

Seventeen

Pāramārthika or *apāramārthika*? On the ontological status of separation according to Abhinavagupta

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Every Sanskritist is familiar with the difficulties induced by the process of coalescence (*sandhi*) through which the final syllable of a Sanskrit word is mingled with the first syllable of the next word. The ambiguities resulting from this process sometimes have important consequences at a philosophical level: I would like to show here how the disappearance of a single phoneme in a sentence due to the rules of *sandhi* can lead to two very different interpretations and transform our understanding of a whole philosophical system.

The text examined below as an illustration of this belongs to the Pratyabhijñā corpus. The Pratyabhijñā doctrine was elaborated by the Kashmiri philosophers Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta;¹ its metaphysical background

*I wish to thank Alexis Sanderson, with whose generous help I read the greater part of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* (henceforth *ĪPV*) in 2005.

¹Utpaladeva (fl. c. 925-975) is the author of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-kārikā*-s (henceforth *ĪPK*) and of two commentaries on them: a short *Vṛtti* and a more detailed *Vivṛti* (of which only a few fragments are known so far: see TORELLA 1988 and 2007a, b, c and d, and RATIÉ forthcoming a and b). Abhinavagupta (fl. c. 975-1025) has written two important commentaries on Utpaladeva's Pratyabhijñā works: the *ĪPV*, which comments on the *ĪPK* while synthesizing Utpaladeva's autocommentaries, and the very long

is that of Śaiva non-dualism, but its originality² lies in the fact that its authors do not content themselves with explaining the religious dogmas contained in the Śaiva non-dualistic scriptures: they endeavour to transform these dogmas into a philosophical system by engaging in a constant rational dialogue with other philosophical schools, be they Buddhist or Brahmanical.³ In particular, they defend a kind of idealism according to which all the entities that we apprehend as external to us are in fact nothing but internal aspects of a single, all-encompassing and omnipotent consciousness.

In an intriguing and somewhat ambiguous passage of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī*, Abhinavagupta endeavours to expound the Pratyabhijñā's position regarding the ontological status of the separation (*vicchedana*) that we usually assume to exist between consciousness and its objects, but also between an object and another object – or between a consciousness and

Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivismarśinī (henceforth *ĪPVV*), which primarily comments on Utpaladeva's almost entirely lost *Vivṛti*. The text of the *ĪPV* quoted here is that of the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies edition, but several manuscripts (and the *Bhāskarī* edition) are also quoted within brackets whenever an emendation is proposed ("p.n.p." means "the passage is not preserved in...").

²Which is emphasized by Utpaladeva himself, who calls the Pratyabhijñā a "new path" (*mārgo navaḥ*, *ĪPK* IV, 16). Abhinavagupta explains (*ĪPV*, vol. II, p. 271): *abhinavaḥ – sarvarahasyaśāstrāntargataḥ sannigūḍhatvād aprasiddhaḥ*. "[This path is] new, [i.e.], it was [already] contained in all esoteric treatises, [but] not well known, because [so far] it was hidden [in them]." Alexis Sanderson has noticed (during the viva of my thesis in la Sorbonne, 30/01/2009) that Abhinavagupta thus seems to moderate a bit Utpaladeva's bold statement by stipulating that the Pratyabhijñā's novelty is not a rupture from the Śaiva tradition, and he suggested that this might constitute a difference between the point of view of Utpaladeva and that of his commentator (otherwise very faithful to Utpaladeva's autocommentaries: see TORELLA 2002, pp. XLIII-XLIV). However, this interesting hypothesis does not seem to fit with the *ĪPVV* parallel passage: Utpaladeva himself seems to have developed this idea in the *Vivṛti* ad loc. fragmentarily quoted by Abhinavagupta. See *ĪPVV*, vol. III, p. 401: *aspaṣṭatvād iti ...*, "because it was not obvious...", and the following commentary by Abhinavagupta, e.g. *yad api rahasyāgameṣu nirūpitam tathā vispaṣṭatvena noktam garbhīkṛtya tu nirūpitam ...* "This too, that had [already] been expounded in the esoteric scriptures, [i.e.], which had not been expressed clearly [there] as [it is in the Pratyabhijñā treatise], but the explanation of which was contained in an embryonic way [in these esoteric scriptures]..." In any case, Alexis Sanderson's important and difficult question (are there any meaningful differences between the thought of Utpaladeva and that of Abhinavagupta?) remains to be further explored.

³On this process of conceptualization and the relative novelty that such a dialogue represented for Śaiva non-dualism, see for instance SANDERSON 1988, p. 694, TORELLA 2002, p. XIII and RATIÉ 2011, pp. 6-11. This dialogue resulted in various borrowings from other philosophical schools, particularly (but not exclusively) that of Dharmakīrti and his followers, and the concepts thus borrowed from these various non-Śaiva sources were subtly distorted: see e.g. TORELLA 1992, TORELLA 2002 (Introduction), TORELLA 2007a and c, RATIÉ 2010a and 2010b.

another consciousness. The present article is an attempt at clarifying this position, which constitutes one of the most original features of Utpaladeva's idealism.

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The problematic passage begins after Utpaladeva has shown against his Buddhist opponents that consciousness cannot be a series of momentary cognitions irreducibly distinct from each other. We must acknowledge consciousness's unity in order to account for our experience of the world: without it, our practical existence (*vyavahāra*) would remain a perfect mystery, for memory is the basis of our mundane existence, but in the absence of a unitary consciousness, nothing could explain the synthetic awareness through which consciousness can grasp remembered objects.⁴ Utpaladeva concludes from this that one must assume the existence of a unique consciousness possessing the three powers of knowledge, memory and exclusion (*jñānasmrtyapohanaśakti*)⁵ mentioned in the *Bhagavadgītā* as the attributes of the supreme deity.⁶ In his commentary on verse I, 3, 7 in the IPV, Abhinavagupta explains that idealism is the only way to account for the phenomenon of knowledge (*jñāna*): the relation between the grasped object and the grasping consciousness (*grāhyagrāhakabhāva*) can take place only if perceptual consciousness, far from revealing an independent reality external to it, is consciousness *manifesting itself in the form of the object*.⁷ In fact, consciousness and the various objects that it perceives are

⁴On this long demonstration, see TORELLA 2002, pp. 99-103, RATIÉ 2006, TORELLA 2007b and RATIÉ 2011, pp. 35-306.

⁵See IPK, I, 3, 6-7: *evam anyonyabhinnānām aparasparavedinām / jñānānām anusamdhānajanmā naśyej janasthitiḥ // na ced antaḥkṛtānantaviśvarūpo maheśvaraḥ / syād ekaś cidvapur jñānasmrtyapohanaśaktimān //* “Thus, [if one admits the Buddhist opponent's thesis], people's practical experience (*janasthiti*), which arises from the synthesis (*anusaṃdhāna*) of cognitions that are different from each other and do not know each other, should perish – unless [one acknowledges] that there must be a unique Great Lord internally creating the countless forms of the universe, consisting in consciousness, and possessing the powers of knowledge, memory and exclusion.” (On the meaning of *evam* here, see IPV, vol. I, p. 105: *evam iti parābhyupagame sati*. “‘Thus’ – [i.e.,] if one accepts the opponent's thesis.”)

⁶Utpaladeva himself indicates the origin of this triad of powers (see *Vṛtti*, p. 14), i.e., *Bhagavadgītā* XV, 15 (*mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanam ca*. “From me arise memory, knowledge and exclusion”). On the meaning of this borrowing, see RATIÉ 2006, pp. 79 ff.

⁷See IPV, vol. I, p. 107: *saṃvit tāvat prakāśata iti tāvan na kecid apahnuvate. sā tu saṃvid yadi svātmamātraviśrāntārthasya sā katham prakāśaḥ? sa hy arthadharmā eva tathā syāt; tataś cārthaprakāśas tāvaty eva paryavasita iti galito grāhyagrāhakabhāvaḥ*.

not different entities, but one single entity taking various forms, just as when dreaming, we are aware of objects that do not exist independently of

ato 'rthaprakāśarūpam samvidam icchatā balād evārtho 'pi tadrūpāntargata evāṅgikartavyaḥ. “At least nobody denies this: obviously, consciousness is manifest (*prakāśate*). But if this consciousness [were the consciousness] of an object resting on itself only (*svātmamātraviśrāntārtha*), how would it be the manifestation (*prakāśa*) [of this object]? For [if it were] so, this [manifestation] would be nothing but a property (*dharma*) of the object; and as a consequence, since the manifestation of the object would be confined inside the sole [object], the relation between the grasped object and the grasping subject would be lost. Therefore if [we] want consciousness to consist of the manifestation of the object, [we] must necessarily admit that even the object is entirely internal to [consciousness]’s nature.” Here too, the *sandhi* results in an ambiguity that a priori allows for two possible interpretations. Thus the editors of the KSTS edition of the IPV as well as K. C. Pandey have understood the beginning of the passage otherwise, and they have suspended the *sandhi* in conformity with this understanding (*sā tu samvid yadī svātmamātraviśrāntā arthasya sā katham prakāśaḥ*); most consulted manuscripts (i.e., D, J, L, S2 and SOAS) suspend the *sandhi* in the same way. Similarly, Bhāskarakaṇṭha understands *svātmamātraviśrāntārthasya* as the coalescence of a compound in the nominative feminine qualifying *samvit* (*svātmamātraviśrāntā*) with the word *artha* in the genitive (see *Bhāskarī*, vol. I, p. 139: *svātmamātraviśrāntā – svayamprakāśanījasvarūpamātraparā sā samvit*. “[But if] consciousness only rested in itself (*svātmamātraviśrāntā*), [i.e.], if it were entirely absorbed in its own nature that is a self-manifestation, [how would it be the manifestation of the object]?”). However here, I do not think that this is what Abhinavagupta means. Thus, immediately afterwards, he formulates the consequence of the hypothesis to which he has just alluded: if it were not the case, manifestation would be a mere property (*dharma*) of the object. If the hypothesis consisted in postulating that consciousness merely rests in itself as Bhāskarakaṇṭha understands it (i.e., if it consisted in supposing that consciousness is only conscious of itself as a self-manifestation), one could not understand why such a consequence should follow. I therefore assume that *svātmamātraviśrāntārthasya* is a compound and that Abhinavagupta means that if the consciousness of an object were the consciousness of an object “resting only in itself” (*svātmamātraviśrāntā*), i.e. *existing independently of consciousness*, or without being grounded (*viśrāntā*) in consciousness, then consciousness could not be the manifestation of the object, and this manifestation, which would be nothing but a property belonging to the object itself, independently of consciousness, would remain inexplicable and absurd, since what is manifest is so for some kind of consciousness. This argument (which implicitly targets the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas) can be found in a much more developed version in chapter I, 5 of the IPK, which is entirely devoted to the explanation and justification of the Pratyabhijñā’s idealism, and in the *Tantrāloka* (henceforth TĀ) 10, 21-22: see RATIÉ 2011, pp. 316-326. Cf. the parallel passage in the *Vivṛti* fragment *ad* I, 3, 7 in TORELLA 2007a, p. 477: *prakāśarūpam hi cittatvam karṣṭamāyām ādisiddham eva tadatiriktatvam ca nīlasukhāder jadābhimatasya bhāvajātasya svayam aprakāśarūpatvam syād atadrūpatve ca prakāśamānatānupapattiḥ*. “For the reality of consciousness (*cittatva*), which consists of manifestation (*prakāśa*) [and] is constituted by agency, is always already established (*ādisiddha*), and [stating] that all objects such as blue, pleasure, etc., which are considered to be insentient, are distinct (*atirikta*) from this [consciousness] would [amount to saying] that by themselves, they do not consist of manifestation; and if they do not consist of [manifestation], it is impossible that [they] might be manifest.”

our consciousness and are mere aspects that consciousness takes on.⁸ This all-encompassing and infinitely plastic consciousness is precisely what the Śaiva non-dualistic scriptures designate as Śiva, the omnipotent and omniscient “Lord” (*īśvara*); and the experience of memory (*smṛti*) shows that it remains one and the same throughout time.⁹ Abhinavagupta then remarks that as a consequence, the separation (*vicchedana*) between consciousness and its objects, between one consciousness and another consciousness, or between one object and another object, is in fact a mere appearance (*avabhāsamātra*), since all objects and all consciousnesses are ultimately nothing but one single universal consciousness taking on these countless objective and subjective forms without losing its fundamental unity and identity:

*idam api pravāhapatitam urikāryam – yat kila *yad*
[conj. SANDERSON: *tad* KSTS, *Bhāskarī*, J, D, L, S1, S2,
SOAS; p.n.p. P] *ābhāsyate tat saṃvido vicchidyate, saṃvic ca*
tataḥ, saṃvic ca saṃvidantarāt, saṃvedyaṃ ca saṃvedyāntarāt.
na ca vicchedanaṃ vastutaḥ saṃbhavatīti vicchedanasyāvabhā-
*samātram ucyate.*¹⁰

This too must be admitted as a consequence, namely: that which is manifested is separated from consciousness, and consciousness [is separated] from it; and one consciousness, from another consciousness; and one object of consciousness, from another object of consciousness. And since in reality (*vastutas*), separation is not possible, [we] call it a mere appearance (*avabhāsamātra*) of separation.

Before explaining that the capacity to produce this appearance of separation is mentioned in Utpaladeva’s verse as the “power of exclusion” (*apohanaśakti*),¹¹ Abhinavagupta adds a somewhat mysterious sentence:

⁸On this analogy between perception and dreams (and on its limits in the Pratyabhijñā system), see RATIÉ 2010a.

⁹See ĪPV, vol. I, p. 107: *sa cārthaprakāśo yady anyas cānyaś ca, tan na smaraṇam upapannam ity ata eka evāsāv iti. ekatvāt sarvo vedyarāśis tena kroḍikṛta ity etad apy anicchatāṅgikāryam*. “And if this manifestation of objects constantly becomes other [as the Buddhist opponent contends], memory cannot be explained; therefore [we must admit] that this [consciousness] is one. Because of this unity, all objects of knowledge without exception are encompassed by this [consciousness]; this too must be acknowledged [by the Buddhist], however reluctantly.”

¹⁰ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 109-110.

¹¹ĪPV, vol. I, p. 110: *eṣa eva paritaś chedanāt pariccheda ucyate, tadavabhāsana-sāmarthyam apohanaśaktiḥ. anena śaktitrayeṇa viśve vyavahārāḥ*. “It is precisely this

*na ca tad iyatāpāramāṛthikam, nirmīyamāṇasya sarvasyāyam
eva paramārtho yataḥ.*¹²

The second part of the sentence is not particularly problematic; literally, it means something like “because this is precisely the ultimate reality (*paramārtha*) of whatever is created.” The first part is more difficult to understand, though. Faced with this difficulty, the translator of the IPV, K. C. Pandey, simply chooses not to translate it – but he omits to warn his readers that he is skipping a sentence.¹³ Why is the great paṇḍit thus embarrassed by these few words? He usually relies on Bhāskarakaṇṭha’s late commentary, and the seventeenth-century¹⁴ writer does not seem to find the sentence particularly problematic. For him, it means something like this:

And (*ca*) because of this much (*iyatā*), this [separation] (*tad*) is not real (*na... pāramāṛthikam*); it is precisely the ultimate reality (*paramārtha*) of whatever is created.

Bhāskarakaṇṭha is thus interpreting the passage as meaning that the separation between subjects and objects is *not real* (*na...pāramāṛthikam*) for the reason just stated by Abhinavagupta, i.e., because it is only an appearance; and Bhāskarakaṇṭha explains that of course, appearances cannot be real – otherwise, when someone sees two moons instead of one because of some eye disease, the two moons should be considered as real, which is absurd.¹⁵ As for the rest of the sentence, he understands it not as the justifi-

[appearance of separation] that is called ‘cutting off’ (*pariccheda*) because it ‘cuts’ (*-cheda* = *chedana*) ‘on all sides’ (*pari-* = *paritas*); the capacity to manifest this [separation] is the power of exclusion (*apohanaśakti*). All mundane transactions (*vyavahāra*) occur thanks to this triad of powers [mentioned in verse I, 3, 7].”

¹²IPV, *Ibid*.

¹³See *Bhāskarī*, vol. III, p. 38: “And then, as a matter of course this also has to be admitted that whatever is made manifest, is separate from Saṃvid, so is one Saṃvid from another, and so also is one object of knowledge from another; and that this (separation) however is not really possible. Hence it is called mere appearance, because all that is created is mere appearance (*Ābhāsa*).”

¹⁴See SANDERSON 2007, p. 422 (against K. C. Pandey’s so far prevalent opinion that Bhāskarakaṇṭha lived at the end of the eighteenth century: see PANDEY 1936, pp. 264-265).

¹⁵See *Bhāskarī*, vol. I, p. 142-143: *pāramāṛthikam – satyabhūtam, anyathā candradvītvasyāpi pāramāṛthikatāpatter iti bhāvaḥ*. “[And this separation is not] real (*pāramāṛthika* = *satyabhūta*). One should supply: because otherwise, as a consequence, the moon’s [perceived property of] being double too would be real.”

cation of the first words,¹⁶ but as the specification that all objects, *including objects of action* (and not only objects of knowledge that are perceived or remembered) – are nothing but an appearance.¹⁷

At first sight, this interpretation seems satisfactory: it apparently fits rather neatly with the non-dualism of the Pratyabhijñā, since the passage is then taken to mean that the separation dividing things and consciousnesses into a multiplicity of ontologically distinct entities is a mere appearance devoid of reality, the only ultimate reality (*paramārtha*) being the absolute non-duality (*advaita*) of the universal consciousness hiding beyond this illusory differentiation.

There is, however, another way of understanding the sentence, and this ambiguity is probably the cause of K. C. Pandey's embarrassed silence here; for according to the rules of *sandhi*, one could take *iyatāpāramāṛthikam* (in the sentence *na ca tad iyatāpāramāṛthikam*) to be the result of a coalescence between the words *iyatā* and *apāramāṛthikam*. According to this second reading, Abhinavagupta would be saying that the appearance of separation is not unreal (*na... apāramāṛthikam*) – in other words, he would mean quite the contrary of what Bhāskarakaṇṭha assumes him to mean. Thus understood, the sentence could be translated as:

And (*ca*) for all that (*iyatā*), this [separation] is not unreal (*apāramāṛthika*); since it is precisely the ultimate reality of whatever is created.

Several scribes copying manuscripts of the IPV have understood the passage in this way, and they have suspended the *sandhi* accordingly so as to make it clear;¹⁸ so have the editors of the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies. But why should we choose this reading rather than Bhāskarakaṇṭha's?

¹⁶Contrary to the KSTS editors, Bhāskarakaṇṭha considers that *yataḥ* belongs to the next sentence (translated above, fn. 11). See *Bhāskarī*, vol. I, p. 143: *yata iti. yataḥ paṇḍitair eṣa eva viccheda eva paricchedanāt – samanantaroktasya chedasya karaṇāt pariccheda ucyate ...* “‘because’ (*yataḥ*) – [that is to say,] because ‘it is precisely this’ [i.e.,] it is precisely this separation that is called ‘cutting off’ by the learned, due to the activity of cutting that has just been mentioned...”

¹⁷See *Bhāskarī*, vol. I, p. 143: *nanv avabhāsyamāṇasya smaryamāṇasya cāyaṃ nyāyo bhavatu nirmīyamāṇasya tu kā vārtā? ity āha nirmīyamāṇasyeti. ayam evāvabhāsa eva sarvatra jñeye kārye vāvabhāsanamātram eva paramārthaḥ; tathā ca nādvaitahānir iti bhāvaḥ*. “But this rule may apply for that which is manifested [in a perception] and that which is remembered; but what about that which is created (*nirmīyamāṇa*)? To this [Abhinavagupta] replies [with the following sentence beginning with] *nirmīyamāṇasya*. ‘This precisely’ – [i.e.,] this very appearance – is the ‘ultimate reality’ – [i.e.,] it is nothing but an appearance (*avabhāsanamātra*) – in all objects of cognition or action; and thus non-duality (*advaita*) is not abandoned.”

¹⁸See D, J, L and S2, which bear the reading *iyatā apāramāṛthikam*.

After all, from a narrow philological point of view, both interpretations are possible due to the *sandhi*'s ambiguity.

In this case the context is decisive. First of all, the word *iyatā* (literally, "because of this much", that is to say, "for all that") usually indicates a restriction, and Abhinavagupta has just stated that this separation is an appearance: given the presence of this word, the passage is very likely to mean that *although* this separation is an appearance, *yet* it is not unreal. Secondly, Bhāskarakaṇṭha's interpretation of the rest of the sentence (according to which appearance is the ultimate reality of all objects, including objects of action, and not only perceived or remembered objects) sounds rather forced, whereas one could interpret it more naturally as an allusion to an important point of divergence between the Pratyabhijñā and some followers of the Advaita Vedānta –¹⁹ a point of divergence that, in Abhinavagupta's eyes, constitutes the justification (hence the *yataḥ*, "since") of the statement that separation, although a mere appearance, is not unreal.

Thus the Pratyabhijñā philosophers accuse these Vedāntins of misunderstanding the nature of reality when assuming that all differences must be illusory on account of the principle that only that which is one and unchanging is real (*pāramārthika*). On the contrary, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta insist that although reality is a unitary consciousness, it is not a static absence of differences, but a dynamic unity capable of encompassing all differences without losing its fundamental oneness. Even though the Pratyabhijñā philosophers defend a full-fledged non-dualism, they consider that differences are not illusory, because they see reality as constituted by this unique consciousness that is first and foremost a power to manifest (literally, a "light", *prakāśa*) and because according to them, the differentiated universe is nothing but consciousness manifesting itself in a differentiated form. This means that whatever is manifest – including all the phenomenal differences – partakes in the ultimate reality (*paramārtha*), the essence of which is manifestation: Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta refuse to acknowledge the dichotomy drawn by some Advaitins between the absolute reality of the unique *ātman-brahman* and the mysterious illusion constituted by the differentiated world of *māyā*.²⁰ One can therefore interpret the ambiguo-

¹⁹On this divergence (and the fact that these Vedāntins defend a doctrine very close to that of Maṇḍanamiśra), see RATIÉ 2010b, pp. 369 ff. (which examines in particular Abhinavagupta's commentaries on ĪPK II, 4, 20).

²⁰In the Pratyabhijñā, the term *māyā* does not designate, as in Maṇḍanamiśra's Advaita Vedānta for instance, some kind of inexplicable illusion to which the *brahman* would remain profoundly alien: it is real and explicable (see RATIÉ 2010b, fn. 68 and 98, p. 378) because it is nothing but the power (*śakti*) or freedom (*svātantrya*) of consciousness to manifest itself as if it were fragmented (see below, fn. 27: *māyāśakti* "consists

ous sentence in the commentary on ĪPK I, 3, 7 as meaning that separation *is not unreal*, because although it is an appearance, appearance or manifestation (*avabhāsa*) is precisely the ultimate reality (*paramārtha*), i.e., the manifesting consciousness (*prakāśa*) that pervades everything and is the essence of “whatever is created” (*nirmāyamāṇasya sarvasya*), or, in other words, of whatever is made manifest by consciousness through its power of exclusion.²¹

Admittedly, Abhinavagupta sometimes states that the whole differentiated universe – the sphere of *māyā*, understood as the domain of differentiated appearance – is in fact an illusion, or more precisely, an erroneous perception (*bhrānti*); and he adds that taking a piece of nacre for a piece of silver, which we ordinarily consider as a kind of illusion (as opposed to the realization of the reality constituted by the piece of nacre) is actually comparable to a dream within a dream, in which illusion is not opposed to reality but to a more complex and inclusive illusion.²² These passages

in the freedom of manifesting separation”, *vicchedanāvabhāsanāsvātantryarūpa*), and the Pratyabhijñā philosophers present this freedom as the very heart of reality. As a consequence, the manifestations produced by *māyāśakti* also partake in reality. See e.g. Abhinavagupta’s parallel commentary on ĪPK I, 3, 7 in ĪPVV, vol. I, p. 296, which makes clear that the only reality – which is *prakāśa*, the manifesting consciousness – pervades the sphere of *māyā* as well: *ayam tātparyārthaḥ: iha prakāśamātrasvabhāvatvena pramāṭrprameyāṇām viśveśām eva tāvat tādātmyād ekarūpāveśa eva vāstavaḥ. sa ca māyāpade ’py anivṛtta evāprakāśanaprasaṅgāt*. “This is the general meaning [of Utpaladeva’s *Vivṛti* here]: in this [world], for sure, only the immersion in the unitary nature [of consciousness] is real (*vāstava*), because of the identity (*tādātmya*) of all knowing subjects and all objects of knowledge without exception, since their nature consists of nothing but the manifesting consciousness (*prakāśa*). And this [pervasion] remains intact even in the realm of *māyā*, because [otherwise] there would follow the absence of manifestation (*prakāśana*) [of whatever would not be immersed in the nature of the single manifesting consciousness].”

²¹The passive present participle *nirmāyamāṇa* qualifies what is being made or created, but the verb *nirmā-* also implies some kind of measuring activity or delimitation: consciousness creates the phenomenal universe precisely through its power of exclusion that separates objects and conscious individuals.

²²See Abhinavagupta’s commentary on ĪPK II, 3, 13, where an objector interrupts his explanation of error as an incomplete manifestation (*apūrṇakhyāti*) in the following way (ĪPV, vol. II, p. 114): *nanu satyarūpyajñānam apy apūrṇakhyātiḥ. tatas tarhi kim? idam ataḥ sarvaṃ bhrāntir ity āgacchet. diṣṭyā drṣṭir unmimīṣaty āyusmataḥ. māyāpadaṃ hi sarvaṃ bhrāntiḥ; tatrāpi tu svapne svapna iva gaṇḍe sphoṭa ivāpareyaṃ bhrāntir ucyate, anuvṛttyucitasyāpi vimarśasyāsthairyāt*. “[– An objector:] But the cognition of real silver as well, [and not only the cognition in which we mistake nacre for silver,] is an ‘incomplete manifestation’! [– Abhinavagupta:] So what follows from this? [– The objector:] This must follow from it: everything is an illusion (*bhrānti*)! [– Abhinavagupta:] O wonder of wonders! Your eyes, o Venerable, deign to open! For the totality of the sphere of *māyā* is an illusion; and within this very [illusion], [we usually] call ‘illusion’ the inferior

seem to constitute evidence in favour of Bhāskarakaṇṭha's interpretation: the separation dividing reality into a multiplicity of distinct entities is not real, since ultimately, everything remains a mere aspect of a single unitary consciousness.

However, in the Pratyabhijñā's perspective, paradoxically, the appearance of differentiation that constitutes the phenomenal universe cannot be reduced to a mere illusion. For illusion is characterized by a contradiction (*virodha*, *bādha*) occurring at some point between a former cognition (for instance: "this is silver") and a present cognition (for instance: "this is nacre") that reveals *a posteriori* the invalidity of the first cognition.²³ But in the case of identity and difference, no such contradiction occurs, since to be aware of the phenomenal world is to be aware of *both* identity and difference:

*ihānūvṛttaṃ vyāvṛttaṃ ca cakāśad *vastu ekatareṇa [conj.: vastu
katারেṇa KSTS, J, L, S1, S2, SOAS; p.n.p. P, D] vapuṣā na sa-*

(*apara*) [type of illusion occurring when one mistakes nacre for silver for instance,] just as a dream within a dream, just as a boil on a tumor – because there is no permanence of the grasp (*vimarśa*) [through which we realize for instance that 'this is silver', since it is contradicted by the subsequent cognition 'this is nacre'], whereas it should have a continuity [if it were a valid cognition]." Cf. ĪPVV, vol. III, p. 153: *pūrṇaprathābhāwād apūrṇakhyātirūpeyam akhyātir eva bhrāntiḥ. yady api sarvaiva saṃsārakathothā bhrāntis tathāpi svapne svapno gaṇḍe sphoṭa iti nyāyena māyāpade 'pi bhrāntivyavahāro 'yaṃ tāvaty api samucitopayogipūrṇaprakhyāviraḥāt.* "Illusion (*bhrānti*) is nothing but an *akhyāti*, that is to say, a manifestation (*khyāti*) that is not complete (*akhyāti* = *apūrṇakhyāti*), because of the lack of a complete manifestation. Even though illusion in its entirety arises from this tall story (*kathā*) that is the cycle of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), nonetheless, following the model of a dream within a dream, [or] of a boil on a tumor, [we] ordinarily talk about 'illusion' even inside the sphere of *māyā*, because even in this [latter case], the complete and efficient manifestation that should occur is lacking." On the definitions of *bhrānti* in the Pratyabhijñā tradition, see RASTOGI 1986 and NEMEC 2012.

²³See e.g. ĪPV, vol. II, pp. 77-78, where Abhinavagupta sums up Utpaladeva's position regarding the definition of the valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) while emphasizing that any cognition which remains uncontradicted (*abādhita*) is to be considered as valid: *ata eva vibhāgaviśeṣalakṣaṇaparīkṣādibhir iha nāyāsito lokaḥ. yad yad abādhitasthairyam ata evāpratihatānūvṛttikaṃ vimarśaphalaṃ vidhatte, tat tad bodharūpaṃ bodhyaniṣṭhaṃ pramāṭṛsvarūpaviśrāntaṃ pramāṇam iti.* "For this very reason, in this [treatise, we] have not exhausted people with [useless digressions] such as the examination of the characteristics [of the various means of knowledge] according to their particular distinctions: whatever has a lasting state (*sthairya*) that is not contradicted (*abādhita*), [and that] for this very reason, has as its result a grasp (*vimarśa*) the continuity (*anūvṛtti*) of which is not impeded, is a means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) consisting in a cognition (*bodha*), regarding an object of cognition (*bodhya*) [and] resting in the nature of the knowing subject (*pramāṭṛ*)." On the relation between this position and that of Kumārila's "intrinsic validity" (*svataḥ prāmāṇya*), see RATIÉ 2011, p. 654.

*tyam ucyatām ubhayatrāpi bādhakābhāvāt; satyato hi yadi bādhaka evaikatarasya syāt tat tadudaye sa eva bhāgaḥ punarunmajjanasahiṣṇutārahito vidyudvilāyaṃ vilīyeta, na caivam. ata eva bhedābhedayor virodhaṃ duḥsamarthaṃ abhimanyamānair ekair avidyātvenānirvācyatvam, aparaiś cābhāsāgnatayā sāmṛtatvam abhidadhādbhir ātmā paraś ca vañcitaḥ. saṃvedana-viśrāntaṃ tu dvayam api bhāti saṃvedanasya svātantryāt. *sarvasya hi [Bhāskarī, J: sarvasya KSTS, L, S1, S2, SOAS; p.n.p. P, D] tiraśco 'py etat svasaṃvedanasiddhaṃ yat saṃvidantarviśrāntam ekatām āpādyamānaṃ jalajvalanaṃ apy aviruddham.²⁴*

In this [world], one cannot say about an entity that is manifest both while conforming (*anuvṛtta*) [to similar entities] and while being excluded (*vyāvṛtta*) [from entities that are different from it] that it is real (*satya*) in one of these forms only; because nothing contradicts any of these two [forms]. For if [one of them] really contradicted the other, then, when the one [supposedly contradicting the other] arises, this precise aspect [supposedly contradicted,] being deprived of the capacity to appear again, should vanish as a flash of lightning vanishes – but it is not the case. For this very reason, some, who consider that the contradiction between difference and identity is impossible to justify – [i.e.,] that it is inexplicable (*anirvācya*) since it consists of nescience (*avidyā*) –, and others, who talk about [its] ‘relative truth’ (*sāmṛtatva*) because it entirely rests on appearances (*ābhāsa*), have fooled themselves as well as the others. Rather, both of them, [identity and difference], are manifest [insofar as] they rest on consciousness, by virtue of consciousness’s freedom (*svātantrya*). For even water and fire, since they receive unity [insofar as] they rest inside consciousness, are not contradictory: this is established by [mere] self-consciousness for all – even for an animal.

Any empirical object is pervaded both by difference and identity: it is distinct from whatever it is not, and we apprehend it as being thus excluded (*vyāvṛtta*);²⁵ but we also grasp it as an object insofar as it is identical with other entities (for instance, this pot perceived here and now is grasped both

²⁴IPV, vol. II, pp. 117-118.

²⁵On this process of exclusion (*apoha*, *apohana*) that is described, according to Dharmakīrti’s epistemology, as the basis of any conceptualization, see in particular chapter I, 6 of the IPK.

as being different from anything that is not a “pot” and as being similar to any other object that may be called “pot”). And any conscious entity experiences in the most immediate and indubitable way that in this regard, identity and difference are not contradictory, because we are *simultaneously* aware of them. This point is crucial, because it entails that in the Pratyabhijñā system, identity does not cancel difference (contrary to what the Vedāntins contend, since they consider that only identity is real),²⁶ nor does difference cancel identity (so that the Vijñānavādins, who think that only difference is real, are equally wrong): neither of them is more real than the other. As a consequence, according to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, the awareness of the differences separating consciousnesses and objects is not a pure and simple illusion that the consciousness of non-duality may abolish. Contrary to illusion and reality, difference and identity are not incompatible; rather, as Abhinavagupta often points out, they appear together, because identity is the background (*bhitti*) on which all manifestations – including that of difference – can occur.²⁷

This notion of background keeps recurring in Pratyabhijñā texts: Abhi-

²⁶See ĪPV, vol. II, p. 180, quoted and translated in RATIÉ 2010b, fn. 69, pp. 367-368.

²⁷Thus in ĪPK I, 8, 7, Utpaladeva states that while phenomena can exist as external (i.e., they sometimes appear as if they were distinct from consciousness), they always exist in an internal way (i.e., in a relation of identity with consciousness): *cinmayatve 'vabhāsānām antar eva sthitiḥ sadā / māyayā bhāsamānānām bāhyatvād bahir apy asau* // “Phenomena always have a purely internal existence insofar as they consist of consciousness; this [existence] is also external because of the externality of [entities] manifested by *māyā*.” Abhinavagupta comments while emphasizing once again that identity with consciousness (i.e., being internal to consciousness) and difference from consciousness (i.e., being external to it) are not contradictory, and he explains that the former is the background on which the latter can become manifest. See ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 331-332: *iḥāvabhāsānām sadaiva bāhyatābhāsata dābhāvayor apy antar eva pramāṭṛprakāśa eva sthitiḥ, yata ete cinmayah; anyathā naiva prakāśerann ity uktam yataḥ. yadā tu māyāśaktiā vicchedanāvabhāsanasvātantryarūpayā bāhyatvam eṣām ābhāsyate, tadā tad avalambyāvabhāsamānānām asau sthitiḥ bahir apy antar api. nāyam āntarābhāso bāhyatvasya virodhī pratyuta sarvābhāsabhittibhūto 'sau, tat katham virodha iti yuktam uktam: sadaivāntarānām satteti*. “In this [world], it is ‘always’ the case – [i.e.,] whether there is a manifestation of externality or not – that phenomena have a ‘purely internal’ existence – [i.e., an existence] in the sole manifesting consciousness of the subject –, since these [phenomena] consist of consciousness; for [we] have [already] said that if it were not the case, they could not be manifest at all. However, when their externality is manifested by the power of *māyā* (*māyāśakti*) that consists in the freedom (*svātantrya*) of manifesting separation (*vicchedana*), then, with respect to this [externality manifested by the power of *māyā*], the existence of the manifested [entities] is both external and internal. This internal manifestation is not contradictory (*virodhī*) with externality; on the contrary, it is the background (*bhitti*) of all phenomena. So how could there be any contradiction (*virodha*)? [We] have therefore rightly said that [things] absolutely always exist as being internal.”

navagupta thus compares consciousness to a mirror capable of manifesting a multiplicity of forms without losing its fundamental unity,²⁸ and he insists that just as reflections in a mirror, objects can be manifest only on the background (*bhitti*) of consciousness.²⁹ But Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta also have recourse to the analogy of a painting and its background to describe the relation between difference and identity. This is partly due to the polysemy of the term *citra*: as an adjective, it means “colourful”, “variegated” or “varied”, and the substantivized adjective (as well as derived substantives such as *vaicitrya*) means “variety” in general, but the term also designates a painting or a fresco, for a painting is a whole made of various colours. Utpaladeva plays on these meanings by stating that consciousness is “comparable to the surface of the even background (*bhitti*) of the painting (*citra*) that is the variety (*vaicitrya*) of the universe”,³⁰ and Abhinavagupta explains the analogy in the following way:

*viśvavaicitryam hi tatra parameśvare prakāśaikātmani sati bhā-
ti yathā citram bhittau. yadi hi nīlapītādikaṃ prthag eva pa-
rāmrśyate tadā svātmaviśrānteṣu teṣu *tathaivānyonyaviśaye*
[*Bhāskarī*, J, S1, SOAS: *tathā vānyonyaviśaye* KSTS: *yathā vā-
nyonyaviśaye* L, S2; p.n.p. P, D] *jadāndhabadhirakalpāni jñā-
nāni svaviśayamātranīṣṭhitāni, vikalpāś ca tadanusāreṇa bhava-
ntas tathaiveti citram idam iti kathamkāraṃ pratipattiḥ? eka-
tra tu nimnonnatādirahite bhittitale rekhāvibhaktanimnonnatādivi-
bhāgaḥ juṣi gambhīranābhīr unnatastanīyam iti citrāvabhāso yu-
ktaḥ, tadvad ekaprakāśabhittilagnatvena vaicitryāt makabhedopa-
pattiḥ.*³¹

²⁸See e.g. ĪPV, vol. II, pp. 177-178 (quoted and translated in RATIÉ 2007, pp. 353-354, fn. 82) and TĀ 3, the greater part of which is devoted to examining the notion of reflection (*pratibimba*). Cf. LAWRENCE 2005 and RATIÉ 2011, pp. 280-289.

²⁹See ĪPVV, vol. II, p. 71: *prakāśamānatā tu mameti caitrasyeti ca bhittibhūtaṃ pramātāram avalambya nīyameṇa vyavahriyate. yad idam tallagnatvena nīyataṃ vyavaharaṇam, tattādātmyam ānayati ghaṭapratibimbasyeva darpaṇalagnatvena*. “But [we] talk about and deal with (*vyavahriyate*) the fact that [something] is manifest (*prakāśamāna*) insofar as [this thing] rests on the knowing subject that is [its] background (*bhitti*), while being restricted [to this particular subject,] in the form ‘[this object is manifest] to me’, or ‘[this object is manifest] to *Caitra*.’ That [our] talking and acting (*vyavaharaṇa*) [with respect to a given phenomenon] is restricted [to a particular subject to which it is manifest] insofar as [this phenomenon] rests on this [subject] implies the identity (*tādātmya*) [of the phenomenon] with the [subject], just as [our way of talking and acting] as regards the reflection (*pratibimba*) of a pot[, which is considered] as resting on the mirror, [implies the identity of the reflection with the mirror].”

³⁰ĪPK II, 3, 15ab: *viśvavaicitryacitrasya samabhittitalopame /*

³¹IPV, vol. II, pp. 122-123.

For the variety (*vaicitrya*) of the universe is manifest only if there is a Supreme Lord who consists of nothing but a manifesting consciousness (*prakāśa*), just as a painting (*citra*) [is manifest only if there is] a background (*bhitti*). For if one grasped [various objects] such as blue or yellow only separately (*pr̥thak*) [from each other], then, since these [various objects] would rest [only] in themselves, in the same way, [perceptual] cognitions, being confined to their own respective object, would be as it were insentient, blind and deaf with respect to their mutual objects; and conceptual cognitions, which exist while conforming to the [perceptions that precede them,] would be exactly in the same case; so how could the understanding “this is a painting” (*citram idam*) [ever occur]? On the contrary, the manifestation of a painting in the form “this [woman] has a deep navel and prominent breasts” is possible on the unitary surface of a background that is [itself] devoid of [the properties] “deep”, “prominent”, etc., [and yet] bears differentiated aspects (*vibhāga*) such as “deep”, “prominent”, etc. that are differentiated thanks to the lines [drawn on the background]. In the same way, the difference (*bheda*) which is [the universe’s] variety is possible [only] insofar as this [variety] rests on the background that is the unitary manifesting consciousness (*ekaprakāśa*).

Apprehending a variety implies the synthetic grasp of diverse elements: as long as the various colours of a painting are apprehended separately from each other, they are only “yellow”, “blue” or “red”, and their respective differences, which constitute the painting, cannot be manifest. The awareness of the painting only arises when the various colours are grasped together, and they can be thus grasped only if a background unites them without dissolving their differences.³² Besides, a painting is capable of suggesting the very depth that it lacks: someone observing a painting apprehends properties such as “deep” or “prominent” that do not really affect the painting’s background, since they are only suggested by lines drawn on a surface that remains even (*sama*). The background remains depthless, and yet depth is

³²Cf. ĪPVV, vol. III, p. 161: *viśvalakṣaṇaṃ hi vaicitryaṃ tatra pramātari citram i-va samabhittitale viśrantaṃ sat prakāśate bhittiprakāśam antareṇa sindūraharitālādīprakāśacitraprakāśasambhavāt*. “For the variety (*vaicitrya*) constituted by the universe is manifest while resting on the knowing subject, just as a painting (*citra*) on the surface of an even background (*bhitti*); for without the manifestation of the background, the manifestation of the painting – which is the manifestation of vermilion, orpiment, etc. – would be impossible.”

nothing but the background, because the background is what manifests itself as deep. In the same way, the unitary consciousness remains unaffected by the differences of the phenomenal universe, just as the background of a painting is not really divided by the lines drawn on it; and yet, these differences exist insofar as they are the unitary consciousness manifesting itself as differentiated.

So whether one contemplates a painting or the world, illusion does not consist in seeing differences where in fact there should only be identity – for paintings, just as the world, do manifest a variety, and the painting’s unity does not contradict its variety, just as consciousness’s unity does not contradict the variety of the perceived universe.³³ Rather, illusion consists in perceiving differences as if they were absolute, without apprehending their fundamental relation to identity – without realizing that they can only spread on the background of identity:

*ekarasākāro ’nupapadyamāno ’pi yayātidurghaṭakārīṇyā bheda upapadyate, secchā māyāśaktisṛṣṭeti. yathā hi bhittir eva vartu-latvena nīrbhāsamānā stano nāma tanurekhāvaśāt, tathā prakāśa eva prthubudhnāditayā prakāśamāno ghaṭaḥ. sā tv anadhikāpi prakāśato māyāśaktivaśād adhikevāvabhāti.*³⁴

Although the difference (*bheda*) that appears as absolute (*ekarasākāra*)³⁵ is not [in fact] possible, it is made possible thanks to [the universal consciousness’s] will that accomplishes the most difficult [deeds] (*atidurghaṭakārīṇ*); [this is why Utpaladeva says that this difference] “is created by the power of *māyā*.” For just as it is the background (*bhitti*), insofar as it is manifest as a sphere, that is called a breast [in a painting representing a woman], because of a fine line [and not because of some real volume,] in the same way, it is the manifesting consciousness

³³Cf. e.g. *Mālinīśloka-vārttika* (henceforth MŚV) I, 76: *ekaḥ prakāśaḥ svātantryāc citrarūpaḥ prakāśate / vastutaś ca na citro ’sau, nācitra bheda-dūṣaṇāt* // “It is a unique manifesting consciousness (*prakāśa*) which is manifest as having various forms by virtue of its freedom (*svātantrya*); and in reality, it is not varied (*citra*), [but it is not] devoid of variety (*acitra*) either; for [such an absence of variety] is contradicted by the difference [of which we are aware].” Cf. also MŚV I, 108: *ucyate nādvaye ’muṣmīn dvaitaṁ nāsty eva sarvathā / uktaṁ hi bheda-vandhye ’pi vibhau bheda-vabhāsanam* // “[We] answer that in this non-duality [described by us], duality is certainly not completely non-existent; for [we] have said that in the Omnipresent Lord, although He is devoid of differences, there is a manifestation of differences.”

³⁴IPVV, vol. III, p. 163.

³⁵Literally, it “has the aspect of a unique flavour.”

(*prakāśa*), insofar as it is manifest as [the property consisting in] having a large base and other [particularities of the pot], that is the pot. But although this [property consisting in having a large base, etc.], is not something over and above (*anadhi-ka*) the manifesting consciousness, it is manifest as if it were something over and above [it], because of the power of *māyā*.

Illusion does not consist in seeing variety where there is only unity, but in the fact that we do not apprehend this variety as a manifestation of unity, just as, when seeing objects represented in a painting, we do not realize that these objects are part of the painting and appear only thanks to its unitary background. In the same way, in front of a mirror, we sometimes mistake reflections for the objects that the mirror reflects, because we are not aware of the background on which these objects are reflected. Dreams are an illusion of the same kind, since a dreamer believes that he is dealing with objects external to his consciousness without realizing that these objects are only manifest on the background of his consciousness and exist only as manifestations of this background. Only from this point of view can worldly existence be considered as an illusion and compared to a dream: not because the various objects and subjects constituting the world would be devoid of reality, but because whether in dreams or in the waking state, we are not usually aware that these objects and subjects are mere manifestations of consciousness.³⁶ The transmigrating subject is therefore deluded not because he would be aware of illusory differences, but because his awareness of these differences (which are real) is incomplete – i.e., he grasps them without being fully aware of the background of non-duality that enables this manifestation.³⁷

³⁶Thus, in *ĪPV*, vol. II, p. 141, Abhinavagupta writes the following about mundane action: *yathā darpaṇāntaḥ kumbhakāraṇivartyamānaghaṭādipratibimbe darpaṇasyaiva tathābhāsanamahimā, tathā svapnadarśane saṃvidāḥ, tathāpi tanmahimnaivaitenedaṃ bahiḥ sphuṭarūpaṃ kriyate ity abhimāna ullasati. evaṃ saṃvinmahimnā kumbhakṛti daṇḍacakrāḍau ghaṭe 'vasthite tanmahimnaivābhimāno jāyate yathā mayedaṃ kṛtam, anenedaṃ kṛtam, mama hṛdaye sphuritam, asya hṛdaye sphuritam iti.* “Just as, when the reflection of a pot being made by a potter for instance [appears] inside a mirror, the glory of such a manifestation belongs to the mirror itself, in the same way, [when this pot being made by a potter] is seen in a dream, [the glory of such a manifestation] belongs to consciousness. And yet, precisely because of this glory of [consciousness,] this [erroneous] opinion arises: ‘this vividly [perceived] form outside [of me] is made by this [potter].’ Thus, whereas the potter, [his] stick, [his] wheel, etc., and the pot are [all] made to exist by the glory of consciousness, due to this very glory of [consciousness] there arises such an [erroneous] opinion as ‘I have done this’, ‘he has done this’, ‘this [first] arose in my heart [in the form of a creative desire]’, ‘this [first] arose in his heart [in the form of a creative desire’, etc.]”

³⁷Which is the reason why the Pratyabhijñā philosophers define illusion (*bhrānti*) as

Thus, when describing the process of exclusion (*vyapohana*) involved in any conceptual elaboration,³⁸ Abhinavagupta explains that all objects exist within consciousness “as a city in a mirror” (*darpaṇanagaranyāyena*): phenomenal variety is entirely contained in consciousness, and consciousness manifests its countless differences by taking an infinite number of forms without ceasing to be a single unitary consciousness, just as a single mirror manifests all the details of a complex urban landscape without losing its unity.³⁹ However, usually, we do not apprehend phenomenal variety as a way for consciousness of manifesting itself, but rather as a series of entities external to and independent of our consciousness; and we thus apprehend objects and subjects as separated from each other precisely because of the power of exclusion. This power produces the appearance of a shattered universe by excluding each different entity from it whatever it is not, thus radically separating it not only from other objects and subjects, but also from the very background that manifests it.⁴⁰ This activity of exclusion,

an incomplete manifestation (*apūrṇakhyāti*). See e.g. ĪPV, vol. II, p. 113: *apūrṇakhyāti-rūpākhyātir eva bhrāntitattvam*. “The essence of illusion is nothing but an *akhyāti*, that is, [not an ‘absence of manifestation’, *a-khyāti*, but] a manifestation (*-khyāti*) that is not complete (*a-* = *apūrṇa-*).” Cf. *Bhaskarī*, vol. II, p. 123: *iṣadathe ’tra nañ na tv abhāve*. “In the [compound *akhyāti*], the [prefix of] negation has the meaning of ‘partial’ (*iṣat*) and not that of an absence (*abhāva*).”

³⁸This description is an explanation of ĪPK I, 6, 3: *tadatpratibhābhājā mātraivātadvyapohanāt / tanniścayanam ukto hi vikalpo ghaṭa ity ayam* // “For what is called conceptual elaboration (*vikalpa*) is the determination (*niścayana*) of ‘this’ – [for instance,] ‘the pot’ – thanks to the exclusion (*vyapohana*) of ‘[what is] not this’ by the knowing subject himself, to whom the manifestations of ‘this’ and ‘non-this’ belong.”

³⁹See e.g. ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 243-244: *iha pramātā nāma pramāṇād atiriktaḥ pramāsu svatantraḥ saṃyojanaviyojanādy*ādhānavaśāt* [*Bhaskarī*, J, L, S1, S2: *-ādhānavaśāt* KSTS, SOAS; p.n.p. P, D] *kartā darśitaḥ; tasya ca pramātur antaḥsarvārthābhāsaḥ, cīnmātra-śarīro ’pi tatsāmānādhikaraṇyavṛttir api darpaṇanagaranyāyenāstīty apy uktam. evaṃ ca tatpratibhāṃ ghaṭābhāsam, atatpratibhāṃ cāghaṭābhāsam pramātā bhajate – sevate tāvat, tad avikalpadaśāyāṃ citśvabhāvo ’sau ghaṭaś cidvad eva viśvaśarīraḥ pūrṇaḥ*. “In this [treatise, we] have shown that what is called ‘knowing subject’, which is something over and above the means of knowledge and which is free with respect to knowledges because it brings about [their] association, [their] dissociation, etc., is the agent (*kartr*); and [we] have also shown that this knowing subject possesses the manifestation of all objects internally, and that [this manifestation] in turn, which is nothing but consciousness – [i.e.,] which exists while having one and the same substrate with this [subject] –, exists in the same way as a city in a mirror (*darpaṇanagaranyāyena*). And thus, for sure, the ‘manifestation of *this*’ – [i.e.,] the phenomenon of a pot [for instance] – and the ‘manifestation of *non-this*’ – [i.e.,] the manifestation of a non-pot – belong to the subject; as a consequence, in this non-conceptual state, the pot, which has as its nature consciousness, embodies the whole universe (*viśvaśarīra*); it is [absolutely] full (*pūrṇa*), just as consciousness.”

⁴⁰See the rest of the passage quoted in the previous fn. (ĪPV, vol. I, pp. 244-245): *na*

identified with the power of *māyā*, is repeatedly compared to scissors (*ta-kṣaṇa*, *ṭaṅka*) “cutting off” reality,⁴¹ as in the benedictory verse with which Abhinavagupta begins chapter I, 6 in his *ĪPV*:

svātmābhedaḥghanān bhāvāṃs tadapohanaṭaṅkataḥ /
*chindan yaḥ svecchayā citrarūpakṛt taṃ stumaḥ śivam //*⁴²

We praise Śiva, who, cutting off (*chindan*) entities by virtue of His will – although [these entities remain] undivided (*ghana*) because of their non-difference (*abheda*) with the Self – with the scissors (*ṭaṅka*) of their exclusion (*apohana*), is the author of the [universe’s] various (*citra*) forms.

Objects and subjects are not really cut off from each other or from the consciousness that takes their forms, just as the objects of a painting can only be manifest insofar as they stand out against their background. And yet, through a mysterious effect of *trompe-l’œil*, in wordly existence they seem to exist independently of their background, just as a city reflected in a mirror can sometimes seem to exist by itself.⁴³ Cosmic illusion – just as

ca tena kecid vyavahārāḥ; tan māyāvīyāpāram ullāsayan pūrṇam api khaṇḍayati bhāvam, tenāghaṭasyātmanaḥ paṭadeś cāpohanaṃ kriyate niṣedhanarūpam. tad eva vyapohanam āśrītya tasya ghaṭasya niścayanam ucyate ghaṭa evety evārthasya sambhāvya mānāparavastuniṣedharūpatvāt. “But no worldly activity (*vyavahāra*) is possible with this [pot when it is thus apprehended on the background of consciousness]; therefore [consciousness,] bringing forth the activity of *māyā*, shatters (*khaṇḍayati*) this being, although it [remains absolutely] full; this is what produces the exclusion (*apohana*) – i.e., the negation (*niṣedhana*) – of the non-pot, that is, [on the one hand,] the Self, and [on the other hand, objects] such as cloth, etc. It is by relying on this very exclusion that [we] express the determination (*niścayana*) of the pot in the form ‘it is just a pot’ (*ghaṭa eva*) – for the meaning [of the particle] *eva* consists in a negation (*niṣedha*) of other things that are imagined as a hypothesis.” As already noted, Abhinavagupta is relying on the Dharmakīrtian concept of exclusion (*apoha*, *apohana*); thus this explanation of the meaning of *eva* echoes Dharmakīrti’s analysis of this particle (see GANERI 1999 and GILLON 1999).

⁴¹See e.g. the conclusion of the passage quoted in the two previous fn. (*ĪPV*, vol. I, p. 245): *eṣa eva paritaś chedāt takṣaṇakalpāt paricchedaḥ*. “This is the separation (*pariccheda*) [that is thus called] because of the ‘cutting off’ (*-cheda*) ‘on all sides’ (*pari-*), similar to [the action of] scissors (*takṣaṇa*).”

⁴²*ĪPV*, vol. I, p. 237.

⁴³Cf. the way Kṣemarāja develops this analogy in *Spandakārikānirṇaya* ad *Spandakārikā* 2, p. 10: *na prasevakād ivākṣoṭādi tat tasmān nirgatam; api tu sa eva bhagavān svasvātantryād anātiriktām apy atiriktām iva jagadrūpatām svabhittau darpaṇanagaravat prakāśayan sthitaḥ*. “The [universe] does not arise from this [manifesting consciousness] as walnuts from a bag for instance; rather, the Lord himself exists while manifesting existence in the form of the universe (*jagadrūpatā*) out of his own freedom, on the background that is himself (*svabhitti*), as a city in a mirror (*darpaṇanagaravat*), as though [this existence in the form of the universe] were something over and above (*atirikta*) [the background], whereas [in fact,] it is nothing over and above [it] (*anātirikta*).”

the illusion of dreams or the illusion created by a mirror or a painting – is not the wrong belief in the existence of differences, but the lack of awareness that these differences are manifested by a unique consciousness that is the essence of whatever is manifested.

From this point of view, the power of exclusion is indeed responsible for our mistaken apprehension of reality, and it remains a mere appearance (*avabhāsa*) insofar as it never undermines in the least the fundamental non-difference (*abheda*) of consciousness. However, once again, it is not *unreal* (*apāramārthika*), because this power itself is the very heart of reality, that is, the freedom (*svātantrya*) of consciousness, a freedom so absolute that it enables consciousness to appear as fragmented without ceasing to be one, or to appear as what it is not without ceasing to be itself.⁴⁴ Thus, at the end of a confrontation with some Advaita Vedāntins who contend that the differentiated universe is unreal, Abhinavagupta concludes:

*tena svātmarūpam eva viśvaṃ satyarūpaṃ prakāśātmatāparamā-
rtham atruṭitaprakāśābhedaṃ eva sat prakāśaparamārthenaiva
bhedenā prakāśayati maheśvara iti tad evāsyātidurghaṭakāritva-
lakṣaṇaṃ svātantryam aiśvaryaṃ ucyate.*⁴⁵

Therefore the Great Lord (*maheśvara*) manifests (*prakāśayati*) the universe, which consists of nothing but Himself (*svātman*), the form of which is real (*satya*), which has as its ultimate reality its identity with the manifesting consciousness (*prakāśa*) [and] which never ceases to be identical with the manifesting consciousness. [He manifests this universe] through a differentiation (*bheda*) that itself has as its ultimate reality the manifesting consciousness (*prakāśaparamārtha*). This is precisely what is called freedom (*svātantrya*) or sovereignty (*aiśvarya*) – [a sovereignty] characterized by the fact of being the agent of the most difficult deeds.

Although the differentiation (*bheda*) through which things and people appear as distinct from each other is a mere appearance insofar as nothing ever loses its non-difference (*abheda*) with the manifesting consciousness, it is perfectly *real* in the sense that even this differentiation “has as its ultimate reality (*paramārtha*) the manifesting consciousness”: as Abhinavagupta says in the ambiguous passage previously mentioned, it is an appearance, “and for all that it is not unreal, because this is the ultimate reality (*paramārtha*)

⁴⁴See RATIÉ 2010a, pp. 33 ff., and RATIÉ 2010b, pp. 17 ff.

⁴⁵IPV, vol. II, p. 181.

of whatever is created.” Appearing or being manifest is the very nature of consciousness, and *separation is real because it is manifest* – because it is one of consciousness’s ways of manifesting its sovereign freedom.

* * *

The separation dividing objects and consciousnesses is a mere appearance (*avabhāsamātra*) insofar as according to the Śaiva non-dualists, ultimately the only reality is an all-encompassing, omniscient and omnipotent consciousness. And yet it is not unreal (*na... apāramārthika*), because the essence of consciousness is to manifest, and because whatever is manifest is an aspect of reality: the created (*nirmīyamāṇa*) is nothing but the creator (*nirmātr*) appearing in the form of the created, and the separation through which this creation is performed is nothing but the power of consciousness to appear as what it is not without ceasing to be itself. As a consequence, neither the separated entities nor separation itself can be discarded as mere illusions, although they both have to be recognized as appearances (*avabhāsa*) taken on by the absolute consciousness.

There is something paradoxical about this view, since far from opposing reality to appearance, it equates the two of them: to be is to appear or to be manifest.⁴⁶ And Bhāskarakāṇṭha’s (mis-)interpretation is very telling in this regard: he cannot believe that Abhinavagupta might be defending the view that the appearance of separation is *not* unreal, because otherwise, the very distinction between reality and appearance would be lost, and one would have to admit that optical illusions such as seeing two moons instead of one are real as well.

Admittedly, Abhinavagupta often playfully blurs the distinction between reality and appearance – for instance when, as we have seen, he presents worldly illusions such as mistaking nacre for silver as “inferior” illusions set inside the cosmic illusion of *saṃsāra*, and when he says that from the point of view of ultimate reality, we are no less deluded when we realize that there is nacre in front of us than when we mistake nacre for silver. However, he insists that it is not the apprehension of the differentiated universe that is illusory, but only the incomplete perception of it whereby we do not apprehend it as a manifestation of the absolute consciousness; and

⁴⁶See e.g. Abhinavagupta’s formulation of this equation in ĪPV, vol. II, p. 241: *avabhāsasāratvad vastūnām...*, “because real things (*vastu*) have as their essence (*sāra*) manifestation (*avabhāsa*)...” Cf. the translation proposed by K. C. Pandey for the compound *ābhāsavāda* (literally, “doctrine of manifestation”) which often designates the Pratyabhijñā doctrine: “realistic idealism” (PANDEY 1936, p. 319).

the Pratyabhijñā's doctrine does not amount to some kind of universal relativism in which all distinctions between reality and illusion would be lost, because it still entails a fundamental distinction between what is passively manifested (that is, the various objective aspects or appearances taken on by consciousness) and what actively manifests itself (that is, consciousness itself, understood as a pure dynamism that is the source of all manifestation). The Pratyabhijñā system thus involves a shift from the distinction between reality and illusion to that between the manifesting consciousness (*prakāśa*) and the manifested entities (*prakāśya*). And indeed, the former is the essence of the latter, since *prakāśa* is the ultimate reality of everything; nonetheless, the latter differs from the former insofar as it is only a very limited aspect of the former. Ultimately, it is freedom (*svātantrya*) that constitutes the only criterion of reality: only freedom makes the difference between ultimate reality (*paramārtha*) and a mere appearance that partakes in that ultimate reality but is only an incomplete aspect of it, since the difference between worldly appearances and the ultimate reality that constitutes their essence is the mere fact that consciousness freely chooses to manifest itself in the form of the phenomenal universe.⁴⁷

From this point of view, Bhāskaraṇṭha's understanding of the passage examined here reveals how much of Śaiva metaphysics had been lost by the time he wrote his commentary: although he is obviously aware that there is an important difference between the non-dualism propounded in the Pratyabhijñā treatise and that of Advaita Vedānta,⁴⁸ his interpretation of this passage of the ĪPV clearly involves a form of vedānticization (which is also perceptible in his commentary on another Kashmiri text expounding an original kind of non-dualism, the *Mokṣopāya*).⁴⁹ Admittedly, the point that he misses is subtle (and the mistake easy to make, precisely because of the ambiguity created by the application of the *sandhi* rule), but it is also crucial: it is the core of Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta's explicit dis-

⁴⁷Consciousness thus freely chooses to appear as alienated and passive (for passages in Abhinavagupta's works emphasizing this paradox, see RATIÉ 2010a, pp. 26 ff).

⁴⁸See e.g. Bhāskaraṇṭha's introductory verse to chapter I, 2 (devoted to the exposition of the *pūrvapakṣa* to be refuted by the treatise), in which he distinguishes between a mere "non-duality" and the Pratyabhijñā's "ultimate non-duality" (*Bhāskarī*, vol. I, p. 81): *pūrvapakṣamayadvaitam advaitān madhyapakṣataḥ / niṣkṛṣyānte parādvaitapakṣavantam śivam stumam* // "We praise Śiva, who, after defeating the duality (*dvaita*) which constitutes the prima facie thesis thanks to the intermediary thesis of non-duality (*advaita*), eventually adopts the thesis of ultimate non-duality (*parādvaita*)."

⁴⁹Thus for instance, Bhāskaraṇṭha superimposes on the text of the *Mokṣopāya* the idea that the phenomenal world is, just as Maṇḍanamiśra's nescience (*avidyā*), *sadasad-bhūyān anīrvacanīyam*: see HANNEDER 2006, pp. 166-167.

agreement with Advaita Vedānta, and one of the most original features of the Pratyabhijñā metaphysics.

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