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SCRIPTURE AND THE HERMENEUTICS OF LIBERATION IN EARLY ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

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Dedication

To the memory of Steve Collins

याज्ञवल्क्येति होवाच, यत्रायं पुरुषो प्रियते। किमेनं न जहातीति। नामेति।
अनन्तं वै नामानन्ता विश्वे देवः। अनन्तमेव स तेन लोकं जयति।
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .......................................................................................................................... vii

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 1

Liberation and the Highest Good ......................................................................................................... 1
Mahā-Vākyā ......................................................................................................................................... 9
Characters, Dates, and Archive ........................................................................................................... 15
Vedic Theology .................................................................................................................................. 17
Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta as Purva- and Uttara-Mīmāṃsā ..................................................................... 33
The History of Ideas ............................................................................................................................ 38
Structure and Chapter Overview ......................................................................................................... 46
Note on the Title. ................................................................................................................................. 53

PART ONE: CIRCUMSCRIBING THE FIELD OF VEDIC THEOLOGY

Chapter One: Rethinking the Idea of Scripture in Vedic Theology ............................................. 55

Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 55
The Classical Theory of Śruti ................................................................................................................. 56
Śruti in Early Vedic Theology ............................................................................................................... 61
Śabara’s Understanding of Śruti ........................................................................................................... 64
From Śruti to Śāstra... Śruti .................................................................................................................. 72
The Impersonal Nature of the Veda ....................................................................................................... 82
Śruti-Sāstra as Perception ................................................................................................................. 86
Śruti in Other Brāhmanical Traditions ................................................................................................. 89
Śaṅkara’s Understanding of Śruti ........................................................................................................ 92

Chapter Two: The Mīmāṃsā Model of Puruṣārtha and the Role of Scripture. .......................... 98

Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 98
Dharma and Puruṣārtha ....................................................................................................................... 99
Dharma and Ritual Causality ............................................................................................................... 105
The Doctrine of Apūrva and the Temporal Unity of the Ritual ......................................................... 112
The Idea of Mediate Causality ......................................................................................................... 118
Bhāvanā, Ākāṅkṣā, and the Structural Unity of Sacrifice and Text ................................................... 120
Mīmāṃsā Classification of Vedic Texts and the Upaniṣads .............................................................. 125
Language and Prābhākara-Mīmāṃsā .............................................................................................. 136
Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 143

PART TWO: LIBERATION AND THE HIGHEST GOOD IN PRE-ŚAṄKARA VEDIC THEOLOGY

Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 145

Chapter Three: The Highest Good and Liberation in Pre-Śaṅkara Mīmāṃsā... 153

iv
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heaven as Liberation</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberation in Kumārila’s Thought: Introduction</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumārila’s First Account of Liberation</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumārila’s Second Account of Liberation</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Four: Liberation in the Brahma-Sūtra</strong></td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Remarks: Methodology</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Doctrine of Vidyā/Upāsana</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahma-Vidyā</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Practice of Meditation on Brahman</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attaining Brahman</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Self in Liberation</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahma-Sūtra, Liberation, and the Two Great Upaniṣads</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Five: The Doctrine of Prasaṅkhyāna</strong></td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Soteriology of Bhāratprapaṇca</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prasaṅkhyāna in Pātanjalayoga-Sāstra</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Vedāntic Prasaṃkhyāna</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “Another Cognition” Meditation</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part Three: Dharma, Scripture, and the Good of Man in Early Advaita Vedānta**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Six: General Characteristics of Dharma and the Path of Disengagement</strong></td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma and the Validity of the Veda</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dharma of Engagement and Disengagement</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śaṅkara’s Psychology and the Human Condition</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire and Qualification</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Attainments of Dharma</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning the World of the Gods</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahman as Brahmā, the Ultimate Attainment of Meditation</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Seven: Liberation, Ritual, and the Arising of Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Self and the Nature of Liberation</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of Ritual and Vividiśā</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arising of Knowledge</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Model of Causality</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Eight: You Are That, All Right, We Just Need to Figure Out What: Vedānta-Vākya and the Identity Statements</strong></td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Upaniṣads as Para- and Apara-vidyā</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Chapter Nine: Liberation and the Inquiry into Brahman

- The Dharma of Disengagement and Desire .......................................................... 438
- The Process of Knowing Brahman ..................................................................... 443
- Sravana and Manana in the Upadeśa-Sāhasrī ................................................... 459
- Nididhyāsana and Parisanākyāna ..................................................................... 469
- Parisanākyāna: A Second Avenue .................................................................... 477
- The Purpose of Parisanākyāna and the Nature of Liberation ............................. 480

### Part Four: From Identity Statements to Mahā-Vākyas

#### Chapter Ten: Sarvañātman and the Doctrine of Upaniṣadic Mahā-Vākyas

- Introduction and a Historical Note ................................................................. 487
- Mahā-Vākyas in Mīmāṃsā ............................................................................. 494
- Sarvañātman and the Preliminaries ................................................................ 499
- The Vedāntic Mahā-Vākyas .......................................................................... 507
- Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 517

### Epilogue............................................................................................................. 520

### Bibliography ..................................................................................................... 525

- Abbreviations .................................................................................................... 525
- List of Primary Sources ...................................................................................... 528
- Editions, Translations, and Secondary Literature ............................................ 533
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INTRODUCTION

“Where female parrots shut in cages at the door discuss intrinsic and extrinsic validity, debate whether action or the unborn Lord is the giver of results, and deliberate if the world is permanent or impermanent, know that place to be the abode of the learned Maṇḍana.”

Liberation and the Highest Good

There is an odd, curious textual structure in the commentary of Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda (ca. 650-800 C.E.) on the first chapter of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad. The commentary contains one of Śaṅkara’s most comprehensive accounts of the doctrine of liberation, mokṣa—we may for the time being understand it simply as freedom from the cycle of transmigration or embodiment—which is here explicitly called “the highest good,” paraṁ śreyas. This account, however, is broken in two parts, one consisting of the full introduction to the commentary, and another one which is attached to a rather pedestrian gloss on the first chapter of the Upaniṣad. One almost gets the sense that Śaṅkara did not say all that he wanted to say on the topic of liberation and its attainment in the Introduction, and having performed duly his rather tedious commentarial duty on that part of the Upaniṣad whose topic would have hardly piqued his interest—cosmic relations between phonetics and ritual—he decides to conclude with an extemporaneous smash, as the “real Upaniṣadic deal” begins only in the second chapter: “We present now this deliberation for the purpose of distinguishing between knowledge and action: Is the highest good attained solely

1 svataḥ pramāṇaṁ parataḥ pramāṇaṁ kīrāṅganā yatra giraṁ giranti |
dvārastha-nīḍāntara-sanniruddhā jānīhi tan maṇḍana-panḍitaukaḥ ||
phala-pradaṁ karma phala-prado ‘jaḥ kīrāṅganā yatra giraṁ giranti |
dvārastha-nīḍāntara-sanniruddhā jānīhi tan maṇḍana-panḍitaukaḥ ||
jagad dhruvaṁ syāj jagad adhruvaṁ syāt kīrāṅganā yatra giraṁ giranti |
dvārastha-nīḍāntara-sanniruddhā jānīhi tan maṇḍana-panḍitaukaḥ. ŚDV 8.6.8.
through action; or, through action assisted by knowledge; or, rather, through knowledge and action together; or, through knowledge assisted by action; or, through knowledge alone?”

The two comments together, odd in their structure, can hardly be seen as odd in meaning. Looking carefully at Śaṅkara’s Upaniṣadic commentaries, one would inevitably notice that he generally begins all of them by discussing knowledge of Brahman or the Self as the means of liberation, which he commonly calls “the highest good,” not in isolation, but specifically contraposed to ritual action and its combination with “knowledge,” that is, meditation on Brahman. The introductions to his Upaniṣadic commentaries univocally announce that, to Śaṅkara’s mind, all that matters in the Upaniṣads, all that they are about, is liberation, the highest human good, and that it is necessary to clarify that the sole means of liberation is knowledge of Brahman. “Sole” is not an emphatic here nor a general negation, but specifically conveys that knowledge of Brahman is the means of liberation without the aid of ritual and meditation.

What is, nevertheless, exceptional in this quirky introduction is Śaṅkara’s thoroughness on the topic of liberation, through which he does two things that I would like to emphasize here. First, he implicitly tells us what constitutes, to his mind and for his time, the pertinent and full scope of the discourse on liberation; to put it differently, he selects his interlocutors, and points out which accounts of liberation he finds deserving of attention and rebuttal. Second, through contrast with his interlocutors, he shows how his understanding of liberation is an absolute novelty for this pertinent scope at this point in history.

Saving thorough analysis for chapters three through five, I now note that in the Introduction and Conclusion to the first chapter of Taittirīya-Bhāṣya, Śaṅkara presents and

---

2 atraitac cintyate vidyā-karmanor vivekārtham – kīṁ karmabhyāṁ eva kevalebhyaḥ paraṁ śreyāḥ, uta vidyā- saṁvyapekṣebhyaḥ, āhosvid vidyā-karmabhyāṁ saṁhatēbhyaṁ, vidyāyā vā karmāpekṣāyāḥ, uta kevalāyā eva vidyāyā iti. TUBh 1.11.4, VI.46-7.
refutes several accounts of liberation, all of which concern the question of the combination of knowledge and action, and most of which can be directly associated with Vedic theologians who were his close predecessors or contemporaries: (1) liberation is just the state of being the Self, attained by the performance of ritual, a doctrine whose direct advocate was Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and which was identified as such by Śaṅkara’s immediate student and commentator Sureśvara; (2) liberation is “heaven,” svarga, a state of unexcelled felicity in the hereafter, attained by the performance of ritual, a doctrine that can be traced to the Mīmāṁsakas Śabara and Kumārila; or alternatively by ritual aided by knowledge, which was in some way, shape or form the doctrine of various Vedāntins and Mīmāṁsakas; (3) liberation is attained by a “stream” of ritual and knowledge, that is, by the practice of continual meditation, a doctrine that was advocated by the proponents of the extremely influential prasaṅkhyāna-vāda (on which more later), prominent among whom were Bhartṛprapaṇca and Śaṅkara’s contemporary Maṇḍana Miśra; (4) liberation involved going to a different place in the hereafter, a doctrine found in many Upaniṣads, but, importantly, the doctrine of liberation of the Brahma-Sūtra itself.

The accounts that Śaṅkara presents in the Taittirīya-Bhāṣya were, in fact, part of a single discourse, because their proponents had what I will later call a shared sphere of commitment. To anticipate briefly, these were all accounts of “Vedic theologians,” that is, of Mīmāṁsakas and Vedāntins who shared a very specific notional intersection that set them apart from their intellectual peers, namely the conviction that the Vedas were the sole authority on the questions of dharma—which we may for the time being translate fairly imprecisely as appropriate ritual and social behavior—and liberation; that, in other words, questions of liberation can be debated solely through recognizing scripture as a form of argument. To paraphrase one of the most orthodox among them, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa: everything that pertains to dharma and liberation has its
origin in the Veda, and wherever it may be found, it must be adjudicated through the Veda. Indeed, a careful study would show that throughout his writings Śaṅkara generally does not debate liberation with Buddhists, Sāṅkhya, Naiyāyikas, and the like, for the simple reason that they do not belong to this shared sphere of commitment that accepts the Vedas not only as valid, but as conclusive argument. To his mind, the proper discourse on liberation was absolutely restricted to the Vedas. More generally, when Vedic theologians did debate others on liberation, as Kumārila did, for instance, debate Śāṅkhyas, it was when these others made a “Vedic claim,” that is, tried to justify their accounts by an appeal to the Vedas.

We should note not only the pertinent, but also the full scope of the discourse. Śaṅkara talks about liberation as the highest good, and the highest good in Vedic theology was a wider set of values that included not only liberation, but “heaven” or svarga as well. Modern scholars tend to see the two as strikingly different, indeed incommensurable values. Johannes Bronkhorst had in recent years, for instance, attacked the commonly accepted idea of an original unity of Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta through the assumption that from the very beginning Mīmāṁsā was all about heaven and none about liberation, whereas Vedānta was all about liberation and none about heaven. Nothing could be farther from the truth in Śaṅkara’s eyes: he read the Mīmāṁsā doctrine of heaven as a competing account of liberation that deserved due rebuttal. In fact, throughout the history of Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta, svarga and mokṣa were often defined in the same terms, niratiśaya-prīti/sukha/ānanda, the highest happiness. The scope of the notion of the highest good spanned both unsurpassed happiness and total absence of suffering, and svarga and mokṣa were sides of a single coin: while everyone accepted the second, many were skeptical about the possibility of the first.

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3 atra yāvad dharma-mokṣa-sambandhi tad veda-prabhavam. TV 1.3.2, I.166.
4 Bronkhorst 2007b.
The second thing that I want to extricate from the *Taittirīya-Bhāṣya* comment is that Śaṅkara in this discourse on liberation stood alone in claiming that liberation was achieved simply through knowledge of Brahman, knowledge *qua* knowledge, attained when the teachings of the Upaniṣads were fully understood. Such doctrine was a novel phenomenon in this shared sphere of commitment that I call Vedic theology. While already in the *Brahma-Sūtra* some Upaniṣadic texts were interpreted as deliberate fancy and classed under the rubric of symbolic meditations, but others as presenting factual ontological relations between Brahman on the one hand and the world and the Self on the other, there just wasn’t the notion that liberation could follow simply on understanding what those Upaniṣadic texts that present real ontological relations say. While such understanding was obviously necessary, it was just a prerequisite for proper meditation on Brahman, and it was not liberating knowledge. Even Śaṅkara’s contemporary and intellectual next-of-kin Maṇḍana Miśra affirmed that the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads had to be followed by meditation on Brahman, because mere intellectual understanding does not remove ignorance. So far as can be ascertained from the available textual evidence, all Vedāntins in Śaṅkara’s context would have held that meditation on Brahman that is facilitated by the Upaniṣads, and generally accompanied by Vedic ritual, was the characteristically Vedāntic soteriological practice.

This is not to say that ideas about liberation that is a result *just* of intellectual understanding were not present in Śaṅkara’s wider intellectual context. Liberation was a “hot topic” of the day, and Śaṅkara’s doctrine contraposed to the rest of Vedic theology was, ultimately, derivative on the old divide between *sāṅkhya* and *yoga*, not the two philosophical schools that we associate with Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Patañjali, but the two general approaches to soteriology within the Hindu traditions. In his groundbreaking paper “The Meaning of Sāṅkhya
and Yoga,” Franklin Edgerton had shown that *sāṅkhya* and *yoga* in the early Indian history did not stand for any philosophical or metaphysical system, but for two distinct ways of conceptualizing salvation, *sāṅkhya* standing for the soteriological scheme which understands liberation as a result just of knowing a truth, knowing how things are, whereas *yoga* referring to the pursuit of liberation by some form of action or practice that is ultimately non-intellectual. This divide persisted in the philosophical Śāṅkhyā and Yoga, but Edgerton was right in concluding that Śaṅkara was as much an heir to *sāṅkhya* as was the *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*.\(^5\)

In the Vedic theology of his time, however, the systematic exegesis of the Vedas through commonly accepted canons of interpretation, Śaṅkara was somewhat of a maverick in claiming that liberation was a result just of knowing Brahman: whether or not the Mīmāṁsakas and Vedāntins who formed Śaṅkara’s intellectual context saw any value in knowing *qua* knowing, ultimately they all understood the pursuit of liberation as a form of *yoga* in which the soteriologically most significant element was non-intellectual. The first major argument of this dissertation, therefore, is that Śaṅkara’s interpretation of the Upaniṣads to the effect that liberation was a result just of knowing Brahman, knowing that is neither accompanied by ritual nor succeeded by meditation on Brahman, was a new thing in Vedic theology.

By developing this argument, my intention partly is to illuminate one important question that had intrigued students of Advaita Vedānta and Indian philosophy. The question concerns the proper understanding of Śaṅkara’s significance in Indian intellectual history. The significance I have in mind is not that of the received Śaṅkara, the Śaṅkara of the hagiographies and the monasteries; the royal Śaṅkara who rules India as a Śaṅkarācārya from his seats at the four cardinal points; the Śiva born to join forces with Kumārila and banish Buddhism from India; the

\(^5\) Edgerton 1924:34.
universalist Śaṅkara of Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, and Dr. Radhakrishnan; the Śaṅkara of the first feature film ever shot in Sanskrit; and that model Indian philosopher whose public image embodies and accommodates all things Sanskrit and, indeed, Hindu.

I do not have in mind the received, but rather the historical Śaṅkara, although the first must have at least in some respect been derivative on the second. What I have in mind, then, is the significance of that Śaṅkara of whom, to use the image pained by Allen Thrasher, thinkers “as acute as Sureśvara,” his own immediate students, thought so highly as to consider themselves belonging to his school, rather than the school of some earlier teacher.6 The question I intend to illumine, then, concerns the significance of Śaṅkara in terms of some beginnings, some novelties, in his own intellectual context. What was he, really, about?

The question of Śaṅkara’s significance has been asked by his most assiduous modern students. Sengaku Mayeda, for instance, proposed that Śaṅkara was not a “particularly original philosopher,” but rather a very bright commentator, as well as a “pre-eminent religious leader and a most successful religious teacher.”7 Mayeda was likely echoing Daniel Ingalls, who argued that what was original to Śaṅkara’s philosophy seems to have been the concept of Brahman without qualities; the other elements of his system were old, stated in various places, but the specific synthesis he made of them was “something quite new in the history of Indian philosophy.”8 For Allen Thrasher, on the other hand, there was no question that the philosophy of Śaṅkara’s Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya was highly original, even if as a synthesis: the proper question of Śaṅkara’s significance was to ascertain whether this philosophy presupposed

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6 Thrasher 1979:120.  
8 Ingalls 1952:12-3.
Maṇḍana Miśra’s *Brahma-Siddhi*, or it was, rather, the other way around. Whodunnit? Thrasher argued for the first, because,

> If the Brahma-Siddhi was written in ignorance of Śaṅkara’s works, and represents a current in pre-Śaṅkara Advaita, we must drastically reduce the usual estimate of Śaṅkara's originality. We must say that the commanding importance he has in the history of Vedānta, so great that all works before him except the Brahma-Sūtras themselves, the Gaudapāda-Kārikās, and possibly the BS, have disappeared, was due not to any newness in his ideas or his combination of ideas into a system, but to some other cause—perhaps to his zealous activity as an "evangelist" of Advaita Vedānta against the Buddhists, and the adherents of other systems within the Hindu fold, or to his activity in setting up *mathas* to carry on the tradition he followed.⁹

These accounts present a dichotomy of possibilities: Śaṅkara was either a great philosopher, even if not terribly original, or he was a religious leader and a teacher. I don’t doubt that he was most of this, although “pre-eminent religious leader” as an epithet for a man who was as elitist as they make them and who thought that there were very few deserving to be led directly by him sounds overly generous on the side of imagination.

Be that as it may, seeing his major significance either as a philosopher or a religious teacher, or as both, disregards the overwhelming bulk of his writings, or what he himself was most concerned with. My argument here is that Śaṅkara’s significance for his own context was that of a *theologian of liberation*; that, in other words, what astute intellectuals like Sureśvara found so appealing about him as to see themselves as members of his school was a *novel model of soteriological causality* that he developed and its formidable defense. This novel model said that liberation the highest human good was attained solely by knowledge *qua* knowledge, and that the competent aspirant after liberation did not need to practice ritual and meditation, indeed, that *he could not possibly* practice them if he was really qualified. While, as I said, this was not a novelty in the wider intellectual context, it was very much so in Vedic theology.

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⁹ Thrasher 1979:119.
In a sense, Daniel Ingalls had already recognized this, albeit implicitly, in his article “The Study of Śaṅkarācārya,” where his final word about Śaṅkara’s significance was that his novelty and original synthesis were “directed not so much against Buddhism, which is the traditional claim, as against the Mīmāṃsā and against schools of a more realistic Vedānta such as the Bhedābheda which flourished in Śaṅkara’s time.” Ingalls still thought of contribution mostly in terms of metaphysics, *ergo*, philosophy, but he rightly identified Śaṅkara’s interlocutors. My study takes Ingalls’s insight and extends it over the highest good.

The method through which I approach my study, on the other hand, on which more under the heading of “The History of Ideas,” turns illuminating this question into writing the history of the highest good in Vedic theology before and including Śaṅkara.

**Mahā-Vākya**

The principal objective of the dissertation, however, goes beyond this argument. When Śaṅkara says that liberation follows just by knowing Brahman, he thereby rejects not only meditation on Brahman, but also knowing Brahman as one would know any object. What he has in mind, rather, is *knowledge of a fact or a state of affairs*, specifically the fact of the Self—*oneself*, the agent of experience—*being Brahman*. Indeed, we will see that the doctrine of *prasaṅkhyaṇa* or meditation on the non-dual Brahman argued that such meditation was necessary precisely because it approached Brahman as an object, the scriptural knowledge of which was deemed insufficient because it was mediate—it was knowledge by description or analysis, to use Henri Bergson’s phraseology—and argued instead that such knowledge must be followed by direct realization, or knowledge by intuition. While Śaṅkara agreed generally with the intuition claim, he argued that the requisite intuition could not pertain to Brahman as an object—indeed, such a

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proposition was strictly impossible in a properly monistic ontology—but to a state of affairs that pertains to oneself, and, *eo ipso*, must be immediate, the knowledge of which was simply a matter of anamnesis, and would follow naturally once one had removed all possible identification points for the Self.

Liberation, then, the highest good, followed not upon meditation on Brahman or by knowing Brahman, but upon knowing that oneself was Brahman. Liberation followed, in other words, upon fully understanding the Upaniṣadic identity statements, statements such as *tat tvam asi*, “You are that,” of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.8.7), and *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*, “I am Brahman,” of the *Brhad-Āranyaka* (1.4.10), that identify Brahman with the individual Self as the cognitive agent. These identity statements are commonly called *mahā-vākyas* or “great statements” in scholarly literature, and the principal purpose of this dissertation is to investigate their origin as such, as *mahā-vākyas*, and to understand just what was so “great” about them.

Although *mahā-vākyas* are a prominent feature of the conceptual range of most students of Hinduism, Vedānta, and Indian philosophy, there is generally no scholarly account that attempts to trace their origin or properly understand their meaning. In terms of what *mahā-vākya* may mean, the scholarly use of the lexeme can be broken down into several varieties that represent a progressively shrinking scope. In Chapter Ten I will present this taxonomy in more detail, so it is sufficient here to simply lay it down and illustrate briefly.

There is, first, a tendency to label any short and in some sense important statement from the wider range of the Hindu canon, including books such as the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, as a *mahā-vākyya*. Thus, Richard H. Davis in his “The *Bhagavad Gita*: A Biography,” says that “Indian commentators often highlighted especially powerful statements in the *Gita* for special attention
as mahavakyas (great utterances).”\textsuperscript{11} The second practice is identical with the first, except that it delimits the scriptural scope to the Upaniṣads: any short and important statement in the Upaniṣads seems liable to be called a mahā-vākya. Thus, for instance, Chris Bartley calls the famous Taittirīya 2.1.1 statement that defines Brahman, satyaṁ jñānam anantam brahma, a mahā-vākya. As we will see in Chapter Ten, this was one of the statements that were explicitly not mahā-vākyas for Advaita Vedāntins.\textsuperscript{12}

These two scholarly practices are, with some notable exceptions, unjustified, insofar as they do not reflect any indigenous theory about, and use of, the term, but seem to follow a simple, if uninformed, logic: if it is short and important, call it a mahā-vākya. In this use, mahā-vākya shares much of the semantic range of the English word “mantra,” which is at times defined as “a word or phrase that is repeated often and that expresses someone’s basic belief.”\textsuperscript{13} Such mahā-vākyas do not concern us here.

The third practice properly identifies the mahā-vākyas with the Upaniṣadic identity statements in general, while the fourth is more specific, insofar as it concerns four such identity statements, associated with the four Vedas, the four monasteries allegedly established by Śaṅkara in the four cardinal points, and his four principal students. These four mahā-vākyas, with their corresponding Veda, sacred place in a cardinal direction and Śaṅkara’s student, are:

(1) praṇāṇam brahma, “Consciousness is Brahman,” in AiU 3.3 of the Rgveda → Puri → Padmapāda;
(2) ahaṁ brahmāsmi, “I am Brahman,” in BĀU 1.4.10 of the Yajurveda → Shringeri → Sureśvara;
(3) tat tvam asi, “You are that,” in the ChU 6.8.7 of the Sāmaveda → Dwaraka → Hastāmalaka;
(4) ayam ātmā brahma, “This Self is Brahman,” in MāU 2 of the Atharvaveda → Badrinath → Troṭaka.

\textsuperscript{11} Davis 2015: 99.
\textsuperscript{12} Bartley 1986:103, 105.
\textsuperscript{13} The definition is taken from Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary. I am thankful to Gary Tubb for pointing out this similarity of use to me.
We will see in Chapter Ten that the doctrine of four *mahā-vākyas* was associated with monastic Advaita Vedānta, that it was relatively a latecomer, and that as a subject of inquiry it properly belongs to religious history rather than the history of ideas.

As for the origin of the Upaniṣadic identity statements being called *mahā-vākyas*, the predominant scholarly practice either does not ask the question, or simply assumes that it was Śaṅkara himself who began such practice. This will also be evident from the review in Chapter Ten, but here we may quote Andrew Nicholson’s statement as fairly commonplace: “For instance, the eighth-century Advaita Vedāntin Śaṅkara dubbed four Upaniṣadic sentences as ‘great statements’ (*mahāvākyas*): ‘You are that’ (*tat tvam asi*), ‘I am Brahman’ (*ahāṁ brahmāsmi*), ‘This self is Brahman’ (*ayam ātmā brahma*), and ‘Brahman is consciousness (*prajñānaṁ brahma*).’”\(^{14}\) Śaṅkara is credited not only with introducing the practice of calling the Upaniṣadic identity statements *mahā-vākyas*, but with the singling out of four of them as well.

All things considered, very little is known about the Upaniṣadic identity statements in their being *mahā-vākyas*, “great statements,” and particularly unclear is what is so “great” about them. The most “extensive” dedicated study available is K. Satchidananda Murty’s *Revelation and Reason in Advaita Vedānta*, which has a ten-page chapter titled “Interpretation of *Mahāvākyas*,” a distillation that attempts to explain the details of the philosophy of language that are involved in the interpretation of the identity statements, but neither pursues the origin of the idea, nor attempts to understand its nuts and bolts.\(^{15}\)

What is even less widely known\(^{16}\) is the existence of what appears to have been another, different idea of *mahā-vākyas* in Indian intellectual history, one that developed in the school of

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\(^{14}\) Nicholson 2010:41.

\(^{15}\) Murty 1959:88-98.

\(^{16}\) And was so particularly before the groundbreaking work of Larry McCrea (2008).
Mīmāṁsā and was adopted as a term of art in the tradition of Sanskrit aesthetics that was influenced by Mīmāṁsā. In this use, mahā-vākyas literally meant a “great” statement, a long statement or sentence, an element of language whose range included anything from what we call a “paragraph” to a full book. All the three great pre-Śaṅkara Mīmāṁsakas knew about this idea, and while we will unravel its details later, it may be now worth our while for the purpose of contrast to look briefly at a relatively late definition of such mahā-vākyas in the Sāhitya-Darpaṇa of the 14th-century aesthetician Viśvanātha Kavirāja. A “great sentence” is a collection of sentences that are mutually related through fitness (yogyatā), syntactic expectancy or cohesion (ākāṅkṣā), and proximity (āsatti), in other words, a text. Viśvanātha’s examples of such “great sentences” are telling: the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, and Kālidāsa’s Raghu-Vaṁśa.\(^\text{17}\)

To put things in perspective, now, whereas the Advaita Vedānta mahā-vākyas were sentences of two or three words, the theory of literary criticism that was influenced by Mīmāṁsā classed under mahā-vākyas one of the longest epic poems in world literature. The Vaiṣṇava Vedāntin Jīva Gosvāmin went even further in claiming that the full Vedic corpus, which in his reckoning included the itihāsa-purāṇa literature, was one grand mahā-vākyas.\(^\text{18}\)

My argument with regard to mahā-vākyas is twofold, historical and conceptual. First, an explicit Advaita Vedānta notion of mahā-vākyas was not developed by Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara, in fact, used the lexeme only once in relation to the Upaniṣads, in his little-studied commentary on the Aitareya, and while it is clearly related to the knowledge that characteristically the Upaniṣadic identity statements provide—the understanding of oneself, the cognitive agent, being Brahman—and is used in the context of teaching, there is no explicit, underlying theory as to what constitutes a “great statement.” Śaṅkara otherwise did not have a preferred term for the identity

\(^{17}\) SD 2.1-2.

\(^{18}\) De 1961.
statements, and he tended to designate them metonymically, “*tat tvam asi* and the rest.”

Śaṅkara’s prominent students Sureśvara and Padmapāda did not talk about *mahā-vākyas* either, though one would have expected the first to do that in his *Naiṣkarmya-Siddhi*, which is a treatise solely concerned with the meaning of the Upaniṣadic identity statements.

An explicit *theory of mahā-vākyas*, of that feature in virtue of which the Upaniṣadic identity statements were “great,” is for the first time laid down by the 10th-century Advaitin Sarvajñātman. And while it remains entirely possible, or perhaps even probable, that there was a notion of *mahā-vākya* in monastic Advaita Vedānta before Sarvajñātman—in fact, with Sarvajñātman’s conceptual apparatus, one can fully reconstruct a *mahā-vākya* doctrine in Śaṅkara’s own works, as we shall see eventually—it is Sarvajñātman who provides that threshold or transformation of concept that excites so profoundly historians of ideas.

A transformation though it was, I will argue second, Sarvajñātman’s *theory of mahā-vākya* was directly and quite explicitly modeled on the Mīmāṁśā blueprint of *mahā-vākyas* as “long sentences.” What was great about the Upaniṣadic identity statements was that only through them the Upaniṣads as the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* section of the Veda, concerned solely with Brahman, could be read as a coherent, *single*, corpus. The proper and full understanding of *tat tvam asi* and *aham brahmāsmi*, on which was predicated the attainment of liberation the highest good, required the understanding of the two juxtaposed categories, Brahman and the Self, which were ellipses that were fully defined in various Upaniṣadic texts, and separately explained further in individual passages. The identity statements stood at the top of a textual hierarchy that was linked through relations of tight cohesion, a *texture*, that obtained finality of meaning solely through them, and would unravel without them. The Upaniṣadic identity statements, in other words, were *only formally short*, and could not be read and understood without reading and
understanding the Upaniṣadic corpus, which corpus, on its part, would be merely a sum of discontinuous passages without them at the top. *Tat tvam asi* and *ahaṁ brahmāsmi* were *mahā-vākyas,* “great statements,” because they were the Upaniṣads.

**Characters, Dates, and Archive**

The network of this study through which several Vedāntins and Mīmāṁsakas intersect is Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda. Like most dates in Indian history, we do not know when he was born or when he died, and all that can be said with some degree of certainty is that he lived sometime between 650 and 800 C.E.¹⁹ The precise dates are not, however, as important for the kind of intellectual history that I want to do here as is relative chronology. That is, it does not matter that much just when Śaṅkara was born and when he died, as much as it matters which philosophers and Vedic theologians were a significant part of his intellectual context, and which were positively and negatively influenced by him. What is known from the perspective of relative chronology, thus, is that Śaṅkara lived sometime between 650 and 800 C.E., but after Śabara,

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¹⁹ The scholarship on Śaṅkara’s dates is vast, and good overviews of the major arguments are available in Nakamura (1983:48-89), Pande (1994:41-54), and Harimoto (2006). Several methods have been used for dating Śaṅkara. One is the explicit attribution of dates to him in later works: in fact, the most common dates of Śaṅkara’s birth and death that we find in scholarly literature were proposed based on a short manuscript of an unknown title, which says that Śaṅkara was born in the year 710 of the Śaka era and died in 742, which is equivalent to 788 and 820 C.E. Several other works repeat these dates, none of which, however, is earlier than the 16th century. Another method is based on pursuing what is known from other sources about the flourishing of cities that Śaṅkara mentions in his works. Hajime Nakamura, however, had shown that in referring to names of specific cities, Śaṅkara was just following a customary practice, and that his referring to such places was not related to their contemporary significance (1983:59-62). Yet another dating approach is through the attempt to locate historically three kings that Śaṅkara mentions in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra* 4.3.5—Balavarman, Jayasirīha, and Kṛṣṇagupta—under the assumption that they were his contemporaries. From these names, and based on South Indian political history, Kengo Harimoto had proposed that Śaṅkara likely wrote his *Brahma-Sūtra* commentary sometime between 756 and 772 C.E. (Harimoto 2006). Finally, there is the method of relative chronology, which places him between philosophers and theologians whose dates are better known, and who were roughly contemporaneous with him. This method is still very imprecise and places him anywhere from 650 to 800 C.E. (Harimoto 2006:87-93) but for our purposes it is the only method relevant.
Bhartprapañca, Kumārila, and Prabhākara, and before his own students Sureśvara and Padmapāda, as well as Sarvajñātman.\(^{20}\)

The only unclear detail relevant for this study in terms of intellectual history is Śaṅkara’s precise relationship with the other great Advaitin of his time, Maṇḍana Miśra, and the best available evidence suggests that the two were contemporaries, but that Maṇḍana’s *Brahma-Siddhi* presupposed Śaṅkara’s *Brahma-Sūtra* commentary.\(^{21}\) Given that Sarvajñātman can be dated to the second half of the tenth century C.E.\(^{22}\), the study examines scripture and the highest good in Vedic theology beginning with the canonical theological texts, the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* and the *Brahma-Sūtra*, and up to the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century C.E.

The primary archive of the study consists of: (1) Śaṅkara’s authentic works, that is, his independent treatise *Upadeśa-Sāhasrī* and the commentaries on the *Brahma-Sūtra*, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and the principal Upaniṣads (*Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka, Taิตirīya, Chāndogya, Aitareya, Īśā, Kaṭha, Muṇḍaka, Praśna*, and two on *Kena*);\(^{23}\) (2) The works of the three great pre-Śaṅkara Mīmāṃsakas, that is, Śabara’s *Bhāṣya* on the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, Kumārila’s *Śloka-Vārttika* and *Tantra-Vārttika*, and Prabhākara’s *Bṛhatī*; (3) Maṇḍana Miśra’s *Brahma-Siddhi*; (4) The works

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\(^{20}\) On the dates of the three Mīmāṃsakas, see Kataoka 2011b:20-24, who gives 500-560 C.E. for Śabara, 600-650 C.E. for Kumārila, and 620-680 for Prabhākara. Krasser 2012 quite convincingly suggests earlier dates, the middle of the sixth century for Kumārila and, by implication, earlier for Śabara. Bhartprapañca’s date of 550 C.E. suggested by Nakamura (2004:131) is as good as any pre-Śaṅkara date. Padmapāda and Sureśvara, being Śaṅkara’s students, are his younger contemporaries, and their dates are tied to him. This study does not address the long-debated question of the identity of Sureśvara with Maṇḍana Miśra: as much as the present author would fancy this identity to have been real, the assumption here is that the two were different persons.

\(^{21}\) Thrasher 1979.

\(^{22}\) See Eswaran Nampoothiry’s Introduction to the *Pramāṇa-Lakṣāna*, p. ix-xiii; Kocmarek 1985:7-11; Potter 435-6.

\(^{23}\) The issue of the authenticity of Śaṅkara’s works has been a very productive question in Sanskrit studies, and the above list reflects the good work of Paul Hacker (1995:41-56), Daniel Ingalls (1952), and Sengaku Mayeda (1965a; 1965b; 1967). The authenticity of two commentaries is still uncertain, on the *Pātañjala-Yoga-Sāstra* (the *Yoga-Sūtra* with the commentary which is commonly attributed to Vyāsa), and on the *Āgama-Sāstra* of Gaudapāda that includes the *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad*; the two are not consulted here. Although relatively recently arguments have been made in favor of the authenticity of the treatises *Viveka-Cūdamani* (Grimes 2004) and *Paṇcikaranam* (Sundaresan 2002), the two contain common Advaita concepts and expressions that are absent in Śaṅkara’s authentic works and, eo ipso, later.
of Śaṅkara’s immediate students, Padmapāda’s Pañca-Pādika and Sureśvara’s Naiṣkarmya-Siddhi, Brhad-Āranyaka-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya-Vārttika, and Taṭṭiritīya-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya-Vārttika; and (5) Sarvajñatman’s Saṅkṣepa-Śārīraka and Pañca-Prakriyā. For Chapter Four dedicated to liberation in the Brahma-Sūtra, I will rely on several post-Śaṅkara commentaries insofar as they are useful for reconstructing the Brahma-Sūtra doctrine. For Chapter Five that deals with the doctrine of prasankhyāna meditation and Bhartṛprapaṇca’s soteriology, I will refer to sections of Ānandagiri’s commentaries on Śaṅkara’s Brhad-Āranyaka-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya and Sureśvara’s Brhad-Āranyaka-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya-Vārttika. More on both in due course.

Vedic Theology

Throughout the dissertation I use the lexeme “Vedic theology,” and I speak about “Vedic theologians.” Lest the purpose of my project be misunderstood, under this and the next two headings I should like to clarify why I choose to talk about “theology,” what I mean under the term, and what kind of a project I am doing. There has been a growing trend in Hindu studies in recent years to make theology a legitimate field of inquiry, or simply to use the term without elaborate justifications, that involves two strands that should be untangled.25 On the one hand,

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24 I use the contested terms “Hindu” and “Hinduism” in regard to the premodern period without a sense of need for a lengthy justification. David Lorenzen’s essay “Who Invented Hinduism?” (2006:1-36) should, for the intellectually honest reader, end the debate about the European construction of “Hinduism,” or about any construction, for that matter, that seeks to locate the origins of Hinduism, both the name and the game, to use Wendy Doniger’s witty turn of phrase (2014:3), in the colonial encounter. Particularly instructive is Lorenzen’s location of the debate in “the tendency of many historians of modern India—especially those associated with the subaltern school—to adopt a postcolonialist perspective that privileges the British colonial period as the period in which almost all the major institutions of Indian society and politics were invented or constructed.” (p.36)

25 The sustained discourse on “Hindu theology” seems to originate with Catholic theologians working in India, particularly Richard de Smet (1916-1997, on whose life see Malkovsky 2000a), who had, for better or worse, influenced many modern students of Śaṅkara and Vedānta. The recognition of the theological nature of Vedānta seems to have become mainstream in academia with studies about Rāmānuja rather than Śaṅkara, for instance van Buitenen’s edition and translation of Rāmānuja’s Vedārtha-Saṅgṛaha (1956), John Carman’s model study The Theology of Rāmānuja (1974), Eric J. Lott’s God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja (1976), and Julius Lipner’s The Face of Truth (1986). However, it is the work of Francis Clooney, with which I will engage more in this heading, that is largely responsible for Hindu theology becoming both a common mode of discourse and
there is a claim that understanding many traditions and individuals in the Hindu context is facilitated by treating them as theological and as theologians, respectively. This is commonly accompanied by an attempt to show that theology in such cases fits the bill better than philosophy; in other words, that many influential Hindu intellectuals, “such as Kumārilabhaṭṭa, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Abhinava, or Vijñānabhikṣu,” to refer to Jonathan Edelmann’s list, were not philosophers and that it is misleading to call them that, given how the terms “philosophy” and “philosophers” are presently used.  

The justification for the claim is simple: philosophy is an inquiry that does not assume the authority of religious texts, whereas theology, although itself a reasoned inquiry, accepts the epistemic validity of texts and tradition; theology is scriptural interpretation, philosophy is not. Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and their intellectual collocutors mostly argue about the correct meaning of texts, and use texts as arguments; ergo, they are not philosophers in the present sense of the term.

Francis Clooney traces the discourse that treats the likes of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja as philosophers to the colonial encounter and the position of subordination of theology relative to science and philosophy in post-enlightenment Europe: there was a need on the part of Indian intellectuals to present Indian thought in general as philosophical, thus, “respectable,” and avoid the stigma of dogmatism that theology carried with it. Today, “the views of theology in relation to science and philosophy are more nuanced and less heated,” and to continue avoiding Hindu theology is to continue reading “a problem indigenous to European history into an Indian context.”

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26 Edelman 2013:430.
On the other hand, there is a plea for “Hindu theology” as a way of doing theology today, commonly described by the proponents as “faith seeking understanding” and as “soteriological transformation.” Francis Clooney is again useful for articulating the presuppositions of such understanding of theology: it is an inquiry which is carried on by believers who allow their belief to remain an explicit and influential factor in their research, analysis and writing. Believing theologians are (usually) members of believing communities, and have those communities as their primary audiences … With their communities, they believe in some transcendent (perhaps supernatural) reality, the possibility of and (usually fact of) a normative revelation, and in the need to make practical decisions and life choices which have a bearing on salvation. Theologians do their work with an awareness of and concern for these beliefs, and with a desire to defend and preserve them, even if at one or another moment they may have to question, recontextualize and finally reformulate them in modes of discourse quite different from those already familiar to the community.28

Anantanad Rambachan describes such an undertaking as one which “articulates a personal interpretation and understanding of the tradition,” and Jonathan Edelmann says that modern Hindu theologians in the Euro-American academic context are those “for whom the academic study of Hinduism is part of their personal and religious development, and who believe their articulations of Hinduism are answerable to the academic community, as well as the specific Hindu communities and traditions of which they are part.”29 Such theology may also be practiced by scholars with commitments in one tradition who try to understand another, thus making themselves liable to a tension between “vulnerability to truth” found in the other tradition, and “loyalty to truth” of one's own tradition. This is the plea for “comparative theology.”30

There are, thus, several (non-exclusive) senses in which “Hindu theology” may be understood or practiced: an academic undertaking towards understanding, without commitments, that finds the categories of theology useful (and more so than other categories, particularly those

29 Rambachan 2006:4; Edelmann 2013:428.
30 Clooney 1993:5-6.
of philosophy) for describing an intellectual, a tradition, a notion or practice, etc.; an undertaking towards understanding, with commitments, which may or may not be situated within the academic context. Edelmann and Kiyokazu Okita call the two “first- and second-order theology,” respectively. Both may be done by scholars or practitioners from within or without the tradition, or from within another tradition, with or without explicit comparative aspirations, if the field of inquiry is specifically theological.

Under the heading on “The History of Ideas,” I will articulate why my project is not an essay in theology, although its main characters are throughout called “theologians.” Here I want to clarify in what sense I use “theology,” what method may be employed in delimiting the scope of “Hindu theology” relative to Indian philosophy, and why Vedic theology (which may be taken as a subset of Hindu) rather than Indian philosophy. Very briefly, my claim is that “Hindu theology” is a welcome intervention, but that the binaries theology or philosophy and theologian or philosopher are less helpful. I suggest, rather, that it is more useful to do two things: first, consider carefully modes of discourse and kinds of arguments that an individual or a tradition may develop and put forward; second, related to the first, be mindful of what I call the shared sphere of commitment, constituted by the context or scope in which the different kinds of arguments can be advanced in virtue of shared presuppositions. I do not discuss Hindu theology as a contemporary practice, because that serves little purpose for my project.

Resisting essential definitions, there are several senses in which one may talk about Hindu theology as a mode of discourse, revolving around questions of subject and method. One is that of exegesis. Now, it is said that “theology” is obliquely applicable even in regard to religions or systems which are not focused on God (theos), but have a transcendent point of

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31 Edelamann 2013; Okita 2014.
reference, such as Buddhism. Taking the “transcendent point of reference” in the Hindu context to stand for ontological reals (including causal relations) that are knowable solely from linguistic utterances (śabda), theology as exegesis is about ascertaining and understanding the explicit or implicit meaning of texts that concern such transcendent points of reference, by employing recognized canons of interpretation. Exegesis is different from general interpretation, not necessarily methodologically, but in terms of the character of its subject: although both may use the same tools, exegesis is concerned with ontological reals that are supersensible. As we know from Larry McCrea’s study of poetics in Medieval Kashmir, the Mīmāṃsā canons of sentence interpretation were thoroughly appropriated by Sanskrit alaṅkāra-śāstra; in other words, Mīmāṃsā and alaṅkāra-śāstra shared the methodology of interpretation. However, Mīmāṃsā was theology (that is, exegesis) in virtue of the character of its subject, real causal relations that are empirically unknowable, whereas literary criticism was not.

Let us further clarify this through comparing the two Hindu traditions that are typically represented as atheistic, Mīmāṃsā and Sāṅkhya, and see why the first qualifies as theology whereas the second doesn’t. Both Mīmāṃsā and Sāṅkhya delineated their unique scope as consisting of that which is supersensible. The Mīmāṃsaka Śabara famously said in his Bhāṣya that dharma concerns things past, present and future that are minute, hidden, or remote, thus supersensible. The Sāṅkhya-Kārikā likewise claimed that there are things which are real yet not immediately knowable, for a variety of reasons, such as excessive distance or proximity, sense impairment, inattention, minuteness, obstruction, covering, or mixture with other things in the

33 McCrea 2008.
34 MSSBh 1.1.2.
same category. Mīmāṁsā set its scope of reals, specifically causal relations, as those which are knowable solely from the Veda (codanā), that is, are not traceable inferentially, but must be discerned “from hearing.” Sāṅkhya, on the other hand, accepting that there are things which are knowable solely from scripture, claimed that its characteristic objects of inquiry, the “non-manifest” (avyakta) or prime matter (mūla-prakṛti), and the Self (puruṣa), were both knowable from inference that proceeds through analogical reasoning (sāmānyato-drṣṭa), and did not bother with scriptural objects at all.

Thus, while both Mīmāṁsā and Sāṅkhya posit a thing with a “transcendent point of reference,” the scope of the first was theological because of being knowable solely from linguistic utterances, whereas the scope of the second was philosophical, or properly metaphysical. This distinction, however, obtains not through the content or the subject of the inquiry—in both cases it is a supersensible reality—but through the method: the first proceeds through interpretation of linguistic utterances, while the second through analogical reasoning that pursues causal relations and inferred reals from data that is empirically knowable.

We can, thus, state the general principle that theology is exegesis, interpretation of texts about ontological reals, of whatever kind, if they involve a transcendent point of reference, that is, if they are understood as supersensible. This is an important restriction that is not commonly made, yet is required in order to properly circumscribe the field of Hindu theology. Clooney, for

35 SK 7.
36 SK 6: “That which is not immediately knowable and is not established even by that [analogical inference] is established through valid testimony;” tasmād api cāsiddhaṁ parokṣaṁ āptāgaṁāt siddham. Gauḍapāda’s instances of such things: “Indra is the king of the gods; there is the land of the Northern Kurus; there are nymphs in heaven;” tasmād api cāsiddhaṁ parokṣaṁ āptāgaṁāt siddhaṁ yathendro deva-rājaḥ uttarāḥ kuravaḥ svarge ‘psarasa iti parokṣaṁ āpta-vacanāḥ siddhaṁ.
37 “The knowledge of supersensible things is got through inference from analogical reasoning;” sāmānyatas tu drṣṭād atīndriyaḥ prasiddhir anumāṇāt; SK 6. Gauḍapāda thereon: “Matter and the Self, being supersensible, are established through inference from analogical reasoning;” pradhāna-puruṣāv atīndriyaḥ sāmānyato drṣṭenānumāṇena sādhyete.
instance, argues that Advaita Vedānta is theology and not philosophy because it involves an extension of the Mīmāṁsā canons of interpretation over the Upaniṣads, but just from that it would not be clear how, for instance, Indian jurisprudence, which also developed as an extension of the same Mīmāṁsā principles, is not theological. While Clooney proceeds to characterize Advaita Vedānta as theology in the sense of “faith seeking understanding,” there is this more basic sense in which all forms of Vedānta, as well as the textual religious traditions of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, most of which were associated with Vedānta, had something in common with Mīmāṁsā: the commitment to a transcendent point of reference. We may call this exegetical or scriptural theology, a mode of discourse that is concerned with truths about reals knowable solely from linguistic utterances, whose understanding requires interpretation, and which uses characteristically theological arguments. While it is the method that is determinative here, the restriction of the subject is important, because without it the method would not amount to theology.

Let me now give an instance of what I call “characteristically theological arguments,” drawn from a dispute between Bādarāyaṇa and Jaimini as a paradigmatic Vedāntin and Mīmāṁsaka, respectively. In the fourth section of the third chapter of the Brahma-Sūtra, there is a long discussion in which Bādarāyaṇa puts forward the claim that the Upaniṣadic meditations are the means of human good independent of Vedic sacrifices, and goes on to consider several Mīmāṁsā objections. The knockdown argument is given in sūtra 15: there is a Vedic text in the Brhad-Āranyaka from which it is evident that some Vedic folks do not marry, and thus cannot perform ritual because they have not lit the sacrificial fire that is presupposed on marrying, yet pursue the Self, that is, perform Upaniṣadic meditations; such could not be the case if meditation

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38 Clooney 1993.
was supererogatory on ritual. Further, the practice of lifelong celibacy is justified in the *Chāndogya*, which is an important point in the context because both Jaimini and Bādarāyaṇa are traditionally represented as Sāma-Vedins and, thus, custodians of the *Chāndogya*. Jaimini retorts: the *Chāndogya* mention of lifelong ascetics is just that, a mere mention that recognizes the fact of there being such poor fellas, but not an injunction that justifies what they are doing. There is another text, in fact, which condemns such lifelong celibacy. Bādarāyaṇa finally concludes: it is not just a mention, for two reasons: first, because there is “a direct statement of sameness,” that is, the lifelong celibate is listed along with the householder such that nothing really separates the two as good and bad; and second, there are cases of precedent in which Vedic existential statements are read as injunctions.

The argument illustrates perfectly well the theological mode of discourse that involves a *shared sphere of commitment* constituted by the acceptance of Vedic statements as reliable epistemic warrants, of recognized canons of interpretation, and of categories such as “injunction,” “mention,” “direct statement,” “Vedic precedent,” etc. Vedānta of all walks was chock-full of them. Such arguments were possible and made sense because of this shared sphere of commitment, and would be useless against Sāṅkhya, which had a technical term for the Vedic variety of bondage, *dākṣiṇaka* or the bondage respective to honoraria that one pays to Vedic priests, and against the Buddhists and Jains, who did not accept the Veda as a valid *pramāṇa* for any domain.

Taking the subject of theology not in the oblique sense of having a transcendent point of reference, but properly God, one can define Hindu theology as a discourse about such ideas as Brahman, Īśvara, Antaryāmin, Paramātman, Bhagavān, etc. There is, still, an important

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39 See SK 44 and commentaries.
distinction that must be drawn. While in virtue of the subject any kind of inquiry that is concerned with these notions and whatever is related to them—for instance, an appropriate aesthetics, cosmology, psychology, religious practice, a doctrine of the highest good—is theology, “God-talk,” this subject that is theos has historically in the West been a subject not only of theology, but of philosophy as well. That is, insofar as God was understood as the first principle, it was part of the discipline of metaphysics, quite independently from religious considerations or commitments.

Such was the case from early on, in Aristotle’s determination of metaphysics as the inquiry into the first principles of reality, more specifically the supersensible substances, and most specifically God the first mover and pure actuality, which keeps the world rolling as its final cause but is itself not liable to change, and is essentially non-transitive consciousness. In the Catholic tradition, the inquiry into God as the subject of philosophy came to be called “natural theology,” a properly philosophical discipline that takes its data from the world and pursues factual and possible causal relations through the light of natural reason, in the hope of arriving at the first principle. To quote Frederic Copleston on St. Thomas’ understanding of the domain of the two disciplines, “the fundamental difference between theology and philosophy does not lie in the difference of objects concretely considered.” The prominent philosopher of German Enlightenment Christian Wolff characterized this natural theology as “special metaphysics,” that is, the terminus of the metaphysical inquiry into Being in the most general sense of any possible thing. Wolff set three purposes for such natural theology: (1) to prove the existence of God; (2) to ascertain the essential attributes of God; and (3) to determine the things

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41 Copleston 1993b:313.
that are possible given God’s essential attributes. This is still the core of the study of philosophy of religion.

How may one go about distinguishing scriptural from philosophical theology, and from philosophy more generally, in the Hindu context? I suggest that we need to look again at the mode of discourse and the shared sphere of commitment. A line is drawn sometimes between Nyāya as rational theology, thus, properly philosophy, and Vedānta as “revealed” theology: indeed, the Naiyāyikas developed inferential proofs for the existence of God, whereas Vedāntins stuck to their guns and claimed that Brahman was knowable solely from the Upaniṣads. It is more instructive, however, to look at Vedānta and Sāṅkhya, since the second was not theological either through the subject or through the method (though, perhaps, it was so in origin): both traditions were primarily and originally concerned with first principles, the proper domain of metaphysics, whereas the philosophical theology of Nyāya did not really develop before the Buddhist challenge, and was, thus, more of an afterthought.

Now, along with the concern with first principles, Sāṅkhya and Vedānta also shared the general theory of causality, sat-kārya-vāda, the doctrine that the effect was not a new thing, but a transformation of the cause. They parted ways on two questions: first, the material cause for Sāṅkhya was prime matter, whereas for Vedānta it was Brahman, and the efficient cause for Sāṅkhya was the proximity of prime matter with the Self, whereas in Vedānta it was still Brahman; second, the first principles of Sāṅkhya were knowable through inference, as we saw above, whereas Brahman was knowable from the Upaniṣads. Thus, Sāṅkhya and Vedānta were at odds in terms of the pramāṇa appropriate for knowing the first principles, as well as the specifics of such first principles. Finally, Sāṅkhya was historically Vedānta’s main rival at the time of its

42 Hettche 2016.
codification in the *Brahma-Sūtra* (BS), and the bulk of the first two chapters of the BS consists of clarification of Vedāntic doctrines primarily in view of a Sāṅkhya challenge. Let us now pay some attention to the anti-Sāṅkhya arguments in the BS and see what kinds of reasoning they involve.

The BS opens with the definition of Brahman, “It is that from which come origination, etc.,” and immediately proceeds to affirm Brahman’s essential characteristics, consciousness and bliss, not directly, but through distinguishing Brahman from the first principles of Sāṅkhya, prime matter and the Self. The arguments are theological: Brahman is known from scripture, and a proposed first principle will not fit the bill if it does not have the characteristics of Brahman that are known from the Upaniṣads. Prime matter cannot be the first principle, because it does not pass this scriptural test. That is, in the Upaniṣads, specifically the beginning of the 6th chapter of the *Chāndogya*, it is said that the first principle which is Being, *sat*, reflected or visualized before creating the world: “And it thought to itself: ‘Let me become many. Let me propagate myself.’” The prime matter of Sāṅkhya is an insentient principle, it cannot reflect, and so it fails the scriptural test: it is *aśabdam*. Similar is the case with Brahman as bliss in *sūtra* 1.1.13, “That which is bliss abundant is Brahman, because of repetition.” This is a denial that the Sāṅkhyan individual Self is the reference of the *Taittirīya* text that describes five successively higher layers of personhood, culminating with the Self of bliss, because the Upaniṣad proceeds to repeat “bliss” explicitly in association with Brahman throughout its 2nd and 3rd chapters, and says how Brahman “gladdens” the individual Self. Thus, the argument is not that the first principle must be conscious and blissful because causality demands that, but that Brahman is presented as

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43 BS 1.1.3.
44 BS 1.1.5.
consciousness and bliss in the Upaniṣads, for which reason prime matter and the Self of Sāṅkhya cannot be the reference of “Brahman.”

Such arguments are what I consider characteristically theological arguments, driving home a point by an appeal to scripture, although the subject in this case—the first principle—was a proper subject of philosophy, that is, metaphysics. This specific argument was possible because Sāṅkhya had a stake in the Brahman-talk, unlike other metaphysics, through the presence of its first principles in the scriptural corpus: prakṛti and puruṣa are common in the later Upaniṣads, and even more so in the smṛti literature. There was, in other words, a shared sphere of commitment between the two traditions in the “Vedic community:” as Śaṅkara says, the good Vedic folks or śiṣṭas accept many Sāṅkhyan principles, and therefore it becomes imperative to state, for this community which obeys the force of scripture as arguments, just what in Sāṅkhya is not acceptable, and if found in scripture, requires interpretation.45

But Sāṅkhya was also an independent school with which Vedānta shared, as we just stated, the sat-kārya-vāda. It is in this context that we see characteristically philosophical reasoning on the part of Bādarāyaṇa. This reasoning is still theologically constrained, and expressly so: reasoning is inconclusive, and one never gets to avoid all undesirable consequences of a causal theory solely through reasoning.46 Yet, Bādarāyaṇa goes on to engage precisely in such reasoning, with the general claims that Brahman fits best the requirements of a first principle in virtue of its characteristics,47 that the competing first principles make little sense under our common understanding of causality, and that, when no satisfying arguments from reason are forthcoming, the Sāṅkhya notion of causality faces the same objections as Brahman.48

45 BSBh 2.1.3.
46 BS 2.1.11-12, 2.1.26.
47 BS 2.1.35.
48 BS 2.1.10, 2.1.28.
To illustrate, Bādarāyaṇa takes exception to the Sāṅkhya *sat-kārya-vāda* claim that the effect must share the characteristics of the cause. The Sāṅkhya opponent of the BS claimed that it was not possible for Brahman to be the material cause of the world, because the world the effect was radically different from Brahman the cause.\(^49\) The world is evidently insentient, impure, and full of suffering, whereas Brahman is defined as essentially sentient, pure, and bliss solid: it cannot be that the first is an effect of the second. Bādarāyaṇa’s reply was that precisely such cases of causal relations where the effect was radically different from the cause were in evidence.\(^50\) The commentators give several instances of such cases, most of which fail to impress—worms produced from honey, dung-beetle from dung, etc.—but two have intuitive appeal: the insentient hair that grows from a sentient body, and the insentient cobweb that a sentient spider produces. Such cases of empirically knowable causal relations, then, are proof enough that there is no such requirement that the effect be of the same nature as the cause. It must be real, *sat* or Being, and insofar as such is the case, Vedānta endorses *sat-kārya-vāda* equally with Sāṅkhya, but the effect has a surplus of characteristics beyond *sat* that are not shared with the cause. Brahman, further, is such a cause which does not need the intervention of another agent for its transformation: it is constitutionally such a thing which, left to its own internal devices, would transform into its product, without the external intervention of another thing, like milk which left to its own internal structure would transform into curd without the addition of whey.

Whether one finds the arguments compelling and sound or not, they are characteristically philosophical insofar as they endorse Sāṅkhya’s own game, *sāmānyato-drṣṭa-anumāna*, analogical reasoning from known to unknown causal relations in the light not of scripture but of

\(^{49}\) BS 2.1.4.
\(^{50}\) BS 2.1.6.
reason. Such arguments were possible, again, because of a shared sphere of commitment, the doctrine of sat-kārya-vāda. Bādarāyaṇa was explicit about it: charged by the Sāṅkhya opponent that his account of causality amounts to asat-kārya-vāda, he replies that his contention is not against the doctrine of sat-kārya-vāda, but just against the claim that the effect must be like the cause. Further, he was willing to engage the metaphysics outside sat-kārya-vāda such as Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Buddhism, because he had a larger shared sphere of commitment to the discourse of causality as such. This is the part of the BS where there are no topical passages referenced by the individual sūtras, because the context is such that arguments from scripture won’t fly. It is strictly a philosophical mode of discourse.

While its purpose was obviously not to advance original proofs about Brahman or ascertain Brahman’s peculiar characteristics—the Upaniṣads are the sole pramāṇa in that regard, and Vedāntins have never compromised with that—insofar as Brahman was sat, Being, early Vedāntins had a keen interest in engaging philosophically with other traditions. Śaṅkara himself bears witness to this fact: whenever the question of Being and non-Being presents itself in a text he is commenting on, he finds an occasion to advance his peculiar understanding of Being and argue against the several doctrines of asat-kārya-vāda, specifically Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and the Buddhist philosophies, solely on the grounds of reason, and he expressly claims that it follows not only from scripture, but inference as well, that the world was Being in the beginning. Vedānta, thus, endorsed philosophical reasoning and advanced characteristically philosophical arguments because it had a shared sphere of commitment to the discourse of causality through non-sectarian forms of argument.

51 BS 2.1.7.
Thus, in adjudicating whether something is theology or philosophy, one should look at the kinds of arguments that are made, and that will be largely dependent on the shared sphere of commitment. No matter what pramāṇa one assigns to a domain, when it comes to defending one’s position in a context of diverging presuppositions, specifically regarding doctrinal authority—when it comes to arguing how one’s understanding, for instance, of the first principles makes more sense than competing doctrines—there is no avenue for arguing, so long as argument is wanted, but for non-sectarian, and thus non-theological, forms of reasoning. Śaṅkara himself, in fact, was perfectly aware of this: under the BS section that contains the Vedāntic arguments against the Buddhist schools, he says at one point that the reality of ether is established from scriptural statements, specifically the Taittirīya claim that ether arose from the Self, “but for those who are opposed to the authority of scripture, it must be presented as inferable from the quality of sound.”

52 This is a typical case of the Śaṅkhyan smånyato-drśta-anumāna, inferring unknown causal relations and ontological reals from what is empirically available. On one occasion at least, Śaṅkara even exercised the classical Nyāya inferential argument for the existence of God, Īśvara, and its necessary attributes of omniscience and omnipotence.53

It makes little sense to describe such mode of discourse as theological under the aspect of “faith seeking understanding” either, because what is sought is not understanding, but vindication. One could belabor the point with many similar instances about other areas of philosophical inquiry, from Vedānta and other traditions, but that seems superfluous.54

Generally, apologetics was the origin of that mode of discourse in the Indian traditions which

52 vipratipannān prati tu ... anumeyatvarīn vaktavyam; BSBh 2.2.24, II.388.
53 KUVBh 3.1.
54 See, for instance, the work of Arnold (2005), Taber (2005), and McCrea (2013).
was characteristically philosophical. It required the development of non-sectarian forms of argument, such as the theory of pramāṇa, philosophy of language, and the method of prasaṅga or unwanted consequences of a thesis, in which specific issues such as the validity of scripture or the being of first principles could be debated across traditions with various doctrinal commitments.

This dissertation is concerned with that shared sphere of commitment constituted by the acceptance of Vedic statements as reliable epistemic warrants on all supersensible matters, and of the recognized canons of theological reasoning. I call this sphere “Vedic” rather than Hindu theology because it was restricted to the two Hindu schools whose specific concern were the Vedas: Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. Thus, by “Vedic” I do not mean “in the Vedas,” but “pertaining to the Vedas.” The specific topics that I investigate are scripture and the highest good, specifically scripture as the instrument of attaining the highest good, as they were discussed in the shared sphere of commitment. This, perhaps, bears repeating one more time: while the highest good and the epistemic validity of scripture and knowing from linguistic utterances were debated fiercely across traditions, my essay is not concerned with such debates, but solely with the sphere in which theological arguments based on the Vedic canon were a valid form of reasoning. It is for this reason that I treat my characters as “Vedic theologians.” Someone with a different objective may be justified in calling them philosophers: generally, we do not debate whether a Sartre was a philosopher or a novelist or a playwright etc. We look at the mode of discourse.

One final point. The fact that I talk about theology does not mean that we will not see many characteristically philosophical arguments. Śaṅkara, for instance, insisted that the attainment of liberation required both kinds of reasoning, theological and philosophical, śāstra
and yuktī, the first taking its data from scripture and the second from experience. The two modes of reasoning—and I insist that both were modes of reasoning, such that the common distinction between faith or revelation vs. reason is misleading—were embodied in the processes of śravaṇa and manana and sharply distinguished. As we will see in Chapter Nine, liberation was downright impossible without philosophical reasoning, and such reasoning would be indistinguishable from what is properly Indian philosophy, except that it served an ultimately theological purpose: full understanding of the scriptural truths. But, in many cases the two were so intimately related that separating them would be at our own peril. While the theological mode of discourse helps us in identifying the shared sphere of commitment and facilitates nomenclature, I will approach this sphere holistically. Larry McCrea is fully justified in claiming that, at least in Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, philosophical issues and matters of scriptural interpretation are “inextricably bound up together in manifold and complex ways, and any attempt to write the history of the discipline must strive to take account of the full range of internal and external factors that shape and constrain changes in the field.”⁵⁵

Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta as Pūrva- and Uttara-Mīmāṃsā

My large thesis in the dissertation, as I stated in the beginning, is that the Vedāntic idea of mahā-vākya was developed by Sarvajñātman on a Mīmāṃsā model: indeed, that understanding what mahā-vākya was about is facilitated by appreciating its Mīmāṃsā background. In the previous section, further, I claimed that there was such a thing as “Vedic theology,” in which the two schools of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta formed a unique field, distinct from the other Hindu traditions. Since the question of the unity of the two schools has received some scholarly attention in recent

⁵⁵ 2013:141-2.
years, I should like to clarify here in what sense I take “Vedic theology” to have been a unique field.

It is well-known that Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta are two systems of interpretation of the Vedas, concerned with ritual and Brahman respectively. They are, thus, commonly called *karma-mīmāṃsā* and *brahma-mīmāṃsā*, an inquiry into ritual and Brahman, codified in the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* and the *Brahma-Sūtra*. Likely already by the time of Śaṅkara, they were also known as the “prior” and the “subsequent” inquiry, *pūrva-mīmāṃsā* and *uttara-mīmāṃsā*. The precise nature of the *pūrva-uttara* relationship is open to some conjecture, but two possibilities are noteworthy. Hajime Nakamura made the sensible suggestion that Vedānta was posterior to Mīmāṃsā in the sense that “the Vedānta Mīmāṃsā presupposed the ritual Mīmāṃsā as a precondition. The ritual Mīmāṃsā can be set up without necessarily presupposing the Vedānta Mīmāṃsā, but the Vedānta Mīmāṃsā, on the contrary, from the first assumes the ritual Mīmāṃsā as a precondition.” Nakamura’s suggestion has an intuitive appeal, because understanding the BS is impossible without a good grip on principles of interpretation that can be learned only from the MS: the BS assumes a lot.

Another valuable suggestion has been made by Asko Parpola, who proposed that the names of the two disciplines had come from the names, or rather headings, of the two parts of

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56 There is no need to review here the full literature on the history of the two schools: an exhaustive overview and bibliography can be had from Nakamura 1983, particularly 369-447; Parpola 1981 and 1994; Bronkhorst 2007b; and Aklujkar 2010. Nakamura’s second volume (2004) also has a lot of relevant material.
57 See Nakamura 1983:409-412. Nakamura’s two volumes are still the most exhaustive and reliable one-stop shop source for the history of early Vedānta.
59 In his critique to Śaṅkara’s *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, Bhāskara says something along similar lines: taking stock of two claims of Śaṅkara’s, that the inquiry into Brahman is not consequent on the inquiry into ritual, and that some Upaniṣadic meditations combine with ritual but some are just about Brahman, he says that without the inquiry into ritual one could not possibly know which Upaniṣadic passages combine and which do not so as to make the distinction. Even in that negative sense, then, the inquiry into Brahman presupposes the prior *mīmāṃsā*.
one single work called *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra*. That is, initially the two *sūtra* compositions were two parts of a single *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra*, a first (*pūrva*) and a second (*uttara*) part respectively, and the present MS and BS as well as the two disciplines have evolved from the titles. Parpola makes a strong case for his claim, and his studies are the most thorough engagement with the early history of the two *mīmāṁsās*, and the best historical explanation put forward so far.60

In any case, whether the MS and the BS were initially a single work or two distinct but closely related works, it is difficult to read them side by side without the impression that they belonged to a closely shared intellectual milieu. Johannes Bronkhorst, however, claimed relatively recently that the view according to which Vedānta was in the beginning inseparably linked to *pūrva-mīmāṁsā* contradicts some facts.61 Namely, the tradition of Mīmāṁsā up to and including Śabara and Prabhākara shows no awareness of liberation. “Śabara’s *Bhāṣya* deals with Vedic ritual, which as a rule leads to heaven.”62 Vedānta, on the other hand, “has, presumably from its beginning, been about liberation through knowledge of Brahma.”63 If the two were one

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60 The outline of Parpola’s argument goes something like this. There are in Sanskrit literature several works that are divided in two parts, *pūrva* and *uttara*, and a systematic practice of doing so in the *Sāma-Veda*: for instance, the *Jaiminiya Grhya-Sūtra* has a *pūrva* and an *uttara/apara* part. Further, there is clearly the possibility that Jaimini had written a *Brahma-Sūtra* himself, which would have been utilized and replaced by Bādarāyaṇa: Sureśvara had, in fact, ascribed the BS to Jaimini. While the Sureśvara argument has been put forward by several scholars in support of an earlier Jaimini BS, Parpola to his credit shows how reworking someone else’s *sūtra* composition was a common practice in the early post-Vedic period: if Bādarāyaṇa had used and replaced Jaimini’s work, he would not have been the first to do such a thing. Next, it is well-known that the MS and BS quote several Vedic scholars or teachers, including Jaimini and Bādarāyaṇa, numerous times, but an analysis of these quotations would show that Bādarāyaṇa is later than Jaimini and had reworked his BS. The brevity of the present BS also supports its later date, as the *Śrāuta-Sūtras* tend to abbreviate when taking material from another *Śrāuta-Sūtra*. Finally, the BS clearly refers to the MS five times, using the phrase *tad uktam*, “that has already been explained.” The rest of Parpola’s work is a highly instructive analysis of the teacher quotations in the two *Sūtras*, which suggests that Jaimini was a central character in both, and that “Bādarāyaṇa evidently is a teacher who has intruded into the Mīmāṁsāsūtra after its original composition.” See Parpola 1981 and 1994. Unfortunately, Parpola’s work is still unfinished.

61 Bronkhorst has presented his argument in several writings, but its fullest incarnation is in his edited volume *Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta: Interaction and Continuity* (2007b).


in the beginning, where did liberation in early Mīmāṁsā disappear? “It will be clear that the idea of an original unity of Pūrvamīmāṁsā and Uttaramīmāṁsā raises serious questions.”

Having set the issue in these terms, the absence and presence of liberation from the beginning, Bronkhorst does not really tackle it: he reviews the arguments about the unity of the two schools that have been made in secondary literature and attempts to show that the evidence—which is, it bears mentioning, all circumstantial—does not support such unity. He does not bother examining just what heaven and liberation were in the two śāstras—were they really incommensurable—and he hardly engages with the sūtras at all. Unlike Parpola’s contextualization of Mīmāṁsā in the whole range of sūtra literature, Bronkhorst’s work is all “he said, she said,” inorganic. Bronkhorst’s challenge is, thus, weak, and even his reading of the circumstantial evidence is often faulty, as shown by Ashok Aklujkar.

For my thesis here, however, the very question of the pūrva-uttara relationship in terms of origin is somewhat immaterial. The sense in which I take Vedānta to have been uttara to Mīmāṁsā so as to form a unique field with it concerns two presuppositions, both of which I have indicated under the previous heading. They both go back to the MS, and one of them was attributed to Bādarāyaṇa himself. I will define the first by looking at Śaṅkara’s student Padmapāda’s accepting just one sense in which Vedānta as an inquiry into Brahman (but not the BS as a book) was uttara in relation to Mīmāṁsā. Padmapāda says that two rules stated in the Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra were operative in the inquiry into Brahman as well, and it is the second that we are interested in here: it is MS 1.1.5, known as the autpattika-sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa, which says that the relationship of words to their meanings is innate; that the Veda is not a production of a

64 Bronkhorst 2007b:3.
65 Aklujkar 2010.
personal agent of any kind, human or divine; and, that it is a reliable epistemic warrant that is not
derivative on some other warrant of such kind. This rule, in Padmapāda’s words, was required
with regard to Brahman just as it was required with regard to ritual. As we saw in the previous
section, the characteristic nature of this reliable warrant, the Veda, was that it was the means of
knowing supersensible things.

The second presupposition was that the Veda in its full scope, from the mantras to the
Upaniṣads, was essentially an instrument of human good, and that any doctrine one might
develop must not make any part of the Veda meaningless by making it purposeless. The core of
this presupposition was expressed in the MS 1.2.7, and two magnificent but very different
testaments to it were Kumārila’s Tantra-Vārttika 1.2.7 and Śaṅkara’s Bṛhad-Aranyaka-
Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya 4.4.22.

67 Padmapāda (and Advaitins generally) under brahma-jijñāsā did not mean the Brahma-Sūtra that is the book. He recognized that large sections of the book absolutely required the rest of the “one thousand Mīmāṁsā rules,” specifically the sections on the formation of Upaniṣadic meditations, which Advaitins thought concerned the saguṇa Brahman and were part of the same dharma as ritual, and thus not part of the inquiry into Brahman. See PP, p.59.
68 This principle that the Veda in all its scope must be purposeful was recognized even by those Vedāntins who were remote from the BS/MS complex, such as Gauḍapāda. To illustrate, the third prakaraṇa of Gauḍapāda’s Āgama-Śāstra is an attempt to provide a frame of reading the Upaniṣads, but it is a frame very different from that of the BS. Gauḍapāda severs himself with a single incision from the MS/BS tradition in kārikās 3.1-2: “That dharma which resides in the Upaniṣadic meditations (upāsana) is operative with regard to that Brahman which is originated. Before origination, everything is unborn. Therefore, such dharma is regarded as wretched. I will, thus, propound that state which is not wretched, without origination and uniform, so as to show that though things are originated wherever one looks, nothing, in fact, is originated at all.”

upāsanāśrito dharma jāte brahmaṇi vartate |
prāg upatpper ajanī sarvāṁ tenāsau kṛpaṇāṁ smṛta ||
atō vakṣyāmy akāṛpabhyam ajāti samatāṁ gataṁ |
yathā na jāyate kiścīṁ jayamānaṁ samantatāḥ.

In Kārikā 16 of the same prakaraṇa, however, he goes on to say: “There are three stages of life, involving a vision which is low, middle, and high. The Upaniṣadic meditations are taught out of compassion for these three stages.”
We will unravel the first presupposition in the first chapter and the second in the rest of the dissertation, but I note here that I take these two as the core in the light of which the two mīmāṃsās were a unique field of Vedic theology: the first accommodated the use of scripture as argument, and the second provided the ground for a discourse on the highest good in which the Mīmāṃsakas, in the eyes of Advaitins, were legitimate participants and contenders. Over and above these two presuppositions was the Advaita use of the Mīmāṃsā canons of text formation. The doctrine of mahā-vākya itself emulated the formation of ritual idealities through hierarchy of scriptural statements, in which such idealities as units obtained the characteristic feature of finality of meaning. In that sense as well, Advaita Vedānta was uttara to pūrva-mīmāṃsā, a fleshing out of a Mīmāṃsā skeleton with Advaita meat. We will see this in Chapter Ten.

The History of Ideas

I said above that, although I talk about theology and theologians, my essay is not a work in theology. I should like to clarify that statement now. First, the dissertation it is not a work of a contemporary Hindu theologian of the kind that Francis Clooney had described: a believer who allows her “belief to remain an explicit and influential factor in their research, analysis and writing.” My object is, thus, not to articulate a personal interpretation of a tradition, and personal beliefs are intentionally bracketed. Second, my primary concern is not to reconstruct theologies so as to isolate them as phenomena, such as John Carman was doing in his remarkable work on the theology of Rāmānuja. Third, the dissertation it is not conceived as a work in comparative upāsanopadiṣṭeyam tad-artham anukampayā.

We may take this as the origin of the Advaita principle that the meditations on the saguna Brahman, which can be combined with ritual, can be used for the purification of the agent. Thus, although dharma may be wretched, it must have a good use.

69 Carman 1974.
theology, either of the “soft” kind exemplified by Julius Lipner, a reading of Rāmānuja that relies on categories of Catholic theology, or of the “hard” kind exemplified by Francis Clooney, making one’s beliefs vulnerable to truths of other traditions in a personal hermeneutics project.\(^7\)

Rather, I see this project as an essay in the history of ideas, with the additional clarification that the specific ideas whose history I attempt to track happen to be theological, or belong to a mode of discourse that is best characterized as theological.

The history of ideas, of course, means different things to different historians, and here I have deliberately followed the method of historical interpretation that is concerned specifically with texts as speech acts, articulated by Quentin Skinner and inspired by the philosophy of language of J. L. Austin.\(^7\) Very briefly, Skinner’s thesis about the method of interpretation in intellectual history, which concerns itself with ideas expressed in texts, is that one ought to approach the study of ideas in a “properly historical style.” Such style attempts not to assume the perspective of our interest in an issue, so far as that is possible, but to “see things” the way that the authors of the texts we study have seen them.\(^7\)

To bring home what this way of interpretation precisely involves, Skinner contrasts it with ways of reading that approach authors and texts with preconceived expectations of what they should discuss. One such way of reading is the querying of past great philosophers, political theorists, etc., on so-called “perennial issues,” questions universally relevant to man, in an attempt to reconstruct what a past master might teach us about things that are important to us, under the assumptions that, the questions being “perennial,” the past masters must have addressed them. A similar way of reading is through a focus on so-called “unit ideas,” for

\(^7\) Lipner 1986; Clooney 1993.
\(^7\) Skinner 2002.
\(^7\) Skinner 2002:vii.
instance, the idea of progress, social contract, equality, the problems of knowing, etc., that are from the start conceived as a sort of an ideal type—one might even describe them as Platonic—and are part of constituted disciplines. This way of pursuing the history of ideas often comes with a frame of evaluation that takes the vantage point of a formed notion, or of one’s own philosophy—think of Hegel—from which individual authors are judged: they have “failed to develop” the idea, “anticipated” it, “contribute” to it, etc. In any case, the purpose is to look at and evaluate ideas and beliefs from our own perspective. The problem Skinner has with such readings is that they tend not to notice what was important to the authors of the texts: what precise concerns they had in writing them or in saying what they said.

The “properly historical style,” on the other hand, attempts to situate texts in intellectual contexts and frameworks of discourse which would enable us to recognize not what such texts might mean to us, but what they have meant to their authors: this, in fact, is often indispensable even for the bare understanding of their meaning. To put it differently, to understand the meaning of texts as their authors have meant them, to see things their way, intellectual history as history should attempt to approach meaning not from our vantage point, but from the perspective of their authors.

To appreciate this, it is necessary to disambiguate several senses of “meaning” that, in Skinner’s finding, are often conflated. One may talk about meaning in the sense of “sense” and “reference,” that is, in the sense of the denotative or signification functions of words and sentences in a text. Or, one may look at meaning from the reader-response approach to interpretation, such as that exemplified by the notion of “surplus meaning” of Paul Ricoeur, who recognized that a text might have initially had a “pristine” meaning, but claimed that such

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meaning over time, and through the polysemic and metaphorical features of language, assumes autonomous and acquired meanings not intended by its author. This way of looking at meaning answers the question, “what does this text mean to me?” Finally, “meaning” may be used in the sense of *authority intention*, which answers the question, “what does a writer mean by what he or she says in a given text?”

How does this third sense of “meaning” differ from the first? It is to distinguish the two that Skinner appeals to Austin’s theory of speech acts. Consider the following case. “A policeman sees a skater on a pond and says ‘The ice over there is very thin.’ The policeman says something and the words mean something. To understand the episode, we obviously need to know the meaning of the words. But we also need to know what the policeman was doing in saying what he said.”

The policeman makes a declarative statement, which, nevertheless, has on top of its sense an “intended force” with which it is issued: it is a warning. The policeman not only says something, but does something in saying it. Austin called this feature of language “illocutionary force,” and we need not spend much time on it, except that we must note two things. The illocutionary force that turns speech into an act is a feature solely of speech: whether the policeman does succeed in warning the skater or not is, for the purpose of speech, irrelevant. The point is that the sentence as an act has such force, over and above its denotation. So, let us characterize this sense of meaning as *speaker’s intention*. Second, the fact that statements are a mode of communication makes this intention public, insofar as it is also intended to be understood.

How does this apply to the interpretation of texts and the history of ideas? Well, to understand the meaning of a text, it is not enough just to understand how words are used or what

75 Skinner 2002:104.
sentences mean; it is, further, required to understand the *authorial intention*, the illocutionary force of statements in a text. In other words, it is required to understand what specific speech act an author was performing in writing the text or in saying what s/he says. To do that, it is required to identify the context in which something is said—the background, the intended audience, what is intended to be communicated—and once we approach interpretation form such standpoint, we begin asking, on top of what a text means, what specific speech act the author is performing. In the South Asian context, for instance, we may ask whether a text that we study is a case of justification through intertextuality, of overcoading, of an intervention in a preexisting debate or a discourse, etc. Identifying the kinds of speech acts in a text, then, not reconstruction of beliefs, becomes the “specifically historical mode of reading,” or intellectual history, because such reading attempts to track authorial intention.

Two additional notes are apposite. First, Skinner insists that intentions are not motives: an intention does not answer to *why* an author wrote what s/he wrote, only to *what* s/he was *doing in* writing. Insofar as speech acts are forms of communication, they are intended to be understood, and, thus, are public. “[T]he intentions with which anyone performs a successful act of communication must, *ex hypothesi*, be publicly legible.”

Such reading, then, does not aspire to “get in the head” of anyone, but simply to understand what the illocutionary force of a statement or a text is. In the case of the policeman, the public intention can be known from the tone with which the statement is given, from hand gestures, etc. In reading texts, “we need first of all to grasp the nature and range of things that could recognizably have been done by using that particular concept, in the treatment of that particular theme, at that particular time. We need, in short, to be ready to take as our province … the social imaginary, the complete range of the

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inherited symbols and representations that constitute the subjectivity of an age.” What one needs, really, is sort of a contextual omniscience.

Second, such reading is often indispensable even if one’s express aim is not historical interpretation, but, say, properly philosophical engagement with a text. This is so because meaning as sense and reference is often impossible to ascertain without appreciating meaning as authorial intention. Let me illustrate this with a case that is closer to home. One of the most puzzling and discussed passages in Śaṅkara’s works is his comment on the statement satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.1.1. This is, obviously, a very important passage because it contains the definition of Brahman and Śaṅkara’s attempt to explain how language and the Upaniṣads reveal Brahman that is outside the domain of language, but it is puzzling for various reasons, some of which involve Śaṅkara’s both affirming and denying that the pertinent statement is a case of co-referentiality such as the famous “blue lotus” illustration; both affirming and denying that the word jñānam stands for the verbal action of “knowing,” bhāva or dhātv-artha; and the use of lakṣaṇā/lakṣaṇa such that it is not clear if he talks about one or two features of language. (All of this I will discuss later.)

Various interpretations have been given of the passage, none of which makes a significant effort to situate it in the wider context of the contemporary Indian philosophy of language, and all of which fail to see two crucial things: first, that Śaṅkara grapples with two problems relating to Brahman and language, first, that Brahman is not a sentential reference, vākyārtha, and, second, that Brahman is not expressed by the primary signification function of individual words, vācyam—the two are different problems; second, that midway in the comment, the argument changes because the context changes, namely Śaṅkara moves on to discussing the

further statement tasmād vē etasmād ātmanah, which he takes to be identical in meaning to the paradigmatic identity statement tat tvam asi, and no longer views Brahman from the perspective of the category of tat, whose domain includes satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma, but shifts to the identity statement perspective, where language operates through the secondary signification function. Śaṅkara, then, returns to satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma from this higher perspective of the identity statement to modify the initial argument.

The whole argument cannot be appreciated without some grasp of the contemporary Indian philosophy of language, particularly Bhartṛhari and Kumārila, and without consulting Śaṅkara’s comment on the BS 4.1.2, where he lays down the identity statement doctrine. Further, the argument can hardly be understood without figuring out what Śaṅkara is doing in writing the comment, which is addressing the doctrine of prasaṅkhyāna meditation, in which Brahman of the Upaniṣads turned out to be a sentential reference, a definite description. Śaṅkara’s reply to the doctrine of prasaṅkhyāna was the notion of the identity statements and of their meaning obtaining through the secondary signification function. Śaṅkara’s authorial intention, then, was to make an intervention in a preexisting discourse on Brahman, scripture, and liberation, that was very close to home for him, but from which it was absolutely necessary to make an exception. We will unfold the details of this in the later chapters, but here the point is that to fail to see these details is to fail to see things Śaṅkara’s way, but it is also to fail to understand the meaning of this all-important passage so that one could engage its philosophy of language, ontology, etc., philosophically, or its notions of scripture and Brahman theologically.

With this in mind, I can now describe the character of my project. First, it is an interpretation of Śaṅkara’s understanding of a set of related ideas—scripture, dharma, the highest good, liberation—that does not attempt to reconstruct Śaṅkara’s understanding of the
notions in itself, but looks at his theology as a set of interventions in a preexisting discourse on these ideas; it reads Śaṅkara’s theology as consisting of various speech acts with publicly available authorial intentions. The discourse, then, that takes place in Vedic theology, provides the requisite context without which Śaṅkara’s interventions cannot be appreciated, and eo ipso his understanding cannot be reconstructed, and it is for this reason that half of the dissertation is concerned with laying out the context.

Second, taking chapters one through nine as another, single context, the dissertation witnesses the appearance of the mahā-vākyā idea in the theology of Sarvajñātman and provides, against that context, an interpretation of what mahā-vākyā was for him and why he gave that name to the Upaniṣadic identity statements. In other words, the dissertation untangles from the context all the strands that are required to understand Sarvajñātman’s intention in calling the identity statements mahā-vākyā, and with that benefit it explains just what was “great” in them: it relies on the meaning of Sarvajñātman’s mahā-vākyas as authorial intention to appreciate their

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79 My essay, then, differs from other scholarly works that treat Advaita soteriology primarily in this method of interpretation, the “properly historical style.” To illustrate, the notion of “scripture” in Advaita Vedānta is prominent in Francis Clooney’s monograph Theology After Vedānta (Clooney 1993). Clooney’s book, however, is primarily concerned with reading texts as a soteriological practice and as a tradition; with committed or transformative reading; with writing commentaries through the need to keep the tradition of reading fresh, etc. It is a project in theology, and in comparative theology at that. Scripture is also important in J. G. Suthren Hirst’s book Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta: A Way of Teaching, but Hirst is concerned with reconstructing modes of teaching in scripture itself and in Śaṅkara, and whereas her reading of Śaṅkara is thorough, her engagement with Śaṅkara’s context is not: there is little in the way of solid intellectual history to be gleaned from the book (Hirst 2005). Anantanand Rambachan’s Accomplishing the Accomplished is, overall, a good intervention in the interpretation of Śaṅkara’s understanding of the respective role of scripture, personal experience, reasoning, and soteriological practice, but his engagement with Śaṅkara’s context is poor. Just to illustrate, he relies on the medieval Advaita Vedānta manuals the Vedānta-Sāra of Sadānanda and Vedānta-Paribhāṣā of Dharmarāja to “explain” what “Advaita Vedānta” as a unit “thinks,” “accepts,” “has a position on”, “finds,” etc.; indeed, the bulk of his book reads like a medieval manual (Rambachan 1991). A. G. Krishna Warrier’s The Concept of Mukti in Advaita Vedānta (Krishna Warrier 1961), Lance E. Nelson’s “Living Liberation in Śaṅkara and Classic Vedānta” (Nelson 1996), and Andrew J. Fort’s Jīvanmukti in Transformation (Fort 1998) are all valuable and insightful studies about liberation in Śaṅkara and Advaita Vedānta more broadly, some more historical than others, but generally exemplifying the “unit idea” approach. So far as I have been able to see, there are no dedicated studies of Śaṅkara’s understanding of dharma except insofar as it was the negative of Brahman as the proper domain of the pūrva-mīmāṃsā, although one could make a strong case that it is precisely the notion of dharma that is the connecting tissue which keeps scripture, liberation, and the highest good together, as we shall see.
meaning as sense. In doing the second, the essay subscribes to another principle in the study of ideas, expressed by one of the great intellectual historians of our time, Pierre Hadot: “[I]n the words of Aristotle, if one wishes to understand things, one must watch them develop and must catch them at the time of their birth.”

**Structure and Chapter Overview**

The dissertation is divided in four parts and a total of ten chapters. The first part explores the two presuppositions of Vedic theology that I flagged as shared by Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta. In Chapter One, I investigate two related ideas, śruti and apauruṣeyatva, which together stand for the Vedas as books that were never written in time, but are coexistent with the world, represent its linguistic blueprint, and are a source of knowledge from linguistic utterances that is not testimonial in kind. Against all scholarly accounts, I show that the notion of scripture as śruti or “hearing” did not stand for the Vedas that have been heard at the beginning of creation by a few Vedic sages, but primarily for individual scriptural statements that must be taken as valid just as they are heard, a “hermeneutic data” for interpretation in the same way as perception supplies data for inference and other forms of reasoning. The commitment to these two ideas sets Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta from all other intellectual traditions in premodern South Asia.

The second chapter investigates the notion of dharma as the central concern of Vedic theology, and its relation to the “good of man,” puruṣārtha. I show that dharma in the tradition of Mīmāṁsā was understood as a means of attaining something desirable to men through harnessing causal relations that are knowable solely from the Veda. I analyze dharma through the teleology of “ritual causality,” and show how Mīmāṁsakas theorized the hierarchical organization of scripture around dharma such that everything that is in the Veda would be

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80 Hadot 2002:2.
purposeful by serving ritual needs, and ultimately the telos of the “good of man.” The chapter, thus, uses the paradigm of ritual to present the basic categories of Vedic theology that we will see in the “soteriological causality” of Vedānta, and presents the idea of textual hierarchy that will be determinative for Sarvajñaṭman’s mahā-vākya doctrine.

In the second part, I delimit the focus of dharma further on the idea of the “highest good,” niḥśreyasa or param śreyas, and I write the history of negotiation between two such ideals in pre-Śaṅkara Vedic theology, heaven (svarga) and liberation from the cycle of rebirth (mokṣa). As we saw under the heading on pūrva- and uttara-mīmāṁsā, the divide between the two is commonly taken by scholars as the line of demarcation that sets off Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta as two rival traditions. I, however, show that heaven and liberation throughout the two traditions were often defined in identical terms—a state of unexcelled felicity, niratiśaya-sukha or prīti—and that the real wedge of contention between Mīmāṁsā and early Vedānta was less about the highest good, and more about the means of attaining it: the Mīmāṁsakas were advocated of ritual, whereas Vedāntins promoted meditation on Brahman.

Chapter Three focuses on heaven as the highest good in Mīmāṁsā, and on Kumārila’s accommodation of liberation as a human good that is also attainable solely through Vedic means. In Kumārila, we will see two accounts of liberation: in the first, the key role in terms of soteriological causality is played by ritual; in the second, by Upaniṣadic meditation. We will also see that the two accounts involved very different understandings of liberation as a state, and I will argue that Kumārila accepted the second as the highest good, but made provisions for the first as well, as sort of a liberation attained by a karma-yoga of the Bhagavad-Gītā kind.

Kumārila’s second account was very similar to the doctrine of liberation in the Brahma-Sūtra, which is the topic of Chapter Four. There, I show that liberation in the BS meant attaining
the highest Vedic heaven, *brahma-loka*, through meditation on Brahman as one’s Self. This meditation was mental absorption by means of any one of the so-called *brahma-vidyās*, which were full Upaniṣadic counterparts to Vedic ritual, standardized through appeal to principles laid down in the *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra*. Liberation as going to *brahma-loka* consisted in independence or sovereignty, “having no other master but oneself,” which specifically referred to the ability to enjoy all desires that were commonly associated with Vedic ritual, and the ability to move through the heavens of the Vedic world without impediment. Thus, liberation meant becoming as similar to Brahman as possible, which included being able to have all desires fulfilled and resolves accomplished and excluded only the ability to create the world.

In Chapter Five, we move to the doctrine of *prasaṅkhyāna* meditation, which was much closer to home for Śaṅkara because its advocates were Advaitins, such as Maṇḍana Miśra, or otherwise Vedāntins in whose understanding individuality was lost in liberation, and ultimately there was just the single Brahman. This doctrine, which had come to Vedānta from the tradition of Yoga, said that the scriptural knowledge of Brahman from the Upaniṣads was insufficient for liberation because it was mediate, not a form of perceptual awareness, and *sentential*, dependent of concepts and mental constructs. By “scriptural knowledge,” we mean the propositional knowledge of Brahman in the Upaniṣads, presented in positive and negative descriptions, such as “Brahman is consciousness, bliss,” and “the Self is free from faults, from old age and death etc.” Liberation required this scriptural knowledge to be followed by meditation, whose purpose was to reconstitute the subject through purification. Only such meditation could provide direct experience of Brahman.

The two kinds of meditation presented in Part Two, the BS and the *prasaṅkhyāna*, were in a sense very different—we may call them *assimilative* and *cathartic* respectively, and the
attainments towards which they aspired were different—but as kinds of awareness both were forms of concentration or mental absorption.

Two large issues will impress upon our understanding as we follow dharma, scripture, and the highest good from the second to the fifth chapter: first, that pre-Śaṅkara Vedic theologians generally held that the most important statements in the Veda were of the injunctive kind, such as those that enjoin performance of ritual or meditation on Brahman; in other words, that scripture were not as much about knowing something as they are about doing something; second, related to the first, that the paradigmatic Vedāntic process of liberation was meditation on Brahman in some combination with Vedic ritual; that, in any case, simply knowing Brahman as a form of understanding—knowing qua knowing—was insufficient for liberation; or that liberation was not a result of knowing something, but of doing something. This will partly serve a negative purpose: when we move to Śaṅkara’s brand of Advaita Vedānta, we will be in a position to understand Śaṅkara’s model of soteriological causality, and we will appreciate why some Upaniṣadic statements and passages that were immensely important in old Vedānta did not have a shot at becoming mahā-vākyas, or at providing the basis for the doctrine of liberation that went with the mahā-vākya notion. The doctrine of prasaṅkhyaṇa meditation, however, will provide the sole background against which we will understand Śaṅkara’s more specific intervention in the discourse of liberation.

In the third part, we will follow Śaṅkara’s engagement with scripture and the highest good through the lens of his understanding of dharma. In Chapter Six, we will see that Śaṅkara joined forces with the Mīmāṁsakas in taking the purpose of the Veda to be the good of man (puruṣārtha), but fiercely opposed them in insisting that the characteristic feature of dharma in general was knowing, not doing. Such dharma could, further, transit into action, and whenever it
did, the purpose that such dharma served was that of prosperity or advancement, abhyudaya, the
culmination of which was the attainment of brahma-loka, which, we will remember, in the
Brahma-Sūtra was liberation itself. The highest good, however, niḥśreyasa, was solely a result
of knowing Brahman, knowing which by its very nature could not transition into action.
Scripture facilitates both these goals, abhyudaya and niḥśreyasa: its injunctive character is
exhausted in ritual and Upaniṣadic meditations, but liberation is attained solely by means of the
propositional or existential knowledge of the Upaniṣads.

In Chapter Seven, we will begin mapping the path to liberation from inception to
consummation. I will first argue that Śaṅkara, explicitly drawing on the Mīmāṁsā organization
of ritual, replaced the traditional Vedāntic method of jñāna-karma-samuccaya or combination of
“knowledge” (that is, meditation on Brahman) with action (that is, ritual) with a model
of “mediate soteriological causality” or pāramparya, in which a means ceases being a direct
means once it produces its characteristic result. The path to liberation begins with jñāna-karma-
samuccaya, or alternatively just with meditation on Brahman, by a repurposing of meditation and
ritual through giving up the specific desire that the respective meditation and ritual are said to
bring. Such practice of disinterested ritual and meditation culminate in “purity of existence” or
the “arising of knowledge,” whose ultimate point is the “desire after liberation,” mumukṣutva. At
that point, ritual and meditation must be given up through formal renunciation, and be succeeded
by another kind of jñāna, knowing not as meditation, but as understanding Brahman through
theological and philosophical inquiry with a teacher, a form of dharma in which knowing does
not transit into action. Although ritual and meditation are, thus, not the direct means of
liberation, they remain so vicariously, through their causal contribution in the arising of
knowledge.
In the center of such inquiry were the “identity statements” of the Upaniṣads, statements such as *tat tvam asi*, “You are that,” and *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*, “I am Brahman.” These form the topic of Chapter Eight, not in isolation, but as principles through which the Upaniṣadic propositional knowledge of Brahman and the Self could be teleologically organized for the attaining of liberation. I begin by elucidating Śaṅkara’s classification of general types of Upaniṣadic statements, before moving to considering his *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya* on 4.1.2 as the frame through which the doctrine of identity statements can be fully reconstructed. Traversing the two entities juxtaposed in the identity statements, Brahman and the Self, we see how the doctrine of the identity statements was, in fact, Śaṅkara’s direct intervention in the *prasaṅkhya*na discourse: that is, how a reading of the Upaniṣads was possible such that Brahman would not be a composite, relational entity; and, how placing the onus on the identity statements rather than the Upaniṣadic descriptions of Brahman and the Self would provide the requisite immediacy of understanding that, otherwise, meditation was required for.

In the last chapter of Part Three, I move to considering the two kinds of inquiries into the meaning of the identity statements, theological (*śravaṇa*) and philosophical (*manana*), as the direct means of liberation. I show that, to Śaṅkara’s mind, the purification that was supposed to happen through meditation in the doctrine of *prasaṅkhya*na had to be attained before one could inquire into Brahman: liberation was a result *just* of intellectual understanding, through the two inquiries, by means of which the scriptural cognition “I am Brahman” gotten from the identity statements obtains the characteristic of certainty. In other words, whereas the proponents of meditation claimed that even the intellectually indubitable but propositional cognition of Brahman was not sufficient for liberation because of personal impurity, Śaṅkara’s direct process of liberation began *after* such purity had been attained: thus, when one had fully understood the
meaning of the identity statement through the theological inquiry, and attained personal
experience through the philosophical inquiry, liberation had to follow as a matter of course.

I conclude the chapter by considering the question of meditation in Śaṅkara’s system, and
show that although Śaṅkara affirmed its soteriological value as a process that could follow the
philosophical inquiry (meditation, thus, as the third Vedāntic process, nīḍhyāṣāṇa), as a kind of
awareness this meditation (which he called parisaṅkhyaṇa) was not mental absorption or
concentration, but an intellectual or analytic process of reduction or dissociation from all
possible points of identification for the Self, such that the Self would be known not as an object,
but as the light of awareness that is the irreducible residue without which no reduction would be
possible. In other words, I show that Śaṅkara replaced Yogic meditation (prasaṅkhyaṇa) with
characteristically Sāṅkhyan reflection (parisaṅkhyaṇa): not meditation on Brahman so as to
obtain the insight into “I am Brahman,” but a removal of everything that I am not so that I could
not but be Brahman. This was his characteristic contribution to Vedānta soteriology.

Finally, in Part Four and Chapter Ten, we will see the Advaita doctrine of liberation
which was focused on the Upaniṣadic identity statements morph into the theory of mahā-vākyā. I
conclude the dissertation there by showing that: (1) a theory of Upaniṣadic mahā-vākyas was for
the first time explicated not by Śaṅkara, but by the 10-11th-century Vedāntin Sarvajñātman; (2)
an explicit but not theorized notion of mahā-vākyā was already present in Mīmāṁsā, where it did
not stand for short Upaniṣadic statements, but for larger textual units; (3) Sarvajñātman modeled
the notion of Upaniṣadic mahā-vākyas on the Mīmāṁsā blueprint, fitting Vedānta building
blocks into a Mīmāṁsā structure; (4) the Upaniṣadic identity statements were only formally
short: they were cryptic ellipses whose elaboration required the full Upanishadic corpus, and
through the principle of mediate causality could include even the ritual sections of the Veda; (5)
the key element in *mahā-vākya*, both in the Mīmāṁsā blueprint and the Vedanta adaptation, was finality of meaning.

**Note on the Title**

I should like to end this Introduction with a note on the title. It is inspired by the definition of interpretation by the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur claimed that interpretation of any kind, whether of dreams in psychoanalysis, of sacred texts in exegesis, of myths and rituals in the history of religions, even of life itself, had a certain “architecture of meaning,” which was that of “double” or “multiple” meanings. We may illustrate this with the interpretation of dreams. A dream has a direct meaning of whatever its content is, but for psychoanalysis that content is a symbol of some repressed desire, and the task of psychoanalysis as a form of interpretation is to understand what specific desire the symbol stands for. Ricoeur defines a symbol as “*any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first.*”81 Two elements are important in the definition. First, the symbol designates another meaning *in addition* to its direct signification, and second, the secondary signification can be apprehended *only* through the first. Such is the case because some meanings are necessarily hidden—otherwise they would not require interpretation—but they can be deciphered only because they are commonly associated with symbols. The role of interpretation, then, is to “translate” the symbol to an explicit meaning within the frame of reference of a specific discipline that concerns an aspect of human existence. “*Interpretation, we will say, is*

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81 Ricoeur 1978:98.
the work of thought which consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of implied in the literal meaning.”

This, I believe, captures quite precisely Śaṅkara’s understanding of the Upaniṣadic identity statements. While grammarians and philosophers before him have dissected the modes of sentence meaning and the various signification functions of words, it was Śaṅkara who claimed that the identity statements could be meaningful only if the two collocated categories denoted their primary meaning, and in addition to it, designated another, secondary and figurative meaning. It was in that liminal space between the literal and the figurative meaning, fine as a “gnat’s wing,” that new knowledge appeared that made the attainment of liberation possible, when it dawned on one that I myself, known to me most intimately, in fact am that great ground of Being out there: that is, that this Being is not out there at all, but is me. Further, this surplus of meaning that appears when Brahman and the Self stand for the inner Brahman in addition to their individual direct meaning was the only means through which the inner Brahman could be known. It was so because this inner Brahman—but not Brahman as such or the Self as such—was a point “from which words return along with the mind, failing to reach it.” It was hidden to words, the identity statements were its symbol, and therefore it was essentially in the domain of interpretation, that is, accessible solely through words. The prize when this inner Brahman was properly interpreted was liberation; therefore, “deciphering the hidden meaning” and the “hermeneutics of liberation.”

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82 Ibid.
PART ONE: CIRCUMSCRIBING THE FIELD OF VEDIC THEOLOGY

CHAPTER ONE: RETHINKING THE IDEA OF SCRIPTURE IN VEDIC THEOLOGY

Scripture should not be much doubted, being more reliable than the words of one’s mother and father, for one cognizes through scripture personally. It occupies the same rank as the senses.¹

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter for the global goals of the dissertation is to delimit the space of Vedic theology which Śaṅkara inhabited, and thus demarcate the field of his interlocutors. I said in the Introduction that the sense in which I take Vedānta to have been uttara or posterior to Mīmāṁsā was the commitment to the Veda as a source of knowing from linguistic utterances that are considered non-testimonial in character, a commitment which was not shared by other theologies in the same intellectual space. As is well known, the two branches of Vedic theology, the Pūrva and Uttara Mīmāṁsā, had two distinct concerns stated at the beginning of their respective canonical texts—dharma or ritual and Brahman or the great Being from which everything proceeds—yet they shared the conviction that the Veda in all its parts possesses epistemic validity and is the sole reliable warrant for all supersensible things. Whatever course of development the relation between the two brands of Vedic theology may have initially had, by the time of Śaṅkara and his near contemporary Kumārila, the idea of a single canon which includes the Upaniṣads was firmly established.²

¹ śāstraṁ cānatiśaṅkyaṁ pīṭ-māṭr-vacanād pramāṇataram. svayaṁ hi tena pratyeti, indriya-sthānīyaṁ hi tat. MSŚBh 4.1.3, IV.1199.
² TV on 1.2.7 is, for instance, an attempt to include everything in the Veda in a single canon, organized under the injunctive suffix of the optative. That includes the descriptive statements of the Upaniṣads, as I will show in the next chapter.
Additionally, Mīmāṃsakas and Vedāntins shared the commitment to the Veda not only as a reliable warrant, but as the sole means of attaining the highest good as well. This second commitment will take our attention in the rest of the dissertation. Here I want to focus on the epistemic validity of the Vedas constructed around three key ideas, śruti, śāstra and apauruṣeyatva, a complex which forms the connective tissue of Vedic theology. Understanding this complex is necessary not only to set the scope of the field, but also to grasp properly how the relation of scripture with the highest good was conceived. The key among these three ideas is that of śruti, which is so common in scholarly literature but so little understood that I will preface my account with a short review.

The Classical Theory of Śruti

Śruti is one of those terms which students of Indian philosophy (and Indologists of all walks) learn early on in their carriers in a certain meaning or a set of related meanings—one which perpetuates itself through referencing, cross-referencing and no referencing—without seriously questioning how well this meaning maps on to the texts they are studying. “Revelation” or “that which is/was heard” are the most common meaning candidates, referring to the whole corpus of the Veda, from the Saṁhitās to the Upaniṣads. The following is a sample survey taken from studies which are dedicated specifically to śruti, studies where it plays an important role, or studies of Advaita Vedānta in general.3

Purusottama Bilimoria vacillates between “heard word,” “scriptural words,” “the revealed word” (“as it may be termed in western theology”), “heard word – of scripture,” insisting all the while in each case that this is what śruti “literally” means.4 Anantanand

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3 Pollock 1997 gives a similar survey of its uses, along with those of smṛti, in more general Indological literature. 4 1988:5, 7, 17, 20.
Rambachan has just the bracketed “that which is heard” once, with an occasional addition of “Vedic revelation,” in a study which is all about Śaṅkara’s understanding of śruti.\(^5\) In another study he says: “To emphasize the fact that the Vedas were transmitted orally from teacher to student, the texts are collectively referred to as śruti (that which is heard).”\(^6\) Ashok Aklujkar has “that which is heard or revealed,”\(^7\) and Nataliya Isayeva similarly has “[Ś]ruti (lit.: heard), that is, eternally heard or communicated, actually, a revelation.”\(^8\) A Monograph by Kotta Satchidananda Murty is titled “Revelation and Reason in Advaita Vedānta,” and a festschrift for the famous neo-Vedāntin scholar T.R.V. Murti bears the title “Revelation in Indian Thought.”\(^9\) Wilhelm Halbfass’s important study “Tradition and Reflection” has: “[Ś]ruti Vedic-Upaniṣadic ‘revelation.’”\(^10\) David Carpenter: “Veda was also equated with śruti, literally "hearing" and referring to what has been heard, that is, revealed.”\(^11\) Some studies do not even bother to define the term\(^12\) or opt to use the simple, uninformative “scriptural texts.”\(^13\) Always paired with śruti is smṛti, standing broadly for the rest of canonical books of Hinduism, taken as “that which is remembered” or tradition.

It also bears mentioning that quite often introductory textbooks of Hinduism treat śruti as revelation and as one of the key criteria of what being Hindu means. Gavin Flood’s widely used “An Introduction to Hinduism,” for instance, places śruti under “General features of Hinduism,”

\(^5\) 1991:4, 46.
\(^6\) 2006:117.
\(^7\) 1991:3; this is, otherwise, a very rich and valuable study.
\(^8\) 1993:31.
\(^9\) Murty 1959; Coward and Sivaram 1977.
\(^12\) For instance, Adluri 2015.
\(^13\) For instance, Hirst 2005:9.
describes it as “revelation,” identifies it with the Veda and associates it with the Vedic sages, to whom it was revealed and who passed it along in oral transmission.\textsuperscript{14}

If we make a composite account of this, śruti would signify the Veda in some collective sense, revealed at some point in history and orally transmitted. A full-fledged version of this account was given by Barbara Holdrege in her important study “Veda and Torah.” Holdrege proposed that śruti refers to that which was heard by the Vedic ṛṣis, “recorded’ through the vehicle of their speech and assumed a concrete form on earth as the recited texts of the mantras.”\textsuperscript{15} While the term may be interpreted to mean “that which is heard” in oral transmission, “it is also clear that the related term śruta was used as early as the Rg-Veda to refer to cognitions of the ṛṣis and that the term śruti itself still retains this association among contemporary Indian thinkers: Veda as śruti is ‘that which was heard’ by the ancient ṛṣis as part of a primordial cognition in the beginning of creation.”\textsuperscript{16} We should note that Holdrege proposes cognition instead of revelation. The ṛṣis intuit, see and hear, the mantras.

Holdrege’s thesis was inspired by the work of the Vedic studies scholar Jan Gonda, who proposed that the meaning of the Sanskrit noun dhīḥ and its root siblings such as dhītiḥ and dhyāna, in the Rig Veda but elsewhere as well, express the idea of seeing, vision, “exceptional and supranormal faculty, proper to ‘seers’ … the faculty of acquiring a sudden knowledge of the truth, of the functions and influence of the divine powers, of man’s relations to them etc. etc. It is this ‘vision’ which they [the seers] attempt to give shape, to put into words, to develop into intelligible speech, to ‘translate’ into stanzas and ‘hymns’ of liturgical value.”\textsuperscript{17} Gonda did not

\textsuperscript{14} Flood 1997:12.
\textsuperscript{15} 1996:25.
\textsuperscript{16} Holdrege 1996:9.
\textsuperscript{17} 1963:68-9.
associate these visions with śruti, but Holdrege claimed that even in the Rig Veda “the oral-aural dimensions of Vedic cognition are also emphasized by the ṛṣis,” although less than the visual.\textsuperscript{18} She offered, unfortunately, only one explicit reference in support of the claim.\textsuperscript{19}

Holdrege’s account has the merit of spelling out clearly and with conviction what most scholars think when they read, hear or write “śruti” and for trying to get to the bottom of it by pursuing what we may call “the classical theory of śruti.” The locus classicus of the theory is a famous passage from Yāska’s Nirukta: “The seers had directly seen dharma. Through instruction they handed down mantras to the later generations, who did not see it directly. The later generations, losing the power of instruction, handed down from memory this composition, and the Veda and the auxiliary Vedic sciences, for the purpose of keeping ahold of its likeness.”\textsuperscript{20}

The complexities of understanding this passage aside, particularly what sākṣāt-kṛta and dharman mean,\textsuperscript{21} the ṛṣis in the passage are not described as hearing, but seeing dharma. Further in the Nirukta they are described as seers of the Vedic mantras, presumably referring to the Saṁhitā portion of the Veda: “The seers have visions of the mantras.”\textsuperscript{22} Sheldon Pollock cites another

\textsuperscript{18} Holdrege 1996:229.
\textsuperscript{19} It is RV 8.59.6, quoted bellow with Jamison’s and Brereton’s translation:
\textsuperscript{20} sākṣāt-kṛta-dharmānaḥ ṛṣayo babhūvuh. te ‘varebhyo ‘sākṣāt-kṛta-dharmabhya upadeśena mantraṁ samprāduḥ. upadeśāya glāyanto ‘vare bilma-grahaṇāyemaṁ granthaṁ samāmnāsiṣur vedaṁ ca vedāṅgāni ca. 1.20.2, p.90.
\textsuperscript{21} They are exhaustively discussed in Aklujkar 2009. In translating bilma-grahaṇāya with “for the purpose of keeping ahold of its likeness,” I take clue from Yāska’s alternative gloss of bilma as bhāsana.
\textsuperscript{22} evam … ṛṣuḥaṁ mantra-drṣṭayo bhavanti. 7.3.8, p.549.
passage from Pāṇini which talks about the sāman chants being seen by ṛṣis, and concludes: “The ṛṣis are not normally said to have ‘heard’ mantras.”

Obviously, such passages can be related to śruti only indirectly. They certainly support the idea that “the Veda” was early on seen as being revealed to or cognized by the seers, but there is no straightforward route of relating this understanding of revelation or cognition to śruti. Claiming that the idea of revelation or cognition must be the origin of the idea of śruti because such understanding “still persists today” is reading backwards. The conceptual difficulties of the classical theory aside, to which, as Pollock says, “long acquaintance and acquiescence may have inured us,” the textual evidence has just not been produced.

Two notes before we proceed. First, what the Vedic ṛṣis see in this account are the hymns of the Vedic Samhitās, so we would expect that such hymns be the first referent of the word śruti in its use, at least in an important restricted sense. Second, as far as etymology is concerned, there is not much justification for translating śruti as “that which was heard.” The problem with this is that śruti is not a participle but, commonly, an action noun. Śruti is, to use Bilimoria’s favorite word, “literally” hearing, an audition, just as dṛṣṭi is seeing or vision. Another meaning of the word is the instrument of hearing, either the sense in general or the ear as its seat. This was proposed by a vārttika of Kātyāyana under Aṣṭādhyāyī 3.3.94 and is well attested.

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23 Pollock 1997:399. The sūtra is 4.2.7, dṛṣṭaṁ sāma, and is explaining the derivation of adjectives formed with the taddhita affix aN applied to ṛṣis who have seen sāman chants, vasiṣṭha → vasiṣṭhaṁ sāma = vasiṣṭhaṁ dṛṣṭaṁ sāma. See Kartre 1989:403 and Sharma 1999:158-9.

24 Pollock 1997:400.

25 See Abhyankar 1986:130, under kṛt: “kṛt affix ti added to roots to form nouns in the sense of verb-action; e.g. kṛtih, sthitih, matih etc.” And 396, under śruti: “(1) lit. hearing, sound …; perception, as a proof contrasted with inference …; (2) the authoritative word.” Whitney 1993:432: “feminine nouns of action.”

26 Holdrege’s “cognition” is, obviously, much closer in form than “that which was heard.”

Śruti in Early Vedic Theology

To Pollock goes the credit of realizing how śruti and the related smṛti float on thin air and how such a set of categories “basic to the formation and self-understanding of Sanskrit culture … has been misunderstood, or at least never clearly explained, in Western (and westernized) Indology.”28 While Pollock is primarily interested in the construction of the two categories as an elementary form of ideological power in classical Sanskrit culture, and I want to understand the epistemological significance of śruti, the starting point of his discussion and the origin to which he traces the divide provides the frame through which the connotations of śruti can be investigated: it is the association of śruti and smṛti with another pair, pratyakṣa and anumāna or perception and inference.

This association has roots in early Vedic theology and is evident already in the Dharmasaṃhitās, which talk about express Vedic statements that trump in validity customs which are only inferably Vedic. The relevant distinction which the Dhārma-Sūtras draw is between practices based on evident statements, presumably those which are actually recited as part of Vedic study and known to the addressee from hearing the Veda, and practices that are customary but that have no clear warrant in extant injunctions, so that there are or were such injunctions must be inferred. The problem with the inferable rules is the intervening human factor, namely that the justification for the practices is not found in the Vedas as they are known, but only in the conduct of Vedic men, and men—as MS 4.1.2 claims—have pleasure as motive inherently and universally. Since there are no direct legitimizing statements for such practices, potentially at least it is always possible that they may turn out to be unjustified.

The context allows for an equivalence to be drawn between śruti, pratyakṣa-vidhāna, brāhmaṇoktā vidhayāḥ and pratyakṣa-śruti: they are all juxtaposed to rules whose sources are inferable, and to inference in general. Śrutiś are, then, direct rules or injunctions found in the Brāhmaṇas. Customs for which such śruti rules are in evidence are a safe bet and cannot be trumped by practices where the rules are only inferable. We should note that, whatever the full initial scope of śruti may have been, what the term covers here is practices based on scriptural rules. The distinction which is drawn is not between the Vedas on one hand and other scriptures on the other, but between practices legitimized by rules that are found somewhere in the Vedas and practices which lack such legitimacy. We should also note the privileged status of that which is expressed in śruti; it is this, it seems to me, that Pollock has in mind when he talks about the category as “an elementary form of ideological power.” It is an instrument of legitimizing what one does and believes, and it may at least provisionally point to something with a scope which is initially restricted. If this is, indeed, the first place where śruti appears in a context which allows for setting some theoretical frame, it is also mightily significant that the context is one of legitimizing action.

Let us also note here that the Dharma-Sūtras do not use the term smṛti in this context, but talk about inferable rules and lost Brāhmaṇa texts. David Brick has argued that originally smṛti

29 śrutir hi balīyasy ānumānikād ācārāt. drśyate cāpi pravṛtti-kāraṇam. prītir hy upalabhya. “[F]or a Vedic text has a greater force than a practice for which a vedic text has to be inferred. We notice here, moreover, a motive for such a practice, for one derives pleasure from it.” ĀDhŚ 1.4.8-10
brāhmaṇoktā vidhayas teṣāṁ utsannāḥ pāthāḥ prayogād anumāyante, yatra tu prīty-upalabdhiḥ pravṛtṛ na tatra śāstram asti. “All rites are described in the Brāhmaṇas. The lost Brāhmaṇa passages relating to some of them are inferred from usage. When a practice is undertaken because of the pleasure derived from it, it does not presuppose a vedic text.” ĀDhŚ 1.12.10-11
ekāśrayaṁ cācaryāḥ pratyakṣa-vidhānād gārhaḥṣṭasya gārhaḥṣṭasya: “There is, however, only a single order of life, the Teachers maintain, because the householder’s state alone is prescribed in express vedic texts.” GdhŚ 3.36
dharmenaḥdhi ḡos tāṁ veda sa-paribṛmhanaḥ. śiṣṭās tad-anumāna-jīṭāḥ śruti-pratyakṣa-hetavaḥ. “Cultured people are those who have studied the Veda together with its supplements in accordance with the Law, know how to draw inferences from them, and are able to adduce as proofs express vedic texts.” BDhŚ 1.6. All translations Olivelle. VdhŚ 6.43 is similar and seems to be based on this. See also Olivelle 2000:16.
did not refer to textual rules, but to traditional time-honored norms, comparable, for instance, to
the modern rule that the father of the bride should pay for her wedding. As a distinct textual
corpus, it initially denoted the Dharma-Śāstras, which develop as a result of a growing tendency
towards versification in the Dharma-Sūtras, where verses mostly state traditional norms with
which the listener would have been long familiar and in whose ears such norms would have been
sacrosanct.\footnote{Brick 2006.}

A similar doctrine is found in the third pāda of the first adhyāya of MS, particularly
1.3.1-4, where the question is what to do with that dharma or ritual action which is not based on
the words of the Veda, but is practiced by the same good Vedic men that practice explicitly
Vedic ritual. It should be accepted as valid, because the fact that the practitioners are the same
allows for an inference. In case, however, it contradicts the Veda, it should be discarded. The
section does not talk about the pursuit of pleasure as a possible reason for invalidity, but sūtra
1.3.4 is interpreted by Śabara in that way.\footnote{(Pūrvapakṣa:) dharmasya śabda-mūlatvād aśabdaṁ anapekṣaṁ syāt. “Since dharma is based on the word [of the
Veda], that which is not based on the word of the Veda should be disregarded.”. (Siddhānta:) api vā kartṛ-śāmānyāt pramāṇam anumāṇaṁ syāt. “Rather, because the agents are the same, it [a word
not based on the Veda] is valid, since there would be an inference.” virodhe tv anapekṣaṁ syāt, asati hy anumānam. “But in case of a conflict, it would be disregarded, for inference is
there only when there isn’t [a conflict].” hetu-darśaṇaṁ ca. “And, because a reason is seen.” MS 1.3.1-4. See also Clooney 1990:121.}

Neither śruti nor smṛti are explicitly mentioned, and
the terms used are śabda and aśabda, that dharma for which there is a word and that for which
there isn’t, but the association of śruti with pratyakṣa is otherwise common in MS, and in sūtra
1.4.14 we find the same pratyakṣa-vidhāna as in GDhS 3.36.\footnote{We may conclude that an
understanding must have been common to the intellectual space of early Vedic theology that
there are direct Vedic injunctions, actually known because of being part of Vedic study, and that
there are customs that whose origin cannot be related to an express Vedic statement; since both
are practiced by Vedic men, the customs which are not supported by express Vedic texts must have origin in textual rules and injunctions which are not accessible; such practices are good, as long as they do not contradict something in the express statements.

Śabara’s Understanding of Śruti

Śabara’s commentary on the mentioned pāda provides a broad theoretical ground for conceptualizing smṛti, since smṛti it is taken precisely in the sense of memory of something previously experienced or seen, a prior cognition (pūrva-vijñāna), but then it is applied strictly in regard to memories the reliability of which is in question because the source of the prior cognition, in this case an explicit Vedic composition, is no longer evident. The reliability of such memories is secured on inferential grounds: if good Vedic folks who do the Vedic stuff do this other thing as well, we can infer that those who had instituted the practice were aware of a Vedic text that is not known anymore. Śabara, in other words, still deals with particular actions of diverse types, some of which are rituals that are found in the Dharma-Śāstras, the paradigmatic case being the aṣṭakā rite, while others are practices which haven’t found scriptural expression, for instance digging up wells and setting up drinking fountains. He does distinguish between the two, using strictly smṛti for the first and conduct or ācāra for the second, but the underlying principle behind both is that of memory, smṛti or smarana.

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33 The objection in the MSSBh 1.3.1, I.161 is precisely to the effect of impossibility of memory of something not experienced or heard (naḥ anunabhūto śruto vārthaḥ smaryate), which would cover all grounds of memory, worldly and Vedic.

34 This is also in the MSSBh 1.3.1.

35 These two, of course, have a long history in the Dharma literature. See Brick 2006 for some discussion.

36 MSŚBh 1.3.1, I.159 in which he introduces five instances of such non-Vedic action reads: “Now, then, where we do not perceive a Vedic word and they remember, ‘This practice should be observed in this manner, for this purpose,’ would this be in the same way [valid like the Veda] or not?” athedāṁ yatra na vaidikaṁ śabdam upalabhahāṁ atha ca smaranty evam ayam artho nusīhātavyaṁ etasmai ca prayojanāyeti. kim asau tathaiva syāṁ na veti. It follows that memory is a common feature of all such acceptable Vedic practices, whether they have been smṛtified or not. Cf. also MSSBh 1.3.15, I.243: “It is accepted that the validity of memory and conduct is from inference;” anumānāt smṛter ācārāṁ ca prāmāṇyam iṣyate.
Although under 1.3.1 Śabara mentions the perceptibility of the *composition* as opposed to the general principle of memory, śruti is throughout this section paired with *smṛti* in the restricted sense and—we need to note this crucial point very carefully—Śabara does not have “the Veda” in mind, but *single* statements in the Veda, *vaídika-vacana*, almost invariably in the Brāhmaṇas, expressing rules or injunctions. This is particularly clear under the comment on MS 1.3.3, where śruti is for the first time introduced in the discussion, after the principle of Veda based on the word and *smṛti* on memory = *anumāna* is discussed under the first *adhikaraṇa*, *sūtras* 1.3.1-2. *Śruti-virodha* or contradiction to śruti is a contradiction to an express Vedic injunction. A specific rule needs a specific counter-rule to contradict, and it is here that śruti appears, not in the discussion of the principle. The principle of memory does not apply where it contradicts a *specific* śruti, or where some ulterior motive can be detected; in both these cases the source the memory of which the rule is would be something else, for instance greed for an honorarium. Śabara clearly does not presuppose just *anything* found in the Veda when he uses śruti in pair with *smṛti*, but—on the evidence we have here—specifically those sections/statements which regulate ritual and rites. Let us take stock of this and see how śruti is used elsewhere in the *Bhāṣya*.38

Apart from *smṛti*, śruti is paired in the MS and the *Bhāṣya* with several other counterparts or sets, invariably as something specific in the Veda and *revolving around the direct meaning of*

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37 pratyakṣeṇopaladbhatvād granthasya. MSŚBh 1.3.1, 1.64.
38 Needless to say, there is no whiff of “tradition” in Śabara’s conceptualization of *smṛti*. The ground is fully epistemic and draws on the deliberations about the reliability of memory in general, which Śabara affirms: “Memory is a reliable warrant, because it is a cognition;” *pramāṇaḥ smṛṭih. vijñānar hi tat*. MSŚBh 1.3.2, 1.163. There is no need for our purposes to consider Kumārila’s rethinking of the śruti/smṛti relationship (see McCrea 2010, Yoshimizu 2012.). Suffice it to say that Kumārila continues to use śruti in the sense of a single sentence in the Veda, of the nature of an injunction. In his canonization of *smṛti* as consisting of the Dharma-Śāstras and in establishing the validity of the other books and sciences that Vedic people accept by tracing their root in direct experience, mundane or Vedic, he is careful to be either vague and use *veda* or specific to use *vidhi/śruti, mantra, arthavāda* etc.
what is said. This primarily means a full Vedic statement which enjoins something, either the principal sacrifice or some of the details related to it.\textsuperscript{39} Such statements are direct because the meaning of what is predicated in them—the ritual or its detail—involves the literal meaning of the word, one which imposes on one’s understanding just from hearing. That this is so is clear from the fact that this literal meaning of the word, or of a simpler linguistic element such as the contributory factors to action (kāraka), for instance the instrument, expressed through the case endings, or the number also expressed through the ending, is also called śruti.\textsuperscript{40} We need to note this point well: a śruti or an express statement is one in which what is predicated, a single thing, is comprehended just from hearing, before any process of humanly contingent interpretation can begin. It is hearing a specific word in its direct, most common meaning. A sentence in which this most common meaning of the predicate is understood is śruti. Śabara’s definition is: “The denotation of a thing which is understood just from hearing the word is understood by śruti. Śruti is hearing.”\textsuperscript{41}

We note, then, this factor as crucial: direct meaning of what is said, got from hearing before interpretation. I should like to note here that it is the conscious, purposeful, textual interpretation that is meant, one which seeks to obtain a meaning different than the literal. Mīmāṁsakas did not, of course, mean that one is born with a full understanding of language and

\textsuperscript{39} The instances are too numerous to cite; an important comment is on MS 1.3.3, in the above discussed section, where Śabara consistently uses śruti as the term for the direct text to which inference is juxtaposed; other instances include 1.2.24, 1.3.18 (pratyakṣa śṛutiḥ), 1.4.2, 1.4.14 (pratyakṣa-vidhāṇa glossed as pratyakṣa-śṛuti), 2.1.20, 2.3.13, 3.3.11.

\textsuperscript{40} This is obvious from Śabara’s comment on 3.1.12. I translate kāraka as “contributory factor to action” following Matilal 1990. Cf. also MSŚBh 3.1.13: “Because of the use with an express statement. These categories are used in relation to hearing in the singular. There is only one thing here which is heard. And, in regard to action in which the word is the means of knowing, whatever the word says, it is that which the reliable warrant is.” śruti-samyogāt, ekatva-śruti-saṁyuktā ete padārthāḥ, ekaṁ hi dravyam eṣa śṛūya-te, śabda-lakṣaṇe ca hi karmāṇi yasya chabda aha, tad asmākaṁ pramāṇam.

\textsuperscript{41} yad arthasyābhidhānaṁ śabdasya śravaṇa-mātriḍ evāvagamyate, sa śrūyāvagamyate. śravaṇaṁ śṛutiḥ. MSŚBh 3.3.14, I2.825.
can comprehend words “as they jump upon us.” They did believe, however, that words have common, single references, as we shall see a bit later, and when one says “stick,” this in the direct meaning, as heard, does not mean a gram of weed or something similar. Mīmāṃsakas, further, did not deny the linguistic determination of the data of experience which shapes any conceptualized perception one may have. It is in dealing with the text of the Veda where interpretation becomes important, as a process one performs to obtain a meaning from a sentence or a text which is not the one that jumps upon the competent reader upon hearing. This may be as innocent as determining how several sentences fit together, or as grave as understanding a particular word in a sense different than the one “got on hearing.” Crucially, Śabara identified the direct meaning of a Vedic text with pratyakṣa, while all forms of interpretation he marked as parokṣa, indirect, or ānumānika, inferential.

One of such forms of interpretation is ascertaining the principal-subordinate relationship between parts of the ritual performance (more on which in the next chapter), for which six criteria (called pramāṇa) are delineated: (1) śruti or express meaning; (2) liṅga or implied meaning; (3) vākya or syntactical relation; (4) prakaraṇa or context; (5) krama or sequence; and (6) samākhyā or technical term. There is no need here to analyze them, but we should note that they have successive validity, each of them more valid than the one following, but it is only śruti which has direct, unconditional validity, for two reasons. First, in śruti the sentence-reference relationship is direct (sannikṛṣṭah śruty-arthāḥ); what is said is what is meant—“go get the

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42 See Taber 2005, particularly pp.93-148. As we shall see later, the words of the Veda have been directly identified by Śaṅkara as creative, providing the natural categories under which things in the world are classified.

43 See on MS 2.3.18, II.605: “The sentential unity of the cooked rice with deposition is evident, while the relation with the sentence about the divinity is inferential, not evident. ‘He deposits the cooked rice’ is an express statement. ‘He deposits that which relates to Bṛhaspati’ is inferential.” upadadhātinā cāsya pratyakṣam ekāväkyatvam, paroṣaṇi devatā-vacanēnānumeyam. carum upadadhātī hi pratyakṣaṇi vākyam. bārhaspatyam upadadhātī ity ānumānīkam. The distinction is very common in the Bhāṣya.

44 These are given in the MS 3.3.14; this and the following paragraph are based on Śabara’s comment on this sūtra. See also Jha 1964:247-57; Patton 2005:69-70.
hammer” is taken to mean just that, not “I want to smack you with it,” a meaning possible but distant. In the Veda one does not have a license for deriving implicit meaning which is contrary to the direct meaning because, second, only śruti is properly Vedic, equivalent to the Vedic word. The other five are not so, ergo they are human, and are valid so long they are śruti-mūla, rooted in an express Vedic statement. They cannot undermine something expressly predicated by the Veda, because in that way they would be undermining themselves. Whatever concordance is achieved by the other five is valid, but—here it is again—inferential (ānumānikī ekavākyatā), and so it cannot be stronger than or optional to the express statement.

To give one instance of this, there is the statement aindryā gārhapatyam upatiṣṭhate, “One should attend to the domestic fire with the mantra to Indra.” There is also near to it a mantra in which Indra is celebrated. The proximity of the two texts raises the question: “Should one attend to the domestic fire itself with the mantra, or to Indra who is somehow related to the fire?” In trying to answer the question, we note that the mantra only praises Indra and does not contain an express statement to the effect that Indra is the reference of the whole sentence. In fact, only the first line of the mantra is quoted, where Indra’s name is not even mentioned (kadā canā starīr asi). That it is a mantra for Indra can only be arrived at by supposing that the mantra indicates that, perhaps through calling to mind the full mantra first, with the assumption

45 Cf. MSŚBh 3.3.14, II.844-45: “It has been said: ‘Since dharma is rooted in the word, what is not the word should be disregarded’ (śūtra 1.3.1). Both of the context and implied meaning are not the word; and in regard to things beyond the range of perception, there is no means of cognition except the Veda.” uktam evaitad dharmasya śabda-mūlatvād aśabdam anapekṣāṁ syād iti. yad etat prakaraṇāṁ liṅgaṁ ca ubhayam apy etad aśabdam. na cātikrānta-pratyākṣa-viṣaya evaṁ-lakṣaṇake arthe śabdam antareṇa paricchedo ’vakalpathe.

46 The two are put together in the Taittirīya-Saṁhitā 1.5.8.3-4. The mantra itself is from the Rig Veda 8.51.7: kadā canā starīr asi
nēndra saścasi dāsūše |
úpopén nú maṅghavan būya in nú te
dānārī devāsya prcyate ||
“Never are you a barren cow, nor, Indra, do you go dry for the pious man.
Over and over, more and more, the gift coming from you, the god, becomes engorged.” (Jamison and Brereton 2014:1134)
that otherwise its recitation would be without a purpose. This having been obtained through indication, it does not have the power to override the express statement that the domestic fire should be worshipped. In fact, that Indra is addressed in the hymn is understood through the express statement, which mentions a mantra for Indra, and the fact that this specific mantra is in its proximity and is available for employment. This makes the inferential operation of indication śruti-mūla, rooted in something express. We hear the word aindryā in the śruti; we see a mantra in proximity; we infer that the devatā of the mantra is Indra, for a mantra without a devatā is of no use.47

Another case of a set of six interpretative tools is the one determining the order of the ritual performance, again called pramāṇas, and śruti again has the precedence against the other five because it is direct.48 And, crucially, śruti is paired with and opposed to lakṣaṇā or figurative meaning, and it trumps here as well.49 In both cases, the counterparts to śruti are called inferential.

We do not need to clutter the text with more instances, because a clear pattern emerges. Śruti is that in the Veda which one gets “on hearing,” and what has direct efficacy and authority as a pramāṇa. The form of instantiations of śruti throughout the pairings is consistent, namely particular express Vedic statements, in the “smṛti-chapter” of the MS and elsewhere. That allows

47 “When mantra is near an act in the context which requires details of procedure, the mantra, in virtue of being in the text forms a verbal supplement to the act which requires details, ‘Sacrifice with this mantra.’ That is, a result being expected from the sacrifice, one should assist the sacrifice with this mantra. The mantra in question cannot assist unless Indra is its reference. So, it means that the mantra denotes Indra. This denotation is rooted in śruti.” itikartavyatārthinaḥ prakaraṇavato 'rthasya samidhāv upaniṣātito mantra āmnāna-sāmarthyād itikartavyatākāṅkṣasya vākya-śeṣatām abhyupetaitena mantreṇa mantriṣṭi. kim uktāṁ bhavati. yāgena abhīpsite sādhyaṁāne 'nena māntreṇopakuryād iti. na cāntrena indrābhīdhiḥnam ayaṁ mantra upakartum śoknoti. tenaitad uktāṁ bhavati. anenendro 'bhidhātavya iti. atāh śruti-mūla evāyam arthaḥ. ... ‘This meaning that ‘Indra should be worshipped with this mantra’ is got from the direct statement, but relative to the inferential sentential unity and the force of indication (in the mantra).” yatas tu khalv ānumānikīm ekavākyatāṁ liṅga-sāmarthyāṁ cāpeksya śrauto 'yam artho yad āddrasypasthānam anena mantreroṇy avagamyate. MSŚBh 3.3.14, I.288-9.
49 śrutiś ca lakṣaṇāyājyāyaṁ jyāyasī, MSŚBh 1.2.19, I.134; śruti-lakṣaṇā-viśaye ca śrutir jyāyasī, MSŚBh 1.4.2, I.324.
us to conclude that for Śabara, when the Veda states something directly and expressly, that is śruti and it is pratyakṣa, perceptible. All forms of human involvement requiring understanding which is arrived at by something more than the mere hearing of the express text is inferential, ānumāṇika. This is clearly an extension of the familiar express vs. inferred rules/statements distinction that we’ve found in the Dharma-Sūtras and that resulted in the śruti/smṛti classification. Whether it is historically later, we are not in a position to say. Most of what I found in the Bhāṣya of Śabara certainly goes back to the sūtras.⁵⁰ We ought to see, though, a generalization of an idea: Veda, associated with hearing, associated with literal meaning, associated with direct authority, vs. memory/hearing with an afterthought, associated with human interpretation, associated with roots in hearing, associated with dependent authority.

Because of the prominence of literal meaning, śruti constitutes the ideal form of Vedic evidence. It is a pramāṇa, existing in sets with other pramāṇas which operate strictly in the Vedas (vede vs. loke), where it trumps all others in all sets because it is direct. It is the perceptual in the Veda, on which all other hang, completely comparable to the status of sensory perception and its relation to the other reliable warrants in worldly matters (as we will see in the next section).

In all the instances that I’ve inspected in the Bhāṣya, the passages so characterized are equivalent to Vedic injunctions (vidhi/codanā). The scope of the Veda was broader than this, and in some of its texts, called arthavāda and containing mostly stories, Mīmāṃsakas allowed for

⁵⁰ The six pramāṇas of ascertaining the principal-subsidiary relation are a matter of the third pāda of the third adhyāya. Particularly sūtra 3.3.14 is significant. A matter concerning an application of a ritual modeled on a prototypical ritual is associated with anumāṇa in sūtra 5.1.20, and this unable to trump what is expressly said, etc. As for the MS itself, “So we ought to conclude carefully that the MS might be of a rather high antiquity: 450—400 B.C. (? the age of Pāṇini?), but the collection took its present form under the influence and the name of one or several Jaimini(s) in a later period. But when? Is it at the time when Kātyāyana the grammarian commented on Pāṇini in his Vārttika, about 250 B. C. (?), or when the Vedānta-sūtras were redacted, that is between 200 and 300 A. D. (?).” (Verpoorten 1987:5).
figurative meaning to have precedence over direct meaning so that such a narrative or commendatory passage may be related to an injunction through a common reference. Furthermore, in such passages, Śabara thought, the considerations of truth and falsity did not matter, and for this reason they could not be offered in evidence, which was the primary function of śruti.\textsuperscript{51} Notably, when such a passage is offered in evidence, Śabara declines to acknowledge it as having the force of śruti. While everything in the Veda has to be purposeful, not everything is evidence, and the arthavādas were directly liable to interpretation so that they could be related to other direct statements.\textsuperscript{52} When such passages are called śruti, and that happens very rarely, they are invariably further qualified: the arthavādas are, for instance, sometimes called phala-śruti or sentences about results following from the use of specific substances in a sacrifice, or the accounts of creation are sṛṣṭi-pralaya-śruti.\textsuperscript{53} They are, furthermore, never offered in evidence. They are, thus, śruti (statements), which can be understood in the literal sense, but they are not really śruti because they should not be understood as they are heard. We may further speculate that the mantra section of the Veda would also have been given the similar treatment under this understanding, because in the ritual context mantras are not taken to express what they directly mean. Such surely would not have been the universal understanding even in Śabara’s time, and Prabhākara provides some internal evidence when he comments on the reasons for the investigation into dharma under MS 1.1.1: “‘But, if this matter is understood just from the Veda, why is it inquired into here?’ – True, but the great seers are of

\textsuperscript{51} See MSŚBh 1.2.10.
\textsuperscript{52} See MSŚBh 1.3.13, 1.242, where a sentence that looks like an injunction, ācārya-vāca pramāṇam, adduced by the opponent in 1.3.11, is interpreted as arthavāda because it hangs on another injunction and, thus, the word ācārya must be taken in the figurative meaning, namely veda, which precludes direct validity. yat tu śrutir iti naitat. arthavādatvāt. katham arthavādaḥ, vidhy-antaraṁ hy asti, āgneyo ’ṣṭākapāla iti. atrācāryo vedo ’bhipretaḥ, ācinoty asya buddhim iti.
\textsuperscript{53} See MSŚBh 4.3.1 on the phala-śruti.
opposite opinions in this regard. Some explain it based on other reliable warrants, while others accept that even the *mantras* and *arthavādas* are reliable warrants in regards to their meaning *just as it is heard*, saying that the Veda is a reliable warrant even in matters not pertaining to duty.\textsuperscript{54} However, while a fuller history of *śruti* will require some more leisure (and we can be fairly certain that the idea does not go to the oldest Vedic texts), what happens in all likelihood is a progressive broadening of the scope of *śruti* (not the Veda!) parallel to the broadening of the scope of *smṛti* and likely driven by it—*śruti* does not appear to have been a thing before the tradition became aware that there are customs that are not directly evidenced in the Veda and must be justified as memory—from the ritual context to the whole of the Veda and from the *Dharma* literature to all the books that the Brāhmaṇical society came to accept. How far is the classical theory—the seers saw/heard the *mantras*, *sāmans*—from the milieu in which *śruti* was likely first theorized!

**From Śruti to Śāstra**

Something more, however, is in evidence in the *Bhāṣya* of Śabara and the long fragment from the older commentary on the MS by the Vṛttikāra which Śabara quotes.\textsuperscript{55} *Śruti* already being called *pratyakṣa* in the sense of express textual statements which one understands just from hearing becomes likened to *pratyakṣa* in the epistemological sense as perception and placed on a rank equal to it. Parallel to this, it is given primacy over *anumāṇa* or inference in the specific, technical sense of inference, as well as all other reliable warrants. Related to this develops the

\textsuperscript{54} yadi punād evāyam artho ‘vagamyate, kim atra jijñāsyate iti. satyam; vipratipannās tu maharṣayaḥ kecit pramāṇaṁ tāntara-pūrvakam arthaṁ varṇayanti; kecin mantārtavādaṁ āpi yathā-śruta evārthe prāmāṇyaṁ icchanty akārye ’py arthe vedaḥ pramāṇaṁ iti vadaṁtaḥ. *Brhatī*, I.1.1, I.19.

\textsuperscript{55} As reported by Taber 2005:176, Kumārila and Pārthasārathi Miśra identify the Vṛttikāra with Upavarṣa. Nakamura 2004:32-5 rejects this identification, but his reasoning seems to be based on the assumption that Śabara quotes the Vṛttikāra verbatim, and the Vṛttikāra would not have said “Upavarṣa says” in his own text if he were really him. This would not be a problem if Śabara, in fact, paraphrases the Vṛttikāra.
doctrine of the absence of an author of the Veda. This happens, it seems to me, by a transfer of meaning from śrutī to a term related to it, šāstra, or Veda in its epistemological role as one of the reliable warrants, pramāṇas.

It is possible, indeed, to talk about a set of related terms, terms with a single denotation but different connotations, which would, apart from śrutī and šāstra, include veda, veda-vacana, āgama, śabda, vākya. They all either directly refer to the Veda, or can be applied to the Veda in a more restricted sense, and their use is functional and relational—they are found in sets such as veda/loka or different classifications of pramāṇas. That they all have the same denotation allows for an occasional interchangeable use: the principle of synonymy. For instance, commenting under MS 1.3.14, Śabara uses śāstra where properly he should use śrutī:

In the prima facie view the words of the teacher [an author of a Kalpa-Sūtra] are, ‘The Amāvāsyā ritual should be performed on all days.’ But, easily accessible is the scripture, ‘The Pūrṇamāsa ritual should be performed on the full moon day, and the Amāvāsyā ritual on the new moon day.’ Therefore, because the sentence is opposed to the direct statement, these [statements of such kind, i.e. from the Kalpa-sūtras] are not veracious statements. Ergo, they are not reliable warrants.”

Scripture or šāstra is used here clearly in the sense of śrutī or express, particular statement. Šāstra is otherwise the term used for the function of the Veda as a reliable warrant. It is the term already used by the Vṛttikāra in the classical formulation of the Veda as pramāṇa among the other pramāṇas, and Kumārila takes it as synonymous with codanā and upadeśa, again the two terms used in the sūtras themselves to refer to the Veda as pramāṇa. But since

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56 acārya-vacanaṁ hi bhavati pūrvapakṣe sarvāsa tithiṣy amāvāṣyā iti. sannihitaṁ ca śāstram paurnāmasyāṁ paurnāmasyāṁ yajeta, amāvāṣyāṁ amāvāṣyāṁ yajeta iti. tena śruti-viruddha-vacanāṁ na satya-vācaḥ, tasmād apramāṇam. MSSBh 1.3.14, I.242-43. This is, of course, not to deny reliability to the Kalpa-Sūtras, but to deny them a śruti status.

57 sāmānya-rūpaṁ apy etad adhikārād viśiṣyate | codanā kopadeśaḥ ca śāstram evety udāḥtam. ŚV Śabda 12. “The generic form [of verbal cognition] is here specified because of the context [that is, śabda as the general way of learning from words is specified as scripture as learning from the words of the Veda]. It was already declared that codanā (direction) and upadeśa (instruction) are what śāstra (scripture) is.” The two words are from sūtras 1.1.2 and 1.1.5.
both terms, śruti and śāstra, denote the Veda, the transfer of qualities is open and it is here that
we witness how śruti that is called pratyakṣa for long centuries in the sense of express statements
contributes to the idea of śāstra, the Veda in its epistemological role beyond that of mere
interpretation, being likened to pratyakṣa precisely as perception.

The idea that the knowledge of the Veda is equal in status and validity to perceptual
knowledge is based on the Mīmāṁsā distinction between cognitions in which the object is
immediately present and cognitions in which the object is remote on the one hand, and the notion
that verbal knowledge as such does not presuppose a prior cognition in which a relation between
an object and a word is established on the other. Going through the six reliable warrants that
Mīmāṁsakas accept in the classical formulation by the Vṛttikāra, we witness how he draws a
distinction between warrants in which the object is near and warrants in which the object is
remote, that is, perceptible or otherwise (sannikṛṣṭa or asannikṛṣṭa), and we take note how
scripture is classed in the second group, with the other four that are not perception. Normally
that the object is not immediately given to perception yet otherwise knowable would mean that
there had to have been a perceptual knowledge at some earlier point on which this new, non-
perceptual cognition is based. Comparison, for instance, tells us something not about what is
presently seen, but about what is otherwise known but not immediately present. “Comparison or
similarity produces a cognition about a thing which is not present, like in the case of
remembering the cow upon seeing a gavaya.” Seeing a gavaya or a wild cow in the forest is not
knowing something about the gavaya, but about the domestic cow, because it is the cow which is
not perceptually present. If comparison would be about the present object, it would be just a

58 They are perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), scripture (śāstra), comparison (upamāna), postulation
(arthāpatti) and absence (abhāva).
59 upamānam api sādṛśyam asannikṛṣṭe 'rthe buddhim utpādayati. yathā, gavaya-darśanaṁ go-smaraṇasya. MSŚBh
1.1.5. I.37, quoting the Vṛttikāra.
variation of perception. Comparison, then, proceeds by way of remembrance of prior perception of the cow and a present perception of the *gavaya*, giving rise to a new cognition about the non-present cow.\textsuperscript{60} The object is already perceptually known, but the specific \textit{new} information about it, which a reliable warrant must provide, is not knowable through perception.

Scriptural knowledge, however, is odd because its object is perceptually inaccessible, but it does not share with the other four the fact of having a prior cognition as the \textit{sine qua non} through which it proceeds. An inference of fire on the hill requires actually seen smoke and a remembered relation between smoke and fire, and the cognized similarity of the cow with the *gavaya* requires a previously seen cow and a presently seen *gavaya*.\textsuperscript{61} Scriptural knowledge, on the other hand, is derived \textit{just} from a verbal cognition,\textsuperscript{62} one which does not presuppose some other perceptual cognition for its very possibility.\textsuperscript{63} The Vṛttikāra insisted that this feature as essential to scriptural knowledge, which is had when “the word itself talks” and which, for this reason, cannot possibly be wrong because it does not report anything previously experienced. Later Mīmāṁsakas, however, universalized this feature of being inerrant to \textit{knowledge from verbal cognition as such, scriptural or testimonial}, and it is convenient to begin with that point.

Let us note first, though, that historically this happened as a response to the challenge of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, who claimed that the ultimately existent things or unique particulars (*svalakṣanās*) are unnameable, since naming operates with concepts that are imposed over the unique particulars that are known in perception. Buddhist epistemology, in other words, privileged perception (really, sensation) and spurned language as inherently conceptual. As

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item This is an understanding of comparison different from that of Nyāya. See Taber 2005:198-9.
\item Śabara explicitly says in MSSBh 1.1.4, I.22 that inference, comparison and postulation are preceded by perception, pratyakṣa-pūrvakatvāc cānumānopamāṇārthāpattīnām.
\item In terms of terminology I follow here Matilal 1990 as far as possible.
\item “Scriptural knowledge is a cognition about a thing which is not present, from cognition of a linguistic utterance.” śāstraḥ śabda-vijñānād asannikṛṣṭe ‘ṛtha vijñānam. MSSBh 1.1.5. I.10, quoting the Vṛttikāra.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Arnold puts it, “The basic idea is that a bare perceptual event is constitutively nonlinguistic, with
the subsequent addition of linguistic interpretation representing, among other things, the point at
which cognitive error creeps in.” The challenge was, in other words, that knowledge from
words *is errant as such.*

Take Prabhākara’s example, “There are hundreds of herds of elephants on the fingertip.”

This is, of course, a claim which cannot be true, but the reason is not that it fails to communicate
meaning. We do understand what “hundreds of herds of elephants” means and insofar we do
understand it, we have a verbal cognition. Such knowledge from verbal cognition cannot be
wrong as long as we grasp the meaning. *Sensu stricto,* words do not operate in regard to external,
experiential matters, such as elephants on fingers, for—as Śālikanātha says—there just is no such
rule. Errors can creep in only in sentences that pretend to report a factual state of affairs.

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64 2005:25.
65 Here is how Prabhākara formulates the challenge: “Stating that words do not refer to things in, “But, is it not the
case that an injunction may convey a falsehood,” he expresses a fault in the thesis. – And how is it that words do not
refer to things? It is said: A reliable warrant which does not correspond to the thing is abandoned [as being such a
warrant]; because, when [there is a faulty cognition, and] a defeating cognition appears, the opposite cognition based
in that [object] does not reappear; but in regard to words, though there is a clear defeating cognition, the opposite
cognition which is word-based appears again—for instance, in “there is a herd of elephants on the fingertip.”
Therefore, the thing [as a referent to the word] is not even possible, as [it is possible] in the case of silver and
mother-of-pearl. Therefore, since an injunction does not correspond to things, the thesis that it is through injunction
that *dharma* is known does not make sense.”
66 “You do not understand the defeated-defeater relation. Here what is defeated is the vision ‘there are hundreds of
herds of elephants on the fingertip,’ which is [in the domain of] another reliable warrant. Not, however, ‘hundreds of
herds of elephants.’”
67 Cf. *Ṛjū-Vimalā* 1.1.2, I.26-7: “Here another cognition, to be ascertained by inference, is defeated. But, [the
cognition in] the form of ‘hundreds of herds of elephants’ is not an external thing; because, the sentence does not
function in regards to such external things. A justified warrant can be defeated in regard to that sphere where it
operates as such. Speech does not operate in regard to external matters, for there is no such rule.”
is a competent user of a language, one will have verbal cognitions, and if an utterance proves to convey an error, as in the case of elephants on fingers, we should look for the source of this error elsewhere.

Mīmāṁsakas developed different theories about where precisely to locate such error. Following Prabhākara, Śālikanātha identified human speech with a form of inference in which what the speaker says is taken as an inferential mark (liṅga) of her cognitive state. For a good inference, two criteria would be necessary, namely that the speaker be trustworthy and that the reported knowledge be otherwise in the domain of what is perceptually knowable to the listener. In such an inference, an error can be made on two counts. We could, first, take something that is not an inferential mark (liṅga) of a reliable cognition of the speaker to be such a mark, and that could happen if we do not apply the two aforementioned criteria. In making such an inference we would have to guard ourselves against frauds, “who know one thing and say another.” In a good inference, in other words, we would correctly ascertain the intention of the speaker. The product of our inference, however, would be knowledge of the cognitive state of the speaker, not of the correspondence of what she is saying to the actual state of affairs, and even when we’ve ascertained it correctly there could still be an error if the speaker’s cognition has missed the reference. She might have been distracted, or the complex of conditions necessary for a correct perceptual cognition might have been compromised (bad eyesight, insufficient light etc.). She may, thus, claim that the “butler did it,” be trustworthy and convinced in her

viṣaye yat pramāṇaḥ pravṛttam, tatra tasya bādhō bhavati. na ca vacanasya bāhye pravṛtīḥ; tatra tasya pravṛtti-niyamābāvād ity uktam.

68 Agreeing, by the way, with Dignāga and Dharmakīrti; see Arnold 2005:40. This whole section is based on Rju-Vimalā and Brhatī on MS 1.1.2.
69 pratyayitasya hi vacanasya avyabhicarī pramāṇāntara-pūrvvakam, yatropalabhamāna-viṣayam; Brhatī 1.1.2, I.26.
70 pratārakā anyathā jānanto ’py anyathā vākyāni prayuñjate. Rju-Vimalā 1.1.2, I.32.
71 tathā pramādino duṣṭa-sāmagrīkāś cānya-vivakṣāyām anyad eva vākyam uccārayanti. Ibid.
cognition, yet there could still be no correspondence between her words and the reference, the one who actually did it.

Such an error would not be a product, however, of any of the pramāṇas that are involved in knowledge from linguistic utterance, namely perception, inference and verbal cognition. For Prābhākaras, an error in perception occurs when something representative, a form of memory, gets mixed with a present object.\(^72\) An image of the butler, in other words, interferes with what our lady perceptually cognizes in a generalized form as “this,” and she is unable to distinguish the two owing to distraction, because it is dark etc. The presentational for Prābhākaras was universally inerrant, the error was a matter of a mix-up. Further, Śālikanātha defined inference quite formally—a cognition of a cause from an effect is all what inference is\(^73\)—and an error in the inference can happen, again, when one thing is mistaken for another, specifically when that which is not a mark is taken as such, say smog taken as smoke. This would not be an error of inference per se, but, again, a case of confusion of one thing for another, a case of wrong identification. In the case of testimony, such a confusion could happen if the words of one untrustworthy are taken as words of one who is trustworthy, because his true intention has not been properly ascertained. In any case, no error would come from the verbal cognition, for such cognition, like perception, is a form of awareness—knowledge of a thing got just from the word—and since awareness is presentational, “perceptual,” a reference would be immediately given to it.\(^74\) Whether the knowledge of the listener, however, will correspond to the reference actually intended by the speaker, when words are employed in sentences in other words, will

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\(^{72}\) “There, it is not the perceptual knowledge which misses. One thing there is the visual awareness of “this is something,” but quite another “it is silver,” which is merely recollective awareness hanging on to silverness. Here the error consists in not distinguishing the two, but the perceptual knowledge in inerrant.” na tatāndriyakaṁ jñānaṁ vyabhicarati. ekaṁ hi tatra jñānam—idam—iti cākṣuṣanam, aparām iti—rajatam—iti rajata-mātrāvalambī smarana-jñānam; tayor vivekāgraḥaṇa-nibandhaḥ bhramo ‘yam; na punar aindriyakaṁ jñānaṁ vyabhicarati. Ibid.

\(^{73}\) kāryataḥ ca kāraṇāvagatīr anumānām eva. Ibid.

\(^{74}\) Cf. Brhatī 1.1.2, I.33: saṁvidah pratyakṣatvāt.
depend on these other conditions. Prabhākara’s claim, thus, was that words expressing concepts are *equally basic* to experience as perception is, because they are given to awareness without mediation. They are not constructs or abstractions. Errors, however, are possible in testimonial, *sentential*, accounts.

Kumārila’s response to the Buddhist challenge that conceptual thinking involving words is the point at which error enters cognition was a frontal and multipronged counterattack. It involved, first, a reaffirmation of conceptualized or verbalized perception. Kumārila argued at length that it is not only the bare percept of a unique particular, stripped of all concepts expressed in words, which qualifies as what is apprehended in perception.75 Conceptualized/verbalized perception is equally perceptual and revealing the object because if the object of the percept does not have the characteristics attributed to it, all ground for superimposing them by the mind would be lost. Why cognize something as a cow and not a horse if such conceptualized cognition is just a matter of construct? Who decides that, and how is intersubjectivity possible without it? Bhatt expresses the gist of Kumārila’s argument well: “It should be noted that such features are not imagined but discovered by the assimilative and discriminative operations of the mind. They are as much objective as the individual (‘Vyakti’) revealed in the first stage [non-conceptualized perception], which is the concrete unity of universals and particulars.”76

The second point of Kumārila’s counterattack was the doctrine of intrinsic validity (*svataḥ prāmāṇya*) of all cognitions—bare or conceptualized perceptions, testimonials, comparisons, inferences etc.77 Validity, claimed Kumārila, is a faculty or a capacity (*śakti*) which

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75 The whole argument is given in the Pratyakṣa-Pariccheda chapter of ŚV, which has been competently translated and interpreted by Taber 2005.
76 1994:16-17.
cognitions as kinds of things must have if they are to have it at all.78 Seeking justification for belief in a certain cognition outside the cognition itself, how it presents itself to our cognitive ability, is doomed to regressus ad infinitum because any further cognition would again seek justification in another cognition without end. All that one can offer, for instance, for the claim that what one saw was a ball is that it appeared as a round object, no doubt was present to one’s awareness etc. These are all cognitions like the first, ball-cognition, and pursuing validity for the first through them will always ask for a further point of validation. As Arnold puts it: “[I]f the initial cognition is not credited with the ‘capacity’ for validity, then no other cognition will be able to bestow that—unless, of course, the second-order cognition is intrinsically credited with that capacity, in which case, why not simply allow this with respect to the initial moment?”79 For there to be some form of validity to begin with, it has to be postulated that any cognition is prima facie valid.80 A cognition can be falsified if some other, subsequent cognition contradicts it, for instance when the cognition of mother-of-pearl replaces that of silver, or if there is a reason for doubt because the cognition does not present itself clearly: “Is it a man or a post?” In any case, such invalidity would come from outside, from another cognition or from a defect in the factors contribution to the cognition, such as healthy senses, sufficient sunlight or what have you: a cognition is not independent in regard to its origin.81 But prima facie, any cognition is valid as it presents itself, unless and until proven wrong. This applies to testimonial knowledge as well. It

78 svataḥ sarva-pramāṇānāṁ prāmāṇyam iti gamyatām | na hi svatī ‘satī śaktī kartum anyena śakyate. ŚV Codanā, 47. “All pramāṇas have intrinsic validity; a faculty that is in itself unreal cannot be made real by another.”
80 Validity as a śakti, a category which is not among the existents in the world (vastu), but is a feature of such existents, having no other locus except for the existent, is known through postulation. Kumārila was otherwise very fond of the category of śakti.
81 ŚV Codanā 48.
can prove wrong only by a subsequent cognition that the speaker is not trustworthy or could not have experienced what she reports.  

Kumārila was not ready to reduce even testimonial knowledge to inference, as Prābhākaras did, for several reasons, but ultimately because the cognitive state of the speaker, taken to be the inferential reason (hetu or liṅga) in virtue of the two criteria, the speaker being trustworthy and the object being in the experiential domain, is not really a mark of the reference, as Prabhākara himself admitted. It is a mark of an object present in the speaker’s awareness, but there is no invariant relation between the word the speaker uses—“butler”—and a necessary presence of the reference of the word, when, say, the maid did it. In plain language, “the butler did it” means just what the witness thinks: there may be no butler behind the witness’s thought, he was with the householder’s wife and cannot provide an alibi. For words not to miss the mark, they need to refer directly, human speech included, and the reduction of knowledge from verbal utterances to inference, as the Bauddhas proposed, would strip śabda of validity entirely, because one cannot be certain in principle whether one’s words represent the object accurately. The sphere in which words are pramāṇa, therefore, has to be different than the sphere of inference. Now, it is true that in testimonial accounts we need to rely on the cognitive state of a specific speaker, and we also need to assume an invariant concomitance between “correspondence of cognition/words to experience” and “being a trustworthy speaker,” just as we need to know that smoke is universally related to damp firewood. Thus, though a cognition arises from a linguistic utterance as prima facie intrinsically valid, there is still an afterthought in regard to its validity.

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83 purastād varṇitaṁ āhy etat tasmāc chabdena yā matih | 
tasyāḥ svataḥ pramāṇatvaṁ na cet syād doṣa-darśanam. ŚV Śabda, 53.
“This [that the validity cannot rest on trustworthiness] was explained before. Therefore, the thought that is owing to an utterance is intrinsically valid, if no fault is seen.”
“Well, why should I believe him? Is he trustworthy, could he have actually experienced this?”

Figuratively, we can call human speech inferential, since it shares with inference an element of invariant concomitance (albeit assumed), but the instrument which causes the cognition is the utterance, and the utterance is understood once we have understood what the individual words mean directly, not through the cognitive state of the speaker. We may, thus, call testimony inferential, but we cannot define it as inference.  

The Impersonal Nature of the Veda

But these differing accounts aside—and there were many other related differences, some of which will appear in the next chapter—both camps agreed that knowledge from verbal cognition as such is inerrant; and, both the presupposition and the refined product of this was that words—as informative and corresponding to referents—do not denote individual things, but real universals, the shape or blueprint of things. Verbal knowledge as such is never about this specific pot in front of me or about historical events. It, rather, provides the natural categories through which particular experience is structured. Of course, in an actual testimony corresponding to actual experience, words composed in a sentence would, if so required by the sentence, refer to individuals, but again as instantiations of such universals. As Kumārila claimed, individual entities have that dual nature to be an indivisible unity of a particular and a universal.

That words have universals as referents was in itself not controversial, and it was accepted even by Buddhist philosophers. However, whereas Buddhists thought that universals are constructs, Mīmāṃsakas, as we saw above, took them to be real on one hand and revealing

84 See ŚV Śabda 39-52, 109; see also Pārthasārathi on 48.
85 See McCrea 2013:134-6.
rather than concealing the true nature of object. This Mīmāṃsā doctrine was formulated already in one of the crucial sūtras of the MS (1.1.5), commonly known as the autpattika-sūtra: “The relation of the word to its meaning is innate. Knowledge of such meaning is [had through] instruction, which is infallible in regard to imperceptible things. It is a reliable warrant, according to Bādarāyaṇa, because it is independent.”86 The consideration of the sūtra leads us, finally, to the consideration of the nature of Vedic knowledge, śāstra as a specific form of śabda.

Though knowledge from verbal cognition as such was theorized as inerrant, yet it was not accorded the status of pramāṇa because of the strict requirement that a pramāṇa should tell us something new. Once we’ve learned what words mean, when used in non-sentential context they could at best remind us of a previously known reference.87 And, as we have seen above, when sentences are formed from words, in testimonial accounts, there were two scenarios under which Mīmāṃsakas allowed an error to infect what is actually said: in intentional deception—“In all cases the thing is not cognized directly through personal speech, because it is contingent on personal desire, and persons use words even when the thing is not there”88—and in reports of erroneous cognitions even when intentions are aboveboard. Both of these scenarios, notably, are contingent on personal agency: they require a speaker who is absolutely trustworthy and omniscient. Therefore, both can be removed, thought Mīmāṃsakas, in a single stroke: remove the speaker and you remove both intention and prior cognition.

Intention (vivakṣā, literally desire to say) as Mīmāṃsakas understood it is the key word here, for it covers not only cases of speech intending to convey a state of affairs, true of false, but

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86 autpattikas tu śabdasyārthena sambandhas; tasya jñānam upadeśo 'vyatirekaś cārthe 'nupalabdhe, tat pramāṇaṁ bādarāyaṇasya, anapekṣatvā. My translation follows the Viṛttikāra. It is, perhaps, significant that this centralmost doctrine is attributed to Bādarāyaṇa, the purported author of the Brahma-Sūtra.
87 See ŚV Šāda 99-111.
88 sarvatra pauruṣeṇa vacasā na sāksāt artha eva prafiyate, puruṣecchā-paratantarvāt. asaty apy arthe puruṣā vākyam prayañjānā dṛṣyante. Rju-Vimalā 1.1.2. 1.25.
also the case where an individual or a group intends that a word should denote one thing rather than another. The second was arguably more dangerous for Mīmāṃsakas, since it could happen that the most cherished word of words, dharma, gets to mean what the Buddha intended it to mean. So, the first step to secure the inerrancy of Vedic knowledge was to propose that the relation between the word and its reference is innate, natural, never instituted into being by a personal (or contractual) whim, human or divine. The word-reference relation is non-personal, apauruṣeya, said the Vṛttikāra, and this is likely the first appearance of the idea that we have evidence of. There never happened in history an event when someone said, “let this thing be called ‘a ball,’ that thing ‘a cow’ and that yonder thing ‘dharma.’” The basic, non-technical meanings of words (in the Sanskrit language), which impose upon our understanding on hearing, are meanings which words have always had, since the (non)-beginning of time. (Plato should have consulted Jaimini to learn the names of his ideas in the topos hyperuranius.)

But even such non-intentional words could be intentionally inflected by personal agency, as we have seen above. Therefore, at the last step it was claimed that there never happened in history an event where a person used the word-meaning relationship to compose the Vedas. The Vedas have always been there, transmitted in the same way as they are now. This is the last feat which should secure the inerrancy of the Vedas: they are, properly speaking, not accounts of anything and they do not presuppose a prior cognition of which they would be reporting. The absence of a prior cognition that is a matter of reporting should, thus, eliminate the second point

89 apauruṣeyaḥ śabdasyārthena sambandhas. MSŚBh 1.1.5, I.41. Śabara has aviyuktaḥ as a gloss of autpattikaḥ, inseparable for innate, and he does not use the term apauruṣeya except when quoting the Vṛttikāra, but does talk about pauruṣeyāṁ vacanam, human speech.
90 Vṛttikāra, “Therefore, we think someone, a person, created a word-reference relation and composed the Veda in order to employ this relation.’ – On this, it is now said, it is proven, because the relationship is non-personal.” tasāṁ manyāmahe kenapi puruṣena śabdānāṁ arthaṁ saha sambandhāṁ kṛtvā samvyavahartūṁ vedāḥ prāṇīta iti. tad idānīṁ ucyate – apauruṣeyatvāṁ sambandhasya siddham. MSŚBh 1.1.5, I.52-53.
at which error could creep in. There is no possibility for a mix-up or for the virtues or defects of the speaker to modulate testimony.\textsuperscript{91}

Mīmāṁsakas have used many arguments to bolster the claim that the word-meaning relationship and the composition of the Veda are non-personal. There is no perceptual evidence of an author, and all the other reliable warrants operate with perceptual data.\textsuperscript{92} Were there one, we would have remembered him no matter how long ago it was, as that would have been a major event. Surely, we would have remembered if someone built the Himālaya; it is not our home garden after all, the memory of which could have faded in the family. Men, furthermore, do not have the power to compose on such supersensible matters as are treated in the Veda.\textsuperscript{93} One is tempted to interpret such understanding of the Veda as one of a naturally structured phenomenon: in the Vedas words are meaningfully ordered just as planets are in the solar system, as rivers flow down to the ocean, as water melts sugar and salt. Whereas for deists such ordered phenomena would betray personal intelligence behind it, Mīmāṁsakas would have agreed with Hume that this information is just not given in experience.

Two arguments specifically seem to support such an interpretation. The first argues from the awareness of an author that we have in the use of technical language, such as of Pāṇini when we talk Sanskrit grammar, and the absence of a similar impression in everyday language. While the claim that we are aware of a specific author is not particularly strong, we do have the sense of artificiality of technical lingo and notations, for instance in formal logic, which is strikingly different from the sense about the natural language acquired through observing how elders talk,

\textsuperscript{91} “In the Veda there is not even the possibility of a defeating cognition. Therefore, there is not even a doubt that words might not correspond to their reference.” vede punaḥ bādhaka-جيبाधिव्यात arthāsanparśitaśानकापिनास. \textit{Bṛhatī} 1.1.2, 1.24. See also Kataoka 2011a:272-92.
\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Vṛttikāra: puruṣasya sambandhur abhāvāt, kathāṁ sambandhā nāsti? pratyaśaṣyasya pramāṇasya abhāvāt tat-pūrvakatvāc cetareśām. MSŚBh 1.1.5, 1.53.
\textsuperscript{93} Šabara 1.1.25, 1.99: api caivaṁ-jātiyake 'rthe vākyāni sarīhartuṁ na kīṁcana puruṣāṇaṁ bijam asti.

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as Mīmāṁsakas would say, where we never stop to think, “someone made this up.” The second argument proposes that the claim that a personal author must have established the word-meaning relationship would involve a vicious circle, because such action of naming presupposes the use of language. “Let’s call this a ‘ball’” as a performative utterance depends on a preexisting verbal practice. Both arguments, however, refer just to the word-meaning relationship, not the composition of the Veda, and Mīmāṁsakas, one gets the impression, hope to prove both by proving the first.

Be that as it may, such was in Mīmāṁsā understanding the intention and prior cognition that were lacking behind language in general and the Vedas in particular. Not only are the Vedas not like Marco Polo telling us about his travels: they do not even admit an original act of assigning names to things. Knowledge from the Veda is knowledge just from words and from sentences which do not depend on or convey a prior experience. It is knowledge, but not about what has already been seen or heard.94

**Śruti-Śāstra as Perception**

We can see, now, why scriptural knowledge would be likened to perception and contraposed to inference. Perceptual knowledge does not require data from another reliable warrant. Human or personal speech does and therefore, though its operation is independent insofar as it provides new information in a way different from the other reliable warrants, it is ultimately dependent on

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94 “But when the word itself talks, how can it be false? In that case there is no understanding from another person. When it is said ‘it talks’, it means that it makes known. It becomes the means of something being understood. Since the word is the means, it makes known by itself.” atha śabde bruvați kathaṁ mithyeti. na hi tadānīṁ anyataḥ puruśād avagamāṁ. brāvīti tasya bhavyāntaro bhavyamānaṁ vai. Vṛtti in MSŚBh 1.1.5, I.42. “That is, when a cognition has been brought about by means of words, there is no need for any other cognition (to corroborate it), or of any other person as having the same cognition.” na hy evaṁ sati pratyayāntaram apekṣitavyaṁ, puruṣāntaraṁ vāpi. ayaṁ pratyayaḥ hy asau. MSŚBh 1.1.5, I.25.
perception. So are the other pramānas, as discussed above. But knowledge derived from the Veda is not of the testimonial kind; it is direct just like perception. “It occupies the same rank as the senses,” as Śabara says in the passage which serves as this chapter’s epigraph. The Vedas are, as it were, the “senses” for knowing that which is beyond the senses, the third eye of the Vedic theologian, and any form of knowledge which is structurally derivative cannot be applied in an argument against them. Inference proper, not just inference as a blanket term for scriptural interpretation as paired to śruti-pratyakṣa, cannot be offered against an express scriptural statement, just on the ground that it is inference, while the statement is perception:

“All, because of similarity to personal speech, the Vedic speech would be false.” – This is inference; the cognition in regard to Vedic speech, however, is perception. Inference which is against perceptual evidence is not a reliable warrant.

The notion, “seeing falsity in the case of another cognition, this one will be false as well” is an inferential one; being contradicted by this perceptual cognition, it is defeated.

This is, of course, a figurative use of the word pratyakṣa. Kumārila significantly also talks about inference in its nominal and definitional sense, samijña and lakṣaṇa, as we have seen above with testimony being inferential but not inference. He also reinterprets the smṛti=anumāna, which Śabara took literally, as smṛti=arthāpatti, a postulation of lost Vedic passages rather than a formal inference in virtue of the agents being the same, on the ground that any knowledge that comes after some other knowledge can be called anumāna, inference. This allows us, it seems

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95 See, for instance, ŚV Codanā 71: pauruṣeye tu vacane pramāṇāntara-mūlatā | tad-abhāve hi tad duṣyed itaran na kadācana. “As for personal speech, it is dependent on another reliable warrant. Without such reliability it would be errant, but never so non-personal speech.” Kumārila proceeds to affirm that all pramāṇas are informative independently and even when they do provide the same knowledge, they do not do so in the same way (73-4). See also Kataoka 2011b:279-82.

96 api ca puruṣa-vacana-sādharmyāt veda-vacanaiḥ vitatham ity anumānaṁ vyapadeśād avagamyate, pratyakṣaṁ tu veda-vacanena prayāyaḥ. na cānumānaṁ pratyakṣaṁ-virodhi pramāṇaṁ bhavati. MSSBh 1.1.2, I.17.

97 yo ’py asya prayāyaṁ-viparyāsaṁitrāpi viparyāsyaśaṁtiḥ ānumānikaḥ prayāyaḥ utpadyate, so ’py anena prayāyakṣaṁ prayāyena virudhīyamāno bādhyate. Vṛttikāra, MSSBh 1.1.5, I.42.


99 tasmād arthāpattir evātīvṛtyābhirad upacārāṁ paścāṁ mānād anumāṇatvenoktā. TV 1.3.2.
to me, to see the application of the concepts of *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* in a strict as well as a loose sense and then group items applying the second. Thus, the six reliable warrants are divided in perception on one hand, where the object is directly visible, and the rest, where the object is not present. Testimonial speech is grouped with the second. However, when the general *śabda* is specified and *śāstra* is taken as separate, then we have perception and scriptural knowledge on the one side, in which no prior knowledge is presupposed for the operation of the *pramāṇa*, and *śabda* and the other four *pramāṇas*, which depend for their operation of perceptual data.

It is useful, at this point, to refer to the familiar *loka/veda* distinction, the two realms postulated by Vedic theology. The first refers to the world as we know it, with natural laws knowable directly through perception and the other three, four or five *pramāṇas* that harness perceptual data. The second refers to the scriptural domain, which has its own, “verbal” laws that one can harness to one’s benefit—more of which in the next chapter—and which is knowable directly through an express Vedic statement, *śruti*, and the different sets of *pramāṇas* that employ *śruti*-data. Each realm, in other words, has a basic *pramāṇa*, one that gives a direct access to the realm, and because the second shares such directness within its own realm with the first, in virtue of that quality it can be called perception. In both realms the other *pramāṇas* that do not have this direct access to the realm as a defining property are called *anumāna*, not in the technical sense of inference but in the etymological. Mīmāṃsakas, thus, dispensing with trustworthiness and yogic perception of the Buddha, Īśvara and any imaginable authority, replaced one perception with another, *śruti/śāstra-pratyakṣa*, “scriptural perception” on the part of the subject. In this light, to treat *śruti* as revelation would be justified only insofar as it affords a glimpse into otherwise concealed world to the subject, a means and not a product.
Śāstra, properly speaking, the Veda paired with the other laukika or worldly pramāṇas, is an intruder in classification, a mixing of the realms. We may speculate that its inclusion in the list of pramāṇas of the Vṛttikāra, admittedly awkward even by Kumārila, and the toils to distinguish it from testimonial knowledge, came as a result of the duress of the Veda being under attack and requiring authority that cannot be questioned, by stretching the limits of some old ideas such as the likeness of śruti with pratyakṣa and the prominent role of the direct meaning associated with it.

**Śruti in Other Brāhmaṇical Traditions**

But such deliberations will have to wait some other occasion. For our purpose it is necessary now to go back to the original question of delimiting the field of Vedic theology. While other Brāhmaṇical schools were recognized by the time of Kumārila and Śaṅkara as being part of the smṛti tradition, containing many teachings that the Vedic śiṣṭas would approve of, they did not have any serious stake in the direct interpretation of the Veda.

Larson’s evaluation of Śaṅkhya’s attitude to knowledge from linguistic utterance is certainly true, if imprecise: “Śaṅkhya had never denied reliable verbal testimony (āptavacana or śruti) as a legitimate and important means of knowing, but Śaṅkhya clearly gave pride of place in knowing to independent reasoning, even in the area of samyagdarśana and adhyātmavidyā (that is to say, in the area of ultimate truth and the science of liberation).”101 Though Īśvarakṛṣṇa in SK 5 accepts knowledge from linguistic utterance as different from inference, his formulation did not recognize the Veda as apauruṣeya as Mīmāṁsakas would have wanted: āpta-śrutir āpta-

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100 pratyakṣaḥ suktaḥ śabda-mātrasya lakṣaṇam |
tad atitvaritena kiṁ śāstrād abhidhīyate. ŚV Sabda 1. “The definition of knowledge from linguistic utterance in general should be given in the discussion of perception and the rest. Why is, then, hurriedly the definition of scripture given?” This is the pūrva-pakṣa that opens the śabda chapter of the ŚV.
vacanaṁ tu. The most straightforward translation of this would be: “But, hearing from a trustworthy source is a reliable statement.” The reconstructed text of the *Suvarṇa-Saptati*, which Paramārtha translated into Chinese and is likely the oldest available commentary on the *Sāṇkhya-Kārikā*, supports such reading: “For instance, the four Vedas spoken by Brahmā and the *Dharma-Śāstra* spoken by Manu.”102 Āpta was, otherwise, the common word for a trustworthy person, though Mīmāṁsakas preferred pratyayita. Other earlier commentaries, such as the *Bhāṣya* of Gauḍapāda, analyze āpta-śrutī as a *samāhara-dvandva* and take āpta to stand for teacher and śruti for the Veda.103 More important, however, is the fact that Sāṅkhya developed in opposition to and rejecting the ritualism of the Veda, which is clear from the very outset of the *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*,104 and however the compound is to be understood, it certainly is at best an early instance of “raising of the hat” to the Veda and moving on.105 Most important, the characteristically Sāṅkhyan objects, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, were knowable through inference, not scripture.

Early Yoga had several doctrines which ran counter the Mīmāṁsā account of the Veda. The understanding of knowledge from linguistic utterance was the familiar knowledge from a trustworthy source, with no special concession for the particular nature of the Veda.106

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102 āpta-śrutir āpta-vacanam ucyate iti. yathā brahmaṇaṁ manunā ca uktāṁ ca catvāro vedā dharma-śāstraś ca. SSS 1.5, p.9.
103 āpta-śrutir āpta-vacanāṁ ca. āptā ācāryā brahmādayaḥ. śrutī vedaḥ. āptas ca śrutiṣ ca āptā-śrutī tad-uktam āpta-vacanam iti. SKG 1.5, p.52. The Māṭhara-śrīti follows suit.
104 SK 2, which claims that Vedic ritualism as a means ending the threefold suffering is no better than the ordinary, for a variety of reasons.
105 Renou 1965:2.
106 See YS 1.7 and the *Bhāṣya* thereon: āptena dṛṣṭo ‘numito vārthaḥ paratra svabodha-saṅkrāntaye śabdenopādityate, śabdāt tad-artha-viṣayā vṛtthiḥ śrotur āgamaḥ. yasyāśraddheśvartah na dṛṣṭānumānaḥ sa āgamaḥ plavate. mūla-vaktari tu dṛṣṭānumānaṁ nirvāplavaḥ syāt. “The mental modification arising from hearing the words of a reliable person who desires to convey his cognition to the hearer is āgama-pramāṇa, i.e., authoritative testimony to the hearer. That testimony may be false, i.e., cannot at all be a pramāṇa, if the person communicating the knowledge is not trustworthy or is deceitful or is one who has neither seen nor experienced what he seeks to communicate. That transferred cognition which has its basis in the direct experience of the first authoritative
Furthermore, verbal cognition was understood as concealing the real object, and for such real object, “the thing in itself,” to be properly known, it would have to be first purged from all verbal and conceptual traces.\(^{107}\) Such knowing free from words and concepts constitutes “best perception and the basis and origin of inference and testimony.\(^{108}\) Patañjali, in other words, was arguably privileging perception no less than his Buddhist peers. Early Yoga, furthermore, while accepting that words generally have a natural expressive power, took the imposition of specific words over specific things to be a matter of convention. In other words, it accepted, unlike Mīmāṁsā, an event of naming.\(^{109}\)

The only competing tradition which developed a thorough account of the validity of the Veda was Nyāya, which, nevertheless, differed from Mīmāṁsā on all major counts. The Nyāya-Sūtra (NS) defined knowledge from linguistic utterance solely as testimony, “an instruction of a trustworthy person,”\(^{110}\) and Naiyāyikas were uncompromising in subsuming the Veda under this definition. Vātsyāyana, in fact, defined who a trustworthy person is in wording identical to Yāska’s definition of a ṛṣi, “one who has directly seen dharma,” and applied the definition to everyone—ṛṣis, Vedic nobles and barbarians alike—because they all do their business depending on trustworthy accounts.\(^{111}\) The specific nature of the Veda was only that it relates things that are humanly invisible, but were visible to the ṛṣis.\(^{112}\) Naiyāyikas, furthermore, claimed that the word-reference relationship is conventional, that is, instituted into being in an event of naming:

\[^{107}\] See YS 1.42-3 and the Bhāṣya thereon.
\[^{108}\] tat paraṁ pratyakṣaṁ tac ca śrutānumāṇayor bijam, tataḥ śrutānumāne prabhavataḥ. YSBh 1.43, p.93.
\[^{109}\] YSBh 1.27 and 3.17.
\[^{110}\] āptopadeśaḥ śabdaḥ. NS 1.7.
\[^{111}\] āptaḥ khalu sākṣāt-ktā-dharmaḥ … ṛṣy-ārya-mlecchānāṁ samānaṁ lakṣaṇam. tathā ca sarveṣaṁ vyavahārāḥ pravarttanta iti. NSBh 1.7, p.24-5.
\[^{112}\] See sūtra 1.1.8, 2.1.67, and Bhāṣya thereon.
“Let this name apply to this object.”\textsuperscript{113} While in the Bhāṣya this convention was left unqualified, later Naiyāyikas attributed the act of naming, as well as of composing the Veda, to God, Īśvara.\textsuperscript{114} But most important, again, was the fact that Nyāya, much like Sāṅkhya, did not have a major stake in the Veda, and developed all of its major arguments solely on the strength of reasoning.

It was only the Vedāntins who joined Mīmāṁsakas in staking everything on the authority and validity of the Veda, because the Upaniṣads were part of the Vedic canon. If the Upaniṣads were to be valid as a pramāṇa, the whole Veda had to have independent validity. For this reason, even Advaitins had to have a stake in Vedic ritualism, as Mīmāṁsakas had to account for the validity of the Upaniṣads. For all of their opposition to Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā, Advaitins subscribed fully and unconditionally to the set of ideas which developed around the autpattika-sūtra, namely that words refer to universals, the word-reference relationship is natural, and the Vedas have no author, presuppose no prior cognition and no intention, and constitute a form of immediate knowledge.

\textbf{Śaṅkara’s Understanding of Śruti}

One cannot but be impressed with the level of sophistication of argument which Mīmāṁsakas produced to defend such a counterintuitive idea: there are books that were never composed by a god or a man, and they are immediately and unconditionally valid. Yet for all this sophistication, at the top of it all, Mīmāṁsakas insisted that it is only in regard to commands that the Vedas have such unconditional authority. Thus, when Śabara laid down a broad claim to anything otherwise

\textsuperscript{113} “And what, pray tell, is this convention? It is a rule which restricts the denotation of words, ‘this group of objects will be named by this word.’” kaḥ punar ayaṁ samayaḥ. asya śabdasyedam artha-jītam abhidheyam ity abhidhānabhidheya-niyama-niyogaḥ. NSBh 2.1.55, p.137.

\textsuperscript{114} See Kunjunni Raja 1963:23-4; Potter 1977:376-9; Chemparathy 1987.
unknowable being in the domain of the Veda, “the Vedic injunction only, and not any sense organ, can intimate a past, present and future thing that is subtle, concealed, remote or similar in kind,” Prabhākara, arguing from the standpoint of strictest Mīmāṁsā fundamentalism, was quick to “clarify” that these other things that the Veda may say have not their normal meaning, but only kārya, “obligation” that is constitutively future. To vulgarize the idea, when the Veda narrates stories, the reference behind such narration, the thing that the story is about, is nothing in the past or present, but just a ritual action that one needs to perform, one that impresses upon the addressee as requiring completion, and the story tells the addressee, “Get on with it.”

Everything in the Veda, thus, is normative, in a very restricted sense. The Vedas are also not informative about things that are already constituted and complete (siddha), such as the existents in this world or behind it: cows, agriculture, colors red and blue, heaven as a real place worthy of description, or Brahman.

Śaṅkara’s project of rethinking the Vedas in general and the Upaniṣads in particular took for granted most of what Mīmāṁsakas arrived at concerning the epistemic role and validity of the Veda: without the Veda, there is no means of perceiving that which is in the realm of the supersensible; the Veda is authorless and the relation between the word and its meaning is natural; words refer to universals or forms, not to individual substances, qualities or actions;}

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115 ṭodanā hi bhūtaṁ, bhavantaṁ, bhaviṣyantaṁ, sūkṣmaṁ, vyavahitaṁ, viprakṛṣṭam ity evan-jātiyakam artham śaknoty avagamayitum, nänyat kiṁcancendriyam. MSSBh 1.1.2, I.13.
116 na caṁndriyān arthān śrutm antaṁ kaścid upalabhata iti śakyaṁ sambhāvatitum, nimittābhāvāt. BS Bh 2.1.1, II.284.
117 apauruṣeye vede vaktur abhāvāt, BS Bh 1.2.2, I.98. The same affirmed in BS Bh 1.3.28, I.190; gavādi-śabdārtha-sambandha-nityatva-darśanāt. na hi gavādi-vaaktiṇāṁ utpattimattve tadv-ākṛtiṇāṁ apy utpattimattvariṁ syāt. dravyaguna-karmaṁ hi vyaktaya evotpadyante, nākṛtayaḥ. ākṛtibhiḥ ca sābdānāṁ sambandhaḥ, na vyaktibhiḥ, vaaktiṇāṁ ānantyaṁ sambandha-grahaṇānupattepateḥ; “The relationship between words such as ‘cow’ and meaning is seen to be eternal. For, it is not the case that when individual cows are born that their universal/shape is born as well. Only individual substances, qualities and action can have origin, not universals. Words are related to universals/shapes, not individuals, because the relation of words with individuals cannot be grasped, since individuals are innumerable.” BS Bh 1.3.28.
the Veda is “perceptual,” direct, whereas smṛti is inferential, because the first does not depend on anything else for its validity while the second does.\footnote{118}

His project, however, focused on rethinking the nature of the Veda as pramāṇa as having \textit{first and foremost} truth value and only then, \textit{if required}, action value. In doing so, he hoped to open a space for some sentences of the Upaniṣads not to have an action value at all, and in this he argued against Prābhākaras on one end and fellow Vedāntins on the other. In most arguments he joined forces with Maṇḍana Miśra, but there were several crucial points at which he parted ways with him as well.

Let us conclude with a short analysis where Śaṅkara differed from the Mīmāṁsā account presented above. The emphasis on the informative nature of the Veda as a canon opened up the possibility to treat the \textit{arthavāda} passages as having full and independent validity just like the Vedic injunctions.\footnote{119} This in effect allowed Śaṅkara to affirm that the Veda, though \textit{apauruṣeya}, comes from Brahman as an omniscient and omnipotent being, a doctrine having roots in the Upaniṣads and one which Mīmāṁsakas did not accept.\footnote{120} As a Vedāntin he also upheld the doctrine that the world is created from and annihilated in Brahman. Mīmāṁsā did not share this doctrine either. Kumārila famously claimed that the simplest assumption is that the world now is as it has always been and that the doctrine of creation and annihilation is an \textit{arthavāda} which has

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\item \textit{pratyakṣaṁ hi śrutih, prāmāṇyaṁ praty anapekṣatvāḥ; anumānaṁ śrutiḥ, prāmāṇyaṁ prati sāpekṣatvāḥ. BSBh 1.3.28, I.191.}
\item \textit{See BSBh 1.3.31 and BĀUBh 1.3.1. I will treat this issue in detail later in the dissertation.}
\item \textit{This is developed in BSBh 1.1.3, where BĀU 2.4.10 is given as reference: asya mahato bhūtasya niḥśvāsitam etad r̥g-vedo \ldots Note also tasya mahato bhūtasya nirañiṣṭayaṁ sarvajñatvāṁ sarva-śaktimattvāṁ ceti, “That great being is absolutely omniscient and omnipotent.” Such understanding, in fact, places him dangerously close to the Naiyāyika account of the Veda, because, as I will show later, Brahman that has the properties of omniscience and omnipotence is precisely Iśvara in Śaṅkara’s theology. Kumārila argued against the doctrine that the Veda might originate from an omnipotent being in \textit{SV Codanā}.}
\end{itemize}
given rise to creationist philosophies. This acceptance of periodical creation opened up the possibility for taking at face value those passages of the Veda which present the Veda as a form of revelation. The Veda is eternal, but it is intuited by Prajāpati at the beginning of the new cycle of creation. Because words in the Veda refer to universals, Prajāpati creates the manifold that is the world against the Vedas as the blueprint. Such doctrine does not require taking the creation account as historical events, because the individuals depicted are not really individuals, but posts. The Vedic gods are also accommodated in this scheme: they may be born and die with the creation and the destruction of the world, but they are really posts occupied by different individuals in different cycles of creation: Indra the king of heaven is like Milka the cow. The Vedas, then, enter humanity when they are intuited or cognized by rṣis through the power of their austerity.

There were other differences concerning the role of yogic perception, the nature of smṛti etc., but they need not concern us here.

We can, thus, legitimately describe the Veda as revelation in Śaṅkara’s Vedānta, unlike in Mīmāṁsā, but we ought to note how this idea is never related to that of śruti. Śaṅkara’s acceptance of the arthavāda texts as potentially authoritative has made it possible to identify śruti with the whole Vedic canon and to consolidate the several terms such as śāstra, śabda, śruti, such that we can hardly notice any distinction among them when they are used in regard to

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121 “Mīmāṁsakas, however, in this and any other regard, do not accept anything more than what is evident.” mīmāṁsakaiḥ, punaḥ, idānīm iva sarvatra drṣṭān nādhikam iṣyate. ŚV Codanā 98-9. The doctrine that the accounts of creation and destruction in the arthavāda passages, such as those in the Upaniṣads, are the origin of Brāhmaṇical creationist philosophies is proposed in the TV 1.3.2. For a similar understanding in Bhartṛhari, see Aklujkar 1991.

122 See Holdrege 1994 and 1996, Chapter 1, particularly pp. 43-62, for a collection and analysis of Brāhmaṇa passages in which Prajāpati intuits the Veda through some interplay of mind and speech and creates the world with the Veda as its blueprint or by uttering vocalized speech. “The Vedic mantras, as the expressions of the divine speech of Prajāpati, are depicted in the Brāhmaṇas as part of the very fabric or reality and as reflective of the structures of the cosmos.” (1996:56) This doctrine has some striking similarities with Plato’s demiurge in Timaeus creating the world by intuiting the eternal forms.

123 The whole account is developed in BSBh 1.3.28-31; we need not quote these but note that the support that he finds for most of this comes from smṛtis, mainly Manu, and Mahābhārata.
the Veda. But the central unifying feature persisting through the complex from Mīmāṁsā to Śaṅkara was that of pratyakṣa-like validity, and this comes out clearly from Śaṅkara’s insistence that there isn’t anything that can disprove the truth of things corresponding to notions conveyed by the words of scripture, got from hearing. Scripture relates to supersensible matters and it has a peculiar way of imposing upon our understanding. The Vedas are śruti not because they were heard by the rṣis, but because men learn from hearing them. In a sense, men through hearing the Veda recreate the vision that the rṣis had at the dawn of creation. This, in the words of the Bhāgavata, is the śrutekṣita-pathah puṁsām, the way of seeing through the ears for men.

Where Śaṅkara was strikingly different from his Mīmāṁsā predecessors was his relentless insistence on using śruti as the preferred term for Vedic evidence and the extent to which he depended on such Vedic quotations, incomparably more so than Mīmāṁsakas. Drawing on Walter Slaje’s thought, we may claim that it was a feature of Śaṅkara’s method to bombard the reader with endless quotes so as to create the impression of samanvaya, a unison of Vedic evidence supporting his point, strikingly different from the Mīmāṁsā context-sensitive quoting. Another reason for this surely was his agenda to drive home the point that the knowledge-texts of the Veda are equally śruti because they equally do not presuppose a prior experience and impose upon our understanding with the direct sense of their words:

Also, because matters of knowledge are similar to matters pertaining to ritual. That the Darśa-puṁsā ritual produces a particular result, has a specific procedure and subsidiaries which need to be performed in a specified sequence is a super-sensuous matter, not in the domain of perception, and we understand them as such from the sentences of the Veda. Likewise, that realities such as Paramātmā, Īsvara, devatās, are not

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124 For instance, in BĀUBh 1.3.1, śruti, śrauta-śābda, śāstra all seem to refer to the Veda interchangeably.
125 See, again, his comment on BĀUBh 1.3.1.
126 Bhāg. 3.9.11.
127 Slaje 2007:152: “Pūrva-Mīmāṁsakas applied the exegetical principle of ‘context’ (prakaraṇa) for interpreting Yājñavalkya’s formulations. The correctness claimed by Advaita-Vedāntins for their interpretation of BĀU passages was based on a maximum of matching quotes associatively accumulated from as many different śruti and smṛti text-places as possible.”
gros and the like, are beyond hunger and thirst etc., is made known only by the sentences of the Veda, ‘because they are supersensible, they ought to be like that [as taught in the Veda.]’ And, there is no difference in the manner that texts about action and about knowledge impress themselves upon the understanding.128

128 kriyārthaiś cāviśeṣād vidyārthānāṁ yathā ca darśa-paurṇamāsādī-kriyedam-phalā viśiṣṭaitikartavyatākā evaṁ-krama-prayuktāṁ ca ity etad alaukikaṁ vastu pratyakṣādy-aviṣayaṁ tathā-bhūtaṁ ca veda-vākyair eva jñāpyate. tathā, paramātmeśvarā devatā-svastu asthūlādi-dharmakam aśanāyādy-ātāṁ cetyeṣu-ādī-viśiṣṭam iti veda-vākyair eva jñāpyate, ity alaukikatvā tathā-bhūtam eva bhavitum arhaṁ. na ca kriyārthair vākyair jñāna-vākyānāṁ buddhy-utpāṭakatve viśeṣo 'sti. BĀUBh 1.3.1, VIII.39.
No intelligent person would do an action which brings no felicity, even if told to do so by hundreds of sentences.  

**Introduction**

We saw in the previous chapter how the broad field of Vedic theology shared some basic presuppositions about the validity of the Vedic canon. I also noted that Mīmāṃsakas ultimately took the validity of the Veda to pertain only to ritual action, and then argued that Śaṅkara’s project of reinterpreting the Veda had to begin by challenging this thesis. Advaita Vedānta, however, shared another important presupposition in Vedic theology, and that was the notion that the purpose of the Veda was to serve human needs and to provide for some good that is desirable to man, and Śaṅkara’s rethinking of the Veda as knowledge *qua* knowledge and not action was not an independent project in epistemology: it was meant to show that understanding was more basic than action to the good that the Veda can provide for man.

This radical rethinking, moreover, depended thoroughly on general categories in the discourse of “the good of man” in Mīmāṃsā, such as goals and means (*sādhya* and *sādhana*). Śaṅkara’s reorganization of the Veda around the goal of liberation, furthermore, used some *specific* categories in what I call “Mīmāṃsā ritual causality,” such as the notions of *ārād-upakāraka* and *sannipātyopakāraka*, which for the time being we will translate as direct helpers and aggregated helpers, and relied on novelties in the Mīmāṃsā discourse introduced by Kumārila, specifically the notion of *pāramarya* or mediate ritual causality. Next, Śaṅkara’s rethinking of the role of meditation as the Vedāntic means of liberation was directly influenced

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1 na ca buddhi-pūrva-kārī puruṣārtha-rabitaṁ vyāpāraṁ vacana-śatenāpy ukto ‘nutiṣṭhāti. TV 2.1.1, I.383.
by two types of Mīmāṁsā injunctions, *niyama* and *parisaṅkhyā* or restriction and exclusion, and his core soteriology was predicated on Kumarila’s philosophy of language. Finally, the very notion of *mahā-vākya* was modeled on what Mīmāṁsakas called *prayoga-vidhi* or ritual manual and depended on the Mīmāṁsā idea of completion of meaning.

In other words, in his radical rejection of the Mīmāṁsā understanding of the Veda, Śaṅkara shared the basic presuppositions about the validity and use of the Veda, and constantly fell back on employing Mīmāṁsā categories. In this chapter, therefore, I will present a coherent account of the Mīmāṁsā model of *puruṣārtha* or “the good of man” and its relation to scripture. I will focus on the brand of Mīmāṁsā that developed under the influence of Kumārila, who had a much more positive role in Advaita Vedānta, and conclude the chapter with the key differences in the school of Mīmāṁsā that was associated with the other great post-Śabara Mīmāṁsaka, Prabhākara. Throughout the chapter, we will negotiate between historical developments and permanent deep structures in Mīmāṁsā, focusing more on the second. The chapter will provide us with the basic challenge for Advaita Vedānta, one that we will see develop further through chapters three through five, but it will also serve as our indispensable resource to which we will often refer for understanding Śaṅkara in the later parts of the dissertation.

The chapter does contain some important discoveries, particularly concerning Kumārila’s idea of mediate causality, and offers probably the first serious engagement with the Mīmāṁsā understanding of the Upaniṣads, but originality is not its goal. There is no “big argument” that is limited to the chapter, and its purpose is to serve the larger needs of the dissertation.

**Dharma and Puruṣārtha**

One of the key presuppositions in Mīmāṁsā was that the Veda was like a manual of “ritual technology” whose purpose was to secure something desirable to man. To Staal’s old question,
why Vedic people perform ritual, Mīmāṇsakas would have answered, for the same reason that they do anything at all: happiness. Ritual for Mīmāṇsakas was, then, something on which some human good depends, and both the ritual as the means and the good which it brings were felicitously covered by the Sanskrit term puruṣārtha. Puruṣārtha is a compounded Sanskrit word that can be interpreted in two ways, as a tat-puruṣa or a determinative compound, in which case the meaning would be a human need or purpose, and as a bahu-vrīhi or a possessive compound, in which case the meaning would be that which is for some human need or purpose. The compound, in other words, could stand at the same time both for a goal or result (sādhya or phala) and for the means or instruments of achieving that goal (sādhana).

Defining puruṣārtha in the instrumental sense, Śabara says: “That on which human happiness depends, i.e., that which when done man becomes happy, that is the category for the good of man (puruṣārtha). How so? Because it exists on the account of the desire to obtain, not on account of scripture. … Since for the good of man is not separate from happiness, it in fact constitutes the means of obtaining happiness.”

We will have occasion to unravel the details concerning the instrumental nature of puruṣārtha in this chapter, but it is important to note here that Mīmāṇsakas—at least those of the later days—understood the Veda to be humanly

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2 Staal 1979. As indicated above, by “Mīmāṇsā” here I have in mind the line of Śabara and Kumārila. As will be clear at the end of the chapter, Prābhākaras had a different understanding of dharma.

3 On these two types of compounds see Tubb and Boose 2013:96-125 and 127-37; Abhyankar 1961:179-80 and 283; Whitney 1992:489-494 and 501-11.

4 yasmin prītiḥ puruṣāṣya, yasmin kṛte padārthe puruṣāṣya pṛītir bhavati sa puruṣārthaḥ padārthaḥ. kutaḥ … tasya lipsārthena ca bhavati, na śāstreṇa … avibhakto hi puruṣārthaḥ pṛītya. yo yaḥ pṛīti-sādhanaḥ sa puruṣārthaḥ. MSŚBh 4.1.1, IV.1194.
centered: that men want happiness was *objectively* determined, through natural desires. The purpose of the Veda was human happiness, and the questions were, what kind of happiness can the Veda bring for man, and how.

To answer this, we need to delve a little into Mīmāṁsā specifics and its technical language. Mīmāṁsā as a knowledge system, in fact, developed around the Veda and what early Vedic theologians saw as the central concern of the Veda, an idea which they called *dharma* and the definition of which was given right at the opening of the MS (1.1.1-2): “Now, therefore, an inquiry into *dharma*. *Dharma* is that thing which is known from a Vedic injunction.” For our purpose here it is superfluous to investigate the development of this concept through its history, since the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsā understanding of *dharma* was quite straightforward: it is what brings some good (*śreyah-sādhanatā, śreyas-kara*), namely human happiness (*puruṣa-prīti*). A lucid account that explicates how *dharma* was supposed to brings some good is found in Durga’s commentary on the *sākṣat-kṛta-dharmāna rṣayah* from the *Nirukta* that we saw in the previous chapter: “Seers are those who see that from a certain action combined with a *mantra* referring to a particular thing there appears a transformation in the form of a result which has particular

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5 Clooney had famously argued for “Jaimini’s decentering of the human” and claimed that “even if Jaimini takes seriously into account the human perspective … [he] locates the intelligibility of the sacrifice in the sacrificial element itself and not in the human person.” (1990:163) See also Clooney 1987. Clooney’s thesis certainly has much to recommend itself—Mīmāṁsā teleology can be likened to a system of merit where personal factors are excluded—but come Kumārila and the system is driven by the needs of the individual and not of the ritual action itself. The “decentering of the human” seems to me to be rather for the purpose of avoiding the pitfalls of human frailty and the contingencies of personal agency, not for the sheer joy of action, its obligatory nature or the securing of its continual performance (Clooney 1987:664), such that the expected result would inevitably follow for human good, because there would be no point at which the process could fail. This is not unlike the removal of personal agency from the Veda so that its validity could not be questioned at any point and its knowledge would be perfect. The “decentering of the human” is for securing the personal firmly in the center. In any case, whether Clooney is right about pre-Śābara Mīmāṁsā (his argument explicitly goes only that far) or not, Kumārila’s “centering of the human” can hardly be questioned.

6 Cf. Śābara on MS 3.1.7: “In the world, action is determined by need; in the Veda, by the word.” loke karmārthaṁ lakṣaṇam, śabda-lakṣaṇair punar veda iti.

7 athāto dharma-jiṣṭhāsā. codanā-lakṣaṇo ’rtho dharmaḥ.
characteristics.” Dharma is, in other words, a means of human good which appears when things are used and arranged in particular ways, not knowable otherwise than from the Veda.

This property of dharma belongs to a Vedic sacrifice as a unit organized around the central role of ritual action, but to its elements as well, such as the stuff that one offers or the sacrificial implements one uses, because under some circumstances they individually could produce a result which would constitute human happiness. While we do not need to consider details, we should note well the instrumental nature of dharma. For a Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsaka, dharma is never one of the goals of human life; it is a puruṣārtha insofar as it an instrument of achieving such a goal.

The specific nature of dharma as one means of human happiness is that it deals with laws of causality which are not known otherwise than from the Veda. This is, perhaps, best illustrated by the stock example of how individual items used in a sacrifice independently produce some form of human felicity. When during the performance of the Darśa-pūrṇamāsa rituals the sacrificer uses a milking vessel (go-dohana) rather than the regular vessel (camasa), this change brings added value to the sacrifice: the sacrifice generally performed for the attainment of heaven now brings cattle in the future as well, because the use of the regular vessel is sufficient for the attainment of the primary result. The milking vessel, thus, obtains independent instrumentality regarding human happiness: it is not anymore for the good of the ritual (on which more in a bit),

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8 ṛṣyanti ye amuṣmāṭ karmanā evam-arthavatā mantreṇa saṁyuktād amunā prakāreṇaivāṁ-lakṣaṇāh phalavipariṇāmo bhavaityaḥ ṛṣayāḥ. Durgācārya’s commentary on Yāska’s Niruka 1.20, p.90-1.
9 Dharma is described as śreyas-kara in Śabara’s Bhāṣya right under MS 1.1.2, while Kumārila’s term is śreyas-sādhanatā (ŚV Codanā 13-14; Kataoka’s comments on verse 14 are most illuminating [2011b:208-9]).
10 ŚV Codanā 13-14 and 190-1.
11 The occasional practice, therefore, to translate dharma as “duty” (as in Jha’s translation of Śloka-Vārtika [1907], or Edgerton’s translation of the Āpadevī [1929]) in the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsā context is misleading.
but is for the good of man. But, more important for us, this causal relation that obtains between the use of the milking vessel instead of the regular vessel and the future receiving of cattle is knowable from the Veda. The vessel is just an odd thing in the world with characteristics that we otherwise know—shape, material etc.—but that same thing has the additional characteristic of *dharmatā* or procuring happiness in a way known only from the Veda.

The Vedas, then, as far as they do inform about anything, do not inform so much about things as about causal relations. But these causal relations are not matter-of-fact relations, and there is nothing in our experience that would allow us to know about them. This, then, constitutes the *specifica* of *dharma* and the Vedas: *dharma* is a supersensible relation between a thing or an action and a future state of affairs agreeable to men, knowable from the Vedas. We ought to note that this is a *future* and *producible* state of affairs (*bhāvya* and *kārya*). It is in the domain of becoming, not of Being. Furthermore, that these relations are knowable from the Veda is not what the Veda is really about. What matters is not so much that they are knowable, but that they are harnessable.

Two further notes are in place before we go into the details of what I call here the “ritual technology” or “harnessability” of the Veda. First, while Kumārila explicitly attributes the property of *dharma* to ritual implements and material offerings individually, *dharma* is primarily associated with complex rituals in which the primary, good-producing factor is the ritual action of sacrifice, while the ritual implements, the material offerings and the other ritual elements are subordinate and only assisting in the production.

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12 See Śabara on 4.1.2 for the *goddhana* being *puraṣārtha*. Cf. Jha 1964:260: “[T]he use of the Milking Vessel is *Puraṣārtha* because, while the mere act of *waterfetching* could be done in other vessels also, the particular result, *obtaining of cattle*, could be obtained only if the water were fetched in the *milking vessel*.”
Second, the results that these sacrifices produce are of diverse kinds, such as wellbeing in general (bhūti), cattle (paśu), kingship (rājya), etc., but the common result that is usually presented as the result of a ritual performance and the end-factor in a Vedic injunction is “heaven” or svarga. As the Mīmāṁsā mantra goes, svarga-kāmo yajeta: “He who wants heaven should sacrifice.” Now, by heaven Mīmāṁsakas did not mean a place one goes to after death, such as the one described in the Vedic corpus or in scriptures broadly. Śabara summarizes this popular view in the comment to MS 6.1.1: “Heaven is a specific place where there is neither heat nor cold, neither hunger nor thirst, no unpleasant stuff, no sorrow, to which go after death those who have led virtuous lives and not others.” While it is certain that Śabara rejects this view, it is not certain why; part of the reason, however, must be that heaven as a place is not a producible thing.

If heaven is not a place one goes to, it is also not a thing of the world which is generally considered pleasurable and which people tend to describe as heaven: “For ascertaining the meaning of all words, we must depend on common usages; now, we find that in common usage, the word 'heaven' is used to refer to substance: 'Fine silken clothes are heaven; sandal-paste is heaven; sixteen-year-old girls are heaven.' Whatever pleasurable substance there is, that is heaven.” Appealing as it may be, this view is rejected by invoking a principle that has had wide acceptance in Indian philosophy: something is not what we think it is or what it appears to be unless it is that all the time. This is the principle of absence of vyabhicāra, or deviation. A substance is pleasurable in some cases but not in others, whereas happiness as a state is

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13 Lest I be jumped at by expert Indologists and Mīmāṁsā specialists, it is necessary to point out here that it is the English word mantra that is intended.

14 nanu svarga-śabdo loke prasiddho viśiṣṭe deśe.  yāsmin noṣṭaṁ, na śītaṁ, na kṣud, na ṭṛṣṇā, nārātiḥ, na glāniḥ,  puṇya-kṛta eva pretya tatra gacchanti, nānye. MSŚBh 6.1.1, IV.1347-8.

15 sarveśām eva śabdānāṁ artha-jūane laukikāṁ prayogo ‘bhuyapāyaḥ.  tasmiṁś ca laukike prayoge dravya-vacanāḥ svarga-śābdō lakṣyate.  kauśikāni sūkṣmāṁ niṣcitāṁ svarṇāṁ svargaḥ, candanāṁ svargaḥ, dvy-āṣṭā-varsāḥ striyaḥ svarga iti.  yad yat prītimad dravyam, tat tat svarga-śabdenocyyate. MSŚBh 6.1.1, IV.1347.
happiness in all cases when it obtains. It is for this reason that the word “heaven” can only
directly apply to happiness as a state, not to any substance that causes happiness. To summarize,
if svarga is not an actual place in the hereafter, it is no Fred Astaire heaven either.

By an extension of the above-stated principle of absence of vyabhicāra or deviation, it is
eminently possible to infer that Mīmāṃsakas thought of heaven as a state of some uninterrupted
happiness, happiness undetermined by fleeting causes, producible by the performance of
sacrifice. We will revisit the idea of heaven in the next chapter, but now we turn to the manner of
organization of the ritual—and its correspondence in the text of the Veda—which guarantees the
attainment of the result, the “ritual technology” of Mīmāṃsā.

Dharma and Ritual Causality

I opened this chapter with presenting puruṣārtha as a means of human happiness, and we saw
that in its deepest structure, puruṣārtha and dharma had a similar nature: dharma was a means of
human happiness very much like wealth, but it was specifically a Vedic means, that is, a means
that harnesses Vedic laws of causality. We also saw that dharma in the restricted sense referred
to Vedic ritual. To be even more specific, dharma was the principal ritual in a complex ritual
performance, the part in which the offering is made, not, however, in isolation, but in its feature
of teleologically organizing the whole ritual and harnessing it for the obtainment of the expected
result. In this most restricted sense, dharma was the instrumental puruṣārtha as the principal act
(pradhāna) in a ritual to which everything else was subordinate (śeṣa/aṅga/guna, an auxiliary),
but which was itself subordinate to the expected result such as heaven, which result in its turn
was subordinate to man (the non-instrumental puruṣārtha).\footnote{I use the pradhāna-śeṣa pair here, but Mīmāṃsā uses several other terms, mukhya for the first and guṇa and aṅga for the second. See Clooney 1990-98-100. See also TV 3.1.2, II.653: “Because the word śeṣa can express many
through this *principle of subordination*, and its success depends on properly understanding the principle and on working out its details so that the result would be achieved.

The principle of subordination is quite straightforward, and it is stated in MS 3.1.2: one thing is auxiliary to another when it is for another.17 Śabara first explains being for another as doing service for or providing help to another, *upakāraka*, but quickly proceeds to define it as complete dependence on another, such as that of a donkey or a slave on the master. The second was, really, the essential characteristic in Kumārila’s eyes. A man may drink water from a canal that has been dug up for irrigation, and that may help him every now and then, but it does not make the canal *for* drinking. The canal was dug for irrigation; irrigation is its telos, and the other helpful uses are merely incidental. The master-slave relation is, again, a useful illustration: while the master may do things for the slave, such as feeding him, he does not do them *for the slave’s sake*, but for his own benefit. An auxiliary is something that is for another and has no cause or ground or justification of being elsewhere than in the other.18

Let us see, now, how this principle of subordination works in a ritual and how the Veda corresponding to the ritual as its backbone is teleologically organized. A principal or superordinate element in a complex ritual performance must satisfy several criteria. First, as we saw in the beginning of the chapter, it must be directly related to human felicity: its performance or use must be objectively occasioned by man’s desire for happiness, not by the requirements of the ritual itself.19 Second, the principal is not principal absolutely; it is subordinate to the result—it is *for the sake* of the result—which in its turn is subordinate to man. However, third, since its

17 śeṣaḥ parārthatvāt.
18 Na śeṣo ’nyaḥ parārthatvān na ca hetv-antaraṇa saḥ. TV 2.1.5, p.533.
19 See MS 4.1.1 and 4.1.5 and Śabara thereon.
being for something else is objectively determined, in the context of the ritual performance it is not subordinate to anything, and everything else is subordinate to it. This is in virtue of the fact that only the principal is directly related to the expected result of the ritual, while everything else is vicariously so: it is the principal that is fruitful. Fourth, the principal is typically an action—it is what someone does in the ritual and it is not the sacrificer himself, the offering, or any odd ritual element; specifically, it is the action of sacrificing, pouring into fire or giving that constitutes the central element of the ritual. It is that part of the sacrifice in which, for instance, clarified butter (ājya) or the sacrificial cake (purodāśa) are offered. Fifth, it is not necessary that there be a single principal. In some of the major rituals, in fact, there are several principal ritual performances; they all must be, however, fruitful, directly related to the result of the ritual as a complex. That an action is independently fruitful is determined by the application of the Mimāṃsā principles of scriptural interpretation.

We will recall that the definition of an auxiliary was “being for another.” In the ritual context, an auxiliary is that which is for the good of the ritual, kratvartha in Sanskrit. Unlike the subordination of the principal, puruṣārtha, which is objectively determined by the need of man, a kratvartha is subordinate on scriptural grounds. In other words, that something serves the needs of the ritual action is so because there is a Vedic sentence which institutes such a fact, or because

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20 “That which is connected with the result is the principal, while that which is related to the principal is the subsidiary.” pradhānaṁ phala-saṁbandhi tat-saṁbandhy aṅgam iṣyate. TV 2.1.1, p.266.
21 MS 4.2.27 defines these actions as those that bring about a connection between the substance that is offered and the deity to which it is offered: yajati-codanā dravya-devatā-kriyaṁ samudāye kṛtārdhatvāt. The general term is “to sacrifice,” but it refers to all forms of principal action, which Śabara lists as three: sacrificing, pouring and offering, yajati dadāti juhotīty evaṁ lakṣamāṇam. The next sūtra defines pouring or homa as identical with sacrificing, with the additional element of pouring liquids, tad-ukte śravanāj juhotir āsecanādhikaḥ syāt. Śabara defines “giving” in the comment as giving up one’s ownership and establishing a relation to the ownership of another, ātmanaḥ svatva-vyāyātīḥ parasya svaṁv阎ana sambandhaḥ. Giving up (utsarga) is the common element of the three.
22 See, for instances, MS 4.4.34 and Śabara thereon, as well as the whole adhikaraṇa, 4.4.29-38, in which the principle of fruitfulness is associated with a sacrifice being a primary and is ascribed to several distinct sacrifices within the complex Darśa-pāṇamāsa because all of them are said to be fruitful.
23 See Śabara on MS 4.1.5.
it is otherwise possible to interpret a Vedic text to that effect. Given that the principal element of the ritual is the ritual action or *kriyā*, the factors that most immediately participate in this action, called *kārakas*, perforce constitute auxiliary elements: the material offerings (*dravya*) such as the clarified butter and the sacrificial cake are auxiliaries in the sacrifice, as is the sacrificer himself. Though in an important sense the sacrificer is the ultimate principal of the sacrifice, since its result is for him while the sacrificial action is for the result, he is so as the enjoyer (*bhokṭṛ*) of the results of action. As the agent (*karti*), however, he is subordinate to the action. The divinities (*devatā*) to which the offerings are made are also auxiliaries to the ritual action, since they are not the beneficiaries of the ritual results but serve as mere nominal recipients of the offerings that the ritual as a sacrificial action must have in order to be a ritual.\textsuperscript{24} Chatterjee puts this rather nicely: “[I]n a sacrifice, the deity is as important as a guest in the context of the act of hospitality.”\textsuperscript{25}

No exhaustive account of this is necessary, however, and we need to note just two things. (1) The central elements of a sacrifice are of two kinds, namely *purusārtha* and *kratvartha*; the first is directly related to and productive of the expected result, while the second directly serves the purpose of the first. (2) The principle of subordination is not exhausted with that, for the *kratvartha* elements have other things subordinate to them.

More important than this—and we need to note this point very well—is that not all actions in a ritual are primary actions. In fact, Mīmāṃsakas have grouped all ritual actions broadly in two but more specifically in three categories, in virtue of what it is that they produce. The twofold division is that between principal and auxiliary actions, and the criterion of division

\textsuperscript{24} Clooney 1988 is a fine analysis of the role of devatās in Mīmāṃsā. They are purely textual figures, non-corporeal and not actually sitting in sacrifices, and their existence is “a strictly linguistic requirement, ensuring the intelligibility of the sacrifice through what is said …” (p.283).
\textsuperscript{25} 1992:171.
is whether the action is concerned directly with ritual elements—the agent, the offerings, etc.—or not. Closely tied with this is the nature of their result: (1) is it something immediately given or visible (drṣṭa); or (2) is it something which is not visible (adrṣṭa) but must be postulated so that a part or the whole ritual will make sense. Let us expand a bit on this.

There are, to begin with, some ritual actions that produce very visible results (drṣṭa) and their shared characteristic is that they operate over ritual elements that are themselves already auxiliaries in the ritual complex. These actions have been grouped under four headings: (1) origination or utpatti, for instance when a rice paddy is made; (2) obtaining or prāpti, for instance when milk is got from a cow; (3) change or vikṛti, for instance when the solid clarified butter is melted; and (4) refinement or saṁskṛti, for instance when the rice paddy is sprinkled with water. We note, first, that they produce their result by operating on some of the ritual factors, for instance rice paddy the offertory. In doing so, they are auxiliaries to what is already subordinate to the principal ritual action of offering, so they themselves are auxiliary actions. We note, second, that the result of most of them is immediately evident: the action results in a rice paddy or milk. We note, third, that the fourth category, refinement, is the only one among the four which can produce an unseen result, an excellence added to the consecrated item in the form of suitability for ritual use, which is not necessarily empirically noticeable, as in the case of the consecration of the sacrificer. This fourth group also includes some intermediary actions with visible refinement as their result, such as threshing (avahanana) and grinding (peṣaṇa), and the blanket term that Śabara uses to refer to all forms of refinement, visible and invisible, is saṁskāra, or “preparation.”

On MS 2.1.6. Saṁskāra, of course, has felicitously a semantic range much broader than that or refinement. See Kataoka 1999 for a most accessible account of saṁskāras.
These four have come to be commonly called *sannipātyopakārakas* or aggregated helpers, in view of their fourth crucial characteristic, namely that their causal efficacy is absorbed by and terminated in the auxiliary ritual elements. This last feature of theirs is an instantiation of a general principle of Mīmāṁsā accounts of ritual causality, which is worth spelling out: causal efficacy terminates in the produced result and is vicariously carried over in the further process. Once this has happened, the action ceases being a means. I will have occasion to say a more about this below; as for the *sannipātyopakārakas*, to sum up, they are actions which produce visible or somehow palpable results and are subordinate to the ritual elements, which themselves are *kratvartha* or for the good of the ritual. Their relation to their superordinate element is, however, immediate, and they are absolutely required for the result to obtain.

The second category of actions are the offertorial actions that we described as principal. Their *differentia specifica* is stated negatively: they are not meant to culminate in the preparation or the production of some substance. They are not, in other words, one of the four *sannipātyopakārakas* whose causal efficacy extends up to their immediate superordinate ritual element, and they are recognized by the fact that they do not produce anything visible or tangible. Put differently, if what they produce immediately is accepted as their actual result, that would render the sacrifice purposeless. The visible result of the offertorial actions is ashes left from the sacrifice, but no one would perform a sacrifice to end up with ashes. Therefore, an invisible future result (*adrṣṭa*) is postulated as their telos, such as heaven, wellbeing, or cattle.

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27 There are minor differences of opinion between the Bhāṭṭas and the Prābhākaras about them, concerning mainly how they are instituted by the Vedas, into which we need not go. See *Prakaraṇa-Pañcikā* chapter 13 in Pandurangi 2004. My account of the nature of the *sannipātyopakārakas* is based on TV 1.2.7.

28 MS 2.1.7 and Šabara thereon.
However, in some complex Vedic rituals, several such offertorial actions are performed, and not all of them are said to bring a result. Therefore, a further division of these offertorial actions is introduced. Some are principal actions in the full sense, because they bring the ultimate result of the sacrifice. Other offertorial actions, however, are mentioned in the proximity to the fruitful actions, but are unrelated to a result. They are considered auxiliaries to the principal actions in the full sense. They are also principal in a way because they are full ritual acts, to which ritual elements such as the sacrificer or the offerings are auxiliary—in form they are hardly distinguishable from the principal proper—but they do not bring heaven or cattle.

Therefore, by the application of the Mīmāṁsā principles of interpretation, they can be related to a principal proper and serve its purpose rather than the immediate good of man. They are, thus, for the good of the ritual (kratvartha), while only the principal proper is for the good of man (puruṣārtha). Unlike the sanmpātyopakārakas which are removed from the principal by the ritual element to which they are directly subordinate, such as the sacrificial cake or the sacrificer, they are directly related to the principal. For this reason, they have received the appellation of ārād-upakārakas or direct helpers. However, they are related to the principal through postulation of contribution to its results, and not naturally and indispensably, like the sanmpātyopakārakas are related to their superordinate element. Although the second are removed from the principal by their superordinate element whereas the first are not, they express a closer, essential relationship. We ought to note this concept very well, as it will play a crucial role in understanding the Vedic rituals.

29 MS 4.4.34: tat punar mukhya-lakṣaṇaṁ yat phalavattvam; that is characterized as the primary which is fruitful.
30 tat sanmpīḍhāv asamyaṣṭaṁ tad-aṅgaṁ sāyati: that which is in its proximity but unrelated [to a result] is its subsidiary. Ibid.
31 Śabara on MS 4.1.5.
32 See, for instance, MSSBh 2.2.3, II.483 on the distinction between the primary actions, which are directly related to the result, and their direct helpers, which are close to the primary which is fruitful. “Therefore, they [the primary actions], are related to the result; because the āghāra and other sacrifices are close to the [primary] which is fruitful, they are its direct helpers.” tata esāṁ phala-sambandhaḥ, phalavat-sanmpidhes tv āghārādīny ārād-upakārakānīti. See also TV 2.1.7.
role in Śaṅkara’a making sense of the role of ritual on the one hand and renunciation on the other in the pursuit of liberation.

To sum up, then, all actions performed in a Vedic ritual are of broadly two and specifically three kinds: (1) some are auxiliary outright as they operate over ritual elements, which are themselves subordinate to the principal in the ritual, and are called sanātipātyopakārakas; (2) others are principal outright, the offertorial fruitful actions, and are called puruṣārtha; (3) finally, there are the offertorial non-fruitful actions, principal to ritual elements yet subordinate to the puruṣārtha actions; they are called ārād-upakārakas and are kratvartha. That the ārād-upakārakas were not considered fruitful did not mean, of course, that they do not contribute anything to the ritual. That would render them purposeless, the worst nightmare of a Mīmāṃsaka. We will address this a little later in the chapter, but now I want to speak to a more pressing question.

The Doctrine of Apūrva and the Temporal Unity of the Ritual

I talked about the sacrifice as a ritual complex that consists of different types of elements, subordinate and superordinate actions, and a single ultimate result. We also discussed the principle of subordination that provides hierarchy to this ritual complex. However, we did not see how it is that these ritual elements enter a complex in the first place. What is it that aligns so many distinct actions and elements into a coherent whole, a whole which is not a sum of its parts as far as it is expected to end in a single result?

There are, in fact, two aspects to this question. The first concerns the structural unity of the ritual complex: how and why is it the case that diverse and discrete actions, offertories and other ritual elements can become a whole in respect to a result? The ritual is an actual performance in history, so on the one hand this aspect concerns the facticity of the ritual: how are
the distinct actions, elements, and results in an actual performance constitutive of a whole? The ritual is also normatively laid down in the Veda, and so its structural unity concerns its textual ideality as well.

The second aspect concerns the temporal unity: how is it the case that temporally circumscribed actions, many in number and different in kind, produce a single result, and one that is not immediately visible at the end of the complex ritual? Organizationally, it is more convenient for me to treat the second, temporal aspect first, and it is to this that we now turn.

The ground of the temporal unity of the sacrifice was the doctrine of *apūrva*, a doctrine with a long history in Mīmāṁsā and a driving force behind many of Kumārila’s innovations. The unity of the sacrifice in the temporal sense was problematic on two counts. The first was because a sacrifice consists of several ritual actions organized on the principle of subordination and performed at different times. In a single sacrifice, it was possible to have several principal rituals, all of which would have had auxiliary rituals (*ārād-upakārakas*), some of which would be performed after the performance of the principal ritual. How is it that these temporally discrete and self-contained rituals produce a single result at the end of the sacrifice?

Another (and more important) problem stemmed from the fact that heaven, cattle, or wellbeing obviously did not come at the very end of the ritual; the ritual action, generally described as the means in the ritual complex, would be completed, and it was not clear how it was related to the delayed result. How are the ritual and its result a unit? The traditional Mīmāṁsā answer to this was that a Vedic sentence that relates the ritual to a future result was a warrant enough for the causal relation to obtain. Let us expand on this.

The general understanding of causality in Mīmāṁsā was quite down to earth and can be characterized as Humean. Śabara’s definition of a causal relation was: “There is a causal relation
only there, where something is when another thing is and is not when that other thing is not.”

For two things to be causally related, there had to be some contiguity between them. “It is only when an effect appears immediately after a cause that it is recognized as following from that cause.” Now, it was clear that Vedic causality cannot be quite like that, because the result is never seen together with the alleged cause. Vedic causal laws were different in kind: that a result follows the performance of a certain ritual is due to a Vedic fiat. An injunctive sentence of the Veda institutes into being a causal relationship between something ordinary, say the wood of khadira tree, and a result to which this ordinary thing is otherwise not related, say virility. It is no longer required that the cause and its effect be immediately related. “In the case of Agnihotra and similar acts, the causal relation is declared just by the words of the text; hence, even though the result is not seen at the time, there is the conviction that it will come in due course.” This principle was the rationale behind the notion of apūrva, “that which has no precedence.” The Vedic causal relationship is unprecedented, unique, empirically not known and therefore knowable only from the Vedas.

33 On MS 4.3.2, IV.1246: kārya-kāraṇa-sambandho nāma sa bhavati, yasmīn sati yad bhavati, yasmīniś cāsati yan na bhavati, tatraiva kārya-kāraṇa-sambandhaḥ.
34 On MS 4.3.27, IV.1261: yac ca anantaram upalabhyate, tat tataḥ iti vijñāyate.
35 See MSSBh 4.3.3 and the deliberations on the khādirāṁ vīrya-kāraṇaṁ yūpaṁ kuryāṁ injunction.
37 Clooney 1990:232-39 claims that apūrva for Jaimini refers to such “Vedic” elements in the sacrifice, the fact that it is sacrifice that brings one to heaven, not otherwise knowable, or that “one should husk the rice by beating it” for the sacrifice to be successful. We may say that whatever is determined by the Veda and introduced in the sacrifice is apūrva, unprecedented, at the instance of its introduction. Halbfass 1991:302 calls this the “prehistory of the classical Mīmāṁsā usage of apūrva,” and also mentions another, parallel line of development of the concept, in which apūrva is “an impersonal and substrateless (anāśrita) potentiality, a kind of cosmic principle or power to be manifested or actualized by the ritual acts.” A fuller history of this idea is available in Kataoka 2000, who calls it dharma-abhvivakti-vāda or the doctrine of manifestation of dharma; see also Aklujkar 2004, particularly 281-5. The core of this doctrine is expressed by Bhārtrhari: “[D]harmā-prayojana vā refers to the view of the Mīmāṁsakas: … dharma is already in place. It is only manifested (made operational) by such (rites) as the agni-hotra. Set in motion by them, it bestows the fruit, just as, in service, a master is moved by the servants … toward a result.” (See Aklujkar 2004:281 for the Sanskrit and reference.)
Kumārila, on the other hand, had different ideas about causality and *apūrva*. What was “unprecedented” about ritual was not so much that the relation between the ritual and its future result was not known “before the Veda,” but that ritual as a form of action had a *fitness* or *faculty, capacity*, that is absent before the action is performed and is, therefore, posterior to it.\(^{38}\) The novelty that gives its name to *apūrva* is not its sole knowability from the Veda, but the fact that prior to its performance the action is not capable of bringing about the result.

Kumārila, further, claimed that *apūrva* was a *general principle* of cultivation and maturing that was common to processes of all kinds. Major actions in general, not only Vedic actions, do not produce results immediately, as is evident from cases such as agriculture and education. “Even ordinary worldly results, such as children, do not appear immediately, nor are they expected immediately.”\(^{39}\) Reflection on causality shows that observable contiguity is characteristic only of simple causal processes. Complex production requires maturation, in which the result is incipiently present immediately, but fully and visibly only after it has undergone several stages, and long after the cause has ceased operating in its initial form. Think about the

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The old Mīmāṁsā idea of *apūrva* being the novel thing introduced by and known through the Veda begins to change with Śabara and develops into the full-blown theory of Kumārila (see, again, Clooney 1990:221-53), where *apūrva* becomes the link that relates the sacrifice to heaven.

Yoshimizu 2000 had controverted Clooney’s account and argued that Śabara did not introduce *apūrva* as meaning the link between the transient action and later heaven, but used the word in the old sense of that which is introduced by a Vedic injunction and knowable from it, organizing the sacrifice structurally but not temporally. This has been in turn disputed by Kataoka (2011b:18-9), but is of no concern for our account.

Halbfass (1991:307, slightly reworked from Halbfass 1980) remains the most accessible account of Kumārila’s theory of *apūrva*. Kataoka 2011b:445-454 relates very successfully the short account of *apūrva* in ŚV *Codanā* 196-200 with the much longer account in TV 2.1.5 and is certainly most accurate and thorough presentation of Kumārila’s understanding.

\(^{38}\) karmabhyaḥ prāg ayogyasya karmaṇaḥ puṣuṣasya vā |
yogyā śāstra-gamyā yā parā sā’pūrvam iṣyate. TV 2.1.5, I.394.

\(^{39}\) aihikaṁ cāpi putrāḥi karma-janma-svabhāvam |
nā karmāṇantarāṁ kaścid phalaṁ labdhurīṁ vyavasyati. TV 2.1.5, I.397.
growth of a tree from the sprout or the production of yoghurt from milk. Heaven is not much different than these processes. We can describe it as the thickening of ritual action.\textsuperscript{40}

It is, of course, Vedic causality in which things are linked in an uncommon, unobservable causal relation—\textit{khādira} wood and virility—and that is why the general process of maturation is not called \textit{apūrva}, but only the Vedic one. Kumārila did not dispute the old, epistemological roots of the idea: it is from a Vedic injunction that one apprehends \textit{apūrva}. But his understanding of \textit{apūrva} was firmly situated in the ontological, and his point was that being Vedic was just the specific difference of the much more general nature of causality.\textsuperscript{41}

All forms of complex causal relations involving maturation share also in epistemology: they are all knowable through postulation (\textit{arthāpatti}) or positing of a fact to reconcile some other facts that do not sit well together on the evidence available. For instance, that a baby appears well after intercourse requires postulating a process of maturation that is not visible. The specific nature of \textit{apūrva} is that we do not have precedence \textit{both} on the part of seeing heaven, \textit{and} of its causal link with the ritual action, which situates \textit{apūrva} both in the realm of the unprecedented and of scriptural postulation. We know about heaven and sacrifice from the Veda, but attaining heaven by performing the sacrifice would be impossible without an invisible and trans-temporal link between the two.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} See TV 2.1.5, I.395.
\textsuperscript{41} Kataoka 2000:172 insists that \textit{apūrva} for Kumārila had epistemological roots just like for the tradition following Prabhākara, and it did not mean something ontologically new. Prabhākara famously defined \textit{apūrva} as \textit{mānāntarāpūrva} (\textit{Bṛhaī ...}), and that much is not disputable. For Kumārila, Kataoka gives the negative evidence that he begins the \textit{pūrvapakṣa} in TV 2.1.5 “presupposing the interpretation that \textit{apūrva} is something epistemologically new or not known before.” (2000:180). Kumārila, however, does not have kind words for the theory of \textit{apūrva} presented by the \textit{pūrvapakṣin}—“Sure, this \textit{apūrva} which you have concocted in your mind, as if it were something embodied, you can go on to refute, but that does not contradict anything on our part” (yad idaṃ svamati-parikalpitaṃ vigrahavatā ivāpūrvaṃ bhavadbhīr nirākriyate, na tenāṃśāhāmi kūścic virudhyate)—and he does not define \textit{apūrva} epistemologically. While acknowledging that \textit{apūrva} is knowable only from the Veda (\textit{śāstra-gamyā, veda-gamyā}), the central element in his definition is that this \textit{apūrva} does not exist before the ritual action is performed and is, thus, posterior to it.
\textsuperscript{42} Yoshimizu 1996 argues that the knowability of \textit{apūrva} through postulation was also an innovation of Kumārila.
Kumārila described *apūrva* as a capacity of the ritual action, a śakti, and it was important to emphasize that this capacity was substantially non-different from the action, for otherwise there was the danger that *apūrva* would replace dharma as the instrument of human happiness, or heaven as the goal. *Apūrva* was a mode under which the ritual action continues to exist after it has been completed, much as milk continues to be milk after acquiring the characteristics of sourness and thickness, and this feature of action made it both temporally circumscribed and somehow permanent. The category of śakti allowed Kumārila to reap all the benefits of the claim that it is the ritual action which is dharma, without assuming the unwanted consequence of action not being evidently related to heaven as its result.

The precise way in which *apūrva* operates is by leaving a mark or saṃskāra on the Self of the sacrificer. The fact that the Self is eternal secures the permanency of the otherwise impermanent action. An action has been performed and completed, but the imperceptible gains from that action—and through that the action itself—reside in the eternal Self, because they have left a mark on it. This makes it possible to present the ritual as a trans-temporal unity of its separate constitutive actions that are performed at different times. The problem was, let us remember, that: (1) a ritual consists of a primary action to which several ārād-upakārakas are subordinate, some performed before the main ritual but some after; and, (2) some of the large rituals have several primaries, often temporally quite removed from one another. The actual ritual actions are obviously non-contemporaneous, but the *apūrva* as the mark they leave—which, as Kumārila claimed, are the respective actions, in a different aspect—resides in the eternal Self, and in virtue of that they achieve simultaneity. All the main and subordinate rituals produce individual *apūrvas*, which combine to produce a final *apūrva* that matures and in time brings forth the intended result. We do not need to go into the details of how a final *apūrva* is
produced, but we do need to pay attention to one principle involved, and that is mediate causality. To this we now turn.

**The Idea of Mediate Causality**

An innovation of Kumārila that has gone unnoticed by scholarship but played a crucial role in Advaita hermeneutics and soteriology was the idea of *pāramparya* or mediate causality through close succession. The idea was directly related to *apūrva*, and is first introduced in TV 1.2.7, where Kumārila ponders how understanding the Veda serves human good (*puruṣārtha*).

Understanding the Veda was, of course, necessary for the performance of ritual, since ritual was laid down in the Veda, and the Mīmāṃsā assumption was that everything that a Vedic man does in a ritual context must be enjoined. There appears the question, therefore, how is understanding the Veda enjoined. Kumārila proposed that there is an injunction to that effect, *svādhyāyo dhyetavyaḥ*, “One should do a recitation of the Veda.”

The problem was, however, that the injunction pertains not to understanding the Veda, but to rote memorization and recitation. Kumārila here proposed that the injunction breaks down into consecutive goals and means, until it somehow terminates into being useful for human happiness, and that there was no need to seek an injunction for every step in this process.

The injunction says that the Veda should be recited, and here we ask what is accomplished by such recitation. The obvious result was retention of the text. The retained text as a result becomes a means in its turn, and through it one proceeds to learning words as units. Once word boundaries are established, the words being the result assume the role of means for understanding word meaning. Word meaning in its turn engenders understanding sentence meaning, and one can then understand what the Veda says and perform ritual. Kumarila’s point

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43 ŚB 11.5.6.3.
was that there is no requirement for separate injunctions for the steps following rote memorization, because they follow as consequences of each previous step. Puruṣārtha is the performance of the ritual, but because understanding is necessary for such performance, it is at this final point that the injunction to recite the Veda becomes fruitful. It does that through a course of successive goals and means, pāramparya. The injunction itself undergoes progression, and its gains are further absorbed by another injunction for performing a ritual, in a causal succession terminating in human good. In such a course, the crucial takeaway is to see how a means ceases being a means once it produces its result, but through the series it mediately continues being a means and eventually reaches the ultimate result.

In this case, the positing of such a series spared Kumārila the task of postulating an apūrva that would accrue from the recitation of the Veda. Through the series, the recitation of the Veda becomes for-the-good-of-the-ritual, and through the ritual it contributes to human felicity in a visible way. There is only one apūrva to postulate, between the ritual and heaven, while the rest is just a natural development of understanding through education. However, the principle of pāramparya applies when the result is an apūrva as well, there being no difference in causality in general, and Kumārila saw such series everywhere, for instance between the threshing of grain and the making of the sacrificial cake. There was no need for separate injunctions for every step between the threshing of grain and the making of the cake, because the first injunction could be broken down in a series of steps and terminate in the cake mediately. This idea of mediate causality, a principle which says that a cause terminates in its immediate result but is carried over through that result to the ultimate accomplishment, was likely a product of Kumārila’s rethinking of causality in general, prompted by the problem of apūrva, and had an
immense influence in Advaita soteriology and hermeneutics. It will come in sharp focus when we consider the progression of liberation in Śaṅkara’s Vedānta.

**Bhāvanā, Ākāṅkṣā, and the Structural Unity of Sacrifice and Text**

The structural unity of the sacrifice is a result of a complex of related ideas. Any individual sacrifice is an action that combines present and prospective things in the world: there are offertorial substances; actions and procedures of making them; agents, expected results such as heaven; actions in which the agents offer the substances for the bringing about of heaven; etc. In Mīmāṃsā technical language, these are generally divided in two groups: things that already are (siddha), already constituted, and things that still need to be (sādhyā). We may think of them as actual and potential existents. Now, the structural unity of the sacrifice is centered on potential existents, because these are deficient and require actual existents for completion. Let us work through this by means of an illustration.\(^{44}\)

In the classical Indian example of an action with its contributory factors, “Devadatta cooks rice in a pot by means of fire,” Devadatta the cook, rice the cooked result, the pot where the rice is cooked and fire the means of cooking are constituted existents: they are not essentially relational.\(^{45}\) The cooked rice is, of course, not yet a thing, but once it is cooked, its being is not contingent on other things. Once brought into being, it will be cooked rice. All the contributory factors, thus, can be seen in isolation, but the action of cooking itself is *essentially relational*, insofar as there could be no cooking unless there is a cook, ingredients, a cooking fire, a pot, a

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\(^{44}\) This and the next section are largely indebted to McCrea 2000a. Useful are also Kataoka 2001, Ollett 2013, Edgerton 1928 and Freschi 2012:22-6. My account, however, is based on TV 2.1.1-4, which is relevant in its totality and, so, I will not include individual references. My presentation is less technical than a Mīmāṃsaka would want, as I am less interested here in the language aspect and more in the organization of action as a means of human good.

\(^{45}\) The example is taken from McCrea 2000a:434. I follow Matilal 1990 in translating *kāraka* as “contributory factor for action.”
manner of cooking and a dish. This is the first distinction we need to note, in Mīmâmsā jargon the distinction between that which is (siddha), and that which is not but could be, contingent on its relation to other things (sādhya). It is a distinction that involves Being and becoming on one hand, and relation on another. While the cooked dish is in becoming, it can achieve Being in which it will be non-relational. The sacrificial cake is a good instance of this: in relation to the action of making, it is sādhya, an expected result, but in relation to the action of offering, it is siddha, accomplished and available for taking up. The action of cooking, however, will always be relational.

The fact that the action is essentially relational and deficient makes it the element which provides the structure to the sacrifice. The relationality of action, first, makes the action purposeful or intentional, and instrumental. When Devadatta cooks the rice, he does that to accomplish something: cook it and then eat it or serve it to others. He does it, in other words, to bring about a future state of affairs of there being cooked rice, to which future state of affairs the action has an instrumental value. To do that, he not only needs to cook, but he needs to cook in a certain way: he needs a recipe and some know-how. Thus, the action is not only (1) intentional or result oriented; and (2) instrumental; but also (3) procedural, i.e., unless it is performed in a certain manner it will fail to be an instrument and to bring about the desired future state of affairs. Finally, the action is (4) performable in the imperative sense, such that unless performed, nothing will come out of it. This performability is, really, the only fully relational thing in an action. Cooking in the instrumental and the procedural sense is substantive: cooking is “a thing” and so is the manner of cooking, ready at hand for employment. For there to be pizza on my table tonight, however, some cooking must really happen. The action of cooking, then, can be analyzed into the fact that it is cooking among other forms of action, and that it is happening.
It is this performability that keeps the sacrificial action together. The fact that unless performed the action is non-productive and purposeless provides the force that harnesses disparate actions and things into a coherent whole. Mīmāṁsakas have termed this performability bhāvanā, “bringing into being.” This bhāvanā is the efficient force of the action, the one that gets the job done and secures the result, but the feature through which it holds the whole sacrifice together is its integrative force or ākāṅkṣā, “need” or “curiosity” or a “charge.” The performability of the sacrificial action as a purposeful action requires certain things without which the action could not be performed. First, it requires that there be a result: the sacrifice should bring about heaven. Second, it needs that a sacrifice and not a soccer game take place. Third, it needs a set procedure in which the sacrifice happens. This procedure in its turn organizes all actions, substances, participants and what have you in the sacrifice in a coherent, teleologically organized whole, a whole of subordinate actions that result in substances that are offered in the principal action by the sacrificer, for the result. Without these three—result, means and procedure—a sacrifice will not be performed, and so the performability of the sacrifice seeks these out to “discharge its need.”

These are, then, the three features of ākāṅkṣā as the organizing structure of the sacrifice: the result or phala expressed by the accusative of the neuter interrogative pronoun, kim, “what” (svarga, heaven); the instrument or karāṇa, expressed by the instrumental of the interrogative pronoun, kena, “with what” (yāga, the sacrificial action); and the procedure of the sacrifice or itikartavyatā, expressed by the interrogative adverb of manner, katham, “how.” Any subordinate action will have a performability and a need of its own, discharged in the production of the offertory but ultimately extending to the principal action through the offertory. Psychologically,
of course, this ākāṅkṣā or ritual curiosity operates through the sacrificer and his intention to bring about heaven.

Now, I said above that the sacrifice is not only a matter of facticity, but of textual ideality as well. In fact, the above account was somewhat my own reconstruction. When Mīmāṁsakas talk about bhāvanā and ākāṅkṣā, they talk about properties of textual, Vedic injunctions in relation to a prospective performer of a ritual, or more generally of any prescriptive sentence in relation to a listener. Despite their many differences, all Mīmāṁsakas understood sentences and texts as a collocation of words in which ultimately one thing is expressed, an action, in which the core role belonged to the verb.

For the Bhāṭṭas, a Vedic sentence expresses an injunction as a unit, but its central element is the bhāvanā or the performability of the action. Hearing a Vedic injunction, such as “he who wants heaven should sacrifice,” svarga-kāmo yajeta, one cognizes that one should bring about heaven by the performance of sacrifice. The bhāvanā here consists in “should bring about,” and is expressed by the optative ending in the finite verb yajeta. But this bhāvanā is further divisible into “bring about” and “should.” The first of these is a property that all verbs have, a “general verbality” as Edgerton calls it, consisting in the fact that all verbal forms denote a productivity of some sort or effectuation of a state of affairs. Kumārila and his school of Mīmāṁsā called this feature ārthī or factual bhāvanā.

In our cooking example, “Devadatta cooks rice,” we can analyze the finite verb “cooks” into “s/he brings about” and “by means of cooking.” This “s/he brings about,” expressing the performability of action, is a feature of all verbal forms. Some finite verbs, however, specifically the optative and imperative forms (as well as gerundives), have the additional element of

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“should” or the so-called verbal, śabdī bhāvanā. What this śabdī bhāvanā does is enjoining the subject, the one who desires the result, to perform the action so that the result may be attained.

Let us work this through the paradigmatic injunction svarga-kāmo yajeta. Its meaning is paraphrased as svarga-kāmaḥ svargaṁ yāgena bhāvayet, “he who wants heaven should bring about heaven by means of sacrificing.” We notice how the finite verb yajeta has been broken down into the specific instrumental action (by means of sacrificing) and the general performability or bhāvanā (should bring about). In this injunction, heaven as the result of sacrifice is the object of the injunction, because its desirability, as we have demonstrated, is taken for granted—all men, in fact, want heaven. Further, the bhāvanā here is of both types: “brings about” and “should.” The first is, of course, textual, but its reference is the actual sacrificial performance: it is interested in the text insofar as there is a sacrifice to be performed which requires a text corresponding to the sacrifice to be constituted. The second, also textual, looks towards the sacrificer and how it may constitute a text so that he may be induced to perform the sacrifice. Each of these two will have a set of the three parts of the cohesive force, the ākāṅkṣā of the bhāvanā. I will outline only the first here, and keep the second for later in the chapter.

For there to be an actual bringing about of something, the bhāvanā here expressed by the optative suffix in the finite verb, “should bring about,” requires from the text an object, a means, and a manner. Thus, in svarga-kāmo yajeta, given that this is a central or puruṣārtha injunction, the object feature of the ākāṅkṣā is determined by the desire of the agent: what should be brought about is heaven. The object satisfies the purpose of the action. The means is expressed by the lexical meaning of the verbal root in the finite form yajeta, namely yāga or sacrifice, and this is the instrument feature of the ākāṅkṣā. For these two we did not need to go out of the injunction,
but the sacrificial procedure—the recipe for cooking heaven—will be expressed in other parts of the Veda which describe what one does in a given ritual. For instance, if the injunction is *jyotiṣṭomena svarga-kāmo yajeta*, then a Jyotiṣṭoma sacrifice procedure is required. The suffix in the finite verb expressing *bhāvanā* will attract the elements of this procedure—if one ought to bring about heaven, one will be prompted to ascertain how—first through textual proximity, but generally by applying the rules and methods of Vedic exegesis. The ākāṅksā of the *bhāvanā* will, in other words, organize sections of the Veda so that the purpose of the injunction may be realized: it will constitute a text describing a ritual.

**Mīmāṁsā Classification of Vedic Texts and the Upaniṣads**

We saw, thus, how the Mīmāṁsakas understood ritual as a means of human felicity. By and large, they considered the Vedas to be *only* about this: the purpose of the Veda was to enjoin ritual and communicate in some way that its performance is a means of human happiness. For that purpose, a text had to be worked out which would cover all the details of the performance as well as the knowledge and know-how necessary for it. This text would need to contain knowledge about the agent, details about offering preparation, the use of implements and the role of the recipients, a script for the performance, an incentive for the sacrificer, all teleologically driven by the injunction which introduces the ritual. The text should be constituted from the Veda, and Mīmāṁsakas classified the entire Veda by types of passages that it contains in terms of their ritual applicability. In this section, we will outline this classification, and then we will try to pinpoint the role of the Upaniṣads in it.

Mīmāṁsakas classified the Veda in four kinds of texts: (1) *vidhi* or injunctions; (2) *mantra* or sacrificial chants; (3) *arthavāda* or descriptive passages; and (4) *nāmadheya* or names. It is no surprise that the injunctions were considered the central texts: only they were directly
related to dharma. The injunction group referred to the portions of the Brāhmaṇas which enjoin the performance of sacrifices and included all kinds of injunctive texts, which Mīmāṁsakas meticulously classified. Vidhi covered not only the principal injunctions, but everything that is enjoined in the sacrifice, for instance the sannipātyopakārakas, the ārād-upakārakas and all the individual actions they involved and auxiliaries they required. Crucially, they involve everything that is to be understood “just as it is heard.”

Injunctions were classified primarily based on two criteria: (1) what they enjoin; and, (2) how they enjoin it. Under the first rubric, one common division is into utpatti-vidhi, an originative injunction in which the predicate is the principal element of the ritual performance; and viniyoga-vidhi, an applicative injunction which affirms that some auxiliary is related to the principal. The two are commonly referred to as puruṣārtha-vidhi and kratvartha-vidhi, enjoining that which is for the good of man or that which is for the good of the ritual, respectively. Good instances would be agnihotraṁ juhoti, “He performs the daily fire ritual,” and dadhnā juhoti, “He uses yoghurt as the oblation.” To this pair, a third is commonly added, adhikāra-vidhi, a statement that introduces the ritual agent who is entitled to reap the fruits of the sacrifice, for instance the famous svarga-kāmo yajeta, “He who wants heaven should sacrifice.”

It is not necessary that these be stated in separate sentences. However, an injunction can affirm only one thing, and in complex injunctions the other elements are considered qualifiers of that one thing, producing thus a viśiṣṭa-vidhi, a qualified injunction. When these three injunctions in a ritual are put together through the three features of syntactic expectancy, ākāṅkṣā, in a hierarchy ascertained through the Mīmāṁsā principles of interpretation, they produce a prayoga-vidhi, a whole manual that delineates the integral organization of the ritual and the manner of its
performance, as well as all the other details required. This is the text that I referred to above as the final product that covers the whole ritual procedure.\textsuperscript{47} This is commonly listed as the fourth type of injunction in this classification, and we should take a good note of it because it will play an important role in the \textit{mahā-vākya} idea. This fourfold classification is given in later manuals, but the individual types of injunctions are common currencies in Śabara’s and Kumārila’s works.\textsuperscript{48}

The second classification of injunction asks the question, \textit{how} is something enjoined. By this criterion, injunctions are commonly classified in three types: (1) \textit{apūrva-vidhi}; (2) \textit{niyama-vidhi}; and (3) \textit{parisaṅkhyā-vidhi}. The \textit{locus classicus} on these is TV 1.2.34, although Kumārila there does not mention \textit{apūrva-vidhi}, but rather talks about \textit{vidhi}, \textit{niyama} and \textit{parisaṅkhyā}.\textsuperscript{49}

An \textit{apūrva-vidhi} is a statement that enjoins by disclosing an otherwise unknown causal relationship. Take, for instance, the statement \textit{vrīhīn prokṣati}, “he besprinkles the rice,” that is an action of the type of \textit{saṁskṛti} or consecration, and adds an excellence of some kind to the substance over which it operates. That there is some causal relationship between the action of besprinkling and the excellence that obtains subsequently in the rice is not empirically knowable, and is solely due to the injunction. We can look at this from the point of view of the desired result. We need an element of excellence in the rice so that it can be used in preparing the sacrificial cake. Because this excellence is invisible, no action is empirically related to it. In Kumārila’s words, such relationship does not obtain “absolutely.” For all we know, it may be the

\begin{quote}
\textit{vidhir atyantam aprāpte niyamaḥ pākṣike sati |}
tatra cānyatra ca prāpte parisaṅkhyeti kīrtaye. TV 1.2.34, 1.152.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{47} See Tachikawa, Bahulkar and Kolhatkar 2001 for a ritual modeled on the Darśa-pūrṇamāsa and a corresponding \textit{prayoga-vākya} serving as a manual of its performance, the \textit{Pavitreśi-prayoga}.

\textsuperscript{48} A good overview is available in Pandurangi 2006:177-8.

\textsuperscript{49} Kumārila’s definition, which he then expands on, says: “A sentence is an injunction when [some causal relationship] absolutely does not obtain [by other means of knowing]. A restriction happens when there is [general] optionality, whereas an exclusion when such optionality obtains in regard both to one and another.”
action of arranging the rice into the image of LeBron James that will furnish the required excellence. Nothing of the kind is known to us “before the sentence,” and for this reason this type of injunction is “pure,” fully in the domain of the Veda. It is exclusively related to unseen results. It is eminently clear that this injunction is related to the original meaning of the notion of *apūrva*, unprecedented as knowable only from the Veda.

There may be cases, however, when two ritual elements are commonly related, in multiple possible ways. Keeping with the rice example, once the rice has been consecrated, its husk needs to be removed so that it can be used in making the cake. We know how to do that, and we could imagine more than one appropriate ways—this is not empirically unavailable. An injunction in relation to this reads, *vrīhin avahanti*, “he threshes the rice.” The predicate of this injunction is not the action of rice preparation, but its specific mode of threshing qualified by the natural consequence of excluding all other possibilities, never mind if they are all accounted for or not. The important thing is that optionality obtains *in general*. This type of injunction is called *niyama*, restriction.

When, however, there is a similar situation but one in which the whole scope of what can be affirmed is known, and the point is not to affirm the stated element as intended but to exclude whatever is not stated, this injunction is called *parisaṅkhya*, exclusion. Take, for instance, the statement *aśvābhidhānīṃ ādatte*, “he takes the horse’s bridle.” While we need not go into involved details, the statement as it stands is problematic because the action of holding is supposed to be performed alongside the recital of a certain *mantra*, but the statement seems to reiterate something already affirmed in a related text, which puts its purpose in jeopardy: a *pramāṇa* cannot repeat something known. The solution is to take the statement as intending not

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50 *tatra yo ’tyantam aprāpto na ca prāpsyati prāg vacanād ity avagamyate tatra niyogo śuddha eva vidhir. TV 1.2.42.*
to enjoin the holding of the horse’s bridle while reciting the mantra, but as intending to exclude the holding of the donkey’s bridle which presents itself as an assumed alternative. The restriction still denotes the action of holding: holding as qualified not by what is said, but by what is not said when it could have been said.

This, obviously, leaves a lot of leeway for dissent, and it is often a matter of disagreement whether a specific statement is a restriction or an exclusion. We need not worry about this, but we should note well how the three are defined, because they will play a formative role in Śaṅkara’s making sense of meditation vs. reflection in Vedānta. To summarize, the first classification provides for the structure of the ritual: it is set in motion by a sentence that presents the central ritual element; ritual details are related to the central element; the agent entitled to the results is pointed out; the structure itself is given. The second classification, on the other hand, is concerned with knowing causal relationships that govern the elements of the ritual.

The second group of Vedic texts, mantras, referred to versified composition, generally in the Vedic Śaṃhitās, which are recited in a sacrifice accompanying parts of the ritual and are intended as markers of these parts, the respective deities, the offertories, etc. “[M]antras allude to what is going on in the sacrifice as the priest executes it. Thus, recited in the proper sequence, they help the priest see what he is doing and remind him of what has yet to be done. They provide a running narrative of the rite.”51 Taber points to a crucial feature of theirs: “[T]heir meaning is usually evident as soon as they are pronounced. They are grammatical; they make sense of themselves. But, still, when a mantra is presented in the Veda as a formula to be uttered in the context of the ritual, one may take it to express what it means, or one may not.”52 Unlike the injunctions that must be taken as heard, mantras are more like a soundtrack. They do not say

51 Taber 1989:149.
52 Ibid, 145.
anything about Indra, Agni, the sacrificial fire, etc., but indicate what is happening at a given moment in the ritual and help the priest recall that detail, much as Wagner’s “Wedding March” played at a wedding to accompany the entrance of the bride is not about Elsa, but marks the entrance event. The reference of the waltz is the event, not Elsa.

As for the arthavāda or stories and descriptions found alongside the ritualistic sections of the Brāhmaṇas, they were a problem for Mīmāṁsā because they evidently do not enjoin an action—all that the Vedas are valid for—but are part of the Vedas and cannot be discarded without compromising the validity of the corpus. An additional problem with these passages was that many of them were just contrary to sensory evidence. Think, for instance, of the many bandhus or correlations in the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads, such as the famous identification of the sacrificial horse with the universe at the opening of the Brhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad. Given the premise that the Vedas are valid only regarding (ritual) action and do not teach about things that we can see, what to do with such descriptions many of which are plain false and all of which are not about action?

Śabara’s solution was to treat such passages as not being truth claims at all. Consider any story. A story can do two things: (1) it can give an account of past events; or (2) it can cause attraction or repulsion to something else, like an advertisement that makes you want the product no matter how accurate it is. This is what arthavādas do: they advertise the ritual action. Their validity does not consist in whether what they say is true or not—though one can always interpret them to avoid contradiction with the evident—but in aiding the performance of the sacrifice by making it look good.53 To take the standard arthavāda example: “One who wants prosperity should immolate a white animal to Vāyu. Vāyu is the swiftest deity. Vāyu comes with

53 See Śabara ad MS 1.2.10.
his own property and leads him [the sacrificer] to prosperity.” In Kumārila’s words, knowing that the cause and the effects are alike, one is made to believe that the sacrifice to the swiftest deity will make the result arrive without much delay. This makes the arthavādas purposeful and, therefore, valid, not in terms of truth, but action.

Kumārila brought his hallmark sophistication to the issue of arthavādas. I mentioned that he distinguished two kinds of bhāvanā or verbal productivity, arthī or actual and šabdī or verbal bhāvanā. In the paradigmatic injunction svarga-kāmo yajeta, this bhāvanā had the form of “bring about” for the arthī bhāvanā and “should” for the šabdī bhāvanā. The arthī bhāvanā further had three points which it required for its completion: an object (heaven), an instrument (the sacrifice) and a procedure of sacrificial performance. Now, the šabdī bhāvanā similarly needs to become complete in the same three points in order to accomplish its objective, which is to get the man perform the sacrifice. The šabdī bhāvanā is all about the taking up of the sacrifice, not its accomplishment, so naturally its object, answerable to the kim-feature of the ākāṅkṣā or the verbal need, is the taking up of the action, for which reason the sacrificer must be induced. Further, the šabdī bhāvanā requires an instrument for effectuating this, corresponding to the kena-feature of the ākāṅkṣā, and for this it must give rise to an understanding of the injunction on the part of the sacrificer, one that is contingent on experiencing that there is a causal relation between the action to which he is prompted and the result that he expects. Kumārila calls these two—the kim and kena features—puruṣa-pravṛtti and vidhi-jñāna respectively, engaging man in the sacrifice through understanding the injunction.

Finally, the šabdī bhāvanā needs to find a way to do that, corresponding to the katham-feature of the ākāṅkṣā. The question, then, is how the optative suffix which expresses bhāvanā—

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54 sādhanānurūpa-sādhyotpatī-dvāreṇa kṣipra-devatā-sādhyāṁ karma kṣipram eva phalam dāsyati. TV 1.2.7, I.115.
55 This section is based on TV on MS 1.2.7
and Kumārila is quick to point that the insentient suffix operates through the sacrificer’s awareness—can convince the sacrificer that the ritual action can furnish the result. "For, a man acts led by reason, and as long as he does not understand something as good, he will not act upon it."\textsuperscript{56} We shift perspective now, from the optative suffix to the sacrificer, because the sacrificer must see the desirability of the sacrifice. This, Kumārila claims, can happen in two ways. The sacrificer can see, first, the excellence of the ritual action; it is an action laid down by a Vedic injunction, and the Veda is faultless. In this case, the \textit{śabdī bhāvanā} operates solely through the optative suffix. Or, he can realize how the sacrifice is good because some of the deities or substances that are its part are excellent in some way. This is accomplished by the \textit{arthavāda} sections: hearing, as I already said, how Vāyu is the swiftest deity, one’s understanding that the cause and the effects are alike is activated and a conviction that the sacrifice to the swiftest deity will make the result arrive quickly is born. The fact that an \textit{arthavāda} is juxtaposed to an injunction makes these two seek each other for completion, and while the suffix could perform the same function alone, the presence of the \textit{arthavāda} suspends that. Kumārila calls this feature of the \textit{śabdī bhāvanā} corresponding to the \textit{itikartavyatā}, the \textit{katham} feature, the knowledge of excellence or \textit{prāśastyā-jñāna}.\textsuperscript{57}

The question now presents itself: where is the place of the Upaniṣads and the knowledge of the Self as its domain in this classification? The seemingly easy answer is: the Upaniṣads are part of the Brāhmaṇas and they do not enjoin action (or so it seems); ergo, they must be \textit{arthavādas}.\textsuperscript{58} This is how scholars tend to present the Mīmāṃsā understanding of the Upaniṣads.

\textsuperscript{56} buddhi-pūrva-kārino hi puruṣā yāvāt praśasto ‘yam iti nābudhyante, tāvan na pravartante. TV 1.2.7, I.114.
\textsuperscript{57} The fourth part of the Veda, \textit{Nāmadheya} or names, refers to texts which give references to particular sacrifices through their names, and seems to have been posited as a category just to avoid double injunctions. See Jha 1964:182-6.
\textsuperscript{58} For a reliable study of \textit{arthavāda} in Mīmāṃsā, see Harikai 1994. For a short overview, see Jha 1907:xxxv; for a longer overview, Jha 1964:177-182.
For instance, Halbfass writes: “Kumārila mentions the Upaniṣads side by side with arthavādas, and he tends to see the Upaniṣadic teaching about the Self as being auxiliary to dharma, that is, to the performance of ritual actions, insofar as the notion of a noncorporeal permanent self is a condition and an incentive for performing such acts which are supposed to bear fruit in another life or birth.”59 Hirst explicitly identifies the Upaniṣadic statements about the as self as arthavāda in Mīmāṁsā: “These [non-injunctive statements] last were classified as arthavāda, secondary statements whose real function was to encourage a person to undertake ritual action. So, for example, all statements about the self were seen, not primarily as descriptions of the self, but as motivators to action, the self being the one who would accrue the result of the sacrifice performed.”60 “The application of the category of arthavāda (secondary passages) (v) is slightly more complicated. The Ritualists developed this notion to account for apparently descriptive passages, particularly those found in the Upaniṣads.”61 Rambachan gives a similar explanation:

The Pūrva Mīmāṁsā contention that the Upaniṣads have no independent purpose but are merely an appendage to the main body of injunctive text was a formidable challenge to Śaṅkara. … Many Vedic texts, for example, including the sentences of the Upaniṣads (vedānta-vākyas) are seen as having their purpose only in praising what has been enjoined in the injunctions (PSM 1.2.7). … According to Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, the Upaniṣads are merely an appendage to the main body of injunctive statements. The utility of the Upaniṣads lies only in praising the prescribed action or in providing some useful information, such as knowledge of the deity or agent for performance of a particular rite.62

The fact of the matter is more complex than this simple identification of “being subordinate to dharma” with “being arthavāda,” and its corollary “the Upaniṣads as a unit are subordinate, ergo they are arthavāda.” Let us examine carefully what Kumārila says about the Upaniṣads.

59 1991:150.
60 2005:38.
61 Ibid., p.63.
62 1992:34.
To begin with, Kumārila’s understanding of the complex ritual causality found a place for the Upaniṣads as providing knowledge about the agent in the sacrifice, ultimately serving the purpose of action but having truth value. We should recall here the puruṣārtha/kratvartha and principal/auxiliary organization of the sacrifice. The ritual agent in the sacrifice was an auxiliary factor, a kratvartha, and the Upaniṣadic texts which present knowledge of this agent were ultimately absorbed in the principal ritual action through the agent. Unlike the arthavādas, which for Kumārila were strictly in the realm of śabdī bhāvanā where truth values do not matter, the Upaniṣadic passages about the Self were absorbed in the arthī bhāvanā where accurate knowledge was important, although ultimately made use of in action. Ascertaining the details of procedure that involved the ritual agent was not related to like or dislike, and the success of the sacrifice was predicated on knowing such details. It is significant that Kumārila placed the Upaniṣads right there. “The Upaniṣads discharge their need (ākāṅkṣā) through presenting the agent that is subordinate to the ritual action.”63

Thus, Kumārila included the Upaniṣadic description of the Self in the arthī bhāvanā, before he had the occasion to introduce the arthavādas and the śabdī bhāvanā as their domain. The issue of arthavāda appears with passages which are fanciful or do not contribute anything obvious to the action. They are not required as part of the sacrificial procedure, but are present in the text and must be accommodated because of that. Vāyu may be the fastest deity for all we know, but the point is that this does not matter in the sacrificial procedure. The situation with the Self is different, and in one sense can be compared to the sacrificial cake: the cake is subordinate to the action of offering, yet the passages which enjoin how to prepare it are not arthavāda, because they are predicated on having truth value. They enter the itikartavyatā. With the Self, of

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63 etena kratvartha-kartr-pratipādana-dvāreṇopaniṣadāṁ nairāṅkṣyaṁ vyākhyātam. TV 1.2.7, 1.114.
course, the issue was somewhat more crucial, since without a permanent Self that enjoys the results of the sacrifice the authority of the Veda would be compromised. Kumārila thought that such knowledge of the Self as an eternal agent and enjoyer of ritual action follows even from the bare injunctive statements through scriptural postulation—there must be an eternal Self that will enjoy the results, or otherwise what the injunction says would be false—but such knowledge becomes firm through the study of the Upaniṣads.64

However, in other places Kumārila does treat Upaniṣadic texts as arthavāda. For instance, in his account of the origin of smṛti, he attributed the various theories of creation and dissolution common among Vedic folks to ideas that originate in the mantras and arthavādas.65 This certainly includes sections of the Upaniṣads. He traced even the origin of some Buddhist ideas—idealism, momentariness, the doctrine of no-Self—to the Upaniṣads and arthavāda, explicitly paired, and meaning to prevent excessive attachment to sensual matters.66 Reasoning also had origin in the Upaniṣads and arthavāda in pair.67 These ideas of his were not particularly revolutionary either: for most of them he had a precedent in Bhartṛhari.68 We may, further, venture to guess that he would have classified the Self-Brahman identification in the Upaniṣads as arthavāda, since such a doctrine, as noted by Nakamura, makes the Mīmāṁsā doctrine, predicated on a plurality of Selves, fundamentally impossible. “The eternal existence of the individual ātman, from the standpoint of the highest truth, is absolutely necessary and indispensable as the presupposition on which the Mīmāṁsā philosophy can establish their

64 ŚV Ātmavāda 141, 148.
65 yāś caitāḥ pradhāṇa-puruṣeṣvara-paramāṇu-kāraṇādi-prakriyāḥ sṛṣṭi-pralaya-di-rūpeṇa praḥtūs tāḥ sarvā mantrārthavāda-jijnād eva. TV 1.3.2, 1.168.
66 sarvatra hi tad-balena pravartate, tad-upārane coparamāṇitī vijñāna-mātra-kṣaṇa-bhaṅga-nairātmyādi-vādānām apy upaniṣad-arthavāda-prabhavatvam viṣayeṣv atyantikam ṛgaṁ nivartayitum āty upapannaṁ sarveṣaṁ prāmāṇyam. Ibid.
67 tatra lokārthavādopaniṣat-prasūtais tarka-śāstraṁ sarva-vipratipatti-mukha-pradarśanam. Ibid.
rites.”⁶⁹ Finally, Kumārila refuted Vedāntic theories of the origin of the world and rejected the very possibility of a creator, which is so prominent in Vedānta.⁷⁰

Therefore, it seems to me that it is a notional mistake to talk about a general Mīmāṁsā attitude to the Upaniṣads as a single corpus, as it is commonly done. Kumārila clearly had an idea that they are distinct, focused on knowledge of the Self, but they contained the same types of sentences as the Brāhmaṇas: injunctions and their auxiliaries, and arthavādas. The fact that both are treated as auxiliary to dharma is not the characteristic that calls for putting an equation sign; there is, rather, a crucial difference, insofar as one give information that must be taken literally and the other is for the purpose of inspiration.

The key distinction in attitude between Mīmāṁsā and Advaita Vedānta was not about the Upaniṣads being arthavāda, but about what kind of Self they presented: A Self that is essentially a ritual agent and an enjoyer, or a single aloof Self, one for all. A corollary to this concerned the status of passages that talk about liberation from saṁsāra: are they true statements of result, or just statements of praise? We will see this conflict already in the next chapter.

**Language and Prābhākara Mīmāṁsā**

Kumārila’s philosophy of language was fully consistent with the model of the sacrifice and its ritual causality. Words are meaningful intrinsically and before they combine in a sentence. In a sentence, word meanings are harnessed by the verb, absorbed, and finalized in a new, sentential meaning. Cognition also proceeds from recognizing individual word, to recognizing their meaning, to understanding what the whole sentence or passage stands for. That much was

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⁶⁹ 1983:363.
⁷⁰ ŚV Sambandhākṣepa-Parihāra 83-4. The whole chapter is one massive statement against a first principle of the world.
already said by Śabara: “Words, denoting their own objects, cease their [individual] function, and then the understood word meanings give rise to sentence meaning.”⁷¹ Word meanings are employed by the bhāvanā of the verb to form a coherent sentence meaning, but they mean whatever they mean before that. This has become known as the abhihitānvaya-vāda, or the doctrine of association of word denotations in a sentence. It is important to see how this understanding corresponds to the theory of mediate ritual causality which Kumārila developed, in which individual things and small and large actions of different kinds are gradually absorbed in the final action in a process of refinement and maturation, giving up their individual causality only to keep it.⁷² This idea will have a massive significance for Advaita soteriology and the notion of mahā-vākya.

The rival school of Mīmāṁsā, the school of Prabhākara, had a different approach to language, tied to a different approach to ritual as well. To begin with, whereas for Kumārila the verbal suffix in the sentence ultimately expressed an urging for the performance of action by presenting it as a means to a desirable end,⁷³ for the Prabhākaras Vedic injunctions issue a mandate or niyoga to an individual to perform a ritual, having their own purpose in view, namely perpetuating ritual performance.⁷⁴ To secure such performance, an injunction must have an object, something real that it produces as an outcome, so that the agent of the sacrifice, coming with his own purpose such as happiness, would take up the enjoined action. The injunction, in other words, issues a mandate, but it needs to provide all the requirements so that the mandate

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⁷¹ padāni hi svaṁ svaṁ padārtham abhidhāya nivṛttavyāpārāni. athedānīṁ padārthā avagatāḥ santo vākyārthaiṁ gamayanti. MSŚBh 1.1.25, I.96.
⁷² Kumārila’s doctrine of sentence meaning is developed in the Vākya chapter of the ŚV.
⁷³ The theory was fully worked out by Maṇḍana Miśra, who argued that the śabda-bhāvanā expresses that the action has the property of being a means of something desirable, iṣṭa-sādhanatā. See David 2013 for a very lucid account of this.
⁷⁴ This account is indebted most of all to Yoshimizu 1994 and Hiriyanna 1972:85-96; I have also profited from McCrea 2000b.
would be carried out. This mandate is not unconditional or categorical, as it was characterized by early scholarship, \(^{75}\) but pertains to someone for whom the performance is relevant in virtue of the desire for the result, or some other criterion, i.e., someone who has an *adhikāra* for the ritual action. \(^{76}\) The injunction cannot select just anyone, say a Śūdra, and present him with an unconditional obligation, as Kant’s categorical imperative would, because the successful performance of the mandate requires that one understands the mandate as pertaining to oneself, and that happens through the object of the agent’s desire, such as heaven. But, that is how far the injunction goes. Whereas Kumārila expected the injunction to convey somehow that the performance of the ritual action can bring about the expected result, Prabhākara saw that as already covered by the desire for the result.

To understand this clearly, think of the sentence, “She who wants a good life should pursue education.” The central message which the sentence wants to communicate for Kumārila would be how good education is, because no thinking person would take up a course of action unless first convinced that it is for one’s good. Prabhākara, on the other hand, would take that requirement satisfied by the desire for a good life, in which case the core message of the sentence would be that education *must* be pursued if one wants a good life; i.e., one must take up that course of action. To be, now, specific, the *taking up* of the course of action is the mandate issued by a Vedic injunction (*niyoga*). \(^{77}\) The specific form of action, in our case education, is the instrument by which one can accomplish the objective, a good life, but it is also the direct object

\(^{75}\) See Nakamura 1994 for a comparison of *niyoga* with Kant’s categorical imperative. While Prabhākara’s account of obligation is deontic, its characterization in Kantian terms is wrong on several important counts.

\(^{76}\) The desire would pertain to the rituals known as *kāmya-karma*, which were meant for a specific result such as heaven or cattle. The very belonging to one of the three classes would constitute the criterion for the performance of the mandatory rites, *nitya-karma*, which such a member of the three classes would need to perform till the end of life.

\(^{77}\) atrābhidhīyate—niyogaḥ karmani niyuṅkta iti na sāmyag avadhṛtaṁ bhavatā. ārāmbe hi puruṣaṁ niyuṅkte, na karmaṇi. *Ṛhāti* 2.1.5, III.321.
of the urging expressed by the injunction. For Prābhākaras, contrary to the Bhāṭṭas, the specific action and not the result is the one element that needs to be produced (kārya), although the result remains superordinate to the action. Ultimately the educational system has its own purpose, to perpetuate itself. The good life which it promises is not superordinate to it, but it is superordinate to the performance of the action of study on the part of the student.

Now, there is one difference between ordinary, worldly mandates, such as the one of education and a good life, and Vedic mandates, and that is that the result does not follow immediately upon the completion of the mandate—one is not seen going to heaven after the ritual—owing to which something permanent must be postulated over and above the action expressed by the mandate, that remains after the performance of the action and eventually brings about the result. This additional element is knowable solely from the Veda—it is, in fact, what makes the Veda a pramāṇa—and is why the Vedic mandate is called apūrva, unprecedented, unknowable otherwise.

Prābhākaras clearly followed the old Mīmāṁsā understanding of ritual causality, where what matters is to get the ritual structure right and leave the rest to the Veda. If the Veda says that he who performs the sacrifice goes to heaven, then one had every right to believe so. There is no need for grand theories of ritual causality or general theories of maturation. There is something permanent which remains after the sacrifice, and nothing more than this is required.

This central role of the structural unity of the sacrifice influenced the Prābhākara philosophy of language, in which words do not initially mean anything individually, but collectively first produce a single sentence meaning and only then acquire individual word

79 na pūrvam apūrvam. pūrvam tad ucyate yad avagatam prāk. yat tu kenacid prāg anavagatam pratiyate tad apūrvam. tathā-bhūtaś ca vidhy-arthaḥ. Ṛju-Vimalā 2.1.5, III.312.
80 Clooney is, therefore, right in claiming as much. 1990:245-53.
meanings. Words are individually meaningful only in sentences, when they are syntactically related to other words. This understanding of language has become known as the anvitābhidhāna-vāda or the doctrine of denotation as single correlated meaning. This unified and unique sentence meaning is action, of the obligation kind (kārya), qualified by its contributory factors (kārakas), and a sentence without a verb expressing such an obligation cannot be construed as unitary and cannot express meaning. If a sentence does not obtain a meaning, neither can the individual words. It is, in fact, impossible to even learn what individual words mean unless they form part of such a sentence expressing obligation, because learning language happens through observing how elders deal with one another through commands.81

Such an attitude to ritual action and language meant that Prābhākaras did not care much for the arthavādas, except for the fact that they happened to be part of the Veda. The ākāṅkṣā or the syntactic expectancy of a sentence expressing action is discharged once all the contributory factors are supplied for the structural unity of the ritual to obtain. If some of the factors are missing, they must be supplied (a process called adhyāhāra), but once that is done, there is no natural ākāṅkṣā anymore and for any other words that happen to be in the vicinity. For instance, for the adjective “white” for a “cow,” an ākāṅkṣā must be assumed just because the word happens to be there.

Such was the case with the arthavādas as well: they do not bring anything real to the ritual action, but are in proximity and need to be accounted for. Since verbal forms that do not express obligation, such as those in the present tense, do not have ākāṅkṣā either, the arthavādas are construed with their proximate injunctions. This attitude is well exemplified by an objection (pūrva-pakṣa) which Śālikanātha characterized as “half-conclusion”: there is no real loss if the

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81 Śālikanātha’s Vākyārtha-Mātrkā is one grand statement of this philosophy. See Sarma 1987, 1988, and 1990.
arthavāda portion of the Veda has no validity, but there would be an enormous loss if the injunctions, by association with something invalid, would lose validity too. This is a “half” conclusion because there is nothing wrong with it essentially, except that it puts the whole of the Veda in jeopardy and through that the injunctions themselves, and so it is necessary that the arthavādas do get some validity, though nothing would be lost without them. They are, therefore, construed along with an injunction, in sheer view of the fact that they happen to be around.

Śālikanātha applied the same reasoning regarding the Upaniṣadic descriptions of Brahman. An Upaniṣadic statement (vedānta-vākyya) such as “Brahman is awareness, bliss” must be completed with some injunction expressing an obligation, for otherwise its words will not even obtain reference. If it is possible to supply them with some such obligation, all good and well. Otherwise, the disassociation of the Upaniṣadic statements from injunctions will simply mean that they remain inexpressive and will bring no real harm.

Equally radical was the Prābhākara understanding of the knowledge of the Self. Sureśvara paraphrased eloquently this understanding in his Sambandha-Vārttika. As a padārtha or a common category, the Self was not at all in the domain of knowledge from

82 tatra rāddhāntaikadeśyāha – mā bhūt tasya prāmāṇyaṁ, tasya kevalasyārthāvada-bhāgasya bhavatu apramāṇatā, na kācit kṣatīḥ, nanu tadāpramāṇye vidhy-uddeśasyāpi jñāta-prāmāṇyasya aprāmāṇyāpattir mahatī kṣatīḥ. Ṛju-Vimalā 1.2.1, II.2.)
83 Śālika developed his account as a response to Maṇḍana Miśra’s Brahma-Siddhi, but he was clearly spelling out an understanding which must have been much older than this. Śaṅkara and Sureśvara are both aware of this construal of the Upaniṣadic statements and argue against it (see, for instance BĀUBh 1.3.1 and NaiŚ 1.14-19). All we know with certainty about Śālika is that he was later than Maṇḍana, whom he directly quotes and attacks, and earlier than Vācaspati (see, for instance, Acharya 2006:xxi). Śālika’s critique of the descriptive sentences in the Upaniṣads concerning Brahman is found in his Ṛju-Vimalā on Prabhākara’s Brhatī on 1.1.2.
84 evam sarvapadānāṁ kāryānītyārthābhidhāyakatvād yadi vedāntesu kāryam yogyam adhyāḥārādibhir labhyate, tadā kāryārthaiva vedānta-vākyānām api; atha na, tato ’nabhidhāyakataiva vyutpatti-virahāt. ato vidhi-nirākaraṇam api vedāntesu na kṣatim āvahati. Ibid.
85 SV 440-454. The doctrine is presented as of “those who are enamored with mandate as the sole reference,” niyogārthaikā-rāginaḥ (454).
linguistic utterances, śabda. The Self was like rice, a thing whose properties we already know, but which we use in ritual through the fact that it becomes an auxiliary to the action of offering. The Veda is a pramāṇa strictly on the mandate or niyoga that an action of some kind be performed. Through that mandate, the only new thing that the Veda says about rice qua rice is that it is usable in the relevant ritual, serviceable to the mandated action; in other words, that it is an auxiliary. The Self is, like rice, otherwise known, and its true nature is recognized by the aid of reasoning that proceeds by examination of what is permanent and what changes (anvaya-vyatireka) in its three states—waking, sleep and deep sleep. The proper pramāṇa for knowing the Self is pratyabhijñāna, recognition, which was a mode of perceptual awareness. The idea of pratyabhijñāna as a mode of perception was developed in the school of Nyāya, and we may quote Chatterjee on this with profit:

To recognize thus means to cognize that which we are aware of having cognized before. Pratyabhijñā is recognition in this sense. It consists in knowing not only that a thing is such-and-such but that it is the same thing that we saw before.

Pratyabhijñāna was a mode of perception in which the percept is qualified by traces of former percepts, and it was the pramāṇa for knowing the Self. Through reasoning, these traces of former percepts should be removed, at which point the pure Self alone remains. The Self is known through recognition assisted by reasoning, and the Veda has no say in this: if it does say

86 “Others say: because the Self is a category, it is knowable by other means, not from scripture, like other categories such as rice.”

anya āhuh padārthatvāt pramāṇāntara-gamyatām ātmano nāgamāt siddhir vrīhyādy-anya-padārtha vat. SV 440.

87 SV 451-454.

88 SV 441. Śabara, in fact, argued in MS 1.1.5 against the Vijñānavādin opponent that the Self was self-evident, known to oneself through the recognition of one’s persistence through time, but eminently private and not available to intersubjective perception.

89 Chatterjee 2008:188.

things about the Self, as it does, the corresponding scriptural cognition is a form of appearance present to our consciousness, *pratibhā*, but it is not a veridical cognition produced by a *pramāṇa*. This does not mean that it is false awareness, but it is repeating something that is already known. The only new thing that the Veda can say about the Self is that it is auxiliary to the action of ritual or meditation.

**Conclusion**

This chapter provided us with several tools necessary for proceeding with the dissertation. First, Śaṅkara’s fundamental rethinking of the nature of the Upaniṣads in specific and the Veda in general, culminating in the notion of *mahā-vākyas*, had as its starting point the formidable task of challenging the claim that the Veda was an authority *just* on action, primarily of the ritual kind, and now we can appreciate what this really meant. Second, Advaita Vedānta as a systematization of the Upaniṣads developed as a soteriological enterprise, and ventured into theology and philosophy out of apologetic concerns. Although Vedic theology was fully dominated by action and meditation, as we shall further see in the next chapters, it also provided the categories in which the Advaita form of soteriology was expressed—results, means, procedures, forms of causality, the central role of desire and the suitable candidate (*adhikārin*)—all of which Advaitins both challenged and appropriated. In other words, in organizing the Veda and the Upaniṣads around the ideal of liberation, Advaitins used Mīmāṃsā modes of thinking. This concerned particularly the rethinking of the role of meditation, crucial in which were the nature of the so-called *niyama*- and *parisaṅkhya-vidhi*, restriction and exclusion, and the formulation of the notion of *mahā-vākya* on the model of the *prayoga-vidhi* or ritual manual.

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91 “It is from linguistic utterance that a mere phenomenon arises, not from a *pramāṇa*;” *tataḥ ca pratibhā-mātrāṁ śabdād iti na mānataḥ*. SV 450.
92 Ibid, 452-453.
Central was the role of Kumārila, because it was his model of dharma that Advaitins appropriated. First, Kumārila understood dharma as humanly centered, a means of some good (śreyas-kara), and Śaṅkara fully agreed with it. Second, Kumārila’s approach to language, in which individual elements gradually combine to obtain final reference, opened the door for rethinking the Veda as primarily being about knowledge and only then about action. This was best reflected in his rethinking of the nature of arthavādas, in which they had to be meaningful before they become absorbed in the action. They had to convince a thinking man that the ritual action was good, and they had to engender understanding first, which only later results in taking up action. With this Kumārila accommodated at least the possibility for the thinking man to say, “I am not convinced. This is not for me.” Kumārila’s philosophy of language, further, had a direct influence on Śaṅkara’s soteriology, in which liberation followed upon understanding the identity statements of the Upaniṣads, which was contingent on understanding the meaning of the correlated categories. Finally, although the Mīmāṁsā categories of ritual action which Śaṅkara used in rethinking the soteriological role of the Veda were common in Mīmāṁsā long before Kumārila, it was their reorganization in terms of maturation through mediate causality (pāramparya) which Kumārila introduced that would play the crucial role in this rethinking.
PART TWO: LIBERATION AND THE HIGHEST GOOD IN PRE-ŚAṆKARA VEDIC THEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

We saw in the previous chapter that the Vedic theologians of the Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā school associated the authority of the Veda with dharma, defined as a capacity of existents to bring about some future good desirable to man (śreyas-kara). By and large the category of dharma was identified with ritual action, and the results which dharma was thought to bring spanned from worldly desirables of the Vedic variety—good progeny, cattle, wealth, virility, royal sovereignty—to a state of felicity in the hereafter, happiness pure and simple called “heaven” or svarga.

In the following three chapters, I want to look at deliberations in pre-Śaṅkara Vedic theology on “the highest good,” niḥśreyasa. This is a term with some history in the corpus of dharma literature,¹ where it initially meant any general good which one may attain by observing dharma in the broad sense, primarily one’s social duties, and which was commensurate with and appropriate to one’s social standing.² The late Vasiṣṭha Dharma-Sūtra was the first to associate niḥśreyasa with the attainment of heaven: “Next comes the desire to know the Law for the sake of attaining the highest goal of man. Now, someone who knows the Law and follows it is a

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¹ The term itself is not all that common—three occurrences in the ĀDhS and one in GDhS and VDhS each—but it is prominently placed right at the beginning of ĀDhS and VDhS.
² See, for instance: ĀDhS 1.1.4-8: “There are four classes: Brahmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, and Śūdra. Among these, each preceding class is superior by birth to each subsequent. Those who are not Śūdras and are not guilty of evil deeds may undergo initiation, undertake vedic study, and set up the sacred fires; and their rites bear fruit. Śūdras are to serve the other classes; the higher the class they serve, the greater their prosperity;” catvāro varṇā brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya-vaiśya-śūdrāḥ, teṣāṁ pūrvaḥ pūrvo jñātataḥ śreyāṁ. asūdrāṇāṁ aduṣṭa-karmanāṁ upāyanaṁ vedādyayam anagnīdheyam phalavantu ca karmāṇi. ūṣrūṣā śūdrasyas tu vṛddhaṁ. pūrvaṁ pūrvaṁ varṇante niḥśreyasyam bhūyāṁ. GDhS 11.23-26, in the section of the king and how he should judge: “Reasoning is the means of reaching a correct judgement. Having reached a conclusion in this manner, he should decide the case equitably. If there is conflicting evidence, he should consult those who are deeply learned in the triple Veda and reach a decision, for, it is said, acting in that way, he will attain prosperity;” nyāyādhyagame tarko 'bhyapāyaṁ. tenābhyūhyā yathā-sthānaṁ gamayet. vipratipattau trai-vrddhebhyaṁ pratavahṛtya niṣṭhaṁ gamayet. tathā hy asya niḥśreyasāṁ bhavati. Both translations Ollivelle 2000.
righteous man (dhārmika). Such a man becomes pre-eminent in this world and wins heaven after
death.”3 We will see shortly that Mīmāṁsā in general associated this highest good or nīḥśreyasa
with the attainment of heaven.

However, when we come to the Manu Smṛti, we witness a new, neat theory in Vedic
theology of what constitutes the highest good. All attainments that were associated with dharma
have now been grouped in a single category, and something quite different has become “the
highest good”:

Acts prescribed in the Veda are of who kinds: advancing, which procures the
enhancement of happiness [ābhuydayika]; and arresting, which procures the supreme
good [naiḥśreyasika]. An action performed to obtain a desire here or in the hereafter is
called an ‘advancing act,’ whereas an action performed without desire and prompted by
knowledge is said to be an ‘arresting act.’ By engaging in advancing acts, a man attains
equality with the gods; by engaging in arresting acts, on the other hand, he transcends the
five elements.4

All actions which are prompted by desire bring results that are characterized as furthering
happiness both here and in the hereafter, and culminating in becoming one of the gods. This
category of attainment from this point on gets the appellation of abhyudaya, prosperity or
promotion. The highest good, on the other hand, to be achieved by action which is “arresting,”
nivṛtta or disengaging, and not prompted by desire, is defined as “going beyond the five
elements,” which is a common idiom of liberation. These “arresting” actions are identified in
Manu as internal sacrifices, giving up the common Vedic rituals, cultivating knowledge of the
Self, self-control, austerity.5

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4 sukhābhyudayikāṁ caiva naiḥśreyasikāṁ eva ca | pravṛttin ca nivṛttin ca dvividhaṁ karma vaidikam || 12.88 ||
iha cāmutra vā kāmya pravṛttin karma kīrtyate | niṣkāmanāṁ jāta-pūrvarūpaṁ tu nivṛttin upadiśyate || 12.89 ||
5 Manu 12.93-93, 104.
While the doctrine presented in *Manu* can be taken as merely illustrative of a wider but not at all uniform worldview, it does conveniently point to a new ideal occupying the post of the highest good of human life, one which is essentially negative: *nihśreyasa* here is not an attainment of something new and conducive to human happiness, but is a form of absence. The formulation appears at the very end of *Manu*, in the 12th chapter which talks about action and the process of rebirth closely related to it, where the goal is to “go beyond the five elements,” the sphere of action and matter, to destroy one’s “impurities” and “taints resulting from action” and attain the old Vedic ideal of immortality by means of knowing, renunciation and asceticism.\(^6\) This is a new classification of what the Veda can provide for men: (1) all the happiness here and in the hereafter, *abhyaudaya*, and, (2) final liberation, *nihśreyasa*. The two will become a comprehensive pair of ideals and an all-important rubric in Advaita Vedānta.

It is not quite possible to give a single, uniform definition of liberation, and pursuing the early history of the idea is beyond the scope of this undertaking,\(^7\) but for our purposes a convenient way to begin thinking about liberation is through what Halbfass calls the “therapeutic paradigm,” a worldview in which liberation is likened to the state of medical health understood as the absence of disease.\(^8\) The majority of terms for liberation in Indian intellectual history are, in fact, negative expressions pointing to getting rid of something undesirable: *mokṣa, mukti, nirvāṇa, nirṛtti, nirṛtti, nirodha, kaivalya, apavarga, hāna, anāvṛtti, apunar-āvṛtti, apunar-bhava, apunar-jamna*. The “disease” one needs to get rid of is generally identified as suffering, *duḥkha*, and the process of rebirth, *samsāra*, commonly understood not as being but as

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\(^6\) *Manu* 12.101-4.

\(^7\) A sketch of such history can be drawn from Bronkhorst 2007a:15-54.

\(^8\) Halbfass 1991:243-263.
becoming. Suffering and rebirth are immediately caused by action (karma), and action as we commonly think of it, good and bad acts in general, bodily, mental, and vocal. Action, thus, constitutes a problem, and on its part, it is commonly a symptom of a more persistent condition, characterized by mental states or psychological torments such as desire, anger, greed (kāma, krodha, lobha). These can further be traced to ignorance (avidyā), which in the Brahmanical systems generally stands for the misapprehension of one thing as another, the Self as the body, but is often equated with a cosmic principle, “primordial matter.” Liberation is, therefore, at its barest breaking away from rebirth (saṁsāra) which is fueled by action (karma), and remaining without a body.

This is necessarily a crude depiction of the bare contours, but if we disregard for the moment the early Upaniṣads and early Vedānta, it is a depiction of a worldview shared by all Brahmanical systems except for Mīmāṁsā. If we generalize even further the characterization of ignorance, it is a worldview shared by Buddhists as well. Significantly, it is a worldview prominent in compositions which became the most important smṛtis for Vedic theology, namely Manu, the Bhagavad-Gītā, and the Mahābhārata. It is also quite commonly taken as the single feature in virtue of which it is possible to think about Indian philosophy as a unique and unified field.

9 The Bhāgavata 10.1.4, for instance, talks about becoming or bhava as a form disease, and bhava-roga or bhāva-roga is otherwise a popular and often used term.

10 For instance, the great historian of Indian philosophy Surendranath Dasgupta in his Yoga Philosophy in Relation to Other Systems of Indian Thought (1930:8-11) talks about the doctrine of karma and mukti as “the two fixed postulates which Hindu philosophy could not disavow even in its highest soarings,” in all its systems except for the Čārvākas. Karl Potter (1965) had organized the different systems of India’s philosophies around the doctrine of liberation, in an idiosyncratic but quite illuminating approach. We need not bother with this, nor with the attempts to break away from that paradigm and associate Indian philosophy as philosophy strictly with reason and argument, in which soteriological concerns are commonly absent (see, for instance, Ganeri 2001), so long we appreciate how central a place liberation has been accorded in defining the field of Indian philosophy.
Now, we saw in the previous chapter that Mīmāṃsakas took it for granted that “all men strive after happiness.” The worldview which was the result of such a premise was fundamentally positive: life is good, happiness is possible both here and in the hereafter, and ritual action is the way to secure it. At the center of the worldview were desire and ritual. The doctrine of liberation, on the other hand, started with the opposite premise: “All men strive after the destruction of the chain of rebirth, whether they know it or not.”1 Happiness is not possible, life is not good, and action and desire are part of the problem, because the second prompts one to act and action leads to rebirth. The two had also essentially different understanding of what desire and significant action were: Vedic theologians by *karma* understood ritual, heteronomous action, one which is enjoined in the Veda. The traditions of liberation took *karma* as action in its broader and more autonomous sense, action in which one is responsible for one’s moral choices.12 Mīmāṃsakas saw desire as that which prompts one to act for one’s good; liberationists saw desire as what prompts one to act, but commonly *despite* better judgement and against one’s benefit.13 There was also a plethora of ways proposed for preventing action that fuels *saiṅsāra*, from the literal stopping of action in extreme asceticism, to intellectually understanding the eternal Self as inactive, and to acting with understanding in between.14

1 yataḥ sarvāḥ avidvāṁś ca saṁsāra-kṣayam icchati. SKG 17, p.91.
2 The SK, for instance, rejected Vedic ritual as “impure” because of involving violence and excess: one must kill in sacrifices and one ends up better off than others (SK 2). Sāṅkhya also had a favorite name for ritual action: it was bondage of the honorarium type (*dākṣinaka bandha*), in which one tries to buy one’s place in eternity by paying priests to do ritual for him (Vācaspati on SK 44, p.60: istāpūrtena dākṣinakaḥ, puruṣa-tattvānbhiṣṇo hiṣṭaḥpūrtakārī kāmopahata-manā badhyate iti). Another new development, the doctrine of the three *guṇas* or modalities of matter conditioning one’s awareness—a doctrine absent in the Vedic corpus including the old Upaniṣads and absent in Mīmāṃsā—took over the place of what determines the destiny in the hereafter. Winning heaven was no longer contingent on performing ritual, but on cultivating the *sattra-guna*. See, for instance, the last chapter of *Manu* and the 17th chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.
3 Cf., for instance, the famous exchange from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* 3.36-7: “Arjuna said: What is it that drives a man to commit evil, Vārsṇeya, however reluctantly, as though propelled by force? The Lord said: It is desire, it is anger, which springs from the force of *rajas*, the great devourer, the great evil: know that that is the enemy here.” Translation van Buitenen 1981:85. See also Kṛṣṇa’s famous diatribe against ritual in 2.42-5, in which desire is not spared either.
4 See, again, Bronkhorst 2007a:15-54.
Both doctrines, however, had called their respective achievements *nihśreyasa*, “the highest good,” and this was one of the reasons why, once the term was coopted fully by liberation, *svarga* was on the one hand treated as a competing doctrine of liberation by Advaitins and others, and Mīmāṁsakas had the occasion to address themselves to the doctrine of liberation on the other. What happened further in Indian intellectual history was a negotiation back and forth between the two, *svarga* and *mokṣa*, on what liberation or the highest good really is.

In this part of the dissertation, I want to consider ideas of liberation and its status as the highest good of human life in pre-Śaṅkara Vedic theology. In doing so, I want to pay attention to the following questions: What is liberation—is it merely an absence of rebirth, or rather something positive? If it is the second, what does its positive character consist in? Is it some sort of an attainment, like heaven, and if so, of what kind? More broadly, how can liberation be effected: what is/are the means of liberation? As it is, hopefully, immediately apparent, *nihśreyasa* and *śreyas-kara* are etymologically related: if *dharma* is a means of some human good, can its complex causal structure be applied for achieving the highest good? If so, how? What are the factors involved in liberation, and how are they to be organized to achieve that highest good of human life? What is the role in this of ritual action, what of knowledge of the Self as different from the body? Is there a place for desire in the pursuit of liberation, and if so, of what kind? Does the Veda enjoin liberation in the way it enjoins the winning of virility and heaven? What is the role and nature of the Upaniṣadic knowledge in the pursuit of liberation?

As we move through the three chapters of this part of the dissertation, we will see what the prominent answers to these questions were in pre-Śaṅkara Vedic theology. Our biggest gain will be to appreciate that early Vedic theology had little understanding for and even less interest in knowledge *qua* knowledge in the pursuit of liberation. The one theme that will emerge in
broad contours as the paradigmatic Vedāntic means of liberation will be meditation. We will see essentially two types of Vedāntic meditation, which we can describe as meditation on saguṇa and nirguṇa-brahman respectively, aiming at two different attainments and related to the two doctrines of niḥśreyasa. The significance of the first doctrine of meditation for our ultimate object of understanding the notion of mahā-vākya will be largely negative: when we move to discussing Śaṅkara’s understanding of dharma and niḥśreyasa in the next part of the dissertation, we will appreciate why some Upaniṣadic statements and passages that were immensely important in old Vedānta, for instance injunctions of meditation such as ya ātmāpahata-pāpmā vijaro vimṛtyur viśoko vijighatso 'pipāsaḥ satya-kāmah satya-saṅkalpaḥ so 'nveṣṭavyaḥ sa vijijñāsitavyaḥ from ChU 8.7.1, and the eighth chapter of Chandogya as a unit, did not have a shot at becoming mahā-vākyas or at providing the basis for the doctrine of liberation that went along with the mahā-vākya notion.

On the other hand, the problems that will emerge when we move to discussing the second type of Vedāntic meditation, specifically the question of mediacy of scriptural knowledge against the immediacy of the alleged direct vision of Brahman attained through meditation, as well as the relational character of language and the issue of how words and thought can grasp and express a non-dual entity such as Brahman, will have an immense positive contribution to mahā-vākya. Reflection on the identity statements of the Upaniṣads, the future maha-vākyas, as the direct instrument of liberation, de facto replaced this second type of meditation, and with that it inherited these two specific problems. Some of the key characteristics of and questions about mahā-vākya developed in dialogue with and as a direct response to this doctrine of meditation.

15 “The self that is free from evil, from old age and death, free from sorrow, free from hunger and thirst, whose desires and intentions are real—that is the self that you should try to discover, that is the self that should be investigated and known distinctly.”
The three chapters are organized not systematically—that is, not by discussing the pertinent questions and issues independently—but by investigating the notions of the highest good and liberation in the thought of the most prominent pre-Śaṅkara Vedic theologians individually. Chapter Three discusses niḥśreyasa and liberation in pre-Śaṅkara Mīmāṃsā, focusing on Kumārila Bhaṭṭa. In Chapter Four, I move to early Vedānta and the doctrine of liberation in the Brahma-Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa. I conclude this part with the doctrine of meditation on nirguṇa-brahman, otherwise known as the prasaṅkhyaṇa-vāda, in the theology of Bhartrprapaṇca and Maṇḍana Miśra. The three chapters are conceived as partially independent units: they can be read individually, but each subsequent chapter looks back at the preceding ones.
CHAPTER THREE: THE HIGHEST GOOD AND LIBERATION
IN PRE-ŚAṆKARA MĪMĀ_MSBÄ

On this point some blabbermouths, ignorant of the specific meaning of what the śruti text says, proclaim that sons and similar things are means of liberation.¹

**Heaven as Liberation**

Scholars customarily say that the idea of liberation was absent in early Mīmāṁsā and that it was inorganic to the system. We may quote Halbfass’s assessment as quite representative: “Final liberation (mokṣa), commonly accepted as a leading theme or even as the basic concern of philosophical thought, does not play any role in the older literature of the system; Mīmāṁsā deals with dharma, not with mokṣa.”² Halbfass goes on to argue that this attitude towards liberation changes with Kumārila, at whose hands Mīmāṁsā is transformed into a rounded and comprehensive philosophical system, in which “karma and saṁśāra, as well as mokṣa, become more significant and manifest in thought and argumentation, not so much as explicit themes, but as tacitly accepted presuppositions or as points of reference and orientation.”³ They become reference points, but not determinants of the system, and “the theme of final liberation … is not really his [Kumārila's] own concern.”⁴ This characterization certainly seems correct in view of Śabara’s silence on liberation, yet curiously if we look at Mīmāṁsā reception by Śabara’s and Kumārila’s contemporaries, it does not come as right: Mīmāṁsakas are read as advocates of heaven as a state of liberation.

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¹ atra kecid vāvadukāḥ śruty-ukta-viśeṣārthābhājīñāḥ saṅtah putrādi-sādhanānāṁ mokṣārthatāṁ vadanti. BĀUBh 1.5.18, VIII.196.
² Halbfass 1991:300-1.
³ Ibid.
We saw in the previous chapter that Śabara theorized the human good which dharma brings as “heaven” or svarga, not to be understood as a place one goes to in the hereafter or as some pleasurable substance of the more mundane kind, but just as a state of happiness. Śabara developed his account under some constrictions of the Mīmāṁsā ritual technology: it was necessary to define heaven as a state rather than a place or a substance, because only in that case could heaven be superordinate to the ritual performance: by the requirements of Vedic ritual, substances are generally for the purpose of the ritual (kartvartha), not for the purpose of man (puruṣārtha), and places are not things which one can really produce.

We also saw that Śabara defined heaven as a state of felicity which is desirable equally to all men, and a state under which all attainments desirable to men could be classified. This made the category quite open for different associations and determinations. While only the state of felicity would qualify as heaven, Śabara did not specify what causes the appearance of such happiness or whence it would derive, or even what this happiness precisely is. And, while a specific place to which the deceased go after death might not be what heaven is, that did not preclude the possibility that there is such a place in which the state of happiness called heaven can be experienced. Kumārila, in fact, refining Śabara’s definition, added that heaven is to be experienced in a specific place, other than the one in which the ritual action was performed: heaven is unsurpassed happiness, niratiśaya-prīti, to be enjoyed in another place and a future life. We should note that Vedāntins also commonly associated svarga with bliss. Śaṅkara, for one, commenting on the last paragraph of the Kena Upaniṣad, says: “In the heavenly world’

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5 prītir hi svargaḥ. sarvaś ca prītirn prārthayate. MSŚBh 4.3.15, IV.1256.; sarva-puruṣārthābhidhāyī sāmānya-vacanaḥ śabdaḥ na višeṣe avasthāpito bhavati. MSSBh 4.3.20, IV.1258.

6 “We will explain in the sixth book that heaven and hell can only be experienced in another place and life, owing to being unsurpassable felicity and suffering in nature, and not immediately after the performance of the ritual action.” sarga-narakau ca niriṣayā-sukha-duḥkhātmakatvād deśāntara-janmāntarānubhavaniyau na karmāntaraṁ sambhavata iti śaṣṭhāye vakṣyāmaḥ. TV 2.1.5, I.397.
means in Brahman that is bliss in nature. Because of the qualification ‘endless,’ the word ‘heaven’ does not refer to the place of the gods (triviṣṭapa).“

On the other hand, there were, it appears, Mīmāṁsakas who claimed that heaven and hell can refer only to the happiness and suffering that are experienced in this very lifetime as a consequence of the performance of sacrifice and of engaging in prohibited action respectively. The category of heaven was open.

What Śabara did claim was that the attainment of heaven through ritual action is the highest good of human life, niḥśreyasa. So, if heaven was the term for all human attainments and if it was the term for the highest good of human life, a term which others by that time used for liberation, someone could have easily drawn the conclusion that Mīmāṁsakas hope to attain liberation by the performance of ritual action. And some sure enough did. Bhavya, for one, prefaced his critique of Mīmāṁsā precisely with such a view:

Without any sense of shame, some deny that meditation and insight [constitute] the true way to deliverance. They insist that deliverance can only be achieved by rituals. They say that according to tradition there is no other correct way to deliverance than the rituals prescribed in the sacred texts., i.e. [rituals that involve] rice, cattle, butter and intercourse with one’s spouse.

7 KUPBh 4.9, IV.76: anante aparyante svarge loke sukhaṁśa brahmaṇity etat. anante iti viśeṣān na triviṣṭape ananta-śabdaḥ, Cf. KUVBh on the same (p.121): anante āpāre avidyaṁśānte svarge loke sukha-prāye nirdvākānaparī pare brahmaṇī. See also Gonda 1966:73-107. On Triviṣṭapa as the heaven of Indra, see Hopkins 1915:58-61.

8 We know this from Kumārila’s opponent in TV 2.1.5, whom he describes as nipuṇam-manyāḥ, “fancying himself clever.” “Because heaven and hell are happiness and suffering in nature, they are experienced in this very lifetime, right after the performance of the ritual.” sukha-duḥkhaṁśakatvam eva janmasv eva jannasv. kriyānantarām evah saṁsargar, nārakaṁ api. (IV.392) Kataoka (2011b) seems quite justified in proposing that this is Bharṭṛmitra talking, Kumārila’s arch enemy if we believe Pārthasārathī under ŚV Pratijña 10, where Kumārila says that Mīmāṁsā has been largely made mundane in the world and Pārthasārathī adds: bhaṁtrmitrādibhiḥ. On Bharṭṛmitra see Nakamura (2004:170-73) and Pandey (1983:229-36).

9 Under MS 1.1.2 (I.11, 13), Śabara described dharma as that category, consisting of sacrifices such as Jyotiṣṭoma, which relates man to the highest attainment, niḥśreyasa. so 'rthaḥ puruṣaparī niḥśreyasasvā sarṣyunakti; … ko 'rthaḥ? yo niḥśreyasyāya jyotiṣṭomādīḥ.

10 We saw it used in Manu, but along with apavarga it was the favorite term of Naiyāyikas as well, as is evident from Vatsyayana’s commentary on NS 1.1.1-2. See also Potter 1977:28-34.

11 eke 'apavarga-saṁ-mārga-dhīyāna-jhānāpaṁśadinaḥ | kriyā-mātreṇa tat-prāptiṁ pratiḥāparaṇapratapāḥ || śāstroṭka-vṛṇi-śasv-ājya-patnī-sambandha-karnāṇaḥ |
Furthermore, Śaṅkara, clearly pointing to Kumārila, was even more explicit in understanding svarga as a competing account of liberation: “Or rather, liberation is a result just of ritual actions, since such ritual actions are the cause of unsurpassed happiness which is denoted by the word ‘heaven.’”\(^{12}\)

Yet Kumārila himself, though read by his contemporaries and close successors as identifying heaven with liberation—Bhavya used the term apavarga and Śaṅkara mokṣa—explicitly declined to make that identification in the context of discussing mokṣa. “If you propose that liberation consists in enjoying happiness, then it would be equivalent to heaven and it would be perishable.”\(^{13}\) “He who is after liberation and does not desire heaven, because heaven is bondage in nature…”\(^{14}\) The identification also assails our sensibility to the idea of liberation: how can there be liberation when heaven is to be experienced in another body? Is not liberation precisely freedom from rebirth and embodiment? Let us leave this question for now and revisit it in the conclusion.

**Liberation in Kumārila’s Thought: Introduction**

We opened this part with the scholarly recognition that liberation does not play any role in Śabara’s commentary to the MS, while it is an implicit presupposition in Kumārila’s thought. In fact, liberation was not just an implicit presupposition, but something Kumārila was quite explicit about: of the four traditional goals of human life or puruṣārthas, all knowledge about matters of dharma and mokṣa originates in the Veda or in some lost portions of the Veda that

\(^{12}\) athava, niratisayyāḥ prīteḥ svarga-śabdā-vācyāyā karma-hetutvāt karmabhya eva mokṣaḥ. TUBh Introduction.

\(^{13}\) sukhopabhoga-rūpaḥ ca yadi mokṣaḥ prakalpyate | svarga eva bhaved eva paryāyena kṣayo ca saḥ. SV Sambandhākṣepa-Parihāra 105.

\(^{14}\) yaḥ svargaṁ na kāmayate bandhātmakatvān mokṣārthī. TṬ 6.3.2, IV.1408.
were kept in a form of memory, *smṛti*, whereas the other two are in the domain of worldly dealings.\(^{15}\) This assertion was formulated as part of Kumārila’s attempt to account for all practices, doctrines, disciplines of knowledge and texts that have taken hold in contemporary Hindu society or even beyond it as having an origin in one of the two basic *pramāṇas* corresponding to the two spheres, perception for the empirical and the Veda for the trans-empirical.\(^{16}\) Kumārila, in other words, did not just presuppose the worldview of karma, *saṁsāra* and liberation, but claimed that knowledge about them is the sole province of the Vedas.

Kumārila addressed questions pertaining to liberation directly or indirectly in several places in his works and presented accounts which seem different if not mutually exclusive.\(^{17}\) This prompted modern scholars to conclude that he was changing his mind about the issue and reevaluating the role of sacrifice and the Veda, and in some cases to use the several accounts as good material for one of the favorite sports of Teutonic Indology, called “ascertaining the chronological sequence of Kumārila’s works.” Rogue Mesquita and Kiyotaka Yoshimizu, for instance, think that Kumārila’s initial understanding of liberation was similar to that of Nyāya, a negative state without either pain or pleasure, but that he later moved towards a Vedāntic notion. John Taber also recognizes two basic accounts but does not find them sufficiently different to constitute a real shift in understanding; the differences can be attributed to different attire Kumārila dons, a philosopher in the ŚV and a theologian in the TV. Larry McCrea doubts

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\(^{15}\) tatra yāvad dharma-mokṣa-sambandhi tad veda-prabhavam. yat tv artha-sukha-viṣayaṁ tal loka-vyavahāra-pūrvakam iti vivektavyam. TV 1.3.2, 1.166.

\(^{16}\) See TV 1.3.2. Kumārila’s project of pursuing the origins did not mean that he had committed himself to endorsing just anything that “good Vedic men (*śiṣṭas*) might accept,” to use Śaṅkara’s turn of phrase (BSBh 2.1.3), as having a truth value. On the contrary, he traced many of the doctrines against which he argued vehemently, such as those of Sāṅkhya, Nyāya and Vedānta, to misinterpreting *arthavāda* or inspirational stories in the Veda and the *smṛti* literature as real ontological accounts.

\(^{17}\) The two central arguments are found in the ŚV *Sambandhākoṣa-Parihāra* chapter and in TV 1.3.29. Liberation is also treated in the lost *Bṛhat-ṭīkā*, some fragments of which have been found in later works of his followers and opponents (here I will use what has been included in Taber 2007); relevant is also the *Ṭup-Ṭīkā* 6.3.1-2.
whether the ŚV account amounts to a real acceptance of liberation; the TV account certainly
does and it represents a change in Kumārila’s understanding, but the change is a result of “a
more sophisticated application of pre-existing Mīmāṁsā hermeneutical rules to the injunctions of
self-knowledge.” 18 I concur with the view that there are two basic accounts, and with Taber
against Mesquita that the BṬ account is a refinement of the ŚV account. Contra Taber, I see the
two as quite different, and contra McCrea it does not seem to me necessary to conclude that they
constitute a change in Kumārila’s position. It seems possible, rather, to argue that Kumārila talks
about two related but different things in the two accounts: there are two different kinds of
liberation after which men may strive, and the Veda can provide the means for both.

Kumārila’s First Account of Liberation

In both accounts of liberation, the important questions are: what precisely the direct means of
liberation is; what is the role of the Upaniṣadic knowledge of the Self in the Veda generally; and,
is such knowledge a means of liberation. The first account is part of the Sambandhākṣepa-
Parihāra chapter of the ŚV, and it may be worthwhile to be mindful of the context in which it
appears. The chapter treats objections to the Mīmāṁsā view that the word-reference relation is
natural, not brought into being either by a convention of men or by some first principle such as a
creator of the world. Kumārila tackles the second by proving that there could not be such a
creator or a first principle to begin with, in the course of which he refutes theories of creation in
the Veda and the smṛti literature and in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta and Sāṅkhya. His account of
liberation is inserted in a general course of refutation, in a context where it is not always
straightforward to determine what he is willing to allow just for the sake of argument, but does
not really accept. We should be careful, therefore, not to read the account out of its context.

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And the context, to be specific, concerns the role of *discriminative knowledge* which Sāṅkhyaś and others claim to be a means of liberation, that is, knowledge from the Upaniṣads which presents the Self as different from the body.¹⁹ The Sāṅkhyaś are likely the philosophical school that bears that name, but the term could also stand for anyone whose way of liberation was through cultivation of knowledge as understanding, and specifically “knowledge of the absolute separateness of the soul and body, and independence of the soul from all acts and qualities.”²⁰ This was in any case the soteriological significance of the term *sāṅkhyya*, as demonstrated by Edgerton almost a century ago, and the systematic Sāṅkhya would have been a prominent part of that wider complex. I will base my reading of the context on the systematic Sāṅkhya, but we should bear in mind the broader context.

Kumārila is less concerned with the details of what liberation is and more with how to achieve it, but the second is contingent on the first. Liberation here is defined in negative terms. Throughout it is referred to solely as *mokṣa*²¹ (something we should bear in mind, as it will be important when we move to the second account) and it is explicitly distinguished from heaven: liberation does not consist in the experience of happiness, because in that case it would be equal to heaven, a state produced by ritual action, and consequently it would not be eternal. “A thing which is caused cannot be imperishable.”²²

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²⁰ Edgerton 1924:2-3.

²¹ In the ten core verses of the ŚV account mokṣa/mucyate are the sole terms used to refer to liberation (seven times in all), while in the BT account the Sāṅkhya-Yoga term kaivalya is used.

²² “If it be postulated that liberation consists in enjoying happiness, then it would correspond to heaven and it would be perishable. A thing which is caused cannot be imperishable.” sukhopabhoga-rūpa ca yadi mokṣah prakalpyate | sarga eva bhaved eṣa paryāyena kṣayo ca saḥ || 105 || na hi kāraṇavat kiñcid aksayitvena gamyate || 106ab ||
Liberation is, thus, essentially negative in nature. It is not a form of fashioning that should produce a novel and positive state of affairs, but it is an absence, abhāva, getting rid of something undesirable, specifically the reason which keeps the Self in bondage. Liberation is, in other words, absence of bondage, absence of the relation of the Self to a body.\textsuperscript{23} With this Kumārila is treading a fine line: he wants liberation to be eternal, which entails that it cannot be produced in the manner of heaven, but unlike Advaita Vedāntins he does not understand liberation as a state which the Self enjoys for all eternity without being aware of it. For Kumārila bondage is real and liberation is a future state of affairs no less so than heaven, yet one not produced, such that once achieved it will be there for good. Pārthasārathi interpreted the absence that is liberation as a form of permanent posterior non-existence through destruction (pradhvaṁsābhāva), akin to the non-existence of the broken pot, and an anterior non-existence (prāg-abhāva) of future bodies that will never be.\textsuperscript{24} Śaṅkara read Kumārila’s argument along similar lines.

The means of achieving liberation should correspond to the expected result, and given that the result is an absence, its achieving must proceed not through production which depends on action, but through elimination.\textsuperscript{25} “One is released through the absence of the cause.”\textsuperscript{26} The question, then, becomes, what is the cause of bondage—what is it that requires eliminating—and how to put an end to it. Throughout the account, it is clear that what keeps the Self in bondage in

\textsuperscript{23} See his comments on 106: bhāva-rūpaṁ sarvam utpatti-dharmakaṁ ghaṭādi kṣaya-dharmakam eva, ato na sukhātmikā muktr tāma-jñānena kriyate iti … śarīra-sambandho bandhaḥ, tad-abhāvo mokṣaḥ.
\textsuperscript{24} nispannāṁ dehāṁ yaḥ pradhvaṁsābhāvaḥ yaś cānutpannāṁ prāg-abhāvaḥ sa mokṣaḥ. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} “Except for its negative nature, there is no other ground for the eternality of liberation. And, no absence can be accepted as a result of any action.”
\textsuperscript{26} hetv-abhāvena mucyate. ŚV Sambandhākṣepa-Parihāra 106.
Kumārila’s understanding is action and its results, well-known to us as the law of karma or action that produces results that perpetuate embodiment.27

We should make it abundantly clear, however, that “action” that is karma which gives rise to embodiment does not refer to action of just any kind (kriyā): involuntary or unconscious behavior such as blinking or sneezing, basic voluntary actions such as moving one’s arm and purposeful activity such as walking or jogging are largely inconsequential for karma, because such actions do not produce results that perpetuate embodiment. Furthermore, although karma is customarily defined as “moral action,”28 and in the traditions of liberation it did stand for acts done with the body, mind or speech in which moral choices matter,29 karma for Kumārila had nothing to do with moral concerns: what makes for good or bad karma are not acts which might strike our moral sensibility as “good” or “bad,” nor the purity of one’s life and awareness, which the Brahmanical traditions of liberation had associated with the three guṇas and made crucial for rebirth. What matters is how such acts are treated in the Veda.30 What Kumārila meant by “action” was something like an intersection of (1) intentional, future-oriented action, and (2) forms of voluntary personal and social behavior, both regulated by the Veda. That was the scope of karma-producing action, and Mīmāṁsakas classified it in two primary groups: (1) Vedic rituals which produce good karma in general (svarga or heaven) or of some particular form (such as good progeny, cattle). These are the rituals that we were concerned with in the previous

27 “Therefore, one is released through the exhaustion of karma alone, when the cause [of embodiment] is no more.” tasmān karma-kṣayād eva hetv-ahāvena muceyate, 106cd. Cf. Pārthasārathi thereon: karma-nimittaḥ ca bandhaḥ karma-kṣayād eva na bhavatītī.
28 See Doniger’s edited volume on karma (1980b), where the theme of morality runs as a constant throughout the contributions. See also Collins 1982:29: “karma – ‘action’, moral retribution’ … the moral quality of actions performed previously – usually but not necessarily in past lives – determines the happiness or suffering experienced thereafter.”
29 See the 12th chapter of Manu, 16th and 17th chapters of the Bhagavad-Gītā, Sāṅkhya-Kārikā 2-3 for starters.
30 The most lucid treatment of karma in general and its relations to moral concerns in Indian philosophy (with a significant focus on Kumārila) remains Halbfass 1991, chapters four and nine.
chapters, and Mīmāṃsakas called them ritual actions of the optional variety (kāmya-karma), i.e., rituals whose performance is occasioned by a desire for some good result on the part of the performer; (2) Action prohibited by the Veda (niṣiddha-karma), producing bad karma (pratyavāya, “the reverse,” naraka, hell; durita, bad lot; doṣa/pāpa, fault). The second consisted of social behavior proscribed by the Veda on the one hand, and malicious rituals enjoined in the Veda, such as the notorious śyena, a ritual intended for effectuating the death of one’s enemy (and, it would appear, for giving Mīmāṃsakas sleepless nights of intense exegesis), on the other.

Let us note for now that it is the action regulated by the Veda which matters for the purposes of bondage and liberation, and that such action can produce good and bad karma. There is this new karma on the one hand, referring directly to actions over which the Veda has a say and which produce good or bad results in the future, and there is a karmic stock consisting of the results of actions accumulated through countless lives and culminating in the present body on the other. These two together constitute what ultimately keeps the Self in bondage.

We should remember at this point that the context in which Kumārila discusses liberation was, first, the role of the discriminative knowledge of the Self, which Sāṅkhyaśas and others consider to be the means of liberation, and, second, the claim that such discriminative knowledge is enjoined in the Upaniṣads as a means of liberation. The Sāṅkhyas account amounted to claiming that discriminative knowledge of the Self independently stops karma as the link that keeps the Self bound to a body. For Sāṅkhyas, karma was just a symptom of bondage, not its root cause. The root cause of bondage was ignorance (ajñāna), consisting in confusing the Self with the body or more generally with matter (prakṛti/pradhāna) or some of its evolutes, and liberation was a state in which the Self has finally got rid of ignorance and through perfect discriminative
knowledge remains an uninvolved spectator.\textsuperscript{31} After this, Sāṅkhya thought, there still remains some karmic inertia: knowledge has for all purposes put an end to the store of karmic residue, and one has achieved what may be described as jīvan-mukti or liberation while living, but the Self continues to be embodied till death, “through the force of the past impressions, like the potter’s wheel that continues to whirl because of the impulse which it previously received.”\textsuperscript{32}

With death there comes liberation which is absolute and final: full separation from the body.\textsuperscript{33} This meant that the instrumental cause of liberation is knowledge that distinguishes the Self from matter, and that karma, being just a symptom of bondage, disappears shortly after ignorance has been stopped. Such was the account of liberation which Kumārila argued against.

Now, Kumārila conceded that knowledge which distinguishes the Self from the body does put an end to its antipode, ajñāna or ignorance; however, he claimed, all that could possibly follow from this is that one would stop creating new karma. “If ignorance be proposed as the cause of the rise of actions, from the destruction of ignorance no rise of [new] actions would follow, but one would still not get rid of the results of [already performed] actions.”\textsuperscript{34} Kumārila’s account is contingent on this concession, real or provisional. Further, it is inferable that this absence of the rise of new actions is primarily tied to good karma, one which is obtained by the

\textsuperscript{31} There hardly is a need of substantiating this from the Sāṅkhya literature: these themes are basic to Sāṅkhya and they abound in the SK and its commentaries. A few references from Gauḍapāda’s Bhāṣya may suffice. “Bondage is caused by ignorance” (bandhaḥ ajñānas tu nimittaḥ, SKGBh 44, p.191); “Liberation is obtained by discriminative knowledge (of the Self) from of the manifest and the non-manifest (matter and the evolutes)” (vyaktāvyakta-vijñānān mokṣaḥ prāpyate, SKG 17, p.90); “When there is knowledge of the 25 principles, which is characterized by the awareness that the soul is different from the body, and one knows: this is pradhāna, this is buddhi, this ahaṅkāra, these are the five elements, from which the soul is different—from this knowledge the subtle body is destroyed, wherefrom liberation follows” (yadā pāṇca-viṁśati-tattva-jñānaṁ syāt sattva-puruṣānyathā-khyāti-lakṣaṇam—idaṁ pradhānam, iyaṁ buddhiḥ, ayam ahaṅkāraḥ, imāni pāṇca mahā-bhūtāni yebhyo 'nyah puruṣo visadṛṣṭa iti. evam jñānāl liṅga-nivrūṭiṁ tato mokṣa iti; SKGBh 55, p.180).

\textsuperscript{32} tiṣṭhāti samśkāraṁ vaśāc cakra-bhrama-vad dhṛta-śārīraḥ. SK 67. The SK does not use the term jīvan-mukti, but the state described surely admits of such a designation. See Jakubczack 2004.

\textsuperscript{33} SK 65-7.

\textsuperscript{34} utpattau karmaṇaṁ cētām ajñānaṁ kāraṇaṁ yadi | tan-nāsāt syād anutpattis teśāṁ na phala-varjaṇam || 101 ||
performance of the optional Vedic rituals, kāmya-karma. These are the new actions that do not arise, the optional Vedic rituals, and therefore Kumārila’s presupposition is that the destruction of ignorance does not give rise to new actions and their consequent karma because one has lost the desire for good karma. Discriminative knowledge of the Self engenders dispassion, which consists in the absence of desire for good karma. Kumārila does not say as much, but it can be inferred that such is his presupposition from verse 95—knowledge deconstructs attachment—as well as verse 111. Elsewhere he explicitly associates the absence of the desire for heaven (which, we will remember, provides the occasion for kāmya-karma) with the pursuit of liberation. In the BṬ refinement of the argument it is also clear that knowledge of the Self results in dispassion, which further reinforces knowledge. Let us note this well: knowledge removes ignorance consisting in confusing the Self with the body, which gives rise to dispassion/absence of desire, which in its turn does not prompt one to perform optional Vedic rituals, which stops the creation of good karma.

This is a crucial point for Kumārila’s argument—the pursuit of liberation precludes desires for good results—as it also accounts for his insistence that knowledge of the Self presented in the Upaniṣads is not a means of liberation because it cannot be enjoined for some good of man (puruṣārtha). We should remember at this point that for Mīmāṁsakas the category of for-the-good-of-man (puruṣārtha) was for the most part restricted to the primary ritual action, to which all other elements of the ritual were subordinate, because it is from the ritual action that

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35 “A result (of a sacrifice) is known (to follow) when it is desired, and it could not come to the one who does not want it. Since this (dispassion) is present in the knower of the Self, knowledge is useful (through that).”
prārthyanāmān pralāni jñāta na cānicchor bhaviṣyati ātma-jñāṃ caitad asfi taj jñānam upayujyate || 111 ||
36 yaḥ svargaṁ na kāmayate bandhātmakatvān mokṣārthī… TT 6.3.2, IV.1408.
37 niṣṭya-nairīttikair eva kurvāno durita-kṣayam jñānaṁ ca vimalī-kurvan abhyāṣena ca pācayam vairāgyāt pakva-vijñānaḥ kaivalyam bhajate naraḥ. Verse 6 in Taber’s selection.
man gets the desired future result. The result itself, for which the action serves as a means, was subordinate to man, and the whole pursuit was provoked by man’s desire. In other words, no kāma, no puruṣārtha. For knowledge of the Self to be enjoined, it must cater to some desire, and it is enjoined and is useful for providing the information that there is an eternal Self which will enjoy the results of the ritual in the future, because without that piece of information one would not take to the ritual performance.\textsuperscript{38} We should not confuse, however, desire as Mīmāṁsakas understood it with motivation in general. Kumārila understands that liberationists have a purpose, he calls them mokṣārthins, but kāma is tied to some form of felicity, prīti, and to productive undertakings.

As for the forbidden action that produces bad karma, Kumārila did not say explicitly how such action stops: it may be that the ability to distinguish the Self from the body is sufficient to prevent one from transgression. However, Mīmāṁsakas claimed that bad karma can be amassed not only by prohibited action, but additionally through the failure to perform certain rituals, which belonged to a third, much murkier category called obligatory action, consisting of rites that had to be performed daily or on certain occasions (nitya-naimittika-karma) but without quite a clear understanding why. These rituals included, for instance, the daily Agnihotra and the fortnightly Darśa-pūrṇamāsa, rituals which were also classified as optional, to be performed for heaven, but which become obligatory when the desire for heaven has been lost in the pursuit of liberation. They become obligatory under a different provision, that one should perform them as long as one lives, and with the concession that their procedure may be simplified provided the

\textsuperscript{38} na ca sāṅkhya-di-vijñānān mokṣo vedena codyate || 102cd ||
ātma jñātavya ity etan mokṣārthaṁ na ca coditam |
karma-pravr̥tti-hetutvam ātma-jñānasya lakṣyate || 103 ||
primary offertorial action is performed. Optional for those who will perform them no matter what, obligatory for those who might not bother at all.\textsuperscript{39}

Mīmāṁsakas were not clear why these rituals must be performed. The MS just says that the non-performance of the obligatory rites results in a fault, which Śabara interpreted as “loss of heaven” (and which is tantamount to their being “for the sake of heaven,” as in their optional version);\textsuperscript{40} Kumārila argued that they have to be performed because otherwise bad karma would be created—“they bind the one who does not perform them”—while later adding that they can exhaust some old karma as well.\textsuperscript{41} It seems clear, nevertheless, that they were obligatory precisely so that they would apply even after the desire for heaven has been replaced by the pursuit of liberation.\textsuperscript{42}

The abstention from optional rituals and acts proscribed in the Veda on the one hand and the performance of the obligatory rituals on the other should, thus, stop the replenishing of the

\textsuperscript{39} On these, see MS 6.3.1-7 and the commentaries. Dharmadhikari 2006:329-36 provides a good but not exhaustive overview of how nitya-karmas have been conceptualized in history (but not through history); it is quite clear from his account that the tradition struggled with how to precisely understand them, particularly in their relationship with the optional rituals. See also Krishan 1994.

\textsuperscript{40} “The śruti text says that a fault follows from the omission of the principal ritual act: ‘He who is a performer of Darśa-pūrṇamāsa is certainly cut from heaven who fails to perform the ritual on a full moon or a new moon. Speaking about a fault when the principal act is not performed, the śruti text shows that the act is obligatory.” pradhānātikrame doṣaḥ śrīyate, apa vā eṣa svargāl lokāc chidyate yo darśa-pūrṇamāsa-yājī san paurnamāśiṁ amāvāsyāṁ vātipātayed iti pradhānātikrame doṣaṁ bruvahns tasya nityatāṁ darśayati. MSŚBh 6.3.3, IV.1411.

\textsuperscript{41} “One should perform the obligatory rites with the intention of warding off diminution (nitya-naimittike kuryāt pratyavāya-jihāsayā, ŚV Sambandhākṣepa-Parihāra 110cd); “The regular and conditional rites, relating to the different varnas and āśramas, must be performed for the purpose of exhausting previous sins and the prevention of future sin on the account of their non-performance (praty-āśrama-varṣa-niyatāṁ nitya-naimittika-karmāṇy api pūrva-kiṛta-dūrita-kṣayārtham akaraṇa-nimittānāgata-pratyavāya-parihārārthaṁ ca kartavyānī, TV 1.3.29, I.288);” “The obligatory rituals also bind the one who does not perform them (badhanty akurvantaṁ nitya-naimittikāny api, BṬ v.1);” “Exhausting bad karma by means of the obligatory rites (nitya-naimittikair eva kurvāṇo durita-kṣayam BṬ v.6);” See also Yoshimizu 2007:203-12.

\textsuperscript{42} Cf. Dharmadhikari 2006:331 (in regard to Pārthasārathi): “Now the question arises why svarga is not to be regarded as the result of the nimitta here. The answer is that svarga is not expected by those who are mumukṣus, i.e. desirous of liberation from the bondage of Karman, while prayavāya-parihāra, i.e. keeping away the sin is expected by all those who perform the Nitya sacrifice, like agnihotra, etc.”
karmic stock. As for the old stock, some bad karma may be annulled by the performance of the obligatory rituals, but in general karma has to be exhausted through time by experiencing the karmic consequences; once that happens—the BṬ says “in 10,000,000,000 age cycles”—one will become liberated.\textsuperscript{43} Kumārila, thus, did not allow knowledge and dispassion to exhaust the accumulated karma altogether by reducing it to inertia, and through this he denied any direct efficacy to knowledge in the pursuit of liberation.\textsuperscript{44} Such knowledge was reduced to a precondition for the giving up of optional rituals, and at best we could hazard a guess that its causal contribution would have been absorbed in the non-performance of karma through the principle of mediate causality (pāramparya) that we discussed in the previous chapter.

Kumārila’s thinking in this was characteristically mīmāṃsīc: pursuing the factor which plays the most direct role. Actions are most immediately related to a future state of affairs of any kind, and it is because of actions that one gets another body after death. If action is the cause of embodiment, then a way must be found to stop action.

I take the BṬ argument to be a refinement of the ŚV argument because the two share features which distinguish them from the TV argument. First, in both accounts the non-performance of optional and forbidden action on the one hand and the performance of obligatory action on the other play the central role in achieving liberation. Second, both are predicated on

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{43} yuga-koṭi-sahasreṇa kaścid eko vimucyate, v.4.
\textsuperscript{44} “Knowledge is not a means of liberation, because it is not a counterpart to the potential state of action. To be sure, it could not be antithetical to it. Even if we accept that actions, like attachment, etc., are brought about by ignorance, actions in their state of potentiality are not made inoperative through knowledge. There is no reliable warrant that there occurs a destruction of actions through knowledge, nor that only a slight result is experienced, like in the case of a transgression committed by a prince.”
\end{quote}

tac-chakty-apratīyogītvān na jñānaṁ moksā-kāraṇām |
karma-śaktāṁ na hi jñānaṁ virodham upagacchati ||
yady apy ajñāna-janyatvam karmanām avagamyate |
rāgādī-vaṁ tathāpy eṣāṁ na jñānaṁ nirakriyā ||
karma-kṣayaḥ hi vijñānād ity etac cāpramāṇavaṁ |
phalasyālpasya vā dānaṁ rāja-putrāparādha-vaṁ. ŚV SambandhākṣePa-Pariḥāra 94-6.
the absence of desire or *kāma*. In the BT the role of knowledge of the Self is explicitly more positive. It is a precondition for taking up the process of liberation, but also something which undergoes development: the performance of obligatory rituals assists the perfecting and maturation of knowledge of the Self through exhausting the karmic stock, and such knowledge finally culminates in solitude of the Self. Let us note, though, that even in this case knowledge of the Self does not have an *instrumental role* in achieving liberation. It could not possibly have such role, for two reasons: first, it is not a form of action, which is generally the instrumental factor that brings the good of man (*puruṣārtha*); it is, rather, a form of understanding, which, second, could become instrumental only in virtue of a specific desire (as I shall show under the next heading). This knowledge is, therefore, not a means of liberation, but a state that undergoes an evolution from being a precondition (absence of desire through disappearance of ignorance), turning into a patient (the perfecting and maturation of knowledge, intensification of dispassion) and maturing in a result (solitude).

There is, unfortunately, some paucity in Kumārila’s account, but we could surmise that the disappearance of ignorance is also gradual, and that it initially consists in disillusionment with the world of sacrifice and desire, but that it eventually matures as understanding becomes clearer. Answering some of the questions we posed in the introduction, we can say that the means of liberation under this account is a combination of performing some actions while abstaining from others. Knowledge of the Self is required, but its causal efficacy is remote and absorbed in dispassion. Liberation is a state of isolation of the Self and it does not involve positive experience.

Let us finish with how Śaṅkara read this account: liberation is just a state of remaining a pure Self without striving for anything, achieved by abstaining from the optional and prohibited
acts, by exhausting the karmic stock through enjoyment, and by preventing bad karma by
performing the obligatory rituals. The obligatory rituals could also exhaust some old karma, both
good and bad, as long as it hasn’t started bearing fruits. Liberation is both a future state and
eternal, in the manner of the posterior absence through destruction. 45 Although Śaṅkara does
exaggerate a tad Kumārila’s argument—as far as I have seen, Kumārila does not say that
obligatory rites could exhaust good karma—that is probably just for covering all bases. In
commenting on this, Sureśvara leaves little doubt whom the master was addressing. He quotes
directly the ŚV, followed by the sassy remark “Those who fancy themselves Mīmāṃsakas thus
reject knowledge of the Self and claim that ritual is a means of liberation.” 46 Śaṅkara’s interest
is, in fact, piqued because he likes what the account amounts to, “remaining a Self without
striving,” which is his own definition of liberation—and shared, we should mention, with the
YS 47—with the inevitable ātmā ca brahma, but is scandalized by everything else.

Kumārila’s Second Account of Liberation

The second account, to which we turn presently, is an account of liberation which is not quite
that. As I already noted, the question in virtue of which the two accounts are about the same
thing concerns not precisely liberation, but generally the nature of the knowledge of the Self in
the Veda and specifically its use in the pursuit of liberation or other goals. In fact, Kumārila in
the TV 1.3.29 does not talk about mokṣa, kaivalya, apavarga at all, but about niḥśreyasa and its
paired counterpart abhyudaya. This is an important point, for two reasons. First, niḥśreyasa, as I

45 kāmya-pratiṣiddhayor anārmbhāt ārabdhasya ca upabhogena kṣayāt nityānuṣṭhānena ca pratyavāyābhāvāt
ayatnata eva svātmany avasthānāṁ mokṣaḥ ... iṣṭāniṣṭa-phalānāṁ anārabdhānāṁ kṣayārthānāṁ nityānāṁ iti cet ... yad
dhi naṣṭam, tad eva notpadyata iti pradhvarūnāṁbhāva-van nityo ’pi mokṣa ārabhya eveti cet. TUBh Introduction,
VI.8. Similar discussion in BSBh 4.3.14.
46 iti mīmāṁsakāṁ-manyaiḥ karmoktaṁ mokṣa-sādhanaṁ |
pratyākhyāyatma-vijñānāṁ tatra nyāyena nirūyayati. TUBhV 1.10; the verse quoted in 1.9 is ŚV Sambandhākṣepa-
Parīhāra 110.
47 tadā draṣṭaḥ svarūpe ‘vasthānam. YS 1.3.
noted in the introduction, was a term commonly used for liberation in Indian intellectual history, but not exclusively so. As an axiological term, referring to “that good which has no higher to itself,” it could and did stand for any good one might have considered the highest, and we saw that the VDhS and Śabara used it for heaven. Second, because of being a value term, nihśreyasa connoted a commitment to the designated good, a commitment not necessarily expressed by the negative terms. We also saw that the ŚV account was inserted in a course of refutation of competing ideologies, and McCrea had alerted us that Kumārila’s endorsement of liberation seemed quite provisional. It is difficult, however, to talk about the highest good without some commitment to it.

Before we can appreciate fully Kumārila’s reasoning in the TV, we need to acquaint ourselves with the ideology to which the account is tied. Here knowledge of the Self is not associated to Śāṅkhya and similar doctrines, which wanted liberation to follow just from understanding that the Self is different from the body, but to chapter eight of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, which talks about knowledge of the Self as a means of fulfilling desires. The chapter consists of two parts which are related in structure: both begin with an injunction which says that the Self should be investigated; the first part talks about various worlds and desires that one may win and fulfill by knowing the Self; the second part is story about Prajāpati teaching the gods and the titans whose purpose is to illustrate how this investigation of the Self might proceed; both parts talk about what may be described as the final attainment accomplished by means of knowledge of the Self.

For our purposes, it is not necessary to penetrate fully the logic of the chapter, but we need to note a couple of things. First, the injunction runs: “One should investigate, clearly understand the Self that is free from faults, ageless and immortal, free from sorrow, not liable to
hunger and thirst, the Self whose desires and intentions are true. He who investigates and understands this Self obtains all the worlds, and all his desires are fulfilled.”

Second, the results which are promised to follow from knowledge of the Self in the injunction indicate immediately that the Upaniṣad is not interested in knowledge of the Self as such, but as a means of fulfilling desires and winning the heavenly spheres. It also quickly becomes obvious that the “true” desires and intentions from the injunction are not desires and intentions for the Self, as we may be prone to think due to long acquaintance with readings of the Upaniṣads through the lens of Advaita Vedānta; they are desires and intentions which, through knowledge of the Self, become immediately fulfilled and realized. These are the same familiar desires for the heavenly world of ancestors containing the common choice delights, but the issue is how to obtain freedom of motion to visit them at will, without depending on the exigencies of ritual action. And then, there is the familiar concern with re-death: how does one make sure that the highest heaven which one may obtain is not a result that will eventually perish? “[A]s here in this world the possession of a territory won by action comes to an end, so in the hereafter a world won by merit comes to an end.”

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48 ya ātmāpahata-pāpmā vijaro vimṛtyur viśoko vijighatso 'pipāsaḥ satya-kāmaḥ satya-saṅkalpaḥ so 'nveṣṭavyaḥ sa vijijñāsitavyaḥ. sa sarvāṁś ca lokān āpnoti sarvāṁś ca kāmān yas tam ātmānam anuvidya vijānāti. This is the version of the injunction which opens the second part of the chapter. The first version, right at the beginning of the chapter, runs: “Now, here in this fort of brahman there is a small lotus, a dwelling place, and within it, a small space. In that space there is something—and that’s what you should try to investigate, that’s what you should try to know distinctly.” Translation Olivelle, with a slight modification.

49 Cf. for instance Deussen 1980:190: “These ‘true wishes’ are here delineated in a rather odd, clumsy manner. … This subsection [8.2] from its spirit and tone, stands off so much from the whole and interrupts and disturbs the whole context … that we conjecture in it a perceptible delineation of ideas [8.3.2] by another hand … perhaps by the same hand which, at the conclusion of the previous chapter (Prapāṭhaka), explained the fulfillment of all things in the sense of a magical unfoldment of the person into many manifold individuals.”

50 See 8.2. The worlds attained by discovering the Self include those of the fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends, perfumes and garlands, food and drink, music and women. “[T] hose here in this world who depart after discovering the self and these real desires obtain complete freedom of movement in all the worlds (8.1.8).” “Anyone who knows this goes to the heavenly world every day (8.3.5).” Olivelle’s translation.

51 8.1.6, Olivelle’s translation.
we discussed in the previous chapter and in the Introduction is not under question, but is
affirmed throughout. The pressing concern is not how to get free from desires, but how to make
sure they are not thwarted.

The chapter also presents what may be called the highest attainment, referred to as “the
highest light” (paraṅ jyotih) and associated with the world of Brahman (brahma-loka),
described very graphically: it is the third heaven from here, having two seas, Ara and نىya, a lake
by the name of Airaṅmadīya, a banyan tree known as Somasavana, a fort called Aparājita and
Brahman’s golden hall by the name of Prabhu.52 There is a path leading to it that goes from the
human heart, where the Self resides, through one of the channels issuing from it—the central one
leading to the top of the head—and the sun rays which form a continuum with these channels
and culminate in the sun itself: the door of heaven. This is the stairway to the heaven of
Brahman, and the password at the door is Om.53 This highest attainment is a place from which
one does not return again to this “gray and toothless state, to the toothless, gray and slobbery
state.”54 Attaining the world of Brahman presupposes liberation: “Shaking off evil, like a horse
its hair, and freeing myself, like the moon from Rāhu’s jaws, I, the perfected self (ātman), cast
off the body, the imperfect, and attain the world of brahma.”55

Wining this highest attainment is absolutely predicated on knowing the true Self, and a
crucial role is played by the character of the Self in deep sleep, a common Upaniṣadic theme
which presents the Self as persisting but remaining in a state of non-transitive awareness, not
liable to the faults of waking and dream. This is a crucial role, because here the state of the Self

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52 8.3.4; 8.4.3; 8.5.3; 8.12.2-5; 8.13.
53 8.6.
in deep sleep is a border state, a state in which the Self maintains its existence but is not liable to faults, death, old age, grief, hunger and thirst, simply by not being aware of its identities in waking and dream.\(^{56}\) However, it is a border that has to be crossed too, because there the Self “does not perceive itself fully as 'I am this,'... It has become completely annihilated.”\(^{57}\) One, in other words, has to reach this state of the Self in deep sleep because it is a state of full separation from the body, but then one has to re-emerge in a positive situation of one’s “own true form,” svena rūpeṇa.\(^{58}\) This true form is one in which the Self is no longer embodied, but keeps the innate faculties of sight, smell, speech, hearing, thought, which function through its innate mind, its “divine sight.”\(^{59}\) These have, obviously, been suspended in the state of deep sleep, in virtue of which disembodiment and freedom from all faults is attained, but once that happens, they re-emerge to function autonomously, without their bodily seats.

This state of the Self, “the highest person” (uttama-puruṣa) which is disembodied but positive—“like the wind, rain-cloud, lightning and thunder”—goes on to enjoy in the world of Brahman “with women, chariots and relatives,”\(^{60}\) with all desires fulfilled and all worlds won.

Back to Kumārila now, we should remember that dharma as a means of some good was for the most part restricted to the central ritual action, because it was the ritual action which ultimately brings the desired good. This made the ritual action puruṣārtha, subservient to the purpose of man, while all else in the sacrifice was deemed kratvartha, subservient to the purpose of the ritual itself. There was, however, a scenario under which a ritual meant for a particular result could also bring an added value, if instead of a standard ritual item a substitute was used.

\(^{56}\) That this is a crucial state is quite evident from 8.6.3: “So, when someone is sound asleep here, totally collected and serene, and sees no dreams, he has slipped into these veins. No evil thing can touch him, for he is then linked with radiance.” Olivelle’s translation.

\(^{57}\) 8.12.

\(^{58}\) 8.3.4; 8.12.3

\(^{59}\) 8.12.4-5.

\(^{60}\) 8.12.2-3.
Take, for instance, the daily Agnihotra ritual, an offering of milk into the sacrificial fire, which, as we saw above, was classified as an obligatory ritual whose purpose was to prevent the creation of bad karma. Now, if the sacrificer were to offer yoghurt instead of milk, this change would transform the nature of the sacrifice from obligatory to optional, and the sacrifice would not only prevent bad karma as its common result, but would also bring heaven as an added value.

Two points are important to note here. First, what brings about the change in the nature of a sacrifice from nitya to kāmya is the desire on the part of the sacrificer: the sacrificer is prompted by the desire for heaven to use yoghurt instead of milk. Second, yoghurt which, being a substance, is naturally subservient to the ritual, undergoes trans-instrumentalization and becomes subservient to the purpose of man (puruṣārtha), the element which brings about the desired value, all the while remaining subservient to the ritual in other sacrifices. By this principle, yoghurt could be theorized both as kratvartha and puruṣārtha. It would remain subservient to the central ritual action of offering *in general*, but it would maintain autonomy where there is an injunction which establishes a direct causal relation between it and, say, heaven, through an appropriate desire. This trans-instrumentalization would not work if the statement which says that the use of yoghurt brings particular results belongs to a context of another sacrifice where yoghurt is a common offertory, in which case the statement of results relating to its offering would have to be interpreted as arthavāda advertising the ritual. For our purposes, we ought to note well again that a category cannot be puruṣārtha without there being a desire for a specific result on the part of the agent.\(^6\)

\(^6\) This is worked out at the beginning of the third *pāda* of the fourth *adhyāya* of MS, where particularly important are *sūtra* 1, which states the general principle that statements about results associated with substances are arthavāda, and *sūtra* 5, which states the exception. Some useful information on this can be gleaned from Yoshimizu 2004.
Kumārila applies this principle over the knowledge of the Self to theorize how it can both be kratvartha and puruṣārtha. We saw in the previous chapter and in Kumārila’s first account of liberation that the knowledge of the Self from the Upaniṣads served as an impetus for taking up ritual action, as well as the principle which secures the relation between engagement and disengagement in actions and the future results which they bring: there is a permanent Self in which the ritual continues to exist and mature until blossoming in heaven.62 This was no mean role to play, since without such knowledge a ritual would not happen: An intelligent person will not do an action unless s/he knows that such action is for her good. Nevertheless, such knowledge was subordinate to the ritual, and it was not the element which directly procures the expected human good. But, imagine a scenario in which knowing the Self as different from the body is: (1) enjoined by a Vedic injunction; (2) associated with attainments of the kind which dharma brings in general; (3) which attainments are related to specific human desires; and (4) such knowing cannot in any straightforward manner be related to another ritual through the context. Under such a scenario, knowledge of the Self would undergo trans-instrumentalization in the manner of yoghurt and it would become a direct means of achieving a specific desired human good, puruṣārtha.

Precisely such a scenario is in play in the eighth prapāṭhaka of the Chandogya Upaniṣad that we touched upon above. First, there is an injunction that the Self should be investigated and known distinctly. Second, there are specific results of the kind which dharma produces that are accomplished by this knowledge, which, as I said above, Kumārila classified under the two groups of abhyudaya and niḥśreyasa. Kumārila defines abhyudaya here as the obtaining of

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62 “Because, without it (knowledge of the Self) there would be no relation to engagement or disengagement in actions which bring results in the hereafter.” tena vinā paraloka-phaleṣu karmaṣu pravṛttī-nivrṛtty-asambandḥāt. TV 1.3.29, I.288.
supernatural powers of the kind produced by the practice of Yoga, such as the ability to become atomic in size. In the context of chapters seven and eight of the Chāndogya this clearly refers to the freedom of motion (kāma-cāra) and the ability to visit the heavenly spheres. Nihśreyasa, on the other hand, standing for the highest good, is defined as “a result which is a state of attaining the supreme Self, a state consisting in no-return.” Kumārila does not say what the “supreme Self” or paramātman refers to here, but it likely is a gloss of the param jyotiḥ or “the highest light” from the Chāndogya, or perhaps the “highest person,” uttama-puruṣa, the last and highest state of the Self attained after it had emerged from deep sleep and attained the world of Brahman, with its cognitive powers restored, unembodied but “in its own form.” As we shall see later, by his time the two were in any case seen as related.

Third, these two attainments got through knowledge of the Self are clearly related to desires, and Kumārila explicitly treats them as a pair: the attainments consist in fulfilling desires, and the two form sentential supplements to the injunction for knowing the Self. Finally, it is not possible unambiguously to relate these attainments through context to some other ritual in which knowledge of the Self would be serving the purpose of the ritual (kratvartha), and therefore they cannot be explained away as being arthavāda. From all of this it must follow that the results in the form of abhyudaya and nihśreyasa are real, and that knowledge of the Self as the thing enjoined for their achieving is puruṣārtha. Knowledge of the Self has, thus, become a crucial item for achieving prosperity and liberation, joining a select club consisting of yoghurt, the

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63 yoga-janyānimādy-aṣṭa-guṇaśvarya-phalāni varṇitāni, Ibid.
64 From the seventh chapter he cites 7.1.3, tarati śokam ātmavit, and from the eight 8.2 and 8.7.1, both of which talk about attaining all worlds, fulfilling all desires of the heavenly kind.
65 apunar-āvṛtty-ātmaka-paramātma-prāpty-avasthā-phala-vacanam. TV 1.3.29, I.288.
66 “Since an unambiguous connection or disconnection to some ritual cannot be established through their forming a part of some context, these statements about results are not arthavāda like those about the ointment, the khādira wood, the sruva etc.” aprakaraṇa-gataveṇānāikaṁti-kratu-sambandhāsambandhāc ca nāñjana-khādira-sruva-vākyādi-phala-śruti-vad arthavādatvam. Ibid.
wooden ladle, the milking vessel, the post made of *khadira* wood. We can almost visualize how scandalized Śaṅkara must have been by this.

Just as in the first account, the attainment of liberation which is related to the injunctions of knowledge of the Self must be accompanied by the performance of the rituals and actions obligatory for all classes in general or respectively. The two are meant for accomplishing different results in this pursuit: action exhausts previous bad karma and prevents the creation of new karma, and knowledge of the Self brings *abhya*daya and *niḥśreyasa*. Since they both produce results independently of one another, serve different purposes and proceed through different courses, they are not mutually optional, exclusive, or subordinate to one another.67 Since they both contribute to liberation as the final result, we may venture that Kumārila saw their relationship akin to that of two or more equally principal, *apūrva*-producing actions in the complex sacrifices such as the Darśa-pūṇamāśa which we discussed in the previous chapter.

This is rather an important point, because this second scenario of Kumārila does amount to a form of what has been theorized as a combination of knowledge and action as both exercising causal efficacy in the pursuit of liberation (*jñāna-karma-samuccaya*). Ideally this was a combination between two independent and principal causal elements, *pradhāna*, but it was also understood as a relationship between a primary means and its direct subordinate, if the subordinate remained causally efficacious.68 What Kumārila presented in the TV amounts to a

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67 “And, the injunction of knowledge does not preclude a relation to action. The obligatory and optional actions, relating to the different classes and *āśramas*, have to be performed for the purpose of exhausting previous sins and the prevention of future sin on the account of their non-performance. Because these [knowledge on the Self one hand and action of the two types on the other] have different purposes and proceed through different paths, they do not cancel one another, become options or subordinate parts to one another.” na ca jhāna-vidhānena karna-sambandha-vāraṇām. praty-āśrama-varṇa-niyatāni nitya-naimittika-karmāṇy api pūrva-kṛta-durita-kṣayārtham akaraṇa-nimittānāgata-pratyavāya-pariḥārārtham ca kartavyāni. na ca teśāṁ bhinnā-prayojanatvād bhinnā-mārgatvāc ca bādhā-vikalpa-parasparāṅgāṅg-bhāvāḥ sambhavantī. Ibid.

68 *Samuccaya* in the MS and Śabara thereon seems to refer to combining things without any relationship of subordination, and surely such is the sense in the BS 3.3.58, which says that meditations which bring different
combination of action and knowledge as mutually independent (and therefore equally principal) means in the attainment of liberation.

We will continue with Kumārila for a tad longer in the concluding remarks, but let us finish this section by reemphasizing that what makes the two accounts so different is the absence of desires in the first and their presence in the second. McCrea had suggested that Kumārila did change his ideas about the role of the knowledge of the Self from the ŚV to the TV, in virtue of which his understanding of liberation also must have changed, and he traced this change to a better grasp of pre-existing Mīmāṃsā rules of interpretation. However, it is quite evident that Kumārila was aware of this specific rule—how a thing can serve both the need of the ritual and the need of man—already in the ŚV, and it was precisely in consideration of this rule that he extended the definition of dharma as a means of some good from the limited scope of action to offertories and ritual details as well. I find it preferable, therefore, to suggest that he was acting in the role of a hermeneut to accommodate two very different accounts of liberation, both of which had currency in the Vedic theology of his time. We will touch upon this question in the conclusion of this part of the dissertation.

Concluding Remarks

It would be worthwhile here to take stock of Kumārila’s accounts, to put things in perspective and see clearly just what concerns around liberation were at stake. Kumārila defined dharma, the province of the Veda, as a means of some good, śreyas-kara, a means that is of instrumental nature, a sādhana, which should bring about a state (avasthā) of felicity (prīti), which is of the nature of an accomplishment and is necessarily future (sādhya). A central role in this was played

results may be combined indiscriminately, since they produce their own results independently. Advaitins have understood the relationship in broader terms, as is evident, for instance, from the first chapter of Sureśvara’s NaiS.
by kāma, human desire for some form of happiness that is the motive for taking up the means of achieving the respective good. Sensu stricto, the Veda was the reliable warrant on things of the sādhyya character, and authoritative on facts about already constituted existents (siddha) only insofar as such existents are employable and required for the accomplishment of the future state.

All these categories were crucial in the discussions of liberation in Vedānta as well: is liberation a new state that should be attained, or an already constituted existent, or something else? If it is not a new state, can the means for its accomplishment be puruṣārtha? And, what is character of such means? The common Mīmāṁsā means, ritual action, was necessarily sādhyya, and even when things of the siddha character were recognized as directly instrumental, they were subordinate to an action. Yoghurt may bring heaven for all we know, but not unless it becomes a part of a sacrifice, a part subordinate to the central action of offering, to be specific. And what about desires, so intimately related to the idea of puruṣārtha? Does not liberation presuppose freedom from desire? Or, are there, perhaps, some other desires different from the common Vedic desires for sons, worlds, heavenly delights, but satisfying the criterion of puruṣārtha? If there are, what are they precisely? Furthermore, what is happening with the descriptions of enjoying the same old Vedic objects of desires in the state of liberation in the Upaniṣads? Given that heaven was already associated with the highest possible bliss, a state created by action, a perishable product, could one possibly enjoy the same heavenly delights in liberation without compromising eternity? Finally, if liberation is solely in the province of the Veda, is it enjoined by a Vedic injunction in the same manner as ritual is? These questions occupied the center stage in early Advaita Vedānta, but they were explicitly or implicitly negotiated much before that.

In Kumārila’s account, knowledge of the Self was of the siddha character: it is about an existent, and as such it naturally serves the needs of the ritual and not the good of man. In his
first account, liberation was presented in negative terms, a state of future absence that can be
accomplished only through negative means, namely absence of karma as the most direct cause of
embodiment. He denied that knowledge of the Self is enjoined for liberation, and he described
liberation as a state with a single word: *kaivalya*, a solitude of the Self. The pursuit of liberation
was predicated on absence of desire. This scenario was not a common case of Mīmāṃsā
procedure. It could, however, be accommodated under Kumārila’s understanding of the nature of
the Self: The Self is essentially pure awareness, an eternal omnipresent sentient substance, which
experiences happiness, distress and the like directly and not through an assumed identity with the
intellect as in Vedānta, and which for that reason undergoes change. Purify it of all karma, starve
it from all experiences and it will remain a pure subject.69 Liberation was possible (and
achievable only by means of action), but nowhere did he say that it was desirable.

His second account, on the other hand, had all the hallmarks of a proper Mīmāṃsā
procedure and result. Knowledge of the Self was *enjoined* for liberation. As we shall see shortly,
though being of the *siddha* character, Kumārila’s commentators thought that it becomes a part of
a central process, one which can be understood as *sādhya*. The pursuit of liberation was
predicated on desire of some kind, and liberation as a result was an attainment of a state
(*avasthā-prāpti*). In fact, as I said in the beginning of the previous section, this was no mere
liberation: the Upaniṣadic text to which Kumārila tied his account made liberation a precondition
which is surpassed by and absorbed in the final attainment, reaching the world of Brahman, and
Kumārila was clear about the desirability of this attainment: it is *niḥśreyasa*, the highest good.

For all we can see, Kumārila’s second account presents liberation as an attainment which
is very similar to heaven. What Kumārila was, in fact, doing is a reaffirmation of the old Vedic

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69 The two central places in which Kumārila discusses the Self are the Ātma-Vāda chapter of the ŚV, and TV 2.1.5.
ideal through absorbing the “new discovery” that is liberation: through knowledge of the Self as eternal, the attainment of heaven can be made permanent. Heaven is still a new state, one which the Self does not experience presently, but because the Self is eternal, one who knows this Self can attain heaven as a permanent state. This seems to be Kumārila’s way of tackling the problem which assumed central importance in his first account, but is completely ignored in the second: heaven is happiness and bondage, and if liberation is a new, positive state, consisting in experience of happiness, it would be “tantamount to heaven and perishable.” Well, if the element which is central in its attainment is eternal, perhaps the new state can be imperishable as well.

It is, possibly, also important that this account did not present ritual action as directly productive of the future state. Ritual is causally efficacious, but its results are exhausting the stock of bad karma and preventing its replenishing; ritual is responsible for liberation in the strict sense, what the Upaniṣad describes as the freedom from fault, but not for the attainment of the new state.

Finally, in the two accounts Kumārila applied two models of instrumental causal efficacy over the role of the knowledge of the Self in liberation, without explicitly mentioning either. In the first, knowledge of the Self gives rise to dispassion; its contribution is absorbed in dispassion, which becomes the cause for abstaining from performing optional Vedic rituals, which absence in its turn is the immediate cause of depleting the stock of good karma. A fitting model: negative means for a negative result. Knowledge of the Self was thrice remote and not directly related to the ultimate result. This was the pāramaparya model of mediate causality that we introduced in the previous chapter. In the second model, jñāna-karma-samuccaya, both ritual and knowledge were directly contributing something to liberation and were to be performed side by side: ritual exhausts old karma whereby one becomes free, corresponding perhaps to the “shaking off evil,
like a horse its hair, and freeing myself” of the Upaniṣad, while knowledge of the Self brings the new state of affairs. We should bear in mind that these two were not mutually opposed models of causality. Applied over a complex ritual performance they work perfectly well together. Yet, they do amount to stratification of causal elements and hierarchy of means. Under the second model it is not possible to deny causal efficacy to what has been recognized as a means, even if that is just a helping element, because the principal means would fail without the assisting means. Under the first model, a means had ceased being a means once it has produced its result, and it is absorbed in a new production. Its causality has been mediated.

All things considered, Kumārila presented two accounts of liberation, both of which are compatible with his understanding of the Self and which, therefore, need not constitute a change in his thinking. In doing so he was accommodating different understandings of liberation that had currency in Vedic theology of his time. The first was, to use Potter’s categories, an account of liberation *from*; a procedure for such liberation is not enjoined in the Veda, “but here is what I can do for you.” The second is not only liberation from, but liberation *to* as well, and not only is it enjoined in the Veda, but it is the highest attainment one can aspire for.70

Now, Kumārila’s commentators have related his two accounts to two competing models of liberation in early Vedānta, and more generally in Vedic theology. The Sāṅkhyan knowledge of the Self as different from the body “which is not enjoined in the Veda for liberation” was identified both by Pārthasārathi and Someśvara as referring to the famous Yājñavalkya-Maitreyī dialogue from the *Brhad-Āranyaka Upaniṣad*.71 As we shall see in the next part, the whole fourth chapter of the BĀU containing Yājñavalkya’s teachings to Janaka and Maitreyī formed an early major account of liberation in Vedānta, one which was very different from the one in *Chāndogya*

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70 Potter 1965.
71 Pārthasārathi on ŚV *Sambandhākṣepa-Parihāra* 102 and Someśvara on TV 1.3.29.
and rectified to conform the *Chāndogya* in the *Brahma-Sūtra*. We’ve already seen that Kumārila himself associated the second account to the 8th *prapāṭhaka* of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, and Pārthasārathi described this second reference to knowledge of the Self as *meditational* knowledge, one which forms a part of a larger meditational complex involving breath control and the other well-known constituents of yoga. This amounted to saying that discriminative knowledge of the Self, knowledge *qua* knowledge, is not enjoined for liberation, whereas *meditational* knowledge can be. This detail serves as a good transition point from Mīmāṁsā onto early Vedānta.
CHAPTER FOUR: LIBERATION IN THE BRAHMA-SŪTRA

When one has attained Brahman through the meditation on Brahman that has the mentioned characteristics, one attains freedom of movement.
– But, how could there be such freedom of movement everywhere without performing the requisite practice occasioned by the intention for attaining the respective world?
– The attainment itself is the cause.¹

Introductory Remarks: Methodology

In this chapter, I will reconstruct the doctrine of liberation in Bādarāyaṇa’s Brahma-Sūtra. I will show that the BS doctrine was based on the 8th chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad that we are already acquainted with from Kumārila’s second account of liberation. To be more specific, I will show that liberation in the BS meant attaining the highest Vedic heaven, brahma-loka, necessarily after one’s death, through ascending the universe via the “course of the gods” or deva-yāna. The experience of liberation consisted in independence or sovereignty, “having no other master but oneself,” which specifically referred to the ability to enjoy all desires “of the Vedic variety” and the ability to move through the heavens of the Vedic world without impediment. This was a liberation characterized by enjoyment, bhoga. Additionally, liberation may have also included the bliss of experiencing Brahman’s “own nature.” The process of achieving liberation was meditation on Brahman as one’s Self. This meditation was absorption of one’s thought process in a single notion. It had to be accompanied by the performance of ritual by all practitioners except one group, lifelong celibates, and by other religious practices, as well as by cultivation of personal virtues. Both meditation and the other assisting practices had to

¹ VPS 3.3.40, p.1030.
continue till the end of one’s life. My reconstruction will be based on the third and fourth books of the BS, where liberation and the process of achieving it are explicitly treated.

The BS is, as is well-known, the tersest of all sūtra compositions and the meaning of the majority of individual sūtras is all but impossible to comprehend without a commentary. I should like to lay out, therefore, the methodology that I will employ in this reconstruction. It is based on four principles, ordered successively by importance.

First, there are several sūtras that can be read without the aid of a commentary, and often they are of crucial importance. Their meaning is clear either directly or because they contain an unambiguous reference to what is customarily called viṣaya-vākya or topical text, typically but not exclusively a passage from the Upaniṣads. Let me give instances of both.

(1) In the first pāda of the fourth book, there is a series of sūtras, seven through eleven, from which it is immediately obvious that the process of liberation is meditative absorption of some kind. This meditative absorption must be practiced in a sitting posture and wherever concentration is possible. That much can be read straightforward and without recourse to a commentary. Nowhere else in the book is there another section which presents another or alternative means of liberation, and whenever the commentators present a different means or reinterpret meditation, they are supplying their own doctrine.

(2) At the opening of the third pāda of the third adhyāya, in the first sūtra where the general principle of how Upaniṣadic meditations are formed is stated, there is an unmistakable reference to Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra 2.4.9. From this reference, it is immediately apparent that these meditations are formed after the model of the Vedic sacrifices that are given in the Brāhmaṇas. Consulting what the MS says on this provides immense help in reading the sūtra; since this is an opening sūtra, it is important for our understanding of the entire book. Similarly, there are often
in the sūtras enough cues to point to the precise passage from the Upaniṣads that is under discussion. These also tend to be placed centrally, at the beginning of pādas. Good examples are 3.4.1, puruṣārtho 'tah śabdād iti bādarāyaṇaḥ, which points very likely at TU 2.1.1; and 4.4.1, sampadyāvirbhāvah svena śabdāt, which is a certain reference to ChU 8.12.3. Other certain cases are the famous janmādy asya yataḥ (1.1.2), which is a direct reference to TU 3.1.1, and ānandamayo ‘bhyasāt (the second chapter of TU). In many cases, therefore, the precise Upaniṣadic passage can be identified, and then reading the passage in context facilitates understanding.

Second, on many sūtras in the five commentaries that I decided to consult (on which more in a bit), very often there is a remarkable unanimity in interpretation. Daniel Ingalls had noticed that Śaṅkara and Bhāskara are often unanimous on the interpretation of many sūtras and that they often seem to follow an older commentator, a vyttikāra, whose doctrine can be reconstructed by reading the two commentaries side by side. This method can be extended further: whenever all commentators agree on the meaning of a sūtra or adhikarana, it is fair to assume that the meaning is unambiguous.

In doing so, third, it will be found that the one commentary deviating the most is that of Śaṅkara, and in many cases these deviations can easily be seen and discarded. Let me give an example. I said that there is a series of sūtras in the first pāda of the fourth adhyāya where it is clear that the process of liberation is meditative absorption, to be performed in a sitting posture. All the commentators interpret the sūtra in roughly the same way, and so does Śaṅkara. But then, Śaṅkara adds that this refers to “the knower of the lower Brahman,” and that the knower of real Brahman can sit or stand or do whatever he wants, because meditation is dependent on human

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2 Ingalls 1954.
choice while knowledge is not: knowledge is how things are, and posture has no say in this. The distinction of higher and lower Brahman was, of course, Śaṅkara’s hallmark doctrine, and the difference between knowledge and meditation was his earth-shattering innovation in Vedānta. But, there is nothing in the BS to warrant such distinctions, so whenever he interprets a sūtra in the straightforward manner before cancelling out the direct meaning, it is fair to stick with the literal interpretation, “bring him back to the fold,” and assume that the meaning is unambiguous.

Fourth, in the reconstruction, I will use five commentaries, those of Śaṅkara, Nimbārka, Śrīnivāsa, Bhāskara and Rāmānuja. Most useful among these for ascertaining Bādarāyaṇa’s own doctrine is Nimbārka’s Vedānta-Pārijāta-Saurabha. Nimbārka is still a very mysterious figure in Indian intellectual history, and old scholarship customarily proposed quite a late date for him. More recent studies suggest that the VPS might be the oldest BS commentary available.  

Whatever the case may be, more important than the date is the nature of the commentary. The colophon to every pāda of the commentary identifies the work as śārīraka-mīmāṃsā-vākyārtha, an exposition of the literal meaning of the BS, and the commentary attempts to do just that: provide the minimum necessary to make the individual sūtras intelligible and identify the topical texts, without engaging in polemics of any kind. Ghate’s study of the BS, which is still the most valuable piece on the doctrine of Bādarāyaṇa, found Nimbārka’s commentary be the closest to the intended meaning of the BS.  

The other commentaries need no introduction, except perhaps that of Śrīnivāsa, who was a follower of Nimbārka. He and Rāmānuja offer very similar interpretations, and recently it has

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4 Ghate 1981.
5 Sometimes it is claimed that this is a sub-commentary on the Vedānta-Pārijāta-Saurabha, but that is not the case; it is a full, independent commentary.
been proposed that Śrīnivāsa’s *Vedānta-Kaustubha* preceded Rāmānuja’s *Śrī-Bhāṣya*. We do not need to worry over such questions, but we do need to note that on a number of *sūtras* and *adhikaraṇas*, the commentaries are often divided on readings and interpretation, typically Nimbārka, Rāmānuja and Śrīnivāsa against Śaṅkara and Bhāskara. In such cases my policy is either to exclude these places from my account, or, if they proved too intriguing, to rely on Ghate’s study and to seek internal coherence in the text. Another very valuable and accurate study of liberation in the BS is that of Nakamura, but it is relatively short and no more than an overview.

I should finally note that by “Bādarāyaṇa” I mean whoever wrote or edited the BS in the form in which it was commented upon, whether it was one person or more of them. Unearthing layers or strands, synchronic or diachronic, is not an object of this study.

**The Doctrine of Vidyā/Upāsana**

The cornerstone of Kumārila’s first account of liberation, the claim that knowledge of the Self as different from the body is *just* for the good of the ritual and not for the good of man, was in fact a long-standing Mīmāṁsā position. As far as we can infer from the *Brahma-Sūtra*, the general Mīmāṁsā attitude towards the Upaniṣads was that they provide what is called *vidyā*, some form of esoteric knowledge, whose purpose is to accomplish a refinement or embellishment of certain items in the sacrifice that are themselves for the good of the ritual. This was *saṁskāra* or *saṁskṛti*, one of the four *sannipātyopakārakas* that we introduced in the Second Chapter. The scriptural justification of this principle was found in a statement from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*:

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6 A good summary of these arguments can be found in Potter 2013:95-7.
7 I have not included here the commentary of Madhva, as Ghate has already shown that it is not of much use in understanding the BS itself.
“Only that which is performed with knowledge, with faith, and with an awareness of the hidden connections becomes truly potent.” Two words are important here, vidyā and upaniṣad. The context of the passage is the udgītha, the central element of a Sāma Veda song, which is here identified with the syllable Om, the understanding of which identity fulfills all kinds of desire. This understanding “embellishes” the udgītha such that if a ritual in which the udgītha is chanted is performed with such esoteric knowledge, the results of the ritual are enhanced. Early Mīmāṁsakas applied this as a universal principle: knowing the hidden connections of the udgītha improves the udgītha and enhances the ritual, and likewise knowing the Self as distinct from matter embalishes the Self which is the ritual agent. If some independent result is said to follow from this knowledge of the Self, such as liberation, that is really the commercial break time of the Veda. This is the doctrine with which we are already very well familiar, and the BS puts it directly into Jaimini’s mouth.

The principle that all kinds of Upaniṣadic vidyās are for refinement was rejected by Bādarāyaṇa as being specific to the udgītha and not general, but Jaimini’s particular assertion about knowledge of the Self was a much more complex story. The claim that the Self as an agent and the knowledge of the Self as distinct from the body are subservient to the ritual was never controverted. What Bādarāyaṇa denied was that the Upaniṣads as a scriptural corpus are really, or only, about that. Śaṅkara was typically eloquent on this point: “Had the transmigrating soul alone, the embodied agent and expericner, been taught in the Upaniṣads as merely distinct from

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9 yad eva vidyayā karoti śraddhayopaniṣadā tad eva vīryavattarāṁ bhavati. ChU 1.1.10, translation Olivelle.

10 All the BS commentators take the Chāndogya text to be the topical text of BS 3.4.4, tac-chruteḥ, and take it as a statement of a general Mīmāṁsā attitude towards all Upaniṣadic vidyās, and Someśvara under TV 1.3.29 invokes the same text in justifying Kumārila’s claim that discriminative knowledge of the Self serves the purpose of ritual. Note: the sūtras are quoted from and referenced to the edition of VPS (see Bibliography).

11 BS 4.1.2: śeṣatvāt puruṣārtha-vādo, yathānēyev iti jainimih; “Because the agent is subsidiary to the action, the statement of results is just talk of the good of man, as in other cases; thus Jaimini.”

the body, then the Upaniṣadic statement of results could have been an *arthavāda* in the aforementioned manner.”¹³ That there is such an entity as a permanent Self which survives death and can enjoy the results of ritual in the future is knowable from the Veda, as the Veda is the reliable warrant on all matters supersensuous, and the Upaniṣads can provide that specific knowledge, which would make them subservient to ritual insofar as they act in that capacity. But, claimed Bādarāyaṇa, the Upaniṣads primarily teach a principle higher than this transmigrating Self, in virtue of which they are the means of another, independent goal of man, liberation. Because of this higher teaching, liberation cannot be explained away as mere talk. This brings us to considering how the BS presented the Upaniṣads as a distinct canon.

One of the central presuppositions of Vedic theology presented in the *Mīmāṁśa-Sūtra* was that the purpose of the Veda was to provide for some good of men that is not available by natural means. In the *Mīmāṁśa-Sūtras*, this was the role of *dharma*: *dharma* was that on which human good depended, and for the most part *dharma* was limited to ritual. The challenge for Bādarāyaṇa in defining the Upaniṣads as a canon distinct from the Brāhmaṇas of Mīmāṁśa was to show how the Upaniṣads serve human goals in a way different from or independent of ritual. This specific difference of the Upaniṣad was found in the doctrine of *vidyā* and *upāsana*, both of which I will translate as meditation, for reasons which will hopefully become clear soon.

Strictly speaking, *vidyā* referred to specific Upaniṣadic sections engaging what Olivelle describes as particular “hidden connections” between two distinct things which are in some way understood as identical.¹⁴ These *vidyās* were either one-off, forming one distinct section in one Upaniṣad; or repeated throughout the canon, sometimes even in the same Vedic branch (śākhā).

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¹³ yadi sarṣāry eva ātmā śārīra kartā bhoktā ca śārīra-mātra-vyatirekeṇa vedānteṣu upadiṣṭāḥ syāt, tato varṇitena prakāreṇa phala-śrutier artha-vādatvam syāt. BSBh 3.4.8, III.721.

By way of illustration of the first we may point to the famous identification of the sacrificial horse and the Universe at the opening of the *Brhad-Āranyaka Upaniṣad*. An example of the second would be the Śāṇḍilya-vidyā, Śāṇḍilya’s teaching about how this whole world is Brahman, which is most prominent in the ChU but also repeated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (ŚB) and in the BĀU,\(^{15}\) or the Vaiśvānara-vidyā, the teaching about the Self which is common to all, forming a part both of the ChU and the BĀU.\(^{16}\) Bādarāyaṇa says that these *vidyās* constitute single, unique units, no matter whether they are one-off, restricted to one śākhā or found throughout the canon, in the same way that sacrifices described in different Vedic texts are single ritual models. They aim at the same result, for instance attaining Brahman; they have the same form, for instance they are both about Vaiśvānara the universal Self and involve the same details; they start with the same injunction, for instance that one should meditate on this universal Self; and they share the same name.\(^{17}\) They are constituted as units by way of combining the details mentioned in the different texts. Whatever these *vidyās* turn out to be in the end, let us note that they were understood from early on as the Upaniṣadic counterpart to Vedic ritual. They have an injunction, they aim at a result, and they have a procedure.

Vedāntins of different backgrounds quite unanimously used the term *upāsana* as a synonym for *vidyā*, and it is here that we get an abundance of definitions from which it is

\(^{15}\) Of course, the BĀU itself is a part of the ŚB, which makes the *vidyā* repeated twice in the Brāhmaṇa of the Vājasaneyins.

\(^{16}\) ChU 5.11-18, BĀU 5.9.

\(^{17}\) BS 3.3.1: sarva-vedānta-pratyayaṁ codanādy-aviśeṣat; Nimbārka thereon, p.920: anekatra proktam apy upāsanam ekam eva, codanādy-aviśeṣat, “Although a meditation is described in several places, it is one only, because of uniformity of injunction and the rest.” The explicit reference is to MS 2.4.9: ekaṁ vā samyoga-rūpa-codanākhyāviviśeṣat. Śabara thereon, II.635-6: sarva-śākhā- pratyayaṁ sarva-brāhmaṇa-pratyayaṁ caikaṁ karma, artha-sānyogasyaviśeṣat, tad eva prayaṇanam uddhiśya tad eva vidhiyamānaṁ pratyabhijānīmaḥ. rūpam apy asya tad eva dravya-devatam, puruṣa-prayatnaḥ ca tādṛśa eva codyate, nāmadheyam cāviśiṣṭam, tena tad eva karma sarva-śākhādiṣu, “The act in all branches and Brāhmaṇa texts is one, because of uniformity of relation to purpose—we cognize the same act enjoined for the same purpose; because of uniformity of form in terms of offertories and deities; because the same human effort is enjoined; because of uniformity of name.”
immediately apparent that the intended meaning of both was that of meditation. Here is a short selection of definitions taken from works of prominent Vedāntins:

A uniform stream of thought called contemplation (dhyāna), cultivation (bhāvanā), meditation (upāsana). (Maṇḍana Miśra) Since meditation (upāsana) if of the nature of contemplation (dhyāna)... (Nimbārka) Meditation (upāsana) is a current of uniform thoughts, not mixed with dissimilar notions, concerning a scriptural object and in a scriptural manner. (Śaṅkara) Meditation (dhyāna), to define it, is a stream of awareness fixed on objects such as Deities described in scriptures and unbroken by [thoughts on] things of different kind. They call it concentration. (Śaṅkara) By meditation (upāsana), a direct perception of the object of meditation, such as the Lord, is achieved. (Śaṅkara) Viewing an object as taught in Scripture and prolonged dwelling on that till one gets identified with that, is, indeed, said to be meditation. (Sureśvara) [T]he teaching of Scripture is conveyed by means of the term 'knowing' (vedana), which is synonymous with meditating (dhyāṇa, upāsana). That these terms are so synonymous appears from the fact that the verbs vid, upās, dhyai are in one and the same text used with reference to one and the same object of knowledge. (Rāmānuja) Now, dhyai means to think of something not in the way of mere representation (smṛti), but in the way of continued representation. And upās has the same meaning; for we see it used in the sense of thinking with uninterrupted concentration of the mind on the object. We therefore conclude that as the verb 'vid' is used interchangeably with dhyai and upās, the mental activity referred to in texts such as 'he knows Brahman' and the like is an often-repeated continuous representation. (Rāmānuja)

18 Śaṅkara, for one, consistently uses vidyā and upāsana as synonyms, but for him the first was much broader in scope than the second, as we shall see in the next chapter. There is no indication that Vedāntins preceding him made any such distinction between the two. Bādarāyaṇa does not use the term upāsana, nor the all-important lexeme brahma-vidyā, but he uses the term vidyā throughout in the sense of distinct Upanisadic units, and names one of them, puruṣa-vidyā, in 3.3.24. That he understood these vidyās as meditations is clear from the beginning of the first pāda of the fourth adhyāya, where their application is described as dhyāna, to be practiced in a sitting position, etc. 19 BrS p.74. 20 upāsanasya dhyāna-rūpatvād. VPS 4.1.8, p.1199. 21 upāsanāni ca yathā-śāstraṁ tulya-pratyaya-santatir asaṅkīrṇa ca atat-pratyayaiḥ śāstroktālambana-viṣayā ca. TUBh 1.3.2-4, VI.17. 22 dhyāṇaṁ nāma śāsroktadevatādy-ālambaneṣv acalo bhīna-jātiyair anantaritaḥ pratya-yā-santānaḥ. ekāgratetī yam āhūḥ. ChUBh 7.6.2, VII.431. 23 upāsanena sāksāt-kṛte upāsye viṣaye śivārādau. BSBh 3.3.59, III.710. 24 śāstrārddita-dhiyopetya hā śivārādūmābhīmaṇaḥ || cīrāsanām bhaved arthe tad upāsanam ucyate. TUBhV 1.66, translation Balasubramanian 1984:237. 25 dhyānopāsana-paryāyaṁ vedana-sabdenopadesāṁ; tat-paryāyavat ca vidy-ūpāsti-dhyāyeśtvam ekasmin viṣaye vedanopadesa-para-vākyeṣu prayogād avagamyate. ŚBh 4.1.1, I.713-4. Translation Thibaut 1904:714. 26 dhyānaṁ ca cintanam. cintanaṁ ca smṛti-santati-rūpaṁ na smṛti-mātram. upāstir api tad-ekārthāḥ. ekāgra-cintā-vṛtti-nairantarye prayoga-darśanāḥ. tad-ubhayakārthāḥ asakṛt-āvṛtta-santata-smṛtir iha brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati (MU 3.2.1); ibid. Translation Thibaut, ibid.
For by meditation is understood thought directed upon one object and not disturbed by the ideas of other things. (Rāmānuja)\textsuperscript{27}

Contemplation, consisting of a continuous stream of thoughts having the form of the object contemplated, the synonyms of which are mentation (\textit{vedana}) and meditation (\textit{upāsana})… (Śrīnivāsa)\textsuperscript{28}

If any distinction at all should be drawn between the two, \textit{vidyā} seems to stand more generally for the constituted textual ideality of an Upaniṣadic meditation, whereas \textit{upāsana} indicates its facticity in practice. This, however, is a tenuous distinction and it should not be pursued consistently. Besides, several other words were used as full synonyms for \textit{vidyā} and \textit{upāsana}: \textit{dhyāna, vedana, bhāvanā, darśana, drṣṭi, vijñāna}. Bādarāyaṇa exclusively used \textit{vidyā}, but in the commentarial corpus \textit{upāsana} became the term of art, and for a good reason: we will not fail to notice the related etymology of \textit{upāsana} with \textit{upaniṣad}. The unique feature of the Upaniṣads, then, was expressed in their title: they were meditational texts. Whatever ontological differences Vedāntins have had, before the times of Maṇḍana and Śaṅkara the Upaniṣads were texts of meditation.

Let us briefly illustrate how an Upaniṣadic \textit{vidyā/upāsana} would have looked like through the aforementioned identification of the sacrificial horse and the Universe and with the help of Śaṅkara and Sureśvara. In the \textit{brāhmaṇa} the different limbs of the horse which is to be sacrificed in an Aśvamedha are identified with significant spatiotemporal elements and categories of the Vedic world: the horse’s head is dawn, its torso the year, its limbs and joints the seasons, months and fortnights, its feet—days and nights; its sight is the sun, its breath the wind and its gaping mouth the fire common to all men; its underbelly is the earth, its abdomen the intermediate space and its flanks the quarters; its bones are the stars, its flesh the clouds, its

\textsuperscript{27} ŚBh 4.1.8, I.719: \textit{dhyānaṁ hi vijñāya-pratyayāntarāvyavahitam eka-cintanam ity uktam}. Translation Thibaut 1904:721.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{dhyātin dhyeyākāra-pratyaya-pravāha-rūpasya dhyāyaty-arthasyopāsana-vedanādy-apara-paryāyasya}. VK 4.1.8, p.1200.
intestines the rivers. The description goes on, but it is already apparent that the horse is likened to categories of time and space on the one hand, and to certain elements of significance in the Vedic worldview. Note, for instance, the complex of the sacrificial fire and the sun—the earthly and heavenly fire—which are related by the wind that carries sacrificial oblations from earth to heaven. What the brāhmaṇa presented for Śaṅkara and Sureśvara was an identification of the sacrificial horse with the highest divinity of the Vedic worldview, Prajāpati, who was commonly seen as an embodiment of the totality of both the natural world and the world of the Veda, and variously called Hiranyagarbha, Virāṭ, Sūtra, kārya-brahma, Mṛtyu or death, etc. The meditation consists in visualizing these correlations: to be specific, it consists in seeing or mentally assigning these spatiotemporal and Vedic categories in or to a specific horse, one which is to be sacrificed in an actual ritual performance.

Two criteria of classifying the Upaniṣadic vidyās can be inferred from the BS. The vidyās are, first, instruments of procuring something desirable to men: “From this (vidyā) a human goal follows, because of the texts to that effect; so says Bārarāyaṇa.” They can, therefore, be classified in terms of the intended result. A second and a more basic criterion is the nature of the correspondence between the two things correlated in the meditation. This correlation can be either real or merely based on a symbol (pratīka). The meditation on the Aśvamedha sacrificial horse is a good example of the second: the head of the horse is not really dawn, but dawn is mentally imposed over the horse’s head and meditated on as such in virtue of some resemblance between the two. Śaṅkara says, for instance, that primacy is a feature both of dawn and the horse’s head, and this is a ground enough for the one to be visualized as the other. In the

29 puruṣārtho ‘taḥ śabdād iti bādarāyaṇaḥ. BS 3.4.1.
30 “Dawn, the period relating to Brahman, … is the horse’s head because of primacy; and, the head is the predominant the parts of the body;” uśā iti, brāhma muhurtaḥ uṣāḥ … sīrāḥ, prādhānyāt; sīraś ca pradhānaṁ śarīravayavānām. BĀUBh 1.1.1, VIII.9.
commentarial corpus this became known as *pratikopāsana*, symbolic meditation, the symbolic resemblance being the important factor even if an argument could be made for some real ontological relation.\textsuperscript{31} For Bādarāyaṇa, all Upaniṣadic meditations other than the symbolic belonged to a single class, which we may provisionally call meditations on Brahman, *brahma-vidyā* or *brahmopāsana*. The distinction between the two is drawn in two *sūtras*, 4.1.4 and 4.3.14, the upshot of both being that the symbol-based meditations do not have the attaining of Brahman as their result.\textsuperscript{32}

Bādarāyaṇa calls the symbolic meditations *kāmya*, optional, with a clear allusion to the optional, desire-based rituals that are performed for specific results.\textsuperscript{33} Now, they are classified further as (1) either performed within a broader ritual, or as (2) performed independently. Bādarāyaṇa’s term for the first was *aṅgāvabaddha* meditations, meditations pertaining to subsidiary elements of a ritual, performed under the rubric of consecration or embellishment and meant to either enhance the result of the ritual or bring some added value.\textsuperscript{34} The meditation on the sacrificial horse can again be adduced as an example. In the Aśvamedha sacrifice, the sacrificial horse was classified under the category of a subsidiary part, subordinate to the principal element that was the ritual action, and the whole ritual was be performed for a specific result. If the ritual, however, was accompanied by the meditation on the horse as Prajāpati as delineated above, then the horse would be embellished through that meditation and the ritual would bring for the sacrificer attainment of the highest heaven, the world of Prajāpati. The insertion of this meditation was optional, contingent on the desire of the sacrificer for another

\textsuperscript{31} See, for instance, VK on BS 3.3.58.
\textsuperscript{32} Cf. also VPS on 3.3.58, who terms these meditations *brahma-prāpti-vyatirikta-phala*, having results other than the attainment of Brahman.
\textsuperscript{33} See BS 3.3.58-64 and the commentaries thereon.
\textsuperscript{34} BS 3.3.53.
result, in the manner of the milking vessel or go-dohana which brings added value, a different result, to a ritual where otherwise an ordinary vessel was to be used. This meditation would be, thus, both kāmya and anīgāvabaddha.

Although these meditations pertained to elements subsidiary to a ritual, Vedāntins univocally refused to accept that the meditations themselves were subsidiary to the ritual with which they were associated. They were taken as units unto themselves and when combined with the respective ritual, Vedāntins made the ritual subordinate to them, insofar as the result which was expected from the complex performance was the result associated with the meditation, not the ritual. Śaṅkara and Sureśvara even claimed that the same meditation could be performed in a non-ritual context as well, as an option to the combined performance. The meditation on the Aśvamedha horse, for instance, could be performed outside of a ritual and with no horse at all. If one did not have the requisite adhikāra for an Aśvamedha, which was, we should note, a royal sacrifice, our Advaitins claimed that one could perform the same meditation not on the horse but on oneself, on one’s own head as dawn and the rest, and still attain the world of Prajāpati.

The second group of kāmya meditations can be best defined negatively, through two characteristics: (1) they were strictly Upaniṣadic meditations, that is, meditations which were not tied to ritual subsidiaries and not to be performed in a ritual context; (2) their results were, however, of the variety which ritual was thought to bring, and not the attainment of Brahman. Illustrations for these may be: “He who knows thus the wind as the child of the quarters will not mourn the loss of a son.” “He who meditates on Brahman as name obtains freedom of movement as far as name reaches.”35 Such meditations are, in fact, interspersed in the Upaniṣads alongside

35 ChU 3.15.2: sa ya etam eva vāyuṁ viśāṁ vatsaṁ veda na putra-rodaṁ rodiṁ; 7.1.5: yāvan nāmno gataṁ tatrāsyā yahā-kāma-cāro bhavati yo nāma brahmopāste. Śaṅkara, Śrīnivāsa and Bhāskara uniformly cite both of these as instances, and it seems that the intention is to illustrate both types of counterparts, Brahman or something else. In
the meditations for the attainment of Brahman, and from the two instances it is clear that they could be meditations on something either as Brahman or as some other divine principle. In either case the meditation was based on symbolic likeness, *pratīka*. When Vedāntins talk about *pratīkopāsanas*, they generally have these independent Upaniṣadic meditations in mind, and even more restrictively the meditations in which the symbolic counterpart is Brahman.\(^{36}\) It is clear, however, that the meditations on ritual subsidiaries were also understood as symbolic in nature. We may, thus, classify the *kāmya* meditations that do not end in attaining Brahman as *aṅgāvabaddhopāsana* and *pratīkopāsana* and bear in mind that in the second the meditational counterpart was either Brahman or something else. We should not fail to note that these *pratīkopāsanas* are the same or similar textual loci which in Kumārila’s second account of liberation were associated with the attaining of prosperity (*abhyudaya*).

**Brahma-vidyā**

I went into these details of classification of *vidyās* not to bother the specialist or deter the proverbial general audience from reading on, but to bring home the following point: for Bādarāyaṇa, an Upaniṣadic meditation was (1) either symbolic and optional—related to a sacrificial element or independent—and resulting in an attainment other than Brahman; or (2) a meditation on Brahman proper. Once the first were properly identified and labeled, *all* the

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\(^{36}\) See BS 4.1.4 and the commentaries thereon, all along similar lines; VK, p.1194: *pratīkopāsaneṣu sarīṣayaḥ, kim pratīkopāsaneṣv apy ātmatvenānusandhānaṁ karaṇīyaṁ, ahosvin neti? kim tāvad yuktam? karaṇīyaṁ eva, brahmopāsanatvāviśeṣād iti prāpte, “In regard to the symbolic meditations, there is the following doubt: should the meditation on the object as the Self be done in regard to the symbolic meditations as well or not? – What is the reasonable thing to do? – Surely it is to be done, because these are a species of meditations on Brahman; such is the *prima facie* view.”
remaining Upaniṣadic meditations were classified as meditations on Brahman proper, because they result in attaining Brahman.

This was essentially a negative characterization, but in 4.1.3-4 it is combined with a positive one: a *brahma-vidyā* is a meditation on Brahman as one’s Self. “As the Self, because that is what they admit and teach; but, not as a symbol, because the symbol is not the Self.”37 The commentaries, naturally, diverge in understanding the precise ontological relationship that undergirds the identification of Brahman with the Self, but we need not bother with that. It is sufficient to take what Nimbārka has to say on this:

“This is my Self” (ChU 3.14.3), thus the ancient admit. “This is your Self” (BĀU 3.4.1), that is how they instruct students. Therefore, the aspirant after liberation should meditate on the Supreme Self as one’s own Self. However, the Self is not to be intended in regard to a symbol, because the symbol is not the Self of the meditator.38

There are, in other words, texts in the Upaniṣads that identify one’s Self with Brahman, and they constitute *brahma-vidyā*; there are texts that identify something else with Brahman or something else, such as the mind as Brahman or the *udgīha* as the sun, and they are not *brahma-vidyā*.

The negative characterization, however, was more basic, and that was to accommodate one Upaniṣadic *vidyā* which did not fit the Brahman-as-the-Self paradigm. That was the famed *pañcāgni-vidyā* or the knowledge of five fires from the ChU 5.3-10 and BĀU 6.2, the two textual loci which introduce the process of rebirth in the Vedic corpus. The *pañcāgni-vidyā* was somewhat of an oddball for the BS classification, because it does not relate two distinct things so that it could be a meditation of one thing as another. It was a depiction of *sāṁsāra*, which was by some Vedāntins seen as a meditation on Brahman as an effect that is the world, but it promised the attainment of Brahman to those who know the process of rebirth through the same path

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37 ātmeti tūpagachanti, grāhayanti ca. na pratīke, na hi saḥ. BS 4.1.3-4.
38 eṣa me ātmeti pūrve upagacchanti. eṣa te ātmeti ca śiṣyān upadiśanti. ato mumukṣuṇā parama-puruṣaḥ svasyātmatvena dhīeyaḥ. pratīke tv ātmānusandhānaṁ na kāryaṁ na sa upāsitur ātmā. VPS 4.1.3-4, p.1190, 4.
which was associated with the common brahma-vidyās. Bādarāyaṇa, therefore, emphasized the “not as a symbol” principle: if a meditation is not symbolic and it promises the attainment of Brahman, it is a brahma-vidyā.\(^\text{39}\)

The attainment of Brahman was, in fact, “the higher instruction,” the constituent in virtue of which vidyā was a means of some human good: “From this [vidyā] there follows the attainment of a human good, because there is scriptural evidence to that account—thus Bādarāyaṇa.”\(^\text{40}\) The commentators have unanimously glossed the “higher instruction” as an instruction about the Supreme Self as opposed to the transmigrating enjoyer and ritual agent that the Mīmāṃsakas proposed as the domain of the Upaniṣads, and they have also unanimously selected the famous brahma-vid āpnoti param from the Taittirīya as the topical sentence of the human good referred to in the quoted sūtra. This gives us the occasion to tackle now the question of brahma-vidyā in some detail.

In terms of scriptural theology, brahma-vidyā is the textual ideality of a specific meditation on Brahman, to be reconstructed through combining the meditational details of its various iterations as well as some other elements common to all brahma-vidyās and to be applied optionally to the other brahma-vidyās in an outlined procedure, resulting eventually in the attainment of Brahman. We are already familiar with the combination of details, but let us see how all of it was supposed to work.

A representative list of prominent brahma-vidyās and their respective Upaniṣadic loci reconstructed from the BS commentaries would look like this:

- Šāndilya-vidyā in ChU 3.14 and ŠPB 10.3, with a few details in BĀU 5.6, the teaching of Šāndilya about the innermost Self which is Brahman.

\(^\text{39}\) See BS 4.3.14-15 and the commentaries thereon. Later Vedāntins reworked the pañcāgni-vidyā as a meditation on “one’s imperishable nature as having Brahman as its Self” (so Nimbārka, Śrīnivāsa, Rāmānuja), a meditation in which the object is not Brahman but the unchanging Self, but in which Brahman is eventually inserted.

\(^\text{40}\) puruṣārtho ‘taḥ, śabdād, iti bādarāyaṇaḥ. BS 3.4.1.
- **Bhūma-vidyā** in ChU 7, the teaching of Sanat-kumāra to Nārada about Brahman that is plenitude (*bhūman*).
- **Sad-vidyā** in ChU 6, the famous instruction of Uddālaka Āruṇi to his son Śvetaketu on how Being (*sat*) is everything, including the individual Self.
- **Upakosala-vidyā** in ChU 4.10-15, the teaching of Upakosala Kāmalāyana to Satyakāma Jābāla about the person in the sun and in the eye.
- **Ānandamaya-vidyā** in TU 2, otherwise also known simply as *Brahma-vidyā*, and discussing what became the essential positive nature of Brahman.
- **Vaiśvānara-vidyā** in ChU 5.11-18 and BĀU 5.9, the teaching of the king Asvapati to six householder Brahmins about the Self which is common to all.
- **Aksara-vidyā** in BĀU 3.8, Yājñavalkya’s teaching to Gārgī about the imperishable Brahman.
- **Dahara-vidyā** in ChU 8.1-6, containing the teaching about the small space in the city of Brahman that is the heart.
- **Madhu-vidyā** in BĀU 2.5, the teaching of Dadhyañc Ātharvaṇa to the two Aśvins about the brilliant immortal person within everything.
- **Pañcāgni-vidyā** in ChU 5.3-10 and BĀU 6.2, delineating the process of rebirth.

We should note that Bādarāyaṇa does not treat these individually—even their names are culled from the commentarial corpus—but establishes the principles of unity of the separate *vidyās*, the optionality of the different *brahma-vidyās*, the possible aggregation of non-*brahma-vidyās* and different exceptions to these principles.\(^{41}\)

Now, it will not escape the attention even of the resident Upaniṣadic expert that this is a bit of a medley of texts and topics. Some work had to be done not only to standardize the individual *vidyās*, but to normalize them across the board as well, so that they all would be equal meditations that bring one to Brahman. A template *brahma-vidyā* had to be worked out to which they would all conform, yet keeping their individual details in virtue of which one of them could be practiced as per one’s preferences but the result would be the same in all cases.

First of all, they would all have to aim at the attaining of Brahman through the so-called *deva-yāna* or the course of the gods (on which more below).\(^{42}\) In fact, it was precisely because of

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\(^{41}\) As I mentioned earlier, however, he does name one of the non-*brahma-vidyās*, puruṣa-vidyā, in 3.3.24, so it is inferable that by his time the corpus was already standardized in different *vidyās*.

\(^{42}\) “The scholars of *brahman* who depart life by fire, by sunshine, by day, in the bright fortnight, and during the six months after the winter solstice go to *brahman*.” Translation van Buitenen 1981:103.
the *deva-yāna* that the *pañcāgni-vidyā*, which does not even so much as mention Brahman as a counterpart to anything, made the *brahma-vidyā* cut: it promised those who know the secret of rebirth and meditate in the wilderness to ascend to the world of Brahman through the course of the gods.\(^{43}\) The course, on the other hand, was not mentioned, for instance, in the *sāndilya-vidyā, madhu-vidyā, vaiśvānara-vidyā*, so there it had to be inserted. It *could* be inserted because there are direct statements from *śruti* and *smṛti* which associate knowing Brahman with ascending to Brahman via the divine path that are taken as generally applicable whenever someone is a knower of Brahman, for instance *Bhagavad-Gītā* 8.24. Thus, ascending through the course of the gods becomes a part of all *brahma-vidyās*. By the principle of reciprocity, knowing Brahman is inserted in the *pañcāgni-vidyā*: if someone ascends through the *deva-yāna*, surely, he must be a knower of Brahman.\(^{44}\)

A second thing to normalize was Brahman itself, and that was necessary to make sure that the object of meditation *and* the attained result were the same. A single conception of Brahman was to permeate the *vidyās*, and so the notion of Brahman had to be standardized through inserting Brahman’s “essential characteristics,” culled from a few texts where Brahman is defined. First to be inserted were Brahman’s positive characteristics, which Bādarāyaṇa calls “bliss and the rest.”\(^{45}\) This primarily referred to the well-known characterization of Brahman as Being, knowledge, limitless, Bliss, established on the basis of the *Taittirīya* (*satyaṁ jñānam anantam brahma; ānando brahma*).\(^{46}\) That was, in any case, natural, because the *Taittirīya* account provided the paradigmatic *brahma-vidyā* (called, in fact, simply *brahma-vidyā*), since it

\(^{43}\) ChU 5.10.1-2.
\(^{44}\) See on this *BS* 3.3.31: *aniyamaḥ, sarveśāṁ, avirodhaḥ, śabdānumānabhyāṁ, “No restriction, [the course belongs to] all [meditations]; there is no contradiction, through the evidence of scripture and inference (*smṛti*).” The commentaries are quite unanimous, again.
\(^{45}\) *ānandādayaḥ pradhānasya, “Bliss and the rest of the principal.”* *BS* 3.3.11. The commentaries are again mutually coherent.
\(^{46}\) *TU* 2.1 and 3.6.6.
gave the paradigmatic injunction—*brahma-vid ānotti param*—that justified all *vidyā-upāsana* as a means of human good, the essential definition of Brahman and most of the technical vocabulary (such as *vidvān*, one who has known Brahman, in effect the old term for what became *jīvan-mukta*.)

A second set of characteristics of Brahman to be inserted universally in *brahma-vidyās* were Brahman’s negative characteristics taken explicitly from Yājñavalkya’s teachings to Gārgī:

That, Gārgī, is the imperishable, and Brahmins refer to it like this—it is neither coarse nor fine; it is neither short nor long; it has neither blood nor fat; it is without shadow or darkness; it is without air or space; it is without contact; it has no taste or smell; it is without sight or hearing; it is without speech or mind; it is without energy, breath or mouth; it is beyond measure; it has nothing within it or outside of it; it does not eat anything; and no one eats it.  

Such insertion should prevent mistaking Brahman for any of the finite beings that are its perishable products.  

Both insertions were justified by an appeal to a principle given in the MS, which stipulates that all characteristics essential to a primary element in a ritual follow that primary wherever it may appear.

With these two additions, the concept of Brahman for the purposes of meditation would be complete, and other characteristics should be kept for the individual *vidyās*. Bādarāyaṇa was, however, particularly alarmed by the absence of those positive characteristics that were prefaced by “true,” such as having true desires and resolves that we saw in the 8th *Chāndogya*, in Yājñavalkya’s teaching to Janaka. Yājñavalkya tied the achieving of liberation to giving up all

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48 This is based on BS 3.3.33: aḵṣara-diyāṁ tv avarodhaḥ sāmānya-tad-bhāvābhīyāṁ aupāsada-vat tad uktam, “Inclusion of the notions of imperishable, because of generality and its being that, like in the case of the Upasad sacrifice, that has been said.” The commentaries are again remarkably on the same line.
49 MS 3.3.9: guṇa-mukhya-vyātikrame tad-arthatvān mukhyena veda-saṁyogaḥ, “When the primary and the subsidiary diverge [belong to a different Veda], because it [the subsidiary] is for the purpose of that [the primary], the relation to the Veda is through the primary.”
50 See BS 3.3.34.
desires, but Bādarāyaṇa wanted the true desires to be inserted in that meditation on the pretext of its being the same meditation as the one from the Chāndogya.\textsuperscript{51} We should note that for now, and I will have more to say about it later.

Conspicuously absent from this concept of Brahman is an emphasis on its causal role in relation to the world, which was so prominently placed at the very opening of the BS: “Brahman is that from which proceeds the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world.”\textsuperscript{52} This absence is a real giveaway of what brahma-vidyā was about. Its aim was some attainment through self-assimilation. Through meditating on Brahman as one’s Self, one becomes Brahman in all respect, except for the ability to interfere with the creation of the world. So, Brahman’s agency in creation was not emphasized in the constructed meditational concept not because it was not deemed essential to Brahman’s nature, but because it was useless for the meditational aspiration. Of course, it would have been present in many vidyās that talk about it, but its role would have facilitated the correlation of the meditational counterparts, not Brahman’s role in creation. We will have more to say on this when we talk about the state of liberation.

So, once the different vidyās have thus been normalized, whatever is left as characteristics of Brahman in the individual vidyās is peculiar to them, not to be combined further. Thus, given that a brahma-vidyā correlates Brahman to the individual Self, its full-fledged formulation would have looked something like this:

\[(P)(R,S)\text{Brahman which is Being, knowledge, bliss, infinite, imperishable and thus different from its products, is my (Q)Self. [BV]}\textsuperscript{53}\]

\textsuperscript{51} kāmādītaratra tatra cāyatanādibhyaḥ, “(True) desires (should be added) elsewhere, and those there (to be added here), because of (sameness of the) abode.” BS 3.3.38. The commentators are again in agreement, and Śaṅkara follows suit, before drawing the qualified/supreme Brahman distinction as he typically does when he has a problem with the straightforward meaning.\textsuperscript{52} BS 1.1.2.

\textsuperscript{53} I should like to emphasize that this formulation is not meant to be a logical notation expressing a relation, but a template containing variables.
The predicate notations would stand for elements which are peculiar to the specific brahma-vidyā. P and Q would express the specific correlation. For instance, in the Śāṇḍilya-vidyā the relation would be between Brahman that is “larger than the earth, larger than the intermediate region, larger than the sky, larger even than all these worlds put together,” and the Self “of mine that lies deep within my heart, smaller than a grain of rice or barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller even than a millet grain or a millet kernel.” R and S would signify features of Brahman characteristic to the individual vidyā, which could be of several types. Some would be considered specific characteristics of Brahman, but restricted to the vidyās where they are mentioned. Again, in the śāṇḍilya these would be “having true desires, true resolves, all actions, all smells and tastes” and the like. Other could be accidental properties that should facilitate concentration. For instance, in the brahma-vidyā of the TU, Brahman whose essence is bliss is described as having a body “whose head is pleasure, right plank delight, left plank thrill and torso joy.” Because Brahman cannot be a compounded entity, these are not real properties, but are meant to facilitate concentration. There may be other details to work out in the individual vidyās, but the template would have looked something like that.

Because the attainment as their integral part in all of them is the same—Brahman through the deva-yāna—only one should be practiced by an individual practitioner: whereas the kāmya meditations which bring attainments of the same kind as ritual can be combined as one desires

\[55\] TU 2.5.
\[56\] priya-śirastvādy-aprāptir upacayāpacayau hi bhede, “Non-obtainment (in the universal meditational concept of Brahman of qualities) such as ‘having pleasure as its head,’ because addition and subtraction (are possible) in (the context of) duality.” BS 3.3.12.
(samuccaya), the more the merrier, one brahma-vidyā would bring the same attainment as any other, and therefore they were theorized as options to one another (vikalpa).57

The Practice of Meditation on Brahman

Now the question is, how was a brahma-vidyā or brahmopāsana to be practiced? While Bādarāyaṇa clearly talks only about meditation as the means of attaining Brahman, all Vedāntin commentators have understood brahma-vidyā as consisting of three limbs. The topical text which became canonical for this division came from Yājñavalkya’s teachings to Maitreyī: ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ, “The Self, honey, is to be seen: it is to be heard about, pondered over and meditated upon.”58 Vedāntins have universally interpreted the first gerundive, draṣṭavyaḥ, as stating the goal, that one should eventually achieve a vision of Brahman, whereas the other three as expressing the procedure: that goal can be accomplished through instruction in scripture, presumably a specific text delineating a vidyā (śravaṇa); reflecting on the meaning of what was heard (manana); and meditation proper on Brahman as the constructed meditational object (nididhyāsana).59

Two related points are important in this regard. First, these three were supposed to be practiced sequentially: one hears from scripture first, clarifies the meaning of what was heard, and finally meditates. In terms of soteriological causality, the contribution of each preceding limb is harnessed by the following. Second, the first two are in general not discussed in pre-Śaṅkara Vedānta at all or very vaguely, from what we know from Maṇḍana and Śaṅkara’s and Sureśvara’s engagement with opponents: meditation proper was the means. Bādarāyaṇa’s sole

57 vikalpo ‘viśiṣṭa-phalatvāt. kāmyās tu yathā-kāmaṁ samuccīyeran na vā pūrva-hetv-abhāvāt, “There is option, because the result is the same. But, the optional-volitional meditations may be combined or not promiscuously, because the previous reason does not obtain.” BS 3.3.57-8.
58 BĀU 2.4.5 and 4.5.6.
59 The second is Maṇḍana’s preferred term.
concern was with meditation, and *darśana* as the goal and *dhyāna* as the means were essentially the same thing, a vision of Brahman achieved through practice. Srinivasa Chari’s observation may be profitably quoted on this point: “Three stages are mentioned as preparatory to the vision of Brahman (*darśana*). These are *śravana* or hearing, *manana* or reflection and *nididhyāsana* or meditation. … According to this teaching, *nididhyāsana* or *upāsanā* is the direct means to mokṣa, whereas *śravana* and *manana* are subsidiary or *aṅga* to *upāsanā*.”\(^{60}\) As we will see in the next chapter, Śaṅkara will have dramatically different ideas in this regard.

We have, thus, zeroed in on meditation proper. Bādarāyaṇa had several things to say on the practice of meditation. First, in terms of type of awareness, the meditation on Brahman was a fixed concentration on a notion or an idea: “Because meditation is of the nature of concentration.”\(^{61}\) This “fixed concentration” was a persistent feature of Vedāntic characterizations of meditation. We saw some of the definitions of *vidyā/upāsana* in the beginning, but it may be worthwhile to revisit a few: it is a repetition of the same thought or notion (Bhāskara: *samāna-pratayāvṛtti*); it is a representational flow, focused mentation (Rāmānuja: *smṛti-santati-rūpa*; *ekāgra-cinta-ṛtti*); a continuous flow of a uniform notion/thought of the meditational object (Śrīnivāsa: *dhyeyākāra-pratyaya-pravāha-rūpasya*); uniform stream of thought called contemplation, cultivation, meditation (Maṇḍana: *tat-santānavatī dhyāna-bhāvanopāsanādi-śabda-vācyā*).

In terms of content, the meditational thought that one would have mulled over would have been a self-identification with Brahman through a variation of the [BV] proposition that I formulated above.\(^{62}\) As was generally characteristic of meditation in South Asia, meditation on

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\(^{60}\) Chari 2002:283.


\(^{62}\) BS 4.1.3, referenced above.
Brahman was to be practiced strictly in a sitting posture, but there was no restriction in terms of place: it was to be practiced “wherever concentration is possible.” This is a clear giveaway that the paradigmatic meditator on Brahman would have been a householder.

Along the same lines, this meditation was supposed to be accompanied by ritual and other religious practices, which included the daily Agnihotra and practices such as charity and austerity for the individual āśramas, as well as cultivation of certain virtues for everyone. We saw how Mīmāṁsakas struggled to justify why ritual had to be performed by everyone, and the best they could offer was prevention of bad karma. Bādarāyaṇa, on the other hand, proposed that ritual along with one’s duties could also foster meditation when performed in the pursuit of liberation. The individual āśramas were supposed to continue performing their individual duties under the provision that they are conducive to liberation, which provision was traced to BĀU 4.4.22: “It is he that Brahmans seek to know by means of vedic recitation, sacrifice, gift-giving, austerity and fasting.” Charity was the duty of the householders and austerity and fasting of the renunciants, while sacrifice consisting of the daily Agnihotra was to be performed by everyone, the only exemption being “one Vedic branch some of whose members never light

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63 asīnāḥ sambhavāt, “(Meditation should be practiced while) seated, because it is possible (only in that way).” BS 4.1.7. yatraiṅkāgratā tatrāvīṣeṣāt, “Wherever concentration (is possible), there, since there is no specification.” 4.1.11.  
64 agniḥotrādi tu tat-kāryāyaiva tad-dārṣanāt, “But, Agnihotras and the rest are for that effect, because that is seen.” BS 4.1.16. Cf. VPS thereon, p.1214: vidyayāgnihotra-dāna-tapa-ādīnāṁ svāśrama-karmaṇāṁ nivrūtī-śāṅkā nāsti vidyāḥ-poṣakatvād anuṣṭeyān eva yajñādi-śrutaḥ vidyotpādakatva-dārṣanāt, “There is no question of ceasing the duties of one’s āśrama, such as Agnihotra, charity, austerity, etc., through meditation. They must be observed because they nurture meditation, because we see in the ritual texts that they give rise to knowledge.” Also, BS 3.4.33: sahaṅkāritvena ca, “And, as being assistants.”  
65 sarvāpekṣā ca yajñādi-śrutā śva-vat, “(Meditation) depends on all (āśrama duties), as per the text about sacrifice and the rest, in the manner of the horse.” BS 3.4.26. The horse is interpreted differently, but Nimbārka’s is the simplest: “as one depends on a horse for going.”  
up the fire.” The reference is to Vājasaneyin renunciants who would take up renunciation without ever marrying.

Along with their āśrama duties, all who aspired after liberation were expected to cultivate certain virtues which were considered *enjoined*, in the BĀU immediately following the previous provision: “A man who knows this, therefore, becomes calm, composed, cool, patient and collected.” Calm, self-control, tolerance, etc., thus, became mandatory virtues, and along with the āśrama duties they were subsidiaries to meditation. In fact, Bādarāyaṇa and the commentators were typically Mīmāṃsīc in turning the tables on Mīmāṃsā: ritual and the āśrama duties were, really, primarily for achieving liberation by assisting meditation, but mandatory *even* for those who do not aspire after liberation, under the different provision that they are to be practiced as long as one lives, just as the *kratvartha khādira* wood or yoghurt can become *puruṣārtha* through the process which we discussed.

“You want yoghurt? I’ll give you some yoghurt!”

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67 kāma-kāreṇa caie, “One branch [say that knowers of Brahma give up action] voluntarily. BS 3.4.15.

68 “It was when they knew this that men of old did not desire offspring, reasoning: ‘Ours is this self, and it is our world. What then is the use of offspring for us?’ So they gave up the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, and the desire for worlds, and undertook the mendicant life. The desire for sons, after all, is the same as the desire for wealth, and the desire for wealth is the same as the desire for worlds—both are simply desires.” BĀU 4.4.22.

69 śama-damāy-upetab svāt tathāpi tu tad-vidhes tad-aṅgatayā teśām avaśyānuṣṭeyatvāt, “Still, he should be possessed of calm, self-control, etc., since they are to be practiced mandatorily on the strength of being subsidiary to meditation as per the injunction.” BS 3.4.27.

70 vihitatvāt cāśrama-karmāpi, “Because they are enjoined even as āśrama-duties.” BS 3.4.32. Cf. VPS on 32-3, p.1141-3: yad vidyāṅgādi tad anumukṣunā cāśrama-karmatvenāpy anuṣṭheyaṁ yāvaj-jīvam agnihotram juhoti iti vihitatvāt. vidyā-sahakārītvenāpi vividisantī yajñena ity-ādinā yajñāder vihitatvān mumukṣunām apy anuṣṭheyaṁ samyoga-prthaktvenobhayārthatva-sambhavāt. “Sacrifice etc., which are subsidiaries to meditation, should also be performed be the one who does not aspire after liberation, through the injunction ‘He offers Agnihotra as long as he lives.’ Since they are enjoined as subsidiary to meditation in the text ‘Brahmins seek to know it through sacrifice,’ etc., aspirants after liberation should perform them as well, since that is possible by the rule of conjunction and separation [MS 4.3.5]."
Finally, meditation on Brahman was supposed to be practiced one’s whole life.\textsuperscript{72} This last stipulation is immediately relevant to considering the results of meditation, as it answered the question, what should one do when the meditational practice has borne fruit? The question was prompted by the assumption that there comes a point in time during one’s life when the meditation has become perfect, at which stage one becomes a vidvān, a knower of Brahman.\textsuperscript{73} The commentators do not have much to say about what this achievement was supposed to look like: Brahman becomes manifest (Nimbārka: vyajyate; Śrīnivāsa: brahma vyaktaiḥ bhavati; Rāmānuja: asya sāksat-kāraḥ) in meditation which is of the nature of devotion (Nimbārka: bhakti-yoge dhyāne; Śaṅkara: bhakti-dhyāna-prāṇidhānādy-anuṣṭānam; Bhāskara: bhaktiḥ, dhyānādīnā paricaryā; Rāmānuja: samyak-prīṇane bhakti-rūpāpanne; Śrīnivāsa: nididhyāśana-lakṣāne bhakti-yoge). A lexeme that is characteristically used is “steady recollection” (dhruvānusmṛti),\textsuperscript{74} which implies that once one has experienced Brahman, such awareness had to be maintained till the end of life—one is still in saṅsāra up until reaching brahma-loka—for which purpose the practice of meditation had to continue till one’s final breath, along with Agnihotra and religious duties that nurture it. Meditation, thus, became something like the principal nitya-karma for the aspirants after liberation.

**Attaining Brahman**

What happens after the vision of Brahman when one has become vidvān, on the other hand, is depicted in some detail. First of all, one becomes immediately free from the past bad karma

\textsuperscript{72} āvṛttir asakṛd upadeśāt, “(There should be) repetition (of meditation) more than once, because such is the instruction.” BS 4.1.1. ā prayāṇāt tatrāpi drśtam, “Until death, for it is seen in scriptures (that it is done) even then.” BS 4.1.13.

\textsuperscript{73} api saṁrādhane prayāsānānumānabhyāṁ, “And, (Brahman is revealed) in perfect meditation, because of (the evidence) of perception and inference [that is, śruti and smṛti].” BS 3.2.24.

\textsuperscript{74} See, for instance, VK on 4.1.13.
which has not started bearing fruits, whereas the new karma which one would otherwise create
does not stick.\textsuperscript{75} The past good karma is also gone, either immediately or at death, without one
having to experience any of it, but one must live through the karma that has already started
bearing fruits.\textsuperscript{76} The text justifying this is the famous passage from the ChU: “There is a delay
for me here only until I am freed; but then I will arrive.”\textsuperscript{77}

On this point Śaṅkara gives the potter’s wheel instance of karmic inertia from the SK that
we saw in Kumārila’s first account and which famously posited the distinction between
liberation while living and final liberation, but that is rejected head-on by Rāmānuja and rightly
so.\textsuperscript{78} It is clear that for Bādarāyaṇa there was no such thing as liberation before death, and even
little after that, as we shall see in a bit. In terms of practice, everything was supposed to remain
the same as well—one had to continue with meditation, with ritual and with one’s religious
practices for life. After all, the topical text on the destruction of karma was ChU 5.24.3: “When
someone offers the daily fire sacrifice with this knowledge, all the bad things in him are burnt up
like a reed stuck into a fire.”\textsuperscript{79} Bādarāyaṇa will have an additional intervention on this matter, but
we will see that later.

\textsuperscript{75} tad-adhigame uttara-pūrvādyayor aśleṣa-vināśau tad-vyapadeśāt, “On the attaining of that, the anterior and
posterior karma is destroyed and does not stick, because there is such a statement.” BS 4.1.13.
\textsuperscript{76} itarasyāpy evam-asamśleṣa pāte tu. anārabdha-kārye eva tu pūrve tad-avadheḥ, “The other kind [good karma] also
does not stick, on the fall. Only [that karma] whose effects has not begun, because till that.” BS 4.1.14-15. There is a
disagreement what pāte tu means: Nimbārka and Śrīnivāsa: good karma does not stick equally as bad, and on the fall
of the body one is liberated; Rāmānuja: good karma drops on the fall of the body, because it facilitates meditation.
\textsuperscript{78} See the comments on BS 4.1.15. On Rāmānuja, see also Fort 1998:77-83. A most informative discussion on the
origins of the doctrine of jīvan-mukti is available in Slaje 2007:127-130.
\textsuperscript{79} Translation Olivelle 1998:245.
In fact, the concern was more how to keep in some way the reality of the good and bad karma which one is freed from at the attainment of Brahman: such karma is not really destroyed as previously claimed, but redistributed to one’s friends and enemies respectively.\footnote{ato \textit{‘}nyāpi hy ekeśam ubhayoḥ, “For (there are is also karma) other than this (obligatory) of both (good and bad kind), (according to the text) of one (Vedic branch).” BS 4.1.17. The branch is not identified and the text which all commentators except Nimbārka quote is \textit{tasya putrā dāyam upayanti suhṛdaḥ sādhu-kṛtyāṁ dviṣaṇṭaḥ pāpa-kṛtyāṁ}, which assigns the karma to one’s progeny. Nimbārka: suhṛdaḥ sādhu-kṛtyāṁ dviṣaṇṭaḥ pāpa-kṛtyāṁ. I haven’t found the reference for either, but the most famous instance of this theme is Kauśītaki \textit{Upaniṣad} 1.4: \textit{tat sukṛta-duṣkṛte dhunute. tasya priyā jñātayaḥ sukṛtam upayanti. aprīyā duṣkṛtam. “Then he shakes of his merits and demerits. His dear relatives obtain his merits, those who are not dear his demerits.” Translation Bodewitz 2002:16. Bodewitz gives few additional references (n.38). The theme of transfer of karma is, otherwise, a common feature of Hinduism, on which see Doniger O’Flaherty 1980a:10-13.}

Finally, when death comes, one’s cognitive functions, life-breath and the subtle elements forming the subtle body progressively withdraw and gather around the Self, which at that point enters the heart and can exit through any of the channels that we saw in the 8\textsuperscript{th} of ChU in Kumārila’s second account.\footnote{tac-cheṣa-gaty-anusmṛti-yogāc ca hārdanugṛhitāḥ śatādhikyāḥ, “Through the application of remembering the course that is a subordinate element to that \textit{[the brahma-vidyā] (and the knower) favored by the one dwelling in the heart (departs) through the hundred and first (channel).}” BS 4.2.16.} He who performed solely ritual throughout life takes any of the lower channels and gradually attains the world of the forefathers, \textit{pitr-loka}, through the course of the forefathers known also as the southern course (\textit{pitr-yāna, daśaśīya\textit{yana}}), and eventually returns to earth when the good karma has been exhausted. For the \textit{vidvān}, on the other hand, the top channel lightens up, the one forming a continuum with the sun-rays, at which point begins his ascension through the course of the gods, known also as the northern or upward course (\textit{deva-yāna, uttara\textit{yana}}).\footnote{The best historical account known to me is that of Karmarkar 1925.} He never returns.

We don’t need to investigate the history of the idea of the two courses.\footnote{The best historical account known to me is that of Karmarkar 1925.} However, since they are mentioned in several Upaniṣadic passages, for Bādarāyaṇa it was important to standardize the \textit{deva-yāna} because it formed an integral part of the \textit{paradigmatic brahma-vidyā}
as the course through which all knowers of Brahman achieve Brahman, lest someone conclude that there are multiple courses corresponding to different attainments. The course of the gods delineates the progress of the knower of Brahman from entering the channel that goes from the top of the head and all the way to brahma-loka, through a medley of intermediate stages that are of a very heterogeneous character, such as “flame,” “the waxing fortnight of the moon,” “lightning,” various divinities, the sun and the moon etc. Karmarkar suggests that originally the deva-yāna referred strictly to multiple paths through which the gods were considered to travel to earth to attend sacrifices and then back to heaven. The paths of the gods were described in superlative attributes suggestive of light and increase of power (light, day, summer, the waxing moon, etc.) and leading to different divinities, but then the description assumed a literal sense in the Upaniṣads. For Bādarāyaṇa they became guiding agents of some kind, a specification which was, according to the commentators, supposed to preclude the possibility that they be interpreted as road signs or rest areas where one could refresh, gas up or have a little fun.

The manner of standardizing the course of ascending to the world of Brahman is, according to the commentators, through “combining the details mentioned in one place with all the rest,” in the same way in which “the details of meditations referring to the same object in different places are combined in one.” This can be done because “the course to the world of

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84 Important loci in which the path is discussed, or which are otherwise relevant include: ChU 4.15-5; 5.10.1-2; ChU 8.5-6; BĀU 5.10; 6.2.15; 4.3-4; KṣU 1.3; MU 1.2.11. The path is also mentioned in the ŚB 2.1.3.1-3 and BhG 8.24-5. Cf. Rāmānuja on 4.3.1, p. 744, expressing the prima facie view: aniyama iti. kutaḥ? aneka-rūpatvān nairapekṣyatvāc ca, “There is no standardization, because they are different in form and independent on one another.”

85 Karmarkar 1925:461.

86 ativāhikās tal-liṅgāt, “They are conductors, because there is such an indication.” BS 4.3.4. Cf. VK p. 1278: tatra mārga-cīnha-bhūtāḥ bhavantu, vrksa-parvatādi-vat … bhoga-bhūmaya vā bhavantu, “They could be road signs, like trees or mountains, … or places of pleasure.” Likewise, Rāmānuja, Bhāskara and Śaṅkara, who is characteristically most elaborate.
Brahman is the same, and different texts simply refer to it by mentioning a few of its characteristics.\(^87\)

And, when all the details are worked out, the course should look like this. Once the knower of Brahman hits the top channel, he mounts the sun rays, which constitute the highway all the way to the sun. It does not matter if he dies by day or night, in summer or winter, because sunrays are there at night as evidenced by the fact that it is hot, while in winter they are just “overpowered by frost” but still there.\(^88\) The first conductor that takes the \textit{deva-yāna} itinerant is flame or light \textit{(arciḥ)}, which in the original accounts stood simply for the cremation fire. Flame hands him over to a series of conductors identified by temporal names: “day,” “the waxing fortnight,” “the six months when the sun travels north” and “the year.” From the “year” he reaches the world of the gods, specifically of Vāyu the god of air, and from then on to the sun, moon, and lightning. From that point on, “a non-human person” takes him and leads him all the way to the world of Brahman,\(^89\) but successively assisted by Varuṇa, Indra and Prajāpati. When he reaches the world of Brahman, that is the end of \textit{sāṁsāra}.\(^90\)

Now the question presents itself, what is this world of Brahman and which Brahman does the knower of Brahman attain? We saw in Kumārila’s second account how the ChU described

\(^{87}\) BS 4.3.1; VK, p.1268: \textit{tasmāt sarvāsu śrutiṣu sarveṣām anyatroktānāṁ parvaṇām anyatropasāṁhareṇa sarva-viśeṣaṇa-viśiṣto ‘rcir-ādi-mārga eka eva pratipadyata iti siddham}. ŚBh, p.744: \textit{vidyā-guṇopasamhāra-vad anyatroktānāṁ anyatropasamhāraḥ kriyate}. BSbh, III.822: \textit{ekaiva tv eṣā śṛtiḥ aneka-viśeṣaṇā brahma-loka-prapadanī kvacit kenacit viśeṣaṇopalaksiteti vadāmaḥ}.

\(^{88}\) \textit{raśmy-anusārī. niśi neti cen na sambandhasya yāvad-deha-bhāvītādv darśayati ca. atāś cāyane ‘pi daksīne, “Following the sunrays. If it be said, ‘but not at night,’ then no, because the relation (of the knower with his karma) lasts only as long as the body, as scripture shows. Therefore, also during the southern course of the sun.”} BS 4.2.17-19. VK, p.1256: \textit{rātrāv api raśmayo dehe aṣṇopalambhān niścīyante, hemante tu tuśāra-nikarābhībhavād anupalabdhīḥ}.

\(^{89}\) \textit{tat puruṣo ‘mānavaḥ, sa etān brahma gamayati}. ChU 5.10.2.

\(^{90}\) \textit{tad-apīteḥ sāṁsāra-yavapadesāt, “Because of the designation ‘sāṁsāra’ until entering that.”} BS 4.2.8. VK, p.1268: \textit{apītir brahma-bhāvāptiḥ, sācirādikayā śṛtyā deśa-viśeṣaṇī gatvā bhavati, tad arvāg deha-sambandha-rūpa-sāṁsārasya vyapadesāt}. "Entering means attaining the nature of Brahman, and this takes place when one has attained a particular region through the path beginning with light. Prior to that, the soul is subject to transmigratory existence," Likewise, Rāmānuja.
brahma-loka: it was a place of heavenly delights. It was the Kauśītaki Upaniṣad, however, commonly referred to on this point by the commentators, which gave the most graphic description, and we may summarize what it had to say with profit.\footnote{This is found in the first book of the Upaniṣad, specifically chapters 3 through 7.} Once the knower of Brahman passes on from the world of Prajāpati towards brahma-loka, five hundred celestial nymphs dispatched by Brahman, a few of which are individually named, greet him with garlands, lotions, cosmetic powders, clothes, and fruits. His first stop is at a lake by the name of Āra, which he must cross with his mind, and if his knowledge is imperfect he drowns there. A watchman greets him next and he comes to a river by the name of Vījarā, which he also must cross with his mind: should he succeed, this is the exact point at which his saṁsāra ends.

He then arrives at the tree Ilya, and the fragrance of brahman permeates him. Then he arrives at the plaza Śālajya, and the flavor of brahman permeates him. Then he arrives at the palace Aparājīta, and the radiance of brahman permeates him. Then he arrives near the doorkeepers, Indra and Prajāpati, and they flee from him. Then he arrives at the hall Vibhu, and the glory of brahman permeates him.\footnote{KṣU 1.5, translation Olivelle 1998:329-31.}

After some more heavenly adventures, he finally meets Brahman who sits on a throne, and presents himself before him. On Brahman’s question: “Why are you?” he replies: “You are the Self of all beings, and I am who you are.”\footnote{It is reassuring to learn that Brahman, when you meet him on his throne at liberation, asks questions in Serbian.} After some more chitchat, Brahman finally tells him: “You’ve truly attained my world, Mr. X, it is yours.”\footnote{bhūtasya bhūtasya tvam ātmāsi. yas tvam asi so ‘ham asmi. KṣU 1.6.}

Now, already by the time of Bādarāyaṇa such descriptions have not been agreeable to all Vedāntins, and so there appears the question, to which Brahman does the liberated Self go to via the path of the gods. A certain Bādari is reported to have advanced the view that the vidvān is lead to that Brahman which is the effect, kārya-brahma. This in later Vedānta became

\footnote{tam āha āpo vai khalu me loko ‘yaṁ te ‘śāv iti. KṣU 1.7.}
synonymous with the *saguṇa* Brahman or Hiranyagarbha/Prajāpati, corresponding to Brahmā the demiurge of the universe of the Purāṇic tradition, and at the same time the embodiment of the universe identified as *saṁsāra* and the highest deity of Vedic ritualism. I associate this development with the tradition of the *Brhad-Āranyaka* (on which more later). Since Brahman is really omnipresent, Bādari claimed that actions such as motion and attainment are not possible in relation to it, and therefore the ultimate endpoint of the path of the gods is Prajāpati, who can be named Brahman on the account of being the firstborn and closest to Brahman.⁹⁶ The dominant *Chāndogya* account involving going to *brahma-loka* was, however, accommodated by the invention of the doctrine of gradual liberation that was so influential in later Advaita and in forms of Bhedābheda: at the end of the universe, Hiranyagarbha himself is liberated and along with him the *deva-yāna* itinerant attains the supreme Brahman.⁹⁷ This view was opposed by Jaimini the *Chāndogya* master, who claimed that the supreme Brahman is attained by those who meditate on it, because that is the primary meaning of the word *brahma*.⁹⁸

Bādarāyaṇa disagreed with both, claiming that both accounts have problems. It was wrong to start from a supreme vs. effected Brahman distinction and then decide who goes where or at all: the significant distinction was between symbolic and non-symbolic meditations. If one’s meditation was not based on a symbolic representation, one would attain Brahman even if such meditation was on the effected Brahman or *saṁsāra*, as in the case of those who meditate by means of the *pañcāgni-vidyā*. On the other hand, claiming that going to the supreme Brahman makes no sense jeopardized those texts that do talk about attaining the supreme or the highest

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⁹⁶ kāryāṁ bādarir asya gaty-upapatteḥ. sāmīpyāḥ tu tad-vyadeśah, “To (Brahman which is) the effect, says Bādari, because going makes sense in regard to him. Because of proximity he bears that name (Brahman).” BS 4.3.7, 8. ⁹⁷ kāryātyaye tad-adhyakṣena sahātaḥ param abhidhānāt. BS 4.3.9. ⁹⁸ paraṁ jaiminir mukhyatvāt, “The supreme (Brahman, says) Jaimini, because of (its) being the primary meaning.” BS 4.3.11.
light. Bādarāyaṇa was, in other words, uncompromisingly theological in his approach: look at the texts, gentlemen, we are in the sphere of the Veda!

The Self in Liberation

Liberation, thus, meant becoming Brahman in some sense, but there remained the task of specifying what that precisely meant, and of answering the questions that were peculiar to Vedic theology. Did liberation involve attaining a novel state of affairs desirable to men, as in Mīmāṃsā? If so, how could such a state be eternal, and what was the role of desire in its pursuit? What was the experience of liberation precisely like?

Now, we saw that the principal element in a Vedic ritual was the action of sacrificing or offering, and the good which was desirable to man was ultimately the result of that principal element. The goal of the Mīmāṃsakas in advancing such a theory was to remove any contingency that could have occurred because of a personal whim. No human or divine factor ought to have a say whether one will get a result or not: if the action was done properly and all the contingencies were accounted for, the result had to follow just as in any mundane enterprise

99 apratīkālambanān nayaṭi bādarāyaṇa ubhayatā doṣāt, “He [the non-human person] leads those whose meditation does not depend on symbols, thus Bādarāyaṇa. Because both views are faulty.” BS 4.3.14.

100 Śaṅkara wanted Bādari’s view to be the siddhānta, but that is a clearly not the case. Cf. Nakamura 1983:388: “Śaṅkara holds that the theory of Bādari in the Brahma-sūtra IV.3.7-11 is the established theory (siddhānta). Of course, this is not correct as an interpretation of the Sūtra, but the fact that Śaṅkara would go so far as to attempt an impossible interpretation and conclude that Bādari’s view was the final one, should perhaps be adequately noted.” A most useful and learned discussion on the three views is available in Ghate 1981:145-49, who thinks that sūtras 4.3.15-6, which present Bādarāyaṇa’s view, form a separate adhikaraṇa that concerns the question “who is lead to Brahman,” whereas sūtras 4.3.7-14, presenting Bādari’s and Jaimini’s view, ask the question about the destination, in which case Jaimini’s view is the siddhānta. I don’t find this correction necessary, but it really amounts to semantics rather than any substantial distinction. It is clear that Bādarāyaṇa wants the destination to be the highest Brahman, but his concern is to affirm that it is not the case that only those who meditate on such Brahman attain to it, because such a view would jeopardize the pañcāgni-vidyā which promises the same attainment as the regular brahma-vidyās.
such as agriculture.\textsuperscript{101} This brought with itself the problem of impermanency: the ritual action is an action, and the results produced by action are not permanent. As the \textit{Chāndogya} put it, “as here in this world the possession of a territory won by action comes to an end, so in the hereafter a world won by merit comes to an end.”\textsuperscript{102} Ritual was also problematic in the specifically Indian understanding of permanence: it proceeded in the manner of combining elements to produce a final result, and things that are got by compounding can be broken apart. The \textit{Mundaka’s} famous diatribe against ritual was along these lines: “Examining the world \textit{piled up} through ritual, a Brahmin should become cognitively disengaged with it: what is not made cannot be got through what is made.”\textsuperscript{103}

We also saw that \textit{vidyā} as a unit was constructed in the image of ritual, with an injunction, details of procedure, etc. Bādarāyaṇa, however, thoroughly reevaluated the category of \textit{pradhāna} and replaced against Jaimini the principal factor in any Vedic undertaking, ritualistic or meditational, with Brahman.\textsuperscript{104} Brahman became the court of final jurisdiction at which the enterprise is judged. The reasoning behind this was simple: Brahman is the repository of all desires which one could possibly obtain through the performance of ritual, and all its intentions come to pass by necessity: \textit{satya-kāma} and \textit{satya-saṅkalpa}. Brahman is eternal, and it is also one’s Self, to be realized through meditation. If one could become Brahman, one would obtain both all desires and the requisite permanence at the same time.

The bedrock of the idea of \textit{brahma-vidyā}, thus, was that Brahman is the Self—it is the higher Self in virtue of which Upaniṣadic meditations are instrumental to the bringing of a

\textsuperscript{101} Cf. VPS on BS 3.2.40, p.914.: \textit{dharmāṁ phala-hetuṁ jaiminir manyate, kṛṣyādi-vat tasyaiya tad-dhetutvopapateḥ}; “\textit{Dharma} is the cause of the result, thinks Jaimini, because only that makes sense, as in agriculture and the like.”
\textsuperscript{102} 8.1.6, translation Olivelle 1998:275.
\textsuperscript{103} parīkṣya lokān karma-citān brāhmaṇo nirvedyam āyāṁ nästy akṛtaḥ kṛtena. MU 1.2.12.
\textsuperscript{104} phalam ata upapatteḥ, “The result comes from it [Brahman] because that makes sense.” BS 3.2.38.
human good. The core of every brahma-vidyā was that this Brahman should be meditated upon, and the idea was consistently applied throughout the Upaniṣadic corpus. It was also applied over the passage on which Kumārila locked horns with the Sāṅkyas, namely Yājñavalkya’s teaching to Maitreyī: “The Self, honey, is to be seen: it is to be heard about, pondered over and meditated upon.” Sāṅkhyas wanted this passage to enjoin the pursuit of liberation through discriminative knowledge of the Self as different from the body, a pursuit predicated on dispassion and aiming at cognitive isolation. Kumārila acknowledged the pursuit as predicated on the absence of desire, and precisely for that reason denied that it could be enjoined. Vedāntins, however, tied the passage to Brahman the higher Self, and made good on Yājñavalkya’s claim that it is because of this Self that all objects of endearment are desirable. The pursuit of liberation became the pinnacle of all aspirations, predicated on the desire for Brahman as one’s Self, ātma-kāma. This became the standard lexeme justifying the pursuit of liberation as being within the scope of regular Vedic theology.

The issue of permanency also meant that the final attainment could not be quite a new or an adventitious state of affairs as Mīmāṁsakas wanted. Rāmānuja expressed beautifully what Mīmāṁsakas would have wanted the highest attainment to look like if it were to satisfy the criterion of being puruṣārtha: “At the stage of attainment, it only makes sense that one becomes related to a producible personal character, for otherwise the scriptures of liberation would be concerned with something which is not a human good.” For Vedāntins this was a no-go for the reasons we have just stated: whatever is adventitious, āgantuka, is bound to be lost. The saving grace was found in the idea of manifestation or āvirbhāva of an essential personal character, but

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105 See BS 1.4.19-22 and the commentaries thereon.
106 BĀU 2.4.5 and 4.5.6.
107 sādhyena rūpeṣa sambandha iti yuktam; anyathā hy apuruṣārthāvabodhitvam môkṣa-śāstrasye syāt. ŚBh, p.758.
one that is presently not experienced: “At the stage of attainment, there is a manifestation of the Self in its personal character, because the text says so.”\(^{108}\) The text was, of course, the famous \textit{Chāndogya} passage: “This deeply serene one, after he rises up from the body and reaches the highest light, immerses in his own true appearance.”\(^{109}\) Thus the attainment was neither novel nor quite not novel. It was becoming what one could essentially become, when liberated from all that was adventitious to one’s real nature: a sculpture carved out from the same omnipresent slab, not one constructed through addition.\(^{110}\)

However, this was not the procedure of separation in the Sāñkhya manner, in which the Self eventually remains in isolation from matter, but a literal \textit{modeling}, becoming a replica of the ideal model that is Brahman. Final liberation meant achieving “the highest similarity,” \textit{paramāṁ sāmyam}, to the meditational model that was Brahman:

\begin{quote}
When the seer [the meditator] sees that golden-colored Self, the creator and the Lord, the origin that is Brahman, then he, being a \textit{vidvān}, rid of all merit and demerit and spotless, attains the highest similarity.\(^{111}\)
\end{quote}

Bādarāyaṇa says that the Self at the point of liberation experiences itself as “not divided” from Brahman, which, as evidenced by the descriptions of what the state consists in, is clearly not a statement of absolute identity.\(^{112}\) One becomes of the same kind as Brahman, equally “awesome.”

Two key ideas describe this state: independence and pleasure. The two were directly based on the 7\(^{th}\) and 8\(^{th}\) of the \textit{Chāndogya}, respectively. One becomes independent, without a master, a sovereign to oneself, which gets to mean that one can travel in all the heavenly spheres

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\(^{108}\) sampadāvīrbhāvah svena śabdāt. BS 4.4.1.
\(^{109}\) 8.12.3.
\(^{110}\) BS 4.4.2.
\(^{111}\) MU 3.1.3. There is an unambiguous reference to this text in BS 4.4.21.
\(^{112}\) avibhāgena dṛṣṭatvāt. BS 4.4.4.
and enjoy all the desires positively affirmed in the 8th chapter of Chāndogya—the worlds of one’s forefathers, perfumes and garlands, women, and chariots—by one’s mere will.\textsuperscript{113} This does not constitute a compromise to his liberation, because it happens in bodies—multiple bodies at the same time—which one creates by mere will and then pervades by one’s awareness, as a lamp pervades space which is contiguous with it.\textsuperscript{114} Liberation, thus, becomes aiśvarya/svārājya in which one can do everything that Brahman can. Well, almost everything: one cannot interfere in the functioning of the world, in its creation, sustenance, and destruction, which remains the sole province of Brahman.\textsuperscript{115} “(The independence of the liberated) is limited to enjoyment, because such is the indication got from the ‘similarity.’”\textsuperscript{116} The topical text of this sūtra is TU 2.1, the paradigmatic brahma-vidyā which was also the paradigmatic statement of ‘attaining the highest’ that made upāsana useful:

He who knows Brahman attains the highest. On this there is the following verse: he who knows Brahman as Being, knowledge, the infinite, hidden in the deepest cavity and in the highest heaven, attains all desires along with the wise Brahman.

The knower of Brahman becomes as similar to Brahman as it is possible, and that seems good enough because all the good stuff is there.

One of the final sūtras, a particularly obscure one, is interpreted by Nimbārka, Śrīnivāsa and Rāmānuja as positing a second and more essential characteristic of liberation, bliss or

\begin{footnotes}
\item[113] सङ्कल्पद एव तात्क्रृते, एता एव नवायाद्विपांि “(The liberated attains his forefathers etc.) simply through his resolve, because the text says so. Therefore, no one is his master.” BS 4.4.8-9. Cf. ChU 7.2.2, \textit{sa svarād bhavati}.
\item[114] BS 4.4.10-15. Bādarāyaṇa is trying to solve a theological dispute here between Jaimini, who says that there are bodies in liberation, and Auḍulomi, who says that there aren’t, by proposing that both views are possible: one may be embodied and enjoy the aforementioned delights or be unembodied and still enjoy, like in the state of dreaming where experience happens in bodies that are created by the Lord. It is possible in the same way as the \textit{dvadāśāha} ritual can both be a \textit{sātra}, a ritual session not performed for anyone but for one’s own prosperity, and an \textit{ahīna}, a ritual which a priest performs for another, for offspring, as one’s resolve may be. So much for the claim that the two Mīmāṁsas “could not have originally been one.”
\item[115] जगद-व्यापार-वर्जयम प्रकरणद असामिवित्वाच, “(Such independence) does not include (interfering in) the functioning of the world, because the texts that are about that include no reference to the liberated Self.” BS 4.4.17.
\item[116] भोग-मात्रा-सूर्य-लिङ्गाच ca. BS 4.4.21.
\end{footnotes}
ānanda, which consists in intuited Brahman in its essential features. Nimbārka is concise enough to be quoted in full: “The liberated Self intuits Brahman which is devoid of transformations such as birth, which is the totality of inherent, inconceivable, endless qualities, possessing all plenty.”\textsuperscript{117} It is hard to adjudicate whether Bādarāyaṇa did mean this addition or not, but we should bear in mind that the most essential positive characteristic of Brahman to be inserted in all brahma-vidyās was precisely bliss, and Nimbārka’s formulation virtually mirrors the paradigmatic meditation, only that now the notion has become an intuition. The topical text quoted on this sūtra is right from the bliss-section of the Taīttirīya: “He [Brahman] is flavor (rasa), and obtaining flavor one becomes blissful.”\textsuperscript{118} This would have also accounted for the Kauśitaki description of brahma-loka where mister X is permeated by the fragrance and flavor, radiance, and glory of Brahman. Be that as it may, enjoyment was already posited as the feature of liberation through the attainment of all desires, and these two, aiśvarya/svārājya and ānanda, whatever the extent of the second was, became the two determinants of liberation.

Finally, liberation undoubtedly involved going to a specific place, much like the experience of heaven in Mīmāṁsā. It could not be enjoyed right here right now.

\textbf{Brahma-Sūtra, Liberation and the Two Great Upaniṣads}

It has since long been recognized that the \textit{Brahma-Sūtra} looks very much like a systematization of the \textit{Chāndogya Upaniṣad}. Paul Deussen was probably the first to notice that in the first \textit{adhyāya} of the text, twelve of the twenty-eight topical passages were from the \textit{Chāndogya}, while no other Upaniṣad supplied more than four. Further, the passages from each Upaniṣad were discussed in the order as they appear in their texts, which prompted Deussen to suggest that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[118] raso vai sa rasāṁ hy evāyaṁ labdhvānandī bhavati. TU 2.7.
\end{footnotes}
Bādarāyaṇa or a follower of his inserted sixteen passages from other Upaniṣads into an earlier work that systematized the Chāndogya, keeping the principle that the original order of the extracts should be maintained. If we rely on commentarial concord, we would notice that the dominance of the Chāndogya is even more striking in the other three adhyāyas. For instance, the whole first pāda of the third adhyāya is based on the doctrine of five fires as discussed in the fifth prapāṭhaka of the Chāndogya. The third pāda of the same adhyāya, further, deals with five sections of the Chāndogya, again in the order in which they appear in the Upaniṣad.

S.K. Belvalkar went farthest in proposing that there could have been a Chāndogya-Brahma-Sūtra and a Brhad-Āranyaka-Brahma-Sūtra etc. The Brahma-Sūtra that became the normative was the Chāndogya one, written by Jaimini, in which Bādarāyaṇa or his students introduced passages from the other Upaniṣads as side illustrations. The principal goal in this was to secure the harmony within the Chāndogya, but use materials from the other Upaniṣads as supporting evidence.

As I said in the introduction, my purpose here is not to investigate such issues. I will take it as proven that the Brahma-Sūtra text known to us, the text that was commented upon by Vedāntins, was a systematization of the Upaniṣads based on the Chāndogya. That much, I believe, cannot be doubted. I do want to address, however, another question, one which concerns the place of the other great Upaniṣad in this systematization, the Brhad-Āranyaka. I want to suggest that the BS does not attempt to illustrate the Chāndogya doctrine with a few “side points.” Rather, another phenomenon comes in perspective in we read closely, and that is an attempt to create a pan-Upaniṣadic doctrine by way of rectification of other views. This

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119 Deussen 1908:27-9; 1912:120-22.
120 Faddegon 1923.
121 Belvalkar 1918; 1927; 1929.
rectification primarily happens to what must be taken as a competing doctrine of liberation, one derived from Yājñavalkya’s teachings to king Janaka in the fourth book of the Brhad-Āraṇyaka. I will finish the section with this rectification. We cannot present Yājñavalkya’s account in detail, but at least its outline must be given.

The account is presented in the part of the Upaniṣad where Yājñavalkya taches Janaka about the Self in its three states: waking, dream and deep sleep. The first state is identified with the visual sphere, while the second with the heart. The Self travels back and forth between the two through the same channels (nāḍī) that we know about from the 8th chapter of Chāndogya, and in the dream state it creates its own experiences “through its own radiance,” by rearranging impressions from the waking state. The Self is not really related to either, because the things from waking and dream stay where they belong—the dream chariots remain in dreams, he does not come back on them—and that is a proof that nothing really sticks to the Self. The third state of the Self, which is commonly known as suṣupti but which is here called samprasāda, perfect calm, is one in which the Self comes in order to find real rest, “like an eagle, after flying around in the sky and getting tired, folds its wings and swoops down the nest.” In this state the Self sees no dreams, oblivious to anything “like a man embraced by a woman,” and it is freed from all the good and bad that it may experience in the two other states. Most significantly, because of the perfect calm and lack of transitive awareness, this is a state where “all desires are fulfilled, where the Self is the only desire, and which is free from desires.”

122 Chapters 3 and 4 of Book 4.
124 BĀU 4.3.21.
125 Ibid., tad vā asyaitad āpta-kāmam ātma-kāmam akāmam rūpaṁ śokāntaram.
This is also a state of non-duality, in which the Self could cognize, being naturally the cognitive agent, but does not cognize anything because there is no second thing which could become an object to awareness:

When there is some other thing, then one can see another, smell another, taste another, hear another, speak to another, think of another, touch another, distinctly know another. He becomes the sole ocean, the sole seer. This is the world of Brahman, ... the highest goal, the highest attainment, the highest bliss.  

In other words, the Self in the state of non-duality characteristic of deep sleep is identified with brahma-loka, the highest attainment.

The conversation naturally turns to liberation as the way to attain the state of brahma-loka, which Yājñavalkya contrasts to the process of rebirth that involves going to another place and back, rehearsing what we already know from the BS. When a man is on his deathbed, his cognitive functions are gradually lost as he has entered the heart. A channel lights up for him and the Self departs enveloped by the subtle body. What he turns out to be depends on action and behavior in this life. “A man resolves in accordance with his desire, acts in accordance with his resolve, and turns out to be in accordance with his action. And so people say: ‘A person here consists simply of desire.’” What Yājñavalkya means by action here is still probably mostly ritual, as convincingly argued by Tull. Rebirth is ultimately related to desire, because the subtle body leads one to the next destination shaped by the actions performed through desire. Once the results accrued through action have been exhausted, one returns to Earth to do some

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126 यत्रा वा अन्यं इवा स्यात् तत्रायो 'न्यात् पुष्येद् अन्यं 'न्याज् जिघ्रेद् अन्यं 'न्याद् रास्येद् अन्यं 'न्याद् वादेद् अन्यं 'न्याद् चृंयाद् अन्यं 'न्यान् मन्वितान्यो 'न्यात् स्पष्टेद् अन्यं 'न्याद् विज्ञानियात् स्यात् एको द्रास्तावितो भवति। एशा ब्रह्मा-लोकाः च अवद्या भवति। एशा वा ध्वस्या परमा गतिः। एशा वा परमा अनन्दा भवति। BĀU 4.3.31-2.
127 BĀU 4.4.5.
more ritual; this is, so far, all well-known. “That is the course of the man who desires.” But then comes the twist:

Now, a man who does not desire—who is without desire, who is freed from desire, whose desires are fulfilled, whose only desire is his self (akāma, niśkāma, āpta-kāma, ātma-kāma)—his vital functions [standing for the subtle body in the BS systematization] do not depart. Brahman he is and Brahman he attains. On this there is the following verse: When one has got rid of all desires that have taken shelter in the heart, a mortal becomes an immortal and attains Brahman right here.  

The Upaniṣad then quotes several verses which begin talking about the path by which the knowers of Brahman go to the heavenly world, svarga-loka, but predictably we hear none of the description that we are familiar with from the BS. The heavenly world turns out to be the Self itself, as already hinted, and if one knows this Self, one not only wins that world, but is the world. And crucially, this world is found, and immortality won while one is still here. The final attainment is nothing but getting into a state where one does not see any diversity. It is attaining samprasāda or the perfect calm of deep sleep and non-transitive awareness while still living:

One should see with the mind alone that there is no diversity whatsoever. From death to death goes he who sees any diversity here.  

The Self can be described only through negative attributes—this is the famous neti neti section—and its pursuit requires leading a celibate life and the cultivation of certain virtues. We have already seen these passages, but it is worthwhile repeating them:

It was when they knew this that men of old did not desire offspring, reasoning: ‘Ours is this self, and it is our world. What then is the use of offspring for us?’ So they gave up the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, and the desire for worlds, and undertook the mendicant life. … A man who knows this, therefore, becomes calm, composed, cool, patient and collected.  

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130 manasaivānudraṣṭavyaṁ neha nānāsti kiñcana. mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyum āpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati. BĀU 4.4.19.  
The way to attain liberation, thus, is to give up the desires of the Vedic variety, practice celibacy and cultivate virtues. Then one “becomes a Brahmin—free from evil, free from stain, free from doubt. He is the world of brahman, Your Majesty, and I have taken you to him.”\textsuperscript{132}

In several ways, this account is in a stark opposition to the 8\textsuperscript{th} chapter of \textit{Chāndogya} that formed the basis of the BS systematization. The ChU affirmed both desire and ritual: desires were good—ancestors, perfumes, garlands, chariots, women—and ritual was just inefficient in securing them. One had to continue performing ritual daily if intending to become free from the process of rebirth (ChU 5.24.3), but then discover the Self whose desires and intentions are effortlessly fulfilled and accomplished, \textit{satya-kāma, satya-saṅkalpa}. Yājñavalkya, on the other hand, disparaged desire, and his man was \textit{akāma, niskāma, āpta-kāma, ātma-kāma}. He associated ritual strictly with the process of rebirth.

Most problematic of all, however, was Yājñavalkya’s characterization of the Self and the promotion of deep sleep into its highest state, one in which there is no transitive awareness of any kind, what to say of enjoyment. This doctrine was attacked heads-on and rejected in no uncertain terms in the 8\textsuperscript{th} chapter of \textit{Chāndogya}, where Prajāpati in his teaching to Indra promoted such a “deeply serene Self” as the real deal, before Indra realized how unappealing it is “even before he got back to the gods”:

\begin{quote}
But this Self as you just explained it does not know itself distinctly as ‘I am this,’ nor does it know any of these beings here. It has become completely annihilated. I do not see anything enjoyable in this.\textsuperscript{133}
\end{quote}

Prajāpati conceded, and the Self had to reemerge back from the state of deep sleep, its cognitive faculties restored, and reach \textit{brahma-loka} to enjoy desirable objects and see diversity aplenty.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} ChU 8.11.1. Translation Olivelle 1998:285, with slight modification.
Related to this was the course of attaining liberation and its timing. In the ChU account, liberation involved going to another place through the *deva-yāna* and it was attained necessarily after death, whereas Yājñavalkya rejected any kind of departure, a posthumous path or a postponed attainment: “I’ve already taken you to *brahma-loka*. It is you!”

The two accounts talked about the same thing, the Self in the heart in its three states and in liberation, but dissented on all essential points. Not only that, but the *Chāndogya* openly attacked the *Bṛhad-Āranyaka*. Bādarāyaṇa, on the other hand, in his systematization of the Upaniṣads started with the assumption that there is a pan-Upaniṣadic ideological coherence and that when Upaniṣads talk differently about the same thing, they ought to be saying the same thing. In effect, this meant that they ought to be repeating what the *Chāndogya* says. Now, in this systematization, the 8th chapter of *Chāndogya* and Yājñavālkya’s teaching to Janaka were classified under the same *vidyā*, the *dahara-vidyā*, since they both talk about the space-like Self that is in the heart. This Self is, really, Brahman, but Brahman that is to be meditated upon as one’s Self so that one may become like it. Because the two passages constitute the same *vidyā*, the attributes mentioned in one are to be supplied in the other, and thus the true desires and resolves from the ChU are to be imported into the BĀU. In this way our *akāma, niṣkāma, āpta-kāma, ātma-kāma* ascetic who does not see duality whatsoever and aspires for no progeny, to whom the Self is the world, gets to enjoy all the heavenly delights, forefathers and sons, garlands, perfumes and women.\(^\text{134}\) The standardized account, in which the *svārājiya* consisting in the ability to travel to any heavenly sphere in a self-created body and enjoy was the most general

\(^{134}\) *kāmādītaratra tatra cāyatanādibhyāh, “The characteristics such as desire are to be supplied from the one to the other and the other way around, because the form (of the meditation) is the same.”* BS 3.3.39. The commentators are in unison on this *sūtra*, and so is Śaṅkara, before claiming that the two Brahmans are different in the two passages, and only the BĀU is the higher one; the desires in the BĀU are inserted just to show the majesty of Brahman, not for meditation, as this passage is not about meditation at all. Ghate, of course, notes that Śaṅkara’s interpretation is unjustified (1981:130). In Śaṅkara’s defense, the two passages are genuinely opposed to one another.

227
feature of liberation that all knowers of Brahman attain, made it possible to argue that one would get the heavenly delights even if such was not one’s aspiration. That is just what sovereignty is, you don’t get to be a king and not behave like one.\(^{135}\)

Bādarāyaṇa also rejected the idea that Yājñavalkya’s account amounted to achieving liberation while living and not taking the course of the gods. Yājñavalkya’s saying that a mortal becomes immortal when he has got rid of all desires and attains Brahman right here means no more than getting rid of the anterior and posterior karma in the manner in which the ChU described it. It clearly does not mean that one drops dead on the spot, which is a proof enough that one is still embodied, still in \(sāṁsāra\), and still with a subtle body, until final liberation is reached in \(brahma-loka\).\(^{136}\) Furthermore, that his vital functions or subtle body do not depart does not mean that he does not go via the \(deva-yāna\). For Bādarāyaṇa, a preferable reading of the same BĀU verse was the Mādhyandina recension, which says not \(tasya prāṇāḥ\), but \(tasmāt prāṇāḥ\), amounting to a crucial difference. What the text says is not that the subtle body enveloping the Self of the knower of Brahman does not depart through the course of the gods,

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\(^{135}\) See BS 3.3.40, upasthite \(\text{‘tas tad-vacanāt, “Just on the account of approaching, because the text says so.”’}\) VPS, p.1030: utka-lakṣaṇaṁya brahmopāsanayā brahmopāsanampanne sarva-lokeṣu kāmacāro bhavati. nu na tat-taḷ-loka-prāpti-saṅkalpa-pūrvakaṁ tat tattādhanānusṭhānāṁ vinā sarvāṁ kāmacāraḥ? tatrocyaṁ ataḥ upasampattā eva hetoḥ param jyotir upasampadyā svena rūpenaḥbhinnispadyate [ChU 8.3.4]. sa svarāḥ bhavati [ChU 7.2.2] \(tasya sarveṣu lokeṣu kāmacāro bhavati\) [ChU 7.25.2] iti vacanāt. “When one has attained Brahman through the meditation on Brahman that has the mentioned characteristics, one attains freedom of movement. – But, how could there be such freedom of movement everywhere without performing the requisite practice occasioned by the intention for attaining the respective world? – The attainment itself is the cause, as the texts make it clear: “Having attained the highest light, he is accomplished in his own character.” “He becomes independent.” “He attains freedom of motion in all worlds.”

\(^{136}\) samānā cāṣṭy-ūpākramād amṛṭatvaṁ cânuposya. tad-apīteḥ saṁsāra-ūpadeśāt. sūkṣmaṁ pramāṇaṁ ca tathopalabdhāḥ. nopamardenāḥ; “The same (course for the knower and non-knower) until the ascension to the path. The immortality (in the BĀU) is without having burned (the relation to the body). Because, \(sāṁsāra\) is denoted until entering that (\(brahma-loka\)); and, the subtle body (still persists), because there is such an apprehension from proof. So, (the immortality) is not through destruction.” BS 4.2.7-10.
but that it does not depart from the Self: it sticks to the Self all the way until liberation is reached.\textsuperscript{137}

Finally, one of the sūtras according to most of the commentators claimed that even the denial of plurality in Yājñavalkya’s part concerns only matters in which Brahman is not regarded as the Self.\textsuperscript{138}

It would be, however, misleading to conclude that all that Bādarāyaṇa was doing amounted to a normalization of Yājñavalkya’s “odd” teaching. Yājñavalkya’s dialogue with Janaka and Maitreyī contributed many positive elements in the final formulation of the doctrine of brahma-vidyā. To begin with, the lifelong celibacy which the text promoted was used by Bādarāyaṇa as an argument for the independence of meditation from ritual. If śruti talks about practitioners of brahma-vidyā who do not light up the sacrificial fire—which follows as an inevitable consequence of not begetting sons, as one had to marry to perform ritual—then meditation cannot be a part of ritual, since they practice meditation but do not practice ritual. Second, the list of personal virtues that every knower of Brahman had to cultivate, such as tranquility and self-control, šama and dama, also came from Yājñavalkya. Third, Yājñavalkya’s negative description of the Self became a part of the paradigmatic brahma-vidyā, which meant that Bādarāyaṇa wanted every aspirant after liberation of the Upaniṣadic variety to study that text. Fourth, the ātma-kāma theme became the justifying factor of the pursuit of liberation as a legitimate Vedic enterprise. Related to that, fifth, Yājñavalkya’s instruction to Maitreyī became

\textsuperscript{137} pratiśedhād iti cen na śārirat spaśto hy ekeśām, “If it be objected, ‘There is a denial (of departure),’ then no; (The departure which is denied is) from the embodied Self, because it is clear in one recension.” BS 4.2.12. Śaṅkara divides this sūtra in two and manages to arrive exactly at the opposite conclusion, but this is not justified. See Ghate 1981:140-41.

\textsuperscript{138} See BS 3.3.39 and the commentaries.
the basis on which the three Vedāntic processes of liberation were formulated: śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana.

With these considerations in mind, we can still confidently claim that Yājñavalkya’s account of liberation was different from that of the BS, and that the Brhad-Āranyaka brought the development of Vedānta into a different direction. Liberation as the final attainment was understood as a state where no ontological difference of any kind obtains. Its influence was very noticeable in the later Upaniṣads, such as the Muṇḍaka, as well as in Gauḍapāda’s well-known doctrine of the four states of the Self. In terms of pre-Śaṅkara systematic Vedic theology, however, it was the commentary on the Upaniṣad written by Bhartṛprapañca that presented the normative account, and to him we turn next.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE DOCTRINE OF PRASAŃKHYĀNA

Those who proclaim that liberation from saṁsāra comes through repeated meditation on it seem to be able to do just anything: they have been blessed by Agni Vaiśvānara.¹

Introduction

We saw in the previous chapter that meditation was the key soteriological practice in the unitary brahma-vidyā doctrine of the Brahma-Sūtra. There was, however, another Vedāntic doctrine of meditation, one which directly concerned Śaṅkara’s favorite Upaniṣadic texts—the negative descriptions of the Self—and occasionally the future mahā-vākyas. Except for the Brahma-Siddhi of Maṇḍana Miśra, we know about it only from Śaṅkara’s BĀUBh and Sureśvara’s Vārttika thereon, as well as the Naiṣkarmya-Siddhi. In some cases, this type of meditation was called prasaṁkhyāna, and it was not a Vedāntic innovation: it was appropriated from the tradition of Yoga. We will see in the case of one of its proponents, Bhartṛprapañca, just how the two kinds of meditation were different, but for now we note two key points of departure. First, whereas the Brahma-Sūtra doctrine promoted assimilative meditation that aimed at becoming Brahman in kind, prasaṁkhyāna was generally reductive and aimed at full identity with Brahman that implied the loss of one’s separate existence. Second, and related to the first, the doctrine of prasaṁkhyāna was thoroughly steeped in Yoga psychology and practice: whereas in the Brahma-Sūtra, ignorance that we identified as the root cause of transmigration in the Introduction had no prominent role—generally the BS system is focused on systematizing the Upaniṣadic meditations and takes embodiment for granted—the doctrine of prasaṁkhyāna was a part of the therapeutic paradigm worldview.

¹ saṁsāra-daṛśanābhyyāsāttan-muktāṃyepracākṣate | nākāryaṁvidyate tēṣāṁ vaiśvānara-varāśrayāt. BĀUBhV 1.4.700.
We may put this in the following way: even if ignorance was part of the BS system, it was at best a cover of the Brahman-characteristics that the Self innately possesses, and the BS meditation did not aim at removing such ignorance but at developing the innate characteristics, specifically the feature of experiential bliss consisting in the ability to enjoy all desires and accomplish all resolves.\(^2\) In the prasaṅkhyaṇa doctrine, on the other hand, meditation was explicitly geared towards the removal of ignorance, which kept the Self separate from Brahman, by immersing the mind the product of ignorance in Brahman. Furthermore, although the two doctrines shared the same scriptural network, prasaṅkhyaṇa put a recognizably yogic twist to it.

Historically, it would appear that many pre-Śaṅkara Vedāntins were advocates of some form of prasaṅkhyaṇa. A few indications suggest, for instance, that a prominent prasaṅkhyaṇa-vādin was Brahmadatta, a pre-Śaṅkara Vedāntin who is identified by Sureśvara’s commentator Jñānāmṛṭa as the character behind the following idea put forward in NaiS 1.67:

Some, relying on the strength of their own tradition, say: “The cognition ‘I am Brahman’ that is produced from the Vedāntic statement does not dispel ignorance on its mere appearance. – How then? – It drives away ignorance through the accumulation of meditation for him who meditates day after day for a long time. The evidence for this is the text ‘Becoming a god, he joins the gods.’”\(^3\)

While Jñānāmṛṭa is dated to 1800 CE by Potter and is unlikely to be historically reliable, Ānandagiri in his comments on the section of the Sambandha-Vārttika where Sureśvara discusses prasaṅkhyaṇa says that it was Brahmadatta who relied on the doctrine of niyoga and

\(^2\) The only place in the BS where some doctrine of ignorance can be teased out is the beginning of the second pāda of the third adhyāya, which discusses the creation of objects in the dream state. The commentators are sharply divided on the interpretation, but sūtra 5 and 6 seem to point out that the characteristics of the Self are hidden either through the wish of the Lord or through association with the body. See also Solomon 1969:116-124.

\(^3\) kecit svasampradāya-balāvaṣṭamabhād āhuḥ, yad etad vedānta-vākyāt ahain brahma iti vijñānaiṁ samutpadyate, taṁ naiva svotpatti-mātreyājñānaiṁ nirasayati. kiṁ tarhi? ahany ahani drāghīyasā kālenopāśnasya sato bhāvanopacayāt niḥṣeṣam ajñānaiṁ apagacchati, devo bhūtvā devān apyeti [BAU 4.1.2ff] iti śruteḥ.
upheld the notion that knowledge of the unity of the Self required an injunction of meditation.\(^4\)

This Brahmadatta is provisionally dated to 600-700 AD by Nakamura.\(^5\)

Another, related doctrine is presented by Suresvara in continuation of the same passage:

Others say: “By means of meditation one should bring about another, special cognition of the Self. By this cognition, the Self is known, and only this cognition dispels ignorance, not the cognition of the Self arisen from the Upaniṣads. The following statements have this meaning: ‘Having known, one should cultivate insight;’ ‘The Self should be seen: it should be heard about, pondered, meditated over,’ ‘One should search out, investigate that Self.’”\(^6\)

This has commonly been identified as the doctrine of Śaṅkara’s contemporary Maṇḍana Miśra. Šaṅkara himself discusses a variant of this idea in BĀUBh 1.4.7, probably in some earlier formulation.

It is not clear how much, and if at all, the two views presented by Suresvara in the quoted passage are different. In fact, it would appear from the Vārttika that the doctrine of \textit{prasaṅkhya}na had an impressive variety of detail in what is oftentimes a fascinating interaction of Yoga, Vedānta, and the two forms of Mīmāṁsā. We will not go into all these details in the chapter, but the key differences concerned the nature of the injunction of meditation on the Self, whether meditation obtained through \textit{bhāvanā} or \textit{niyoga}, what was the hierarchical structure of the injunction and the negative descriptions of the Self, including the identity statements of the Upaniṣads, etc. One of the prominent \textit{prasaṅkhya}na-vādins, Maṇḍana Miśra, argued vehemently against the possibility of injunctions in the domain of the Upaniṣads, including meditation.


\(^6\) Āpara varṇayanti upāsaneṇātmaka-vaśyaṁ viśiṣṭāṁ viṣṇu-āntāmṛtaṁ bhāvayet, tenātma jñāyate, avidyā-nivartakaṁ ca tad eva, nātma-vaśyaṁ veda-vākya-jañitaṁ viṣṇu-āntāṁ iti. etasmin arthe vacanāpy api—vijñāya prajñāṁ kuryā [BAU 4.4.21], draṣṭavāhyā śrotavyo mantaṁyo nididhyāsāvyah [2.4.5], so 'nveṣṭavyah sa viṣṇu-āntāṁ yāḥ [ChU 8.7.1.3] ityādīni. BĀUBh 1.4.7.
Such differences notwithstanding, however, all forms of prasaṅkhya addressed themselves to the same problem—yet another striking difference from the Brahma-Sūtra—which concerned the nature of language in its incarnation in scripture, and its capacity to convey knowledge of Brahman. In general terms, this problem said: knowing through scripture is knowing second-hand; it is a form of knowing in which Brahman is not directly experienced, and therefore scriptural knowledge must be followed by meditation that culminates in a vision of Brahman or the Self. We will unravel the details of this problem in the chapter, but for the time being we may think of it as the distinction between perceptual and book knowledge, say, of the parakeet who has found it convenient to observe the world from the top of my head and that I am immediately aware of as I write, and the parrots in Maṇḍana Miśra’s house that “were heard repeating sentences like 'Is validity intrinsic to knowledge, or extrinsic? Is Karma the giver of fruit, or is it God?'” about which I can read with some amusement but without certainty, not the least because of what kind of entities they are. A variety of the problem of language said that scripture presents Brahman as a relational entity, a definite description obtained through attribution of characteristics, which must culminate in the vision of Brahman as a non-relational, non-dual entity. Both these features of the problem were crucial for Śaṅkara’s notion of the identity statements that morphed into mahā-vākyas, because the mahā-vākya doctrine developed in direct response to these two concerns.

It is important to emphasize that the advocates of this type of meditation were Advaitins and bhedābheda-vādins of the aupādhika type (Bhartṛprapaṇa), theologians with whom Śaṅkara would have had little or no disagreement on the conclusion that ultimately, in any case in the

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7 Mahadevan 1968:27.
state of liberation, there was nothing but Brahman. In other words, this was a doctrine much closer to home than the *Brahma-Sūtra* account.

The doctrine of *prasaṅkhyaṇa* developed around a few key texts from the *Brhad-Āranyaka*. One was the statement that introduced the triple process of Vedāntic sādhana, Yājñavalkya’s ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ. The *nididhyāsitavya* part was specifically related to texts that introduce meditation on the Self or Brahman, such as ātmety evopāśīta, “One should meditate on it as the Self.”8 The most important among these was vijñāya praṁnāṁ kurvīta, “Having known, one should cultivate insight,” from BĀU 4.4.21, for two reasons. First, it seemed to promote just the sequence of knowing Brahman that the *prasaṅkhyaṇa* doctrine wanted: having first known, learned from scripture, one should cultivate insight, meditate. Second, the text was followed by a statement that those who wish to know the Self practice sacrifice and other Vedic forms of action (4.4.22), and by the cultivation of certain virtues (4.4.23). These texts are known to us from the *Brahma-Sūtra* account, and just like the BS our *prasaṅkhyaṇa*-vādin wanted ritual and the related āśrama practices to accompany meditation in the pursuit of liberation, but the set of virtues in 4.4.23 in *prasaṅkhyaṇa* seems to have corresponded to the yama-niyama complex in Yoga.

In this chapter, thus, we will introduce the doctrine of *prasaṅkhyaṇa*. I will begin by offering an account of the soteriology of the prominent pre-Śaṅkara Vedāntin Bhartṛprapañca. There we will become acquainted, for one thing, with the form of jñāna-karma-samuccaya or the combination of action and knowledge that Śaṅkara was most explicitly arguing against, but more importantly we will have the chance to see forms of the two kinds of meditation side by side, or rather in progression. Then I will introduce *prasaṅkhyaṇa* in the *Pātañjala-Yoga-Śāstra*, where

8 BĀU 1.4.7.
we will see the key issues that this kind of meditation was addressing. Next, I will reconstruct the contours of the Vedāntic notion of prasaṅkhyaṇa from the works of Śaṅkara and Sureśvara. We will end the chapter with Maṇḍana Miśra and the doctrine of meditation on Brahman in its fullest expression.

**The Soteriology of Bhartṛprapañca**

Bhartṛprapañca was an old Vedāntin the only thing about whom we know is that he wrote a voluminous commentary on the BĀU, which is now lost but was profusely discussed by Śaṅkara and Sureśvara, and from which Ānandagiri quotes directly in his commentaries to the Bhāṣya and the Vārttika. Although his commentary was lost, Bhartṛprapañca was immensely influential and important for the history of Vedānta. He was, along with Kumārila, Śaṅkara’s main foil, but he also influenced the latter in positive ways: Śaṅkara’s cosmological and psychological categories were taken from Bhartṛprapañca. Fortunately, his doctrine can be reconstructed in its broad contours from Śaṅkara, Sureśvara and Ānandagiri.9 I will begin with a short statement of his cosmology and psychology because their details are soteriologically significant.

Bhartṛprapañca was an advocate of a version of the theology of transformation, brahma-pariṇāma-vāda. He held that there is a single, non-dual Brahman, but one which factually

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9 Nakamura’s date of Bhartṛprapañca, 550 CE, is as good as any date preceding Śaṅkara. Important studies of Bhartṛprapañca include Hiriyanna 1957:79-94 and 1972:6-16, Nakamura 2004:128-52, Andrijanić 2015 and 2016, Dasgupta 1932:43-46 and Pandey 1983:209-28. My presentation of Bhartṛprapañca’s soteriology is based solely on my own reading of the three Advaitins, however, with some aid from Hiriyanna. I have, I should like to acknowledge, benefited greatly from Andrijanić 2015, who gives quite an exhaustive list of passages where Bhartṛprapañca’s views are discussed in the BĀU corpus. For reconstructing the doctrine of meditation on Brahman and the combination of ritual and meditation, I have relied on BĀUbh 1.4.15, BĀUbhV 1.4.1692-1779, BĀUbh 1.5.18 and BĀUbhV 4.4.706-740. For Bhartṛprapañca’s cosmology and psychology, I depend on BĀUbhV 1.6.46-51, BĀBh 2.1.20, BĀUbhV 2.1.466-72, BĀUbh 2.3.6 and BĀUbhV 2.3.90-104ab and 112-24, BĀUbh 4.3.7, BĀUbhV 4.4.393-412. Ānandagiri’s commentaries on the Bhāṣya (Ṭīkā) and the Vārttika (Śāstra-Prakāśikā) likely contain direct quotes from Bhartṛprapañca, and these are generally marked with bhartṛprapañca-vyākhyaṁ uttāpayati or anuvadati, and are often repeated verbatim in the two commentaries. For this reason, I have relied on Ānandagiri without reservation.
transforms itself into the multiplicity of the world. This pure Brahman, properly called Paramātman or the Supreme Self, has two states, a causal state in which it is prone to transformations, and an effected state in which it exists as actual transformations. As itself, however, it is beyond both. The transformations of Brahman are real, and Brahman stands in relation to them as the ocean stands in relation to drops of water, waves, foam, bubbles etc.¹⁰

The transformation of Brahman proceeds along two lines. On the one hand, in terms of creation of the physical world, Brahman is a state of undifferentiated potentiality, avyākṛta, which transforms into the manifold of the world by way of evolution of the five common elements and into all the details of creation. Significantly, these details include the divinities that are commonly identified in the Upaniṣads with cognitive and active functions, such as speech, sight, life-breath, hearing, touch, etc.¹¹

The second line of transformation is that of consciousness, and it proceeds from another causal state of Brahman which is called Antaryāmin or Īśvara, the inner controller, and which Bhartṛprapañca describes as “a slightly agitated state of the supreme Brahman.”¹² This Antaryāmin becomes the distinct Selves which are generally called kṣetra-jīna, jīva or vijñānātman, and which are transformations of Brahman’s own consciousness.¹³ These are further distinguished as cosmic—the Selves embodied into the different deities of the Vedic

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¹⁰ See BĀUBh 5.1.1, p.687-8: “Thus in all three times—origin, maintenance and dissolution—the cause and the effect are both infinite. The single infinitude is spoken of as divided into a cause and an effect. So, Brahman is one, both dual and non-dual, as an ocean consists of water, waves, foam, bubbles etc. And, as water is real, its effects—waves, foam, bubbles etc.—are the ocean in nature and have the properties of appearance and disappearance are also really real. Thus, the whole world of duality is nothing but really real, corresponding to the waves to the water, while the supreme Brahman corresponds to the water of the ocean.” See also BĀUBhV 1.4.487.

¹¹ See BĀUBhV 2.3.92 and Ānandagiri thereon.

¹² “On this some say, ‘The supreme immutable Brahman which is like a great ocean and is naturally not shaken has the state of the inner controller, that in which it is slightly shaken.’” BĀUBh 3.8.12.

¹³ “Those who explain the word vijñānamayā as a modification of the consciousness that is the Supreme Self...” yeśāṁ paramāṁ-vijñāpī-vikāra eva vyākhyaṇam... BĀUBh 4.3.7, IX.526. Ānandagiri thereon (identical comment on BĀUbV 4.3.318): vijñānamāṁ paramāṁ brahma tat-praṇāṅko jīvo vijñānamayā iti bhartṛprapañcer uktam anvadati.
pantheon—or individual. Among the Selves embodied in the divinities, the highest is that of Hiranyagarbha, which is “the Self of the world,” the universal soul known also as sūtrātman or the Self that is the “thread” that keeps the world together. The Selves of the other divinities, such as the Sun, are the Selves behind the cognitive and active functions on the macrocosmic level (adhidāvam). They are replicated on the microcosmic level of every individual (adhyātman).

Thus, Brahman evolves the active and cognitive functions on a macrocosmic level through the first line of creation, animates them through becoming the individual Selves of the Vedic divinities, and then replicates the same functions on a microcosmic level.

The two transformations come together in the embodied individual, where the first line makes for what is called “adjuncts” (upādhi) of the embodied Self, referring to the elements that form its gross body, sense objects, and the active and cognitive functions that form its subtle body. They are non-essential to the Self—hence adjuncts—but they do alter the Self, as we shall see in a bit. It may be worthwhile here to think of the standard example of an upādhi in Indian logic, dampness, which is non-essential to wood, but which alters fire as wood’s function by causing smoke.

The transformation of the Supreme Self into individual Selves happens to a part of Brahman (paramātmaikadeśa, parāṁśa), which is cut off from it as it were through the power of ignorance, avidyā. Ignorance is a category that assumes several roles in Bhartṛprapañca’s doctrine, and the ignorance that cuts off a shard of Brahman is the cosmic principle that seems equivalent to Brahman’s causal state as the first point in its material transformation, the

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14 See Ānandagiri on BĀUBhV 2.3.92: jīvopādhitvena yāvat kāryaṁ avyākṛtāj jātaṁ tat sarvam etāvad eva.
15 See BĀUBhV on 3.2.55: saṁsārītvaṁ paricechitāj vijñātmavāṁ aśnute. “It is but ignorance that is the delimiting, owing to which a piece cut from the Supreme Self becomes the individual Self and through which the Supreme Self becomes liable to transmigration.”
avyākṛta: “Ignorance is a power of Kṛṣṇa arisen from the Supreme Self directly. Deforming a part of the Supreme Self, it makes its residence in it.”16 The part cut off from the Supreme Self becomes like a desert, a blemish of a part of the earth, but not the whole of it.17 The cutting off is creation in the logical sense, not temporal. Ānandagiri alludes to this when he uses the present participle: the entity that is the individual Self obtains from the Supreme Self as it is being cut, not as a posterior effect of a prior and completed action.18

This cosmic ignorance, however, is just the factor of individuation that separates the individual from the Supreme Self: it is the category maker. The full individuation such that the Self cut off from Brahman becomes a jīva requires a further complex of three intertwined factors that alter its Brahman-nature: these are impressions of previous experiences since time immemorial that have become habits (vāsanā, scent); desires (kāma) formed through habituation; and karma, the results of previous action performed through desire. These three are kind of a no man’s land, because they are neither transformations of Brahman’s consciousness nor products of Brahman’s potential materiality, but what happens when the two get together. They do, however, directly reach the Self and alter it, “like flower scent that is put in a basket or distilled in oil that remains there even when the flower has been removed.”19 Through their medium, thus,

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16 If that is indeed the case, it would correspond to Śaṅkara’s avyākṛte nāma-rūpe that is the adjunct of Brahman and the stuff of which everything is made.
17 kṛṣṇa-śaktir avidyāpi parasmād eva sotthitā | vikṛtya paramātmanāṁ vijñānātmānāṁ tiṣṭhanti || yathoṣarātmakāṁ doṣah prthivyā eva jaiñīvān | kṣmaikadesāṁ vikṛtyās te ’vidyā tadvat parātmanaḥ. BĀUBhV 2.3.122-3.
18 On BĀUBhV 2.3.103: paramātmanāḥ paricchidyamānaṁ yena viśeṣeṇa vijñānātmatva-lābhaḥ.
19 BĀUBh 2.3.6, VIII.288: sarvaḥ karmarāśiḥ—puspāśraya iva gandhaḥ puspa-viṣṇu iva puṭa-tailāśrayo bhavati, tadvat—liṅga-viṣṇu iva puṭa-tailāśrayo gandhaḥ puṣpāśrayo yadvat puṭam āśrayati tiṣṭhati. BĀUBhV 2.3.17-8: gandhaḥ puṣpāśrayo yadvat puṭam āśraya tiṣṭhati | kusumāpagame ’py evaṁ liṅgaḥ vāsenaḥ vāsanātmān | vāsanā-kāma-karmāṇi liṅgaḥ vāsanātmān | liṅgād ātmanāmi āyanti gandho ganda-puṭaṁ yathā.
even external objects factually affect the Self. Yet they are not essential to the Self, because their relationship with it is that of contact, and a contact can be broken.20

Bhartprapañca also mentions a psychological form of ignorance, which he takes from the school of Yoga and which is the first of the five well-known psychological torments or kleśas. Ignorance here refers to a persistent cognitive error consisting in ascribing to the Self properties that do not belong to it.21 It is not quite clear what its relation to the vāsanā-kāma-karma complex is—I did not find any elaboration of this—but it is certain that it is not the starting point and the root of all saṁsāra, as with Śaṅkara. Saṁsāra is not just a cognitive error: it is factual cutting off from Brahman that sets off a cycle of rebirth that is a real cycle of habits, desire, action, a cycle in which the three factors constitute a chain with no starting point. Since the psychological ignorance is a habitual cognitive error, I surmise that it can be categorized as one of the vāsanās, perhaps the one with deepest roots.

The dual nature of the individual Self—essentially Brahman since being its real product, but an agent and enjoyer of the results of action, liable to rebirth, insofar as alienated from Brahman—brings with itself a dual entitlement in Vedic terms: as an entity liable to transmigration, the individual Self is obliged to perform Vedic ritual; as Brahman, it is entitled to realize its nature as Brahman and pursue liberation.22

This is a curious doctrine that looks like a blend of Sāṅkhya-Yoga and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. Brahman’s causal aspect of avyākṛta and the vijñānātman are quite reminiscent of prakṛti and puruṣa, and the vāsanās were no doubt taken from Yoga. But then, as impressions they are not

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20 See BĀUBh 4.3.22; BĀUBhV 4.4.391-412.
21 See BĀUBhV 4.4.725. The Yoga doctrine of kleśa is part of the second chapter of the YS, and avidyā itself is defined in 2.5
22 yenānyas tena saṁsārī karmādhikṛta iṣyate | ananya-pakṣe ‘haṁ brahmety ukter brahma prapatsyate. BĀUBhV 2.1.471.
just a feature of the psyche: they do color the Self, and through them the mind and the senses
impact the Self and the Self becomes the agent and enjoyer, as in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. Śaṅkara and
Sureśvara, in fact, ridicule Bhartṛprapañca as a self-styled Vedāntin who has made a pact with
the logicians but is cheating on them with the Sāṅkhya and, afraid that they may tell on him,
runs to the Vaśeṣikas for rescue.23

The key takeaway from this brief presentation of Bhartṛprapañca’s cosmology and
psychology is the dual character of the individual Self: as an agent of action and experience, the
Self is *obliged* to perform ritual, but as Brahman it is entitled to liberation. These two, claimed
Bhartṛprapañca, are mutually exclusive at least at their face value, and the reason is that ritual
presupposes agency that is in the domain of ignorance. The simultaneous performance of ritual
and the pursuit of liberation wasn’t a problem for the old Vedānta, but it became a serious
problem with the introduction of the category of ignorance. We saw that Vedic theologians had
struggled with how precisely to define and classify the obligatory rituals, but in all cases, they
pursued the strategy or reclassification through another provision according to the expected
result. For early Vedāntins, ritual was not inherently bad; it was inefficient in securing a
permanent attainment, and rebirth was at its root a consequence of that inefficiency: what is
made can be unmade. It was, therefore, easy to reclassify ritual as something that nurtures
meditation when performed along with it. Vedic theologians have been doing such
reclassifications often, as is hopefully obvious by now, and in a straightforward manner.

But, the appearance of ignorance, in its dual cosmological and psychological role, made
ritual a problem, and quite a specific one. In the traditions of liberation where the notions of
ignorance developed, agency was a product of ignorance and a determining factor in rebirth:

23 BĀUBh 2.3.6 and BĀUBhV thereon.
agency was at the root of saṁsāra, and it formed a part of a causal chain of rebirth. Everyone had some variation of this chain, and so did Bhartṛprapañca, as we just saw: The Self is delimited from Brahman by cosmological ignorance, and conditioned by psychological ignorance as its deepest impression that prompts action; impressions of previous actions form desires, desires prompt one to act again, actions produce or reinforce impressions etc. This was agency in general, involving all aspects of one’s being. But then, Bhartṛprapañca was a Vedic theologian and for him ritual was the significant action. The issue with this was that ritual turned out problematic at the root, not at the fruit.

This was a problem because on the one hand it presupposed a total commitment to the whole of the Vedic corpus, which comes quite obviously from the many quibbles of Śaṅkara with Bhartṛprapañca’s commentary on the question of whose doctrine really compromises the unity of the Veda, while on the other it meant that what the Veda enjoins is ignorance, and ignorance from which one could not possibly escape if one were to abide by the words of the Veda.

Bhartṛprapañca brought out his best to impress how central a problem this was for the pursuit of liberation, and to do that he invoked historically the earliest justification of why obligatory ritual had to be performed.

This was the doctrine of debts, specifically its Taittirīya Saṁhitā formulation which says that every Brahmin is born a debtor to a number of creditors, particularly the gods, the Vedic sages and the forefathers. Olivelle’s account pursues the history of this idea in some detail, but for our purposes it is enough to say that the debt to the Vedic sages was to be discharged by living the life of a Vedic student, and the debt to the forefathers by begetting sons who would

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24 Potter 1965:93-116 has quite an illuminating discussion of these causal chains of rebirth.
25 BĀUBh 4.4.22, 5.1.1.
continue performing the rituals for the good of the forefathers in heaven. These two one would discharge at a point in life, but the debt to the gods was a lifelong mortgage: one had to continue performing ritual for the gods as long as one lived, under the provision that is already well-known to us: “One shall perform the daily fire oblation as long as one lives.” To appreciate the logic behind this doctrine, we can quote here from the Bhagavad-Gītā with profit:

Prajāpati, after creating creatures and sacrifice together, said in the beginning: “Ye shall multiply by it, it shall be the cow that yields your desires. Give ye the Gods being with it, and the Gods shall give ye being. And thus giving each other being ye shall attain to the highest good. Themselves enhanced in their being with sacrifice, the Gods shall give ye the pleasure ye desire: he who enjoys their gifts without return to them is but a thief.”

The Gīta explicitly called this divine-human codependence karma-bandhana or the bond of ritual, while the BĀU had compared it to the relationship of men and livestock: “Just as an animal is for men, so is a man for the gods.” For Bhartṛprapañca, this meant that one was obliged to stay in ignorance, obliged to act as a ritual agent and revolve in the cycle of saṁsāra: do sacrifice for the gods, go to heaven, come back to do more sacrifice to no end.

This on its face value meant that the pursuit of liberation was impossible: if one had to perform ritual to the end of life, one had to see oneself as an agent, an element subordinate to the ritual action and “an animal to the gods,” reap the impermanent results and be reborn once they are exhausted. Ritual was literally “things gone south,” rebirth through the course of the forefathers, the southern course (dakṣināyana). How could one, then, make use of the other part of the Veda that is geared towards liberation, to which one is entitled because of being a product of Brahman, if the Veda requires one to remain in ignorance?

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28 BhG 3.9.
29 BĀU 1.4.10.
Bhartṛprapañca’s solution to this conundrum was based on what I will mark here as the first of two texts crucial to his soteriology: ātmānam eva lokam upāsīta, “One should meditate on the world as the Self.” Because the world is ultimately a transformation of Brahman, it is dual in nature: it is ignorance and saṁsāra—the Upaniṣad identifies it with death itself, mṛtyu—but it is also Brahman. If one can, therefore, turn ritual from its state of effect to the state of cause, such ritual would not produce perishable results:

On this, some say: the results of ritual of a knower of Brahman who meditates on the world as one’s Self does not decay because of the combination with meditation. There are two senses of the word “world” which is inseparably related to rites. One refers to the manifest state, which is the repository of ritual and called ‘that which pertains to Hiranyagarbha.’ He who meditates on this manifest and limited world that is invariantly related to ritual obtain results of ritual that are exhausted because he identifies himself with limited ritual. However, he who has reduced the world that is invariantly related to ritual to its unmanifest state, its causal form, and then meditates on it, obtains results of ritual that are not exhausted, because he identifies with ritual that is unlimited.

This is the formulation of the doctrine of jñāna-karma-samuccaya, combination of “knowledge” and ritual. The crucial element in this doctrine was meditation, because ritual was supposed to be transformed through meditation. Let us see, therefore, what Bhartṛprapañca meant under “meditation on Brahman.”

Bhartṛprapañca’s definition of meditation was nothing out of the ordinary: meditation is a stream of awareness that is of the nature of becoming. By “becoming” he meant turning oneself into something else by assimilating to its nature through contemplative absorption in it. The “something else” is a scriptural object, a divinity, and because of that, meditation is dependent on...
hearing about some asserted identity from scripture and understanding properly what is being said. This is the same meditative complex that we saw in the BS account—śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana. Let us see how this sequence precisely worked.

First, one hears a passage in the Upaniṣads that contains some identity statement, and then ascertains correctly what the words are and what objects they refer to. In general, that happens through an investigation of the meaning of the passage so that it becomes clear what is the correct reference of the meditational counterpart, which is not always straightforward. Then, once the word-reference relationship has been ascertained, the mind obtains a clear cognition of the object. Now, the mind in this context is really the Sāṅkhya buddhi, which in any cognitive act is said to assume the shape of the cognized object, to mold itself into the object. Since the mind molds itself into the object, in a true cognition the mind is “not distinguished from the external knowable object,” it looks exactly like it. In our case, insofar as there is a correct cognition of a scriptural object from what has been heard, the mind has taken the shape of that scriptural object. Finally, any cognitive act is possible in virtue of there being awareness to begin with: the mind is just an instrument and is not itself sentient. The mind must reflect back to the Self the properly ascertained object, and because the individual Self is vijñānātman, cognition in nature, the cognitive content (vijñeya) is not distinguishable from it: The Self takes the form of the cognized object (remember how the vāsanās reached directly the Self). What remains, then, is to mull over this cognitive content that is a mental formation until the Self turns into the cognized object in conformity to the cognition. It can do that because it is vijñānamaya,
consisting in cognition. This is a general principle of meditative absorption, and the procedure itself is justified by a passage from the BĀU, which I will mark as the second crucial text for Bhātrprapañca’s soteriology:

Having known him [the Self,] a wise Brahmin should cultivate insight. He should not muse over many words, for that is just wearing of one’s voice.\(^{38}\)

Vijñāya prajñāṁ kurvīta, “having known, one should cultivate insight,” meant for Bhātrprapañca that one should hear from scripture until the meaning is clear, but then one should sit down and meditate and through absorption assume the state of the meditational object. Meditation is, then, cultivation of insight, prajñā-karaṇa.\(^{39}\)

We can now go back to our first text, ātmānam eva lokam upāsīta, “one should meditate on the world as one’s Self.” Now, we saw in Bhātrprapañca’s cosmology that “the world” was the place of saṁsāra, coextensive with the sphere of ritual and the divinities that constitute it. These divinities were represented on the microcosmic level as well, as the set of cognitive and active faculties: sight, hearing etc. Meditation on the world as the Self, then, was meditation on saṁsāra, and it was supposed to begin by meditation on these divinities as cognitive faculties of the world-Self and adjuncts to one’s own Self.

The central text for this procedure was one which Yājñavalkya repeats six times in his teachings to Janaka. The two discuss successive meditations on Brahman as speech, life-breath, sight, hearing, mind and the heart, which correspond to Agni, Vāyu, Āditya etc., before Yājñavalkya concludes each meditation with devo bhūtvā devān apyeti, “becoming a god, one joins the gods.”\(^{40}\) The text obviously plays on the double meaning of deva as cognitive faculty and divinity, so Bhātrprapañca says that one should successively meditate on oneself as these

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\(^{38}\) BĀU 4.4.21.

\(^{39}\) BĀUBhv 4.4.708.

\(^{40}\) BĀU 4.1.2-7.
faculties—adjuncts to the individual Self as the senses on the one hand and to the world-Self as
gods on the other—until one fully identifies with the respective divinity. Becoming one by one
each of them, turning one’s adjuncts into the universal adjuncts, one fashions oneself into the
world, in its gross feature: the virāṭ.

In doing so, one emulates a mythical, primordial event of creation in which the highest
Vedic divinity, Puruṣa or Prajāpati, finds himself alone in the world, creates humans and
animals, and then creates the gods as superior to himself—those for whom he must sacrifice—
before realizing that there is really nothing except him: it is himself alone who has fashioned
himself into the world, and he is everything. This is “the god [but also and the man, puruṣa] who
forgot who he was”41 and invented other gods so that he could have someone to adore. So, the
final step in one’s own refashioning into the world through meditation is becoming this very Self
of the world through meditative absorption, in the manner described in the passage that contains
our mahā-vākya-to-be, aham brahmāsmi:

Since people think that they will become the Whole by knowing brahman, what did
brahman know that enabled it to become the Whole? In the beginning this world was
only brahman, and it knew itself thinking, “I am brahman.” As a result, it became the
Whole.42

Brahman here for Bhartṛprapañca was Hiraṇyagarbha, the supreme vijñānātman or individual
Self, the “universal individual”43 embodied as Prajāpati, and through meditation on
Hiraṇyagarbha as the Self one completes the Self-refashioning: having turned one’s individual

42 BĀU 1.4.9-10.
43 samasta-vyastātmakaṁ sautraṁ tattvam. ĀG on BĀUBhV 4.4.721.
faculties into the universal faculties, one finally transforms one’s Self, *vijñānātman*, into the collective Self of the world.44

This is an important step for Bhartṛprapāṇca for the following reason: the mere performance of ritual brings only *sāṁsāra* as its result, and so long one is an element subordinate to ritual (*karma-śeṣa*) there is no question of liberation: it is all ignorance reinforcing ignorance. However, when one has become the universal Self, Prajāpati, one is no longer part of the primordial compact between the gods and the humans, but one who has forged the compact and stands outside of it. *Karma-bandhana* no longer applies, and the gods have lost one animal. One becomes not a sacrificer to the gods, but to oneself. By meditation on *sāṁsāra*, one overcomes *sāṁsāra*, the Vedic world of divinities and ritual.

This, however, is not the end of *sāṁsāra* as embodiment, for attaining the state of Hiraṇyagarbha is attaining Brahman that is really Brahmā, Brahman that is both dual and non-dual in nature:

There is a state of the supreme Self called Viriñca that is dual-nondual in nature and is revealed by a combination of meditation and ritual. Because it is dual, it is perishable.45 Hiraṇyagarbha is still an individual Self, a shard of Brahman, a world-soul with the divinities as universal adjuncts. Attaining to the nature of Hiraṇyagarbha is not liberation. So, the real gain of this Self-fashioning in meditation is arriving to a state where the pursuit of liberation becomes possible. One is no longer a factor subordinate to ritual, but not quite Brahman either. Or rather, one is Brahman, but that is the *kārya-brahman* that Bādari talked about in the BS.

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45 dvaitaikatvātmikāvasthā viriñcākhyā parātmanaḥ | vijñāna-karmābhivyāgyā dvaitātvāt śa kṣayātmikā. BĀUBhV 1.4.1702. Viriñca is a common name of Brahmā.
Therefore, now a second type of meditation must commence, meditation on Brahman not as the effect, but as the cause, not on Hiranyagarbha but on Brahman proper. This meditation also begins with a text that establishes an identity relation, now specifically *tat tvam asi*, the second *mahā-vākya*-to-be. It is also preceded by an investigation of meaning to ascertain the exact meditational counterpart, but now the procedure is deconstructive. One must gradually remove from one’s constructed universal Self everything that constitutes an adjunct by discarding the divinities that are the universal faculties, until one eventually sees that the counterpart of the sentence, the *tat*, is Brahman which is “free from *sāṁsāra* and its cause, non-dual, real, without beginning or end.” Once that has been accomplished, one must meditate on this Brahman incessantly. The *raison d’être* of meditation in general, that is, in both kinds, is that scriptural knowledge is mediate, lacking in direct experience, and must become immediate through constant absorption of the mind in that scriptural knowledge. We will investigate this later in the chapter.

The key instrument in the performance of this meditation is the mind, which must ward off thoughts of duality and maintain its absorption in Brahman. This is a problem, for two reasons: keeping a mind *just means* maintaining a sense of duality in which no real vision of the single Brahman is possible, yet the mind is the only instrument of meditation at one’s disposal; and, the mind is a product of ignorance, or Brahman’s state of *avyākṛta*. The solution of this final conundrum is a gradual, slow reconversion of the mind from its being an effect back to Brahman

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48 See Ānandagiri on BĀU BhV 4.4.709, which is an elaboration of Bhartṛprapañca’s interpretation of *vijñāya prajñāṁ kuryāt*. 

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the cause through continual absorption in Brahman, in the same way as metal which is deposited in the ground from which it initially emerged as ore would in time reconvert into earth. This really means that the mind through absorption in Brahman becomes nirvanized in Brahman and ceases being a mind. This is a key and final step in liberation, because—we shall remember—the complex of impressions, desires and karma that constituted being an individual Self, jīvatva, had its residence in the mind and through the mind it colored the Self. Once full absorption in Brahman is achieved and the mind has been dissolved, there is nothing left that would keep the Self separate, and the vijñānātman also dissolves into the Supreme Self. The dessert had been reclaimed, liberation achieved.

This second meditation is also accompanied by the performance of ritual, but now ritual is also transubstantiated into its cause, through the proximity to Brahman, in the same manner as the mind. Meditation on Brahman transforms ritual just as a charm transforms poison into medicine, or like yoghurt with sugar mixed in it does not cause fever but has calming effects. At the end, it all becomes offering of Brahman into Brahman, and ritual no longer brings perishable results, but is a direct means of attaining liberation.

We can compare now the two meditations. The first was assimilative, like the Brahma-Sūtra meditation, and its aim was the attaining of Brahman, but this was the kārya-brahman of Bādari. It could be repurposed for liberation if one did not intend to attain brahma-loka, and in fact it had to be repurposed because it was one’s only shot at winning an entitlement to brahma-jñāna. We can understand it as a form of constructive meditation which involved fashioning oneself into a future state by means of meditative absorption. The second meditation was rather deconstructive: ascertaining one’s true identity as Brahman through the Upaniṣads, but then

49 BĀUBh 4.4.22.
absorbing the mind and action into this Brahman for the gradual dissolution of mind as the seat of the individuating factors that keep the Self separate from Brahman. While the first was fashioning of oneself through identification, the second was, as prasaṅkhyāna-vādins insisted, based on real identity, based on knowledge, one which was, however, deemed insufficient, because of lacking in direct experience.

Our future mahā-vākyas were tied to the respective meditations. Brahma in the first stood for Hiranyagarbha and was the meditational counterpart in the final step of the constructive meditation, where one identifies with the universal soul but not the pure Self. Tat tvam asi, on the other hand, was part of the deconstructive meditation, where one first had to remove everything that was not pure Brahman, and then begin the absorption in the meditational object.

Let us now tackle prasaṅkhyāna-vāda directly and see why the propositional knowledge of Brahman obtained from the Upaniṣads was insufficient and why it had to be followed by meditation. First, however, we must prepare the ground by investigating the origin of prasaṅkhyāna in the Pātañjala-Yoga-Śāstra.

**Prasaṅkhyāna in Pātañjala-Yoga-Śāstra**

The term prasaṅkhyāna is relatively common in the PYŚ, where it stands for that kind of meditational practice or dhyāna which, when coupled with the practice of kriyā-yoga that consists of austerity, recitation of Om, and dedication to Īśvara—tapas, svādhyāya and īśvara-pranidhāna—purges the mind of the psychological torments, kleśas, to the degree where the psychological torments end.

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50 I follow Philipp Maas (2010a, 2010b, 2013) in referring to a Pātañjala-Yoga-Śāstra, a lexeme standing for the Yoga-Sūtra and the Bhāṣya which is commonly attributed to Vyāsa as a single work. Maas presents a strong case that the attribution of the canonical commentary on the YS to a Vyāsa is a relatively late phenomenon, and that in earlier sources the Bhāṣya and the Sūtra text are treated as a single śāstra. Prasaṅkhyāna occurs once in the Sūtra text (4.29) and seven times in the Bhāṣya. The following account is based on the PYS itself and on a short but most useful and reliable paper by Ko Endo (2000) entitled “Prasaṅkhyāna in the Yogabhāṣya.”
mind becomes nothing but discriminative knowledge that illuminates the distinction of its own being from that of the real Self, puruṣa.\textsuperscript{51}

It is particularly important to note that Yogic \textit{prasaṅkhyāna} needs to be accompanied by the practice of \textit{kriyā-yoga}, because its operation in destroying the psychological torments requires assistance: \textit{kriyā-yoga} attenuates the torments, and \textit{prasaṅkhyāna} makes them as good as burnt, such that even if objects which might activate them are present right in front of one’s eyes, the torment that could potentially be activated being as good as a burnt seed would fail to germinate.\textsuperscript{52} The cooperation of \textit{kriyā-yoga} and \textit{prasaṅkhyāna} meditation is compared to the cleaning of a piece of cloth from dirt: one first needs to shake off the gross dirt, and then to wipe away carefully the fine, intransigent dirt. The first step is comparable to the application of \textit{kriyā-yoga}, whereas the second to the diligent engagement in \textit{prasaṅkhyāna} meditation.\textsuperscript{53} We should also note that the three practices that constitute \textit{kriyā-yoga} are part of the wider \textit{yama-niyama} complex of restraints and observances that a practitioner of Yoga must follow: they are the last three \textit{niyamas}. This will be important when we move onto Vedāntic \textit{prasaṅkhyāna}.

\textsuperscript{51} “The being of the mind, its last trace of impurity purged, is established in its own nature which is but discrimination of the Self from its own [mind’s] being, and tends towards contemplation of the rain-cloud of \textit{dharma}. Meditators call this [being of the mind] the highest \textit{prasaṅkhyāna}.” tad eva rajo-leśa-malāpetanī svarūpa-pratiśthānī satvā-puruśāntatā-ḥvyātī-mātraṇī dharma-megha-ḥyānopagaṇī bhavati. tat pariṇā prasaṅkhyānam ity ācaṅkṣate dhīyīnāḥ. YSBh 1.2, p.6.

\textsuperscript{52} “That [\textit{kriyā-yoga},] when practiced, attenuates the psychological torments and thus nurtures concentration. That is, in that case the attenuated torments can be as good as burnt by the power of meditation, having the property of not being activated.” sa hy āsevyamānāḥ samādhiḥ bhāvayati kleśānīś ca pratanū-karotī. pratanū-ṛtān kleśān prasaṅkhyānāgnīnā dagdha-bija-kalpān aprasava-dharmaṇāḥ kariṣyatīti. YSBh 2.2, p.114-5.

\textsuperscript{53} “The gross mental formations of the torments, attenuated by \textit{kriyā-yoga}, should be eliminated by \textit{prasaṅkhyāna} until made fine as good as burnt. Just as a gross impurity of a piece of cloth is first shaken off and then the fine dirt is removed by effort and a suitable means, likewise the mental formations of the torments that are gross are a minor obstacle, whereas the fine mental formations are a major obstacle.” kleśānāḥ yā vyṛttaḥ śhūlās tāḥ kriyā-yogena tanū-ṛtān satyān prasaṅkhyānena ḍhyāṇena hātavyā yāvad rūṣmī-ṛtāḥ yāvad dagdha-bija-kalpā iti. yathā vastrāṇāḥ śhūlo malāḥ pūrvān nirdhyuṣate paścāt rūṣmī yatnenaṇḍenā caṇḍaniye tathā svalpa-pratipaksāḥ sūkṣma vṛttayaḥ kleśānāṁ, rūṣmī tu mahā-pratipaksā iti. YSBh 2.11, p.130.
Thus, the *prasaṅkhyāna* meditation as practice purifies the mind to the degree where it becomes made solely of discriminative knowledge, a state which the YSBh calls *dharma-megha-dhyāna* or *samādhi*. At the stage of such purification of the mind, *prasaṅkhyāna* matures from a means into a result, from practice to a form of cognition.

It is important to note, further, that the *prasaṅkhyāna* meditation does not quite eliminate the psychological torments: they are *as good as* burnt seed, and the subtle impressions from past lives (*saṁskāras*) that activate the torments may still overcome the mind such that its discriminative knowledge is lost. For this reason, *prasaṅkhyāna* needs to be repeated over and again so that the mind may stay in the state of perfect discrimination and remain aloof from other ideas. In a sense, the perfect state of *prasaṅkhyāna* as-a-result is always future.

The key feature of *prasaṅkhyāna* meditation, however, is that the insight or cognition which it provides is perceptual in kind, a result of yogic *pratyakṣa*. This is important for two reasons. First, perception is concerned with particulars, *viśeṣa*, unlike inference and scripture which are concerned with universals and convey knowledge of particulars only through knowing the relations of such universals. We know that there is fire on the hill because we know that smoke and fire as categories are universally related. We learn about a specific lotus through composite descriptions of universals that involve syntactic relations: it is blue, in someone’s courtyard etc. We do not see the smoke or the lotus as genus in neither case. Inference and scripture provide knowledge that is mediate, *parokṣa*. The insight that *prasaṅkhyāna*, on the other hand, provides is not how the Self *in general* or as a *category* is different from *prakṛti*, but how this Self *of mine* is like that. This affords the cognition obtained through *prasaṅkhyāna* immediacy, *pratyakṣa*, that scriptural knowledge lacks. Second, in Yoga—as we saw in the First

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54 Endo 2000:79.
Chapter—perception was epistemologically primitive and foundational: scriptural knowledge, on the other hand, was a second-hand account of something previously experienced, and we were justified in believing what scripture says because a personally experienced state of affairs was reported by someone trustworthy.\textsuperscript{55}

This immediacy or the perceptual character of meditation, in which one is privileged to knowledge of truth produced by concentration, defeats the torment-activating percepts because it is equal in primacy to them: both are perceptual in kind, and the meditative absorption is not inherently weaker than the common perception. We can illustrate this with Kālidāsa’s wonderful description of Śiva’s meditation (prasaṅkhyāna) which sheltered him from the temptations that Kāmadeva caused in his Himalayan hermitage:

Though he heard the songs of the heavenly nymphs, at this time Shiva the Destroyer was deep in his yogic meditation—it is truly said that for those who are masters of themselves no interruption can break their concentration.\textsuperscript{56}

Let us note these features of the prasaṅkhyāna meditation well: (1) its function is cathartic, but operating on the fine impurities of the psychological torments; (2) it must be accompanied by kriyā-yoga practices, which attenuate the torments to the degree where prasaṅkhyāna can be functional; (3) the result of this cleansing is that the mind becomes so pure that it can discern between its own being and the Self, at which point prasaṅkhyāna from a

\textsuperscript{55}“Something seen or inferred by a trustworthy person is reported verbally so that what one has personally experienced may pass to someone else. The mental formation of a hearer arising from a word concerning its reference is called scripture.” āptena dṛṣṭo 'numito vārthaḥ paratra svabodhasaṅkṛāntaye śabdopasāṇaḥ, śabdāt tadarthaviṣayā vṛttiḥ śrotur āgamaḥ. YSBh 1.7, p.20.

means transits into a result; (4) the torments, however, are just “as good as” burnt seeds, dagdha-bīja-kalpa, where kalpa is the operative word, and subtle impressions may always activate them, for which reason prasaṅkhyāna must be practiced continually; and, (5) the cognition afforded by this prasaṅkhyāna has that characteristic of immediacy which makes it better than the mediate cognition that is characteristic of scriptural hearing.

The Vedāntic Prasaṅkhyāna

In their commentaries on the Brhad-Āranyaka Upaniṣad, Śaṅkara and Sureśvara discuss several doctrines of meditation that seem like curious cases of an intersection of Yoga and Mīmāṃsā in a Vedāntic setting; that is, accounts of liberation that are predicated on a thoroughly Yogic psychology and doctrine of embodiment, but seek to justify meditation as a form of action requiring a Vedic fiat through the means of Upaniṣadic injunctions. One such fascinating case is found in the Sambandha-Vārttika 440-455, a Prābhākara appropriation of the basic Yoga doctrine of arresting the functioning of the mind as a way of interpreting the Upaniṣadic injunctions of meditation such as ātmety evopāśīta.

The account says that the Self, being an actual something denotable by words, a padārtha, is not in the domain of knowledge from linguistic utterances, or sentences. Think of rice, a thing whose properties we know but which we use in ritual through the fact that it becomes an auxiliary to the action of offering.57 The Veda is a pramāṇa strictly on the mandate or niyoga that an action be performed, and through that mandate the only new thing that the Veda says about rice qua rice is that it is usable in the relevant ritual, serviceable to the mandated

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57 “Others say: because the Self is a category, it is knowable by other means, not from scripture, like other categories such as rice.”
anya āhu padārthatvāt pramāṇāntara-gamyatām |
ātmano nāgamāt siddhir vrīhyādy-anya-padārtha-vat. SV 440.
action. The Self is like rice: it is known through recognition or *pratyabhijñāna*, which is a mode of immediate perceptual awareness, assisted by reasoning. This is the proper *pramāṇa* for knowing the Self, not the Upaniṣads. When the Upaniṣads do say things about the Self, the corresponding scriptural cognition is a form of an appearance present to consciousness, *pratibhā*, but not a veridical cognition produced by a *pramāṇa*. The only new thing that the Upaniṣads can say about the Self is that it is subsidiary to the action of meditation.

That is how, in fact, the Upaniṣads facilitate liberation: since embodiment is a result of the relation of the Self with the mind that is the seat of impressions, *vāsanās*, the Upaniṣads issue a mandate of meditation, following which one can achieve a suppression of the familiar mental impressions or of the mind itself, *nirodha*. Once such suppression has been achieved, the self-luminous Self has no choice but to shine through. This is, evidently, a Prābhākaran take on the second *sūtra* of the PYŚ, *yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodah*, appropriated to deny validity to the propositional knowledge of the Self from the Upaniṣads.

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58 “It is from linguistic utterance that a mere phenomenon arises, not from a *pramāṇa;*” tataś ca pratibhā-mātraṁ śabdād iti na mānataḥ. SV 450ab.

59 “At that point [when the veridical recollective awareness has obtained,] a man is mandated by scripture to suppress the mental impressions or the mind itself, but not to understand the constitution of a thing. The second proceeds through another *pramāṇa*, and speech has no use in that regard. When the impressions have been suppressed, the Self shines through on its own, not depending on another *pramāṇa*, being self-luminous in nature. … The Self encounters what is undesirable simply on the account of impressions, and liberation obtains just by suppression, whether there are other means present or not.”

tad-vāsanā- nirodhe ‘taḥ pumāṁ śrutāḥ niuyjyate ||
manaso vā nirodhe ‘sau na tu vastv-avabodhane |
māṇātareṇa tat-siddher nātra vyāpriyate vacaḥ ||
svayam-jyotiḥ-svabhāvatvāṁ niruddha-svānta-vāsanaḥ |
pramāntāraṇapecṣo ’pi svayam ātmā prakāśate. SV 442-444.
vāsanā-mātra-hetutvād ātmānā ’nartha-saṁgateḥ |
anyopaye saty asati nirodhād eva muktatā. SV 446.

60 That this doctrine was a real thing is further suggested by Śaṅkara’s *pūrvapakṣin* in the BĀU 1.4.7: “Since the suppression of the mental states is different from the scriptural knowledge of the Self, and since we know that it has been enjoined for practice in another system, let this be enjoined;” athāpi syāc citta-vṛtti-niroḍhasya veda-vākya- janītātma-vijñānād arthāntaravāt, tantrāntareṣu ca kartavyatāvāgatavād vidheyatvam iti cet.
Other related cases of Mīmāṃsīc meditations abound in the Bhāṣya and the Vārttika, but just one of them is explicitly styled prasaṅkhyaṇa. It is discussed by Śaṅkara in the eighteenth verse chapter of the US as the pūrva-pakṣa for his promotion of the deliberation on tat tvam asī as the means to liberation, as well as by Sureśvara in the SV 756ff and NaiS 3.88ff. Furthermore, the key prasaṅkhyaṇa contention, that scriptural knowledge of Brahmān is not enough for liberation and that it must be followed by meditation, is often discussed by the two masters even when they do not mention prasaṅkhyaṇa explicitly, particularly under BĀU 1.4.7 and 4.4.21, where the two key injunctions of meditation are stated, ātmety evopāśīta and vijñāya prajñāṁ kurvīta.61

Now, the proponents of prasaṅkhyaṇa claimed that this kind of meditation was different from the Upaniṣadic meditations that were based on assimilative absorption facilitated by cosmic correlations. We will see much more of this knowledge vs. meditation issue in Śaṅkara’s distinctions between saguna- and nirguna-brahman and meditation and knowledge, but for the prasaṅkhyaṇa-vādins the question of validity of cognitions was quite important. That comes out distinctly from Sureśvara’s opponent’s claim in the NaiS: prasaṅkhyaṇa was not like the stereotypical Upaniṣadic fancy that requires concentration, but is otherwise not objective, that is, is without a true object corresponding to the notion, as in the case when a man thinks that a female body that is full of feces is, in fact, lovely, and keeps musing on it. Rather, prasaṅkhyaṇa is based on a true cognition produced by the Upaniṣadic identity statements and clarified through reasoned inquiry. The specific role of meditation was to engender full understanding of that same scriptural cognition of a true state of affairs: prasaṅkhyaṇa was based on true cognitions,  

61 Śaṅkara does not say much under BĀU 4.4.21, but Sureśvara has a long discussion against Bhartṛprapaṇca and Maṇḍana Miśra.
and it produced even truer cognitions. Meditation of this kind was not just concentration: it was based on truth, and it aimed at truth.

Thus, at the core of the Vedāntic prasaṅkhyaṇa was the conviction that the identity statements of the Upaniṣads were informative about a factual state of affairs. They were knowledge qua knowledge, and although the epistemic status of meditation was problematic and ambiguous—Sureśvara’s opponent’s wording is significant: meditation perfects the scriptural cognition, paripūrṇāṁ pramitiṁ janayati, which places prasaṅkhyaṇa in the court of pramāṇa—the proponents of this doctrine seem to have been unambiguous that the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads and not meditation was the pramāṇa for knowing Brahman. This conviction was fortified with some theological arguments as well: scripture could not affirm both unity of the Self with Brahman as literally intended, and meditation as independently meaningful, because the second presupposed the subject-object distinction. Thus, meditation was an accessory to the propositional knowledge, not the other way around.

Meditation, however, was required, because the propositional scriptural knowledge of the Self-Brahman identity was insufficient for liberation. Scripture deals with universals, categories, and when the Upaniṣad says tat tvam asi, that means that the category of the Self is identical with Brahman. Such cognition does not translate to the experience “I myself am Brahman.” I do not “see” non-duality. Sureśvara’s statement of prasaṅkhyaṇa, in fact, explicitly places scripture in the same category with reasoning: the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads is to

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63 This is discussed in some technical detail in the SV 770-790.
Brahman what smoke is to fire: neither show directly their respective object.\(^{64}\) Perception, on the other hand, presents particulars that affirm duality moment after moment. Thus, no matter how much one may believe that there is nothing but Brahman, it is enough to open the eyes and see just the opposite. Perceptual duality which one encounters moment after moment is bound to defeat the scriptural cognition “I am Brahman.” In addition to that, percepts easily activate their corresponding impressions that have been formed through long habituation.\(^{65}\)

For these two reasons—perception is immediate, and it activates impressions—the scriptural cognition “I am Brahman” should, first, itself become immediate in kind, and therefore it is better understood as the result that comes after the application of the process of meditation.\(^{66}\)

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\(^{64}\) “By their nature, linguistic utterances express their meaning mediately. They secure validity by soliciting the help of reasoning. Reasoning is also ineffective in regard to understanding things as they are, just as smoke is in regard to fire. Reasoning too reveals the object by recourse to meditation.”

paroṣa-vṛttyā śabdo hi vadan svārthān svabhāvataḥ ]
sambhāvayan pramāvatvaṁ yuktiṁ svīkṛtya vartate ]
yāthātmyāvagame ‘saktā dhūmo ‘gnāv iva sā ’pi ca ]
svī-śoṣyaiva prasaṅkhyānaṁ yuktiṁ vastuni vartate. SV 777-8.

\(^{65}\) “One does not obtain permanent liberation on hearing ‘You are Being.’ Therefore, continuous meditation along with reasoning are required.”

sad eva tvam astīty ukte nātmano muktatāṁ sthirām ]
prapadyate prasaṅcaksāṁ ato yuktyaṁucintayet. USP 18.9.

“He who has realized the truth about the Self does not need meditation. The ignorant, on the other hand, does not attain that result [knowledge of the Self] even if he had heard about it.”

pratipannātma-yāthātmyaḥ prasaṅkhyānādī nekṣate ]
ajñas tu śrāvito ’py asmād vinā nāpnoti tat phalam. SV 785.

“The strong impression that is produced by percepts inevitably defeats the scriptural cognition ‘I am Being,’ and one is led to external things through faults. Since cognitions got from scripture and reasoning are concerned with universals, percepts of particulars inevitably defeat them.”

sad asmiṁ ca vijñānam akṣaja bādhate dhruvam ]
śabdotattār drḍha-saṁskāro dosaśa cākṣṣyate bahiḥ ]
śrūtunumāna-janmānuvā sāmānya-vaśyau yataḥ ]
pratyayāv akṣaja ‘vaśyau viśeṣārtho nivārayet. USP 18.13-14

\(^{66}\) “The means should be enjoined after the result, ‘You are Being,’ has been stated. Nothing else but prasaṅkhyāna is constituted for that purpose.”

sad asūti phalaṁ coktvā vidheyaṁ sādhanaṁ yataḥ ]
nā tad anyat prasaṅkhyānāt prasiddhiḥāram iheṣyate. USP 18.17.

“Although it is known from scripture [that one is Brahman] the mediacy in this regard does not depart. It is for a direct experience of this that prasaṅkhyāna is enjoined. … Scripture enjoins prasaṅkhyāna for the one who has heard the narrative about the Self from scripture, but wants to make it his own, personal attainment, although not experienced [previously].”

api sāstrāt prapanne ‘śimin pāroksyaṁapahārataḥ ]
tat-sāksāt-karaṇāyava prasaṅkhyānam vidhiyate ]
Second, because perceptual awareness does not cease so long one lives, and it continues presenting impression-activating percepts, this immediate awareness “I am Brahman” must be actively maintained: prasaṅkhyaṇa is a repeated meditation. The cognition “I am Brahman” is future to the application of meditation, and in an important sense it always remains future, as the cognition-producing meditation must be repeated over and again. The meditation, furthermore, must be accompanied by practices that are like the kriyā-yoga of the PYŚ.67 The whole idea is, obviously, influenced by the PYŚ.

A lexeme that is commonly used in this regard is śamādi or śamanādi, “having calm as its first.”68 This most certainly refers to the complex of personal virtues that are listed in BĀU 4.4.23, and which every practitioner of the standardized BS brahma-vidyā had to cultivate: “A man who knows this, therefore, becomes calm, composed, cool, patient, and collected.”69 It is absolutely important, however, that this list is found in the section of the Upaniṣad just after the injunction of meditation that was one of the paradigmatic prasaṅkhyaṇa texts, vijñāya prajñāṁ kurvīta in BĀU 4.4.21. This complex attaches to the Vedāntic prasaṅkhyaṇa quite parallel to the kriyā-yoga practice that must assist the yogic prasaṅkhyaṇa, and even Śaṅkara customarily refers to it as a wider set that is yama-niyama in nature, as we shall see in the later chapters.

As I said above, the proponents of prasaṅkhyaṇa were adamant that the propositional knowledge of unity of the Self with Brahman was the specific cause of cognition, or pramāṇa. Such knowledge revealed a domain that was otherwise unavailable. Because of the problem of

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śruter jhātātma-vṛttānto ‘nanubhūtam api svakam | sthānākam vaḥchataḥ śāstrāt prasaṅkhyaṇaṁ vidhīyate. SV 771, 773.

67 “Therefore, for attaining experience, one should practice prasaṅkhyaṇa with effort, along with Self-control etc., giving up practices that are opposite to its result.”
tasmād anubhāvāyāva prasaṅcaśātaḥ yatnataḥ |
tyajān sādhana-tat-sādhya-viruddhāṁ śamanādiṁ. USP 18.18. Also, SV 761 and 763 describe prasaṅkhyaṇa as sopāyo vihitāḥ and śamādi-airgānvitaḥ, enjoined along with or furnished with auxiliary means, self-control etc.

68 SV 764; USP 18.18.

mediacy, however, meditation was required, and such meditation had the status of a function or a vyāpāra of this propositional knowledge, its efficient mode. Meditation was the propositional knowledge put to use. The prasaṅkhyaṇa claim was, to remember, that the understanding of unity does not drive away ignorance on its mere arising, and the role of continuous meditation was to elevate pramāṇa as veridical cognition to its culmination point. Scriptural knowledge was not experience, and only as experience did pramāṇa serve the good of man, liberation.70

Finally, the doctrine of prasaṅkhyaṇa, steeped in Yoga psychology and practice, was nevertheless a doctrine of Vedic theology, and it took the Upaniṣadic injunctions of meditation on the Self as statements with real injunctive force. The proponents of such meditation were aware that prasaṅkhyaṇa was a Yogic doctrine, and by Yogic we mean the tradition of the PYŚ which is repudiated in the BS.71 Meditation seems to work well for yogis, all right, but for Vedic theologians Yoga was a laukika or worldly matter, and an important consideration was whether

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70 “Prasaṅkhyaṇa is enjoined for the one who has not experienced the Self although he has heard about it from scripture and wants to make it his own residence. Only through meditation as its own function does scripture reveal its own meaning. It cannot do so without such function. For this reason, there is no split of meaning of scripture [between the propositional knowledge and the injunction to meditation.] It is not right that agents [here, the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads] conceal their own function. Therefore, it is justified that meditation serve the meaning of unity [between Brahman and the Self]. Even after revealing such unity, scripture does not attain completion prior to understanding the human good, because of the danger that it may lose validity. … In this way, the linguistic utterance [the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads] personally establishes the object: by assuming primacy regarding the injunction, it becomes a reliable warrant.”

71 David Gordon White in his recent book The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali: A Biography (2014) talks about Yoga with an upper-case Y as a philosophical system, “a theory of everything,” versus lower-case yoga for all other uses. There is no doubt that there is some yoga in the BS (we saw that a form of meditation was its soteriological practice), but Yoga with the doctrine of avidyā, kleśa etc. is foreign to it, and is presented as a form of Sāṅkhya, which in general is the recipient of the fiercest and most sustained beating.
such meditation was approved of in the Veda. Given the specific problem that the Vedāntic notion of prasaṅkhyāna was addressing, the mediacy of the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads, its proponents promoted a doctrine of Vedic injunctions that affirm meditation as a means of immediate knowledge of the Self. “It is known in the world that meditation is related to seeing. Lest it be doubted that it is likewise in the Veda, [meditation] is enjoined.”\textsuperscript{72} An injunction of meditation was required, in other words, for attaining immediate knowledge of the Self’s being Brahman as a form of direct experience.\textsuperscript{73} Śaṅkara identifies such injunctions as niyoga, which was the preferred terms of the Prābhākaras: the Veda not only discloses meditation as the means of the clear immediate knowledge of the Self: it also, \textit{and primarily}, issues a mandate that such meditation be performed.\textsuperscript{74}

Four texts are commonly discussed by Śaṅkara and Sureśvara as such injunctions:

Yājñavalkya’s statement to Maitreyī that introduced the Vedāntic method, \textit{ātmā vā are drasṭavyah śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyah maitreyī} in BĀU 2.4.5 and 4.5.6; \textit{ātmety evopāsīta} in BĀU 1.4.7, in the text that contains the future \textit{mahā-vākya aham brahmāsmi}; \textit{vijñāya prajñāṁ kurvīta} in BĀU 4.4.21 that is part of the text that introduces calm or śama and other virtues as practices that must accompany meditation; and ChU 8.7.1, \textit{ya ātmāpahata-pāpmā vijaro vimṛtyur viśoko vijighatso 'pipāsaḥ satya-kāmaḥ satya-saṅkalpaḥ so 'nveṣṭavyah sa vijijñāsitavyah}, “One should investigate and know distinctly the Self which is free from faults, etc.”

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{loke darśana-sambaddham prasaṅkhyānaṁ samāśritam | vede ‘pi kiṁ tathā tat syān na vā ‘tas tad vidhiyate. SV 765.}
\item \textit{Therefore, possessed of calm, etc., one should practice prasaṅkhyāna with effort, for the purpose of direct experience, giving up whatever is contrary to this means and its result.”}
\item \textit{tasmād anubhavāyaiva prasaṅcaśśa yatnataḥ | tyajan sādhana-tat-sādhya-viruddham śamanādīmān. USP 18.18.}
\item \textit{Since [the Self's being Brahman] is not understood [just from the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads,] the mandate [to prasaṅkhyāna] is not contradictory to it until such awareness becomes firm, as in the case of ritual.”}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{72} loke darśana-sambaddham prasaṅkhyānaṁ samāśritam | vede ‘pi kiṁ tathā tat syān na vā ‘tas tad vidhiyate. SV 765.
\textsuperscript{73} “Therefore, possessed of calm, etc., one should practice prasaṅkhyāna with effort, for the purpose of direct experience, giving up whatever is contrary to this means and its result.”
\textsuperscript{74} niyoga 'pratipannatvāt karmanāṁ sa yathā bhavet | aviruddho bhavet tāvad yāvat sarīvedyatādṛdhaḥ. USP 18.11.
from old age, death, sorrow, hunger, thirst, whose desires and intentions are real.” More
specifically, the proponents of prasaṅkhyaṇa claimed that these statements were injunctions of
the apūrva type that we discussed in Chapter Two, that is, injunctions which disclose a causal
relation between a specific practice and a future result.75 This had two consequences, one
concerning the nature of meditation, and the other, the nature of liberation.

First, meditation was not a natural means of bringing the mediate propositional
knowledge of the Upaniṣads from mediacy to immediacy. As I said above, meditation was a
worldly thing, and a Vedic injunction was required to promote it as a means of immediacy: such
immediacy of the Self was empirically unavailable, and without a Vedic fiat one could not be
certain that meditation was adequate. This resulted in an interesting encounter of two doctrines
of scriptural immediacy, that of Yoga (and the other traditions of liberation) and that of Vedic
theology. In Yoga, scriptures were based on direct experience, and practice was supposed to
emulate such experience so that one’s own experience of supersensible things would become
likewise immediate. In Vedic theology, scriptures were a form of direct experience akin to
perception, our only window to things supersensible, and there was no cognitive agent behind
them. The proponents of prasaṅkhyaṇa, thus, wanted a direct experience of Brahman for which
scripture was necessary but insufficient, but needed scripture to sanction the practice of
meditation. One kind of direct experience was supposed to sanction another.

75 This is most thoroughly discussed in BĀUBh 1.4.7 and the Vārttika thereon, but Śaṅkara consistently introduces
the possibility of the respective statements being apūrva injunctions before rejecting it, as we will see in Chapter
Nine. From the SV 754 and Ānandagiri thereon, it would appear that these injunctions were further organized in
specific groups that formed a coherent network: statements of the kind of ātmā draṣṭavyāḥ were uttpati-vidhis or
statements that introduce meditation as a process, like the major ritual injunctions, whereas statements as vijnāya
praṇām kurvīta, interpreted by Ānandagiri as mokṣa-kāmaḥ praṇām kurvīta, were adhikāra-vidhis, presenting the
practitioner to whom meditation pertains with the means to the desired result; through implication, this would be the
one who had heard about the Self, acquired the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads. These are fascinating
details for the history of Vedānta, but I will not pursue them, gaurava-bhayāt.
Second, the vision of the Self that such meditation was supposed to bring about would terminate in liberation at a future time: liberation was not a visible result, and would necessarily be experienced *postmortem*. Even if immediacy of the propositional knowledge was attained in life, the *prasaṅkhyaṇa* doctrine promoted a stream of awareness, like the stream of the Ganges, or an “accumulation of meditation” that had to be maintained for a long time, in any case till the end of life. This seems to have been the doctrine that Śaṅkara argues against in the BĀUBh 1.4.10 as well as in the introduction to the TUBh, namely that it was the stream of awareness concerning the Self that removes ignorance and brings about liberation, not the first clear cognition, with the final punch taking place at death.⁷⁶

**The “Another Cognition” Meditation**

Under the above *prasaṅkhyaṇa* account, it was the same scriptural cognition, albeit transformed by the continuous meditation, that would drive away ignorance and bring about liberation. Meditation was like the salt to a dish: the substance was still the same, but with the added virtue of immediacy. There were, however, other Vedāntins who claimed that liberation required another cognition, different from the scriptural. Śaṅkara presents this idea in his BĀUBh:

> Others say: “By means of meditation one should bring about another, special cognition of the Self. The Self is known by means of this cognition, and only this cognition dispels ignorance, not the cognition of the Self arisen from Vedic sentences. The following statements have this meaning: ‘Having known, one should cultivate insight;’ ‘The Self should be seen: it should be heard about, pondered over, meditated on,’ ‘One should search out, investigate that Self.’”⁷⁷

Sureśvara expressed a similar idea:

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⁷⁶ BĀUBh 1.4.10 should be read in detail regarding this, but Śaṅkara there argues against the doctrine that it is the last cognition of the Self, or alternatively the uninterrupted stream of awareness, that removes ignorance and leads to liberation. There is a little doubt that the two are sides of the same doctrine.

⁷⁷ *apare varṇayanti upāsanenātmaviṣayaṁ viśiṣṭāṁ vijñānāntaraṁ bhāvayet, tenātmā jñāyate, avidyā-nivartakaṁ ca tad eva, nātma-viṣayaṁ vedā-vākyājanitāṁ vijñānam iti. etasmīrin arthe vacanāny api — vijñāya prajñāṁ kurvīta [BAU 4.4.21], draṣṭavyah śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyah [2.4.5], so ‘nveṣṭavyah sa vijñāsitavyah [ChU 8.7.1.3] ityādīni. BĀUBh 1.4.7.*
Others, however, say: “Because the cognition ‘I am Brahman’ arisen from Upaniṣadic sentences is relational, it does not quite reach the real nature of the Self. – What then? – This same cognition brings about another, non-propositional cognition, for the one who meditates on it perpetually like the stream of the Ganges, and that cognition alone dissipates the darkness of ignorance without a remainder. The proof for this is the statement ‘Having known, a brāhmaṇa should cultivate insight.’”

It is not fully clear just how this view was different from the previous, since it is but a matter of perspective whether a transformed cognition is taken to be the same with or different from the original. However, this second view came along with an additional claim: the liberating cognition must be different from the scriptural, because the scriptural sentential cognition is relational, predicated on difference, and but an approximation of the non-dual Brahman. In one form or another, this doctrine was characteristic of the śabdādvaita-vāda of the grammarians and Maṇḍana Miśra. I will call it the doctrine of “another cognition” meditation. For the purpose of brevity, and having in view historical attributions in Advaita Vedānta, in reconstructing this doctrine I will focus on Maṇḍana Miśra.
Now, Maṇḍana famously said:

There are three forms of understanding regarding Brahman. The first is from linguistic utterance [scripture]. The second is variously called *dhyāna*, *bhāvanā*, *upāsana*, and consists in continual meditation on what has been heard. The third is direct experience; it is the state of completion in which all mental constructs have been annulled.\(^{81}\)

The Upaniṣads were, Maṇḍana affirmed, our only window into knowing Brahman,\(^{82}\) but the problem with them was that they presented Brahman as a relational entity. To be precise, they did present Brahman as the only real thing behind the apparent multiplicity, but in doing so they relied on words that stand for categories, whose use was predicated on ignorance. They presented Brahman in a way that had to rely on illusion, though not intending to affirm illusion: they could not present Brahman directly, but had to do so through composite, determinate description. Let us see how this was the case.

Very briefly, Brahman for Maṇḍana Miśra was that most general category or *padārtha* that apparently evolves into the multiplicity of creation, that is, into all the specific *padārthas* of all kinds. This Brahman, further, was speech in nature, identical with the holy syllable *Om*:

Maṇḍana was, like Bhartṛhari, a proponent of *śabda-vivarta-vāda*\(^{83}\). Since creation apparently evolves from Brahman, Brahman can best be understood as Being and as the cause of everything. And, since this Being and cause is speech in nature, Brahman is that great genus, *sāmānya*, that diversifies itself in all the categories of language. This general notion of Brahman as the ground of Being and the great genus is formed based on the creation passages of the

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82 BrS 4.4, p.157.
Upaniṣads, such as the famous *yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante* of the *Taittirīya*, but the crucial prerequisite for forming the notion of Brahman was that its formation was possible because causality and Being are categories that we are otherwise acquainted with.84

Brahman as the great cause and genus, however, was an insufficient characterization of Brahman: it was the positing of the category as a something denotable by words, describable in language, but it was not informative of Brahman’s characteristic nature. Now, in the Upaniṣads this general causality or Being is further associated with some positive qualities, such as consciousness and bliss, and more generally disassociated from the kinds of things that the apparent transformations of Brahman are, through negative attribution: Brahman is not gross nor fine, not liable to hunger and thirst, etc. The three modes of predication jointly manage to present Brahman in its true, specific nature: (1) the creation statements set the category to which Brahman belongs; (2) the positive characteristics present Brahman’s essential nature through qualities that are empirically available to us; (3) the negative statements deny any limitations and abolish the multiplicity of Brahman’s apparent transformation, such that only Brahman as a positive thing remains. The processes involved in this are association with some and exclusion from other qualities, *saṁsarga* and *bheda*, and generally this is how sentential references of determinate descriptions are formed.85

This Upanisadic knowledge of Brahman can be likened to descriptions of unknown things which we, nevertheless, understand. Take, for instance, a traveler who visits an island and

84 *BrS*, p.157.

85 The two processes were, in fact, two competing theories about sentence meaning formation in Indian philosophy of language, to be precise, about the relations of the things signified by the various terms in a sentence. Historically, they are traced to two pre-Kātyāyana grammarians, Vājapyāyana and Vyāḍi, and they stemmed from disagreement over the reference of individual words: while Vājapyāyana claimed that the reference was the universal, *jāti* or *sāṃsarga*, Vyāḍi claimed that it was the individual, *dravya*. Maṇḍana as a proper Mīmāṃsaka was a proponent of the first: words denote universals, and the sentence meaning is just the relation of the word meanings, their association; it seems, though, that he uses *bheda* with the negative attributes. On the two, typically lucid discussions are available in Hiriyanna 1972:73-77, and Kunjunni Raja 1977:191-93.
sees an uncommon bird. When she gives her description: “On this island, there are these birds, they call them ‘Jewelfowl;’ they have feet made of emerald, beaks made of ruby, and wings made of gold and silver,” the description is informative enough because we are acquainted with the categories that the traveler had used. A specification of the “bird” genus is made through a predication of characteristics, such that through the testimony we are acquainted with a specific bird species that we have not seen before. It does not even matter if there really are such birds or not: we have meaningful verbal cognitions even when we know that there are no corresponding objects, as in the case of the expression “hare’s horn.” Through composite description, language as the ground of Being can convey the notion of almost anything, and reality in any case is not really any more real than Pegasus might be.

The point is, the Upaniṣads must use these general categories if they are to be a source of knowledge about Brahman: they must convey the unknown through the known. More generally, their statements must be synthetic to be informative, because that is what sentences as pramāṇa do. It is not enough just to take Brahman as conveyed by the padārtha of Being or causality, because that is not sufficiently informative about the specificity of Brahman, for which a sentence is required. Brahman in its specific nature is not in the domain of words, but a sentence can convey much about it. This poses the obvious problem that we have already discussed—such knowledge is mediate—but it poses another, specifically Advaita problem: it presents Brahman as a relational entity, a definite description that obtains as a sentential reference, a verbal composite as it were—saṁsargātmaka as Sureśvara says—the knowledge of which depends on

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87 BrS p.18.
categories that we know of through duality. It is a form of analogical predication that depends on there being analogues with which we are acquainted through perception, and that presupposes duality and ignorance. The Upaniṣad may not affirm them as intended, but it cannot do without them.

Therefore, this first sentential cognition of Brahman depends on ignorance, *avidyā*. It provides knowledge of Brahman and it is the *pramāṇa* for knowing Brahman, but it depends on concepts, mental constructs or *vikalpas*, and for this reason it does not stop ignorance. One, therefore, must engage in the processes of repeated meditation on the Self from which all multiplicity has been denied, in the above manner, a meditation that is preceded by hearing and thinking, *śravaṇa* and *manana*, along with practices such as celibacy. This is, of course, the triple Vedāntic process of *śravaṇa, manana* and *nididhyāsana*. Maṇḍana specifically calls these “means proclaimed in scripture” for dispelling ignorance, and it seems important to note that they are not a function of and an indispensable auxiliary to *pramāṇa* as was the case with the previous account of *prasāṅkhyāna*: it is solely the Upaniṣads that disclose Brahman, but a further means is required to dispel ignorance and effectuate liberation. This is meditation on Brahman that is promoted as such a means in the Upaniṣads.

Now, this is, again, an obvious problem, because meditation, along with the auxiliary means, is an instrument of some sort, and the exercise of its instrumental agency over a patient requires a distinction between the two. The patient in this case is the vision of duality, *bheda-darśana*, and meditation should undo that on which it itself depends. Not an easy task. Maṇḍana, therefore, says that meditation is eventually deconstructed in the Self, deconstructing *in the*

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process the distinction between the agent, the action, and the object of meditation, in the manner of some powder that reacts with the dirt in water, eliminating both the dirt and itself, or of a poison that is an antidote to another poison. Such hearing and meditation are a form of prophylactic ignorance, then, a docta ignorantia of an Advaita sort, that is different from what the Upaniṣads call prapañca, bheda or mṛtyu. Maṇḍana refers to the famous Īśopaniṣad mantra which says that one overcomes death by ignorance, and then achieves immortality by knowledge: that is, by the processes of liberation that depend on distinctions and, thus, constitute ignorance, one gradually deconstructs grosser ignorance, multiplicity or “death.” Finally, and when the pure Self shines through, one achieves liberation, a state of remaining in the Self.

This state is, of course, equivalent to the third form of understanding regarding Brahman, direct experience. This direct experience that is brought about by meditation is the “another, special, non-propositional cognition of Brahman” that Śaṅkara and Sureśvara have in mind. While the propositional knowledge reveals Brahman as a pramāṇa, the meditational complex that involves the practices of śravaṇa, manana and dhyānābhyāsa/bhāvanā/prasaṅkhyāna, along with celibacy and the like, is the means that brings about the removal of ignorance, which is equivalent to the direct experience of Brahman, and with that it brings about liberation.

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This is, of course, redolent of the sabīja/nirbīja-samādhi of Yoga. In addition to that, in the few instances where Maṇḍana explicitly mentions prasaṅkhyāna, the important thing is that such meditation is the only thing that can undo the psychological faults that have roots in ignorance and prevent one from experiencing Brahman and liberation.\(^9\) This suggests that meditation on Brahman is tantamount to purification that ends with the removal of ignorance. It is not a removal of faults in understanding or cognition, but a removal of personal faults. In this light, it makes perfect sense why Maṇḍana would consider ritual to be causally effective in the pursuit of liberation, alongside hearing, thinking and meditation and their auxiliaries such as celibacy. If meditation is a prophylactic agent, then its effect can be accelerated with a catalyst. This is mightily important to bear in mind, because for Śaṅkara the removal of personal faults will happen on a different stage, before one could begin the inquiry into Brahman, and the faults that the sādhaka has in the application of the three processes will be of a different kind, strictly concerning understanding.

We should note here that such understanding of gradual purification after fully knowing Brahman from the Upaniṣads allowed Maṇḍana to claim how it was possible for ignorance to remain operative even after the propositional knowledge from the Upaniṣads was crystal clear and indubitable. Balasubramanian may be quoted on this with profit:

In the same way, the illusion (mithyāvabhāsa) of the world continues even in the case of a person who has the knowledge of the non-dual Self conveyed by the Upaniṣadic texts. If the illusion continues in spite of the fact that the verbal cognition (śabda-jñāna) arising from the Upaniṣads is clear, certain, and indubitable, it is because of the power of deep-rooted impressions of the beginningless illusion. … In order to counter these impressions, something more than the verbal cognition arising from the Upaniṣads is required. Maṇḍana says that repeated contemplation (abhyāsa) on the content of the verbal cognition generated by the Upaniṣadic texts is necessary in order to root out the impression of the beginningless ignorance. As a result of the repeated contemplation (abhyāsa), the impressions of the knowledge of the non-dual Self obtained from the

\(^9\) yato na kāma-prāptyā kāma-pravilayaḥ, api tu doṣa-paribhāvanābhuvā prasaṅkhyānena, BrŚ p.30. tasmāt prasaṅkhyānam evaikaḥ kāma-nibarhaṇopāyaḥ, karma-vidhayas tu viparyaya-hetavaḥ. Ibid.
**Upaniṣads** grow and develop, become powerful and get stabilized in such a way that they are able to remove the impressions of the beginningless illusion and thereby bring about the manifestation of the real nature of the Self (ātma-svarūpa-āvirbhava).\(^{92}\)

We should, however, note carefully that Maṇḍana’s problem with the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads was not that it was verbal. Allen Thrasher seems justified in claiming that even the final knowledge of Brahman attained through meditation would still be somehow verbal, just because Brahman itself was speech in nature. “The possibility is left open that to Maṇḍana's mind even the final, non-dual knowledge of Brahman is still verbal, because its object is Brahman, which is still śabda.”\(^{93}\) For Maṇḍana, reality itself at the core was verbal, and it was so even when devoid of all mental constructs: the world was a false appearance of the Word. The problem was, rather, that the knowledge of Brahman from the Upaniṣads obtained through the threefold predication in which Brahma in its specific nature was a determinate description, a vākyārtha or a saṁsarga-bheda, one that is meaningless without mental constructs. It was not just a verbal cognition that may not necessarily be verbalized, but a full-blown propositional knowledge. It is eminently significant that both Śaṅkara and Sureśvara framed the problem in terms of Upaniṣadic sentences, not just verbal cognition of any kind. Maṇḍana’s solution to the problem of Brahman as a sentential reference or a definite description was to promote meditation in which all mental constructs would be overcome through the repetition of the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads. Śaṅkara’s solution in promoting the identity statements of the Upaniṣads as the focal point of liberation was very different, as we shall see in Chapter Eight, and it involved a mode of predication in which the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads would not amount to a definite description of Brahman.

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\(^{92}\) Balasubramanian 1983:333.

\(^{93}\) Thrasher 1993:98.
Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be worth our while here to reiterate the central claim of the doctrine of prasāṅkhyāna: scriptural knowledge of Brahman or the Self is not enough for liberation, because of its being mediate and relational. That claim is easy to appreciate, and in some variation, it has been commonly made by religious men of diverse affiliations: direct personal experience is different from scriptural knowledge.

Its epistemic significance can be viewed, for instance, through the lens of the Bergsonian distinction between knowledge through analysis or description and knowledge through intuition. Henri Bergson famously claimed that any object that is not known empirically can be known in two ways: through analysis that involves description of the characteristics of the object in virtue of its having elements in common with other objects, thus through analogy; or through intuition that is a “kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it.”94 Think of a character in a novel, for instance, who can be described by the author in various complexity of detail, but of whose traits and actions we can know just in virtue of the fact that we know them as concepts. Appreciating fully or absolutely such a character would require us on our part to “coincide with his person,” to attain a form of sympathy in which we would experience his emotions, to assume a vision of things from his perspective rather than from the outside. If such a form of knowing would be possible, it would be in the domain of intuition.

This is roughly what the proponents of prasāṅkhyāna were claiming. Knowing Brahman through scripture meant knowing Brahman from the outside and through description by means of abstract concepts, a description that was possible in virtue of Brahman’s having characteristics

94 Bergson 1913:7.
that were shared with its finite products. Such description did not quite work even on the conceptual level, however, because Brahman’s characteristics such as bliss and consciousness were not really like the characteristics that we are empirically acquainted with. Maṇḍana’s description of the uncommon bird was only an imperfect approximation, because Brahman did not have bliss like the bird had silver wings: the bliss of Brahman does not have a full analogue. The negative characteristics of Brahman in the Upaniṣads would additionally convey that Brahman was not a kind of an entity in the same order of being as its products were.

This simultaneous application of cataphatic and apophatic theology made of Brahman an eminently composite entity, a sentential reference, a vākyārtha, the knowledge of which absolutely required concepts or mental constructs. That is just how sentences that involve definite descriptions work: a particular genus is individuated by the predication of unique characteristics. Knowing Brahman directly and as an entity that is absolute or simple, beyond mental constructs, would require becoming Brahman, experiencing Brahman’s bliss, and assuming Brahman’s kind of awareness.

The prasaṅkhyāna doctrine, however, was that such propositional knowledge of Brahman from the Upaniṣads was the only window into knowing Brahman. The prasaṅkhyāna meditation was not supposed to start from scratch in the pursuit of Brahman, nor function independently as an alternative method. The notion of Brahman or the Self formed from the Upaniṣads was true as far as truth in the sphere of illusion was possible. It was the continual meditation on this same propositional knowledge formed through analogy with what was known, and the prasaṅkhyāna-vādins as Vedic theologians were sure to emphasize that the Upaniṣadic statements of Brahman or the Self were the sole pramāṇa for knowing Brahman. For some of them, meditation was a mode of the propositional knowledge through which such knowledge became clearer. For
Maṇḍana Miśra, the scripturally formed cognition of Brahman, *pramāṇa* as a result or *phala*, became the specific cause of the final non-dual cognition, *pramāṇa* as an instrument or the unique cause, *karaṇa*. The route to knowing Brahman fully was solely through the Upaniṣads.

It is, of course, difficult to find an epistemological justification why the same cognition that is repeated over and again, all other things being equal, would just by itself transition into an intuition or direct experience. Maṇḍana Miśra’s point, however, was that meditation on Brahman reconstitutes the subject through purification: it removes impressions of ignorance, it undoes desire, and it stamps its own impressions. Bhaṛtrprapañca’s idea was much along the same line: the continual immersion of the mind, the product of ignorance, in Brahman its cause would gradually transform the mind, brahmanize it back to the cause, in the same manner as a metal piece made of ore would decompose back to ore and, eventually, to soil. This was, then, the crucial *prasaṅkhyāna* claim: meditation effectuated purity of the subject, and without such purity obtaining, the cognition of Brahman would never become immediate.
CONCLUSION

I said that Kumārila’s two accounts of liberation need not be interpreted as a change in his own understanding, but that it is better to see them rather as an attempt to accommodate two very different understandings of both what liberation is and how it can be achieved. As we saw, his first account was tied to “Śāṅkhya,” and we have reasons to believe that this was the systematic Śāṅkhya which was organized around treatises such as the Śāṅkhya-Kārikā: the same arguments against it reappear in the BS commentaries. However, Kumārila’s account had wider application and it could refer to any variation of the doctrine that discriminative knowledge—knowledge of the Self as distinct from matter—is in itself sufficient for liberation.

And, at this point it would be useful, it seems to me, to think of the famous Śāṅkhya-Yoga distinction in the Bhagavad-Gītā, where Śāṅkhya is introduced by Kṛṣṇa in the second chapter just before the beginning of the fratricidal war, precisely in the sense of knowing the true Self as different from the body, not an agent nor a patient of action, neither a murderer nor liable to murder. Throughout the Gītā this Śāṅkhya is affirmed as a means of liberation, alternative to Yoga, to yield the same results as Yoga but inherently more difficult. We also saw that the result which discriminative knowledge of the Self was supposed to bring was isolation of the cognitive agent and absence of transitive awareness.

One problem with Śāṅkhya for Vedic theology could have been that it is not easy to comprehend how discriminative knowledge can be a means that is constitutionally processual. How does one practice knowing to be a Self which is different from the body? It also seems fair to me to say that the texts that promote such knowledge rarely make it clear what is knowledge as knowledge, as a result—knowledge as content of awareness that has the quality of certainty—and what is knowledge as practice, a procedure to arrive at certainty.
Another problem must have been that an isolated Self with no transitive awareness for all eternity cannot be appealing to theologians who have spent their lives pondering over how rice, milk, and wood, when arranged properly, can bring about eternal and unsurpassed happiness. When early Vedic theology—both Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta—encountered “Sāṅkhya” in this sense of discriminative knowledge, it treated it as information that one can do things with, use it in one way or another for one or another result, in the same manner as the repurposing of yoghurt or khādira wood.

Kumārila, however, had committed himself to claiming that both dharma and mokṣa were solely in the province of the Veda, so in his first account he tried to accommodate a theory of liberation that had taken hold in the Vedic worldview but was not quite to his liking. He did not share its presuppositions, but he could work something out. So, what he did in the end amounted to turning Sāṅkhya into a form of nīṣkāma-karma-yoga, where the information about an eternal Self had engendered disinterest in the attainments promised in the Veda, but ritual practice was repurposed for attaining liberation.

Kumārila’s second account, on the other hand, should be grouped with the Brahma-Sūtra doctrine of liberation, with which it shared all important notions. This doctrine was centered on the role of meditation. Liberation was to be achieved by meditative absorption in Brahman as one’s Self—the higher Self that is not liable to transmigration, and not by any form of intellectual understanding or knowledge qua knowledge. Meditation on Brahman was the means of liberation even for Vedāntins who were much closer ontologically to Śaṅkara, such as Bhartṛprapañca, Maṇḍana Miśra, and the prasaṅkhyāna-vādins, which distinguished mediate knowing through scriptural cognition and direct knowing through meditative absorption. In the BS, knowing as knowing was largely procedural, insofar as it was important for forming the
meditation or ascertaining the meditational counterpart of oneself, in just the way that sacrifices are formulated: the process of liberation was meditation. In the doctrine of prasaṅkhyāna, on the other hand, the veridical cognition of Brahman or the Self obtained from the Upaniṣads was genuinely important, but even then, liberation did not follow by knowing Brahman or understanding with full certainty what the Upaniṣads say: there was no liberation without meditation on Brahman. This summarizes my overall argument in chapters three through five: in pre-Śaṅkara Vedic theology, liberation was never a result just of knowing as knowing, whether that be the discriminating knowledge of the Self or knowledge of Brahman from the Upaniṣads. Liberation was a result either of ritual or meditation on Brahman.

Persistent throughout the chapter was the role of ritual. We saw that Vedic theologians were not quite sure what the role of ritual in the pursuit of liberation was. For Mīmāṁsakas, it was supposed to prevent the creation of bad karma, but Kumārila thought it could also exhaust some of the old karmic stock. In his first account ritual was, really, the sole means. The Brahma-Sūtra turned the table on Mīmāṁsā: ritual’s primary role was to nurture meditation, but it was also mandatory for those who do not pursue liberation. Bhartṛprapañca, coming from the background of the therapeutic paradigm where ignorance caused agency and ritual perpetuated it, promoted ritual from an assistant to meditation to an equal partner.

The role of desire, kāma, was another item of negotiation. Kumārila’s first account was predicated on the absence of desire for the common Vedic attainments, but his second account clearly presupposed it. In the related Brahma-Sūtra account the desires related to the Vedic attainments became essential characteristics of Brahman, accomplished by Brahman’s mere will, and to strive after fashioning oneself in Brahman’s image meant securing the accomplishment of
these desires. The pursuit of liberation became ātma-kāma, and these true desires of Brahman were upheld even by the likes of Bhartṛprapañca, who was, at the end of the day, a monist.

Finally, the idea of liberation was development not only of mokṣa, but equally if not more so of svarga. In fact, the definition of niḥśreyasa as unexcelled felicity, niratiśaya-prīti or niratiśayānanda, placed svarga and mokṣa in the same category, that of the ultimate human attainment. Bliss was, of course, different thing to different theologians, but so was heaven. Particularly in the early Vedānta that was focused on the Brahma-Sūtra, liberation was much closer to heaven than to the liberation in the schools of the therapeutic paradigm. To quote Nakamura, it was “almost unparalleled in the writings of any Indian school.”¹ The “big discovery” of the Upaniṣads was that one could attain and keep the attainments that the ritualists aspired for, if one could just tap into their incorruptible source, Brahman, which is free from faults and whose desires and resolves are ever true.

¹ Nakamura 1983:531.
PART THREE: DHARMA, SCRIPTURE, AND THE GOOD OF MAN
IN EARLY ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

INTRODUCTION

In this part of the dissertation I will consider the themes that were front and center so far—scripture, dharma, and the good of man—in the doctrine of the theologian who provides the network for my whole undertaking, the great 8th-century Advaita Vedāntin Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda. This investigation will complete the history of rethinking the nature of the Vedic canon on Śaṅkara’s part, a history that we need to know so we can finally tackle the notion of vedānta-vākyā in the restricted sense in which it was used by Śaṅkara and Sureśvara, and understand why in particular tat tvam asi and aham brahmāsmi became the two mahā-vākyas in Sarvajñātman’s formulation of the doctrine, and not the injunctions of ritual as in Kumārila’s first account of liberation, or the injunctions of meditation around which the brahma-vidyās in the BS were formed, or Bhartṛprapañca’s favorites ātmānam eva lokam upāsīta and vijñāya prajñāṁ kurvīta, or the prasaṅkhyaṇa injunctions of meditation such as ātmety evopāsīta, or even descriptive statements of Brahman such as satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma.

Completing this history will require that we investigate two of the most troubled questions in Śaṅkara’s thought, and a host of other difficult issues related to them as well. The two questions concern respectively the nature of and the soteriological efficacy of ritual and meditation. The first question is, how precisely did Śaṅkara conceive of the relationship of what is commonly called “knowledge” and “action,” jñāna and karma, and of their possible cooperation in the pursuit of liberation? As we saw in the previous part, Vedāntin theologians before Śaṅkara unanimously advocated for some form of jñāna-karma-samuccaya, combination of “knowledge” and “action,” whereas Śaṅkara, as we have heard so often, notoriously rejected the very possibility of combining the two. Patrick Olivelle’s assessment in this regard can be
cited as the standard and commonly accepted scholarly view: “Advaita, for example, claims that works in general and ritual actions in particular contribute nothing toward the attainment of liberation, and that knowledge is the sole cause of liberation.”¹ Olivelle also correctly notes that, while Śaṅkara’s arguments about the impossibility of the performance of ritual presuppose the attaining of liberation while living, jīvan-mukti, and the absence of the vision of duality, he expects even the seeker after liberation to give up ritual, a case in which the non-duality argument cannot be advanced.²

When we delve into Śaṅkara’s works, however, the image that emerges is not at all crisp and clear. While I do not wish to quote anything yet, there are places where Śaṅkara explicitly endorses jñāna-karma-samuccaya in a way that seems quite compatible with the BS account but not with Bhartṛprapañca, yet denies that such a combination could be productive of liberation. There are also places where he explicitly affirms that ritual does contribute something to the attaining of liberation, contra Olivelle’s assessment, and leading, for instance, Allen Thrasher to wonder whether his “complex doctrine … on works and knowledge” was fully consistent.³ I will show by the end of this part that Śaṅkara had a complex yet crystal clear doctrine about the mutual relationship of “works” and “knowledge,” and that “works” do contribute something to the attaining of liberation. Understanding just “what” this contribution is and “how” it stands in relation to knowledge requires an understanding of the complex Mīmāṁsā ritual technology, with which we are at this point well-acquainted.

The second central question that we will have to investigate is, what was Śaṅkara’s understanding of the nature and the role of meditation? We saw that the principal Vedāntic

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¹ Olivelle 1986:18.
² Ibid, 33.
³ Thrasher 1979:122.
means of liberation, in the standardized BS account, in Bhartṛprapañca’s doctrine, and in the
teology of prasaṅkhya, was brahma-vidyā that was practiced as a form of meditative
absorption, upāsana or dhyāna. Śaṅkara’s radical rethinking of the Vedic canon involved not
only the rejection of ritual, but of meditation as well. On this we may quote with profit
Hiriyanna’s almost century-old evaluation:

In holding such a view [that meditation plays no role in the genesis of right knowledge],
Śaṅkara stands alone; and practically all the other Vedāntins reject this distinction
between jñāna and upāsanā, and admit an injunction in one form or another in respect of
the knowledge of the self. Thus they fall into line with the Mīmāṃsakas, who hold that
the main purpose of the Veda as a whole is to inspire activity by prescribing something to
be achieved, and not merely to state matters of fact. The only difference between the
Pūrva- and Uttara-kāṇḍas according to these Vedāntins, is while in the former what is
prescribed is generally a sacrificial act, in the latter, it is meditation which is purely a
mental act. Thus it is injunctive statements found in the Upaniṣads like Ātmā vā are
draṣṭavyah that are of primary importance and not assertive propositions like Tat tvam
asi which only subserve them by furnishing the theme for the meditation prescribed. The
meditation, if it is to be practiced, presupposes a knowledge of certain details such as the
nature of ātman—the object to be meditated upon. The purpose of statements like Tat
tvam asi is merely to impart this knowledge and not directly to lead to self-realisation.
The ātman therefore is, in Mīmāṃsā phraseology, the śeṣa of the upāsanā-vidhi.⁴

In arriving eventually at tat tvam asi as the mahā-vākya, we need to see why Śaṅkara had this
problem with meditation and meditative texts. More than that, we need to ask the same question
that we asked related to ritual: was it really the case that meditation played no role whatsoever in
the pursuit of liberation? We also need to understand the distinction between knowledge and
meditation, especially because both terms are commonly denoted by jñāna when the question of
combination of “knowledge” and “action” is discussed.

In pursuing these two questions, my thesis will be that, while liberation for Śaṅkara was a
result of knowledge qua knowledge, or knowledge as “matters of fact,” to use Hiriyanna’s turn
of phrase, both ritual and meditation had causal contribution to the attainment of liberation, not,

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⁴ Hiriyanna 1928:3-4.
however, under the *samuccaya* or “combination” model, but under the model of mediate causality or *pāramparya*. Under this model, ritual and meditation as processes and the scriptural texts that present their idealities were both meaningfully subsumed under the identity statements of the Upaniṣads as the focal points of the striving after liberation, although they could not be practiced simultaneously with knowledge.

I do not wish, however, to discuss these questions one by one or by explicitly aiming at them. I want, rather, to continue narrating the story that has been enfolding so far in the dissertation, the story of scripture, *dharma*, and *niḥśreyasa*, by keeping in mind the prior developments of the plot and moving steadily towards the denouement, the birth of *mahā-vākyā*. The best way to do that is, it seems to me, to pursue holistically and in context one of these three ideas in Śaṅkara’s system, one which is quite well-known because of being prominently placed in his works, at or near the beginning of the commentaries to the *Brahma-Sūtra* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. It is the idea of *dharma*. Following the course of Śaṅkara’s understanding of *dharma* as it unfolds when we track all its implications will naturally lead us to considering the pertinent questions about scripture and the highest good, about knowledge, ritual, and meditation, but in the manner of a coherent story. Once we complete the full course, we will understand the precise relationship between knowledge and action, the role of meditation, why Vedāntic injunctive texts could not be the central Upaniṣadic statements, and, eventually, how both ritual and meditation were soteriologically efficacious and formed integral parts of the future *mahā-vākyas*. At the end of the course, we will see that Śaṅkara replaced meditation on Brahman with reflection on the Upaniṣadic identity statements as the proper Vedāntic method of liberation.
The examination of Śaṅkara’s understanding of dharma, then, is the theme of this part of the dissertation. Two notes are in order before I move on to that task. First, as I just said, I want to approach Śaṅkara’s dharma by reading it in context, and the context is constituted by Śaṅkara’s fellow theologians, Mīmāṁsakas and Vedāntins. I also want to study it holistically: that is, I want to investigate its underlying presuppositions and its bifurcation as a unified enterprise, as that seems to me to be the only way to comprehend the intricacies of the knowledge-action-meditation complex properly. For presentation purposes, this means that, first, our old friends Kumārila and Prabhākara, Bādarāyaṇa, Bhattṛprapañca and Maṇḍana Miśra, will keep popping up occasionally; and, second, that the part is conceived as a unit that should be read as such. Nevertheless, someone once said “A big book is a big evil,”5 and adamant not to neglect this stylistic maxim entirely, I will break the part into four chapters. In the first, Chapter Six of the dissertation, we will concern ourselves with dharma in general and with the path of engagement that terminates in the attaining of brahma-loka, which is not coterminous with liberation as it was in the BS. In Chapter Seven, I will introduce Śaṅkara’s doctrine of liberation, and we will pursue the repurposing of the dharma of engagement as the first leg on the path to liberation and a preparation for the dharma of disengagement. In Chapter Eight, I will focus on Śaṅkara’s notion of the identity statements of the Upaniṣads, their place in the Upaniṣads as a corpus, and their relation to other kinds of Upaniṣadic passages. That will prepare the ground for the dharma of disengagement in Chapter Nine, and the inquiry into Brahman through the identity statements as the properly Vedāntic path to liberation. With that, I will complete one of the two major arguments of this essay, namely that Śaṅkara’s promotion of knowledge as knowledge and

\[5\text{ Cassirer 1956:preface.}\]
the reasoned reflection on the identity statements of the Upaniṣads as the means of liberation and
the highest human good was a novelty in Vedic theology of his day, rather than the norm.

Second, understanding Śaṅkara’s dharma requires familiarity with his psychology and
cosmology, particularly the first. Both have been, of course, examined thoroughly and by many,
yet the emphasis on Śaṅkara’s monism and illusionism have lead scholars to disregard some
details that I find crucial for appreciating his soteriology and approach to dharma. For this
reason, I will have a few things to say about both, not in the form of a self-contained study,
however, but at a point where it seems convenient, and without aspirations to be exhaustive in
either.
CHAPTER SIX: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DHARMA 
AND THE PATH OF ENGAGEMENT

In view of propriety, it follows that those past mothers who were causes of his happiness would appear in front of him at his mere will. For, it is not right that a yogin of a pure mind should have a desire for or association with those mothers who were the causes of his misery and a means of his being born as a domestic swine.¹

One should not think that the results of ritual and meditation are permanent, like relation is amongst the Dravidians.²

“The face of truth is covered with a golden dish.
Open it, O Pūṣan, for me, a man faithful to the truth.
Open it, O Pūṣan, for me to see.”
— The man who performs a combination of “knowledge” and “action” is praying to the sun at the time of his death.³

Introduction

In conceptualizing the Veda as a canon, Śaṅkara’s entry point was that scripture had to satisfy some need of man, it had to be useful and have practical value. “The purpose of śruti is to instruct about human needs.”⁴ As should be obvious by now, Śaṅkara inherited this conviction from Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsā, and he also fully shared the worst nightmare of Vedic theology, that

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¹ mātaro janayitryo 'tītāḥ sukha-hetu-bhūtāḥ sāmarthyāt. na hi duḥkha-hetu-bhūtāsuvṛṣa-sūkarādi-janma-nimittāsu mātṛṣu viśuddha-sattvasya yogina icchā tat-saṁbandho vā yuktāḥ. ChUBh 8.2.2-9, VII.483.
² bhāvanājaṁ phalaṁ yat syād yac ca syāt karmaṇaḥ phalam | na tat thāsvn iti mantavyaṁ draviśeṣv iva saṅgatam. NaiŚ 3.93.
³ hiraṃmayena pātreṣa sataysiaāpihitam mukham |
⁴ puruṣārthopadeśa-paratvāc chrutam; TUBh 1.11.4, VI.50.
upholding certain doctrines may render parts of the Veda purposeless: The Veda *in its entirety* must be useful in satisfying some human need.

Śaṅkara also shared the broadest significance of the Mīmāṃsā understanding that there are goals of different kinds that men strive after, and that there are means suitable for the achieving of such goals, both felicitously going under the appellation of *puruṣārtha*: there are, in other words, human needs that are *puruṣārtha*, such as getting comfort and avoiding discomfort, and then there are things and actions, such as houses and house construction, that satisfy these needs, which are also *puruṣārtha*.⁵ He participated fully, thus, in the technical jargon of Vedic theology, where *puruṣārtha* could be either a determinative or a possessive compound, and where there were goals and results (*sādhya, phala*) and means (*sādhana*) of the principal and subordinate kind (*pradhāna, guṇa*), all teleologically organized in a unique whole. The goals that men aspire for could be classified in two broad groups: enjoyment, which can be generally defined as obtaining comfort and avoiding discomfort, and liberation from the cycle of rebirth.⁶

Pursuing enjoyment is, of course, not restricted to men, and the specific characteristic that constituted the human condition was that men were entitled to pursuing goals by Vedic means, that is, by *dharma*. This specifically human pursuit was supposed to be directed to the two goals that we introduced in the previous part, *abhyudaya* or promotion and *niḥśreyasa* or the highest good. “For, only men are specifically entitled to promotion and liberation.”⁷ As we saw in the previous part, these two were by Śaṅkara’s time a common currency in Vedic theology, standardized in the *Manu-Smṛti* around the category of *kāma* and used even by Kumārila.

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⁵ See BSBh 2.2.1 and 2.2.6.

⁶ This twofold classification is reconstructed from his rebuttal of Sāṅkhya in the first *pāda* of the second *adhyāya* of the BSBh, but is so commonplace in his intellectual milieu that it can be safely said that he endorses it.

⁷ *manuṣya-grahaṇair viśeṣato 'dhiṅkāra-jiṅgūnārtham. manuṣyā eva hi viśeṣato 'bhujvadya-niḥśreyasa-sādhane 'dhiṅkāta ity abhiprayaḥ*. BĀUBh 1.4.9, VIII.120.
Nevertheless, Śaṅkara would be the first to think about the two thoroughly and to organize the Veda in the most minute detail around them.

Śaṅkara’s understanding of dharma was also shared with Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsā: dharma is the specifically Vedic means of achieving a human good of the two afore-mentioned kinds. By “specifically Vedic,” we mean that knowledge of dharma was available only in the Veda and not through any other reliable warrant. These were all, in fact, shared presuppositions of the whole field of Vedic theology. Prābhākaras, of course, though that the essential characteristic of dharma was obligation and not instrumentality, but they did not deny that dharma was a means of achieving good: Śālikanātha proposed that this feature of dharma as being a means to a desirable result was how one could recognize dharma among many other actions that were in themselves causes of suffering. An upalakṣaṇa of a sort.

When we consider, however, how Śaṅkara understood the workings of dharma and the Veda in securing human good, a gulf of difference appears before us and we witness a comprehensive rethinking of the nature of the two. This rethinking, moreover, was eventually responsible for the specifically Advaita understanding of liberation and for the formulation of the mahā-vākya idea.

We saw in the Second Chapter that Mīmāṁsakas considered that the specific sphere in which the Veda is epistemically valid was that of things that are not empirically available. Śabara famously said: “For, (only) an injunction and not any sense organ is able to make known a thing

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8 prājnāṁ sākṣād abhyudaya-niḥśreyasya-hetur yaḥ sa dharmaḥ. BhGBK Introduction, XI.2. This understanding of dharma was extended at the hand of Maṇḍana Miśra and became the norm in Bhāṭṭa-Mīmāṁsā and Advaita Vedānta to refer to all human action, not only that regulated in the Veda, as iṣṭa-sādhanatā, a means to something desirable. On this, see David 2013 for a most lucid account.

9 svabhāvena hi karmāṇi dukhotpāda-hetu-bhūtāni. teṣu kāryatvāvagamaḥ phala-sādhanatāvagama-nibandhanaḥ. VAM 2.9, p.37.
that is past, present or future and is subtle, hidden, remote or suchlike in kind.”10 This was a quite broad definition, but its implications for Mīmāṃsakas were not at all straightforward. The primary and independent validity of the Veda was restricted to ritual action, or, to be specific, to an otherwise unknown causal relationship between ritual action of a certain kind—offering, pouring, giving—and a future state of affairs desirable to men. This specific causal relationship was fully unknown from other sources. The teleology of the sacrifice and its expression in the Veda was, of course, predicated on the use of common things—clarified butter, rice, wooden posts, sacrificial animals, fire—but these things were empirically available, otherwise known, and the Veda was not a reliable warrant on their nature or characteristics. Its validity concerning them was exhausted in what Mīmāṃsakas called itikartavyatā, details of sacrificial procedure, namely how these common things should be employed in sacrifice so that the ritual performance would bring the desired result. So, although Śabara said that matters of fact past and present are in the domain of the validity of the Veda, this was a very restricted and dependent validity.

We also saw that related to the question of the validity of the Veda was the issue of language. Mīmāṃsakas claimed that only the Vedic sentences of the injunctive kind had independent validity. We may illustrate this with Śabara’s interpretation of the case that is now well-known to us, in which a substance assumes the role of the primary element in a ritual performance because its use brings a specific result: yoghurt for heaven, khādira wood for virility. Śabara claimed that even in such cases, the character of the Vedic sentence was not existential or informative: “The injunctive ending establishes the relation between khādira wood and virility; it does not state anything existing in the present.”11 Even in such cases, then, there

10 codanā hi bhūtaṁ bhavantāṁ bhavisyantāṁ sūkṣmaṁ vyavahitaṁ viprakṛṣṭam ity evamjātiyakam arthaṁ śaknoty avagamayitum, nānyat kiṁcanaendriyam. MSŚBh 1.1.2, I.13
11 vidhi-vibhaktiḥ kuryād iti vīrya-khādira-sambandhasya vidhātri, na ca vartamānapadeśīṁ. MSŚBh 4.3.3, IV.1247.
had to be an injunction that would establish the causal relationship, and a sentence without such an injunction was, strictly speaking, defective. An often-quoted proverbial verse says: “In all the Vedas, the following five words are sure signs of an injunction: kuryāt (should make), kriyeta (should be made), kartavyam (ought to be made), bhavet (should become), syāt (should be).”

This was all quite uncontroversial across the whole field of Mīmāṃsā: The Veda commands and intimates some unknown causal relationship. However, the fault line in Mīmāṃsā appeared over the question of what has the epistemic priority in Vedic commands: is it the command itself comprehended first, or is it the causal relationship? Thus, Prābhākaras on the one hand argued that the Veda first commands and then informs. Maṇḍana Miśra expressed this both eloquently and succinctly: “While conveying an obligation, the injunction intimates matters of fact as well.”

The process of knowing from Vedic linguistic utterances was understanding an obligation as a unitary idea from the whole sentence or larger piece of text first; only then and through the command could one proceed to knowing the meaning of smaller linguistic units and any matter-of-fact information. Kumārila, on the other hand, started from knowing the meaning of words and smaller linguistic units first, where the awareness that one had to do something would appear only after one had understood some amount of individual information and comprehended the causal relationship between the ritual performance and the future state of affairs. In some cases, one also had to be convinced that the proposed ritual was good and beneficial solely through understanding non-injunctive texts, the arthavāda passages from the Brāhmaṇas. Kumārila’s insistence that a thinking man does not do anything without understanding that an action is beneficial opened in a sense a can of worms in Vedic theology.

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12 kuryāt kriyeta kartavyam bhavet syād iti pañcamam | etat syāt sarva-vedeṣu niyataṁ vidhi-lakṣaṇam. In MSSBh, ibid; BĀUbh 1.3.1, VIII.40. See Devasthali 1959:177.
13 kāryam artham avagamayantī codanaiva bhūtādikam apy artham avagamayati. BrS p.74.
became possible to ask: “Well, what if I do not see this as beneficial?” It also provided the
starting point for Śaṅkara’s rethinking of pramāṇa, dharma and the Veda.

**Dharma and the Validity of the Veda**

Śaṅkara’s epistemology started with the assumption that knowledge of any kind should result in
some good of men. This is a principle that holds good across the board, both in ordinary life and
in matters in the domain of scripture: “The attainment of good depends on understanding things
as they are, just as in normal life. He who understands things rightly in the world attains the
desired and avoids what is not desired, not otherwise. Likewise, the attaining of the good is
possible when the meaning of scriptural passages has been understood correctly, not
otherwise.”14 What pramāṇa needs to accomplish, therefore, is correct understanding of the
nature of things so that they can be used or avoided. Only after something has been known
properly can there be considerations whether one should do something or not.

Take, for instance, the practical need to distinguish between people as friends or enemies.
The action of differential treatment that is directed towards attaining some good by associating
with friends or avoiding a misfortune by staying away from adversaries is absolutely predicated
on figuring out who is one’s friend and who is one’s enemy. Beneficial action normally does not
happen *before* this is ascertained. Another of Śaṅkara’s favorite examples is poison: the need to
avoid poison and avert its harmful effect is predicated on the ability to recognize poison.15
Further, to understand if one is a friend or an enemy or if something is poison, one needs to
know what these things are.

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14 BĀUBh 1.3.1, VIII.37: aviparītārtha-pratipatteḥ śreyah-prāpyt-upapatter lokavat. yo hy aviparītam arthaṁ
pratipadyate loke sa iṣṭan prāṇoty anīśād vā nivartate, na viparītārtha-pratipattyā; tathecāpi śrāuta-śabda-
janītārtha-pratipattau śreyah-prāptir upapannā, na viparyaye.
15 Both illustrations are used in BĀUBh 1.3.1.
This feature of pramāṇa is so basic that it is not even restricted to humans. Men proceed to act only after ascertaining if something is good or bad in the same way as animals to. Those of developed minds run away from fierce-looking, abusive and armed men when sense experience obtains because its causal conditions are met, just as an animal runs away from a man with a stick in hand, thinking “he wants to kill me,” but rushes towards someone carrying green grass.16

Śaṅkara, thus, agreed with Kumārila that man is buddhi-pūrva-kārin, someone who understands first and acts later,17 and was opposed to the Prābhākara doctrine of obligation. The criterion of any reliable warrant is whether it produces a cognition which is both certain and fruitful. If śāstra is to be a pramāṇa at all, neither the positive nor the negative criteria of the Prābhākaras are relevant: the cognition of something being one’s inevitable duty cannot be epistemologically primitive, nor are mere descriptions of things eo ipso disqualified from validity. For a scriptural statement to be a pramāṇa, it first needs to engender a cognition that passes the test of certainty, and then it needs to be conducive to some good.18 Both must obtain before the question of obligation can even be posed. As we shall see below, there are hosts of other factors that need to obtain as well before one would proceed with acting upon something that the Veda commands.

16 “Because, there is no difference from the animals. Just as animals have a cognition of something averse from sense data when their senses are related to sense object and turn away from it, or go towards it when it is appealing—when perceiving a man with a stick in his hand they start running away, thinking ‘he wants to kill me,’ but noticing one with green grass in hand go towards him—likewise even men with developed minds seeing fierce-looking, strong, abusive men, sword in hand, run away from them, but approach the opposite. Therefore, the function of objects of knowledge and reliable warrants is the same for man and animals.” paśv-ādibhiś cāviśeṣā. yathā hi paśv-ādayāḥ śabdādibhiḥ śrotādīnāṁ sambandhe sati śabdādi-viśeṣāne pratikūle jāte, tato nivartante, anukūle ca pravartante; yathā daṇḍodyata-karaṁ puruṣam abhimukham upalabhya ‘māṁ hantum ayam icchati’ iti palāyitum ārabhate, harita-trṣa-pūrṇa-pāṇim upalabhya taṁ prayābhimukhi bhavanti; evarīṁ puruṣā api vyutpanna-cittāḥ krūra-drṣṭam ākṛṣṭaṁ khaḍgodyata-karaṁ balavata upalabhya tato nivartante, tad-viparītān prati pravartante. atāḥ sāmānaḥ paśv-ādbhīḥ puruṣāṇāṁ pramāṇa-prameya-vyavahārāḥ. BSBh 1.1.1, I.3-4.

17 This lexeme so dear to Kumārila is used right at the opening of the BSBh.

18 “What constitutes the validity or invalidity of a sentence is not whether it talks about things or action, but if it produces certain and fruitful knowledge. If it does, then the sentence is valid; if it doesn’t, it is not.” na vākyasya vastv-anvākhyānaṁ kriyānvaṁvākhyānaṁ vā prāmāṇyāprāmāṇya-kāraṇam. kim tarhi? niṣcita-phaḷavad-viśeṣāntopaḍakatvam; tad yatrāsti tat pramāṇaṁ vākyam; yatra nāsti tad apramāṇaṁ. BĀUBh 1.4.7, VIII.112.
It is for this reason that the Veda becomes a reliable warrant: the ability to produce certain and fruitful understanding. Although the Veda is divided per the kind of good that it provides for men—prosperity and liberation—as a pramāṇa it begins to function in both spheres equally:

Matters of knowledge and meditation (vidyā) are similar to matters pertaining to ritual. That there is such a thing as a certain ritual, for instance Darśa-pūrṇamāsa, which has specific details of procedure and which is performed in a particular sequence, is a supersensible matter, not knowable empirically but communicated by Vedic texts. Likewise, things such as the Supreme Self, the Lord, and various divinities, as well as characteristics such as not being gross, being above hunger and thirst and the like, are also communicated by Vedic texts. Because they are supersensible, they must be as described [by the Veda.] There is no difference in the way texts about action and texts about knowledge impress themselves upon the understanding.19

Let us pause here and review again the Prābhākara account of Veda as pramāṇa.

Mīmāṁsakas famously claimed that individual words in the Veda have the same meaning that they have in normal life.20 Words denote universals and in themselves stand for the categories of the world, padārtha, things denoted by words. The Veda as a form of knowing from linguistic utterances has nothing to do with words (pada): the domain of the Veda are sentences or texts (vākyā), because it is at the level of sentences that something new and empirically unknowable can be communicated. “Fire” is just fire and “butter” is butter, but a statement about the pouring of butter in fire has its own sentential denotation. While the Veda is not authoritative on fire as a category of the world knowable through perception, a sentence can express the empirically unknowable. Prābhākaras pushed this to the limit by claiming that, cognitively, the meaning of

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20 prayoga-codanābhāvād arthaikatvam avibhāgāt, “(Words must have) one meaning (in the Veda as in the world) because (only in this way) injunctions of employment (of things in sacrifice) is possible, (and) because no distinction (between the two is seen).” MS 1.3.30. See also Devasthali 1959:2-3 and Clooney 1990:131-37.
Vedic sentences is prior to the meaning of their individual words: they have their own denotation before their smaller linguistic units obtain individual denotation. This denotation is an obligation: I must do something. Sentences are naturally injunctive, and when they are not, the natural injunctive force is blocked by an imposition of some other mode, for instance the indicative, such that the result is an accidental existential statement.21

Now, aside from the question of cognitive priority or posteriority of sentences and smaller meaning-bearing units, Śaṅkara and his followers agreed that the Veda operates in the sphere of sentences, not individual words. This is not always obvious, since Śaṅkara does talk about categories that are in the domain of the Veda; these are, however, insofar as the Veda has something to say about them, always ellipses that need to be elaborated in sentences, as we shall see somewhat later. However, for the Veda to be meaningful, it must inform about things as they are—the attaining of any good depends on that—failing which it could not be a reliable warrant. The sentential cognition produced by any Vedic text is, then, about some supersensible reality of a substantive kind: ritual, the Self, God, etc. What is meaningful in a Vedic text are not the individual words īśvara or darśa-pūránamāśa, but how these are described. For the Veda’s being a pramāṇa, it is simpler to accept that Vedic texts denote things, not action, and that the natural verbal mode is not the injunctive but the indicative. It is the injunctive that is imposed independently of the sentence meaning, if there are circumstances conducive for that.

Let us consider one of the favorite Mīmāṁsā sentences, darśa-pūránamāśaḥbhyaṁ svargaskāmo yajeta. The natural meaning of the sentence is not the obligation that one must perform the Darśa-pūrṇamāśa ritual: it could not possibly be, because the cognition of obligation as the sentential meaning would not obtain if one did not have the requisite qualification (adhiṃkāra) for

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21 See, for instance, Sarma 1990:25.
the performance of the ritual. In this case, the qualification would at the least involve having the desire for heaven, and in its absence not only would one not perform the ritual on the Prābhākara account: one would not understand that the sentence pertains to oneself, and it would fly right by like flatus vocis. What the sentence is about, then, is the Darśa-pūrṇamāsa ritual as a supersensible reality. The cognition that this ritual should be performed comes later, if the requisite qualification is present. Scriptural realities such as the Supreme Self are expressed in existential statements that denote qualified entities, and ritual is of that kind as well.

Sureśvara, in fact, claimed that obligation as the sense that a ritual had to be performed was itself a category, padārtha, a matter of words and not sentences, a personal element over and above the scriptural cognition of the supersensible reality:

An injunction is fruitful when a category of observance is accepted as present over and above the understanding that is a result of the sentence, as in the case when something that has the nature of effort is understood over and above the cognition that corresponds to Agnihotra. In this particular case [ātmety evopāśita] there is no such thing.

This is the rationale that made it possible for Śaṅkara to claim that there are two kinds of dharma, one proceeding by way of engagement and another by way of disengagement, and that the Veda is the reliable warrant on both because they are equally supersensible. To sum up, for

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22 “An injunction is fruitful when human engagement is understood over and above the cognition produced simply by hearing the injunctive sentence. For instance, in ‘He who wants heaven should sacrifice by the Darśa-pūrṇamāsa ritual,’ the performance of this ritual is not equivalent to the cognition produced by the injunctive sentence about the ritual, because such performance depends on entitlement.” tatra hi vidheḥ sāphalyaṁ yatra vidhi-vākya-śravaṇa-mātra-janita-vijñāna-vyatirekena puruṣa-pravṛttir gamyate. yathā darśa-pūrṇamāsābhhyāṁ svarga-kāmo yajeta ity evam ādau. na hi darśa-pūrṇamāsā-vidhi-vākya-janita-vijñānam eva darśa-pūrṇamāsānusṭhānam. tac cādhikārādy-apekṣānubhāvi. BĀUBh 1.4.7, VIII.108.

23 “Likewise, why wouldn’t there be a union of words that are parts of sentences that propound the Supreme Self, the Lord, etc. and include the existential verb, through the qualificandum-qualifier relationship?” tathā asti-pada-sahitānāṁ paramātmeśvarādī-pratipādaka-vākya-padañāṁ viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣya-bhāvena saṁhatiḥ kena vāryate. BĀUBh 1.3.1, VIII.40.

the Veda to be a reliable warrant, it must primarily inform. It must inform about that which is empirically unavailable, and the knowledge must be useful to men for getting what they want and avoiding what they don’t.

What makes the being of knowledge is not that something has to be performed, because knowledge is about correspondence to things. – What is it then? – That it is known through a reliable warrant. Nor does the specific cognition obtain because it is about performance. – Why then? – Just because it is produced by a Vedic text. Since such is the being of realities that are understood from Vedic texts, if [the cognition] is qualified by performance, one will perform. If it is not qualified like that, s/he will not.25

The same theme is expressed a bit differently in Śaṅkara’s claim that knowledge is contingent on things, whereas action is contingent on man, or, more specifically, on the agent.

This is a quite common theme in Śaṅkara’s writings and prominently placed near the beginning of the BSBh and in the first prakaraṇa of US.26 This distinction is commonly drawn in the context of knowledge of Brahman versus ritual action, but is evidently more basic and refers to knowledge of any kind. Knowledge of Brahman (brahma-vidyā) or scriptural knowledge (vidyā) is determined by the object to which it corresponds, in the same way as perceptual awareness is determined by the object. Knowledge is universally the result of a reliable warrant and is not a matter of human choice. If the Yugo car is in the field of my vision and the causal factors of perceptual awareness obtain, I don’t have the option to un-see the Yugo or fancy that it is a Ferrari. The instant I do that, my awareness is no longer knowledge and no longer caused by a


26 “Therefore, knowledge of Brahman is not dependent on human exertion? – What is it dependent on, then? – It is dependent solely on the object, just like the knowledge of a thing that is in the sphere of what is perceptible.” ato na puruṣa-vyāpāra-tantrā brahma-vidyā. kiṁ tarhi, pratyakṣādi-pramāṇa-viṣaya-vastu-jñānavad vastu-tantraiva. BSBh 1.1.4, I.22-3.

“‘I am the agent, this is mine,’ this is how action functions. Knowledge is dependent on the thing, whereas injunction is dependent on the agent.” ahaṁ kartā memedaṁ syād iti karma pravartate | vastv-adhīnā bhaved vidyā kartr-adhiḥno bhaved vidhiḥ. USP 1.1.13
pramāṇa. Action, on the other hand, is not really a matter of pramāṇa, because it invariantly involves option: any odd action can be done, not done, or done otherwise than it should be done, because it depends on human effort, on what man thinks, or on the agent in general. So, if one can reply to svarga-kāmo yajeta, “I am not going to do it,” yet has a clear cognition of the sentential meaning, the knowledge that the sentence provides cannot be that a ritual must be performed. The Veda as a pramāṇa, thus, cannot be injunctive at its core: no injunction will make my Yugo a Ferrari nor impose a sense of obligation solely on its own.

All of this was echoed by Maṇḍana Miśra in his Brahma-Siddhi:

That knowledge which is solely from linguistic utterance is not liable to injunction, because it obtains without it, as in the case of understanding ritual. Just as the understanding of the sentential meaning of the Vedic statement ‘He who wants heaven should sacrifice’ obtains solely from the validity of the statement, likewise an understanding of the Self obtains from the validity of texts that propound the essential nature of the Self, and it does not require an injunction. When the reliable warrant is complete with its causal conditions, not even desire for knowing is required on the part of man – even those who do not want to, do understand – how much less so an injunction.27

This insistence on knowing as being solely concerned with how things are and the distinction between knowledge as objectively determined and action as subjective is so basic to Śaṅkara’s system that it functions as a classificatory device for everything in the Veda. Crucially, as I said above, it determines what gets to be labeled as one kind of dharma and what as another.

It will continue haunting us throughout the dissertation.

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The Dharma of Engagement and Disengagement

The nature of the Veda as a whole, then, is to be informative, not injunctive. In general, the scope of the Veda is dharma, a means to obtain something desirable. We saw in the introduction that what the Veda can provide for men through teaching dharma is broadly divided into prosperity or promotion, and liberation. These two respectively determine the content of the Veda, what the Veda is informative about: for the attaining of prosperity, the Veda teaches action, whereas for the attaining of liberation, it teaches knowledge of Brahman and dispassion:

The Lord, creating the world and intent on its upkeep, first projected Marīci and the other patriarchs and taught them the Vedic dharma that is characterized by engagement. Afterwards, he created the four Kumāras and taught them the dharma characterized by disengagement, that is, by knowledge and dispassion. For, there are two kinds of dharma that are taught in the Veda, one characterized by engagement and another one characterized by disengagement.

Dharma, then, can be of two kinds: characterized by engagement, pravrṭti-lakṣaṇa, and characterized by disengagement, nivrṛttī-lakṣaṇa. Two notes are apposite before we proceed. We should make it clear right now that the twofold division itself was not Śaṅkara’s own invention: Mīmāṁsakas themselves often described Vedic prohibitions as deterrents from action (nivartaka) and the action described in them as something that should not be done (nivartayitava). Furthermore, we saw in the previous chapter the same distinction in the Manu-Smṛti, although it was associated explicitly with action, karma, not with dharma. However, Śaṅkara’s presentation of what the dharma of disengagement involved was thoroughly...
original and amounted to claiming that it was, in fact, more basic to the Veda, as we shall in the
in Chapter Nine.

Second, we need to be aware that Śaṅkara talks about dharma in two ways. In one of
them, dharma is strictly in the domain of Vedic ritual action in several of its kinds and
invariantly related to prosperity, abhyudaya. It is common for Śaṅkara to juxtapose this use of
dharma to Brahman as the two spheres of the two inquiries respectively, dharma-jījñāsā and
brahma-jījñāsā, and argue how they are oh so very different. Such is, for instance, the case at the
beginning of the BSBh, particularly: “Knowledge of dharma results in prosperity and such
knowledge is dependent on performance. On the other hand, knowledge of Brahman results in
the highest good and it is not dependent on performance.” This distinction between dharma and
Brahman hinges on the inherited difference in the two exegeses on the crucial question of Vedic
theology: what is the element in the respective pursuit from which the final good comes, the
pradhāṇa factor. We saw that Mīmāṃsakas argued that this is generally ritual action, and
exceptionally substances such as yoghurt, both of which were called dharma by Kumārila. In the
previous chapter, we also saw that Bādarāyaṇa replaced dharma with Brahman, the repository of
all desires. In this sense, dharma and Brahman are comparable and mutually excluding
categories, and they seem to have been so from the very start of the two exegeses.

Brahman, however, was never theorized as an instrumental cause, a sādhana, in the
attainment of the desired goal. It was more like the Aristotelian causa finalis, that thing which
one strives to become. Dharma, on the other hand, was by and large coextensive with the ritual
action (karma) that organizes teleologically different elements such as substances and mantras in

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31 That is, in two relevant ways for the purposes of his soteriology, since he also participates in the discourse of
dharma as essential properties of things throughout the BSBh.
32 abhyudaya-phalaṁ dharma-jānām, tuc cānuśṭhānāpekaśam; niḥśreyasa-phalaṁ tu brahma-jānām, na
cānuśṭhānāntarāpekaśam. BSBh 1.1.1, I.6.
a series of individual actions in the pursuit of the desired goal. In that sense, its Vedāntic counterpart was not Brahman, but vidyā, and vidyā was explicitly organized on the model of dharma, with a central injunction and the whole shebang. Both dharma/karma and vidyā were instrumental causes, sādhanas. Śaṅkara’s take on vidyā was a complicated matter, as we shall see, but it was still modeled after dharma, namely a process based on scripture, organized around a central text, and involving practices arranged in a coherent whole on a clear principle. In short, it was a means (sādhana) for a goal (sādhyā). In this perspective, the same deep structure of dharma was operative throughout the scope of Vedic theology both on the Bhāṭṭa and the Advaita accounts, and it was but natural for Śaṅkara to rework the Manu-Smṛti classification: anything in the Veda that is a means to something desirable but not available by ordinary devices, that involves some form of practice and that has the same deep teleological structure, never mind how that structure is respectively achieved, is “dharma, itself the cause of prosperity or the highest good for living beings.”

In general, the two types of dharma are relatable to two types of sentences in the Veda, indicative and injunctive, though we must bear in mind that whether a statement will be taken as an injunctive, and if so, what its precise injunctive force will consist in, is personally contingent. There are some more details in the first category and one significant gray area between the two, as we shall see shortly, but which of these two general types of dharma one will get to practice is contingent on what qualification or adhiṣṭhāna one has, and this in its turn is related to what specific desire, kāma, prompts one’s striving. The pair of kāma-adhiṣṭhāna is also responsible for how the knowledge obtained from the Veda becomes personally inflected. Thus, the category of desire comes in large focus with Śaṅkara and his followers.

33 prāñināṁ sāksād abhyudaya-niḥśreyasa-hetur yaḥ sa dharmaḥ. BhGBh Introduction, XI.2
Śaṅkara’s Psychology and the Human Condition

We saw throughout this dissertation that the notion of dharma in Vedic theology was tied to goods desirable to men, puruṣārtha, and I opened this chapter with Śaṅkara saying that only men were specifically qualified for the two kinds of good which dharma typically brings, prosperity and liberation. At this point it becomes necessary for us to define precisely the human situation that Śaṅkara has in mind so that we can see what the practice of dharma involved, and to do that we must touch upon Śaṅkara’s psychology. Bearing in mind Śaṅkara’s well-known absolute monism, we must assume that there are certain cosmological categories of Being that somehow obtain—it is impossible to define the human situation without them—but we do not need to worry about their relation to Brahman.

The individual Self in Śaṅkara’s system is a complex product that is built on an initial interaction between the real Self, one and only for everyone, and the so-called intellect, internal organ, or the mind (buddhi, antah-karana). The real Self is, essentially, nothing more than the category in virtue of which it is possible to have phenomenal consciousness of any kind. Śaṅkara quite often compares this Self to sunlight, the necessary factor of any perceptual awareness that is essentially formless, but assumes all kinds of forms contingent on the shapes that it illuminates. We will take the following definition from the Upadeśa-Sāhasrī as exhaustive:

Ātman is the self-effulgent perception, the seeing, internally existing and actionless. It is the witness which is directly cognized and interior of all, and the Observer which is constant, attributeless and non-dual.34

We need to bear in mind that this pure Self is not the subject of conscious experiences, because any cognitive act involves a distinction between a subject, an object, an instrument, and cognitive content, and cancels monism: the non-dual Self cannot participate in these and still

remain non-dual. The Self is what makes subjectivity possible. Insofar as Śaṅkara describes it as the witness, it is not itself what cognizes anything, but is the accommodating factor, the seeing behind the seer.\textsuperscript{35} The pure Self, thus, is the awareness that ever obtains but is never transitive.

The subject properly speaking, the one that has cognitions, is a reflection of the pure Self in a set of adjuncts, \textit{upādhis}, the crucial among which is the intellect or \textit{buddhi}.\textsuperscript{36} This \textit{buddhi} can be defined as the evolute of Brahman in which cognition (\textit{vijñāna}) in general takes place. The pure Self is the only Self, but it is not one that can have transitive awareness of itself. The intellect, owing to its proximity to the pure Self in the evolution from Brahman, becomes the locus in which a sense of Self can obtain. Śaṅkara illustrates the relationship between the Self, the intellect, and the sense of Self with the reflection that appears when a face is placed in front of a mirror.\textsuperscript{37} The sense of Self that is like the image in the mirror is variously called \textit{ahaṅkāra}, \textit{aham-pratyaya}, \textit{asmat-pratyaya}, \textit{ātmābhāsa} etc, and becomes the basis on which the individual Self is eventually built.\textsuperscript{38} The Self is not its reflection, but becomes identified with it. It may also be figuratively said to be under illusion, thinking oneself something which it is not, if we understand that this thinking does not happen in the Self itself, but is accommodated by its light.

The reflection is neither a property of the face nor of the mirror, but it is dependent on both, insofar as it can obtain only if both are present. It does not, however, obtain necessarily: it is accidental because the face must be in front of the mirror for one to think, “This is me.”\textsuperscript{39} In a different sense, it is a necessary relationship for there to be cognitive subjectivity at all, because the intellect is not a conscious principle—it is that thing which is the locus of cognition, but is

\textsuperscript{35} See BĀUBh 1.4.10.
\textsuperscript{36} See BĀUBh 1.4.7.
\textsuperscript{37} USP 1.18.43.
\textsuperscript{38} Throughout the USP, particularly in 1.4 and 1.18. The \textit{asmat-pratyaya} is the term used famously right at the beginning of the BSBh.
\textsuperscript{39} Cf. USP 1.18.39: dvayor eveti cet tan na dvayor evāpy adarśanāt; “If it be said that the reflection is a property of (a combination) of the two, we say no, because it is not seen even when the two are present.”
itself not conscious of anything—whereas the pure Self is not an agent. So, the properties of the one are placed over the other: the consciousness of the Self is superimposed over the intellect so that there can be a conscious experience, whereas the cognitive agency that involves the dualities of subject, object, instrument, and cognition that belong to the intellect are superimposed over the Self.\(^{40}\) Because the intellect is the place where the reflection of the Self obtains and is located, the first adjunct of the ātman, the individual Self is commonly called the vijñānātman, the Self of cognition, and is typically distinguished from the pure, inner Self called the pratyag-ātman or paramātman.

The above account is based primarily on the Upadeśa-Sāhasrī, and it seems to me that it is the necessary starting point as it provides the clearest idea of the focal point around which the individual Self is constructed, namely the sense of Self or aham/asmat-pratyaya: it is a reflection of the Self in the intellect, a reflection that relates the two. We can now broaden the presentation by drawing from the BSBh and the BĀUBh. What is superimposed over the pure Self is not just cognitive agency: it is agency in general, namely the complex that involves action (kriyā), its contributory factors (kārakas) such as the agent, specifically identified with the reflection of the Self around which the vijñānātman is constructed, instruments, and results.\(^{41}\) This is most evidently instantiated in the case of cognition: there is an agent or cognitive subject, jñātṛ, which is the sense of Self reflected in the mirror of the intellect (ātmābhāsa); there is an object to this subject that includes anything that might become an object of awareness, from external things to internal states of any kind, called by Śaṅkara yuṣmat-pratyaya, ”the notion of You;” there are the

\(^{40}\) US 1.18.65. Also, BSBh 1.1.1, I.5: evam aham-pratyayinam aśeṣa-sva-praśara-sākṣini pratyag-ātmany adhyasya taṁ ca praty-ātmānāṁ sarva-sākṣiṁ naṁ tad-viparyayenāntah-karaṇādiṁ adhyasyati: “Likewise, superimposing the internal organ that bears the sense of Self over the internal Self, the witness of the modifications of that bearer, one proceeds to reversely superimposing the internal Self over the internal organ.”

\(^{41}\) See BĀUBh 1.4.17, VIII.159: svābhāvikyā svātmani kartr-ādi-kāraka-kriyā-phaṯmatkātāḥdyāropa-laṁsamanāḥ avidyāvāsanāṁ vāṣitaḥ so kāmata kāmatavān. On the reflection of the Self being the agent, see USP 1.18.53a: ātbhāsas tu tīṁ-vācyāḥ.
mind and senses as instrumental causes; and there is the cognition itself, vijñāna, that take place in the intellect. All of this is superimposed on the Self either directly or indirectly. Agency, however, is general: it concerns any kind of agency. The complex of pramāṇa or reliable warrants is a restricted case of cognition—one that happens to be valid—and is equally superimposed over the Self: all reliable warrants, scripture in all its scope included, are superimposed over the Self and can operate because there is such a thing as the Self to illumine them:

All forms of worldly and Vedic forms of behavior that involve knowable objects and reliable warrants become operational through the mutual superimposition of the Self and the non-Self, a superimposition that is called ignorance (avidyā), as do all scriptures that are concerned with injunctions, prohibitions, and liberation.42

The superimposition of agency brings with itself the superimposition of the enjoying the results that such agency implies, bhoktṛtva.43

Furthermore, the cognitive agency, of course, has the intellect as its location—it is there that cognition happens—but cognition is dependent on a set of other factors: it is dependent on the so-called manas, commonly translated as the mind but better understood as the faculty of attention; on the cognitive faculties that function in their respective sphere, commonly called senses, indriya; finally, on the body, which houses these senses. The light of awareness is, thus, further reflected in the rest of one’s personality, but it is also progressively restricted or dimmed because it is modulated by each previous reflection:

42 tam etam avidyākhyam ātmānātmato itaretarādhyāsaṁ puraskṛtya sarve pramāṇa-prameya-vyavahārā laukikā vaidikā ca pravṛttāḥ. sarvāṇi ca sāstrāṇi vidhi-praṭīṣṭedha-mokṣa-parāṇi. BSBh 1.1.1, I.3.
43 See, for instance, the end of the Adhyāsa-Bhāṣya of the BSBh 1.1.1, I.5, where the two are most explicitly paired in relation to superimposition: evam ayam anādir ananto naisargiko dhyāso mithyā-pratyaya-rūpaḥ kartṛtvā-bhoktṛtvā-pravartakaḥ sarva-loka-pratyakṣaḥ; “Thus is this natural superimposition that is without a beginning or end, false notion in nature, the instigator of agency an enjoyment, evident to all.” Also, the BAUBh Introduction, VIII.5: iṣṭāṇīṣṭa-parīti-parihāreccchā-kāraṇam ātma-viṣayam ajñānaṁ kartṛ-bhoktṛ- svarūpaḥbhimāna-lakṣaṇaṁ; “The cause of the desire to attain the good and avoid the evil, viz, ignorance regarding the Self, which expresses itself as the idea of one’s being the agent and expericen...”
The intellect, because of its transparency and proximity, becomes a reflection of the light of awareness of the Self. For this reason, even those who discriminate fancy themselves first as being the intellect. Next there is the reflection of awareness in the mind, due to proximity, by its comingling with the intellect; then in the senses, because they are in contact with the mind; and then in the body, because of its being in contact with the senses. Thus, in succession the Self with its own innate intelligence illumines the whole aggregate of body and organs.\footnote{buddhis tāvat svacchatvād ānantaryāc ca ātma-caitanya-jyotiḥ-praticchāyā bhavati; tena hi vivekiṇām api tatra ātmābhimāna-buddhiḥ prathamā; tato 'py ānantaryāt manasi caitanyāvabhāsatā, buddhiḥ-samparkāt; tata indriyeṣu, manāḥ-saṁyogāt; tato 'nantaraṁ śarīre, indriya-samparkāt, evam pāramāpyena kṛtsnaṁ kārya-karaṇa-saṁghātam ātmā ca ityāvabhāsayati. BĀUBh 4.3.7, IX.527-8.}

These are like mirrors within mirrors, and the Self could potentially identify—have the notion “This is who I am”—in regard to any of them, contingent on one’s discriminative ability. “It is for this reason that all people identify themselves with the body and organs and their functions in an unregulated way, as per their discrimination.”\footnote{Ibid: tena hi sarvasya lokasya kārya-karaṇa-saṁghāte tad-vṛttiṣu ca aniyatātmābhimāna-buddhir yathā-vivekaṁ jāyate.} The buddhi/antah-karaṇa/vijñāna is the first adjunct of the Self, giving it the name vijñānātman, but the rest become its adjuncts as well. This principle can be extended even to things that are merely related to oneself, considered “my,” and Śaṅkara calls the whole field of potential items of identification aham-mama-gocara, “the sphere of ‘I’ and ‘my.’”\footnote{See USP 1.18.27.} This field or sphere is concretized in relation to the sense of Self and becomes “the notion of ‘this,’” idam-dhī, where idam is a variable that stands as a complement to the notion of “I” and forming a complex with it—“I am this”—whose value can be anything from the sphere of “I and mine,” any property of the non-Self that one can superimpose over the Self, as long as it is either reached by the light of awareness or is in relation to oneself.

We can now appreciate one of the most striking passages written in the history of Indian philosophy:

As we said, superimposition, to define it, is the notion of something in regard to something else. It is like when one superimposes external properties over the Self, thinking, “I myself am injured” or “I myself am whole” when one’s son or wife is injured.
or whole; or when one superimposes properties of the body and thinks, “I am fat,” “I am lean,” “I am fair,” “I stand,” “I go,” or “I leap;” or when one superimposes properties of the senses, as in “I am dumb,” “I am blind in one eye,” “I am emasculated,” or “I am blind;” or when one superimposes properties of the internal organ, such as desire, resolve, doubt and certainty.\(^{47}\)

This superimposition whose cause is false awareness, is, Śaṅkara claims, called ignorance or *avidyā* by the learned.\(^{48}\) We should note here for the sake of being thorough that ignorance assumed an all-important role in post-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedānta: it became a cosmological category, standing for the primordial stuff of which the world is made or which operates on Brahman as it is about to don its causal garb. As Hacker and Mayeda have shown, ignorance was not a cosmological item in Śaṅkara’s thought.\(^{49}\) In fact, in how Śaṅkara talks about ignorance, the very possibility of ignorance presupposes that the cosmological diversification of Being had already taken place: *buddhi* and the rest of the adjuncts need to be present for the mutual superimposition of properties to take place. In general, we can say that ignorance is strictly a psychological category in Śaṅkara’s thought and looks at the Ātman-Brahman relationship on the side of the Self, whereas the counterpart *cosmological category* on the side of Brahman is the *nāma-rūpe*, name and form.\(^{50}\)

\(^{47}\) adhyāṣō nāma atasmiṁ tad-buddhir ity avocāma. tad yathā—putra-bhāryādiṣu vikaleṣu sakaleṣu vā aham eva vikalāḥ sakalo veṣi bāhya-dharmān ātmany adhyāṣyati; tathā deha-dharmān 'sthūlo 'haṁ krśo 'haṁ gauro 'haṁ tiṣṭhāmi gacchāmi lanḍhayāmi ca' iti; tathendriya-dharmān—'mūkaḥ kāṇaḥ klībaḥ andho 'ham' iti. tathāntaḥkaraṇa-dharmān kāma-saṅkalpa-vicikitsādhyavasāyādin. BSBh 1.1.1, I.4-5.

\(^{48}\) tam etam evaṁ-lakṣaṇam adhyāṣam paṇḍitā avidyeti manyante. BSBh 1.1.1, I.3.

\(^{49}\) Hacker 1995:57-100; Mayeda 2006b:22-26, 76-84.

\(^{50}\) A second issue related to ignorance developed in post-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedānta, growing into a dispute over which the school would divide in two camps. This was the question about the locus of this ignorance: one line of Advaitins, including his immediate students Sureśvara and Padmapāda, claimed that Brahman itself is the locus of ignorance, whereas another line, started by Vācaspati Miśra but continuing the tradition of Maṇḍana, claimed that the individual Self or *jīva* is the locus. As shown by Ingalls (1953), Śaṅkara, while aware of the problem, chose not to deal with it because he considered that no solution within what is logically possible could be forthcoming. Śaṅkara discussed the question “Whose is ignorance?” in a couple of places (most notably BSBh 4.1.3, BĀUBh 4.1.6 and BhGBh 13.2), which all tend toward evasion and can be roughly characterized by the following dialogue:

- Now, whose is this ignorance that you are talking about?
- Well, of the ignorant, duh!
- That would be me, I gather.
In the BhGBh this ignorance is said to be potentially of three kinds: (1) failure to grasp an object (*agrahaṇa*), as in the case of darkness; (2) seeing one thing as another (*viparīta-grahaṇa*), under which most of Śaṅkara’s favorite examples would fit, such as seeing a snake in a rope, silver in the mother-of-pearl, or when the simple-minded see dirt and a flat surface in the sky; and (3) doubt (*saṃśaya*), the classical example of which in Indian philosophy is the uncertainty whether a silhouette in the distance is a man or a post, to which Śaṅkara also commonly refers. These are all cases of cognitive errors, and Śaṅkara’s object in using them is to show that they do not constitute an error on the part of the knower, but a flaw in the causal conditions of perception: the Self is not in illusion *in essentia*, but *in actu*. They must be taken as no more than illustrations, however, because the superimposition that Śaṅkara talks about is evidently of a very different kind: it is the mistake that makes all other mistakes possible—as well as all truths, inclusive of the final truth expressed in the eventual *mahā-vākyas*. This form of ignorance is not just the common mistake of false recognition that brings embarrassment, or the uncertainty that a scarecrow may cause. Ignorance is the false awareness and the superimposition that is *natural* (*naisargika*) and without a beginning (*anādi*), that is, it obtains as a normal state and not as a cognitive oddity. We may take Mahadevan’s lead, therefore, and distinguish this from of ignorance from the common as *metaphysical*.52

However—and this is a point not commonly discussed, yet crucial for Śaṅkara’s soteriology and *dharma*—the mere formation of the reflection of the Self, the consequent superimposition of the notions of agency and enjoyment, the complex centered around action,

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51 BSBh 13.2.
52 Mahadevan 1985.
namely action itself, its contributing factors and its results (kriyā, kāraka, phala), and the potential of identification with anything that constitutes the field of “I and my,” fashion the category of the individual Self, the universal or padārtha to which the word “Self” can be applied: this is not what makes the Self of any Devadatta or John Doe. Ignorance is the immediate factor of distinguishing the category of vijñānātman or jīva from the Supreme Self, but it is not the immediate factor of individuation. Two additional factors are required for there to be an individual Self.

We may put this another way. What the image of the Self will look like is contingent on the mirror: the image of the face conforms to the mirror, and the mirror can be variously inflected. There are some contour points that need to be invariantly present in all images so that we could identify what kind of thing the image represents, and these are the sense of Self—“I am this”—and agency. What range of values “this” will take depends on two other factors: impressions that have the nature of habitual desire that prompts action (vāsanā, bhāvanā, saṁskāra, kāma), and the results of previous action or karma.

The three, really, form a circle that reinforces itself. The impressions are impressions of ignorance, results of past identifications involving agency—past actions—that color, or rather perfume, one’s awareness. They are in the form of volitional tendencies for something specific. Śaṅkara determines their scope as rāgādi, which clearly refers to the well-known set of psychological faults or kleśas, namely attachment, aversion, and illusion (rāga, dveṣa, moha). Desires that are formed through impression are the medium that otherwise unproductive ignorance must take to become an instigator to action (bhāvanā). Action and its resultant karma

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53 jāti-karmādīmattvād dhi tasmiṃ śabdās tv ahaṁkṛti. “As this bearer of the "I"-notion has a universal, and is possessed of action, etc., it can be referred to by words.” USP 1.18.28. Translation Mayeda 2006b:175.

54 US 1.18.31.
on their part produce one’s future embodiment that is an instantiation of ignorance, as it involves a wrong identification in which one becomes naturally prone to specific desires and fit for the attaining of specific goals, requiring specific action. Because the superimposition that is ignorance is natural and without a beginning, this circle of avidyā -> vāsanā -> kāma -> karma -> avidyā is a true circle: everything is logically predicated on ignorance, but ignorance historically or temporally requires an existing embodiment.

Being perfectly stainless, Ātman is distinguished from, and broken by, nescience, residual impression, and actions.55
The living Self, individuated by ignorance, results of previous actions and past impressions, assisted by the chief breath and possessing a mind and senses … 56
Ignorance could be the cause of inequality through recourse to action that is set in motion by impressions that are torments, attachment, etc.57
There must be some force impelled by which one becomes averse to one's own world, the Self, as if he were helpless. – Is it not ignorance? For, he who is ignorant is averse and acts. – Ignorance is not an instigator to action, for it conceals the true nature of a thing. It obtains the state of being the seed of action like darkness that is the cause of the action of falling into a ditch. – Well say it then, what is the cause of a man's activity. – It is said here: it is desire.58
Suffused by the impression of ignorance that is natural to him and that consists in a superimposition of the notions of action, its factors such as the agent, and its results, over the Self, he desired.59
Desire is the cause of action, because of being an instigator.60

The individual Self, thus, is a work in progress, constituted by the three factors of ignorance, desires that are impressions in nature and prompt one to act, and the results of action that have shaped one's present identity. While ignorance is the general factor of individuation,

55 avidyāyā bhāvanayā ca karmabhīr
vivikta ātmāvavaddhiḥ sunirmalaḥ. USP 1.10.9ab.
56 jīvo mukhya-prāṇa-sacivāḥ sendriyāḥ samanasko 'vidyā-karma-pūrva-praṇā-panigrahaḥ. BSBh 3.1.1, II.527-8.
57 rāgādi-klesā-vāsanāśrā-karmāpekṣā tva avidyā vaisanmya-karī syāt. BSBh 2.1.36, II.344.
58 tasmād bhavitayaṁ tena, yena prerito 'vāsa iva bahirmukho bhavati svasmāl lokāt. nanv avidyā sā; avidvān hi bahirmukhīḥ-bhūtaḥ pravartate—sāpi naiva pravartikā; vastu-svarūpāvārṇātmikā hi sā; pravartakā-bijātvaṁ tu pratipadyate andhatvaṁ iva gartādi-patana-pravṛttiḥ. evaṁ tarhi ucyatāṁ kiṁ tad yat pravṛttiḥ-hetur iti; tad ihābhūdhīyate—esānā kāmaṁ saḥ. BĀUBh 1.4.16, VIII.157-8.
59 svābhāvikyā svātmāṁ kartr-ādi-kāraka-kriyā-phaḷāmakaṭādhyāropa-lakṣana-yā avidyā-vāsanayā vāsitaḥ so 'kāmayata kāmitvaṁ. BĀUBh 1.4.17, VIII.159.
60 karma-hetuvā kāmaḥ syāt, pravartakatvāt. TUBh Introduction, VI.8.
the category maker, desire and karma are the two factors that make it possible for one to be born
with a specific identity—that is, in a family belonging to a class—and have the fitness for
specific desires and forms of attainment that are related to them.

As is, hopefully, evident, Śaṅkara’s psychology was Bhartṛprapañca’s psychology from
top to bottom. The individual Self was constituted by the same triplet of aavidyā-kāma-karma,
with vāsanā negotiating the transition between the first two. This was in both cases inspired by
the psychology of Yoga, specifically the idea of five kleśas expressed in the YS 2.3: “The
torments are ignorance, the sense of Self, attachment, aversion and clinging to life.”61 If
anything, Śaṅkara was more consistent in applying this Yoga classification, sticking to the
psychological significance of ignorance that takes the Self to be its opposite, whereas
Bhartṛprapañca’s leaned towards aavidyā as a cosmic power.62 The point of Śaṅkara’s departure
from Bhartṛprapañca was his theory of reflection of the Self in the intellect as constituting the
vijñānātman: the individual was not a chunk of Brahman that is cut off by a cosmic power of
ignorance. It was a product of one big mistake, a succession of nested mirror images assuming
substance because of being graced by the light of awareness.63

61 avidyāsmitā-rāga-dveśāḥbhīniveśāḥ kleśāḥ.
62 Cf. YS 2.5: anityāsucī-dukkhānāmasu niyta-śuci-sukhātma-khyātir avidyā. “Ignorance is the notion that takes the
self, which is joyful, pure, and eternal, to be the nonself, which is painful, unclean, and temporary.” Translation
Bryant 2009.
63 The similarity of Śaṅkara’s psychology with that of Yoga, and the purported authorship of the Yoga-Sūtra-
Bhāṣya-Vivarana, prompted Paul Hacker to advance the thesis that Śaṅkara might have been a converted yogin. Cf.
particularly the following statement: “For the time being it is not possible to decide to what extent Śaṅkara, with his
point of agreement with the “ātmology” and psychology (“cittology”) of Yoga, follows an already existing (pre-
monistic) Vedānta tradition, since no work of this literature except the enigmatic BS is any longer extant. But since
he differs from other Advaitins on those points of ātmology as well as in avidyology which connect him with Yoga,
we may assume for the time being that his relations with this system were particularly close as a result of his earlier
allegiance to it.” (Hacker 1995:119) It should be evident from my previous chapter that the crucial categories of
Śaṅkara’s “ātmology, cittology, avidyology and brahmology” were taken from Bhartṛprapañca, who was mocked for
not being able to decide whom he wants to make alliance with. While Śaṅkara’s acquaintance with Yoga seems
more thorough than what he could have gathered from Bhartṛprapañca, it was Bhartṛprapañca who, for all we know,
used or introduced the terms aavidyā, vāsanā, kāma as doṣa, vijñānātman, avyākṣete and vyākṛte nāma-rūpe etc., in
Vedānta. This, I think, makes Hacker’s thesis unnecessary.
We can now see what is the “human” condition in Śaṅkara’s eyes. Which dharma in any specific form will be pertinent to oneself is dependent on a set of specific categories that have been superimposed over the Self: “Scriptural statements such as ‘a brāhmaṇa should sacrifice’ function through superimposition of characteristics such as membership to class, stage of religious life, and age.”64 This is the specific superimposition that must take place for dharma to become pertinent, over and above the general identification with the mind, body and senses and their natural properties: membership in the varṇāśrama system. One must have become a member of the social structure for which the Veda is relevant, and without such a state of affairs obtaining, dharma does not pertain to oneself in any way. The light of awareness that permeates the field of “I and mine” must illumine a specific area of social identity that is formed into a habitual nature through avidyā-kāma-karma.

Śaṅkara was, of course, aware that there was a world beyond Vedic society, but that world was of little interest to him. It was split between the “natural world,” in which everyone participates and which is comprised of natural actions such as breathing and eating when one is hungry, actions that have no consequence for the law of karma because of not being scripturally regulated,65 and the world of sheer desire and innate faults such as attachment and aversion, in which one acts against the regulations of the Vedic injunctions and prohibitions and glides down the scale of Being all the way to plant life.66 One must have been born in the three upper classes for starters: this is the Self for which dharma in general has pertinence:

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64 tathā hi—brāhmaṇo yajeta ity āḍini śāstrāṇy ātmani varṇāśrama-vayo’vasthādi-viśeṣādhyāsam āśritya pravartante. adhyāśo nāma atasmīn tad-buddhir ity avocāma. BSBh 1.1.1, IV.4.
65 This is a recurring distinction in his comments. For instance, BĀU Bh 1.3.1.
66 See, for instance, the introduction to the BĀU Bh. This was, of course, a pan-Vedāntic attitude inspired by the “third state” of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, other than the southern and the northern course that we saw in the previous chapter: “Then there are those proceeding on neither of these paths—they become the tiny creatures revolving here ceaselessly. ‘Be born! Die!’—that is a third state.” ChU 5.10.8. Translation Olivelle 1998:237.
The “Self” here refers to the natural person that is characterized by a complex of body and senses, a member of one of the castes.\(^{67}\)

The regulated Vedic world provides the means for attaining the goals of prosperity and liberation, and the initial point of both pursuits requires one to be a member of Vedic society, born in it.

**Desire and Qualification**

It is deducible from Śaṅkara’s writings that *dharma* is organized around a set of four categories. These are: desire, *kāma*; eligibility, *adhikāra*; desired attainment, *sādhya*, which can be for the most part identified with attaining a *world* or *sphere*, *loka*, that contains an assortment of desirable things; and means, *sādhana* or *hetu*, adequate for the desired attainment.\(^{68}\) *Dharma* is, as we have seen above, identified with the means, characterized by action or its absence, but this is the means in its relationality to the three other factors, not in itself. Let us examine now these four key categories.

We saw in the previous part that the category of desire played a role of paramount importance in the field of Vedic theology in its entirety, and the pursuit of liberation in early Vedānta was also tied to desires, namely to the notion of *ātma-kāma*, desire for the Supreme Self whose desires are always fulfilled, *satya-kāma*. These in the *Brahma-Sūtra* were the desires from the eighth chapter of the *Chāndogya*. With Bhrtrprapañca, we saw the therapeutic paradigm making inroads in Vedic theology and desires becoming a problem. With Śaṅkara, Advaita Vedānta became similarly a doctrine that belonged to both worlds—Vedic theology in which *kāma* had a crucial positive role, and the traditions of liberation in which it was at or near the root of the problem, the disease of transmigration, *saṁsāra*. This uneasy coexistence of two

\(^{67}\) ātmaiva—svābhāvikaḥ avidvān kārya-karaṇa-saṅghāta-lakṣaṇo varṇī. BĀUBh 1.4.17.

\(^{68}\) This is clearest in his comment on BĀUBh 1.4.17.
divergent worldviews meant that kāma had to undergo some rethinking, so that it could simultaneously be spurned yet have its important theological role preserved. Śaṅkara’s way of doing this involved extending the scope of desire to refer to purpose that motivates any undertaking. The result of this rethinking was that the idea of kāma could be employed variously, to refer to desirable things or pleasurable attainments on the one hand, or to a motive of any kind that prompts one to undertake a certain course on the other.

The Vedic use of kāma that Mīmāṁsakas theorized referred to the pleasurable attainments that ritual brings—heaven, prosperity, virility, wealth, sons, etc. Most of these, insofar as all pleasurable attainments could be subsumed under the notion of felicity, were an objective category; that is, the desire for their attainment was natural to men. Some had to be made desirable scripturally if they were required for the attaining of something else. There was, however, no underlying psychology to account for the desirability of heaven and the like. “Desires” were objects of desire, and people wanted them naturally. This was true across the board in Mīmāṁsā, and even Kumārila’s radical rejection of obligation sought justification for the adequacy of the means, and not the desirability of the attainment.69 One could draw the distinction between “Vedic” and “non-Vedic” “desires,” that is, desirables—wealth could be given as an instance of the second, being explicitly referred to as puruṣārtha70—but the only meaningful difference between the two could be that the second were present and available naturally, while the first were future and the means of attaining them were knowable solely from the Veda. Being human meant wanting stuff, and this is all there is to desire; just make sure you do not want stuff prohibited in scripture.

69 Clooney 1990:193 perspicaciously notes that Jaimini had a very pragmatic view of human desire—people want stuff just because they are human—and that such a pragmatic view of desire was the limit to which his anthropology goes, “all he has to say about human beings.”

70 See MSŚBh 4.1.2; see also Jha 1964:294-5.
Śaṅkara’s works are full of such “Vedic desires,” and he is explicit in identifying them with desirable objects:

Under kāma, sons and the like are intended. That is, they are desired. – But, the word kāma stands for a type of desire, does it not? – No, because it is clear from the context that the word “kāma” is used in the sense of sons, etc.\(^{71}\)

That much is kāma – that is the limit of objects of desire. Desirable objects are such things as are characterized by the wish for a wife, sons, wealth and ritual.\(^{72}\)

However, as we saw above, desires were properly an individuating feature of the jīva, and Śaṅkara described them in a Yoga-like manner: they are modes of the mind formed through impressions into habits, they are faults and torments that prompt one to act for the attaining of desirable objects or for avoiding something undesirable.\(^{73}\) And, coming from the background of the therapeutic paradigm, he identified all desires for objects, viṣaya, as products of ignorance that perpetuate embodiment. This obviously included the desires for ordinary, “non-scriptural” things, as well as desires that prompt one to act against scriptural injunctions and prohibitions, the road of degradation culminating in plant life. However, it also included “scriptural” desires, formed through “scriptural impressions” that prompt one to perform ritual and amass good karma:

But, ignorance about the Self that is the cause of the desire for attaining what is desirable and avoiding what is undesirable and is characterized by fancy of one’s nature as being an agent of action and experience that has not been removed by its opposite, the knowledge of the nature of the Self as identical with Brahman. So long as it is not removed, one is impelled by the natural faults such as attachment and aversion for the results of action, and acting even in transgression to prohibitions laid down in scripture amasses with body, mind and words bad karma that leads to undesirable present and future results. This is because of preponderance of natural faults and it is the road down

\(^{71}\) putrādayaś ca tatra kāmā abhipreyante—kāmyanta iti. nanu kāma-śabdenecchā-виšeṣo evocyeran; na, šatāyuṣah putra-pautrāṃ vrṇiṣya [KtU 1.1.25] iti prakṛtya ante kāmnāṁ tvā kāma-bhājain karomi [KtU 1.1.24] iti prakṛteṣu tatra tatra putrādiṣu kāma-śabdasya prayuktatvāt. BSBh 3.2.2, III.562.

\(^{72}\) etāvān vai kāma etāvad-viṣaya-paricchinnā ity-arthaḥ. etāvān eva hi kāmayitavyo viṣayaḥ—yad uta jāyā-putra-vitta-karmāni. BĀUBh 1.4.17, VIII.160.

\(^{73}\) BSBh 1.1.1; 2.3.33.
to plant life. When there is a preponderance of impressions created through scripture, then one amasses good karma with one’s body, mind and words.\(^{74}\)

The two forms of action and their corresponding desires were, obviously, very different in Śaṅkara’s eyes—one of them brings good karma of some sort and the other brings one down—but their deep structure was the same: both were predicated on ignorance, and both perpetuated ignorance, the superimposition of agency over the Self; both functioned through creating impressions that give rise to desires that are in the form of habits; and both aimed towards sense objects. Because of this, there was always a chance for one to slip from the scriptural striving and start gliding down towards plant life by forming unwholesome habits. Desire for sense objects of any kind was a problem.

This psychology of desires as habits formed through past impressions that prompt action meant that there was no such thing as “objective desires,” things that all people want just by being human. One could say with Sarvajñātman that all men strive after unexcelled happiness and the eradication of all suffering,\(^{75}\) but unlike in Mīmāṃsā, that striving was modulated by what one apprehends as desirable or otherwise. Everyone is a product of some pattern of habits, a “work in progress,” and when people strive after some good through Vedic means, that is not invariantly the same good. There are, in other words, deep psychological desires, acquired through habit formation in long lifetimes, that are related to the Vedic desirable objects and

\[^{74}\text{na tv ātmanaḥ īṣṭāniṣṭa-prāpti-parihāreccchā-kāraṇam ātma-viṣayam ajñānaṁ karṇāḥ bhoktṛ-ṣvarūpābhīmaṇa-lakṣaṇaṁ tad-vipariṇā-mahātmā-svarūpa-vijñānānapoṁś tataḥ dṛṣṭaṁ dhvani-viṣayajā prakṛtakṣaṇaṁ sastra-vihita-sādhanāṁ adharmānāṁ adharmānāṁ ādiḥ vṛddhāḥ samātāya ṣṭāṁ bhūtānāṁ vṛddhāḥ. BĀUBh Introduction, VIII.5.}\]

\[^{75}\text{“In this world, all beings have the following aspiration: ‘May I have unexcelled happiness, and may all suffering born of sense objects and appearing as injury be gone.’”}\]

iha jagati sarva eva jantur niratisayam sukhām uttamaṁ mamāstu | uparamatu tathopaghāta-rūpaṁ viṣayajā-duḥkham iti sṛphāṁ karoti. ŚŚ 1.66.
prompt one to perform ritual, just as there are habitual tendencies for the “natural” desirable objects.

With this distinction in mind, we can appreciate how Śaṅkara could claim on one hand that ritual that is performed in the pursuit of liberation is desireless, niśkāma, yet tie that same ritual to a specific desire on the other. Additionally, we can make sense of his charges against Kumārila’s first account of liberation, claiming that there is no such thing as obligatory action (nitya-karma) that is not prompted by desire: all forms of action are kāmya, directed towards something. Ritual may not be performed for obtaining the common Vedic desirable things, but one still hopes to gain something through its performance. We will return to this point later.

These “scriptural” desires are ultimately directed towards desirable attainments, sādhya, that can be broadly identified with four spheres, loka. The mere desire for the attaining of a specific sphere is, however, not a sufficient ground for one to take up the means or procedure adequate for the respective attainment. Kāma is absorbed in the category of adhikāra, qualification, competence or entitlement for the attainment and for its adequate means. Adhikāra is a composite category, all whose constituents must be present for a successful enterprise. The closest Śaṅkara comes to delimiting the scope of adhikāra is BSBh 1.3.33, in the BS section that affirms contra Jaimini that the gods are qualified for knowledge of Brahman, even though they are not qualified for ritual: “Qualification is contingent on aspiration, ability, absence of prohibition, etc.”

Let us reflect on these through the instance of the horse sacrifice ritual, the Aśvamedha, that is known to us from Chapter Four. For one to take up the performance of this ritual, one primarily must have the desire for the attainment that is related to it. For Śaṅkara, the ultimate

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76 arthitva-sāmarthya-pratiṣedhādy-apekṣatvād adhikārasya; I.204.
result of performing the Aśvamedha is attaining the state of identity with life-breath, *prāṇa*, in its highest manifestation as Hiraṇyagarbha the world soul; in other words, it is the attainment of *brahma-loka*. At the bare minimum, therefore, one must have the aspiration, *arthitva* or *kāma*, towards attaining *brahma-loka*. However, the performance of Aśvamedha is not open just to anyone with the adequate desire: it is specifically meant for royalty, and even *brāhmaṇas* are forbidden from preforming it.\(^{77}\) One must not be, then, under a scriptural prohibition or *pratiṣedha* from performing the ritual that is directed towards the attainment related to one’s aspiration. One also must have the ability or *sāmarthya* to perform the ritual, which in this specific case would include the massive wealth that is required for an Aśvamedha. These three, and potentially other factors (as shall we see a bit later, being married is also part of the qualification for the performance of all Vedic rituals), must be present for there to obtain an entitlement for the performance of the ritual.

This entitlement, *adhikāra*, is by no means uniform for all members of the *varnāśrama* system. As we saw above, everyone’s conditioning in terms of *kāma/vāsanā* was different, and even if one did have the desire for some attainment through a ritual, a host of other factors were in play: Śūdras were, as is well known, prohibited both from ritual and the study of Brahman;\(^{78}\) very few kings could perform *rājasūya* (none in Śaṅkara’s time, per his own testimony);\(^{79}\) many

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\(^{77}\) See, for instance, BĀUBh 1.1.1, VIII.6 (and the Vārttika thereon, 1.1.5-6), where Śaṅkara and Sureśvara justify the meditation on the sacrificial horse as useful for those who are, otherwise, not entitled to perform the *aśvamedha*: "The utility of this meditation related to the horse sacrifice is this: Those who are not entitled to this sacrifice will get the same result through this meditation itself." *asya tv aśvamedha-karma-sambandhino vijñānasya prayojanam—yesām aśvamedhe nādhiḥkāraṇaḥ teśām asmād eva vijñānāt phala-prāptih.* Sureśvara: *akartāpy aśvamedhasya brāhmaṇaḥ ceha buddhimān.* Śaṅkara is even more explicit about the relative nature of qualification in reference to the royal consecration ritual, the *rājasūya*: "Qualification should not be ruled out where it is possible because it is impossible somewhere else. Even men are not competent for all things. For instance, Brāhmaṇas do not have competence for a *rājasūya;*” *na ca kvacid asambhava ity etāvatā yatra sambhavas tatṛāpy adhikāro’podyeta.* manuṣyānām api na sarveśaṁ brāhmaṇādīnaṁ sarveśu rājasūyādyśv adhikāraḥ sambhavati. BSBh 1.3.33, I.204.

\(^{78}\) See Clooney 1990:189-94 on the first, BS 1.3.34-8 on the second.

\(^{79}\) "‘There never were kings who were world-sovereigns, just as there are none today,’ one would be obliged to say, and thus obstruct the injunction for a royal consecration ceremony.” *idānīṁ iva ca nānyadāpi sārvabhaumaḥ kṣatriya*
of the Vedic rituals were caste specific, etc. We do not need an exhaustive account of all that an
adhiṣṭhāna involves, so long we appreciate how personalized it is.

We are now in a position to make the full statement against the Prābhākara account of
duty. For there to arise the cognition “this is my duty” regarding a Vedic injunctive statement,
there first needs to obtain a superimposition of cognitive and active agency over the pure Self.
One must, further, identify oneself as a member of the varṇāśrama system through the set of
vāsanā-kāma-karma. This set also determines what kind of aspirations one has. One must also be
free from scriptural prohibitions, as well as have the ability and means that are required for
carrying out the specific duty. All of this must obtain for there to arise a sense of personal duty,
over and above the cognition of the ideality of the scriptural object. This is the full import of
Śaṅkara’s claim that we already discussed:

An injunction becomes fruitful when human effort is understood independently, over and
above the cognition produced merely by hearing the injunctive statement. It is like
hearing that “He who wants heaven should perform the Darśa-pūrṇamāsa ritual.” The
mere cognition produced by the injunctive statement relating to the Darśa-pūrṇamāsa is
not in itself the performance of the Darśa-pūrṇamāsa. That will necessarily be contingent
on qualification and the like.\textsuperscript{80}

Drawing the consequences of this, we may say that the level at which the reliable
warrants operate is the Self over which cognitive agency has been superimposed. This
superimposition is, of course, ignorance, but it is ignorance that is constituting and affecting all
equally—it is affecting the category of the individual Self, the vijñānātman or the “Self of
cognition.” For this reason, the reliable warrants are just about knowing something, and they are
valid on intersubjective level. But the vijñānātman is properly individuated by the further

\textsuperscript{80} tatra hi vidheḥ sāphalyaṁ yatra vidhi-vākya-śravaṇa-mātra-janita-vijñāna-vyatirekeṇa puruṣa-pravṛttir gamyate.
yathā darśa-pūrṇamāsābhīyaṁ svarga-kāmo yajeta ity evam ādau. na hi darśa-pūrṇamāsa-vidhi-vākya-janita-
vijñānam eva darśa-pūrṇamāsānuṣṭhānam. tac cādhikārādy-apekṣānubhāvi. BĀUBh 1.4.7, VIII.108.
categories of *karma* and *kāma-vāsanā*. It is at this level that aspirations are operative and a cognition of duty possible. This level goes beyond even class membership, and is as individual as can be. The cognition of a sense of personal duty is facilitated by *śruti*, insofar as it hinges on the apprehension of a scriptural reality, but it is not in the domain of *pramāṇa*, which must be applicable universally.

**The Attainments of Dharma**

In general, there are four possible final attainments, *sādhya*, for which the means are knowable from the Veda, and they are all “worlds” or spheres, *loka*: the world of men, *manuṣya-loka*; the world of the forefathers, *pitṛ-loka*; the world of the gods, *deva-loka*; and the world that is the Self, *ātma-loka*. I use the qualification “final” on purpose and in a specific sense: these are attainments that are not means to some other goal—they are at the top of a causal structure—although only the last is really the ultimate. There are a few other items that are also attainable through knowledge provided by the Veda or otherwise scripturally regulated, although they are part of the natural world, which are *sādhya* but also *sādhana* for these final attainments. The first three final attainments are all primarily in the domain of *dharma* that is characterized by engagement, *pravṛtti*, and their corresponding means are all forms of action or something immediately related to action. The fourth is in the domain of *dharma* that is characterized by disengagement, *nivṛtti*, and its respective means is solely knowledge. There are some details that muddle this neat classification, but let us first focus on the contours.

I belabored above Śaṅkara’s claim that knowledge *qua* knowledge is something that is not humanly contingent and not in the domain of human choice or preference. We may say in the Cartesian spirit that matters of knowledge are such that, when seen clearly and distinctly, the human mind cannot but assent to them. This for our purposes meant that if one had a choice
regarding anything presented in the Veda as a means of some attainment, then insofar as one had such a choice, that was not a matter of knowledge, but of action. Whereas in pre-Śaṅkara Vedic theology action or \textit{karma} referred strictly to ritual, bodily action, and \textit{vidyā/upāsana} was its mental counterpart, unique in nature and procedure but diversified per the desired object and the relation of the meditational counterparts, Śaṅkara reclassified \textit{everything} over which man had a choice as a form of action:

\begin{quote}
Action is bodily, vocal, and mental, laid down in the \textit{śruti} and \textit{smṛti} literature and called \textit{dharma}.\textsuperscript{81} \\
– But hold on, isn’t knowledge, to define it, a mental action? – No, they are different. Action is that where something is enjoined without regard to the nature of the thing, and it is contingent on the operation of the human mind. … Although meditation, which is but mentation, is mental, man has the option to do it, not do it or do it otherwise, and so it is dependent on man. Knowledge, on the other hand, is produced by a valid cognition, and a valid cognition concerns a thing just as it is. Therefore, knowledge cannot be done, not done or done otherwise: it is fully dependent on the thing, not on an injunction or on man. Thus, although knowledge is mental, it is vastly different. It is like this: The notion about man and woman as fire that is expressed in the text “A man is surely fire, Gautama. A woman is surely fire, Gautama” is mental, but being produced solely by an injunction, it is nothing but action, and it is dependent on man. However, the notion of fire regarding a known fire is not dependent on an injunction or on man, but solely on the thing that is an object to perception, and so it is but knowledge, not action.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

Śaṅkara clearly takes the quoted passage as an instance of meditation, where man and woman can be seen as fire intentionally, although the meditator knows that no actual relation exists between the two: s/he has made the deliberate choice to see the one as the other. The enormous significance of Śaṅkara’s distinction between knowledge and action was that the doctrine of \textit{brahma-vidyā} was no longer a straightforward matter: the notion of a standard Upaniṣadic

\textsuperscript{81} śārīraṁ vācikaṁ mānasaiṁ ca karma śruti-smṛti-siddhāṁ dharmākhyam. BSBh 1.1.4, I.19.
\textsuperscript{82} nanu jñānaṁ nāma mānasī kriyā, na; vailakṣaṇyāt. kriyā hi nāma sā, yatra vastu-svarūpa-nirapekṣaiva codyate, puruṣa-citta-vyāpārdāṁ ca ... dhyānaṁ cintanaṁ yady api mānasam, tathāpi puruṣeṣā kartum akartum anyathā vā kartuṁ śakyam, puruṣa-tantratvāt. jñānaṁ tu pramāṇa-janyam. pramāṇaṁ ca yathā-bhūta-vastu-viṣayam. ato jñānaṁ kartum akartum anyathā vā kartum na śakyam. kevalaṁ vastu-tantram eva tat; na codanā-tantram, nāpi puruṣa-tantram; tasmān mānasatvā 'pi jñānasya mahad vailakṣaṇyam. yathā ca puruṣo vāva gautamāgnih yośā vāva gautamāgnih [ChU 5.7.8.1] ity atra yośit-puruṣayor agni-buddhir mānasī bhavati; kevala-codanā-janyatvāt tu kriyaiva sā puruṣa-tantrā ca; yā tu prasiddhe 'gnāv agni-buddhiḥ, na sā codanā-tantrā, nāpi puruṣa-tantrā; kiṁ tarhi? pratyakṣa-viṣaya-vastu-tantraiveti jñānam evaitat, na kriyā. Ibid, I.26.
brahma-vidyā in which the object, the attainment, the procedure and the path of ascension are the same but details vary could not hold good, because in some of these vidyās one had to make the choice of seeing oneself as Brahma in meditative absorption, whereas in others one had no choice but to know oneself as Brahma, so long as one was capable of rightly understanding what was being said. We will say a little more on this in a bit, but for now we should note that anything in the Veda that is expressed by an injunction and dependent on human effort, be it bodily, vocal, or mental, is a form of action.

The three action-related attainments were, of course, a commonplace in Vedic theology in general and in the Upaniṣads and Vedānta in particular, and two of them are already well-known to us from the accounts of liberation. The world of men is attained through giving birth to a son, but more specifically through the deathbed rite of entrusting, sampratti or sampradāna, in which the father transfers the performance of his ritual duties to his son when it becomes clear to him that death is imminent. In this way, he vicariously continues his existence in the world of men and, thus, “wins” manusya-loka. The rite consists in the father saying to his son: “You are Brahman, you are the sacrifice, you are the world,” and in the son replying: “I am Brahman, I am the sacrifice, I am the world.”83 The son thus becomes the means or sādhana for winning the world of men. More specifically, however, since the son is not karma the preferred Vedic means, the means is the son as related to the rite of entrusting or transference, which by Śaṅkara’s reckoning is action of the vocal type.84

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83 yadā praiṣan manyate ‘tha putram āha tvaṁ brahma tvaṁ yajñas tvaṁ loka iti. sa putraḥ pratyāhāhaṁ brahmāhaṁ yajño ‘haṁ loka iti. BĀU 1.5.17. Another important place for this idea is the second adhyāya of the Aitareya Upaniṣad, where the birth of a child is described as the second birth of one’s Self “for the continuance of the worlds.”
84 See the avataroṇa to the comment on the BĀUBh 1.5.17, VIII.192: putrasya tv akiṛiyātmakatvāt kena prakāreṇa loka-jaya-hetutvam iti na jñāyate. atas tad vaktavyam ity athānāntaram ārabhyate.
Getting a son is, of course, predicated on having a wife, jāyā, but marrying and obtaining a wife are much more than what the common categories might suggest. A wife becomes an essential part of the qualification, adhikāra, for the performance of ritual, which is the means or sādhana for the second final attainment, the world of the forefathers, pitṛ-loka. Marriage is, then, scripturally regulated not only in social terms, but as an essential element of Vedic ritual causality. After completing the course of studying the Vedas with a teacher and before commencing the life of daily ritual performance, a man must marry a wife. He must do that in imitation of a primordial mythic event, where the first man and sacrificer Prajāpati was overcome by desire and bored by being alone, grew double in size and split himself in two, a male and female, so that he could accept a wife and sacrifice to the Self-projected gods.85 A wife is, thus, a means that entitles one to perform ritual.86 The performance of ritual requires some wealth in the form of cattle and the like, and this wealth as an attainment or sādhya becomes the means, sādhana, for performing ritual.87 Ritual on its part is the means for attaining the world of the forefathers through the southern path that we have seen in the BS account. Pitṛ-loka is the final attainment, in the sense that it is not a means to anything further. It is not, however, ultimate, since one falls back to the world of men once the good karma has been exhausted, hopefully to take up ritual performance again.

The rituals that bring one to the world of the forefathers are those that lead to heaven, such as the Darśa-pūrṇamāsa and the Agnihotra. We will remember at this point that these were rituals which Mīmāṁsakas claimed every member of the three upper classes had to perform, either through the desire for heaven (kāmya) or under the scriptural provision that they had to be

85 This is narrated in the fourth brāhmaṇa of the first adhyāya of the BĀU.
86 jāyā karmādhikāra-hetu-bhūtā me mama kartuḥ syāt; tayā vinā aham anadhikṛta eva karmaṇi; atāḥ karmādhikāra-sampattaye bhave jāyā. BĀUBh 1.4.17, VIII.159.
87 atha vittaṁ me syāt karma-sādhanāṁ gavādi-lakṣaṇam. Ibid.
performed as long as one lived (nitya). The other rituals, such as those for prosperity, virility, wealth, etc., were independent, and we saw that wealth was theorized as a form of final attainment insofar as it was directly conducive to human happiness, puruṣārtha. Śaṅkara seems to think that these other rituals, or at least some of them, are absorbed in the causal structure that is ultimately geared towards the world of the forefathers or the world of men. For instance, the wealth-rituals are necessary because wealth is the means for the heaven-rituals, not a thing desirable independently. Furthermore, this whole structure, including the Agnihotra, etc., is in an important sense optional, kāmya, because it is occasioned by the desire for the final attainment. 88 To state this more emphatically: in the strict sense, there is no such thing as mandatory rituals that every member of Vedic society must perform.

This is a point which Śaṅkara discusses often and in depth, and his arguments are directly aimed against Kumārila’s presentation of the obligatory rituals as immediately efficacious in the pursuit of liberation. We will remember that Kumārila’s first account of liberation presupposed that desire and ignorance have already been eradicated when one had to take up the performance of ritual solely under scriptural provision, to prevent future bad karma and exhaust some of the present karmic stock. Śaṅkara’s critique of this amounted to claiming that it was putting the cart before the horse: no one, in fact, does anything without being prompted by some urge and motive. As we saw while discussing Śaṅkara’s psychology, karma was third in line among the factors of individuation of the Self, a resultant immediately of kāma/vāsanā and mediately of ignorance. Action was, in other words, predicated on desire just because any undertaking is prompted by a specific psychological setup, which consisted in forms of attachment and aversion. This had to be the case because desire was based on ignorance, and ignorance just

88 This seems clear from BĀUBh 1.4.17.
meant superimposing agency over the Self: so long as one acts, one affirms not knowing the Self, in which case some form of attachment and aversion are inevitable.

It is not possible that there will be exhaustion of all action, because it is impossible that desires, which are the causes of action, would cease in the absence of knowledge. For, he who does not know the Self has desires, since desires have as their results whatever is not the Self.\(^8^9\)

Furthermore, it did not follow that nītya-naimittika are all that different from the kāmya actions even on the Mīmāṁsā account. Kumārila, as I just mentioned, argued that nītya-naimittika had to be performed because otherwise bad karma would be created, pratyavāya, but this presupposed a desire to avoid bad karma and was, eo ipso, a striving after something desirable. In a sense, desireless action was *contradictio in adiecto*, and action that was solely determined through scripture was an impossible notion.

\[\text{– It is not right not to perform that which is laid down in scripture, because such acts are not prohibited [like the prohibited eating of the meat of an animal killed by a poisonous weapon]. – Not so, because both are equally based on wrong ideas and produce bad results. Actions laid down in scripture are based on wrong notions and conducive to what is bad just as much as eating poisoned flesh is. Therefore, for the one who knows the real nature of the Supreme Self, it is but right not to perform actions laid down in scripture, since they are equally based on wrong notions and conducive to what is bad, when the false notion has been removed by knowledge of the Supreme Self. – It may be right in that case, but the obligatory rituals are solely based on scripture [that is, not on desire, which would have been removed by the removal of wrong notions] and are not conducive to what is bad, and so it is not proper that they be given up. – Not so, because they are enjoined for the one who has the faults of ignorance, attachment and aversion, etc. Just as the optional rituals such as Darśa-pūrṇamāsa are enjoined for the one who has the fault of desiring heaven, likewise the mandatory rituals are laid down for the one who has the fault of ignorance, the root of all evil, and the faults of attachment and aversion for attaining the desired and avoiding the undesired that are produced by this ignorance, and who seeks to attain the desirable and avoid the undesirable being equally impelled to act by the same ignorance. They are not based solely on scripture. Nor is there an intrinsic divide into optional and mandatory rituals of Agnihotra, Darśa-pūrṇamāsa, Paśubandha and Somayāga. They become optional owing to the fault of the agent who has the desire for heaven, etc. Likewise, the mandatory rituals are enjoined for the one who has the fault for heaven, etc.}

\(^{8^9}\) na ca karma-hetūnāṁ kāmānāṁ jñānabhāve nivrtyya-asambhāvād aśeṣa-karma-kṣayopapattīḥ. anātma-vido hi kāmaḥ, anātma-phala-viṣayatvāt. TUBh Introduction, VI.9.
of ignorance and who by his very nature wants to get the desirable and avoid the undesirable.\(^9\)

Mimāṃsakas, of course, meant that the kāmya rituals are not meant for attaining any of the desirable objects promised in the Veda, and I suggested that Kumārila clearly did not mean to say that nitya-naimittika are undertaken without any purpose or motive. But we should remember that svarga was defined as felicity pure and simple, and Śabara explicitly subsumed under it all goals of man.\(^9\) It would be difficult to argue, therefore, that avoiding bad karma is not what is desirable to man or somehow constitutive of that, in other words, kāmya. Thus, even if we disregard the psychological dimension of kāma, Śaṅkara’s critique is very much to the point.

This meant that all rituals were prompted by desire, and that the traditional kāmya rituals were tied to some specific desirable attainment—sons, wealth, heaven—whereas the nitya, when they were not for heaven, were driven by a general desire to get what is good and avoid what is bad. They were at their root both kāmya. Nevertheless, in virtue of the twofold meaning of kāma—as desirable object and as psychological desire—it was still possible to describe the so-called obligatory rituals as niśkāma, not tied to any specific desirable object. This will have a massive soteriological and theological significance for Śaṅkara, one which was directly

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\(^9\) “It is the generic word, denotative of the ends of all men, not restricted to any particular end”; sarva-puruṣārthāḥbhidhāyī sāmāṇya-vacanāḥ śastraḥ na višeṣe avasthāpi bhavati. MSSbh 4.3.20, IV.1258.
facilitated by Kumārila’s refashioning of the obligatory rituals as meant for exhausting the karmic stock, not just for preventing fresh bad karma.

We will deal with this in the next chapter, however, and for the present purposes we should just note that ritual was normally directed towards winning the world of the forefathers through the southern course. It was dependent on wealth as a means, which in its turn was dependent on marrying a wife as a qualification. These two, as well as a son as the means for the world of men, were desirable objects of the mixed sādhya-sādhana type, and were tied to respective rituals as well, or otherwise scripturally qualified. Together with the two final attainments, they constituted a causal ritual chain and formed the scope of kāma as desirable objects of the Vedic kind.

These two hankerings after the ends and means are what desire is, prompted by which an ignorant man helplessly enmeshes himself like a silkworm, and through absorption in the path of rituals becomes externally directed and does not know his own world, the Self. As the Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa says, “Infatuated with rites performed with the help of fire, and choked by smoke, they do not know their own world, the Self.” – But, how come you say that is the extent of desires? They are endless. – It does not matter if one wishes or not, one cannot get more than this, which consists of results and means. There is nothing in the world besides these results and means, visible or invisible, to be acquired. Desire is concerning things to be acquired, and since these extend no farther than the above, it is but proper to say, “That is the extent of desire.” That is, desire consists of the two hankerings after the ends and means, visible or invisible, which are the specific sphere of qualification of the ignorant man. Hence the wise man should renounce them.92

The two worlds, of course, contain an assortment of enjoyable objects which are eo ipso won and enjoyed by winning the worlds, and that prompts us to consider the nature of the third world, that of the gods.

92 te ete eṣaṇe sādhyasādhana-lakṣaṇe kāmāḥ, yena prayuktāḥ avidvān avaśa eva kośa-kāra-vad ātmānaṁ veṣṭayati – karma-mārga evātmānaṁ prañjādadh bahirmukhī-ḥūto na svam lokam ātmānaṁ pratijānāti; tathā ca taittirīyaṁ – agnī- mукdho haiva dhūmatāṁtāṁ svām lokāṁ na pratijānāti [3.10.2.1] iti. kathāṁ punar etāvattvam avadhāryate kāmānāṁ, anantaṁvīt; anantaḥ hi kāmāḥ — ity etad āśāṅkya hetum āha — yasmād na icchan ca na icchāṁ api, ato 'smāt-phala-sādhana-lakṣaṇad bhūyo 'dhikāraṁ na vīduṁ na labheta. na hi loke phala-sādhana-vyatiriktaṁ drṣṭāṁ adṛṣṭāṁ vā labdhavyam asti; labdhavya-viṣayam hi kāmāḥ; taṣya ca itatad-vyatirekenāḥbhāvāḥ yuktāṁ vaktum — etāvān vai kāmāḥ iti. etad uktāṁ bhavati — adṛṣṭārtham adṛṣṭārtham vā sādhyā-sādhana-lakṣaṇam avidyāvat-puruṣādhihikāra-viṣayam eṣaṇā-dvayaṁ kāmāḥ. BĀUBh 1.4.17, VIII.130-1.
Winning the World of the Gods

The third attainment is the worlds of the gods, deva-loka, culminating in the world of Hiranyagarbha or brahma-loka, achieved through the northern course known to us from the BS account. The means of attaining this world is meditation on the so-called lower Brahman, to which ritual may be optionally added to form a variety of jñāna-karma-samuccaya, a combination of “knowledge” and “action,” that is, meditation and ritual. This attainment is, really, the equivalent of the state of liberation in the Brahma-Sūtra.

As I have already reminded us, the normative Vedānta account of liberation presented by Bādarāyaṇa in the BS envisioned a standard brahma-vidyā arranged around an injunctive text. The doctrine of vidyā was explicitly modeled on the ritual, insofar as the individual brahma-vidyās were formed by combining details from different texts, had the same standardized object—Brahman—and involved the same attainment—brahma-loka—achieved by ascending through the same northern course. The attainment was a specific place, achieved by motion. The process was meditative absorption on Brahman through any of the thus standardized vidyās. The result involved enjoying the Vedic delectable objects: ancestors that manifest at will, garlands and perfumes, women, and carriages. Liberation itself consisted in winning sovereignty, svārājya, and pleasure, bhoga, which were directly derived from the seventh and eighth prapāṭhaka of the Chāndogya, respectively.

I also said that for Śaṅkara this doctrine involved action of the mental kind because at the very least one had the choice to sit down and intentionally identify oneself with Brahman—or not. It was not a matter of knowing, but of doing, and doing was posterior to pramāṇa and involved a host of personal and other factors. A sure sign that a text was not about liberation was if the text was injunctive. “Knowledge arises from reliable warrants and concerns the real nature
of the thing. It can be neither produced nor blocked by a hundred injunctions.\textsuperscript{93} Well, sure sign most of the time, as we shall see in Chapter Nine. Liberation, as we shall also see later, was just about knowing, a form of anamnesis, and had nothing to do with action of any kind. See, for instance, his comment on the one of the sūtras on meditation that I identified as crucial because of being pellucid, 4.1.7:

The consideration about sitting and the like does not arise, to begin with, regarding meditations that are related to ritual subsidiaries, because in that case they are dependent on the ritual [and regulated by its provisions]. It does not arise regarding perfect seeing either, because knowledge is dependent on the thing. It is, however, with regard to other kinds of meditation that it should be deliberated whether one should meditate without a specific rule—standing, lying down or sitting—or strictly sitting.\textsuperscript{94}

Knowledge \textit{qua} knowledge cannot be scripturally regulated, because it follows the constitution of things, not some human, divine, or non-personal whim. Śaṅkara, thus, cancelled out what Bādarāyaṇa affirmed, and his distinction of knowledge and meditation in effect divided Bādarāyaṇa’s \textit{brahma-vidyā} into one leading to Brahman the effect, \textit{kārya-brahma} or Hiraṇyagarbha, as already suggested by Bādari, involving absorptive meditation and in which everything that we know from the BS account was fine and dandy, and another one concerning the pure Brahman, involving theological and philosophical reflection and a thoroughly reevaluated role of ritual. Śaṅkara continued using most of the same standard terms for both meditation and reflection: \textit{vidyā, jñāna, vijñāna, darśana, drṣṭi}, even the one which was most clearly associated with meditation, \textit{upāsana},\textsuperscript{95} but he explicitly drew the distinction when it had

\textsuperscript{93} jñānaṁ tu pramāṇa-janyaṁ yathā-bhūta-viśayaṁ ca. na tat niyoga-śatenāpi kārayituṁ śakyate, na ca pratiṣedha-śatenāpi vārayituṁ śakyate. BSBh 3.2.21, III.595.

\textsuperscript{94} karmāṇa-samvardhāśeṣu tāvat upāsaneṣu karma-tantratvāt na āśanādi-cintāḥ; nāpi samyag-darśane, vastu-tantratvād vijñānasya; itareṣu tu upāsaneṣu kim aniyamena tiṣṭhan āśīnaḥ śayāno vā pravarteta uta niyamena āśīna eveti cintayati. BSBh 4.1.7, III.782.

\textsuperscript{95} See, for instance, TUBh 1.11.4, where \textit{upāsana} is not meditation proper, but reflection.
to be drawn and used terms such as *samyag-darśana*, “perfect seeing,” and pairs such as *para-vidyā* and *apara-vidyā*, *sagūṇa-vidyā* and *nirguṇa-vidyā*, *brahma-vākyā* and *upāsanā-vākyā*.  

There were a few other, equally important reasons why Śaṅkara denied that achieving *brahma-loka* was real liberation, most of which are commonly known and just what we would expect from him. Liberation is just being the Self, *svātmany avasthānāṁ mokṣaḥ*, and is, thus, equivalent to the Self.  

_Ergo_, liberation is omnipresent and non-different from the itinerant. The individual Selves are ultimately Brahman, so liberation cannot be something one could reach by going to another place, for it only makes sense to reach that which is separate from oneself.  

Further, the reaching of *brahma-loka* presupposes duality—an agent, action, object of attainment—and with that it presupposes and reinforces ignorance. It also jeopardizes texts that affirm non-duality: they could only make sense if they were related to liberation, whereas the meditational texts would still be meaningful with *brahma-loka* as their independent attainment.  

But for our purposes here the important thing was that going to *brahma-loka* involved attaining the same Vedic desirable objects, *kāma*—women and the like—that one wished to attain prompted by desire. The essential difference was just that one did not have to return to the human realm as in the case of ritual and the southern course. In the old Vedānta this was good enough a difference, since, as I argued, its disagreement with Mīmāṁsā was less on the attainment and more on the means. With Śaṅkara, however, we reach here the point where a wedge is inserted in the Veda as a canon: on the one hand are things *kāmya*, geared towards attaining the common pleasurable objects in one of the three worlds through some form of

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96 The first two pairs are omnipresent in his works. On the last, see BSBh 3.2.21.  
97 TUBh Introduction.  
98 gati-śruter āpya iti – *sūrya-dvārena, tayordhvam āyan* ity evam-ādi-śrutibhyaḥ prāpyo mokṣa iti cet; na; sarva-gatavāt gantrībhyaḥ cānanyatvāt. ākāśādi-kāraṇatvāt sarva-gatariḥ brahmā, brahmāvāyatiṁrīkṣaḥ ca sarve vijñānātmānaḥ; atho nāpyo mokṣaḥ. gantur anyad vibhinna-desam ca bhavati gantavyam. na hi, yenaivāvāyatiṁrīkṣaḥ yat, tat tenaiva gamyate. TUBh 1.11.4, VI.48-9. Also, the Introduction to the eighth *prapāṭhaka* of the *Chāndogya*.  
99 TUBh 1.11.4 on both. On the second, BSBh 3.2.14-5 is a good delineation of the principle.
action, and on the other hand there is the world which is the Self, attained solely through
knowledge. *Brahma-loka*, the northern course, meditation and sovereignty and enjoyment were
part of the first group. One was prompted by the same desires as defilements to attain desirable
objects of the same kind.\(^\text{100}\) This was the top of what could be achieved pursuing *pravṛtti-
dharma* and promotion or *abhyaṇḍaya* as the human good toward which such *dharma* aimed.

Ritual, with or without the accompaniment of meditation, which this ignorant man, for
whom the divisions of caste, order of life and so forth exist, and who is bound to those
rites, performs, leads to promotion beginning with human birth and ending with identity
with Hiranyakarṣaṇa.\(^\text{101}\)

Introducing the path of the gods which is for obtaining the results in the lower
meditations…\(^\text{102}\)
The course of the gods must be common to all meditations “with qualities” that result in
the attainment of promotion.\(^\text{103}\)

Let us note this well: *brahma-loka* is at the top of the process of *abhyaṇḍaya*. What this meant
was that the text which was front and center in the BS account of liberation, the *dahara-vidyā* of
the eighth chapter of the *Chāndogya*, was not about liberation at all: it was about meditation that
results in promotion. This was a profoundly troubling text for Śaṅkara, not only because the BS
took its account of liberation as the normative in all *brahma-vidyās*, but because it infelicitously
combined all kinds of things that Śaṅkara could not see hand in hand: the Self that is free from
faults, old age, death, lamentation, hunger and thirst—in short, his own favorite description of
the Self—with “true” desires and resolves, that meant the ability to have ancestors manifest
themselves at one’s will, to have fun with women, carriages, garlands and perfumes, all
predicated on the ability to move throughout the worlds without restriction.

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\(^{100}\) See BĀUBh 1.4.17.

\(^{101}\) *etasya hy aviduḥ varṇāśrama-pravibhāgavato 'dhikṛtasya karmaṇo vidyā-sahitasya kevalasya ca śāstroktasya kāryaṁ manuṣyayatvādiko brahmānta utkaraṇaḥ*. BĀUBh 1.4.10, VIII.141.

\(^{102}\) *aparāśu vidyāśu phala-prāptaye deva-yānaṁ panthānam avatārayiṣyan ...*. BSBh 4.2.1, III.699.

\(^{103}\) *sārvasām eva abhyaṇḍaya-prāpti-phalānāṁ saguṇānāṁ vidyānāṁ aviśeṣena esā deva-yānākhyā gatir bhavitum arhati*. BSBh 3.3.31, III.666.
For our ultimate mahā-vākya purposes, we should note that this separation of meditation that ultimately leads to brahma-loka meant that the central sentences in Bādarāyaṇa’s brahma-vidyās, such as ya ātmā apahata-pāpāṁ vijaro vimṛtyur viśoko vijighatso 'pipāsaḥ satya-kāmaḥ satya-sankalpaḥ so 'nveṣṭavyah sa vijjñāsitavyah of the dahara-vidyā, could not possibly be the most important Upaniṣadic statements, for the simple reason that their final attainment was not liberation. One gets the sense that Śaṅkara thinks such passages could be rectified for knowledge and liberation purposes, if read in the light of Yājñavalkya’s teaching of the Self, in which case the possession of unfailing desires and the like would not stand for what the meditator hopes to achieve, but for some form of praise of Brahman, and the injunctive force of the core statement would also fail to obtain. We could say that Śaṅkara turned the table on Bādarāyaṇa: we can rectify passages for coherence, but not the way Bādarāyaṇa wanted.

This rejection of attaining brahma-loka as the equivalent to liberation meant going directly against the Brahma-Sūtra, so a saving grace was found in the idea of krama-mukti or gradual liberation, which was already there in the BS itself but was rejected by Bādarāyaṇa. One could still achieve real liberation in brahma-loka if one became disillusioned with the idea of sovereignty and developed perfect knowledge of the Self, in which case one would still need to complete one’s term in brahma-loka—just as the liberated aspirant on earth would have to wait till death for full liberation—but would be then liberated along with Hiraṇyagarbha. Śaṅkara was explicit that the sovereignty won through meditation had to end with the expiry of the kalpa, and

104 See BSBh on 3.3.39, III.681, where Bādarāyaṇa affirms the unity of the “meditations on the heart” in the ChU and BĀU, and in effect makes the BĀU conform the ChU: “But, there is this difference between the two: in the Chāndogya account, the meditation on Brahman is of the qualified kind, because it is said that desires are to be known just as the Self is: ‘Those who depart from here without discovering the Self and these true desires.’ In the Vājasaneyaka, however, we see just that Brahman without qualities being taught.” ayaṁ tu atra vidyate viśeṣaḥ—saguṇaḥ hi brahma-vidyā chāndogyae upadiśyate—atha ya ihātmānam anuvidya vrajanty etāṁś ca satyān kāmān ity ātma-vat kāmānām api vedyatva-śravanāt, vājasaneyake tu nirguṇam eva brahma upadiśyamānam dṛṣyate.
that the rise of perfect knowledge had to happen before one could be really liberated in *brahma-loka*.

Great sages may have been attached to other meditations [lit., knowledges] that result in sovereignty and the like. It makes sense that after [attaining *brahma-loka*] they became disillusioned on seeing that such sovereignty depletes and, becoming fully absorbed in knowledge of the Supreme Self, attained liberation.\(^{105}\)

Those who have attained the world of Brahman that is the effect reach the supreme and pure state of Viṣṇu along with Hiranyagarbha, the ruler of the world, after the destruction of the world, their perfect vision having arisen there [in *brahma-loka*]. In this way, the notion of gradual liberation should be accepted from the text that speaks about non-return.\(^{106}\)

One gets a sense from this last comment as well as from his interpretation of the last *sūtra* in the BS that he trusted this sequence, from becoming disillusioned with sovereignty to developing perfect knowledge and getting liberated, was likely to happen in *brahma-loka*, but he was explicit that winning *brahma-loka* meant just avoiding rebirth till the next creation of the world:

“*It is understood that they return after this kalpa.*”\(^{107}\)

Sarvajñātman put the two eloquently together:

If a man, his mind full of desiring, attains Brahmā who sits on a lotus [i.e., Hiranyagarbha] by a combination of ritual and meditation, he, being ignorant, attains again the human condition without transmigrating [that is, in the next cycle of creation]. If, on the other hand, he comes to know the Supreme Self there [in *brahma-loka*], he is freed from all bondage. This is the gradual liberation presented in the texts of all Vedic branches, and one which is quite reasonable.\(^{108}\)

Thus, attaining *brahma-loka* became a large gray area in Śaṅkara’s system, representing simultaneously the top attainment of the *abhyudaya* course *and* liberation, albeit gradual, getting

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\(^{105}\) jñānāntaresu ca aiśvāryādi-phałeṣv āsaktāḥ syur maharṣayaḥ. te paścād aiśvārya-kṣaya-dārśanena nirviṇṇāḥ paramātma-jhāne parinīṣṭhāya kaivalyaṁ prāpur īty upapadyate. BSBh 3.3.32, III.671.


\(^{107}\) tasmād asmāt kalpād ūrdhvam āvṛttir gavyate. BĀUBh 6.2.15, X.780.

\(^{108}\) yadi vā samuccaya-vaśāt puruṣaḥ kamalāsanaṁ vrajati kāmuka-dhiḥ | punar eva mānnavam imāṁ tu vinā parivartam āvrajaṁ mūḍha-matiḥ || athavā sa tatra paramātma-matiḥ parimucyate sakala-bandhanatāḥ | krama-yoga-muktim uditā śrutisu pratīśākhām evam upapannatarā. SŚ 3.50-51.
one’s feet wet in nihśreyasa. We will address the question of brahma-loka as being simultaneously abhyudaya and nihśreyasa once again at the end of the chapter, relative to the different types of meditation.

We should, finally, also note that the statement “liberation is attained solely through knowledge” should be taken with a grain of salt, for some of the kāmya things were irredeemable—those explicitly tied to specific objects of desire—whereas other were dependent on the agent and, although constituting a form of action and not knowledge, played a crucial soteriological role as well. The wedge, thus, was not a line of demarcation, but an intersection.

The crucial text here was one already known to us, BĀU 4.4.22. This will occupy us in the next chapter, but here is a foretaste:

At this point it should be explained here how the whole Veda can be employed to the subject of the Self … By repeating what has been said in this chapter, along with the result, it is attempted to show that the whole of the Veda, sine the corpus dealing with optional rituals (kāmya) is to be employed just for this purpose. Thus, a repetition is made starting with the words “That very.” … The whole of the ritual portion of the Veda, with the sole exception of the parts dealing with optional rituals (kāmya), is employed through absorption in this knowledge of Brahman laid down in the present chapter starting with “What light” and having the delineated results.109

Brahman as Brahmā, the Ultimate Attainment of Meditation

It is apposite to end this chapter with a few comments on the ultimate point of the process of meditation and the course of the gods, the northern path. As I said above, it is the so-called lower Brahman or Brahman as the effect, aparabrahman, kāryabrahman. In cosmological terms, these two refer to Hiranyagarbha, an individual Self or vijñānātman whose body is the whole

world. They are, however, a broader, complex notion that comprehends the totality of creation.\footnote{A quite reliable and thorough presentation of Hiranyagarbha in Śaṅkara’s system is found in a little-known essay by Anam Charan Swain (1971). Statements where Śaṅkara draws the direct equivalence between kārya/apara-brahman and Hiranyagarbha are many: see, for instance, MUBh 1.1.8 and 1.1.9, AiUBh 3.3, PUBh 5.5.}

As a vijñānātman or jīva and in virtue of possessing a relation to adjuncts, Hiranyagarbha is an individual Self just like any other. However, his adjuncts happen to be “very pure.” By “pure adjuncts” Śaṅkara has in mind the same avidyā-kāma-karma complex that individuates any individual Self, but in Hiranyagarbha’s case they are attenuated to the degree that this will be his last birth. That principle accommodates the doctrine of Bādari in the Brahma-Sūtra according to which residents of brahma-loka who develop knowledge of Brahman through the process of gradual liberation are liberated along with Hiranyagarbha at the expiry of the kalpa. This purity of adjuncts is what earns Hiranyagarbha the right to be called Brahman: although he is Brahman to no higher degree than anyone else, it is relative to the purity of his adjuncts that scriptures attribute the appellation “Higher” to him, whereas they describe the (common) individual Selves as liable to transmigration because of preponderance of impurity of adjuncts.\footnote{“Because of the preponderance of purity of adjuncts, śruti and smṛti generally describe him as the higher [Brahman] … whereas in the case of the jīvas, because of preponderance of impurity of adjuncts only transmigration is generally affirmed;” hiranyagarbhas tūpādhi-suddhy-atiśayāpekṣayā prāyaśaḥ para eveti śruti-smṛti-vādāḥ pravṛttāḥ. … jīvānāṁ upādhi-gatāsuddhi-bāhūlyāt saṁsāritvam eva prāyaśo bhilapya; BĀUBh 1.4.6, VIII.92.}

Hiranyagarbha is the first entity that appears in the creation process, and there are several important textual loci that Śaṅkara relates to his appearance. For instance, he is what is called “death” at the beginning of the first adhyāya of the Brhad-Aranyaka: “In the beginning, there was nothing here at all. Death alone covered this completely, as did hunger; for what is hunger but death?”\footnote{BĀU 1.2.1. Śaṅkara thereon: “Death here refers to Hirnyagarbha identified with the intellect, because the property of hunger belongs to the Self that is identified with the intellect (the vijñānātman);” buddhy-ātmano ‘ṣanāyā-dharma iti sa eṣa buddhy-avastho hiranyagarbho mṛtyur ity ucyate. VIII.21.} He is also that Brahman which appears as the first product in the creation process delineated in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad: “He is omniscient and knows it all, knowledge is his
creative power. From him are born Brahman, name, form, and food.” Finally, he is the second “full” or pūrṇa in the famous mantra of the Brhad-Āraṇyaka: “That over there is full, this over here is full: the full proceeds from the full. Taking the full from the full, only what is full remains.” He is also the recipient of the Vedas at the beginning of creation.

Hiranyagarbha is properly the universal soul that animates the whole world as the life-breath or prāṇa that pulsates through the universe and keeps it together, just as it keeps individuals alive. Indeed, prāṇa is how Śaṅkara most commonly identifies him in the BĀUBh. As the life force animating the world, he is commonly called the thread that runs through all things, “like the (invisible) pillars of a house,” for which reason he is also known as the sūtrātman. This sūtrātman is the innermost entity in brahma-loka, pervading it just as it pervades the whole world. Since he is the first creation of Brahman and himself the cause from which the creation of the five elements as well as the mind and the senses proceeds, he is sometimes described as the cause although himself an effect. He is also the collective vijñānātman, the subtle body of the world, on which all individual Selves are strung through their own subtle bodies.

Hiranyagarbha has attained such a lofty status by being the best practitioner of the path of combined ritual and meditation in his past life, becoming so perfected in it as to be born as its very embodiment:

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113 yaḥ sarvajñāḥ sarva-vid yasya jñāna-mayaṁ tapaḥ |
tasmād etad brahma nāma rūpaṁ annaṁ ca jāyate. MU 1.1.9.
114 pūrṇam ahaḥ pūrṇam idam pūrṇat pūrṇam udacyate |
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśisyate. BĀU 5.1.1.
115 BS Bh 1.3.30.
116 Hiranyagarbha is called the sūtrātman in BĀUBh 5.5.1.
117 BĀUBh 3.7.1-2.
118 See, for instance, MUBh 2.1.3.
119 sa hy antarātmā liṅga-rūpeṇa sarva-bhūtānām. tasmin hi liṅgātmanī sarṁhatāḥ sarve jīvāḥ. tasmāt sa jīva-ghanaḥ. PUBh 5.5, IV.286.
Because Prajāpati in his past life, when he was a practitioner, was the first in virtue of practice of cultivation through perfect ritual and meditation among those who aspired for the status of Prajāpati through practicing ritual and meditation, he burnt all faults such as attachment and ignorance that prevent one from becoming Prajāpati before all the other aspirants for the position did.  

Hiranyagarbha/prāṇa also has a gross form, constituted by the world as a totality and by specific heavenly bodies and divinities related to them representing his faculties, for instance the sun and the moon as his sight. A verse from the Muṇḍaka may be given as an instance of what the being of this gross form involves:

He is the inner Self of all whose head is fire [Śaṅkara—heaven], whose eyes are the moon and the sun, whose ears are the directions, whose speech are the revealed Vedas, whose breath is air, whose heart is the whole world and whose feet is the earth.  

Śaṅkara’s common appellation for this gross manifestation of Hiranyagarbha/prāṇa is piṇḍa, “the ball,” that is, the (general, collective) individual, and other common names for it are Virāṭ—the preferred, standardized term in the commentaries on the MU and PU and in later Advaita Vedānta—Vaiśvānara or the Self common to all, Puruṣa-vidha or the Self that has the shape of a man, Ka the interrogative pronoun, Prajāpati, or even Hiranyagarbha.

The entire scope of ignorance that has been explained is of two kinds: internally, it is life-breath, the support, like pillars and the like of a house, that which gives light, the immortal. Externally it is characterized as the effect, non-luminous, subject to birth and death, like the grass, kuśa, and plaster of the house, denoted by the word “real,” mortal. It was concluded, “By that, prāṇa (denoted by “immortal”) is covered.” That prāṇa is manifested variously in different media. Prāṇa is said to be the one god. Its external persona is one, general, diversified as the sun, etc., designated by various words such as Virāṭ, Vaiśvānara, the Self in human form, Prajāpati, Ka, Hiranyagarbha etc., of which piṇḍa is the main one.  

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120 ca pra jāpātiḥ, atikrānta-janmani samyak-karma-jñāna-bhāvanānuṣṭhānaiḥ sādhakāvasthāyā, yad yasmāt, karma-jñāna-bhāvanānuṣṭhānaiḥ pra jāpāti tyaiḥ pratipitsānair pārvaḥ prathamaḥ san, asmāt pra jāpāti tyaiḥ pratipitsā- samudāyāḥ sarvasmāt, ādau aśuṣat adahat. kim? ās ag ājan sarvān pāpmanaiḥ pra jāpāti tyaiḥ pratibandhā- kūrtaḥ-bhūtān. BĀU Bh 1.4.1, VIII.80. See also BS Bh 1.3.30.

121 agnir murdhā cakṣuṣi candra-sūryau diśaḥ śrote vāg vi vṛtās ca vedāḥ | vāyuḥ prāṇo ṕṛdayaiḥ vi śvam asya padbhīyaḥ prūḥiḥ hy eṣa sarva-bhūtāntarāt月末. MU 2.1.4. Śaṅkara in the avata raṇa to the verse: yo hi prathamaṇiḥ prāṇaḥ dhi rānagarbhāj jāyate ’nādyāntār virāṭ etc.

122 sa ca vyākyāto ’vidyā-viṣayaḥ sarva eva dvi-prakāraḥ—antaḥ prāṇa upaṣṭambhake gṛhasyeva stambhādi-lakṣaṇaiḥ prakāśako ’mṛtaḥ; bāhyaś ca kārya-lakṣaṇaḥ ’prakāśaka upajana-pāya-dharmakas trṣa-kuśa-mṛtikā-samo
Through the process of creation, Hiranyagarbha/prāṇa and Virāṭ/piṇḍa evolve into and comprehend the whole world: on the one side through the evolution of the elements, and on the other through the process of individuation from Virāṭ to the petty creatures. This totality may be identified with what Śaṅkara calls the world as evolved name and form (nāma-rūpa-vyākṛtaṁ jagat), the world in all its bits and pieces, and it is this which is the broader sense of the term kārya-brahman, Brahman that is the effect.

An important manifestation of Hiranyagarbha is the sun, with which prāṇa forms the ground that makes the northern course possible: the prāṇa that flows through the human body from the channels of the heart forms a continuum with the rays of the sun, the sun itself is the gate that one must pass through at entering brahma-loka, “the golden dish” that has to be removed so that one could see and finally reach the highest divinity of the Vedic form of ignorance, Hiranyagarbha himself at the top, the mental or subtle body of the world. The sun, of course, forms a continuum with all forms of fire, sacrificial or otherwise. This helps us understand the set of vidyās or meditations that Śaṅkara associates with kārya/apara-brahman and the attaining of brahma-loka: there is the pañcāgni-vidyā or the meditation of the five fires that presents the process of transmigration and the paths to the world of the forefathers and the world of the gods; the vaiśvānara-vidyā or the meditation on the Self that is common to all and manifests as the fire of digestion; the meditation on Brahman as Satya, the three-syllabled Brahman that is the person in the orb of the sun; and in general, all meditations on the primacy of

grhasyeva satya-śabda-vācyo martyāḥ; tena amṛta-śabda-vācyah prāṇaḥ channa iti copasaṁhratam. sa eva ca prāṇo bāhyādāhāra-bhedeśv anekadhā vistṛtaḥ. prāṇa eko deva ity ucyate. tasyaiva bāhyaḥ piṇḍa ekaḥ sādhuṁ—virāḍ vaiśvānara ātām puruṣavidhāḥ prajāpātiḥ ko hiranyagarbha ity-ādibhiḥ piṇḍa-pradhānaiḥ śabdair ākhyāyate sūryādi-pravibhakta-karaṇaḥ. BĀUBh 2.1.1, VIII.216.
prāṇa, or the life-breath. In fact, these are all meditations on prāṇa, in which one identifies with the World Self and wins the world of Brahman:

Now, by proceeding along the northern course, they attain that part of Prajāpati which is Prāṇa, the eater, and the sun. Through what? By knowing the prāṇa, the sun, the Self of that which is moving and stationary, through austerity. Specifically, through control of the senses, faith, and meditation on oneself as Prajāpati; in other words, by meditating “I am prāṇa, the sun.”

In religious terms, the lower Brahman is Brahmā the demiurge, who has absorbed in his persona a host of features and names of the central divinity of Vedic ritualism: Hiranyagarbha, Ka, Puruṣa, Prajāpati. Śaṅkara even quotes the first verse of the famous “Who” hymn of the Rig Veda (10.121), where Hiranyagarbha makes his grands appearance and which calls him the life-breath of the gods (devānām asuḥ), and draws the equivalence with Brahmā explicitly.

This kārya/apara Brahman is invariantly the highest attainment of all meditations, however, that proceed by way of absorption, even when their cosmological referent is not prāṇa or the effected Brahman. Śaṅkara does seem to see a different set of meditations in which it is really the supreme Brahman that is being meditated on and not prāṇa/Hiranyagarbha, but with a

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123 This is most obvious in his commentary on the fifth adhyāya of the BĀU.
124 atha uttareṇa ayaneṇa praṇapateḥ anīṣāṁ praṇām attāram ādityam abhijayante. kena? tapasā indriya-jayena. viśeṣaṁ brahmacaryena śraddhayā vidyāyā ca praṇapatyātma-visāyā ātmānaḥ praṇāṁ sūryaṁ jagataḥ taṣṭhuṣaṁ ca anviṣāya aham asmīti vidītvā ādityam abhijayante abhiprāpṇuvaṁ. PUBh 1.10, IV.245.
125 Under BSBh 1.2.23: hiranyagarbhāḥ sām avartatēgre bhūtāya jātāḥ pātir ēka āsīt sā dādhāra prthivīṁ dyām utēmāṁ kāsmi devāya havīsā vidhema “In the beginning the Golden Embryo arose. Once he was born, he was the one lord of creation. He held in place the earth and this sky. Who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?” Translation Doniger 1981: For the hymn, see Doniger 1981:26-29; Brereton and Jamison 2014:1592-94.
126 Ibid., Śaṅkara quotes the following verse: “The first embodied Self is called puruṣa. It is he, Brahmā, the first creator of beings, who was born in the beginning.” sa vai śarīrī prathamaṁ sa vai puruṣa ucyate | ādi-kartā sa bhūtānāṁ brahmāgre samavartata. Note the echo of the hymn in this verse through the common verb, samavartata: it is he, Brahmā, who was born/arose in the beginning. The same verse is quoted by Sureśvara in BĀUBh 1.2.162. The theme of Brahmā being the first-born, appearing on a lotus stemming from the navel of Nārāyaṇa as he lies on the waters of the causal ocean, is a commonplace in the Purāṇas. See Dimmitt and van Buitenen 1978:16-29.
predication of certain qualities. These include, at the least, the *dahara-vidyā*, the *śaṃdīlya-vidyā* in ChU 3.14, and meditations on Om as a symbol of the supreme Brahman.\(^{127}\) The first two are singled out because the qualities that are predicated to Brahman concern directly his causal role. In fact, the second opens with the famous *sarvam khalv idam brahma tajjalān śānta upāsīta*, which Śaṅkara relates directly with the creation, maintenance and destruction of the world, a role not associated with the lower Brahman, but Īśvara, the supreme Brahman in its garb as the cause of the world and its inner ruler (*kāraṇa-brahman* and *antaryāmin*).\(^{128}\) It is to Īśvara that certain qualities are predicated, not to Hiranyagarbha.

One does get the sense that these are more directly meditations meant for gradual liberation. For instance, the meditation on Om as a symbol of the higher Brahman delineated in the *Praśna-Upaniṣad* is said to lead one to *brahma-loka*, where one would almost seamlessly “see the highest Puruṣa” and be liberated, because liberation depends on “seeing the thing as it is and not depending on fancy.”\(^{129}\) However, the general principle is that whenever absorptive meditation is the process, one that depends on distinctions and in which qualities are intended to be affirmed, the ultimate attainment is always the world of Brahmā *because* the respective meditations are predicated on duality, and the world of Brahmā is the highest one could get in that sphere. All such meditations, whether concerning *prāṇa/Hiरयagarbha* or Īśvara, are

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\(^{127}\) See BSBh 1.2.1-2; ChU 3.14.4; BSBh 1.3.13.

\(^{128}\) See ChUBh 3.14.4, IV.177: manomaya-itty-ādinā jyāyānebhya ity-antena yathokta-guṇa-lakṣaṇa īśvaro dhyeyaḥ. This is not the place to elaborate on Īśvara. See Hacker 1995 and Comans 2000 for some basic discussion. In general, Īśvara for Śaṅkara is *para-brahman* or *kāraṇa-brahman*, which are correlative terms with the *apara/kārya* set. He is the higher Brahman *because* it is the cause of the lower, effected Brahman in its totality. His key attributes are omniscience and omnipotence, through which he is related to the creation of the world (BSBh 1.1.5), and being the internal ruler behind everything, including *prāṇa* or the *sūrātman* (BĀUBh 3.8.12), through which feature he is related to all individual Selves as their real Self. In religious terms, he is Nārāyaṇa (īśvaro nārāyaṇākhyāḥ, BĀUBh 3.7.3, IX.432).

\(^{129}\) BSBh 1.3.13.
encompassed under the appellation of *saguṇa-vidyā*, *upāsana*, meditation on Brahman as possessing qualities.

The *adhikarins* for meditation, to which ritual may be added to form a *jñāna-karma-samuccaya*, a combination of “knowledge” and “action,” are householders who have been instructed in some such meditation and practice it, as well as renunciants and hermits.\(^{130}\) This is, then, a legitimate form of *jñāna-karma-samuccaya*, but *jñāna* does not stand for knowledge of Brahman or the Self. Although it is based on some of the famous Upaniṣadic passages that are associated with Śaṅkara in the scholarly *imaginaire*, such as *sarvaṁ khalv idam brahma*, it is not knowledge but meditation, because in these texts Brahman is presented as an object of meditation, as if possessing qualities which it does not, in fact possess. I will elaborate on this in Chapter Eight, and our business with meditation is not nearly over.

We may conclude this chapter with the observation that this process of meditation-cum-ritual is fully compatible with the BS account of combining *jñāna* and *karma*. The problem with it was, of course, that it did not lead to liberation. It brings one close, or, as Śaṅkara says, “its results are proximate to liberation,”\(^{131}\) but it was not the real thing. In any case, Śaṅkara’s beef with the *jñāna-karma-samuccaya* was not with this variation, whose value both he and Sureśvara affirm whenever possible.

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\(^{130}\) ChUBh 5.10.12; BĀUBh 6.2.15.

\(^{131}\) *kaivalya-sannikṛṣṭa-phalāni*, ChUBh Introduction, IV.9.
CHAPTER SEVEN: LIBERATION, RITUAL, AND THE ARISING OF KNOWLEDGE

Sureśvara ✅
@realMaṇḍanaMiśra
FAKE NEWS about liberation in the @failing ŚV. Very un-Vedic. So-called Mīmāṁśaka the crooked Kumārila has been writing lies for 30 years. Bad (or sick) guy!

Introduction

We saw in the previous chapter that Śaṅkara divided the attainments which the Veda can provide for men in four spheres, loka, and tied to them a specific means or sādhana, an appropriate qualification or adhikāra, and a corresponding desire, kāma. From this point on, we will pursue in some length, in three chapters, the same scheme regarding liberation, the final and, in this case, ultimate attainment: the sphere, loka, that is the Self. A crucial role in the attainment of liberation, and in opposition to the accounts of liberation that we have examined in the second part of the dissertation, was played by the few sentences in the Upaniṣads which I will call “identity statements,” and which Śaṅkara most commonly referred to as “tat tvam asi and the rest.” Liberation was supposed to follow as a matter of course upon the full understanding of these identity statements, and they on their part organized whole sections of the Upaniṣads in a hierarchy geared towards facilitating such understanding. But, this understanding generally could not take place without some process of clarification of meaning, and one could not engage in such clarification without first satisfying some existential criteria. I will focus on the identity statements, the Upaniṣads, and the process of understanding in chapters Eight and Nine, and here I will deal first with the general nature of liberation and the necessary preliminaries.

While scholars have written extensively on elements of this topic—and I will refer to the most important studies in my notes—I do have a rather major historical argument to make here,
one that is novel but, I contend, most useful for understanding Śaṅkara’s soteriology: Śaṅkara developed the whole path to liberation generally, and the section to the state which he called “arising of knowledge” or jñānotpatti/vidyotpatti/jñāna-prāpti specifically, on the model of ritual causality of the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā system, drawing particularly on the ideas of mediate causality or pāramparya and the two kinds of non-major ritual actions, the ārād-upakārakas and the sannipātyopakārakas, or the direct and aggregated helpers. A third important Mīmāṃsā principle which he also used with profit, but in conjunction with the aforementioned two and, thus, very differently than other contemporary Vedāntins, was the idea of trans-instrumentalization or repurposing of ritual and other āśrama practices for the needs of liberation. Reading Śaṅkara through the lens of the account that I will present has the benefit of seeing coherence in his system, particularly in his attitude toward ritual that I marked as puzzling in the introduction to this part of the dissertation.

Early Advaitins have mapped the path to liberation in various degrees of detail. Most systematic in this was Sureśvara, whose scheme in the Naiṣkarmya-Siddhi 1.52 runs as follows:

- performance of ritual and āśrama practices (nitya-karma) → acquisition of merit (dharmotpatti) → destruction of bad karma (pāpa-hāni) → purity of mind (citta-śuddhi) → understanding the nature of bondage (saṁsāra-yāthāmyāvabodha) → dispassion (vairāgya) → desire for liberation (mumukṣutva) → searching for a means (tad-upāya-paryeṣaṇam) → practice of Yoga (yogābhyāsa), which his commentator Jñānottama rightly glosses as the practice of the three methods of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana, but which most certainly involved the Yogic practices of yama-niyama as well → inclination of the mind toward the inner Self (cittasya pratyak-praṇaṇatā) → full understanding of the identity statements (tat tvam asy-ādi-vākyārtha-parijñāna) → destruction of ignorance (avidyoccheda) → remaining as the Self (svātmany
avasthāna). Sureśvara developed this scheme to show how ritual becomes a means of liberation “mediately,” through a succession in which every result becomes a means for another result and culminates vicariously in the ultimate attainment, exactly like Kumārila’s doctrine of how the understanding of the Veda or the threshing of the rice culminate in heaven mediately.

Śaṅkara also offered an itinerary to liberation, which was, however, organized on important juncture points. In BhGBh 5.12, he says that one attains liberation through four successive stages: purity of existence (sattva-śuddhi); acquisition of knowledge (jñāna-prāpti); renunciation of all action (sarva-karma-sannyāsa); and steadfastness in knowledge (jñāna-nisthā).1 We will take these schemes as orientation points, but I will work out the path to liberation by looking at Śaṅkara’s wider corpus and by ascertaining what the stated juncture points involve. Along the way, I will also address points from the competing theories of liberation that still need addressing.

The Self and the Nature of Liberation

Śaṅkara defined liberation in a couple of related ways, depending on whom he was arguing against, but his most persistent and final definition was that liberation is just remaining in the state of being the Self:

Therefore, liberation is remaining in one’s Self, [a state that follows] when ignorance that is the ground of desire and action has ceased.2
For, attaining the world that is the Self is just remaining in one’s Self at the cessation of ignorance.3

Liberation is the state of being the pure Self when the complex of the factors of individuation is removed. It comes about when the ground of individuation, ignorance or avidyā that produces

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1 Cf. Bader 1990:45-64.
2 tasmād avidyā-kāma-karmopādāna-hetu-nivṛttau svātmany avasthānāṁ mokṣa iti. TUBh Introduction, VI.10.
3 ātma-loka-prāptir hy avidyā-nivṛttau svātmany avasthānam eva. BĀUBh 4.4.22, IX.647.
the category of the individual Self, has been destroyed, at which point the other two factors that
further give rise to the innumerable individual Selves—desire and action—fall off by
themselves. In this sense, liberation is synonymous with the Self or with Brahman, and its
definition is identical with the definition of Brahman:

This one, on the other hand [as opposed to the permanently changing] is permanently
changeless in the absolute sense, all-pervading like space, devoid of all transformation,
ever content, partless, self-effulgent in nature. It is the state of being unembodied, called
liberation, where good and bad karma along with their results, as well as the three periods
of time, have no continuatio."^4

Liberation is, in fact, most directly said to be Brahman: “For, in all Upaniṣadic texts liberation is
ascertained as uniform. The state of liberation is, in fact, Brahman itself.”^5 However, because
liberation happens when ignorance has ceased, logically if not temporally, it was also possible to
define it in negative terms:

Liberation cannot be brought into being. For, it is nothing more than the destruction of
bondage, and it is not producible. And, as we have just said, bondage is ignorance, and
destroying ignorance by action is not possible."^6

The most sustained presentation of liberation in such negative terms is in the USP 16 and 18.

There bondage is defined as a cognitive error that consists in wrong superimposition, specifically
the superimposition of the property of knowing to the intellect or buddhi in the manner of
attributing the idea of a snake over a rope, and the failure to distinguish the intellect from the
Self. Bondage is ignorance. Release happens when this cognitive error is undone. Such release
does not constitute an attainment of a different state on the part of the Self; rather, it is a form of

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^4 idarī tu pāramārthikāṁ kūṭaṁ niṁtāṁ vyoma-vat sarva-vyāpi sarva-vikriyā-rahitaṁ niṁta-trptaṁ niravayavāṁ
svayam-jyotih-svabhāvaṁ, yatra dharmadharmo saha kāryeṇa kāla-trayaṁ ca noppāvartete; tad etad aśarīrtratvarāṁ
mokṣākhyām. BSBh 1.1.4, I.20.
^5 mukta-avasthā hi sarva-vedanteṣva eka-rūpaiva avadhāryate; brahmaiva hi mukta-avasthā. BSBh 3.4.52. Cf.
^6 anārabhyatvān mokṣasya; bandha-nāśa eva hi mokṣaṁ, na kārya-bhūtaḥ; bandhanaṁ ca avidyety avocāma;
avidyāyāś ca na karmaṇaṁ nāśa upapadyate. BĀUBh 3.3.1, IX.386.
anamnesis that can only figuratively be ascribed to the Self. The Self is neither an agent nor a patient, and the whole talk of attaining liberation as a goal, of means to attaining that goal and the like, is figurative in any case. Liberation is a sādhya or prāpya like the other three attainments, but only in a manner of speaking. The witty Sureśvara says that it is like getting the necklace that has been on one’s neck all along, or escaping the demon that is one’s own shadow. Neither of the two are real attainment or avoidance, yet something does happen on both occasions. One has forgotten a true state of affairs—logically again, not temporally—and needs to be reminded. To get the necklace, one simply has to get it.

Defining liberation as the cessation of ignorance at knowing oneself as Brahman also meant promoting liberation as something that brings visible results, drṣṭa, that is, readily available and apparent, and not something one will experience in the hereafter, like heaven or brahma-loka. That knowledge had visible results was the accepted norm in Vedic theology, and the study of the Veda itself was commonly described as ending in visible results. Presenting liberation as drṣṭa had some significant theological consequences, since it immediately disqualifies the major forms of ritual action—the rituals as units—from being direct means to liberation. Rituals by hypothesis produce invisible, future results, and liberation is not of that kind. This was, in fact, one of the reasons why Advaita Vedānta stood so uncompromisingly by

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7 “Bondage is a confusion of the intellect, and liberation is destruction of this confusion,” buddher bhrāntir iṣyate | bandho mokṣaś ca tan-nāśaḥ. USP 18.59
“The intellect, illuminated by the light of the sentient Self, thinks that it possesses sentience. That is its confusion. Because sentience is the nature of the Self, it is commonly applied to the intellect figuratively. This absence of discriminative knowledge is beginningless, and there is nothing more to transmigration than this. Liberation is the destruction of this error, it cannot be more than this.” bodhātma-jyotiṣā dīptā bodham ātmani manyate | buddhir nānyo ’sti bodhṛiti seyaṁ bhrāntir hi dīh-gatā ||
bodhasyātma-svarūpatvān nityāṁ nityaṁ tatropacaryate | aviveko ’py anādyo ’yaṁ saṁśāro nānya iṣyate ||
mokṣas tan-nāsa eva syān nānyathānapattitaḥ. USP 16.60-62ab. See also USP 18.45-6, 107.
8 NaiS 1.31-4.
the problematic ideal of jīvan-mukti or liberation while living, and presented every attainment along the course as a visible result. That liberation is a visible result is often the unstated factor behind Śaṅkara’s claim that there are only four kinds of action—production, attainment, transformation, and refinement, the four sannipātyopakārakas—and that none of them can operate over the Self and bring about liberation. What he means is that only these types of ritual Vedic actions bring about visible results of the kind to which liberation belongs, not that Agnihotra or playing marbles are not action at all.⁹

In terms of strict soteriological causality, however, the cessation of ignorance was the final cause of liberation, not what liberation as a state was, and this formulation is better understood as a causal explanation rather than a proper intensional definition. Śaṅkara resorts to this causal definition when arguing against fellow theologians who would like liberation to be a novel, future state of affairs, producible in the manner of heaven, or against other competing doctrines, when it is important to bring home the idea that liberation is just what happens when bondage, its opposite, is no more.¹⁰ It was, nevertheless, important to affirm, specifically against Kumārila, that liberation was a state, not a negative one that consists merely in absence of the cause of embodiment, but a positive state equivalent to the Self. It wasn’t another or a future

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⁹ See, for instance, BĀUBh 3.3.1: “And, it is not possible that ignorance be destroyed by action. The operation of action extends over the sphere of the visible, for the domains of the operation of action are production, attainment, transformation, and refinement. There is no domain of action other than the faculty of production, attainment, transformation, and refinement, as is well-known in the world. And, liberation is none of these four categories. That is why I just said that it is obstructed by ignorance;” avidyāyāś ca na karmeṣā naśa upapadyate, dṛṣṭa-visayatvac ca karma-sāmarthyaśya; upatty-āpti-vikāra-sanāskāra hi karma-sāmarthyaśya viṣayāḥ; upādayitūrī prāpayitūrī vikartur ca sāmarthyaṁ karmanāḥ, na ato yatirikta-visayo ‘sti karma-sāmarthyaśya, loke ‘prasiddhatvāḥ; na ca mokṣa eśāṁ padārthānāṁ anyatamaḥ; avidyā-mātra-vyavahita ity avocāma. Also, in detail in BSBh 1.1.4.

¹⁰ For this reason, Mayeda’s account of Śaṅkara’s understanding of liberation (2006b:73-5), that is, liberation just as the cessation of ignorance, is incomplete and imprecise, as it relies solely on the US and completely misses the numerous passages where Śaṅkara defines liberation as a state that ensues upon the cessation of ignorance. Particularly problematic is the conclusion that “Śaṅkara’s concept of final release is very similar to the Mahayana Buddhist view of nirvāṇa, characterized by Candrakīrti as 'being of the nature of destruction of all false assumptions' (sarvakalpanākṣayarūpa).” While this is procedurally true—liberation is achieved by undoing all concepts—to Śaṅkara’s mind it certainly was not true regarding liberation as a state.
state, but a present state of which one was not aware. The positive definition was important when arguing against Kumārila’s first account of liberation.

We will remember here that the negative account of liberation said that freedom from rebirth was like the absence of a broken pot: the pot had a history but no future, and its absence, though brought into being, was subsequently eternal. To put it differently, its absence had no history, but had future. This was a form of liberation that was not acceptable to Vedāntins in general, and to Advaitins in particular, because it smacked of asatkārya-vāda. The subsequent absence of the pot was just a figurative absence, because Being continued to be a positive remainder after the breaking of the pot. Being as a positive and unitary thing could assume distinguishing features, such as the shape of a pot and the action of a pot production, and then be separated from them, and the two states could respectively be described as coming into the being of a pot and its absence or destruction, but this was a form of vikalpa or mental construct. The important point, though, was that Being allowed such imagination to take place, whereas absence, a mere nothing, could assume no qualities or actions. It was absolutely non-relational. Properly speaking, there was no absolute future absence when the pot was broken. To define liberation, therefore, as absence of future embodiment—which was, we will remember, the key move on Kumārila’s part in the argument that liberation could not be enjoined as it does not admit of productive striving—was just not sound reasoning. Liberation was not absence: it was presence of the only thing that could be present, the Self.\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) yad dhi naṣṭam, tad eva notpadyata iti pradhvaṁsābhāva-van nityo ’pi mokṣa ārabhya eveti cet—na, mokṣasya bhāva-rūpatvāt. pradhvaṁsābhāvo ’py ārabhyata iti na sambhavati, abhāvasya viśeṣābhāvād vikalpa-mātram etat. bhāva-pratityogī hy abbāvaḥ, yathā hy abhinno ’pi bhāvo ghaṭa-paṭādibhir viśeṣyate bhinnā iva ghaṭa-bhāvah paṭa-bhāva iti, evам nirviśeṣo ’py abbāvaḥ kriyā-guṇa-yogād dravyādi-vad vikalpyate. na hy abbāva utpalādi-vad viśeṣaṇa-saha-bhāvī. viśeṣaṇavattve bhāva eva syāt. TUBh Introduction, VI.10.
This was an important move, because the pursuit of liberation was an action and a form of striving, and such striving had to be prompted by a desire for something positive. Śaṅkara could now present the pursuit of liberation as striving for the Self, on the part of an ātma-kāma or one with a sole desire for the positive Self. This Self, however, was not the satya-kāma, the Self that was the repository of all good desires. It was the Self all whose desires were fulfilled because it did not have any. It was Yājñavālkyya’s Self. Because the Self did not have any desires, he who aspired just after that Self was eo ipso without the desires that were satisfied by ritual and similar means. One could at the same time have the desire for the Self, be prompted to action in the proper Vedic manner and with the adequate adhikāra, and be properly without desires as expected from an aspirant after liberation, simply because the Self did not have desires.\(^\text{12}\)

Let us mark these three final steps that are in a logical sequence as the consummation of the path to liberation: full knowledge of Brahman, causing the destruction of ignorance, causing the state of being the Self. That there was a temporal break between them is explicitly denied in BSBh 1.1.4 with a most impressive arsenal of Upaniṣadic statements, but the sequence is affirmed consistently.\(^\text{13}\)

The Role of Ritual and Vividiśā

Kumārila’s first account promoted the obligatory rituals as the direct causal factor in the attainment of liberation. Ritual had to prevent the creation of future bad karma that would occur through non-performance, and after the karmic stock had been exhausted through experience,


\(^{13}\) api ca brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati [MU 3.2.9], kṣīyante cāsyā karmāṇi tasmin drṣṭe parāvare [MU 2.2.8], ānandaṁ brahmaṁo vidvāṁ na nibhethi kutaścana [MU 2.9], abhayāṁ vai janaṁ prāpto’si [BĀU 4.2.4], tad ātmānam evavēvedāham brahmāśmīti, tasmāt tat sarvam abhavat [BĀU 1.4.10], tatra ko mohaḥ kah śoka ekaṁ prāśāyaṁ [ĪU 7] ity evam-ādyāṁ śrutayo brahma-vidyāṁantarāṁ eva mokṣaṁ darśayantah madhye kāryāntaraṁ vārayanti. I.21.
one would be automatically liberated. In the Brhat-Ṭīkā, the obligatory rituals were given even a more prominent role: they would not only prevent, but also exhaust some present bad karma, and thus speed up the process.

Śaṅkara, as we saw in the previous chapter, rejected this account, arguing that ritual as a form of action was predicated on ignorance and desire—action was the third in line among the individuation factors. I said that Kumārila’s account presupposed that ignorance and desire had already ceased through the discriminative knowledge of the Self, but for Advaitins that just could not be the case: if ignorance had ceased, so would have agency. Sureśvara’s causal chain of saṁsāra was particularly explicit about the place of any form of action, ritual included. The human condition was that of suffering, which was consequent on embodiment. The body was a result of good and bad karma, which was a result of deeds prohibited and enjoined in scripture. Action was predicated on attachment and aversion—the staple forms of desire—which were false ideas of what was pleasant and unpleasant. Such ideas had root in the uncritical acceptance of duality. At the bottom of this was the lack of understanding of the self-evident non-dual Self.

Action that is not prompted by desire was just not possible. By performing the so-called obligatory rituals, one at the least hopes to attain the pleasant and avoid the unpleasant, and these are intrinsically related to rāga and dveṣa.14

Śaṅkara, further, rejected Kumārila’s claim that the failure to perform the nitya-naimittika rituals would create bad karma, pratyavāya. He argued that non-performance was a form of absence, nonexistence or abhāva, and that as such it could not create positive effects.15

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14 NaiS Introduction; TUBhV 1.6-8.
15 See, for instance, TUBh Introduction, VI.9: “The non-performance of the obligatory rituals is an absence, and therefore bad karma [as a result of that] does not make sense;” nityānāṁ ca akaraṇam abhāvaḥ tataḥ pratyavāyānupapattiḥ. In all fairness, we should say that Kumārila had anticipated this objection—or perhaps it was already explicitly made, possibly by the Vājasaneyins who, as we have seen, argued that one could take to the life of
However, he took a shine to Kumārila’s claim that the so-called obligatory ritual could exhaust accumulated bad karma. To be sure, there was nothing obligatory about these rituals, and they were not really niskāma or performed without any expectations, but they had the good characteristic of being bound to the general good that a Vedic ritual can bring, namely heaven. They were not explicitly tied to specific desires, such as for cattle or virility, and so they could be repurposed through a Vedic fiat and a fitting desire on the part of the performer.

We have already seen this repurposing procedure in Kumārila’s second account, with the knowledge of the Self, and in the BS, with ritual. I called it trans-instrumentalization. With Śaṅkara’s characteristic eloquence and clarity, this trans-instrumentalization comes into sharp focus. Ritual that is enriched with two elements—the Upaniṣadic meditations and the absence of interest in the objects that ritual otherwise brings, abhisandhi—produces a special effect, different from its common results, just as poison that otherwise causes death can be a cure when accompanied by a charm, or as thick sour milk that causes fever can have calming effect when

renunciation immediately after the study of the Veda, without ever lighting the fire, which was endorsed by Bādarāyaṇa against Jaimini—and replied to in the BṬ:\

kaṁ padaṁ prāg-abhāvo yo vihitakaranadisu | na cānaṁha-karatvena vastutvaṁ nāpanīyate ||
sva-kāle yad akurvaṁ tad karoty anyad acetanaḥ |
pratyaṇyo ’syā tenaiva nābhavena sa janyate. “The anterior absence of ritual actions, when such rituals are enjoined but not performed, does not lose substantiality because of causing something undesired. The unthinking man who does not perform them when he should, does [at that time] something else, and his bad karma is a result of that, not of absence.” Verses 2 and 3 in Taber’s excerpt (Taber 2007:182).

Śaṅkara’s theory was that while not performing the obligatory rituals, one was creating fresh bad karma as a consequence of past accumulated bad karma, presumably by engaging in other things—thus following Kumārila’s polished argument—while the non-performance itself was just an indication that such thing was happening, “for otherwise there would be an origination of something positive out of mere absence, in contradiction to all reliable warrants;” atāḥ pūrvapacita-duritebhyaḥ prāpyamāṇāyāḥ pratyaṇa-kriyāyā nityākaraṇaṁ lakṣaṇaṁ iti śat- pratyaṇyaśya nāṇupapattiḥ – akurvaṁ vihitav karma [Manu 11.44] iti. anyathā hi abhāvād bhāvotpattir iti sarva- pramāṇa-vyākopa iti. TUBh Introduction, VI.9.

Another prominent argument against nitya-naimittika was that they could not fully exhaust the bad karmic stock either, since it was endless. TUBh 1.11.4.

16 nityāṇy adḥigatāṁ kartāṁ upāṭa-durita-kṣayāṭhāṁ. TUBh Introduction, VI.8.
sugar is mixed in it. A third element is mentioned additionally in the BGBh, and that is dedication of all action to the Lord. This special effect of ritual performed not for heaven but as a way of worship of the Lord is purification of one’s existence, called variously sattva-śuddhi, ātma-saṃskāra, etc. This procedure also changes the type of ritual as action, and of the result that ritual brings. Ritual does not bring adṛśta results, something necessarily experienced in a future life, but drśta, results that are palpable here and now; it becomes a form of saṃskṛti, one of the four saṃnipātyopakārakas:

And, I just said that actions are in the domain of one who does not know. For, actions of the type of production, obtainment, transformation, and refinement/purification are in the domain of ignorance. That is why I said that actions become a means of knowledge though purification of the Self.

Śaṅkara will not call ritual a saṃnipātyopakāraka for a different reason, however, as we will see by the end of the chapter. Let us note here that Śaṅkara expected those who are intent on liberation to take their ritual “with cream and sugar.”

Such purification of existence or refinement of the Self consists in the removal of psychological faults that result from bad karma and that block the knowledge of the Self. In short, performance of ritual leads to what Śaṅkara calls the arising of knowledge, jñānotpatti or vidyotpatti. And, because of this, such obligatory ritual is properly a means of liberation.
need to be mindful of several things in this regard, however, and we need to consider what this arising of knowledge is.

The performance of ritual, consisting mostly of the daily Agnihotra, is now just one of the actions that are pertinent to the members of the varṇāśrama social system. It is important to bear this in mind: when talking about karma, Śaṅkara commonly has ritual in mind, but ritual is just one of several possible practices a participant in the varṇāśrama would engage in, and it is pertinent only for householders. Let us pay some attention to the following passage from the TUBh:

– If that is the case, then the other āśramas are irrelevant, since the arising of knowledge is caused by action [through removing the hindrances] and actions are enjoined for householders only, from which fact it follows that there can be only one āśrama. Thus, the statements that Agnihotra should be performed as long as one lives are all the more apposite. – No, because actions are many. It is not that only Agnihotra and the like are actions. There are actions that are associated with the other āśramas such as chastity, austerity, truthfulness, calmness, self-control, non-violence, etc., as well as actions that are characterized by concentration, meditation, etc., that are the best for the arising of knowledge, because they are unadulterated.21 The nitya-karmas are now not the daily rituals that every Vedic man should perform, but whatever the members of the individual āśramas do. Other practices are, in fact, better than disinterested ritual, because of being “unadulterated,” “unmixed.” Ānandagiri glosses this with “because they are not mixed with violence and the like,” obviously alluding to ritual slaughter.22 This is well-corroborated in BĀUBh 4.5.15, where Śaṅkara offers a similar reasoning and claims that the obligatory actions of those who have gone forth are better suited for the rising of knowledge than ritual, which is mixed with violence, attachment, aversion, etc. Let us remember

21 evaṁ tarhi āśramāntarānupapattiḥ, karma-nimittatvād vidyotpatteḥ. grhausthasyaiva vihitāni karmāṇī
aikāśramyam eva. ataś ca yāvaj jīvādi-śrutayaḥ anukūlataṁ syuḥ, na; karmānekatvāt. na hy agnihotrādīny eva
karmāṇi; brahmacaryāṁ tapaḥ satya-vacanaṁ śamaḥ damaḥ ahiṁsā ity-evam-ādīny api karmāṇi itarāśrama-
prasiddhāṁ vidyotpattau sādhakatāṁyas asaṅkīrtāṁ vidyante dhīyāna-dhārañādi-lakṣaṇāṁ ca. TUBh 1.11.4, VI.51-2.
22 asaṅkīrtatvād hīṁsādy-amisritatvād ity arthaḥ. Ānandagiri on TUBh 1.11.4, p.35.
the dual nature of ritual: it is commonly associated with desire, wealth, etc., and only exceptionally with the arising of knowledge. Thus, the arising of knowledge—and what that is we will discuss shortly—may happen through any of the obligatory practices of the respective āśramas, so long they are scriptural, in addition to some factors that are not even related to the āśrama system, such as the grace of the Lord (īśvara-prasāda).

Śaṅkara is not always clear whether all the obligatory practices of the respective āśramas give rise to knowledge specifically through depleting the bad karmic stock. In the TUBh, for instance, he says that there is no such rule that knowledge arises just from the exhaustion of bad karma and not from practices such as non-violence, chastity, austerity, meditation, as well as from the grace of the Lord. All these are, in any case, only helpers to the triple Vedāntic process of hearing, thinking and meditation. In the BĀUBh 4.4.22, on the other hand, the most important comment on this matter, purity of existence that comes from the depletion of bad karma is associated specifically with the obligatory practices of the three āśramas other than those who have gone forth, namely the recitation of the Veda, sacrifice, charity, and austerity. In the path to liberation, such purity of existence is an important, threshold step, and one of the cardinal points in Śaṅkara’s soteriology. We may, thus, surmise that the obligatory āśrama practices occasion the arising of knowledge through engendering purity of existence first, while

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23 na; niyāmabhāvāt. na hi, pratibandha-kṣayād eva vidyotpadyate, na tv īśvara-prasāda-tapo-dhyānādy-anuṣṭhānāt iti niyamo 'sti; ahiṁsā-bhramacaryādīnāṁ ca vidyāṁ praty upakārakatvāt, sākṣād eva ca kāraṇatväc chravaṇa-manama-nididhyāsanādīnām. TUBh 1.11.4, VI.56.

24 His thinking in this regard was most likely shaped by the Bhagavad-Gītā, specifically 18.5-6, which says that sacrifice, charity, and austerity should never be renounced, as they purify man, but should be performed with disregard for their result. 5.11 is also relevant, introducing the term ātma-śuddhi, and saying that yogis perform action with body, mind, words, and purified senses, but without attachment. The term sattva-śuddhi or purity of existence was also likely taken from sattva-saṁśuddhi in 16.1, although it appears also in the ChU 7.26.2
the practices of those that have gone forth, as well as factors such as the grace of the Lord, do so
directly.  

That these ritual and other āśrama practices give rise to knowledge of the Self can also be
formulated in the strict terms of Vedic theology. The two key passages in this regard are already
known to us from the BS: they are BĀU 4.4.22 and 23, and particularly significant is what
Śaṅkara has to say about them under BS 3.4.26-7. The first passage said that Brahmins seek to
know (vividīṣanti) the great Self through recitation of the Veda, sacrifice, charity, and austerity.
Once they know the Self, they become sages and go forth as renunciants desiring that Self.  
Śaṅkara, the statement presents two consecutive processes. The first is the striving after knowing
the Self, vividīṣā, and that striving proceeds by performance of the āśrama practices. These are
now canonized as the daily recitation of the Veda, sacrifices, charity, and austerity, to which
Śaṅkara adds chastity. This list, now, corresponds fully to ChU 2.23.1:

There are three types of persons whose torso is the Law (dharma).
The first is one who pursues sacrifice, vedic recitation, and gift-giving.
The second is one who is devoted solely to austerity.
The third is a celibate student of the Veda living at his teacher’s house—that is,
a student who settles himself permanently at his teacher's house.
All these gain worlds earned by merit.
A person who is steadfast in brahma reaches immortality. 

25 Bradley Malkovsky has written a full book and an article (2000a, 2001) on the role of divine grace in Śaṅkara’s 
Vedānta, but other than pointing out that there is such a thing, and a prominent one, in Śaṅkara’s system, his work
has little value for understanding the precise role of such divine grace. This is largely because of failing to
comprehend that the arising of knowledge is relatively an early threshold in Śaṅkara’s soteriology, and not what
directly brings down avidyā. In terms of strict soteriological contribution, the role of divine grace is exercised before
one can begin engaging in brahma-vidyā.

26 tam etaṁ vedānvacanena brāhmaṇa vividīṣanti yajñena dānena tapasānāśakena. etam eva viditvā munir bhavati |
etam eva pravrājino lokam icchantaḥ pravrajanti. The pronouns refer to “sa vā eṣa mahaṁ aja ātmā yo ‘yaṁ
vijñānamayaḥ prāṇesu” in the beginning of the passage.

27 Under BĀU 4.4.22, Śaṅkara reads anāśakena as an adjective for tapasā, not a fifth independent action. That is,
since tapas can refer to bodily mortification of any kind and anāśaka to starving that ultimately ends in death, the
second should be read as an adjective of the first to give the meaning of not enjoying the objects of desire,
kāmānāśana. In the BSBh 3.4.26, ChU 8.5.1 is quoted to the effect that chastity is equivalent to sacrifice.

There are, then, five āśrama practices listed here, and from the comment on the cited passages (ChU 2.23.1) we can relate them to the respective āśramas:

1. Chastity or brahmacarya for the student who lives with his teacher his whole life. Śaṅkara is clear that this does not include the regular student life, after which one must make the choice of an āśrama as a vocation, as Olivelle has shown, but for the life-long student whose vocation is to serve the teacher;29

2. Sacrifice or yajña, consisting primarily of the daily Agnihotra; charity or dāna; and Vedic recitation or adhyāyana for the householder;

3. Austerity or tapas for an ascetic (tāpasa) or a mendicant (parivrāṭ). The mendicant is, again, one who has made such vocational choice, to be distinguished from another category of mendicant whom we will soon see. The vocation consists in observing vows such as the cāndrāyaṇa fast.

All these āśrama practices eventually lead to the arising of knowledge, as we have seen, if they are not performed for other gain; that is, if they are repurposed. Otherwise, they all normally bring some form of good karma or punya that belongs to the sphere of promotion.30

Now, there is nothing inherently or naturally prophylactic about these practices. They are not like acetone for nail polish that removes stains just because such is its constitution or the way it reacts with other substances: we saw that nitya-naimittika-karma was generally for heaven. Rather, there is an injunction in the BĀU passage of the utpatti/apūrva type, which, as we will remember from the Second Chapter, introduces a ritual undertaking for a specific purpose by disclosing a causal relation that is not knowable except from a Vedic statement. These actions

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29 Olivelle 1993.
30 From the BGBh, it appears that the so-called smārta practices or the duties of the respective classes from the Dharma-Śāstras can be added to this class.
are for knowing the Self just because the Upaniṣad says so. To spell this out as clearly as we can, the injunction relates the āśrama practices to the state of appearance of knowledge of the Self as means to a result, just as an injunction for, say, Darśa-pūrṇamāsa relates the sacrifice to the appearance of heaven as means to a result. The practices of the āśramas bring about vidyotpatti because there is an upatti-vākyā, an originate conjuction to that effect. Performance of ritual thus becomes the starting point in the pursuit of liberation. The injunction, of course, informs: it does not command.31

And then, there comes a point where such knowledge of the Self has arisen, one has become an ātma-vit, and the process is no longer vividisā. The absolutive in BĀU 4.4.22 marks that break clearly, etam tam viditvā, and introduces something new. This new thing is that one desires the Self and goes forth as a renunciant. This renunciant is different from the vocational renunciant. He corresponds to the brahma-saṅstha from the ChU, one who is steadfast in Brahman, and Śaṅkara clearly distinguishes him from the ordinary mendicant whose vocation is to do rites of austerity.32 In other words, Śaṅkara thinks that there comes a point, the arising of knowledge, where one gives up the āśrama practices that have made one a knower of the Self.33

– But, is it not contradictory to say that knowledge depends on the āśrama practices and that it does not depend on them at the same time? – No, we say! Knowledge, once arisen, does not depend on anything for fruition. However, it does depend for its arising.34

31 Cf. BSBh 3.4.27, III.739; “– But, I said that we do not see an injunction in the text ‘they aspire to know through sacrifice etc.’ [BĀU 4.4.22]. – You surely did say that. Nevertheless, because the relation is unprecedented, an injunction should be postulated. For, this relation of the desire to know to sacrifice and the other practices does not obtain before the statement, by which fact [of obtaining otherwise] it could be a restatement.” nanu uktam—yajñādibhir vividiṣānaṁ atra na vidhir upalabhya vā iti—satyam uktam; tathāpi tu apūrvatvāt saṁyogasya vidhiḥ parikalpyate; na hi ayaṁ yajñādīnaṁ vividīṣā-saṁyogasya pūrvaṁ prāptaḥ, yenānūdyeta.

32 tapa eva dvitiyas tapa iti kṛcchra-candrāyaṇādi tadvāṁ tāpasaḥ parivrāḍ vā na brahma-saṅstha āśrama-dharma-mātra-saṅsthaḥ; brahma-saṁsthasya tv amṛtatva-śravaṇāt. ChU 2.23.1.

33 kiṁ caiva evaṃ evātmanāṁ svant lokam icchantah prārthayanti prabhājana-sīlāh pravrajanta prakasanti prakarṣeṇa vrajanti sarvān karmāni saṁyanyaṣyantīty arthaḥ. BĀUBh 4.2.22, IX.647.

34 nanu viruddham idaṁ vacanam—apekṣate ca āśrama-karmāṁ vidyā, nāpekṣate ceti. neti brūmaḥ; utpannā hi vidyā phala-siddhiṁ prati na kiṁcid anyad apekṣate, utpattīṁ prati tu apekṣate. BSBh 3.4.26, III.737.
They have been useful for the arising of knowledge, but knowledge once arisen has a result of its own—Śaṅkara occasionally talks about the arising and the maturation of knowledge—for which it does not require the help of the āśrama practices. We still need to figure out just what this “arising of knowledge” is, but let us first introduce the relevant part from BĀU 4.2.23.

When the performance of the āśrama practices has borne fruit and one has become a knower of the Self, one further becomes śānta, calm, “withdrawn from the action of the senses”; dānta, self-controlled, “averse to the mental cravings”; uparata, tranquil, “free from all desires”; titikṣu, tolerant, “bearing with the dualities”; and samāhita, collected, “concentrated by disassociation from the spurs of the mind and the senses.” This is, in fact, the scriptural origin of the set of personal virtues—śama, dama, uparati, titikṣā and samādhiṇa—that we know from the BS as the virtues that all aspirants after liberation should cultivate. We have also seen them standing for the yama-niyama complex in the doctrine of prasaṅkhyaṇa-vāda, the counterpart of kriyā-yoga in Yogic meditation. Now, we need to note two important things about them in the context of the arising of knowledge.

First, while the BĀU passage says that one who had acquired these five has already become a knower of the Self—they appear as the result of the vividiṣā—they may also be practiced in lieu of the five āśrama practices, even when one does not have knowledge of the Self. Śaṅkara, in other words, treats them as āśrama practices like the other five, because they are the practices of those who are real knowers of Brahman. They have, thus, a dual nature of virtues that one has acquired, and of practices that one cultivates intentionally. Although they are

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35 For instance, in the TUBh 1.11.4.
36 BĀU 4.2.23: tasmād evaṁ-vic chānto dānta uparatas titikṣuḥ samāhito bhūtvātvany evātmānaḥ paśyati. From the commentary: tasmād evaṁ-vic chānto bāhyendriya-vyūpārata upaśāntas tatha dānto 'ntaḥ-karaṇa-ṭṛṣṇāto nivṛṣṭa uparataḥ sarvaiṣaṇaḥ-vinirmuktaḥ saṁnyāsi titikṣur dvandva-sahiṣṣuḥ samāhita indriyāntaḥ-karaṇācalana-rūpād vyāvrtyaikāgrya-rūpeṇa samāhīto bhūtvā. Ibid.
pertinent to someone who already knows the Self, manifest after the arising of knowledge—and Śaṅkara says that they are “directly related to knowledge,” for reasons we will see under the next heading—they can serve as substitutes for the āśrama practices that are just for the arising of knowledge, which comes to mean that one can practice just them instead of ritual and the like, renounce even before knowledge had arisen, and make knowledge arise through them. If they are “related to knowledge,” why couldn’t they give rise to knowledge as well? They are, in fact, better suited to give rise to knowledge, being “unmixed” with violence and the like, as we have seen.

Second, like the prasaṅkhyāna-vādins, Śaṅkara takes these five as quite synonymous with the Yogic yama-niyama complex—commonly referring to them either as śama-damādi or yama-niyama, where the respective items evidently correspond and mean the same thing, sense and mind control—and wider in scope than just the five. To put this differently, from some important loci such as TUBh 1.11.4, BĀUBh 4.5.15, and USG 1:4-5, it is evident that the virtues/practices that are “related to knowledge” are more than just five—they include non-violence, absence of anger, truthfulness, etc.—but they are essentially reducible to practices of sense and mind control, and to virtues such as humility. Under BĀU 4.5.15, Śaṅkara says that the āśrama practices that are directly related to knowledge are, first, yama-pradhānāni, predominantly sense control in nature; second, humility, etc.; and, third, mental practices characterized by meditation, knowledge, and dispassion. A similar classification can be made based on USG 1:4-5, where Śaṅkara says that the teacher should engage the student who

37 tasmāt viraktasya mumuśoḥ vināpi jñānena brahmacaryād eva pravrajed ityādi upapannam. BĀUBh 4.5.15, IX.677.
38 atha evaṁ sati avidvad-visayānāṁ āśrama-karmaṁ balābala-vicāraṇāyāṁ, ātmā-jñānotpādaṁ prati yama-
pradhānānāṁ amāniṁbādāṁ mānasāṁvaṁ ca dhyaṇa-jñāna-vairāgyāṁ saṁnipatyo nāpāravām; hiṁsā-rāga-
dveśādi bāhulyād bahu-kliśṭa-karma-vimiśritā itare—iti. BĀUBh 4.5.15, IX.676.
evidently has no grasp of knowledge in yamas such as non-violence and absence of anger; in niyamas that are not opposed to knowledge, which would likely correspond to dhyāna, dhāraṇa, jñāna, vairāgya from BĀUBh 4.5.15 and TUBh 1.11.4; and in humility and similar virtues.

Nevertheless, the BĀU 4.4.23 text is important for theological purposes, because based on this text Śaṅkara claims that the sama-damādi complex is more proximate to knowledge than the practices of the common āśramas.

Let us summarize our findings. The path to liberation begins with the performance of the āśrama practices, along with Upaniṣadic meditation and no expectance of the results. This complex causes purity of the Self through exhausting bad karma, which removes the psychological faults and leads to the arising of knowledge. In theological terms, this is called vividiṣā and is based on BĀU 4.4.22. Alternatively, there are virtues that commonly appear when knowledge had arisen, but which can also be practiced instead of ritual and the like, for the arising of knowledge. They are essentially sense and mind control in nature, and theologially are traced to BĀU 4.4.23. The common āśrama practices are “comparatively external” because of their relation to the “desire to know,” vividiṣā, whereas the later are “proximate” because of their relation to “knowledge” or vidyā itself.39 And, there is the grace of the Lord, which can make knowledge arise as well.

Arising of Knowledge

There is, unfortunately, no stipulative definition that I could find in Śaṅkara’s works that would reveal immediately what this arising of knowledge, jñānotpatti, vidyotpatti, or jñāna-prāpti, is.

Nevertheless, there are several coordinates that can help us pinpoint it. The key to this is to

39 tasmād yajñādīni śama-damādīni ca yathāśramaṁ sarvāny eva āśrama-karmāṇi vidyotpattāv apekṣitavyāni. tatrāpi evaṁ-vit iti vidyā-saṁyogat pratyāsannāni vidyā-sādhanāni śamādīni, vividiṣā-saṁyogat tu bāhyatarāni yajñādīnīti vivektavyam. BSBh 3.4.27, III.739-40.
remember that there is a point at which knowledge is arisen, ritual and the other āśrama practices are of no use anymore, and knowledge itself brings the path of liberation to fruition. We should note the following important statement again:

– But, is it not contradictory to say that knowledge depends on the āśrama practices and that it does not depend on them at the same time? – No, we say! Knowledge, once arisen, does not depend on anything for fruition. However, it does depend for its arising.\(^{40}\)

Further, such fruition of knowledge is preceded by the practice of the triple Vedāntic method:

The result of knowledge is preceded by hearing, etc., in line with the statement that one should listen about, ponder over, and reflect on the Self.\(^{41}\)

We will see in Chapter Nine that Śaṅkara presents renunciation of all āśrama practices as an aṅga, an essential requirement for the practice of the three methods. There are, then, three points of what we may call brahma-vidyā, or knowledge of Brahman: a point at which knowledge is arisen, followed by knowledge as practice, and culminating in knowledge as a result. Let us also remember that after one had known the Self, one becomes endowed with the five virtues and seeks the Self, having renounced the āśrama practices, as per BĀU 4.4.23. Why seek the Self if one knows the Self? Furthermore, Śaṅkara in his delineation of the key juncture points on the path to liberation placed “attainment of knowledge” or jñāna-prāpti as the second stop, preceded by purity of existence achieved through the performing the āśrama practices, and followed by their renunciation. Clearly jñānotpatti does not stand for knowing oneself as Brahman, but is intimately related to the status of ritual and āśrama duties.

To begin with, any student of Śaṅkara worthy of her salt would have by now recognized the set of virtues or practices from the BĀU 4.4.23 that I discussed above, śama, dama, uparati, śravaṇādi-pūrvakaṁ hi vidyā-phalam, śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ [BĀU 2.4.5/4.5.6] ity-ādi-śruty-antarebhhyāḥ. TUBh 2.1, VI.59.

\(^{40}\) nanu viruddham idaṁ vacanam—apekṣate ca āśrama-karmāṇi vidyā, nāpekṣate ceti. neti brūmaḥ. utpannā hi vidyā phala-siddhiṁ prati na kiṁcid anyad apekṣate, utpattīṁ prati tu apekṣate. BSBh 3.4.26, III.737.

\(^{41}\) śravanjādi-pūrvakaṁ hi vidyā-phalam, śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ [BĀU 2.4.5/4.5.6] ity-ādi-śruty-antarebhhyāḥ. TUBh 2.1, VI.59.
titikṣā and samādhāna. They are the third member of what is sometimes called sādhana-catuṣṭaya or the fourfold means that should prepare one for direct engagement in the study of Brahman. The four appear at the opening of the BSBh as standing for the immediate sequence denoted by the first word atha.

Therefore, something must be pointed out in the sequence of which the inquiry into Brahman follows. It is said, it is the discrimination between things eternal and transient; dispassion for the enjoyment of things here and in the hereafter; the acquisition of the means that are calmness, self-control, etc.; and striving after liberation.42

The third means here is sometimes called śat-sampatti or the “acquisition of six,” because śraddhā or faith is commonly added to the list of five.43 This is a post-Śaṅkara development that is likely the result of merging the Kāṇva and the Mādhyandina recensions of the BĀU, since the second substitutes śraddhāvitaḥ for samāhitaḥ.44 Padmapāda in the PP follows the Kāṇva on which Śaṅkara’s commentary was based and lists the original five. The change likely appears with the Bhāmatī of Vācaspati, who quotes the Mādhyandina and lists śraddhā as the fifth practice. In Ānandagiri, we find the composite list of six, and they are usually given as such in scholarly accounts. As we saw under the previous heading, Śaṅkara himself generally refers to them as śama-damādi or yama-niyama, and for him the complex admitted other virtues as well. In the prose section of the US, compassion or dayā is added to the first two, standing likely for the set of personal virtues which he generally instantiates with humility, and rounding up the three kinds of practices and virtues. For convenience, we may from this point on refer to them as śat-sampatti, but it should be clear that this is just a metonym.

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43 See, for instance, Radhakrishnan 160:155.
44 The Mādhyandina text is Satapatha Brāhmaṇa 14.7.2.26: tasmāc chānto dānta uparas titikṣuḥ śraddhāvitto bhūtvātmany evātmānaṁ paśyet sarvamātmāni paśyati.
But we are getting sidetracked. We should remember that these were described as appearing once one has known the Self, after knowledge had arisen, yet could be cultivated for such arising in place of the āśrama practices and meditation. We also saw that there was a point at which knowledge was considered arisen and independently working towards fruition, at which point one would renounce the āśrama practices and meditation. We are, therefore, justified in understanding this arising of knowledge as an event that is not instantaneous, but takes some time.

The midway placement of the ṣaṭ-sampatti, which were both consequent on and for the sake of knowledge, indicates that the first point of the arising of knowledge is the first in Śaṅkara’s list of four means: discrimination between things that are eternal and transient, nityāṇitya-vastu-viveka. This is the big breakthrough that the disinterested performance of ritual and the other āśrama practices should bring about. The content of this discriminative knowledge is obviously not some full understanding of the Self on the one hand and matter on the other, because that would be tantamount or close to liberation. Rather, both Sureśvara and Padmapāda read this as understanding the true nature of transmigration, the fact that everything in the world, objectively and as the value of one’s religious aspirations culminating in the attainment of brahma-loka, is transient, perishable, subject to decay.45

Indeed, there is a motif recurring throughout Śaṅkara’s works that points to an event that must happen before one can engage in the properly Vedāntic or brahma-vidyā practices, and that is understanding the world of dualities in general and of Vedic ritual in particular, and becoming disillusioned with them. Consider, for instance, the following statement that marks the beginning of inquiry into Brahman:

45 Sureśvara’s formulation in NaiŚ 1.51 is sarīsāra-yāthātmyāvabodha. See also PP p.62-3.
This chapter [of the Upaniṣad] is begun for understanding the truth of the nature of the Self for the one who has purified himself by observing a combination of meditation and ritual without expecting the results, who has removed the obstacles for the [appearance] of the knowledge of the Self, who sees the faults concerning duality because he has become cognitively averse to the sphere of the external, who is trying to uproot the seed of transmigration which is ignorance, and who is inquisitive about the inner Self.46

The passage presents a nice transition from the purification of existence accomplished by ritual and meditation to understanding saṁsāra and becoming averse to it. Similar statements are common throughout Śaṅkara’s works, and the same event of insight into the nature of saṁsāra followed by disillusion with the world must happen even in brahma-loka, in the case of those who continue their progress towards liberation on the krama-mukti track:

Some great sages are attached to other meditations that bring about opulence, but later, through seeing how this opulence decays, they get disillusioned, become steadfast in knowledge of the Supreme Self, and reach liberation.47

The passage is about sages who have reached brahma-loka and are liberated with Hiranyagarbha at the end of the universal cycle. Even in brahma-loka, then, there must happen an insight into the decay that is characteristic of saṁsāra, followed by becoming averse to it. That is the first of the four “means” required prior to the inquiry into Brahman, followed by the second: nityānitya-vastu-viveka and vairāgya. A common characterization of the second is that one has become nirviṇṇa, disillusioned or disgusted with saṁsāra.48 There is a textual reason behind this use, as we shall see shortly.


47 jīvāntareṣu ca aśvāyādi-phaleṣv asaktāḥ syur mahārṣayaḥ. te paścād aśvāyā-kṣaya-darśanena nirviṇṇāḥ paramātma-jīvāne parinīṣṭhāyā kaivalyaṁ prāpyām ity upapadhyate. BSBh 3.3.32, III.671.

48 The following statement is, again, typical: “Brāhmaṇas, seekers of Brahman, on getting a teacher who is like a boat on the boundless ocean which has for its water the suffering due to roaming in the cycle of birth, decay and death, desire to cross that ocean, and being disillusioned with the world of means and attainments consisting in good and bad karma and their respective means and results, long to attain the eternal, highest good which is entirely different from the above.” brāhmaṇa brahma vividīṣavaḥ janma-jāra-marāṇa-prabandha-caakra-bhramaṇa-kṛtāyāsa-duḥkhodakāpāra-mahodadhi-plava-bhūtaṁ gurum āsādya tat-Āraṁ uttīrṣavaḥ dharmadharma-sādhana-tat-phala-
These two—the understanding that everything that is won through ritual undergoes decay and the subsequent disgust with such ritual attainments—constitute the arising of knowledge or jñānotpatti/vidyotpatti brought about by the disinterested performance of the āśrama practices.

The arising is, plain and simple, an insight into the nature of saṁsāra, and dispassion. Once dispassion has been won, it leads to the appearance of the sat-sampatti, which are now not only practices, as they were in relation to the desire to know the Self and practiced instead of ritual and meditation, but acquired virtues. We can now appreciate why Śaṅkara says that they are “related to knowledge.” Knowledge is dispassion, and for the one who is dispassionate it is natural to control the mind and senses and to develop the personal virtues.

Paul Deussen in his classic “The System of the Vedānta” says the first of the four qualifications for the study of Brahman stands for “a general metaphysical disposition in virtue of which one has a consciousness of an unchanging being, in contrast with the changeableness of all worldly things and relations.” He says that the eternal substance here is Brahman, but this stage stands for some initial insight into its nature and not a full understanding. This is quite misleading, as we have seen above. The discrimination is an insight into the nature of transmigration as it pertains to the world of Vedic ritual, or to action more generally, including the mental action that is meditation. It stands for understanding that things obtained by ritual perish, an understanding that engenders dispassion towards the three lokas—this world, the world of the ancestors and of the gods—and sets one towards the Self. That one had become an ātma-vit means that one had become disillusioned with what the Self is not.

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49 Deussen 1912:80.

50 Scholars, of course, continue giving vague characterizations that cannot be supported with references. See, for instance: “The first of these [nityānitya-vastu-viveka] involves primarily insight into the underlying reality that encompasses all change.” (Dubois 2013:10) But precision is, perhaps, too much to ask from a book that spells “Upāniṣad” throughout its 400 plus pages, including in its title.
The cultivation of śat-sampatti should culminate in one’s becoming an aspirant after liberation. This is the high point of the arising of knowledge, the consummation of the “desire to know” and the transition to the desire for the Self, from vividiśā to ātma-kāma or mokṣa-kāma, from the discovery of the Self to “becoming” the Self. At this threshold, one must renounce ritual and the āśrama practices, since knowledge has arisen and is on its way to fruition. This was what those whose knowledge had arisen do, as we shall remember from the BĀU 4.4.22-3: those who have discovered the Self go forth as renunciants, striving after that Self as their world alone. Specifically, they renounce the desire for sons, wealth, and worlds, in effect their entitlement to ritual, the necessary means of ritual performance, and the attainment. The śat-sampatti, although part of the wider set of āśrama practices, are not renounced, because they are just what knowledge is. They are not renounced even when one had understood Brahman, “become” the Self, for a reason which we will consider in Chapter Nine.

Let us also note here that the event of arising of knowledge was doubtlessly patterned on one of the key textual determinants of Śaṅkara’s soteriology, a verse from the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad that played the role of adhikāra-śruti in Advaita Vedānta, parallel to the adhikāra-vidhi of the Mīmāṁsakas that we introduced in the Second Chapter, and laying down the entitlement to the inquiry into Brahman and the results that it brings:

Having examined the worlds piled up by ritual, a Brāhmaṇa should become disillusioned, thinking “What is not made cannot be won by what is made.” For knowing that [Brahman,] he should, sacrificial fuel in hand, approach a teacher who is learned in the Veda and steadfast in Brahman.51

51 pariśīya lokān karma-citān brāhmaṇo nirvedam āyān nāasty akṛtaḥ kṛtena |
tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet
samit-pāṇīḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham. MU 1.2.12.
The verse presents the sequence of the two in Śaṅkara’s “four means” from the BSBh, understanding followed by dispassion, where the word for dispassion is nirveda that is etymologically related to nirvinṇa. In the next verse, we learn that the Brahmin who approaches a teacher in the described manner is praśāanta-citta, of pure mind—the ultimate attainment of the āśrama practices—and śamānvita, endowed with calmness. The last evidently corresponds to the first of the sat-sampatti, śama. This confirms our finding of what it is that Śaṅkara had in mind under nityānitya-vastu-viveka, the point at which knowledge appears. The transient refers to the worlds won by ritual, and it is this that must dawn on the agent of ritual and meditation.52

**The Model of Causality**

Before moving to vidyā and its functioning, let us complete the story of the soteriological role of ritual, meditation and the āśrama practices. Śaṅkara said, as we saw, that they were “comparatively external” to knowledge. On a couple of occasions, he called ritual that consists of the daily Agnihotra ārād-upakāraka, a term with which we got acquainted in the Second Chapter. To refresh our memory, ārād-upakārakas were full-fledged rituals for which no separate results were directly stated, so by the application of the Mīmāṃsā principles of interpretation they were considered auxiliaries to other major rituals that were described in their

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52 I do not wish to open here the theme of physical renunciation in Advaita Vedānta, on which many have written quite competently. It is transparent to me that Śaṅkara thought that such physical renunciation had to happen before one could properly engage in brahma-vidyā. Relatively recently, however, Roger Marcaurelle claimed that what Śaṅkara had in mind under renouncing was primarily giving up the sense of agency, and that physical renunciation was not necessary in all cases, as a consequence of which full enlightenment, to Śaṅkara’s mind, was available to everyone, not only Brahmins. While engaging fully with Marcaurelle’s thesis would take us far afield, I wish to point out that he, like Malkowsky, misunderstands what jñānotpatti represents in Śaṅkara’s system. See, for instance: “This rediscovery of the mind’s real nature is called the “emergence of knowledge” (jñānotpatti). As a spontaneous and immediate result of this emergence comes the destruction of ignorance (avidyānivṛtti) of the real nature of one’s Self. And with annihilation of ignorance also immediately ensues the eradication of its effect, that is, the erroneous superimposition on the Self of limiting adjuncts such as doership and experiencing.” (Marcaurelle 2000:25-6) As I have shown, jñānotpatti is not the final understanding of one’s being Brahman, but a relatively early threshold on the path to liberation. When that much is understood, engaging with Marcaurelle’s thesis becomes superfluous.
textual vicinity. “That which on its own does not have a result but is in the proximity of something that does is considered its auxiliary.” In practice, they were smaller independent rituals performed before and after each of the two main rituals in a Darśa-pūrṇamāsa. We saw that Mīmāṃsakas thought these ārād-upakārakas produced some intermediate apūrva, whose causal contribution was absorbed in the apūrva of the respective principal fortnightly ritual that eventually mixed in the final apūrva. In terms of the attainment of heaven, the ārād-upakārakas were indirect means, because they served directly their principal rituals.

However, they got their name of ārād-upakāraka not through their indirect relation to heaven the result, but through their direct relation to the principal ritual they served, and in pair with the other type of non-principal actions, the sannipātyopakārakas, which I called “aggregated helpers” because their causal contribution was absorbed in a ritual auxiliary, namely the offertory. These were the four actions of production, acquisition, transformation, and refinement. They were all performed over a substance that was offered in a ritual—making the rice paddy, getting milk from the cow, melting solid butter, sprinkling the paddy—and their causal contribution to the principal action of offering was mediate, absorbed in the offertory. In Mīmāṃsā technical jargon, the ārād-upakārakas were direct helpers to the principal ritual, because there was no intermediary between the two, whereas the sannipatyopakarakas were indirect helpers because their immediate relation was to the material used for offering.

However, the sannipātyopakārakas expressed a closer relation to their superordinate material—there cannot be threshed rice without threshing—and one that is directly expressed in an injunction: vrīhin avahanti. The auxiliary full rituals, on the other hand, were not really required for the principal rite in a Darśa-pūrṇamāsa, except for the fact that they are described in

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53 phalavat sannidhāv aphalaṁ tad-aṅgaṁ bhavati. MSŚBh 4.4.19, IV.1277.
proximity and not related to a result. Their relation to the principal rites were not introduced into
being by a statement to that effect either, but through scriptural postulation, arthāpatti: if they
are not related to the principal rites, they would be useless, and this compromises the validity of
the Veda and is unwanted. Let us pay attention to these complex hierarchical relations: the
auxiliary rituals are directly helping the principal ritual, but the relation is distant, accidental; the
sannipātyopakārakas are helping the principal ritual indirectly, through their superordinate
material, but their relation to their material is close, essential; both are indirect in relation to
heaven, since their causal contribution terminates in the primary ritual either directly or
indirectly, and only the primary ritual is directly related to heaven.

Now, Śaṅkara thought that ritual could be considered such a direct helper to knowledge
because, under the circumstances we have discussed—accompanied by meditation and not
related to its common result in the form of heaven—it would become fruitful by giving rise to
knowledge through personal purification. In this scenario, knowledge was the principal means
that eventually brought about liberation:

– But liberation cannot be produced. How can you say that it is a product of ritual? –
There is no such fault, because ritual is a direct helper. Ritual, bringing about knowledge,
is figuratively called an indirect cause of liberation.54

I should like to note here that ārād-upakāraka is commonly but mistakenly translated as
“indirect helper” in scholarly literature. Both Thibaut and Gambhirananda mistranslate ārād-
upakārakatvāt karmaṇaḥ in the above sentence as “Works, we reply, may subserve final release
mediately,” and “work helps from distance (i.e., indirectly) in producing the result,” because the

54 nanu anārābhyo mokṣaḥ, katham asya karma-kāryatvam ucyate? naiṣa doṣaḥ, ārād-upakārakatvāt karmaṇaḥ.jñānasyaiva hi prāpakaṁ sat karma pranāḍyā mokṣa-kāraṇam ity upacaryate. BSBh 4.1.16, III.792.
adverb ārād means both “directly” and “indirectly” and they wrongly relate ārād-upakāraka to liberation rather than knowledge, without appreciating the theological context of the argument. 55

We can now conclusively answer the question that we posed at the beginning of this part of the dissertation: how did Śaṅkara precisely look at the possibility of combining ritual with knowledge? One available relationship was that between a principal and an auxiliary, pradhāna and aṅga/šeṣa/guṇa, if the second was an essential element for the first insofar as without it, the whole complex would be impossible. Such was the case, for instance, with the relation of offertories to the action of offering: there cannot be an action of sacrifice without a sacrificial animal or an appropriate substitute. The sannipātyopakārakas expressed a similar close relationship to their superordinate material. Another available relationship, quite different, was that between two principal factors, in the manner of the two fortnightly rituals in a Darśa-pūraṇamāsa. These two scenarios exhausted the scope of what Vedāntins understood under the samuccaya relation. In either case, both elements were absolutely required for the success of the undertaking, and simultaneously so, either temporally or through the final combination of the respective apūrva in the transtemporal Self.

This Śaṅkara rejected in no ambiguous terms, and for several related reasons. The arising of knowledge just meant understanding that the results of ritual were transient; that one cannot win immortality by wealth, the necessary means of ritual; that the unmade cannot be won by the made. To continue performing ritual in such circumstances would be kind of schizophrenic, affirming what one is trying to negate. Besides, liberation was a visible result, and only the four sannipātyopakārakas produced visible results. None of them could so much as touch the eternal Self. And so on. We should note very well that Śaṅkara under this model of samuccaya rejects

55 Equally wrong, it seems to me, are Alston and Balasubramanian in their respective translations of the Naiṣkarmya-Siddhi; understanding the Vedānta use of ārād-upakāraka requires appreciating its Mīmāṃsā context.
repeatedly the same analogy that we started with: ritual spiced with meditation is like sweet yoghurt or charmed poison. This analogy was, in fact, Bhartṛprapañca’s, who thought that it was the knowledge of the eternal non-dual Self, knowledge *qua* knowledge, that transubstantiates ritual from bondage to liberation. For Śaṅkara, however, *samuccaya* was the way in which *meditation* combines with ritual, not knowledge. It was *meditation* that transforms ritual, not knowledge of Brahman.

Another possibility was to treat ritual as an *ārād-upakāraka*, a direct but distant helper to knowledge, direct insofar as its contribution is not absorbed by some other causal factor first, but distant insofar as it is not required after it had given rise to knowledge. Furthermore, because there was no natural relation between ritual and knowledge, but one established through a postulated originative injunction as we saw in BSBh 3.4.27, there was no reason that knowledge, dispassion, could not arise through those *āśrama* practices that were *knowledge in nature*—mind and sense control—or through the grace of God, etc. Although the relation between ritual and knowledge was direct, it was not essential. Knowledge had such an essential relationship with the opposite of ritual, that is, with renunciation of all *varṇāśrama* duties except those that were renunciation in kind. Both ritual and renunciation of ritual had direct relationship to knowledge, but under different causal models. The first was an *ārād-upakāraka*, while Śaṅkara called the second, the *saṭ-sampatti* complex, *sannipātyopakārakas*, essentially related to knowledge. This was so because without mind and sense control and a healthy dose of humility, knowledge—dispassion—was impossible. And, the first was related to liberation, the result of knowledge, mediate, through giving rise to knowledge which independently produces its own result, while

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56 BĀUBh 4.4.22; TUBh 1.11.4.
57 atha evaṁ sati avidvad-visayaṁ āśrama-karmaṁ balābala-vicāraṁ āyaṁ, ātma-jñānotpādanaṁ prati yama-pradhānaṁ amānitvādīṁ mānasāṁ ca dhyāna-jñāna-vairāgyādīṁ sannipatvādīṁ sāṁsitvādīṁ. BĀUBh 4.5.15, IX.676.
the second, *competent* to give rise to knowledge, was *necessary* after such rise had taken place, and until the full understanding of unity (and even after, as we shall see in Chapter Nine).

Although Śaṅkara does not say as much, he clearly saw the relation of ritual with knowledge through the *pāramparya* model of ritual causality that we considered in the Second Chapter. This was, to remember, the model of termination of the direct causal contribution of any ritual element in its immediate effect, but reaching the final result through a chain of successive intermediate results. It was, for instance, the model through which the threshing of rice was absorbed in the rice as its effect, but nevertheless reached heaven through the rice, the rice paddy, and the offering. I suggested in the Second Chapter that it was Kumārila who developed the model on a full scale. In any given ritual, both models of causality were involved, of course, and so were they in the pursuit of liberation. Knowledge had renunciation of all *varṇāśrama* practices as its integral part, *aṅga*, and it could not be practiced without it. Ritual, meditation and the other *varṇāśrama* practices, on the other hand, culminated in their contribution to the arising of knowledge, specifically in dispassion, and reached liberation mediately. On this lower lever, nevertheless, ritual and “knowledge,” that is, *saguṇa* meditation based the Upaniṣadic *vidyās*, were related in a *samuccaya* manner, had no problem combining, but had to be performed without desire for their common results.

Although Śaṅkara referred elsewhere to the idea of *pāramparya* explicitly, the term which he used for ritual contributing indirectly to liberation was the adverbial *praṇādyā*, which we may read as its synonym.⁵⁸ Sureśvara, on the other hand, as we saw in the introduction, laid out the full journey to liberation through a succession of stages in which the performance of ritual as the starting point and an *ārād-upakāraka* mediately culminates in liberation through a

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⁵⁸ BSBh 4.1.16.
pāramparya chain.\textsuperscript{59} From this point on, Advaitins begin talking about knowledge and ritual as means of liberation under the mode of sākṣat-pāramparyābhyaṁ, directly and mediately, respectively.\textsuperscript{60} It is worthwhile pointing to Śureśvara’s inimitable wit in the way he described the transition from the renunciation of ritual and all varṇāśrama practices to the sole engagement in knowledge. Renunciation was like the sampatti or sampradāna ritual that we talked about in the previous chapter, the means of winning this world, when the dying father transferred his own ritual self to his son, to continue sacrificing vicariously through him.\textsuperscript{61} We can almost visualize ritual on its deathbed, whispering to knowledge: “I have done all that I could. Now you carry on.”

Of crucial importance was that this pāramparya chain of soteriological causality extended through lifetimes, and it was perfectly possible for one to have achieved the requisite mental purity by doing ritual and observing the āśrama practices in a previous life, in which case one was supposed to renounce and engage in brahma-vidyā immediately after student life. The litmus test was dispassion. Once dispassion was achieved, ritual had nothing more to contribute.\textsuperscript{62} Padmapāda, in fact, claimed that this was why inquiry into Brahman did not have to be preceded by the inquiry into dharma. One may have done that in a previous life and gotten all that one could get.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{59} NaiS 1.45-52.
\textsuperscript{60} See, for instance, the commentaries on BSBh 4.1.16, particularly Ānandagiri: “Treating the sūtra as being about nirguṇa-vidyā, knowledge and action are a means of liberation directly and mediately, like the plow and eating are the means of living;” nirguṇa-vidyā-viṣayatvari sūtrasyopetya lāṅgala-bhojanayor jīvana-hetutā-vad dhi-karmaḥ sākṣat-pāramparyābhyaṁ mokṣa-hetutvam.
\textsuperscript{61} NaiS 1.49.
\textsuperscript{62} “Action characterized by Agnihotra and by celibacy and the like, performed in a previous life, facilitates the arising of knowledge such that some are evidently dispassionate from very birth.” TUBh 1.11.4.
\textsuperscript{63} na ca naiyogike phale kāla-niyamo ’sti. tena pūrva-janmānuṣṭhitā-karma-saṁśkrto dharma-jijñāsāṁ tad-anuṣṭhānai ca pratipadāmayāma eva brahma-jijñāsāyāṁ pravartata iti na niyamena tad-apeśko ’tha-śabdo yuyate. “There is no rule when actions will bear fruit. One may have been purified by performed actions in a past life that bear fruit now; if so, inquiry into dharma is unnecessary, and so it cannot be the consequence that ’atha’ would refer to.” PP, p.61.
We should also note that, as John Taber had recognized, the inquiry into Brahman to Śaṅkara’s mind could not be fruitful without the four prerequisites being satisfied, that is, without knowledge having arisen. Śaṅkara, in fact, said as much at the beginning of the prose part of the US. If the teacher recognizes signs that the student does not “grasp knowledge,” he should send him to remedial lessons on sense and mind control and humility. Padmapāda was even more explicit about it:

If somehow—by the will of providence or by curiosity or the desire for much learning—the inquiry is undertaken [without the four prerequisites satisfied in succession], one will not be able to understand without doubts that Brahman is the Self, because without obtaining the means enumerated, his mind, not tuned inward, will be engrossed only in the external.

We will end this chapter by noting that the status of direct helpers given to ritual meant that the knowledge passages of the Upaniṣads and the meditation and ritual texts could form a unity of independent texts: they did not require one another syntactically, but there was a way to combine them through the vivekaḥ, the desire to know the Self, in a unity of purpose. Kumārila called this vākyavivekaḥ, unity of independent texts, distinct from the more common syntactic sentential unity or padaikavivekaḥ. And, the result of such intertextual unity was that the integral Veda, without the explicitly kāmya portions that could not be repurposed, was for liberation, as I hinted at the end of the last chapter. This is the big takeaway from this chapter for our ultimate, mahā-vākyatā, purpose.

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64 Taber 1983.
The whole of the ritual portion of the Veda, with the sole exception of the parts dealing with optional rituals (kāmya), is employed through absorption in this knowledge of Brahman.68

As for the ritual portion of the Veda being auxiliary to the meaning of the knowledge portion, that is a case of unity of independent passages occasioned by a text that establishes a principal-auxiliary relation.69

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68 BĀUBh 4.4.22.
69 jñāna-kāndārtha-śeṣatvaṁ karma-kandasya yat punah | viniyojaka-hetv etat tayor vākyāikavākyataṁ. SV 278. The viniyojaka text that establishes the principal-subordinate relation of independent items is the vividiśa text, BĀU 4.4.22.
CHAPTER EIGHT: YOU ARE THAT, ALL RIGHT, WE JUST NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT: VEDĀNTA-VĀKYA AND THE IDENTITY STATEMENTS

As for those who ignore the surest warrant “You are Being” and seek to know by other means, well, they may as well taste through their eyes.1

The Upaniṣads and Para- and Apara-vidyā

As is commonly known, Śaṅkara understood the Upaniṣads as propounding the doctrine of the unity of the Self and Brahman, and as having liberation as their sole goal. It is quite common for Śaṅkara to say such things, particularly in the so-called Sambandha-Bhāṣyas, or introductions to his Upaniṣad commentaries, and at important juncture points. For instance:

All the Upaniṣads, as well as the Bhagavad-Gītā and Mokṣa-Dharma, are exhausted just in determining the true nature of the Self.2

The intended meaning in this whole Upaniṣad is the knowledge that Brahman is without interior or exterior and homogenous like a lump of salt. This is ascertained based on the ending of the two portions [chapters 1 through 4], “this is the teaching,” “there is so much to immortality.” Likewise, in the Upaniṣads of all Vedic branches, knowledge of the unity of Brahman is the conclusive meaning.3

He did not shy away from being dramatic about it either:

Those who, on the other hand, imagine a Self which is different from Brahman and reduce the science of bondage and liberation to arthavāda, they dare to trace the footsteps of the birds or to pull the sky with their fist and cast it away as if it were skin. We are not able to do that. We understand that the conclusive meaning of all Upaniṣadic texts is that we are Brahman, which is always homogenous, non-dual, changeless, unborn, without old age and death, immortal, fearless, the Self.4

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1 addhātamam anādṛtya pramāṇaṁ sad asīti ye | bubhutsante 'nyataḥ kuryus te 'kṣṇāpi rasa-vedanam. NaiS 3.117.
2 sarvāsām upaniṣadāṁ ātma-yathāmya-nirūpaṇaṁ caiva-śāstraṁ caiva-vidyām niścito 'ṛthaḥ. ĪUBh Introduction, IV.5-6.
3 saṁdha-ghana-vad anantaram abāhyam ekaraśaṁ brahma—iti vijñānaṁ sarvasyām upaniṣadi pratipipādayiśāṭrathaḥ—kāṇḍa-dvaye 'py ante 'vadhāraṇād—avagamyaṁ—'te ato 'rthaṁ priyaskṛt aśāṁ | sarvadā samaikarasam advaitam avikriyam ajam ajaram abhayam ātma-śāstraṁ | sarvāvadaḥ sarva-vedānta-niścito 'ṛthaḥ ity evaṁ pratipadyāmahe. BĀUBh 4.4.6, IX.623.
4 ye tu ato 'nyathā ātma-vastu parikalpya bandha-moksādi-sāstraṁ ca arthavādam āpādayanti, te utsahante—khe 'śākunaṁ padaṁ draṣṭuṁ, khaṁ vā muṣṭinā ākraṣṭuṁ, carnavad veṣṭītum; vayaṁ tu tat kartum aśāktaḥ; sarvādā samaikarasam advaitam avikriyam ajam ajaram amṛtam abhayam ātma-tattvaṁ brahmaiva smaḥ—ity evaṁ sarva-vedānta-niścito 'ṛtha ity evaṁ pratipadyāmahe. BĀUBh 4.4.4, IX.623.
And, while we saw that upaniṣad was obviously related in etymology to upāsana, the central idea of the Brahma-Sūtra, and meant meditation on some correlation, as Śaṅkara himself occasionally acknowledged in texts that were evidently not about liberation,\(^5\) he pursued several alternative etymologies, prominently placed in the introductions to his most important works, that were meant to bring home the same idea: upaniṣad is just about liberation:

This very knowledge of Brahman is denoted by the word upaniṣad, because of completely exhausting (avasādanāt) saṁsāra along with its cause for those who cultivate it; for, such is the meaning of the root sad when preceded by the preverbs upa and ni [i.e., upa+ni = ava].\(^6\) Upaniṣad is knowledge (vidyā). Because it strikes down or exhausts the states of being born in a womb and of old age for those who are devoted to it, or because it brings one near Brahman, or because the highest good is found, sat down (upaniṣaṇṇam), in it.\(^7\)

He even called his own Upadeśa-Sāhasrī an Upaniṣad:

Therefore, this Upaniṣad is begun in order to destroy ignorance, put an end to transmigration and put forth knowledge of Brahman. The word upaniṣad is formed from the root sad preceded by upa and ni and followed by the zero suffix, because it weakens and destroys birth and the like.\(^8\)

It was, after all, the knowledge that was directly signified by the word, and the composition was an Upaniṣad just because it contained such knowledge.\(^9\)

We saw, nevertheless, in Chapter Six that Śaṅkara divided dharma into one characterized by action and another one by abstaining from action. The first was concerned with winning the

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\(^5\) For instance, in TUBh 1.3, VI.14: sarhītāyaḥ upaniṣadaṁ sarhīta-viśayaṁ darśanam ity etat.

\(^6\) seyaṁ brahma-vidyā upaniṣac-chabdha-vācyā, tat-parānāṁ saheṭoḥ saṁsārasaṁśāryāntāvasādanāt; upa-ni-pūrvasya sades tad-arthatvāt. BĀU Introduction, VIII.3.

\(^7\) upaniṣad iti vidyocaye, tat-sevināṁ garbha-janma-jarādi-niśātanāt, tad-avasādanād vā; brahmaṇa upaniṣamayitṛtvāt; upaniṣaṇṇaṁ vā asyāṁ pariṁ śreyo iti. TUBh Introduction, VI.10-11. This suggests that he is alternatively taking the root to be sad, 6th-class root that has the sense of motion and exhaustion/destruction, or that he thinks that √sad, preceded by upa and ni, has that sense. Cf. šadḷ viśaṇa-gati-avasādaneṣu (Katre 1989:1193). His repeated use of niśātana suggests that he also has the 6th-class √sad in mind as well, although this could be only through similarity of sound. Cf. šadḷ śātane (Katre ibid.).

\(^8\) tasmād ajñāna-hānāya sarṁsāra-vinivṛttaye | brahma-vidyā-vidhāṇāya prārabdhopaniṣat tv iyam || sader upani-pūrvasya kvipı copaniṣad bhavet | mandi-karana-bhāvāc ca garbhādēḥ śātanāt tathā. USP 1.25-6.

\(^9\) See the introductions to BĀU and KṭU.
three worlds as a form of promotion or prosperity, *abhyaudaya*, while the second was concerned with liberation, *niḥšreyasa*. We also identified *brahma-loka* as the gray area where the two goals intersect. There was evidently a broader sense to what Śaṅkara called *vedānta-vākyāni*, Upaniṣadic passages, and while the general point of all the Upaniṣads may have been liberation, evidently not all Upaniṣadic texts were about liberation directly. Śaṅkara did believe that most of them could eventually be used in the service of liberation, but as units they had their individual goals. Some were directly about liberation, while some could be repurposed to serve the needs of liberation indirectly.

Now, we also saw that all reliable warrants that are the means of true cognitions presupposed the operation of ignorance on what we may call an intersubjective level, before personal factors that are resultants of the *kāma-vāsanā-karma* complex could interfere. This included the Veda as the reliable warrant on all supersensible matters, and with that the Upaniṣads as its subunit. Let us note this well: scripture as *pramāṇa* requires for its functioning such categories as an agent, an object, an instrument, and a result of knowing, and these are all staple items of ignorance. By being a reliable warrant, the Upaniṣads must indulge in ignorance, they cannot avoid it. What they can do, however, is *intend to affirm* this ignorance—or not. What this means is that although all Upaniṣadic passages must function in ignorance, some of them may *not intend* ignorance: by indulging in ignorance, they may intend to communicate such a state of affairs in which the distinctions of knowing ultimately do not obtain. In such a case, for Śaṅkara they were about knowledge, *vidyā*, and serving the goals of knowledge, although they had to take their bearings in ignorance, *avidyā*. If they *intend to affirm* distinctions, ignorance, then they were serving goals of ignorance, ergo, goals of desire. Such passages were not about
knowledge, but about meditation. In terms of scripture, this is where the wedge with which I ended Chapter Six is located.

This distinction was also reflected in Brahman as the specific domain of the Upaniṣads. In the Upaniṣads, there are passages that deny multiplicity in the world, and these are commonly tied to creation accounts, or otherwise to Brahman’s relation to the world. Although these passages may present what Śaṅkara calls kārya-brahman and apara-brahman, which is ultimately equivalent to the totality of creation, they do not intend to affirm it, but use it as a way of bringing home the point that there is such a thing as Brahman without any distinctions whatsoever, nirguṇa or nirviśeṣa-brahman.10 A good instance of such an Upaniṣadic passage is Yājñavalkya’s dialogue with Gārgī during the Brahmin Super Cup (brahmodya) on the occasion of King Janaka’s sacrifice, the teaching about the imperishable Brahman in the eighth section of the third chapter of the Brhad-Āraṇyaka. In that section, Yājñavalkya presents Brahman in relation to the world—Brahman is that imperishable thing on which all created things “above the sky, below the earth, in between the two, past, present, and future,” are woven warp and woof—but the essential characteristics of this imperishable Brahman are all negative:

It is the imperishable, and Brahmins refer to it like this—it is neither coarse nor fine; it is neither short nor long; it has neither blood nor fat; it is without shadow or darkness; it is without air or space; it is without contact; it has no taste or smell; it is without sight or hearing; it is without speech or mind; it is without energy, breath, or mouth; it is beyond measure; it has nothing within it or outside of it; it does not eat anything; and no one eats it.11

The purpose of such passages is not to present Brahman as a creator or otherwise related to creation. Rather, they are “texts whose point is to convey that Brahman, who is the Self, is beyond the phenomenal world.”12 Such passages do associate Brahman with certain adjuncts, but

10 See, for instance, BSBh 1.4.14, 2.1.14.
12 vākyāni niṣprapaṇca-brahmātma-tattva-pradhānāni. BSBh 3.2.14, III.585.
their purpose, as I said above, is not to affirm such adjuncts as Brahman’s real characteristics, but to harness them so as to teach that Brahman is without them. Other characteristics that are not tied to creation accounts may also be affirmed of Brahman, for instance the identification of various words for bliss with parts of Brahman’s body in the Taittirīya, but these are commonly not intended as qualities at all, and serve the purpose of facilitating concentration or comprehension.\textsuperscript{13} As textual units, such passages are about what Śaṅkara calls para-vidyā or nirguṇa-vidyā, or passages where multiplicity and Brahman’s distinguishing characteristics are not intended, and which present “a uniform Brahman of which all multiplicity is denied.”\textsuperscript{14} Generally, thus, texts in which Brahman is presented in negative terms are texts of knowledge that deal with the real Brahman. We will focus on these texts under the next heading.

On the other hand, there are Upaniṣadic texts that present Brahman solely with positive characteristics. Śaṅkara’s favorite instance of such texts was the śāndilya-vidyā, the fourteenth part of the third chapter of the Chāndogya that opens with the statement *sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma*, “This whole world is Brahman,” of mahā-vākya fame.\textsuperscript{15} The passage affirms a slew of positive characteristics of Brahman: Brahman is made of the mind and has the vital functions as its body, it is brilliant in form, contains all actions and desires, smells and tastes, etc. These characteristics are affirmed as intended of Brahman, for the sole reason that they are not denied. For Śaṅkara, this Brahman or Īśvara that is qualified by such characteristics is the Brahman of meditation. He does not really have these characteristics, but should be seen as if he did.\textsuperscript{16} Just in virtue of this, the passage could not be about knowledge: a falsehood is intended, not as an error

\textsuperscript{13} See BSBh 3.3.12.
\textsuperscript{14} pratyastamitāseṣa-prapañcam ekākāraṁ brahma. BSBh 3.2.21, III.589.
\textsuperscript{15} See, for instance, Murty 1959:75. The passage is ChUBh 3.14.4, VI.177.
but as a deliberate vision, which is the characteristic feature of meditation. The passage is, thus, about meditation, and it does not “consecrate one in sovereignty,” liberation, unlike the 6th and 7th chapter of the same Upaniṣad. Not in a million years could sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma be a mahā-vākya in Śaṅkara’s reckoning: it was in the wrong kind of text. Such texts are, really, useless for the purpose of knowing Brahman, because Brahman that is “all” is really Brahman with all desires, actions, tastes, smell, etc. Although the statement about Brahman being all is true in itself, its explication is not, and at the least, it must be first removed from its context.

Such Upaniṣadic passages, then, which describe Brahman in superlative positive terms are passages of meditation in which the central statement is an injunction.

Scriptural statements about Brahman are of two kinds: one present Brahman with distinguishing features, as in “It contains all actions, all desires, all smells, all tastes,” and the other present Brahman as devoid of distinguishing features, as in “Not gross nor fine, not short nor long.”

These two kinds of statements are quite directly different. The first contain true, negative descriptions of Brahman; they also involve some duality insofar as Brahman is depicted as the creator or the support of the world, which however are not intended to be affirmed and are for the purpose of denying substance to multiplicity. These are non-duality statements and statements of knowledge. The second kind of statements contain positive descriptions of Brahman, such that he does not really have, which are, nevertheless, intended to be affirmed.

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17 ata eva śaṣṭha-saptamayor iva tat tvam asi, ātmaivedaṁ sarvam iti neha svārājye 'bhiṣiṇcati. Ibid, p.178.
18 And, in fact, it was. Śaṅkara says that the sixth prapāṭhaka of the Chāndogya was an elaboration of sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma. Thus, in its own context the statement was part of a meditation passage, but it branched out in the proper knowledge context as well. sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma tajjalān ity uktai [ChU 3.14.1], kathaṁ tasmāj jagad idaṁ jāyate, tasmin eva ca īyate 'niti ca tenaivety etad vaktavyam. ChUBh Introduction to Chapter Six, VII.335.
19 upāsana-vidhi-pradhānāni hi tāni. BSBh 3.2.14, III.585.
These passages are statements of duality and are for meditation, and have an appropriate injunction of meditation.\textsuperscript{21}

To illustrate the difference between these two kinds of texts, we may compare the aforementioned śāṇḍilya-vidyā with the madhu-vidyā of the Brhad-Āranyaka 2.5.1-19. The texts are similar insofar as the same Upaniṣadic meditational structure of correspondence seems to be at play: in the śāṇḍīlya-vidyā the correspondence is between “the Self of mine within the heart” that is smaller than a grain of rice or barley, and the great Brahman that is larger than the earth, the sky and the intermediate space. This Self-Brahman is, further, identified with “all,” both in general and as a variable: this all is Brahman, and Brahman has all desires, actions, tastes, and smells. The identity between the two counterparts is that of assimilative identification, because the positive characteristics of Brahman are not denied: the text is one of meditation that is predicated on affirming the duality between the counterparts as intended. The madhu-vidyā similarly draws the identity of the macrocosmic with the microcosmic, but in more explicit detail: there is a radiant and immortal person that resides both in the waters and in semen, in fire and in speech, in wind and in breath, in the sun and in sight, in the quarters and in hearing, in the moon and in the mind etc. Each macrocosmic counterpart is called “the honey of all beings,” and the radiant and immortal person on both sides of the counterpart is identified with the Self, with Brahman, and like in the śāṇḍīlya-vidyā—with everything, sarva. In the madhu-vidyā, however, the crucial statement is the final statement in 2.5.19, which says that “this Brahman is without a prior and without a posterior, without anything inner and outer; this Self is Brahman that directly experiences everything.”\textsuperscript{22} This everything, thus, is different from the everything of Śāṇḍīlya, because it serves the purpose of bringing home the point that there is only the non-dual Brahman

\textsuperscript{22} tad etad brahmāpūrvam anaparam anantaram abāhyam. ayam ātmā brahma sarvānubhūḥ.
that is consciousness in nature. This is accomplished through the negative statement that cancels out the carefully drawn distinctions in the previous eighteen paragraphs. The text, thus, is not about duality and meditation, but about non-duality and knowledge.

As for what some say, “even the Vedic texts that present forms of Brahman are just for the purpose of understanding the formless Brahman through the denial of multiplicity, and have no independent purpose,” that is not quite right either. How so? Some multiplicity is spoken of in the context of the higher knowledge, for instance in the text that begins in “for, to him are yoked ten organs, hundreds of them, he is the organs, the ten, the thousands, the many, the infinite.” [BĀU 2.5.19] Since the text ends in “this Brahman is without a prior and without a posterior, without anything inner and outer; this Self is Brahman that directly experiences everything” [ibid], that text may be for the purpose of denial. However, when multiplicity is spoken of in the context of an injunction to meditation, such as in “He consists of the mind, has life-breath as its body, effulgence in nature” etc. [ChU 3.14.2], it is not right that these be denied, because they are related to an injunction of meditation, such as in “he should make a resolve” [ibid.]. Since the text presents characteristics of such kind for the purpose of meditation, it is not right to postulate that they are for the purpose of denial through the secondary signification function.23

There are, on the other hand, Upaniṣadic passages in which it is not immediately clear just what they intend to affirm, because they present Brahman or the Self in mutually excluding terms. They talk of Brahman as having no distinguishing qualities, nirviṣeṣa or nirguna, but then add further descriptions in which some positive qualities are predicated and, lo and behold, seem to be intended. Such is the case, for instance, in the dahara-vidyā of the chapter eight of the Chāndogya, where the Self that one should search out and know distinctly is described as free from faults, aging, death, sorrow, hunger, and thirst—all good—and then as having true desires and resolves, about which we quickly learn some juicy things. As Śaṅkara says, we hear not only

23 yad apy āhuh—ākāra-vādinyo ’pi śrutayaḥ prapañča-vilaya-mukhena anākāra-pratipatty-arthā eva, na prthag-arthā iti, tad api na samācānām iba lakṣyate; katham? ye hi para-vidyādhihikāre kecit prapañcā ucyante, yathā—yuktā hy asya harayaḥ satā ḍaśeti, ayaṁ vai harayo ’yaṁ vai daśa ca sahasrāni bahūni cānantāni ca ity evam-ādayah—te bhavantu pravīlayārthāḥ. tad etad brahmāpūrvaṁ anaparam anantaram abāhyam ity upasanāhārāt. ye punar upāsanā-vidhānādhihikāre prapañcā ucyante, yathā—mano-vyavahāraḥ bhārūpaḥ ity evam-ādayah—na teśāṁ pravīlayārthatvaṁ nyāyaṁ, sa katraṁ kurvita ity evam-jātiyakena prakṛtenaiva upāsaṇa-vidhina teśāṁ sambandhāt. śrūtyā ca evam-jātiyakānāṁ gunānām upāsaṇārthate ’vakalpaṁ añne na lakṣaṇayaḥ pravīlayārthatvam avakalpaṁ. BSBh 3.2.21, III.591.
about the Self, but about desires as well. As the passage unfolds, it turns out that it is the “true desires and resolves” statement that is intended to be affirmed, because the statement of result talks about attaining these true desires and resolves. The whole passage, though containing descriptions of Brahman pure and simple, belongs to what Śaṅkara calls saguṇa/apara-vidyā, or passages in which the positive qualities predicated of Brahman are intended. In terms of statements about Brahman, the negative descriptions prevail because they present the true Brahman, but on the level of text the positive characteristics are not intended for denial, because the text is about gradual liberation or krama-mukti. Although “true desires and resolves” are characteristics of Brahman contingent on Brahman’s having limiting adjuncts, they are intended in the text, because the text is for dummies who cannot comprehend Brahman as a real thing if it is wholly without qualities, and are intent on reaching brahma-loka. “For, the absolutely real, non-dual Brahman that is devoid of distinctions such as direction, space, qualities, motion, and results appears as good as non-existent to the slowwitted. Therefore, scripture thinks, ‘Let me first set them on the right path, and I will slowly make them grasp the absolutely real as well.’”

This text is different from the śaṅḍilya-vidyā because it does contain true descriptions of Brahman, which can be salvaged, so to speak, in composite accounts when Brahman is characterized by drawing from the Upaniṣadic corpus. But, satya-kāma and satya-saṅkalpa are never denied in the text itself, and the passage overall is for meditation.

There is, thus, a restricted and a broader sense of vadānta-vākya or an Upaniṣadic statement or text. This is a significant point to keep in mind when one is reading Śaṅkara: it is important to be clear what sphere any given Upaniṣadic passage belongs to: para/nirguṇa-vidyā

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24 saṅkalpāḥ kāmāś ca śuddha-sattvopādhi-nimittā īśvarasya, citrāgu-vat; na svataḥ neti neti [BĀU 2.3.6] ity uktatvāt. ChUBh 8.1.5, VII.479.
and knowing, or *apara/saguna-vidyā* and action/meditation. So, we may say that in the
Upaniṣads there are passages in which knowledge, non-duality, and liberation are intended, and
then there are passages on meditation which are generally geared towards promotion, *abhyudaya*.
More specifically, some are explicitly about promotion, and they correspond to the *kāmya* or
*pratīkopāsana* meditations that we know from the BS account, which identify Brahman with
such things as the mind, the sun, name, etc., through deliberate fancy. There are, next, passages
that delineate meditations on ritual subsidiaries, the *aṅgavabaddha* meditations from the BS,
whose purpose is to improve the results that the ritual to which they are tied brings. Finally, there
are passages on meditations that serve the purpose of gradual liberation, and these correspond to
the *brahma-vidyā* of the BS, involving meditational absorption on Brahman as one’s Self,
meditation on Oṃ, and the meditations on *prāṇa* or life breath, the *apara/kārya-brahman*.

Brahman is known in two forms, one that is qualified by adjuncts that are diversities such
as name and form, and another one opposite to that that is devoid of all adjuncts. …
There are Upaniṣadic passages by the thousands that show, through the difference
concerning knowledge and ignorance, that Brahman has two forms. Among these, all
practices that are characterized by a subject and object of meditation belong to Brahman
in the state of ignorance. Among these, further, some are meant for promotion, some are
meant for gradual liberation, and some are meant for improving the efficacy of ritual.
They are different through the difference of the adjunct or specific quality. Although the
object of meditation which is qualified by the individual qualities is the single Supreme
Self, the Lord, still their results are different in accordance with the quality that is
meditated on. … [From the *Bhagavad-Gītā* 10.41 it follows that] wherever there is
preponderance of might, that is enjoined to be meditated with the idea, “It is the Lord.”
… Likewise, although knowledge of the Self is the cause of immediate liberation, it
nevertheless must be taught through certain adjuncts as well, but there the relation to
adjuncts is not intended. Thus, it becomes important to examine the trend of the passages
in order to determine whether a given passage belongs to the *para* or the *apara* sphere.26

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... sahasraśa vidyāvidyā-viśaya-bhedena brahmaḥ dvi-rūpatāṁ darśayanti vedānta-vākyāni. tatrāvidyāvasthāyāṁ
brahmaṇa upāsyopāsaṅkādī-laṅkṣaṇaṁ sarvo vyavahāraṁ. tatra kānicid brahmaṇa upāsanāṁ abhyudayārthāṁ, kānicit
krama-mukty arthāṁ, kānicit karma-saṁrddhy-arthāṁ. teṣāṁ guṇa-viśeṣopādhi-bhedena bhedāṁ, eka eva tu para
ātmeśvaras tais tair guṇa-viśeṣair viśiṣṭaṁ upāsyo yady api bhavati, tathāpi yathā-guṇopāsanām eva phalāṁ bhidyante.
... yatra yatra viṁśhūty-ādy-atīśaṁ, sa sa śīvra ity upāsyayā codyate. … evaini sadyo-nukti-kāraṇaṁ apy ātma-
jiñānam upādhi-viśeṣa-dvāreṇopadiśyāmānam apy avivākṣitopādhi-sambandha-viśeṣaṁ parāpara-viśayatvena
sandihyāmānaṁ vākya-gati-paryālocanāyāṁ nirṇetavyāṁ bhavati. BSBh 1.1.11, I.49-51.
The same classification of meditations into three kinds is given in the introduction to the
Chāndogya-Bhāṣya, with a rationale what is it that ties them with knowledge into the same
corpus, the Upaniṣads:

Such being the case, in this context of non-duality, there are described meditations that
are means to promotion, meditations on a form of Brahman that is slightly modified from
the non-dual and mentioned in texts such as “made of the mind and having prāṇa as its
body” and bringing results that are proximate to liberation, and meditations related to
various ritual subsidiaries and augmenting the ritual results. They are mentioned in the
context of non-duality because of the commonalities of secrecy and mental modification;
for, these other meditations are mental modifications just as much as knowledge of non-
duality is.27

In the Upaniṣads, then, in this broader sense, there are four kinds of passages, vedānta-
vākya, only one of which are about knowledge. Let us call the last, in general, passages about
propositional knowledge of Brahman and the Self. They contain facts about Brahman and the
Self, and ways to illustrate and teach such facts. Propositional knowledge of the Self will also be
found in texts that are not about knowing, but about meditation: there can be vedānta-vākyas in
the strict sense within vedānta-vākya texts in the broader sense. Such knowledge can be salvaged
from these passages and used in composite descriptions, but whatever positive qualities are
attributed to the Self, such as having true resolves and desires, must not enter such descriptions.

When we think about the Veda as a corpus, then, we can ask two questions. While we
saw that the Veda as a pramāṇa must be about how things are, additionally an impetus for action
can be served by its individual texts, and things that are not strictly true but are useful may also
be stated—or not. Based on this, we can ask whether a Vedic passage is about knowledge or
about action, in which case all the passages on meditation will fall into the second group.

27 tatraitasmin advaita-vidyā-prakaraṇe abhyudaya-sādhanāṇy upāsanāṇy ucyante, kaivalya-sannikrṣṭa-phalāni ca
karmāṅga-sambandhāni, rahasya-sāṁśāntyaḥ mano-vṛtti-sāṁśāntyaḥ ca—yathā advaita-jñānaṁ mano-vṛtti-mātrāṁ,
tathā anyāṁ apy upāsanāṁ mano-vṛtti-rūpāṁ—ity asti hi sāṁśāntyaḥ. ChUBh Introduction, VI.9.
Alternatively, we can ask whether something in the Veda is bodily or mental, in which case the meditation passages will be classed with the propositional knowledge of Brahman and the Self, against the ritual texts. It is the second criterion, to Śaṅkara’s mind, that sets the Upaniṣads apart as a corpus from the rest of the Veda. If we, however, apply the two criteria simultaneously, we would get texts about ritual, texts about meditation, and texts about Brahman and the Self, corresponding to the well-known threefold distinction of karma-kāṇḍa, upāsana-kāṇḍa, and jñāna-kāṇḍa.

In this and in the next chapter, we will concern ourselves first with the propositional knowledge of the Upaniṣads and then with the direct process of liberation focused on understanding this propositional knowledge. In other words, we will examine jñāna-kāṇḍa proper and the restricted sense of the Upanisads or vedānta-vākya. Once we have done that and we conclude this part of the dissertation, we will be able to see through contrast and “as clearly as a wood-apple in our palm” what precisely Śaṅkara was advocating for, as well as to understand better his significance in the history of Vedānta.

The Scope of Para-vidyā Texts

In his BSBh, Śaṅkara says that the Upaniṣadic statements have two kinds of uses: in one, they ascertain the nature of the supreme Self; in the other, they present the identity of the individual Self with the supreme Self.²⁸ For practical purposes, I will call the second kind “identity statements,” and whenever I use that lexeme I will refer to statements that identify the individual Self as the cognitive agent, the vijñānātman, with the supreme or pure Self, the paramātman. This twofold division is obviously the baseline classification of the vedānta-vākya in the

restricted sense of texts that are about knowledge and the higher Brahman. Another classification
can be drawn through coordination of the first prose chapter of the US and BSBh 2.1.14. There
are two kinds of Upaniṣadic statements: the first are statements of the characteristics of
Brahman, and the second are “scriptural statements meant for presenting the non-duality of the
Self.”

The first categories in the two classifications evidently correspond to one another, and
they further correspond fully to the “positive” and negative characteristics of Brahman that were
part of the paradigmatic brahma-vidyā in the BS. I write “positive” in quotation marks to
distinguish these from the other positive characteristics, such as satya-kāma, that were restricted
to the individual meditations. The “positive” characteristics were not positive for Śaṅkara, in any
case. While we will deal with these in detail later, exemplary lists of such texts that “ascertain
the nature of the supreme Self” of that “present the characteristics of Brahman” are drawn in
BSBh 4.1.2 and USP 1.6, and they include the classical “positive” characteristics in satyaṁ
jñānam anantāṁ brahma, “Brahman is Being, consciousness, limitless,” and vijñānam
ānandaṁ brahma, “Brahman is consciousness, bliss,” as well as a host of negative
characteristics of Brahman drawn mostly, but not exclusively, from Yājñavalkya’s teachings at
Janaka’s brahmodya.

The second kind of statements in the second classification, those that “present the non-
duality of the Self,” are evidently not equivalent to the identity statements, though they are
directly related to them. A list of such passages drawn from the USP 1.6 and BSBh 2.1.14 shows

29 ātmaikya-pratipādana-parāḥ śrutīḥ in USG 1.6; ātmaikatva-pratipādana-param vacana-jātām in BSBh 2.1.14,
II.309; para-brahmaikatva-pratipādikāḥ śrutayaḥ in BĀU Bh 2.1.20, VIII.250.
30 TU 2.1.1.
31 BĀU 3.9.28.7, 8.
that these are texts that present Brahman in a general way, as the great ground of Being and the cause of creation:

- *yatā nānayat paśyati*, “Where one does not see another,” from ChU 7.24.1, the section of the text on Brahman as plenitude.
- *ātma vā idam eka evāgra āśīt*, “In the beginning this world was the Self, one only,” from AiU 1.1.1.
- *ātmevedaṁ sarvam*, “This world is the Self,” from the ChU 7.25.2.
- *brahmevedaṁ sarvam*, “This world is Brahman,” from BĀU 2.5.1.\(^{32}\)
- *sарvāṁ khalv idaṁ brahma*, “All this is Brahman,” from the ChU 3.14.1, and its elaboration in:
  - *sad eva somyedam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam*, “In the beginning, my dear, this world was Being alone, one only without a second,” from ChU 6.2.1.
  - *aitadātmyam idam sarvam, tat satyaṁ sa ātmā tat tvam āsī, “This whole world is a state of having that as its Self; it is Reality, it is what you are,” of ChU 6.8.7 ff.
  - *idaṁ sarvaṁ yad ayam ātmā*, “All these are what the Self is,” in BĀU 2.4.6.
  - *neha nānāsti kiṁcana*, “There is no difference whatsoever here,” in BĀU 4.4.19.

The context where these texts are discussed is the BS section on origination, against the Śāṅkhya *prakṛti* and for the notion of *satkārya-vāda* or the doctrine of the persistence of the cause in the effect. As *kinds* of texts, these passages belong to the same category as the canonical Upaniṣadic statement that introduces Brahman as the cause of origination, maintenance, and dissolution, TU 3.1.1: “That from which these beings are born, on which, once born, they live, and into which they return—know that distinctly: it is Brahman.” These are, then, statements about the causal Brahman, or Brahman as the material and efficient cause of the world. However, Śaṅkara’s choice of these specific statements as paradigmatic of the causal Brahman is rather important, for several related reasons. First, while they are not equivalent to the identity statements, they provide the ground for them, insofar as Brahman is presented as the sole reality that does not admit of a second, including the individual Self. Invariantly, the two kinds of statements are

\(^{32}\) As discussed by Mayeda, the *brahmevedaṁ sarvam* in that form occurs in the *Nyāsihottara-Tāpanīya Upaniṣad* 7.3, and it would be unlikely for Śaṅkara to quote that text. BĀU 2.5.1 is *brahmedaṁ sarvam*, which might have been assimilated to the *aṁtaivedaṁ sarvam* which occurs just before it in the *Upadeśa-Sāhasrī* text. Mayeda 2006b:229.
related, and they are commonly related as opening and concluding statements of an Upaniṣadic
text, upakrama and upasaṁhāra: first the causal Brahman is presented as the sole reality, and
eventually this sole Brahman is identified with the individual Self. Second, to Śaṅkara’s mind,
they present an account of causality that does not involve Brahman’s actual transformation into
or even evolution of creation, but simply a way of bringing home the point that Brahman as the
cause is the creation, that is, that Brahman is everything. Third, they are more specific as to what
kind of a cause Brahman is, insofar as they relate well with the statements that “ascertain the
nature of the supreme Self.” They are more determinate than the mere positing of Brahman as
the cause of all created beings, and Śaṅkara, in fact, says as much: their purpose is to ascertain
the nature of Brahman in its causal role.34

We will address the third point somewhere down the line. Let us now see in very broad
terms why Śaṅkara claimed that these statements about the causal Brahman affirmed the sole
reality of Brahman rather than that of real creation. His reasoning is predominantly theological,
with a splash of metaphysics and epistemology, and the knockdown argument is the most
hallowed principle of Vedic theology, namely that scripture must serve a human good. The texts
that present Brahman as the cause commonly proceed to describe creation of entities, or to talk
about them in a way that seems to acknowledge their reality: in the Chāndogya, we read about
the doctrine of triplication, where Being evolves into heat, water, and food, and further into

33 Cf. BĀU Bh 2.1.20, VIII.258-9: upakramopasaṁhārābhāyāṁ ca—sarvāsu hy upaniṣatsu pūrvam ekatvaṁ
pratijñāya, drśṭāntair hetubhiṣ ca paramātmano vikāraṁśādītvaṁ jagataḥ pratipādaḥ, punar ekatvaṁ upasaṁharati;
tad yathā ihaiva tāvat idam sarvaṁ yad ayam ātmā iti pratijñāya, utpattisthiti-laya-hetu-dṛśṭāntaiḥ vikāra-vikārītvādy-ekatva-pratyaya-hetūṁ
pratipāda, anantarām abāhyam, ayam ātmā brahma [BĀU 2.5.19] īty upasaṁharisyati. “Also, through the opening and concluding
statements. For, in all the Upaniṣads, first unity is presented as a thesis; then by means of reasons and the illustrations of origination,
maintenance and dissolution the arguments for the notion of unity of the transformation and transforming cause are presented, and the conclusion is
stated in texts as ‘without interior or exterior, this Self is Brahman.’”
34 vedānta-vākyāṁ jagat-kāraṇāvadāḥbhāra-paraṭāḥ; ... evāṁ-jātīyakasya kāraṇa-svarūpa-nirūpaṇa-parasya vākyajātasya ... BSBh 1.4.14, I.250-51.
several kinds of living beings. In the *Taittirīya*, we read about the creation of the five elements from the Self: space, air, fire, water, and earth. In Yājñavalkya’s teaching to Maitreyī, after the statement “All these are what the Self is,” there follows a description of how all the details of creation emerge from and are absorbed in the great Being. None of these descriptions, however, are related to the attainment to liberation or any other human good: specifically, there are no statements of the kind that relate the attainment of liberation, of Brahman, or of the Self, to knowledge of the creation of the world from Brahman. Therefore, the descriptions of creation that are attached to the statements of Brahman as the cause do not serve any good of man in some direct manner. “What is intended to be taught is not the manifestation of the world, for no human goal is seen or heard as related to such manifestation.”

Here we should pause to list yet another kind of Upaniṣadic statements that belong to the *para-vidyā* category, those that present the goal of human life that is liberation. Some of these include:

- *tarati śokam ātmavit*, “The knower of the Self crosses over sorrow,” of ChU 7.1.3,
- *tam eva vidivāti mṛtyum eti*, “Knowing him alone, one crosses over death,” of ŚU 3.8.
- *tatra ko mohah kaḥ śoka ekaśvat anupasiyataḥ*, “What illusion or sorrow could there be when one sees unity?” of ĪU 7.
- *abhayaṁ vai janaka prāpto ’si*, “You have attained fearlessness, Janaka,” of BĀU 4.2.4.

They are statements of liberation that obtains when the Self or Brahman is known, and knowing the Self or Brahman really means knowing that Self which is not liable to transmigration, the

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35 na hy ayaṁ sṛṣṭy-ādi-prapāṇcāḥ pratipipādayiśitaḥ. na hi tat-pratibaddhah kaścit puruṣārtho dṛṣyate śrūyate vā. BSBh 1.4.14, 1.252.
36 The list is based on BSBh 1.4.14 and 4.3.14.
“Higher Self” or the higher teaching of the BS 3.4.8, not, however, in itself, but as being the individual Self, taught in statements such as *tat tvam asi*. We should make a good note of this: liberation that obtains by knowing Brahman obtains by knowing Brahman as identical with the individual Self, the *vijñānātman*. In other words, the statements of result or liberation are most directly related to the identity statements from the first twofold classification. Such statements identify the individual Self, a being which is by definition created, and a conscious entity, with the supreme Self, and affirm that no difference of the subject-object kind obtains between the two. These texts are on the one hand most directly related to the statements of liberation, and on the other they are the concluding passages or *upasaiṁhāra* of those Upaniṣadic text in which Brahman is presented as the sole reality, through the affirmation that the conscious Self as the product of Brahman’s creation just *is* Brahman.

The statements of liberation are related to the identity statements “scripturally,” insofar as liberation is explicitly said to be a result of knowing Brahman or the Self. They are also related “theologically,” because the inquiry into Brahman terminates in understanding one’s identity with Brahman, and once the identity statements have been fully grasped, there remains nothing further that one could possibly wish to know: Śaṅkara says that there remains no *ākāṅkṣā* once Brahman has been known in full. As we will remember from the Second Chapter, the notion of *ākāṅkṣā* signified the syntactic expectancy of words and larger linguistic units that were not sufficient on their own for full understanding of whatever required understanding, but also the

37 See, for instance, BSBh I.2.14, I.252-53: brahma-pratipatti-pratibaddhaṁ tu phalaṁ srūyate—*brahmavid āpnoti param* [TU 2.1], *tarati śokam atmavit* [ChU 7.1.3], *tam eva viditvāti mṛtyum eti* [ŚU 3.8] iti. pratyakṣāvagamaṁ cedaṁ phalam, *tat tvam asi* ity asaṁśāryātmatva-pratipattau satyāṁ saṁśāry-ātmatva-vyāvṛtteḥ. “Scripture says that the result is contingent on understanding Brahman. And, this result is directly experienced, as per the statements ‘The knower of Brahman attains the highest;’ ‘The knower of the Self crosses over sorrow;’ ‘Knowing him alone, one crosses over death,’ for when the identity statement ‘You are that’ is understood, the transmigrating Self ceases.”
curiosity on the part of the cognitive subject. Such curiosity and syntactic expectancy were fully discharged when the result of a striving had been secured, and Śaṅkara says that once one had known that Self which is “single, pure, eternal, etc.,” no further curiosity was possible.³⁸ On the other hand, the descriptions of creation involved an abundance of curiosity, until their understanding culminates in the identity statements. This can be illustrated by looking at the eighth section of the sixth chapter of the Chandogya, where hunger and thirst the paradigmatic characteristics of transmigration are sequentially reduced to food, water, and heat, and finally to Being, which Being is identified with the individual Self in tat satyaṁ sa ātmā tat tvam asi. Such reduction takes place because at each subsequent step there remains the curiosity: “What is hunger? What is food? What is water? What is heat?”³⁹ But once the reduction terminates in Brahman that is the Self, there could not possibly be any curiosity remaining, at least not without running the risk of one’s head shattering.

Liberation was related to the identity statements not only “scripturally” and “theologically,” but also “evidently.” Liberation, as we saw in Chapter Seven, was an “evident” result in Śaṅkara’s system, drṣṭa, and Śaṅkara certainly had axes to grind when he added to the paradigmatic text of liberation, “the knower of Brahman reaches the highest,” statements that

³⁸ “Also, this evidence [of the Upaniṣads] is the final evidence, propounding the unity of the Self, after which no syntactic expectancy remains. In the world, when one says 'yajeta,' the verb needs to be supplied with 'who,' 'with what,' and 'how.' Such is not the case when it is said 'You are that' or 'I am Brahman.' No curiosity remains in such case, because such understanding extends over the Self which is everything. Curiosity is possible when there is some other thing remaining. But there is no other thing than the Self over which one could be curious about.” api cāntyam idam pramāṇam atmaikatvam pratiṇādhakam—nātaḥ paraṁ kiṁcid ākāṅkṣyam asti; yathā hi loke yajetety ukte, kiṁ? kena? katham? ity ākāṅkṣyate; niṇavaṁ tat tvam asi, āham brähmāsmi ity ukte, kiṁcid anyad ākāṅkṣyam asti—sarvātmaikatva-viṣayatvād avagatet; sati hy anyasmin avāsīṣyamāne 'rte ākāṅkṣā syāt; na tv ātmaikatva-vyatirekāvaśīṣyamāno 'nyo 'rtho'sti, ya ākāṅkṣyeta. BSBh 2.1.14, II.313.

³⁹ “The origin statements cannot give such knowledge that leaves no room for curiosity, and it is evident that they aim at something outside of themselves. Thus, the statement 'Know this sprout, the body, to have come out of something, for it cannot be without a root,' culminates in the statement that Being is the source of the world that is to be known.” niṇavaṁ utpatty-ādi-śrutīnāṁ nirākāṅkṣārtha-pratipādana-sāmarthyam asti; pratyakṣaṁ tu tāsāṁ anyārhatvāṁ samanugamayte; tathā hi—tatraicu cunāgam utpatitam sonya vijnāhī nedam amālaṁ bhavisyati [ChU 6.8.3] ity upanyasya udarke sata evaikasya jagan-mūlasya vijñeyatvāṁ darśayati. BSBh 4.3.14, III.835-36.
talk about the absence of the psychological faults such as illusion and grief: as we shall see in the next chapter, liberation was a result that was literally evident, through the absence of the psychological faults that were outgrowths of ignorance. Such evident liberation could possibly follow only when one had understood one’s true nature as Brahman, where ignorance does not obtain, and not by understanding creation.

The texts that present Brahman as the sole reality, on their part, are commonly the opening statements of a text, upakrama, or statements that set the topic under discussion. It is a very important feature of theirs that they present this causal Brahman as a conscious entity. They do so by attributing to Brahman reflection or will, an instance of consciousness, in statements of the “let me be many, let me create progeny” kind. We may illustrate this with the opening statement of the sixth chapter of the Chāndogya, “In the beginning, my dear, this world was Being, one without a second,” which proceeds to state that this Being “thought to itself: ‘Let me become many, let me create progeny.’”

We may also illustrate it with the Taittirīya account of creation, where the creation of progeny follows as a result of will rather than reflection: “He desired: ‘Let me become many, let me create progeny.’” Alternatively, they do so by explicitly denoting the causal Brahman “the Self,” ātman, as in the Taittirīya 2.1.1: “From this Self, space came into being; from space, air; from air, fire; from fire, water; from water, earth; from earth, plants; from plants, food; from food—man.” The causal Brahman is, thus, a conscious entity, and that fact should provide the ground for establishing its identity with the cognitive agent that is the individual Self, the viññānātman, in the identity statement. Such, however, would be the

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40 sad eva somyedam agrā āśīd ekam evādvitīyam. … tad aikṣata. bahu syāṁ prajāyeyeti. ChU 6.2.1-3.
41 so ‘kāmayata. bahu syāṁ prajāyeya. TU 2.6.1.
42 tasmad vā etasmād ātmana ākāśaḥ sarībhūtaḥ. ākāśād vāyuḥ. vāyor agniḥ. agner āpaḥ. adbhyaḥ prthivī. prthivyā oṣadhyāḥ. oṣadibhyo ‘nnam. annāt puruṣaḥ. TU 2.1.1.
case if this causal Brahman is the *sole* conscious entity: that is why Śaṅkara calls these

“statements that present a single Self.”

The creation of progeny and creation in general, however, does not sit well with the
descriptions of Brahman as a sole reality, both in the passages that introduce the causal Brahman
in the opening statements, and in the concluding statements that explicitly identify the created
individual Self with the supreme Self. One way to deal with this issue would be to interpret the
identity statements as a case of assimilative identification rather than a true identity, in which
case the creation statements would be taken as statements of fact. The *para-vidyā* texts, however,
are not texts of meditation, but of knowledge, and the solution to this “sole reality” versus
“factual creation” problem is to appeal to the negative characteristics of Brahman from the texts
that “ascertain the nature of the supreme Self.” To refresh our memory, these were characteristics
such as “neither short nor long, neither gross nor fine, without birth, aging and death, fearless,”
etc., which deny of Brahman such characteristics that are liable to change. These are directly
contradictory to the statements of creation because they present Brahman as a permanently
changeless entity. Brahman is not an entity that can *intrinsically* accommodate mutually
exclusive characteristics that things otherwise may have under different aspects, for instance
when something is alternatively in motion or rest. Brahman cannot be both extended and not
extended, with hunger and thirst and without them, both unborn and undergoing transformation

43 “By describing Brahman as knowledge and as the agent of will, it is ascertained that Brahman is awareness, and
Īśvara is described as the cause in the sense of not serving the purpose of others; by the word ‘Self’ used later as one
that has entered all in the sequence of sheaths of the body, he has been ascertained as the inner Self within all. In
‘may I become many, may I be born,’ by teaching the becoming of all concerning the Self it was declared that the
created transformations are non-different from the creator.” atra tāvaj jñāna-śabdena pareṇa ca tad-visayaṇa
kāmāyīṛtva-vacanena cetanaṁ brahma nyārūpayat; aparā-prayaJayatvēśvarāṁ kāraṇam abraviṭ; tad-visayaṇaiva
pāreṇātma-śabdena saṁbhādi-kośa-paramparayā cāntar-anupraveśanena sarveṣāṁ antaḥ pratyag-ātmānāṁ
niradhārayat; bahu syāṁ praṣāyeva iti cātma-visayaṇa bahu-bhavaṁ naśaṁsaṁsaṁna saṁjñamānāṁ vikārāṇāṁ srṣṭur
abhедam abhāṣata. BSBh 1.4.14, I.251.
in which itself becomes born as many, etc. *Permanently* changeless means not liable to transformation under any description or aspect.  

So, the descriptions of creation are both uncomfortable with the statements that present Brahman as the sole reality, and contradictory to the negative descriptions of Brahman. In adjudicating their truth value, relative strength, and use, it is paramount to bear in mind that they are not directly relevant to the attainment of liberation: we saw that liberation was directly related to the identity statements. However, they must serve some purpose. Here the principle of textual coherence or *ekavākyatā* kicks in. The meaning of a text as a unit is superordinate to the meaning of individual sentences. Since a result is affirmed to follow from understanding Brahman as a non-dual entity, and since no result attaches to texts that present Brahman as factually creating the world, these creation statements must be read along with the opening and concluding statements that present Brahman as the single reality, that is, in their light:

It is not possible to postulate [a result attached to the creation statements], because we understand that they form sentential unity with the respective opening and concluding statements about Brahman.  

And, it cannot be that the understanding of Brahman’s transformation into the world is independently intended for some result, as the understanding of the unity of the Self is the means of liberation, for there is no evidence of that. Scripture shows that a result follows solely from understanding the sole reality of the permanently changeless Brahman, of the

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44 “Is it not that by adducing the clay illustration, it is understood that the purport of scripture that Brahman has transformations? For, clay and the like are considered consensually in the world to be transforming. – No, there is evidence from the statements that deny all changes that Brahman is permanently changeless: ‘This is the great, unborn Self, unaging, undying, immortal, fearless Brahman;’ ‘This Self is, ‘not thus, not thus;’” ‘It is neither gross nor fine.’ And, it is not reasonable that the single Brahman have the properties of transformation and be devoid of them. – Can it not be like having motion and rest? – No, it has been qualified as permanently changeless. The permanently changeless Brahman cannot have different attributes, like rest and motion. As I’ve just said, Brahman is permanently changeless, because all transformations have been denied of it.” nanu mṛd-ādi-dṛṣṭānta-prañayānāt pariṇāmavad brahma śāstrasāḥbhimatam iti gamyate; pariṇāmino hi mṛd-ādayo ‘ṛthā loke samadhi-gatā iti. nety ucyate—sa vā eṣa mahān aja ātīmājaro ‘maro ‘mṛto ‘bhayo brahma [BĀU 4.4.25], sa eṣa neti nety ātmā [BĀU 4.4.22], asthīlam aṇaṇu [BĀU 3.8.8] ity ādyābhyaḥ sarva-vikriyā-pratiṣedha-śrutibhyāḥ brahmaṇaḥ kūṭāsthavāvagamāt; na hy ekasya brahmaṇaḥ pariṇāma-dharmatvaṁ tad-rahitatvaṁ ca śakyaṁ pratīpatatvam; sthiti-gatvaḥ syād iti cet, na; kūṭāsthasyeti višeṣaṁ; na hi kūṭāsthasya brahmaṇaḥ sthiti-gatvad aneka-dharmāśrayatvaṁ sambhavati; kūṭāsthāṁ ca nityaṁ brahma sarva-vikriyā-pratiṣedhaḥ ity avocāṁ. BSBh 2.1.14, II.313-14.

45 na ca kalpayītum śakyaṁ, upakramopasaṁhārābhyyāṁ tatra tatra brahma-viśayair vākyaiḥ sākam eka-vākyatāya gamyamānatvā. BSBh 1.4.14, I.252.
kind that begins in “This Self is ‘not such,’ ‘not such,’” and ends in “You have become fearless, Janaka.” Such being the case, this is proved: since in the context where Brahman is discussed the result is attained from understanding Brahman that is devoid of all distinguishing characteristics, all the fruitless descriptions of Brahman such as its transformation into the world are employed for the purpose of understanding Brahman, through the principle “That which is fruitless in the proximity of something fruitful is its auxiliary.”

This is the same principle through which the ārād-upakāraka rituals were attached to the principal rituals in a Darśa-pūrṇamāsa. The descriptions of creation are fruitless intrinsically, and become fruitful through the fact of their proximity to the statements that present Brahman as the cause and a conscious being.

The obvious question now is, what does it mean to read the descriptions of creation in the light of the statements that present Brahman as the cause? They should be read as intending to bring home the point that Brahman is the cause, while not affirming that it factually transforms into the creation. To illustrate this, in the well-known case from the sixth chapter of the Chāndogya, the statement of tripllication of Being into heat, water, and food does not intend to affirm that these three principles and their subsequent products are transformations of Being, but that they are non-different from Being; thus, that they are Being. This is what the Upaniṣad itself affirms, to Śaṅkara’s mind, through using the examples of clay, iron, and copper as substances and clay things, nail-cutters and copper trinkets as their products, and the claim that only the respective substances are real while the individual products are unreal, mere name, a verbal handle. The use of examples is meant to be a form of analogical reasoning through which scripture conveys a particular notion of causality, in which the effect is absolutely non-different

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46 na ca, yathā brahmaṇa ātmaikatva-darśanaṁ mokṣa-sādhanam, evaṁ jagad-ākāra-parināmitva-darśanaṁ api svatantram eva kasmācīt phalāyābhipreyate, pramāṇābhaṅvāt; kūṭastha-brahmātmaikatva-vijñānād eva hi phalaṁ darśayati sāstram—sa eva neti neti ātmā ity upakramya abhayaṁ vai janaka prāpto ’si [BĀU 4.2.4] ity evaṁ-jñātyakam. tatrāturād bhavati—brahma-prakaraṇe sarva-dharma-viśeṣa-rahita-brahma-darśanād eva phala-
śiddhau satyām, yat tatrāphalaṁ śrūyate brahmaṇaṁ jagad-ākāra-parināmitvādī, tad brahma-darśanopāyatvenaiva vinirūjyate, phalavat sannidhāv apahalaṁ tad-aṅgam itivāt. BSBh 2.1.14, II.314.
from the cause, through employing instances of common cause-effect relationship. Śaṅkara quotes Gauḍapāda’s succinct statement on this point, which is worthwhile repeating here: “Creation that is taught in various ways, such as through clay, iron, sparks etc., is only a means for introduction; in fact, there is no difference whatsoever.”

Such analogical reasoning is required because knowledge of Brahman’s being the cause does not obtain otherwise than through analogical reasoning: we do not have experience with causes that do not transform, and thus common cases of causality must be employed as the closest approximation. We need not go into the details of such analogical reasoning, and a fine account is available in Suthren Hirst’s monograph, but we should make a note that once the principle that particular instantiations of a cause are false as effects but real as the cause has been grasped, the Upaniṣad can use the descriptions of creation, such as the Chāndogya passage of triplication, as categories through which individual effects may conceptually be reduced back to Brahman the cause. This is, obviously, required, because we know the world of multiplicity perceptually, but for liberation one needs to come to know it as essentially non-different from Brahman; that is, one needs to know it as Brahman, “one alone, without a second.”

This obviously makes the descriptions of creation texts with no truth value, but useful nevertheless, indeed necessary, serving the purpose of the statements about the causal Brahman as their sentential supplements. While Śaṅkara does not call them as such, this determination is identical with the definition of arthavāda statements. We should note this very well and bear it in

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47 tathā ca sampradāya-vado vadanti—

mṛ-loha-visphulingādyaiḥ srṣṭr yā coiditānyathā |

upāyaiḥ so vātārāya nāsti bhedaḥ kathaśca. BSBh 1.4.14, I.252. The quote is from Gauḍapāda’s Āgama-Śāstra 3.14. On this, most relevant is the long comment on BS 2.1.14 in its entirety.

mind when we come to discuss mahā-vākyas in Chapter Ten. Sarvajñātman will explicitly call such texts “arthavādastatements that facilitate reasoning.”

There is evidently also another kind of Upaniṣadic texts that are part of the para-vidyā corpus, and these are texts in which the discussion is not about the causal Brahman as the great ground of Being out there, but about the inner Self. Particularly important among these are TU 2.1.1-2.5.1, the teaching about the five sheaths of the Self, pañca-kośa, and BĀU 4.3.7-4.4.22, Yājñavalkya’s teaching to Janaka about the three states of the Self: waking, dream, and deep sleep. The subject in these texts is the individual transmigrating Self, the vijñānātman, but their intention is not to teach about it. Rather, by positing this transmigrating Self and its characteristics as the subject, the anuvāda, they intend to predicate of that this Self its being the pure, supreme Self, through the gradual elimination of its characteristics.49

We will have much more to say about this later, but we should note that this is how Śaṅkara also interprets those texts that explicitly mention two Selves, the individual Self and the Lord, such as the famous statement about the two friendly birds from the Rg Veda and the Munḍaka and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad:

Two birds, who are companions and friends, nestle on the very same tree. One of them eats a tasty fig; the other, not eating, looks on. Stuck on the very same tree, one person grieves, deluded by her who is not the Lord. But when he sees the other, the contented Lord—and the Lord’s majesty—his grief disappears.50

49 “Repeating the characteristics of the transmigrating Self, the text intends to affirm its unity with the supreme Brahman. For, the succeeding statement, ‘It meditates as it were, it runs as it were,’ is seen to be about the removal of the characteristics of the transmigrating Self. … We have proved, thus, that the transmigrating Self of cognition within the organs is the great, unborn Self, the supreme Self.” anūdya saṁsāri-svarūpaṁ pareṇa brahmaṇāsya-aitkātnām vivaḵṣati; yataḥ dhvyaṁitaṁ lāyatiṁ [BĀU 4.3.7] ity evam ādy utara-grantha-praṅṭṭhitāḥ saṁsārī-ṛharma- nirākaraṇa-parā lakṣyate; ... yo ‘yaṁ viṁśaṁ-mayaṁ prāṇeṣu saṁsārī lakṣyate, sa vā eṣa mahāṁ aja ātmā paramēśvara evāṃśābhīḥ pratīpādita ity arthaḥ. BSBh 1.3.42, I.220.
50 ŚU 4.6-7; MU 3.1.1-2. Only the first verse is in the Rg Veda, 10.164.20. Translation Olivelle 1998:425.
Such texts do not intend to affirm the difference between the individual and the supreme Self, but the individual Self is introduced so that its identity with the supreme Self can be affirmed.\textsuperscript{51}

We can formulate this as a general epistemological principle. Scripture is not an authority on the individual Self as such, or its characteristics. This Self is known perceptually, as Mīmāṁsakas have argued. Scripture does, however, say things about this Self that are unknown empirically, and when it does so, it first has to introduce the Self or its characteristics by setting them as the subject under discussion, the anuvāda, before proceeding to affirm of it characteristics of the saguṇa-brahman in the texts of meditation, or deny its transmigrating characteristics in texts of knowledge. “When a sentence is found to be purposeful through its part that presents what does not obtain empirically, its part that presents what was already known should be held as a restatement.”\textsuperscript{52}

To summarize, the scope of Upaniṣadic para-vidyā texts is constituted by six kinds of statements: (1) the identity statements, or the statements that present the identity of the individual Self with the supreme Self; (2) statements that ascertain the nature of the supreme Self or present the characteristics of Brahman; (3) statements about the causal Brahman that present the sole reality of the Self or the supreme Brahman; (4) “proliferation” passages or descriptions of the creation of the world that form sentential supplements to the statements about the causal Brahman; (5) statements of liberation that are directly related to the identity statements; and (6) texts that present and eliminate the characteristics of the individual Self so as to show that the individual is the pure, supreme Self. Central among these are the identity statements, because

\textsuperscript{51} “The individual Self is posited solely with the intention to affirm its identity with the supreme Self, not with any other intention;” tādātmya-vivakṣayaiva jīvopādānam, nārthāntara-vivakṣayā. BSBh 3.3.34, III.674.

\textsuperscript{52} api ca aprāptāṁśopadeśena arthavatī vākye sañjāte, prāptāṁśa-parāmarśasya nityānuvādatayāpi upapadyamānatvāt. BSBh 3.3.19, III.648.
liberation is related to them directly. They are full counterparts to the injunctions of ritual or meditation in the action section of the Veda, and to them we move next.

**The Identity Statements of the Upaniṣads**

The practice of knowledge for Śaṅkara was fully focused on the identity statements of the Upaniṣads, statements that correlate Brahman the ground of Being with the individual Self. This was in a sense very much like the standard process of liberation in the BS, meditation on Brahman as one’s Self. Śaṅkara, however, rejected the direct soteriological significance of meditation, for a variety of reasons, most of which we have already seen: some meditations were part of *saguna-vidyās* and were good either for promotion or for gradual liberation; meditation in general affirmed rather than negate the sense of agency. Meditation certainly had a positive role to play in the pursuit of liberation, but that was before one had taken to the life of renunciation: meditation was for purity of the mind and existence, and it was practiced within the scope of the *apara-vidyās*. Liberation, on the other hand, being directly consequent on the removal of ignorance, was a result of knowledge *qua* knowledge.

The Upaniṣadic *vidyās* in the BS were built around injunctive statements, and even the triple pan-Vedāntic process was introduced by Yājñavalkya’s urging of Maitreyī. For Śaṅkara, however, all injunctive texts, even those that were part of *nirguṇa-vidyās*, presupposed duality, because they were based on a system of action and its contributory factors: they promoted the action of meditation, required an agent and an object of meditation, etc.⁵³ Such statements could not occupy the textual locus around which the practice of *brahma-vidyā* would be organized, because that would mean that the Upaniṣads meant to affirm non-duality as intended. We saw, in fact, this problem already in the doctrine of *prasāṅkhyaṇa*, whose proponents accepted the

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⁵³ BSBh 2.1.22.
identity of the Self with Brahman disclosed by statements such as *tat tvam asi*, but wanted meditation to be enjoined as their subsidiary so that the textual intuition of Brahman could transit from mediacy to immediacy and beyond the subject-object duality.

The *prasaṅkhyāna* doctrine was also not acceptable to Śaṅkara, again for several reasons. First, it seemed to miss the root cause of *saṁsāra*: ignorance. If one’s embodiment and transmigration were consequent on superimposing characteristics of one thing over another, the fallback to injunction and the practice of meditation *just* reaffirmed the same ignorant agency that had been, supposedly, annulled by the understanding of the negative descriptions of the Self in the Upaniṣads.\(^{54}\) Second, the essence of meditation was the repetition of the *same notional action* over and over. If the root problem of *saṁsāra* was ignorance, what new contribution would that same notion bring toward the removal of ignorance?\(^{55}\) Finally, meditation involved agency that was inherently antinomous: on the one hand, it reaffirmed ignorance such that so long meditation was practiced, there could be no liberation; on the other hand, it *had* to be practiced repeatedly, for there was no reason why one would not slip back into bondage when meditation was terminated, *if* understanding the identity statements was not enough. Was this stream of awareness what liberation was?

In Śaṅkara’s system, thus, the *ontological* identity of Brahman and the Self replaced the meditative correlation of the two in the BS, and the statements which posit this identity replaced the injunctions of meditation as the core of the practice of *brahma-vidyā*. Clarification of

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\(^{54}\) Cf. for instance USP 18.21: “Once the superimposition has been negated through the *neti neti* text, no further injunction of superimposition is in any way possible.”

so ‘dhyāso neti netīti prāptavat pratiṣidhyate|
bhūyo ‘dhyāsa-vidhiḥ kaścit kutaścin nopapadyate.

\(^{55}\) See, for instance, NaiŚ 3.124: “If reasoning and hearing do not directly give rise to certain knowledge before, what new result could possibly appear by repetition?”

yukti-śabdau purāpy asya na ced akurutāṁ pramāṁ |
sākṣād āvartanāt tābhyaṁ kim apūrvarī phaliṣyati.
meaning of the identity statements through the three processes of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana replaced meditative absorption in Brahman, and liberation followed once one had fully understood the identity statements. Playing with Śaṅkara’s language, we may call this stage of full understanding brahmānubhava, brahmātmatvānubhava, brahmātmāvagati, vākyārthānubhava, kaivalyānubhava, that is, direct experience of Brahman, of Brahman’s being the Self, of the meaning of the identity statements, or of liberation.56 Sureśvara in the NaiS calls it tat-tvam-asy-ādi-vākyārtha-parijñāna, full comprehension of the meaning of the identity statements such as tat tvam asi, “you are that.”57 While in the Advaita chain of soteriological causality this stage was not the last link, being followed by the destruction of ignorance and the state of remaining in the Self, it was the culmination of one’s effort, since the last two links would follow by necessity, in a logical but not temporal sequence. We can, therefore, mark such full understanding of the identity statements as the point of consummation of the brahma-vidyā practice.

Now, what are these identity statements? We saw under the previous heading that they were Upaniṣadic statements that affirm the identity of the individual with the supreme Self, the vijñānātman with the paramātman. More formally, they are statements that affirm the being of the category or padārtha of “that” to the category or padārtha of “you,” which stand for Brahman and the Self respectively.58 The precise meaning of the two categories is ascertained through examination of Upaniṣadic passages, and we will see how that proceeds shortly. The identity that is affirmed of the two categories is not analytic, as noted by Rudolph Otto. That is,

56 These are adaptations of expressions from BSBh 1.1.4, 2.1.4, 3.3.32, 4.1.2.
57 NaiS 1.52.
58 Formulations of this kind abound in the BSBh, and the correlated entities are interchangeably called tat-padārtha, brahma, īśvara, parameśvara, and tvam-padārtha, jīva, śārīra etc. See for starters BSBh 2.1.21, 2.3.46, 3.2.6, and 4.1.2-3.
the second is not just another name for the first, although the ultimate reference of the two categories is the same. The identity statements are, rather, synthetic, that is, conveying new information that is unknown about the correlated categories before they are identified.\(^{59}\) That must be so, in any case, if the statements are to be pramāṇa at all. It is not necessary, furthermore, that their form be \(x = y\), for Śaṅkara mentions among them statements of the “there is no other \(x\) than \(y\)” kind, where \(y\) stands for the Self directly or through some of its cognitive functions that an agent might identify with.

This new knowledge contained in the identity statements cannot be had before one fully understands what the two categories ultimately stand for. In fact, the clarification of meaning as the process that replaced meditation was clarification of meaning of the respective categories. “A sentence such as tat tvam asi cannot give rise to certain knowledge regarding its meaning in the case of those for whom the two categories are blocked by ignorance, doubt, or confusion, because the meaning of the sentence depends on understanding the meaning of the individual words.”\(^{60}\) We will, therefore, first focus on what entities Śaṅkara thought were correlated in statements such as tat tvam asi.

Before we do that, however, we should mention that there does not seem to be a technical term that is consistently used to refer to such identity statements as a category, nor do we find anywhere the full scope of their class. There are several designations that we can identify in the BSBh. One is abheda-nirdeśa, statement of non-difference, but that wording was influenced by the sūtra itself.\(^{61}\) The second is the one we have seen under the previous heading, vijñānatmanah.

\(^{59}\) Otto 1970:102: “To judge by terms and speculative efforts, “Ātman is Brahman” is an analytical statement, or rather a verdict of identity. In secret, however, it remains a verdict of synthesis.”

\(^{60}\) tatra yeṣāṁ etau padārthau ajñāna-saṁśaya-viparyaya-pratibaddhau, teṣāṁ tat tvam asi ity etad vākyam svārthe pramāṇiḥ notpādayituṁ śaktoti, padārtha-jñāṇa-pūrvakatvād vākyārtha-jñāṇasyeti. BSBh 4.1.2.

\(^{61}\) BSBh 2.1.22, II.328: nanv abheda-nirdeśo ’pi darśitaḥ—tat tvam asi ity evaṁ-jātiyakaḥ. The sūtra runs: adhikaṁ tu bheda-nirdeśāt.
paramātmaikatvopadeśa-parā (pravṛttih), a mode of scriptural sentences that identify the individual with the supreme Self. The most common way to refer to them seems to be tat-tvam-asy-ādi, “the group in which the first member is tat tvam asi,” to which various additions can be attached, such as evam-jātīyaka and ity-evam-ādi-vākya, “of such kind;” vākya; vedānta-vākya; śāstra; śruti; brahmātmaikatva-vastu-pratipādana-para, “a statement that affirms the unity of Brahman and the Self.”

From passages in the BSBh, we can provide the following examples of identity statements as a representative but not an exhaustive list. Such a full list cannot be found in Śaṅkara’s works, and whenever he lists statements of this kind, his purpose is just to illustrate.

- **ahaṁ brahmāsmi**, “I am Brahman,” in BĀU 1.4.10.
- **ayam ātmā brahma**, “This Self is Brahman,” in BĀU 2.5.19
- **eṣa ta ātmā sarvāntaraḥ**, “The self within all is this self of yours,” in BĀU 3.4.1.
- **eṣa ta ātmāntaryāmy amṛtaḥ**, “This Self of yours, the inner controller, the immortal,” in BĀU 3.7.3-23.
- **nānyo ’to ’sti draṣṭā śrotā mantā vijnātā**, “There is no other seer, hearer, thinker, knower than him,” in BĀU 3.7.23
- **nānyad ato ’sti draṣṭṛ**, “There is no seer other than this [imperishable],” in BĀU 3.8.11.
- **[tat satyaṁ sa ātmā] tat tvam asī**, “That is Being, that is the Self, that is what you are,” in ChU 6.8.7-6.14.3.
- **tvām vā aham asmi bhagavo devate ’ham vai tvam asi devate**, “Blessed Lord, I am surely you and you are surely me.”

Establishing an exhaustive list seems superfluous in any case, because the principle is that a statement which identifies Brahman with the Self in a text that has nirguṇa-vidyā as its scope is

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62 BSBh 1.1.4, 1.2.8, 1.3.19, 1.4.6, 3.3.32; throughout Sureśvara’s NaiS as well.
63 References in the BSBh include 1.1.4, 1.2.8, 2.3.30, 3.2.27, 3.4.8, 4.1.3.
64 Joel Brereton (1986) had argued against the interpretation of tat tvam asi as an identity statement, claiming that the gender of the subject would have to follow the gender of the predicate, and that the sentence, if meant to be an identity statement, should read saḥ tvam asi. For my purposes this intervention is irrelevant, since Advaitins have universally read tat tvam asi as an identity statement. I do not wish to address the issue at length here, but it does not seem to me that Brereton is right. The personal pronoun tvam is not gendered, and it is but right for the demonstrative tat in such a case to follow the gender of the noun it stands for, which is sat, Being.
65 In BSBh 4.1.3, III.773, introduced by tathā hi paramesvara-prakriyāyāṁ jābālā ātmatvenaiva etam upagacchanti, “To illustrate, the Jābālas, in the chapter on the Supreme Lord, present him as the Self.” I have not been able to identify the reference.
“of that kind” as *tat tvam asi*. It is rather important to note that such a statement must be part of a *nirguna-vidyā*: a glaring absence from this list is the statement from the *Kauśītaki, yas tvam asi so ’ham asmi*, that mister X addresses to Brahman on the couch in *brahma-loka*. One can hardly imagine a more explicit and fuller identity statement, and Śaṅkara’s aversion to this old Upaniṣad has been well noted by Signe Cohen.\(^{66}\)

Śaṅkara, nevertheless, focused most of his attention on interpreting *tat tvam asi* and *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*, and there seems to be a good reason for that practice. Under BS 4.1.3, the *sūtra* that established meditation on Brahman as one’s Self because “they understand and teach it like that,”\(^ {67}\) he divides the identity statements in two categories, related to the notions of understanding and teaching, respectively. *Aham brahmāsmi* is in the first group, while *tat tvam asi* in the second, providing thus neat blueprints for the two perspectives in the processes of *brahma-vidyā*, that of the student and that of the teacher. Historically, however, it was another identity statement, one contained in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, that anchored the text based on which the very notion of identity statement culminating in *mahā-vākyā* was developed: it was *tasmaḥ vā etasmād ātmanaḥ*, “from this very [Brahman] which is the Self [creation proceeds].”\(^ {68}\)

Śaṅkara’s commentary on the second chapter of the *Taittirīya* was the primary source for Sarvajñātman’s *Paṅca-Prakriyā*, and therefore I will base my account there. I will also draw on BSBh 4.1.2 and 2.1.14-22, as well as on US.

**The Problem of Language**

The rejection of meditation as the means of knowing Brahman meant that Brahman could be known solely through scripture, that is, through language. To put this more technically, the

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\(^{66}\) Cohen 2008:139-147.

\(^{67}\) ātmeti tūpagacchhati grāhayanti ca.

\(^{68}\) TU 2.1.1.
Upaniṣads were the only pramāṇa that could give rise to the cognition of Brahman. This pramāṇa could use aids, but not that of meditation. This was a tough proposition to defend, for reasons we have discussed in depth. Let us very briefly review them.

The root problem with scripture was that it was supposed to be informative about supersensible things, but it had to do so by using categories that are known to us. Mīmāṁsakas claimed that the Veda was not an authority on categories, word meanings, but on unknown relations. By using known categories, the Veda could inform that there was such a relation between some future result and a ritual action of a kind. The Prābhākaran take on meditation was an uncompromising application of this doctrine: the only new information that the injunctions of meditation offered about the Self concerned its status of a subsidiary to the action of meditation. The Self was known perceptually, through the process of recognition. The pūrvapāka in BSBh 1.1.1 was along these lines: is Brahman a known or an unknown category? If it was known, then there would be no reason to inquire into it. If it was unknown, then it could not be inquired into, the unstated assumption being: because it was an existent, not a relation.69

Maṇḍana Miśra, on the other hand, argued that the Veda could be informative about Brahman if it was possible for Brahman to be a padārtha, a category that is known to us and for which individual words can stand. Ultimately all words stood for Brahman, and we could start with the idea of Brahman as that great Being and the cause of everything and obtain a definite description from the Upaniṣads, a proper informative vākyārtha or sentential meaning that would reveal Brahman specifically, not just through the facts of its being the cause. Such vākyārtha in which the meaning was not a universal but a particular was achieved by relating attributes to a substantive, technically called viśeṣya-viśeṣaṇa-bhāva. There was no reason for the Veda not to

69 tat punar brahma prasiddham aprasiddhaṁ vā syāt; yadi prasiddhaṁ na jijñāsitavyam. athāprasiddhaṁ naiva śakyaṁ jijñāsitum iti. BSBh 1.1.1, I.8.
be able to tell more about something, so long that thing was *somehow* known to us. The problem with this was that it presented Brahman as a relational entity that is known only mediately, through description, and Maṇḍana’s solution was: meditation.

In terms of scriptural theology, the problem of language and conceptional thinking in relation to Brahman was expressed in the Upaniṣads as well. The most prominent textual locus was the *Taittirīya* 2.4.1:

> Whence words return along with the mind, not attaining it, he who knows that bliss of Brahman fears not at any time.\(^{70}\)

Śaṅkara addresses this text quite consistently when talking about Brahman and language.

Another important Upaniṣadic statement was *Kena* 1.3:

> There the eye goes not, speech goes not, nor the mind; we know not, we understand not how one can teach this.\(^{71}\)

So, how could the Upaniṣads be the *sole pramāṇa* on Brahman, if language and conceptual thinking in which speech was couched had so much stacked against them? Before we tackle this, we need to address a couple of points concerning Śaṅkara’s take on a few categories of language that were important for him and were common in his intellectual universe. The first is related to the substantive-attribute or noun-adjective relation, *viśeṣya-viśeṣana-bhāva*, that I mentioned above. This relation was the way Sanskrit grammarians explained how individual words that otherwise stand for universals express a particular through combining. This is an involved topic that we not need consider in detail, and a few notes will suffice. In sentences and phrases such as *krṣṇah tilah*, “black sesame,” or *nīlam utpalam*, “a blue lotus,” as well as in descriptive or coordinative compounds, *karma-dhāraya*, such as *nīlotpalam*, there obtains a relation between the two words with different meanings so that they both denote a particular, a

\(^{70}\) Translation Radhakrishnan 1992:545.
\(^{71}\) Translation Radhakrishnan 1992:582.
specific variety of lotus: not a lotus in general or a blue something in general, but specifically a blue lotus. To paraphrase Bhartṛhari, in *krṣṇah tilah*, the word “black” is used in the sense of some black substance whose genus is unknown, whereas the word “sesame” is used in the sense of a genus whose quality is unknown. Since their generalities do not relate, they first mutually specify their meaning: in the sentence, “black” gets to stand for the black color specified by the being of a sesame seed, and “sesame” stands for the being of a sesame seed specified by the black color. Their word denotations have changed, and now the two words are relatable. Finally, these two transformed denotations merge in one, and the whole phrase gets to denote a particular black sesame seed. The last was what Mīmāṃsaks call a *vākyārtha*, a sentential denotation.\(^{72}\) Maṇḍana’s definite description of Brahman was very much like that.

Sanskrit grammarians identified this noun-adjective relation with the rubric of *sāmānādhikaranya* or co-referentiality, the phenomenon where two words are coordinated both syntactically and semantically, that is, are in the same case and stand for the same reference. This was, further, part of the rubric of *vṛtti*, or complex formations. Śaṅkara, on the other hand, had a wider understanding of such co-referentiality, and for Vedāntins in general the idea of *sāmānādhikaranya* had a much greater ontological, not merely linguistic, significance. It was important to understand, first, how Brahman is coordinated with its characteristics, such as in Maṇḍana’s definite description, and, second, how it is coordinated with other ontological reals, such as in the identity statements and the identifications of Brahman with the world. Thus, in addition to the problem of how speech in general can relate the supersensible Brahman, it was also important to figure out what kinds of ontological relations the descriptions of Brahman

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\(^{72}\) Sastri 1964. See also Bhartṛhari’s *Vākyapadīya*, Book 3, *Vṛtti-Samudeśa*, and Sharma’s translation and commentary on the *Āṣṭādhyāyī* 1.2.42 and 2.1.49 (Sharma 2000, 2002).
disclosed. Śaṅkara, thus, classed co-referentiality in four kinds, and his taxonomy is primarily ontological and only secondarily linguistic.\(^{73}\)

One kind was the *viśeṣya-viśeṣaṇa-bhāva* that we have seen, and it is common for Śaṅkara to give the classical “blue lotus” example as its illustration. In a sense, co-referentiality was synonymous with this relation, as any apposition would have had the form of one word playing the role of a qualifier to another substantive. However, there were several ways in which this could happen, and the noun-adjective relation was just one of them. A second type was the quite uninformative case of full synonymy, *ekatvam*, where two words have the same meaning and the same primary mode of signification, such as “Brahmin,” “best of the twice-born,” and “a god on Earth.”\(^{74}\) A third type was the case of superimposition, *adhyāsa*, where one thing could be described as or identified with another through deliberate fancy; that is, when two things are identified but we know that they are different. This was the bread and butter of the symbolic meditations in the Upaniṣads, for instance the identification of name with Brahman, and more generally of all symbol-based modes of adoration, such as the worship of Viṣṇu as the image or as the śālagrama stone.

Superimposition, of course, did not have to be deliberate, and we have seen previously that it was the very nature of metaphysical ignorance. Superimposition of the notion of one thing over another could have happened naturally, as in the case of the identification of the Self with the body or the cognitive faculties. A statement of co-referentiality of two categories could, thus, intend to negate such superimposition through pointing to an incommensurability. Śaṅkara called

\(^{73}\) The taxonomy is given in BSBh 3.3.8.
\(^{74}\) Uninformative, that is, for Brahmin grammarians and theologians, *not* for social historians.
this kind of co-referentiality *apavāda*, negation. Advaitins commonly illustrate this with the right knowledge that has replaced the cognitive error of confusion in the statement “The man is a post,” and meaning, what has previously been wrongly seen as a man is now ascertained to be a post. Sureśvara called this form of co-referentiality a defeated-defeater relation, *bādhya-bādhaka-bhāva*, and the term of art in later Advaita Vedānta became *bādhāyāṁ sāmānādhikaranya*, co-referentiality in the sense of a conflict.

The second important idea is that of *vṛtti*, which is sometimes translated as “uses of words.” Kunjunni Raja calls them “the function of a word in its relation to the sense,” presumably having in mind Frege’s famous distinction between a sense and reference of expressions: the phrases “morning star” and “evening star” or the names “Phosphorus” and “Hesperus” have different senses, but they both refer to the same object, the planet Venus. Thus, words have their sense, but they also have functions through which they do not have to stand for or refer to their sense. Deshpande’s term for *vṛtti* is “signification function,” and since *vṛtti* is commonly described as potency or *śakti*, he defines this signification function as “a power or a special ability of a word to function in a certain capacity as a signifier of a certain meaning.” I find Deshpande’s formulation preferable. It does not seem to me that the sense-reference distinction has been posited in Indian philosophy of language quite as Frege did: the question that is front and center is, how can a word that otherwise stands for one thing get to stand for another.

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75 Apavāda was otherwise a common technical term in Sanskrit grammar, standing for a special rule that is an exception to another, general rule, and which in effect cancels the operation of the general rule. See Abhyankar 1986:33.
76 NaiS 2.55-6, and otherwise throughout the treatise.
77 Such is the practice, for instance, by Kocmarek in his translation of Sarvajiñātman’s *Pañca-Prakriyā* (1985).
79 Frege 2007.
80 Deshpande 2007:53.
Śaṅkara’s understanding of *vṛtti* was shared with Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsā, and there seems to be little original that he brings to the idea.\(^81\) Words have their primary or “natural” signification, *abhidhā*, in which they stand for universals. The signified in such a case is called *vācyā*, directly expressed. In sentences, it is possible for this signification function to be blocked, in which case the word would exercise a secondary function, which is figurative and can neutrally be called *aupacārika* or *bhākta*.\(^82\) More commonly, this secondary signification function is called *lakṣaṇā* (and note well the long final vowel). Words can exercise such secondary signification function *only* in sentences, when the literal meaning is impossible in the context. Śabara, in fact, argued that words in sentences *must* exercise their secondary signification function, because in sentences they refer to class-members, not to universal class-properties.\(^83\) Śaṅkara most certainly accepted this line of reasoning and classified the secondary signification into one approximating to and another departing from the primary meaning. In the first case, the words signify class members, parts of the classes they signify in isolation, while in the second they signify something that is not included in their scope but is *directly* related to it, through metonymy, synecdoche etc.\(^84\) A classic example is “a village on the Ganges,” where Ganges does not stand for the river, but for the bank, which is, nevertheless, directly related to the river. The signified in such a case is called *lakṣya*, indirectly expressed or indicated.

A second figurative signification function is one that proceeds specifically through metaphor, or qualitative similarity of the figurative denotation of the word to the natural

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\(^{81}\) For a most lucid account of the Bhāṭṭa understanding of *vṛtti*, see McCrea 2008:91-7.

\(^{82}\) Instances of both are common in the BSBh: 1.1.6, 1.3.28, 1.4.9, 1.4.19, 2.3.5, 2.3.16, 2.3.29, 2.4.4, 2.4.20, 3.1.4, 3.1.7, 3.2.4, 3.3.24.

\(^{83}\) McCrea 2008:96.

\(^{84}\) lakṣaṇāyām api tu sannikarṣa-viprakarṣau bhavata eva; adhyāsa-pakṣe hi arthāntara-buddhir arthāntare nikṣipiṣata iti viprakṛṣṭā lakṣaṇā, viśeṣaṇa-pakṣe tu avayavi-vacanena śabdena avayavaḥ samarpyata iti sannikṛṣṭā. BSBh 3.3.9, III.630-31.
meaning. The classic example of this which Śaṅkara also employs is “the man is a lion,” where the word that stands for lion as a class is first figuratively identified with valor as one of the leonine qualities, and then applied to an individual man in virtue of his possession of valor.\(^{85}\) This may be called a tertiary signification function insofar as it is twice remote from the primary meaning; that is, “lion” cannot be directly related to “man,” but only through the medium of valor. This is commonly called \textit{gauna-vṛtti}, but the signified is also \textit{laksya}. We will say more about signification in the last chapter, when we move to Sarvajñātman.

The last thing we need to point out is that early Advaitins, and certainly Śaṅkara, Sureśvara and Sarvajñātman, endorsed the Śabara-Kumārila’s \textit{abhihitānvaya-vāda} theory of sentence meaning. To rehearse this very quickly, Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsakas thought that words in sentences first denote their word meanings, then cease their individual functions, combine, and denote the sentential reference. Such was also the order of understanding on the part of the competent user of a language: ascertain which word is said, recollect its meaning, and combine it to understand which individual existent the sentence intends to affirm. Not only did Advaitins endorse the theory, \textit{it was crucial to their soteriological project}. Understanding the identity statements was predicated on properly understanding the categories of \textit{tat} and \textit{tvam} first.\(^{86}\) Word combination, in other words, \textit{was} the process of liberation. What Advaitins did not accept, however, was that the meaning which the individual words produced in combination had to be a sentential reference, a \textit{vākyārtha}. Other possibilities were open, and we will see what they were.

\(^{85}\) Śaṅkara refers to this metaphor in BSBh 1.1.4 and 3.1.6.

\(^{86}\) Karl Potter is, therefore, not correct when he claims in the first volume on Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika of his \textit{Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies} (1977:151) that Vedāntins espoused \textit{anvitābhidhāna-vāda} along with Prābhākaras. His assessment is better in the volume on Advaita Vedānta (1981).
The Categories of “That” and “You” and the Notions of Brahman and the Self

The problem of how language may express the supersensible Brahman did not concern the word *brahma* itself, or several other words that Śaṅkara would have considered full synonyms, such as *sat* or Being, *iṣṭiḥ* or Brahman that visualizes the world to set it in motion, or *īśvara*, God, all standing for Brahman’s causal function in regard creation. It is common for Śaṅkara to say that these words denote Brahman in their primary signification function.

This also implied that Brahman was not quite unknown: the word had its direct meaning, derived from the root *bṛṁḥ* and standing for that which makes things grow, the cause of the world in the most general sense. In any case, Brahman had to be a known thing, linguistically expressible, for language to be meaningful, because words cannot convey that which is fully beyond experience.

Brahman as such a cause of the world, that great ground of Being which makes things grow, was also the topic of an Upaniṣadic passage that posits its being, the textual basis of the *Brahma-Śūtra* definition of Brahman as the source of creation, sustenance and destruction of the world, *Taittirīya* 3.1.1: “That from which these beings are born, on which, once born, they live, and into which they return—know that distinctly: it is Brahman.” The problem with the denotation of words like *brahma* and with its corresponding description was that they were incomplete, “with a remainder” that still needs to be stated. They present Brahman in a vague, insufficient, imprecise way. They throw Brahman in and posit its relation to creation, but they require more.

87 tat-padena ca prakṛtaṁ sat brahma iṣṭiḥ jagato janmādi-kāraṇam abhidhīyate. BSBh 4.1.2, III.769.
88 brahma-śabdasya hi vyutpādyamānasasya nitya-śuddhatvād ayo 'ṛthāḥ pratīyante, bṝṁhater dhātor arthānugamāt, BSBh 1.1.1, I.8. brahmavit brahmavit vakṣyamāna-lakṣaṇam, bhṛhattamatvāt brahma, TUBh 2.1.1, VI.59.
89 annādi-brahmaṇaḥ pratīpattau dvārāḥ lakṣaṇāṁ ca yato vā imāni ity-ādy uktavān. sāvaśeṣāṁ hi tat, sāksād-brahmaṇo ‘nirdeśāt. TUBh 3.1.1, VI.127.
So, while Brahman is directly signified by words such as *brahma*, *īśvara*, *sat*, they do not say much about its essential, peculiar nature. It may well be that the *pradhāna* of Sāṅkhya is denoted and intended in such passages. The specific nature of Brahman must be stated, and this nature comes in three sets of qualities presented in Upaniṣadic texts. The first are positive attributes from texts such as *satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma* and *vijñānam ānandaṁ brahma*, TU 2.1.1 and BĀU 3.9.28.7, and Śaṅkara says that they present Brahman as the light of consciousness. The second and the third are negative attributes that deny change in Brahman on the one hand, and possession of the attributes of its gross products on the other. They are presented in texts such as *adrṣṭaṁ draṣṭṛ, avijñātāṁ vijñātṛ, ajām ajaram amaram, asthūlām anaṇu, ahrasvam adīrgham*, from Yājñavalkya’s teachings to Gārgī in BĀU 3.8. The predication of such qualities to Brahman obtains through the mode of co-referentiality, the substantive-attribute relation, and it is very much like the construction of the notion of Brahman the uniform meditational counterpart in the BS *brahma-vidyās*. These collectively are evidently the texts that ascertain the nature of the supreme Self from our classification.

Now, such combination of words to obtain definite knowledge, not the mere positing of the general category, causes the apparent problem of presenting Brahman as a sentential reference, a *vākyārtha*, a denoted referent as something of a kind, a member of a class that is specified by the qualifying properties. Think of *nīlotpalam*, the blue lotus, the flower in my garden belonging to the class of lotuses and made particular through the attribution of blue color.

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91 *Adṛṣṭaṁ draṣṭṛ* and *avijñātāṁ vijñātṛ* are from 3.8.11, *asthūlām anaṇu, ahrasvam adīrgham* from 3.8.8. *Ajam ajaram amaram* seems to be based on the Madhyandina recension, in ŚB 14.6.8, but it does not correspond fully as *ajam* is not there.

92 Later Advaita Vedānta classified the two kinds of characteristics of Brahman, its general causality in TU 3.1.1 and its distinguishing characteristics, in *ṭatāsṭha-lakṣaṇa* and *svaṛūpa-lakṣaṇa*, non-essential and essential characteristics. See, for instance, in Deutsch 1969.
and other qualities. This could not work in the case of Brahman, because Brahman is one-off, it does not have a class from which it could be delimited through attribution. Thus, Brahman the *padārtha* is too general, uninformative, and the substantive-attribute relation seems impossible because Brahman cannot have a class. Śaṅkara’s solution to this riddle was to propose that the *viṣeṣya-višeṣaṇa-bhāva* does not need to be restricted to the substantive-attribute type that produces a sentential reference through definite description. It was possible to interpret it as a definiendum-definiens relation, a *lakṣya-lakṣaṇa-bhāva*. How are the two different? Well, the second is a subtype of the first, but while the first delimits a member from its class, the second delimits *a something from everything else*.

– But, a substantive is distinguished by shunning other (possible) attributes, as in the case of blue and red lotus. When there are several substances that belong to the same class and can have one attribute, only then is an attribute meaningful, not in regard to a unique thing, because there is no possibility of an alternative attribute. Just like the yonder sun is one, likewise is Brahman. There are no other Brahmans from which the one is to be singled out, as in the case of the blue lotus.

– There is not that fault, since the attributes are for definition, not qualification.

– And what is the difference between definiens-definiendum relation on the one hand and the qualifier-qualificandum relation on the other?

– The qualifiers distinguish a substance from things of its class, while a definiens from everything, as in “space is that which provides room.”

Compare the following two statements:

- The lotus is blue, large, and fragrant;
- Space is that which gives room.

The first is a definite description obtained through attribution of color and other qualities to a class, while the second is a definition. The distinction is eminently clear in English because of

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93 nanu, viṣeṣyaṁ višeṣaṇāntaraṁ vyabhicarad viṣeṣyate, yathā nīlaṁ raktaṁ cotpalam iti; yadā hy anekāṁ dravyāṇi eka-jātiyāṁ eka-višeṣaṇa-yogīṇi ca, tadā višeṣaṇāsyārthavattvam; na hy ekasmin eva vastuni, višeṣaṇāntarāyogāḥ; yathā asāv eka āditya iti, tathā ekam eva brahma, na brahmāntarāṁ, yebhyo višeṣyeta niłotpala-vat. na; lakṣaṇārthatvād višeṣaṇānāṁ. nāyāṁ doṣaḥ. kasmāt? lakṣaṇārtha-pradhānāṁ višeṣaṇāṁ, na višeṣaṇa-pradhānāṁ eva. kaḥ punar lakṣaṇa-laksyor višeṣaṇa-višeṣyayor vā višeṣaḥ? ucyate. sajātīyebhya eva nivartakāṁ višeṣaṇāṁ višeṣyasya; lakṣaṇaṁ tu sarvata eva, yathā avakāśa-pradātr ākāśam iti. TUBh 2.1.1, VI.61-2.
the definite article, but it is not so in Sanskrit. Śaṅkara claimed that the predication of characteristics to Brahman in the Upaniṣads is an instance of a definiendum-definiens relation.

In claiming this, which amounts to a crucial distinction from the account of Maṇḍana and other prasaṅkhya-vādins in which Brahman ended being a sentential reference, Śaṅkara clearly took a cue from the tradition of Nyāya. Vātsyāyana, the author of the Nyāya-Bhāṣya, said that the method of Nyāya as a discipline had three parts. The first, called uddeśa, is the mere positing of a category by way of stating its name. The second is definition, laksāṇa, or stating the property of the posited category that differentiates it as a thing. The last is parīkṣā, examination by means of reliable warrants whether the stated definition is applicable to the defined thing or not.\footnote{trividhā cāsya śāstrasya pravrṭtih, uddeśo laksanaṁ parīkṣā ceti. tatra nāmadheyena padārtha-mātrasyābhidhānam uddeśaḥ, tatrodhiṣṭasya tattva-vyavacchedakā dharmo laksanaṁ. lakṣītasya yathā-laksanaṁ upapadyate na vetti pramāṇaṁ avadhāraṇaṁ prīkṣāḥ. Nyāya-Bhāṣya on 1.3.} Precisely the first two were happening at the beginning of the second chapter of the Taittirīya, where Brahman is posited as something to be known in the statement brahmavid āpnoti param, “The knower of Brahman attains the highest,” but its specific nature is not stated. The immediately following statement satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma is a definition of the posited category that distinguishes its nature from everything else by the attribution of the three characteristics of Being, consciousness, limitless.

In doing so, the three characteristics that serve as definiens of Brahman the definiendum are predicated of Brahman serially, not simultaneously, which should further prevent the definition from being confused for a definite description. In a definite description, all attributes that are predicated of the substance need to be understood simultaneously for the sentential reference to obtain. Consider the expression, “a blue hardcover book of five hundred pages.” For this to be a single expression, it must be syntactically tight. There is no such requirement in
satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma. Śaṅkara says that these are, really, three separate statements, satyaṁ brahma, jñānaṁ brahma, anantaṁ brahma, that progressively refine the definition of Brahman. Brahman is, then, not a sentential reference, but is identified with individual words that stand for three separate categories: in effect, it is not identified with attributes at all, but with substantives that share the denotation with it. Brahman is not real or conscious: it is Being and consciousness. The three do eventually restrict one another, but there is no requirement that they do so simultaneously: the serial predication amounts to a gradual refinement of the notion of Brahman. Whereas for the unique lotus a full definite description is required, Brahman is already single.

The profit from this mode of predication is obvious: Brahman becomes known in its specific nature, not just as a padārtha, but is no longer a relational entity, a particular obtained by a collocation of a noun and adjectives, a sentential reference. Śaṅkara hoped in this way to avert what he saw as the pitfall of the prasaṅkhyaṇa formulation of the notion of Brahman: it turned out a saṁsargātmika entity, a verbal composite like the funny bird that we named Jewelfowl.

Let us very briefly go through the three parts of the definiens and see what they contribute to defining Brahman in its specific nature.

Satyam – that is true which does not alter its nature which is fixed by itself. If a thing alters its self-constituted nature (i.e., becomes what it is not), it is unreal. Therefore, a transformation is unreal; “The transformation is a verbal handle, as being it is only clay;” only being is real. Therefore, saying “Brahman is Being,” [the Upaniṣad] guards Brahman from transformation. From this it follows that Brahman is the cause.

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95 satyādi- śabdā na parasparaṁ sambadhyante, parārthatvāt; viśeṣyārthā hi te. ata eva ekaiko višeṣaṇa-śabdaḥ parasparaṁ nirapekṣo brahma-śabdena sambadhyate – satyaṁ brahma jānaṁ brahma anantaṁ brahmaṇi. TUBh 2.1.1, VI.62.
96 satyam iti yad-rūpeṇa yan niśčitāṁ tad rūpaṁ na vyabhicarati, tat satyam, yad-rūpeṇa yan niśčitāṁ tad rūpaṁ vyabhicarati, tad anṛtam ity ucyate. ato vikāro 'nṛtam, vācārambhānaṁ vikāro nāmadheyāṁ mṛttiketyeva satyam [ChU 6.1.4], evaṁ sad eva satyam ity avadhāranāt. ataḥ satyaṁ brahma iti brahma vikārāṁ nivartayati. ataḥ kāraṇatvaṁ prāptaṁ brahmaṁ. Ibid.
Now, we already knew that Brahman was the cause through the etymology of the word, “it is that which makes things grow,” so there must be more to the statement that *satyam* tells us how Brahman is the cause. The operative idea here is that Being is changeless, like clay that persists being clay throughout its different shapes.

Our concept of Brahman is refined through understanding that Brahman as Being is changeless, but in effect that presents Brahman as the material cause of the world, *upādāna-kāraṇa*, and that brings two dangers. First, a material cause or the stuff that things are made of is, in our experience, an insentient thing, like clay the material cause of pots, pitchers, and the like. Second, an insentient cause requires a sentient agent, a separate *nimitta-kāraṇa* or an efficient cause. The second attribution, that of *jñāna* or knowledge, prevents these two from obtaining.

“Since a cause, being a thing, requires causal factors, as in the case of clay, its being unconscious may obtain. Therefore, it is said, Brahman is knowledge.”

The further attribution of *ananta*, infinite, along with the prior fact of Brahman’s being *satyam* the singular Being, prevent *jñānam* to be taken in the sense of a cognitive agent:

Consciousness is knowing, awareness. The word “consciousness” refers to the verbal action, not the agent of knowledge, because consciousness is a qualification of Brahman along with truth and infinite. The two are impossible when there is an agent of knowing. How can that which is transformed as being the cognitive agent be Being and infinite? For, that is infinite which is not cut off from anything. If it is the agent of knowledge, it is separate from the knowable and from knowledge—how could it be infinite?

First, that Brahman is changeless Being and limitless, *satyam anantam*, jointly prevent the common distinction of agent, object, and action of knowing to obtain. The agent-object

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97 [kāraṇasya ca kārakatvam, vastutvāt, mṛḍvat, acid-rūpatā ca prāptāḥ; ata idam ucyate—jñānāṁ brahmeti. TUBh 2.1.1, VI.62-3.](#)

98 [jñānaṁ jñaptiḥ avabodhaḥ, — bhava-sādhano jñāna-śabdah — na tu jñāna-kartr, brahma-viśeṣaṇatvāt satyānantābhyaṁ saha. na hi satyātaṁ anantatā ca jñāna-kartr̥vate saty upapadyate. jñāna-kartr̥tvena hi vikriyamāṇaṁ kathaiṁ satyaṁ bhavet, anantaiṁ ca? yad dhi na kutaścit pravibhyate, tad anantam. jñāna-kartr̥tvē ca jñeyaiṁ-jñānābhyāṁ pravibhaktam ity anantatā na syāt. Ibid.](#)
distinction presupposes limits, and is otherwise known: scripture would not be informative if it were to uphold it. Brahman is just knowing that does not involve agent and object. Second, the attribution of ananta prevents this knowledge that does not involve the agent-object distinction to be limited, as knowledge otherwise is. Brahman thus becomes omniscient, and we have arrived at Śaṅkara’s common definition of Brahman/Īśvara as the omnipotent and omniscient cause of the world. I should like to note that this is a very curious form of omniscience that a captious mind may be tempted to call omni-ignorance, were it not clear that in Śaṅkara’s eyes it is not an epistemological category at all.

Now, in the passage that I have been following here, TUBh 2.1.1, there seems to be a shift in the argument when Śaṅkara points to the identification of this Brahman with the Self, which the Upaniṣad does by the typical anaphoric-cataphoric use of the pronouns, tasmād vā etasmād ātmanah, which is followed by an account of creation. This is no longer just the “tat-padārtha” context, and that is also evident from Sarvajñātman’s Pañca-Prakriyā which we will consider in Chapter Ten: it is the tat = tvam context. I will come back to this passage later.

For now, we should point out that the definition of Brahman as satyam jñānam anantam relates through the individual categories to other Upaniṣadic passages in the texts about the causal Brahman that present Brahman as the sole Self in our classification. Śaṅkara clearly identifies satyam with sat from the 6th chapter of the Chāndogya, and that text is used to bring home the point that Brahman in its causal role does not undergo transformation, but just is that great thing out there, coordinated with everything. Elsewhere (BSBh 2.1.14), as we saw in the previous heading, he goes at great length to show how the creation passages are illustrations of how the world of multiplicity does not proceed from Brahman, but is Brahman; in other words, how Brahman the cause is changeless. Any textual locus that discusses satyam/sat can be used to
elaborate on Brahman’s nature as the unchanging Being from which creation proceeds, and these include, for example, the 1st of Aittareya and the 2nd of Taittirīya itself. Brahman’s feature of jñānam anantam, on the other hand, is elaborated in passages such as the section of the bhūma-vidyā where the Upaniṣad says, “where one does not see, hear or cognize another, that is plenitude.”

Thus, the texts about Brahman as the sole Self, ātmaikatva-pratipādana-param vacanajātam, seem to be individually related to the categories that form the definiens of Brahman as their elaborations, and on their part, use the descriptions of creation to teach what kind of Being and consciousness Brahman is. The three are in a close synergy. We can begin to form some idea of hierarchy of Upaniṣadic passages on the side of the tat-padārtha:

- brahma-vid āpnoti param posits Brahman as that thing which should be known; it is known in general through the etymology, and its incomplete characterization is given in yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jīvanti, yat prayanty abhisaṁviśanti, tad vijijñāsasva, tad brahma;
- satyaṁ jñānam anantam brahma defines this Brahman essentially;
- satyaṁ brahma is elaborated in texts such as sad eva somyedam agra āsīt evādvitīyam of ChU, and ātmā vā idam eka evāgra āsīt of AiU, as well as in the TU 2; the descriptions of creation in these texts are used to teach Brahman as satyam;
- jñānam anantam brahma is elaborated in yatra nānyat paśyati of the ChU.

The next part of the definition of Brahman is the text vijñānam ānandam from BĀU 3.9.28.7, presenting bliss as the fourth characteristic that defines Brahman’s nature. The interpretation given of knowledge applies to bliss as well: Brahman is not an object of experiential happiness, because that would bring about the same basic cognitive duality of action, agent, and patient. This attribute also calls for an elaboration passage, but Śaṅkara’s immediate choice is not to point to the Taittirīya Brahmnanda-valli chapter that an Upaniṣadic scholar would immediately think of. The Taittirīya, all-important for the history of Vedānta as it

99 ChU 7.24.1.
100 BĀUBh 3.9.28.7.
gave the paradigmatic injunction of brahma-vidyā, brahma-vid āpnoti param, and the satyaṁ jñānam anantam brahma definition of Brahman, was not a text without challenges for Šaṅkara, because the injunction and the definition were followed by a peculiar statement of result: “A man who knows [Brahman as Being, knowledge, infinite] hidden in the cavity, the highest heaven, attains all desires together with the wise Brahman.” This was the paradigmatic statement of the nature of liberation in the BS, but from the perspective of para-vidyā such passages for Šaṅkara were statements of praise, arthavāda or Vedic propaganda meant to make liberation appealing.\footnote{Ibid.}

For Šaṅkara, the normative description of ānanda was BĀU 4.3.32, which is a part of a section that shared something important with the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of Taittirīya. Both texts contain descriptions that attempt to make a stratification of bliss, which goes roughly like this: the highest possible human pleasure is the basic measure of bliss. That highest human bliss times one hundred equals the bliss in the world of the Gandharvas, and thus progressively to the bliss of Prajāpati, which is one hundredth of the bliss of Brahman. While the Taittirīya culminates in claiming that this bliss of Brahman is beyond thought and words, evidently because there is no further standard of comparison, the BĀU proceeds to say that this is “the highest goal, the highest attainment, the highest world, the highest bliss,” but of the kind that one cannot experience because it pertains to the state of samprasāda, deep calm characteristic of deep sleep, where Brahman is the sole entity and no cognition can obtain. Bliss is what Brahman is, thick, solid bliss, the ground that makes possible the experience of any form of pleasure, but which is itself not experienced.\footnote{TU 2.5, BĀUBh 3.9.28.7}

We can, now, appreciate Šaṅkara’s statement that this positive definition of Brahman presents Brahman as the light of consciousness, and as nothing more. It is, however, a bit more difficult to appreciate what new information could provide the other kinds of Upaniṣadic
statements about Brahman, those that deny change in Brahman on the one hand, and possession of the attributes of its gross products on the other. We saw their important hermeneutic role with regard to the statements about the causal Brahman and the descriptions of creations: Brahman cannot really transform into the creation because it is a permanently changeless entity. As for the definition of Brahman, however, they don’t seem to contribute much, since Śaṅkara’s positive characteristics were so “positive” that there was nothing left to deny. Or rather, there was, as we shall soon see, but only at the level of the identity statement, not on the tat-padārtha side.

Let us see what we have achieved through the definition of the tat-padārtha. The indeterminate notion of that thing which makes everything grow that we are empirically acquainted through understanding causality and growth with has become essentially defined and known in its specific nature through identification with individual categories. The procedure made it possible to avoid presenting Brahman as a relational entity, which was one of the two major reasons why prasaṅkhya-vādins wanted Upaniṣadic knowledge to be followed by meditation. We did not quite avoid the problem of supersensible Brahman and language. Brahman was still defined by words, and we have not seen any reason why such attribution could not happen through the direct signification function: we will have to come back to this problem. But for now, Brahman was not expressible in sentences in the manner that class members were, and this is an important point to absorb: Śaṅkara found a way out where prasaṅkhya-vādins could not: the mode of predication was through lakṣaṇa. This was still a type of the viśeṣya-viśeṣa-bhāva, general co-referentiality through predication, but the prediction was definitionial, not descriptive.

The second category in the identity statements was the tvam-padārtha, the category of “You.” Here is Śaṅkara’s definition: “The category of ‘You’ is the inner Self, the listener,
regarded as the inner Self starting with the body and ascertained as culminating in consciousness.103 The definition is a bit cryptic, but it is clear nevertheless that the category refers to a student to whom the instruction in the identity statement is repeated, and who can potentially identify with anything that one may consider “the Self,” beginning with the body and culminating in pure consciousness.

I will say much more about this in the context of the identity statement, but now let us note that just like the characteristics of Brahman that are elaborated in separate Upaniṣadic passages, the category of tvam is also taken up for deliberation in the Upaniṣads, such that its scope is gradually restricted so that it can become possible to present it as the pure light of consciousness. In the Taittirīya chapter that defined Brahman, this is done through the famous teaching of the five sheaths of the Self, pañca-kośa, namely man as the Self that is made of food (anna-rasamaya), life-breath (prāṇamaya), mind (manomaya), cognition (vijñānamaya), and bliss (ānandamaya). In Śaṅkara’s reading, which is quite uncontroversial except for the fifth sheath, these are the physical human body consisting of the different limbs; the vital Self consisting of the various forms of prāṇa; the mental body that is constituted by the Vedic mantras that one can recite internally; the cognitive Self that forms correct ideas from the Vedas as its pramānic field so that it could perform proper sacrifice; and the blissful Self, that is, the Self that enjoys “bliss,” the results of ritual and meditation. The last two obviously stand for the categories of kartṛ and bhokṛ as specifically Vedic categories, the ritual agent and the one to whom the results of Vedic acts accrue.104 We should bear in mind that agency was the symptom of ignorance, the root of transmigration, and transmigration was suffering. Although I haven’t

103 tathā tvam-padaṁ-pårātho 'pi prayag-ātmā śrotā dehād ārabhya prayag-ātmatayā sambhāvyamānaḥ caityanyaparyantatvenāvadhāritaḥ. BSBh 4.1.2, III.770.
104 See TUBh 2.1.1 through 2.5.1.
seen a statement directly spelling this out, the blissful Self that is in closest proximity to Brahman as bliss thick and solid is, really, the miserable Self, the transmigrating Self that thinks itself an agent. Sarvajñātman will explicitly identify ānandaṁ brahma with nirduḥkha, absence of suffering that we need to understand in the wider sense of transmigration.

The pañca-kośa, thus, are sheaths enveloping the Self with all the possible points of identification in the natural and the Vedic sphere, and Śaṅkara says that the Upaniṣad uses this teaching to unveil Brahman as the innermost Self, one’s own Self, by progressively removing the sheaths that are created by ignorance, in the manner of the gradual winnowing of grain of the kodrava species that has several layers of husk.105

The Identity Statement Context

I said that it is was not easy to see what new information the negative characteristics add to the notion of Brahman in Śaṅkara’s account. It becomes, however, abundantly clear when we look at the third chapter of the verse portion of the US that these characteristics become meaningful on the assumption that Brahman is the Self, not before that. The reasoning in this four-verse composition is as follows. The question that is under discussion in, how should one understand the identity statement “I am he,” where “he” stands for Īśvara or Brahman? Two options are available: Īśvara can be understood either as one’s own Self, such that this would be a full identity statement, meaning that I am literally Brahman, or it can be understood as something which is not the Self. Ānandagiri’s example clarifies what the second really means: does “I am he” mean something like “I am Meru,” the great mountain and the greatest thing out there one

105 annamayādibhyā ānandamayāntebhya ātmabhyaḥ abhyantaratamaṁ brahma vidyayā pratyag-ātmatvena didarṣayiśu śāstram, avidyā-kṛta-pañca-kośāpanayanena aneka-tuṣa-kodrava-vitusi-karaṇeneva tāṇḍulān prastauti. TUBh 2.2.1, VI.75.
could possibly conceive of? If that were the case, the identity statement would intend to affirm assimilative meditation.

The key argument for the first possibility is that characteristics such as “not gross” and “not fine” are predicated of Brahman, and if they are predicated to some external Meru-like thing, then such a thing would be unknowable—what could possibly such a “not gross, not fine” thing be—and the worst theological nightmare would follow: a scriptural statement would be either meaningless, or would intend to affirm the Buddhist emptiness. If, however, Brahman is the Self, myself, then such statements would be purposeful, because they would mean that I who am Brahman am not any of the products that may be described either as gross or as fine. Whatever Brahman is said to have created, I am not that, and by the principle of residue it would follow that I am Brahman pure and simple. The similar situation is with descriptions such as “without prāṇa” and “without a mind:” if they, attributed otherwise to Brahman, are not taken to refer to the transmigrating Self, then they would be useless because of being not informative, as I also indicated at the end of the satyam jñānam anantam ānandam brahma analysis. From the Brahman = Self standpoint, however, they become most informative, because now we can say that whatever one may identify with in the field of points of identification is meaningfully denied. Am I gross? No! Am I fine? No! Am I mortal? No! Do I have a mind? No! And so on. As Śaṅkara says, these characteristics are predicated to Brahman for negating the false superimposition of characteristics that do not belong to the Self.

Whatever we may otherwise think of the argument, it helps us understand that Śaṅkara’s attribution of negative characteristics to Brahman was not just a theological requirement posed by the BS procedure of forming the notion of Brahman: it was quite meaningful, but not in isolation from the context of the identity statement. We are now, then, deep in this context,
where two things need to happen. First, the individual reference of the category of \textit{tvam} must be fixed, if it has not been fixed yet: while the reference of the category of \textit{tat} is quite independent, the reference of \textit{tvam} seems to require procedurally the context of the identity statement. Second, some sense must be made of the identity statement itself. Let us go back, therefore, to this context, and the \textit{Taittirīya Upaniṣad}.

The \textit{Taittirīya} text that we have been considering says that Brahman is Being, knowledge, infinite. Later the text says that one should know Brahman as bliss, and that completes the definition of Brahman. This Brahman is related to one’s Self in three important ways. First, creation proceeds from this Brahman and culminates with the birth of man who is the Self consisting of food, \textit{puruṣa anna-rasamaya}; the Self comes from Brahman. Second, once this creation has been completed, Brahman enters created beings, \textit{tat sṛṣṭvā tad evoprāviṣat}, and is said to reside in the cavity that Śaṅkara interprets as the intellect.\textsuperscript{106} Third, this Brahman that creation proceeds from is most directly called the Self: “From that [Brahman] which is this Self, space is born,” \textit{tasmād vā etasmād ātmana ākāśaśaṁ sambhūtaḥ}, etc. Thus, Brahman is presented as the source of creation in general and the five-layered Self in particular, is directly identified with the Self in \textit{tasmād vā etasmād ātmanah}, and is said to have entered creation as the Self: Brahman that creates is the Self, and as that same Self it enters creation and becomes nested in the man of five sheaths. Śaṅkara draws an explicit equivalence between \textit{tasmād vā etasmād ātmanah} and \textit{tat tvam asi}, and in the context of the \textit{Taittirīya} that we are following, this is the identity statement that juxtaposes the two categories.

Since in the statement “from that [Brahman] which is the Self [space came about]” the word “Self” is used in the sense of Brahman itself, it follows that Brahman is the Self of the cognitive agent. Further, the text shows that Brahman is the Self in the text “He attains the Self of bliss.” The same follows from the entrance of Brahman, for the text

\textsuperscript{106} TUBh 2.1.1, VI.67.
“Having created it, it entered into it” shows that Brahman entered into the body as the individual Self.107

How is it that I am this great ground of Being, the causal Brahman? What does the Upaniṣad mean when it says, “You are that?” The statement is an instance of co-referentiality, sāmānādhikaranya, and it would appear that this co-referentiallity can be taken in two ways, depending on where one’s point of identification is located. The general purpose of tat tvam asi is to negate whatever one may understand as the Self but is not so, and in that sense, it is an instance of negational co-referentiality, apavāda-sāmānādhikaranya, which Śaṅkara says explicitly under BSBh 3.3.9.108 As such, the identity statement is intimately related to the negative characteristics of Brahman that can be subsumed under another famous Upaniṣadic text, neti neti: while the individual negative characteristics of Brahman negate individually, neti neti negates generally and it negates everything that the Self is not. To be more specific, at this level what the identity statement says is that one is not anything that can be an object of consciousness and conceived as separate from oneself: the objective part of any propositional consciousness that the subject can identify with, from parts of one’s body to one’s most intimate thoughts, what Śaṅkara otherwise calls idam-aṁśa.109 This does not mean that one is no longer aware of any objects, of course, but simply that one does not identify with them. What remains when such negation of superimposition has been applied is pure subjectivity, jñātṛtvā. This is the intended

107 tasmād vā etasmād ātmanaḥ iti brahmaṇy eva ātma-śabda-prayogat veditur ātmaiva brahma. etam ānandamayam ātmānam upasanikrāmati iti ca ātmataṁ darśayati. tat-praveśaḥ ca; tat sṛṣṭvā tad evānuprāvīṣat iti ca tasyaiva jīva-rūpeṇa śāfr-a-praveśaṁ darśayati. ato vedituḥ svarūpaṁ brahma. TUBh 2.1.1, VI.65.

108 “A negation, to define it, is the posterior correct notion which removes a prior deep-rooted false notion, when there is such a deep-rooted false and settled notion in regard to a certain thing; for instance, the notion of the Self in regard to the psychophysical complex is subsequently driven away by the notion of the Self in regard to the Self only through the correct notion arisen from ‘You are that.’” apavādo nāma—yatra kaminiścicid vastuni pūrva-nivīṣṭāyāṁ mithyā-buddhau niścitiyām, paścād upajāyamānā yathārthā buddhiḥ pūrva-nivīṣṭāyā mithyā-buddhēḥ nivartikā bhavati—yathā dehendriya-saṁghāte ātma-buddhiḥ, ātmany eva ātma-buddhyā paścād-bhāvinyā tat tvam asi ity anayā yathārtha-buddhyā nivartyate. BSBh 3.3.9, III.629.

109 USP 6.5.
meaning of the *tvaṁ-padārtha* in the identity statement, and when one understands it as such, the statement is more directly an instance of *viṣeṣya-viṣeṣana-bhāva*, a case where two words stand for the same reference. The statement *literally* says that the subject of knowing is Brahman, that is, is Being, consciousness, infinite, bliss. This is the ultimate point that words can reach and exercise their direct signification function. Let us expand on this.

The relation of the Self to Brahman is established through Brahman’s feature of *jñānam* or consciousness, but there is a problem with this. Brahman was defined as *jñānam anantam*, unlimited consciousness and ontological omniscience, but its identification with the Self that is the cognitive agent imposes limitations on consciousness, since it presupposes the system of cognitive agency: agent, object, instrument, content, and action. The agent does not have to identify with any object that is presented to it, but objects *are* presented all the same, and they are required for the self-understanding as the pure agent. The distinction is, further, required for the very possibility of understanding the identity statement. So, if Brahman’s being consciousness means that Brahman is the cognitive agent, it would not be unlimited—an object is a second entity that *eo ipso* means limitation for the agent—and its being transient would follow because cognition implies change.

That Brahman is *just* consciousness is no less problematic either, when we pause to consider what that really means. Śaṅkara said that consciousness or *jñāna* means the verbal action of knowing—*jñānam jñaptiḥ avabodhaḥ*, *bhāva-sādhano jñāna-śabdaḥ*—and any form of action implies change, a transition from one state to another, not Being, but becoming. The final punch, therefore, is that Brahman that is defined by the word *jñānam* and is identified with the cognitive agent cannot be *directly signified* by that word, but it can be indicated.
We will remember here that the empirical Self for Śaṅkara was at the core a reflection of the pure Self as the light of consciousness in the intellect, buddhi, which was for this reason the first and the closest point of Self-identification that happened through mutual superimposition. The Self as the agent of cognition, the one that is directly denoted by the personal affix tiṅ in the finite verbal form jānāti, “s/he knows,” and the one directly denoted by the personal pronouns tvam and aham, was the reflection of the Self in the intellect, the ātmābhasa. Cognition as action that involves the syntactic relations or kārakas, such as the agent and instrument, takes place in the intellect—which was why the most direct appellation for the individual Self or jīva was vijñānatman, the Self of cognition—and the intellect itself that accommodates such cognition was its instrumental factor, karaṇa. The object of cognition was also a transformation of the intellect in the shape of the external object. Now, all of this was possible because the intellect, buddhi, was suffused by the light of consciousness that is the Self. The intellect is insentient, so it cannot have cognition on its own, whereas the Self is cognition pure and simple that cannot involve change, so neither of the two can be the reference of the finite verb “s/he knows,” and the saving grace is found in the sense of Self—the reflection of the Self—and the processual action of knowing that happens in the intellect. The agent is denoted by the personal ending, whereas the action of knowing is denoted by the root to which the ending is applied. Because all of this is possible through the fact that the Self illumines the intellect, the Self is indicated by these two—the action and the agent of knowing—through immediate proximity, but it is not denoted directly. The predication of the characteristic of jñānam to Brahman, thus, happens through the secondary signification function of the word, lakṣanā (to be distinguished from lakṣaṇa, the word for definition).\(^{110}\)

\(^{110}\) This is largely based on USP 18.
Because Brahman’s nature of being a knower cannot be separated from him and because it does not depend on instruments like senses, its being eternal is proven though Brahman’s nature of knowledge. Therefore, Brahman is not knowledge as the sense of the root, because [such knowledge that Brahman is] it is not action in nature. For this reason, Brahman is not the agent of knowing either, wherefore it is not denoted by the word “knowledge.” Still, it is indicated by the word “knowledge,” which is a specific attribute of the intellect and denotes the semblance of Brahman. However, it is not denoted, because it does not have the properties such as genus, which are the ground of uses of words.\footnote{vijñātṛ-svarūpāvyatirekāt karaṇādi-nimitānapekṣatvāc ca brahmaṇo jñāna-svarūpātve 'pi nityatva-prasiddhiḥ. ato naiva dhātv-arthas tat, akriyā-rūpatvāt. ata eva ca na jñāna-karṣṭ; tasmād eva ca na jñāna-sābdv-vācyam api tad brahma. tathāpi tad-ābhāsa-vācakena buddhi-dharma-viśeṣena jñāna-sābdvata tāl laṃ̣kṣyate; na tu ucyate, śabda-pravṛtti-hetu-jāty-ādi-dharma-rahitvāt. TUBh 2.1.1, VI.66.}

This is supported with the most favorite Advaita argument that is like the garam masala for every curry: it is the only way that scripture can be meaningful. Knowing presupposes cognitive agency, yet such agency is empirically known. If scripture were to affirm agency, if Brahman were the cognitive action or the agent that knows another or knows itself directly, it would not be a reliable warrant since it would have no sphere of operation. The Upaniṣads as a reliable warrant must have a reference to it, but they do not affirm it. It is like the necessary \textit{prima facie} view that must be stated so that the true and conclusive view can be stated against it.\footnote{USP 18.3-8.} Thus, Brahman is consciousness, but not of any kind that can be actually experienced and named.

Now, this identification of Brahman with the inner Self in the feature of consciousness makes Brahman an inward category, myself, and this further poses a problem with the qualification of \textit{satyam}, Being. We saw that this Being was what makes things grow and that it was coordinated with everything, but in such a way that the reality of all multiplicity was denied. This multiplicity is denied as real, but the assumption of multiplicity is necessary for the very possibility of affirming that Being is coordinated with everything, and for the possibility of
denial, very much like the case of cognitive agency that requires the complex around knowing as action. This presents Brahman denoted by the word “Being” as an external object of knowing, and that cannot be reconciled with the sense of $jñānam$, myself as knowledge simple. It turns out that Brahman cannot be denoted by $satyam$ either, but must be indicated as well:

Likewise, by the word ‘Being.’ Brahman, on the account of its essence being the state where all distinctions have been abolished, is indicated in ‘Brahman is Being’ through the word ‘Being’ whose sphere is the external universal of ‘Being.’ It is not, however, denoted by it.\(^{113}\)

So, Brahman being that great Being out there that makes everything grow does not, in fact, make anything grow, because there is no second thing other than Brahman to begin with. All that causality is just a show whose only purpose is to make it possible to express how awesome the director is.

Unsurprisingly, the same is true of Brahman’s characteristic of bliss. The blissful Self that was closest to Brahman serves as a mark through which Brahman as bliss thick and solid can be indicated. Bliss is experienced in the intellect, and the intellect is in proximity to the Self that is the light of consciousness. The mental experience of bliss, thus, points to Brahman that is the ground of any experience of bliss,\(^{114}\) “but when the subject-object distinction that is a product of ignorance has been set aside by knowledge, there remains only the essential, thick and solid, one, non-dual bliss.”\(^{115}\) Such Brahman as bliss must be understood as just the ultimate point of aspiration in which the pursuit of that $niratiśaya$-$prīti$ that was the synonym of the highest human good culminates. Brahman as bliss is indicated through the experienced bliss, but it is not denoted.

\(^{113}\) tathā satya-śabdenāpi. sarva-viśeṣa-pratyastamita-svarūpatvād brahmaṇaḥ bāhya-sattā-sāmānya-viṣayeṇa satya-śabdena lakṣyate $satyaṁ brahma$ iti; na tu satya-śabda-vācyaiḥ brahma. TUBh 2.1.1, VI.66-7.

\(^{114}\) TUBh 2.6.1.

\(^{115}\) niraste tu avidyā-ḥṛte viṣaya-viṣayi-bhāge, vidyāyā svabhāvikaḥ pariśuṣṭaḥ ekaḥ ānandaḥ advaitaḥ bhavati etam arthaṁ vibhāvayisyaṁ āha. TUBh 2.8.1-4, VI.109.
So, on the level of the identity statement, the two categories of *tat* and *tvam*, standing for Brahman the great Being out there described in superlative language, and the inner Self that is tinged by ignorance and is liable to suffering that is transmigration, restrict one another because of being co-referential, and there obtains a special meaning of the identity statement in which the reference is neither external nor liable to transmigration. Śaṅkara makes the point of emphasizing that this special meaning obtains without the respective categories giving up their individual meaning. This must be interpreted to mean that the respective categories do not directly obtain a secondary signification function in the sentence because the primary is blocked, as would be the case in “Devadatta is a lion,” where “lion” must be first reduced to “leonine.” In technical terms, the sentence does not require the words to exercise their *gauṇa-vṛtti*. This would be quite disastrous for the argument, in fact, because it would mean that either Brahman or the Self stands for something else, such as *pradhāna* or the body. However, when combining in sentences through the *viśeṣya-višeṣaṇa-bhāva*, some restriction of meaning must obtain, as in Bhartṛhari’s black sesame or Śaṅkara’s black horse. This is not an equivalent case, as neither of the two *padārtha* have a respective class from which it can be delimited, but it is quite like the definition of *satyam jñānam anantam brahma* where something from the scope of the collocated categories had to drop. What drops in the meaning of the sentence is Brahman’s being external and the Self being liable to transmigration. In other words, clarifying the meaning of the *tvāṁ-padārtha*, one had reduced the scope of the word through removing the sheaths covering the Self, only to realize that s/he had not considered the one point of identification that made the removal possible, Brahman the light of awareness. One learns from the sentence that this inner Self of mine is Brahman, that great unlimited Being that is not liable to change and

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116 USP 18.171.
transmigration, but is not extraneous either.\textsuperscript{117} It is in this tiny space between the literal and indicated meaning, both of which are necessary, that liberation becomes possible, when it dawns on one that I myself, known to me most intimately, in fact am that great ground of Being out there: that is, that this Being is not out there at all.

Elsewhere Śaṅkara says that what drops on the side of Brahman is its being the creator, which was, we should bear in mind, the key feature of Brahman as Īśvara.\textsuperscript{118} That will have tremendous consequences in Sarvajñātman’s formulation of the mahā-vākya doctrine.

But, non-difference is also stated in sentences such as “You are that.” How could both difference and non-difference be possible, given that they are contradictory? – There is not that fault, since we have established in the respective places the possibility of both on the analogy of the great space and the space in a pot. Moreover, when non-difference has dawned on one through statements such as “You are that,” the individual Self’s being liable to transmigration is lost, and so is Brahman’s being a creator, because full knowledge defeats the practical reality of difference that extends through false awareness.\textsuperscript{119}

Brahman, thus, created the world, entered the cavity of the heart that is the intellect, enveloped itself with five sheaths to perform ritual and meditation and experience the “bliss” that is suffering that they bring, but really did nothing of the kind. I should like to point out here without going into details that this (and only this) is the demarcation line between the two truths or realities in Advaita Vedānta, the absolute, paramārtha, and the practical, vyavahāra.

However, that Brahman is \textit{literally} the inner Self has tremendous consequences on the definition of Brahman as that inner, non-transmigrating Being. \textit{Precisely because} the individual \textit{padārthas} in the identity statement do not give up their individual meanings, the definition of

\textsuperscript{117} USP 18.169-172, 194-5.

\textsuperscript{118} Julius Lipner (2000) is most certainly wrong in claiming that nothing is lost from the meaning of tāt, as I hope is amply clear. What is crucially lost is the sense that Brahman is mediate, external, and that Brahman is the creator.

\textsuperscript{119} nanv abheda-nirdēśo ’pi darśitaḥ—tāt tvam asi ity evan-jātiyakaḥ; kathari bhedābhedaḥ viruddhau sambhaveyātām? naiṣa doṣaḥ, mahākāśa-ghaṭākāśa-nyāyenobhaya-sambhavasya tatra tatra pratiṣṭhāpitavāt. api ca yadā tāt tvam asi ity evan-jātiyakenābheda-nirdēsesābhedaḥ pratibodhito bhavati, apagataṁ bhavatī tadā jīvasya sanśīrītvān brahmaṇaṁ ca srṣṭtvavam, samastasya mithyā-jīna-vasyānmbhitasya bheda-vasahārasya samyag-jñanena bādhitavāt. BSBh 2.1.22, II.328-9.
Brahman the entity behind the identity statement as satyaṁ jñānam anantam ānandam but identified with the inner Self now obtains through lakṣaṇā, the secondary signification function: words do not reach Brahman to express it directly, but because of the proximity of the pure Self and the intellect they can indicate it. Being cannot be that external Being that persists through changes, because it is my inner Self; knowledge cannot be the action or the agent, because they change; and, bliss cannot be the positive experience of pleasure, because that is transmigration.

With this feat Śaṅkara avoided, to his mind, the second problem with Brahman and language. By treating the attribution of characteristics as definiendum-definiens relation, he avoided the prasaṅkhyāna problem of Brahman being a vākyārtha, a sentential reference as a definite description; by claiming that words merely indicate Brahman, he avoided the problem of Brahman being designated directly by words, vācyā.

Therefore, it is proven that Brahman is not directly expressible by individual words, in keeping with the statements “Whence words return along with the mind without reaching it” and “inexpressible, non-supporting.” Furthermore, Brahman is not a sentential reference in the manner of the blue lotus.¹²⁰

Finally, by putting the absolute onus on the identity statement rather than the definition of Brahman or the injunction, in opposition to the prasaṅkhyāna-vādins, he could give the final punch and claim that such knowledge of Brahman, though obtained from verbal utterance, was not mediate in kind:

– One cannot experience the satisfaction of eating by hearing a sentence. The sentence analysis is like making milk-rice from cow-dung. – True, the understanding from sentences that are not about the Self is mediate. However, it certainly is immediate in respect to the inner Self, like in the case of getting the number right. The inner Self is its own evidence, synonymous with “knowable to itself.” When the sense of Self ceases, there is an experience of one's own Self.¹²¹

¹²⁰ at āh siddham yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha (TU 2.4.1), anirukte 'nilayane (TU 2.7) iti ca avācyatvam, nilotpala-vad avākyārthatvam ca brahmaṇaḥ. TUBh 2.1.1., VI.67.
¹²¹ vathānubhūyate trptir bhujer vākyāṇ nā gamyate | vākyasya vidhṛtis tadvad gośakṛt-pāyasī-kriyā ||
The case of getting the number right refers, of course, to Śaṅkara’s famous example of how knowledge of the inner Self is available to oneself directly, perceptually, but may be forgotten, in which case the anamnesis can happen only through a linguistic utterance. A boy was told that there are ten boys in total, but his perception presents only nine. He had forgotten to count himself, and someone must tell him, “Well, you are the tenth.” As soon as that happens and he is competent enough to understand it, no further perception is needed, as he is known to himself most intimately.  

Likewise, our student has been counting the sheaths enveloping the Self and got very close in figuring out what the Self could not possibly be, but must be told eventually that it is the very possibility of counting what he really is.

Thus, tat tvam asi was a case of co-referentiality that was both a negation and qualification, apavāda and viśesya-viśesana-bhāva. The definition of Brahman had been obtained from the Upaniṣads. Through the application of the negative characteristics of Brahman, all that is not the Self had been removed from the pure agent. Finally, tat and tvam qualified one another, where some negation again had to take place for a sentence reference to obtain through indication. This reference obtained through the denial of causality of Brahman and transitive awareness of the Subject, which was also the domain, we shall remember, of the negative characteristics. And this reference, the reference behind tat tvam asi, was neti neti. The word tat obtains the meaning of the inner Self, and the word tvam obtains the meaning of tat. The two conjointly remove suffering and mediacy. In this way, they mutually convey the meaning of neti neti.  

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122 The analogy is found in the TUBh 2.1.1 and USP 18.169ff.
123 tac-chabdhāḥ pratyag-ātmārthas tac-chabdhārthas tvamas tathā | duḥkhītvātpratyag-ātmatvarī vārayetām ubhāv api || evaṁ ca neti netyarthaṁ gamayetāṁ parasparam. USP 18.197-8.
Since there is no other more apposite description, Brahman is called neti neti. Because, apart from teaching by way of negating the phenomenal world of manifestations, there is no better description of Brahman.\(^{124}\)

We still need to address the question of “another cognition of Brahman,” but we will do that after we return to knowledge as cultivation. Let us summarize now what we have discovered so far. The passages of the Upaniṣads that are concerned with \textit{para-vidyā} have as their goal to present the Self as single. They are governed by what we called the identity statements, because liberation follows as a result of understanding such identity statements. The identity statements correlate two categories, \textit{tat} standing in general for Brahman as the cause of the world, and \textit{tvam} standing for the individual who happens to listen to the Upaniṣads. The category of \textit{tat} is defined in the TU as \textit{satyam jñānam anantam brahma}, to which \textit{ānanda} is added as fourth. These characteristics, which Śaṅkara calls \textit{brahmaṇo lakṣanam} or the defining characteristics of Brahman, are elaborated in texts within the category of Upaniṣadic passages that are about the single Self. \textit{Tat}, further, has negative characteristics too, but it turns out that their purpose is to apply on the side of the individual Self: they relate the categories that are placed in identity. The category of \textit{tvam} presents the individual Self in all its points of identification, and is also elaborated in the TU through the teaching of the five sheaths that envelop the Self that has lodged into the intellect. Initially the identity statement is an instance of negational co-referentiality, where Brahman’s negative characteristics are used to remove from the notion of the Self anything that it may objectively identify with. When \textit{tvam} is purged of the sheaths so that only its relation to the intellect remains, the word stands for the cognitive agent that is a reflection of the pure Self/Brahman in the intellect. Once this reference has been fixed, the identity statement is an instance of \textit{viśeṣya-viśeṣana-bhāva} where two words that stand for a

\(^{124}\text{na hi, etasmāt iti na, iti na, iti prapañca-pratīṣedha-rūpāt ādeśanāt, anyat paramādeśanāṁ brahmaṇo’sṭīti. BSBh 3.2.22, III.600.}\)
single reference mutually restrict their scope: Brahman is no longer external and the creator/cause, whereas the inner Self is not liable to suffering/transmigration. The identity statement literally says that the inner Self is Brahman, but the thus denoted single entity is now defined by *satyam jñānam anantam ānandam brahma* through the secondary signification function of the words. While Brahman in its essential nature is directly expressed neither through words nor though sentences, these are the only way that one can learn about it and attain liberation.
CHAPTER NINE: LIBERATION AND THE INQUIRY INTO BRAHMAN

Since both experience of the results of action and knowledge of Brahman are results of the karma that had started bearing fruits, it is but proper that they not be mutually exclusive.¹

The Dharma of Disengagement and Desire

As we saw in the Second Chapter, for the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsakas the driving force behind the constitution of a text as the blueprint of a sacrifice was the syntactic expectancy of the productive power of the verb, bhāvanā. While we not need go into details, it appears from Śaṅkara’s comment on BĀU 1.4.7 that there were Vedāntins who wanted to apply the idea of bhāvanā for forming meditations on Brahman on the ritual model. Now, we saw that Śaṅkara argued that the knowledge given in the Veda can transit into action only if the cognition produced by a Vedic statement becomes somehow qualified by the idea that one should do something. There were scriptural cases, he further claimed, where such transition into action could not happen in principle, yet they were for the good of man, puruṣārtha. These were most evidently the Vedic prohibitions. When a Vedic statement does not enjoin a course of action but rather prohibits, the terminus of meaning of such a sentence would be just the cognition itself, because no action could really follow from it.

Let us consider the sentence “Do not consume hemlock, it is poisonous.” Obeying what the sentence commands ideally does not require effort on the part of man, and the sentence becomes fruitful just by producing a clear cognition. Śaṅkara says that such sentences achieve completion or paryavasāna just insofar as they are understood: they do not cross the threshold of

¹ ārabdhasya phale hy ete bhogo jñānaṁ ca karmaṇaḥ | avirodhas tayor yuktah. USP 4.4.
action.\textsuperscript{2} In fact, prohibitions act as checks to an impulse to action that otherwise obtains, by giving rise to some correct understanding. Seeing food, one is naturally prompted to eat it, and the prohibition is effective precisely by checking this natural ignorant tendency when food is poisonous. It does this by invoking recollection of the nature of poison.

This is quite a significant argument, because it allows Śaṅkara to claim that there are types of Vedic sentences favored by Mīmāṁsakas over which their most prized possession, the theory of bhāvanā, could not be applied in principle, precisely because there is nothing to do. The notion of paryavasāna or completion is crucial here, because for Mīmāṁsakas it marked the point where the injunction had secured all the details necessary for the performance of the relevant ritual, the point where it was clear what should be done, for what purpose, following what procedure (kim, kena, katham), and where the ritual agent had been convinced that good would be obtained through the sacrifice.\textsuperscript{3} The idea of bhāvanā could not really be applied in the case of prohibitions, because no production of anything was expected. While this may be stretching the argument a bit too far—it certainly is not immediately apparent in many prohibitions why something should not be done, and the arthavāda texts attached to them may exercise some verbal bhāvanā on Kumarila’s account—it is an ingenious critique because it ties the attaining of something good just to knowing. It particularly damages the procedural component of action, because it makes little sense to ask, “How should I not consume hemlock,” and it is a good starting point for Śaṅkara to claim that there are sentences in the Veda, even of the injunctive type, whose meaning terminates in sheer understanding (avagati-niṣṭhā) and which

\textsuperscript{2} na ca pratiṣiddha-viṣaye pravrītta-kriyasya akaraṇād anyad anuṣṭheyaṁ asti. akartavyatā-jñāna-niṣṭhataiva hi paramārthataḥ pratiṣedha-vidhiṁnaṁ syāt. BĀUBh 1.3.1, VIII.41. See also BSBh 1.1.5.

\textsuperscript{3} On paryavasāna, see McCrea 2008:55-98.
serve dharma that is characterized by disengagement. Little wonder that Śaṅkara classified knowledge of Brahman as prohibitory in kind:

Therefore, the prohibitory injunctions terminate just in knowledge that corresponds to the thing, and they have not even a whiff of reaching human effort. Likewise, the injunctions of knowledge that correspond to things such as the Supreme Self achieve completion in just that much. … Thus, the Vedic dicta inculcating the true nature of the Supreme Self, removing the erroneous notions about its being gross, dual etc., automatically assume the character of prohibitions of all actions, for in both cases there is equally an absence of action.⁴

This is the reason Śaṅkara related the statement which introduces the triple process of brahma-vidyā, Yājñavalkya’s ātmā vā are draṣṭavyah śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyah, to renunciation. The purpose of this injunction terminates in knowing—a Self needs to be seen—and the injunction discloses processes of knowing as its procedure. Precisely for this reason the injunction discloses for an adhikārin that ritual and the other āśrama practices must be renounced in the pursuit of the Self: “The section on Maitreyī was commenced to indicate the means of immortality which is wholly independent of action. It is the knowledge of the Self, with renunciation of everything as its part.”⁵ Even more indicative is a statement in the introduction to the comment on the first run of the Yājñavalkya-Maitreyī dialogue, to the effect that going forth or pārivrājya is enjoined as an auxiliary to brahma-vidyā.⁶

The status of aṅga accorded to renunciation meant that brahma-vidyā could not proceed without it. In Sarvajñātman’s words, whereas in the ritual section of the Veda statements about

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⁵ yat kevalāṁ karma-nirapekṣaṁ amṛtātmā-sādhanāṁ tad vaktavyam iti maitreyī-brāhmaṁ sarvam ārabdhām. tac cātma-jñānam sarva-sannyāsaṁga-viśiṣṭam. BĀU Bh 2.5.1.

⁶ tasmān na sādhanāntara-sahitā brahma-vidyā puruṣārtha-sādhanaṁ, sarva-virodhatā, sādhana-nirapekṣaiva puruṣārtha-sādhanaṁ—iti pārivrājyaṁ sarva-sādhana-sannyāsa-lakṣaṇam anvātvena vidhītasyate. BĀU 2.4.1, VIII.298.
engagement and disengagement, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* or injunctions and prohibitions, were of equal validity, Yājñavalkya’s statement concerned solely disengagement pertaining to the one who renounces all action: *brahma-vidyā* did not and could not involve action.\(^7\) This is how Advaitins have generally understood Yājñavalkya’s statement. We should also remember from the Seventh Chapter that knowledge *was* dispassion, predicated on understanding transmigration. Once knowledge had arisen, striving for something productive would be “non-productive,” and the further human good had to come just through understanding.

One may, of course, object that knowing as a process rather than a result was also a form of action or engagement, but Śaṅkara’s point was that this action was not productive. It was a form of guided anamnesis, making a student remember something that he had always known, like Meno’s slave in Plato’s famous eponymous dialogue, and—here is the crucial claim—the requirements of this anamnesis intersected in the object one tried to know, Brahman. As we saw in Chapter Six, knowledge was dependent on the thing, not on human choice. In matters of human choice, one must follow the urge for the result; in matters of knowing, one must follow the requirements of the thing. Brahman is the “thing” or the *pradhāna* factor in a *brahma-vidyā*, and understanding proceeds through what Brahman requires: state the definition of Brahman; elaborate Brahman’s characteristics in the texts where they appear; reduce the scope of the Self; draw the full identity; repeat until the cognition of unity is indubitable.

Another thing that needed thorough reevaluation in this light was the role of desire. We saw in the Seventh Chapter that Śaṅkara associated liberation with the desire for the Self, which was the desire for liberation: *ātma-kāma, mokṣa-kāma*. Advaitins have argued that this was a quantum jump of a sort, a desire that does not obtain naturally but must be brought about through

\(^7\) SŚ 1.71-2.
cultivation. Without it, inquiry into Brahman through the three processes could not be successful. However, if the desire was there, it did not matter how it got there. The inquiry into Brahman depended on the desire for liberation, not on understanding ritual, because when the desire for liberation had arisen, ritual had already become superfluous: it had accomplished its purpose, given rise to dispassion and the striving after liberation, and that could have just as well happened in a past life.

Thus, for Advaitins the inquiry into Brahman that was otherwise the counterpart to the inquiry into dharma was radically different from the first. The inquiry into dharma was required so that a successful sacrifice could be performed, and the sacrifice itself had a corresponding injunction that stipulated who the sacrifice is for through its x-kāma statement. The jījñāsā was just that, an inquiry that followed once the Veda had been studied. For Advaitins, however, brahma-jījñāsā was not just an inquiry: it was the process itself, consisting in śravaṇa, manana, nididhyāsana, that ends in liberation, it was the thing on which human good follows, and it had to express the appropriate desire through which the adhikārin would be ascertained. Athāto brahma-jījñāsā was in a sense not a counterpart to athāto dharma-jījñāsā, but to svarga-kāmo yajeta. And, whereas the desire for heaven obtained naturally through the fact of embodiment, the desire for Brahman/liberation was so radically different that it had to be the starting point of the process.

Padmapāda, thus, related Śaṅkara’s statement of the four prerequisites for the study of Brahman that we discussed in the Seventh Chapter to Śaṅkara’s choice to analyze jījñāsā as ājñātum icchā, desire to know, in the literal sense of the desiderative rather than the technical sense of vicāra or deliberation, where the object of deliberation is predicated rather than the desire itself. To put this more plainly, the immediate point of athāto brahma-jījñāsā was not to
introduce the inquiry into Brahman as a matter of course that would follow in the Vedic
curriculum after the study of the Veda and the inquiry into dharma, but to affirm that there is
such a thing as the desire to know Brahman, radically different from our common notion of
desire, which, when present, would lead to inquiry into Brahman through its own force, and
when absent the inquiry would either not follow, or would fail miserably if it did. Such analysis
of the desiderative justified the statement of the four prerequisites as that on which the inquiry
was consequent, and they constituted what the desire to know Brahman was. In its
consummation, the desire to know Brahman is mumuṣutva, the desire after liberation. In more
theological terms, the presence of such desire to know Brahman was the transition point from
vividisha to mumuṣutva/mokṣa-kāma.8

The Processes of Knowing Brahman and the Doctrine of Pramāṇa

I mentioned in the Fourth Chapter that we can gather very little about the role of śravaṇa and
manana in pre-Śaṅkara Vedānta. They are regularly discussed in the Bhāṣya and the Vārttika on
BĀU against opponents, but the onus is always on meditation, nīdidhyāsana. The real Vedāntic
sādhana was meditation, and meditation was the process that had to be repeated more than once,
in accordance with BS 4.1.1, āvṛttir asakṛd, upadesāt. Most informative were Bhartṛprapañca
and Maṇḍana Miśra, in whose case it seemed as if śravaṇa was the first understanding of
Brahman, which in its turn became the instrumental factor of meditation and the direct
experience of Brahman.

With Śaṅkara, however, the onus shifted to śravaṇa and manana, and they were to be repeated until full understanding. Sureśvara explicitly said that the principle of repetition
involved in the notion of meditation could be meaningful only regarding śravaṇa and manana:

8 See PP, p.52-67.
Now, if it is the case that you could not possibly live without prasaṅkhyaṇa, we will make that possible for you, but only concerning śravaṇa, etc. Let the principle of repetition in prasaṅkhyaṇa operate with respect to hearing of the teaching. One understands after hearing perfectly that which was slightly or half-heard.\(^9\) This does not necessarily mean, it seems to me, that the third process could not be repeated, but that it was not to be taken as prasaṅkhyaṇa. Sureśvara was, of course, echoing the master from the BSBh 4.1.2, who said that some may understand the identity statement on one hearing, but generally full understanding proceeded through incremental gains, removing one point of identification from the Self at a time. The repetition was of śāstra-yukti, obviously corresponding to śravaṇa and manana.\(^10\) Notably, there is no mention of meditation or a third step in general in this most important comment for Śaṅkara’s soteriology, based on which we reconstructed the doctrine of the identity statements.

Now, Śaṅkara says that the three processes are “modes” of seeing the Self, which means that in Yājñavalkya’s statement, ātmā vā are draṣṭavyah presents the goal, vision of the Self, while the rest states the procedure.\(^11\) The three should be performed sequentially so that the first two may have a compounded effect in the third, where one would be able to “reflect with certainty,” and certainty in general seems to be the big attainment:

Therefore, the Self should be seen, it should be made an object of vision. It should be heard about first, from a teacher and from scripture; afterwards, it should be considered through reasoning (tarka); then, it should be reflected upon with certainty. Thus, the Self is seen through the execution of the three practices of hearing, consideration, and reflection. When they reach unity, then the perfect vision of the unity of Brahman is transparent, not otherwise, just by hearing.\(^12\)

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\(^9\) athaivaṃ api prashaṅkhyaṇam antareṇa praṇāṇam dhārayatum na śaktosīti cet, śravaṇādau eva sampādayiṣyāmaḥ. katham?
prashaṅkhyaṇe śrutāv asya nyāyo ’stv āntreṇanāṭmakaḥ |

\(^10\) BSBh 4.1.2.

\(^11\) tasmād ātmā draṣṭavyah; sa ca śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāstavya iti ca darśana-prakāraḥ uktāḥ. BĀUBh 2.5.1, VIII.323.

\(^12\) tasmād ātmā vā are draṣṭavyah darśanārhaḥ, darśana-visayam āpādayitavyah; śrotavyah pūrvam ācāryata āgamataś ca; paścān mantavyah tarkataḥ; tato nididhyāstavyo niścayena dhyātavyah; evarī hy asau drṣṭo bhavati śravaṇa-
In all cases, however, consideration through reasoning must conform to what is ascertained through hearing. Likewise, reflection must conform to what is thought through reasoning, that is, what is known as certain through hearing and consideration.\textsuperscript{13}

The three should, then, be performed in sequence, each subsequent step starting where the previous had left off and in conformance with its gains, and at the stage of reflection one should be able to cogitate with certainty on what had been arrived at through the first two.

Now, as I said above, it is obvious that the three processes, but more restrictedly the first two which we may collectively name \textit{brahma-vidyā}, are equivalent with the \textit{brahma-jījñāsā} from the opening of the BS. Sarvajñātman, for instance, wrote his masterpiece the \textit{Saṅkṣepa-Śārīraka}, a versified summary of the BSBh, on the model of such \textit{brahma-vidyā} with a teacher. The same is also quite evident from Śaṅkara’s comment on the first two \textit{sūtras} in the BS: the requirements of qualification on the part of the student are the same in BSBh 1.1.1 and in the opening of the prose portion of the US, and Śaṅkara talks about what amounts to \textit{śravaṇa} and \textit{manana} under 1.1.2. This is an important point to bear in mind for appreciating that the three processes do not amount to the study of the Upaniṣads in the strict sense. The Upaniṣads are studied prior to the three processes, and this is clear, for instance, from Śaṅkara’s rejection of the possibility that the inquiry into Brahman be consequent on the study of the Upaniṣads: the Upaniṣads are read with the rest of the Veda, before one begins with either \textit{dharma-jījñāsā} or \textit{brahma-jījñāsā}.\textsuperscript{14} Śaṅkara likewise says that one of the \textit{nitya-karmas} in the BĀU 4.4.22, \textit{vedānuvacana} or the daily recitation of the Veda, includes the recitation of the Upaniṣads in its

\textsuperscript{13} sarvathāpi tu yathāgamenāvadhāritam, tarkatas tathaiva mantavyam; yathā tarkato matam, tasya tarkāgamābhyāṁ niścitasya tathaiva nīdirdhīyāsanaiṁ kriyata iti. BĀUBh 2.4.5, VIII.304.

\textsuperscript{14} svādhyāyādhyayanānāntaryaiṁ tu samānam. BSBh 1.1.1, I.5.
In other words, he who comes to an Advaita guru for instruction does not come a blank slate, Upaniṣad-wise. A student that comes to a teacher for an inquiry into Brahman had already memorized the Upaniṣads and knows what they say: he understands the sentences. He does not know, however, what they mean.\(^{16}\)

It is important to appreciate this point, it seems to me, with regard to the doctrine of *pramāṇa*. The three methods are not part of the *pramāṇa* complex as we commonly think of it, or as what can be described as a causal account of cognition. That place is reserved for the Upaniṣadic statements as part of the Veda: the Veda is the sole *pramāṇa* on supersensible things. Yet, there are statements in Śaṅkara’s commentaries in which he juxtaposes scriptural knowledge from the Veda, that includes the Upaniṣads and is described in terms such as “heap of words,” to “realization” (*vijñāna*, glossed in BhGBh 7.3 as *śvānubhava*), “understanding” (*avagati*) or “experience” (*anubhava*) that seems to be over and above such scriptural knowledge or scriptural verbal cognition. Consider, for instance, the following statement:

[The objection that the Upaniṣads, labeled as “higher” knowledge, would fail to be part of the Veda, called “lower” knowledge, does not hold good,] because the intendent meaning is “realization of an object of knowing.” What is primarily intended here as the “higher knowledge” is the realization of the immutable [Brahman] that is knowable solely from the Upaniṣads, not the heap of words that constitute the Upaniṣads. On the other hand, the word “Veda” in all cases is intended in the sense of “heaps of words.” Since understanding the immutable is not possible without additional effort, such as approaching a teacher, and dispassion, even when the heaps of words have been understood, knowledge of Brahman is mentioned separately and called “higher.”\(^{17}\)

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15 **yadā vedānuvacana-śabdena nityah svādhīyayo vidhīyate, tadā upaniṣad api gṛhiṇaive, vedānuvacana-śabdārthaika-deśo na paṁtyakto bhavati. BĀUBh 4.4.22, IX.645.**

16 One would expect this to be an obvious point, and it has been recognized since the time of Deussen (1912:17-8), yet strangely it is not obvious to everyone. See, for instance, Malkovsky 2001:86-7, who says that the “disciple begins by listening to scripture as expounded by the guru, memorizing the texts,” and otherwise manages to make a caricature of the three methods, claiming that they are a “preparation for brahma-vidyā,” by a process of copy-paste from sketchy sources.

17 **na, vedya-viṣaya-vijñānasya vivakṣītatvāt. upaniṣad-vedya-viṣayāni hi viṣṇānam iha parā vidyāt prādhānyena vivakṣītam, nopaniṣac-chabda-rāśiḥ, vedya-śabdena tu sarvatra śabda-rāśir vivakṣītaḥ, śabda-rāśy-adhyagame ‘pi yatnātaram antaṁca gṛuv-abhipamana-lakṣaṇaṁ vairāgyaṁ ca nākṣārādhyamāṇaṁ sambhavatīti prthak-karaṇaṁ brahma-vidyāyā atha parā vidyāti. MUBh 1.1.5, V.13-14.**
The takeaway from this passage is that an “additional effort” is required to understand what an Upaniṣadic text means, over and above what it may say. This additional effort consists in dispassion, etc., which would correspond to the four prerequisites, and approaching a teacher, which is the starting point of brahma-vidyā that involves engagement in the three processes. They are required for understanding, realization, personal experience of what the text says. If they are required for such understanding, what is their pramāṇa status?

There is, further, an important, curious passage in BSBh 1.1.2, in which Śaṅkara apparently muddles the waters of what precisely the pramāṇa for knowing Brahman is:

Unlike in the inquiry into dharma, in the inquiry into Brahman śruti etc. are not the only pramāṇa. Rather, here the pramāṇa are śruti, etc. as well as personal experience etc., as far as that is possible, because knowledge of Brahman terminates in personal experience and is in the sphere of existent things.¹⁸

Just prior to this statement, Śaṅkara also positively affirms the role of reasoning in brahma-vidyā as some kind of a pramāṇa in the inquiry into Brahman. There are, of course, many statements where Śaṅkara says that the only pramāṇa for knowing Brahman are the Upaniṣadic statements, and such cases particularly concern the identity statements. One explicit example is BSBh 1.1.4: “Nor is Brahman, though a fully existent entity, in the domain of sensory perception or the like, because the fact that Brahman is the Self, given in the statement ‘You are that,’ is not knowable except from scripture.”¹⁹

This had given rise to some discussions about the respective role of scripture, reasoning, and personal experience in Śaṅkara’s theology, with regard to the doctrine of pramāṇa, particularly in scholarship influenced by neo-Vedanta, in which the upshot was that Śaṅkara

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¹⁹ na ca pariniṣṭhitā-vastu-svarūpātve ’pi pratyākṣādi-višayatvāṁ brahmaṅaḥ, tat tvam asī iti brahmātma-bhāvasya śāstram antareṇānavagamamāṇatvāt. BSBh 1.1.4, I.16.
apparently thought that what is known through scripture must be somehow confirmed in personal experience. Anantanand Rambachan had analyzed and rejected such neo-Vedantic interpretations, without, however, clearly spelling out the role of the three methods and of personal experience in their relation to the doctrine of pramāṇa. His contention was that “personal experience, etc.” were “only subordinate and supplementary to śruti,” and that manana involved not anumāna as a pramāṇa, but a form of reasoning which “is termed sāmānyato-drṣṭanumāṇa and is equivalent in modern logic to analogical reasoning. It is also designated as yuktī and tarka. This type of reasoning is not itself a pramāṇa, but operates as an ancillary to a pramāṇa. Its function is to produce a belief in the possibility of a thing. In relation to brahmajñāṇa, the aim of all such tarkas is to strengthen the teachings of the Upaniṣads.”

Aside from the fact that Advaitins did not accept any form of reasoning as an ancillary to scripture the pramāṇa, and aside from the sweeping generalization in drawing an equivalence between sāmānyato-drṣṭa and tarka/yuktī, Rambachan is roughly right in identifying the nature of tarka. He is also very much justified in rejecting the neo-Vedanta interpretations that want scriptural knowledge to be “confirmed” in personal experience, but is wrong in believing that śravaṇa was somehow the real deal, to which manana was an auxiliary, whereas personal experience was there just to supplement. This is just not how Śaṅkara presents the three methods:

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20 Rambachan 1991:114.
21 Ibid., 103.
22 Sāmānyato-drṣṭa was, of course, a common form of inference in the common sense of pramāṇa, an instrument or source of knowledge with its characteristic domain. See, for instance, Bhatt 1962:256-64, for a good overview focused on the Bhāṭṭa school of Mīmāṃsā, but also discussing the early Nyāya and Sāṅkhya mentions of the term. Rambachan seems to be repeating what M. Hiriyanna (1995:172) had said decades ago: “But in the very nature of the case, the arguments based on such examples [taken from ordinary life] are only analogical (sāmānyato-drṣṭa) for, while they are drawn from the realm of common experience, Brahman by hypothesis transcends it. They can thus only give support to, or indicate the probability of, Vedāntic truth, and cannot demonstrate it independently of revelation. In other words, this type of argument is utilized here not as a pramāṇa, but as only an accessory to it (yuktī).” Both these statements smack of “medievalism,” that is, of representing a pan-Advaita doctrine based on the medieval manuals such as Vedānta-Sūra or Vedānta-Paribhāṣā, on which Rambachan depends throughout in any case.
we saw that he wanted them to work in a sequence of incremental gains, that understanding was
very much equivalent to “personal experience” of some kind, and that it was the goal in which
the consideration of the identity statements terminates. The key insight to appreciate, however, is
that none of the three, śravaṇa included, was a pramāṇa to begin with, in the common causal
sense that associates a pramāṇa with a specific domain that is in its sole competence, and that a
false opposition is at play. Let us walk through this slowly.

Advaitins, to begin with, did not think that the inquiry into Brahman, consisting of
śravaṇa and manana, had the status of a reliable warrant in the common causal sense, that is, that
which gives rise to a veridical cognition. Sarvajñātman was, for instance, quite emphatic what
was at stake if the inquiry into Brahman were to have any causal role in the rise of the cognition
of Brahman:

In giving rise to cognition of the Supreme Self, the inquiry serves neither as the efficient
cause like the recitation of the Veda, nor as an ancillary to the Veda. For, otherwise,
Vedic statements would be dependent in the production of veridical knowledge of the
identity of Brahman and the Self, and that is not right. Inquiry has no role in the rise of
cognition of the sentence meaning; such cognition evidently appears in the competent
language user immediately on hearing a sentence. Therefore, if inquiry is regarded as the
efficient or an auxiliary cause in giving rise to valid cognition of meaning through
postulation, the Vedic statement would lose its independence.23

As I said above, the student who had begun the inquiry into Brahman knows the Upaniṣads and
understands what they say: he has a verbal cognition. He does not understand what they mean,
for several reasons, first of which is that they seem to be saying mutually opposing things that
cannot be accommodated in a straightforward manner. It is also clear that the sentence meaning

23 svādhya-ya-van na karaṇaṁ ghaṭate vicāro
nāpy anāgataḥ aṣṭaḥ paramātma-dhiyaḥ prasūtaḥ
sāpeksatapatati veda-gras tathātve
brahmātmane pramīti-janmane na hoyam ||
vyutpannasya hi buddhi-janma sahasā vākya-śrutau dṛśyate
vākyārthe nataḥ 'sti buddhi-janane mūmāṁsana-vyāptih|
tenāṁyāḥ karaṇādi-bhāva-bhayane mūmāṁsanasyāsīte
that is at stake, the sentence pertinent to the veridical verbal cognition, is that of the identity statement: this is the point on which the inquiry is focused both in US and ŚŚ. However, it is not clear to the student that the identity statement does intend to affirm full identity, rather than an assimilative identification or the like. If we look at the first two chapters of the prose section of US, it is evident that in the first inquiry the point is to establish that scripture does affirm such identity against what appears as evidential difference between the Self and Brahman, and the exercise of ritual and similar practices that go well with this difference, whereas in the second the problem shifts to the very possibility of such identity on grounds of reason. In other words, the student cannot form the veridical notion or pramiti about what the statement amounts to if he happens to come with notions that cancel such understanding. Śravaṇa and manana, then, aim at establishing what the Upaniṣads really intend to say, and how that might be possible, respectively. They are not a pramāṇa, but a theological and a philosophical inquiry that is geared toward dealing with two different problems that appear in a sequence, in a case where a cognition had appeared but is not yet a pramiti.

Sarvajñātman hints at a pramānic analogy and his commentator Puruṣottama expands on it. Suppose a king had a favorite servant whom other royal servants led by some trickery to another place. They left him there, but told the king that he had died. Imagine, now, that the servant had somehow come back and remained hidden in the royal garden. The king sees him unexpectedly, mistakes him for a ghost, and runs away in fear. The point of the story is that there is nothing wrong in the king’s seeing; he does see his servant, but he had been so fully convinced that the servant was dead, that the sight of him did not give rise to a cognition that is taken as veridical.²⁴ Imagine seeing your close friend for whom you gave the funeral eulogy, sipping her

²⁴ ŚŚ 1.14, Puruṣottama thereon.
coffee just across from you in a coffee shop. Similar would be the shock at entertaining the literal meaning of the identity statements as the one intended: one would be left in utter disbelief whether that could possibly be true, just as seeing the friend would make one question everything about the friend or about one’s own sanity.

Thus, the inquiry does not have a *productive* role in the rise of the cognition of the Brahman-Self unity, since otherwise the scope of scripture pertaining to supersensible things would be at stake: the operative factor in the inquiry is repetition, *āvṛtti*, specifically *āmreḍana* or reiteration of words, with a human teacher, *not* the Upaniṣadic statements themselves; they are already known. If the inquiry had a *pramānic* status, the impersonal nature of the Veda would be at stake. One hears “You are that” and understands what the statement says: there is verbal cognition by just that much. What the inquiry amounts to, therefore, is *removal* of faults in understanding, and this is quite comparable to cognitions that are doubtful because of faults that prevent certainty to obtain.

Sarvajñātman presents these faults as psychological in nature, *puruṣāparādha*, but Śaṅkara’s presentation is more epistemological. What prevents veridical knowledge to rise from the identity statement is when the respective *padārtha* that form the statement are obstructed by ignorance, doubt, and inverse ascription. These are already familiar to us—the case of uncertainty whether what one sees is a man or a post, or forming the notion that a man is a post—but the point is that they arise as a form of obstruction to a cognition that would otherwise be veridical. Remove the faults, and the *pramāṇa* has all that it needs for a veridical cognition. This is the role of *śravana* and *manana*, to remove obstructions or cognitive defects.26

25 ŚŚ 1.14-17.
26 ataḥ, tān pratyechavyāḥ padārtha-viveka-prayojanaḥ śāstra-yukty-abhyāsaḥ, yady api ca pratipattavya ātmā niraśaḥ, tathāpi adhyāropitaṁ tasmin bahv-ariṣṭataṁ dehendriya-mano-buddhi-viṣaya-vedanādi-lakṣaṇam; tatra
Now, I will propose here that in the BSBh 1.1.2 statement that I quoted above, and otherwise in that comment where Śaṅkara talks about anumāna and tarka/yukti as having a positive role in knowing Brahman, Śaṅkara uses the notion of pramāṇa in a different sense, or rather as pertaining to a different set of categories. We should first note that he does not say śruti, but śrutyādayaḥ that stands for a set of pramāṇas, not a single pramāṇa. I discussed at length in the First Chapter the notion of śruti and claimed that initially it did not stand for scripture as a unit that forms a set of pramāṇas with perception, inference etc., but for single scriptural statements that must be taken in the literal sense, and that it participated in several sets of pramāṇas as canons of interpretation; in all such sets, all the counterparts of śruti were labeled “inference.” Therefore, in our case, śrutyādayaḥ does not refer to what we commonly think of śruti as the pramāṇa alongside perception and the rest, but to principles of interpretation of cases where conflicting verbal cognitions arise and need to be variously accommodated. That is, they are tools to organize the “scriptural data” of verbal cognitions.

This is, in any case, how Śaṅkara’s commentators have generally understood śrutyādayaḥ. Ānandagiri identifies this with the six pramāṇas that establish the principal-auxiliary relation, viniyoga, in a text. For our purposes, this means ascertaining which statements should be taken as the principal and which as subordinate, for instance as illustrations, so that an order in the conflicting verbal cognitions may be achieved. Another such set would be the so-called ṣat-tātparya-liṅga or the six indicators of meaning that are used to determine the single meaning of an integral, complex text.

ekena avadhānena ekam aṇiṣam apohati, aparēṇa aparām iti yujyate. tatra kramavati pratipattiḥ. tat tu pūrva-rūpam eva ātma-pratipatteḥ. yeśāṁ punah nipuṇa-matīnāṁ na ajñāna-saṁśaya-viparyaya-laksanaḥ padārtha-viśayaḥ pratibandho ’sti, te śaknuvanti sakṛd uktam eva tat tvam asi-vākyārtham anubhavitum iti, tāṇ prati āvṛtta-ānarthakyam iṣṭam eva. BSBh 4.1.2, III.770.
The point is that this is exclusively an enterprise in scriptural theology, where the idea is to ascertain a core statement that must be read literally, and interpret the rest of the pertinent text in its light. For instance, in the Sixth Chapter of the Chāndogya that presents the paradigmatic identity statement, *tat tvam asi*, is the point that Śvetaketu is literally Brahman, and if so what does that involve, or is it the case that evolution of everything from Brahman, Śvetaketu included, is the point? This has further ramifications as to whether the identity is a case of real identity or of identification, and consequences for the choice of practice. The second goal of the process of scriptural inquiry, once it has been determined that the Upaniṣads do intend to affirm the identity in the literal sense, is to ascertain the references of the two categories: which *tat* and which *tvam* are the same thing? We will follow the two in the next section through the first prose chapter of the UŚ, but my point here is that such methods are not *pramāṇic* methods so long as we understand *pramāṇa* as instruments of veridical cognition. Such *pramāṇa* would be one’s *veda-svādhyāya*, to echo Sarvajñātman again. They are *pramāṇa*, on the other hand, because they do assist in the process where a cognition that had otherwise appeared does not have a clear reference.

Further, the inquiry into Brahman unlike the inquiry into dharma is itself the process, and the process, for there to be liberation in the end, must culminate in full understanding, *tat tvam asy-ādi-vākyārtha-parijñānam* to use Sureśvara’s turn of phrase. Because both categories that stand in the relation of full identity are known, and liberation is a visible result, predicated on understanding that must happen as immediately available to one’s awareness, it is eminently possible if not inevitable for one to ask the question, “How could I possibly be such an entity as the defined Brahman?” This is so because difference is “naturally,” perceptually available to
oneself. Therefore, the second inquiry ensues, one that is evidently a proper philosophical inquiry.

Clearest, in my assessment, about the purpose of manana was Padmapāda, who refers to it as tarka and yukti, reasoning, which Śaṅkara, we will remember, identified as the modus operandi of manana. The pertinent question of Padmapāda’s concern was the following: it may be the case that one had understood the identity statement, since it has been ascertained that the Upaniṣads do, indeed, affirm the identity of Brahman with the Self. A cognition of the Self-Brahman full identity had been formed, but the cognition, although clear, is not yet certain because its content appears impossible, like seeing something so out of place and time that one would not believe one’s eyes before examining how and if it was possible at all.  

The content of the cognition seems impossible because tvam denotes the individual Self, the jīva, to which the being of Brahman the denotation of the tat-padārtha is predicated—the first liable to transmigration etc., the second ever free, etc.—and no certainty is possible until the contradiction between the two is removed. Padmapāda says that this contradiction needs to be removed by tarka, which is defined as “a discriminating notion concerning reliable warrants, signification functions, and content of cognitions.”

This, then, is in part a meta-pramānic inquiry that concerns the specific domain of the pramāṇas, aiming to establish that the unity of Brahman with the Self is solely knowable through scripture; in part philosophy of language and mind, which should clarify that Brahman as the Self is not denoted by words, but indicated, as we saw in the previous chapter, and represented whenever there is any phenomenal consciousness; and

28 pramāṇa-sakti-viṣaya-tat-sambhavāsambhava-paricchedātmā pratyayaḥ. Ibid.
ontology proper, that should show by analogical reasoning how it makes sense that Brahman be everything, including one’s Self.

And, because this Self-Brahman relation must be personally understood and experienced, given that it concerns oneself and the ground of Being as a known category, one’s own personal experience about the related categories as well as that of the teacher also play a positive role in the second inquiry that should clarify the scriptural understanding. This is the crucial difference, in Śaṅkara’s eyes, of the inquiry into Brahman from the inquiry into dharma, where the sole purpose is just to understand the hierarchical structure of the text, and the tarka-pāda topics are treated through the demands of apologetics. That future virility is consequent on the use of khādira wood cannot really be a matter of personal experience, but if the non-temporal unity of Brahman with the Self is not personally understood, liberation cannot follow.

It is for these reasons, I will propose, that Śaṅkara treats reasoning and personal experience as pramāṇas, not as pramiti-karaṇam or an instrument of a veridical cognition in the characteristic causal sense, but as further means that must clarify and bring to consummation the verbal Upaniṣadic cognition of identity that rises from hearing the Upaniṣads and has been given a proper shape through the first, theological inquiry. The integral inquiry, thus, serves the purpose of removing the faults that prevent certainty in the cognition to obtain. As we saw, Śaṅkara claimed that in the third process one would be able to reflect with certainty on what had been determined through śravaṇa and manana. Certainty, thus, is the element that the inquiry should bring to the cognition, so that the cognition could transit to pramiti, and that does not play a role in the rise of the cognition itself.

We can also look at this outside the strict frame of pramāṇa in the causal sense. The possibility of the inquiry comes from the following principle: that Brahman is the Self, the
identity statement, is knowable solely from the Upaniṣads. To quote the BSBh 1.1.4 again: “Nor is Brahman, though a fully existent entity, in the domain of sensory perception or the like, because the fact that Brahman is the Self, given in the statement ‘You are that,’ is not knowable except from scripture.”29 Both Brahman and the Self, on the other hand, are known entities, the first from the etymology of the word, as we saw in the formation of the notion of Brahman, and the second because of being immediately available: “For, everyone cognizes the Self and does not think ‘I am not.’ Were it not the case that there is the Self, everyone would think, ‘I am not.’”30 Not only are they known, but must be so, for otherwise the unknown relation between them would be unknowable. This is very much like the apūrva-vidhi of the Mīmāṁsakas, which relates known categories—wood and virility—in an unknown causal relationship, just that in this case such relationship must become intimately known for there to be liberation, and can become known because it concerns oneself. That the two individual categories are known makes them available to individual inquiry, and because they are known—doubts and inverse ascription are possible in their regard.

But, there is a catch. If they are known as common existing things, objects, then they would not be in the domain of the Upaniṣads, just as grain and threshing are not individually knowable from the Veda. The Veda is the pramāṇa on supersensible things. They are, therefore, not really known. As we saw in the deliberation on the identity statement, because Brahman is the Self, the Self is not really known even from the notion of the Self or the idea “I am.” This notion is the reflection of the Self in the intellect, and because of its being nearest in contact with the Self, it serves as its closest approximation point, a known through which the unknown can

29 na ca pariniśṭhita-vastu-svarūpate’pi prayāksādi-visayatvaṁ brahmaṇaḥ, tat tvam asi iti brahmātma-bhāvasya śāstram antareṇaṇava-gamyamānatvāt. BSBh 1.1.4.
30 sarvo hy ātmāstitvaṁ pratyeti, na nāham asmi iti. yadi hi nātmāstitva-prasiddhiḥ syāt, sarvo lokaḥ nāham asmi iti pratiyāt. BSBh 1.1.1, I.8.
become known. The category of the Self as it is known to us is a range of identification points which are not really the Self, but are witnessed by the Self, and need to be eliminated. The inquiry can examine these by showing how they are not the Self, so that eventually the real Self that is not an object would be left as the irreducible remainder that cannot be scrapped, because without its light of awareness the inquiry itself would be impossible.

When the word [Self] is used with respect to the inner Self that possesses the body and is in the realm of difference, when it is denied that the Self is the body, etc., the word creates an apprehension of the remainder, Being, though that is inexpressible in words. Śaṅkara likens such knowledge to the case when an army is seen and one knows that the king is there, though he is hidden by the parasol, the flag, the banner, etc. When everything is examined and the king is still not seen, there arises the cognition that whoever is left unseen must be the king. He must be there because it was announced that the king was coming. This is what the inquiry should accomplish: considering all the candidates for the Self, all empirically knowable, it should zero in on the Self as a non-object. Its procedure is, therefore, negational, and Śaṅkara uses all words for negation common in Indian philosophy to refer to it: *apoha, niṣedha, pratiṣedha, apavāda.*

A similar procedure also applies on the side of the *tat* category. One of the purposes of the *manana* process is to show through analogical approximation how Brahman’s being the cause is reasonable, cause not in the sense of the evolution of the world from Brahman, but in the sense of the world’s being Brahman, as the effect just is the cause. Thus, general causality is knowable, but what is not knowable without the Upaniṣads is that Brahman is *satyam jñānam anantam ānandam.* But, because causality is knowable in general, it can be used as an illustration

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31 dehavati pratyag-ātmani bheda-viśaye prayujyamānah śabdaḥ, dehādīnām ātmatve pratyākhyaṁ ānāṁ yat pariśiṣṭaṁ sad avācyam api pratyāyayati. ChUBh 7.1.3, VII.418.
32 Instances of such uses are omnipresent in his works, and he most commonly applies the term *pratiṣedha,* otherwise the Mīmāṁsā term for Vedic prohibitions.
of Brahman’s causal role. Eventually, when full identity is known as obtaining through the secondary signification function, even Brahman’s being the cause is no longer the case. But without appreciating causality, that last intuition is impossible, for there is otherwise no prop that one can use to relate oneself to the great ground of Being.

There is such a thing as Brahman, which is eternal, pure, aware, and free in nature, omniscient and omnipotent. From the etymological analysis of the word “Brahman,” the notions of eternality, purity and the like are cognized, for such is the meaning of the root byṃḥ. The existence of Brahman is also well-known because of its being the Self of all; for, everyone is always aware of one's own existence, and it is never the case that one thinks “I am not.” If there were no awareness of self-existence, everyone would think “I am not.” And the Self is Brahman. – But, if it is known in the world that Brahman is the Self, then Brahman would be known and there would be no reason for inquiry. – No, because these are the disagreements about its specific nature. Ordinary men and lokāyatās think it is simply the body that is the sentient self; others say it is the senses that are aware; still others it is the mind; others that it is just momentary awareness; yet others that it is void; others claim that there is a transmigrating agent and enjoyer, over and above the body; some claim it is an enjoyer, but not an agent; yet others claim there is a lord, over and above the self, omniscient and omnipotent; and still others say that this lord is the self of the enjoyer. And so, there are many of opposite views based on logic, scripture, and their semblance. If one were to accept any of them without examination, one would be deprived of the highest good and would get the undesirable. Therefore, starting with the introduction of the inquiry into Brahman, the meaning of texts will be examined here, with reasoning not opposed to them, so that the highest good may be attained.33

Excepting the Lord, as described, no other factor of origin, maintenance, and dissolution of the word, as described – for instance, the insentient pradhāna, atoms, non-Being or some transmigrating self – can be imagined. Nor can this happen spontaneously, for there is the dependency on specific place, time and causes. The proponents of the doctrine that the Lord is the cause accept only this inference for pr

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through another *pramāṇa*, such as inference. Since it is the Upaniṣadic statements that present Brahman as the cause of the creation etc. of the world, this inference that is employed here – not contrary to the Upaniṣadic statements – is also a *pramāṇa* for reinforcing the understanding of the texts, and it is not excluded; for, the Upaniṣads themselves accept such reasoning as help.\(^{34}\)

Wilhelm Halbfass had discussed the issue of reason and revelation in Śaṅkara’s Vedānta at some length, and he showed that Śaṅkara recognized a form of scriptural, guided reasoning and inference-making that is employed by the Upaniṣads themselves.\(^{35}\) For our purpose of understanding *manana*, this means that the Upaniṣads give a model of the use of reasoning that a human teacher can emulate in the process of instruction.

**Śravaṇa and Manana in the Upadeśa-Sāhasrī**

As it is well-known, the three chapters of the prose part of Śaṅkara’s US were written with the purpose of illustrating the three Vedāntic methods of liberation.\(^{36}\) Let us look now at the first chapter, conceived as a manual for conducting *śravaṇa*, and see in practice what the goal of *śravaṇa* was.\(^{37}\) The chapter opens with the qualifications of the student that would have been achieved through the desire for knowing the Self, *vividiśā*: dispassion, and the possession of the required virtues. We learn that the student who had approached the teacher for instruction is a renunciant: the *adhikāra* text, MU 1.2.12-13, is explicitly mentioned—*parīkṣya lokān* etc.—but

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\(^{35}\) Halbfass 1991:131-204.

\(^{36}\) “The three *prakaraṇas* of the Prose Part can, in content, be regarded as illustrating respectively the stage of hearing (*śravaṇa*), the stage of thinking (*manana*) and the stage of meditation (*nididhyāsana*), which constitute the three *Vedāntic* stages to attainment of final release (*mokṣa*).” Mayeda 2006a:66.

\(^{37}\) atha mokṣa-sādhaneṣu-vidhīhin vāyukhyāsyāmaḥ, USG 1.1. The chapter is sometimes called *Śisyānuśāsanam*. See, for instance, the 2003 edition in the Sarasvatī-bhavana-grantha-mālā series, edited by Rama Kiśora Tripāṭhī.
BĀU 4.2.22-3 are obviously relevant as well.\textsuperscript{38} The teacher should first examine the student and see if he is indeed qualified, that is, if he has the required virtues and the preliminary grasp of transient and eternal things. If the opposite proves to be the case, he should send the student to remedial lessons in dispassion and the requisite virtues.\textsuperscript{39}

He should then instruct the student in the body of texts that we identified as constituting the \textit{para-vidyā}, propounding that there is only one Self, and proceed to making the student grasp the characteristics of Brahman. These include the positive and negative characteristics that we saw in the definition of the \textit{tat-padārtha}, and there seems to be nothing different in the list of texts from the one in BSBh 4.1.2, except that they are not in the same order: here the list begins and ends with negative texts, and \textit{vijñānam ānandam} and \textit{satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma} are stuck in the middle.\textsuperscript{40} This very obviously refers to establishing the reference of the \textit{tat-padārtha}, and is further corroborated with passages from the \textit{Bhagavad-Gītā} that are “meant to propound that the Supreme Self is not liable to transmigration and that it is non-different from everything.”\textsuperscript{41} The link of \textit{tat} with the individual Self is clearly established.

And when that is done, if the student had grasped these characteristics of the Supreme Self, the teacher should ask him, “Who are you, my dear,” shifting the instruction to the \textit{tvain-padārtha}. The goal of such instruction is to make the student understand his identity with Brahman by removing all that is incompatible with the notion of \textit{tat} from his understanding of himself. Part of the strategy in doing this is to remind the student occasionally of the characteristics of the \textit{tat-padārtha}, but in such a way that the relation between the two, \textit{tat} and

\textsuperscript{38} USG 1.2:3.  
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 4-5.  
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 6-7.  
\textsuperscript{41} smṛtibhiḥ ca ... ity-ādibhiḥ śruti-ukta-lakṣāṇāviruddhābhāḥ paramātmāsaṁsāritva-pratipādana-parābhiḥ tasya sarveṇānanyatva-pratipādana-parābhiḥ ca. USP 1.8.
tvam, becomes obvious. This is accomplished, first, by the description of creation through the process of quintiplication, pañci-karaṇa, or the evolution of name and form into the world and its minutest details, down to caste and social identity, and then by description of Brahman entering its own creation as the Self, in the manner that we saw in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad. The point of this description is to show how the student is different from his body, caste, and family identity, but also from his current āśrama position of a renunciant, and that he should rather identify with the inner Self that had entered creation after it evolved from the Self.\textsuperscript{42}

At a point during this instruction, it has gotten across to the student that the identity statement as the teacher had explained it \textit{literally} means that Brahman is his own self, himself, but such identity appears impossible to the student: “But, we \textit{are} different. I am ignorant, happy and miserable, bound and transmigrating. The Lord is different from me, not liable to transmigration.”\textsuperscript{43} The student presents an account of duality in which liberation is achieved by the performance of ritual for the pleasure of the Lord. There follows a new round of teaching in the identity statements of the Upaniṣads with the purpose of removing from the category of tvam the notion of being a ritual agent and, with that, of being liable to saṁsāra.

The instruction has moved to this distinction, past bodily and social identification and to the liability to transmigration, and to what that might mean for the difference or non-difference of the two categories. This distinction is prompted by the fact that the student’s being liable to pain, hunger, thirst, and the like—the paradigmatic characteristics of saṁsāra—are perceptually evident to him, whereas scriptures say that the Supreme Self is not liable to them. It appears, therefore, that this is the root distinction between the two categories: the one is not liable to saṁsāra and the second is, from which follows that the Self is \textit{essentially} an agent. In other

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 9-24.
\textsuperscript{43} anya evāham ajñāḥ sukhī duḥkhī baddhaḥ saṁsārī, anyo 'sau mad-vilakṣaṇo 'saṁsārī devaḥ. Ibid., 25.
words, the negative characteristics of the Supreme Self from the Upaniṣads that the teacher posited in the definition of tat and related to the Self are evidently not applicable to the Self as it is known to the student. The corollary of this is that the Upaniṣads intend to affirm difference between the Supreme and the transmigrating Self, and affirm ritual as the means both of prosperity and liberation. Here begins, then, an instruction that continues till the end of the chapter and aims to show that the Self is not the ritual agent. This is, clearly, the ultimate purpose of the śravaṇa process: show that the Upaniṣads do intend to affirm that the Self is not an agent that is liable to transmigration by maintaining that the Self is, indeed, Brahman.

This is done by ascertaining the proper reference of the idea of the Self that, in the student’s understanding, undergoes transmigration because of evidently experiencing pain. The procedure is to distinguish the Self as the pure subject or witness of different states of propositional consciousness, all of which can be understood as objects and which include the sensations of pain, the psychological torments such as attachment and aversion, the objects that incite them, desire more generally etc. They are all located in the intellect: they are properties of buddhi, not of the Self. The Self is again affirmed as different from them through yet another barrage of Upaniṣadic quotations that consist in identity statements and negative descriptions of the Self.

The distinction of the Self as the subject from the objective part of its states of propositional consciousness is the only significant excursion in more philosophical reasoning in this chapter, but the point is not really to indulge in reasoning pure and simple. Rather, it is an instance of application of the anvaya-vyatireka method, which was a common method with

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44 Ibid., 33.
45 Ibid., 36.
46 Ibid., 37-8.
Indian thinkers in general, one of whose purposes was to ascertain words and word meanings by examining a complex and finding the element that persists through change. Grammarians used it, for instance, to establish uninflected nominal stems or prātipadikas on the one hand and affixes on the other, by observing the concurrent occurrence and non-occurrence of elements in real, inflected, words, and by associating meaning with them. For instance, in the inflected words vrkṣas and vrksau, the element that occurs in both cases is vrkṣa, whereas s and au differ. The two, however, may persist in other circumstances: for instance, au is concurrently occurrent in vrksau and āsvau, whereas vrkṣa and āsva are concurrently non-occurrent. This allows for associating vrkṣa with “tree” or “something having roots, fruits, leaves etc.” as its meaning, and s and au with singularity and duality, respectively.\(^47\)

Śaṅkara’s specific use of the method consisted in examining what idea persists when we use the personal pronouns, aham and tvam, and what changes. In any propositional consciousness of the “I am x” or “I see x” kind, the objective variable is different, but the subject of consciousness remains the same. Since that is the case, the subject of consciousness is the meaning of the personal pronoun, and whatever can become its object, including one’s most intimate thoughts, cannot refer to the Self, because it is the element that is different in each case. This method should be used both to ascertain this meaning and to bring it to mind when construing the identity statement.\(^48\) So, the teacher wants to tell the student that if he understands

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\(^47\) See Deshpande 2007:7-9; Cardona 1967-8.

\(^48\) Śaṅkara elsewhere explicitly states that the anvaya-vyatireka method is used for ascertaining words and word meanings, very much in line with the grammarians (see USP 18.96, 176-180, 189). A typically lucid account of anvaya-vyatireka in early Advaita Vedānta is available in Cardona 1981. Mayeda in his introduction to the translation of US claims that the anvaya-vyatireka method was used by Śaṅkara to establish the meaning of the identity statement as a sentence, where what needs to drop from the meaning of tvam drops because of incompatibility with tat. Apparently, this method was later replaced by Šarvajiñātman with jahad-ajahal-lakṣāṇā (Mayeda 2006b:53-8). Mayeda is most certainly wrong in claiming this. In USP 18.96, Śaṅkara explicitly says that anvaya-vyatireka applies to words and word meanings. The identity sentence meaning was established through sāmāṇādhikaranya or viśeṣa-viśeṣaṇa-bhāva, where the single reference of the word obtains through secondary
what the notion of the Self refers to—and it must refer to that which persists in all cases when we use the word “Self”—suffering and the other states of saṁsāra could not belong to the Self, because they are invariably the predicate in the propositional consciousness.

The upshot of this is the realization that the Upaniṣads do intend to affirm the Self-Brahman identity literally, and not as a case of identification that would uphold the continuation of ritual and the perpetuation of the ritual Self and its accessories, such as the sacred thread. This is the big gain of the śravaṇa process. “From all these statements, it is proven that you are the sole Self, the Supreme Brahman, free from all the characteristics of transmigration.”

In summary, śravaṇa as presented in the USG 1 should introduce the categories of tat and tvam and bring the student to understanding that the para-vidyā passages of the Upaniṣads do not present the Self as a transmigrating ritual agent essentially different from Brahman; that is, they intend the identity literally. Next, śravaṇa, having first defined the notion of Brahman, should fix the reference of the tvam-padārtha, such that it becomes obvious that the two have the same reference. Śravaṇa is, in other words, a heads-on, “classroom” exegesis, to be repeated until it is clear to the student that scripture does intend to affirm full identity. The US manual is a blueprint of how such pedagogical exegesis might proceed, and it surely provides its structure, but it would be modulated depending on what the student had already understood, the difficulty in understanding a certain point etc. Its form of reasoning is strictly theological, and the only significant excursion in philosophy consists in distinguishing the subject and object in cases of propositional consciousness where the Self is involved, but even that is just for establishing the reference of the personal pronouns that the Upaniṣad identifies with Brahman.

signification. Cardona is, therefore, right in claiming against Mayeda that anvaya-vyatireka was not a method of meditation for Śaṅkara, but a general mode of reasoning.

49 ity-ādi-śrutibhyāḥ, smṛtibhyāṣ ca ... ity-ādibhyā eka evātmā paraṁ brahma sarva-saṁsāra-dharma-vinirmuktas tvam iti siddham. USG 1.37-8.
I do not wish to go into the details of the second prose chapter that discusses manana, because most of it would be a repetition of what I have already said. I need to add however, a few notes. The general theme of the chapter concerns determining the real nature of the Self: is it essentially an agent of action and experience, or is such agency accidental to it, in which case it would be the Self pure, one for all. This is prompted by the same problem that we saw in the first chapter: sāṁsāra consisting in suffering painful sensations in the waking and dreaming states is a matter of presentational consciousness. Śaṅkara’s arguments follow the line of independence of consciousness that cannot be identified with its objective counterparts, nor can it participate in compositions of any kind: The Self is essentially different from the objects that are forms of painful sensations the marks of sāṁsāra, and it is absolutely aloof from the body, mind, and senses. In other words, the chapter picks up where the previous chapter had left off, and its purpose is to tackle the doubts that the student will inevitably have in the possibility of the conclusion that was arrived at through the process of śravaṇa. Although this is a case of strictly philosophical reasoning, it is still permeated by the Upaniṣadic theme of the three states of awareness: waking, dream, and deep sleep.

There are two key moments in this second process, really a variation of a single theme, and they concern language and cognition. First, if the Self is cognition in nature, as the teacher claims, then it cannot be permanently changeless, kūṭastha, as the teacher also claims, because cognition is verbal action, and action is change. The teacher’s reply is that the word “cognition” or upalabdhi is only figuratively applied to the Self, in virtue of the fact that cognition as a result is a reflection of the Self whose nature is cognition pure and unchanging, like the illumination of the sun. Second, because the Self is consciousness or cognition in nature, it is also understanding
or veracity in nature, *avagati* or *pramāṇa*. All veridical cognitions are, in fact, possible because of the light of the Self; they all terminate in the Self, and the Self is indicated through them:

One may object to this: it is contradictory to say that understanding is the result of a reliable warrant, and that it is the eternally changeless light of the Self in nature. To the student saying this, the teacher replied: It is not contradictory. – How is it, then, the result of understanding? – It is so figuratively. Even though it is permanently changeless, it is seen in the results of cognitions that obtain through perception and the like, since it is their [ultimate] reference. Because such perceptual cognitions are impermanent, understanding also appears as if impermanent. For this reason, it is figuratively designated as the result of reliable warrants.\(^\text{50}\)

The Self is, really, self-established in nature—it is what consciousness is—and it requires no proof by means of a *pramāṇa*. But, because such is the case, all veridical cognitions, though they are impermanent, are, really, indications of the Self that is unchanging understanding in nature. In its truest sense, *pramāṇa* or *avagati* is *just* the permanently changeless Self.

I single out these two moments as crucial for the following reason. We saw in the previous chapter that understanding the identity statement was predicated on understanding that Brahman’s being the Self as knowledge or *jñānam*, the crucial link between the two categories, obtains through the secondary signification function of the word. Without understanding this, as well as understanding what *jñānam* ultimately refers to, full understanding of the identity statement is impossible, and this point is not discussed in the *śravaṇa* section, because it is not a theological topic. As a corollary of this, it follows that *liberation is impossible* without going the full length of *manana*, without *śāstra-yukti* together: since understanding the identity statement *is* the Vedāntic process of liberation, proper understanding is predicated on grasping the nuts and bolts of philosophy of language and mind.

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50 *tatrāḥa codakaḥ—avagatiḥ pramāṇānāṁ phalam kūṭastha-nityātma-jyotih-svarūpeti ca vipratisiddham. ity uttavantam āha—na vipratisiddham. kathāṁ tarhy avagateḥ phalatvam? tattvopacārāṁ. kūṭasthā nityāpi satī pratyaksādi-pratyayyānte lakṣyate, tādarthyāt. pratyaksādi-pratyayaysya anityatve anityeva bhavati. tena pramāṇānāṁ phalam ity upacaryate. USG 2, 108.*
This conclusion is reinforced by the following point: we also saw that *brahma-jñāna* or *tat tvam asy-adi-vākyārtha-parijñāna* was supposed to culminate in “personal experience,” *anubhava*, or “understanding,” *avagati*. *Avagati* is the dominant theme in this second chapter—it is sometimes called just the *avagati-prakaraṇam*—but we learn here that understanding is what the Self is: understanding the identity statement *just is* “becoming” the Self, because the Self is indicated by all veridical cognitions as the consciousness without which veracity is impossible, and which is veridical as consciousness even in cognitions that are not veridical. When full understanding obtains, one reaches the level of the Self, which is the absolute or *paramārtha* perspective in which only consciousness is real, but not its content. The content does not necessarily disappear upon such understanding, but one knows from this perspective that what is seen in waking is as false as the content of dreams from the standpoint of waking. One has broken new ground, and it is, at last, the firm ground. There is no “confirmation” of the scriptural knowledge in personal experience, but personal experience that is understanding that is the Self itself, when the meaning of the identity statement had been fully clarified through the theological reflection, when it had been understood that in the identity statement the sentence reference obtains through the secondary signification function, and that one’s propositional awareness is but an indication of Brahman the light of consciousness.

We return, thus, to the point with which we began in Chapter Seven: understanding the identity statement without the last shred of doubt is all that is required for liberation, for such understanding just is the Self. This understanding removes ignorance, as a consequence of which one remains the Self as the final step in the attainment of liberation. There is, in other words, no special intuition of *brahma-jñāna*, no mystical experience, no further “direct vision of

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51 Such is the case both in Mayeda’s critical edition and in Jagadananda Swami’s translation (1949).
52 BSBh 2.1.14.
Brahman,” no second, non-scriptural cognition beyond the full clarification of doubts, just an intellectual understanding with full certainty, predicated on accepting the figurative nature of words that stand for consciousness, and of cognitions as mere indicators of “understanding.” It is arriving at *avagati* through *śāstra-yukti* over the plenitude of scriptural data.

We can, in fact, pinpoint the exact moment when liberation takes place. After the last quoted statement, when the student realizes that all mental states are just reflections of the light of the Self, veridical as the Self but false as their individual content, he says the following, which is worthy of quoting in full:

If that is the case, sir, then understanding (*avagati*) is permanently changeless, just the light of the Self in nature, known through itself because of not depending on a *pramāṇa* with regard to itself. Everything else is unconscious and for the purpose of another, being made to act through combination [with other things]. The non-Self exists for the sake of another just in virtue of the nature of understanding that appears as the cognitions that give rise to happiness, suffering, illusion, etc. Consequently, from the absolute standpoint (*paramārthataḥ*), it does not exist at all. Just as it is seen in the world that the snake does not exist in the rope nor water in mirage except through awareness (*avagati*) of them, it is likewise but right that the dualities of waking and dream do not exist except through awareness of them. In the same way, sir, from the absolute perspective, the understanding that is the light of the Self is compact, and therefore it is permanently changeless and nondual, being present in all cognitions, whereas cognitions are not present in understanding itself. Just as various cognitions of things blue, yellow, etc., are not what understanding is in the dream state, likewise they are not so in the waking state. And, since cognitions of things blue, yellow, etc., are not what this understanding is, they ought to be unreal, and except for their understanding there is no separate agent of understanding, for which reason by its own nature it can neither be accepted nor rejected, given that there is no other thing.\(^{53}\)


468
The teacher approves of this, confirms that the student has gotten rid of ignorance by the power of knowledge, and is now liberated: “You have thus attained fearlessness, and from now on you will not experience the suffering of waking and dream. You are freed from the misery of transmigration.” The student ascents with an Om.

Needless to say, the mental state corresponding to the statement of liberation is a token of a mental state, just as those of the dream and waking states. It is, nevertheless, a shift in perspective, from vyavahāra to paramārtha, where the world is still seen but “under the mode of mirage.” And, a mental state is all that it can be under the circumstances. It is, also, all that is required in Śaṅkara’s eyes, but we will talk about it after we deal with nididhyāsana.

**Nididhyāsana and Parisaṅkhyaṇa**

The last of the three processes, nididhyāsana, had puzzled scholars for some time. As we saw in Chapter Five, in pre-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedānta this third process stood for meditation on Brahman that developed under the influence of the school of Yoga and was generally called prasaṅkhyaṇa or dhyānabhyāsa in Maṇḍana Miśra’s turn of phrase. Śaṅkara rejected the possibility of meditation on Brahman after Brahman had been known, and otherwise meditation had applicability in the saguṇa-vidyā portion of the Upaniṣads, culminating in the arising of knowledge and in renunciation. There could not be meditation on Brahman as depicted in the nirguṇa-vidyā passages. We also saw that the first two processes, śravaṇa and manana, could jointly culminate in full understanding and liberation. Yet, Śaṅkara affirmed this third process and, curiously, called it parisaṅkhyaṇa in the third prose section of the US. In other words, he simply changed the preverb from pra to pari. What is this parisaṅkhyaṇa and why call it that?

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54 ity evaṁ tvam abhayam prāpnoṁ, nātaḥ paraṁ jāgrat-svapna-duḥkham anubhaviṣyaṁ. saṁsāra-duḥkhān mukto ’śti. Ibid., 110.
Mayeda approvingly refers to Paul Hacker’s translation of the word as “Rekapitulierende Betrachtung,” and says that *parisaṅkhyaṇa* seems to be “a kind of meditation which consists in recapitulating the conclusion which had been arrived at through one’s previous study and discussion with a teacher,” pointing to Śaṅkara’s rejection of *prasaṅkhyaṇa* but admitting that it is not clear how *parisaṅkhyaṇa* was any different.\(^{55}\) In an important little monograph on meditation in Śaṅkara’s Vedānta, Jonathan Bader suggests, rightly, that Śaṅkara’s choice of the term *parisaṅkhyaṇa* could have been influenced by the Mīmāṁsā notion of *parisaṅkhya-vidhi*.\(^{56}\)

I had come to the same conclusion independently, before I had the occasion to read Bader’s monograph, and here I would like to expand upon what is just a hint in it.

*Prasaṅkhyaṇa-vādins* related meditation on the Self to injunctions such as *ātmety evopāsīta, vijñāya prajñāṁ kurvīta* and so ‘*nveṣṭavyaḥ sa vijijñāsitavyaḥ*. That is, the injunctions of meditation picked specifically the *nididhyāsitavya* part of Yājñavalkya’s statement. It is quite instructive to see what Śaṅkara had to say about these injunctive statements. Under BĀU 1.4.7, Śaṅkara rejects what appears to be an adaptation of the Bhāṭṭa idea of *bhāvanā* to meditation, the idea that the statement *ātmety evopāsīta* could be an *apūrva-vidhi*, an injunction that introduces meditation on the Self as a form of action that is a means to knowing the Self, but is itself not known as such a means without the injunction, as I discussed in the Second Chapter. The reason for his rejection is that there obtains optionality regarding the Self, which is evident from later passages in the Upaniṣad. Think, for instance, of Uṣasta Cākṛāyaṇa’s pestering of Yājñavalkya to tell him about Brahman that is direct and immediate. “Which one is it, Yājñavalkya, that is the Self within all?”\(^{57}\)

\(^{55}\) Mayeda 2006b:254.  
\(^{56}\) Bader 1990:78-9.  
\(^{57}\) atha hainam uṣastaś cākṛāyaṇaḥ papraccha. yat sākṣād aparokṣād brahma ya ātmā sarvāntaraṁ taṁ me vyācākṣasveti. eṣa ta ātmā sarvāntaraṁ, katamo yājñavalkya sarvāntaraḥ. BĀU 3.4.1.
know which Self should be the object of meditation first, before the injunction could make sense as an *apūrva-vidhi*. Once one had ascertained the real Self, however, all other points of identification vanish because they are ignorance, and by the principle of residue only the option of thinking of the true Self remains, which makes the injunction dead and gone because one no longer sees oneself as an agent etc.\

Śaṅkara, however, says that the statement can be taken as an injunction, not of the *apūrva*, but of the *niyama* kind, a restriction. To refer again to our second, “resource” chapter, a restriction was an injunction that obtains when options are available, for instance in preparing the rice, and only one of them is enjoined. What Śaṅkara intends to say is that one should meditate on the true Self and not on any other point of identification available, for instance, the mind. The glaring problem with this is, as the *pūrva-pakṣin* is quick to point out, that Śaṅkara had just said that thinking on the true Self was inevitable by the principle of residue. Śaṅkara’s reply to this objection has some consequences both for understanding the role of *nididhyāsana*, and the nature of liberation:

But, how is it the case that there is optionality of meditation, when you said that the mental flow over the true Self would be permanent by the principle of residue? – That is right. Nevertheless, even though it is so, the results of actions that produced the body must bear fruit. And, even though full understanding had arisen, the functions of the body, mind and words are inevitable because the karma that had begun unfolding overpowers knowledge, like the case of the released arrow. For this reason, the functioning of knowledge is weaker and optionality obtains. Therefore, the mental flow of knowledge of the Self must be regulated by relying on methods such as renunciation, dispassion, etc.\

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58 ātmety evopāśita iti nāpūrva-vidhiḥ, pakṣe prāptatvāt. *yat sākṣād aparokṣād brahma* (BĀU 3.4.1), *katama ātmeti—yo ‘yaṁ vijnānamayaḥ* (BĀU 4.3.7) ity-evam-ādy-ātma-pratipādana-parābhiḥ śrutibhir ātma-viṣayaṁ vijnānam utpāditam; tatrātma-svarūpa-vijnānenaiva tad-viṣayānātmābhimāna-buddhiḥ kārakādi-kriyā-phaḷādiḥyāropaṇātmikā avidyā nivartitā; tasyāṁ nivartitāyaṁ kāmādi-doṣānapatāḥ anātmacintānupatāḥ; pārīśeyād ātma-cintaiva. tasmāt tad-upāsanam asmin pakṣe na vidhātavyam, prāptatvāt. BĀUBh 1.4.7, VIII.106.

I will discuss the consequences of this on the nature of liberation and knowledge of the Self in the next section, but let us note that even after full understanding it was possible to swerve and think on other things by the force of the already constituted conditioning. Because of this, it is required to focus on the true Self.

Here I should point out that Śaṅkara referred to vijñāya prajñāṁ kurvīta of BĀU 4.4.21 as a statement of the same kind just before the quoted passage. He says the same about the third important statement commonly adduced as an injunction to meditation, so ‘æveṣṭavyah sa vijijñāsitavya of ChU 8.7.1—it is not an apūrva-vidhi but niyama—emphasizing, however, the other important feature of apūrva: it cannot be an injunction of such a kind because investigating and knowing have visible results, understanding, whereas injunctions of the apūrva kind are invariably related to invisible results, such as the presumed excellence in rice as a result of besprinkling, or the virility that comes about from using a post of khādira wood.60 Third time’s a charm, and although even Sureśvara accepts this endorsement of niyama-vidhi begrudgingly or as hypothetical, there is no doubt that Śaṅkara was serious about it.61

Now, all advocates of prasaṅkhyāna wanted ritual and the āśrama practices given in BĀU 4.4.22, as well as the six virtues in BĀU 4.4.23 that were identified with yama-niyama, to be either enjoined or practiced all the same alongside meditation: both these texts came just after the vijñāya prajñāṁ kurvīta. Śaṅkara rejected the first, as we saw, because the āśrama practices were related to the “desire to know the Self,” not to knowledge itself, and were “comparatively remote.” They culminated in understanding transmigration and engendering dispassion. The six virtues or the complex of yama-niyama, on the other hand, although having the status of

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60 āneṣṭavyah vijijñāsitavya iti ca eṣa niyama-vidhir eva, na apūrva-vidhiḥ. evam anveṣṭavyo vijijñāsitavya ity arthah, deṣṭārthatvād anveṣaṇa-vijijñāsanayoḥ. ChUBh 8.7.1, VII.507.
61 NaiS 1.88, and BĀUBhV 1.4.921-932.
practices of the āśrama of those who had gone forth, the monks, had to be observed not only after renunciation, but even after knowing Brahman, because it was possible for one to be distracted by hunger and similar natural discomforts. These were not only renunciation in nature—knowing that presupposes doing nothing productive—but also virtues that one had to cultivate even after full knowledge of Brahman had arisen, because such knowledge had to be guarded against the overpowering tendencies of embodiment. Consider, for instance, the following passage from ChUBh 2.23.1, where Śaṅkara argues at length that the monk who is established in Brahman, brahma-saṁśṭha, cannot have an obligation to perform ritual and the other āśrama practices because he has obtained the cognition of unity:

– But, the rules and regulations of a monk also become impossible because the cognition of duality that is the ground for injunctions has been defeated by the cognition occasioned through the texts that propound seeing unity. – No, they are for the purpose of restraint, because it is possible for one to be diverted from the cognition of unity by hunger and the like.\(^{62}\)

Such virtues were not only conducive to the rise of knowledge equally or better than the āśrama practices, but were, as Śaṅkara said, “related to knowledge itself,” indispensable. The statements of meditation were restrictions, niyama-vidhi, in this other important sense: they involved yama-niyama as auxiliary to meditation.

Śaṅkara, of course, did not think that the statements he designated as niyama-vidhi exercised any commanding power. Under BSBh 3.2.21, he says that injunctive statements within the scope of para-vidyās are used for directing the attention, much as in ordinary language when

one says, “see this” or “hear this.” This is required because without proper attention one may not form a cognition even when facing the object, so it is proper to direct the attention.\footnote{Mayeda (1998) fails to appreciate this when he rejects Bader’s suggestion that Śaṅkara took a cue from the parisaṅkhya-vidhi of the Mīmāṃśakas, because “it is no doubt an ‘injunction’ as the term vidhi clearly shows.” Aside not bearing in mind the general rethinking of the nature of injunctions as informative rather than commanding, Śaṅkara commonly uses the term vidhi for any kind of a positive statements, including the propositional statements of the Self-Brahman unity, for instance in the text from the ChUBh 2.23.1 that I just quoted.}

Let us translate this now to the case of nīdīdhyāsana, the third method of knowing the Self. The question we must ask is, how does one restrict one’s mental flow on the Self when the Self is, as Śaṅkara repeatedly says, a “non-object,” and the very notion of unity is canceled by affirming such a mental flow that involves a subject, an object, an instrument, and an action? Now, I said in the Second Chapter that the third type of injunction according to manner was parisaṅkhyā, exclusion, and that its essential characteristic was affirming one thing but intending to deny another. To use a more down to earth example, saying “read a book” would be such an exclusion, if two conditions obtain: first, the intended meaning is not what is explicitly said, but something like “do not watch a movie,” “do not play a video game,” etc.; second, the intended counterpart or set must be known in full. In other words, “read a book” must exclude something specific and not just anything in general. Nīdīdhyāsana in Śaṅkara’s system, just like śravaṇa and manana, was meant for understanding the identity of the two padārthas, its central text was tat tvam asi, and we already saw that knowing this identity was not knowing an object that one could keep one’s mind on. It was knowing a “non-object,” or what the reference behind the statement was not. Śaṅkara went as far as saying that the meaning that obtains when tat and tvam were identified was neti neti.

Looking, now, at the third prose chapter of the US, we see something that looks very much like such a case of tat tvam asi unfolding. The parisaṅkhyāna reflection sets the familiar
principle of distinction between the knower and its objects, and then proceeds to enumerate the categories that may become such objects. This is the general principle of the procedure: “That by which the objects are known is different from them, being their knower.” The objects are, first, the sense objects—sound, touch, form, taste, and smell—and because they are perceived, they do not constitute the Self and should have no influence over the Self. The sense objects undergo the many kinds of transformation and cause the experience of happiness, suffering and the like, but their knowers are different from them. This is an important intuition, because it opens the avenue for the knower to disassociate himself from any of these experience-causing transformations.

Consider the case of praise: it comes through words, and therefore it can be reduced to words as an instance of their transformation; words are sound perceived by the ear, and the agent of knowing is different from the object; ergo, praise has nothing to do with him. The same procedure can be applied to words that express falsehood, horror, humiliation etc. The tactile sensations such as heat and cold are likewise analyzed as transformations of touch that are different from the knower, and so are all kinds of form, taste, and smell. This reflection, thus, picks those Upaniṣadic texts that dissociate the Self from the objects of the senses, and Śaṅkara quotes the Kaṭha Upaniṣad 3.15: “It has no sound or touch, no form. It is free from decay, without taste; eternal and without smell.” These are, of course, the negative characteristics of Brahman that relate the categories of tat and tvam.

The sense objects, further, before they are experienced as a specific cognitive instance of happiness, suffering and the like, require the joint functioning of the cognitive faculties, the body where they are seated, the mind and the intellect. As perception, they are a composite product. The Self, on the other hand, does not participate in composition in general, and whatever may be

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64 yena ca jñāyante, sa vijñātṛtvāt ataj-jātyaḥ. USG 113.
65 aśabdam asparśam arūpam avyayaṁ tathārasaṁ nityam agandhavac ca yat. Ibid.

475
presented to it in the manner of unfolding of karma is unrelated to it. Another set of negative
Upaniṣadic texts affirm this non-relational status of the Self, before Śaṅkara states his
knockdown argument: “The most important reason is that things that are the non-Self do not
exist.”

The intention of the parisaṅkhyaṇa reflection, in other words, is not to affirm “You are
Brahman” as an object of meditation, but to serve the practical purpose of reminding the knower
of Brahman what he is not. Tat tvam asi in the context of meditation should provide a procedure
for the aspirant after liberation, when he is alone, without a teacher, to remember: “Whatever you
may identify with, no!” This is, in fact, the only way one can reflect on the Self or perform
ātmānucintanam, because the prasaṅkhyaṇa procedure is both unproductive, doing what has
already been done or piṣṭa-piṣṭi, grinding what is ground, but also further affirms ignorance by
reintroducing the subject-object-instrument-action complex where it is, strictly, impossible.

Sureśvara says a bit indiscriminately that the injunction of meditation can be taken either
as niyama or parisaṅkhyaṇa:

– But, from the apūrva injunctions ‘One should meditate on it as the Self,’ ‘The Self, honey, should be seen,’ we ascertain a mandate for the action of seeing the Self on the
part of man. – No, we don’t, because the knowledge of things as they are, being the cause
of liberation by removing the ignorance of the Self that is the seed of all bad things, is not
humanly contingent. Even if we accept it as an injunction, it is not of the apūrva kind.
The injunctive meaning can be either that of a restriction or an exclusion, because we
meditate on the supreme Self solely through excluding the vision of the non-Self.

It seems to me, however, that Śaṅkara saw a significant difference between the two. The
injunction expressed the purpose of restricting the thought from going to the external objects

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66 anātma-vastunaś cāsattvaṁ paramo hetuḥ. Ibid.
67 Ānandagiri on BĀUBhV 4.4.798.
68 nanu āṁety evopāśīta, ṛta v āre draṣṭavyaḥ ity apūrva-vidhi-śruteḥ puruṣasyātma-darśana-kriyāyāṁ niyogo
‘vasiyata iti. naivam. apuruṣa-tantratvād vastu-yāthātmya-jñānasya sakalānarthā-bijaṁnaṁavodbodhsārīṇo muktihetor iti. vidhy-abhyupagame ‘pi nāpūrva-vidhir ayam. ata āha —
niṣyāmaṁ parisaṅkhyaṇa v āvīḍhy-artho ‘pi bhaved yataḥ |
anātma-darśanenaiva paraṁśuṁam upāśmahe. NaiŚ 1.88.
under the overpowering influence of embodiment and keeping yama-niyama relevant even for
the monk who does not, or rather should not, see duality. Parisaṅkhyā, on the other hand, was
tied to the identity statement and the manner in which such restricted reflection should proceed:
affirming one thing but intending to negate another, much along the line of Śaṅkara’s claim that
the real reference behind tat tvam asi was neti neti. Śaṅkara never says that the injunction itself
might be a parisaṅkhyā. If I am right, this point was lost on the later tradition. Sureśvara’s
commentator Jñānottama, for instance, says that the injunction could be taken as a niyama if the
vision of the non-Self overpowers the vision of the Self, or a parisaṅkhyā if they are equal,
which is a non-starter for Śaṅkara’s orthodox Brahma-Sūtra standpoint that the karma that had
started bearing fruits always overpowers knowledge of the Self. Kumārila’s point that a
parisaṅkhyā affirms one thing intending to negate another was lost. Little wonder that this was
all seen as hypothetical in any case. What Śaṅkara meant was that one should keep one’s thought
on the Self by considering what the Self is not.

Parisaṅkhyāna: A Second Avenue

There is a second avenue through which we may approach the understanding of parisaṅkhyāna:
it is the Mahābhārata. The term itself or the absolutive form parisaṅkhyāya is used several times
in the Mokṣa-Dharma section of Mahābhārata’s Śānti-Parvan, and in all cases, it is related to
sāṅkhya as a discipline that is explicitly paired with and distinguished from yoga. We will focus
on two such cases. First, the relation of parisaṅkhyāna to sāṅkhya and its distinction from yoga
is stated in verse 26 of chapter 306, in the dialogue between Vasiṣṭha and Karālajanaka that is
nested in Yudhiṣṭhira’s questioning of Bhīṣma: “So far I have accurately described the vison of
yoga. Now I will speak the knowledge of sāṅkhya, which provides vision through
parisaṅkhyaṁ.”

Nīlakaṇṭha glosses this parisaṅkhyaṁ vision as “direct experience by means of full exclusion, dissolving every product into its immediate cause, in the manner of the snake and the serpent.”

Vasiṣṭha proceeds to delineate a sāṅkhya system in which the twenty-four categories of creation, including the non-manifest prakṛti, emanate from and dissolve back into the inner Self. The Self is called the twenty-fifth principle, from which the other principles emanate but which, really, does not contain them at all (nistattva). Verse 42 says that the Sāṅkhyaḥ “perform a vision that is consequent on parisaṅkhyaṁ” and is a sāṅkhya vision. Nīlakaṇṭha’s glosses this as “the direct experience that is consequent on the dissolving of phenomenal manifestation in the conscious Self through pursuing the gross-to-subtle causal sequence.” Elsewhere he gives a similar gloss to the absolutive parisaṅkhyaṁya: “Defeating every preceding error with subsequent knowledge.”

It seems fairly obvious that the idea involves making a full count of the categories of experience until one arrives at the Self, from which it all comes and to which it all resolves, not unlike the sixth chapter of the Chāndogya.

Second, in chapter 315 we read about another account of sāṅkhya, in which Yājñavalkya instructs Janaka in a teaching that is very much amenable to Śaṅkara’s doctrine of mutual superimposition of the Self and the non-Self—here puruṣa and prakṛti—through ignorance. The

69 yoga-darśanam etāvad uktan te tattvato mayā |
     sāṅkhya-jñānaṁ pravakṣyāmi parisaṅkhyaṁ-darśanam. MBh 12.306.26, V.622 [12.294.26]. All references are to the “vulgate” text as commented by Nīlakaṇṭha in his Bhārata-Bhāva-Dīpa, with cross-references to the critical edition in the square brackets.

70 parisaṅkhyaṁ parivarjanaṁ rajjūraga-vat. uttarottarasya kāryasya pūrvasmin pūrvasmin pravilāpanaṁ tena
darśanaṁ sākṣāt-kāro yasmiṁ tathā. V.622.

71 Cf., especially, verses 31-32:
yasmād yad abhijāyeta tat tatraśa praliyate | liyante pratilomāṁ śrjyante cāṅtarātmāṁ ||
anulomena jāyante liyante pratilomataḥ | guṇa guṇeṣu satataṁ sāgarasyormayo yathā.

72 parisaṅkhyaṁ sthītu-sūksma-krameṇa cid-ātmane prapañca-pravilāpanaṁ tāṁ anudarśanaṁ sākṣātkāraṁ
     sampādayanīty arthāḥ. V.623.

73 tatra uttarottara-jñānena pūrva-pūrva-bhramāṁ parisaṅkhyaṁ bādhitvā. On 12.301.5, V.602 [12.294.5]: jñānena
     parisaṅkhyaṁ sadoṣān viṣayān nrpaḥ.
important knowledge here concerns the fact that qualities or characteristics (guna) that belong to prakṛti cannot be ascribed to the sentient puruṣa, which is, for this reason, nirguṇa, and does not come in touch with prakṛti. Yājñavalkya concludes: “This is the vision of sāṅkhyā, the best full enumeration for you. Having thus fully enumerated, Sāṅkhyas attain isolation.”74 Yājñavalkya proceeds in the next chapter with yoga that is the meditational, aṣṭāṅga-yoga, and the two are clearly presented as alternatives for liberation.

Parisaṅkhyāna in the Mahābhārata, then, is sāṅkhya, whose purpose is to enumerate everything under the sun so as to facilitate, to refer to James Fitzgerald’s apt characterization of the context in which parisaṅkhyāna is equated with sāṅkhya,

disaffection from the world, a radical purging of egocentrism and desire from one’s taken for granted understanding of the world with oneself in it. This disaffection, called vairagya (a dissociation from life’s motivating stimuli at the visceral level of a person’s being), is effected by the systematic, enumerative contemplation of the entire system of the world. The word Sāṅkhya signifies comprehensive intuition,” or “all-gnosis,” and its cognates signify “enumerate, know the whole of some complex entity by itemizing and totaling every component of it.”75

We should add: know it all so as to reduce it to what is further irreducible and know it as different from yourself.

Back to the third prose chapter of UŚ, we cannot fail to notice that Śaṅkara is doing somewhat of that parisaṅkhyāna that the Mahābhārata and Nīlakaṇṭha are describing. The knower of Brahman who is troubled by things pertaining to the body, mind and words should cognitively reduce whatever is troubling him to the basic sense objects—sound and the rest—with the understanding that he as their knower is unrelated to them. Śaṅkara’s parisaṅkhyāna, then, being a meditation, is a device that employs the pertinent categories of sāṅkhya to map all

74 sāṅkhya-darśanaṁ etat te parisaṅkhyānam uttamam |
evaṁ hi parisaṅkhyāya sāṅkhyaḥ kevalatāṁ gatāḥ. 12.315.19, V.640 [12.303.19].
75 Fitzgerald 2012:49.
possible identification points for the Self in such a way that they are reducible to the basic sense objects, from which he is different because they are not attributable to the Self. It is a meditation not on the Self, but on its difference from whatever is not the Self, such that when full dissociation is achieved, one cannot but be the Self and have that direct experience that makes all experience possible, but is essentially non-transitive. Parisaṅkhyāna, this, is a structured reflection on neti neti, in which the full scope of identification points is mapped in a cause-effect chain.

Both entry points, thus, lead to the same conclusion: parisaṅkhyāna is sāṅkhya, in which the point is not to focus on the Self, but to eliminate everything that the Self is not. The two are, evidently, related through etymology, and the core meaning is “making the full count.”

Kumārila’s account, however, is more informative, as he makes clear that the purpose behind the full enumeration is not to affirm what is stated, but to communicate what is not stated yet is intended.

Be that as it may, we can now say the obvious: whereas prasaṅkhyāna meditation was yoga, parisaṅkhyāna reflection was sāṅkhya.

The Purpose of Parisaṅkhyāna and the Nature of Liberation
Liberation in Śaṅkara’s understanding was attained at the completion of the manana process. Did nididhyāsana have, then, a causal contribution in the attainment of liberation? Śaṅkara’s gloss of Yājñavalkya’s nididhyāsitavyah was niścayena dhyātavyah, to be reflected with certainty, and certainty was the big common gain of śravaṇa and manana: the initial verbal cognition of unity produced by the identity statements of the Upaniṣad could finally terminate in pramā/avagati by the processes of theological and philosophical reflection with a teacher. We saw under the previous heading that such vision of unity, however, was in permanent danger from the
overwhelming power of embodiment and the karma that had started bearing fruits, and

\textit{nididhyāsana} had at the least the purpose of keeping this vision permanent.

In the opening of the third prose chapter of US, Śaṅkara says that the \textit{parisaṅkhyaṇa} meditation is delineated for those aspirants after liberation who want to diminish (\textit{kṣapāṇa}) the good and bad karma that had already been accumulated, as well as to prevent the replenishing of the karmic stock, with the following reason: “The psychological faults are caused by ignorance, and they in their turn give rise to the vocal, mental, and bodily actions, through which karma of good, bad, and mixed nature is produced. (The \textit{parisaṅkhyaṇa} meditation is delineated) for the sake of liberation from them.”\textsuperscript{76} This obviously does not sit well with the end of the second chapter and the grand, almost pompous, announcement of liberation attained. Does it tell us something about the nature of liberation?

Ānandagiri in his comment tries to grapple with the problem by introducing the notion of mediacy of the knowledge of the Self: “It has been established that he who had attained the aforementioned knowledge that is devoid of injunctions and had accomplished his purpose does not need to observe anything prompted by an injunction. Now, the author shows that there is something that remains to be done on the part of those who have not attained immediate sentential knowledge because their understanding of the categories is not exceedingly clear.”\textsuperscript{77}

Scholars in general also relate \textit{nididhyāsana} with the problem of mediacy of the knowledge of Brahman, but offer interpretations that are more in line with the \textit{prasaṅkhyaṇa} doctrine than with Śaṅkara’s own. M. Hiriyanna, for instance, says: “The object of this stage \textit{[nididhyāsana]} is, as

\textsuperscript{76} mumukṣuṇām upātta-puṇyāpunya-kṣapaṇa-parāṇām apūrvānapacayārthāṁ parisaṅkhyaṇam idam ucyate—avidyā-hetavo dosāḥ vāṁ-manaḥ-kāya-pravṛttī-hetavaḥ, pravṛttēś ca iṣṭānāśa-miśra-phalāni karmāni upacīyante iti tan-mokṣārtham. USG 3.112.

\textsuperscript{77} vidhi-rahita-pūrvokta-vidyā-sampannasya kṛta-krtyasya vidhito na kiṁcid anuṣṭhāyam iti pratiṣṭhāpitam. sampratī yeṣām aparokṣāni vākyārtha-jñānaṁ sphaṭatāra-padārtha-jñāna-virahatavān na sampadyate teṣām anuṣṭhāya-śeṣaṁ darśayati. Ānandagiri on USG 1.112.
often remarked before, to transform into direct experience the mediate knowledge of ultimate reality acquired by the study of the Upanishads and by reflection upon their teaching. It is accordingly vision that is sought now, and not mere knowledge.\footnote{Hiriyanna 1995:172.} Ānandagiri’s remark may not be fully on the point, because the two processes of śravaṇa and manana would have been repeated until the identity statements terminates in full understanding, as Śaṅkara had said under BS 4.1.2. Moreover, it was in later Advaita Vedānta that the notion of aparokṣa-jñāna took the central stage. It was crucial in the doctrine of prasaṅkhyāna, and Śaṅkara was aware of it, but his reply to it was simple: because the identity statement is about myself, who am most intimately known to me, it does not require any additional measure of immediacy beyond pinpointing precisely the reference of the notion of the Self by eliminating all the other identification points. For Śaṅkara, the immediacy of the knowledge of the Self obtained as in the case of the boy who had forgotten to take himself into account, but is reminded of the fact when someone tells him, “You are the tenth person.” In general, although Śaṅkara clearly addressed the notion of the immediacy of brahma-jñāna, expressions such as aparokṣa-jñāna, aparokṣānubhūti, or aparokṣānubhava are absent from his works. Perhaps parisaṅkhyāna was a contemplation that one would have practiced alongside śravaṇa and manana, on one’s own. There may be, however, something more to Ānandagiri’s comment. We will return to it in a bit, but let us now try to clarify a couple of things about the nature of liberation.

Let us first finish our story with prasaṅkhyāna-vāda and the purported second understanding or cognition of Brahman. Maṇḍana Miśra, as we saw, thought that the scripturally formed notion of Brahman had to be meditated upon because it was relational, a verbal composite, and mediate. Śaṅkara solved the first issue by insisting that the scriptural notion of
Brahman was not a definite description, but a definition. He solved the second by placing the onus on the identity statements: they became the focal point of brahma-jñāna and no further immediacy was required because knowledge of Brahman just was knowledge of myself. And, while Maṇḍana thought that liberation would follow when ignorance had been dissolved through long meditation, for Śaṅkara ignorance was undone and liberation attained immediately on fully understanding the identity statement. He, in fact, explicitly argued against a doctrine according to which the very last cognition of the Self was the one responsible for undoing ignorance. Śaṅkara very much shared the prasaṅkhyāna idea that knowledge of Brahman was prophylactic, but charged these fellow Vedāntins that they did not really understood what knowledge was:

> We have already said that knowledge has visible results, the cessation of ignorance, grief, illusion, fear, and the like. Knowledge, in fact, terminates in the cessation of the psychological faults headed by ignorance. Whatever cognition is fruitful in bringing about the cessation of such psychological faults headed by ignorance, be it the first, the last, continuous, or discrete, only that is knowledge.\(^79\)

For him, the crucial question was not how to transform scriptural knowledge into a direct vision of Brahman, but whether one felt this scriptural knowledge in one’s bones and one’s whole being so that one no longer craved after transient pleasures, feared transmigration and such. “I am Brahman” meant “I am none of these things.” As a corollary to this, he was serious and literal in insisting that knowledge had visible results: not a mystical intuition, but freedom from vices consequent on understanding that what prompts these vices has nothing to do with me. Knowledge was prophylactic in this sense of not only stopping the behavior that was predicated on ignorance, but undoing the psychological setup on which such behavior was predicated. This was the result that knowledge brings to consummation, from jñānotpati to phalāvasāna. And

once that has happened, all future “cognitions of Brahman” would be of the same kind—“I am Brahman as I am none of these things”—and it was but right that the first such cognition be the liberating cognition.

We should also note that the final understanding of Brahman of the prasaṅkhyaṇa kind was strictly impossible in Śaṅkara’s system. We saw in the previous chapter that the characteristic in virtue of which the Upaniṣads were a single corpus was that both meditation and knowledge were mental modifications, a mano-vṛtti: “Just as knowledge of non-duality is merely a mental modification, so are the other meditations mental modifications in nature.”80 We can try to understand this in consonance with Śaṅkara’s theory of cognition: for there to be an ascertainment of an object, the mind must take the shape of the object and simultaneously be illuminated by the light of the Self.81 Because Brahman is a non-object, the mind in the cognition of non-duality cannot really assume any form, so we can surmise that the object would be just the reflection of the Self as understanding or pramāṇa pure and simple. Or, we can understand it preferably as the thought corresponding to the statement of the student in the Upadeśa-Sāhasrī that we identified as the moment marking the attainment of liberation. In either case, however, it would be a mental modification that is predicated on the presence of the cognitive apparatus and the subject-object distinction. To put this differently, “experience of Brahman” in the truest possible sense in Śaṅkara’s system was a contradictio in adiecto. Ultimately, experience of Brahman, insofar as it was possible, was a product of ignorance.

Śaṅkara, in fact, said as much: “Both knowledge [of the Self-Brahman unity] and experience of karma are results of the actions that have started bearing fruits.”82 Karma was, of

81 See USP 18.118-120.
82 ārabdhasya phale hy ete bhogo jñānaṁ ca karmaṇāṁ. USP 4.4.
course, one of the three factors of individuation that were consequent on ignorance, and thus knowledge of Brahman as one could possibly experience it, a mental modification, was just a product of ignorance. As such, it belonged to the same order of being, that of actuality, as any other experience of happiness, suffering or similar end products of manifest karma. The characteristic feature of this specific mental modification was that it had the ability to prevent the creation of new karma and the experience of the non-manifest karma, and this was at the least because the two belonged to a different order of being, that of potentiality. That which is not yet does not ever have to be.

This was a mental modification that could in time put an end to all mental modifications, including itself. It had such power because it stopped the inverse attribution of qualities of the Self and the non-Self, yet itself was predicated on such inverse attribution, for which reason its nature was quite precarious. So long one was subject to the karma that had started bearing fruits, there had to be mental modifications of some kind, and there had to be a residue of karma that influenced one’s mental state. For this reason, it was of crucial importance to maintain this specific mental modification constantly alive to oneself, in face of the unfolding of the remaining karma. It was this, I would like to suggest, that was the main purpose of the parisaṅkhyaṇa meditation: because one was liable to the karma that had started bearing fruits till final, post-mortem liberation in Brahman was achieved, it was possible to lose the immediacy of the knowledge of one’s being Brahman and to slip into identifying with any one thing from the sphere of the non-Self, whether words of praise or censure or sense objects. Parisaṅkhyaṇa could in such a situation bring back the immediacy of knowing oneself as Brahman by recreating the awareness of what one is not, and with that stop the influence of the natural functioning of body,
mind, and words over oneself. In that sense, Ānandagiri seems justified in relating its use to immediacy, though perhaps not its first appearance.
PART FOUR: FROM IDENTITY STATEMENTS TO MAHĀ-VĀKYA
CHAPTER TEN: SARVAJÑĀTMAN AND THE DOCTRINE OF UPANIŚADIC MAHĀ-VĀKYA

Victorious is that immediate awareness, unaffected by illusion, residing in its natural eminence, the sole cause of the world, one whose plenitude is defiled by the differences fashioned by its own nescience, through which it is the world, the Supreme Self, and the individual Self.¹

Introduction and a Historical Note

In the previous two chapters, we focused our attention on the identity statements of the Upaniṣads and on their role as the final link in Śaṅkara’s chain of soteriological causality. They did not really have a name, though, and early Advaitins liked to call them metonymically “tat tvam asi and the rest.” Tat tvam asi was paradigmatic among them, since it explicitly related the two categories, but historically tasmād vā etasmād ātmanaḥ from the Taittirīya was more important for the formulation of the identity statement notion, because it was the second chapter of the Taittirīya that provided the core of the doctrine. In any case, however, one would not know that these identity statements did not have a name if one read scholarly accounts of Advaita Vedānta, and one would have heard countless times that these pithy identity statements were called mahā-vākyas. One would have also read accounts of how Śaṅkara used and interpreted mahā-vākyas. In this chapter, we will see that the doctrine of mahā-vākya was not formulated by Śaṅkara himself, but by another early Vedāntin, namely Sarvajñātman. We will also see that mahā-vākya had a prehistory in the fellow school of Vedic theology, Mīmāṃsā, and

that Sarvajñātman explicitly modeled the Vedāntic idea of *mahā-vākya* on the Mīmāṁsā
original, using a Mīmāṁsā structure to build an edifice of purely Śaṅkaran blocks. We will in
this way finally come to the resolution of this lengthy story. It will turn out that the identity
statements of the Upaniṣads understood as *mahā-vākyas* were only formally short statements,
and from a fuller perspective they were massively long, a hierarchical organization of nearly the
whole Vedic canon into a single text. But, before we do all that, let us first see how scholars
commonly understand *mahā-vākyas* and how much that is historically justified.

The scholarly uses of *mahā-vākya* can be classed in several loose groups of progressively
reducing scope. To begin with, any short but somehow important statement from any
foundational Hindu text can be called a *mahā-vākya*. Edwin Bryant, thus, defines *mahā-vākya* as
“a ‘pivotal’, ‘most important’, or ‘representational statement’ for the theology of a sect.”\(^2\)
Similarly, Richard H. Davis in his recent “The Bhagavad Gita: A Biography,” says that “Indian
commentators often highlighted especially powerful statements in the *Gita* for special attention
as *mahavakyas* (great utterances).”\(^3\) The late Tamal Krishna Goswami suggests that *mahā-vākyas*
that “are found across many traditions” are the “one good device” through the application of
which “apparently contradictory passages can be brought into conformity with the canon.” He
also seems to share Bryant’s idea that *mahā-vākyas* are representational statements: “Amid the
vast firmament of a tradition’s authoritative texts, a *mahāvākya*’s luminosity outshines that of all
others, as it encapsulates the tradition’s inner core, the purport of its beliefs.”\(^4\) Goswami
proceeds to identify an English *mahā-vākya*, “Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead,”
as the cornerstone of the Gauḍīya theology of his own teacher, A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami

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\(^2\) Bryant 2003:xxi, 500.
\(^3\) Davis 2015:99.
Prabhupāda. Such presentations evidently take *mahā-vākyas* as some sort of an interpretative device, and they seem to be popular with scholars who come from a theological background, Catholic or otherwise. Most explicit in such theological approach was perhaps Julius Lipner, who says in his study of Rāmānuja that both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja erected their respective systems of Vedānta on the foundation of select statements from the Upaniṣads, *mahā-vākyas*, which served the roles of hermeneutic keys.⁵

More restricted in scope seems to be the practice of naming a *mahā-vākya* any short and important statement, but strictly from the Upaniṣads, generally without providing justification for doing so. Thus, for instance, Chris Bartley calls the *Taittirīya* 2.1.1 statement that defines Brahman, *satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma*, a *mahā-vākyya*, but he does not say why specifically that statement would be a *mahā-vākyya*, nor does he provide a reference in support.⁶ As we will see later, this was one of the statements that were explicitly *not* *mahā-vākyas* in Sarvajñātman’s account. In a similar vein, Rudolph Otto in his classic “Mysticism East and West” labels the famous *Chāndogya* 6.2.1 statement, *sad eva somyedam agra āsid ekam evādvitiyam*, a “great saying.”⁷ Matthew Kapstein, on the other hand, talks about Śaṅkara’s careful deployment of *mahā-vākyas* or passages derived from the Upaniṣads in the first prose chapter of the *Upadeśa-Sāhasrī* as a way of structured teaching, suggesting, thus, that all the Upaniṣadic statements that Śaṅkara strings there in a textual cavalcade are *mahā-vākyas* in some way.⁸

Finally, the identity statements are generally called *mahā-vākyas*, typically *tat tvam asi* among them. This use is ubiquitous, and the following few examples are adduced merely for illustrative purpose. Bader: “Still more important here is the discussion of the sacred utterance

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⁵ Lipner 1986: 82.
⁸ Kapstein 2015.
(mahāvākyā), 'Thou art that' (tat tvam asi). This mahāvākyā is the basis upon which Śaṅkara constructs his method of liberation.” “The focal point of the discipline leading to true knowledge is the mahāvākyā, a sacred utterance expressing only the highest truth.”9 Malkovsky: “Śaṅkara teaches that ignorance may be entirely destroyed upon hearing for the first time a ‘Great Saying’ (mahā-vākyā) from the Upaniṣads such as ‘That thou art’ (tat tvam asi) and fully gasping [sic] its import.”10 “The highest wisdom of the Upaniṣads, the essence of the revealed śruti, is most fully embodied in a small number of cryptic sentences called mahāvākyas.”11 Pande: “A common view found among other Vedāntins was that the mere hearing of the Vedāntic Mahāvākyas like Tattvamasi does not lead to the direct knowledge of the Self.”12 Narayanacharya: “Śhankara discriminates between the so-called Mahāvākyas (The ‘great’ statements) and Laghuvākyas (the ‘ordinary’ ones), with no precedent before him and no sanction by the Vedas and the Mimāmsa discipline.”13 Deutsch: “‘Hearing’ (śruta), the first of the three, has to do with the initial (and sometimes immediately enlightening) acquaintance with the teachings of Advaita. The aspirant is encouraged to listen to the sages and study the Vedāntic texts. He must investigate the mahāvākyas or great sayings of the Upaniṣads and determine their proper purport.”14

More specifically, sometimes a limited set of identity statements are called mahā-vākyas. Mayeda says that eleven or twelve of them are enumerated, but the common set has four.15 These are tat tvam asi, aham brahmāsmi, ayam ātmā brahma, and prajñānaṁ brahma. Sometimes,
however, *sarvam khalv idam brahma* from the śāṇḍilya-vidyā is included in place of *prajñānam brahma*. The doctrine of four *mahā-vākyas* is commonly ascribed to Śaṅkara himself. Andrew Nicholson, for one, says: “For instance, the eighth-century Advaita Vedāntin Śaṅkara dubbed four Upaniṣadic sentences as ‘great statements’ (*mahāvākyas*): ‘You are that’ (*tat tvam asi*), ‘I am Brahman’ (*aham brahmāsmi*), ‘This self is Brahman’ (*ayam ātmā brahma*), and ‘Brahman is consciousness (*prajñānam brahma*).’” These four *mahā-vākyas* are sometimes described as one for each of the four Vedas: each *mahā-vākyya* expresses the essence of an Upaniṣad, which in its turn expresses the best and highest knowledge contained in one of the four Vedas; these four Vedas have been entrusted in care to the four great monasteries at the four cardinal points, coming in succession from one of the four principal students of Śaṅkara:

- (1) *prajñānam brahma* in AiU 3.3 of the Rg Veda → Puri → Padmapāda;
- (2) *aham brahmāsmi* in BĀU 1.4.10 of the Yajur Veda → Shringeri → Sureśvara;
- (3) *tat tvam asi* in the ChU 6.8.7 of the Śāma Veda → Dwaraka → Hastāmalaka;
- (4) *ayam ātmā brahma* in MāU 2 of the Atharva Veda → Badrinath → Troṭaka.

In any case, the scholarly assumption is either that *mahā-vākyas* were just always there, or that Śaṅkara invented the idea.

Contrary to these reports, Śaṅkara himself was not the author of the *mahā-vākya* doctrine. There is, in fact, only one mention of Upaniṣadic *mahā-vākyas* in his authentic works. It is found in his *Bhāṣya* on the Aitareya Upaniṣad, and although it is clearly related to that knowledge which is available from the identity statements, no underlying theory can be reconstructed from that single comment:

When by good fortune a teacher of supreme compassion beat near his ears the drum of the great sayings of the Upaniṣads whose notes were meant to wake up the knowledge of the Self, then the individual realized that Puruṣa, discussed as the Lord of creation—called Puruṣa because of taking a residence in the city (of the heart)—was Brahman, the

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great. … How (did he realize it)? ‘Oh, I have seen this Brahman as the real nature of my Self!’

There are, of course, numerous mentions of mahā-vākyas in the many spurious prakaraṇa works that are attributed to Śaṅkara, all of which are nested in post-Śaṅkara developments of doctrine and style.

If Śaṅkara did not explicate a mahā-vākyya doctrine, it follows by implication that the idea of four mahā-vākyas was not Śaṅkara’s own either. While I have not pursued the formation of this specific notion, it appears that it must have been well-established by the 14th century and the great Advaitin Vidyāraṇya. In his Pañcadaśī, Vidyāraṇya interprets the four mahā-vākyas in Chapter Five, called Mahā-Vākya-Viveka, where he follows the common order of the four Vedas: Rg (prajñānaṁ brahma), Yajur (ahaṁ brahmāsmi), Sāma (tat tvam asi), Atharva (ayam ātmā brahma). The idea is present in the most influential hagiography of Śaṅkara, Śaṅkara-Dig-Vijaya of Mādhava, which says that Govindapāda personally instructed Śaṅkara in these four statements: “That best of ascetics, exceedingly pleased by the worship that was done with devotion, instructed him in Brahman through the four sentences that are the summit of the [respective] Vedas.”

The most prominent place of the four mahā-vākyas idea is in the corpus of the so-called Maṭhāmnāya texts. These are a few short compositions commonly attributed to Śaṅkara—Maṭhāmnāya, Mathāmnāya-Stotra, Mathāmnāya-Setu, Maṭhétivṛtt—a or in one case a

On the Śaṅkara-Dig-Vijaya, see Bader 2000:53-62. Bader does not accept the common ascription of this work to Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya and dates the work between 1650 and 1798.
Maṭhāmnāya Upaniṣad. The most well-known of them, the Mathāmnāya-Setu, consists of 75 anuṣṭubh verses. In Mathew Clark’s estimate, these texts are not more than four or five hundred years old. Mathāmnāya literally means “the tradition of the Maṭha,” and these texts in fact provide the doctrinal frame of the Daśanāmī institution of Advaita renunciants by circumscribing the tradition. The assumption being that Śaṅkara founded four monastic institutions at the four cardinal points, these texts aim at filling out identification rubrics for each of the four traditions by providing the following information, taking Śrīneri as an example:

1. Āmnāya (realm of one of the Vedas): Southern;
2. Maṭha: Śrīneri/Śāradā-pīṭha;
3. Jurisdiction (mandala): Āndhra, Draviḍa, Karṇata, Keralā;
4. Orders (sannyāsa names): Sarasvatī, Bhāratī, Purī;
5. Deities: Ādi-Varāha, Kāmākṣī;
6. Holy place (tīrtha): Tuṅgabhadra, Rāmeśvaram;
7. Veda: Yajur;
8. Mahā-vākya: aham brahmāsmi;
9. Gotra: Bhūrbhuva;
10. Brahmacārī name: Caitanya;
11. Sampradāya: Bhūrivāra;
12. Śaṅkara’s student to whom the Maṭha was entrusted: Hastāmalaka (Śureśvara).

There is no uniformity in these Mathāmnāya texts regarding which Deity and which student of Śaṅkara is associated with which Maṭha, and only Toṭaka is related to the Jyośimaṭh in all accounts. The “Sampradāya” item is not very clear either, and it comes to stand as a collective term for the several sannyāsa names that are given in the tradition. Mahā-vākya here is the liberating mantra of the respective tradition. That is, it is the mantra which Daśanāmīs receive during the second stage of their initiation into renunciation (vidyā-saṁskār or virajā-havan).

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22 Clark 2006:117.
This scheme of quartets does not seem to have much grounding in practice. In his study of the Śrīṅgeri tradition, Yoshitsugu Sawai notes: “According to tradition, Śaṅkara is said to have enjoined the Śrīṅgeri Maṭha especially to study the Yajur Veda and to meditate on the mahāvākya, ahaṁ brahmāsmi, which occurs in the Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad of the Śukla Yajur Veda. The author of this work has observed, however, that some of the seventy brahmacārins at Śrīṅgeri Maṭha during his visit were studying not the Yajur Veda but the Ṛg Veda and to some extent the other Vedas as well.”

It is, rather, a device of stamping authority over the realm, similar to the hagiographic notion of dig-vijaya or conquering the four quarters. In his commentary on the Maṭhmānaya-Setu, in fact, Mishra says that “for the stability of the world and protection of the Dharma,” Śaṅkara “divided entire Bharat into four Dharma Empires.”

The four Śaṅkarācāryas are the tutelary heads of the whole Daśanāmī institution that otherwise has little or no relation to the four Maṭhas. The instability of the quartets scheme is evident in sarvāṁ khalv idam brahma and Kāñcipuram perpetually lurking in the shadows as a fifth mahā-vākya and Pīṭha.

**Mahā-vākya in Mīmāṁsā**

As I said in the Introduction, the idea of mahā-vākya had its prehistory in Mīmāṁsā. This early side of the story is virtually unknown, however, and two scholarly accounts are known to me, those of Kunjunni Raja and Larry McCrea. Moreover, on the face of it, mahā-vākya in Mīmāṁsā appears to be the exact opposite of mahā-vākya in Advaita Vedānta: a Mīmāṁsā mahā-vākya is a “great” sentences in the literal sense of the word: it is long, not pithy. Kunjunni

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25 Sawai 1992:64.
Raja calls it a “compound sentence,” which indicates that it is a larger textual unit than a single complete sentence.

The idea of *mahā-vākya* was a relatively minor, but still common currency in classical Mīmāṁsā. It is explicitly mentioned only rarely, it is never explicitly theorized—we must reconstruct its meaning from use—and it is never an object of contention, which suggests that it was an idea clear and acceptable to all. Śabara mentions it once under MS 6.4.25, and Kumārila twice, in ŚV *Vākya* 140-143 and TV 1.2.7. Prabhākara also knows about it: he mentions *mahā-vākya* in *Bṛhatī* 1.2.1.

The backbone of *mahā-vākya* in Mīmāṁsā was a related notion or principle, one that we saw several times in the dissertation: *paryavasāna* or completion, termination of meaning. The principle of *paryavasāna* says that any larger sentential unity in which a smaller sentence has been absorbed, finalized and, if so required, altered, can be called a *mahā-vākya*. In principle, this works at any linguistic level, and it is rather in relation to short sentences that the term is used. Take, for instance, an injunctive sentence, such as “One should lie,” which, when negated, becomes a prohibition: “One should *not* lie.” The second sentence becomes a *mahā-vākya* in relation to the first, which is completed and altered in the second, yet still maintains its individual existence as a constitutive part of the final sentence. The two distinct units, in our example the injunction and the negative particle, restrict one another, such that the injunction becomes a prohibition and the negation becomes specified. The final sentence is a *mahā-vākya*, while the two elements become *avāntara*, intermediate in relation to it. This is how, in fact, Śabara talks about *mahā-vākya* in his *Bhāsyā*:

> And, when a *mahā-vākya* has been formed, the intermediate sentence (*avāntara-vākya*) is no longer an evidence, because it has been defeated by the other word, as from the
intermediate sentence which enjoins looking a prohibition “One should not look at the rising sun” is understood in the mahā-vākyā.28

It is clear from this that mahā-vākyā in Mīmāṁsā was a “final” or superordinate sentence in relation to an intermediate sentence, avāntara, one that is finalized in the composite whole.

Mahā-vākyā is, thus, most commonly paired with avāntara. Its important feature as such a final sentence is that it becomes pramāṇa or stronger evidence in relation to its constitutive avāntara-vākyā, which has been defeated by it. While the avāntara-vākyā remains a unit unto its own and a constitutive part of the mahā-vākyā, it has lost independence.

Let us look now at Kumārila’s TV 1.2.7. This is part of a longer section that Kumārila presents as an alternative interpretation on part of the Bhāṣya, one which he eventually refutes, but the specific point about mahā/avāntara-vākyā is not controverted:

In all cases, the intermediate sentences (avāntara-vākyā) are not authoritative when there are final sentences (mahā-vākyā), just as when there is a final number the intermediate numbers don't count. But, when they are used alone, then they are authoritative, because they don't have expectancy, as in “there is a piece of cloth.” However, it is not that there is no expectancy in all cases just because we do not see expectancy in this case, given that [the sentence] is complete by this much. For, all sentences are completed when other meaningful words are not pronounced with them. Generally, those of skilled vision have the expectation over and above the heard words. But, when this “over and above” is not present, there is no expectancy either. When it is present, we understand that sentential unity obtains. Otherwise it would not be there even when words are pronounced. So, when there is no mahā-vākyā, the avāntara-vākyā is authoritative, but when mahā-vākyā is possible, it is not.29

Kumārila’s example is based on Śabara’s Bhāṣya, who explains how sentences that are apparently complete can absorb additional words that are added to them: if the adjective “red”

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28 na ca mahā-vākye sati avāntara-vākyāni pramāṇaṁ bhavati, padāntarasya bādhanāt, yathā, nodyantam ādityam ākṣeta—iti pratiṣedho gamyate mahā-vākyāt, avāntara-vākyād ākṣaṇa-vidhānam. MSŚBh 6.4.25, l.p.689.
happens to be near the sentence, it must become its part because words always have syntactic expectancy, openness to being modified by other words. “There is a piece of red cloth” is a mahā-vākya in relation to “There is a piece of cloth,” its avāntara-vākya. While this may sound all too simple to be important, Śabara and Kumārila are discussing through the example how arthavāda passages attach to injunctions to form sentential unity, and such unity can obtain on a level of a single sentence or between several sentences that form a text.

It may be useful to think through the numbers example here in terms of arithmetic operations and rules of precedence. An expression such as $5 + 3 \times 7$ has two levels at which the respective operations will be performed. Multiplication has precedence over addition because it relates its terms more proximately, but precisely because of that the addition operation is the final and governs the full expression. The multiplication is intermediate in relation to it, since it simply gives one of the final terms that are related through addition. The multiplication can be seen in isolation, and unless it is subsumed under a further operation it will be final, but it is always potentially subsumable under addition or subtraction.

At the core, a mahā-vākya is not necessarily massively long: all that is required is that there is a longer sentence that subsumes another shorter sentence, which is avāntara in relation to it. In the ŚV, thus, Kumārila says that a four-word sentence is a mahā-vākya, a long sentence, in relation to a laghu-vākya, a short sentence, of three words. However, we saw in the Second

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“If it is assumed that an independent three-word sentence does not exist in the four-word sentence, then a tree would not exist in a forest. If you say that it is different because it is real, being separately formed, then words are also different from their sentences, and the same would apply to words and phonemes. Therefore, just as small sentences (laghu-vākya) continue existing in a large sentence (mahā-vākya), likewise words and phonemes persist in sentence cognition. – But, these are never used alone. – The small sentence is also used for the purpose of the large. –But, it still denotes a small reference! – So do words.”

prthak-prasiddha-sadh-bhavam tripadam ca catuspade |
naśṭaḥ yadi kalpīta vrksa na syāt tadā vane || 140 ||
prthak-prasiddhy-amithyavat sīyād vākyāntaratā yadi |
vākyāc chabdāntaratvam syāt tathaiva pada-varṇa yoḥ || 141 ||
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Chapter how the combination of individual words and sentences through the principle of subordination and the force of syntactic expectancy can go all the way to a point where a whole text is constituted, delineating a sacrifice organized around the centrality of the ritual action.

Such description of a sacrifice is, in fact, the ultimate point of the paryavasāṇa process, the “final” final meaning which terminates all possible individual meanings. In the truest sense, only this is a mahā-vākyā because only here everything is finalized and the syntactic expectancy of the bhāvanā is fully saturated. In this, mahā-vākyā is synonymous with what Mīmāṃsakas call prayoga-vākyā or prayoga-vidhi, a text delineating step by step the performance of a Vedic ritual and presupposing everything on which the success of the ritual depends. Such is the definition given in the Mīmāṃsā-Kośa: “A large sentence is the pramāṇa that establishes the principal-auxiliary relationship. It has the form of an applicatory injunction (prayoga-vidhi). It is necessarily an inferable entity.” A mahā-vākyā is, thus, literally a “great,” long sentence, a whole book or a ritual manual, one in which the whole ritual has been delineated through the application of the principles of ascertaining the principal-subordinate relationship between the distinct ritual elements and in which a single sentential reference obtains: the ritual action qualified by all the ritual details.31 In such a mahā-vākyā, all the details have their individual, avāntara, context, and to them arthavāda passages may be attached. All is finalized, however, in the mahā context, which is governed by the injunction that institutes the sacrifice.

That the mahā-vākyā is an inferable entity means, as far as I can see, that it needs to be worked out by the performer of the sacrifice, or someone who takes the trouble to do that by

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31 MK VI.p.3132: mahā-vākyāṁ (viniyojakāṁ pramāṇaṁ) prayoga-vidhi-rūpaṁ nityānumeyam eva.
producing a manual, through the application of the Mīmāṁsā principles of interpretation of the principal-subordinate relationship, viniyoga. In that sense, ritual manuals are human compositions in the form of organization of scriptural statements.

**Sarvajñātman and the Preliminaries**

As I said in the introduction, Śaṅkara himself did not have much to say about mahā-vākyas. Other than the AiUBh, the only other mention of mahā-vākyas is in the BSBh:

For, when there is a mahā-vākyas which gives rise to a cognition of meaning, the intermediate sentence (avāntara) does not give rise to a cognition of meaning independently. For instance, in the negative sentence ‘One should not drink alcohol,’ only a prohibition of drinking alcohol is understood from the relation of the three words, and not over and above that an injunction of drinking alcohol from the relation of the two words, ‘One should drink alcohol.’

His understanding is clearly identical to that of Śabara, and likely based on Śabara’s comment.

Sureśvara and Padmapāda do not mention mahā-vākyas either, and for an explicit theory of the notion we must look at the great 10th-century Advaitin Sarvajñātman and his treatise *Pañca-Prakriyā*. Before we move onto Vedāntic mahā-vākyas, however, we need to introduce several ideas on which Sarvajñātman depends.

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32 na hi mahā-vākye ’rtha-pratyāyake ’vāntara-vākyasya prthak-pratyāyakatvam asti; yathā na surāṁ pibet iti naivati-vākye pada-traya-sambandhāt surā-pāna-pratiśedha evaiko ’rtho ’vagamyate; na punah surāṁ pibed iti pada-dvaya-sambandhāt surā-pāna-vidhir apīti. BSBh 1.3.33, I.p.206. Note that the word-count in the translation follows the Sanskrit, not the English.

33 I have read a good part of Sureśvara’s BĀUbhV and have not seen a single mention. Although it remains possible that it does appear somewhere, I am very skeptical of that. In any case, if Sureśvara had a mahā-vākyas theory, one would expect to find it in the *Naśkarmya-Siddhi*, which is all about tat tvam asi and ahaṁ brahmaṁ.

34 What is known about Sarvajñātman is that he wrote his masterpiece *Sankṣeṣa-Śārīraka* during the reign of a king by the name of Manukulāditya. That much he says himself in the penultimate verse of the SS: “The best of renunciants adorned by the name of “Sarvajñātman,” his mind purified by the touch of the dust from the lotus feet of Devēśvara, composed this *Sankṣeṣa-Śārīraka* that magnifies the understanding of noble men when the glorious Manukulāditya of royal pedigree rules the Earth as a sovereign.” Based on inscriptive evidence, this Manukulāditya has been identified as the Chera king Bhaskara Ravi Varma, whose dates seem to be 962–1018 AD. Sarvajñātman was a Vaiṣṇava and likely a priest in the Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Trivandrum. There is a tradition based on commentaries on the *Sankṣeṣa-Śārīraka* (including Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s) that portrays him as a student of Sureśvara based on homonymy (*deva = sura*), but that is certainly wrong. In all his works Sarvajñātman refers to his teacher as “Devēśvara” and to Sureśvara as the Vārttikakāra and once as Sureśvara. In the colophon of his third preserved work, the epistemological treatise *Pramāṇa-Lokṣaṇa*, he gives the following
The first point concerns the signification function of words. We saw in Chapter Eight that the two categories of *tat* and *tvam* obtained a single reference when put in apposition, without giving up their natural denotation in the process. “Without giving up their individual meaning, the two words mingle to obtain a special meaning and terminate in understanding the inner Self. There is no other meaning opposed to this one.” This was required because on the one hand the statement had to be taken literally—it is not, for instance, that the four-headed demiurge Brahmā and/or my body would be intended to be affirmed as identical—and on the other the two entities were, in fact, different: *tvam* stood for the image of the Self in the mirror of the intellect, and *tat* for Brahman in its causal role. The identity statement had to presuppose a measure of difference in any case, to be meaningful or informative: Śaṅkara had little interest in the so-called *aikya-sāmānādhikaraṇya* or full synonymy. Furthermore, while standing for their individual referents in their primary signification function, the two words restricting one another obtained a single sentential reference not through the same primary, but the secondary signification function. Two conditions, thus, obtained for this *lakṣanā*: the categories had to express directly their individual references, and indicate a joint reference at the same time.

Śaṅkara did not say much more about the secondary signification function. He did, however, specify that such secondary signification function could be “proximate” or “distant,”

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student-teacher lineage: Śreṣṭhānandapāda -> Devānandapāda -> Deveśvarapāda -> Sarvajñātmapāda. See Eswaran Nampoothiry’s Introduction to the *Pramāṇa-Lakṣaṇa*, p. ix-xxiii; Kocmarek 1985:7-11; Potter 435-6. Christopher Minkowski (2011) notes that Sarvajñātman became very important for Advaita Vedānta in early modernity (15th to 18th century), and by implication for the status of Advaita as sort of an establishment philosophy for the 19th and 20th century generation that achieved independence. He suggests that the reason for this might be the nature of Sarvajñātman’s *Sankeṣa-Śāriraka* as a summary of Śaṅkara’s BSBh “in about 1250 accessible verses,” a proto-manual of the *Vedānta-Sāra* sort. While there is obviously substance to Minkowski’s intuition—the SS is indeed very systematic—Sarvajñātman’s verses are not always accessible; the sheer number of meters he uses is staggering for a work in philosophy, and he certainly has poetic aspirations. Furthermore, the polemical sections of the SS are with the old “enemy” the Mīmāṃsakas, and Advaita polemics in the early modern period had picked a different fight, with the movement of Madhva. Sarvajñātman’s place of honor needs further clarification.

35 svārthasya hy aprahāṇena viśiṣṭārtha-samarpakau | pratyag-ātmāvagatyaṃtau nānyo 'rtho 'rthād virodhy atāḥ. USP 18.171.
and he related them to viṣeṣaṇa and adhyāsa, qualification and superimposition, as in the blue lotus and the intentional superimposition of Viṣṇu’s qualities on the image. These two, further, were a subset of the four types of co-referentiality, which, apart from the uninteresting synonymy, included negation, which was, in fact, the modus operandi of the identity statements up until the proper references of the two categories were fixed. At the last instance of tat tvam asi, when the references of the two individual words were settled, the relation was that of viṣeṣya-viṣeṣaṇa-bhāva, since it was important for the words to keep their references, but even that was negational to a degree at the secondary signification function plain, which operated not on the level of the individual words, but of the sentence. Śaṅkara did not talk much about the signification functions and cannot, perhaps, be commended for absolute clarity.

We should also be mindful that the secondary signification function could obtain only at the sentence level, not of words that stand alone. It obviously concerned the individual words, but for Kumārila it concerned the sentential reference as well. Think, for instance, of the sentence “The lion-boy is sleeping.” “Lion” here obviously must be understood metaphorically, through bravery as a shared quality, but for Kumārila the whole sentence, having the qualified boy as its reference, was also an instance of the secondary signification function: all sentences are about particulars, and words denote only universals.

Let us now see what Sarvajñātman had to say about signification. There are three signification functions. The primary is the occurrence of the word in the sense of the universal, in the manner that the elders use it. The secondary signification function is of two kinds, one based on a direct relation of two things, and another on a relation through shared quality. The last is, thus, twice remote from the primary, because a word is used in a sense of another word not through a direct relation, but through some qualities that are characteristic for its denotation but
are predicated to another thing. Sarvajñātman’s example is “Devadatta is a lion,” where leonine qualities such as fierceness and bravery are predicated of Devadatta.36 We may call it metaphorical signification function. In Sanskrit, the three functions are called vr̥ttis, that is, mukhya- or prasiddhi-vṛtti, lakṣaṇa-vṛtti and gaṇa-vṛtti.37

I saved the second vṛtti for the end because it is more complicated than the first two: it is itself of three kinds. “The lakṣaṇa signification function is an occurrence of the word in the sense of another meaning through a relation with the primary meaning, when the understanding of the primary meaning is blocked by another reliable warrant.”38 The important feature is that this function obtains through a relation to the primary meaning of the word; that is, the use is still justified through the normal denotation. We may call it relational signification function. One kind of this lakṣaṇa is when the word occurs in the sense of something completely different from its common occurrence, yet immediately related to it, the classical example being “A hamlet in the Ganges,” where “Ganges” must stand for the bank of the river: a different thing, yet contiguous with it. Sarvajñātman calls this secondary signification function jahal-lakṣaṇa, the relational signification function in which the word gives up its meaning.39 A second kind is when a word stands for a meaning that is different from its primary meaning, but includes this primary meaning in all its scope. Sarvajñātman’s example is “The red one is standing,” where the red one is a horse, specifically a red horse. “Red” here does not signify the universal “redness,” but does include it as a quality of the denotation. Sarvajñātman calls this function ajahal-lakṣaṇa, the

36 guṇa-vṛttis tu mukhyārtha-parigrahe pramāṇāntara-virodhe sati mukhyārtha-guṇa-yogād arthāntare vṛttih iti; yathā śiṁho devadattaḥ iti kraurya-śauryādi-śiṁha-guṇa-yogāt śiṁha-sabdasya devadatte vṛttih. PPr 1, p.6-7.
37 tiraḥ śabdasya vṛttayā prasiddhi-lakṣaṇā-guṇa-vṛttaya iti loke prasiddhāḥ. PPr 1, p.4-5.
38 lakṣaṇa tu punaḥ mukhyārtha-parigrahe pramāṇāntara-virodhe sati mukhyārtha-sambandhād arthāntare vṛttih. PPr 1, p.6.
39 tatra jahal-lakṣaṇā nāma śabdasya mukhyārtha-parityāgena arthāntare vṛttih; yathā gaṅgā-śabdasya svārtha-parityāgena tīra-mātre vṛttih. PPr 1, p.7-8.
relational signification function where the word does not give up its meaning. Finally, a third form of this relational secondary signification function is when a word stands for a reference different from its own meaning, but not for its full scope. The example here is “This is that Devadatta,” where the proximate and the distal pronoun stand for an individual that is temporally and spatially qualified differently. The pronouns do not denote these qualifications, but the pure individual. Sarvajñātman calls this function jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā, the relational signification function where the word partially gives up and partially retains its meaning. In later Advaita Vedānta it was also known as bhāga-tyāga-lakṣaṇā.

Now, there is a significant historical note to be made about Sarvajñātman’s presentation of the relational secondary signification function. The common Sanskrit terms for a signification function were śakti and vṛtti, capacity and occurrence. Sarvajñātman used both, with vṛtti as the category term. The grammarians, however, used the term vṛtti in the sense of modes of complex language formations of several kinds, including compounded words. Discussing the lakṣaṇa-vṛtti, Sarvajñātman references the grammarian’s notion of vṛtti and the Aṣṭādhyāyī 2.1.1, where specifically word compounding is discussed. It is instructive to look at Patañjali’s Mahā-Bhāṣya comment on the sūtra.

Patañjali talks about compound formation as one of the cases of vṛtti, and proposes two ways in which two words, one subordinate and one principal, combine to produce an integrated meaning. The first is called ajahat-svārthā vṛtti, in which the subordinate word does not give up its meanings in the compound formation, and the second is jahat-svārthā vṛtti, in which the

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40 ajahal-lakṣaṇā tu puṇaḥ mukhyārtham aparitvajya kṛtstnam eva svārtham upādāya arthāntare vṛttiḥ; yathā śoṇas tiṣṭhati ity aśva-lakṣaṇavyāraṁ śoṇa-sābdasya śonimānaṁ grhītvaiśvāsya-vyaktavā vṛttiḥ. PPr 1, p.8.
41 jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā tu mukhyārthā-parigrahe sati mukhyārthākadesa-parityagena śabdasyaikadesāntare vṛttiḥ; yathā so 'yaṁ devadattaḥ iti vākye so-'yaṁ-padayoḥ desa-kāla-sābala-vācinoḥ desa-kāla-bhāga-parityagena devadatta-vyaktavā vṛttiḥ. Ibid.
43 See Tubb and Boose 2007:35ff.
subordinate compound member does give up its meaning. The illustration being rājñāḥ puruṣa or “king's man,” when the compound rāja-puruṣa or “king-man” is formed, under the first view the word rājan stands not for a king, but for the man, employing its meaning as a qualifier of the man. Under the second view, both constitutive members give up their meaning and a single meaning obtains, namely a “king-man.” We may think of the difference through the phrase darśanīyah rāja-puruṣaḥ, “a handsome king-man.” Under the first view, the adjective qualifies the man, who also happens to be related to the king. Under the second view, it is the whole “king-man” that is qualified. Both views involve problems, which we not need go into, except that some prompt Patañjali to modify the presentation of jahat-svārthā to the effect that although the subordinate member gives up its own meaning, it does not do so entirely. Only that part of the meaning which is incompatible with the main member is abandoned.44

It is very much possible that Sarvajñātman put two and two together: if lakṣaṇā is the signification function or vṛtti that obtains when words are combined, and vṛtti in any case stands for complex formations, then the kinds of relations that obtain between a word and its meaning in compounds might just as well be the relations that obtain in lakṣaṇā. He might have reworked the jahat-svārtha to apply in cases where the word does, indeed, give up its meaning in entirety, and took his cue from Patañjali’s refinement of jahat-svārtha to propose the jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā, where the word gives up just a fraction of the scope of its meaning. Sarvajñātman himself, in fact, suggests as much: “Accepting this signification function, those who are eminent knowers of the three Vedas made the threefold division of lakṣaṇā by formulating it in the technical terms of the language as jahat-svārtha, ajahat-svārtha, and jahad-ajahat-svārtha, in

44 See Joshi 1968:9-10, 75ff.
the sūtra “An operation on inflected words happens when they are related [fit to be joined in a compound].”

Be that as it may, let us note now that there were four kinds of secondary signification functions in his scheme, one gaunavṛtti and three kinds of laksanā. We are justified in grouping them all under the category of “secondary signification function” in virtue of how they are designated through verbal formations: when a word is used in its literal meaning, the common practice is to say that something is ucyate, “said,” but more precisely “directly expressed;” when a word is used in a sense different from the literal meaning, regardless whether it is through the metaphorical or the relational signification function, the common practice is to say that something is lakṣyate, “indicated” or “figuratively expressed.” The same pair appears in the gerundive form, vācya and lakṣya.

We move now to the second point in the preliminaries, and it concerns the reference of the categories of tat/brahman and tvam/aham. This reference is of two kinds, one which is directly denoted, primary or vācya, and one which is indicated, secondary or lakṣya. Sarvajñātman presents the direct references in both cases as “stained” or “dappled” entities, śabala, consisting of a pure core and a surplus of stains or spots of the nature of adjuncts, upādhi. The pure core in the category of tat is Brahman that is a non-dual entity of the nature of bliss and consciousness. This Brahman, however, is in association with ignorance or avidyā, in virtue of which, or rather through which as the immediate cause, it assumes the causal role in relation to the world. It is the Brahma-Sūtra Brahman, the entity from which proceed creation,

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46 This is obvious, for instance, in the Second Chapter of PPr, where Sarvajñātman consistently uses the pair, having allowed in the First Chapter that Brahman be indicated either through gaunavṛtti or through jahad-ajahal-laksanā.
47 pada-dvāyārthau ca dvividhau, vācyau lakṣyau ca. tatra vācyau śabalau; lakṣyau śuddhau. PPr 2, p.18.
maintenance, and destruction of the world. From this Brahman dappled by ignorance the gross
and subtle categories of creation proceed: from the five elements and down to the internal organ
on the one hand, and Hiranyaagarbha and his existence as the various forms of prāṇa on the
other.  

This, of course, is the totality of kārya-brahman that we discussed in Chapter Six. The
assumption of avidyā on the part of Brahman through which Brahman becomes the creator and
the product, the nimitta- and upādāna-kāraṇa, makes Brahman an external thing in relation to
the Self that identifies with its products, and mediate, knowable in detail through scripture. Such
mediacy, pāroksya, is Brahman’s most stubborn stain. This is the entity denoted by the words tat
and Brahman: a non-dual, mediate entity. The pure core, on the other hand, is not denoted, but
indicated by the category.  

We should note that avidyā by this time had replaced Śaṅkara’s nāma-rūpe as the cosmic power that provides the stuff for the world.

The category of tvam/aham also has a pure core and a surplus of stains. The core is inner
awareness or immediate consciousness, pratyak-caitanya, through which one most directly
knows oneself. This inner awareness is the same in all entities, up to and including the gods, but
it variously identifies with the gross and subtle categories of creation. It is the jīva or the
category of the individual Self. The very potentiality of identification with the categories of
creation makes the jīva a dual entity.

We may think of this along the lines of the common viveka or discrimination procedures, whose very possibility is predicated on there being
something extraneous to myself that I am not, yet of which I am necessarily aware for
discrimination to make sense. This sense of duality is the principal stain of the category of

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48 prāṇa-piṇḍa-kāraṇāvidyā-śabalaṁ advayānanda-caitanyaṁ brahma-śabda-vācyam. Ibid.
tvam/aham. The primary denotation of the category expresses an entity that is a single inner awareness yet dual in character. As with the category of tat, the pure core is not directly expressed by tvam/aham, but indicated.\footnote{pratyak-caitanya-bhāgo lakṣyate. ibid.}

I would like to note here briefly that the notion of Brahman being a spotted entity, śabala, appears occasionally in prakaraṇa works that are attributed to Śaṅkara, most notably in the Pañcīkaraṇa. Śaṅkara never describes Brahman in this specific way, and so śabala may be added as one of the minor criteria in deciding the authorship of works ascribed to Śaṅkara.

The question now presents itself, through which of the four possible modes of secondary signification are the pure cores of the two categories indicated. Sarvajñātman proposes that both the metaphorical and the relational signification function are fit to play that role, but the acceptance of the first is certainly in deference to the authority of Sureśvara, whose Naiśkarmya-Siddhi he quotes: “[The Self is indicated by the notion of “I”] because of being inner, very subtle, and conducive for the vision of the Self.”\footnote{pratyaktvād atisūkṣmatvād ātma-dṛṣṭy-anuśīlanāt [NaiS 2.55] iti guṇa-yogād aham-ādi-śabdasya gauṇī pratyag-ātmani vṛttir aṅgī-kṛtaiva. PPr 1, p.10.} The innerness of the category of tvam is the important feature here, because it is the key shared quality with the pure core, but Sarvajñātman does not want just a procedure in which this pure core will be indicated: it is necessary that the surplus drops at the same time, and that is most clearly accomplished by the jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā. The construction of the mahā-vākya notion is predicated on this function.

The Vedāntic Mahā-vākyas

In Pañca-Prakriyā, Sarvajñātman discusses aham brahmāsmi and tat tvam asi as, now explicitly, mahā-vākyas, and there seems to be a reason why only these two. Aham brahmāsmi is the topic of Chapter Two of the treatise, which discusses more generally how knowledge of unity of
Brahman with the Self, culminating in direct experience, arises in the qualified aspirant who had approached a teacher, one who turns out to be imagined through the student’s ignorance in the manner of dream objects, and who is surrounded by thousands of similarly imagined fellow brahmācārins. Issues such as the nature of and disagreements about the two types of liberation, absolute and living, are discussed. The mahā-vākya, in other words, looks at the identity of the two categories from the side of the student and addresses questions that are pertinent to the student in whom knowledge arises and for whom liberation takes place. Chapters Three and Four discuss tat tvam asi and the notion of avāntara-vākya, and clearly the view of the mahā-vākya is from the standpoint of the teacher: it is the teacher who should know how to organize the instruction around the two categories. The opening of Chapter Four is quite explicit about it, as it says that the avāntara-vākyas will be discussed for the benefit of the student who had duly approached the teacher, with the whole shebang of the adhikāra stuff that is familiar to us from the openings of the BSBh and the US.54

My object in emphasizing this is to bring home the point that there was no such thing as four Vedas cum four mahā-vākyas doctrine in early Advaita Vedānta; there wasn’t even a mahā-vākya doctrine at all, in the sense we commonly think of it, namely as tat tvam asi from the 6th prapāṭhaka of the Chāndogya or ahaṁ brahmāsmi from the 1st adhyāya of the Brhad-Āranyaka and situated strictly in their context. There was, rather, a mahā-vākya context, a kind of Upaniṣadic statement that identifies Brahman the great cause and ground of Being with the inner Self of every creature that perceives itself as the cognitive agent. The mahā-vākya context is a context of categories that is superordinate to any textual incarnation in which it may appear, and in which the only meaningful difference is that of perspective in a teacher-student relationship.

As I have been drumming for some time, in terms of this mahā-vākyas context, the tasmād vā etasmād ātmanah of the Taittirīya provided the core of the doctrine, because it related the categories in the textual locus where the two were paradigmatically laid down.

We will come back to this mahā-vākyas context. Now let us focus on what Sarvajñātman called the avāntara-vākyas, thus explicitly adopting the Mīmāṁsā mahā/avāntara model. These are statements that pertain to the members of the mahā-vākyas, the categories of tat and tvam, and refer to scriptural passages where they are individually described.55 Sarvajñātman calls them “sentential supplements of the mahā-vākyas,” mahā-vākya-śeṣa, making it explicit that these statements are attached to the respective categories and serve their individual purposes in their own context, not the mahā-vākyas context.56 The avāntara-vākyas have a “scope” or an “extension,” parimāṇa, on each side of the two categories. On the side of the tat category, this scope is constituted by way of predication of “unrepeated qualities” to Brahman within nirguṇa passages. What Sarvajñātman means by “unrepeated qualities” is an idiosyncratic way to designate the positive and negative attributes that formed the notion of Brahman both in the Brahma-Sūtra and in Śaṅkara’s definition. They are “unrepeated” in the sense that they are not such qualities as satya-kāma and satya-saṅkalpa in the formation of Upaniṣadic saṅguṇa meditations by way of forging units out of the several passages where a respective meditation is described.57 They constitute the essential notion of Brahman. They are to be collected from the Upaniṣads of all Vedic branches, and special care should be made in the effort of gathering

56 PPr 2, p.23.
57 nirguṇa-brahma-para-samasta-veda-śākhopaniṣad-gatāpunar-ukta-samasta-padopasārīhāreṇa. Ibid.
negative attributes, lest slacking may bring about an incomplete negation of the false points of 
identifications for the Self.⁵⁸

In Pañca-Prakriyā Sarvajñātman deals only with the avāntara-vākyas that present the 
positive attributes (vidhi) of Brahman, but in the Saṅkṣepa-Śārīraka he also includes the negative 
attributes (niṣedha) and understands their purpose in the same way as Śaṅkara: they negate all 
possible points of identification for the Self within the sphere of fine and gross objects.⁵⁹

Focusing on the positive attributes, the avāntara-vākyas are satyaṁ jñānam anantam brahma and ānando brahmeti vyajānāt from the Taittirīya 2.1.1 and 3.6.1, and there is nothing 
particularly different in this from Śaṅkara’s BSBh 4.1.2, except that Sarvajñātman is much more 
comfortable with ānanda or bliss as an attribute of Brahman so as to stay within the Taittirīya 
setting, rather than go to the Brhad-Āraṇyaka. Although these are positive attributes, they present 
Brahman in terms of denial rather than affirmation: Brahman as a thing is opposed to unreal, 
insentient, limited things that are liable to suffering, which obviously constitutes the sphere of 
created things.⁶⁰ This denial is accomplished through Brahman’s feature of being limitless, 
ananta, and that becomes very important for the next textual level, below the avāntara-vākyas.

That is, for the purpose of teaching how this Brahman that is Being, consciousness, bliss 
is unlimited, different from the kinds of real, conscious, and pleasurable things that we are 
acquainted with, there are Upaniṣadic passages of five kinds. The first three are texts of creation, 
maintenance, and destruction of beings; the fourth are texts that describe Brahman entering its 
creation; the fifth are texts that describe how Brahman that had entered beings rules them from 
within. Sarvajñātman’s instances are all from the Taittirīya: “That from which these beings are

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⁵⁸ yadi pun na samāharaṇaṁ bhavet paramita-pariśedhanam āpatet. SŚ 3.318.
⁵⁹ SŚ 3.312-325.
⁶⁰ anṛta-jāda-paricchinna-duḥkha-viruddhaṁ vastu satya-jñānānantādi-śabdaiḥ brahma-śabdārthatvena nivedyate. 
PPr 4, p.40.
born, by which they live once they are born, and in which they return at death, that is Brahman, that is what you should strive to know distinctly”; “Once it had created them, it entered into them”; “It is out of fear from it that the wind blows and the Sun rises.”

Now, Sarvajñātman calls such texts “arthavāda passages that form supplements to the meaning of the affirmative and negational statements, like the statements of praise and censure.” His Mīmāṁsā discourse is at its peak here: he labels the avāntara-vākyas that contain the positive and negative attributes of Brahman vidhi and pratiṣedha, terms which Mīmāṁsakas used for injunctions and prohibitions, and he attaches to them Upaniṣadic passages that are arthavāda, explicitly likened to the Mīmāṁsa arthavādas that were passages that had no independent truth value, but served the purposes of the injunction or the prohibition that they latched on. The purpose that the Upaniṣadic arthavādas serve is to facilitate reasoning into the possibility of Brahman’s being limitless, evidently through analogy, illustration, etc.

There are obviously many points on which we could pause, examine what Sarvajñātman is saying in more detail or see how much his presentation follows Śaṅkara’s: the careful reader would have recognized all his building blocks in the previous chapters. However, that is irrelevant for our purpose here, which is to appreciate the relation between different kinds of Upaniṣadic passages and the hierarchy that obtains between them. There are texts that present Brahman’s characteristics, but these characteristics are not of the kind that is commonly known: they are unlimited, non-dual. The Upaniṣads facilitate the making sense of this through passages

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63 etaiḥ pañca-vidhāḥ samblāvanārthavāda-vākyaiḥ ... PP r 4, p.42.
that, for instance, talk about creation, but do not intend to affirm creation. The avāntara-vākyas have arthavādas under them.

There are avāntara-vākyas on the side of the category of tvam as well, and their scope is, as we would expect, the pañca-kośa section of the Taittirīya. They serve the purpose of drawing out the inner Self that had entered the heart of beings by gradually reducing its scope, as we saw in Chapter Eight. Another procedure that can be applied for the same gain is the examination of the three states of awareness—waking, dream, and deep sleep—to find out that while the states change, the Self itself does not. Sarvajñātman’s reference point for this is Aitareya 1.3.13, tasya traya āvasthās traya svapnāḥ, “These are its three dwellings, three sleeps,” but obviously the model would have been Yājñavalkya’s teachings to Janaka in the BĀU. The upshot of these two procedures is that the category of tvam stands for the inner Self, different from and unrelated to the three states, single yet ensouling all animate things in the world, from individuals and respective divinities to the world itself.

At this point, at the completion of the understanding of tvam through its avāntara-vākyas, the principle that we have been pursuing through the course of the dissertation kicks in: all this is empty talk unless it serves some good of man. As Sarvajñātman puts it, “the purport of narrating about the three states of awareness, as in ‘These are its three states, three sleeps,’ does not serve a good of man in its own meaning.” Through the phala-śruti of Vedānta, the Taittirīya text “the knower of Brahman attains the highest,” it follows that such good of man is contingent of the unity of Brahman and the Self. Further, through the rule that we discussed in the Second Chapter in connection with the ārād-upakārakas—a scriptural passage that is not related to a result on its

64 TU 2.2-2.5.
65 tathā jāgrat-svapna-suṣupti-vilakaṣaṇo jāgrat-svapna-suṣupti-sambandha-rahito ‘dhyātmādhibhitadhidaiwasarīrastha ekas tvam-padārthatha. PPr 4, 45.
own attaches to a proximate text that is—the passages that discuss tvam, such as those about the
three states of awareness, seek the context of the mahā-vākya, tat tvam asi as the statement
through which the human good that is unity of Brahman with the Self is realized.66 We have,
thus, gone a step above the avāntara context and reached the mahā-vākya.

Sarvajñātman had made several jumps, of course, some of the Urukrama kind, in
coordinating texts from various places: his reference text about the three states of awareness is in
the Aitareya, and the statement of result is the Taittirīya, and there is no real proximity as
required by rule. Still, the pañca-kośa doctrine is in the Taittirīya, and that was a passage with an
identical purpose, establishing the category of tvam. Tat tvam asi is, of course, in the Chāndogya,
far from the Taittirīya brahma-vid āpnoti param, but Śaṅkara said, we will remember, that tat
tvam asi and tasmād vā etasmād ātmanaḥ from the Taittirīya had the same meaning. Further, the
Aitareya statement on the three states is relatively proximate to prajñānam brahma, an identity
statement like tat tvam asi. And, in culling the avāntara-vākyas for the category of tat, the
procedure was to track down relevant passages from Upaniṣads of all Vedic branches. This
provides a network in which everything is proximate to everything else, one way or another.

In the mahā-vākya context, now, the two categories are identified, that is, their primary
references are identified. To be specific, Brahman which is characterized as limitless Being,
consciousness, bliss, that is, which is opposed to unreal, insentient, limited things that are liable
to suffering, but is a mediate, external entity known through scripture, is identified with the inner
Self, which, because of its innerness, is “dual,” having things that are present to it as objects of
awareness. The two categories obviously exclude one another in two respects: Brahman is non-
dual, whereas the Self is dual; and, Brahman is mediate, whereas the Self is immediate, known privately. Something’s gotta give: for non-exclusion to obtain, mediacy drops from the scope of meaning of Brahman, and duality drops from the scope of meaning of the Self. This happens through the secondary relational signification function, jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā, in which the respective words indicate a single reference through eliminating the mutually exclusive parts. Thus, the two words, through directly expressing their respective meanings, indirectly denote a single entity that is defined as an inner Brahman, that is, Brahman whose nature is eternal, pure, conscious, free, real, supreme bliss, non-dual, and at the same time inner awareness. This is the Brahman that is the synonym for absolute liberation.

I would like to draw now the attention to the end of Chapter Seven, where we concluded the preliminaries of liberation and saw how the whole Vedic corpus, without the explicitly kāmya sections, was for liberation through mediate causality, pāramparya. We saw that unity obtained between the texts of knowledge and action through the vividiśā statement in BĀU 4.4.22 and the principle of vākyaikavākyatā or unity of purpose of distinct texts. Sarvajñātman does not talk about this in the PP r, but the theme does appear indirectly in his statement of adhikāra: before one should approach a teacher, one must be freed from all impurities, obtaining thus the results available through the karma-kāṇḍa section of the Veda, and then renounce all action. Introducing this as our final consideration in the Vedāntic mahā-vākya doctrine, I offer


the following schematic representation of the hierarchy and structure of the notions and texts we covered:

**Scheme 1: Mahā-vākyā Structure**

**mahā-vākyā context:** tat tvam asi, aham brahmāsmi

**Reference** [through jahad-ajahal-laksanā]:
Brahman as eternally pure, awake, free, real, supremely blissful, non-dual awareness.

*(niyā-ṣuddha-buddha-mukta-satya-paramānandādvaya-cit-pratyag-brahma)*

**Statement of result:** brahma-vid āpnoti param (TU 2.1), relates the two categories through purpose

**avāntara-vākyā context** (mahā-vākyā-śeṣa):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tat-padārtha</th>
<th>tvam-padārtha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positive and negative (vidhi-pratiṣedha)</td>
<td>pañcha-kośa (TU 2.2-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>satyam jīhānam anantam brahma (TU 2.1.1)</td>
<td>three states of awareness (BĀU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ānando brahmeti vyajānāt (TU 3.6.1)</td>
<td>reference (pratyakṣa, sadvaya): The inner Self, without adjuncts, pure awareness, one in all creatures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reference (parokṣa, advaya): Brahman that is opposed to the non-existent, unreal, dull, limited, suffering, characterized as being, consciousness, unlimited, bliss (asad-ānṛta-jāda-paricchinna-duṣkha-virudhharin yat satya-jañānāntānta-laksanāni brahma)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Arthavāda** (avāntara-vākyā-śeṣa), five types:

1. creation statements (Srṣṭī-sthiti-pralaya-vākyā) yato vā imānibhūtāni jāyante. yen a jātāni jīvanti. yat prayantī abhisamviśanti. tad vijijñāsasva. tad brahmeti (TU 3.1.1)
2. entrance statements (praveśa-vākyā) tat srṣṭvā. tad evānupraviśat (TU 2.6.1)
3. regulation statement (niyamana-vākyam) bhīṣāsmād vātaḥ pavate, bhīṣedeti sāryaḥ (TU 2.8.1)

**Qualifications context:**

Statement of adhikāra: MU 1.2.12-13

**Principles of causality and manner of achieving adhikāra** *(vidviṣā)*: BĀU 4.4.22, 23

1. Pāramparya: the performance of ritual and meditation without desire, for personal purity, culminating in dispassion (4.4.22)
2. Šamuccaya: dispassion and the practice of yama-niṣyama (4.4.23)

Looking at the scheme and the foregoing analysis in terms of textual structure and cohesion, it is immediately apparent that tat and tvam in the mahā-vākyā context are just a demonstrative and personal reference respectively to their avāntara-vākyas, insofar as their interpretation, not in the theological sense but purely on the level of meaning, is impossible without reference to texts where they are elaborated. The pronouns stand in a cohesive relation to their avāntara-vākyas through semantic identity, and the full sentences can be introduced in place of the pronouns by way of substitution. The avāntara-vākyas on their part are the
requirement for the resolution of the personal pronouns, but they are also presuppositions with their own requirements, insofar as the attributes of Brahman are incomprehensible without recourse to Upaniṣadic passages where they are discussed. In Sarvajñātman’s packed account, *anantam* was the ground for having recourse to such passages, but it was really the juxtaposition of *anantam* to the other three characteristics, as we saw in Śaṅkara’s account of the identity statements. “What do you mean, consciousness unlimited? – Look at the *bhūma-vidyā*. – Being unlimited? The *sad-vidyā*.” This was also possible through semantic identity, as *satyam* and *sat* from the *Taittirīya* and the *Chāndogya* have the same meaning, as Śaṅkara said.

The *mahā-vākyas* itself, then, is really an ellipsis for a much longer statement that joins the respective meanings of the two categories such that they are purged of their mutually exclusive elements, yet at the same time a mandatory ellipsis since the mutually exclusive elements need to be simultaneously meaningful. The final reference that obtains through the juxtaposition of the meaning of the counterparts, in which Brahman is no longer mediate and the Self is no longer dual, is not informative in the same way as when Brahman is both mediate and immediate and the Self is both dual and non-dual: it is in that liminal state that liberation takes place. Thus, the *mahā-vākyas* are simultaneously pithy and massively long, through subsuming and requiring the *avāntara* and the *arthavāda* context. Add to this the prerequisite context that provides for the very possibility of understanding the *maha-vākyas*, and they can potentially involve everything in the Veda that can be used in the pursuit of liberation. In the *mahā-vākya*, the full finality of meaning of the Veda obtains.

Before moving to the conclusion, I want to hazard the following idea. The *mahā-vākyas* are, of course, scriptural statements, part of the Upaniṣadic corpus. Their expanded form, however, must be worked out by tracing the cohesion relations that obtain between the terms on
the mahā, avāntara, and arthavāda level, and through the vividiśā between the jñāna and karma corpus, and by providing a structure that does not appear naturally, in the sense that there is no scriptural text as such that states the expanded form explicitly. As we learned from the Mīmāṁsā-Kośa, a mahā-vākya is an inferable thing. To go back to the Second Chapter, now, scripture is like a grand repository of empirically unavailable data that one can tap into contingent on one’s aspirations and abilities—“The Veda gives rise to veridical cognitions for a competent person,” as Sarvajñātman says⁶⁹—but then do stuff with this data, explore how it can be structured for one’s needs. From such perspective, mahā-vākyas are, like the ritual manuals or prayoga-vidhis, what that one must work out on one’s own or through a model. In this sense, a mahā-vākya is something like the prose section of the US, a structure of scriptural data around the identification of the two categories, meant for attaining liberation.

**Conclusion**

To state now the obvious, in formulating the notion of Upaniṣadic mahā-vākyas, Sarvajñātman took his bearings fully and explicitly from the Mīmāṁsā model. This was a model of hierarchy of scriptural statements on three levels, mahā, avāntara, and arthavāda, each lower level subsumed, terminated, and finalized in the level above. The fact needs emphasis, because we may be tempted to think that mahā-vākya, even if Śaṅkara or Sureśvara and Padmapāda did not mention the lexeme, was just a change in nomenclature. This is what Murty’s account implicitly does: so long as Advaitins talk about tat tvam asi and such, they are talking about mahā-vākyas, never mind the name. But, pursuing this line does not help us see why these statements are mahā and not just identity statements.

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⁶⁹ *adhikārīṇaḥ pramīti-janako vedāḥ iti nyāyāt.* PPr 2, p.21-2.
Sarvajñātman needed to pull strands from several sources to turn the identity statements into *mahā-vākyas*. From Mīmāṁsā, he took the model organization of texts—the structure—and the key Mīmāṁsā *mahā-vākya* characteristic: finality of meaning that does not cancel the independence and meaningfulness of the member statements in their context, but does so in its own context, like in the case of precedence of arithmetic operations. Sentences in general, *mahā-vākyas* included, were, Kumārila said and Śaṅkara followed suit, like a cart whose wheels are distinct yet not independent, being unable to run on their own. Śaṅkara had already provided Sarvajñātman with the ideas that the categories are, really, full sentences or a distillate of scriptural passages, such as the *pañca-kośa*, and that the creation texts in the Upaniṣads are *arthavādas* that do not have individual truth value but do have a purpose. These were the building blocks to fill in the structure. The glue might just have come from Patañjali’s *Mahā-Bhāṣya*, which discussed how words in forming compounds keep part of their meaning but drop whatever is mutually exclusive. Patañjali talked not about *lakṣaṇā* but about *vṛtti* in a different sense, but it was easy to use his idea under the assumption that *lakṣaṇā* happens when words are juxtaposed.

Historically, the doctrine of *mahā-vākya* developed not around *tat tvam asi* and *aham brahmāsmi*, as we commonly think, but around a *Taittirīya* core. There are two reasons for this. The first was that the *Taittirīya* provided the normative definition of Brahman, the general category of the great cause from which creation proceeds, as Being, consciousness, bliss, limitless, and it was easy to seek the identity where Brahman was fully defined. One *Taittirīya* statement was important in this regard, *tasmād vā etasmād ātmanah*, important because it looked anaphorically right back at the definition of Brahman, yet cataphorically at the creation of beings

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70 ŠV Vākya 148.
and the entrance of Brahman itself into them as the Self. This was not the paradigmatic mahā-vākya, but it was historically the most fertile identity statement.

The second reason is a bit more arcane. The identity statements doctrine that evolved into mahā-vākya developed as a response to prasaṅkhyāna-vāda and the two problems of mediacy of scriptural knowledge and the relational nature of language. The scriptural basis of this doctrine was the BĀU 4.4.21 statement, “Having learned, one should cultivate insight, without pondering much over words, because that just tires the voice.” Prasaṅkhyāna-vādins interpreted this to the effect that words did express Brahman, just not immediately, for which reason meditation was required. The same problem was, curiously, touched upon in the famous Taittirīya verse, yet to a very different effect: “Whence words return along with the mind, not attaining it, he who knows that bliss of Brahman, fears not at any time.”

The Taittirīya verse rejected not only words, but also the capacity of the mind the instrument of meditation to reach Brahman. Śaṅkara based his account of language as indicting Brahman through the secondary signification function on this scriptural locus, and although the verse is oddly out of place at first sight, without any justification in its context, the Advaita doctrine of mahā-vākya based on the Taittirīya core that occupies the space around the verse addressed precisely that issue.

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71 TU 2.4.1, 2.9.1.
In the Introduction, I set as my goal to show that Śaṅkara’s significance for Indian intellectual history—not the great cultural hero Śaṅkara, but the hero of Padmapāda, Sureśvara, and their likes—can best be appreciated if we approach him as a theologian of liberation. Śaṅkara has been described as many things, but two epithets have stuck with him: that of a great philosopher, and that of a mystic. As for the first, his brilliant synthesis notwithstanding, the truth is that there was not a whole lot original to Śaṅkara’s philosophy. As Daniel Ingalls had claimed in his paper “The Study of Śaṅkarācārya,” Śaṅkara’s philosophy was a fix (of the Gauḍapāda or, perhaps, Bhartrihari kind) on the doctrine of *bheda-bheda*, and now we know that this *bheda-bheda* was that of Bhartṛprapañca, whose categories of psychology and cosmology Śaṅkara inherited. Parallel to his being a great philosopher, Śaṅkara was habitually described as a mystic or a philosopher of experience, by Indian scholars who wanted to ground scripture and philosophy in personal experience, and in non-specialist accounts in the West, particularly in the studies of mysticism, where he has become one of the favorite characters. In the West, such depiction was partly the legacy of Rudolph Otto’s book *Mysticism East and West*, whose influence had persisted even in Indology through Paul Hacker, and partly a result of the more general approach to the study of religion focused on mystical experience or intuition as its source, the legacy of William James and Henri Bergson. To illustrate briefly this perspective of Śaṅkara, we may quote from Otto:

But above all Śaṅkara holds that knowledge based on scripture is merely the finger which points to the object and which disappears when it is itself looked upon. The real knowledge is that which he calls “one’s own vision” — *darśanam*. This vision for him, as knowledge for Eckhart, is not a matter of “having visions.” It is rather an awareness of identity with Brahman, and that as an “intuitus,” a dawning of insight,

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our own clear-sighted realization of that which the scriptures taught. This awareness cannot be “produced,” we cannot reason it out. It is not a “work.” It comes or does not come independently of our will. It must be seen. The way may be prepared by the words of the Vedas and by meditation (pratyaya) on them, but in the end it must be our own vision.²

While more recent scholarship such as the work of Anantanad Rambachan has done much to discredit this characterization of Śaṅkara as a mystic or a philosopher of experience, Śaṅkara’s ideas about scripture, intuition or personal experience, and liberation have never been fully studied in their context. Scholars have learned to read Śaṅkara carefully about the details of his system, but less so to appreciate his major participations and interventions in a preexisting discourse, to read him in a “properly historical style.”

It is, however, the attribution of mysticism to Śaṅkara, examined in his context, rather than his being a great philosopher, that helps us pinpoint his significance, because the most prominent aspect of his theology was liberation, and mysticism was precisely what he sought to distinguish his soteriology from. The striving after personal experience that was over and above scriptural knowledge was very much a part of Śaṅkara’s intellectual universe, and certainly his own concern. It was expressed in the Yoga-Sūtra, 1.49: “It [seedless samādhi] has a different focus from that of inference and scripture, because it has the particularity of things as its object.”³ Yoga was about direct experience, Yogic perception, an “intuitus,” and precisely this was its major distinguishing feature from Sāṅkhya, whose Self was known not as an object, but as the light of consciousness known from analogical reasoning, and from the scriptural theologies of Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta. But such Yogic perception made an alliance with Vedic theology, most prominently in the doctrine of prasaṅkhyaṇa, which claimed that scriptural

³ Translation Bryant (2009:159).
knowledge of Brahman was general, mediate, and had to culminate in direct experience through long, cathartic meditation as another, immediate cognition.

This was the thesis that Śaṅkara repudiated. While the pursuit of liberation had to terminate in personal experience, this “intuitus” or “dawning of insight” or “vision” precisely had to be reasoned out, by means of the two forms of reasoning, theological or scriptural exegesis (śravaṇa) and philosophical reflection (manana) based on analogy (sāmānyato-dṛṣṭa), the characteristic methods of Mīmāṁsā and Śāṅkhya, not of Yoga. While scripture was “merely the finger,” the finger was all that one had: the knowledge of one’s being Brahman was beyond scripture and words, yet available solely through words. This was the “hermeneutics of liberation” that I mentioned in the Introduction, the deciphering of a hidden meaning with an expert in the techniques of anamnesis, upon which something additionally is known through symbols, but cannot be known otherwise because it is inexpressible except through symbols. There was no—and there could be no—insight that was different from the scriptural cognition once such cognition had been fully clarified through reasoning: one could not but have the personal experience, because this personal experience, avagati, was the Self, and the real fruit of the soteriological process was full, perfect dispassion, “being the Self” that was unrelated to anything that is not the Self and was known only negatively.

That one had the insight was a “visible result,” visible in the perfect absence of identification and in appropriate behavior. And, it was visible to the teacher, much like the favorite joke of psychologists where a young practitioner of behavioral analysis asks his partner after a night of passionate love: “You enjoyed it a lot. How about me?” It was the teacher in the Upadeśa-Sāhasrī who had the last word on liberation: “You have thus attained fearlessness, and from now on you will not experience the suffering of waking and dream. You are freed from the
misery of transmigration,” and it was Yājñavalkya who had to tell the king: “You have attained fearlessness, Janaka.” A special insight was impossible where one could know the Self only through what the Self was not, a non-object that was, nevertheless, the residue that was irreducible because without it no reduction could ever be possible. The final teaching was neti neti, the reference of the mahā-vākyas.

This, as we saw, was a characteristically Sāṅkhyan mode of knowing, an intellectual reflection that was essentially opposed to performing ritual and that culminated in perfect disassociation from all possible identification points, but not in a different kind of experience. The full understanding, however, was predicated on personal purity, and this was another point on which Śaṅkara’s soteriology was different from the rest of Vedic theology. In the doctrine of prasaṅkhyaṇa, meditation itself was cathartic, and the insight into one’s being Brahman that transformed mediate knowledge to immediate was a result of purification, which was accelerated by the performance of ritual. Śaṅkara turned this upside-down: such purification had to happen before one could possibly engage in the intellectual inquiry into Brahman, and in arguing this, Śaṅkara drew on the Mīmāṁsā intricacies of ritual technology to develop a new model of soteriological causality, pāramparya or successive causality. This model mapped the progress on the path to liberation by delineating attainments that turn into means upon their achievement, subsuming but also terminating their respective means.

At the center of this novelty were the identity statements of the Upaniṣads that became the mahā-vākyas. As realized by Hiriyanna almost a century ago, the central role of the identity statements was a new thing in Vedic theology, where meditation on Brahman, just like ritual, was organized around the Upaniṣadic injunctions such as vijnāya prajñāṁ kurvīta. By placing the onus on the identity statements and by interpreting them as affirming real rather than
meditative identity, Śaṅkara solved the key problem that was faced by the doctrine of 
prasaṅkhyaṇa, the mediacy of scriptural knowledge. There was no question of the knowledge
being mediate so long one recognized that it was about oneself. Sure enough, personal purity was
required for such recognition, but the recognition itself was consequent on knowing qua knowing
or qua clarification, not on repeated meditation on Brahman that reconstructs the subject and
deconstructs itself in the process.

To return to Bergson’s example of the character in a novel that I mentioned at the end of
Part Two, for Śaṅkara the intuitive knowledge did not require for one to “coincide with the
person” of the character through a form of sympathy: it had to dawn on one, rather, that “I am
the character, the book is about me.” What was required, then, was not sympathy, but anamnesis.

This, finally, meant that the mediate knowledge of Brahman from the Upaniṣads,
expressed in statements such as satyaṁ jñānam anantam brahma, became part of what
Sarvajñātman called, following Mīmāṁsā philosophy of language, avāntara-vākyā, knowledge
expressed in intermediate sentences that becomes finalized in the mahā-vākyā. Such was not the
case in prasaṅkhyaṇa-vāda, as Hiriyanna recognized, and it is no wonder that the identity
statements played no major role in Maṇḍana’s Brahma-Siddhi. The mahā-vākyas gave the
finality of meaning that, otherwise, the prasaṅkhyaṇa meditation was supposed to provide.

In short, the characteristically Sāṅkhyan mode of knowing, the pārampyaya model of
soteriological causality, and the doctrine of the identity statements formed Śaṅkara’s theology of
liberation that, I claim, was his major significance. Meditation on Brahman and direct, Yogic
perception, came back to Advaita Vedānta through Vācaspati Miśra and his synthesis of Śaṅkara
and Maṇḍana Miśra. It came back to haunt Śaṅkara’s legacy: he may have converted the man, all
right, but he forgot to convert his ghost.
ABBREVIATIONS

AiU – Aitareya Upaniṣad

AiUBh – Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Aitareya Upaniṣad

ĀDhS – Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra

ĪU – Īśā Upaniṣad

ĪUBh – Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Īśā Upaniṣad

US – Śaṅkara’s Upadeśa-Sāhasrī

USG – Śaṅkara’s Upadeśa-Sāhasrī, the prose (gadya) portion

USP – Śaṅkara’s Upadeśa-Sāhasrī, the verse (padya) portion

KUPBh – Śaṅkara’s Pada-Bhāṣya on the Kena Upaniṣad

KUVBh – Śaṅkara’s Vākya-Bhāṣya on the Kena Upaniṣad

KṭU – Kaṭha Upaniṣad

KṣU – Kauśītaki Upaniṣad

ChU – Chāndogya Upaniṣad

ChUBh – Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Chāndogya Upaniṣad

GDhS – Gautama Dharma-Sūtra

ṬṬ - Kumārila’s Tūp-Ṭīkā on Śabara’s Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra-Bhāṣya

TU – Taittirīya Upaniṣad

TUBh – Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Taittirīya Upaniṣad

TUBhV – Sūreśvara’s Vārttika on Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Taittirīya Upaniṣad

TV – Kumārila’s Tantra-Vārttika on Śabara’s Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra-Bhāṣya

NaiS – Sūreśvara’s Naiśkarmya-Siddhi

NS – Nyāya-Sūtra of Gautama
NSBh – Vātsyāyana’s Bhāṣya on the Nyāya-Sūtra
PUBh – Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Praśna Upaniṣad
PP – Padmapāda’s Pañca-Pādikā
PPr – Sarvajñātman’s Pañca-Prakriyā
PYS – Pātañjala-Yoga-Śāstra, name for the Yoga-Sūtra along with the Bhāṣya traditionally attributed to Vyāsa
BĀU – Bṛhad-Āranyaka Upaniṣad
BĀUBh – Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Bṛhad-Āranyaka Upaniṣad
BĀUBhV – Sureśvara’s Vārttika on Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Bṛhad-Āranyaka Upaniṣad
BṬ – Kumārila’s Bṛhat-Ṭīkā
BDhS – Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra
BS – Brahma-Sūtra attributed to Bādarāyaṇa
BSBh – Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Brahma-Sūtra
BrS – Maṇḍana Miśra’s Brahma-Siddhi
BhG – Bhagavad-Gītā
BhGBh – Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Bhagavad-Gītā
Manu – Manu Smṛti
MāU – Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad
MU – Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad
MUBh – Śaṅkara’s Bhāṣya on the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad
MK – Kevalānanda Sarasvatī’s Mīmāṁsā-Kośa
MS – Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra attributed to Jaimini
MSŚBh – Sabara’s Bhāṣya on the Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra
MH – Bhavya’s Madhyamaka-Hydaya
VDhS – Vasiṣṭha Dharma-Sūtra
SK – Sāṅkhya-Kārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa
SKG – Gauḍapāda’s Bhāṣya on the Sāṅkhya-Kārikā
SŚ – Sarvajñātman’s Saṅkṣepa-Śārīraka
SSS – Suvarṇa-Saptati-Śāstra commentary on the Sāṅkhya-Kārikā
SD – Sāhitya-Darpaṇa of Viśvanātha Kavirāja
ŚU – Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad
ŚDV – Śaṅkara-Dig-Vijata, attributed to Vidyāraṇya
ŚB – Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
ŚBh – Rāmānuja’s Śrībhāṣya commentary on the Brahma-Sūtra
ŚV – Kumārila’s Śloka-Vārttika; it is always followed by the chapter title, for instance ŚV Śabda refers to the Śabda-Pariccheda chapter
SV – Sureśvara’s Sambandha-Vārttika (commentary on Śaṅkara’s introduction to the Brhad-Āraṇyaka-Bhāṣya and the introductory part of Sureśvara’s Vārttika thereon)
YS – Patañjali’s Yoga-Sūtra
YSBh – The Bhāṣya on the Yoga-Sūtra attributed to Vyāsa
VAM – Śālikanātha’s Vākyārtha-Mātrkā, eleventh chapter of his Prakaraṇa-Pāṇcikā
VK – Śrīnivāsa’s Vedānta-Kaustubha commentary on the Brahma-Sūtra
VPS – Nimbārka’s Vedānta-Pārijāta-Saurabha commentary on the Brahma-Sūtra
VPV – Vṛtti on Bhartṛhari’s Vākyapadīya
LIST OF PRIMARY SOURCES

(1) Generally, prose sources, including commentaries, are quoted with text and page number. In multivolume editions, the volume and page are given together. For instance, MSŚBh 7.2.5, II.232 stands Śabara's Bhāṣya on the Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra, on sūtra 5 of the second pāda of the seventh adhyāya, on page 232 of the second volume.

(2) Sūtras and verses, as well as prose sections of the Upaniṣads and the prose part of Śaṅkara’s Upadeśa-Sāhasrī, are quoted only by text number.

(3) When more than one editions are consulted, the references are given according to the first edition listed.

(4) Translations are listed after the editions. When multiple translations are given, they are listed in order of preference. In all cases, however, translations in the text are mine, unless specified otherwise.

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