selves are many; in them ... Maheśvara has created his activity, which is his beatitude and which follows his single agency."

In Section IV the contrast between God's creation and the mental elaboration (*vikalpa(na)*) of the individual is dealt with. Here one reads, among other things: "The things that constitute this universe, which are to Maheśvara ... indicated by the meaning of the word 'this' ..., without the connection with [or: the consideration of] the conventional linguistic expression 'this' coming into play, those very things appear — since they were created thus by God — as particular realities (*svalakṣaṇa*)<sup>9</sup> insofar as they have the same

substratum as several manifestations, and in many forms insofar as they are universals each taken singly." (p. 213).<sup>5</sup> Against this *kārikā* 8 observes: "On the contrary, in the individual subject, those entities that are manifested separately become the object of mental elaboration (*prakalpyāḥ*) in the sphere of memory, imagination and so on, and have a variety of distinct names." (p. 213-214). The *Vṛtti* adds: "The entities that are manifested separately, that is, the universals, are shown by the limited [610] subjects — thanks to the power of mental elaboration (*vikalpanaśaktyā*) — as the object of inner reflective awareness through various names such as 'jar', 'silvery', 'white', 'cloth', 'cart' and so on. ... It is precisely this manifestation of a differentiation between perceiving subject and object perceived, substantiated by the word, which constitutes the bond of the *samsāra* in the limited soul." (p. 214). *Kārikās* 9 and 10 continue: "The creation that pertains to him (i.e., the individual subject, JB) is not common [to other subjects] and is dependent on the creation of the Lord. It occurs in the limited subject — essentially identical to the Lord — in virtue of the very power of the Lord ... coinciding with the activity of mental elaboration (*vikalpakriyayā*)." (p. 214-215). Finally *kārikā* 11: "The creation of the Lord may be common or not common to all subjects, manifesting itself [in both cases] in all clarity. With the suppression of the mental constructs (*vikalpa*), resulting from concentration on a single point, the plane of the Lord is gradually reached." (p. 215).

These extracts raise the question what exactly is meant by the "creation" pertaining to the limited subject, and by their "mental elaboration". Note 20 on p. 215 proposes the following answer: "... also the limited subject possesses an innate power of creation which is in essence no different from that of the Lord, since the individual himself is essentially identical to the Lord although he ignores or has forgotten this identity. This power of creation, limited by non-awareness, remains restricted to the individual sphere: what is created are images, feelings, ideas etc., which depend more (as in the case of memory) or less (as in fantasy) on the objects in the phenomenal world created by the Lord. These two kinds of objects and of creations are distinguished by being the last 'common to all subjects', the others are 'not common' i.e. not able to be experienced except by the limited subject who creates them. But the power of creation is essentially the same." This is no doubt correct, but raises another question. *Kārikā* 11 states that mental constructs must be suppressed in order to reach liberation (for this is what it is all about). Does this merely mean that the individual must suppress memory and fantasy? Does this suffice for becoming liberated? Are only memory and fantasy "the bond of the *samsāra* in the limited

---

<sup>5</sup> I deviate somewhat from Torella's translation ("insofar as they have the same substratum as several manifestations" does not occur in it), in order to bring out the parallelism.

soul"? The answer must quite evidently be negative. For God's creation, as we have seen, is "without the connection with [or: the consideration of] the conventional linguistic expression 'this' coming into play". The objects in the creation of the limited soul, on the other hand, [611] "have a variety of distinct names". There is here obviously more at stake than just memory and fantasy, viz. a specific way of looking at the world which is determined by "names", i.e. by language. This is precisely what is stated in *kārikā* 13: "The liberated soul looks at the 'common' cognizable reality as being undifferentiated from himself, like Maheśvara; the bound soul, on the contrary, looks at it as absolutely differentiated."<sup>6</sup>

This liberating knowledge — essentially knowledge without "mental elaboration" (*vikalpa*, *vikalpana*, *prakalpa*) — is close to the kind of liberating knowledge that had come to prevail in Buddhism. In Brahmanism an altogether different kind of knowledge was usually looked upon as leading to liberation: the knowledge of the true nature of the self. How is this difference to be explained?

This question leads us to the topic of the self as agent. It is impossible to deny that this topic is quite central to the *Īśvarapratyabhijñānkārikā*. Verse 2 of the *Upodghāta*, i.e. the first one after the introductory verse, speaks of the Self (*svātman*) which is agent (*kartṛ*) as well as cognizer (*jñātr*), and the notion comes back again and again in the text. Seen from the perspective of earlier Indian philosophy, this is surprising. To see why this is so, it will be useful to recall some fundamental notions of the earlier period. Liberation from the effects of karma is an aim shared by most Indian philosophical and religious currents. One way to obtain this kind of liberation, advocated in one form or another by various schools of thought, consists in the realization of the true nature of the self. In these schools the real self does not participate in the activities of body and mind. By realizing that one is different from everything that acts, and that one is identical with something (the self) that is not active, one becomes separate from one's actions, and therefore also from the results of these actions.

It is not possible, nor indeed necessary, here to prove the correctness of the above observations.<sup>7</sup> The classical school of philosophy which illustrates them most clearly is *Sāṃkhya*, with its absolute distinction between the inactive soul (often called *puruṣa*) and material nature (*prakṛti*, *pradhāna*) which is active. Practically all schools of Brahmanical

---

<sup>6</sup> Utpaladeva's idea about liberation is similar to Bhartṛhari's, but he manages to avoid a contradiction that marred the latter's position. I will discuss this issue in a forthcoming article "Indology and rationality".

<sup>7</sup> Bronkhorst, 1993: ch. 5.

philosophy looked [612] upon the soul as a non-agent. Indeed, insight into its non-active nature is, in most schools, an essential precondition for liberation.

Utpaladeva takes a diametrically opposite position. He explicitly rejects the Sāṃkhya position for not attributing agency to the self. Consider the following passage:<sup>8</sup> "Those who do possess pure consciousness but not the agency to the highest degree (*uttamakartṛtā*) are created by the Lord as separate, distinct from the self, due to their being devoid of agency. Though having the same characteristics — consciousness etc. — these subjects are differentiated from one another because of a particular will of the Lord: they are the Vijñānakevalas. (Vṛtti:) This class of subjects, corresponding more or less to the *puruṣas* of the Sāṃkhya, has the name of Vijñānakevala." Why does Utpaladeva take this position?

One factor that has been at work in this fundamental reversal can be identified.<sup>9</sup> It is related to another problem that occupied the minds of practically all thinkers of classical India. One might call it the problem of the origin of objects. This problem does not primarily concerns the creation of the world or the like, but rather, more prosaically, the interpretation of sentences of the type "he makes a mat" or "the pot comes into being". Statements like these were considered problematic, because there is no mat while it is being made, and nor is there a pot while it comes into being. The problem is related to an underlying presupposition, which I have studied in some other publications and which I have baptized "correspondence principle".<sup>10</sup> It assumes that the words of a sentence correspond to the entities that constitute the situation described by that sentence. This principle led to various difficulties, which we cannot discuss here. The problem of origination, however, was particularly prominent among them, and was dealt with by thinkers belonging to all schools of thought — including Buddhist and Jaina ones —. All of them offered their own solution to this problem, and the list of the solutions proposed is quite impressive. The [613] solution that concerns us here is the *satkāryavāda*, the doctrine according to which the effect exists already before it is produced. This position may not agree with our common sense, but it does solve the problem of "he makes a mat". This statement now describes a situation in which there is "he", the activity of making, and indeed the mat, for the mat exists already before it has been made. And in "the pot comes

<sup>8</sup> Kārikās III.2.6-7, with a line from the Vṛtti (p. 199-200; Sanskrit p. 67-68).

<sup>9</sup> The fact that God, for Utpaladeva, is free (*svatantra*), and that Pāṇini defines the agent as the one that is free (P. 1.4.54: *svatantraḥ kartā*), though alluded to from time to time — e.g. kārikā I.5.14 with Vṛtti — cannot but be a subsidiary reason to explain the reversal under consideration.

<sup>10</sup> See Bronkhorst, 1996.

into being", there is already a pot before it has come into being; the word "pot" refers to this already existing pot.

The Vedāntin Śaṅkara is one of those who deal with the problem, concentrating on the statement "the pot comes into being" (*ghaṭa utpadyate*). Consider the following passage:<sup>11</sup>

If the effect did not exist prior to its coming into being, the coming into being would be without agent and empty. For coming into being is an activity, and must therefore have an agent, like [such activities] as going etc. It would be contradictory to say that something is an activity, but has no agent. It could be thought that the coming into being of a pot, [though] mentioned, would not have the pot as agent, but rather something else. ... If that were true, one would say "the potter and other causes come into being" instead of "the pot comes into being". In the world however, when one says "the pot comes into being" no one understands that also the potter etc. come into being; for [these] are understood to have already come into being.

Śaṅkara accepts the *satkāryavāda* as the solution to the problem: the pot is already there before it has come into being, and that is how it can come into being.

Having looked at this passage, let us now turn to some passages in Utpaladeva's text. We will see that he, too, finds statements of the type "he makes a mat" and "the pot comes into being" problematic. His solution is however somewhat different from the *satkāryavāda* illustrated above. The problem is dealt with in Section II chapter IV of the book under review (p. 175 ff.; Sanskrit text p. 55 ff.). We read there (kārikā 2) that "an insentient [614] reality does not have [the] power ... to confer existence on something that is not. Therefore, the relation of cause and effect (*kāryakāraṇatā*) is essentially reduced to that of agent and object of the action (*karṭṛkarmatva*)." The Vṛtti explains "insentient reality" with "whether it is primordial matter (*pradhāna*) or atoms or seed" (*pradhānaparamāṇubijādi*). This shows that Utpaladeva disagrees with the Sāṃkhyas, the most important representatives of *satkāryavāda* within the Brahmanical tradition, for whom primordial matter (*pradhāna*) is the ultimate cause of all there is (except, of course, the selves). It also shows that — in a statement like "the seed causes/produces the shoot" — he refuses to consider the seed the real cause of the shoot. Instead, the real Self, which is the Lord (*īśvara*), is the real agent, and the object is not created by him, but merely made to

<sup>11</sup> Śaṅkara ad Brahmasūtra 2.1.18: *prāg utpattē ca kāryasyāsattve utpattir akarṭṛkā nirātmikā ca syāt/ utpattis ca nāma kriyā, sā sakarṭṛkaiva bhavitum arhati gatyādivat/ kriyā ca nāma syād akarṭṛkā ceti vipratīṣidhyeta/ ghaṭasya cotpattir ucyamānā na ghaṭakarṭṛkā, kiṃ tarhy anyakarṭṛkā iti kalpyā syāt/ .../ tathā ca sati ghaṭa utpadyate ity ukte kulālādīni kāraṇāni utpadyante ity uktaṃ syāt/ na ca loke ghaṭotpattir ity ukte kulālādīnām apy utpadyamānatā pratīyate/ utpannatāpratīṣṭh/*. This passage has already been dealt with in Bronkhorst, 1996.

become the object of the senses:<sup>12</sup> "Attributing the nature of existent to what does not exist is contradictory, and it is already established in what exists. [The relation of cause and effect consists in this:] a thing, already present within [the I], is 'created' by the Lord, or in other words, is caused by him to become the object of knowledge for the internal and external senses." And again:<sup>13</sup> "At the moment of the original creation, as in the course of everyday reality, Maheśvara, by virtue of the power of *māyā*, by entering the body etc. conceived of as self, creates the [limited] knower and thanks to the power of agent (*kartr̥śaktyā*) gradually renders the various objects that shine within him externally manifest. Creating is precisely rendering manifest in this way." In *kārikās* and their *Vṛtti* following II.4.4 Utpaladeva explains that "[t]he entity which is [first] internal with respect to another, once it has become external is to be understood as the effect of that other" (*kārikā* 6), and cause "is only the knowing subject" (k. 7). And therefore "Parameśvara is taken as efficient cause as regards the shoot" (k. 8). Even in the case of a statement like "the potter makes a pot", the potter, though sentient, is not the real agent, for "the potter produces the jar through a whole series of operations to which he subjects the clay etc., following the rule determined by the Lord" (k. 9).<sup>14</sup> All this means that in the statement [615] "the potter makes a pot", the word "potter" refers to God, the real agent, and "pot" to something that initially shines within God and becomes subsequently manifest. Manifestations that are internal — we learn from *kārikā* I.8.6 — are one with the knowing subject (*pramātraikyā*), and therefore ultimately with God. The word "pot" in "the potter makes a pot" refers therefore to the internal manifestation of the pot, and ultimately to God himself. Either way there is something it refers to, and the correspondence principle is satisfied.

What about such activities as becoming, or coming into being, as in "the pot comes into being"? The answer is given in the *Vṛtti* on *kārikā* II.4.20:<sup>15</sup> "an insentient reality cannot even be the agent of the action of being — 'it is, it becomes' — since it does not possess the freedom that is manifested through 'wanting to be/become' (*bubhūṣāyogena*). Thus the ultimate truth in this regard is that the knowing subject, and he alone, 'causes' the insentient reality 'to be/become' (*bhāvayati*), or, in other words, appears in various forms

<sup>12</sup> *Vṛtti* on *kārikā* II.4.3-4 (p. 176). The Sanskrit (p. 55, one but last line) reads incorrectly *siddhasyauvā*°, which must be *siddhasyaivā*°.

<sup>13</sup> *Vṛtti* on *kārikā* I.6.7 (p. 133-134, modified; Sanskrit p. 29).

<sup>14</sup> In note 18 on p. 151-152 Torella refers to Somānanda, according to whom "the jar is produced by the potter but only insofar as his creativity is contained within the all-pervading creativity of the Lord".

<sup>15</sup> *Vṛtti* on *kārikā* II.4.20 (p. 187). I translate the Sanskrit verb *bhū* (p. 61) "to become, come into being" as well as "to be". The verb is used thus elsewhere in the same text, e.g., *kārikā* I.2.10: *tatra tatra sthite tat tad bhavat[i]* "The various things come into being in concomitance with the presence of certain other things".

such as mount Himācala and so on." Even though Torella translates this sentence as if only 'being' is involved, I believe that it may also cover 'becoming'. In other words, the pot does not exist as external object before it comes into being,<sup>16</sup> and internal manifestations cannot have causal efficiency (*arthakriyā*), again according to *kārikā* I.8.6. It is rather the knowing subject, which is the Lord, that appears (*bhavati!*) in that form and is referred to by the word "pot". The Lord is therefore the agent of being as well as of becoming; this is precisely what we read in the *Vṛtti* on *kārikā* I.5.14, where the property of *bhavanakarṭṛtā* is ascribed to the supreme Self (*paramātmān*; from *kārikā* 13). If *bhavanakarṭṛtā* belongs to the supreme Self, it follows that the supreme Self is *bhavanakarṭṛ* "agent of being/becoming". Torella translates (p. 122) "subject of the action of being", but this may not do full justice to the meaning 'becoming'.

[616]

It will be clear that Utpaladeva gives a new interpretation to the *satkāryavāda* and to the problem of origination. It fits his religious views, but has as inevitable consequence that God, or the real self, is an agent, in fact the only agent that exists. This turns the world view of Sāṃkhya and other philosophies on its head. For them all activity had belonged to the material world (which includes the mental world), whereas only the self remained untouched by actions. With Utpaladeva only the real self is agent, and nothing else. This must have two effects, one on the doctrine of karma upheld by Utpaladeva, the other on the liberating insight advocated by him. We will now turn to these.

With regard to karma we can be brief. The *Vṛtti* on *kārikā* III.2.5 observes that "[t]he karmic maculation, which pertains to the agent devoid of the light of consciousness, is due to the error of considering the cause of births and so on the actions, which on the contrary — as has been established — are not causes".<sup>17</sup> The difference with Sāṃkhya etc. is evident. There the error was to ascribe the actions to the self, which in reality is free from them. Here, on the other hand, the error is to think that actions can be causes at all, even though the only real cause is the Lord. Karmic causality is only valid for beings devoid of the light of consciousness. Indeed, several *kārikās* of Section III chapter II specify this with regard to various beings, and *kārikā* 10 observes:<sup>18</sup> "All the beings that are immersed in the flowing of existence, starting from the gods, are affected by the three maculations: but of these it is precisely the karmic maculation that constitutes the sole direct cause of the

<sup>16</sup> In fact, manifestations permanently reside internally, and exist only externally insofar as they are manifested as external owing to the power of *māyā*; so *kārikā* I.8.7.

<sup>17</sup> *Vṛtti* on *kārikā* III.2.5 (p. 199; Sanskrit p. 67).

<sup>18</sup> *Kārikā* III.2.10 (p. 202; Sanskrit p. 69).

samsāra." Actions are effective on these lower levels, but in reality they are not causes. On the highest level there is activity, but this activity leads no longer to karmic retribution. Indeed, recognizing the agency of the self appears to be always accompanied by freedom from the karmic maculation. The Vidyeśvaras are mentioned in kārikā III.2.9 as a class of subjects that are endowed with agency, and have transcended the karma.

Does Utpaladeva still recognize a liberating insight, and if yes, what is it? It can no longer be the realization that the real self is not involved in any activity whatsoever, for here the real self is, quite on the contrary, involved [617] in all activity without exception. The earlier liberating insight cannot therefore be maintained as the only, and crucial, element. We have seen, and see again below, that Utpaladeva presents an altogether different liberating insight, which is rather close to the insight accepted by the Buddhists criticized by him.

Note however that at least one passage of the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā mentions insight into the true nature of the self as liberating knowledge. The second half of kārikā III.2.2 reads:<sup>19</sup> "once Science (*vidyā*) has made him recognize his own nature as Lord, then, his essence being solely consciousness, he is called 'liberated'." The Vṛtti comments: "With the recognition of the true reality of the self attained thanks to Science he is free." But the concluding section IV offers an altogether different kind of liberating knowledge. It describes in much detail how the suppression of the mental constructs (*vikalpa*) leads to the highest goal:<sup>20</sup> "With the suppression of the mental constructs, resulting from concentration on a single point, the plane of the Lord is gradually reached." "Permeated only by the reflective awareness of 'I am this universe', this creation of the Lord is free from mental constructs — since no differentiation arises within it — and it is manifested in all clarity. On this plane, by applying oneself and intensely cultivating those moments when the mental construct becomes attenuated, which occur sporadically while the activity pertaining to the limited subject is taking place, the beings in the power of the samsāra gradually attain, through the emergence of the state of the Lord in all its fullness, the dissolution of the state of limited individuality."<sup>21</sup> Similarly in the following verses of section IV.

Here, then, Utpaladeva presents a form of liberating knowledge that is very different from the "insight into the true (i.e. inactive) nature of the self". This other kind of liberating knowledge is precisely the one which Buddhism — which had always rejected the "insight

<sup>19</sup> Kārikā III.2.2 (p. 197; Sanskrit p. 66)

<sup>20</sup> Kārikā IV.11 cd (p. 215; Sanskrit p. 77), cited above.

<sup>21</sup> Vṛtti on kārikā IV.11 (p. 216-217; Sanskrit p. 78)

into the true nature of the self" — had come to accept. Once again we see that Utpaladeva has been profoundly influence by the Buddhists he criticizes.

Something remains to be said about the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school of thought. Here the self could be described as agent, but in a way which did [618] not jeopardize the "insight into the true nature of the self" as liberating knowledge. For here the self was conceived of as an omnipresent substance, which cannot, for that reason, undergo any movement. In that sense the self is inactive, and an insight into its true nature was considered a necessary precondition for liberation. However, this motionless self, being a substance, can be the substrate of various qualities. These qualities — more precisely the quality "effort" (*prayatna*) — allow the self to interact with its body, and indirectly with the rest of the material world. The self is therefore an agent, even though it never moves. Liberation implies that all qualities leave the self, which now reaches its real, inactive, nature. When Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika came to accept, and rationalize, the existence of a creator God, it conceived of him along the lines set out in connection with their soul theory, with this difference, that God was believed not to need a body in order to interact with the material world.<sup>22</sup>

It will be clear that there are points of similarity between Utpaladeva's description of the Lord and the creator God of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. Most importantly, both are, in very similar ways, agents. The activity of the Lord, that is, his being creator, — Utpaladeva tells us — consists in his power of volition (*icchāśakti*),<sup>23</sup> not in any bodily activity on his part. In this respect the Lord's activity is similar to that of Yogins who, too, can produce pots etc. by virtue of their volition alone.<sup>24</sup> But Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika accepts "insight into the true nature of the self" as liberating knowledge, whereas Utpaladeva appears only to pay lip-service to it and turns rather to the "suppression of the mental constructs". Why this difference?

The answer is not difficult to guess. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika never denied, or rather emphatically maintained, the objective and independent reality of the material world, and therefore also the objective reality of karma. Utpaladeva, on the other hand, preached that actions are in reality not causes, and that only the mistaken conviction that they are is responsible for [619] the trouble they bring about.<sup>25</sup> For Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika the task remained

<sup>22</sup> Chemparathy, 1972: 138 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Vṛtti on kārikā II.4.1; p. 55, 175. Cp. kārikā II.4.21: "Therefore causality, agency (*kartrtā*), action are nothing but the will (*icchā*) of Him who wishes to appear in the form of the universe, in the various manifestations of jar, cloth and so on" (p. 61, 187)

<sup>24</sup> Kārikā II.4.10; p. 57, 179.

<sup>25</sup> Utpaladeva's closeness to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is confirmed by Āhnika II.2 — which "aims at establishing that the categories acknowledged by the bāhyāvādins (the reference is particularly to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika) are

to escape from the effects of one's actions, for Utpaladeva the problem of karma had essentially disappeared. But liberation remained the aim, and insight was still believed to bring it about.

### Appendix

A number of misprints (or what seemed to me misprints) came to my notice while reading this book. Since their enumeration may be helpful to readers, or for a next edition if and when it is planned, I list them here. Note that no systematic search for errors of this kind has been undertaken, and that this list does not claim to be exhaustive in any way.

A loose sheet called "Errata Corrige" accompanies the book. On this sheet itself I noticed two misprints:

l. 2	p. XIV, fn. 3, l. 3	⇒	p. XIV, fn. 9, l. 3
l. 7	p. 96, fn. 2, ll. 1 2 12 15	⇒	p. 96, fn. 21, ll. 1 2 12 15

In the main text (= all except the Sanskrit edition) the following seem to be misprints:

p. X l. 19:	ortodoxy	⇒	orthodoxy
p. XII l. 23:	school	⇒	schools
p. XIII l. 3:	af	⇒	of
p. XXII l. 25:	such	⇒	such as
p. XXIV l. 16:	toughtless	⇒	thoughtless
p. XXV l. 23:	sleep into	⇒	slip into
p. XXVIII l. 17:	eteronomy	⇒	heteronomy
p. XXIX l. 13:	unpredictable	⇒	unpredictable
p. XXXVI l. 30:	Ahīrbudnyasamhitā	⇒	Ahīrbudhnyā°
p. XLI n. 68 l. 1:	His	⇒	Its
p. XLIII l. 7:	naturale	⇒	natural
p. XLVIII l. 26:	simple	⇒	simply
p. XLVIII l. 27:	unvaluable	⇒	invaluable
p. 85 n. 5:	note 2	⇒	note 3
p. 96 n. 21 l. 12:	'bhidhāyadāḥ	⇒	'bhidhāyakāḥ
p. 112 n. 6 l. 2:	kṣāṇikavādin	⇒	kṣāṇikavādin
p. 115 n. 14 l. 16:	rūpiṇaḥ	⇒	rūpiṇaḥ
p. 116 n. 17 l. 1:	°bhāsam	⇒	°bhāsanam
p. 127 n. 45 l. 8:	Noone	⇒	None
p. 139 l. 5:	contraddiction	⇒	contradiction
p. 139 l. 13:	rupyajñānā°	⇒	rūpyajñānā°
p. 140 n. 12 l. 18:	vivākṣito°	⇒	vivākṣito°
p. 142 l. 9:	rupam	⇒	rūpaṃ
p. 143 n. 18 l. 2:	astidaṃ	⇒	astīdaṃ
p. 155 n. 8 l. 3:	Chandogya	⇒	Chāndogya

---

acceptable only if seen from the Śaiva viewpoint" (p. 157 n. 1) — and by the fact that he assumed "a Naiyāyika guise in the Īśvarasiddhi" (p. XXII).

p. 157 n. 1 l. 2 -Vaiśeṣka	⇒	-Vaiśeṣika
p. 160 l. 9: linked each	⇒	linked to each
p. 164 l. 12: lenght	⇒	length
p. 165 l. 5: maṇirupyādi°	⇒	maṇirūpyādi°
p. 165 n 12 l. 9: bahudāpy	⇒	bahudhāpy
p. 184 n. 27 l. 15-16 parapravanatā	⇒	parapravanatā
p. 192 n. 11 l. 14: mahāmāya	⇒	mahāmāyā
p. 192 n. 11 l. 17: Mahāmāya	⇒	Mahāmāyā
p. 207 n. 30 l. 9: dvadaśānta	⇒	dvādaśānta
p. 210 n. 2 l. 5: melana	⇒	melanā
p. 212 n. 11 l. 2: ya sattā	⇒	yā sattā

### References:

- Bronkhorst, Johannes (1993): *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*. Second edition. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Bronkhorst, Johannes (1996): "The correspondence principle and its impact on Indian philosophy." *Indo-Shisōshi Kenkyū / Studies in the History of Indian Thought* (Kyoto) 8, 1996, 1-19.
- Chemparathy, George (1972): *An Indian Rational Theology. Introduction to Udayana's Nyāyakusumāñjali*. Vienna: Gerold & Co. (Publications of the De Nobili Research Library, I.)