

## Remarks on Compassion and Altruism in the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy

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**Abstract** According to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, a subject who has freed himself from the bondage of individuality is necessarily compassionate, and his action, necessarily altruistic. This article explores the paradoxical aspects of this statement; for not only does it seem contradictory with the Pratyabhijñā's non-dualism (how can compassion and altruism have any meaning if the various subjects are in fact a single, all-encompassing Self?)—it also implies a subtle shift in meaning as regards the very notion of compassion (*karuṇā*, *kṛpā*), since according to the two Śaivas, compassion does not result from the awareness of the others' pain (*duḥkha*)—as in Buddhism—but from the awareness of one's own bliss (*ānanda*). The article thus shows that in spite of their radical criticism of traditional ethical categories such as merit (*dharma*) and demerit (*adharmā*), the two Śaiva philosophers still make use of ethical categories, but not without profoundly transforming them.

**Keywords** Utpaladeva · Abhinavagupta · Pratyabhijñā · Compassion · Altruism

I have already attempted to show, in a previous article,<sup>1</sup> the importance of the concept of otherness (*paratva*) in the Pratyabhijñā philosophy, by pointing out that it is one of the crucial points that enable Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta to distinguish their idealism from that of the Buddhist Vijñānavādins. Whereas Dharmakīrti states in his *Santānāntarasiddhi*<sup>2</sup> that the various other cognitive series

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<sup>1</sup> See Ratié (2007).

<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, the text is only preserved in its entirety in a Tibetan version (for an English translation of Stcherbatsky's Russian translation of this Tibetan version, see Stcherbatsky (1969); for the Sanskrit initial verse as quoted by Abhinavagupta and Rāmakaṇṭha, see Ratié (2007, fn. 20, p. 323)).

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which constitute what we usually call “the others” are known through a mere inference (*anumāna*), the two Śaiva philosophers show, first, that such an inference is impossible according to Dharmakīrti’s very principles, and second, that our knowledge of the others’ existence is a much less abstract awareness than that provided by any inference: according to them, this awareness is rather a guess (*ūha*) in which we immediately sense our own freedom (*svātantrya*) outside of the boundaries that define our individuality, and as such, the awareness of the others’ existence is already a partial recognition of the universal Self which the Śaiva non-dualistic scriptures designate as Śiva. Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta also point out that contrary to the Vijñānavādins’ system, theirs enables us to understand intersubjectivity: if several subjects appear to share a single object of perception, it is not because this object would have an independent existence outside of consciousness, as the externalists contend; nor is it because of a perpetual accidental correspondence between various particular illusions belonging to each cognitive series, as Dharmakīrti explains in his *Santānāntarasiddhi*; rather, it is due to the absolute freedom of the single infinite consciousness, which is able both to present itself as scattered into a multiplicity of limited subjects, and to manifest its fundamental unity in these various subjects by making them one with respect to one particular object.

However, I would like to point out here that from the point of view of the Pratyabhijñā philosophers, otherness is not only a problem as regards the way we become aware of the others’ presence, nor only as regards the way we can consider that we share perceived objects with other perceiving subjects. For whether from the Vijñānavāda’s or from the Pratyabhijñā’s perspectives, the question of otherness is linked to that of compassion (*karuṇā*, *kṛpā*).

Thus from the Buddhist point of view, the problem of otherness is not only ontological or epistemological, but also soteriological, and this latter dimension places the Vijñānavāda in a rather delicate situation:<sup>3</sup> accepting that the other subject or cognitive series is more than a mere object in my cognitive series would amount to abandoning the very principle of idealism,<sup>4</sup> so that Dharmakīrti carefully avoids formulating such an acceptance;<sup>5</sup> but if endeavouring to free the others from

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Inami (2001, p. 465), who sums up this situation in the following manner: “If other minds were admitted, their theory would be inconsistent. If other minds were denied, it would be meaningless to preach others”.

<sup>4</sup> Which the Sautrāntika opponent portrayed by Abhinavagupta in his ĪPV emphasizes while criticizing the Vijñānavādins’ account of the others’ existence; see ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 174–175 (quoted and translated in Ratié (2007, pp. 334–335)): if one can infer another cognitive series, then it is possible “that the object of cognition (*prameya*) itself might be distinct from consciousness; since [then] such [Dharmakīrtian arguments] as ‘the necessity of being perceived together’ [for the object and its cognition] (*sahopalambhaniyama*) do not necessarily lead to the conclusion [of idealism], what offence has the mass of objects [...] committed, because of which it would not be allowed to rest on its own nature, [independently of the subject]?”.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Inami (2001, pp. 473–474): “The acceptance of the existence of other minds, just as that of the existence of external objects, is contradictory to the theory of *vijñaptimātratā*. In this respect, Dharmakīrti, in the *Santānāntarasiddhi*, deals with other minds only in the conventional sense. Moreover [...] he often insists that the inference of other minds can be regarded as valid because of its correspondence. Such an inference is conventional and is denied on the level of the ultimate truth”.

their suffering (for instance by teaching them) is not to remain a perfectly vain attempt, the others must be something over and above a mere object of inference in my cognitive series—which is to say, ultimately, something more than a mere artificial concept (*vikalpa*) resulting from a mechanism of residual traces (*saṃskāra*). This delicate situation seems to be the source of a fundamental ambiguity on Dharmakīrti's part: while the Buddhist logician never explicitly accepts the existence of other cognitive series in the ultimate sense, he never completely denies it either.<sup>6</sup>

In this regard, it is worth noting that unlike Dharmakīrti in his *Santānāntara-siddhi*, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta state in the clearest manner that according to them, other subjects do not have any kind of existence independently of the Self's, and that this universal Self encompassing all subjects and objects is unique; from this latter point of view, the Pratyabhijñā philosophy is, without any ambiguity, a solipsism.<sup>7</sup> And yet, remarkably enough, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers also attach considerable importance to compassion—and do not seem to consider that their solipsism is in any way contradictory with the principle of compassion. Thus from the very beginning of his work, Utpaladeva specifies that it is while “desiring to help men as well” (*janasyāpy upakāram icchan*)<sup>8</sup> that he has endeavoured to enable the others to achieve the self-recognition by which they should be freed from all suffering and limitation; Abhinavagupta, commenting on this first verse, explains that it is out of compassion (*kṛpā*) that Utpaladeva has written the treatise—a treatise the goal of which is supposed to be entirely altruistic, since Abhinavagupta

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Inami (2001, p. 474): “He does not clearly mention that the existence of other minds is denied in the ultimate sense. He comments only that Buddha's knowledge is beyond our argument”.

<sup>7</sup> See ĪPV, vol. I, p. 48 (quoted and translated in Ratić (2007, p. 315)) according to which “the entire multiplicity of subjects is in reality one single subject (*ekaḥ pramātā*), and this [subject] alone exists”.

<sup>8</sup> ĪPK I, 1, 1: *kathaṃcid āsādyā maheśvarasya dāsyam janasyāpy upakāram icchan / samasta-saṃpatsamavāptihetum tatpratyabhijñām upapādayāmi //* “Having somehow attained the state of servant of the Great Lord, and desiring to help men as well, I am going to enable them to achieve the recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of this [Lord as themselves] which is the cause of obtaining all beneficial effects”. Here, by “men” (*jana*), Utpaladeva means any member of mankind, as Abhinavagupta points out (ĪPV, vol. I, p. 14): *janasyeti, yaḥ kaścij jāyamānas tasyety anenādhikāriṣayō nātra kaścīn niyama iti darśayati*. “By [using the word] ‘men’ (*jana*), [which designates] ‘anybody who was born’ (*jāyamāna*), [Utpaladeva] shows that in the [Pratyabhijñā system,] there is absolutely no restriction as regards who is qualified (*adhikārin*) [to receive teachings and who is not]”. Cf. ĪPK, IV, 18 (*janasyāyatnasiddhyartham udayākarasūnūnā / īśvarapratyabhijñeyam utpalenopapādītā //* “Utpala-[deva], son of Udayākara, has explained this Recognition of the Lord (*īśvarapratyabhijñā*) so that men (*jana*) may obtain realization without effort”, and Abhinavagupta's commentary on the term *jana* (ĪPV, vol. II, p. 276): *yasya kasyacij jantor iti nātra jātyādyapekṣā kācid iti sarvopakāritvam uktam*. “[By saying that he has explained the Recognition of the Lord so that ‘men’, that is to say] any born being (*jantu*) [may obtain realization, Utpaladeva] has expressed the fact that [this Recognition] is beneficial to all (*sarva*), because in this regard there is no such requisite as caste (*jāti*), etc.”.

describes it in several occasions as a vast “inference for others” (*parārthānumāna*):<sup>9</sup>

*\*janasyety [J, L, SI, SOAS: janasya KSTS, Bhāskarī, S2] anavarata-jananamaraṇapīḍitasyety anena kṛpāspadatayopakaraṇīyatvam āha. apiśabdaḥ svātmanas tadabhinnatām āviṣkurvan pūrṇatvena svātmani parārthasamṣṭyatiiriktaprayojanāntarāvakāśam parākaroti. parārthas ca prayojanam bhavaty eva tallakṣaṇayogāt; na hy ayaṃ daivaśāpaḥ svārtha eva prayojanam na parārtha iti; tasyāpy atallakṣaṇayogitve saty aprayojanatvāt; samṣṭyatyatvenābhisamḥitam yan mukhyatayā tata eva kriyāsu prayojakam tat prayojanam. ata eva bhedavāde’pīśvarasya sṛṣṭyādikaraṇe parārtha eva prayojanam iti darśayitum nyāyanirmāṇavedhasā nirūpitam: yam artham adhikṛtya puruṣaḥ pravartate tat prayojanam iti.*<sup>10</sup>

By [saying] “men” (*jana*), i.e., [all] those who are tormented with endless births (*janana*) and deaths, [Utpaladeva] expresses the fact that they must be helped (*upakaraṇīya*) because they are an object of compassion (*kṛpā*). The

<sup>9</sup> Abhinavagupta borrows this notion of “inference for others” from the Nyāya. See for instance Jayanta Bhaṭṭa’s interpretation of NS I, 1, 32 (*pratijñāhetūdāharaṇopanayanigamanāny avayavāḥ*. “The elements are the proposition to be demonstrated (*pratijñā*), the reason (*hetu*), the example (*udāharaṇa*), the application to the case at hand (*upanaya*), the conclusion (*nigamana*)”) in NM, vol. I, p. 18: *parārthānumānavākyaikadeśabhūtāḥ pratijñādayo’vayavāḥ*. “The elements which are the proposition to be demonstrated (*pratijñā*), etc., are gathered in a sentence [which constitutes] the inference for others (*parārthānumāna*)”. Thus according to the classical example mentioned in fn. 55 of the KSTS edition of the ĪPV (ĪPV, vol. I, p. 25): *parvato’yaṃ vahnimān iti pratijñā, dhūmavattvād iti hetuḥ, yo yo dhūmavān sa sa vahnimān yathā mahānasa ity udāharaṇam, tathā cāyam ity upanayaḥ, tasmāt tatheti nigamanam iti*. “This hill is on fire (= *pratijñā*), because it has smoke [on it] (= *hetu*); wherever there is smoke there is fire, as in the case of a kitchen (= *udāharaṇa*); and this [hill] is such that [it has smoke on it] (= *upanaya*); therefore [the hill] is such [that it is on fire] (= *nigamana*)”. In the ĪPV, Abhinavagupta compares the various elements of the treatise to those which, according to the Naiyāyikas, constitute the inference for others; see vol. I, p. 25: *evaṃ pratijñātavyasamastavastusamgrahaṇenedam vākyaṃ uddēśarūpaṃ pratijñāpīṇḍātmakaṃ ca, mādhyaḡranthas tu hetvādinirūpakāḥ, iti prakāṣito mayeti cāntyaśloko nigamanagrantha ity evaṃ pañcāvayavātmakaṃ idaṃ śāstram paravyutpattiphalam*. “Thus, because this sentence [constituted by the first verse of the treatise] contains all the things to be demonstrated, it consists in stating the themes [which are developed in the treatise] and it is a summary of the thesis to be demonstrated (*pratijñā*); whereas the treatise, between [this first sentence and the last,] expounds the reason (*hetu*) [for this inference], etc.; and the last verse, [beginning with] ‘Thus I have explained...’, constitutes the conclusion (*nigamana*). Thus this treatise made of five elements (*pañcāvayava*) results in the instruction of others (*paravyutpatti*)”. Cf. ĪPV, vol. II, p. 126, where Abhinavagupta makes again explicit allusions to the Nyāya terminology: *parārthānumānātmakaṃ hi śāstram, tatra ca pramāṇādiśoḍaśapadārthattvamayatvam eva paramārthaḥ*. “For the treatise consists in an inference for others (*parārthānumāna*), and its ultimate nature (*paramārtha*) is nothing but its consisting in [examining] the true nature of the sixteen categories (*padārtha*) which are the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), etc., [enumerated in the first aphorism of the *Nyāyasūtra*]”. Cf. also ĪPV, vol. III, p. 182: *tatprakāṣanāyedaṃ pūrṇaparārthānumānarūpaṃ pramāṇādinigrahasthānaparyantapadārthaśoḍaśakanibandhanena samyak paravyutpattisampādanasamarthaṃ śāstram*. “This treatise, which consists in a complete inference for others (*parārthānumāna*), [and] which aims at making evident this [identity of oneself with the Lord,] is capable of inducing the instruction of others (*paravyutpatti*) in a complete way by relying upon the sixteen categories (*padārtha*) [enumerated at the beginning of the *Nyāyasūtra*,] from the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) to the weak point [of an argument] (*nigrahasthāna*)”.

<sup>10</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 15–16.

word “as well” (*api*) [in “desiring to help men as well”], by emphasizing the identity (*abhinnatā*) of [Utpaladeva] with the Self,<sup>11</sup> sets aside the possibility of any other motive (*prayojana*) [for writing the treatise] besides accomplishing the others’ interest (*parārtha*); for [Utpaladeva, insofar as he has realized his identity with the Self,] is full (*pūrṇa*) as regards himself (*svātman*). And the others’ interest (*parārtha*) is indeed a motive, since it is appropriate to the definition of the [motive]; for there is no divine curse according to which only my own interest (*svārtha*), and not the others’ interest, would be a motive! Because even [my own interest,] if it is not appropriate to the [motive]’s definition, is not a [motive; for] the motive is what one mainly aims at as what must be accomplished (*saṃpādyā*), [and which,] for this very reason, is the prompter (*prayojaka*) of actions. It is for this very reason that even in a dualistic system (*bhedavāda*), the founder of Nyāya has explained that “the goal aiming at which a person undertakes to act is the motive”<sup>12</sup> [without excluding the others’ interest from this definition], in order to show that regarding the [cosmic] activities—creation, etc.—of the Lord, the motive is nothing but the others’ interest.

According to Abhinavagupta, it is exclusively the others’ interest (*parārtha*) which guides the author of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikās*, for Utpaladeva, who has freed himself from the metaphysical bondage consisting in believing in his individuality, is now one with the universal Self; and by adding that “even” from the point of view of a dualistic system such as the Nyāya, it is a legitimate motive in acting for the world’s creator, Abhinavagupta implies that it is all the more the case in a non-dualistic system such as the Pratyabhijñā. We are reaching here the paradox at the heart of the Pratyabhijñā’s notion of otherness: according to Utpaladeva and

<sup>11</sup> It is possible to understand *svātmanas tadabhinnatām* in several ways. Bhāskaraṇṭha interprets it as meaning “the identity of oneself with the [men] whom one must help” (see *Bhāskarī*, vol. I, p. 32: *tadabhinnatām—upakaraṇīyais saha svasyābhedam*). K. C. Pandey interprets it as meaning rather the identity of Utpaladeva with the Self (see *Bhāskarī*, vol. III, p. 5: “his identity with the Supreme”) and mentions Bhāskaraṇṭha’s interpretation in a footnote without giving reasons for his own choice. At first, Bhāskaraṇṭha’s interpretation seems to fit better with the meaning of the word *api*: Abhinavagupta could be explaining here that this “as well” is reminding the reader that all men *too* are the Self (or that they too are Utpaladeva insofar as he has realized his identity with the universal Self). However, the rest of the sentence indicates that the word *api* is meant to set aside any motive besides the others’ interest, “because of the being complete in oneself” (*pūrvatvena svātmani*) that this identity implies; and in the *ĪPVV* (see below), Abhinavagupta further explains that the liberated (such as Utpaladeva), *because he has realized his identity with the Self* and is therefore “complete” or “full” (*pūrṇa*) as regards himself (*svātman*), necessarily aims at nothing but the others’ interest. Therefore it seems to me that here, K. C. Pandey is right: Abhinavagupta means that the word *api* emphasizes Utpaladeva’s identity with the Self. How then does this word reveal this identity? Abhinavagupta is probably alluding to the fact that according to the Śaiva scriptures (*āgama*), the Lord is compassionate: he bestows his grace (*anugraha*), and *so does the liberated*, who also (*api*) has as his sole motive (*prayojana*) grace (*anugraha*) as soon as he has realized his identity with absolute consciousness (cf. TĀ 2, 38, quoted below, fn. 26).

<sup>12</sup> NS I, 1, 24.

Abhinavagupta, otherness is not real in the ultimate sense, and the others are nothing but various limited ways for the unique and infinite Self to manifest itself; and yet, Abhinavagupta clearly maintains that this non-dualism is not incompatible with altruism.

This paradox might cease to appear as a mere contradiction if one first takes into account the fact that according to the Pratyabhijñā, the others, just as myself, *exist insofar as they are the Self*:<sup>13</sup> the existence of the Self (*ātman*) and the non-existence of otherness (*paratva*) does not imply that the others (*para*) do not exist, nor that they are a mere object for my consciousness; for the others are indeed others (*para*), but they are also other subjects (*pramātr*). In the Vijñānavāda, depriving the others from any reality is a risk that must be taken, for the other's consciousness, forever inaccessible to my perception,<sup>14</sup> can only be the object of an inference. As any object of inference, it is artificial or constructed (*kalpita*), and since only self-manifested cognitions exist, there is no transcendent subject of whom the others might be manifestations and who would exist beyond the empirical self constituted by the series of my momentary cognitions. By contrast, in the Pratyabhijñā system, the other does not exist only because I, as a series of momentary cognitions, become aware of him or her: he or she exists *also by virtue of the awareness that he or she freely takes of himself or herself*, and according to the Śaiva philosophers, it is precisely this freedom that we guess when we suddenly realize that we are in the presence of another subject and not a mere object. For Abhinavagupta insists that I become aware of the other insofar as I become aware of an entity which, in spite of my efforts to objectify it, cannot be reduced to a mere object for my consciousness, be it an object of inference: the other subject is that which resists all my attempts to objectify it,<sup>15</sup> the presence of which I become aware as that which “could not bear to be grasped objectively” (*idantāvīmarśāsahiṣṇu*).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Cf. for instance the verse from Utpaladeva's APS (13) which Abhinavagupta so often quotes (see for instance ĪPV, vol. I, p. 42, p. 48, p. 163; ĪPVV, vol. II, p. 77, p. 81, etc.): *evam ātmany asatkalpāḥ prakāśasyaiva santy amī / jaḍāḥ prakāśa evāsti svātmanah svaparātmabhiḥ* // “Thus, these insentient [entities], which in themselves (*ātman*) are as good as nonexistent, exist only insofar as they belong to conscious manifestation (*prakāśa*). Only the conscious manifestation of the Self (*svātman*) exists, in the various forms (*ātman*) of selves (*sva*) and others (*para*)”. If others are “as good as nonexistent” “in themselves”—that is to say, independently of the Self—they do exist as manifestations of the universal Self, and in a much stronger sense than mere objects for instance, for other subjects, contrary to objects, are conscious of themselves—they possess the freedom which constitutes the Self's essence.

<sup>14</sup> The other's consciousness cannot be perceived as an object, precisely because its nature is to be self-manifest (*svaprakāśa*), contrary to objects which require a consciousness in order to be manifested (see Ratić (2007, pp. 321–322)).

<sup>15</sup> See Ratić 2007, pp. 354–364.

<sup>16</sup> ĪPVV, vol. I, p. 106 (see Ratić 2007, fn. 101, p. 363).

Because the essence of consciousness is a subtle dynamism of which will or desire (*icchā*) is the first manifestation,<sup>17</sup> the subject who escapes the bondage of individuality does not cease to have any will; but his will is exclusively turned towards the others—it cannot be selfish, given the completeness or the fullness (*pūrṇatva*) that the liberated subject has acquired by recovering a full awareness of himself:

*īśvaradāsyāsādanād eva pūrṇatātmakaḥ sajjanabhāvaḥ. apūrṇa eva hi svātmānam sarvataḥ pūrayiṣyāmīti param apakaroti, nopakaroti vā, tato durjanaḥ.*<sup>18</sup>

To be a good man (*sajjana*) consists in the fullness (*pūrṇatā*) which comes from the sole realization of the “state of servant of the Lord” [mentioned by Utpaladeva in the first verse of the treatise].<sup>19</sup> For someone who is not full (*apūrṇa*), because he thinks “I must fill (*pūrayiṣyāmi*) myself completely!”, harms (*apakaroti*) the other (*para*) – or [at least,] he does not help (*upakaroti*) [him]; consequently, he is a bad man (*durjana*).

This passage is all the more interesting as one can detect here the reappearance of ethical categories that Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta had seemingly eliminated from the Pratyabhijñā system by designating merit (*dharma*) and demerit (*adharma*) as mere artificial concepts responsible for the individual’s transmigration. For according to a belief widely spread in India, the individual transmigrates because his acts, whether good or bad, must be in some way retributed in the form of new experiences, whether pleasant or painful—and because some acts obviously do not find their moral retribution in the course of a single life. But if, as the Pratyabhijñā philosophers hold, individuals are not the real authors of their actions (since only the absolute consciousness really acts), and if the agent and the object on which action

<sup>17</sup> On this dynamism which differentiates consciousness from a mere reflective device like a mirror (since consciousness, contrary to a mirror, does not passively *reflect* the object but actively *grasps* it as well as itself in the act of grasping it) see particularly ĪPK, I, 5, 11: *svabhāvam avabhāsasya vimarśam vidur anyathā / prakāśo’rthoparakto’pi sphaṭikādijaḍopamaḥ //* “[The wise] know that nature of manifestation is a conscious grasping (*vimarśa*); otherwise, the conscious manifestation (*prakāśa*), although being coloured by objects, would be similar to an insentient entity (*jaḍa*) such as a crystal or [any other reflective object]”. Cf. Abhinavagupta’s famous commentary on it (ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 197–198, quoted and translated for instance in Ratié 2006, fn. 138, p. 87). Desire is such a conscious grasping (*vimarśa*, *avamarśa*, *āmarśa*); see for instance ĪPK, I, 5, 10: *svāmīnaś cātmasamsthasya bhāvajātasya bhāsanam / asty eva na vinā tasmād icchāmarśaḥ pravartate //* “And there is necessarily a manifestation of all the objects [as being] contained in the Self of the Lord; if it were not the case, the conscious grasping (*āmarśa*) which is desire (*icchā*) could not take place”. Desire is the first manifestation of this spontaneity of consciousness, in the sense that it precedes both knowledge (as a desire to know) and action (as a desire to act), but also in the sense that in it, consciousness grasps both itself and the object without apprehending them as separate entities. See for instance the first hemistich of the verse of the *Nareśvaraviveka* quoted by Abhinavagupta in the ĪPVV, vol. II, p. 167: *nirmitsāyaṃ ca nirmeyam eṣṭavyam aprīthakpratham /* “And in the desire to create (*nirmitsā*), the object to be created (*nirmeya*), which is the object of desire (*eṣṭavya*), is not manifest separately (*prīthak*) [from the subject]”.

<sup>18</sup> ĪPVV, vol. I, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> See above, fn. 8.



is exerted are in fact one entity (that is, the absolute consciousness), then the notions of merit (*dharma*) and demerit (*adharmā*), which imply both an agent and something distinct from this agent, lose their meaning. Accordingly, when Abhinavagupta states that it is the universal consciousness—and not the individualized, limited subject—which is the real agent in any mundane action, an opponent objects:

*nanv evaṃ kumbhakṛto nāsti kartṛtvam iti samutsīdet dharmādharmavyavasthā.*<sup>20</sup>

But if it is so, since agency (*kartṛtva*) does not belong to the potter [who seems to be the author of the pot, but only to the universal consciousness,] the distinction between merit and demerit (*dharmādharmā*) must disappear completely!

Abhinavagupta's answer is unambiguous:

*yadi pratyēṣi yuktyāgamayoḥ tad evam eva.*<sup>21</sup>

If you comply with reason (*yukti*) and scriptures (*āgama*), [you must admit that] it is exactly so!

Abhinavagupta is here alluding to the fact that according to the Śaiva non-dualistic scriptures, the individual is subject to transmigration, but only insofar as he considers himself as a particular agent and therefore *believes* that he is morally responsible for his acts: it is only insofar as he gives credit to the idea of a moral retribution and to the very distinction between merit and demerit that he has to face moral retribution and to transmigrate.<sup>22</sup> The notions of *dharma* and *adharmā* are thus presented as an “impurity” (*mala*) because of which consciousness binds itself to the cycle of transmigration determined by the mechanism of moral retribution.<sup>23</sup>

In this respect, distinguishing the good man (*sajjana*) from the bad (*durjana*) indeed indicates that ethical categories are somehow reintroduced into the system. However, they are not reintroduced without undergoing a profound metamorphosis: the good man (*sajjana*) is no longer the one who restricts his action according to his belief in the value of the distinction between merit and demerit, but the one who is perfectly free from such a restriction. He is a good man not because he would

<sup>20</sup> ĪPV, vol. II, p. 149.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> See Sanderson (1992, pp. 288–289).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Abhinavagupta's definition of karmic impurity in the ĪPV (vol. II, p. 221): *tatra kartur abo-dharūpasya dehāder bhinnavedyaprathane sati dharmādharmarūpaṃ kārmaṃ malam, yato janma bhogaś ca, sa ca nīyatāvadhika iti jātyāyurbhogaphalaṃ karma ity uktam bhavati*. “Among these [three impurities mentioned in the scriptures,] the impurity (*mala*) relative to acts (*kārma*), which consists in merit and demerit (*dharmādharmā*), occurs when distinct objects of knowledge are manifest to the agent (*kartr*) who does not consist in consciousness—[that is to say,] to the body and [other objects with which individuals wrongly identify themselves]; this [impurity] produces birth (*janman*) and the experience [of pleasure and pain] (*bhoga*), and this [experience] has a determined limit; this is why they say that action (*karman*) results in birth [and the particular caste assigned by it] (*jāti*), life limited in its duration (*āyuh*) and the experience [of pleasure and pain] (*bhoga*)”.



conform his actions to the category of meritorious acts in the hope of acquiring some merit—which would still be, ultimately, a selfish motive—but because he has recovered his identity with the whole, so that he does not lack anything. He does good simply because he is aware of his fullness—he is an altruist because he no longer depends on any other that he would have to fight, seduce or enslave:

*icchārūpāyā ākāṅkṣāyā gatyantaravirahāt para eva viṣayo bhavati. na ca parāpakāraṇiṣayāsau yuktā tasyāpūrṇasvātmakair eṣaṅīyatvāt; asya tv īśvaradāsyena samastasampatprāptihetunā paripūrṇatvāt svātmani kiṃcid api kartavyam eṣaṅīyaṃ nāsti. apratihātā ca citsvabhāvatvād icchā. sā parārthaviṣayaiva balāt sampadyate. svasampādyaniyantrito hi na param upacikīrṣet, svasampādyābhāve tu balād eva paropakāraṇiṣayā sā bhavati.*<sup>24</sup>

Because [in someone who has been liberated] there is no further possibility of an expectation (*ākāṅkṣā*)<sup>25</sup> consisting in a desire (*icchā*), [his desire has] as its object the other (*para*) only. And this [desire] cannot aim at harming the other (*parāpakāra*), because [harming the other] is an object of desire for those whose Self is not full (*apūrṇa*); but since, thanks to the “state of servant of the Lord” [that Utpaladeva mentions in his first verse, and that he describes as] “the cause of obtaining all beneficial effects”, he is absolutely full (*paripūrṇa*), there is absolutely nothing to do (*kartavya*) [or] to desire (*eṣaṅīya*) regarding himself (*svātman*). And since his nature is [pure] consciousness, his desire is devoid of impediments, [and] it is necessarily (*balāt*) accomplished while aiming only at the others’ interest (*parārtha*); for he who is restricted (*niyantrita*) by what he must accomplish for himself (*svasampādyā*) cannot want to help the other (*na param upacikīrṣet*) – whereas when there is nothing to accomplish for oneself, necessarily (*balād eva*), [one’s will] aims at helping the other (*paropakāra*).

He who has not freed himself *cannot want to help the others*: his will is necessarily restricted to selfish goals because he does not experience his own completeness. On the contrary, the desire (*icchā*) of someone who is liberated, far from being an expectation (*ākāṅkṣā*)—that is, a desire to fulfil the need for something lacking by using the other—is a will bursting out of the awareness of one’s own fullness; it is therefore necessarily altruistic, and is in fact one with what the Śaiva scriptures call the grace (*anugraha*) of the Lord.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> ĪPVV, vol. I, p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> Abhinavagupta appears to be explaining here a sentence of Utpaladeva beginning with the statement that *śāstrakṛtas tu... svātmani nirākāṅkṣatā* (Ibid.): “The author of this treatise, however, is devoid of any expectation (*nirākāṅkṣa*) as regards himself (*svātman*)”.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. TĀ 2, 38: *samastayantraṇātantratrotroṇāṇāñkadharmināḥ / nānugrahāt param kiṃcid cheṣavṛttau prayojanam* // “Someone who possesses the scissors which cut through the warp (*tantra*) of all restrictions (*yantraṇā*) has no motive (*prayojana*) regarding the activity that remains [after realizing one’s identity with the Lord] besides grace (*anugraha*)”. Cf. also the following verse (2, 39) which Abhinavagupta happens to quote precisely in the passage of the ĪPVV devoted to compassion (vol. I, p. 34): *svaṃ kartavyaṃ kiṃ api kalayaṃ loka eṣa prayatnān no pārārthyaṃ prati ghaṭayate*

This argument is of course meant to help establish Utpaladeva's authority from the very beginning of the treatise—a widespread strategy among Indian philosophers, whether Brahmanical or Buddhist.<sup>27</sup> However, in this respect, the comparison with Dharmakīrti's strategy in the *Pramāṇavārttika* is revealing: Dharmakīrti devotes much of his energy (and verses 34 to 131ab of the *Pramāṇasiddhipariccheda*) to justifying Dignāga's statement according to which the Buddha is a valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇabhūta*) by showing that an infinite compassion (*karuṇā*) is at least possible as regards the Buddha. For from Dharmakīrti's point of view, such a compassion implies that two conditions are fulfilled: first, the existence of an infinite number of past existences, and second, the possibility of an infinite increase of mental properties such as compassion.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, according to Abhinavagupta, Utpaladeva's authority is automatically or *ipso facto* (*balād eva*) established, insofar as his will cannot be but absolute compassion as soon as he has recovered the full awareness of his identity: paradoxically, it is the fact that Utpaladeva's self has infinitely expanded which leaves him devoid of any ego (the latter being nothing but a limited awareness of oneself), and as a consequence, necessarily altruistic.

This contrast in turn finds its explanation in the subtle but meaningful transformation to which the Śaiva philosophers subject the very notion of compassion. For from the point of view of Buddhism, compassion is first and foremost the acknowledgement of the others' *pain*: it is the glaringly obvious and universal fact of pain (*duḥkha*)—the first of the four Noble Truths—that prompts the compassionate to act in favour of the others, just as it prompts oneself to free oneself from the bondage of *saṃsāra*. From the point of view of the non-dualistic Śaivas, however, the obvious fact that, once acknowledged, must prompt one to free oneself as well as the others is not pain, but bliss (*ānanda*). For according to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, bliss is nothing but the awareness of one's own fullness (*pūrṇatva*),<sup>29</sup> and the Pratyabhijñā philosophers endeavour to show its presence at

Footnote 26 continued

*kāmcana svapravṛttim / yas tu dhvastākḥilabhavamalo bhairavībhāvapūrṇaḥ kṛtyaṃ tasya sphuṭam idam iyal lokakartavyamātram //* “The mundane (*loka*), accomplishing with effort some task for himself, does not direct any of his own activities towards the others' interest (*pārārthyam prati*); whereas someone on whom the stains of [mundane] existence have completely vanished, [and] who is full (*pūrṇa*) because he has identified himself with Bhairava, has a task which is obviously this only, and nothing else: what remains to be done for the mundane”. The quotation in the ĪPVV has a few variants: *svātmavṛttim* instead of *svapravṛttim*, *tyaktākḥilabhavamalaḥ* instead of *dhvastākḥilabhavamalaḥ*, and *prāptasampūrṇabodhaḥ* instead of *bhairavībhāvapūrṇaḥ*.

<sup>27</sup> See for instance Franco (1997, pp. 39–41), who describes thus the process through which Indian thinkers attempt to establish someone's authority: “Reading through the various texts, one encounters a large number of variations, nuances, permutations, combinations and justifications of the essential properties of authoritative or reliable persons. They can [...] be [...] reduced to three: they have to know the truth, they have to be without personal faults or desires so that they lack motivation for lying, and they have to have a positive motivation, like compassion, grace (*anugraha*), etc., not to keep the truth to themselves”.

<sup>28</sup> See Franco (1997).

<sup>29</sup> See for instance ĪPVV, vol. II, pp. 177–178: *svarūpasya svātmanaḥ paripūrṇanijavabhāva-prakāśanam eva parāmarśamayatām dadhad ānanda ity ucyate*. “What is called ‘bliss’ (*ānanda*) is the [manifestation] of ‘one's own form’, that is to say, of oneself; [in other words,] it is the manifestation, which takes the form of a conscious grasping (*parāmarśa*), of one's own nature which is absolutely full (*paripūrṇa*)”.

the core of any conscious state,<sup>30</sup> *including pain*: they explain that in pain itself lies absolute bliss, which is nothing but consciousness being conscious of itself as freedom. Thus in the *Vivṛtivimarśinī*, while Abhinavagupta is defending Utpaladeva's identification of the conscious grasping (*vimarśa*)—which, as he has just shown, constitutes the essence of consciousness—with bliss (*ānanda*)—defined as the enraptured awareness of the subject's own fullness and expressed as “I”—someone objects:

*nanu duḥkhopalambhakāle tāvad aham ity asti, na ca tatra  
camatkārātmāsty ānandaḥ.*<sup>31</sup>

But when experiencing pain (*duḥkha*), the “I” is indeed present; and [yet], in that case, there is no bliss (*ānanda*) consisting in wonder (*camatkāra*)!

Nothing is more personal than pain: I cannot experience it without instantly ascribing it to myself. While suffering, the subject grasps himself as himself; but this conscious grasping of oneself is neither bliss nor wonder. On the contrary: while in pain, I apprehend myself not as a free and full entity, but as a deprived and affected individual.

To this objection, Abhinavagupta answers:

*ka evam āha nāstīti? tathā hi duḥkham apy ayam āsvādayamāno'ntar eva  
viśrāmyati. tam tv antarviśrāntiṃ bāhyenārthī taṃ ca vinaṣṭam abhi-  
samīkṣamāṇo'nādaratirakṣṛtatvāt satīm api nābhimānute. upadeśa-  
viśeṣadiśā tu māyāvīgalane tadbāhyarūpānādaraṇe saiva viśrāntir  
unmiṣati. tathā hi śivadrṣṭir duḥkhe'pi pravikāsenety ādi.*<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Utpaladeva considers that the conscious grasping (*vimarśa*) which constitutes the very essence of any conscious state is nothing but bliss; thus, while commenting on ĪPK I, 5, 11 (see above, fn. 17), he writes in his *Vṛtti* (p. 22): *prakāśasya mukhya ātmā pratyavamarśaḥ, taṃ vinārthabhedinākārasyaṅyasya svacchatāmātram na tv ajādyam camatkṛter abhāvāt*. “The conscious grasping (*pratyavamarśa*) is the fundamental essence (*ātman*) of conscious manifestation (*prakāśa*); [for] without it, this [manifestation,] although bearing the differentiated aspect of [this or that particular] object, would only have the limpidity (*svacchatā*) [of a mirror], but not sentiency (*ajādyā*), because there would not be any wonder (*camatkṛti*)”. In Abhinavagupta's ĪPVV (vol. II, p. 177), an imaginary objector makes it clear that wonder (*camatkṛti*) is here an equivalent of bliss (*ānanda*): *nanu vimarśābhāvāj jaḍatā syād iti vak-tavye camatkṛter abhāvād iti katham vṛttih? camatkṛtir hi bhuñjānasya yā kriyā bhogasamāpatti-maya ānandaḥ sa ucyate*. “But why does the *Vṛtti*, instead of saying “[the conscious manifestation] would be insentient (*jaḍa*), because there would not be any conscious grasping (*vimarśa*)”, [say] “because there would not be any wonder (*camatkṛti*)”? For we call ‘wonder’ the action of someone who is enjoying (*bhuñjana*), [i.e.,] the bliss (*ānanda*) consisting in obtaining enjoyment (*bhoga*)”. The passage that follows in the ĪPVV, vol. II, pp. 177–181—fascinating, but too long to be quoted here in full—aims at showing that indeed, any conscious act is in its essence bliss. On this famous and much commented passage, see for instance Pandey (1950, pp. 106–109); Gnoli (1956, pp. xlii–xlv); Masson and Patwardhan (1969, pp. 44–45); Bhattacharya (1972, pp. 101–102), and Hulin (1978, pp. 323–324).

<sup>31</sup> ĪPVV, vol. II, p. 181.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Who dares say thus that there is no [bliss in the experience of pain]? To explain: one rests on sole interiority insofar as one is relishing (*āsvādayamāna*) pain *as well*. But someone who desires an external [object] and who focuses on this [external object] that has disappeared does not notice this internal rest (*antarviśrānti*), although it is indeed present, because it is veiled (*tiraskṛta*) by his lack of attention (*anādara*). However, according to the particular view expounded in [the Śaiva non-dualistic] teachings, when *māyā* has vanished, [i.e.,] when one does not focus anymore (*anādara*) on the external form of the [desired entity,] it is precisely this internal rest that becomes obvious. Thus the *Śivadṛṣṭi* [states]: “Even in the midst of pain, due to [consciousness’s] expansion...”, etc.<sup>33</sup>

According to Abhinavagupta, even pain is not devoid of the wonder (*camatkāra*) which characterizes bliss. This wonder is always present at the heart of consciousness; but usually, someone who is in pain does not notice it, because his attention is entirely directed at the external entity the loss of which he is facing, so that he cannot enjoy his own consciousness. Sometimes however, the pain is so intense that even the consciousness of the external entity vanishes (and with it, that of the distinction between the inside and the outside, between the subject and the object), for consciousness, saturated with pain, is then nothing but an awareness of itself as pain, and it is momentarily incapable of functioning normally—which is to say, according to the subject-object distinction without which there is no world in the ordinary sense of the term. During the momentary suspension of this fundamental dichotomy, the overwhelmed consciousness is subject to some sort of expansion (*vikāsa, pravikāsa*), for it is not anymore limited by this or that object, nor even by objectivity in general. Abhinavagupta tells us more about this process in his *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa*:

*duḥkhe’py eṣa eva camatkāraḥ. antarvyavasthitam hi yat tad dayitasuta-sukhādi vīryātmakam tad eva bhāvanāsadṛṣadṛgākrandādibodhena kṣobhātmakam vikāsam āpannam punar na bhaviṣyati nairapekṣyavaśa-saviśeṣacamatkriyātma duḥkhasatattvam. tad uktam duḥkhe’pi pravikāseti.*<sup>34</sup>

In the midst of pain (*duḥkha*) too, there is the same wonder (*camatkāra*). For that which is internally present [and] consists in energy (*vīrya*) – for instance, the joy [caused by] a beloved son [who has disappeared] – gets into a state of expansion (*vikāsa*) the essence of which is a shock (*kṣobha*) because of a cognition such as the imaginary representation [of the lost person], seeing [someone] who looks like [this person], [hearing someone] weeping, and so on; [and this internal energy which has thus expanded] includes the essence of pain (*duḥkhasatattva*), [and yet] it consists in a particular wonder

<sup>33</sup> Abhinavagupta is here quoting ŚD, V, 9: *duḥkhādinā viśeṣaś cet tatrāpy aśivatā na ca / duḥkhe’pi pravikāseti duḥkhārthe dhṛtisamgamāt //* “And if [someone objects that] there is a difference [between Śiva] and pain (*duḥkha*) for instance, [we will answer that] in that case too, there is indeed identity with Śiva (*śivatā*), because even in the midst of pain, because of [consciousness’s] expansion (*pravikāsa*), one experiences joy (*dhṛti*) as regards the object of pain”.

<sup>34</sup> PTV, p. 49.

(*camatkriyā*) due to complete hopelessness (*nairapekṣya*), in the form: “never more will it be!”. This is what [Somānanda] has expressed in “Even in the midst of pain, due to [consciousness’s] expansion...”.<sup>35</sup>

In the ordeal of a great pain, consciousness is conscious of a “never more”. It is at this “never more” that the consciousness which has been shaken by suffering wonders, because it then becomes aware of itself as being entirely pervaded by “hopelessness” (*nairapekṣya*).<sup>36</sup> The term denotes the state of someone who is *nirapekṣa*, i.e., who has no more *apekṣā*—no more expectation. In the midst of intense pain, a desperate consciousness suddenly experiences its full freedom, because it grasps itself precisely as having no expectation whatsoever—and consequently, as depending on nothing at all, since at the very moment when the awareness of the annihilation of a passionately loved object has risen, all the objectivity on which this consciousness usually believes to be depending has abruptly collapsed into a perfect indifference.

Thus, according to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, the primal existential fact is not that of suffering, but that of bliss. This experience of bliss is absolutely immediate, since in it consciousness does not grasp an object out of itself but is merely aware of itself as a free and full entity; it is nonetheless constantly covered or veiled by the artificial distinction because of which we tend to see in the subject and the object, or in oneself and the other, two mutually exclusive realities. Consequently, for the Pratyabhijñā philosophers, pain is not the opposite of bliss, but only its incomplete manifestation;<sup>37</sup> and compassion is not primarily *the acknowledgement of the others’ pain*—which is to say, according to an equiva-

<sup>35</sup> See above, fn. 33.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. M. Hulin’s French translation as “désespérance” (see Hulin 1978, p. 334).

<sup>37</sup> For this reason, according to them, shunning pain is not enough to get rid of it, since only the consciousness which deepens the experience of pain up to the point where it reveals itself as bliss effectively eliminates pain. See the sequel to Abhinavagupta’s analysis of pain in the *ĪPVV* (vol. II, pp. 181–182): *ye tu \*śarīrādītīyākṣavas [kha MS. mentioned in KSTS, fn. 2: śarīrādītīyākṣavas KSTS] te taditarasvargādīgataśarīravāñchayā vā taccharīrāvinābhāvinīṣpratīkārādūhkhajihāsayāham iti camatkārādhyāsam tatra śarīre śīthilayanti, śarīrāntare ca tam camatkāragraham abhisamcārayanti, pāramārthikīm eva tu camatkārānandadaśam \*vītavighnām [conj. vītavighnam KSTS] evāvalilambīṣante mumūrśudaśāpannāḥ*. “However, those who want to abandon their body or [any other object with which they identify themselves] out of a desire for a body residing in the heavens for instance and different from their [present body], or out of a desire to put an end to the irremediable pain that is necessarily associated with this body—those weaken the affirmation of wonder (*camatkāra*) as ‘I’ in this [present] body, and they postpone their grasping of wonder to [their existence] in another body. By contrast, those who have attained the state of ‘someone who desires death’ (*mumūrṣu*) want to rest in the state of bliss (*ānanda*) [consisting in] wonder, in which [all] obstacles have vanished and which alone is real in the absolute sense (*pāramārthikī*)”. Someone who tries to escape his present existence in the hope of obtaining in another life another body which will be more enjoyable, or simply in the hope of escaping the pain which is inherent in the present body, only reduces the intensity of the wonder of which he is capable in this life: by continually shunning pain—and, in a more general way, his current existence—he prevents himself from relishing this existence whether in pain or in joy. Only “he who desires death” (*mumūrṣu*) really desires wonder “in the absolute sense”; but Abhinavagupta carefully specifies here that he is not praising those who despise their current life because they dream of some better existence after this life, nor those who aspire to a nothingness capable of freeing them from existential pain. The *mumūrṣu* does not desire death in the sense that he would wish the end of this existence, nor even in the sense that he would wish the end of all existence. The end he wishes is that of the *samsāra*,

lence drawn by these philosophers themselves, the acknowledgement of the others' incompleteness (*apūrṇatva*)—as it is in Buddhism; on the contrary, it is primarily *the awareness of one's own completeness or fullness—of one's own bliss*. Helping the others is no longer an attempt to fill whatever incompleteness afflicts the others: it is a joyful activity that is not determined by any lack or need and has no other cause besides one's own fullness, because there can be no selfless activity without the blissful consciousness of one's own completeness, and because this blissful consciousness necessarily results in an action aiming at the others' interest.

Indeed, ultimately, the other subject is the *same* consciousness as the compassionate subject; one could therefore argue that in such a non-dualistic system, if only one individual is freed, all of them must automatically be freed, and that consequently the system leaves no room for a relation of compassion as defined above. Bhāskarakaṇṭha, the 17th-century<sup>38</sup> commentator of Abhinavagupta's *Vimarśinī*, expounds the objection and answers it thus:

*na ca vācyam etadabhinnatvena tasyāpy etat siddham iti. etasya tad-  
aikyajñāne'pi tasyaitadaikyajñānābhāvāt sthitāyā apy etatsiddher asat-  
kalpatvāt.*<sup>39</sup>

And one cannot object: “since [men (*jana*)] are not different from the [liberated subject, who in turn is the universal Self], this [liberated state] is [already] accomplished for them too!”; for although [indeed,] this accomplishment has [already] happened, it is as it were nonexistent (*asatkalpatva*), because although the [liberated] has the awareness of his unity with [men], they don't have the awareness of their unity with him.

Bhāskarakaṇṭha here gives to this question the answer that Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta were already giving when asked why, if the absolute consciousness is free, the empirical subject is not: for the only reason that in the latter, the absolute

Footnote 37 continued

the cycle of limited existences which are condemned to end again and again in death: only the *mumūrṣu* really aspires to wonder in the absolute sense, because he desires an existence freed from all the obstacles (*vighna*) that prevent him from fully relishing the bliss inherent in any self-consciousness. However, one should not draw from this the conclusion that the Pratyabhijñā is a bizarre variety of masochistic philosophy that would wallow in pain – on the contrary: in ĪPK IV, 16, Utpaladeva presents the Pratyabhijñā system that he has just expounded as a path which is “easy” (*sughaṭa*), and Abhinavagupta explains in his commentaries that it is easy precisely because it does not require any kind of asceticism, whether it be self-inflicted suffering or the mere constraints that *yogins* are expected to put on their body in order to control their breath for instance. See ĪPV, vol. II, p. 271: *bāhyāntaracaryāprāṇāyāmādikleśaprayāsakalāviraḥāt sughaṭaḥ*. “[This path is] easy (*sughaṭa*), because it is entirely devoid of the least pain and exertion [required for the accomplishment] of external and internal exercises, of breath control, etc.”; cf. ĪPVV, vol. III, p. 401: *yataḥ pratyabhijñāmātrān mokṣas tata eva yamaniyāmādikleśayogo'nupayoga evātra*. “For this very reason that liberation (*mokṣa*) comes from the mere recognition (*pratyabhijñā*), in this [path], *yoga*, [which includes] the pain of constraints (*yama*), restrictions (*niyama*), etc., is absolutely useless (*anupayoga*)”. Utpaladeva's path is that of Recognition—which means that he invites his reader to recognize his identity with absolute consciousness by showing him that his most ordinary experiences are pervaded with bliss and wonder; and from this point of view, the various experiences of pleasure—for instance, that of satiety, but also that of gastronomical relish, or even aesthetic delight—are systematically privileged in the two Śaivas' analyses: see for instance the passage of the ĪPVV (vol. II, pp. 177–181) mentioned above, fn. 30.

<sup>38</sup> On Bhāskarakaṇṭha's date see Sanderson (2007, pp. 150–151), against K. C. Pandey's so far prevalent opinion that he lived towards the end of the 18th century (see Pandey 1936, pp. 264–265).

<sup>39</sup> *Bhāskarī*, vol. I, p. 32.



consciousness freely hides from itself its own freedom.<sup>40</sup> In the same way, the only—but crucial—difference between the liberated and the other individuals lies in the fact that the latter are not aware of their unity with the former; and they are not aware of it because in them, the absolute consciousness chooses not to be fully aware of itself. This dissimulation of oneself from oneself is only a game (*krīḍā*), as Abhinavagupta himself states it, since an absolute consciousness cannot effectively and completely hide from itself its own nature which is precisely to be manifest.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> See the objection put forward at the end of Abhinavagupta's commentary on ĪPK IV, 1 (ĪPV, vol. II, p. 251): *nanu yady eka evāyaṃ maheśvararūpa ātmā kas tarhi bandho yadavamocanāyāyam ud-yaṃhaḥ?* "But if the Self, who is the Great Lord, is really one (*eka*), then what could be this bondage (*bandha*) from which we are [supposed to] make efforts to free ourselves?". The following *kārikā* answers: *tatra svasṛṣṭedambhāge buddhyādi grāhakatmanā / ahaṃkāraparāmarśapadam nītam anena tat //* "In the [Self itself, who is the Great Lord,] the [Self] leads the intellect and [other entities with which an individual identifies himself—which reside] in the objective aspect (*idaṃbhāga*) that He himself has created—to the level of the conscious grasping of the sense of ego (*ahaṃkāra*) as apprehending subjects (*grāhaka*)". So according to Utpaladeva, bondage belongs only to the individual, that is to say, to the "apprehending subject" (*grāhaka*) who is adapted to a corresponding apprehended object (*grāhya*) and who, even though he is a subject, is objectified insofar as he identifies himself with some object of the world such as a particular body (*deha*) or a particular intellect (*buddhi*), etc. However, such an answer only seems to hide the problem without solving it, as Abhinavagupta's imaginary objector notices, since this *grāhaka* cannot be fundamentally distinct from the absolute consciousness which is supposedly free (ĪPV, vol. II, p. 252: *nanv evam apy astu tathāpi kasya bandhaḥ? tīsvaravyatirikto hi ko'nyo'sti?* "Very well; but even if one admits that it is the case, whose is bondage? For who else is there who would be distinct from the Lord?"), and the complete answer to the question is only to be found in ĪPK IV, 3: *svasvarūpāparijñānamayo'nekaḥ punān mataḥ / tatra sṛṣṭau kriyānandau bhogo duḥkhasukhātmaḥ //* "One considers as the individual (*pums*) that which, being plural (*aneka*), consists of, has as its cause, and is interwoven with (*-maya*) the incomplete knowledge (*aparijñāna*) of its own nature (*svasvarūpa*). In this [individual,] action and bliss are artificial: it is experience (*bhoga*), which consists in pain and pleasure". (On the translation of *-maya* here, see ĪPVV, vol. III, p. 359: *tatsvabhāvas tannibandhanas tenaivautaprotāḥ...* "that which has as its nature (*svabhāva*) this [incomplete knowledge], that which has as its cause (*nibandhana*) this [incomplete knowledge]—that which is interwoven with (*otaprotā*) this [incomplete knowledge]..."). Abhinavagupta explains the gist of the verse in the following way (ĪPV, vol. II, p. 253): *satyaṃ paramārthato na kaścid bandhaḥ. kevalaṃ svasmād anuttarāt svāntryād yadā svātmānaṃ saṃkucitāṃ avabhāsayati sa eva tadā svasya pūrṇasya rūpasya yad aparijñānaṃ bhāsamānatve'py aparāmarśarūpaṃ tad eva kāraṇatvena prakṛtaṃ yasya sa pūrṇatvākhyātimātrataivaḥ puruṣa ity ucyate.* "It is true: in the ultimate sense (*paramārtha*), there is no bondage (*bandha*) whatsoever. It is only that when, out of his own transcendent freedom (*svāntrya*), this same [Great Lord] manifests his own Self as being contracted (*saṃkucita*), then one calls 'individual' (*puruṣa*) [the subject] who has an incomplete knowledge (*aparijñāna*) of his own form which is full (*pūrṇa*)—[an incomplete knowledge] which consists in the absence of a conscious grasping (*parāmarśa*) whereas [this form] is being manifest, [and] which is precisely the subject at hand as the cause (*kāraṇa*) [of bondage]—[and] whose essence is nothing but the incomplete manifestation of his fullness (*pūrṇatvākhyāti*)".

<sup>41</sup> See for instance TĀ 4, 9–11 (an objector has just asked how consciousness, which is pure subjectivity insofar as it manifests itself without ever having to be manifested, can present itself as a mere object of consciousness): *ucyate svāmasaṃvītiḥ svabhāvād eva nirbharā / nāsyāṃ apāsyāṃ nādheyāṃ kiṃcid ity udītaṃ purā //* *kiṃtu durghatakāritvāt svācchandyān nirmalād asau / svāmapracchādanakrīḍāpaṇḍitaḥ parameśvaraḥ //* *anāvṛtte svarūpe'pi yad ātmācchādanāṃ vibhoḥ / saiva māyā yato bheda etāvān viśvavṛttikaḥ //* "[To this objection, we] answer that self-consciousness (*svāmasaṃvīti*) remains full (*nirbhara*) because of its very nature; [we] have [already] stated before that nothing can be abstracted nor added from it. However, because it is the agent of the most difficult deeds (*durghatakāri*), because of its pure freedom (*svācchandyā*), this Highest Lord (*parameśvara*) [which is consciousness] is skilful at the game (*krīḍā*) of dissimulating oneself (*svāmapracchādana*). Dissimulating oneself (*ātmācchādana*) whereas one's own nature remains unveiled (*anāvṛtta*): this is precisely the Omnipresent Lord's *māyā* from which comes all this difference existing throughout the universe".



Therefore consciousness, whose freedom remains eternally intact, only plays at alienating oneself and freeing oneself. In the same way, the liberated, who is aware of his unity with the others whom he is trying to free, is only *playing* at freeing them, just as the others are *playing* at being freed. The liberated self as well as the enslaved others are ultimately nothing but roles played by the Actor *par excellence*, the absolute consciousness;<sup>42</sup> it does not mean, however, that the others would be sheer illusions, as opposed to me—for the others, just as me, are that same absolutely free (and absolutely real) entity playing the game of bondage and freedom, so that compassion itself is part of this playful alternation of self-forgetfulness and self-recognition.

Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta thus present their system as a solipsism insofar as they consider that ultimately, a single universal consciousness is the only reality; but paradoxically, they consider that this metaphysical solitude is not incompatible with altruism. For according to the two Śaivas, it is the unity of the absolute consciousness that makes room for the very possibility of the other subjects' existence over and above their mere appearance in my cognitive series, insofar as the absolute consciousness is free to play the role of the individual which I consider myself to be as well as that of the other individuals; by contrast, in the Vijñānavāda, no single consciousness can bestow on the various subjects an equal status by manifesting itself equally in all of them as a subject, so that one cannot see what exactly differentiates the other subjects of whom I am aware from the mere objects of which I am also aware. If the various subjects are in fact aspects of a single consciousness who freely manifests itself as split into a multiplicity of individuals, this single consciousness can at any time manifest again its unity; it is this unity which ensures not only the possibility for various individuals to communicate with each other and to share a common world, but also to experience the only true altruism according to the Pratyabhijñā—an altruism which is nothing but the expression of one's own fullness, and in which compassion, far from being the result of the awareness of pain, springs out of the experience of bliss.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance ĪPVV, vol. III, p. 244: *sa ca bhramo nātyatulyasyāparamārthasato'tyaktasvarūpāvaṣṭambhananāṭakalpena parameśvaraprakāśena pratīgocarīkṛtasya śamsārasya nāyakaḥ sūtradhāraḥ pradhānabhūtaḥ pravartayitetivṛte nāyako vā, yallagnaṃ viśvetivṛttam ābhāti; tata eva prathamah*. "And this illusion [consisting in identifying oneself with objects such as a particular body] is 'first' [according to Utpaladeva] because this [theatrical] plot (*itivṛtta*) which is the universe (*viśva*) manifests itself while [necessarily] resting on the 'nāyaka'—i.e., the troupe director (*sūtradhāra*) who, [because he is the troupe's] most important [member], prompts the action, or the intrigue's main character—of the cycle of rebirths (*śamsāra*) which, similar to a theatre play (*nātya*), becomes an object of cognition [whereas it is] not real in the ultimate sense, due to the manifestation of the Highest Lord (*parameśvara*) similar to an actor (*naṭa*) who does not cease to rest in his own nature [while playing this or that role]". Cf. ŚD, I, 37cd-38: *yathā nrpaḥ sārvaḥprabhāḥ prabhāvāmodabhāvitaḥ / kṛdān karoti pādātadharmāṃs taddharmadharmataḥ / tathā prabhuḥ pramodātmā kṛdāty evaṃ tathā tathā*. "Just as a king, master of the whole world [and] pervaded by the exultation of his own power, accomplishes while playing (*kṛdān*) the deeds of an infantryman according to each of his duties, thus the Almighty, whose essence is exultation, plays (*kṛdāti*) this or that role". On the theatrical aspect of the cosmic game in non-dualistic śaivism in general, see Bansat-Boudon 1992, particularly pp. 456–458, Bäumer (1995) and Bansat-Boudon (2004, pp. 35–61, 144–145, 211–218, 273–284); cf. A. Sanderson's remarks on the socio-religious effects of this image of a God-Actor and on the transformation of the notion of person that it implies (Sanderson 1985, pp. 204–205).

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