

## Otherness in the Pratyabhijñā philosophy

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**Abstract** Idealism is the core of the Pratyabhijñā philosophy: the main goal of Utpaladeva (*fl. c.* 925–950 AD) and of his commentator Abhinavagupta (*fl. c.* 975–1025 AD) is to establish that nothing exists outside of consciousness. In the course of their demonstration, these Śaiva philosophers endeavour to distinguish their idealism from that of a rival system, the Buddhist Vijñānavāda. This article aims at examining the concept of otherness (*paratva*) as it is presented in the Pratyabhijñā philosophy in contrast with that of the Vijñānavādins'. Although, according to the Pratyabhijñā, the other subjects are not ultimately real since all subjects are nothing but limited manifestations of a single absolute subject, the fact that we are aware of their existence in the practical world has to be accounted for. The Vijñānavādins explain it by arguing that we infer the others' existence. The Pratyabhijñā philosophers, while refuting their opponents' reasoning as it is expounded in Dharmakīrti's *Santānāntarasiddhi*, develop a particular original analysis of our awareness of the others, stating that this awareness is neither a perception (*pratyakṣa*) nor an inference (*anumāna*), but rather a guess (*ūha*) in which we sense the others' freedom (*svātantrya*).

**Keywords** Pratyabhijñā – Utpaladeva – Abhinavagupta · Vijñānavāda – Dignāga – Dharmakīrti · Otherness – Idealism – Solipsism · Self-awareness – *Svasaṃvedana* · Action – Kriyā · Freedom – *Svātantrya* · Inférence – *Anumāna* – *Kāryahetu* – *Svabhāvahetu*

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## Introduction Otherness—a philosophical problem?

Who am I?—In many ways, one could argue that the whole of Indian philosophy is primarily concerned with answering this question. The mystery of my identity—of what makes me remain the same throughout time as a “self” (*ātman*)—or the doubt that such an identity might be illusory are themes that all Indian philosophers seem to have tackled in one way or another. However, the question of otherness (*paratva*) has no less philosophical value than that of identity. For my relation to the world is not exhausted by the distinction that I make between “myself” as a knowing subject and the world as a passive mass of objects; if I do make a spontaneous distinction between my ability to perceive things and things’ inability to perceive me, I also tend to consider that I am not alone in a world of objects. Who is the other—this *alter ego*, this other self who shares with me the status of subject, and yet remains different from me?

This article aims at examining the way in which the Pratyabhijñā philosophers<sup>1</sup> have formulated the question, and the original answer that they have given to it. Such an attempt could however seem vain to some, since the Pratyabhijñā philosophy presents itself primarily as an idealistic monism: the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikās* state that all phenomena—including all empirical subjects—are in fact nothing more than limited aspects of Śiva conceived as a single consciousness encompassing the whole universe, and according to Utpaladeva, liberation from the bondage of *saṃsāra* is the mere “recognition” (*pratyabhijñā*) that I am not the limited subject affected by time and space that I have so far believed to be, but *īśvara*, “the Lord” himself understood as this universal consciousness. Since, according to the Pratyabhijñā philosophers, ultimately there is only one single subject, one can wonder whether for them otherness constitutes in any way a philosophical problem: in such a system the differences that keep open the gap between “me” and “the others”

<sup>1</sup> That is to say Utpaladeva (*fl. c.* 925–950 AD), the Kashmiri author of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* (hereafter ĪPK) and of two commentaries on them, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikāvṛtti* and the lost *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtti*; and his fellow countryman Abhinavagupta (*fl. c.* 975–1025 AD), author of a commentary on the ĪPK, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* (hereafter ĪPV), and of a commentary on the lost *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtti*, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtīvimarśinī* (hereafter ĪPVV) (for the date of these authors, see for instance Sanderson (1995), p. 16). Towards the end of the xvii<sup>th</sup> century (on this date see Sanderson (2007), p. 422), Bhāskaraṇṭha wrote a commentary on Abhinavagupta’s ĪPV (hereafter *Bhāskari*). While referring here and there to Utpaladeva’s *Vṛtti* or to Bhāskaraṇṭha’s commentary, I have chosen to focus on the ĪPV, and on the ĪPVV, not only because Abhinavagupta’s commentaries are more extensive than Utpaladeva’s *Vṛtti*, but also because the problem of “otherness” in relation with the Buddhist idealism on which the first part of this article focuses is not mentioned either in the ĪPK themselves or in Utpaladeva’s *Vṛtti*. Unless otherwise stated, I am using the text of the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies (KSTS) edition.

seem to be drowned in a universal identity with the absolute consciousness. Thus, at first sight, the Pratyabhijñā's position regarding otherness seems to be that of a mere denial:

*paratvaṃ kevalam upādher dehādeḥ, sa cāpi vicārito yāvan nānya iti viśvaḥ pramātrvargah paramārthata ekaḥ pramātā sa eva cāsti. tad uktaṃ prakāśa evāsti svātmanaḥ svaparātmabhir iti. tataś ca bhagavān sadāśivo jñānītyi ataḥ prabhṛti krimir api jñānītyi antam eka eva pramātā.*<sup>2</sup>

Otherness (*paratva*) only comes from limiting conditions (*upādhi*) such as the body, and these [limiting conditions themselves], as soon as they are investigated, [turn out] not [to be] different [from the universal self]; therefore the entire multiplicity of the subjects is in reality one single subject (*ekaḥ pramātā*), and this [subject] alone exists. This has been said [by Utpadeva]<sup>3</sup>: “Only conscious light (*prakāśa*) exists by itself, as oneself as well as the self of others”. And therefore, from “the Lord Sadāśiva knows” to “even a worm knows”, it is one single subject [who knows].

In the end, whether in Sadāśiva or in a worm, it is the same subject who knows, and empirical individuality is only the product of “limiting conditions” (*upādhi*), that is to say, of objective entities such as my body which limit, differentiate and particularize the universal consciousness. And since the Pratyabhijñā philosophers do not admit of any reality external to consciousness, objects themselves exist only insofar as they are manifested by consciousness: in fact, they too are nothing but consciousness, so that the differences between subjects do not belong to the sphere of ultimate reality (*paramārtha*).

However, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers do not content themselves with shrugging off the problem of the existence of others by positing the ultimate identity of all subjects. For such a metaphysical reductionism leaves unexplained an important feature of the *vyavahāra*, the empirical world that any philosopher—whatever his view may be regarding the ontological status of this empirical world—has to account for. We all experience daily a spontaneous belief in the existence of others. If all subjects are in fact one, how is it that the phenomenal world appears to be crowded with limited selves who differ from one another? What is it that makes us think that an entity which we consider to be different from us is not merely an object, but another subject? According to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, recognition

<sup>2</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Ajadāpramāṭṣiddhiḥ*, 13 (see *Siddhitrāyī*, p. 5). Cf. ĪPV, vol. I, p. 163, where the verse is quoted in full.

(*pratyabhijñā*) in its highest sense consists in the identification of myself with the universal consciousness; but how is it that in our everyday life we do *recognize* others as *other selves*, instead of considering them as mere objects? Even though the Pratyabhijñā philosophy may deny the ultimate reality of otherness, it still has to explain the mechanism through which, however illusory, this “otherness” appears.

The Pratyabhijñā philosophers show an acute consciousness of this problem. One of the two main passages revolving around otherness is to be found in the fifth chapter of the Section on Knowledge (*Jñānādhikāra*), where Utpaladeva presents what we may call the Pratyabhijñā’s “idealism”, for there he argues that nothing exists outside of consciousness—that objectivity is nothing but a product of subjectivity, and that a single universal subject constantly creates the world that we experience. This creation is of a purely cognitive nature, just as in our dreams, we perceive objective entities the substance of which is actually nothing but our own consciousness—which is not to say that the world is a mere illusion: it does exist as a phenomenon of consciousness, just as our dreams *really take place* as phenomena of consciousness; only those dreams are not *recognized* as what they really are, since while dreaming we take our dreams for a reality existing independently of our conscious stream. In the same way, the world exists, it is not a mere illusion; but it is not recognized as what it really is—a subjective phenomenon, a product of our cognitive activity that has no existence independently of consciousness.

In the course of this explanation of the nature of their idealism, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers criticize a number of metaphysical systems, one of which corresponds to what Western philosophy would also term “idealism” since, just as the Pratyabhijñā, it denies any independent reality to objective entities; the Pratyabhijñā philosophers explicitly designate it as the Vijñānavāda.<sup>4</sup> While examining the latter’s position, they distance themselves from

<sup>4</sup> I am aware that the Western concept of “idealism” is far from being satisfactory when applied to Indian thought, both because within the range of Western philosophy itself the term “idealism” can be understood in several different ways, and because a few modern scholars have called into question the fact that the Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda should be understood at all as a kind of idealism (see for instance P. J. Griffiths’ summary of the controversy, Griffiths (1986), fn. 19, p. 82). I have nevertheless chosen to use the term—by which I mean a doctrine according to which the objects have no existence outside of consciousness—because it is the Pratyabhijñā’s interpretation of the Vijñānavāda and of its consequences regarding the particular problem of otherness that I wish to analyze here. And whatever the real ontological meaning of the Yogācāra philosophy, it is undeniable that Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta understand it as a kind of idealism, and that they consider that they share with the Vijñānavādins the idea according to which objectivity is a mere product of consciousness. It is this encounter between the two kinds of idealism, and the differences between them that the Pratyabhijñā philosophers endeavour to emphasize regarding the particular point of the existence of others, that constitute the object of this article.

what might appear at first sight as a very close metaphysical system,<sup>5</sup> and their criticism aims at showing the superiority of their own idealistic system upon Buddhist idealism. Interestingly enough, in this fifth chapter Abhinavagupta<sup>6</sup> presents the Vijñānavāda's idealism, and more particularly Dharmakīrti's system,<sup>7</sup> as incapable of accounting for the mundane experience of otherness, and he emphasizes this inability as one of the weak points which allow the opponents of idealism to deny that everything is consciousness. By contrast, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers claim to be capable of providing for a system which both holds that nothing exists outside of consciousness and explains our awareness of the others—an explanation that is to be found in the first chapter of the Section on Knowledge.

In the first part of this article, I shall examine the presentation by Abhinavagupta of the Buddhist controversy over otherness, and the way he uses this controversy to emphasize the limitations of the Vijñānavādin's idealism. Then I shall proceed to show how the Pratyabhijñā philosophers themselves claim to solve this problem of otherness.

## I. The Buddhist controversy over otherness as presented by Abhinavagupta (ĪPV I, 5, 5)

### I. 1. The context: a discussion on idealism

As already mentioned, the passage concerning the problem of otherness in the Vijñānavāda occurs in chapter I, 5 devoted to defending the view according to which nothing exists outside consciousness. Utpaladeva first criticizes there the most “naïve” and common form of externalism (*bāhyārthavāda*)<sup>8</sup>—the main argument of which may be summed up as “the objects exists outside of me because I perceive them as existing outside of me”—by showing that I cannot perceive any given object without perceiving it as an object of con-

<sup>5</sup> On the proximity of the Pratyabhijñā system with the Buddhist conceptual apparatus built by Dharmakīrti and his commentators, see Torella (1992); however R. Torella does not deal there with the particular problem of idealism, nor with that of the existence of other subjects.

<sup>6</sup> The problem of otherness in the Vijñānavāda appears in the ĪPV, but not in the corresponding passages of Utpaladeva's ĪPK and *Vṛtti*, although it must have appeared in his lost *Tīkā*, since it is mentioned in the ĪPVV which comments upon it.

<sup>7</sup> Dharmakīrti's philosophy has been interpreted in various ways among Buddhist thinkers, and his “idealism” has been the object of a debate among Western scholars (on this debate see for instance Dunne (2004), pp. 53–131); but whatever his exact relation to the Vijñānavāda may have been, it is a fact that the Pratyabhijñā philosophers identify him as a master, if not the master, of the Vijñānavāda, and that, as will be shown in the sequel of this article, when arguing with this school of thought, it is Dharmakīrti's concepts that they have in mind.

<sup>8</sup> Literally, “the doctrine [according to which there are] objects external [to consciousness]”.

consciousness: even though I do perceive objects as external to my consciousness, it is within the field of my consciousness that these objects are perceived, it is my consciousness which manifests them *as external to me*. He then criticizes the *mīmāṃsaka* form of externalism defended by Kumāriḥa, according to which it is not consciousness that manifests objects, because “manifestedness” (*prakaṭatā*) would be a property belonging to the objects themselves—if it were so, then objects would be similarly manifest to all subjects, or to none. Utpaladeva then mentions yet another form of externalism that may be qualified as “inferential”, since it belongs to some Buddhists who hold the “doctrine [according to which] the external objects must be inferred” (*bāhyārthānumeyavāda*)<sup>9</sup>. Here the Pratyabhijñā philosophers choose to keep temporarily silent and to let two Buddhists—an inferential externalist according to whom one must infer the existence of external objects, and a Vijñānavādin according to whom there are no objects external to consciousness—argue against each other. By doing so they wish to show that the idealism of the Vijñānavāda is too weak to resist the assaults of inferential externalism—an inferential externalism that they will later endeavour to criticize with their own weapons, thus presenting their own idealism as more coherent than that of the Vijñānavādins’.

The externalist’s objections to the Vijñānavāda are stated in *kārikās* 4 and 5. *Kārikā* 4 explains that since the world appears to us as a variety of manifestations, there must be a cause for this variety, but consciousness is in itself undifferentiated, since it is nothing but a power to manifest, a pure light (*prakāśa*) which makes particularities appear while being itself devoid of any particularity. Therefore consciousness itself cannot be the cause of the variety of manifestations, and although indeed we cannot perceive objects outside of consciousness (since any known object is an object manifested through a conscious activity), in order to account for the phenomenal variety we must assume the existence of various objective entities, even if these objective entities are bound to remain only objects of inference and not of perception.<sup>10</sup> To this reasoning the Vijñānavādin may object that there is no need to assume objects external to consciousness in order to account for the phenomenal variety, for “the awakening of residual traces” (*vāsanāprabodha*) is enough to

<sup>9</sup> On this Sautrāntika thesis see for instance R. Torella’s edition of Utpaladeva’s *Vṛtti*, fn. 9, pp. 112–113.

<sup>10</sup> ĪPK I, 5, 4, which constitutes the first part of a sentence extending in the next verse (see fn. 12 for the sequel of the sentence), summarizes the externalist’s view: *tattadāksmikābhāso bāhyaṃ ced anumāpayet / na hy abhīnasya bodhasya vicitrābhāsaḥetutā* // “If [the externalist were to say that] the manifestation, apparently devoid of a cause, of this or that [phenomenon], must lead to infer [the existence of] the external [object] because consciousness, which is not differentiated [in itself], cannot be the cause of the variegated manifestations...”

explain it.<sup>11</sup> The Buddhist externalist nonetheless rejects this objection in *kārikā* 5 on the ground that the Vijñānavādin's answer only hides the problem without solving it, and draws us into an infinite regress: if the awakening of *vāsanās* is the cause of the variety of manifestations, what is in turn the cause of the variety of *vāsanās*?<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2. The externalist's criticism: the Vijñānavāda reifies the other subjects

Utpaladeva's ĪPK and *Vṛtti* only state the Vijñānavādin's objection and its dismissal by the Buddhist externalist, but in Abhinavagupta's *Vimarsinī* the externalist's criticism goes further. For if we do not admit of objects external to consciousness, it is not only the variety within the chain of my cognitions which remains unexplainable:

<sup>11</sup> According to the Buddhists, each of our cognitions, although momentary, leaves a "residual trace" (*saṃskāra*, *vāsanā*) present in a latent form in the following cognitions, and capable of "awakening" at some later moment. This is of course the way they account for the phenomenon of memory (*smṛti*) without positing the existence of an enduring subject (see particularly, in the ĪPV, the chapters I, 2 to I, 4 devoted to the explanation of *smṛti* in the two respective systems; cf. Ratié (2006)), but it is also the way they account for dreams (*svapna*), and the Buddhist idealists consider that it is the same mechanism through which external reality is built in the waking state (see for instance Vasubandhu's commentary on *Viṃśatikā* 17: *evaṃ vitathavikalpābhyaśavāsanānidrayā prasupto lokah svapna ivābhūtam artham paśyann aprabuddhas tadabhāvaṃ yathāvan nāvagacchati*. "Thus, people, asleep with a sleep [due to] the residual traces (*vāsanā*) [themselves due to] the repetition of unreal concepts (*vikalpa*), seeing, as in a dream, an object that [actually] does not exist, do not understand the non-existence of this [object] as they should, since they have not awakened"). Cf. also the "eightfold proof" of the existence of "store-consciousness" (*ālayavijñāna*)—i.e., of the conscious substrate in which such residual traces are supposedly stored—in the *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya* (11, 18–13, 20). There the sixth argument in favour of the existence of the *ālayavijñāna* consists in saying that without it, one could not account for the variety of phenomena in ordinary perception, consciousness being in itself unitary: *kena kāraṇenāsaty ālayavijñāne kāyiko'nubhavo na yujyate. tathā hy ekaty asya yoniśo vā'yoniśo cintayato vā'nūvitarkayato vā samāhitacetaso vā'samāhitacetaso ye kāye kāyānubhavā utpadyante'nekavidhā bahunānāprakārās te na bhaveyur upalabhyante ca. tasmād apy asty ālayavijñānam*. "Why, if there were no store-consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), would bodily experience be impossible? To explain—for someone thinking thoroughly or not; or [for someone] pondering; or [for someone] whose mind is concentrated or not, the variegated bodily experiences that occur in one body would not occur in many different forms, nor would they be perceived [as such]; therefore for this reason also, [one must conclude that] there is a store-consciousness". See Griffiths (1986), pp. 102–103 and 136. Cf. also Yogarāja's commentary on Abhinavagupta's *Paramārthasāra*, 27, p. 59: *vijñānam iti bodhamātram eva kevalam anupādhi, nāmarūparahitam apy anādivāsanāprabodhavaicitryasāmarthyān nīlasukhādirūpaṃ bāhyarūpatayā nānā prakāśata iti vijñānavādinah*. "The Vijñānavādins [hold] that 'consciousness' (*vijñānam*), [i.e.,] a pure consciousness that is not related [to anything else, being] devoid of limiting conditions, shines in various ways as if it were external, [because] although being devoid of names-and-forms, it takes [various objective] forms such as 'blue' or 'pleasure' due to the variety of awakenings of residual traces (*vāsanāprabodha*) that is a beginningless (*anādi*) [process]". I thank professor L. Bansat-Boudon for drawing my attention to this passage.

<sup>12</sup> ĪPK I, 5, 5: *na vāsanāprabodho'tra vicitro hetutām iyāt / tasyāpi tatprabodhasya vaicitrye kiṃ nibandhanam* // "The variegated awakening of residual traces cannot be made [by the Vijñānavādin] the cause of this [phenomenal variety]; [for] what in turn [would be] the cause of the variety of the awakening of [residual traces]?"

*parapramāṭṛrūpeṣu bodhāntareṣu santānāntarāśabdavācyeṣv api tu-lyo'yam availakṣaṇyaprakāraḥ. tatrāpi parakīyābhimatasya kṛśasthūlādeḥ kāyasya, śvāsapraśvāsādeḥ prāṇasya, sukhaduḥkhāder dhīguṇasya, anumātrabhimatasamvinmātrarūpābhede paratvaṃ kasyeti na vidmaḥ.*<sup>13</sup>

As regards the other cognitions as well consisting in other subjects (*parapramāṭṛ*) that [the Vijñānavādins] call “other series (*santāna*) [of cognitions]”, [we find] the same absence of variety. [For] in that case as well, since there is no difference between, [on the one hand], what is [according to the Vijñānavādin] nothing but the cognitions (*saṃvidmātra*) considered as the agent of the inference, and [on the other hand], either the body (whether thin or fat, etc.) which is considered as pertaining to the other, or the vital energy (whether it be inspiration or expiration, etc.) [which is considered as pertaining to the other], or the qualities of the intellect (whether it be pleasure or pain, etc.) [which are also considered as pertaining to the other], we don't see to whom otherness (*paratva*) could belong.

According to the Vijñānavāda, consciousness is in fact nothing but a “series” (*santāna*) of momentary cognitions flashing forth one after the other; the “subject” (*pramāṭṛ*) is not an enduring entity, but the ever new self-luminous aspect of each of these cognitions; and the objects perceived by the subject have no existence outside of the cognitive series, objectivity is nothing but a cognitive event in which consciousness presents itself as external. But, argues the externalist, since the various aspects of the subjects whom we perceive, such as their body, their breathing or their moods, are nothing but objects projected by our cognitive series, how could they have any reality independently from us—how could they be *others*?

*bodhasya tanniṣṭhasyeti cet, so'pi pramāṇena yadi na siddhas tad asann eva, siddho'pi prameyatayā cet taj jaḍa eva, tathāpi ca kāyādivad eva jñānamātrasvabhāvaḥ svasaṃvinmātrarūpatve paraṃ praty asyāsiddheḥ.*<sup>14</sup>

If [the Vijñānavādin answers]: [this otherness] belongs to the cognition (*bodha*) related to these [objective aspects just mentioned of the other subject], [we externalists answer:] if this [cognition] is not established by a valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), then it is absolutely non existent; but if it is established as an object of knowledge (*prameya*), then it is absolutely insentient, and even in that case, it consists only in [my] consciousness, just as in the case of the [other's] body and so on, because this [cognition] is not established with respect to some other [chain], since it has the nature of a self-cognition only (*svasaṃvinmātra*).

<sup>13</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 169–170.

<sup>14</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, p. 170.



If the Vijñānavādin answers that the other subject is none of the objective aspects mentioned so far, but the chain of cognitions related to them, he falls into a new trap: for either this cognitive series is not perceived by my cognitive series—and then the Vijñānavādin, who holds that only that which appears in a cognitive series is real, has to admit that the other chain does not exist at all; or this other cognitive series is perceived by my cognitive series; but then it is an *object* (*prameya*) for my cognitive series, and not another *subject* (*pramātṛ*). The Vijñānavādin fails to account for otherness because the others cannot be ontologically distinguished from mere objects. By thus objectifying others he ends up once again reducing them, just like their bodies a moment ago, to mere aspects of my own chain of cognitions, for the Vijñānavādin holds that the essence of cognition is to be self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*) or self-conscious (*svasaṃvedana*): according to him, a cognition differs from a mere object precisely in so far as it is not only something which is manifested or grasped by consciousness, a simple phenomenon, but also something that manifests itself and the object that it grasps.<sup>15</sup> Because cognition has this self-manifesting power as its characteristic, no given cognition can be manifested or grasped by another cognition, otherwise it would cease to be a cognition and become a mere object of cognition, which means that I can never take as objects of my consciousness someone else's cognitions.<sup>16</sup> For the difference between “a blue

<sup>15</sup> See for instance Dharmakīrti, *Nyāyabindu* (hereafter NB), I, 10: *sarvacittacaittānām ātmasaṃvedanam*. “All cognitions (*citta*) and all mental phenomena (*caitta*) are self-conscious (*ātmasaṃvedana*)”. Self-consciousness is not a particular kind of mental state that would rise from time to time, or a property that would belong to some cognitions only: see the commentary by the Kashmirian author Dharmottara, the *Nyāyabinduṭīkā* (hereafter NBT), p. 64: *sukhādaya eva sphuṭānubhavatvāt svasaṃviditāḥ, nānyā cittāvasthety āsāṅkānīrvṛtyartham sarvagrahaṇam kṛtam*. “It is in order to set aside the objection according to which, since the experience [of states such as pleasure] is [particularly] vivid, only [some conscious states] such as pleasure would be self-cognized (*svasaṃvidita*), and no other cognition, [that Dharmakīrti] uses [the word] ‘all’”. The statement according to which every cognition is self-luminous is already found in Dignāga's works (see Hattori (1968), particularly p. 30 and 110–113).

<sup>16</sup> The Pratyabhijñā authors share this view with the Buddhists; see for instance the beginning of ĪPK I, 3, 2: *dr̥k svābhāsaiva nānyena vedyā*. “A cognition is strictly self-manifesting (*svābhāsa*-), [therefore] it cannot be known through another [cognition]”. This rule applies even in the case of the perception of omniscient yogins who are supposed to have the power of perceiving other people's cognitions. See ĪPK I, 4, 5: *yoginām api bhāsante na dr̥śo darśanāntare svasaṃvid-ekamānās tā bhānti meypade'pi vā* // “Even for yogins, cognitions regarding another cognition are not manifest [as objects of cognitions]; they are [only] manifest insofar as they are one with [the yogin's] self-awareness (*svasaṃvid*), even if [they are considered as having fallen] into the state of object of knowledge (*meya*)”. Abhinavagupta (ĪPV, vol. I, p. 135) explains why it is impossible that a yogin's cognitions may take as their objects other people's cognitions: *tathā hi—saugātānām tāvat svaprakāśaikarūpaṃ jñānam, tac cej jñānāntareṇa vedyam, tarhi yad asya nijam vapur ananyavedyatayā prakāśanaṃ nāma, na tat prakāśitam syāt*. “To explain – for sure, for the Buddhists [as well as for us], cognition consists only in a self-manifestation (*svaprakāśa*); therefore if this [cognition] were known through another cognition, then that which constitutes its very nature, namely a manifestation [which takes place] without being cognized by anything else, would not be manifest”. So the Pratyabhijñā authors do acknowledge the possibility of omniscience for yogins, but they specify that their awareness of the others' cognitions is nothing but the fact that they have identified with the universal consciousness to the point that there are no “others” anymore, so that what we think of as “the others' cognitions” actually become their

patch” and “a cognition of the blue patch” resides in the capacity of the latter to manifest the blue patch and itself; when I perceive the blue patch I am both aware of the blue patch and of the fact that I am perceiving it. But for this very reason, I can never perceive directly anyone else’s cognitions: I can perceive the blue patch that an other subject is perceiving, and I can see the other’s body engaged in perceiving the blue patch, but I can never perceive the other’s perception of the blue patch. So the Vijñānavādin does make an attempt to differentiate the others from mere objects by affirming that they are not constituted by objects such as their bodies but by chains of self-manifested cognitions (*bodha*); nonetheless by saying so he has to admit that he never encounters the other—because all his own conscious stream can grasp about the other is a group of objective entities, and not the cognitive stream because of which the other could be considered as a subject (*pramātr*).

### I.3. The Vijñānavādin’s answer: alterity is known through inference

In order to escape this latter criticism the Vijñānavādin makes a new answer:

*nanu vyāhārādikriyā svātmanicchayā vyāhareyam ity evaṃrūpayā  
hetubhāvena vyāptiḥ dṛṣṭā tac caitrakāye’pi tayā taddhetukayā bhāvyaṃ.*

Footnote 16 continued

own cognitions, experienced as belonging to themselves, i.e. as self-luminous. Only a yogin who has not attained excellence yet can consider that he is perceiving someone else’s cognition, because he still believes in “the other”, i.e., he is still wrongly identifying some objective features of the other with the other’s cognitive power, whereas a perfect yogin, who alone is truly omniscient, knows that there is no such thing as the other. See *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137: *tasmād yoginaḥ paracitta-vedanāvasare iyān prakāśaḥ—etaddehaprakāśasahacārī ghaṭasukhādīprakāśa iii. tatra ghaṭasukhādī [Bhāskarī: ghaṭasukhādīḥ KSTS] idantayā bhāti, tadgatas tu prakāśo’ham ity eva svaprakāśatayā prakāśate. pramātrīkṛtaparadehaprāṇādisamavabhāśasaṃskārāt tu tanniṣṭhām idantiām eva prakāśabhāge’pi manyamāna idaṃ paraññānam ity abhimanīyate ’vīgalitasvaparavibhāgi yogī. prāptaprakarṣas tu sarvam āmatvena paśyan svasṛṣṭam eva svaparavibhāgaṃ paśyatīti jñānasya na yogiññānena prakāśyatā.* “For this reason, when a yogin has the cognition of someone else’s thoughts, this manifestation amounts to this: the manifestation of [objective entities perceived by the other] such as a pot or pleasure, invariably concomitant with the manifestation of [this or] that [particular] body [of the other]. In that [manifestation], [the objects of the other’s cognition,] such as a pot or pleasure, shine objectively (*idantayā*), but the luminosity (*prakāśa*) present in them shines as self-luminous (*svaprakāśatayā*), [i.e.] only in the form ‘I’. Indeed, a yogin for whom the difference between oneself and the others has not vanished—due to the residual trace [left by] the manifestation of such [entities] as the vital energy and [other objective, limited features] of someone else’s body which [he has been] taking for a subject —, considering that this very objectivity which rests on the [other’s body] is also part of the [subjective] manifestation (*prakāśa*), [wrongly] thinks: ‘this is someone else’s cognition’. But [a yogin] who has attained excellence, seeing everything as himself, sees that the distinction between himself and the others is only produced by himself; therefore a cognition cannot be made manifest by the [other] cognition of a yogin”. From this point of view too, the Pratyabhijñā’s position appears very close to that of Dharmakīrti and his followers: see Stcherbatsky (1969), pp. 89–91, where Dharmakīrti argues that yogins do not actually perceive the others’ cognitions, and that they still superimpose on a singular reality the subject-object duality, so that their knowledge of the others’ thoughts remains a mere concept drawn by analogy with their own consciousness.

*na ca matsaṃtatipatitā samīhāsītī svasaṃvedanena niścitam, tataś ca parasamīhā siddhyati, tad eva santānāntaram iti.*<sup>17</sup>

[ - The Vijñānavādin]: But the action (*kriyā*) of speech for instance is experienced in myself to be invariably concomitant (*vyāpta*) with a desire that [occurs] as the cause (*hetu*) [of the activity of speech] in the form “I want to speak”; therefore in the body of Caitra as well, this [activity of speech] must occur while having as its cause the [same desire that I have experienced in myself]. And it is ascertained through self-cognition (*svasaṃvedana*) that this desire is not occurring in my own chain of consciousness. Therefore it is established [to be] the desire of someone else - and this is precisely the “other chain” (*santānāntara*).

The Vijñānavādin—just as Dharmakīrti in his treatise devoted to this very subject, the *Santānāntarasiddhi*, “The Demonstration [of the existence of] other chains [of cognitions]”,<sup>18</sup> that the Pratyabhijñā philosophers know and quote<sup>19</sup>—admits that the others cannot be objects of a direct perception. But, just as Dharmakīrti, he also considers that their existence can be inferred from the fact that they act.<sup>20</sup> For I can observe that whenever I

<sup>17</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 170–171.

<sup>18</sup> This treatise (thereafter SAS) is only preserved in a Tibetan version: for a translation see Stcherbatsky (1969).

<sup>19</sup> See for instance the corresponding passage in the ĪPVV, vol. II, pp. 109–111, where the title and introductory verse of Dharmakīrti’s work are quoted (the text and its translation are given below in fn. 20).

<sup>20</sup> See for instance the introductory verse of the SAS quoted by Abhinavagupta in the ĪPVV, vol. II, pp. 109–110: *buddhipūrvām kriyām dṛṣṭvā svadehe’nyatra tadgrahāt / kalpyate yadi dhī cittamātre’py eṣa nayah samaḥ* // “If [according to the externalists], a cognition is deduced [to exist] in someone else because after having experienced action (*kriyā*) to be preceded by a cognition in one’s own body, one perceives [action] in someone else, it is the same reasoning in the [idealist doctrine of] ‘consciousness only’ (*cittamātra*) as well”. The same verse is preserved with a few variants in Rāmakaṇṭha’s *Nareśvaraparīkṣāvṛtti*, p. 62: *buddhipūrvām kriyām dṛṣṭvā svadehe’nyatra tadgrahāt / jñāyate yadi dhīś cittamātre’py eṣaḥ samaḥ* // “If [according to the externalists], a cognition is known [to exist] in someone else because after having experienced action to be preceded by a cognition in one’s own body, one perceives [action] in someone else, it is the same [way of accounting for the awareness of others] in the [idealist doctrine of] ‘consciousness only’ as well” (I thank professor Sanderson for drawing my attention to this passage). In the ĪPVV, the meaning of the SAS as condensed in this introductory verse is thus summarized (*Ibid.*, p. 111): *asya santānāntarasiddhigranthasyārthaḥ—yathaiva bāhyanaye vyāhārāt parakāyagatā parasamīhānumīyate, tathaiva vijñānanaye vyāhārābhāsāt parakāyābhāsa-gatād iti*. “This is the meaning of the work [entitled] *Santānāntarasiddhi*: just as in the doctrine of externality (*bāhyanaya*), the desire of someone else is inferred (*anumīyate*) from the speech residing in the body of someone else, exactly in the same way, in the [Buddhist] idealism (*vijñānanaya*), [it is inferred] from the manifestation of speech residing in the manifestation of someone else’s body”. This is also the way Rāmakaṇṭha summarizes Dharmakīrti’s doctrine regarding the awareness of others (see *Nareśvaraparīkṣāvṛtti*, pp. 61–62: *kāyavāgyavahāro hi svaśarīre viśiṣṭavijñānapūrvako dṛṣṭaḥ, iti paraśarīre’pi tadādarśanād vijñānam anumīyate sarvair eva*. “For in one’s own body, the phenomenon of bodily speech is experienced to be preceded by a particular cognition (*vijñāna*); therefore, since this [phenomenon of bodily speech] is experienced in the body of someone else as well, the cognition [of this other person] is inferred (*anumīyate*) by everybody”).

speak for instance, my speech is preceded and caused by a cognition which is a will to speak. This invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) leads me to infer that according to the same causality relation, whenever someone else speaks, his speech is preceded and caused by the same kind of cognition; since I am not aware of such a cognition within my own conscious chain, this cognition must belong to another chain.<sup>21</sup>

Dharmakīrti himself points out, in his *Santānāntarasiddhi*, several consequences of this theory. The first and foremost is that since our knowledge of otherness is always only inferential and not perceptual, actually we never know the others—we only know otherness,<sup>22</sup> that is to say, a general concept, and not a concrete singular entity.<sup>23</sup> This general concept is valid insofar as it has “causal efficiency” (*arthakriyā*), that is to say insofar as it enables us to

<sup>21</sup> See for instance Vinītadeva’s commentary to the Introductory verse of the SAS (Stcherbatsky 1969, p. 63): the “external marks” of other chains of consciousness are “the volitional acts, the tendencies to come, to go, to speak. They are the causes of purposive actions. If the Realist, acknowledging the existence of external objects, infers the existence of such tendencies in another [person] on the basis that he sees his purposive actions, and does it because he, in his very self, directly and by inference, sees the relation between the intentions and the actions—this conclusion then does not contradict idealism”. See also Stcherbatsky’s translation of the first and second *sūtras* (“Realism infers the existence of the other mind on the basis of analogy with itself”; “The Idealist also accepts that those representations, in which other’s actions and speech appear to us, would not have existed, if the special processes of other consciousness were not there”) and the commentary thereon: “Observing, in others, exactly the same physical movements and speech as he himself has, the Realist infers that they must be preceded by the same internal motivations as he observes in himself. But this inference is possible even from the point of view of idealism. The Idealist also can, therefore, infer the existence of other mind. Here, by motivation is meant tendency to activity; by physical movements and speech—the physical and verbal marks of mind. The meaning, therefore, is this: If it is noticed in one’s own self that the movements and speech are preceded by a desire to act and to speak, and an inference is then drawn about the existence of such motivations also in another person on the ground that similar movements and speech are observed in him, the Idealist also can possibly have a similar train of thought. Hence, even he can infer the existence of other mind”.

<sup>22</sup> See for instance Stcherbatsky’s translation of *sūtra* 72 of the SAS (*Ibid.*, p. 84): “General concept [of other mind] is not identical with other mind itself. If it were so, we would have cognized the form of other mind as clearly as that of our own”.

<sup>23</sup> See for instance Stcherbatsky’s translation (*Ibid.*) of *sūtra* 74: “Inference (or thinking) does not cognize the real existence of objects; otherwise the rational cognition would not have differed from the sensual one, and its own special field of knowledge etc. would not have been here”. The statement according to which we do not really know anything of the others, and the idea according to which our knowledge of them can only be considered as valid from a practical, and not from an ontological point of view is of course related to Dharmakīrti’s division of knowledge (*jñāna*) into two sharply distinguished categories, that of perception (*pratyakṣa*) and concept (*vikalpa*): only perception grasps a real entity (see below, fn. 61).

fulfil our mundane goals;<sup>24</sup> but ultimately it does not tell us anything regarding reality.<sup>25</sup> Dharmakīrti thus both affirms that the Vijñānavāda accounts for our awareness of the others (this awareness arises from an inference that we constantly make in our everyday life) and that ultimately we never know the others: the intersubjective world is an intellectual construction of ours which does not correspond to any reality external to consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See for instance Stcherbatsky's translation (*Ibid.*, p. 86) of *sūtra* 78 and 79 ("In inferring the existence of other mind, one is also to take into account the fact that it directs our activity in accordance with the desired aim"; "Having known, through this inference, the existence of other mind, the mind as subject successively produces the effects which lead it to the desired aim"), and of Vinītadeva's commentary ("When some person, by inferring other mind, recognizes the existence of another person, and undertakes the corresponding actions—strives for them, seeks them, goes here and there—he will, in the ultimate end, attain the aim, for instance, that of talking to this person. An example of such successive purposive activity can be: greeting the other person, inviting him home, then spreading a carpet before him, entertaining him with viands and drinks, preparing his bed, serving water for washing his feet, cleaning and massaging his feet, etc. What more can one mention in support of the fact that the attainment of the aim is a sufficient ground for accepting inference as the source of truth?").

<sup>25</sup> See for instance Stcherbatsky's translation (*Ibid.*, p. 85) of *sūtra* 75 ("Inference is a source of true cognition, but not because it gives the knowledge of the real"), 76 ("Though inference does not actually reveal the real existence of an object, it is still the source of cognition of truth, for it leads to the attainment of the desired aim"), and Vinītadeva's commentary ("Though inference (thinking) does not actually reveal the real essence of an object, it leads unfailingly to the object that we strive for. And this is why we accept it as a source of knowledge").

<sup>26</sup> This is my understanding of Dharmakīrti's aim in the SAS—an understanding that of course should be considered very cautiously insofar as the SAS is only preserved in its Tibetan version, and since I do not know Tibetan, I have to rely on Stcherbatsky's translation, or rather, on an English translation by H. C. Gupta of Stcherbatsky's Russian translation. However, from this and Abhinavagupta's presentation of Dharmakīrti's thesis here it seems clear to me that R.K. Sharma's general interpretation of Dharmakīrti's aim is not satisfactory. According to him this aim is "twofold" and consists both in "defending his essentially mentalist position", and in "doing the necessary logical exercise so as to justify his belief in the existence of other minds" (Sharma (1985), p. 55). Since R.K. Sharma thus presupposes two contradictory aims (defending an idealistic point of view and defending the view that other minds actually exist outside my consciousness), he cannot but find that Dharmakīrti's attempt is a "failure", adding while concluding that "the disconcerting aspect is that on his view of consciousness, even his professed belief in the existence of others comes under question" (*Ibid.*, p. 68). Indeed, if Dharmakīrti's goal is to prove the reality of other consciousnesses, his attempt is doomed to fail. However one can wonder in what sense his treatise is a *santānāntarasiddhi*—i.e., if the title plainly means "proof of the existence of others". For Dharmakīrti is evidently preoccupied with explaining our *awareness* of others. And he explains that this awareness is that of a constructed abstraction which is only valid insofar as it is efficient in the mundane world. The term of *siddhi* here could thus be understood alternatively as meaning an "establishment" in the sense that it accounts for our *representations* of the others by providing an epistemological explanation of our notion of other streams of consciousness. Indeed, this is what Dharmakīrti claims to be doing, pointing out that this is the main difference between his inference and the realist's (see Stcherbatsky (1969), p. 70). 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".

#### I.4. The externalist's criticism

Nonetheless the Buddhist externalist portrayed by Abhinavagupta has not surrendered, and he now endeavours to show that the inference described by the Vijñānavādin cannot be valid on account of the Vijñānavādin's own principles:

*atrocyate – ihānumātur vyāhārābhāso dvidhā bhavati. vyāpti-grahaṇakāle'vicchedaprāṇo'haṃ vyāharāmīty evaṃrūpaḥ. anumānāvasare ca vyāharaty ayam iti vicchedajīvita ity anyasya vyāptir gṛhītā, anyas cābhāsaḥ katham idānīm hetuḥ syāt? vyāharatīty ābhāsasya ca hetur avidita eveti katham tato hetos samīhānumīyeta?*<sup>27</sup>

To this [the externalist] replies [the following]. In the [inference described by the Vijñānavādin], the manifestation of speech is twofold for the person who makes the inference: at the time of grasping that there is an invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) [between my desire to speak and my speech], [this manifestation of speech], which takes the form “I am speaking”, has as its essence an absence of differentiation [from the inferring subject]; whereas at the time of [drawing] the inference, [the manifestation of speech], which takes the form “X is speaking”, has as its essence a separation [from the inferring subject]. Therefore the concomitance that is grasped belongs to one [entity, i.e., the subject], whereas the manifestation [“X is speaking”] is different [from the subject]; how [then] could [this manifestation different from the subject] be the reason now [, i.e., at the time of inference, for inferring a subject]? And since the cause for the manifestation “X is speaking” is absolutely unknown, how could the desire [of someone else to speak] be inferred from that cause?

It is true that I can notice an invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) between my speech and my desire to speak. And I do perceive speeches which do not belong to me. But nothing legitimates the Vijñānavādin's attempt to apply the invariable concomitance regarding the subjective states “whenever

Footnote 26 continued

Nonetheless, as M. Inami points out, “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” (*Ibid.*, p. 474). It is the task of someone more learned than I am regarding Dharmakīrti's system as well as Tibetan language to account for this ambiguity. It nonetheless seems to me that it may have something to do with the Vijñānavādin's dilemma that Inami states in passing at the beginning of his article (p. 465) : “if other minds were admitted, their theory would be inconsistent. If other minds were denied, it would be meaningless to preach others”. The problem is not only logical nor ontological; it is also soteriological, and the Buddhist concept of compassion is obviously at stake. Whatever the reason for this ambiguity, it is exploited by Dharmakīrti's opponents, as can be seen in the *Vimarśinī*, particularly in the externalist's concluding argument (see below).

<sup>27</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 171–172.

I speak, I have previously had the cognition: ‘I want to speak’” to the perception of an objective<sup>28</sup> fact “X is speaking”; for the invariable concomitance concerns only a subject, that is to say an entity capable of thinking “I want to speak” and “I am speaking”, whereas nothing tells me that X is a subject (X could be an echo, a parrot, an automat, a computer...). In other words, the inference is flawed, because in order to *prove* that X is a subject, the Vijñānavādin has first to *assume* that X is a subject.

*kiṃ ca vyāharaty ayam iti yaḥ pramātrantare’numātṛsaṃmate vicchinna-tayāvabhāsa so’numeyasaṃmatāyāḥ parasamīhāyāḥ kathaṃ kāryaḥ syāt? tasyā hi vyāharāmīty ābhāsaḥ kāryo yo’sāv avicchedajīvitaḥ. na cāvichchedamayasya vicchedamayāḥ kāryam iti yuktaṃ tathābhūtakāryakāraṇabhāva\*grahaṇopāyābhāvāt<sup>29</sup>, na hi svātmani yo’yam avicchinābhāsa sa paratra vicchinnaṃ vyāharaty ayam ity evaṃrūpaṃ ābhāsaṃ janayati kenacit pramāṇena siddham, parasiddhipūrvakatvād asyārthasya, parapramāṭṛsiddheś caivambhūtārthasiddhyadhīnatvenetaretarāśrayāt.<sup>30</sup>*

Moreover, how could the manifestation “X is speaking”, [occurring] as separated [from the speaking subject] in one subject considered as the inferring subject, be the effect (*kārya*) of the desire of someone else considered as the inferred [subject]? For the manifestation “I am speaking”, which is the effect of this [desire to speak], has as its essence an absence of separation [from the speaking subject]. And it is not acceptable [to say] that [this manifestation “X is speaking”] consisting in a separation [from the speaking subject] is the effect of [the manifestation “I want to speak”] consisting in an absence of separation [from the speaking subject], because of the absence of any means of grasping such a causality relation (*kāryakāraṇabhāva*). For it is not established in any way that this manifestation [“I want to speak”], which is not separated [from the subject] in oneself, may produce in someone else a manifestation separated [from the subject] in the form “X is speaking”; because this point presupposes first the demonstration [of the existence] of another subject, and because of the circularity of reasoning (*itaretarāśraya*) of this demonstration [of the existence] of the other [subject], insofar as [this demonstration itself] requires the demonstration of this point [i.e., a demonstration of the fact that the cognition “I want to speak” can be the cause of the cognition “X is speaking”].

How can the Vijñānavādin hold that the cognition of an objective fact “X is speaking”, which belongs to the chain of consciousness of the inferring subject, is the effect (*kārya*) of the cognition of the subjective state “I want to speak”, which would belong to the chain of consciousness of the other? For on

<sup>28</sup> Objective not in the sense that it would have a reality outside of the subject who apprehends it, but only in the sense that this fact is grasped *as* something happening outside of the subject.

<sup>29</sup> *Bhāskarī*, B, J1, J2, L, P, SOAS: –*grahaṇopāyābhāvanāt* KSTS.

<sup>30</sup> *ĪPV*, vol. I, pp. 172–173.

the basis of the invoked invariable concomitance between my desire to speak and my speech, I can understand that the effect of the cognition “I want to speak” is indeed “I am speaking”; but how can the subjective cognition “I want to speak” result in the objective cognition “X is speaking”? Such a causality relation would be understandable if and only if... we were to assume that X is a subject, i.e. an entity capable of desiring, a chain of cognitions. But once again, in order to prove the existence of the other subject, the Vijñānavādin is *assuming* that the other subject exists. There is a “circularity”, or literally a “mutual resting” (*itaretarāśraya*) in the Vijñānavādin’s reasoning, for this demonstration of the existence of the other subject rests on a causality relation (X is speaking because X is willing to speak) that itself rests on the assumption of the existence of the subject (X is willing to speak because X is not a passive object but a willing subject).

*na cāvaśyam avicchinnād vicchinnena bhāvyaṃ iti niyamo'sti vya-bhicārāt. na ca vicchinno'py ābhāsa utpadyatām iti tadanusandhānāt tadutpattir niyatā tatsadbhāve'py anutpattes tadabhāve cotpatteḥ, vicchinna ābhāsaḥ paratrotpadyatām iti yā samīhā tayā saha paratrotp-annasya vicchinnābhāsasya kāryakāraṇabhāvavagrahaṇam eva parāsiddhau na yutkam iti vyāpter evāsiddhiḥ.*<sup>31</sup>

And there is no necessity according to which that which is separated [from the subject] should necessarily come from that which is not separated [from the subject], because there are exceptions [to this so-called rule]. And [contrary to what the Vijñānavādin may object,] the rise of this [objective manifestation from a subjective will] is not necessary due to the synthesis (*anusandhāna*) of these [two, the subjective will and the objective manifestation, that we experience when desiring to speak] in the form: “let a manifestation [of my speech] rise [in the other], although separated [from my subjectivity]”, because although one [of them, i.e. the desire to be heard speaking] is present, the [other, i.e. the objective cognition of me speaking in the other’s consciousness] does not [always] arise, and although [the desire to be heard speaking] is absent, the other[, i.e., the objective cognition of me speaking sometimes] arises [in the other’s consciousness].<sup>32</sup> The very act of grasping the causality

<sup>31</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, p. 173.

<sup>32</sup> K.C. Pandey has a different interpretation of the passage (*Bhāskarī*, vol. III, p. 62): “Nor is the rise of another subject necessarily due to a determinate will (*anusandhāna*) ‘let another subject also come into being’ of the inferrer. For even when one is, the other is not, and vice versa”. Thus according to Pandey, the Vijñānavādin’s argument criticized here consists in saying that my subjective will (“I want another subject to exist”) produces in myself the objective representation of another person speaking—an interpretation that he has obviously found in Bhāskarakaṇṭha’s commentary. See *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 218–219: *tadanusandhānāt—avicchinnābhāsāśrayānumātrsaṃbandhinaḥ parāmarśāt. tadutpattiḥ—vicchinnābhāsotpattiḥ. kuto na niyatety ata āha tatsadbhāva iti. tadsadbhāve'pi—avicchinnābhāsāśrayānumātrsaḥ bhāve'py asya—vicchinnābhāsānumātrsaḥ - utpādābhāvāt. na hi paravyāhārasya tatrāvaśyaṃ bhāva iti bhāvah. tadabhāve ca— anumātrabhāve ca, na hy anumātrsaṇnidhāv eva paro vyāharatīti bhāvah.* “[And contrary to what the Vijñānavādin may object,] ‘the rise of this’, [i.e.] the rise of a manifestation



relation (*kāryakāraṇabhāva*) between the manifestation separated [from the subject, “X is speaking”] which rises in someone else and [my] desire [to be heard speaking] which takes the form: “may a manifestation [‘X is speaking’] separated [from the subject] rise in someone else” is not possible if one has not established [first the existence of this] someone else. Therefore, there is no establishment of that very concomitance [which could enable us to draw the inference of the other’s existence].

In fact, whereas I am aware of the necessary link between my speech and my desire to speak, there is no necessary link between the objective fact of X’s speech and a subjective desire to speak that would compel us to admit that X is a subject willing to speak: there is only a contingent relation between the two, for one could think of other causes that make X speak besides the will of a subject. To this the Vijñānavādin answers here that the inferrer understands this necessity because whenever he wishes to speak, he also wants to be heard; and there is a synthesis (*anusandhāna*) in his desire to be heard between a subjective will (“I wish to be heard”) and the objective form that the perception of his speech will necessarily take in the other’s consciousness (“*this person* is speaking”). The argument rests on the idea that my action is always linked with my awareness that the others might be witnessing it, that is to say, with the awareness that I am a potential *object* for the others. Whatever form

Footnote 32 continued

separated [from the subject is not necessary] ‘due to the synthesis of this’—[i.e.], due to the grasping cognition belonging to the inferrer on whom rests a manifestation which is not separated [from him as a subject, in the form “I want the other to speak”]. [Abhinavagupta] gives the reason why it is not necessary in [the passage beginning with] ‘*tatsadbhāve*’: ‘because although one [of them] is present, i.e., because even in the presence of the inferrer on whom rests the manifestation which is not separated [from the subject in the form “I want the other to speak”], there is no ‘rise’ of ‘the [other manifestation]’, i.e., there is no rise of the manifestation separated [from the subject “X is speaking”]. One must supply: in the case [where the inferrer is present], the other’s speech does not necessarily occur; and in the absence of the inferrer, [there is no necessary absence of the other’s speech], for it is not only in the presence of the inferrer that the other speaks”). However, even if we don’t take into account the fact that such an interpretation makes the Vijñānavādin’s argument particularly weak, the corresponding passage in the ĪPVV makes it very clear that when the subject thinks “let a manifestation rise” (*ābhāsa utpadyatām*), he does not try to create *in himself* a manifestation of the other’s speech by the sole force of his consciousness—he just wants to produce *in the other* a manifestation of *himself* acting (see, in the following footnotes quoting this passage, the way this “synthesis” is formulated: *priyāpi paśyatu*, “may [my] beloved also see [me dancing]”, *maitro’pi paśyatu*, “may Maitra also see [me dancing]”; *paraḥ śrṇotu*, “may someone else hear [me crying]”; *caitre’pi maitro nrtyati śthivativity ābhāsa utpadyatām*, “may the manifestation ‘Maitra is dancing, spitting [etc.]’ rise in Caitra too”). Besides, in this very passage of the ĪPV, Abhinavagupta formulates this “synthesis” as *vicchinna ābhāsaḥ paratropadyatām iti*, “may a manifestation separated [from me] rise in someone else (*paratra*)”. So as the ĪPVV and ĪPV abundantly show, the Vijñānavādin is only arguing here that when we act, we are conscious that this action, which is a product of our subjective will, may be perceived as an object by other subjects, so that there is an invariable concomitance between our subjective will to become the object of the others’ perception and the others’ perception of us as an object. The externalist replies that there is no such invariable concomitance, for I can wish to be heard without being effectively heard, and conversely I can be heard without having wished to be heard.

my subjective will to act takes, it is linked with the desire either to produce in the others an objective manifestation of it, or to prevent the rise of this objective manifestation by hiding my action. Whether I want to produce this perception of myself as an object in the other or not, I am aware that the subjective cause “I want to speak” necessarily produces in the other the objective effect “X is speaking”, and it is thanks to this invariable concomitance between my subjective will to speak and the objective effect thereby produced in the other’s conscious stream that when I see someone else speaking, I do understand the causality relation between the objective event of his speech and his subjective will to speak.<sup>33</sup>

To this the externalist answers<sup>34</sup> that there is actually no such invariable concomitance, because the “synthesis” invoqued by the Vijñānavādin (“I want to be the *object* of the other’s cognition”) does not necessarily produce in the other an objective cognition. I can very well wish to be heard and yet not be heard. Besides, I can very well become the object of someone else’s cognition while acting without having any subjective will to become so. A crying child can remain perfectly indifferent to what surrounds him and go on

<sup>33</sup> See ĪPVV, vol. II, p. 123: *nanu sa caitro’pi yadā bhagavantam abhipūjya recakāṅgahāraih pariṭṣayitum nṛtyati, tadā saṃvrte’vakāṣe nirjane ca. yadā tu sapūtiḥ gōṣṭhīpramuditaḥ priyatamayā \*ca maitrena [em.: caitrena ca maitrena KSTS] saha nṛtyati, na tu tau tato nirgamayya; tadā priyāpi paśyatu, maitro’pi paśyatv iti bhavaty asyābhisandhānam. tat svātmani vyāptir anena gṛhītāna-pavāraṇapūrvakatadācaraṇasya paraviśayatāvagamānābhisandhānasya ca.* “But when Caitra, after having worshipped the Lord, dances in order to please [Him] with gesticulations and breath exercises, [he does it] in a secluded and solitary place; whereas when he dances while enjoying himself in a drinking party with his beloved and Maitra, without making the two of them leave that [place where he is dancing], he has this synthesis: ‘may [my] beloved also see [me dancing], may Maitra also see [me dancing]’. Therefore, the invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) between this act of moving preceded by an absence of concealment and the synthesis (*abhisandhāna*) [consisting in] understanding that [his action of dancing] is an object for someone else is grasped by him in himself”.

<sup>34</sup> At least in the ĪPV; in the corresponding passage of the ĪPVV, it is a Pratyabhijñā philosopher (someone who “holds [the doctrine] of unity with the Lord”, *īśvarādvayavādin*) who raises this criticism and the following. But here as in the ĪPV, the arguments stated are meant to reinforce the externalist’s criticism of the Vijñānavāda; the “holder of the unity with the Lord” thus first helps the externalist criticize the Vijñānavādins’ idealism before exposing his own as stronger, i.e. as capable of resisting the externalist’s criticism. See ĪPVV, vol. II, p. 122, where this alliance as well as its pragmatic and temporary character are emphasized: *evam ukte vijñānavādinā bhāyārthavādī tūṣṇikāḥ kṣaṇam yāvac cintayati, tāvad īśvarādvayavādī paravyāmohavyapohana-ṛaṇarānakatvaritahṛdayaḥ svakarāvalambanapratyāśayā bhāyārthavādinā sahyamāno vastuparamārthaṃ \*pradarśayisyata iti [em.: KSTS pradarśayisyate], tan na saḥate tad etad ity ādinā.* “While the externalist (*bhāyārthavādī*), made silent by the Vijñānavādin after [the latter] has spoken thus [, i.e., after he has stated the ‘synthesis’ argument], is pondering for a moment, the holder of the unity with the lord (*īśvarādvayavādī*), whose heart is impatient because of [his] longing for a refutation of the opponent’s mistake, being tolerated by the externalist who expects him to give him a hand [by criticizing the Vijñānavādin’s argument], [thinking:] ‘the ultimate truth concerning the matter at hand will be made clear [later]’, does not bear this [Vijñānavādin’s argument], [as Utpaladeva expresses with the passage] beginning with ‘*tad etat*’”.

crying in the same way, whether in a crowd or in a secluded place.<sup>35</sup> Of course, when I speak, most of the time my will to speak is linked with a desire to be heard and therefore to produce in the other the objective cognition “X is speaking”, so indeed, in that case an objective cognition “X is speaking” is produced in the other by my subjective desire to speak. But as the externalist again points out, the Vijñānavādin’s argument is circular, for I can understand this causality relation only if the existence of the other has first been established.<sup>36</sup> So the invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) on which the Vijñānavādin’s inference rests (whenever there is a speech, there is a subjective will to speak) is not established—unless one assumes the existence of the other, which is precisely what the Vijñānavādin’s inference is supposed to prove.

So far the externalist has pointed out the invalidity of the inference through which the Vijñānavādin claims to know the others, arguing that the causality relation on which it rests (“the other’s action must be the effect of a conscious will”) cannot be established unless we presuppose the existence of the subject that the inference is supposed to prove. He now adopts a more general perspective:

<sup>35</sup> See ĪPVV, vol. II, p. 124: *vyatirekābhāvaṃ darśayati tatheti. bālo rudan nābhisandhatte paraḥ śṛṇoti ity ekākitve’pi janākīṛṇatve’pi vā kutaścid duḥkhād asāv avyaktadhrvaninā rudann upalabhyate.* “[Utpaladeva now] shows the absence of negative concomitance (*vyatireka*) [between the will to be perceived by others while acting and the others’ perception of me acting] with [the passage beginning with] ‘*tathā*’. A crying child does not make a synthesis [between his subjective will to cry and the objective perception by others of his crying] in the form ‘may someone else hear [my crying]’; whether [he] is alone, or whether [he] is surrounded by a crowd, this [child] is seen crying due to some sorrow without any perceptible noise”.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. ĪPVV, vol. II, pp. 122–123: *yady api maitrasya tathā samihā caitre’pi maitro nṛtyati śṭhivātīty ābhāsa upadyatām iti tathāpi caitraḥ kathaṃ jānīyād anapavārya yad idam nṛttaṃ, tat parasamihākāryaṃ bhavātīti. na hy anena parasamihāvā adyāpi nāma jñātam. param ajānato maitrasyāpi kathaṃ tathā samihā bhaved iti cintyam.* “Even if Maitra’s desire [when he wants to dance, to spit, etc.] takes this form: ‘let there rise in Caitra also the manifestation ‘Maitra is dancing [or] spitting’’, even so, how could Caitra know that this [act of] dancing [performed] without concealing it is the effect of someone else’s will? For through [Maitra’s desire], even now[, at the time when Caitra is trying to infer Maitra’s existence, Caitra] knows nothing at all of someone else’s will. [Besides,] one must reflect on this: how can Maitra as well have such a desire [of being seen acting by someone else], whereas he does not know the other?”. See also *Ibid.*, p. 123: *maitro’pi paśyatv iti yad uktam, tad evam upapadyeta yadi maitrasarīrābhāse samihārūpe draṣṭṛtāsvabhāvaṃ jānīyāt. svātmavartikāryakāraṇābhāvajighṛkṣāsamaye’pi tu kathaṃ parasantānajñānam. drśyatām hi yadā pāmarakadāserakāv anyonyaṃ śṭhivato vādināv udgrāhayato yuvānau nṛtyataḥ, tadāyaṃ para etaj jānāt v iti yad abhisandhānam, tat parapramāṭṛjñānapūrvakam. parajñānam ca tathābhisandhijanitanṛtābhāsajñānapūrvakam ity anyonyāśrayam.* “[The synthesis] invoked [by the Vijñānavādin], namely ‘let Maitra also see [me acting]’, would be possible in this way if one [already] knew that, since the manifestation of Maitra’s body consists in a will, [Maitra’s] nature consists in being a perceiver. But at the time when [one] wants to grasp the causality relation occurring in oneself, how could there be a knowledge of the other’s conscious stream? For look: when two low-cast men are spitting at each other, [when] two dialecticians are arguing against each other, [when] two young persons are dancing, then the synthesis (*abhisandhāna*) ‘may the other know this’ is preceded by the knowledge of the other subject. And the knowledge of the other [subject] is [in turn] preceded by the knowledge of the manifestation of [spitting, arguing or] dancing which is [supposedly] produced by such a synthesis, therefore there is a circularity of reasoning (*anyonyāśraya*) [in the Vijñānavādin’s argument]”.

*pramātrantarāṇi ca yadi bhinnāni tadā tanniṣṭhānām avabhāsānām bheda eva jñānād avyatiriktaṃ ceti nyāyāt. tatas caikābhāsaniṣṭhatvābhāvād ekābhāsaviśrāntas saṃbhūya pramāṭṛñāṃ vyavahāro na syād ity anyonyānuparaktaṃ bhūtagrastaprakṛtiprāyaṃ jagad āpadyeta.*<sup>37</sup>

Besides, if the other subjects are different [from one another], then there must be a difference between the manifestations resting on them as well [, i.e., between the objects of their cognitions as well as between their cognitions], because of [Dharmakīrti's own] principle: “And [how could the object of one cognition], which is not distinct from [this] cognition...”[, etc.] (*jñānād avyatiriktaṃ ca*).<sup>38</sup> And consequently, the mundane sphere of experience (*vyavahāra*), which, being shared by the [different] subjects, rests on a single manifestation, cannot take place, [precisely] because it cannot rest on a single manifestation. Therefore people, not being affected by each other, should fall into a state as good as [that of] being possessed by spirits.

Even if we set aside the problem of how we are aware of the others, the very possibility of their existence remains a mystery in the idealistic system, for as already noted, according to Dharmakīrti and his followers, the object has no existence apart from its cognition—that is to say, it does not exist over and above its apprehension by the subject. But if there are several different subjects, they can only differ as regards their cognitions, for a subject is, according to the Vijñānavādin, nothing but a series of cognitions. These different cognitions cannot refer to a single objective reality that they would apprehend from various subjective points of view, for according to the idealist the object does not exist apart from the consciousness which grasps it. Therefore there cannot be any common world shared by the various subjects: each subject must be confined within his own private world, and the *vyavahāra*, the mundane sphere of experience within which all intersubjective relations take place, cannot be accounted for, since the mundane world is a *shared world*: it presupposes a common ground on which various subjects can

<sup>37</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, p. 174.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Pramāṇavārttika* III, 71 cd: *jñānād avyatiriktaṃ ca katham arthāntaram vrajet*. “And how could [the object of one cognition], which is not distinct from [this] cognition, extend to another object [of another cognition]?” I.e., a single entity cannot be the object of two different cognitions, otherwise the two cognitions would be in fact one and the same, since the object is not distinct (*vyatirikta*) from its cognition, or (*Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti*, p. 208) it is nothing but an “aspect” (*ākāra*) of its cognition. The sentence occurs here in the context of an analysis of “generality” (*sāmānya*): Dharmakīrti intends to show that this generality is a product of the mind and does not have any objective reality (see the conclusion drawn in the next verse, 72 ab: *tasmān mithyāvikalpo'yam arteṣv ekāmatāgrahaḥ*. “Therefore, the fact that [we] grasp an identity in the objects [themselves] is a conceptual construction that does not correspond to reality”). In reality we perceive nothing but singular entities, and because they are singular each of them can only be the object of one single act of perception; which, according to the externalist's criticism here, means that in the Vijñānavāda, if there are different subjects, they do not perceive objects that would be common (*samāna*) to them: each subject perceives his *own* objects, and our belief that we are perceiving this or that object in common with other subjects is erroneous (*mithyā*).

build relations both with objects and with other subjects. If the objects that I perceive have nothing to do with the objects that you perceive, how is it that we are *de facto* sharing a common world in which you are reading what I have written? Nothing can explain the harmony that makes us deal with the same objects in the same world.

Indeed, Dharmakīrti does face such a criticism in the *Santānāntarasiddhi*, when his realist opponent notices that according to his theory, when one person is talking to another, actually “the listener does not perceive the representations of the speaker and *vice versa*”, so that one wonders how they are at all able to have a conversation together.<sup>39</sup> Dharmakīrti answers that the illusion which makes us believe that we are actually perceiving the same objects as those perceived by other people can be compared to that of two persons suffering from the same eye disease and therefore convinced that they are both perceiving the same two moons.<sup>40</sup> They are both mistaken, and yet they are not sharing a single perception; it is just that their two independent illusions happen to coincide with each other.<sup>41</sup> Vinītadeva, while commenting on this illustration, explains that just as in the case of the two moons, our belief that we are perceiving the same objects is an “accidental coincidence”.<sup>42</sup>

Thus according to the Vijñānavāda, the intersubjective world is the result not of a Leibnizian preestablished harmony, but of a mere accident.<sup>43</sup> The variety of the objects that I perceive is explained by the awakening of this or that particular residual trace left during previous lives, and exactly in the same way the variety of the objects that someone else perceives is explained by the awakening of this or that residual trace in his own chain of consciousness. The two chains are perfectly independent, and yet, we believe that we are seeing

<sup>39</sup> See Vinītadeva’s commentary in Stcherbatsky (1969), p. 81: “You, the Idealist, regard only those marks of mind as real which point to your own mind. In reality, the listener does not perceive the representations of the speaker and *vice versa*. In such a case, where then is the agreement between them on the strength of which both, without knowing each other, are equally aware that certain external presentations are caused by the mind (that is, understand each other without knowing about the existence of each other)?”

<sup>40</sup> See *Sūtra* 65, Stcherbatsky (1969), p. 81.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Vinītadeva’s commentary (*Ibid.*): “Here, the perception of two moons by the two persons suffering from the same eye disease serves as an example. One says to the other: Look! and points to the second moon. The other replies: I see! Then, pointing the second moon with pride he thinks: This is what I have shown him! And the listener thinks: He showed me this! Nevertheless, each of them experiences his perception independently without the corresponding external object.”

<sup>42</sup> Stcherbatsky (1969), *Ibid.*: “I myself and the other, i.e., the speaker and the listener, experience our representations independently—I mine and the listener his. Exactly thus, when two persons suffering from the same eye disease see two moons in place of one, each of them experiences his representation independently. We think that when two persons cognize the same object in the form of a clear and distinct representation, this is a similar accidental coincidence of their representations.”

<sup>43</sup> In the Preface to his translation (p. 61), Stcherbatsky notices that Dharmakīrti’s theory cannot but bring to the mind of the Western reader Leibniz’s theory concerning the harmony of monads. However it should be noted that an obvious difference lies in the absence, in Dharmakīrti’s system, of a God to guarantee this harmony.

the same objective realities.<sup>44</sup> Dharmakīrti thus affirms that nothing justifies rationally the harmony between two chains of consciousness: this harmony is nothing but a perpetual — and yet accidental—coincidence. The *vyavahāra* is ultimately nothing but a universal disease, or rather nothing but the sum of particular diseases that, while affecting each of us, make us believe wrongly that we are all perceiving the same objective world. The different subjects do not communicate in any way, they are not affected in any way by each other, and yet they believe that they are communicating with each other, thinking and acting as if they were “possessed by spirits”. But according to the externalist opponent portrayed by Abhinavagupta, the Vijñānavādin cannot provide for a rational explanation as to *how* all these particular diseases manage to converge towards a single seemingly objective world—that is to say, as to how cognitions that are necessarily different manage to seemingly “rest on a single manifestation”. To describe it as an accidental coincidence amounts to renounce explaining it. Therefore his explanation of the *vyavahāra* has no value whatsoever: if the intersubjective world is nothing but a series of individual illusions, one has to account for the fact that this illusion seems to be somehow shared.

Having thus shown both that the Vijñānavādin is unable to account for our awareness of other subjects, and that the very possibility of their coexistence remains a mystery in his system, the Buddhist externalist now shows that his attempt to infer the existence of others contradicts the core principle of his doctrine:

*anumīyamānam api ca bodhāntaram anumāṭṛsaṃmatād bodhād yadi bhinnam, tad asti tāvat saṃbhavaḥ - yat prameyaṃ bodhād bhinnam asiti. sahopalambhaniyamāder anaikāntikatvān nilapitādināpi prameyarāśinā kim apakṣtam, yenāsya svarūpaviśrāntir na sahyate, tasmāt pramātran-tarāṇām apy asiddhir eva.*<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, if the other consciousness which is being inferred is distinct from the consciousness considered as the inferrer, then for sure, there is the possibility that the object of cognition (*prameya*) [as well] 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

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Vinītadeva’s commentary (*Ibid.*): “The previous experiences of consciousness, at times preceding its present existence, serve as the direct cause of this phenomenon. They create the character of our consciousness, which is essentially a special force—the function of mind in general. The phenomenal life is the successive manifestation of this force—a process marked by birth and death. The special essence of this process lies in its capacity to create representations, in which the different persons are convinced that they perceive the same external object. This process does not have any beginning in time. The mind unites the movements, speech, etc.—its own as well as that of others—in one concept of ‘mark of mind’, which is a clear and distinct representation. Thus the speaker thinks: The listener will understand what I speak. The listener, in turn, thinks: I have understood what he has said. Here lies the confidence that the same external object is perceived”.

<sup>45</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 174–175.

conclusion [of idealism], what offence has the mass of objects (the blue, the yellow, etc.) committed, because of which it would not be allowed to rest on its own nature, [independently of the subject]? Therefore, there is absolutely no establishment [not only of the existence of phenomenal variety but] also of the [existence of] other subjects [in the Vijñānavādin's theory].

What does the Vijñānavādin's claim that we infer the existence of other subjects mean exactly? Either the Vijñānavādin considers that the other's consciousness, supposedly inferred, is not distinct from my own consciousness—that is to say, that it is only a mental product of mine; and then the Vijñānavādin has to admit that in his system there is no room whatsoever for the others, since the others, just like all the other worldly objects, are nothing outside my consciousness. Or by stating that the others can be inferred, he wishes to acknowledge that the other subjects appearing in my consciousness somehow have an independent existence apart from their very manifestation in my chain of consciousness. But then why not accept the independent existence of objects as well? The Vijñānavādin grounds his denial of the independent ontological status of objects on the Dharmakīrtian principle according to which an object is necessarily perceived along with the subjective aspect of cognition (*sahopalambhaniyama*)<sup>46</sup>—which, according to the Vijñānavādin, means that objects do not exist independently of the consciousness that manifests them. He thus considers that the necessary co-perception of the object and of its cognition necessarily involves the non-existence of the object outside of the cognition. But then his will to acknowledge the existence of other subjects (if indeed he has such a will) is a breach of his principle, for subjects as well are only manifest insofar as they are objects for my consciousness—whether directly, since I perceive some of their objective aspects in the form of their bodies, etc., or indirectly, since they are the objects of my inferential activity. One cannot see, then, what legitimates the Vijñānavādin's obstination to deny any independent existence to objective entities, which are, exactly in the same way, manifest only insofar as they are objects for my consciousness. The opponent concludes: the Vijñānavādin, despite his claim to do so, is absolutely unable to account for our awareness of other subjects by inferring their existence, because such an attempt is contradictory with his idealistic principles.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Pramāṇaviniścaya* I, 55 (see Steinkellner (1972), p. 206) : *sahopalambhaniyamād abhedo nīlataddhiyoḥ*. “There is no difference between ‘the blue’ and the cognition of ‘the [blue]’, because of the necessity of [their] being perceived together”. R. Torella, in his edition of Utpaladeva's *Vṛtti* (fn. 5, p. 111), notices that Abhinavagupta quotes this very passage (IPVV, II, p. 78). It should be noted, however, that Dharmakīrti himself did not use the concept of *sahopalambhaniyama* in order to establish his idealism against externalism, but merely to establish that blue and the cognition of blue are not different even in the externalist's perspective. It was nonetheless taken as an argument meant to establish his idealism by various authors, including Rāmakaṇṭha for instance (see Watson (2006), pp. 260–271, and particularly fn. 24, p. 261).

## II. Otherness according to the Pratyabhijñā philosophy (ĪPV I, 1, 5)

Let us now turn to the Pratyabhijñā philosophers' explanation of our awareness of others. This explanation occurs while Utpaladeva endeavours to show that the subject is endowed with two powers, those of knowledge (*jñānaśakti*) and action (*kriyāśakti*) in the following verse:

*tatra jñānaṃ svataḥ siddhaṃ kriyā kāyāśritā satī /  
parair apy upalakṣyeta tayānyajñānam ūhyate //*<sup>47</sup>

Regarding those [two powers of knowledge and action], knowledge (*jñāna*) is established by itself; action (*kriyā*), when it rests on the body, can be perceived by the others as well; through this [action resting on the body], the [power of] knowledge of the others is guessed (*ūhyate*).

As the Vijñānavādins, Utpaladeva considers that it is through someone else's action that we become aware of his being conscious. Nonetheless, beyond this apparent similarity lie some important doctrinal differences concerning both the definition of knowledge, that of action, and that of their mutual relation—and as a consequence, concerning also the definition of the nature of our awareness of the others. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the Pratyabhijñā's definition of action (and of its relation to knowledge) as opposed to that of the Buddhists—the whole second part of Utpaladeva's *kārikās* is devoted to the complex elaboration of this definition. Nonetheless it is of importance to point out here its main features, for this issue is crucial in order to understand what our awareness of the others is according to the Pratyabhijñā philosophers. It is therefore necessary to understand first how they define knowledge, action and their mutual relation by following step by step Abhinavagupta's commentary on this verse.

### II. 1. The self-luminosity of knowledge: a subject's consciousness is self-established for that subject

Abhinavagupta first comments upon the beginning of the verse, *jñānaṃ svataḥ siddham*, "knowledge is established by itself":

*ahaṃ jānāmi, mayā jñātaṃ jñāsyate cety evaṃ* \**svaparakāśāhaṃparāmarśa*<sup>48</sup>-  
*pariniṣṭhitam evedam jñānaṃ nāma, kiṃ tatrānyad vicāryate, tadaparakāśe hi*

<sup>47</sup> ĪPK I, 1, 5 (ĪPV, vol. I, p. 45). K.C. Pandey, in his edition of the *Bhāskarī*, gives a different numbering for the verses of the first chapter of the *Jñānādhikāra*, obviously following Bhāskarakaṇṭha, according to whom the real first verse of the chapter is the second to occur while the first is only an introductory verse (see *Bhāskarī*, vol. I, p. 49, about the second occurring verse: *prathamaṃ ślokaṃ upanyasya vyācaṣṭe*. "Having quoted [Utpaladeva's] first verse, [Abhinavagupta now] explains [it]"). Consequently there is a difference in the numbers of the two editions (in the *Bhāskarī* this is verse 4, see vol. I, p. 70). Pandey is probably right, but for practical reasons I have chosen to keep the KSTS (and the *Vṛtti*'s) numbering.

<sup>48</sup> *Bhāskarī*, B, J1, J2, SOAS: *prakāśāhaṃparāmarśa*- KSTS, L (the passage is not preserved in P).



*viśvam andhatamasam syāt, tad api vā na syāt, bālo'pi hi tāvat*<sup>49</sup>  
*prakāśaviśrāntim eva saṃvedayate. tad uktam vijñātāram are kena*  
*vijānīyād iti. tannihnavē hi kaḥ praśnaḥ, kim uttaraṃ ca syād iti.*<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, regarding the cognition which has these forms: “I know, I knew, I shall know”, which rests on nothing but a grasping of the “I” (*ahamparāmarśa-*)<sup>51</sup> that is self-luminous (*svaprakāśa-*), what else could [we still] investigate? For if this were not shining, the world would be thick darkness, or rather even that [thick darkness] wouldn’t exist, for indeed, even a child makes known this very fact [that the cognition “I know”] rests on conscious light. This has been said<sup>52</sup>: “By what [means] could one know the knower [himself]?” For if one were to deny this [subject], what question and what answer could there [still] be?

Knowledge is not a particular kind of objective entity, an object among other objects. For we ascertain the existence of objects through a *pramāṇa*, a means of knowledge (be it direct perception or inference); but knowledge transcends objectivity insofar as it is a self-established power. The cognition “I know” rests on a “self-luminous” understanding of my subjectivity: I cannot

<sup>49</sup> J1, J2, SOAS : omitted in KSTS, *Bhāskari*, B, L (the passage is not preserved in P).

<sup>50</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 45–46.

<sup>51</sup> The word *parāmarśa* and others related to it, such as *vimarśa*, *āmarśa*, etc., are notoriously difficult to translate — see for instance the various translations of *vimarśa* listed by R. Torella (who himself chooses “reflective awareness”) in his Introduction to Utpaladeva’s ĪPK and *Vṛtti*, fn. 32, p. xxiv: “cogitazione, pensiero” (Gnoli), “prise de conscience” (Silburn), “self-consciousness, freedom, determinate consciousness” (Pandey), “ressaisissement infini” (Hulin), “Betrachtung, Urteil” (Frauwallner), “self-representation, representation” (Sanderson), “prise de conscience active, liberté de conscience” (Padoux), etc. The difficulty lies in the fact that each of these translations becomes more or less adequate according to the context, but there does not seem to exist any single word capable of encompassing all the shades of meaning of the original sanskrit in Western languages. The concept must be understood in relation and in contrast with the word *prakāśa* (ordinarily translated as “light”, “conscious light”), and it indicates a power that exclusively belongs to consciousness. I have chosen here to translate the word as “grasping” (to which the French “prise de conscience” is probably the closest) for several reasons stated in the following pages, and that may be summarized thus for now: first, the root *mṛś* from which the word is derived means, according to Monier-Williams, “to touch, stroke, handle” as well as “to touch mentally, consider, reflect”; second, as will be explained below *vimarśa* is conceived of as the dynamic aspect of consciousness, its ability to get hold of itself and of objects, as opposed to the mere “reflection” of *prakāśa*—its ability to shine and to manifest; third, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers explicitly deny that it may be purely and simply conceptual thought as opposed to perception. The word “representation” or “self-representation” (as opposed to the “presentation” of *prakāśa*) is more adequate in some respects, since it marks the contrast with *prakāśa* while suggesting that it is not fundamentally opposed to it, and since it involves a notion of creativity on the part of the subject. However I have not used it, because the use of this term in Western philosophy (particularly in Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophy) may be misleading, as it seems to imply that *vimarśa* is some kind of constructed knowledge and that it is necessarily subject to some transcendental conditions that the Pratyabhijñā philosophers would deny at least for the “pure” *vimarśa*.

<sup>52</sup> In *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* II, 4, 14.

think “I know”, “I perceive”, “I think” without being aware at the same time that I am having that knowledge, that perception, that thought. When I know, I know that I know, and this self-luminous knowledge cannot be called into question in any way; for if such a knowledge were not self-shining, the world wouldn’t even be a mass of darkness—a mass of darkness is still somehow the object of a perception, whereas a perception that is not manifest to anyone is in fact no perception at all, and that is exactly what the world would be if knowledge were not self-luminous.<sup>53</sup> Therefore I cannot ignore the fact that I am a subject: even though I don’t spend my time explicitly telling myself that “I know that I know”, as soon as I am conscious, I am aware that I am conscious, and this immediate reflexivity of consciousness<sup>54</sup> constitutes the very essence of knowledge.

## II. 2. *Prakāśa* and *vimarśa*: action as the essence of knowledge

So far, the Buddhist idealists would agree with the Pratyabhijñā philosophers: Dharmakīrti, following Dignāga, also considers that knowledge is “self-luminous”, and they both contend that the subject is nothing but that self-luminous aspect of any given cognition.<sup>55</sup> Besides, just as the Buddhists, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers consider that we cannot directly perceive the others insofar as their subjectivity resides in the fact that they have cognitions, and we cannot perceive these cognitions as we can perceive a mere object in the world, precisely because cognitions are not objects to be passively manifested, but self-luminous entities. Last but not least, as already noted, they share with the Buddhists the idea according to which our awareness of the others has as its source their action (*kriyā*).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Bhāskaraṅṭha’s commentary (*Bhāskarī*, p. 71): *tad api—andhatamasam api, tamograhane’pi ca prakāśasyaiva sāmartyāt. na hi netradvāreṇāsamcaritaprakāśaḥ jātyandhaḥ tamo’pi grahituṃ śaknoti, adarśanamātrasyaiva tadgatatvāt. abhāvarūpasyādarśanasya nīlarūpasvarūpād dravyasvarūpād vā tamaso bhinnatvāt.* “[Or rather] even that’, [i.e.], even that thick darkness [would not exist], because only conscious light (*prakāśa*) has the power of grasping darkness; for even a complete congenital blindness, in which there is no light, cannot be grasped through the eyes, because in this darkness there is nothing but a mere absence of vision; since not seeing, which consists in a [mere] absence, is different from darkness, which consists in a dark form, or in a substance”.

<sup>54</sup> I don’t mean by this a capacity of consciousness to take itself as an object, for the Pratyabhijñā philosophers explicitly deny that consciousness may know itself thus. Rather, I have in mind the pages in Sartre’s *L’Être et le néant* that are devoted to consciousness’s awareness of itself as a “non-positional self-awareness” making possible any knowledge of an object (see Sartre (1943), particularly pp. 16–23). That is to say, by “immediate reflexivity” I merely mean a spontaneous awareness of oneself that is the transcendental condition of any knowledge of an object while not being itself mediated by any objectifying process.

<sup>55</sup> They would only disagree insofar as for Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, this subject is not a lasting entity: with every self-luminous cognition rises a new subject, and we construct an artificial enduring “self” on the basis of these flashes of momentary subjectivity. The ĪPK and their commentaries are largely devoted to showing that this momentaneistic conception of the self is wrong (on this criticism, see Ratié (2006)).

Nonetheless the Śaivas do not conceive of knowledge and action, nor of their relation, as the Buddhists do, and these fundamental differences lead the Pratyabhijñā philosophers to account for our awareness of other subjects in a different way. Abhinavagupta's next remark already draws a sharp line between the Pratyabhijñā philosophy and that of Dharmakīrti's school:

*tatra jānāmīty antaḥsaṃrambhayogo'pi bhāti, yena śuklāder guṇād atyantajaḍāḥ jānāmīti vapuḥ citsvabhāvātām abhyeti; sa ca saṃrambho vimarśaḥ kriyāśaktir ucyate. yad uktam asmatparameṣṭhiśrīsomānandapādaiḥ - ghaṭādighrahakāle'pi ghaṭaṃ jānāti sā kriyeti. \*tenāntarī kriyāśaktir<sup>56</sup> jñānavad eva svataḥ siddhā svaparakāśā.<sup>57</sup>*

In that [cognition] which has the form “I know” is manifest an association with an internal act of grasping (*saṃrambha*) as well, thanks to which the form “I know”, from a [mere objective] quality, such as “white”, which is totally insentient, acquires the status of consciousness. And this act of grasping, this *vimarśa* is called the power of action (*kriyāśakti*). This has been said by my venerable great-grand teacher Somānanda [in the *Śivadrṣṭi*]<sup>58</sup>: “At the time also of grasping the pot or [any other object], it is action (*kriyā*) that knows the pot”. Therefore the internal power of action (*āntarī kriyāśaktiḥ*), just as the [power of] knowledge, is established by itself, being self-luminous (*svaparakāśa*).

In his verse, Utpaladeva talks about action “when it rests on the body” (*kāyāśritā sati*)—but Abhinavagupta explains here that Utpaladeva adds this specification precisely because action does not always rest on the body. What then is action when it is not incarnated? It is the act of grasping (*vimarśa*) present in every cognition. For cognition is not a mere luminosity (*prakāśa*) that makes things manifest, a passive reflection of things as that of a mirror or a crystal: a mirror or a crystal, although they have the power to manifest other objects, remain insentient, unaffected by and indifferent to the objects that they reflect. On the contrary, consciousness is, in its essence, an activity, a dynamism. To be conscious is not merely to manifest, or even merely to manifest that one is manifesting (as, for instance, two mirrors could) but to grasp oneself as manifesting—a dynamism that the Pratyabhijñā philosophers call *vimarśa*.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *Bhāskari*, B, J1, J2, L, SOAS: *tenāntarīyākriyāśaktiḥ* KSTS (the passage is not preserved in P).

<sup>57</sup> *ĪPV*, vol. I, pp. 46–47.

<sup>58</sup> This is the first part of I, 24, p. 19.

<sup>59</sup> See *ĪPK* I, 5, 11 (*svabhāvam avabhāsasya vimarśam vidur anyathā / prakāśo'rthoparakto'pi sphaṭikādijaḍopamaḥ* // “[The wise] consider that the nature of manifestation is the conscious act of grasping (*vimarśa*); otherwise, the conscious luminosity (*prakāśa*), while being colored by objects, would be similar to an insentient entity such as a piece of crystal”), and Abhinavagupta's commentary, particularly *ĪPV*, vol. I, pp. 197–198: *athānyenāpi satā ghaṭena yato'vabhāsasya pratibimbarūpā cchāyā dattā, tām asāv avabhāso bibhrad ghaṭasyety ucyate, tataś cājaḍaḥ, tarhi sphaṭikasalilamakurādir apy evaṃbhūta eva, ity ajaḍa eva syāt. atha tathābhūtam apy ātmānaṃ taṃ ca ghaṭādikaṃ sphaṭikādir na parāmrāṣṭuṃ samartha iti jaḍaḥ, tathā parāmarśanam evājadyajīvitam antarbahīṣkaraṇasvātantryarūpaṃ svābhāvikaṃ avabhāsasya svātmaviśrāntilakṣaṇam ananyamukhaprekṣitvaṃ nāma. aham eva prakāśātmā prakāśa iti hi vimarśodaye svasaṃvid eva*

Thus the power of action, when it is internal (*āntarī*), is self-established just as that of knowledge—because it is one with the power of knowledge.<sup>60</sup>

This last remark is crucial, because it is closely related to a fundamental and yet subtle difference with the Buddhist idealism described in the fifth chapter. For the Buddhists also acknowledge a difference between *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*; but when they make use of these two terms they don't mean quite the same thing as the Pratyabhijñā philosophers. For the Buddhists, *prakāśa* — often translated in Buddhist contexts as “indeterminate cognition”—denotes a purely perceptual cognition, the passive sensation of a totally singular entity that resists any attempt to be verbally expressed, since language always deals with generalities. On the contrary, *vimarśa* — often translated in Buddhist contexts as “determinate cognition”—denotes a purely conceptual cognition, that is to say the result of an activity of abstraction that builds artificial generalities. Insofar as indeterminate cognition (*prakāśa*) is the passive manifestation of a singular entity, it tells us something of reality—although we cannot, in turn, tell something of it, for this singular reality is by definition inexpressible. As for the determinate cognition (*vimarśa*), although it is useful in the phenomenal world, and in this measure can be considered as valid, it doesn't tell us anything about reality: it is an intellectual construction, a mere conceptual tool that we build in order to be

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*prameyapramāṇādi caritārtham abhimanyate na tv atiriktaṃ kāṅkṣati, sphaṭikādi hi gr̥hītapratibimbam apī tathābhāvena siddhau pramātrantaram apekṣata iti nirvimarśatvāi jaḍam.* “If [one says that in the case of the cognition of a pot for instance,] the conscious manifestation which bears the [reflection of the pot] is called ‘[manifestation] of the pot’ because a ‘coloring’—that is to say a [mere] reflection—is given to this manifestation by the pot, although this [object] is different [by nature from the conscious manifestation], and [that] it is for this reason that [this manifestation] is sentient (*ajāḍa*), then [one must conclude that] a crystal, water, a mirror, etc., which are similar [to consciousness thus defined] must themselves be sentient (*ajāḍa*) [which is an absurd conclusion]. But if [one says that] a crystal for instance is insentient, because although it [bears] thus [the pot's reflection], it is not able to grasp (*parāmarṣtum*) itself as well as the pot, then it is this reflexive grasping (*parāmarśana*) which is the very life of sentience (*ajāḍyājīvita*), the nature of which is a freedom to act through internal and external faculties, which consists in the independence regarding any otherness, and the characteristic of which is to rest in the Self, which constitutes the essence of [conscious] manifestation. For when there rises the act of grasping (*vimarśa*) ‘it is me, consisting in conscious light (*prakāśa*), who is shining [when I have this or that cognition]’, this very self-consciousness (*svasamvid*) produces the opinion that the knower, the object of knowledge, the means of knowledge and [the act of knowing] are accomplished—and it does not require anything else; whereas a crystal for instance, although it receives a reflection, requires another [entity which is] a subject (*pramātr*) in order to be established as being such [a reflector]; therefore, because this [crystal for instance] is devoid of any act of grasping (*vimarśa*), it is insentient (*jaḍa*)”.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. for instance the passage in the ĪPVV commenting on the same verse (ĪPVV, vol. I, p. 101): *svātmani jñānaṃ svaprakāśaṃ, kriyāpy āntarī samvedanād avyatiriktaṃ vimarśarūpā svaprakāśā.* “Knowledge is self-luminous in oneself; internal (*āntarī*) action also, which is not distinct from cognition [and] consists in a conscious grasping (*vimarśa*), is self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*)”.

able to deal with the practical world.<sup>61</sup> Thus in the Buddhist view, there is a radical dichotomy between *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, which are considered as two different kinds of cognitions, among which the former simply manifests a singular entity, while the latter constructs an imaginary generality. By contrast, according to the Pratyabhijñā, *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* only denote two aspects of any given cognition. In every *prakāśa* there is a *vimarśa*, so that even a direct perception, in which we spontaneously tend to assume that our consciousness is merely reflecting an object, is not in fact a purely passive manifestation of what we are perceiving; it presupposes an act of consciousness, a synthesis without which no perception whatsoever is possible.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, *vimarśa* is not

<sup>61</sup> For the Dharmakīrtian definition of direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) as opposed to concept (*vikalpa*), see for instance NB I, 4: *tatra pratyakṣam kalpanāpodham abhrāntam*. “Among the [two sorts of knowledge], direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) is devoid of mental construction (*kalpanā*) [and] not erroneous”. It manifests a completely singular entity (see NB I, 12: *tasya viśayaḥ svalakṣaṇam*. “Its object is a singular [entity] (*svalakṣaṇa*)”); this manifestation of a singularity is “not erroneous” because it constitutes the only true contact with reality that can take place in a cognition (see NB, I, 14: *tad eva paramārthasat*, “the [singular] only exists in the ultimate sense”), but this reality escapes any verbal formulation, for direct perception cannot be expressed verbally, since it is devoid of any “mental construction”, of any conceptual thought that alone can be associated with speech (see NB I, 5: *abhilāpasamśargayapratibhāsā prāṭiṭṭh kalpanā*. “Mental construction (*kalpanā*) is the cognition the manifestation of which is fit for the association with speech (*abhilāpa*)”). From the very beginning of their long controversy with the Buddhists, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers show that they are perfectly aware of this distinction between the two kinds of cognitions; see the beginning of the first verse of chapter I, 2, which states a series of Buddhist objections that are answered in the sequel of the treatise: *nanu svalakṣaṇābhāsam jñānam ekam param punaḥ / sābhilāpam vikalpākhyam bahudhā...* “But one [type of] cognition (*jñāna*) comprises the manifestation of a particular (*svalakṣaṇa*), whereas the other, called concept (*vikalpa*), accompanied by speech (*abhilāpa*), is manifold”.

<sup>62</sup> Utpaladeva states (I, 5, 19) that even immediate perception—that is to say, for the Buddhist, *prakāśa* — must be accompanied by a *vimarśa*, a conscious activity that takes the form of a synthesis (*anusamdhāna*, *pratisamdhāna*): *sākṣātkāraḥ saṅge'py asti vimarśaḥ katham anyathā / dhāvanādy upapadyeta pratisamdhānavarjitam //* “Even at the moment of immediate perception, there is an act of grasping (*vimarśa*); otherwise, how [actions] such as running, which would [then] be devoid of synthesis (*pratisamdhāna*), could be possible?”. Abhinavagupta comments (ĪPV, vol. I, p. 229): *bhavatu vā kṣaṇamātrāsvabhāvaḥ sākṣātkāraḥ. tatrāpy asti vimarśaḥ, avāśyam caitat—anyatheti yadi sa na syāt, tad ekābhisaṃdhānena jāvād gacchan, tvaritam ca varṇān paṭhan, drutaṃ ca mantrapustakaṃ vācayan, nābhimatam eva gacchet, uccārayet, vācayed vā. tathā hi—tasmin deśe jñānam ācikramiṣākramaṇam ākrāntatājñānam prayojanāntarānusamdhānam tityakṣā deśāntarānusamdhāni, tatrāpy ācikramiṣetyādinaṃ saṃyojanaviyojanarūpeṇa parāmarśena vinābhimate-deśāvāptiḥ katham bhavet. evaṃ tvaritodgrahaṇavacanādaḥ mantavyam. tatra viśeṣataḥ sthānaka-ṛāṅkramaṇādiyogaḥ. atra ca yataḥ paścādbhāvīsthūlavikalpakalpanā na saṃvedyate, tata eva tvaritatvam iti sūkṣmeṇa pratyavamarśena saṃvartitāśabdabdhāvanāmayena bhāvyaṃ eva. saṃvartitā hi śabdabdhāvanā prasāraṇena vivartyamānā sthūlo vikalpaḥ, yathedam ity asya prasāraṇā ghaṭṭā śukla ityādiḥ, tasyāpi pṛthubudhnodarākāraḥ śuklatvajātiyuktagaṇasamavāyītyādiḥ. “Or let us admit that immediate perception is purely momentary. Even in [such a momentary immediate perception], there is an act of grasping (*vimarśa*), and this is a necessity; ‘otherwise’, [i.e.], if it were not the case, then [someone] going in haste with a single idea in mind, [someone] quickly reading letters, or someone rapidly reciting a book of mantras, wouldn’t reach his goal, wouldn’t pronounce the letters, nor would he recite [the mantras]. To explain—how could one reach the desired place without an act of grasping (*parāmarśa*) consisting in the union and separation [of various elements]: first the awareness of that place, [then] the desire to make a step, the action consisting in making that step, the awareness of having made that step, the synthesis (*anusamdhāna*) with the [cognition] of a second goal, the desire to leave the first place, the*

necessarily—contrary to what the Buddhists hold—an abstract concept: the concept (*vikalpa*) is only a variety of *vimarśa*, a partial aspect of it, but *vimarśa* is not exhausted by the definition of *vikalpa*, for *vimarśa* is consciousness’s essential dynamism.<sup>63</sup>

Thus for the Buddhists, activity, which means primarily artificiality, does not constitute the essence of consciousness. We do build artificial entities that we call “objects”, and these artificial entities leave “residual traces” (*vāsanā*) which in turn produce new objects, but according to the Buddhists, one can imagine a consciousness in which there would be no more activity, that is to say, a consciousness devoid of concepts (*nirvikalpa*), the pure sensation of the absolutely singular reality devoid of any subject-object duality—such is a Buddha’s awareness.<sup>64</sup> Since they see activity as a contingent feature of

Footnote 62 continued

synthesis (*anusam̐dhi*) with the [cognition] of yet another place, the desire to make a step towards that [other place]... And one must make the same reasoning as regards quickly reading and reciting, etc. In these [two latter cases] in particular, there is an association with the movement, etc., of the point and organ of articulation. And in [all these cases], since we do not witness the construction of a gross concept (which appears only later), [one must conclude] that in order for this rapidity to take place, there must be a subtle act of grasping (*pratyavamarśa*) that is nothing but the power of verbal expression (*śabdabhāvanā*) in a condensed form. For the gross concept (*vikalpa*) is the power of verbal expression which, [so far] condensed, has been explicitly developed. For instance, the development of ‘this’ is ‘pot’, ‘white’, etc., and the development of [the latter] is [respectively] ‘a form having a large basis and a swell’, and ‘that which has an inherent quality associated to the genus of whiteness’.

<sup>63</sup> This distinction between *vimarśa* and *vikalpa* is developed in I, 6: the first verse states that the “grasping of the I” (*ahaṃpratyavamarśa*) is not a mere concept (*vikalpa*), and Abhinavagupta explains that the *vikalpa* necessarily involves multiplicity, for according to its Buddhists’ definition itself, the concept of X consists in the act of separation of X from any non-X (to think of a “cow” is to eliminate mentally whatever is not a cow). But, as Utpaladeva notes in the second verse, in the case of the grasping by the subject of his own knowing activity—which is a kind of *vimarśa*—such a distinction is not possible, for the idea of conscious light (*prakāśa*) cannot be constructed by negating non-light from it. I can build the concept of a cow by eliminating from the object “cow” whatever other object is different from it; but when I say “I”, I am not eliminating from my consciousness whatever is not my consciousness, for everything that I am aware of is part of it. It is true that I do perceive myself as opposed to other subjects, and in that measure my self-awareness has the nature of a concept and is artificial (see I, 6, 4–5); but the pure act of self-awareness of the absolute consciousness that renders the individual’s act of self-awareness possible is not itself a concept, for it grasps an “I” that is absolutely boundless.

<sup>64</sup> See for instance the passage in Vasubandhu’s *Viṃśatikā* (the end of verse 17, *svapne dṛgviśayābhāvam nāprabuddho’vagacchati*, “Someone who has not awakened (*aprabuddha*) does not understand the non-existence of the objects of [his] perceptions”, and its commentary) where Vasubandhu describes the difference between people who have not awakened to reality and people who have—i.e., Buddhas: *evam vitathavikalpābhyāsavāsanānidrayā prasupto lokāḥ svapna ivābhūtam artham paśyann aprabuddhas tadabhāvam yathāvan nāvagacchati. yadā tu tatpratīpaḥsalokottaranirvikalpapajñānalābhāt prabuddho bhavati tadā tatprṣṭhalabdhāśuddhalaukīkajñānasaṃmukhībhāvād viśayābhāvam yathāvad avagacchatiī samānam etat*. “Thus, people, asleep with a sleep [due to] the residual traces (*vāsanā*) [themselves due to] the repetition of unreal concepts (*vikalpa*), seeing, as in a dream, an object that [actually] does not exist, do not understand the non-existence of this [object] as they should, since they have not awakened. But when [people] have awakened because [they] have obtained a cognition (*jñāna*) devoid of concepts (*nirvikalpa*) which is supra-mundane and opposite to the [sleep due to the *vāsanās*], then, they understand as they should the non-existence of objects, because [they are now] in presence of the pure mundane knowledge that [they] have acquired on the basis of this [supra-mundane knowledge]; therefore, it is the same [for them, whether in a dream or in the phenomenal world]”.

consciousness, one could object that one does not see *why* consciousness is ordinarily engaged in building an artificial world of concepts. The Vijñānavādins' answer consists in saying that these concepts are produced by the awakening of residual traces which have been left by previous concepts in turn produced by the awakening of residual traces and so on, and that there is no beginning to such a process.<sup>65</sup> The Buddhist externalists can criticize this answer—and indeed they do so in the 5th chapter of the *Vimarśinī*—by saying that thus the Vijñānavādins never account for the variety built by consciousness: to say that it is the result of a beginningless tendency is only to push the question one step away, for the Vijñānavādins never explain this beginningless tendency itself. By contrast, the Pratyabhijñā philosophy considers phenomenal variety to be the product of the very essence of consciousness, namely its dynamism, its creativity. To say that the very essence of *prakāśa* is *vimarśa* amounts to saying that every conscious manifestation involves an act, a creation; and consciousness is not made to create primarily through the external determinism of residual traces, but out of its intrinsic freedom (*svātantrya*).<sup>66</sup> Since creativity is not, contrary to what the Buddhists hold, a contingent feature of consciousness, but its very core, and since it is not the result of some determinism but the expression of its natural freedom, this intrinsic dynamism is enough to account for the diversity of the phenomenal world, and there is no need to have recourse to the extrinsic mechanism of some residual traces that would be “left” in consciousness without being

<sup>65</sup> Concerning the thesis according to which this process is beginningless (*anādi*), see for instance fn. 11 above.

<sup>66</sup> Immediately after having stated (in I, 5, 11) that the essence of conscious manifestation is *vimarśa*, Utpaladeva adds in I, 5, 12: *ātmāta eva caitanyaṃ citkriyācītikartṛtā / tātparyeṇodītas tena jaḍāta hi vilakṣaṇaḥ* // “For this very reason, the Self is [identified at the beginning of the *Śivasūtras* with] sentiency (*caitanya*); for it is due to this general meaning [of sentiency as] the agency (*kartṛtā*) with regard to cognitions, which is the action (*kriyā*) of consciousness (*cit*), that [something] which is insentient (*jaḍa*) is said to be different [from the Self]”. Abhinavagupta comments at length the allusion to the *Śivasūtras*' opening sentence, explaining that Utpaladeva writes “the Self is sentiency” instead of “the Self is sentient” in order to point out the fact that sentiency is the fundamental property of consciousness, the basis on which its other properties rest; he then comments (ĪPV, vol. I, p. 202) upon the meaning of “sentiency” as *citkriyācītikartṛtā*: *citkriyā ca citau kartṛtā, svātantryaṃ saṃyojanaviyojanānusaṃdhānādirūpam ātmamātratāyām eva jaḍavad aviśrāntatvam aparicchinna prakāśasāratvam ananyamukhaprekṣitvam iti. tad evānātmariṇīpāj jaḍāt saṃyojanaviyojanādisvātantryavikalād vilakṣaṇyādāyīti*. “And the agency (*kartṛtā*) as regards cognition is the action of consciousness (*citkriyā*); [it means] the freedom (*svātantrya*) consisting in joining, separating, synthesizing and so on, [i.e.], the fact of not being confined to one's limited self as an insentient [entity] (*jaḍa*) [is], the fact of having as one's essence an uninterrupted light (*prakāśa*), the fact of not being dependent on anything else (*ananyamukhaprekṣitva*). It is precisely this [property] which brings about the distinction [between the free Self and] an insentient [entity] (*jaḍa*) which, being devoid of the freedom (*svātantrya*) to join, divide, etc., does not consist in a Self”. The very essence of the Self is thus defined as sentiency, which in turn is understood as an absolutely free dynamism. According to the Pratyabhijñā, this essential creativity of consciousness, which can be witnessed in the phenomenal world in such phenomena as dreams or imagination, finds its highest form in the cosmic activity of the universal consciousness constantly creating the world without any material cause (*upādāna*) as a yogin who makes cities and battles appear to an audience without having recourse to any material device. See ĪPK I, 5, 7: *cidāتماiva hi devo'ntaḥsthitam icchāvaśād bahiḥ / yogīva nirupādānam arthajātam prakāśayet* //

fundamentally part of it. This is also the reason why, according to the Pratyabhijñā philosophy, to free oneself is not to get rid of the phenomenal multiplicity, but to gain access to a state of consciousness where objectivity still appears, but as the product of this constant and infinite creativity of consciousness; and where subjectivity still appears, but as the source of this universal creativity, and not as the limited individuality which I ordinarily attribute to myself: to free oneself is to recognize oneself as the universal Self

Foonote 66 continued

“For the Lord, which consists in nothing but consciousness (*cit*), manifests externally, without any material cause (*upādāna*) the [entire] mass of the objects residing within Him out of his free will (*icchā*), like a yogin”. It is worth noting that according to Abhinavagupta, Utpaladeva chooses the example of the yogin rather than that of dream, remembrance, imagination or volition (which also involve a creation devoid of material cause) among other reasons because in these latter cases one might suspect that these creations are not entirely free, since they might be produced by the determinism of residual traces. The idea here is to emphasize the free will (*icchā*) or freedom (*svātantrya*) which characterizes consciousness as opposed to the passivity of insentient beings. See ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 182–183: *iha tāvat svapnasmarāṇamanorājyasamkalpādiṣu nīlādyābhāsavaicitryaṃ bāhyasamarpakahetuvyatirekeṇaiva nīrbhāsata iti yady apy asti sambhavaḥ, tathāpi tadābhāsavaicitryam asthairyāt sarvaprāmātrasādhāranyāt pūrvānubhavasamskārajatvasambhāvanād avastv iti śaṅkyeta. yat punar idaṃ yoginām icchāmātreṇa purasenādivaicitryanirmāṇaṃ dṛṣṭam, tatropādānaṃ prasiddhamṛkāṣṭhaśukraṣoṇitādivaicitryamayam na sambhavaty eva.* “Regarding this [conscious creativity], even though there is this possibility that at least in such [conscious phenomena] as dream (*svapna*), memory (*smaraṇa*), the kingdom of imagination (*manorājya*) or the representation of a desired object (*samkalpa*), a variety of manifestations of [objects] such as ‘blue’, etc., may be manifest without any cause distinct [from consciousness] that would be an external [entity] producing [this variety of objects]—even so, one might fear that this variety of manifestations of [objects] might not be real, due to the fact that it does not last, that it is not common to all subjects, [and] that it is possible that it might be produced by residual traces (*samskāra*) [left by] previous experiences. But in this creation by yogins of a variety [of objects] such as cities, armies and so on, which is witnessed [to take place] through their sole free will (*icchā*), no material cause (*upādāna*) consisting of various things well known [in ordinary action] such as clay, wood, semen or blood can be supposed at all”. Later in his commentary of this verse, Abhinavagupta once more points out freedom (*svātantrya*) as the characteristic of consciousness which, once acknowledged, makes the supposition of a reality external to consciousness perfectly superfluous (*Ibid.*, pp. 184–185): *tatra yogisamvida eva sā tādṛśī śaktiḥ - yad ābhāsavaicitryarūpam arthajātam prakāśayati, iti tad asti sambhavaḥ—yat samvid evābhyupagatasvātantryāpratighātalakṣṇād icchāviśeṣavaśāt samvido’nadhikātmatāyā anapāyād antaḥsthitam eva sad bhāvajātam idam ity evaṃ prāṇabuddhidehāder vitṛṇakīyanmātrasamvidrūpād bāhyatvenābhāsayatīti, tad iha viśvarūpābhāsavaicitrye cidātmana eva svātantryaṃ kiṃ nābhyupagamyate svasamvedanasiddham, kimiti hetvantaraparyeṣaṇāprayāsena khidyate.* “In that regard, the power of the cognitions of a yogin is such that it manifests a mass of objects consisting in a variety of conscious manifestations. Therefore it is possible that consciousness itself, whose freedom (*svātantrya*) is acknowledged, out of its particular free will (*icchā*) consisting in being free from obstruction (*apratighāta*), may manifest as external to the vital energy, intellect, body and so on—the nature of which is consciousness, [but] has been somewhat limited—[i.e.] in the [objective] form ‘this’, the mass of objects which [actually] completely rests within [this consciousness], because [in fact these objects] never cease to be identical with consciousness. Therefore why is it that the freedom (*svātantrya*) of what is nothing but consciousness, which is established [merely] by self-awareness (*svasamvedana*), is not acknowledged regarding this variety of manifestations consisting in the universe? Why should [we] get exhausted with the trouble of searching for another cause [for the variety of the phenomenal world]?”.



endowed with this infinite power (*śakti*) which is inseparably knowledge and action.<sup>67</sup>

### II. 3. Incarnated action as the final stage of knowledge

Abhinavagupta goes on:

*saiva tu svaśaktyā prāṇapuryaṣṭakakrameṇa śarīram api saṃcaramāṇā spandanarūpā safī vyāpārvyāhārātmikā māyāpade'pi pramāṇasya pratyakṣāder viṣayaḥ. sā ca paraśarīrādisāhityenāvagatā svam svabhāvaṃ jñānātmakam gamayati.*<sup>68</sup>

But that same [power of action], when it pervades the body also by its own power, by gradually [entering] the vital energy and the subtle body, since it consists in a stir (*spandana*), that is to say, a speech (*vyāhāra*) which is an activity (*vyāpāra*),<sup>69</sup> is, even in the sphere of the phenomenal world, the object of a valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) such as direct perception and so on. And this [power of action], when it is known in association with the body, etc., of someone else, makes known its own nature consisting in knowledge.

Here too, as Abhinavagupta turns to phenomenal action, the difference between the Vijñānavāda's and the Pratyabhijñā's doctrines becomes obvious. For according to the Buddhists, action in the ordinary sense of the term does not have any ontological value; it is an illusion, a mere imaginary product of our intellectual constructions. When we believe that we are perceiving a man walking for instance, in fact we are only experiencing a series of different

<sup>67</sup> Thus towards the end of the treatise (IV, 15), Utpaladeva describes someone who has attained liberation as someone who has fully recognized himself as this infinite creativity, and who becomes omniscient and omnipotent because he has now fully appropriated powers that already belonged to him before this recognition, but that he did not fully enjoy because he had not recognized them as his: *evam ātmānam etasya samyag jñānakriye tathā / paśyan yathepsitān arthān* [Vṛtti, B, SOAS: *jānan yathepsitān paśyan* KSTS, *Bhāskarī*, J1, J2: *jānan yathepsitān arthān* L (post correctionem)] *jānāti ca karoti ca* // “Thus fully perceiving the self, his knowledge and his action as [they have been shown to be in the treatise], one knows and creates objects as one wishes them [to be]”.

<sup>68</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 47–48.

<sup>69</sup> Bhāskaraṇṭha's text (see *Bhāskarī*, vol. I, p. 75) does not have *vyāpārvyāhārātmikā*, but only *vyāpārātmikā* (“that is to say, an activity”). At first sight the mention of *vyāhāra*, speech, seems a bit odd here. Nonetheless, all the consulted manuscripts in which this passage is preserved (B, J1, SOAS, L) agree with the KSTS reading. Besides, a similar expression is used by Abhinavagupta in the corresponding passage of the ĪPVV (vol. I, p. 101): incarnated action is said to be *vyāpārvyāhārārūpā*, “consisting in a speech which is an activity”. The mention of speech here as an essential form of action is explained not only by the fact that, as we have seen while examining the Buddhist controversy over our awareness of others, the Buddhists favour speech as the paradigmatic action through which we infer the existence of others, but also by the fact that in the Trika, transcendental Speech is identified with the dynamism of consciousness; thus in the ĪPVV (vol. I, p. 105), Abhinavagupta identifies the various degrees of objectification of action with the different levels of the emanation of Speech.

static momentary perceptions: a man in a place P1 at a time T1; then a man in a place P2 at a time T2, etc. We do “recognize” the various men thus perceived as “the same” individual; but such a recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) is actually illusory, for these men remain irreducibly different, since even if we are to suppose that their “form” is the same—thus ignoring the numerous tiny differences occurring at every instant in the body that we are “recognizing”—these men exist only insofar as they are manifested in a momentary cognition, associated with a particular place and time; a man perceived in a place P1 at a time T1 is necessarily different from a man perceived in a place P2 at a time T2. What we call “action” is nothing but the projection of an imaginary identity onto irreducibly different moments, the illegitimate identification of distinct momentary entities.<sup>70</sup> Besides, action necessarily involves succession (*krāma*), but priority and posteriority do not belong to the objects of our perceptions, for our consciousness is made of a series of momentary cognitions: at the time T1 when I am perceiving X at the place P1, X cannot be “prior” to the X that I will perceive at the time T2, for my cognition of X at the time T2 has not arisen yet; nor can it become prior to the X perceived at the time T2, for when the cognition of X at the time T2 arises, the cognition of X at the time T1 has already vanished into naught. It is through a conceptualization *a posteriori* that my mind links together the two cognitions and builds between them a dynamic unity that I never actually perceived. Action thus turns out to be not only a mere concept, but also a

<sup>70</sup> See ĪPK I, 2, 9, summarizing a Buddhist objection: *kriyāpy arthasya kāyādes tattaddeśādijātātā / nānyā’dṛṣṭeḥ na sāpy ekā kramikaikasya cocitā //* “As for action (*kriyā*), it is [nothing but] the fact that an object such as the body comes to exist in this or that [particular] place, [time and form]; [and] it is nothing else, because [nothing else] is perceived; nor can this [action] be one, successive, and belong to one [single subject]”. Abhinavagupta comments, explaining the Buddhist’s position (ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 80–81): *iha pariṣpandarūpaṃ tāvad gacchati, calati, patatīty ādi yat pratibhāṣagocaram, tatra grhadeśāgatadevadattasvarūpād anantaram bāhyadeśavartidevadattasvarūpam—ity etāvad upalabhyate, na tu tatsvarūpātirikṭam kāncid anyam kriyām pratīmah. devadatto dinam tiṣṭhatīty atra tu prabhātakālāviṣṭadevadattasvarūpaṃ tataḥ praharakālāliṅgātatsvarūpam ity ādi bhāti, dugdham pariṇamata ity atra madhuravasturūpam amlavasturūpam dravarūpam kaṭhinarūpam ity ādi. evaṃ taddeśatayā tatkālatayā tadākāratayā ca bhāva eva bhāti. sādrśyāc ca tatra pratyabhijñā bhinne’pi kāyakeśanakhādāv iva.* “As regards [the so-called action], for sure, in that which consists in a movement that is within the range of manifestation, such as ‘he is going’, ‘he is moving’, ‘he is falling’, only this is [actually] perceived: immediately after the form of Devadatta residing in a place which is a house, the form of Devadatta situated in a place which is outside [the house]; but we do not perceive any other action which would be something over and above these forms. As for this [experience]: ‘Devadatta is staying for a day’, in it [this only] is manifest: the form of Devadatta, associated with the morning time, [and] then the form of [Devadatta], associated with [another] part of the day, etc. [Similarly,] in this [experience]: ‘the milk is undergoing a transformation’, [this only is manifest]: the form of a sweet substance, [and then] the form of a sour substance; a liquid form, [and then] a solid form. Thus, only one thing is manifest as having this [particular] place, this [particular] time, and this [particular] form; and because of a similarity between those [different things associated with different places, times and forms], there is a recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of them, although they are [actually] different [from each other], as when [we recognize someone in spite of the fact that] his body, hair and nails [are different]”.

contradictory concept, involving both multiplicity—insofar as it implies a succession of different moments—and unity.<sup>71</sup>

So according to the Buddhists, we infer from the other's speech—which is a kind of action—the fact that he too is a conscious being. But not only is such a knowledge a mere abstraction; in addition, my cognition of action itself is actually a mere mental construction, so that in the end my awareness of the others appears, just as that of objects, as an illusion produced by my mind.

According to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta too, our awareness of the others is rooted in our awareness of their actions. But the reason why action plays such a crucial role in our recognition of other subjects is somewhat different. According to Dharmakīrti, from the invariable concomitance between the cognition “I want to speak” and the cognition “I am speaking”, I infer that when X is speaking, X too must have had previously a desire to speak, a desire which is the cause of action. The Pratyabhijñā philosophers do not understand the invariable concomitance as a causality relation (*kārya-kāranābhāva*)—they show in the passage previously examined of the 5th chapter that such a causality relation cannot be accounted for in an idealistic system—but as an identity relation (*tādātmyabhāva*). According to them, we are aware of the existence of other subjects when we are aware of their actions, for the simple reason that consciousness *is*, in its essence, action. Perceptible action is nothing but an inferior form of *vimarśa*, consciousness's dynamism; and our freedom to act in the phenomenal world is nothing but an

<sup>71</sup> See Abhinavagupta's commentary on the same verse (ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 83–84): *tatra pūrvāpararūpatā kṣaṇānāṃ, na tu svātmani kiñcit pūrvam aparāṃ vā, vastumātram hi tat. ato vikalpaprāṇitām pūrvāparībhūtatvaṃ kramarūpatā kriyāyā lakṣaṇaṃ na vastu kiñcit sprśati, te hi kṣaṇā nānyonyasvarūpāviṣṭā iti katham ekā kriyā, kramo hi bhēdena vyāpto'bhinne tadabhāvāt, bhēdasya viruddham aikyam iti katham kramikaikā ceti syāt? athaikatrāśraye'vasthānād ekā, tatrāpi tatkṣaṇātirikto na kaścid āśrayo'nubhūyate, kṣaṇā eva hi prabandhavrṭtayo bhānti. kiṃ ca tathābhūtair bhīnmadeśakālākāraiḥ kriyākṣaṇair āviṣṭa āśrayaḥ katham ekaḥ syāt? ata eva devadatto'yam, sa eva grāmaṃ prāpta iti sādṛśyād bhavanī pratyabhijñā naikyam vāstavam gamayitum alam.* “With regard to those [experiences of so-called action], the moments (*kṣaṇa*) have priority and posteriority, but in itself, nothing is either prior nor posterior, for [what we perceive] is a mere thing (*vāstumātra*) [devoid of succession since it is purely momentary]. Therefore succession, [i.e.], the fact of being made prior and posterior which is characteristic of action, [since it] has as its very life a [mere] concept (*vikalpa*), does not grasp any real entity; for the moments are not associated with each other's nature; so how could action be one? For succession is necessarily concomitant with difference, since there is no succession in what is devoid of difference. [Therefore], since unity is contradictory with difference, how could [action] be [both] successive and one? But if [the opponent were to answer that action] is one, because of its resting on one single substrate, even in that case [we would answer that] no substrate whatsoever is experienced over and above these moments; for only moments occurring in a series are manifest. Moreover, how could a substrate associated with moments of action having such distinct places, times and forms be one? For this very reason, the recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) that occurs because of a similarity in this form: ‘it is that same Devadatta who has reached the village’ does not have the power to make [us] know a real unity”.

expression, albeit at an inferior ontological level, of consciousness's freedom.<sup>72</sup>

What then differentiates external action from the internal conscious act that characterizes me as a sentient being? Nothing but the manner in which this action is manifested. For consciousness has the power to grasp itself not only subjectively, in the form "I", but also objectively, in the form "this". The objects of the phenomenal world are nothing but aspects of the universal subjectivity objectively manifested; just as, due to the power of imagination, I can present to myself this or that object, the nature of which is in fact nothing but my subjective power to manifest myself and to grasp myself *not as myself*, but as this or that, in the same way the objective world is just the manifestation by myself of myself *as not being myself*. Accordingly, action can manifest itself subjectively, as the internal conscious grasping of the "I"—or objectively, as an external event in the phenomenal world.<sup>73</sup> Ordinary action is

<sup>72</sup> This is one of the fundamental points of disagreement between the Pratyabhijñā philosophers (and more broadly, the Trika to which they belong) and their fellow Śaivas of the Siddhānta, for while the formers endeavour to show that material action (*kriyā*)—including ritual action—is nothing but an ontologically inferior manifestation of knowledge (*jñāna*) (so that liberation can be sought through a purely conscious process, ritual being considered as a mere "paradigm", *udāharaṇa*, for this conscious process), the latter maintain a sharp distinction between action and knowledge – a distinction which is at the core of their dualism between consciousness and the material cause (*upādāna*) of the material world (see above, fn. 66 for a criticism by the Pratyabhijñā philosophers of the idea of cosmic creation through such an *upādāna*). It is this distinction which justifies the unavoidable recourse to ritual in their system in order to achieve liberation, since freedom can be obtained only through the removal of an impurity (*mala*) which is a material substance, and therefore requires more than a gnoseologic process to be removed. For an analysis of this disagreement between the Śaivas "of the left" and "of the right" regarding the relation between action and knowledge, see Sanderson (1992), pp. 282–291, and Sanderson (1995), particularly pp. 38–53.

<sup>73</sup> See the end of the *Jñānādihikāra* (ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 338–339), where Abhinavagupta states: *na cāsyāsau prakāśalakṣaṇaḥ svātmā nīlādyuparāgaś ca parāmarśanaśūnya evāste sphaṭikamaṇer iva, api tu sadaiva vimṛśyamānarūpaḥ, iti vimṛśadrūpatvam anavacchinnavimarśātānanyonmukhatvam ānandaikaghanatvam evāsyā māheśvryam. sa eva hy ahaṃbhāvātmā vimarśo devasya kṛīḍādimayasya śuddhe pāramārthikyau jñānakriye, prakāśarūpatā jñānaṃ tatraiva svātantryātmā vimarśaḥ kriyā, vimarśaś cāntaḥkṛtaprakāśaḥ, iti vimarśa eva parāvasthāyāṃ jñānakriye, parāparāvasthāyāṃ tu bhagavatsadāśivabhuvīdantāsāmānādhikaranyāpannāhamtāvimarśasvabhāve, aparāvasthāyāṃ ca māyāpada idaṃbhāvaprādhānyena vartamāne.* "And this Self consisting in luminosity (*prakāśa*), as well as his affections by [objects] such as blue and so on, does not exist devoid of the conscious act of grasping (*parāmarśana*), as [the self] of a crystal; rather, its nature is constantly engaged in the conscious act of grasping. Therefore, the fact that this [Self] is Maheśvara, 'the Great Lord', is nothing but the fact that its nature is to be grasping (*vimṛśyamānarūpa*), the fact that this grasping is uninterrupted, [his] freedom, the fact that [it] is nothing but bliss; for it is this very act of grasping (*vimarśa*) consisting in subjectivity (*ahaṃbhāva*) of the Lord who is playful, etc., which is the pure and ultimately real knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*kriyā*). Knowledge (*jñāna*) is the fact of consisting in luminosity (*prakāśa*), and within that very [knowledge], the conscious act of grasping (*vimarśa*), which is nothing but freedom (*svātantrya*), is action (*kriyā*); and the act of grasping (*vimarśa*) is luminosity (*prakāśa*) made interior. Therefore it is just the act of grasping (*vimarśa*) which, at the highest (*para*) level, is [both] knowledge and action. At the intermediate (*parāpara*) level which is that of the lord Sadāśiva, [knowledge and action] consist in an act of grasping (*vimarśa*), the subjectivity (*ahantā*) of which has become equivalent to objectivity (*idantā*); and at the lower (*apara*) level which is that of differentiated manifestation (*māyā*), they occur in a way which is predominantly objective (*idaṃbhāvaprādhānyena*)".

nothing more than the “final stage” (*paryanta*) of a conscious process—be it described from the cosmogonic point of view of the universal consciousness constantly engaged in creating the world, or from the phenomenological point of view of any ordinary conscious phenomenon—evolving from the initial expression of a pure subjectivity, in the form “I”, to that of objectivity, where it takes the form of bodily movement.<sup>74</sup>

It is true that, as the Buddhists remark, phenomenal action appears to reason as a contradictory phenomenon, since it involves both unity and plurality. Nonetheless Utpaladeva devotes a great part of the *Jñānādhikāra* to showing that consciousness is precisely a reality that transcends such a contradiction, for the essence of consciousness is to be both one and multiple. To be conscious is to have the power to manifest oneself freely, as this or that—as one, or as multiple, or as both; when I perceive or imagine several objects, in this act of representation I still recognize myself as the unitary basis of this manifestation. Therefore as long as action is conceived of as resting on consciousness, it escapes contradiction, because its multiplicity is nothing but the power of the unitary consciousness to manifest itself as multiple and successive.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> See for instance the beginning of Utpaladeva’s *Vṛtti* to his own *kārikā*, p. 4: *jīvatām kriyā kāyaparispandaparyantībhūtānyatrāpi pratyakṣā, jñānam ātmavedyaṃ paratrāpi kriyayaiva prasidhyati*. “For living beings, action (*kriyā*), when it has reached the final stage (*paryantībhūta*) which is bodily movement, is [the object of] a direct perception in others as well; it is through action that knowledge, which is [otherwise only] an object of self-perception, becomes obvious in others as well”.

<sup>75</sup> See the beginning of the *Kriyādhikāra*, where Abhinavagupta, following Utpaladeva, shows how the establishment of a conscious subject capable of remaining one while manifesting multiplicity in the *Jñānādhikāra ipso facto* renders the Buddhists’ objection concerning action null and void (ĪPV, vol. II, pp. 4–5): *ekā kriyā kramikā katham āśrayasyaikatvabhāvavate sati ghaṭata iti yad uktaṃ, tathā tatra tatra sthita iti, dviṣṭhasyānekarūpatvād iti ca yad uktaṃ, tad api pratikṣiptam eva, yata iyati pūrvaṃ pakṣa iyad eva jīvitam ekam anekasvabhāvaṃ katham syād iti. tatra coktaṃ citśvabhāvasya darpaṇasyevaikatānapābhāhananābhāsabhedasambhava ka iva virodha iti, tasmāt pratyabhijñānabalād eko’py asau padārthātāmā svabhāvabhedān viruddhān yāvad aṅgīkurute tāvat te virodhād eva kramarūpatayā nirbhāsamānās tam ekaṃ kriyāśrayaṃ saṃpādayanti*. “That which has been said [by the Buddhist in verse I, 2, 9, namely]: ‘How an action, being [both] one (*ekā*) [and] successive (*kramikā*), can be possible if [its] substrate (*āśraya*) has a unitary nature?’, as well as that which has been said accordingly [by the same Buddhist opponent in verse I, 2, 10]: ‘[We only experience that] this or that existing, [this or that comes into being, and nothing more; and there is no relation other than that of causality]’, and [in the verse I, 2, 11]: ‘Since that which rests on two [things] has a nature that is not unitary, [since that which is already accomplished cannot require something else, and since dependence, etc., are impossible, therefore the agent (*kartr*) also is an imaginary construction]’, that also has been completely refuted. For the whole life of [our] opponent’s discourse amounts to this much: ‘How could there be anything [both] unitary (*eka*) and having a nature that is plural (*aneka*)?’; but in the [previous section], [Utpaladeva] has answered: what contradiction indeed could there be [between unity and multiplicity], since there can be a differentiation in the manifestations without any disappearance of the unity (*ekatā*) of the nature of consciousness (*cit*), just as [there can be a differentiation in the manifestations] of a mirror [which, while being unitary, manifests a multiplicity reflected in it]? Therefore this [subject], although [remaining] one (*eka*) by virtue of a recognition (*pratyabhijñāna*), being the self of all objects, assumes differences of natures that are contradictory. For this reason those [differences], shining in succession (*krama*) precisely because of the contradiction [if they shone simultaneously], transform this unitary (*eka*) [subject] into a substrate of action (*kriyāśraya*)”. For the Pratyabhijñā philosophers, succession (*krama*) is not—contrary to what the Buddhists claim—the essence of action, but only a quality that it

But what does it mean to say that action “rests” on consciousness? And what do we perceive, when we perceive an action in the world? Certainly we do not perceive the act of a consciousness grasping itself, we do not see *vimarśa* itself, when we witness somebody’s activity; for as Abhinavagupta says in the same passage devoted to how we are aware of other subjects,

*na ca jñānam idantayā bhāti, idantā hy ajñānatvam, na cānyad anyena vapuṣā bhātaṃ bhātaṃ bhavet.*

And knowledge does not shine as an object (*idantayā*), for objectivity (*idantā*) consists in the absence of knowing, and one [thing] that is manifested in a form different [from its own] cannot be [really] manifested.

We cannot perceive the others’ subjectivity, for subjectivity is precisely that which escapes any attempt to be objectified, that which cannot be taken as an object. Nonetheless, when witnessing action associated with objective entities such as bodies, we do sense that we are dealing with a being that transcends mere objectivity, because we then recognize, despite a multiplicity of forms - or rather, at the core of that multiplicity - a fundamental unity: to see Caitra walking is to acknowledge the multiplicity of places, times and forms associated to his moving body—but it is also, inseparably, to sense Caitra’s fundamental unity through these changes.<sup>76</sup> To experience action in the world is to recognize a unity within a multiplicity, to perceive the “extension” (*vaitatyā*) of an individual through a

Footnote 75 continued

acquires when action becomes an object in the phenomenal differentiated world, succession being nothing but the incompatibility, decreed by the Lord himself, between several different phenomena. See for instance ĪPK II, 1, 2: *sakramatvaṃ ca laukikyāḥ kriyāyāḥ kālāsaktiṭāḥ / ghaṭate na tu śāsvatyāḥ prābhavyāḥ syāt prabhor iva //* “And succession is possible for the mundane action, due to the power of time (*kālāsakti*); but it cannot belong to the Lord’s eternal [action], just as [it cannot belong] to the Lord [himself]”. See also Abhinavagupta’s commentary, particularly ĪPV, vol. II, pp. 6–7: *laukikyāḥ kriyāyāḥ sakramatvaṃ kālāsakter ābhāsvicchedanapradarśanasāmānyarūpāt pārameśvarāt śaktiviśeṣād ghaṭata upapadyate, yā tu prabhoḥ sambandhinī tadavyatirikṭā kriyāśaktiḥ śāsvatī kālenāsprṣṭā tasyāḥ sakramatvaṃ astīti sambhāvanāpi nāsti, yathā prabhoḥ sakramatvaṃ asaṃbhāvyaṃ tathā tasyā api*. “The succession of mundane action is ‘possible’—[i.e.], logically possible because of the ‘power of time’, [i.e.], because of the particular power of the Lord consisting in the ability to manifest a separation (*vicchedana*) between manifestations; but the power of action which belongs to the Lord, [i.e.] which is not separated from Him, being eternal, [i.e.] being devoid of any contact with time, one cannot even suppose [for a moment] that it may have succession; for just as the succession of the Lord is impossible, so is that of his [power of action].”

<sup>76</sup> See for instance ĪPV, vol. II, p. 14, where Abhinavagupta, after having explained spatial order, turns to temporal order and gives by the way a definition of mundane action, using the example of a moving hand: *yadā tu gāḍhapratyabhijñāprakāśabalāt tad evedaṃ hastasvarūpaṃ iti pratipattau mūrtena bhedaḥ, atha cānyānyarūpaṃ bhāti tadaikasmīn svarūpe yad anyad anyad rūpaṃ tad-virodhavaśād asahabhavat kriyety ucyate*. “But when, while the cognition ‘this is the same form of a hand’ is taking place due to the very intense light of a recognition (*pratyabhijñā*), there is [nonetheless] a difference in the [perceived] form [of this moving hand], and the form is therefore manifested as ever changing; then this ever changing form which cannot occur in a unitary nature because of the contradiction [between these different forms] is called ‘action’”.

multiplicity of places, times and forms.<sup>77</sup> The Buddhists rightly point out the oddity of such an experience of unity-and-multiplicity; nevertheless they are wrong to say that because action seems to involve a contradiction, it should be discarded as an illusory phenomenon, for action does not possess any of the features that the Buddhists themselves attribute to illusory phenomena.<sup>78</sup> And indeed, in our everyday lives, while we experience both unity and multiplicity in our perceptions of actions, it does not occur to us that these actions are

<sup>77</sup> See the concise definition of action in Abhinavagupta's commentary to ĪPK II, 2, 3 (ĪPV, vol. II, p. 43): *devadattasya yad vaitatyam sã kriyã*. "Action is the fact that Devadatta extends [through place, time and form]".

<sup>78</sup> Commenting upon Dharmakīrti's first statement in the NB (NB I, 1: *samyagjñānapūrvikā sarva-puruṣārthasiddhīr iti tad vyutpadyate*. "The obtainment of all human goals is preceded by a correct knowledge (*samyagjñāna*), therefore this [correct knowledge] is discussed [in this treatise]"), Dharmottara explains (NBT, pp. 17–18): *avisamvādakaṃ jñānaṃ samyagjñānam. loke ca pūrvam upadarśitam arthaṃ prāpayan samvādaka ucyate. tadvaj jñānam api pradarśitam arthaṃ prāpayat samvādakam ucyate*. "Right knowledge' is a knowledge which is not deceptive (*avisamvādaka*). And in the world [as well], [someone] who makes [us] reach an object that [he] has first shown [to us] is called 'trustworthy' (*samvādaka*). Accordingly, the knowledge also which makes [us] reach an object that [it has previously] shown to us is called 'trustworthy'". Right knowledge is therefore defined as that which is not later contradicted by another cognition, and which effectively brings about the effect that we are expecting from it, i.e. which has "causal efficacy" (*arthakriyā*). In ĪPK II, 2, 1, Utpaladeva shows that the cognition of action, since it is not systematically contradicted by a subsequent cognition and therefore has a relative "stability" (*sthairya*), and since it has causal efficacy (*upayoga*, *arthakriyā*), must be considered as valid: *kriyāsambandhasāmānyadravyadikkālabuddhayaḥ / satyāḥ sthairyopayogābhyām ekānekāśrayā matāḥ //* "The cognitions of action, relation, universal, substance, place and time, the substrate of which is both unitary and plural (*ekāneka*), must be considered as valid, because of [their] stability (*sthairya*) and efficacy (*upayoga*)". Abhinavagupta thus comments on the word *sthairya* (ĪPV, vol. II, pp. 29–31): *cittattvād anyatra yā kriyābuddhiḥ kartṛkarmakaraṇādiṣu Caitro vrajati, taṇḍulā viklidyante, eḍhā jvalanīti, tasyā ekānekarūpaṣ caitrādyartha āśraya ālambanam. tathā hi—tattadeśakālākārabhinnāḥ tatra caitradeho'nekasvabhāvo'pi sa evāyam iti ekarūpatām aparityajann eva nirbhāṣate, sa eva caikānekarūpo'rthaḥ kriyā tathaiva pratibhāsanāc pa pāramārthikī, dvicandradī tu tathā bhāsamānam apy uttarakālaṃ pramāvyāpārānuvrttirūpasya sthairyasyonmūlanena dvicandro nāstīty evaṃrūpeṇāsatyam, iha punaś calati Caitra ity evaṃbhūto vimarśo'nuvartamāno na kenacid unmūlyamānaḥ saṃvedyate*. "The cognition of action as regards something which is not the reality of [pure] consciousness, [i.e. the cognition of mundane action] as regards the agent, the act, the instrument of action, etc., in such [experiences as] 'Caitra is walking', 'the grains of rice are being cooked', or 'the fuel is burning', has a 'substrate' (*āśraya*), [i.e.], a resting place that is an object such as Caitra, etc., consisting [both] in unity and multiplicity. To explain—in that [experience of mundane action], the body of Caitra, although having a plural nature [since it] is different as regards this and that places, times and forms, [nonetheless] shines without abandoning its unitary nature in the form 'this is the same [body]'. And it is this same object having a form [both] unitary and multiple that is action (*kriyā*), and because it [continues to] shine exactly in the same way [later], this [action] is real; whereas the two moons and other [illusory manifestations of this kind], even though they are shining [now] in such a way, are not real, because of the destruction later—in the form 'there aren't two moons!'—of the stability (*sthairya*), i.e. of the continuity of the activity of [this cognition of two moons]. Whereas in the case [of action], the conscious grasping (*vimarśa*) having such a form as 'Caitra is moving' is experienced as persisting, as not being destroyed by anything". Besides, contrary to erroneous cognitions, the cognition of action obviously has the "efficacy" acknowledged by the Buddhists as a criterion for the validity of cognitions (see *Ibid.*): *vrajyāyāṃ tu yām eva grāmaprāptim adhyavasyati tasyām avikalāyām upayogo'syā iti sthairyād upayogāc caikānekarūpakriyātattvālambanā buddhiḥ satyaiva*. "But in the case of going, the efficacy (*upayoga*) of this [action is found] in the same reaching of the village which [one] determinately apprehends [as the causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*) to be sought, and which is effectively produced by this action] entirely".

contradictory and thus illusory. Why? Because we recognize in them the characteristic of the only kind of entity that can bear both unity and multiplicity without being annulled by contradiction: a consciousness. For while being aware of the principle of contradiction, we are also aware that we can understand this principle only because our consciousness transcends it—consciousness can grasp that an object A cannot be non-A at the same time and from the same point of view, precisely because consciousness can present to itself (that is to say, take the form of) both A and non-A. Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta consider that no insentient entity can possess agency, for an object of knowledge (*prameya*) is a “self-confined” (*pariniṣṭhita*) entity. It is something which consciousness can define, something that can be circumscribed and distinguished once and for all from what it is not as having this or that characteristic, and the principle of contradiction as stated by Abhinavagupta (“there is a contradiction between one assertion and its negation when they are stated at the same time regarding the same thing”) fully applies to it. For this reason such an object cannot be an agent. Agency requires a certain plasticity, a freedom (*svātantrya*) to unite and divide, for action is both one and multiple; but an object, the nature (*svabhāva*) of which is one and static, since it is forever confined to its definition, cannot be considered as an agent.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, we do speak of actions performed by insentient beings, as when we say that “the chariot is going”—but then we only speak of

<sup>79</sup> See ĪPK II, 4, 19: *na ca yuktam jaḍasyaivaṃ bhedaḥbhedavirodhataḥ / ābhāsabhedād ekatra cidātmani tu yujyate* // “And this [action] can not belong to an insentient, because in that case there would be a contradiction between differentiation (*bheda*) and non-differentiation (*abheda*), because of the differentiation in the manifestations [that action implies]; but [this action] is possible as regards a unitary [subject] consisting in consciousness (*cit*).” Abhinavagupta comments, criticizing the Sāṃkhya’s conception of causality as the continual modification of a primordial nature (*prakṛti*, *pradhāna*) by showing that this primordial nature cannot be both an insentient reality and an agent (ĪPV, vol. II, pp. 176–177): *evam ity abhinna rūpasya dharmiṇaḥ satatapravahadbahutaradharmabhedasambhedasvātantryalakṣaṇam pariṇamanakriyākārkatvaṃ yad uktam tat pradhānāder na yuktam jaḍatvāt, jaḍo hi nāma pariniṣṭhitasvabhāvaḥ prameyapadapatitāḥ sa ca rūpabhedād bhinnno vyavasthāpanīyo nīlapitādivat, ekasvabhāvavattvāc cābhinnno nīlavat, na tu sa eva svabhāvo bhinnas cābhinnas ca bhavitum arhati vidhiniṣedhāyor ekatraikadā virodhāt. kaścīt svabhāvo bhinnas kaścīt tv abhinna iti cet, dvau tarhi imau svabhāvāv ekasya svabhāvāsya bhavetām, na caivaṃ yuktam bhedaḥbhedavayavasthāivaṃ ucchinā sarvavastusv iti nyāyāt. evaṃ jaḍasyedam iti pariniṣṭhīḥābhāsatayā sarvataḥ paricchinnarūpatvena prameyapadapatitāsya nāyaṃ svabhāvabheda ekatve saty upapadyate.* “‘In that case’ [means]: the [idea previously] mentioned according to which a ‘quality-bearer’ (*dharmīn*), the nature of which is not differentiated, such as [the Sāṃkhya’s] ‘primordial nature’ (*pradhāna*), is the agent of the action of evolution (*pariṇamana*)—[an agency] which is characterized by a freedom (*svātantrya*) to divide and unite numerous qualities (*dharmā*) constantly occurring -, that [idea] is not sound, because the [Sāṃkhya’s] ‘primordial nature’ for instance is insentient (*jaḍa*). For indeed, what [we] call an insentient has a nature which is [self-]confined (*pariniṣṭhita*); it has fallen to the state of object of knowledge (*prameya*), but this [insentient primordial nature] must be established [by the opponent] to be differentiated (*bhinna*) because of the differences (*bheda*) of forms [that it is supposed to contain], such as ‘blue’, ‘yellow’ and so on. [On the other hand], because it possesses a unitary nature, it also [has to be] non differentiated (*abhinna*), as ‘blue’. But the same nature cannot stand to be both differentiated (*bhinna*) and non-differentiated (*abhinna*), because of the contradiction (*virodha*) [that there is] between one assertion and its negation [when they are stated] at the same time regarding the same thing. If [our opponent were to answer] that one certain nature (*svabhāva*) is differentiated, whereas one other [nature is not], then [we would answer that] these two natures would [themselves have to] belong to one single nature (*svabhāva*), and such a [hypothesis] is not sound, because of the principle:



these objects as “acting” in a metaphorical sense, for we do not attribute freedom to them, and we do not consider that the chariot “is going” in the same sense as Caitra “is going”.<sup>80</sup> And just as we can see a moving object without considering that this object is really acting, it also happens that we consider stillness as a kind of action—a further evidence that if action generally takes the form of bodily movement, it is rather defined as a *freedom* to move—which includes the possibility not to move.<sup>81</sup> And freedom is the essence of consciousness: while an object is circumscribed once and for all to its static definition and form, consciousness is capable of taking all forms without losing its unity, like a unitary mirror reflecting a variegated landscape.<sup>82</sup> To perceive action is to

Footnote 79 continued

“Thus, regarding all objective entities (*vastu*), the [co]existence of differentiation (*bheda*) and non-differentiation (*abheda*) is impossible”. Thus, for an insentient (*jaḍa*) which has fallen into the state of object of knowledge (*prameya*), since it has a [self-]confined (*pariniṣṭhita*) manifestation, [i.e.] since it has a nature completely cut off (*paricchinna*) [from everything else], this differentiation of natures is not possible, since it [only] has unity (*ekatva*).”

<sup>80</sup> See for instance ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 38–39: *jaḍānām tāvan na jñānātmikā śaktir asti, kriyātmikāpi svātantryaprāṇā svātantryavyapaṅgamād asaṃbhāvanābhūmir eva, tathā ca ratho gacchati ādau upacāram kecana pratipannāḥ*. “For sure, the power consisting in knowledge does not belong to insentient beings; as for the [power] consisting in action, the very life of which is freedom (*svātantrya*), it is just as impossible [that it may belong to them], because [they] are deprived of freedom (*svātantrya*); and accordingly, some admit that in such [sentences] as ‘the chariot is going’, [there is only] a metaphor (*upacāra*)”.

<sup>81</sup> See ĪPPV, vol. I, p. 105: *calāmi śiraś cālayāmīty evaṃbhūtvavimarśasāraiva hi śarīre tadavayave ca kriyā. aparispandarūpāpi tiṣṭhāmīty ādikā kriyā kartari kramikatāparāmarśaparamārthaiva*. “For in the body and his limbs, action has as its essence nothing but such a conscious grasping (*vimarśa*): ‘I am moving’, ‘I am moving my head’. Even the action that does not have as its form a movement (*parispanda*), such as in ‘I am standing’, has as its ultimate reality nothing but a conscious grasp (*parāmarśa*) involving a succession in the agent”.

<sup>82</sup> See ĪPV, vol. II, pp. 177–178: *yat tu prameyadaśāpatitaṃ na bhavati kiṃ tu cidrūpatayā prakāśaparamārtharūpaṃ cidekasvabhāvaṃ svacchaṃ, tatra bhedābhedarūpatopalabhyate; anubhavād eva hi svacchasyādarśāder akhaṇḍitasvasvabhāvasyaiva parvatamatāṅgajādīrūpasahas-rasaṃbhinnam vapur upapadyate. na ca rajatādvicandrādi yathā śuktikaikacandrasvarūpatirodhānena vartate, tathā darpaṇe parvatādi; darpaṇasya hi tathāsvabhāse darpaṇaiva sutarām unmilati nirmalo'yam utkrīṣṭo'yam darpaṇa ity abhimānāt. na hi parvato bāhyas tatra saṃkrāmati svadeśatyāgprasāṅgād asya, na cāsyā pṛṣṭhe'sau bhāti darpaṇānavabhāsaprasāṅgāt, na ca madhye nibiḍakāṭhinasapratighvasvabhāvasya tatrānupraveśasaṃbhāvanābhāvāt, na paścāt tatrādarśanād dūratayaiva ca bhāsanāt, na ca tannipatanotphalitapratyāvṛtāś cākṣuṣā mayūkhāḥ parvatam eva gṛhṇanti, bimbapratibimbayor ubhayor api parvataparśvagaṭadarpaṇāvabhāse'valokanāt. tasmān nirmalataṃmāhātmyam etad yad anantāvabhāsasambhedaś caikatā ca. giriśikharoparivartinas caikatraiva bodhe nagaragatapadarthasahasrābhāsaḥ, iti cidrūpasyaiva kartṛtvam upapannam, abhinnasya bhedāveśasahiṣṇuvena kriyāśaktiāveśasaṃbhavāt*. “Nonetheless that which has not fallen into the state of object of knowledge (*prameya*), but on the contrary, has as its nature the ultimate reality that is conscious light (*prakāśa*), since it consists of consciousness (*cit*): [that which] has as its nature (*svabhāva*) nothing but consciousness (*cit*), [and] is limpid (*svaccha*) [i.e., capable of reflection]—regarding that, having a nature [including both] differentiation and unity (*bhedābhedā*) is possible. For through direct experience itself, [one knows that] the form of a limpid mirror for instance, the own nature of which remains absolutely unbroken, can be united with countless [different] forms such as a mountain, an elephant, etc. And the mountain, [the elephant] and [any other reflected object] do not occur in the mirror in the way silver, a double moon or [any other illusion of this type occur], [i.e.] as concealing the [real] nature of the mother-of-pearl [that is mistaken for silver] or of a single moon [wrongly seen as double]; for [even though] there is such a [variegated] manifestation of the mirror, the very fact that it is a [single] mirror is even more manifest, on account of the opinion [rising at such a sight]: ‘this is a pure, excellent mirror’. For the

perceive the coexistence of unity and multiplicity; and only consciousness has enough plasticity to bear multiplicity while remaining one.<sup>83</sup> Therefore when we witness action, we assume the existence of another conscious being as the agent of this action: the other is always another agent.

Nonetheless so far the difference between this explanation and the Buddhist encounter of our awareness of others – we infer the existence of others from the fact that we see them acting, for action must have as its cause a cognition—remains unclear. What is it that enables Abhinavagupta to consider that the Pratyabhijñā has given an original reply to this question?

## II. 4. The nature of the awareness of others: perception, inference, guess, recognition

What is the nature of our knowledge of the others? The Pratyabhijñā philosophers agree with the Buddhists in saying that it is not a mere perception. For to perceive the other's subjectivity would mean to perceive his cognitive acts, and I cannot perceive someone else's perceptions. The Pratyabhijñā

Footnote 82 continued

external mountain does not enter in that [mirror], since [then] there would follow [the consequence that] this [external mountain] would abandon its place. Nor does this [external mountain] shine *on* the [mirror], because there would follow the absence of manifestation of the mirror [itself]. Nor [does it shine] *inside* [the mirror] the nature of which is dense, solid and resistant, because of the impossibility of entering in that [mirror]. Nor [does it shine] behind [the mirror], because it is not seen there[, i.e., behind it], and because it shines only as distant [from the mirror]. Nor do the visual rays, having been diverted [from the mirror] due to their bouncing off when falling on the [surface of] the [mirror], grasp the mountain itself, because one sees both the reflected object (*bimba*) and its reflection (*pratibimba*) when the manifestation of the mirror is placed next to the [external] mountain. Therefore, this is the grandeur of limpidity (*nirmalatā*), i.e., of the capacity to reflect[, that [in it] coexist both a division into an infinite number of manifestations, and unity. And [similarly], someone standing at the top of a mountain peak has the manifestation of countless objects present in a city in one single cognition. Therefore, agency (*kartṛtva*) is possible only for that which consists in consciousness (*cit*), because it [only] can be pervaded by the power of action (*kriyāśakti*), since [while remaining] undifferentiated (*abhinna*) it is capable of assuming differentiation (*bheda*)”.

<sup>83</sup> Since the Pratyabhijñā philosophers use so often the metaphor of the mirror to convey consciousness's power of manifesting multiplicity while remaining one, one may object that this capacity does not belong only to consciousness, for precisely a mirror is an objective entity which possesses the capacity to manifest multiplicity while remaining one. However the mirror's power is merely synchronic: it manifests a spatial multiplicity, but contrary to consciousness, it does not have the power to manifest a temporal multiplicity while endowing it with unity as the power of synthesis (*anusandhāna*) of consciousness does with action. Besides, the mirror's capacity to manifest a spatial multiplicity is limited to and determined by the presence of this or that particular object outside of it that it reflects, whereas Abhinavagupta explains that a conscious manifestation is a “reflection” (*pratibimba*) that is devoid of any reflected external reality (*bimba*): contrary to the mirror, consciousness does not need any external model in order to manifest objects, and objects can be conceived of as “reflections” only insofar as they do not exist independently of that which manifests them (see particularly the long passage on this subject in *Tantrāloka* III, 51–61, vol. II, pp. 61–69).

philosophers also agree with the Buddhists as regards the importance of action in this awareness: it is the perception of a free action that does not belong to me that leads me to consider that someone else exists in the world.

However they seem to disagree with the Buddhists as to the nature of my knowledge of the others. For commenting upon Utpaladeva's sentence according to which "through action, the [power of] knowledge of others is guessed (*ūhyate*)", Abhinavagupta laconically explains:

*ūhyata ity anena jñānasya prameyatvaṃ na nirvahaṭī darśayati, anyathā hy anumīyata iti brūyāt.*<sup>84</sup>

By [using the verbal form] "is guessed" (*ūhyate*), [Utpaladeva] indicates that knowledge (*jñāna*) cannot bear to be an object of knowledge (*prameya*), for otherwise he would have said [instead]: "is inferred" (*anumīyate*).

Utpaladeva uses the expression "is guessed" because he wants to avoid using the expression "is inferred". But what is exactly the reason for his reluctance to accept the Buddhist view according to which we infer the existence of the others? And, even more important—if our knowledge of the existence of others is not purely inferential, what is its nature? What does Utpaladeva mean exactly when saying that it is a kind of "guess"? Utpaladeva's *Vṛtti* and Abhinavagupta's *Vimarśinī* remain silent on this, so that in order to shed some light on this somewhat enigmatic aspect of the Pratyabhijñā philosophy, it is now necessary to turn to the *Vivṛtivimarśinī*.

There Abhinavagupta comments thus on the use of *ūhyate*:

*ūhyata iti nānumeyatāmātraṃ parasamvedanasetye āhohanaṃ tarkaṇaṃ sambhāvanam iti. atrāṃṣe indriyavyāpāraṇam apy asti, tataś ca sākṣātkāram upalakṣayaty ūhaḥ.*<sup>85</sup>

With the [verbal form] "is guessed" (*ūhyate*) [is expressed] the fact that the consciousness of others is not merely the object of an inference (*anumeya*); this is why [Utpaladeva, in his *kārikās*, *Vṛtti* and *Ṭīkā*.] says "guess" (*ūhana*), "conjecture" (*tarkaṇa*), "assumption" (*sambhāvana*). In this [awareness of the others], there is also, in part (*aṃṣe*), an activity of the senses, and therefore, a "guess" (*ūha*) [also] implies a direct perception (*sākṣātkāra*).

Utpaladeva avoids saying that the others' consciousness is inferred, because to say so would amount to acknowledge that consciousness can be purely and simply objectified, that it can be taken as an object of knowledge (*prameya*, *anumeya*)—and consciousness is precisely that which escapes any attempt of

<sup>84</sup> ĪPV, vol. I, p. 49.

<sup>85</sup> ĪPVV, vol. I, p. 101.

reification: as Abhinavagupta has already stated in the *Vimarśinī*, “knowledge does not shine as an object” (*na...jñānam idantayā bhāti*), and when we are aware of the existence of someone else we do not apprehend his existence as that of a mere object, for consciousness is that which manifests itself, while an object needs to be manifested by a luminosity that does not belong to it, i.e., by a cognition, be it a perception or an inference.<sup>86</sup> But instead of developing this idea, Abhinavagupta adds here, without linking it explicitly to his first statement, another puzzling remark: Utpaladeva also avoids using expressions denoting inference because in our awareness of others, there is also, partly, something of a direct perception (*sākṣātkāra*). Surely, by saying that this awareness implies at least “in part” (*aṁśe*) an activity of the senses, he does not mean only that we have a direct perception of action as the basis of our inference of consciousness—for *any* inference involves as its premise such a preliminary direct perception, that of smoke for instance when we infer the presence of fire. But then what does he mean exactly by saying that this knowledge is “partly” a direct perception? What is the nature of this mysterious “guess” which seems to be both, or neither, an inference and a direct perception?

In the sequel of his analysis in the *Vivṛtivismarśinī*, Abhinavagupta concedes that this knowledge can be termed an “inference”—but under certain very strict conditions:

*yata eva jñānasyaiva kriyā pucchabhūtā, jñānaṃ ca pramātur aṅthagbhūtam, samvedyabhedāt kalpitabhedam, tata eva svabhāvahetur ayaṃ vastutaḥ, na kāryahetuḥ. vitatasya srotasa iva aṁsamātrārūpaṃ hi vyāpārātmakaṃ spandanam.*<sup>87</sup>

For the very reason that action (*kriyā*) is the final stage of knowledge (*jñāna*) itself, and [that] knowledge [in turn] is not separated from the subject (*pramātr*), [i.e.] has [with the subject] a difference that is [only] mentally constructed (*kalpita*) due to the difference in the object of knowledge, this is in reality “a reason which is the nature [of what is to be inferred]” (*svabhāvahetu*), not “a reason which is the effect [of what is to be inferred]” (*kāryahetu*). For the movement (*spandana*) consisting in the activity (*vyāpāra*) [of another subject] consists only in an aspect (*aṁśa*) [of that very subject], just like [the wave] of a large river.

<sup>86</sup> Bhāskaraṇṭha also explains Utpaladeva’s avoidance of words related to the inferential process in this way (see *Bhāskarī*, p. 78: *ūhyata ity asyābhiprāyaṃ vaktum āhohyata iti. anumānaviśayasya prameyatvaṃ sarvair ucyate na tarkaviśayasyeti bhāvaḥ*. “In order to state the intention of [Utpaladeva] regarding [the use of the verbal form] ‘is guessed’, [Abhinavagupta says] ‘by [using the verbal form] *ūhyate*’ [etc.]. The meaning is—everybody says that the object of an inference is an object of knowledge (*prameya*); [but] not that the object of a conjecture (*tarka*) [is such an object of knowledge]”).

<sup>87</sup> *ĪPVV*, vol. I, pp. 105–106.

Abhinavagupta is here alluding to Dharmakīrti's typology of inference. The Buddhist logician distinguishes three kinds of inference; among them, the second has as its "inferential mark" (*liṅga*) or "reason" (*hetu*) "the nature [of what is to be inferred]" (*svabhāva*), while the third has as its reason "an effect [of what has to be inferred]" (*kārya*). In the latter case, I perceive smoke on a hill, and since I know that smoke is the effect (*kārya*) of fire, I infer that its cause, fire, must be present as well on the hill.<sup>88</sup> In the former case, I know that I am in front of something called a "*śiṃśapā*", i.e., called by the name of a particular variety of tree, and I infer from the very nature (*svabhāva*) of that entity that I am in front of a tree.<sup>89</sup> Although the two kinds of reasonings are both termed "inference" (*anumāna*) by Dharmakīrti, they actually correspond to two different types of knowledge, as Abhinavagupta here points out. For the *kāryahetu* inference roughly corresponds to what Western philosophy has called since Kant a "synthetic judgment". In this case I achieve the knowledge of fire through the perception of a completely different entity, smoke, and the only entity that I actually perceive remains different from that which I infer to exist. Besides, it is only a concept different both from smoke and fire (namely, that of causality relation), by linking together rationally the two distinct entities of fire and smoke, that enables me to reach the idea of fire; whereas in the case of *svabhāvahetu*, my knowledge is purely analytical. The entity that I actually perceive and that which I infer are in fact one and the same, and it is a mere analysis of the content of my cognition that leads me to conclude something regarding that content.<sup>90</sup> Abhinavagupta is here alluding to the Vijñānavādins' explanation of our awareness of others as stated in the 5th

<sup>88</sup> See NB II, 17: *kāryaṃ yathā vahnir atra dhūmād iti*. "There is an [inferential] reason (*hetu*) which is an effect (*kārya*) for example in: 'there is fire here, because there is smoke'".

<sup>89</sup> For the Dharmakīrtian definition of the *svabhāvahetu* type of inference, see NB II, 15: *svabhāvaḥ svasattāmātrabhāvinī sādhyadharme hetuḥ*. "The nature (*svabhāva*) [of an entity] is the reason [of an inference] when the property to be established (*sādhyadharmā*) exists merely due to the existence of that [entity]", and Dharmottara's commentary (NBT, p. 106), which concludes: *tasmin sādhye yo hetuḥ sa svabhāvaḥ tasya sādhyasya nānyaḥ*. "The reason for what is to be established is the [very] nature (*svabhāva*) of this [thing] to be established, and nothing more". NB II, 16 gives an example of *svabhāvahetu*: *yathā vṛkṣo'yaṃ śiṃśapāvād iti*. "As in: 'This is a tree, because it is a *śiṃśapā*'".

<sup>90</sup> Actually this parallelism with the Kantian distinction between synthetic and analytic judgments, which was first drawn by Stcherbatsky (see Stcherbatsky (1930–1932), vol. I, p. 271), has become a matter of controversy since E. Steinkellner has criticized it (see Steinkellner (1974)). However, it has been argued (Chakrabarti (1987), p. 398) that one can consider the *svabhāvahetu* inference as analytical insofar as it is "a statement which holds by virtue of the meaning of its symbols", and insofar as its "truth is not based on experiential evidence", but "on meaning, and may be ascertained through linguistic/semantic analysis". To say that a *śiṃśapā* is a tree because the *śiṃśapā* and the tree have the same *svabhāva* amounts to saying that the grounds for calling something a "*śiṃśapā*" are at least partially the same as the grounds for calling it a "tree" (*Ibid.*, p. 396), and this is why the commentators of the *Nyāyabindu*, Dharmottara and Durveka Miśra, both "took the example to be primarily a linguistic exercise" (*Ibid.*). See for instance NBT, pp. 106–107, where, according to Dharmottara, the crux of the *svabhāvahetu* inference is the linguistic use (*vyavahāra*) of the words designating two realities having the same *svabhāva*: *yatra pracuraśiṃsape deśe'viditaśiṃsapāvyavahāro jaḍo yadā kenacid uccāṃ śiṃśapāṃ upādarśyocate'yaṃ*

chapter of the ĪPV: according to it, this awareness is the result of a *kāryahetu* inference, for I infer the existence of someone else's stream of consciousness from the fact that he acts, his action being considered as the effect (*kārya*) of his cognition. According to the Buddhist idealist I cannot perceive the latter, but I can deduce it as a cause (*kāraṇa*) of his action, just as I can deduce the presence of fire from that of smoke.<sup>91</sup> On the contrary, Abhinavagupta argues that our awareness of the others is the result of a *svabhāvahetu*: the other's consciousness should not be regarded as the unperceived cause of a perceived effect (action) that would remain irreducibly distinct from it; and it is not an entity that I would be drawn to suppose only by virtue of a rational necessity, without having any kind of perceptual contact with it. The other's consciousness and the action that I am perceiving here and now are in fact *one and the same entity*, for action is nothing but the "final stage" of the other's cognition, just as a *śiṃśapā* tree is a tree. And just as, in a way, I do *perceive* the "tree" that I am *inferring* to be in front of me, since the *śiṃśapā* and the tree are in fact one and the same reality or have the same "nature" (*svabhāva*),

Footnote 90 continued

*vṛkṣa iti tadāsau jādyāc chīṃśapāyā uccatvam api vṛkṣavyavahārasya nimittam avasyati tadā yām evānucām paśyati śiṃśapāṃ tām evāvṛkṣam avasyati. sa mūḍhaḥ śiṃśapāmātranimittē vṛkṣavyavahāre pravartyate. noccatvādi nimittāntaram iha vṛkṣavyavahārasya. api tu śiṃśapātvamātram nimittam—śiṃśapāgataśākhādimitvam nimittam ity arthaḥ.* "When a stupid man who does not know the use of the word 'śiṃśapā', having been shown a tall *śiṃśapā* by someone in a country where *śiṃśapās* are abundant, is told: 'this is a tree', then this [man], due to his stupidity, will judge that the cause of the use of the word 'tree' is the *śiṃśapā*'s height; therefore whenever he will see a small *śiṃśapā*, he will judge it not to be a tree. This cretin [must] be induced to understand that the use of the word 'tree' has as its cause nothing but the *śiṃśapā* [itself]. In this case, there is no other cause - such as height for instance—for the use of the word 'tree'. Rather, the cause is nothing but the fact of being a *śiṃśapā* i.e., the cause is [merely] the fact that [the properties] of having branches, etc., [which are the causes for calling something a 'tree'], are found in the *śiṃśapā*".

<sup>91</sup> See the first part of this article, but also ĪPVV, vol. II, p. 109, where the Vijñānavādin makes particularly clear that his inference is of the *kāryahetu* type: *tathā hy anumātuś caitrākhyasya mātuh svapratibhāsātām prāpto yo maitrasambandhinā dehapatibhāsenā sahito vyāpāravayā-hārāvabhāsaḥ, tasya samīhayā saha vyāptir gṛhītā kāryakāraṇabhāvaprānitā svātmani.* "To explain—the manifestation of speech which is an activity that possesses the status of self-manifestation for the subject named Caitra who is the inferrer, [when] associated with the manifestation of the body pertaining to Maitra, has an invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) with desire which is grasped in oneself as having as its life a causality relation (*kāryakāraṇabhāva*)." Here too, as in the ĪPV, the criticism of his theory focuses precisely on the fact that the inference is of the *kāryahetu* type; see *Ibid.*, p. 110, where his opponent states: *yo'sāv anumeyo maitraḥ, tadīyayā samīhayā svagrāhakasamviniṣṭha eva vyāhāryābhāso janitaḥ, na tv anumāṣṣammatācāi-trasamvedananīṣṭhaḥ, iti maitrasamīhayā yo na kāryās caitrasamvedananīṣṭha eṣa vyāharatīty ābhāsaḥ, sa kathaṃ maitriyām akāraṇabhūtām samīhām anumāpayet.* "Because the manifestation of speech, etc., which rests only on the self-consciousness of the subject, is produced by Maitra's desire, who is the inferred one, but does not rest on the consciousness of Caitra who is considered as the inferrer, that manifestation 'this one is speaking' which, [since it] rests [only] on the consciousness of Caitra, is not an effect (*kārya*) [resulting] from the desire of Maitra, how could it make [us] infer the desire of Maitra, [since this desire is] not [established] to be the cause (*kāraṇa*) [of Maitra's speech]?" M. Inami, while analyzing Dharmakīrti's inference of other streams of consciousness in the SAS, also notices that "this can be regarded as the inference based on the probans as effect (*kāryahetu*)" (Inami (2001), p. 466).

similarly my “guess” of the other’s consciousness involves a direct perception (*sākṣātkāra*), since I do directly perceive his action, and his action is in fact nothing but an aspect of his consciousness. It cannot be conceived of as an effect (*kārya*) of consciousness, for it is one particular state of consciousness—its “final”, or most objectified state, that is to stay the state in which consciousness’s dynamism, like a fluid current that has frozen up to a point of solidification, presents itself objectively. And just as, when we perceive a wave, we are not perceiving an entity that would be different from the river and that the river would produce while remaining ontologically distinct from it, but a mere aspect (*aṁśa*) of the river itself—that is to say, a particular, partial state of it—in the same way, to perceive the other’s action is not to perceive an entity different from him or her, and merely related to him or her by a causality relation, for the relation between a subject and his action is not a relation of causality but a relation of identity—only the latter is a partial aspect of the former, his objective aspect.

However so far, Abhinavagupta seems to be contradicting his own assertion that the other’s consciousness cannot be objectified by implying that the other can indeed be grasped by my consciousness as an object, since he has just stated first that “guessing” the existence of the other consists in a certain type of inference, and then that this inference involves perception more than the *kāryahetu* type does. Inference and perception constitute the two main types of means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) through which we objectively grasp any given reality; how can he conciliate such statements with that of the impossibility of grasping a consciousness as an object? The sequel of his commentary aims at clarifying this point:

*svabhāvahetuś ca sarvo mohavaśāropitāpāramārthikarūpāntaraparākaraṇ-  
amātraparyavasita iti vyavahārasādhaka evābhidhīyate, na tu aprasiddha-  
prasāadhanarūpa iti vāstavaṃ svaprakāśatvaṃ jñānasya pramāṇus  
tadaīśvaryaśya ca maulikaṃ na viḥaṭata ity atra granthakāraśyaśayaḥ.*<sup>92</sup>

And every reason which is the nature [of what is to be inferred] (*svabhāvahetu*) [actually] amounts to the mere setting aside (*parākaraṇa*) of some other form that is not ultimately real [but] has been superimposed [on the “inferred” reality] due to some distraction (*moha*). Therefore, it is indeed said to be “something that establishes” (*sādhaka*) in the practical world; but it does not consist in making evident (*prasādhana*) that which [previously] was not evident (*aprasiddha*). So the real self-luminosity (*svaprakāśatva*) of knowledge, of the subject and of his sovereignty (*aiśvarya*)<sup>93</sup> is not fundamentally destroyed - this is the idea at the back of the mind of the author here.

<sup>92</sup> ĪPVV, vol. I, p. 106.

<sup>93</sup> That is to say, of consciousness’s freedom (*svātantrya*). See for instance ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 316–317 (*tannāhēśvaryaṃ svātantryarūpaṃ*, “the [Lord]’s sovereignty, which consists in [his] freedom”).

There is an important difference of nature between the type of inference termed *svabhāvahetu* by Dharmakīrti and the other inferential types distinguished by the Buddhist logician: it does not bring about a positive knowledge. It is not strictly speaking “something that establishes” (*sādhaka*). It does not establish anything new, which, according to the Buddhists’ requirements themselves, should set it aside from the *pramāṇa* category. For the very definition of a “means of knowledge” implies that it should be something that establishes in us a knowledge that did not exist before its use; a means of knowledge—be it perception or inference - has to make us know something new.<sup>94</sup> But our “guess” of the others’ existence merely makes clearer, in a purely analytical way, a knowledge that was already present, by “setting aside” (*parākarana*) whatever false notion used to be superimposed on it due to some kind of “distraction” (*moha*)—in this particular case, it makes obvious what we always already know, namely that knowledge and action ultimately have the same nature (*svabhāva*), since incarnated action is nothing but an aspect of consciousness’s dynamism.

This description of what Utpaladeva calls here a “guess” is as a matter of fact very close to that of the “recognition of the Lord” (*īśvarapratyabhijñā*) which is the ultimate goal of the Pratyabhijñā’s philosophy, and consists in the awareness that all objectivity is grounded in me, and that I am Śiva, the universal consciousness. This ultimate state of consciousness is not called a “cognition” (*jñāna*) but a “re-cognition” (*praty-abhijñā*), because it is not a new knowledge, but only the full realization of a knowledge that I always already possess, since as a subject I always already have the intuition of existing as a self-shining entity:

*praṭīpam iti svātmāvabhāso hi nānanubhūtapūrvō’vicchinnaprakāśatvāt ta-sya, sa tu tacchaktyaiva vicchinna iva vikalpita iva lakṣyata iti vakṣyate.*<sup>95</sup>

[We call it] “re-[cognition]”<sup>96</sup> – for it will be explained that the manifestation of the Self is not [something] that would not have been experienced before [the rise of this awareness]; for the [Self]’s light is never interrupted.

<sup>94</sup> See for instance Dharmottara (NBT, p. 19): *adhigate cārthe pravartitaḥ puruṣaḥ prāpitaś cārthaḥ. tathā ca saty arthādhiḡamāt samāptaḥ pramāṇavyāpāro ’ta eva cānadhigataviṣayam pramāṇam. yenaiva hi jñānena prathamam adhigato ’rthaḥ, tenaiva pravartitaḥ puruṣaḥ prāpitaś cārthaḥ. tatraiva cātha kim anyena jñānenādhiḡkaṃ kāryam? ato ’dhigataviṣayam apramāṇam.* “When the object has been known, the individual has been turned towards [it] and the object reached. And since it is so, the activity of the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) is completed from [the very moment when] the object is known. And for this very reason, a means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) has as its object [something] that has not been known [yet]. For it is through the very cognition that makes known the object that the individual is turned towards [the object] and that the object is reached. And regarding that very [object that has already been cognized], what more could be done by any further cognition? Therefore [that] which has as its object [an object already] known is not a valid means of knowledge”.

<sup>95</sup> IPV, vol. I, p. 20.

<sup>96</sup> According to Abhinavagupta, *praty-* in *praty-abhijñā* stands for *praṭīpam*, “again”—i.e., is an equivalent of our “re-” in “re-cognition”.



Nonetheless, this [manifestation of the Self], due to the very power of this [Self], appears as though interrupted, as though constructed.

The recognition of myself as Lord is not any kind of new knowledge, but the mere realization of what I already know, in the form of a synthetic identification between my concept of a universal consciousness and my intuition of myself as a subject—between two natures (*svabhāva*) which I suddenly realize to be one and the same.<sup>97</sup> To bring about recognition is not to demonstrate the existence of the universal consciousness, for demonstrations can only establish the existence of objective realities, but consciousness being self-luminous escapes any attempt either to demonstrate or to refute it.<sup>98</sup> The Self, “always already established”

<sup>97</sup> See the beginning of the analysis mentioned above (ĪPV, vol. I, p. 20: *pratyabhijñā ca – bhātabhāsa-mānarūpānusamdhānāmikā, sa evāyaṃ caitra iti pratīsamdhānenābhimukhībhūte vastuni jñānam*. “And ‘recognition’ (*pratyabhijñā*), which consists in the synthesis (*anusamdhāna*) of a form which was shining before [and of a form] which is shining [now], is the cognition of an entity which is present, through a synthesis that takes the form ‘this is the same Caitra [that I already know]’”). Abhinavagupta, having first shown that ordinary recognition consists in such a synthesis, then turns to the Lord’s recognition (*Ibid.*, pp. 20–21): *ihāpi prasiddhapurāṇasiddhāntāgamānumānādividītapūrṇāśaktisvabhāva īśvare sati svātmanyā abhimukhībhūte tatpratīsamdhānena jñānam udeti, nūnaṃ sa eveśvaro’ham iti*. “In the case [of the universal Lord] as well, there being a Lord whose nature, which is a full power, is known through the well known *Purāṇas*, the scriptures of the Siddhānta, inference and so on, [and] the Self being immediately present [to itself], a cognition rises through the synthesis of these [two, i.e. the Lord of whom I have this abstract knowledge and the intuition of myself], in the form: ‘But I am the Lord!’”.

<sup>98</sup> See ĪPK I, 1, 2: *kartari jñātari svātmany ādisiddhe maheśvare lajāḍāmā niṣedhaṃ vā siddhiṃ vā vidadhīta kaḥ //* “Who, not having an insentient self, could perform either a refutation (*niṣedha*) or a demonstration (*siddhi*) of the agent, of the knower, of the Self always already established (*ādisiddha*), of the Great Lord (Maheśvara)?”. Abhinavagupta (ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 34–35) explains how, whether insentient or sentient, no one can prove or disprove the self: *na ca jaḍātāmā svātmanyā api durlabha-prakāśasvātantryaleśaḥ kiṃcit sādhyaituṃ niṣeddhūṃ vā prabhaviṣṇuḥ pāṣāṇa iva; na cājāḍātmano’py etad ucitam, tathā hi—sa svātmani siddhiṃ ithaṃ kuryāt—yady asya so’bhīnavatvena bhāsamānaḥ pūrvaṃ na bhāśate, anābhāsanam cej jaḍataiva. niṣedhaṃ cetthaṃ vidadhīyāt—yadi sa na prakāśate tathā ca jaḍaḥ, na ca jaḍasyaitad yuktam ity uktam, nāpy ajāḍasya; tasmāt samvitprakāśa eva ghaṭāḍiprakāśaḥ, na tv asau svatantraḥ kaścid vāstavaḥ prakāśa eva cātām tan na tatra kārakavyāpāravat pramāṇavyāpāro’pi nityatvavat svaprakāśatvasyāpi tatra bhāvāt*. “And a self which would be insentient (*jaḍa*), [i.e.] for whom the faintest trace of the light’s freedom (*svātantrya*) would be impossible to grasp, cannot have the power either to demonstrate or to refute anything, just like a stone. But this is not possible either for [someone] whose self is sentient (*ajāḍa*). To explain—this [person] must produce the demonstration (*siddhi*) of [his] self in this way: if this [self] is manifest for this [person engaged in demonstrating it] as [something] new, [then it means that] previously, [i.e. before this attempt to demonstrate it], it was not manifest, [which is absurd, for the demonstration aims at establishing the existence of an ever manifest self]; [and] if there [is] no manifestation [of this self], [this person] can only be insentient. [Similarly, this person] must perform the refutation (*niṣedha*) in this way: if [this self] is not manifest, accordingly, [this person] is insentient (*jaḍa*); and it has [already] been stated that this [refutation] is not possible for an insentient [entity]; nor is it (possible) for a sentient [entity, for this sentient entity would precisely have to prove that it is not sentient]. Therefore, it is the light (*prakāśa*) of consciousness that is the light of [objects] (pot, etc.), whereas the [light of the objects] has no independent reality. And the self is nothing but light. Therefore, just as [there cannot be any] activity of the factors of action (*kāraka*) [with respect to the self], there can be no activity of the valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) as well with respect to the [self], because of the presence in that [self] of self-luminosity (*svaprakāśatva*) as well as of permanence (*nityatva*)”. The “factors of action” (*kāraka*) are the elements which contribute to action: the agent (*kartṛ*), the object on which the action is applied (*karman*), the instrument of action (*karana*), the result of action (*kārya*). The “factors of knowledge” (*jñāpaka*) are the elements which contribute to knowledge, analyzed according to the same model: the knower (*pramātṛ*), the object of knowledge (*prameya*), the action of knowing (*pramā*), the means of knowledge

(*ādisiddha*), ever present and self-luminous, cannot be “established” (*siddha*) to exist by any valid means of knowledge. Thus Utpaladeva’s attempt to produce recognition in the others does not consist in actually producing in them any new knowledge or in giving them some information of which they would have so far remained ignorant; just as the recognition of other subjects, it is nothing but the “setting aside” (*apasāraṇa*) of a series of false notions that, being superimposed on this original and ever present knowledge, constitute a “distraction” (*moha*) preventing me from fully realizing it:

*na kārakavyāpāro bhagavati, nāpi jñāpakavyāpāro ’yam, api tu mohāpasāraṇamātram etat, vyavahārasādhanānāṃ pramāṇānāṃ tāvaty eva viśrānteḥ. ghaṭo ’yam agragaḥ pratyakṣavād ity anena hi ghaṭo na jñāpyate pratyakṣeṇaiva prakāśamānavāt, anyathā pakṣe hetvasiddheḥ, kevalaṃ mohamātram apasāryate. yaś cāyāṃ mohas tadapasāraṇaṃ ca yat, tad ubhayam api bhagavata eva vjṛmbhāmātram, na tu adhikam kiṃcid ity uktaṃ vakṣyate ca.*<sup>99</sup>

With respect to the Lord, there is no activity of the factors of action (*kāra-aka*), nor is there any activity of the factors of knowledge (*jñāpaka*).<sup>100</sup> Rather, this [activity of bringing about recognition] is the mere removal (*apasāraṇa*) of a distraction (*moha*), because the valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) which have [the power of] establishing (*sādhana*) in the practical world rest entirely on such a [Lord, so that they cannot establish that on which they rest]. For this [recognition]: “this [thing standing] in front [of me] is a pot, because [I] have a direct perception of it” does not make [me] know the pot, because [the pot] is [already] manifest through the sole perception [that I have of it]; since otherwise, [there would be a logical defect, namely,] the reason for this proposition would not be established. It is only that a mere distraction (*moha*) is removed (*apasāryate*). And we have [already] stated, and shall state [again], that both this distraction (*moha*) and its removal (*apasāraṇa*) are nothing but an expansion of the Lord himself, and nothing more.

When I recognize an object in front of me to be a pot, this experience cannot be called a perception—although it involves one, for I am indeed perceiving something. Nor can it be called an inference, because, contrary to the perception that lets me know that there is something in front of me, this identification of the nature (*svabhāva*) of an object present in front of me with the nature (*svabhāva*) of the object called “pot” does not make me know anything new: I already know both that there is something in front of me, and that there are things in the world called “pots”. Such an experience only enables me to become more fully aware

Footnote 98 continued

(*pramāṇa*), the result of knowledge (*pramā, pramiti*). Consciousness itself cannot be taken as an object of action or of knowledge, for its essence is subjectivity; nor can it be grasped through an instrument of action or of knowledge, for these instruments are grounded in it and are in fact nothing but partial aspects of it.

<sup>99</sup> IPV, vol. I, p. 38.

<sup>100</sup> On the *kārakas* and *jñāpakas*, see fn. 98.

of my own knowledge, by eliminating the “distraction” which so far had prevented me from recognizing the identity of these two entities.

Similarly, our awareness of others is not a mere cognition (*jñāna*), but a re-cognition (*pratyabhijñā*). When I realize the existence of others I do not acknowledge their existence as I acknowledge that of objects in the world; I do not *learn* it. The fact that the others are subjects is not the content of an information that I would receive either through direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) or inference ( *anumāna*)—Abhinavagupta seems here to be implicitly criticizing Dharmakīrti’s typology of inference, for what he describes as a *svabhāvahetu* in the *Vivṛtivismarśinī* obviously has with inference conceived as a *pramāṇa* establishing a new knowledge a difference of nature. When witnessing action, I recognize it as an aspect of *vimarśa*, the essential dynamism of consciousness. Our awareness of the others is a recognition—that is to say, the flashing awareness of a free, self-luminous entity that I already know, since I myself experience myself as such a free self-luminous entity. To be aware of the others is to recognize in them my own subjectivity.

Indeed, this awareness is not entirely free of objectivity, for it occurs when I perceive objectively a material action being performed in front of me, and I still tend to attribute to that subjective entity objective features such as having this or that body, standing at this or that point of space and time, etc—nor is the process through which this recognition occurs entirely free from objectivity.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>101</sup> In the sequel of this discussion in the ĪPVV, Abhinavagupta does face a series of objections in which a pupil, struggling to understand the difficult notion of a recognition of subjectivity which is still tinged with objectivity, argues that our “guess” of others cannot be both inferential (be it the *svabhāvahetu* inference, which does not produce a new cognition but only a re-cognition) and still preserve the subjective characteristic that differentiates the others from mere objects (see for instance the first of these objections, vol. I, p. 106: *nanu kriyayā yadī dharmī cikīrṣitūḥ paraḥ pramātānumīyate, hetubhāgāś ca jñānāmā tadā vedyarūpatvena pramātur jñānasya cedantāparāmīṣyatvena jaḍatāprasaktir ity āśaṅkyāha pramātrīṭā cetī*. “But if the object of the inference (*dharmīn*) willing to act is inferred through action to be another subject, and [if] a part of the reason (*hetu*) [for this inference] is knowledge, then the logical consequence is the insentiency (*jaḍatā*) of the subject—as it [must] consist in an object of knowledge (*vedya*)—and of knowledge, since it is grasped objectively (*idantā*)”). It is not possible here, due to the length of this discussion (extending from ĪPVV, vol. I, pp. 106–109) to reproduce and analyze it entirely. It is worth noting however that Abhinavagupta acknowledges that this recognition does take an objective aspect, but “only in its intermediate stage” (*madhye param*, *Ibid.*, p. 108), for its “initial stage”, namely the awareness of the “invariable concomitance” (*vyāpti*) between action and knowledge, is actually nothing but the subjective intuition that action involves a freedom (*svātantrya*) which is nothing but the self-luminosity (*svaprakāśatva*) characteristic of subjectivity (see p. 106: *Ibid.*: *pramātrīṭā saṃvidrīpatā, yayā caitraḥ pramātā maitraḥ pramāteṭi vyavahāraḥ. sā ca yādrśī svātmani prakāśīṭāhamīṭy anyāyāpekṣaprakāśajīvitocitavimarśā, tata evedantāvimarśāsahīṣṇuḥ tādrśy evānumānenānumāṭum yuktā. na hy anyena vyāptir anyac cānumīyate, svaprakāśarūpeṇaiva ca vyāptīḥ*. “To be a subject (*pramātrīṭā*) is to consist in consciousness, by virtue of which the mundane experience ‘Caitra is a subject’ [or] ‘Maitra is a subject’ [can take place]; and this [fact of consisting in consciousness], which is such that it is made manifest in oneself as ‘I’; [which is such that] its conscious grasping (*vimarśa*) is fit to be the very life of conscious light (*prakāśa*) as it consists in freedom (*anyāyāpekṣa*); [and which is such that] for this reason, it is not capable of being grasped objectively—only such a [fact of consisting in consciousness] can be inferred by the inference. For [in an inference,] there is no invariable concomitance with one thing, while something else would be inferred; and the invariable concomitance [between action and consciousness] only exists in the form of self-luminosity (*svaprakāśa*)”). As for the “final stage” (*pariyanta*), it is nothing but the assertion that X is a free, self-luminous entity, and although this entity is still associated with objective features such as its body, its recognition cannot be reduced to an objectification, for it does

My recognition of others is always a partial or relative recognition, as opposed to the absolute recognition in which I acknowledge the whole of objectivity, including the objective features that distinguish me and the others as limited selves, to be identical with the unique universal self. Still, it is a kind of recognition, for in it I don't make manifest for myself, by using an instrument of knowledge such as perception or inference, an entity that would passively wait for me to be manifested; I encounter an entity capable of action (*kriyā*), that is to say free (*svatantra*), and I recognize in this freedom the self-luminosity (*svaprakāśatva*) that characterizes my own consciousness. Insofar as I recognize it in an entity which exists beyond the bounds—such as my body—of what I ordinarily assume to be “myself”, the others' recognition, although still stained by objectivity, already constitutes a partial recognition of the universal Self.

## II. 5. The intersubjective world: an expression of the universal subject's freedom

Not only do the Pratyabhijñā philosophers claim that, contrary to the Vijñānavādins', their idealistic system is capable of accounting for our awareness of others. They also emphasize the fact that, contrary to the Vijñānavādins', their idealistic system alone can explain the intersubjective world. For as the Buddhist externalist portrayed by Abhinavagupta notices in his criticism of Dharmakīrti's *Santānāntarasiddhi*, in the Vijñānavāda's perspective no communication whatsoever is possible between several streams of consciousness: each of them experiences a world that has no existence outside of the conscious stream itself and is produced by the internal mechanism of the awakening *vāsanās*. Dharmakīrti thus offers an explanation for the apparent harmony of the different subjects' experiences that borders on a mere absence of explanation, when stating that it is the result of a perpetual coincidence.

In the fourth chapter of the *Kriyādhikāra*, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers further criticize the Vijñānavāda's justification of the intersubjective world.<sup>102</sup> They argue that if various streams of consciousness thus lead their monadic existences while remaining perfectly alien to each other, the very possibility of a valid *kāryahetu* inference becomes questionable. For such an inference rests on the possibility for the subject of grasping the invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) between two phenomena, fire and smoke for instance. However

Footnote 101 continued

not consist in a mere identification of the other's consciousness with the other's body, but precisely in the realization that this entity transcends objective features such as its body insofar as it is self-luminous (see for instance *Ibid.*, p. 106: *na śarīrādi pramātrrūpam anumīyate, nāpi jñānarūpam nīlādi; api tu yādṛg eva pramātur jñānasya ca svabhāvaḥ svātmany aham iti svaprakāśatayā vimṛṣṭaḥ, tathāvidha eva viṣayakriyate'numānenedantāgrāhināpi*. “The body and [the other limiting conditions] are not inferred to consist in the subject; nor are ‘blue’ [and other objective entities inferred] to have the nature of knowledge. Rather, the nature of the subject and of his knowledge is made the object of an inference—although [this inference] grasps things objectively—as being exactly of this sort: [a nature] which is consciously grasped (*vimṛṣṭa*) in oneself as self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*), in the form ‘I’”).

<sup>102</sup> See ĪPK II, 4, 12 and the ĪPV *ad hoc*.

according to the Vijñānavāda's principles, if several subjects are gathered together in a kitchen, each of them can indeed grasp an invariable concomitance while witnessing fire and smoke; but this invariable concomitance is valid only regarding each subject's cognitions of "fire" and "smoke", since each subject supposedly has a cognition of fire and smoke that is different from, and unrelated to, that of the other subjects.<sup>103</sup> The invariable concomitance thus loses its universal scope: I can only consider that my cognition of smoke is invariably concomitant with my cognition of fire, but not that my neighbour's cognition of smoke is such. This leads to the absurd consequence that when, knowing the invariable concomitance between my cognition "fire" and my cognition "smoke", I see smoke on a distant and crowded hill, I cannot conclude from this fact that the subjects standing on the hill are actually witnessing a fire, for precisely the invariable concomitance that I am able to grasp concerns only my chain of consciousness.<sup>104</sup> By contrast, the Pratyabhijñā doctrine, by affirming the existence of a single consciousness that is a free agent, claims to endow invariable concomitance with a truly universal scope, since this consciousness, which is free to manifest itself in the form of different limited subjects, is also free to make them share one single objective manifestation, by making them one with regard to that manifestation:

*iha tu darśane vyāptigrahaṇāvasthāyām yāvantas taddeśasambhāvya māna-sadbhāvāḥ pramātaras tāvatām eko'sau dhūmābhāsaś ca vahnyābhāsaś ca bāhyanaya iva, tāvati teṣāṃ parameśvarenaikyaṃ nirmītam iti hy uktam. tataḥ svaparasantānaviśeṣatyāgena dhūmābhāsamātram vahnyābhāsamātrasya kāryam, iti vyāptau gṛhītāyām bhūyo'pi parvate yo dhūmābhāsaḥ so'pi vahnyābhāsaḥ eveti vyāptiṃ smṛtvānumimīte'tra parvate agnyābhāsa iti. tāvati dhūmābhāsavīśeṣe pramātrantaraiḥ sahaikībhūya vahnyābhāsaśāmānyāṃśe paroḥṣarūpāṃśasahite viśeṣābhāsaṅtaravivikte pramātrantaraiḥ sākam ekibhāvātī yāvat.*<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> IPV, vol. II, p. 164: *ekavāraṃ tāvan mahānase pratyakṣānupalambhabalenāgnyābhāsadhūmābhāsayoḥ kāryakāraṇabhāvo gṛhītaḥ. tatra vijñānavādino darśane pratisantānam anyaś cānyaś cābhāsaḥ, iti svābhāsayor eva kāryakāraṇatā gṛhītā na tu santānāntaragatayor tadyavarttāntasyāsamvedanāt. "For sure, the causality relation between the manifestation of smoke and the manifestation of fire can be grasped at once [by several subjects] in a kitchen through the direct perceptions and absences of direct perception (pratyakṣānupalambha) [that make one able to grasp invariable concomitance according to Dharmakīrti]. In that [situation], according to the Vijñānavādin's system, each manifestation is different according to each conscious stream; therefore it is only the causality relation of two manifestations belonging to [one single chain] that is grasped, but not that of [two manifestations] residing in different conscious chains, because one does not experience the events belonging to [other chains]."*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164–165: *tataś cedānīm anumānaṃ na bhavet svasantānatād dhūmābhāsaḥ krimisarvajñādīpramātrasantānāntaraviśeṣasyāgnyābhāsaśya iti niścayah. "And therefore, [if one admits the Vijñānavāda's principles], now [that I have grasped the invariable concomitance between my cognition of fire and my cognition of smoke], [my] inference of a manifestation of fire occurring in other conscious streams—whether they be worms or omniscient beings, or any other subject—from the manifestation of smoke occurring in my own conscious stream is impossible; this is a certainty"*.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

But in our system, when the grasping of invariable concomitance is taking place, as many subjects as can be present [together] in that particular place have both one single manifestation of smoke and one single manifestation of fire, just as in the externalist system; for [Utpaladeva] has stated that their unity (*aikyam*) in this respect is produced by the Highest Lord. Therefore, thanks to the abandonment of the particularity [characterizing] one's own and the others' conscious streams, the invariable concomitance is grasped thus: "the mere manifestation of smoke [and not one characterized as mine only] is the effect of the mere manifestation of fire [and not one characterized as mine only]". Later as well, remembering the invariable concomitance thus: "the manifestation of smoke on a mountain must be due to a manifestation of fire", one infers: "there is a manifestation of fire on this mountain". It means that [the inferring subject], having [first] become one (*ekībhūya*) with other subjects with respect to a particular manifestation of smoke, becomes one (*ekībhavati*) with other subjects with regard to the aspect which is the universal "manifestation of fire" accompanied by the aspect which consists in an imperceptible form, which is distinct from the other manifestations [of fire] that are particular.

The Pratyabhijñā system holds, just as the Vijñānavāda, that nothing exists outside of consciousness. In the first passage analyzed in this article, a Buddhist holding that objects exist outside of consciousness was criticizing the Vijñānavāda's idealism by showing that it is incapable of accounting for the intersubjective world, whereas the externalist system justifies it by assuming that the various subjects share a common external object of perception. The Pratyabhijñā philosophers show here that there is no need to assume the existence of such external objects in order to account for the subjects' communication. For communication, according to them, is nothing but a partial fusion of the different limited subjects. Such a fusion is possible because the absolute consciousness is, in its essence, a free agency. As such it is free to split itself into different limited subjects, but it is just as free to merge them back into a single entity. So limited subjects are able to share the same experience because this universal consciousness then makes them one with respect to one single manifestation, be it that of particular entity manifested through direct perception in a particular place and time, or that of a universal entity conceived of in an activity of inference. Thus in the Pratyabhijñā system, the intersubjective relations are not accounted for by resorting to a common external object of which the subjects would take different views, as in an externalist system; nor by assuming in a Leibnizian fashion the existence of a God pre-establishing the harmony of some monadic subjects' representations; nor, as Dharmakīrti, by considering that this harmony of monads is a perpetual accident. The limited subjects, according to the Pratyabhijñā philosophy, are not monads, because they are nothing but the limited aspects or roles that a single consciousness freely chooses to assume. For this reason they are not locked in themselves, contrary to insentient objects which are

“self-confined” (*svātmaniṣṭha*): in such a system, the empirical individual is both defined by his boundaries—which he constantly experiences in his encounters with objects and other subjects—and the dissolution thereof—which, just as well, he constantly experiences, by sharing his world with the others. Here again, the intersubjective experience thus turns out to be, according to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, the experience, albeit incomplete, of consciousness’s unity and freedom.

### Conclusion. Of distraction and recognition

The Pratyabhijñā philosophy does not escape what seems to be the fate of every idealism—that of having to pay the metaphysical price of solipsism: as already noted in the introduction to this article, according to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, ultimately there exists only one single universal subject. And yet, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers try to account for our awareness of other subjects and to distinguish it from our perception of objects. The most striking feature of their explanation is that this awareness is described neither as a positive knowledge, nor as a mere illusion.

It is not strictly speaking a knowledge, for means of knowledge—perception and inference—only grasp objects, whereas in this awareness we realize that we are dealing with something that cannot be reduced to the ontological status of objects. The specificity of this encounter with alterity is that in it we do not grasp an object of knowledge (*prameya*), but another knowing subject (*pramātṛ*).

But this awareness is not an illusion either. The Pratyabhijñā philosophers do state that “otherness” is a kind of *moha*; nonetheless the term *moha* should not be understood here as plainly meaning “illusion”, for they use this word in a technical sense, to designate that particular “distraction” by virtue of which I am not paying attention to a knowledge that I nonetheless possess.<sup>106</sup> To be aware of other subjects is indeed for the universal consciousness to playfully hide from itself the fact that it is unitary, just as children, in their solitary games, choose to enact several characters. *Moha* is the distraction through which, like a playful child, consciousness freely chooses to forget that the various characters it has been enacting are actually one and the same, as well as the distraction through which it playfully forgets that it is nothing but consciousness in order to present itself in the form of insentient objects.

<sup>106</sup> For the statement that the awareness of other subjects is due to *moha*, see for instance the introduction to verse I, 1, 5 in Utpaladeva’s *Vivṛti*, quoted by Abhinavagupta in the *ĪPVV* (vol. I, p. 101): *paratvaṃ tu māyāmohakṛtam abhimānamātrasāram iti hy uktam avataraṇikāyām*. “For [Utpaladeva] has said in the introduction [to this verse]: ‘But otherness has as its essence nothing but an incomplete opinion of oneself (*abhimāna*) that is produced by the distraction (*moha*) due to the self-concealing power (*māyā*) [of the Self]’”.

However, if our awareness of others is grounded in *moha*, insofar as it wouldn't take place had consciousness remained fully aware of its fundamental unity, it is, contrary to our awareness of objects, something more than *moha*. For it consists in a "guess" (*ūha*, *ūhana*) in which we suddenly sense that subjectivity is not limited to our own empirical individuality. In it we recognize something—the essential dynamism of consciousness. Like the Buddhist idealists, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers consider that the basis of our awareness of the others is the fact that we perceive their actions; but unlike the Buddhists, they do not see action as a contradictory and illusory phenomenon, but as the very essence of consciousness. According to them, the Vijñānavādins fail to account for this particular awareness precisely because they fail to see the intimate link between knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*kriyā*); they interpret the invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) that they admit to exist between them as a causality relation, but such a causality relation between a perceived effect and a merely inferred cause, which maintains an ontological distinction between knowledge and action, cannot be justified in an idealistic system where existence means nothing but conscious manifestation. By contrast, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers claim that there is between knowledge and action an identity relation, and that it is this identity that constitutes our awareness of the others: while witnessing material action in the world, we recognize in it the freedom (*svātantrya*), the infinite creativity from which the absolute consciousness is not distinct. Indeed, this recognition is only partial (*aṃśe*), for it is still stained by objectivity and associated with a particular body, place and time. Nonetheless, such a knowledge is not the mere cognition (*jñāna*) of an object, and contrary to what Dharmakīrti claims, we do not infer the existence of other subjects from their actions as we infer that of fire on a distant hill from our perception of smoke. Our awareness of the others is not the result of a reasoning, but the flashing recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of our own free subjectivity outside of what we usually presume to be the limits of that subjectivity. The Pratyabhijñā philosophers thus present this awareness as twofold from a metaphysical point of view: while it still participates of consciousness's will to fool itself in its cosmic game (for in it consciousness playfully assumes various roles), it also points to the ultimate recognition that constitutes the highest form of freedom according to the Pratyabhijñā philosophy—the recognition that each of these roles is performed by the same universal consciousness.

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