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Epistemological Implications of the Pratyabhijñā Doctrine

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Abstract: The study is devoted to the analysis of the mutual influence of the ontological and epistemological principles of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine, which constitutes a rational core of Kashmir Shaivism, in the context of identifying its epistemological implications. The most significant of them are considered the distinction between the reality of knowledge and its truth, i.e., strong disjunctivism, and the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine. The first part of the study is devoted to discerning the basic epistemological principles of the Pratyabhijñā in the context of its general ontology. It is concluded that one of the foundations of the latter, a particular interpretation of the *svataḥ prakāśa* doctrine, necessarily presupposes and additionally justifies the principle of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. Besides, the epistemology of the Pratyabhijñā is examined as a paradigm case of strong disjunctivism. In turn, the second part analyzes the influence of the epistemological implications of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine on the formulation of its basic ontological principles. It is concluded that given its virtual equation of reality with knowledge, one of its salient features, namely the identification of error and truth at the ontological level, would not be possible without a preliminary distinction between the reality of knowledge and its truth at the epistemological level. Besides, it is shown how this entire set of principles allowed the philosophers of the Pratyabhijñā to characterize the limited subject as sentient even while considering it an object and offer an interpretation of false egoity that is unusual by the standards of Indian "soteriology".

Keywords: epistemology, Indian philosophy, Pratyabhijñā, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, disjunctivism, *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, *svataḥ prakāśa*, truth, knowledge, reality.

In our previous study in typology[1], we have identified the key role of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle in the epistemology not only of the majority of Brahmanical philosophical schools (*darśanas*) but also of the two most developed schools of Tantric Shaivism — Śaiva Siddhānta and the Pratyabhijñā. However, while in the context of studying the former, at least Indian researchers systematically touch on this topic, there is almost complete silence about the role of this principle in the latter. This can be explained by the fact that, for Indian pundits, this role seems self-evident due to the certain kinship of the two schools. In turn, in Indology, the raising of this question is complicated, on the one hand, by problems in interpreting the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine itself and, on the other, by too strong an emphasis on finding similarities between the principles of the Pratyabhijñā and the logical-epistemological school of Buddhism, i.e., Vijñānavāda (Yogācāra), whose epistemology is based on the opposite principle of *parataḥ prāmāṇya*. Thus, in order to

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[1] Bandurin M. A. *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* and Disjunctivism: A Study in Typology. Vox. Философский журнал, No. 38, 2022, pp. 167-E–198-E.

identify the role of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in the Pratyabhijñā doctrine, it is necessary to focus on its similarities with the Mīmāṁsā, or even the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, school, whereas orientalists, when they for various reasons contrast this doctrine with the philosophy of Kumārila or Prabhākara, proceed to a large extent in the opposite way.

Such a gap seems very unfortunate, as the Pratyabhijñā doctrine has a special place in Indian philosophy, given that it constitutes a rational core of Kashmir Shaivism, which, in turn, is considered the central philosophy of Tantrism by some researchers. We cannot discount the fact, though, that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is not a matter of even secondary importance in the Pratyabhijñā corpus, and so the question can only be raised about the implicit role of this principle in it — which does not make it less significant since, from our perspective, the doctrine in question cannot be properly understood without this principle. In turn, as we have shown in our previous study, *svataḥ prāmāṇya* itself is difficult to interpret in any other way than in terms of disjunctivism, and the epistemology of Śaiva Siddhānta and the Pratyabhijñā, along with the doctrine of Kumārila and Pārthasārathi, can be considered as the paradigm cases of strong disjunctivism in Indian philosophy.

Accordingly, if we want to fill this gap, we have to identify the epistemological implications of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine, the main of which will include *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and strong disjunctivism. That is precisely the aim of this study. However, it should be noted from the outset that in order to achieve it, we, on the one hand, do not need to dwell on the pure epistemology of the Pratyabhijñā since this topic is studied much better, and, on the other, cannot do without excurses into its ontology. The latter necessity is due to the three main reasons. Firstly, the ontology of the Pratyabhijñā not only determines the basic parameters of its epistemology but also presents its implications, shared by several schools, in a new light. Secondly, it virtually identifies reality with knowledge, and this feature cannot be understood without a particular preliminary interpretation of knowledge at the epistemological level. Finally, like any Indian doctrine of the "soteriological" kind, it emphasizes the key role of ignorance in causing the bondage of living beings in *saṃsāra,* and to explain its nature, it has to model this ontological error after the epistemic one. Given all that, the present study will be devoted neither to pure epistemology nor the general ontology of the Pratyabhijñā but will consider the ontology only at the level where it directly shapes the epistemology, and the epistemology only insofar as it affects the formulation or understanding of the general ontology. Accordingly, the first part thereof will be devoted to the peculiarities of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle in the ontology of the Pratyabhijñā[2] and its role in its epistemology, while the second, vice versa, to the influence of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and strong disjunctivism on the formulation of the basic ontological principles of the Pratyabhijñā. We should begin, though, with a general overview of the doctrine under consideration.

I. 1. A General Overview of the Pratyabhijñā Doctrine and Assessment of the Role of the *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* Principle in Its Argumentation

The Pratyabhijñā is a doctrine of nondualistic Tantric Śaivism constituting a rationalization of one of the heterodox schools of classical Indian philosophy commonly known as Kashmir Shaivism. The word "Kashmir" in its name has nothing to do with its content but simply serves to

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[2] Or, as contemporary epistemologists would say, the Pratyabhijñā's metaphysics of perception.

indicate the fact that this school was confined within the Kashmir Valley during its flourishing. On the other hand, it rather misleadingly emphasizes its difference from dualistic Tantric Śaivism, which, as it was commonly believed, developed in South India but was actually widespread both in the south and the north, i.e., in the same Kashmir. Besides a specific name, this school has several other features. Firstly, it is heterodox and based on the authority of the Agamas, not the Veda. Secondly, these Agamas are nondualistic. Thirdly, like any other school of Indian philosophy, it relies on a basic *sūtra*, which, in this case, is the *Śivasūtra* of Vasugupta (9th century AD). The peculiarity is that it is considered an additional Agama obtained by Vasugupta as a result of an independent "revelation" and meant to adapt the doctrine of nondualistic Tantric Śaivism to the current conditions of the "dark age" — Kali Yuga.[3] Fourthly, it is customary to further distinguish four schools within Kashmir Shaivism — Spanda, Pratyabhijñā, Krama, and Kula — which, however, are not competing but complementary. With this in mind, and to avoid repeating the term "school", we will call them doctrines, not schools. Fifthly, harmony between these doctrines was ensured largely thanks to the philosophical writings of the Pratyabhijñā, which began to be used for the interpretation of other doctrines. That culminated in the synthesis accomplished by the great philosopher and master of Kashmir Shaivism, Abhinavagupta (10–11th centuries), under the title of "Trika".[4]

When it comes to the Pratyabhijñā doctrine itself, its formulation is associated with the names of the three key philosophers of Kashmir Shaivism: Somananda (9–10th centuries), Utpaladeva (10th century), and Abhinavagupta. It got its name from Utpaladeva's *magnum opus*, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*, although it is rooted in the ancient tradition of Tryambaka, to which his teacher, Somananda, belonged and which was based on the *Śivasūtra*[5], *Vijñāna Bhairava Tantra*, other Agamas, the doctrine of Krama, and other sources. It is usually translated as "recognition", but given that this term, in this case, stands for "*Īśvarapratyabhijñā*", it should be translated as "self-recognition". But "*Īśvara*" means "God", it might be objected. What does God have to do with self-recognition? Here, we must immediately warn against such a straightforward conflation of the two terms: firstly, it would be an equivocation in the context of the Indian philosophy as a whole, and secondly, it would be a double equivocation in the context of the Pratyabhijñā. The fact is that the latter understands by *Īśvara* not a *karma*-controlling being who remains different from the world but an absolutely independent, omnipotent, and omniscient subject who is reality as such. In other words, it almost completely alters the definition of *Īśvara* and, upon closer examination, even does not give any arguments in favor of that.

There are two main explanations for such an approach. Firstly, because that is stated in the nondualistic Agamas. Secondly, because it is based on the following assumptions. Reality is identical to the nondual consciousness, or the subject, which, however, is characterized not only by pure being unstained by objects (*prakāśa*) but also by reflective awareness (*vimarśa*[6]). That is the

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[3] It should be noted that the 9th century AD is quite an advanced stage of Kali Yuga, given that about 4000 years had already passed then since its supposed beginning. Besides, such an approach to the interpretation of Agamas debunks the popular myth that Tantrism, as such, is supposedly a teaching specifically formulated for the conditions of Kali Yuga.

[4] That is why the names "Kashmir Shaivism", Pratyabhijñā, and "Trika" are often used interchangeably.

[5] The *Śivasūtra* formally belongs to the Spanda doctrine.

[6] Or, again, self-awareness (*ahaṃpratyavamarśa*).

difference between the Pratyabhijñā and the partially kindred Advaita Vedānta school, which recognizes *prakāśa* as the only reality and declares everything else neither real nor unreal, indescribable.[7] Accordingly, to distinguish genuine nondualism from the nondualism of other schools claiming to express it, it virtually identifies this *vimarśa* with *Īśvara*, *Śiva*, and absolute independence (*svātantrya*), implying that the definition of the latter includes nothing that could not be included in the definition of *vimarśa*. Hence, it necessarily follows that something that is not the universal subject, even if it would be called *Īśvara*, would not be the latter simply because it could only be an object, which would, moreover, be by definition dependent on the same universal subject.[8] Furthermore, it cannot even be argued that the Pratyabhijñā offers some esoteric way of comprehending *Īśvara*, the existence of which would also be admitted on the exoteric level as an object of worship. Therefore, those who prefer to use the term "God" even in the context of the Pratyabhijñā should take into account the serious consequences of this step for religion, theology, and all the related disciplines. Indeed, in this case, we are dealing with incompatible definitions, not just with some historical and philosophical synthesis, which the Pratyabhijñā is not.

The above can serve as an additional argument against the conflation of the notions of "*Īśvara*" and "God", but it is unlikely that it can ultimately free us from the first-level equivocation, given that the word "*Īśvara*" is present in the very title of the central work of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine. As regards the latter, though, another issue arises. "*Īśvarapratyabhijñā*" is usually translated as "the recognition of *Īśvara*", but which genitive case is implied here, *genetivus objectivus* or *genetivus subjectivus*? In other words, does the doctrine inspire someone to recognize *Īśvara*, or is it *Īśvara* who must recognize himself? Most translations of the *kārikā* into European languages are in favor of the first option, or at least leave such an impression. Such an interpretation is legitimate and ultimately comes down to the second option, but is more roundabout and involves redundant intermediary stages. That is why we prefer a more straightforward interpretation, which implies no touch of dualism, namely, that *Īśvara* must recognize himself. It also serves as an additional argument that "*pratyabhijñā*", in this case, should be understood not as just recognition but self-recognition. From this perspective, the title of Utpaladeva's work can be translated as "*A Poetic Treatise*[9] *on the Self-Recognition of Īśvara*" or simply as "*A Treatise on Self-Recognition*". In this sense, it will be very consonant with the title of the first work of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine, to which Utpaladeva wrote a partially extant commentary and his adherence to which he always emphasized, the *Śivadṛṣṭi* by Somananda. It is usually translated as "*The Vision of Śiva*", which, in our interpretation, will mean about the same as "the self-recognition of *Īśvara*", i.e., "the point of view of *Śiva*". This treatise, however, did not become central to the Pratyabhijñā doctrine since it was intended for internal use, whereas Utpaladeva deliberately focused on a broad philosophical audience and followed the then commonly accepted rules of rational discussion when composing his *kārikā*. Besides, he wrote a short commentary on his own work in prose, as well as an enormous detailed commentary on it called *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-vivṛti*, also known as *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-ṭīkā*.

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[7] Singh J. Vedānta and Advaita Śaivāgama of Kashmir: A Comparative Study. Calcutta, 1985, pp. 13–16.

[8] Absolute independence in the Pratyabhijñā implies not only "freedom from" but also omnipotence, i.e., total control over all objects.

[9] Most schools of Indian philosophy have a poetic treatise (*kārikā*), and some schools, such as Śaiva Siddhānta and Kashmir Shaivism, even have several of them. Besides, Abhinavagupta's *magnum opus*, the *Tantrāloka*, is also written in verse, not being a *kārikā* proper — and this is not the only example.

The latter survived only very fragmentary and has been recreated bit by bit in recent decades. The main works of the Pratyabhijñā corpus also include two commentaries by Abhinavagupta. The first is a relatively short explanation of Utpaladeva's karika called *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī*. Being a kind of manual, it has always been very popular and, therefore, survived in many copies. The second commentary is called *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī* and served as an explanation of the currently lost *ṭīkā* of Utpaladeva. Just like the latter, it can boast a very impressive volume but, despite this, survived in full. The important additional works of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine include the *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* by Kṣemarāja (10–11th centuries), the *Virūpākṣapañcasikā* by Virūpākṣa (11th or 12th century) with the commentary by Vidyācakravartin (no later than the 14th century), and the commentary on the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* by Bhāskarakaṇṭha[10] (17th century).

Well, let us admit that Utpaladeva's treatise is indeed devoted to the self-recognition of *Īśvara*[11]. But why should such an absolutely independent, omnipotent, and omniscient subject recognize himself, especially given that nothing presumably exists except him? The sole answer is as follows: because he has a special ability called *māyā śakti*, which corresponds to an aspect of the permanent fivefold act of *Śiva* — false self-concealment — described in the nondualistic Agamas. The latter is accomplished in the form of the limited subject, which the universal subject mistakenly becomes, having preliminarily created objective conditions for it out of himself, i.e., bodies, minds, the universe in which it dwells, etc., acting as the manifestations of his own *śaktis*. It should be understood that the limited subject is a universal that displays itself as countless individuals differentiated among themselves by those very objective factors. Further, since the true *Īśvara* is the absolutely independent subject, the false limited subject he supposedly becomes can, by definition, only be dependent.[12] Therefore, *Īśvara* is also called *pati*, i.e., the Lord, and the limited subject is called *paśu*, i.e., the beast. Accordingly, the one in whom the universal subject should recognize himself is precisely *paśu*, as Utpaladeva points out in the second section of his treatise.[13] Thus, the *kārikā* sets the following goal: to bring about the self-recognition of the universal subject in the limited subject through ontological explanation of the everyday practical life of the latter as permanent manifestations of the various powers (*śaktis*) of the former. In this way, from its perspective, the primordial unity of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, *bhoga* and *mokśa*, *paśu* and *pati*, which is well-known in Tantrism, is realized.

At this point, the following question may arise. Given that *Īśvara* has to inevitably admit the limited subject identical to himself for the purpose of self-recognition, why then insist that it is the universal subject who recognizes himself and deny that the *paśu* should recognize him? The fact is that the admission of the *paśu* by *Īśvara* and the admission of *Īśvara* by the *paśu* are completely different things. Since the limited subject, or, more precisely, *māyā śakti* acting as him, can only cognize dualistically, the so-called recognition of *Īśvara* on its part could result only in the erroneous degrading of the latter to the status of an object, which would naturally make it

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[10] Not to be confused with Bhāskara (10th century), who composed a commentary on the *Śivasūtra*.

[11] Who is also called *Maheśvara* (Great *Īśvara*) and *Parameśvara* (Supreme *Īśvara*) in the *kārikā*.

[12] Towards the end of *kārikā*, we are told that he is, in fact, an object, but more on that later.

[13] ĪPK II 3.17. Here and further, we will shorten the titles of the treatises of Kashmir Shaivism, providing a list of abbreviations at the end, and include only one edition of each of them in the references section. Such an approach is justified by the fact that most of them have several editions or translations, the differences between which are not decisive for the given references. As for the quotes from ĪPK, Raffaele Torella's translation was used.

impossible to recognize oneself in it. And that would contradict the basic thesis of the Pratyabhijñā that *Īśvara* is precisely a subject capable of self-awareness and self-recognition. But if *Īśvara* creates the limited subject out of himself and mistakenly becomes it in order to recognize himself in it, then, it may be objected, there are no fewer difficulties: the unity of *Śiva* and the *paśu*, in this case, must be primordial, and this entails the assumption that the former is both true and false at the same time. Let us postpone the consideration of this paradox until the second part of this study and first focus instead on the role the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle plays in all that.

So, since the ontological explanation of the everyday practical life of cognizing subjects is central to the Pratyabhijñā doctrine, and this life, according to the general consensus of Indian philosophers, would be impossible without epistemology,[14] there is every reason to believe that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* plays an implicit but quite a significant role in this explanation. The relevant evidence can already be found in the work of Somananda, who, in the fourth chapter of his *Śivadṛṣṭi,* devoted much attention to the discussion with the Mīmāṃsā school. Having analyzed it, John Nemec came to the following conclusion: "Unlike his treatment of the other schools, however, he sometimes suggests as much not to counter their views but evidently to guarantee them. This is to say that Somananda sometimes reads the Mīmāṃsā sympathetically, *particularly inasmuch as they insist on the reality of what may be known ostensively of the world; for reality conforms to the very manner in which it habitually appears*. Indeed, Somananda implicitly welcomes the ostensive epistemological principle that suggests that, barring any invalidating cognition, what is perceived in and as the mundane, everyday world must be accepted as real and accounted for as such. And as we shall presently see, he adopts some of the philosophical positions of his Mīmāṃsāka interlocutors, though understanding them to be logically coherent, as is his wont, only by way of accepting the real existence of his Saiva, non-dual ontology." [Nemec, 2021, p. 16] This long quote is quite in place, because it is such an approach that Utpaladeva systematically develops.

In our previous study, we proposed the following definition of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle: the inherent justifiedness of any cognition as regards a mind-external object, which is a constituent thereof.[15] This definition implies the denial of the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions and relationalism. The principle of self-justification of knowledge is resorted to right in the first, introductory chapter of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*. Thus, as early as in his commentary on its second verse, Utpaladeva characterizes *Īśvara* as necessarily self-aware and, therefore, self-evident. Moreover, he emphasizes that if that were not the case, the appearance of any objects would not be possible.[16] Next, Utpaladeva claims that the cognitive ability of the universal subject (*jñāna śakti*) is also self-established.[17] Given that the latter is considered by the Pratyabhijñā as directed at the cognition of objects, this statement virtually applies to the results of this ability as well. Abhinavagupta dwells on this point in his commentary on the third verse of the *kārikā*. Thus, he emphasizes the need to acknowledge that the reality of objects of everyday cognition is based on their simple appearance in the corresponding cognitions and must be considered true until their possible invalidation.[18] Besides, in the same context, he emphasizes the

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[14] Thus, Abhinavagupta directly states that epistemology is what makes practical life possible. See ĪPV ad ĪPK II 3.1–2.

[15] Bandurin M .A. *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya…* p. 168-E.

[16] ĪPKVṛ ad ĪPK I 1.2.

[17] ĪPKVṛ ad ĪPK I 1.5.

[18] ĪPV ad I 1.3.

reality of such phenomena as action, relation, and universal: this suggests that he proceeds here from the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle, not from Utpaladeva's particular respect for the Nyāya school, as it is often argued with reference to his other statement made a little earlier.[19] This point is more than once repeated in other works of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine and Kashmir Shaivism in general, but we cannot afford to analyze all the sources and must limit ourselves to just one vivid example. Thus, in Kṣemarāja's commentary on the fourth aphorism of the *Śivasūtra*, it is stated that the *māyā śakti* of *Śiva* generates cognitions and forces limited subjects to know and act on their basis regardless of their truth or falsity and without a fundamental possibility of verifying that at the time of their occurrence.[20] Such a way of justifying knowledge is an obvious reference to *svataḥ prāmāṇya* since the reality of the world itself and the possibility of its direct cognition is also not questioned by Kṣemarāja, not least because he was already familiar with the main treatises of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine.

Here, the following question may arise. Why try to identify *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in these reasonings at all if it is immediately clear that they are ontologically loaded? Thus, when these philosophers emphasize that the reality of objects of everyday cognition is based on their simple appearance, they imply that it is reduced to the reality of the universal subject, i.e., to the pure appearance, whereas the commonly known *svataḥ prāmāṇya* proceeds from the difference between the reality of the object and its appearance and even claims to justify it. On the other hand, Utpaladeva begins his *kārikā* by claiming that the existence of *Īśvara* cannot be proved in any way,[21] i.e., even according to the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle. All this indicates that the Pratyabhijñā doctrine lacks epistemological motivation and comes down to the exegesis of the nondualistic Agamas, which prompt people to go beyond epistemology as such. The answer to this question will be as follows. All of these arguments are correct, except for the conclusion. The fact is that the Agama in the Pratyabhijñā, along with other schools of Indian philosophy, is considered a means of right knowledge and, accordingly, included in the field of epistemology. Accordingly, the Agama taken in this sense is to be justified according to the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle insofar as the general epistemology is based on the latter. However, Abhinavagupta initiated a substantial reform in this regard, which took the Pratyabhijñā epistemology in a largely opposite direction from Mīmāṁsā. Thus, Kumārila emphasized that even though the authority of the Veda is justified on the basis of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle, it cannot be refuted since it presumably has no author. In contrast, Abhinavagupta equated the notions of *āgama, vimarśa,* and *prasiddhi*, which necessarily entailed the impossibility for any Agama to be authorless and the claim that the ultimate source of all Agamas is the universal subject.[22] In this equation, a crucial role was played by the difficult-to-translate notion of *prasiddhi*, which means a kind of indubitable direct knowledge beyond both direct perception and logical inference that is an inherent attribute of a cognizing subject — including, in this case, even animals insofar as they are also considered identical to *Īśvara*.[23] The

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[19] ĪPV ad I 1.1.

[20] ŚSV ad ŚS I. IV.

[21] ĪPK I 1.2. However, reliance on *svataḥ prāmāṇya* also excludes the possibility that it can be taken on faith.

[22] This approach strikes at not only Kumārila but also, in particular, Buddhists who denied the existence of Ātman.

[23] Ratié I. On Reason and Scripture in the Pratyabhijñā. Scriptural Authority, Reason and Action: Proceedings of a Panel at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto, September 1st-5th, 2009 / Ed. by V. Eltschinger and H. Krasser. Wien, 2013, pp. 387–383.

key point here is that *prasiddhi* and, consequently, Agama, is justified based on the principle of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and, therefore, even *Īśvara* would hardly be able to bypass epistemology in the task of self-recognition. Taking all this into account, Abhinavagupta defines the approach of the *kārikā* as follows: "What is taught in this [treatise] is [how to] obtain the real subject merely through an examination (*anveṣaṇā*) of the knowledges [resulting of cognitive acts,] such as 'blue,' 'pleasure' and so on, which are manifest in the most vivid way." [Ratié, 2013, p. 425] He thereby emphasizes the "soteriological" and "cathartic" role of epistemology, i.e., its ability to serve as a means for the liberation from *saṃsāra* — which, in this case, is identical to self-recognition — not only to entail bondage.

All that affected the very structure of the *kārikā*. Thus, Utpaladeva virtually uses terms from the Agamas only to identify them with a purely philosophical terminological apparatus, which he partly developed himself and partly borrowed from other schools. In particular, he applies such basic general philosophical concepts as "*Saṃvid*", "*prakāśa*", and "*vimarśa*" to demonstrate that they are no different from *Īśvara* and *Śiva* of nondualistic Agamas. When it comes to the first term, it is usually translated as "consciousness", but it must be borne in mind that it does not mean consciousness that would be peculiar to a subject but the subject that is identical to consciousness — the subject-as-consciousness — since it is based on this identification that Utpaladeva defends the existence of *Ātman* against Buddhists. As for the *Ātman* considered different from consciousness, he rejects it together with Buddhists. The *kārikā* is thus devoted exclusively to self-awareness and the self-recognition of the universal subject who is interpreted as a synonym for both the Self and *Īśvara*, not to proofs of God's existence, which makes it substantially different from theological treatises. The fact that God is usually understood as the creator of the world, and *Īśvara* possesses this attribute as well, should not confuse us: from the Pratyabhijñā's perspective, something that is not consciousness, whether it is God, spirit, atoms, matter, or something else, is fundamentally incapable of creating the world. All of the above, though, can serve only as additional arguments in favor of the significance of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle for the Pratyabhijñā doctrine, as, in fact, it is a single option for it due to a particular thesis of Utpaladeva we are going to analyze.

I. 2. The Single-Option Status of the *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* Principle as a Corollary of Utpaladeva's Thesis About the Radical Non-Objectifiability of Cognitions

After completing the introductory chapter of the *kārikā*, Utpaladeva initiates an imaginary discussion between Buddhists seeking to refute the existence of *Ātman* and Brahmanists trying to defend themselves against their devastating critique. It is interesting that Utpaladeva largely agrees with the former since he considers the arguments of the ātmavādins unconvincing. His strategy is to use the Buddhist arguments to dissociate himself from the Brahmanical *ātmavāda* and then start criticizing both parties on that basis. However, he has to start basically from scratch, as he has no school to side with and, given a rational approach he adopted, cannot directly refer to the nondualistic Agamas. In these circumstances, he formulates his first truly philosophical argument in favor of the existence of the universal subject, i.e., *Īśvara*, which goes as follows: "A cognition is self-revealing (*svābhāsaiva*) and cannot be the object of another cognition, just as the cognition of taste is not known by that of shape. " [ĪPK I 3.2] It seems somewhat dogmatic because it is not

entirely clear what it proceeds from. Upon closer scrutiny, though, it becomes obvious that the starting point here is a common Indian doctrine called *svataḥ prakāśa*.

The basic form of the latter assumes that a cognition can be aware of itself along with the cognition of its object. It was accepted by most schools of Indian philosophy, including Buddhism and all the schools adhering to the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle, except Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, since the founder of the latter, Kumārila, believed that this doctrine leads to the reduction of objects to mental content. But what made all these schools recognize the truth of this principle? Finding the answer to this question proves to be a nontrivial task, as each school gave unique arguments in its favor. Among the most general considerations, the following come to mind in the first place. Firstly, there must be a radical difference between a cognition and its object since the former is conscious (*ajaḍa*), while the second is insentient (*jaḍa*). And to ensure it, we must consider a cognition capable of self-awareness — otherwise, it will be degraded to the status of an object, whereas objects themselves will lose their unique attribute of insentiency. Secondly, a cognition itself must be somehow eventually cognized, but if we resort to the view that this is accomplished only via another cognition, we will find that this process has no end. Therefore, we have no reason to prefer it, given that we have a simpler thesis about the capacity of a cognition to be aware of itself at our disposal.

It should be noted, though, that in the third chapter of the first section of the *kārikā*, where Utpaladeva formulates and justifies his argument, a happy unanimity about the truth of the *svataḥ prakāśa* doctrine reigns supreme since neither he nor his Buddhist opponents question it at all and argue only about its interpretation. As for the supporters of the *parataḥ prakāśa* principle, they were, as it seems, not given a word at all. Accordingly, Utpaladeva's line of argument *prima facie* looks like this. The omnipotent and omniscient universal subject is the sole reality. Given that he is capable of self-awareness and self-recognition, and cognitions are just forms he adopts, the latter are also capable of self-awareness. In this way, the truth of the *svataḥ prakāśa* principle is a mere consequence of the existence of the universal subject, and Utpaladeva does not aspire to prove the latter at all because he considers that impossible. Accordingly, *svataḥ prakāśa* is unprovable but still quite true — especially since that that is a matter of immediate introspection. These arguments are basically legitimate but not completely satisfactory since they refute neither the supporters of *parataḥ prakāśa* nor those who deny the existence of the *Ātman* as such. Indeed, the same Buddhists could reply that they are not interested in the arguments in favor of *svataḥ prakāśa* that would proceed from the existence of the universal subject since their doctrine allows them to do without him. Thus, consciousness is a discrete stream of self-conscious cognitions, and so there is no danger of confusion between it and insentient objects. As for the fact that Utpaladeva is trying to interpret *Ātman* in a somewhat different way than his colleagues from the Brahmanist camp do and adds that a cognition cannot act as an object of another cognition, this does not change anything since he simply misunderstands the nature of a cognition by considering it a manifestation of a permanent subject. In fact, any cognition as such consists of two components, the introspective and the objective, precisely because it becomes the object of another, and this is an additional argument both in favor of *svataḥ prakāśa* and against the existence of the universal subject.

However, the situation is not really that simple. As we have already noted, the examined chapter of the *kārikā* is preceded by an imaginary discussion between Buddhists and Brahmanists, the understanding of which presents some challenges, as it is not always clear where Utpaladeva merely expounds the doctrines of others and where he agrees with them. Upon closer scrutiny, it

turns out that this discussion contains another general argument in favor of *svataḥ prakāśa*, which is very easy to overlook due to its abstractness, conciseness, and the form in which it is expressed. We have in mind the seventh verse of the second chapter, in which a Buddhist asks the following rhetorical question: if a cognition were insentient, how would it illuminate objects?[24] Abhinavagupta transformed it into an affirmative form: if a cognition were devoid of consciousness, it would not be able to establish objects.[25] In other words, self-awareness is a necessary condition for a cognition to be able to cognize its object. Upon closer examination, it turns out that, in this form, the thesis is accepted not only by Buddhists but also by Prabhākara Mīmāṁsā[26], Advaita Vedānta[27], and Śaiva Siddhānta[28]. As for Utpaladeva, he not only readily admits its truth but, in one of the survived fragments of his grand commentary on his own *kārikā*, even directly quotes a Buddhist philosopher of the 7th century, Dharmakīrti, to corroborate it[29] — even though he quoted extremely rarely. Thus, we can talk about a consensus of various schools of Indian philosophy about another common argument in favor of *svataḥ prakāśa*.

This concise argument, in fact, proves to be very tough and intuitively convincing. It makes immediately clear that what is at stake is not just some kind of introspection but the very possibility of cognition of objects. Besides, it is clear that this is a dig at Kumārila and philosophers of the Nyāya school, who were the most ardent adherents of the opposing doctrine of *parataḥ prakāśa* in Indian philosophy. Thus, Abhinavagupta emphasizes that if a cognition were incapable of being aware of itself, it would be deprived of consciousness and, consequently, turn into an object that, by definition, is unable to cognize other objects.[30] Moreover, if, for the sake of argument, we assume that such cognition somehow occurred, then the attribute of cognizedness could be considered neither immanent to the object, as the Nayāikas believed, nor as brought by the cognition itself, as Kumārila tried to demonstrate, since, in this case, this cognition would be manifest either to all or to none, not to a particular subject or subjects, as required by common sense.[31] In this way, for Abhinavagupta, consciousness and self-consciousness are one and the same thing, and to attribute the latter to objects, even if they are cognitions, would be a contradiction in terms.

Utpaladeva, however, did not give a word to Kumārila and took a rather unexpected path, immediately turning to the criticism of the doctrine of the Sāṅkhya school, according to which only the subject is self-aware, whereas the intellect that directly cognizes objects should be considered insentient in order to preserve the epistemic significance of both. Utpaladeva, siding with Buddhists, emphasizes that if a sentient subject had to be reflected in the intellect in order to ensure the cognition of objects, the latter could not be considered devoid of consciousness, and the meaning of

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[24] ĪPK I 2.7.

[25] ĪPV ad ĪPK I 2.7.

[26] In particular, Abhinavagupta himself attributes it to Prabhākara. See Ratié I. Le Soi et l'Autre: Identité, différence et altérité dans la philosophie de la Pratyabhijñā. Leiden and Boston, 2011, pp. 259, 326–327.

[27] Ram-Prasad C. Indian Philosophy and the Consequences of Knowledge: Themes in Ethics, Metaphysics and Soteriology. Aldershot, 2007, p. 74.

[28] Sivaraman K. Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective. Delhi, 1973, p. 293.

[29] Ratié I. Some Hitherto Unknown Fragments of Utpaladeva's *Vivṛti* (III): On Memory and Error. Around Abhinavagupta: Aspects of the Intellectual History of Kashmir from the Ninth to the Eleventh Century / Ed. by E. Franco and I. Ratié. Berlin, 2016, p. 394.

[30] ĪPV ad ĪPK I 2.7.

[31] ĪPV ad ĪPK I 2.8.

this very distinction would be lost.[32] In the context of the defense of *svataḥ prakāśa*, this verse can be interpreted as follows. Some schools of Indian philosophy, primarily Sāṅkhya and Advaita Vedānta, nominally recognizing the truth of this doctrine, tried, due to the peculiarities of their ontologies, to deny the ability of cognitions to be self-aware and make it the exclusive prerogative of the subject. In other words, they tried to dissociate the notions of "*svataḥ prakāśa*" and "*svasaṃvedana*", which mean the same thing, but the latter is used only in relation to cognitions, while the former refers to both cognitions and the cognizing subject. Accordingly, Utpaladeva's critique is aimed at showing the illegitimacy of such an approach and virtually disqualifies Sāṅkhya and Advaita Vedānta from the discussion about *svataḥ prakāśa*. Indeed, he seeks to emphasize the immanence of consciousness to cognitions and, in this respect, sides with Buddhists, Śaiva Siddhānta, and Prabhākara.

Well, let us admit that Utpaladeva's basic thesis is actually more justified than it would seem at first glance. However, having dealt a blow to Nyāya, Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, Sāṅkhya, Advaita Vedānta, and some other less significant schools by making use of the Buddhists' arguments, he still remained in the company of quite serious opponents and, most importantly, as it seems, did not even begin to fight the Buddhists themselves. Moreover, by emphasizing the immanence of consciousness to cognitions, he only provided grist to their mill, as they can easily ensure this immanence even without admitting *Ātman*. Therefore, it is time to remember the fact that Utpaladeva's basic argument emphasizes not only the ability of cognitions to be self-aware but also the impossibility for them to become objects of other cognitions. Buddhists accept the first part of the argument but reject the second. It would seem that that is a direct consequence of their denial of *Ātman*, but the matter is actually more complicated since all but two ātmavādin philosophers actually side with Buddhists in this regard. One of the exceptions is Utpaladeva himself, and the other is the grammarian Bhartṛhari (ca 5th century), who formulated a doctrine of linguistic nondualism and from whom the former arguably borrowed the thesis under consideration. One of their differences, though, is that Utpaladeva, along with Buddhists, believes that any cognition is actually cognized, while Bhartṛhari allows the possibility for some of them to remain out of the field of awareness.[33]

Accordingly, Buddhists proceed from the fact that there are several cognitive phenomena — first of all, memory — that necessarily presuppose the cognition of a cognition by another cognition, say, by a memory cognition of the past perception of an object. And since memory is otherwise inexplicable, the admission of *Ātman* will not do anything in these circumstances: at best, it could only arrange cognitions based on mental impressions (*saṃskāras*), which gives reason to acknowledge only the latter.[34] Besides, we should not forget that memory implies a special way of the apprehension of an object. Otherwise put, although the object gets there from the direct perception, it still ceases to be an object of the direct perception since the latter does not occur at the moment of pure recollection. This means that memory and direct perception should have, strictly speaking, different objects: in the case of the latter, it should be an object in the basic sense of the

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[32] ĪPK I 2.8. Abhinavagupta, in turn, adds that something insentient is fundamentally incapable of reflecting a self-aware subject. See ĪPV ad ĪPK I 2.8.

[33] See Ferrante M. Studies on Bhartṛhari and the Pratyabhijñā: The Case of *svasaṃvedana*. Proceedings of the Conference of the Society for the Tantric Studies. Religions, No. 8: 145. URL: https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8080145

[34] ĪPK I 2.4–5.

term, while in the case of the former, it should be the direct perception itself. And that, in turn, implies that cognitions must be aware of themselves; if this were not the case, a memory cognition could not have another cognition as its object and would thus cease to be memory proper. Such a unique argument in favor of *svataḥ prakāśa* is given by one of the founders of Buddhist logic, Dignāga, who lived at the turn of the 5–6th centuries.[35] However, it can hardly be called the main one, given that it is indirect, whereas the thesis of the self-aware character of cognitions must be based primarily on direct perception. In this way, Buddhists proceed from the two independent assumptions that need to be reconciled: one cognition must be capable of becoming the object of another to ensure the functioning of memory, and any cognition must be capable of self-awareness. At first glance, this undertaking should not pose any particular difficulties, as the fact that a sentient cognition sometimes acts as an object does not cancel the fundamental difference between sentient cognitions and insentient objects.

However, these reasonings of Dignāga look rather strained since they are too focused on the need to acknowledge the ability of a cognition to act as an object of another. Therefore, Utpaladeva's efforts are aimed at refuting the first assumption of Buddhists. Accordingly, from his perspective, memory, like any other ability of the subject, must be as simple a cognition as direct perception. This is the only way to satisfy the requirement that apprehension of an object presupposes the self-aware character of a corresponding cognition, to which Buddhists themselves subscribe. If we were to proceed from the opposite assumption, the definition of the object would again be insufficiently strict, and the hierarchy between the sentient and the insentient would be violated. Thus, the thesis that one self-aware cognition can become the object of another is for Utpaladeva tantamount to saying that, say, a cup without a bottom can be considered a full-fledged cup — all because the so-called sentient object could be neither, strictly speaking, conscious nor a full-fledged object.[36] That is why he emphasizes that any cognition is not only self-conscious but also cannot act as an object of another cognition. To ensure a logical connection between these theses, he takes a step that only Bhartṛhari did before him, namely identifies the self-aware character of cognitions with their self-confined nature.[37] In other words, the latter is a necessary consequence of *svataḥ prakāśa* and the reason why one cognition cannot become the object of another. That allowed him to accomplish a *reductio ad absurdum* of the Buddhist doctrine, which, if it admits the thesis of the self-confined nature of cognitions in the context of its own ontology, would immediately lead to a violation of the integrity of the everyday practical life, as the best it would be able to do is try to explain the functioning of memory and other forms of determinate knowledge[38] as a kind of error.[39]

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[35] Ratié Le Soi... pp. 118–124.

[36] Torella R. A Fragment of Utpaladeva's *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-vivṛti*. East and West, Vol. 38, No. 1/4, December 1988, pp. 160–166.

[37] ĪPK I 3.1; ĪPK I 3.6.

[38] It should be noted that memory in Indian philosophy can be considered knowledge only in the sense of *jñāna* but not *pramā* since it lacks the attribute of novelty. Buddhists, according to Utpaladeva, can try to get out of that difficult situation by resorting to this distinction, but in vain, since the thesis of the self-confined nature of cognitions applies to any cognition, not only to memory.

[39] ĪPK I 3.3–6.

At this point, however, an obvious objection arises. Even if we assume that Utpaladeva's argument is correct, memory, whichever way you look at it, should remain a special way of the apprehension of an object and should not be capable of the direct perception thereof. Indeed, it is quite a mysterious ability since its object must, on the one hand, be directly related to the object of the direct perception — otherwise, we would not be able to recognize previously perceived objects and, as a result, accomplish even the simplest practical actions — and, on the other, cannot be thus related, as its perception vanished. Insisting that memory is precisely a simple cognition, as it seems, only disrupts this delicate balance by further separating it from the direct perception. To answer this objection, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta formulate the doctrine of the unification of cognitions. Applied to memory, it can be expressed by the following judgment: "I perceived that cup before, and now I am remembering it," where the cup stands for any perceivable object. It can be analyzed into four components: the subject ("I"), the object ("that cup"), the past perception ("I perceived"), and the current memory ("now I am remembering"). The most elusive component here is the object, as, on the one hand, it must be identical to the object of the direct perception and, on the other, has already vanished as such, i.e., "this cup" has turned into "that cup". This means that we have no other choice but to admit that the object of memory cannot appear in it without awareness of the past perception of this very object. However, any cognition is self-confined, and therefore the perception cannot become an object of memory if the latter is understood as a simple cognition. Even so, we are told that it must be understood precisely that way, so we seem to be marking time.

To get out of this difficulty, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta emphasize — it is not that the past perception becomes the object of memory but that the subject of memory himself acts as this past perception in memory insofar as he is the subject of both.[40] And since all that presupposes that the subject must be so in the direct perception as well[41], this means that he accomplishes the unification of the cognitions he himself becomes while remaining transcendent to them. If at least one of these conditions were not satisfied, the unification of cognitions would become impossible, and the everyday practical life would disintegrate.[42] Accordingly, the judgment under consideration should be reformulated as follows: "I perceived that cup before, and now I am remembering it as myself who previously perceived that cup." This, in turn, means that the "I" here cannot be a limited subject but only the Self with a capital S, i.e., the universal subject, since only the latter is capable of becoming cognitions in order to unify them as himself. That is why Utpaladeva makes the following seemingly paradoxical statement: only the absolutely free subject, becoming a cognition for himself, can act as the subject of memory.[43] Ordinary memory thus becomes for him one of the ways of his self-recognition.[44]

But if the universal subject has to become a cognition, this means that, at the end of the day, the latter can still be called an object, which contradicts the thesis about its radical non-objectifiability. It should be acknowledged in this regard that Utpaladeva's thesis is indeed not so radical as to go against common sense. It is, of course, radical in the sense that it emphatically denies the possibility for one cognition to become the object of another but indeed recognizes the

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[40] ĪPV ad ĪPK I 4.3–4.

[41] ĪPK I 4.6.

[42] ĪPK I 3.7.

[43] ĪPK I 4.1

[44] ĪPV ad ĪPK I 4.3.

fact that the subject who has become a cognition must thus become an object for himself.[45] Otherwise, memory would directly cognize the object of the direct perception, thereby ceasing to be memory.[46] Moreover, Utpaladeva claims not only that the universal subject recognizes himself in memory but also that he does so as an object of memory, not only as something transcendent.[47] In this way, the doctrine of the unification of cognitions allows us to ensure that very delicate balance in which the object of memory, on the one hand, must be comprehended via its old perception and, on the other, be directly related to the object of the former perception, thereby allowing us in favorable conditions to return to the respective object on the basis of pure memory and recognize it. However, it plays a much bigger role in the Pratyabhijñā doctrine than being just a way of explaining memory. It virtually connects all the elements of the system and ensures no more and nor less than all the possible relations between cognitions and/or their objects, such as the causal relation, the relation between the subject and the object of knowledge and action, including a non-existent one, and the relation between unity and multiplicity. From an epistemological perspective, it is especially important to mention the following types of relations: between an invalidated and invalidating cognition, between a universal and an object, between direct perception and a perceptual judgment, and between direct and indirect knowledge. It thus ensures the organic unity of epistemology.

In this way, the thesis about the self-confined nature of cognitions allows Utpaladeva to kill several birds with one stone. Firstly, to better justify the *svataḥ prakāśa* doctrine. Secondly, to rationally demonstrate the necessary existence of *Ātman*. Thirdly, to show that the latter must have significantly different attributes from the *Ātman* of other schools — in particular, the necessity for it to be both immanent and transcendent to cognitions. Fourthly, to defeat Buddhism. This list can go on, but it is of particular importance for us here that it also implicitly justifies the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine since the latter becomes its simple corollary. Indeed, if we proceed from the fact that any cognition is self-confined, there is nothing left for it but to be self-justified, i.e., not to have a justificative ontological correlate. This is so because, as we have repeatedly noted in other studies, the issue of the existence of this correlate comes down to the possibility for some cognitions to serve as such a correlate for others. And given that, according to Utpaladeva, no cognition can become the object of another due to its self-confined nature, that possibility is automatically excluded. It is no coincidence that the *kārikā* includes an extensive fragment devoted to the refutation of cognitions — which proves impossible without their unification by the universal subject[48] — and says nothing about their justification with the help of other cognitions. Moreover, Utpaladeva virtually identified the notions of the self-confined nature, determinateness (*niścaya*), and justifiedness, thereby complementing Kumārila, who considered the justifiedness of any cognition as a simple expression of its determinateness. The Pratyabhijñā thus clearly sides with the doctrines belonging to the category of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* with *parataḥ aprāmāṇya*, which includes Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, and Tantrism, as well as, with certain reservations, Sāṅkhya and Yóga of Patañjali, and, moreover, implies that *parataḥ aprāmāṇya* — that is, full-fledged *svataḥ*

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[45] ĪPK I 4.7–8.
[46] ĪPV ad ĪPK I 4.4.
[47] ĪPKVṛ ad ĪPK I 4.1.
[48] ĪPK I 7.6–13.

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prāmāṇya[49] — is ontologically impossible without acknowledging its truth, thereby continuing the work of Somananda.

Finally, the thesis about the self-confined nature of cognitions makes it possible to clarify the relationship between the doctrines of *svataḥ prakāśa* and *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, which in the context of less strict approaches to the interpretation of the former remained largely debatable. Thus, Kumārila systematically denied this doctrine, believing that it leads to idealism, but did not give full weight to the fact that Buddhists themselves rejected the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle in any case and that their idealism stemmed not so much from their adherence to *svataḥ prakāśa* as from their denial of *Ātman*. Other philosophers tried to show that the two doctrines are quite compatible but still considered them largely isolated from each other — the former at the ontological level and the latter at the level of epistemology. At one time, S. K. Saksena admitted that he could not find anything in *svataḥ prāmāṇya* that would not be implied in *svataḥ prakāśa*.[50] For his part, Utpaladeva can agree with this thesis based on strict ontological principles. Indeed, *svataḥ prakāśa* is, for him, a necessary ontological condition of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, as it presupposes the self-confined nature of any cognition that necessarily leads to the latter. Accordingly, if we accept the arguments of the Pratyabhijñā in favor of *svataḥ prakāśa*, we have to implicitly acknowledge the truth of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine, as Utpaladeva himself, for whom the former almost always acts as a substitute for the latter, practically does. That is clearly evident in the purely epistemological chapter of the *kārikā*, which we must consider as prolegomena to the ontological part of this study.

I. 3. The Epistemology of the Pratyabhijñā as a Paradigm Case of Strong Disjunctivism

So far, we have mainly analyzed what modern philosophers would call the Pratyabhijñā's metaphysics of perception. As for the pure epistemology of this doctrine, it occupies quite a modest place in the *kārikā*: apart from some scattered fragments, mostly concentrated in the comments, half of the seventh chapter of the first and the third chapter of the second section are devoted to it. The purely epistemological chapter begins with a fairly typical exposition of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine: "The means of knowledge (*pramāṇam*) is that thanks to which the object is situated within its own confines (*vyavatiṣṭhate*) 'this thing, with these characteristics'. This means of knowledge is an ever freshly arising light related to a subject (*svābhāso 'bhinavodayaḥ*). This light, whose essence is the inner reflective awareness of that which is thus manifested, becomes — as regards the object without spatio-temporal differentiations etc. and expressed by a single name — knowledge (*mitiḥ*), [provided it is] not invalidated." [ĪPK II 3.1–2] There are three notable innovations here, but all of them are secondary to the basic doctrine. Firstly, *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is reduced here to *svataḥ prakāśa* along with the lines of Utpaladeva's approach described above. Secondly, the means of knowledge is equated here with its result as a consequence of the thesis about the self-confined nature of cognitions. Otherwise put, one cognition comes down to the awareness of one object and, given it is itself a means of its knowledge, is identical to the knowledge thereof in its introspective aspect, which, in this case, is the universal subject himself. Buddhists claim a similar thing, but

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[49] Since the combination of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* with *svataḥ aprāmāṇya* is traditionally considered untenable.

[50] Saksena S. K. Nature of Consciousness in Hindu Philosophy. Benares, 1944, p. 86.

Utpaladeva corrects them in his usual manner. Finally, this definition implicitly contains the thesis about the perceptibility of universals. Thus, at a single moment, in purely epistemological terms, it is a specific object without spatio-temporal attributes and expressed by one word, i.e., a universal, that is inevitably cognized. The rest of the chapter basically boils down to reconciling this thesis with the possibility of cognition of particular objects in space and time.

Besides, Abhinavagupta here emphasizes the connection of a specific cognition with a specific subject, systematically opposing Kumārila, whose doctrine of *parataḥ prakāśa*, from his perspective, leads to an absurd situation in which a particular cognition should arise either for everyone or for no one.[51] For our part, we would like to stress the importance of this argument for understanding the subtle difference between an invalidated cognition as such and an arisen invalidated cognition. Thus, according to *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, for a cognition to be justified, it is enough for it to arise, i.e., form an introspective determinateness.[52] Under these conditions, if we do not want to abandon the very concept of truth, we must admit the possibility for it to be false. However, given that this falsity can only be understood as invalidatedness and nothing else, it follows from all that that an ivalidated cognition can, in principle, occur repeatedly. On the other hand, it cannot be admitted that that can happen with the same subject since that, in particular, would contradict the law of excluded middle. Accordingly, the only thing that remains here is to admit that it can arise only for those subjects who have not yet personally realized this refutation.[53] Thus, for example, for someone who has become a victim of fraud and realized his mistake, the corresponding cognitions have been refuted and can no longer arise again, even if he were to be tried to be convinced otherwise — at best, they may arise from memory as a kind of anomaly and therefore will not have the attribute of novelty. However, there still remains an unrestricted category of subjects who have also become or may become a victim of the same fraud and for whom this awareness has not yet arisen or will never arise. In this way, the difference between an invalidated cognition as such and an arisen invalidated cognition can only be ensured by a distinction between specific subjects on the basis of a purely personal and ontological act of invalidation and therefore implies a kind of epistemological perspectivism, which, in turn, is difficult to justify without resorting to the doctrine of *svataḥ prakāśa*.

We are, however, primarily interested in the theory of cognitive error formulated in the same chapter. In our previous study, we came to the conclusion that within the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, strong disjunctivism differs from weak disjunctivism only in that it emphasizes the difference between the reality of knowledge and its truth.[54] Accordingly, if this distinction is peculiar to the epistemology of the Pratyabhijñā, it can be classified as strong disjunctivism. It should be noted from the outset, though, that as in the case of the analysis of Kumārila's philosophy, it is difficult to find direct terminological evidence of this distinction here. Even so, it is virtually even more significant for the Pratyabhijñā doctrine. The fact is that due to the peculiarities of the ontology formulated by him, Utpaladeva is completely deprived of the opportunity to characterize false objects as unreal. Hence his well-known thesis: the true and false appearance of the same

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[51] ĪPV ad ĪPK II 3.1–2.

[52] Bandurin M. A. *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya...* p. 186-E.

[53] Bandurin M. A. The Noumenal Morass: Post-Kantian Representationalism and Its Relationalist Critique in the Light of Strong Disjunctivism. Vox. Философский журнал, No. 34, 2021, pp. 37-E–38-E.

[54] Bandurin M. A. *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya…* pp. 195-E–196-E.

object are equally real.[55] From our perspective, it necessarily implies that the reality of knowledge and its truth are not the same thing, but the peculiarities of everyday and philosophical language, based on the centuries-old identification of the concepts of truth and reality, stubbornly resist clarifying this point of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine. Thus, modern researchers and translators clearly can neither find a common denominator as regards this issue nor offer a strict terminology capable of providing an internally consistent interpretation of the doctrine under consideration.

That primarily becomes manifest in the context of analyzing the theory of cognitive error peculiar to it. It is believed that Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta tried to formulate a comprehensive theory thereof that would incorporate all the advantages of other theories and would be devoid of their shortcomings. It embraces both ontological and epistemological levels, but for now, what interests us is a purely epistemological error. Here, a question arises as to which school is the closest analog to the Pratyabhijñā in this respect, and there are only two noteworthy options: Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā.[56] We believe that it is closest to the theory of Kumārila,[57] but in order to avoid terminological ambiguities, let us attempt a proof by contradiction and assume for the sake of the argument that it is some variant of Prabhākara's doctrine. It should be noted from the outset that *svataḥ prakāśa* is irrelevant here — thus, for example, Śaiva Siddhānta is based on *svataḥ prakāśa* but is still much closer to Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā in terms of epistemology, so it is not a reason to believe that the doctrine under consideration should differ in this regard.[58] Now, the theory of cognitive error of the Pratyabhijñā is known as *apūrṇakhyāti*, or the theory of the error in the form of partial knowledge. Thus, as they say, not all that glitters is gold, and, according to Utpaladeva, we can take a shell lying on the ground for a piece of silver. By itself, such a statement of the problem suggests that one object is perceived here in the form of another and so is closer to Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya, which pose the question in this way, not to Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā or Vedānta. But let us turn a blind eye to that for now. Accordingly, when we make such a mistake, we, according to the Pratyabhijñā, perceive a "silver-in-the-shell" instead of the particular shell, and this erroneous knowledge should be considered incomplete. It is also important here that we continue to perceive the shell even in that case and have, although incomplete, but quite real knowledge thereof — and the acknowledgment of this fact is one of the characteristic features of consistent relationalism.[59] Given all this, the true shell, in this case, is often called the locus of error. Therefore, the possible invalidation of this false knowledge will affect only the "silver", and at that moment, we will realize that, until now, we have perceived only the shell in which it mistakenly appeared. The error itself, again, comes down to the process of the unification of cognition we have already analyzed, which is false in its case.

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[55] ĪPK II 3.13.

[56] Ratié I. Some Hitherto Unknown Fragments… p. 383.

[57] See Rastogi N. Theory of Error According to Abhinavagupta. Journal of Indian Philosophy, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1986, p. 25.

[58] Śaiva Siddhānta's theory of error is, in fact, also very close to that of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, even though it is formally classified in the same category as the theory of Nyāya. The theories of error of Kumārila and Nyāya are very close to each other anyway, and in the context of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* of Śaiva Siddhānta become almost indistinguishable. Accordingly, there are grounds for including these two theories, along with the theory of the Pratyabhijñā, in one category, although, of course, the third theory is the most specific.

[59] Bandurin M. A. The Noumenal Morass… pp. 37-E–39-E.

Now, it is necessary to determine the consequences of the supposed similarity of this theory with Prabhākara's doctrine for the ontological status of false knowledge. Indeed, the thesis that the true and false appearance of the same object are equally real is, in fact, by no means an innovation of Utpaladeva but is shared by most of the schools of Indian philosophy and many of its representatives, including the same Prabhākara or the founder of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, Rāmānuja. In our previous study, we found that the difference between Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā and Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā within *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is that the former denies the difference between the reality of knowledge and its truth and is thus a special variety of weak disjunctivism.[60] If we were to proceed from all that, we would have to admit that Utpaladeva considered all erroneous objects true. But isn't such a theory absurd? From our perspective, it does, but it is indeed peculiar to the philosophy of Prabhākara and so cannot be dismissed as a possible interpretation of the Pratyabhijñā's epistemology on this basis alone. Moreover, someone could also point out here the possibility that the doctrine under consideration investigates the nature of truth on two levels, ontological and epistemological, and so any object can be considered by it true from an absolute point of view, even though at the level of mundane knowledge, it can only be called relatively true, which brings it closer to the two truths doctrine peculiar to Buddhism or Advaita Vedānta.

However, in fact, such an approach is directly refuted by Abhinavagupta. Thus, in the commentary on the verse of the *kārikā* under consideration, he emphasizes that all cognitions are ontologically false because of being incomplete knowledge.[61] This should be understood in the most radical sense, namely that any epistemologically true object can be cognized only as ontologically false, whereas an epistemologically false object can only be doubly ontologically false, or, to use Abhinavagupta's expression, an error in error.[62] But why this sudden shift of emphasis? By and large, it occurs in the text simply as an indication that the ontological error in the Pratyabhijñā doctrine is modeled by Utpaladeva after the epistemological one, i.e., is the same *apūrṇakhyāti* but applied to the explanation of spiritual ignorance. We should not be confused here by the purely ontological nature of this argument, as our task is to identify the distinction between the reality of knowledge and its truth in the doctrine under consideration, and this argument is difficult to interpret in any other way than recognizing this difference at both the ontological and epistemological levels. Indeed, if it is emphasized at one and the same time that the epistemologically true and false appearance of the same object are equally real and that the former is still ontologically false, it necessarily follows that both the ontologically false appearance of an object and its doubly ontologically false appearance are equally real, and, consequently, the reality of knowledge is not reduced to its truth. It may seem, though, that such an approach leaves too little room for the latter in reality, but in any case, there is no doubt that at least the cognizing subject in this doctrine is true.

Navjivan Rastogi is the one who came closest to such an interpretation of the Pratyabhijñā's theory of error when he noted that Abhinavagupta virtually distinguishes between the real and the empirical, or the actual, on the one hand, and between the object and content of knowledge on the other.[63] If we set aside the ambiguous terms "actual" and "content of knowledge" and replace

[60] Bandurin M. A. *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya...* pp. 192-E–195-E.

[61] ĪPV ad ĪPK II 3.13.

[62] Or an error on error.

[63] Rastogi N. Theory of Error… p. 21.

"empirical" with "epistemological", we can say that this interpretation practically recognizes that the Pratyabhijñā's epistemology is, firstly, general disjunctivism and relationalism since it distinguishes between the ontological statuses of the introspective appearance of a true object and false content of knowledge, and, secondly, strong disjunctivism, as it claims that even epistemologically false knowledge is completely real. Besides, there is no doubt that Abhinavagupta simply follows Utpaladeva here. Thus, in particular, the author of the *kārikā* anticipates the discussion about the ontological status of a false object with the thesis that the reality of objects cannot be reduced to their causal function.[64] Besides being an additional ontological argument in favor of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, since it radically excludes the possibility for objects to serve as justificative ontological correlates of cognitions, it implies that efficiency and inefficiency are attributes of *ab initio* true or false self-justified knowledge, not the objects themselves.

Nemec basically accepts Rastogi's interpretation but seems to take half a step back. Thus, he acknowledges that the distinction between the real and empirical nature of cognitions is already present in Somananda's treatise[65] but uses the terms "unreal" and "erroneous" interchangeably, sometimes taking the latter in quotation marks, sometimes not. The latter feature is related to the fact that Somananda supposedly tries to emphasize that epistemologically false cognitions are called erroneous only conventionally.[66] This conclusion looks quite strange since Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta are rather trying to convey to us something opposite, namely that some ontologically false cognitions can be called epistemologically true simply because they are not doubly ontologically false, i.e., due to their non-invalidatenedness, adequateness to their object, and the ability to serve the achievement of practical goals. Such use of terms thus creates the impression that Somananda did not distinguish between the reality of knowledge and its truth, which again gives reason to consider the epistemology of the Pratyabhijñā similar to the doctrine of Prabhākara. That would be fine, but Somananda himself explicitly characterizes the everyday world as erroneous, in no way differing from his disciples in this regard.[67] There are several explanations for this ambiguity. Perhaps the author of *Śivadṛṣṭi* was just slightly carried away by polemics to the detriment of systematicity, and the more developed theory of error of the Pratyabhijñā should be considered a better expression of what he himself meant. Thus, already in his commentary on the corresponding fragment of this treatise, Utpaladeva gives a more generalized interpretation: the point is not so much that epistemologically false cognitions are called erroneous only conventionally but that the very distinction between epistemological truth and erroneousness is merely everyday, i.e., ontologically false.[68] Further, Somananda could mean that the world of everyday practical life would be unreal if it were not a manifestation of the universal subject, and given that the opposite is the case, even an epistemological error cannot be called unreal. Finally, he could simply try to point out that one should not be obsessed with merely epistemological truths but strive for the "soteriological" knowledge, as at the level of the pure subject, even wooden iron

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[64] ĪPK II 3.12.

[65] Nemec J. The Two Pratyabhijñā Theories of Error. Journal of Indian Philosophy, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2012, p. 235.

[66] Nemec J. The Ubiquitous Śiva Volume II: Somananda's *Śivadṛṣṭi* and His Philosophical Interlocutors. New York, 2021, pp. 69–71.

[67] Nemec again uses the term "unreal" here. See Nemec J. The Ubiquitous Śiva: Somananda's *Śivadṛṣṭi* and His Tantric Interlocutors. New York. 2011, pp. 257–258.

[68] Nemec J. The Ubiquitous Śiva Volume II… p. 71.

appears in the true light and is thus, in a sense, true. However that may be, much rests here on pure ontology, and so we will soon have to return to this issue. In any case, it is clear that the doctrine of Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta at least does not contradict the approach of Somananda in this respect, and, therefore, it can be said that the Pratyabhijñā's theory of error proceeds from the distinction between the reality of knowledge and its truth, which makes its epistemology a paradigm case of strong disjunctivism. In the meantime, it is necessary to say a few words in defense of the epistemological realism of the doctrine under consideration.

I. 4. The So-Called Idealism of the Pratyabhijñā Does Not Cancel Its Epistemological Realism

Modern researchers and translators like to call the Pratyabhijñā doctrine idealism because in the fifth chapter of the first section of his *kārikā* Utpaladeva systematically defends the thesis that objects do not exist outside the universal subject. We do not accept such a designation but cannot afford to thoroughly analyze this issue here, because, even though that chapter *prima facie* only analyzes direct perception, it is actually devoted to pure ontology.[69] Therefore, for the purposes of this study, we will confine ourselves to defending the claim that the Pratyabhijñā is a kind of epistemological realism, even taking into account the content of that chapter and other fragments of the *kārikā* that emphasize the unity of the subject and object. However, one piece of evidence against the so-called idealism of this doctrine becomes clear from its very structure. Thus, the fifth chapter is a direct continuation of the exposition of the doctrine of the unification of cognitions and is meant to explain not only the direct perception of objects but also how they get into memory. Accordingly, given that the latter would be impossible without the unification of cognitions, and this process is conducted not by the mind but by the universal subject, it becomes unclear why mental processes should play a greater ontological role in the coarser fact of perception than in memory.

However that may be, the first part of the fifth chapter is devoted to a highly sophisticated imaginary discussion between Utpaladeva and several representatives of other schools. It goes in two basic directions: on the one hand, the author of the *kārikā* tries to demonstrate that objects do not exist outside consciousness, and, on the other, that they can exist within it only if it is understood as the omnipotent, omniscient, and absolutely independent universal subject who is reality as such. Accordingly, Utpaladeva's opponents, from his perspective, are divided into two categories: those who correctly emphasize that objects do not exist outside consciousness but misunderstand its nature and those who misunderstand the nature of consciousness and thereby admit objects to exist outside it. The first consists solely of Vijñānavāda, whereas the second is much more numerous and includes Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, Vaibhāṣika[70], Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā[71],

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[69] In particular, because it is considered there as indeterminate, whereas pure epistemology deals exclusively with determinate knowledge, which can be both direct and indirect and which is also called mediate (*savikalpaka*).

[70] Perhaps the viewpoint resembling Vaibhāṣika's is, in fact, Sautrāntika's. Besides, it is possible that a third doctrine of realistic Buddhism, which is different from these two and which can also be taken as Vaibhāṣika's, is additionally involved in the discussion. See Ratié I. Le Soi... p. 318.

[71] In the context of Abhinavagupta's polemic with Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā in the commentary to this discussion, another argument in favor of *svataḥ prakāśa*, common to the two schools, comes to the fore: the cognizedness of an object must

Sautrāntika, as well as implicitly all the schools adhering to the doctrine of *nirākāravāda*, i.e., denying that consciousness cognizes objects by assuming their form. Utpaladeva skillfully applies the arguments of the idealistic Buddhism of Vijñānavāda to defeat the teachings that admit the possibility of the direct perception of an object outside consciousness, then weakens the position of idealistic Buddhism itself by the critique from the Buddhist representationalism of Sautrāntika, but only in order to modify the idealists' thesis and deal the final blow to the realism of the object outside consciousness. As a result, the discussion is crowned with the thesis that the universal subject not merely unifies cognition but must himself become his objects through self-differentiation due to his inherent omnipotence and absolute freedom, which would disappear if the objects existed outside of him, and the everyday practical life would thus disintegrate.[72] Most researchers and translators believe that despite the substantial modification of Vijñānavāda's thesis, the Pratyabhijñā remains along with it in the category of idealism — of course, "pre-Kantian".

But let us start with something simple. First of all, Utpaladeva nowhere claims that an epistemologically understood object[73] consists of a mental substance. But even that is not the main point. The fact is that, as we have already noted, from the Pratyabhijñā's perspective, epistemology is possible only as an ontological error, which means that it necessarily has certain limitations. Thus, even if it is true that the source of cognition is the universal subject, the limited subject, which is identical to the latter, cannot know anything about that insofar as it can cognize only epistemologically. In other words, pure epistemology is a means of self-alienation of the universal subject. Accordingly, even if we admit that the Pratyabhijñā is indeed idealism, its own epistemology would by definition be unable to know that, and so this so-called idealism would be virtually inexistent for the latter. By the way, that applies not only to the doctrine under consideration but even, say, to Advaita Vedānta, which is also often called idealism, even though many of its followers, even agreeing with such a characteristic, tend to emphasize that it anyway remains a kind of epistemological realism. All because even if the world is ontologically indescribable in terms of reality and unreality, that is only indirectly related to pure epistemology since, from their perspective, the latter is immanent to the world and so adequate to its objects and capable of ensuring successful practical activity within it.[74] For the Pratyabhijñā, epistemology is thus one of the manifestations of duality in the non-dual consciousness, which, as Abhinavagupta constantly emphasized, cannot be excluded from it due to its undoubtful reality.[75] Utpaladeva expounded this doctrine of unity in diversity (*bhedābhedavāda*) in the second chapter of the second section of his *kārikā*.

Here, it may be objected that such an epistemological dualism does not have to be realist, as idealism in the usual sense of the word also implies the dualism of subject and object. If we set ontological matters aside, the answer to this objection will be a simple reference to the fact that the

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be determined by a cognition together with its self-awareness so that the unity of the cognition and the object becomes a differentiating factor of the cognizing subject. See Ratié I. Le Soi… pp. 326–336.

[72] ĪPK I 5.13.

[73] He does not claim that about an ontologically understood object, either, but that lies outside the scope of this study.

[74] Another thing is that Advaita Vedānta equates the reality of knowledge with its truth and so has to stick to the two truths doctrine, being unable to get out of the existing contradictions.

[75] See, e.g., Hanneder J. Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Revelation: An Edition and Annotated Translation of *Mālinīślokavārttika* I, 1–399. Groningen, 1998, p. 79.

Pratyabhijñā's epistemology is based on the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle and therefore must be a disjunctivism — more precisely, as we have shown, strong disjunctivism — and relationalism, i.e., a kind of direct realism. It is noteworthy in this regard that for it, as for other Indian doctrines belonging to this category, perception, even when it is determinate, remains, firstly, completely real and, secondly, direct knowledge.[76] The only reservation that needs to be made here is that it must imply partial agnosticism.[77] Thus, it is capable neither of comprehending the ultimate source of cognitions, i.e., the universal subject, nor of ascertaining a general nature of the reality of its objects but can justifiably assert that each of its specific objects is an integral part of the corresponding cognition and is external to the mind, i.e., that it at least does not consist of a mental substance. In this way, the pure epistemology of the Pratyabhijñā is basically almost no different from the realism of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā. This interpretation is also supported by the fact that Utpaladeva, along with Kumārila, is a proponent of the thesis of the perceptibility of universals, which, from our perspective, not only is an expression of moderate realism as regards them but also implies relationalism, i.e., that they act as constituents of cognitions. Moreover, his doctrine of perceptible universals can even be considered superior to that of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, as it is more systematic and consequent upon the fundamental ontological principles, being an aspect of the same *bhedābhedavāda*.[78]

Finally, it must be remembered that strong disjunctivism adheres to a certain variety of the correspondence theory of truth, and the Pratyabhijñā is no exception in this regard. Thus, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta virtually acknowledge the adequateness to an object as a necessary attribute of epistemological truth.[79] That implies that a practical activity based on the awareness of a false object will itself necessarily be false, even if it brings side effects of some use. Abhinavagupta devoted particular attention to this issue and emphasized that practical activity stems not so much from true knowledge as from the desire based on a mere appearance.[80] Moreover, even the occurrence of an abstract thought can, in this perspective, be called practical activity since it is necessarily correlated with an object and thus leads at least to a certain mental agitation, which also often displays itself physically.[81] All that fits perfectly with Utpaladeva's thesis about the reality of all appearances, *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, and strong disjunctivism. So if we, say, dig our entire vegetable garden all over in search of worms for fishing and do not find them, our activity will be erroneous, even if it would be of some use for us to have plowed beds — simply because there were no worms there, despite our conviction to the contrary.

After all the above, it remains only to ensure a transition to the ontological part of this study by returning to the question of the role of the doctrine of the unification of cognitions in the fifth chapter of the first section of the *kārikā*. As we have already noted, it is meant to explain how objects of direct perception get into memory. We have found out that the latter is impossible without its subject becoming an object for himself in it since that ensures the unification of two

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[76] ĪPV ad ĪPK II 2.3.
[77] See Mishra K. Kashmir Śaivism: The Central Philosophy of Tantrism. Delhi, 1999, pp. 77–78. However, the epistemological agnosticism of the author of this book goes too far.
[78] See ĪPK II 2.1–3; ĪPKVṛ ad II 3.7.
[79] See Rastogi N. The Theory of Error… p. 8.
[80] ĪPV ad ĪPK II 3.1–2.
[81] See ĪPV ad ĪPK II 2.1.

heterogeneous components thereof: the past perception and its present remembrance. However, perception itself is obviously a simple cognition even without any unification, especially given that it is self-confined. Accordingly, one would expect that the analysis of it in the chapter under consideration would not be too bound to the thesis that the subject who has become a cognition has to become an object for himself. After all, this ability of the subject must distinguish memory from direct perception since the possibility of the latter should be excluded in the former. In fact, though, the reverse is the case: Utpaladeva begins outright with the claim that even in direct perception, the subject must become an object for himself in the form of this very perception.[82] Is that necessary merely for the object to be able to get into memory? No, although for that purpose as well. The fact is that, as Abhinavagupta explains, since the subject of memory and perception is one and the same, and an object of memory, as has already been clarified, cannot be separate from the universal subject, an object of direct perception also cannot be separate from it, and, therefore, the difference between these two forms of cognition is reduced to their being different powers of him.[83] However, it is easier to understand that the object of memory is not external to the universal subject than that the object of direct perception is also so because, whichever way you look at it, the latter inevitably appears as external. The fifth chapter is aimed precisely at resolving this contradiction, and the argument under consideration thus only anticipates the general discussion. At the moment, the main point of interest is that despite the doctrine of the radical non-objectifiability of cognitions, the Pratyabhijñā emphasizes the necessity for a cognition to act as an object for the universal subject even in the context of the analysis of direct perception.

That is so because an ontologically understood cognition is the only way of his objectification. It follows from all that that the universal subject must be aware of himself in every cognition while remaining transcendent to them. And this means that their awareness of themselves will, strictly speaking, be common to all of them in the form of the already considered *vimarśa*, i.e., reflective awareness of the universal subject. Such a structure of a cognition even gives reason to characterize the Pratyabhijñā as a higher-order theory consciousness. Thus, Marco Ferrante came to the conclusion that for Abhinavagupta, "there is no radical difference between higher-order thought and first-order representations, thus meaning that the former is inherent in the latter." [Ferrante, 2021, p. 76] Even though such a description has some grounds — in the first place, purely etymological — it should be borne in mind that higher-order theories of consciousness imply representationalism, which is clearly evident in Ferrante's interpretation. Thus, he correctly notes that the doctrine of the self-confined nature of cognitions comes into obvious contradiction with such an approach. However, in trying to resolve it, he overlooks the main obstacle, namely that the radical non-objectifiability of cognitions has *svataḥ prāmāṇya* as its corollary, which, in turn, is, from our perspective, incompatible with representationalism. Besides, following an old bad tradition of Western philosophy, he equates the linguistic, i.e., the propositional, with the representational,[84] and so interprets *vimarśa* as a higher-order representation.[85] Meanwhile, the same *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is perhaps the only way to dissociate these notions and ensure the unity of

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[82] ĪPKVṛ ad I 5.1.

[83] ĪPV ad ĪPK I 5.1.

[84] Which includes both conceptual and non-conceptual content.

[85] Ferrante M. Indian Perspectives on Consciousness, Language and Self: The School of Recognition on Linguistics and Philosophy of Mind. London and New York, 2021, p. 78.

the direct perception and a perceptual judgment without admitting the representational content of knowledge in its case. However, Ferrante, as a representationalist, does not fully realize the acuteness of this issue. In this way, there is every reason to consider *vimarśa* as both immanent and transcendent reflective awareness of the universal subject, which in the case of true direct knowledge does not imply representational content even while being necessarily propositional. That is why the fifth chapter of the first section of the *kārikā* ends on a high ontological note: even the most ordinary jar, in relation to which a perceptual judgment is made, is cognized as I.[86]

II. 1. The Significance of the Distinction Between the Reality of Knowledge and Its Truth for the Ontology and "Soteriology" of the Pratyabhijñā

The reader who has reached this section may, however, notice that despite such lofty ontological results, in purely epistemological terms, we have begun pleasantly but ended sadly, namely tried to emphasize the importance of the epistemological implications of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine for its ontology but eventually came to the conclusion that epistemology from its perspective is possible only as an error. However, the whole point is that only such an epistemology can have significance for the Pratyabhijñā's ontology. At this point, it is necessary to recall what we started with: if *Īśvara* creates the limited subject out of himself and erroneously becomes it in order to recognize himself in it, the unity of *Śiva* and *paśu* then must be primordial, and that apparently entails the assumption that the former is both true and false at the same time. Now we can see that nothing is surprising in this: given that the Pratyabhijñā distinguishes the reality of knowledge from its truth at the epistemological level and models the ontological error after the epistemological one, reality, from its perspective, must also include both truth and apparently true falsity. Thus, Utpaladeva, in one of his hymns, explicitly characterizes *Śiva* as forever bound, eternally liberated, and yet remaining beyond *saṃsāra* and *mokṣa*.[87] In other words, *Īśvara* cannot be considered a kind of deity or reality in the form of the naked truth, as he voluntarily commits false self-concealment. By the way, in this perspective, self-recognition too cannot be called, strictly speaking, true since it only overcomes the artificially created illusion on the part of the one who imposed it on himself. That is why Utpaladeva directly states that both bondage and liberation are real only as an error.[88]

We, however, must delve into the Pratyabhijñā's ontology to the extent that the formulation of its basic principles depends on the previously discussed features of the epistemology of this doctrine. So, the false limited subject is completely real insofar as it is identical to the universal subject. Accordingly, the world of everyday practical life, in which it is necessarily immersed, is also completely real. However, that world consists of objects, as regards which the question of truth or falsity arises as well. From all of the above, it would seem that the answer is obvious: its objects can, in principle, be true epistemologically while being ontologically false. But in fact, everything is not that simple because the principle of the pre-existence of the effect in the cause (*satkāryavāda*), which the Pratyabhijñā adheres to along with Sāṅkhya, Vedānta, and other schools, requires that the objective conditions of the limited subject, i.e., bodies, minds, the universe in which it dwells, etc., are created by *Īśvara* beforehand, out of himself, and, moreover, as his own *śaktis*. Hence it

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[86] ĪPK I 5.20.

[87] SSĀ 2.17.

[88] ŚDVṛ ad ŚD 3.69.

necessarily follows that any object of everyday practical life should be cognized at a higher ontological level, i.e., not just epistemologically but as identical to the universal subject — like the abovementioned jar. This level in Kashmir Shaivism in general and in Pratyabhijna in particular is called *parāpara,* and Utpaladeva characterizes it as a level of the perfect awareness with an element of imperfection. It is perfect since the objects there are cognized as I, and with an element of imperfection simply because objects appear there.[89] From all this, it follows that the universe and the world of everyday practical life are not exactly the same thing: the latter is always reduced to the former, but the former is never reduced to the latter. That is why it is necessary to carefully distinguish what is at stake in each particular case: the creation of the universe as such or the manifestation of everyday practical activities within it, even though these processes, in fact, occur simultaneously.[90] Unfortunately, the related literature, with its terminological confusions, often complicates this task.

Accordingly, the question of the truth or falsity of objects is transferred to a new level, and while we can safely say that the objects of everyday practice are ontologically false, difficulties still arise as to whether they can be called true when they are cognized as identical with the Self. There are two formally opposite points of view in the literature on this matter, which, as far as one can tell, can be traced back to the primary sources of Kashmir Shaivism in general. In the strictest terms, any objects in the Pratyabhijñā's ontology should be called false by definition since they are limited manifestations of the unlimited subject. That is due to the simple fact that *māyā śakti* is considered to act at the *parāpara* level as well, not only at the lowest ontological plane known as the sphere of *Māyā,* or *apara.* In this context, it is sometimes called *māhāmāyā śakti*[91] or *śuddha māyā śakti,* i.e., great or pure *māyā śakti,* respectively. This approach is peculiar to some treatises[92] and studies[93]. Moreover, Abhinavagupta clearly alludes to it in his commentary on the seventh verse of the fourth section of the *kārikā,* when he calls objects mere not-being of the subject.[94] However, in the Pratyabhijñā and in Kashmir Shaivism in general, a different approach prevailed, namely stressing the truth of objects at the *parāpara* level. Its adherents proceed from the simple fact that these objects are cognized as identical to the universal subject and so appear in the true light, thereby losing the ability to serve as factors of his bondage. In other words, the effect of false self-concealment of *Īśvara* does not extend to the *parāpara* level, even though the objects are completely real there. This is a very subtle point: the universal subject does not create the universe through false self-concealment but creates the universe beforehand, and even operates as it himself, and only then simultaneously manifests the everyday practical life within it in the form of false self-concealment at the *apara* level.[95] The acknowledgment of the cosmogonic role of *māyā śakti* at the higher ontological levels does not change anything in this regard. In the same vein, one can explain

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[89] ĪPK III 1.5.

[90] Even though the process of creating the universe in Kashmir Shaivism is a necessary condition for the everyday practical life within it, it does not belong to a restricted period in the past and takes place at any instance of the perception of objects.

[91] Not to be confused with *māhāmāyā tattva,* which is not acknowledged as independent in the Pratyabhijñā doctrine but is differentiated from *śuddha vidyā tattva.*

[92] See, e.g., TĀ 9.93c–96; SKvi ad SK 1.

[93] See, e.g., SenSharma D. An Introduction to the Advaita Śaiva Philosophy of Kashmir. Varanasi, 2009, p. 72.

[94] ĪPV ad ĪPK IV 7.

[95] See ĪPK I 6.7.

why Somananda did not *prima facie* distinguish the reality of knowledge from its truth: he simply considered objects to be true at the *parāpara* level, and when he spoke about their conventional falsity, he actually had in mind their cognition at the *apara* level.

If we look closely, though, we will find that these approaches differ only formally, but the second actually does not negate the first. Indeed, objects can be false in themselves but be cognized as such at the *parāpara* level and so appear there in the true light and not be comprehended in this way at the *apara* level. This can be explained by resorting to the analogy with an illusionist. For a trick to be successful, an illusionist must, on the one hand, know the secret of his trick and, on the other, understand that the latter, although related to true phenomena, is true only insofar as it serves the purpose of misleading the audience. When it comes to the universal subject, *Īśvara* himself acts as an illusionist, he also acts as the audience, but in the status of the limited subject, and the focus is constituted by the appearance of objects, which, again, he becomes himself. However, two things should not be overlooked in this regard. Firstly, the trick, in this case, will embrace both false self-concealment and self-recognition, as the latter, as we have already noted, is erroneous as well. And secondly, the trick is here conducted not with the objects themselves but with their awareness. Thus, when an illusionist "saws" his assistant, everyone understands that, in principle, a person can indeed be cut to death. In contrast, when *Īśvara* creates objects out of himself, that does not imply that there are true objects subsisting in him in the manner of Platonic ideas. On the contrary, objects always remain false in themselves, and any of them can be considered true only as an element of the trick since objects with any other function cannot possibly exist. That is why Abhinavagupta emphasizes that the only purpose of the universe is to serve as a means of the self-recognition of the universal subject.[96]

We will return to this issue soon, but for now, we should point out that the difference between these two approaches has nevertheless caused discord in contemporary literature. It has to do with an attempt to compare different interpretations of the theory of ontological error in Kashmir Shaivism. So, as is known, the Agamas contain a doctrine of *māyā śakti*'s aspects known as *malas*, i.e., varieties of the self-imposed ignorance.[97] There are three of them: *aṇava-mala*, or innate limiting ignorance, *māyīya-mala*, or erroneous perception of an object as differentiated from the subject, and *kārma-mala*, or the illusion of *karma*[98]. Each of them is the cause of the subsequent one,[99] and a certain combination thereof serves as one of the factors of erroneous differentiation of the unitary subject into seven ontological statuses. In turn, Utpaladeva expanded this doctrine with the theory of the three levels of error, in which the highest two levels are modeled after the epistemological one.[100] Finally, Abhinavagupta supplemented all this with the well-known doctrine of the two levels of ignorance, according to which *pauruṣa ajñāna*, or spiritual ignorance, is the cause of *bauddha ajñāna*, or intellectual ignorance. He characterizes the former as the cognition of the non-Self in the Self and the latter as the identification of the Self with the non-Self.[101] Besides, Abhinavagupta points out that the appearance of the non-Self in the Self is a direct consequence of

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[96] BP 5.

[97] Lit. maculations.

[98] Or simply *karma*, given that in Kashmir Shaivism, *karma* is reduced to the *mala*.

[99] See ĪPK III 2.4–5.

[100] Nemec J. The Two Pratyabhijñā Theories of Error… pp. 241–247.

[101] PS 30–31.

the noncognition of the Self in the Self, i.e., of *aṇava-mala*.[102] However, neither Utpaladeva nor Abhinavagupta undertook a systematic comparison of the three above doctrines, and its attempts present in contemporary literature have not yet resulted in unanimity.

This discord has primarily to do with the difference between the cosmogonic and concealing functions of *māyā śakti*, which is sometimes explicitly emphasized, sometimes acknowledged only implicitly, and sometimes completely ignored. Thus, if we acknowledge the cosmogonic role of *māyā śakti* and assume that the latter is reduced to the *malas*, it should follow that *aṇava-mala* is endowed with the same role, given that it is a mere manifestation thereof. In fact, none of the prominent philosophers of Kashmir Shaivism and the Pratyabhijñā doubts this role of *māyā śakti*, but the logical consequence of all that should be that *aṇava-mala* is real at the *parāpara* level as well, and even higher. Nevertheless, the acknowledgment of this fact in the sources and literature is an exception rather than the rule, and the Pratyabhijñā doctrine does not belong to these exceptions,[103] not least because it tries to emphasize the truth of objects at the *parāpara* level. It can be concluded from this that the cosmogonic function of *māyā śakti* in it takes a back seat compared to the concealing one, and, accordingly, *aṇava-mala* is considered by it only in the latter role. The fact that Utpaladeva divides *aṇava-mala* into two types — pure self-awareness with suppression of absolute independence and suppression of pure self-awareness for the sake of false independence[104] — changes nothing in this regard. Only the first type of *aṇava-mala*[105] is suitable for the cosmogonic role, but that is not directly stated. Utpaladeva merely emphasizes that it peculiar the *vijñānākala* subjects, whereas, according to Abhinavagupta, *aṇava-mala* is completely uncharacteristic of the *vidyeśvara* subjects situated one ontological step higher but already at the *parāpara* level.[106]

Regardless of the possibility of *aṇava-mala* at the *parāpara* level, it should be borne in mind that this issue is key for comparing the three above interpretations of the theory of ontological error in Kashmir Shaivism, and the ambiguity on this point makes final conclusions impossible. Thus, it is clear that *pauruṣa ajñāna* is a direct consequence of *aṇava-mala*, but at what level this spiritual ignorance begins depends on the interpretation of the ontological status of *aṇava-mala* itself and taking into account its division into the two types. On the other hand, it is clear that it is directly related to Utpaladeva's theory of the three levels of error, which is perhaps one of the reasons why, in his commentary on *Śivadṛṣṭi*, he endows the first two levels with either the cosmogonic or the concealing function depending on the context.[107] However that may be, the main point here, as we have already emphasized, is not to confuse the creation of the universe in general and the manifestation of the everyday practical activity within it, which correspond to these functions. It can be said that the former is more important from the ontological perspective and the latter from

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[102] Rastogi N. The Philosophy of Sādhanā: With Special Reference to the Trika Philosophy of Kashmir. Albany, 1990, p. 48.

[103] Abhinavagupta, in his brief commentary on Utpaladeva's *kārikā*, virtually acknowledges that fact, but the overall meaning of the respective fragment remains unclear. See ĪPV ad ĪPK III 2.10.

[104] ĪPK III 2.4.

[105] In the literature, these types are sometimes swapped, and the first is called the second, but that does not change the essence of the matter.

[106] However, it is claimed that they have *māyīya-mala*, unlike *vijñānākalas*, which adds no clarity. See ĪPV ad ĪPK III 2.9.

[107] Nemec The Two Pratyabhijñā Theories of Error… pp. 241–245.

the teleological one, as without it, the self-recognition of *Īśvara* would be impossible, whereas it would not be possible without the universe. We must, however, return to the issues of primary importance for this study.

II. 2. The Consequences of Transferring the Distinction Between the Reality of Knowledge and Its Truth to the Ontological Level When Reality is Equated With Knowledge

Now is the time to remember that the universal subject in the Pratyabhijñā doctrine is identical to consciousness and is reality as such, which necessarily implies the virtual equation of reality with knowledge. Accordingly, in these conditions, the distinction between the reality of knowledge and its truth transferred to the ontological level should have some specific consequences. Indeed, it is one thing to distinguish them within the framework of a dualistic ontology, as, from our perspective, the followers of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and Śaiva Siddhānta do — who, however, proceed from the difference between the reality of an object and its appearance and even aspire to justify it with the help of the same *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. It is another thing to distinguish them within the framework of a nondualistic ontology that reduces the reality of an object to the appearance identical to the universal subject.[108] Thus, if we take the latter approach, it will turn out that not only the reality of knowledge will not be identical with its truth at the epistemological level but reality as such will not be identical with truth as such. Of course, provided that knowledge stands for reality here, as someone may try to distinguish reality from truth while neither reducing reality to knowledge nor distinguishing the reality of knowledge from its truth — such theories, though, would have nothing to do with Indian philosophy.

Accordingly, as we have already noted, the universal subject in the Pratyabhijñā does not merely become an object for himself insofar as it becomes a cognition but literally becomes an object through a cognition while remaining himself — which, however, does not prevent him from additionally cognizing objects purely epistemologically. All this is in full accordance with the well-known aphorism of the *Śivasūtra*, which states that knowledge itself is bondage,[109] or, in other words, that the very knowledge that is the only reality and truth is the error as well. But if reality as such is identical to knowledge but, at the same time, is not identical to truth, it turns out that error is then identical to truth, and this cannot but look absurd, at least from a purely epistemological and formal logical perspective. Indeed, even if we distinguish the reality of knowledge from its truth, at the level of pure epistemology, we still simply make judgments that some object is true and real, whereas some other object is real but false. But we have no need to identify truth and falsity since pure epistemology does not allow us to equate reality as such with knowledge having both these attributes.

Even so, the identification of falsity and truth in the Pratyabhijñā's ontology is indeed a necessary consequence of its basic principles, and we must make an effort to understand its meaning. Half the job, though, has already been done in the previous section. Thus, if we admit that objects at the *parāpara* level are true, at the level of everyday practical life, those very objects will act as false. This is precisely the *bhedābhedavāda* of Utpaladeva, which he also formulates in terms

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[108] See ĪPK I 5.2.
[109] ŚS 1.2.

of the identity-in-difference of the internal and the external, using the analogy of a canvas and a painting,[110] and which Abhinavagupta explained by resorting to the sophisticated theory of reflections in a mirror that does not require reflected objects. We cannot dwell on these theories here and will confine ourselves to pointing out that Utpaladeva applies the notion of *upādhi*, employing which Indian philosophers usually try to explain the essential identity of the unitary consciousness with its multiple manifestations, from which it has nevertheless to also be distinguished. In the case of the Pratyabhijñā, however, this notion serves to explain the identity of true objects that are undifferentiated from the universal subject and their false manifestations as allegedly different from him. That is why Utpaladeva emphasizes that the appearance of objects as external to the subject is only an accessory ontological status of the objects identical to him.[111] Accordingly, from all that, it can be concluded that the essence of the matter comes down to emphasizing the following fact: the objects of everyday practical life, albeit being completely real, do not add anything to the true objects, given that they are their false manifestations. In other words, they act as a kind of adjunct without addition. Moreover, it cannot be even said that they make the universe dynamic, as the latter is not similar to the world of Platonic ideas but is constituted by manifestations of various *śaktis* of the universal subject. That is why Abhinavagupta emphasizes that the *parāpara* level consists not only of universals but also of individual substances,[112] while Utpaladeva draws our attention to the fact that even the production of the most ordinary pot is a cosmogonic act.[113] As for why erroneous objects are real at all, that, from the Pratyabhijñā's perspective, is just a brute fact based on the false self-concealment of *Īśvara*, i.e., the will of the universal subject that permanently contains everything.[114] Hence, again, it follows that, despite all their practical significance, their ultimate purpose is to serve as a means of his self-recognition.

All this can be clarified by returning to the analogy with an illusionist. Taking into account the above, the entire sphere of everyday practical life can be compared with a trick accomplished by the universal subject for the sake of false self-concealment for subsequent self-recognition. However, given that self-concealment is false, self-recognition, which requires it as a precondition, can also be considered only erroneous. Indeed, the content of self-recognition is the unity of the universal subject, the limited subject, and objects, and it is primordial and permanent. Accordingly, it can be broken only deliberately and artificially, which, nevertheless, *Īśvara* actually does in the form of the manifestation of everyday practical activity. Abhinavagupta points out that by doing so, he accomplishes something impossible from an ordinary perspective, namely denies himself while remaining himself.[115] Hence, in turn, it follows that his self-recognition is only part of this trick, as he suggests himself cognizing something *ab initio* known but artificially disguised. It thus differs from the usual recognition of an object, as the latter can hardly be deliberately distorted only in order to be controllably recognized later: we will either always remember our trick or forget about it

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[110] ĪPK II 3.15–16.

[111] ĪPK I 8.5.

[112] ĪPV ad ĪPK IV 7.

[113] ŚDVṛ ad ŚD 1.22.

[114] Therefore, from the Pratyabhijñā's perspective, there is no ground for the distinction between manifestation and creation. The former would be impossible without the subject, and the second without the permanent identity of the subject and objects.

[115] ĪPV ad ĪPK II 3.17.

and thus will fail in both cases. In contrast, the universal subject is capable of forgetting and knowing himself simultaneously. Objects in this perspective serve as props and can only be considered true as such. The only thing to keep in mind in this regard is that they will remain real even if they are cognized erroneously, i.e., not as elements of the trick but as something more than that, and, moreover, they can still be epistemologically true even in that case. The meaning of the trick lies precisely in this. Therefore, the absence of the two truths doctrine in the Pratyabhijñā is not a defect, as some believe,[116] but the norm. The main thing here is not to forget that the identification of truth and error can make sense only after distinguishing the reality of knowledge and its truth at the epistemological level. Indeed, critics of this identification do not take into account the fact that it would be absurd if they were not distinguished and can hardly have a significance of its own at all — provided, of course, that we do not strive to reduce the truth to an error and thereby claim that truth does not exist at all. Therefore, it may even serve as an additional argument in favor of the fact that the Pratyabhijñā is a paradigm case of strong disjunctivism.

In this way, the overall meaning of this universal trick is that its false content, albeit being completely real, adds nothing to the true objects that are its elements but, at the same time, misleads the victims of the trick. As for the illusionist, he remains untouched by this illusion because he knows the secret of the trick and performs it. That is basically the essence of any trick, but there remains one difficulty, namely that the illusionist and the victims of the trick must be identical in the case under consideration, and so the former must both fall into and not fall into the illusion. To explain this peculiarity, it is necessary to consider arguably the most difficult point of the entire Pratyabhijñā doctrine.

II. 3. Why the Pratyabhijñā Considers the Limited Subject Sentient

All that we said above will be necessary for us to answer the following complicated question. The ontology under consideration assumes that, in the absence of alternatives, the universal subject himself acts as a victim of his own universal trick, which means that he performs all actions, including in the sphere of everyday practical life, say, makes pots.[117] However, Utpaladeva, towards the end of his *kārikā*, clearly claims that the very limited subject that is immersed in this practical life is actually an object.[118] On the other hand, Abhinavagupta systematically emphasizes that it should considered sentient, even given all that. Accordingly, a question arises whether there is a hopeless contradiction in these two requirements, and if there is none, how to reconcile them. Let us note from the outset that the former peculiarity is not something new to Indian philosophy. Thus, the same Advaita Vedānta stresses that the limited subject is an odd combination of heterogeneous elements — consciousness, mind, and body — all the more odd because the latter two elements, from its perspective, as well as from the perspective of any Brahmanic or tantric philosophical school, are mere objects. However, this issue becomes more acute for the Pratyabhijñā as it proceeds from the assumption that even such a subject is completely real.

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[116] See Mishra K. Kashmir Śaivism… p. 219; Mishra A. A Discussion on the Concept of Advaita (Non-Dualism) in the Light of Śānkara Vedānta and Kāśmīra Śaivism. Journal of East-West Thought, No. 3, Vol. 12, 2022, p. 44.

[117] See ĪPK II 4.9.

[118] ĪPK III 1.9.

At first glance, the answer to it is on the surface. We have just found out that the identity between subject and objects in the Pratyabhijñā doctrine must be primordial and permanent. Accordingly, everything seems to be very simple: the limited subject can be identical to the universal subject even while being an object since any object is identical to it. However, such an answer does not solve the problem but only aggravates it. Indeed, the identity in question is a necessary condition for the identity between the universal and the limited subject but not sufficient because, otherwise, there would be a reason to call all objects without distinction sentient. However, the exact opposite is true: according to the doctrine of the unification of cognitions and taking into account other considerations, the identity of the subject and objects in the Pratyabhijñā implies that the human body, mind, psyche, etc., are basically mere insentient objects like stones and jars. This means that when Abhinavagupta says that the limited subject should be characterized as sentient, he means that it must be considered as such in contrast to the objects in a stricter sense of the term. That adds no clarity, and one of the 11th-century commentators of Abhinavagupta, Yogarāja, even admitted that it is basically impossible to draw the distinction in question.[119]

So, can it really be true that the Pratyabhijñā is not capable of justifying the commonplace everyday difference between sentient subjects and insentient objects? Let us not rush to answer this question in the affirmative and try to understand what Abhinavagupta means. He gives two main arguments in favor of his thesis. The first is that insofar as everyday objects, which are supposedly differentiated from the universal subject, are cognized, that from which they are erroneously differentiated must also be considered a subject, even though it remains an object.[120] The second comes down to the fact that, according to the *svataḥ prakāśa* principle, a specific object must be perceived by a specific subject or subjects, which requires considering the latter both sentient and limited, i.e., falsely conscious.[121] These arguments by themselves do not give us much, as they merely emphasize the necessity of some cognizing object, so to say, which must be considered sentient, even though it is falsely sentient. They do not explain why that should be so, and the appeal to the requirement that the limited subject must be completely real could only strengthen this paradox. So, as it looks, the identity of error and truth is simply postulated in this context, and the whole proposed argument proves to be highly vulnerable since at least a stone, jar, human body, or even mind are specific objects, whereas the limited subject is something obscure in itself. Moreover, it is assumed here that the latter cognizes objects while being an object itself, but can that even occur at one and the same ontological level?

It should be noted from the outset that the Pratyabhijñā's answer to the latter question is strictly negative. The limited subject, though it can erroneously cognize everyday objects, is incapable of doing this independently, i.e., as an object — even if it is identical to the mind. Otherwise, it would cease to be an object and become a full-fledged subject, and the basic nondualism could thus not even be admitted.[122] It should be borne in mind here that the Pratyabhijñā neither posits the limited subject in the Hegelian manner for the subsequent superseding the opposition between it and the universal subject nor postulates it as an independent illusory entity, as Advaita Vedānta does. Accordingly, Utpaladeva emphasizes that the same

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[119] PSVi ad PS 8.

[120] ĪPV ad ĪPK I 4.8.

[121] ĪPV ad ĪPK II 3.1–2.

[122] See ĪPV ad ĪPK I 1.3; ĪPV ad ĪPK III 1.9.

ontological cause — *māyā śakti,* which can only belong to *Īśvara* himself — is responsible for the manifestation of both objects of everyday cognition and the limited subject.[123] Hence it follows that, from the Pratyabhijñā's perspective, the limited subject is reduced to two components: the objective aspect, which can be the body, mind, *prāṇa,* and void,[124] and *māyā śakti* of the universal subject. In particular, Utpaladeva explicitly indicates that pasu literally consists of *māyā.*[125] Such an ontology leaves room neither for the Western or even classical Indian concept of the soul[126] nor for the possibility for the limited subject to be transcendent to its own body independently, in the spirit of Descartes or Kant. Indeed, if it is implied that it must be among the objects of everyday cognition, and the latter, in turn, are understood as false manifestations of the objects identical to the universal subject, it becomes impossible for it to have an independent self-awareness even as an object, since the latter, in that case, would have to be some independent substance, and the nondualistic ontology excludes this.

But if that is the case, it turns out that the limited subject and its body or mind are, after all, not one and the same, as, on the one hand, the latter are something coarser than *māyā śakti* and, on the other, must perform special functions compared to rocks or trees. A certain dualism thus must remain. To clarify this point, it is important not to lose sight of the following nuance. The Pratyabhijñā doctrine differs from both Western and Oriental philosophy in the following respect. According to it, *māyā śakti,* in its concealing role, first manifests objects allegedly differentiated from the subject and only then additionally forms the limited subject based on the objective components thus created. This implies that all objects of the everyday world, without exception, constitute a unitary causal continuum in the form of *māyā śakti* itself.[127] In other words, even though a body or a mind performs some special functions, this is so only because the same can be said about a stone or a tree. On the other hand, from the Pratyabhijñā's perspective, those doctrines that do not take into account the first level of this illusion and focus only on the second inevitably fall into dualism, even if they claim to be nondualistic. This is so because they can only emphasize that the limited subject is identical to the body, mind, or something else and draw various philosophical conclusions from that, but are still forced to admit one or another additional substance or a set thereof in order to explain the supposedly independent causal role of these and other objects. Abhinavagupta explains this in the context of exposing the fallacies of Sāṅkhya and Buddhism, which, from his perspective, ignore *pauruṣa ajñāna* and allow only *bauddha ajñāna,* even though the second level of ignorance presupposes the first.[128] It is noteworthy, though, that all this virtually applies to absolutely any philosophical, religious, or scientific doctrine, regardless of its ontological, ethical, and other content, even if it does not raise the question of liberation from saṃsāra at all,

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[123] ĪPK III 1.8.

[124] *Prāṇa* includes such phenomena as the psyche, vital energy, etc., while the void (*śūnya*) is an aspect of the limited subject in the state of deep sleep. The latter, from Kashmir Shaivism's perspective, is also an object, contrary to the world-denying philosophers who appeal to it.

[125] ŚDVṛ ad ŚD 1.41cd–43.

[126] Even though the doctrine of *karma* presupposes transmigration, in the case of Kashmir Shaivism, it is not a self-contanied soul that is reborn but the universal subject himself.

[127] See ĪPVad ĪPK II 4.9.

[128] Ratié I. Le Soi… pp. 550–551.

which makes Kashmir Shaivism a unique teaching that goes beyond both Western and Oriental philosophy.

Well, let us admit that the limited subject in the Pratyabhijñā is reduced to *māyā śakti*. How can that help answer the initial question of why it must be considered sentient? In fact, pointing out this identity not only can help answer it but is apparently the only way to do that. At this point, it is necessary to remember that *māyā śakti* is not some abstraction or an independent substance but an attribute of the universal subject. And since it is unique and inherent, this, in turn, implies that *māyā śakti* should be understood as the universal subject himself in its form. Accordingly, given the identity under consideration, it turns out that the limited subject is simply the universal subject in the form of *māyā śakti*. This definition does justice to all three identities: between the limited subject and *māyā śakti*, between *māyā śakti* and the universal subject, and between the limited and universal subject. Taking all this into account, it is not surprising that the limited subject in the Pratyabhijñā is characterized as *śūnya pramātā*[129] or *māyā pramātā*, i.e., the "inexistent subject" or "*māyā*-reduced subject", respectively. These characteristics indicate precisely that it does not exist in itself, is reduced to *māyā śakti,* and is thus identical to the universal subject, being sentient just like he is. It goes without saying that this organic unity would not be possible without the ontological identity of error and truth discussed in the previous section.

To clarify this point, it is pertinent to refer to the second main claim of strong disjunctivism. It states that the introspective appearance of a false object, while being completely real, does not exist either before or after its invalidation.[130] If we transfer this principle to the ontological level to explain the unity under consideration, it will apply not to a false object but to the self-awareness of the limited subject. In other words, the self-awareness of the limited subject, while being completely real, does not exist. However, this fact will be further complicated by the identity of error and truth peculiar to the Pratyabhijñā. Thus, given that reality for it is reduced to the universal subject, the principle will be as follows: the self-awareness of the limited subject, albeit identical to the consciousness of the universal subject, does not exist. And it will remain only to add that, with all that said, it will be *māyā śakti*, i.e., the universal subject in the form of the latter. This *śakti*, in turn, will be responsible both for the manifestation of the limited subject and for the operating of the objective conditions it has to live in.[131]

In this way, the limited subject in the Pratyabhijñā is something more than a mere object only because it is identical to the universal subject in the form of *māyā śakti*. Such a status thereof suggests that, on the one hand, it can be considered sentient as regards the objects it cognizes even being an object itself, and, on the other, that its self-awareness is not independent of the universal subject. Besides, given that the reality of knowledge is not reduced to its truth, but the false ontological status of the subject is identical to his true status, the universal subject always remains both transcendent and immanent to objects and the limited subject alike. By reducing the latter to *māyā śakti*, Kashmir Shaivism acquires a highly noteworthy position in Indian philosophy. Thus, in terms of the ontological status of the *saṃsāra*-bound subject, all its schools can be conceived as two poles and the space between them. The first pole will be represented by Buddhism, which reduces

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[129] See ĪPV ad ĪPK II 3.1–2.

[130] Bandurin M. A. Strong and Weak Disjunctivism: A Short Comparative Essay. Vox. Философский журнал, No. 29, 2020, p. 67-E.

[131] ĪPK IV 9–10.

the limited subject to a discrete impersonal flow of *dharmas*, and materialism, which reduces it to the body but does not acknowledge *karma*. The second pole will be Kashmir Shaivism, which reduces it to *māyā śakti*. In between, there will be all the other schools, which can be divided into two main groups. The first will include dualistic teachings that explicitly admit the independent ontological status of the individual soul. The second will embrace doctrines emphasizing its illusory status as a virtually independent substance. It is in this polar opposition within this kind of reductionism that lies the much talked about similarity of the Pratyabhijñā with Buddhism.

It now remains for us only to answer the question of why self-recognition is necessary at all, given that the limited subject is always identical with the universal subject in the form of his own *māyā śakti*. And the only answer to it will be that the manifestations of *māyā śakti* include false egoity, which, albeit being an object, creates the illusion that the limited subject is, firstly, independent and, secondly, completely reduced to its objective components. But, it might be objected, it, after all, cannot do without identification with the body or other, more subtle, objects in any case. This is true, but as we have already noted, false egoity presupposes forgetting the fact that these objects cannot act independently. Thus, as is known, the entire Indian "soteriology" is based on exposing false egoity, which identifies the subject with a body and thereby condemns him to *saṃsāra*. The main cause here is usually considered the mind, of which the ego is the effect. The Pratyabhijñā, in turn, exposes not just the identification of the subject with objects but also a deeper illusion that these objects can act and serve as factors of bondage independently of *māyā śakti* in the first place. Moreover, it emphasizes that this entire causal continuum of everyday practical life in the form of the latter is merely a false ontological adjunct, in which happens virtually nothing that would not actually occur in the universe in the form of various *śaktis* of *Īśvara*. In this respect, Kashmir Shaivism differs radically from both typical Indian "soteriological" teachings and any forms of dualistic realism of the East and West — although emphasizing the reality of the everyday world brings it closer to the latter.

The differences, however, do not end there since they also concern the interpretation of the very nature of this false egoity. Thus, given that from the Pratyabhijñā's perspective, there is nothing in reality but the universal subject, his *śaktis*, and objects identical to him, false egoity can only be understood as an impure self-awareness of the universal subject himself.[132] And since it is a link between *māyā śakti* and particular bodies, minds, and other objective components of the limited subject, it turns out that its instances constitute an unlimited multiplicity, each of which being a false self-awareness of the universal I.[133] Thus, we return once again to the ontological distinction between reality and truth on the one hand and the identity of truth and error on the other and have to add a final touch to our characterization of the self-awareness of the limited subject: the latter, albeit being completely real, does not exist, even having the status of the self-awareness of the universal subject because of its being his own *māyā śakti*. In other words, it cannot be independent simply because, being this *śakti*, it is capable of ontologically erroneous cognition of objects — otherwise, in particular, the body of each individual person would have an independent ego, and the basic nondualism could thus not even be admitted.

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[132] See ĪPV ad ĪPK IV 9–10. With certain reservations, it can even be said that the purpose of the Pratyabhijñā is to bring about the recognition of the fact that false egoity is the universal subject himself. See ĪPK II 3.17.

[133] That is why the universal subject is also called the true ego. See Dyczkowski M. A Journey in the World of the Tantras. Varanasi, 2004, pp. 29–49.

Besides, this fact, on the one hand, serves as an additional argument in favor of why the limited subject can be considered sentient only by virtue of its identity with *māyā śakti* and, on the other, explains why it is not just a specific individual but also both a universal and a collective entity. Indeed, although the limited subject is, first of all, a universal, false egoity forces it to manifest itself in the form of countless specific individuals, each of which, not existing, not having free will, and not possessing independent self-awareness, will nevertheless believe that they conduct their actions themselves and are responsible for them,[134] — because there is nothing else left for them due to the fact that they necessarily do not realize that their own body, mind, and psyche act only as *māyā śakti* and other *śaktis* of the universal subject to whom they are identical and so attribute their activities to themselves.[135] And, again, this description is only figurative, as it is rather *māyā śakti* itself that attributes its activities to objects in the form of specific individuals, as it were disguising as each of them — with completely real and often epistemologically true consequences, it must be added.[136] Indeed, Utpaladeva points out that the sole purpose of *māyā śakti* in its concealing role is to obstruct the self-awareness of the universal subject.[137] But since it always remains an aspect thereof, it can be said that it erroneously conceals both the universal subject and itself.

It is noteworthy that to explain the nature of false egoity, Abhinavagupta again resorts to the example of epistemological error. Thus, he claims that taking the body, mind, etc., for yourself is like confusing a shell with a piece of silver.[138] This means that the same components can be distinguished in this ontological error. Thus, as we remember, the shell, in this case, acts as the locus of the error and a "silver-in-the-shell" as its content. Accordingly, in the case of false egoity, a "subject-in-the-body" will be the content of the error, and a particular body will be its locus. Besides, the body will actually be known as a mere object even in these circumstances. And given that, as we have found out, only the universal subject can take a body for himself in each case, the invalidation of this error will affect only the false "subject" or, in other words, the allegedly independent self-awareness of the limited subject. However, considering that the universal subject is thus identified with all bodies, minds, etc., at once, giving the error a universal scale, and all these objects actually act as his own *śaktis*, this invalidation will not in any way disturb the course of the everyday practical life, leading only to the self-recognition of the universal subject in the limited subject. Therefore, when philosophers of Kashmir Shaivism speak of the "extinction" of egoity, they do not mean specific individuals as different from the rest but all of them at once and regardless of what happens to each of them in the world.[139] According to this ontology, the manifestation of the everyday practical life of cognizing subjects occurs as an error deliberately made by the universal subject for the purpose of self-recognition, and so it cannot stop when he

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[134] That is, it will be doomed to be active and attached to the results of its "own" actions. And since these actions can also be good and altruistic, false egoity should not be confused with egoism. Altruism will also be an expression of false egoity to the extent that an altruist is subject to this illusion.

[135] See ĪPK IV 9–10; ĪPV ad ĪPK II 4.9; PH 12; SK 6–7.

[136] So that this does not look like justifying any deeds of limited subjects, it should be understood that *māyā śakti* is an error in any case, i.e., something negative.

[137] ĪPK IV 9–10.

[138] TS VIII.

[139] See, e.g., SK 9.

reaches this goal but, on the contrary, must continue. It is in this sense that self-recognition can be understood as the invalidation of false egoity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it makes sense to briefly summarize the most general ontological principles of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine, taking into account the identified epistemological implications thereof. From its perspective, the only reality is the absolutely independent, omnipotent, and omniscient universal subject, who is identical to consciousness, is spoken of in the nondualistic Agamas, and can be neither proved nor refuted or taken on faith. However, since it also acknowledges the reality of the limited subject, it cannot but proceed from their primordial and permanent identity. Besides, it has to admit that it is this identity that seems problematic by the standards of everyday cognition. The latter peculiarity, according to it, is explained by the fact that the universal subject ostensibly becomes limited through false self-concealment with the sole purpose of recognizing himself in this status. From our perspective, such a statement of the problem would be impossible without an implicit distinction between the reality of knowledge and its truth, which, as we found out in our previous studies, is a unique feature of strong disjunctivism. If that were not so, the Pratyabhijñā philosophers would not be able to emphasize the reality of the false limited subject and the world of everyday practical life in which it is immersed, which, however, they constantly do, actively opposing their doctrine to Advaita Vedānta. However, since they virtually equated reality with knowledge, the transferring of this distinction from the epistemological to the ontological level resulted in a kind of reduction of the lower to the higher, namely to the explanation of the everyday world as permanent manifestations of various *śaktis* of the universal subject on the one hand and the emphasis on the identity-in-difference of truth and error on the other. All this allowed them to characterize the limited subject as sentient, despite all its falsity and objectness, and to interpret the grossest manifestation of the self-concealment — false egoity — not just as a "root of evil" as other "soteriological" schools of Indian philosophy do, but as an instrument of both bondage and liberation.

Utpaladeva's rational approach, however, required appealing primarily to the more generally accepted doctrines of classical Indian philosophy, of which the principles of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and *svataḥ prakāśa* are especially noteworthy. The uncompromising interpretation of the latter principle allowed him not only to take the first step towards explaining the everyday world as actual manifestations of various powers of the universal subject due to the necessity of unifying cognitions but also to demonstrate the impossibility of the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of the latter, thereby reliably justifying the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine, which is another epistemological implication of his philosophy. Such a complex and comprehensive approach to ontology compels one to basically agree with B. N. Pandit, who emphasized that this philosophical school is as theistic as Vaisnavism, as rationalistic as Buddhism, as nondualistic as Vedānta, as realistic as Sāṅkhya, as practice-focused as Mīmāṃsā, and as logical as Nyāya.[140] That is, perhaps, basically all that can be said about its ontology without going too much beyond the epistemological approach.

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[140] Pandit B. N. Aspects of Kashmir Śaivism. Srinagar, 1977, p. 109.

Abbreviations

BP	*Bodhapañcadaśikā* of Abhinavagupta
ĪPK	*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* of Utlapadeva
ĪPKVṛ	*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikāvṛtti* of Utlapadeva
ĪPV	*Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* of Abhinavagupta
PH	*Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* of Kṣemarāja
PS	*Paramārthasāra* of Abhinavagupta
PSVi	*Paramārthasāravivṛti* of Yogarāja
ŚD	*Śivadṛṣṭi* of Somananda
ŚDVṛ	*Śivadṛṣṭivṛtti* of Utpaladeva
ŚS	*Śivasūtra* of Vasugupta
ŚSV	*Śivasūtravimarśinī* of Kṣemarāja
SSĀ	*Śivastotrāvalī* of Utpaladeva
SK	*Spandakārikā* of Vasugupta (Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa?)
SKVi	*Spandakārikāvivṛti* of Rājānaka Rāma
TĀ	*Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta
TS	*Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta

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