

INTERPRETING ACROSS MYSTICAL BOUNDARIES:
AN ANALYSIS OF SAMĀDHI IN THE
TRIKA-KAULA TRADITION

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Abstract

The following analysis of Abhinavagupta's system of mystical practice (termed the fourfold path or *upāya-catustāyam*) aims to illustrate the ways in which the Western discourse of duality, because of its fundamental acceptance of a mind/body split, is an unsuccessful heuristic model for understanding non-Western mystical traditions. Specifically, I examine the hermeneutical limitations one encounters when applying W. T. Stace's model of comparative mysticism, which gives a Cartesian privilege to the 'introvertive' mystical experience of mental inwardness over its 'extrovertive' counterpart, to Abhinavagupta's eleventh-century Trika-Kaula system. Abhinavagupta's own discourse on mystical states of consciousness inverts Stace's model and ultimately collapses the distinction between introvertive and extrovertive. In the preparatory stages of Trika-Kaula practice, the adept harnesses an inward, regressive power (*visarga-sakti*) in pursuit of an introvertive mystical experience with eyes closed (*nimīlana-samādhi*). In the later stages, however, the same regressive power is inverted to reveal its progressive side and the Tantric thereby attains an extrovertive experience with eyes opened (*unmīlana-samādhi*). At the culmination of his or her practice the Tantric attains a state of consciousness in which the inner and outer become united in the singular continuum of consciousness. At this 'no-path' stage of transcendent experience (*bhairavīmudrā*) the Self within and the world without are one.¹

¹ The following abbreviations are used in the text:

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|------|-----------------------------|
| ĪP | Īśvarapratyabhijñā |
| ĪPv | Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī |
| PS | Paramārthasāra |
| PTlv | Parātrīṣṅikālaghuvṛtti |
| PTV | Parātrīṣṅikāvivarāṇa |
| PrHṛ | Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam |
| ŚSū | Śiva Sūtra |
| ŚSūv | Śivasūtra-vimarśinī |
| SpKā | Spanda Kārikā |

Introduction

This essay traces its roots to a graduate seminar on Comparative Mysticism taught by Gerald J. Larson at the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1994. In this seminar I encountered Larson's extraordinary grasp of the textual sources on yogic practice and philosophy and was inspired by his insight into their deeper significance for our understanding of the relevance of 'mystical' to 'human' experience. In 1973 Larson had carefully formulated his theory of mysticism in an essay titled 'Mystical Man in India': 'A mystical experience,' Larson therein claimed, 'is an intuitive understanding and realization of the meaning of existence—an intuitive understanding and realization which is intense, integrating, self-authenticating, liberating—i.e., providing a sense of release from ordinary self-awareness—and subsequently determinative—i.e., a primary criterion—for interpreting all other experience whether cognitive, conative, or affective.'² In this way Larson lifted mystical experience out of the limited domain of the 'spiritual virtuoso' by identifying it as a 'dimension of general human experience.'³

The most precise yogic term for the mystical dimension of human experience is *samādhi*, which literally means 'placed together' or 'settled down' and refers to higher states of yogic awareness in which the mind becomes one-pointed, either on an object of contemplation, or on Awareness itself.⁴ Within the significant body of Sanskrit literature that defines and codifies the state of *samādhi* there is general disagreement as to whether or not the experience of *samādhi* demonstrates a condition of union or disunion between the individual and the world. In other words, while many spiritual traditions within India have utilized yogic practices for the attainment of their higher aspirations, there is no consensus as to what such experiences have validated.

SpN Spanda Nirṇaya
Tā Tantrāloka
TSā Tantrasāra
VB Vijñānabhairava

² Gerald James Larson, 'Mystical Man in India,' in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1973): 3.

³ Larson, 'Mystical Man,' 3–4.

⁴ See Ian Whicher's excellent discussion of the various interpretations of this central term in his *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 27–30.

Classical Sāṃkhya, arguably the oldest tradition of systematic reflection on yogic experience, adopts the dualist position that *samādhi* reveals a fundamental and eternal separation between material reality (*prakṛti*) and consciousness (*puruṣa*). *Samādhi*, if we are to understand the Sāṃkhya position correctly, is not about ‘union’ but ‘dis-union.’ Although a foundational system within the history of yogic thought and practice, Sāṃkhyic claims for a bifurcated universe were not accepted wholesale by all subsequent practitioners of yoga.

In this essay I examine the understanding of yogic *samādhi* as developed in the texts and traditions collectively identified as Kashmir Śaivism. In the numerous works that follow under this broad rubric we find the systematization and hierarchization of a number of disparate ritual and philosophical systems practiced by the various Tantric and yogic traditions that had flourished in the Kashmir region since as early as the 3rd century C.E.⁵ A much studied and historically significant sect among the numerous Śaivisms that developed in Kashmir is the Trika-Kaula (‘Triadic Embodied Cosmos’),⁶ established by the eleventh-century exegete, Abhinavagupta, and maintained by a number of disciples, including Kṣemarāja, in a lineage which some claim extends in to the third millennium.⁷ A central component of Trika-Kaula traditions is the claim that Tantric initiation and practice under the guidance of a teacher capable of transmitting power (*śaktipāta-guru*) enables one to construct the unifying and empowering vision of phenomenal reality as the flashing forth of one’s own I-awareness (*ahaṃ-ābhāsa*).⁸

⁵ The best synopsis of this ‘systematization’ is found in Alexis Sanderson, ‘Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions,’ in *The World’s Religions*, ed. S. Sutherland et al. (London: Routledge, 1988), 660–704.

⁶ This name reflects Abhinavagupta’s discursive focus on a number of triads, of which the primary include: (a) the ontological triad of Śiva (the absolute as consciousness), Śakti (the absolute as dynamic power), and Nara (the absolute as the individual); (b) the textual triad of Āgama-Śāstra (revealed texts), Pratyabhijñā-śāstra (philosophical texts), and Spanda-śāstra (theological/liturgical texts); (c) the epistemological triad of *guru-vacana* (word of the teacher), *śabda-pramāṇa* (textual authority), and *anubhava* (direct experience); and (d) the ritual/yoga practice triad of *āṇava-upāya* (the way of the individual), *śākta-upāya* (the way of power), and *śāmbhava-upāya* (the way of Śiva-consciousness).

⁷ Among those making a claim to maintaining this medieval lineage are the followers of the Kashmiri guru, Lakshman Joo, Balajnnatha Pandit, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, and contemporary practitioners of Sarvāmnaya Tantra in the Kathmandu Valley.

⁸ See Alper’s discussion of *ābhāsa* and ‘I-awareness’ in ‘Śiva and the Ubiquity of

This essay incorporates an analysis of the fourfold path (*upāyā-catuṣṭayam*) that Abhinavagupta defines as the means to final realization (*śivatva*).⁹ According to Abhinavagupta's concise *sādhana* manual, the *Paramārtha-sāra*,¹⁰ this path begins with an initiation involving the descent of power (*śaktipāta-dīkṣā*), the ritual awakening of a 'coiled power' called *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*.¹¹ The awakening and continued manipulation of this energy is the primary focus of the *sādhana* system.¹² The purported result of *kuṇḍalinī* awakening is the fusing of all semantic dichotomies into a unified experience of bliss consciousness (*ānanda*). As a means of expressing this transcendence of opposites, Abhinavagupta speaks of a single emissional power, or *visarga-śakti*, with a dual capacity: one regressive and introvertive, the other progressive and extrovertive.¹³

This introvertive-extrovertive dialectic appears on several levels in Abhinavagupta's discourse on Trika-Kaula *sādhana*. On the mythico-cosmological level the dyadic *śakti* principle reveals itself as the withdrawal (*nimeṣa*) and expansion (*unmeṣa*) of the supreme consciousness, Paramaśiva. The *nimeṣa* stage of consciousness reveals *visarga-śakti* in its introvertive capacity by withdrawing all manifest expressions into itself in a state of serene self-absorption. The *unmeṣa* stage reveals the extrovertive, expansive capacity of *visarga-śakti* to assume the multiple forms of phenomenality while still remaining un-divided (*abheda*).

The following analysis is primarily concerned with the ways in which this cosmological flux plays out at the level of the human body.¹⁴

Consciousness: the Spaciousness of an Artful Yogi,' in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7 (1979): 345–407.

⁹ 'Final realization' is Deba Brata Sen Sharma's translation of *Śivatva* in *The Philosophy of Sādhana* (Albany: State University of New York, 1990).

¹⁰ A text that I was first introduced to and translated under the direction of Larson in Fall 1994.

¹¹ PS 96.

¹² This is Lilian Silburn's thesis in *Kuṇḍalinī—Energy of the Depths* (Albany: State University of New York, 1988). For the 'voice of the insider' see Swami Kripananda's discussion in *The Sacred Power* (South Fallsburg: SYDA Press, 1995); also, Swami Muktananda (Ganeshpuri: SYDA Press, 1979).

¹³ For my understanding of the regressive and progressive capacity of *visarga-śakti* I am indebted to Paul Muller-Ortega. See his discussion in 'The Power of the Secret Ritual: Theoretical Formulations From the Tantra,' in *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4 (Summer 1990): 41–59.

¹⁴ My focus on 'embodiment' is particularly inspired and informed by Gavin Flood's fine work, *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993).

In line with classical Tantric conceptions of the body as a microcosm, Abhinavagupta claims that the *nimeṣa-unmeṣa* dialectic is not only a cosmic pulse (*spanda*), but also the creative impulse of Paramaśiva within the human heart, manifesting as the process of withdrawal and expansion within human consciousness.¹⁵

Due to the veiling power (*tirodhāna-śakti*) of consciousness, the Absolute-as-human experiences limitation and suffering. However, within this contracted state, the perfectly free (*svātantrya-śakti*) continues the pulsation of expansion and withdrawal. The reason for engaging in the yogic and liturgical practices (*prakriyā*) of the *upāyacatuṣṭayam* is to manipulate this dyadic energy for the yogic purpose of bringing about non-dual states of cognition (*samādhi-s*),¹⁶ which enable the Tantric practitioner to re-cognize his or her essential nature (*svabhāva*) as Paramaśiva.

In articulating this expansion/withdrawal discourse, the Trika-Kaula sources invoke a dyad of *samādhi-s*.¹⁷ One of these is the introvertive or *nimīlana-samādhi*. This *samādhi*, perhaps so named because it describes a state that is reached through ‘closed-eyed’ meditation techniques,¹⁸ is understood to mirror the condition in which the Godhead closes its eyes and gazes upon its own plenitude within itself. A second *samādhi* is titled *unmīlana-samādhi*, the ‘open-eyed’ mystical state in which the yogin recognizes phenomenality as the *unmeṣa* or outward arising of *visarga-śakti*.

The keypoint about these two *samādhi-s* is that they are interwoven throughout the stages of Tantric yogic practice in such a way that the yogin, like the Godhead, comes to recognize that the outer world—seen with ‘eyes open’—and the inner world—seen with ‘eyes closed’—are identified as fundamentally one. This is the stage of

¹⁵ The most important work on Abhinavagupta’s understanding of Paramaśiva as seated in the heart is Paul Muller-Ortega’s *The Triadic Heart of Śiva: Kaula Tantricism of Abhinavagupta in the Non-Dual Shaivism of Kashmir* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989).

¹⁶ Derived from *√dhā*, ‘to put,’ with the prefix, *sam-ā*, *samādhi* literally means, ‘a joining.’ In Patañjali’s yoga system, *samādhi* denotes the highest stages of yogic attainment in which the mind-fluctuations have ceased and the Self abides in Itself.

¹⁷ Jaidev Singh provides a helpful discussion of the *samādhi-s* in his *Spanda-Kārikās, The Divine Creative Pulsation* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980).

¹⁸ This, at least is the claim made by some contemporary exponents of Trika-Kaula doctrine and practice. See, for example, Swami Shantananda’s discussion in *The Splendor of Recognition: An Exploration of the Pratyabhijñā-hṛdayam, a Text on the Ancient Science of the Soul* (South Fallsburg: SYDA Foundation, 2003), pp. 347–354.

highest mystical awareness known as the *bhairava-mudrā* in which consciousness and the world are identified as composed of the same fundamental reality, a reality which is both ‘within’ the yogin as his essential self and manifest as phenomenality. In his *Spandanirṇaya*, Kṣemarāja writes,

With regards to the *ummīlana* and *nīmīlana-samādhi-s*, [the yogin] having seated in the middle ground that pervades both (external and internal awareness) and thereby attaining the state in which [on the one hand] all thought constructions are incinerated by the [churning of the] two (*ummīlana* and *nīmīlana*) firesticks and [on the other hand experiences] the simultaneous revelation of the circle of the sense organs has entered into the [state of highest realization known as] *bhairavī-mudrā*.¹⁹

What Kṣemarāja is describing here is a state of realization in which the fluctuations of the mind (*cittavyrti*) are stilled—the classical goal of Patañjali Yoga (YSū 1.2)—and yet the senses are engaged in the perception of the world. In this rare condition, the yogin encounters the union of both *ummīlana* and *nīmīlana samādhi-s*. This condition of ‘inwardness’ coupled with ‘outwardness’ is the focus of *Śiva-sūtra* 3.45: ‘There is again [the state of] *pratimīlana*.’²⁰ In his commentary on this passage, Kṣemarāja explains that *pratimīlana* is a condition in which the yogin witnesses his own self as both the external world and his essential self-nature.²¹ This witnessing of the identity of self and the world places us within the realms of a discourse that consciously collapses and shatters the distinction between consciousness and material reality, inner and outer, ‘self’ and ‘other.’ In this highest stage of yogic *samādhi*, the yogi’s ‘inner’ world and the ‘outer’ world are experienced as a single continuum of consciousness.²² This innate mystical state (*sahaja-samādhi*) is the experience of one’s essential nature (*svabhāva*).²³

¹⁹ SpN on SK 1.11: *Nīmīlanonmīlanasamādhinā yugapadyāpakamadhyadhya-bhūmyavashtaṃ bhāddhyasitaitad-ubhaya-visargaraṇi-vigalītasakalavikalpo kramasphāritakaraṇacakra antarlakṣo bahirdṛṣṭir nimeṣonmeṣavarjitaḥ | iyaṃ sā bhairavīmudrā sarvatantreṣu gopitā || ity āmnāta bhagavadbhairavamudrānupraviṣṭo.*

²⁰ *Bhuyah syāt pratimīlanaḥ.*

²¹ ŚSūV on ŚSū 3.45: *Pratimīlanam, caitanyābhīmukhyena nīmīlanam, punar api caitanyātma-svasvarūpa-ummīlanarūpam.*

²² VB: *Mamaiva bhairavasya etāḥ viśvabhaṅgyo vibhedītāḥ*: ‘From me, who is the Godhead, the waves of the universe are manifested in various forms.’ CF. PS 48–49.

²³ For more discussion of *sahaja-samādhi* as an innate, mystical state see Robert

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In the descriptions of this state of re-cognition, (*pratyabhijñā*) we find language about ‘oneness’ and ‘bliss’ that resembles descriptions made by mystics from other traditions. Bearing in mind Larson’s opening statements about the ‘mystical state’ as a fundamental dimension of human experience and knowing his interest in the field of comparative mysticism and philosophy, I now seek to interpret ‘across boundaries’²⁴ by situating the Trika-Kaula model of yogic practice and experience within the broader framework of comparative mysticism.²⁵ More specifically, I will examine and critique W. T. Stace’s model of ‘introvertive/extrovertive mysticism’ as one lens by which to sharpen our understanding of the Trika-Kaula mystics’ experience and understanding of yogic practice and experience. The purpose of this ‘hermeneutical gazing’ is not to suggest that the case of one equals that of the other. Quite to the contrary, this is an exercise in reflecting on difference. The model of comparative mysticism proposed by Stace does not apply to the case of Trika-Kaula, and it is precisely this ‘not-fitting’ that I find illuminating, in that it makes more apparent exactly what does ‘fit’, thereby revealing the degree to which Trika-Kaula categories are distinct from and challenge many western epistemological categories. As we shall see, Stace’s analysis of mysticism is rooted in a Cartesian bias which, as Frits Staal has shown,²⁶ is part-and-parcel of the Western discourse on the body-mind complex. Not recognizing his own cultural conditioning, Stace constructed a purportedly ‘universal’ model of mystical experiences

Forman’s discussion in ‘Mysticism, Constructivism, and Forgetting,’ in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness*, ed. Robert Forman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 8.

²⁴ This phrase comes from an important work that Larson edited with Eliot Deutsch, *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). See Larson’s introduction: ‘The Age-Old Distinction Between the Same and the Other,’ pp. 3–18.

²⁵ The inspiration for contextualizing Trika-Kaulism within the discourse of comparative mysticism came out of a seminar with Gerald Larson in 1993. Since then, my thoughts have been further developed and inspired by the insights of Barbara Holdrege and by Paul Muller-Ortega, who at the time of the writing of this essay is also writing an essay on the relationship of Trika-Kaula *sādhana* to extrovertive and introvertive mysticisms.

²⁶ Frits Staal, ‘Indian Bodies’ in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas Kasulis et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993): 59–102.

that gives primacy to mind over matter, to silent introspection over ritual action, in a way that reflects the biases of a Cartesian world view. However, this model does not adequately describe the non-dualist cosmos of Abhinavagupta in which mind/spirit and body/matter are not diametrically opposed but rather interrelated aspects of a single dynamic consciousness.²⁷

At this point, many readers might rightly question why it is that I have elected to draw from the writings of W. T. Stace. His classic work, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, was, after all, written over 40 years ago and has already received significant attention and criticism.²⁸ Moreover, there are more recent works, such as R. C. Forman's *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness* (1999) and Alan Wallace's *Taboo of Subjectivity: Towards a New Science of Consciousness* (2000) that are rooted in a model of mystical experience that is decidedly more 'eastern.' I defend my decision on three grounds. First, of all the writings on mysticism and philosophy, Stace's remains among the most systematic and insightful. It is precisely for this reason that Larson himself continued to have his graduate students read Stace's work even into the 1990s. Second, Stace's Cartesian orientations, precisely because they are so translucent, bring into bas-relief a particular 'western hermeneutics' that is still dominant today, even four decades after the Stace's *magnum opus* was completed. It is this bringing-into-clarity that makes the use of Stace's arguments fruitful for the purposes of this essay. Third, the age of a text does not, in principle, limit its value de facto. Just because a work is 'newer' does not mean that it is 'better' or more valuable than an older work. Similarly, if I am looking at eleventh-century texts on the 'eastern' side of the hermeneutical divide, then a text from the 1960s on the 'western' side of the divide can hardly be labeled 'too old.' Having offered this apologetic, I concede that my analysis of Stace in this essay suffers, at

²⁷ In his examination of 'Indian Bodies' Staal is actually only considering one type of 'Indian' body: namely, that constructed by the Vedic literature. Consequently, his notion of a hierarchical relation between mind and body does not perfectly fit the Trika-Kaula case in the sense that a hierarchy still suggests some kind of valuation or distinction which is ultimately absent from Trika-Kaula non-dualist discourse.

²⁸ See, for example, the attention that Stace receives by several authors in the Steven T. Katz's (ed.) now classic *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

least in certain ways, from the proverbial straw man syndrome. If I am therefore accused of utilizing Stace for the purpose of highlighting the distinctness of the Trika-Kaula understanding of ‘mystical experience’, then I stand guilty as charged and ask my readers’ pardon.

In choosing to analyze the *upāya-catuṣṭayam* via the lens of contemporary theories in the area of comparative mysticism, I do so with several additional reservations. First, I am acutely aware of the problems inherent in the term ‘mysticism.’ This word, connoting the ‘mysterious’ and ‘ineffable,’ is deeply embedded in Western and Christian categories and is arguably too culture specific to be useful in the analysis of non-Western traditions.²⁹ Second, in this era of post-modern critiques, the very aim of comparative mysticism—namely, to study purported claims to the direct experience of, and union with, the divine—is perceived as a scholarly danger zone riddled with truth claims that ought to be left to theologians.

While I concur that truth claims must be located within their specific sociohistorical contexts, I nevertheless concur with Larson that the survival of the field of religious studies lies in the presupposition of the *sui generis* nature of ‘religious’ experience.³⁰ If all religious discourse is to be reduced to linguistic, social, political, and/or cultural determinants then such study might arguably best be subsumed by the specific disciplines which specialize in these areas.³¹ For this reason, my interest is in a post-deconstructionist ‘re-construction’ which takes seriously the challenges of such scholars as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Pierre Bourdieu, while also utilizing the theoretical presuppositions of a critical phenomenology that always takes seriously the ‘words of the believer.’

The kind of ‘middle path’ approach that I am here attempting to frame posits that no single theoretical method can possibly explain

²⁹ Cf. Carl Keller discussion in his essay, ‘Mystical Literature,’ in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven Katz (New York: University of Oxford Press), 75–101.

³⁰ Numerous personal communications between 1992 to the present. One encounter will always remain with me. I had just completed a systematic study of the writing of Michel Foucault and was feeling a bit overwhelmed by the weight of his critique. That day I met with Larson in his office and announced to him that I had once thought that the study of religion had something to do with the pursuit of ‘truth,’ but that now, after reading Foucault, I had come to wonder if there any such ‘truth’ ever existed. Larson looked me dead in the eye and said, ‘I don’t think you should ever give up the pursuit of truth.’

³¹ This argument was forcefully and eloquently during a lecture by Dr. Charles Long at the University of California, Spring 2004.

and interpret the multi-dimensionality³² of human activity and experience.³³ In attempting to interpret Trika-Kaula discourse and practice, I have benefited from the insights of both phenomenology and cultural criticism and have attempted to incorporate aspects of both approaches in this study. On the one hand I provide a phenomenological analysis of Abhinavagupta's theories of consciousness,³⁴ while on the other hand I give a critical analysis of the Western discourse of duality that informs certain theories of comparative mysticism. Specifically, I seek to demonstrate how W. T. Stace's model of introvertive/extrovertive mysticism is inverted by Abhinavagupta's system and is thereby inadequate as a theoretical framework.³⁵ His model is so clearly 'Western' that it constitutes a powerful example of the way in which scholars project³⁶ their own dualistic biases upon their respective fields of study.

Stace's Perspective on Mystical Experience

In his *Mysticism and Philosophy* Stace categorizes all mystical experience into two primary types: introvertive and extrovertive. He writes:

The two main types of experience, the extrovertive and the introvertive, have been distinguished by different writers under various

³² Ninian Smart argued convincingly for a 'multi-dimensional' understanding of religion. See his *The World's Religions* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989).

³³ In this regard I am indebted to Barbara Holdrege's theoretical arguments for a 'multi-perspectivalist' approach to the study of ritual power. See her discussion in 'Toward a Phenomenology of Power,' in *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 5–37.

³⁴ My interest in this aspect of Abhinavagupta's teachings developed out of my ethnographic research on contemporary Newar Tantrics in Nepal, as well as contemporary American practitioners of Siddha Yoga, which traces its lineage back through Abhinavagupta. These practitioners' discourse on Tantric *sādhana* is rooted in Abhinavagupta's primary *sāghanā* texts: the *Paramārtha-sāra*, *Tantrāloka*, and *Tantra-sāra*. Interviews with these American yogis revealed their deep conviction that the aim of Trika-Kaula practice is an experience which is irreducibly 'religious.' While it would be naive to equate the discourse of contemporary Tantrics with that of Abhinavagupta's, it would be equally unwise to ignore their important textual and practice-based parallels.

³⁵ For another critique of Stace, see Katz's discussion in 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism,' in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*.

³⁶ I use 'project' intentionally to invoke the Indian philosophical notion of *saṃskāra-s*, those impressions which are projected outward through consciousness onto phenomenality and thereby condition experience. See Larson, 'The *Trimūrti* of Dharma in Indian Thought: Paradox or Contradiction,' in *Philosophy East and West* 22, No. 2 (1972): 145–153.

names. The latter has been called the ‘inward way’ or the ‘mysticism of introspection,’ which is Rudolf Otto’s terminology and corresponds to what Miss Underhill calls ‘introversion.’ The other may be called ‘the outward way’ or the way of extrospection. The essential difference between them is that the extrovertive experience looks outward through the senses, while the introvertive looks inward into the mind. Both culminate in the perception of an ultimate Unity—what Plotinus called the One—with which the perceiver realizes his own union or even identity. But the extrovertive mystic, using his physical senses, perceives the multiplicity of external material objects—the sea, the sky, the houses, the trees—mystically transfigured so that the One, or the Unity, shine through them. But the introvertive mystic, on the contrary, seeks by deliberately shutting off the senses, by obliterating from consciousness the entire multiplicity of sensations, images, and thoughts, to plunge into the depths of his own ego. There, in that darkness and silence, he alleges that he perceives the One—and is united with it—not as Unity seen through multiplicity (as in the extrovertive experience), but as the wholly naked One devoid of any plurality whatever.³⁷

The fundamental presupposition underlying Stace’s definition of the two types of mystical experience is an ‘essential’ Cartesian split³⁸ between mind—the locus of the ‘inward way’—and the material world—apprehended in a vision of unity by the senses during an ‘extrovertive experience.’ This split enables Stace to locate consciousness as distinct from matter such that the mystic can obliterate the multiplicity of sensations from consciousness in order to explore the ‘darkness and silence’ of the ‘ego.’ After examining case studies exemplifying both types of experience Stace reaches his conclusion that these studies

seem to suggest that the extrovertive experience, although we recognize it as a distinct type, is actually on a lower level than the introvertive type; that is to say, it is an incomplete kind of experience. The extrovertive kind shows a partly realized tendency to unity which the introvertive kind completely realizes. In the introvertive type the multiplicity has been wholly obliterated and therefore must be spaceless and timeless, since space and time are themselves principles of multiplicity. But in the extrovertive experience the multiplicity seems to be, as it were, only half absorbed in the unity.³⁹

³⁷ Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 61–62.

³⁸ For a history of the development of this ‘split’ see Staal, ‘Indian Bodies,’ in *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, 59–103.

³⁹ Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 132.

With this statement Stace reveals the dualistic and evolutionary world view that underlies his model. It is a world in which ‘multiplicity’ stands diametrically opposed to ‘unity’ and is characterized by space and time, which are to be ‘obliterated.’ Unless there is complete obliteration the mystic’s attainment is only ‘partial’ and on a ‘lower level.’

Stace’s is an evolutionary model in which distinct species of mystical experience can be placed on what I herewith identify the MOH-grid (multiplicity-obliteration-hierarchy-grid) ranging from ‘lower,’ ‘partly realized’ (because multiplicity still exists) species to those which are ‘higher’ and ‘completely realized’ (because multiplicity has been obliterated). With this hierarchical model firmly in place, Stace was able to organize data on mystics in such a way that they could be placed in a hierarchical order along his predetermined grid. Organizing his data in this way he then inevitably concluded that mystics such as Ramakrishna and St. Theresa, as ‘extrovertive mystics,’ are spiritually ‘inferior’ to mystics such as Śaṅkara and Meister Eckhart who represent the introvertive way.

The Trika-Kaula Perspective on Mystical Experience

Stace apparently never encountered the writings of Abhinavagupta, Kṣemarāja and other Trika-Kaula mystics in his arm-chair travels.⁴⁰ If he had he would have been confronted with data that would have indeed inverted his theory. Trika-Kaula Śaivism is rooted in a non-dual world view that views such linguistic categories as introvertive and extrovertive as expressions of the dualistic thought patterns (*dvaita-vikalpa*) that are the root cause of ignorance (*avidyā*). These limiting thought patterns located in the mind (*manas*) are projected by ‘I-consciousness’ onto the screen of reality such that the world appears to be a plurality. The aim of Tantric *sādhana* is to uproot all false concepts that limit the realization that both the ‘outer’ and the ‘inner’ are inseparable expressions of a single dynamic consciousness. In this

⁴⁰ To say that Stace never encountered Tantric mysticism is in fact misleading since Ramakrishna, whom Stace discusses, was heavily influenced by Śākta Tantra. However, Stace seems unaware of the fact that while Ramakrishna was considered a master of introvertive mysticism, he himself considered the extrovertive realization of the world as the divine Mother to be a more enlightened state of awareness.

state the *sādhaka* does not withdraw into the darkness of his or her ego. Rather, he or she realizes that the light of consciousness that illumines inward meditations also shines forth as the embodied universe. For this reason, to perceive the unity within the multiplicity of the universe with open eyes (*unnīlana*) is fundamentally the same as perceiving the unity of one's inner self with closed eyes (*nīmīlana*). As we shall see, to a certain extent the ability to recognize the unity within the phenomenal world is considered a higher and more difficult achievement since one has to overcome the obstacle of the appearance of duality. In other words, in the Trika-Kaula, system extrovertive mysticism is, in a qualified sense, higher than introvertive mysticism.

By privileging introvertive, contemplative forms of mysticism, Stace also ignores the role of ritual in bringing about shifts in consciousness.⁴¹ In Trika-Kaulism ritual is the means to the final perception of non-duality. In this tradition both esoteric and exoteric ritual practices bring about radical awakening through the bodily appropriation of preceptorial power (*kaulikī-śakti*). The transmission of this power occurs within the context of highly secretive initiations (*dīkṣā*) and liturgical practices (*prakriyā*) that are said to awaken the aspirant's dormant spiritual power (*kuṇḍalinī-śakti*) and enable him or her to cultivate this energy for the purpose of the highest mystical state, *bhairavīmudrā*.⁴² The tradition's ability to produce such a transformation resides in a knowledge of the *visarga-śakti* within the body (*deha-vidyā*). From this knowledge the Trika-Kaula yogins developed extensive and systematic body-based technologies that produce a radical extrovertive experience of non-duality in which multiplicity is not obliterated but rather 're-cognized' as the expansion of one's own consciousness such that all phenomena are identified with the Self.

As aids to the construction of this matter-affirming awareness, and in accordance with a discourse that affirms materiality and

⁴¹ For an informed discussion of the relationship of mysticism to ritual practice see Staal, *Exploring Mysticism: A Methodological Essay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

⁴² As the state in which the yogin realizes his/her identity as the absolute, *bhairavīmudrā* is 'mystical' in the classic Jamesian sense. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Vintage Press, 1990), James writes: '[The] overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In mystic states we become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness' (410).

embodiment as expressions of divinity, the Trika-Kaula yogins condone, in highly restricted contexts, the use of prohibited substances and antinomian actions as means to transcend culturally defined barriers in the quest for power and mystical awakening. To understand these transgressive acts, one must contextualize them within the system of yogic practices which give them meaning. We shall see that the Trika-Kaula engagement in antinomian, left-handed practices (*vāmācāra*) is the logical outcome of a world-affirming discourse of embodiment—one which privileges neither introversion nor extroversion, neither mind nor matter, neither self nor other, but rather perceives them as inseparable aspects of a singular consciousness that is only fully apprehended in a trans-linguistic state in which all dualities are recognized as the fictions of limited knowledge. In this way I hope to expose the problems inherent in attempting to use any dualistic discourse, like that of Stace's, as an interpretive framework for understanding Trika-Kaula traditions.

The Wondrous Display of Subjects and Objects

In contradistinction to the Western body/mind or body/consciousness split, the Trika-Kaula discourse identifies phenomenal existence as the body of consciousness. To the Trika-Kaulas the material world is not separate from consciousness. Rather, it is the flashing forth of consciousness into a wondrous display of subjects and objects, which, through training in specialized ritual techniques, is ultimately recognized as an expression of one all-pervading consciousness.⁴³ In defending this theory of projection (*ābhāsa-vāda*), the Trika Śaivas argue that the Absolute (*cit-śakti*) is both pure luminosity (*prakāśa*) and a

⁴³ *Paramārtha-sāra* 25–26 [author's translation]:

*Ajñānatimirayogād ekam api svasabhāvam ātmānam /
grāhyagrāhakanānāvaicitryerāvabudhyeta // 25*

'From Its association with the darkness of ignorance, the Self, though its own self-nature is non-dual, comes to perceive itself as a wondrous diversity of subjects and objects.'

*Rasaphāṇita śarkarikāgudakhaṇḍādīyā yatheksurasa eva /
tadvad avasthābhedāḥ sarve paramātmanāḥ śambhoḥ // 26*

'As syrup, molasses, candied sugar, sugar balls and hard candy, etc. are all juice of the sugar cane, so the plurality of conditions are all of Śambhu, the Supreme Self.'

reflective power (*vimarśa-śakti*) capable of self-projection and limitation (*samkocana*).⁴⁴ In other words, the Trika-Kaulas define the Absolute as dynamic consciousness (*cit-śakti*).⁴⁵

In cosmogonic terms, the Absolute, comprising both *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, is called *paramaśiva*, *paraśaṃvit*, *caitanya*, *anūtara*, *mahāśūnya*, and *cit-śakti*. Each of these technical terms refers not only to a cosmological principle but also to a state of consciousness located within the body and accessible through meditative practices. In other words, Abhinavagupta's Tantric discourse employs a double intentionality in which descriptions of the cosmic-consciousness are simultaneously references to the body. For this reason an analysis of Trika-Kaula cosmogonic descriptions provides insight into Tantric models of the body/consciousness dialectic. Briefly then, let us turn to an account of Trika-Kaula cosmogony as told in Āgamic literature.

At the time of creation, from within the cosmic plenum, there emerges an innate pulsation. Desiring to bring forth the universe, this pulsating power (*spanda-śakti*) begins to stir and, like a spider weaving its web, emits the universe out of the infinite womb of Paramaśiva.⁴⁶ This capacity for self-projection is understood as a dialectic of the progressive and regressive power of the *visarga-śakti*. During the phase of cosmic manifestation, the *śakti* displays its progressive/extrovertive capacity, and at the time of dissolution (*mahāpralaya*), the *śakti* displays its regressive/introvertive capacity by reabsorbing the universe of transmigrational experience.⁴⁷ The projection and manifestation of phenomenal existence are at times characterized as a contractive process. According to the Trika-Kaula tradition, the phenomenal world is, in actuality, a contraction (*samkocana*) of consciousness. It is a coagulation or condensing of infinite

⁴⁴ Alper offers an extensive analysis of *ābhāsavāda* in his essay, 'Śiva and the Ubiquity of Consciousness: The Spaciousness of an Artful Yogi,' in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7 (1979): 345–407. Cf. Kamalakar Mishra's *Kashmir Śaivism: The Central Philosophy of Tantrism* (Massachusetts: Rudra Press, 1993): chapter 5, 'The Theory of Appearance (*Ābhāsavāda*),' pp. 191–218.

⁴⁵ See Jaidev Singh's discussion of 'dynamic consciousness' in his translation and exposition of the *Spanda Kāvīkās* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980): esp. pp. xiii–xxii.

⁴⁶ For a further discussion of the *spanda* dynamic see Deba Brata Sen Sharma's *The Philosophy of Sādhana* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990): chapter 1, 'The Metaphysics of the Trika School,' pp. 14–40.

⁴⁷ I am indebted to Paul Muller-Ortega for his insights on the dual nature of the *visarga-śakti*. See his essay, 'The Power of the Secret Ritual Theoretical Formulations From the Tantra,' in *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, no. 2 (Summer, 1990): 41–59.

potentiality into a finite form.⁴⁸ Hence, in this system evolution is an involution involving the return to the unmanifest state of non-dual consciousness.

Although from a certain perspective the process of universal manifestation is a limitation of consciousness, on another level it is the unlimited body of God (*īśvara-śarīra*).⁴⁹ For this reason, the universe is called the embodied cosmos (*kula*).⁵⁰ As the self-manifestation of Śiva, the *kula* is the power of embodiment (*kaulikī-śakti*) which makes possible the play of universal creation (*viśva-sṛṣṭi-līlā*).⁵¹ Significantly, this power of embodiment plays out at the level of the human body, itself a *kula*, and possessed of *kaulikī-*, *vimarśa-*, and *visarga-śakti*-s.⁵² In other words, according to Trika-Kaulism, the process of cosmic embodiment recapitulates itself at the human level.⁵³ Just as the universe contracts only to expand again, so the human experiences limitation only to become omnipotent again by engaging in the esoteric practices of Trika-Kaula *sādhana*, which are designed to harness the regressive power of the *visarga-śakti*. This harnessing of power is not an effort to obliterate matter and isolate consciousness. Rather, it is the means by which matter is re-cognized as consciousness.

Contracted Like a Fig Tree

One shared characteristic among Tantric traditions is the claim that the body is a microcosmic replica of the universe.⁵⁴ Kṣemarāja writes:

As the Lord has the universe as a body (*viśvaśarīra*), so the self with contracted consciousness (*citisaṃkocātma*) is the entire form of con-

⁴⁸ Flood, *Body*, 110.

⁴⁹ Muller-Ortega, *Triadic Heart*, 43. Cf. Flood, 37, 125, 64.

⁵⁰ Muller-Ortega, *Triadic Heart*, 58–63.

⁵¹ For a discussion of this notion of the universe as a ‘cosmic-play’ (*līla-vāda*), see Kamalakar Mishra’s account in his *Kashmir Śaivism: The Central Philosophy of Tantrism* (Massachusetts: Rudra Press, 1993): 249–251. Cf. SenSharma, *Philosophy*, 29, 42.

⁵² Muller-Ortega, *Triadic Heart*, 44.

⁵³ The Trika-Kaula tradition is in no way unique in its equating of cosmic embodiment with human embodiment. See Dirk Van Joens’s comparative and synthetic discussion in ‘Transmission and Fundamental Constituents of the Practice,’ in *Hindu Tantrism*, eds. Sanjukta Gupta et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979): 47–70.

⁵⁴ Edward C. Dimock Jr. aptly writes, ‘The essence of Tāntric thought is that man is a microcosm. He contains within himself all the elements of the universe; he is a part that contains all the elements of the whole.’ See his *The Place of the Hidden Moon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989): 137.

sciousness contracted (*saṃkucita*). The conscious being (*cetana*) is the experient who has the entire universal form (*viśvarūpa*) contracted like a fig-tree in the seed.⁵⁵

In constructing this microcosm-macrocosm discourse, Trika-Kaulas like Kṣemarāja adopted and elaborated upon pre-existing models of subtle physiology in which the various evolutes (*tattva*-s) and deities were given precise bodily correspondences. In this way, in the context of ritual practice, the initiate could locate the various parts of the universe within specific bodily loci such that he or she would eventually make the claim: *sarvam idam aham eva*—‘I alone am all this.’⁵⁶

In the Trika-Kaula system the body (*deha, śarīra*) is a multi-leveled and hierarchized entity comprising both a vertical and horizontal axis. The horizontal body is composed of layers of coagulated consciousness beginning with the dense, physical sheath (*sthūla-śarīra*) and moving inward through the subtle (*sūkṣma*), causal (*kāraṇa*), and supreme (*para*) levels of being. These four levels⁵⁷ are said to correspond to four states of consciousness: waking (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*), deep sleep (*susupti*), and transcendental (*turya*).⁵⁸ The fourth or transcendent body resides in the heart (*hṛdaya*). Thus, at the core of the human anatomy, at the literal heart of embodiment, Paramaśiva resides as the transcendent source of manifestation. Placing Paramaśiva in the region of the physical heart supports the Trika-Kaula’s claim that even during the time of self-limitation (*tirodhāna*), consciousness maintains its transcendent nature (*viśvottīrṇa*).⁵⁹ For this reason, the

⁵⁵ Kṣemarāja on *Pratyabhijñā-hṛdayam* 4. Translated by Mark S. G. Dyczkowski in *The Doctrine of Vibration: An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmir Shaivism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987): *yathā ca evam bhagavān viśvaśarīra, tathā cūṣankocātmā saṃkucita-cidrūpā cetano grāhako ’pi vatadhānikāvāt saṃkucitāśesaśarīrūpaḥ*. For further discussion of the *viśva-rūpa*/fig tree motif see my *Viśvarūpa Mandir: A Study of Caṅgu Nārāyan, Nepal’s Most Ancient Temple* (New Delhi: Nirala Publications, 1996).

⁵⁶ See Sanderson’s discussion of this statement of ‘transcendental subjectivity’ in ‘Maṇḍala and Āgamic Identity in the Trika of Kashmir,’ 180.

⁵⁷ In the Śrī Vidyā system there are only three layers—gross, subtle, and atomic—which correspond to the forms of the goddess, Lalitā Tripurasundarī. For an insightful comparison with another Kaula tradition, see Douglas Brooks’ discussion of subtle physiology in *Auspicious Wisdom: The Texts and Traditions of Śrī Vidyā Śākta Tantrism in South India* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

⁵⁸ For more on the ‘horizontal’ body see Flood, 176–184.

⁵⁹ See Larson’s discussion of the manifest-transcendent dialectic in his essay, ‘The Sources for Śakti in Abhinavagupta’s Kāśmīr Śaivism: A Linguistic and Aesthetic category,’ in *Philosophy East and West* 24 (January 1974): 41–56.

Pratyabhijñā texts declare that existential awakening can occur in an instant (*pratibhā*). All that is necessary is the re-cognition of one's essential Self dwelling in the heart.

However, in Abhinavagupta's *Paramārtha-sāra* we read that a second general category of awakening is one that leads not to instant recognition, but rather only partial recognition, a recognition that becomes complete only after a gradual ascension through the phases of Tantric yoga.⁶⁰ Here Abhinavagupta is referring to the internal ascent of the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* within the body's central energy channel (*suṣumnā-nāḍī*). This central channel resides within the subtle body. As the body's vertical axis,⁶¹ this channel is envisioned as ascending from the base of the spine to the crown of the head, and, in the Trika-Kaula system of subtle physiology, even beyond to the *dvādaśānta-cakra* twelve inches above the crown.⁶² Along this central column are five energy wheels (*cakra-s*), which are depicted as lotus flowers. These centers are recognized as seats of power (*śakti-pīṭha*) that correspond to the *tattva-s*. Hence, the cosmogonic process is replicated within the body through the *cakra* system.

Just as the Godhead moves from a state inward absorption (*unmeṣa*) to outward expression (*nimeṣa*) so the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* is understood to move from a condition of dormancy or 'sleep' to one of being manifest or awake. While *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* is dormant, and coiled like a snake, the individual experiences limitation. When fully awakened by a qualified teacher (*sat-guru*), the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* ascends through the *suṣumnā*, burning up the *sādhaka's* karmic seeds (*saṃskāra-s*) and moving back through the levels of the cosmos to its transcendent source. Hence, Tantric *sāadhanā* is understood as an internal re-absorption of the universe.⁶³ 'Yoga,' declares Jayaratha, 'is the act of fusing [all] the metaphysical principles together within consciousness.'⁶⁴

⁶⁰ PS 96–99.

⁶¹ For further analysis of the Trika conception of the 'vertical axis,' see: Flood, *Body*, 186–187; cf., Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 139–162.

⁶² In a key passage from the *Tantrāloka* (23.33–39), Abhinavagupta describes the *dvādaśānta* as the 'terminal point' of the subtle breath. [Translated by Muller-Ortega, *The Triadic Heart of Śiva*, 168.] Similarly, the Vajrayāna speaks of a supreme center called 'Vajra' above the crown of the head.

⁶³ In technical literature this process of re-absorption is termed *laya-sādhana*. See Sanjukta Gupta's analysis in 'Modes of Worship and Meditation,' in *Hindu Tantrism*, 163.

⁶⁴ *Tantrāloka-vivaraṇa I*, 190.

Through this discussion of the role and internal constitution of the body in the Trika-Kaula discourse one theme becomes clear: for the Trika-Kaula yogin there is a fundamental non-difference between the inner world of the yogin and his or her external cosmos. Bearing this in mind, we now turn to an exploration of the mechanisms of Trika-Kaula *sādhana* through which the initiate cultivates his or her own power centers to produce an innate, non-dual state (*sahaja-samādhi*) in which all dualistic notions are dissolved.

The Awakening of Power

The Trika-Kaula Śaivas were apparently obsessed with harnessing power. Viewing their own bodies as repositories of infinite *śakti*-s, they developed ritual techniques to awaken and manipulate these powers. Arising out of the cremation ground cults of the Kāpālika-Kaulas,⁶⁵ the Trika incorporated within its fold many *vāmācāra* practices that were seen as necessary aids to the transcendence of dualistic consciousness (*dvaita-vikalpa*).⁶⁶ Although by the time of Abhinavagupta many of these transgressive elements had been internalized (such as blood sacrifice and meditating on corpses),⁶⁷ there was still strict adherence to the use of the three prohibited substances (*makāra-trāyam*)—meat (*māṃsa*), wine (*madya*), and illicit coupling (*maithuna*). These ritual aids functioned in two capacities: first, as stimulants to the awakening of the arising force (*udyama-śakti*) that propelled the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* towards the *sahasrāra*; and second, as a final test of the *sādhaka*'s aptitude (*adhikārin*).⁶⁸

In fact, these left-handed elements were reserved for only the most highly qualified aspirant, the *divya-sādhaka*,⁶⁹ who had attained complete mastery over the senses, and even then they were administered only in the context of the secret injunction (*rahasya-vidhi*). Within the

⁶⁵ Sanderson provides a careful textual retracing of Trika's roots to cremation grounds in his 'Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions' in *The World's Religions*, 661–701.

⁶⁶ Lorenzen provides an excellent analysis of the use of antinomian practices in Kāpālika practice in *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972): 88–89.

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⁶⁸ Sanderson, 'Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions,' 692–697.

⁶⁹ Mishra, *Kashmir Śaivism*, 377–379. Cf. Hoens, *Hindu Tantrism*, 72.

parameters of this highly controlled ritual atmosphere, these substances were the means to a liberating empowerment in which the *sādhaka* re-cognized his own body as consubstantial with the body of consciousness. In this state of heightened sense engagement he would, through *śaktipāta* be freed from the bonds of *saṃsāra* and attain the state of embodied liberation (*jīvan-mukta*) in which the world is re-cognized as the play of consciousness (*cit-śakti-Vilāsa*).⁷⁰

To understand this process of body- and world-affirming spiritual emancipation, we must locate the *rahasya-vidhi* within the context of the fourfold means to freedom, the *upāya-catustayam*. This system, laid out in Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* and alluded to in the *Paramārthasāra*, is a gradual path to liberation (*krama-mukti*), that elevates the aspirant from the condition of a fettered beast (*paśu*) to that of a perfected being (*siddha*).⁷¹ At the core of this system are elaborate

⁷⁰ A fascinating account of this final recognition is provided by the contemporary Trika-Kaula adept, Swami Muktananda, in his autobiography, *Chitshakti Vilas: Play of Consciousness* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).

⁷¹ In asserting that there is a hierarchy among the *upāya*-s my analysis challenges the position that the *upāya*-s do not reflect a sequence, but rather a diversity of independent spiritual disciplines. In this regard, one of the finest analyses I am aware of is a recent Master's Thesis by Christopher D. Wallis at the University of California, Berkeley. This work, directed by Robert Goldman, Sally Southerland-Goldman, and Paul Muller-Ortega and titled, 'The Means to Liberation: A Translation and Analysis of Chapters 1–5 of the *Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta' astutely demonstrates that the *Tantrasāra* itself is clearly devoid of any notion of a gradual path model with regards to the *upāya*-s. Instead, the *upāya*-s are therein described as each being complete paths in and of themselves, equally capable of bringing a yogin to the highest stages of awareness. This position is also strongly supported by Sthaneshwar Timalina (personal communication, 6/15/04). However, my own stance is that the *upāya*-s, like the *tattva*-s, can be understood as simultaneously arisen/co-equal, or as part of a sequence (*krama*). In this regard I cite Jaidev Singh's discussion in his translation of the *Śiva-sūtra*: '*Āṇava* and *Śākta upāyas* are only *pāramparika*, i.e., leading to realization through successive stages *āṇava upāya* leading to *śākta* leading to *Śāmbhava upāya*. The ultimate goal is *Śāmbhava Samāveśa*—a spontaneous flash of Understanding. *Āṇava* and *Śākta upāya*-s are only intermediate means to *Śāmbhava Yoga*' (*Śiva Sūtras: The Yoga of Supreme Identity* [New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979], p. xxiii). While some, like Timalina, would argue that Singh's ideas come only through the oral teachings he received from his guru, Lakshman Joo, Singh himself cites ŚSū 3.21 and other passages as evidence for this 'sequence theory.' In line with this argument, Gavin Flood cites Jararatha's commentary on the *Tantrāloka* 13.157 in positing that the term *upāya-yoga-kramatā* reveals that Trika-Kaulas understood that, at least in certain contexts, there is a succession of yogic practice that leads successively from *āṇava*, to *śākta*, to *śāmbhava*, and finally to *anupāya*. See Flood, *Body*, p. 246, fn. 38. In this same section, Flood notes that while Abhinavagupta, in the PTV, again ranks the *upāya*-s, he also notes that any 'hierarchy contains the delusion of duality.'

yogic and liturgical practices (*prakriyā*) designed to harness and cultivate the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*. Training in these techniques begins with *dīkṣā* from the Trika guru, during which the *sādhaka* receives not only guidance in the practices of *sādhana*, but also the fundamental empowerment that awakens the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* and thereby initiates a process of internal ascension. The following analysis of these practices will illustrate the extent to which the Trika-Kaulas equated matter with consciousness and thereby collapsed, inverted, and ultimately obliterated the kind of categories that characterize a Cartesian worldview.

The aim of Trika-Kaula initiation is suffusion by the deity (*devatā-āveśā*).⁷² Toward this end, the master constructs an elaborate *triśūlābhja-maṇḍala*, depicting the trident of Śiva adorned by the three goddesses (*devī-s*) of the Trika tradition—Parā, Parāparā, and Aparā—equated respectively with Śiva's three powers of impulse or will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*). In addition to this trinity of *devīs*, numerous *yoginī-s* and *kālī-s* pervade the *maṇḍala* as protectors and guides of the esoteric Trika-Kaula path. After constructing the sacred *maṇḍala*, the Tantric guru blindfolds the neophyte. With his or her back to the *maṇḍala*, the yogin receives a flower in his or her hand, which he or she then throws over his or her shoulder and onto the *maṇḍala*. The flight of this flower is held to be predetermined by unseen karmic forces. The deity onto which it lands is to be the initiate's chosen god (*iṣṭa-devatā*). During the subsequent period of the aspirant's ritual training this deity is continually invoked. Eventually, its energized presence will dissolve into that ecstatic vision that is the aim of Trika-Kaula practice: the realization of the unity of *mantra*, Self, guru, and chosen deity.⁷³

During the initiation, the *sādhaka* receives guidance in liturgical practices (*prakriyā*). These practices subsequently inform his daily worship (*nitya-pūjā*). Coupled with these liturgical practices, is the engagement in a hierarchy of Tantric yogic practices that suit the aptitude of the aspirant. These practices are laid out in the *upāya-catustayam*, which, as discussed earlier, consists in hierarchical order of the way

⁷² Sanderson, 'Maṇḍala,' 169–170.

⁷³ In addition to the excellent accounts of Trika initiation found in Sanderson (1986), 170–190, and Flood (1993), 220–228, I also witnessed a similar ritual performed by a Sarvāmnāya Tāntrika in the Kathmandu Valley in the spring of 1997.

of the individual (*āṇava-upāya*), the way of power (*śākta-upāya*), the way of Śiva-consciousness (*śāmbhava-upāya*), and the non-way (*an-upāya*).⁷⁴ In most cases, after receiving initiation, the aspirant commences at the first level of the *upāya* system and ascends gradually and sequentially through the various paths until eventually reaching the fourth level.⁷⁵ However, under rare circumstances, the empowerment received during *dīkṣā* is so intense (*atī-tivra-śaktipāta-dīkṣā*) that the *sādhaka* instantaneously becomes liberated.⁷⁶ According to the *Paramārtha-sāra*, under such circumstances the *sādhaka* immediately enters the fourth and final path, the non-way, which is the condition of *jīvan-mukta*. At this level, the potency of the *sādhaka*'s *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* is claimed to be fully awakened. There is no further need for yogic and liturgical practices.

Inverting Stage

Returning to the broader issues of comparative mysticism, what is interesting about this system of practices is that it illustrates an integration of introvertive and extrovertive mystical experiences with a final aim of transcending the dualistic concepts inherent in the very notions introvertive and extrovertive. To understand this process, we must return to our discussion of the parallels between the universe and the human yogin. Just as the Absolute, through its emissional power (*visarga-śakti*) projects and then reabsorbs the universe, so likewise the yogin projects his own reality. This dialectical process is termed the arising and withdrawing power (*unmeṣa-nimeṣa-śakti*). Through the *unmeṣa-śakti*, equated in mythico-cosmogonic terms with the awakening of Śiva from cosmic slumber, the universe comes into being. Through the withdrawing power (*nimeṣa-śakti*), the universe is reabsorbed and the divine being retreats into a state of cosmic withdrawal.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Several scholars have provided complete descriptions of the *upāya* system and I here refer the interested reader to their works: SenSharma, *The Philosophy of Sādhana*, 105–156; Flood, *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*, 245–256; Mishra, *Kashmir Śaivism*, 329–354; and Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 163–218.

⁷⁵ This path of 'gradual ascension' (*krāma-mukta*) is Abhinavagupta's referent in śloka 97 of the *Paramārtha-sāra*.

⁷⁶ Ps 96: *Paramārthamārgam enaṃ jhag iti yadā gurumukhāt samabhyeti / atītivraśaktipātāt tadaiva nirvighnam eva śivaṃ // 96*

⁷⁷ According to Jaidev Singh, the *spanda-śāstra* is primarily focused on explicat-

In the context of yogic practices, this dialectical process, as we saw above, gives rise to two distinct conditions for mystical experience. During the phase of projection or waking state consciousness the yogin seeks an extrovertive mystical experience, *unmīlana-samādhī*, while during the phase of interior withdrawal his aim is an introvertive mystical state, *nīmīlana-samādhī*.⁷⁸ While Stace, as discussed above, argues that introvertive mysticism is superior to its extrovertive counterpart, in the context of Trika-Kaulism we find that the opposite is true.⁷⁹ At the beginning stages of *sāadhanā*, the yogin engages in the introvertive practices of six-limbed yoga (*ṣaḍ-āṅga-yoga*) to still the mind and attain the inward stability that is essential for successful engagement in the extrovertive, left-handed Tantric practices at the higher echelons of yogic training.⁸⁰

The final stages of the *sāmbhava* path are, from a qualified perspective, entirely extrovertive. At the *sāmbhava* stage, the *sādhaka* partakes of the prohibited substances for the purpose of cognizing the world as the play of divine consciousness.⁸¹ Interestingly, this immersion in the external world parallels transformation in the inner world. The attainment of extrovertive *samādhī* propels the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* upwards so that the external sexual union with a Tantric consort

ing the *unmeṣa-nimeṣa* dialectic as it plays out on both cosmic and human levels. See his translation and exposition of the *Spanda Kārikās* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), esp. pp. 143–147.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 8–9. Cf. Flood, 240.

⁷⁹ Here again, I am not unaware of possible objections to my argument that the *āṇava* practices are ‘introvertive’ while the *sāmbhava* practices are ‘extrovertive’. I make this argument all the while knowing that in his *Tantrasāra* Abhinavagupta explicitly states that the practices of the *āṇava* path focus on meditation on ‘external’ objects. However, such practices are specifically geared towards the attainment of *nīmīlana-samādhī*. In other words, one focuses on external objects as supports for internal meditation. In this way, the yogin engaged in *āṇava-upāya* seeks to an internalized experience of consciousness by closing off the gates to the senses and drawing the mind within. Conversely, the yogin engaged in the *sāmbhava* practices does so with the senses oriented towards the objects of the world. His eyes are open in pursuit of the *bhairavī-mudrā*, that ‘seal of Bhairavī’ in which the world is experienced as the outward manifestation of one’s own essential nature. To experience this realization, one’s eyes are naturally ‘open’ and therefore the spiritual discipline is correctly identified, according to Stace’s model, ‘extrovertive.’

⁸⁰ The dynamics of the individual stages are elaborately described elsewhere, notably by Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 163–218.

⁸¹ In the *Tantrāloka* Abhinavagupta explicitly equates use of prohibited substances with ‘aptitude’ (*adhikārin*) acquired in the *sāmbhava-upāya*. See Navjivan Rastogi’s *Introduction to the Tantrāloka* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987): 10, 182.

(*dūtī*) parallels an internal union of Śiva and Śakti within the aspirant's subtle body.⁸² At the moment of this parallel union, the dual states of mystical experience—introvertive (*nimīlana*) and extrovertive (*unmīlana*) *samādhi*—fuse into a non-dual awareness (*advaita-vikalpa*) that gives rise to the yogic state that incorporates and transcends them both (*bhairavī-mudrā*, *pratimīlana-samādhi*).

In the final analysis, Trika-Kaula abolishes all dualistic categories. At the level of *an-upāya*, the liberated being (*jīvan-mukta*) experiences the universe and his own self as a singular pulsation of consciousness (PS 47–48). In this state of non-dual cognition, 'inner' and 'outer' become meaningless. And in this state of non-dual perception, the yogin declares: 'I make the universe within myself in the sky of Consciousness. I, who am the universe, am its creator.'⁸³

*Constructing a Double Identity:
Pure in Public, Powerful in Private*

As we have seen, Trika-Kaula yogins claimed to harness the very power of the cosmos, the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, which, through *dīkṣā*, could be awakened and thereby give rise to a yogic state in which the individual experiences identity with the greater cosmos, expressed in the *mantra*, *Śivo 'ham*, 'I am Śiva.' These radical spiritual claims were linked to social units that intentionally challenged and inverted normative injunctions against the inclusion of women and lower caste practitioners. Turning away from a focus on ritual purity, Tantric traditions placed priority on spiritual aptitude (*vidyādhikārin*) as the criterion for admission into the Tantric 'family' (*kula*). Such actions led to Tāntrikas being labeled as 'impure' and 'dangerous'. Consequently, Trika-Kaula practitioners like Abhinavagupta and Kṣemarāja, who were brahmins, had to maintain a double identity as 'pure' in public, 'Tantric' in private.⁸⁴ For this end, they engaged in two forms of liturgical practices: *tantra-prakṛiyā* and *kula-prakṛiyā*. To understand

⁸² This parallel process is most poetically and elaborately detailed by Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, esp. chapter 4, 'Kulamārga, the Esoteric Way,' 157–175.

⁸³ *Tantrāloka*, 3/125, Translated by Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, p. 189.

⁸⁴ Sanderson details the tensions of this dual role in 'Purity and Power among the Brahmins of Kashmir,' in *The Category of the Person: Anthropological and Philosophical Perspectives*, eds. Steven Lukes et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

the relationship between these two types of practices we have to contextualize them within the more general categories of 'left-handed' (*vāmācāra*) vs. 'right-handed' (*dakṣiṇācāra*) practice as well as the notion of *adhikārin* attained through practice in the yogas of the *upāya* system. Through this discussion we will once again see the ways in which the Tantric affirmation of embodiment and non-dualism provides a counterpoint to the Western discourse of duality.

The two *prakriyā*-s derive from distinct guru lineages (*santāna*): the *tantra-prakriyā* stems from the Tryambaka lineage, and the *kula-prakriyā* from the Ardhatryambaka lineage.⁸⁵ The primary distinction between these two types of practices is that the more right-handed *tantra-prakriyā* does not incorporate sexual union, or *maithuna*, while the left-handed *kula-prakriyā* makes concrete use of this prohibited act as the *sine qua non* of mystical attainment. Because of its incorporation of *maithuna*, the *kula-prakriyā* had to be enacted in secrecy, and for this reason in the 29th *āhnika* of the *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta refers to the *kula-prakriyā* as the 'secret sacrifice.'

These two liturgical traditions are related to each other in much the same way as the introvertive and extrovertive *samādhi*-s. The *tantra-prakriyā* is designed primarily for the purpose of interior worship and for those at the preparatory level of the *ānava-upāya*. During the liturgy, the *sādhaka* incorporates yogic practices with forms of *pūjā* for the sake of attaining introvertive or *nimīlana-samādhi*.⁸⁶ After attaining competence at this level, he is then initiated into the practices of the *kula-prakriyā* in which he seeks an extrovertive or *ummīlana-samādhi*. As with the *upāya-catustayam*, the ultimate goal of the liturgical practice is the *pratimīlana-samādhi*, the state of non-dual mystical awareness which obliterates all notions of interior and exterior. To better understand this process we need to examine more fully the two *prakriyā* systems.

The *tantra-prakriyā* begins with the drawing of the Trika *maṇḍala*. Then the *sādhaka* symbolically offers meat and wine to the deities believed to be present in the diagram. After this, he engages in internal worship (*antar-yāga*). During this process, the Tantric visualizes

⁸⁵ For further discussion of these lineages, see Flood, 269–271. Cf. Sanderson (1988).

⁸⁶ The following description is largely taken from Sanderson, 'Śaivism and the Tantric Tradition.' Cf. Sanjukta Gupta's comparative analysis of liturgical practice in 'Modes of Worship and Meditation,' in *Hindu Tantrism*, 121–163.

the incineration and reconstitution of his self as a divine body (*dīvyadeha*).⁸⁷ First, he engages in bodily purification (*bhūta-śuddhi*). Through this process he envisions his body burning up in a cosmic fire that obliterates his limited, social self. Alexis Sanderson concisely explicates this esoteric process:

The process of incineration is to be understood by the worshipper as the destruction of his public or physical individuality (*dehāntatā*) and the blowing away of the ashes as the eradication of the deep latent traces (*saṃskāra*) of this binding identification. He is to see that all that remains of his identity is pure, undifferentiated consciousness as the impersonal ground of his cognition and action.⁸⁸

This process of bodily incineration parallels the process of universal destruction during the *mahāpralaya*, in which the universe resembles a vast cremation ground (*śmaśāna*) ‘strewn with the lifeless “corpses” of phenomena.’⁸⁹ This place of cosmic incineration, of universal death, is at once the locus of a liberating power. Through death, the yogin attains divine life. Abhinavagupta writes:

Who does not become perfect by entering in that which is the support of all the gods, in the cremation ground whose form is empty, the abode of the *siddhas* and *yoginīs*, in the greatly terrifying place of their play where all bodies (*vīgraha*) are consumed? [That place is] filled with the circle of one’s own rays (*svaraśmimaṇḍala*), where dense darkness (*dhvāntasantata*) is destroyed, the solitary abode of bliss, liberated from all discursive thought (*vikalpa*), and filled with innumerable pyres (*citi*); in the cremation ground terrifying to consciousness (*citi*).⁹⁰

This vivid description illustrates once again the direct correspondence between the human body and the body of the universe. Just as one’s own rays illumine meditation, so ultimately it is only one’s own Self which lights up the universe. In the Trika-Kaula *sādhana* complex internal processes mirror the external (PS 48–49). Similarly, descriptions of cosmic processes simultaneously explicate internal dynamics, and for this reason the yogin’s concept of self must eventually expand to incorporate the notion that he or she *is* the universe. First, however, he or she must attain mastery in the training of introvertive techniques. Hence, he progresses to the next stage of the liturgy.

⁸⁷ PS 76 is a reference to this practice of internal incineration.

⁸⁸ *Tantrāloka*, 15.133c–134b.

⁸⁹ Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 143. Cf. PS 79–80.

⁹⁰ *Tantrāloka* 29.183–185b.

Having incinerated his limited self, the *sādhaka* now constructs a divine body through *nyāsa*, the ritual installation of *mantra*-s and deities. During this process he visualizes his own body as the body of consciousness. For this end, the *sādhaka* visually encodes the Trika *maṇḍala* (the *triśulābja*) onto his own subtle physiology. Starting from the base of the spine he visualizes Śiva's three-pronged trident running up his *suṣumnā* through the aperture in the crown and beyond to the highest *cakra*, the *dvādaśānta* twelve inches above the crown of the head. Along the trident, in correspondence with the *cakra*-s, are inscribed the thirty-six *tattva*-s of cosmic manifestation, beginning with those of the physical world (*mahā-bhūta*-s) and ascending upward to those more refined principles at the initial stages of cosmic manifestation. On the tops of the trident sit the Trika trinity: Para, Parāpara, and Aparā. They are equated with the transcendent aspect (*unmanā*) of the Absolute, the supreme principle (*para-tattva*, the thirty-seventh *tattva*).

During these processes of self-purification and bodily deification, the yogin simultaneously engages in yogic breathing practices (*prāṇāyāma*) for the awakening and elevation of *kuṇḍalinī*.⁹¹ Through the utilization of such introvertive yogic techniques as yogic-locks (*bandha*-s) and postures (*āsana*-s), the breath enters and ascends the central channel. This arising breath (*udāna-prāṇa*) thereby propels the *kuṇḍalinī* upwards towards the higher *cakra*-s. The purpose of these techniques is to catalyze internal incineration. Hence the cosmic fire is understood to be the awakened *kuṇḍalinī* which burns up the limited selfhood of the aspirant. It is interesting that the aspirant visualizes this process daily, when the entire process of *sādhanā* is itself understood as the ascension of the *kuṇḍalinī*. In other words, the yogin visualizes daily the process of his gradual emancipation (*krama-mukti*). The fact that it is merely visualized does not diminish the validity of the *kuṇḍalinī* as an ontological power. Rather, the daily practice is believed to fuel the arising of the energy.⁹²

After constructing the internal *maṇḍala*, the aspirant engages in an external worship (*bāhya-yāga*) that includes the consumption of wine and meat, but not sexual union.⁹³ In this process we see a very

⁹¹ Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 49–50.

⁹² Flood, *Body*, 280–281.

⁹³ The inclusion of these left-handed elements within the *tantra-prakriyā* indicates

important dynamic that again parallels the introvertive-extrovertive, *nimeṣa-unmeṣa* dialectic inherent in the emissional power: namely, that there is a process of interiorization through *antar-yāga*, followed by exteriorization through *bāhya-yāga*. Comparing this internal-external dialectic to the introvertive-extrovertive *samādhi-s* of the *upāya* system, the parallels become readily apparent. In other words, at the level of the interiorization of consciousness *nimeṣa* = *regressive visarga-śakti* = *nimīlana samādhi* = *antar-yāga* = *introvertive mystical experience*, while at the level of the exteriorization of consciousness *unmeṣa* = *progressive visarga-śakti* = *unmīlana samādhi* = *bāhya-yāga* = *extrovertive mystical experience*. Through this elaborate and extensive set of practice-based homologies the Trika-Kaula Tantric re-cognizes the introvertive-extrovertive flux of liturgical and yogic practice as the pulsation of *visarga-śakti* itself. For this reason, the sequence of ritual practice (*pūjā-krama*) is equated with the unfolding of consciousness (*saṃvit-krama*).⁹⁴

Through the liturgical visualizing of the Trika *maṇḍala*, the initiate ultimately seeks to perceive the polarities embodied in notions of internal-external, expansion-contraction, not as Cartesian opposites, but as but two aspects of one reality. Gavin Flood writes:

In visualizing this *maṇḍala* the adept both internalizes the cosmos and its source, defined by the Trika, and in so doing hopes to erode and finally eradicate any sense of individuality or separateness from supreme consciousness. Because the mind is thought to take on the qualities of its objects, the adept through visualizing the *maṇḍala* which is the totality of manifestation and its source, will thereby realize that the essential and manifest cosmic bodies are contained within his own body, and that there is no distinction between him and the object of his meditation.⁹⁵

The fact that external worship follows internal worship, just as extrovertive *samādhi* follows introvertive *samādhi*, points to the Tantric affirmation of the world as the outpouring of *śakti*. Hence, the transgressive consumption of meat and wine asserts both the Tantric's acquisition of a caste-defying power and the embracing of all worldly

that one cannot make an absolute correspondence between *vāmācāra/tantra-prakriyā* and *dakṣiṇācāra/kula-prakriyā*. Still these comparisons are useful, especially given that while the *tantra-prakriyā* rites were considered socially permissible for a brahmin, those of the *kula-prakriyā* were explicitly forbidden.

⁹⁴ Sanderson, 'Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions,' 692–693.

⁹⁵ Flood, *Body*, 280–281.

phenomena as the locus of transformative power, *śakti*. The ingestion of prohibited substances is a radical assertion that while the limited self is bound to Vedic distinctions between pure and impure, the awakened *sādhaka* experiences the entire universe as a manifestation of liberating power.⁹⁶ Thus, that which brings about the downfall of others is that which brings an empowering freedom to the *sādhaka*.

The final empowerment, that which elevates the yogin to the status of *jīvan-mukti*, occurs at the stage of *śāmbhava-upāya*, when one becomes qualified to engage in the secret rite of the *kula-prakriyā*. Through this ritual, which enjoins the most transgressive of the *makāra-trayam*, namely, *maithuna*, the competent Tantric becomes gradually perfected (*siddhi-krama*) within the course of a month.⁹⁷ At this stage, his or her *kuṇḍalinī* strongly activated, the adept transcends all ritual injunctions (PS 40) and lives according to his or her own will (PS 81). Having entered the *an-upāya*, the Tantric claims to be Śiva himself, at once transcendent and immanent, unmanifest and manifest, expanded and contracted, containing all opposites within the body as the pure manifestation of consciousness itself. Hence, acts of secrecy provide the final empowerment.

A Union Beyond, Within, and Through the Body

In the Trika tradition ritualized union embodies on the micro level the ultimate oneness of Śiva and Śakti.⁹⁸ Through mystico-erotic practice, the yogin transcends all opposites to reach a non-dual state of bliss, which arises as a result of the union of *kuṇḍalinī* and Śiva within the *suṣumnā-nāḍī*.⁹⁹ In other words, through the identification

⁹⁶ For a more detailed analysis of the trans-social self see Sanderson, 'Purity and Power Among the Brahmins of Kashmir.' Cf. Muller-Ortega, 'The Power of the Secret Ritual,' and Brooks,

⁹⁷ *Tantrāloka* 29. Cf., Flood, *Body*, 283.

⁹⁸ For an excellent comparative study of Tantric conceptions of sexual union see Eliade's, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958): pp. 249–259. Cf. Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (New York: Samuel Wieser, 1975): chapter 9, 'Polarity Symbolism in Tantric Doctrine and Practice,' 199–227.

⁹⁹ PS 75 is an important reference to the *kula-yāga* union of the Śiva-Śakti dyad.

of the microcosm with the macrocosm in ritualized yogic love-making, the *sādhaka* achieves final empowerment through the completion of *kuṇḍalinī*'s internal ascent.¹⁰⁰

The *kula-prakriyā* is designed specifically for this purpose. Abhinavagupta devotes the twenty-ninth chapter of his *Tantrāloka* to an explanation of this final ritual within the *prakriyā* system. The names he gives it are triadic: it is at once the bodily sacrifice (*kula-yāga*), the secret injunction (*rahasya-vidhi*) and the secret sacrifice (*rahasya-yāga*). Masson¹⁰¹ writes:

The ritual [rahasyavidhi] is in fact an elaborate play that takes the greater part of the day. The goal is the same as in any ordinary drama, to reach a state of perfect equanimity, blissful repose, where the *dūtī* identifies herself with Śakti, and the male identifies himself with Śiva.¹⁰²

What distinguishes this act from 'any ordinary drama' is that during the course of its enactment, the 'actors' attain a state of permanent non-dual mystical awareness (*nirvikalpa*-, or *pratimūlana-samādhi*).¹⁰³ The key to the ritual is the transmutation of desire into an upward force (*udyama-śakti*) equated with the *spanda* principle itself.¹⁰⁴ For this end, *maithuna* is seen as the necessary vehicle of transformation.

During the ritual, several qualified adepts sit in a circle of worship (*cakra-pūjā*) around the Trika-Kaula master.¹⁰⁵ Each is attended by a female consort, called *dūtī* or *yoginī*. In the initial stages of the rite, the *sādhaka*-s first enter a state of *nimūlana-samādhi*.¹⁰⁶ Bringing their senses (*indriyāṇi*) under control by fastening them with the rope of yoga, they prepare for the extrovertive methods of the *rahasya-vidhi*. The key to their qualification is that they maintain the aware-

¹⁰⁰ Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 138.

¹⁰¹ This obscure rite has been analyzed by only a few scholars, including: J. Masson (1969), Lilian Silburn (1988), Paul Muller-Ortega (1990), and Gavin Flood (1993).

¹⁰² J. Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, *Śāntarasa, and Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Aesthetics* (Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969): 40. Also cited by Flood.

¹⁰³ Cf. Larson's important analysis of the distinction between the nature of religious experience (*brahmāsvāda*) and aesthetic experience (*rasāsvāda*), in his essay, 'The aesthetic (*rasāsvāda*) and the religious (*brahmāsvāda*) in Abhinavagupta's Kashmir Śaivism.'

¹⁰⁴ Muller-Ortega (1990), p. 47. Cf. Mishra's discussion of *kula-yāga* as a 'sublimation of sexual desire'. *Op. cit.*, pp. 368–369.

¹⁰⁵ See Muller-Ortega's translation of the *cakra-pūjā* in *Triadic Heart*, 61–62.

¹⁰⁶ Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 183.

ness that their consort is Śakti herself. If they fall from this elevated state, desire will overcome them, and they will not attain the higher mystical experience that is the goal of the ritual.¹⁰⁷ If, however, they are able to keep their passions in check, then through the yogic fire created during union, the *kuṇḍalinī* will be ignited and ascend up the central channel. In this way, the outer union (*bāhya-maithuna*) reflects an inner union (*antar-maithuna*).¹⁰⁸

As the means to igniting this process, the *dūtī* is understood to play a pivotal role.¹⁰⁹ She has herself been initiated through sexual union with the guru, and, according to certain texts, has thereby attained full enlightenment.¹¹⁰ Having received this transmission from the guru, the *dūtī* is perceived as a vessel of preceptorial power and wisdom. During the *kula-prakriyā*, the *sādhaka* receives empowerment from her *yoni*, identified as the mouth of the *yoginī* (*yoginī-vaktra*).¹¹¹ In this context, human sexual union is interpreted as reflecting the power of Śiva's eternal joy (*ānanda-śakti*) which arises from his union with Śakti. Through *maithuna* the human couple become a fusion (*melaka, melāpa, saṅghatta*) of the male and female principles of the cosmos. 'Human coitus,' Flood notes, 'becomes identical with the union (*yuganaddha, yāmala*) of Śiva and Śakti. The *yogi* or *siddha*, also called a 'hero' (*vīra*), becomes the possessor of Śakti, while the *yoginī* or messenger (*dūtī*) becomes Śakti.'¹¹² During this cosmicized union, the *sādhaka* is empowered and vitalized by his consort. In this way, ordinary bodily processes are perceived as synonymous with those of the body of consciousness. The rhythmic breath of love-making becomes the expansion (*unmeṣa*) and withdrawal (*nimeṣa*) of consciousness.¹¹³ The final product of the rite, the emission of semen, is equated with *visarga-śakti* and the bliss of liberation.

¹⁰⁷ Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 184.

¹⁰⁸ Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 186–187.

¹⁰⁹ Although the ritual status of the *dūtī* has not been fully explored both Silburn (*ibid.*, 179), and Flood, *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*, 287–291, provide textual-based analyses that unpack the core practice and symbolism.

¹¹⁰ David G. White's work on the historical origins, social contexts, and textual foundations for the *yoginī* traditions provides the richest and most nuanced analysis of the multiple functions and meanings of the *dūtī*. See his *Kiss of the Yoginī: 'Tantric Sex' in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), esp. pp. 112–114.

¹¹¹ Flood, *Body*, 291. Cf. Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī*, 173.

¹¹² Flood, *Body*, 286–287.

¹¹³ Flood, *Body*, 291.

In this way, the practices of the *kula-prakriyā* are re-coded as the means by which perfect I-awareness (*pūrṇo haṃ-vimarśa*) is established in and through the body. At the height of orgasm (*kampakāla*), the united couple, Abhinavagupta tells us, is to focus on their ‘essential consciousness’ and thereby achieve a desireless (*anicchā*) state.¹¹⁴ In this way the couple loses all awareness of inner and outer, male and female.¹¹⁵ They are elevated into a non-dual embrace in which Self and world become the singular pulsation of undulating *śakti*.

Concluding Reflections

Through ritualized union, the Tantric couple, in Muller-Ortega’s words, ‘physically embody the dyadic wholeness of Śiva.’¹¹⁶ In this way the esoteric ritual becomes a vehicle for harnessing the *visarga-śakti*. At this level of transcendent empowerment, all dualistic distinctions fade away. Through this rite, the Tantric reaches the culmination of his *sādhana*. The engagement in antinomian practices becomes the means to fuel the *udyama-śakti* which fuses within itself expansion and contraction, introvertive and extrovertive, male and female.

This act of physical union is the apex of a long process of bodily training in the Tantric techniques of internal ascension. In the initial stages of this training, the *sādhaka* sits alone, worshipping the Trika *maṇḍala* within his own body. After acquiring competence in these introvertive techniques, he or she then becomes ready for the extrovertive, left-handed rites of the *kula-prakriyā*. Just as the *visarga-śakti* withdraws only to again expand, so the yogin initially interiorizes his practice in order to then ritually embrace the world as the expansion of *śakti*. In this way, the *sādhaka*’s training mirrors the rhythms of the cosmos. The undulation of interior and exterior embodied at all levels of reality—from the undulation of cosmic manifestation to the yogin’s own in-going and out-going breaths—is recognized as the pulsation of the divine *śakti*.

¹¹⁴ Flood, *Body*, 285.

¹¹⁵ *Bṛhadāraṇyakoṇiṣad* 4.3.21: ‘As a man embraced by his beloved woman knows neither the outer nor the inner, so a man embraced by the essence of wisdom knows neither the outer nor the inner.’

¹¹⁶ Muller-Ortega, ‘The Power of the Secret Ritual,’ 45.

Seeing that the one energy manifests itself in all forms, the yogin eventually transcends all dualistic categories by recognizing the outer and inner worlds as mirror reflections of a single reality. This leads in turn to the recognition that the yogin has assumed the form of the universe:

In me the universe appears like jars and other external objects in a clear mirror. From me everything emanates like the various dreams which arise from sleep. Like a body naturally constituted of hands, feet, etc. I assume the form of the universe. It is I alone who bursts forth in all beings as a luminous form.¹¹⁷

In this illumined state, all opposites invert and fuse. The universe is within the body, and the body is projected as the universe. The inner has become the outer, the withdrawn the expanded.

In a classic Tantric example of the recognition of this two-in-oneness (*ekam-dvaitam-pratyabhijñā*), this fusing and transcending of all semantic opposites, the 14th-century *siddha-yoginī*, Lalleśvarī, poetically proclaims:

The entire world [the sphere of duality] exists in Śiva [non-dual truth] and Śiva exists in the world.
Whether it is matter (*prakṛti*) or consciousness (*cit-śakti*)
it is all Śiva.
Śiva is in the *mantra*.
Śiva is in the world.
Śiva exists in His fullness (*pūrṇam*) everywhere (*sarvatra*).¹¹⁸

Lalli's poetry provides a challenge to the Western discourse of duality embodied in scholarly theories such as Stace's. As in our analysis of the dynamics of the *upāya-catustayam*, her words reveal that such dualistic notions as introvertive/extrovertive, body/consciousness, and mind/matter are useful only in a relative and qualified sense. With regards to the interpretation of discourses and practices rooted in non-dual, non-Western models that equate matter with consciousness, human with divine, inner with outer, we are obliged to leave Descartes behind.

¹¹⁷ PS 48–49:

*Mayy eva bhāti viśvaṃ darpaṇa iva mirmale ghaṭādīni /
Mattah prasaratī viśvaṃ svāpnavicitratvam iva suptāt // 48
Aham eva viśvarūpaḥ karacaranādisvabhā iva dehaḥ /
sarvasminn aham eva sphurāmi bhāveṣu bhāsvarūpam iva // 49*

¹¹⁸ Lalleśvarī, *Lalleshwari: Spiritual Poems by a Great Siddha Yogini*, transl. Swami Muktananda (Gurudev Siddha Peeth: SYDA, 1981): #106.

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