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LXXX

Contents

BANGWEI WANG, CLAUS PETER ZOLLER, PETER SCHARF AND HONG LUO:

Preface 7

OPENING SPEECHES

GEORGE CARDONA:

Opening speech 21

SAROJA BHATE:

“Cīnabhāratayoh setuḥ saṃskṛtam (Sanskrit: A bridge between China and India)” 23

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

BANGWEI WANG:

Sanskrit in Ancient Chinese Eyes: Language and Scripts..... 31

YONGHUI QIU:

“神母印度”的图像变化及其宗教-政治意义 41

ARTICLES

DIWAKAR ACHARYA:

The *Saurasamhitā*: The Earliest Surviving Tantra on Sun-Worship 62

SHRIKANT BAHULKAR:

Editing the Manuscripts of Forgotten Sanskrit Texts 76

STHANESHWAR TIMALSINA:

Vimarśa: The Concept of Reflexivity in the Philosophy of Utpala and Abhinavagupta 98

SHENGHAI LI:

Two Mirrors of Literature in Sanskrit and Chinese: On the Intersections of Literary Theories from Premodern Asia 122

GUANGRONG ZHOU:

试论梵语声字在般若经典中的形态与功能..... 146

SUPING DANG & YINGHUA LIU:

Textual Study on the Relationship between Season and Disease: with special reference to Vyādhipraśamanaparivarta of *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra* 173

CLAUS PETER ZOLLER:

Sanskrit and the language situation in the Tarim Basin-oasis towns during the first millennium of the Common Era 185

GUODONG ZHENG:

轮回里的变形记 — 《金光明经》流水本生故事的构成..... 218

MUYOU FAN:

Chen Yinke's Contribution to Buddhist Philological Study: With reference to Sanskrit texts 224

XUESHAN ZHANG:

“七例八转”辨..... 244

KAREN LANG:

Kashmiri Paṇḍitas and the Transmission of Madhyamaka: Patshab's and Sūksmajana's Translation of the *Catuḥśataka* and the *Bodhisattvayogācārakatūḥśatakātīkā* 261

YANG GA:

ལྷོང་པོ་བསྐྱུས་པའི་འཆད་ཉན་བོད་དུ་དར་རྒྱལ་གསལ་བར་བཀྲལ་བ་མིག་ཡིད་ན་བའི་དགའ་སྟོན།..... 279

PETER VERHAGEN:

Tibetan Expertise in Sanskrit Grammar (4): Kātantra Commentaries
by Zha lu Chos skyong bzang po (1441-1527) and Karmapa 8 Mi
bskyod rdo rje (1507-1554) 312

HONG LUO:

How to make and make sense of *kṛt*? The interpretation, translation,
and transmission of *kṛt* in Guṇaprabha's *Vinayasūtra* 333

PETER SCHARF:

Issues in Digital Sanskrit Philology and Computational Linguistics
..... 347

GERARD HUET:

Design of a Sanskrit Reader Assistant 376

AMBA KULKARNI:

Appropriate Dependency Tagset for Sanskrit Analysis and
Generation 401

GEORGE CARDONA:

Pāṇinian derivation: syntax and lexicon, some issues 426

अनुविद्धमिव ज्ञानं सर्वं शब्देन भासते

All cognition appears as pierced through by speech.

言贯思 思发明 མ་ཡིས་ལུག་པ་ཁིན་ཤེས་རིག་གུན་རྒྱང་འགྱུར།

“Sanskrit in China 2019: Sanskrit on Paths”

संस्कृताध्वा

2019 梵语在中国学术研讨会：梵语行

ལེགས་པར་སྒྱུར་པའི་ལས།

Yonghui Qiu, Bangwei Wang, George Cardona, Peter Scharf, Hong
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Vimarśa: The Concept of Reflexivity in the Philosophy of Utpala and Abhinavagupta

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The “Recognition” (*pratyabhijñā*) philosophy of Utpala (900-950 CE) and Abhinavagupta (950-1016 CE) considers consciousness as reflexive. What does this mean is that consciousness does not rely on either a higher or a second order consciousness for the manifestation of its primary mode. This is a much broader issue of whether what is meant by the equivalents for consciousness in this school is the same as what we generally understand by the word ‘consciousness.’ I am interested here to advance conversation on the basis of semblance, or on the basis of some similarities rather than distinguishing *cit/citi/caitanya/ saṃvid/anubhūti/anubhava/prajñā* on the one hand and consciousness on the other. Consciousness is generally identified in the school of ‘Recognition’ as having two roles: to illuminate objects which can be internal such as pain, or external such as pot; and to reflexively cognize, or be aware of the very act of illumination, not just the illumined object. This primary polarity of consciousness manifests as an entity reflexively aware of its manifestation, described here in terms of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*. The claim that consciousness manifests itself opens several internal

conflicts and diverging arguments, even within classical Sanskrit literature or within Hindu or Buddhist schools confronting what it means for consciousness to be reflexively aware of itself. It is therefore reasonable to ask, what is in it that makes the ‘Recognition’ treatment of reflexivity unique to a broader discourse on consciousness, since this issue has been debated for almost three millennia, starting with the *Jyotirbrāhmaṇa* (BĀU IV.3).

To begin with, Abhinavagupta’s philosophy grounds the issue of reflexivity in the platform of a critical dialogue with Dharmakīrti’s (6th-7th C) Sautrāntika-Yogācāra. He rejects the momentary aspect of consciousness while accepting its reflexivity and in this process, he seems to have accepted some arguments while critically rejecting others. Even though the Advaita of Śaṅkara (700 CE) does accept luminosity of consciousness while distinguishing the mental modes or *vṛttis* with consciousness, Abhinavagupta rejects this model of consciousness, primarily because Abhinava’s consciousness is dynamic and free while Śaṅkara’s model lacks these attributes. The crux is, making consciousness inherently lacking dynamism and equating consciousness with the self translates into making the self inherently passive and intrinsically lacking aspects such as volition (*icchā*). Even though there have been some arguments in contemporary scholarship regarding reflexivity of consciousness in the School of Pratyabhijñā, the particular mode of dialogue that led to Abhinava’s concept of *vimarśa* requires further analysis.

The problems with engaging with the concept of *vimarśa* are twofold. For one, the term is loosely defined by Utpala who used it in a philosophical context first; and two, contemporary attempts to understand the concept has added more misconceptions than helped making it clear. In all accounts, our problems come from broad generalization, a common problem of most of the contemporary studies. Rather than taking contemporary understandings for granted, I therefore prefer to returning to the definitions from the classical authors. Nevertheless, we confront the same problems as we are not reading the classical texts in their own language in their own cultural milieu. Ours is a hermeneutic challenge, as we are engaged

translating concepts not just from one language to the other but also from one culture in the remote past to the modern cosmopolitan culture. We sure will be soon exhausted if the quest is to find a single translation or a single interpretation of the term, and we can learn over this issue from Raffaele Torella's observations.¹ To add further, while K. C. Pandey translated *vimarśa* as "consciousness" (Pandey 1963, 329) and explained it as "the capacity of the self to know itself" (Pandey, 1963, 324), Alper translated it as "judgement."² Isabelle Ratie criticizes this particular understanding:

Vimarśa is the pre-conceptual and pre-reflexive act through which consciousness is always already grasping *itself* as having a specific form (whether objective or subjective), and it can only grasp itself in an objective form because all cognitive events ultimately rest on the subjective realization in which consciousness apprehends itself as a pure "I" (See Ratie, *Le Soi et l'Autre*, 160n115. Translation, Ratie 2016, footnote 50).³

Adding to the list of new interpretations, Ratie translates *vimarśa* as [dynamic] realization. The limitation with this translation, though, is *vimarśa* is not a distinctive category of consciousness. Ratie explains the inherent reflexivity of consciousness in terms of *prakāśa*. What we cannot overlook while discussing *vimarśa* is it always complements *prakāśa*: while these two terms define two properties, two aspects of consciousness but are never isolated from each other. If we take the separate terms applied for the sake of analysis as actually imposing metaphysical difference, we would create a dichotomy within consciousness. In my reading, *vimarśa* as a category only describes a specific function of consciousness, just like *prakāśa*. Therefore this is not the case that there are some instances of consciousness to be identified as "*prakāśa*" and the other to be addressed as "*vimarśa*." Applying Alper's definition of *vimarśa* as "judgment," consciousness reflexively cognizes its luminosity and

¹ In his lengthy footnote, Torella 2002 (page xxiv, fn. 32) outlines various readings of *vimarśa* in contemporary literature.

² Alper 1987, 176–241.

³ Ratie, 2017, 437-468.

this is shared in various modes of consciousness. But again, if this ‘judgment’ is to be understood the way analytical philosophy does, we will face the same problem, making two ontological orders within consciousness. Utpala, for example, explains inference in relation to *vimarśa* in the following terms:

pūrvāabhātāntaḥsthita eva arthe nāntarīyakārthadarśanavaśāt tattaddeśakālādiyojanayā vimarśanam anumānam | ĪP Vṛtti I.5.8.

Contingent upon perceiving an invariable entity, inference is an act of reflection (*vimarśana*) by synthesizing distinctive modes of time and space corresponding the entities that have already been manifest [to consciousness] and are [therefore] immanent (*antaḥsthita*).

We need to keep in mind that it is due to *vimarśa* that the *prakāśatā* of *prakāśana*, or the being illuminated aspect inherent with illumination is given to consciousness. And this reflexive confirmation functions not just in perception but in every other mode of consciousness. So if we were to expand upon the idea of *vimarśa* embodying “judgment,” the term explains reflexivity at the immanent level while also expanding its function as consciousness articulates itself in different cognitive modes. Abhinavagupta says:

*vikalpanaviśeṣa eva cānumānam | anumānam anābhāte viṣaye na bhavati vikalparūpatvāt | anābhāte hy arthe bhavad apūrvasaṃvedanaṃ nirvikalpaṃ bhavet, tadviruddhañ cedam . . . na ca vimarśanamātram anumānam – apitu prāptipravṛttiযোগ্য-
vastuniścayarūpam | ĪPVV, Vol. II, p. 156.*

Inference is a particular type of conceptualization. We cannot infer something that has never been experienced since it is of the character of conceptualization. If [inference] were to occur on the object that has not been experienced before, this would be non-judgmental, and this is contradictory to non-judgmental consciousness (*tat*). . . Furthermore, inference is not merely reflexive consciousness. On the contrary, this is of the character of the judgment of an entity that is fit

to be attained [by judgmental consciousness] and [appropriate] for orientation.

When Abhinava rejects in the above passage that inference is merely a reflexive mode of consciousness, he is not rejecting the reflexivity that defines the function of immanent consciousness. On the contrary, this relates to the consciousness of what is given in the present mode of consciousness, with what was an object of the past mode of experience. That is, the scope of *vimarśa* mirrors the domain of *pratyabhijñā*. If this were not to be the case, it would contradict with the premise under which Utpala has used the terminology of *vimarśa* where he establishes that the manifestation of an entity is of the character of reflexivity:

vimarśaś ca yathāgnir dhūme iti bhavati, tathā saṃskṛtasya pramātur asya dhūmasyāgniḥ kāraṇam asya dhūmaḥ kāryam ity api bhavati – ity evaṃ ekātmātāpattiparyanto 'vabhāsana-vyāpāro 'rtheṣu jñānānām, na tu parasparasamāgnatā prakāśamātrāt parisamāpyate | parasparaviśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāvaparāmarśa evānekaikatārūpasambandhaparāmarśaḥ | Saṃbandhasiddhi of Utpala, p. 8.

And this reflexivity is just as in the case of 'if there is smoke there is fire,' it also occurs for an accultured subject in the form that {iti} the fire is the cause of this smoke and the smoke is its effect. And thus (*evaṃ*) consciousness has its operation of manifestation that culminates with the actualization of synthesis (*ekātmātā*) [or, being identical with the self qua consciousness]. The interdependence [between object and consciousness] does not culminate merely with [their] illumination. The reflexive awareness (*parāmarśa*) of the synthesis of the manifold is the reflexive awareness that [they are] mutually linked as a qualifier and the qualified.

It is evident in the above discussion that *vimarśa* explains the act of consciousness that synthesizes what is immediately given. That is, instead of synthesis being a subsequent process, it is simultaneous to perception. The argument then is, consciousness is given as a flash, it is sudden, and is not given in a linear temporal structure. It also

confirms that synthesis is at the heart of all forms of cognition. In perception, we synthesize all the horizons or aspects given discretely in different modes of time and through different angles in different subjective conditions. Utpala identifies this as “attaining homogeneity” (*ekātmatāpatti*) which combines two key terms of *ekātmatā*: “being in the state of a single essence” and *āpatti*: “the mode of incurring, attaining a particular state.” There is a sense of coming-together-ness in this application, although the same term in other contexts could refer to an “undesired consequence.”

The singularity of the event of conscious experience, in the context of perception, relates to the consciousness described in terms of object, or noema in Husserl’s terminology, merging back to its active effulgence. The act of consciousness, or the mode of being conscious – noesis – in turn, becomes one with the consciousness that constitutes itself as the subject. It is not, therefore, in grasping object as object, but in total recognition that “I know this,” consciousness makes a full circle or illuminating aspect of consciousness and reflexive modes are merged. And it is in this mode that the subjectivity of the subject is also manifest. In other words, the subject discovers or reconfirms their subjectivity in this act of consciousness. If we read along these lines, ‘recognition’ is imprinted in every mode of consciousness. And if *vimarśa* is inextricable mode within consciousness and if consciousness were to manifest in different modalities, even the instance of inference or analogy would bear the same mark. This is to say that the same mechanism applies to inferential consciousness, where manifestation of objects is described in terms of *vimarśa* or reflexivity. In the case of inference, there is reflexive consciousness of fire when perceiving smoke, and by means of tracing, the subject employs memory, establishing the invariability of smoke with fire, which culminates in awareness of the fire from the smoke.

It is now evident that *vimarśa* is not one among the modes of consciousness but an essential aspect embedded within every mode of conscious experience. Along these lines, it explains the function of synthesis that is at the heart of any conscious experience. *Vimarśa*,

therefore is more than reflexivity of consciousness in confirming its own mode, as it is a crucial factor of enabling perception and inference and it also gives rise to veridical knowledge. The operation that makes an instance of knowledge veridical, in Abhinavagupta's thesis, results in reflexivity. It is due to this reflexivity that an instance of consciousness becomes a veridical means of knowledge:

ato vimarśa eva phalaṃ tadbalena bodhaḥ pramāṇam | ĪPVV, vol. III, p. 72.

Therefore, reflexivity is the result [of this cognitive process] and the awareness is considered the means of [veridical cognition] on the force of this reflexivity (*tad*).

And the same thesis is confirmed elsewhere:

vimarśalakṣaṇasya pramitivyāpārasya ekaikaśabdavācye 'rthe pravṛttes tadanusāritvāc ca pramāṇasya | ĪPV, vol. I, p. 232.

It is because the operation in the form of *pramiti* or veridical knowledge that has the character of reflexivity, corresponds to the entities that are expressed by each and every word, and because the means of veridical knowledge corresponds to the operation (*tat*).

This now has been clear from the above conversation that *vimarśa* as an aspect of consciousness is used as a device to explain its reflexive role. This *vimarśa* is what makes it possible for consciousness not just to gaze itself but also to transcend itself. It is in this reflexivity that consciousness does not merely grasp consciousness as consciousness but also introduces something new, an object that reflects within. It is in this very reflexive mode that the sense of transcendence is construed, and it is due to reflexivity that consciousness grasps an object as “outside” of itself. At the same time, it is due to *vimarśa* that the inward reflexive gaze makes immanence possible wherein consciousness is reflexively gazing upon itself. It is because consciousness can transcend itself, it also recognizes its immanence, that is, reflexively gazing itself. It is in

this event that self-awareness is imprinted within consciousness. The transcendental mode is what allows for externality and the possibility of the manifold. In the means of cognition, for instance perception or inference, it is by means of reflexivity, that synthesis of either discrete horizon renders non-judgmental instances of consciousness coherent. It creates inferential knowledge by revealing the causal link between the probans and the probandum. An entity can be revealed on the basis of contiguity, association, or relation to what else has been revealed. For instance, consciousness of the presence of fire foregrounded apprehension of smoke.

To move forward, Torella translates the term *vimarśa* as “reflective awareness” (Torella xxiv, fn. 32). On the same note, Torella also points out that the terms *āmarśa* and *pratyavamarśa* are largely synonymous to *vimarśa*. The problem here though, is that no distinction has been made between the reflexive consciousness that instantaneously grasps itself and the post-experiential act of grasping consciousness, identified in terms of *anuvyavasāya*. Paul Williams (1998)⁴ notes a similar problem while translating the Buddhist term, *svasaṃvedana*.⁵ Noteworthy in this context is that Williams avoids using “reflective” or other terms and prefers self-reflexive or reflexive to describe *svasaṃvedana*. This avoids conflating the “*sva*” in the terms *svasaṃvedana* with the “*sva*” of the metaphysical self. I prefer the same terminology, because, as we can see, the conversation on reflexivity of consciousness and the self-aware nature of the self converges in *pratyabhijñā*. This, however, does not mean that the issues inherent to these two systems are the same. The ease I have felt in adopting the terminology of reflexivity comes from my reading that even when there exists a metaphysical self in the paradigm of *pratyabhijñā*, this is not something external or additional to consciousness. On the other hand, if we were to read *vimarśa* along the lines of Pandey, it buttresses the metaphysical arguments for the self but it makes no attempts to erase the underlying

⁴ See in particular, Williams 1998: page 10 and page 235 for discussions on “reflective” versus “reflexive” modes of consciousness.

⁵ Also noteworthy is the use of the term *svasaṃvedana* in *pratyabhijñā* literature.

misconception that makes a distinction between consciousness and the self. It is precisely this reason that leads me to concur with Williams' observation that "reflectivity" does not preclude the mirroring or reflecting nature. The readings that explain *vimarśa* in ontological terms, dividing consciousness in terms of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, failing to recognize these two as two properties or aspects of the same event, in my opinion, either end up buttressing the arguments in defense of second-order consciousness, as in the case of *anuvyavasāya*, or a higher order consciousness manifesting the lower modes of consciousness, or *vṛtti* consciousness, as in Advaita Vedanta.

Returning to the issue of translating *vimarśa*, I do not believe that any term will do the just, as any reductive interpretation of the category will result in proliferating misunderstandings. Just like many other philosophical categories, the term comes with complex philosophical background and we cannot grasp it without addressing various nuances. It is not only because the concept is too wide and explains various aspects of consciousness. It is also because even the concept of reflexivity does not explain the same phenomenon if we compare it even strictly within the frameworks of Descartes and Husserl. I am therefore in no rush to give an equivalent and be satisfied. I would rather like to offer the parameters in which the term is applied. And in doing so, I would like to highlight the aspects that have been mostly overlooked. In my understanding, filling this lacuna offers a new paradigm for addressing the philosophy of *pratyabhijñā*, identifying its unique position while distinguishing it from other philosophical models that also consider consciousness as reflective/reflexive.

There are, I argue, five distinct features of *vimarśa* that make the model of reflexivity unique to the *pratyabhijñā* system:

1. *Vimarśa* has a volitional domain. It is not just illumination, or passive reflection, but an active gaze, the gaze of a subject with will to be and with volition to actualize its manifold. This is explicit in the following verse:

*svāmināś cātmasaṃsthasya bhāvajātasya bhāsanam|
asty eva na vinā tasmād icchāmarśaḥ pravartate ||* ĪP I.5.10.

Even for the absolute consciousness [or the absolutely free agent], there lies the manifestation of all the existents that are immanent. In its absence, the reflexive consciousness in the form of volition [such as I would like to make a jar] would not be possible.

Noteworthy here is that Utpala's *Vṛtti: pratibhāsamānārthaikaaviśayo nirmāṭṛtāmāyo vimarśa icchārūpaḥ* explains: "the reflexivity in the form of volition, which has the character of the creator, has as its object only the entity that is being manifest [by consciousness]." That is, reflexivity of consciousness is equated with volition as mechanism of the externalization of the entities that are being immanently manifest.

Action, which explains temporality, embodiment, materiality, inter-subjectivity, among other philosophical concepts, is an expressed or manifest form of volition in this system. Therefore, to have volition is also to have action in its seminal form. And it is in action that freedom is actualized. Therefore, the issue of freedom or *svātantrya* is intertwined with the issue of volition. We can find all of these issues interspersed in Abhinavagupta's following treatment of *vimarśa*:

*prakāśarūpatā jñānaṃ tatraiva svātantryātmā vimarśaḥ kriyā,
vimarśaś ca antaḥkṛtaprakāśaḥ | . . . sarvathā tu vimarśa eva jñānaṃ
tena vinā hi jaḍabhāvo 'sya syāt |* ĪP Vimarśinī, pp. 433-34.
(Jñānādhikāra 8.11).

Consciousness has the form of illumination, and the action identified as reflexivity that has the character of freedom lies inherently within it. Reflexivity is the illumination that has been reflexively internalized. . . In all accounts, consciousness is the very reflexivity, as consciousness would be insentient in its absence.

2. The *vimarśa* that describes reflexivity of consciousness also simultaneously describes the agentive action of the autonomous subject:

anullasitapūrvasya vimarśalakṣaṇasya pramāṭṛvyāpārasyollāsanāt |
(ĪPVV, III, p. 180).

Because the operation of an agent that has the character of reflexivity comes to manifestation that had not been manifest before.

In other words, it is not sufficient to say that consciousness manifests itself or that it does not require something else for its manifestation. To adhere to this position also implies that the self is inherently active, that there is no consciousness that is expunged of its dynamism and there is no self in isolation of the power of action, described in terms of *kriyā śakti*.

3. *Vimarśa* or reflexivity cannot be conceived in isolation of *svāntarya*, or freedom that is inherent to consciousness.

In this account, volition is intrinsic to consciousness and action is merely its expressed and actualized form; action is a blossomed state of volition. As a consequence, consciousness or the self is never entirely expunged of activity, nor is therefore bereft of agency. This is where the freedom of consciousness lies, that it's power of action is never completely negated even in its most immanent or self-confined mode. This freedom of consciousness is described in terms of *vimarśa*.

4. *Vimarśa* also has a domain of speech, the *vāc*.

Since consciousness is never expunged of its self-expression, and since *vāc* is expressed as the power in the form of action, *vimarśa* incorporates the most subtle expressive aspect of consciousness, identified as *vāc*. This is to say that self-reflexivity also encompasses self-expression by means of speech. Since *vāc* incorporates the most subtle domains of consciousness before it manifests as articulated

speech, this relates to the expressive nature that is in the foundation of consciousness. To be conscious, in this paradigm, is to embody the desire for self-expression. The status given to speech by Bhartṛhari is relevant in this context. It is also worth mentioning at this juncture that the transcendence (*parā*) of consciousness (*citi*) in relation to speech that is self-seeing (*paśyantī*), as found in Somānanda's critique, eventually subsides in Abhinavagupta's philosophy. Torella has pointed out that Bhartṛhari moves to the center through the works of Abhinavagupta. My argument here is that while Abhinavagupta is relatively closer to Bhartṛhari than his predecessors, Abhinava doesn't blur the lines between a grammarian's understanding of speech and his own model of consciousness. *Vimarśa* helps negotiate this ground where the expressive aspect of consciousness is not compromised, and in this sense, there is no consciousness expunged of *vāc*. Furthermore, a holistic reading of philosophies helps us understand that rather than different schools being separate islands, they are different territories with open boundaries. They evolve through an overlapping space and this common ground enables philosophies to sustain dialogue. In this sense, it is organic for Abhinava to develop his own philosophy on the basis of what was given to him, i.e., Bhartṛhari's philosophy of speech. There is no conceptualization, Bhartṛhari proclaims, without it being interspersed by speech.⁶ When we combine this insight with the early concept of Bhartṛhari that speech in its subtle form is self-seeing (*paśyantī*), we glean all the necessary aspects to give us a fully blossomed form of *vimarśa* in the philosophy of Utpala and Abhinava. This interconnectedness of reflexivity and speech is vividly outlined in the following lines:

*vimarśabalena ca yataḥ pramāṇaṃ vimarśaś ca śabdajīvitah, śabdaś
cābhāsāntarair deśakālādi-rūpair anāmṛṣṭe ekatraivābhāsamātre*

⁶ Compare the position of Abhinava with the following passage from Bhartṛhari:
*na so 'sti pratyayo loke yaḥ śabdānugramād rte | anuviddham iva jñānaṃsarvaṃ
śabdena bhāṣate* || VP I.115 [123]. *vāgrūpatā ced utkrāmed avabodhasya śāśvatī* | *na
prakāśaḥ prakāśeta sā hi pratyavamarśinī* || VP I.116 [124].

In particular: *yāpy asañcetitāvasthā tasyām apī sūkṣmo vāgdharmānugamo
'bhyāvartate* | Vṛtti upon VP I.116 [124].

*pravartate ghaṭa iti lohita iti tato deśakālābhāsayoḥ
svalakṣaṇatvārpaṇapravaṇayor anāmiśraṇāt sāmānyāyamāne
ābhāse pramāṇaṃ pravartate* | ĪP, Vimarśinī, Vol II, p. 75.

The veridical means of knowledge depends on the force of reflexivity. Reflexivity relies on speech. And the speech functions corresponding to the mere manifestation in a singular substrate that is not contaminated by any other manifestations in the forms of time, space and so on. Therefore, the veridical means of knowledge functions, corresponding to manifestation that is being homogenized, as the manifestation of time and space which function by projecting their characters [of particularization] that are not interspersed.

Along these lines, *vāc* or the speech in its various forms of expression penetrates not just the everyday commonsense reality but also the absolute that is yet to be determined in terms of space and time. Apparently, the *vāc* that penetrates the absolute in its immanence cannot be the speech that we are accustomed of, that is referential, and has objective horizon. Nevertheless, this same *vāc* has expressed domains that relate to spatio-temporal object. Accordingly, just as particularization is the specific function of time and space, generalization is a necessary function of speech, as speech has, as its object, the universal as its domain. Yet again, whether the reference of speech is a particular or universal or whether its function is in affirming the object or negating the other is a broader issue for us to discuss here. For the current purpose, suffices to say that most philosophers from the classical Hindu paradigm accept both the particular and the universal as the domains of speech. Buddhists have broadly accepted the nominalist position, explaining the scope of speech in terms of negation. The primary function of speech, in the philosophy of Abhinava is homogenization/universalization. In other words, entities in themselves are particularized. However, the speech that objectifies the particulars functions by means of generalization.

There is no pre-synthetic state of consciousness. In other words, the very moment we are aware of something or are aware of our own reflexive nature, consciousness is given as integral. If we divide

consciousness as *nirvikalpaka* or pre-judgmental and *savikalpaka* or judgmental, even the consciousness in the pre-judgmental state is either already given as an integral whole or is not given at all and something that is not manifest does not qualify to be called consciousness. This is only to confirm that there is subtle form of synthesis by means of *vimarśa* even in its most immediate and immanent mode. This, however, is not to deny that there exists synthesis of consciousness. Quite the contrary. The synthetic role consciousness plays remains unchallenged as we are confronted to address the scope of *vimarśa* in meaning-generation. Abhinavagupta explains, upon the synthesis of multiple references where each word is discretely corresponding to different entity, that there emerges a field of co-referentiality. In this account, some instances of consciousness are subsumed under the others, bringing to consciousness a distinct concept wherein all the discrete meanings of each words are synthesized together in generating integral meaning.⁷ It is at this juncture that the concept of *vimarśa* becomes crucial:

taṃ sāmānādhikaraṇyābhāsaṃ samanuprāṇayati yo vākyātmā vākyārthaparāmarśarūpo vimarśaḥ “iha idānīm eva ghaṭo ’sti” ity evaṃrūpaḥ | ĪP, Vimarśinī, vol II, p. 202.

The reflexive awareness in the form of comprehending the meaning of a sentence as a synthesis (*parāmarśa*) is of the essence of sentence and it is what sustains the manifestation of co-referentiality and this has the structure of “this jar exists now in this location.”

Now the question is, if this objectivity is explained as an inherent impulse of consciousness, whether or not this division fits within the prism of the act of consciousness identified in terms of *vitti* and the object of consciousness addressed as *vedya*. In other words, is the division of the act of cognition and its reference object or the division in terms of Husserl as noesis and noema applicable in explaining

⁷ *ābhāsānām miśraṃ yad rūpaṃ tatrāvaśyaṃ kaścīd ābhāsaḥ pradhānatvenānyābhāsānām viśrāntipadikāryaḥ sa teṣāṃ sāmānādhikaraṇam* | ĪP, Vimarśinī, Vol. II, p. 101.

consciousness? If we look into the accounts, we confront the fact that the very act of consciousness not only finds itself in the objective forms, it also becomes the cognizing agent. The conversation on expressive and expressed domains of consciousness appear in the context of addressing speech. For Abhinava, the aspects of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, as it relates to the two aspects of consciousness, determine speech in terms of expressive and expressed aspects of the same reality. The real question, then, is how does the manifestation of the object combined with speech function in revealing the object as it is? Abhinava responds:

*tathā hi prakāśamayatvād arthasya prakāśasya ca vimarśajīvitatvād
vimarśātmakatve 'py
arthasyāpratiniyataśabdamelanaparighaṭitaśabdanātmakavimarśaviś
eṣaprabodhe saṅketa-grahaṇapaṭīyaḥ
svāhitamanaskārasaṃskārasahitaḥ so 'rtho vyāpriyate, na śuddhaḥ |*
IPVV, Vol II, p. 236.

Even though the object [that is cognized] is of the character of reflexive awareness, since an object is of the character of illumination, and since [this aspect of] illumination is dependent upon reflexive awareness for its being, the entity that comes to transaction is the one that is interspersed with attention and the karmic imprints (*saṃskāra*), that is skilled in grasping the agreement (*saṅketa*) [between sign and reference] when there emerges the reflexive awareness, characterized by verbalization, composed of the words that have not been already regulated, and not the pure one [not interspersed by any].

There are more questions to follow if the position is that reflexivity is inherently embedded with speech: Is there any distinction between this reflexivity and conceptualization? The reason being, conceptualization is interspersed with imagination and for reflexivity to incorporate imagination would mean that veridical knowledge expunged of imagination would be impossible. Abhinava responds to this objection by saying that in relation to every new or subsequent mode of cognition, the earlier state is as if expunged of

conceptualization. This gives us a picture of reflexivity that is both devoid of imagination and interspersed with it:

*uttarottarāpekṣayā ca pūrvapūrvasya
saṃvartitaśabdabhāvanārūpatvād avikalpatvam ucyate saty api
vimarśaviśeṣātmakavikalparūpatve | ādyaṃ tu yad aham iti aham
idam iti ca rūpadvayaṃ tatra kevalaṃ śuddhaiva vimarśarūpatā, na
tu vikalpātmakatvam . . . | IPVV, Vol. II, p. 226.*

Since the formation by means of speech is contained, relatively prior in a sequence in relation to the next [of an instance of consciousness] is considered non-conceptual even though it is of the character of conceptualization in the form of a particular reflexivity. With regard to two initial forms as “I am” and “I am this,” there lies pure reflexivity not characterized by conceptualization.

This is to say that it is just a matter of convention than of the fact to credit imagination in the act of synthesis. Every new mode of cognition is integrating new aspects from memory etc. and is therefore interspersed with imagination. However, the first instance being expunged of imagination stands valid only in relation to the subsequent instance of cognition. In other words, consciousness expunged of imagination applies in degree rather than in kind. In other words, if imagining is an inherent character of consciousness, it is latently there even when it is not phenomenologically given in the expressed modes of consciousness. When it comes to speech, this has been already discussed that speech (*vāc*) intersperses even the most pristine forms of experience, as in the case of experiencing pure subjectivity or recognizing one’s own subjectivity, the speech becomes one with pure reflexivity. It is when temporality and spatiality intersperse with what is given to consciousness, that pure reflexivity transforms into conceptualization. This position is still vague regarding the status of conceptualization and its demarcation from reflexivity. Keeping this in mind, Abhinava says:

prāgvāsanopajīvē ced vimarśaḥ sā ca vāsanā ||

Prācyā ced āgatā seyaṃ prasiddhiḥ paurvakālikī |Tantrāloka, Ch. 35, verse 9cd-10ab.

If an instance of reflexivity is contingent on prior karmic imprints (*vāsanā*), and if that imprint is recalled (*āgatā*) as corresponding to the past, then this manifestation belongs to the past.

The distinction between pre-judgmental and judgmental modes of consciousness then rests on memory: if immediate experience is interspersed with memory, this is filled with the past conditioning. On this basis, we can conclude that the pure experience that does not give active presence of the past is what describes reflexivity. In other words, reflexivity describes immediate experience. Accordingly, conceptualization (*vikalpa*) is interspersed with the past modes of experience.

What we need to address, then, is the role speech plays in liminal states of consciousness, in the hazy states with very little attention to what is being cognized, or where concepts are not properly formed. This conversation assists us in determining the judgmental and pre-judgmental modes of consciousness. Utpala and Abhinava maintain that reflexivity is an inherent aspect of consciousness and so it is not possible for consciousness to be expunged of reflexivity, the single most quality that it has to define itself, even if the state is that of liminal consciousness. Even though reflexivity is a wide thesis shared among several philosophical schools, what is unique here is that this reflexivity is interwoven with speech. This leads to the conclusion that there is no mode of consciousness that is expunged of speech or *vāc*. As a consequence, even in the direct mode of experience, there is reflexivity embedded within and there also is the presence of speech.

On the basis of the salient features of speech in relation of consciousness as has been identified above, we can glean the following conclusions:

a. Speech or *vāc* stands for the articulated or expressed form of consciousness that is applied communication where the words correspond to our concepts (the primary sense in which speech is used).

b. The veridical modes of consciousness in terms of perception, inference or semantic comprehension are all endowed with speech. What makes speech inherent to these modes of the expression of consciousness is that they all function abiding by the law of sign reference relation, or X (for instance concepts) signifying Y (for instance the external objects).

c. The most intricate mode of consciousness, the experience per se before this gets interspersed with imagination, also has speech as its domain. This is the very reflexivity identified as speech or this is where *vimarśa* and *vāc* become synonymous.

And, in all of these modes of consciousness, reflexivity manifests in distinctive modes. This is why Abhinava says:

śabdanarūpaṃ ⁸ *vimarśanaṃ yad āntaraṃ citśvabhāvasya antaraṅgaṃ rūpaṃ pratyakṣāder api jīvitakalpaṃ tena yat vimṛṣṭaṃ tat tathaiva bhavati | ĪPVV, vol III, p. 84.*

Reflexivity in the form of verbalization is the immanent structure of consciousness and this is what sustains even [veridical modes] such as perception, and so whatever is reflexively touched (*vimṛṣṭa*) by this, that assumes its form.

The above conversation reaffirms that reflexivity of consciousness is embedded with speech, even though what is meant by speech or *vāc* is not always the same. Even though we are accustomed to apply the terminology of ‘speech’ for articulated or expressed forms, the domain of *vāc* is much wider in this paradigm and if consciousness is

⁸ While the edited version reads *śabdanarūpatvaṃ*, I have followed Rastogi’s (2013) reading.

the most foundational entity, it is the speech or *vāc* that defines its foundationality. In other words, all that exists has as its inherent nature the expressive potency and all that exists can be reduced to some form of expression. This, of course, is not the propositional semantic structures that we analyze when we discuss language but rather the basic pulsation that encloses the totality. This is only to say that all that exists is circumscribed by the relationship of the manifesting and the manifested. This expressive nature of consciousness that compels Abhinava to assign *vāc* in consciousness and equate *vāc* with *vimarśa* is so fundamental that Abhinavagupta assigns this even in our sensory modes of experience.

So far, we have observed that the role *vimarśa* plays in inference is just as crucial as in perception. That is, it is not about reflexivity that determines consciousness but also the act of consciousness that reflexively determines the objects of consciousness is what *vimarśa* explains. If such is the case, *vimarśa* should also play role in verbal cognition as it is as valid a mode of consciousness as any other. Keeping this in mind, Abhinavagupta says:

dr̥ḍhāvimarśarūpaṃ śabdanam āgamaḥ | ĪPVV, III. P. 85

What amounts to *āgama* or the testimony by means of language is the very verbalization in the form of consolidated reflexivity.

This is not all that Abhinava has to say when it comes to linking *vimarśa* with verbal cognition. He adds further:

It is the very reflexivity that is *āgama* in the primary sense, and since the mass of words is instrumental in the genesis of reflexivity, it is also called *āgamas* in the figurative sense.”⁹

Whether consciousness is manifest by means of perception or verbal cognition, the inherent nature of consciousness as having two aspects

⁹ *Tataḥ sa eva vimarśa āgama iti ucyate mukhyatayā, tadupayogitayā tu upacāreṇa tajjanako 'pi śabdarāśiḥ* | ĪPVV, III, p. 84.

of illumination (*prakāśa*) and reflexivity (*vimarśa*) remains the same. It is only that what is reflexively derived differs in each mode, as reflexivity does not stand in this paradigm of mere affirmation of consciousness as consciousness but of the confirmation of the consciousness as directional, as grasping something. In both accounts, there is something to be illumined, and that which has been illumined needs to be reflexively given to consciousness. And this is not in a temporal sequence but rather in the very mode of illumination that is embedded with the instantaneous activation of reflexivity.¹⁰ This intricate relation of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* appears marred as consciousness externalizes itself and finds itself in the midst of conceptualization.

As has been maintained above, in both perception and inference, there are unique ways that the illuminating aspect of consciousness identified as *prakāśa* collaborates with the reflexive mode of *vimarśa*. Abhinava explains how this coordination between these two modalities makes veridical consciousness possible:

pratyakṣe hi prakāśadvāreṇa vimarśo 'sty anyatra tu viparyayaḥ | anumāne nāntarīyakavastvantaraprakāśavimarśāpekṣe 'numeye prakāśavimarśayoga iti sāpekṣatvād dūreyaṃ pramitiḥ prameyāt | tatrāpi ca nāntarīyakatājñānaṃ durlabham ity uktam | na ca vācyāgame 'pi śabdavimarśanapūrvakam arthavimarśanam iti tatrāpi sāpekṣatādi bhaved iti | na hi śabdavimarśanād aparaṃ arthavimarśanam kiñcit śabdasya svaparavimarśātmakatvāt | ĪPVV, III. P. 104.

While in the case of perception, reflexivity exists by means of illumination. However, this is reversed in other cases. [Reflexivity is] contingent in the case of inference, since illumination and reflexivity are united in the object of inference that is contingent upon reflexivity, by relying on the illumination of some other object that is invariable. Therefore, [in the case of inference] veridical

¹⁰ *Pratyakṣāgamayor yat prakāśyaṃ vimarśyaṃ ca, tat yathākramaṃ prakāśavimarśamukhenānyā-pekṣāśūnyaṃ |* ĪPVV, III. 103-104.

consciousness is far removed from the object that is cognized. It has also been said that the consciousness of invariability is rare there [for the rise of inferential knowledge]. One should, however, not argue that even in the case of verbal cognition, there is the reflexive awareness of corresponding meaning after having the reflexive awareness of the word. There is contingency. This is because since the word is of the character of reflexively cognizing itself as well as the other, the reflexive awareness of meaning is not distinct from the reflexive awareness of the word.

A question emerges, if this reflexivity is what confirms consciousness, is there something else, the reflexivity of reflexivity, to confirm itself? The easy response from the position of reflexivity would be to not consider second order reflexivity. It is nonetheless contextual to ask whether the reflexivity that confirms consciousness is the same reflexivity that also confirms consciousness as reflexive. Abhinava rejects the argument that there is a distinctive mode of reflexivity that confirms the reflexive act of consciousness:

dīpaḥ svaparadīpanaḥ, śabdaḥ svaparaśabdanātmakaḥ, jñānaḥ svaparaprathārūpam, vimarśas tu svaparavimarśarūpo na pṛthag ganyate | ĪPVV, II. P. 248.

A lamp illumines itself as well as the other. Speech brings to verbal cognition the other while also presenting itself. Consciousness manifests itself and the other. However, reflexivity being reflexively aware of itself and the other, is not counted separately.

I have discussed above that Utpala and Abhinava have occasionally used *vimarśa* and *pratyavamarśa* synonymously. The embedded counter-orientation, re-direction or inward directionality of consciousness is all the more clear in the second term, as the prefix “*prati*” is used to refer to “facing towards” or “facing towards the self” or “reverse order.” The second prefix, “*ava*” explains the synthesizing role of consciousness, as it refers to “all around” or “over” among many other meanings. The following line of Utpala is noteworthy on this background:

sākṣātkāralakṣaṇe jñāne 'pi cito 'rthapratyavamarśo 'sti sūkṣmaḥ |
ĪP, Vṛtti I.5.6.

Even in the consciousness of the character of direct experience, there is a subtle form of reflexive awareness of the manifestation of an entity.

I have so far demonstrated that issue of reflexivity is intertwined with that of speech. Noteworthy in the philosophy of Abhinava is that what he means by consciousness is not a mental act but a metaphysical process of which mentation is just an iceberg. Consciousness, in this platform, is a foundation for both the mind and the matter. This is not that there is no mind or that there is no matter but that what they meant by *caitanya/citi* or synonymous words is something that permeates the both. This is the metaphysical foundation for all that exists and even in its most external objectified state, materiality does not contradict with having consciousness as its intrinsic nature. Abhinava takes this one step further and argues that the faculty of speech is not merely inherent to consciousness in its luminous form but even in its objectivized external form:

*atra tu darśane viśayasyāpi vimarśamayativād abhilāpamayativam
eva vastutaḥ* | ĪP, Vimarśinī, Vol. I, page 288-289.

In this philosophy, since even the external object is of the character of reflexive awareness, this is in fact comprised of speech.

Conclusion

The concept of *vimarśa* is foundational to the philosophy of Pratyabhijñā for multiple reasons. It is not just to confirm the reflexivity of consciousness that *vimarśa* occurs in this school. It is in this reflexivity that recognition as a fundamental character of consciousness is inscribed. Furthermore, it is due to *vimarśa* that the mirroring of consciousness is not just self-mirroring but also mirroring the other, the object that it grasps, and it is in this mirroring that consciousness synthesizes different modes, having synthesis its intrinsic nature. While the emergence of consciousness is depicted as

non-temporal and non-sequential, the sudden emergence of consciousness underlies the synthesis of different modalities, making conscious event as both non-temporal and temporal, non-object directed and in that sense immanent and transcending its own horizon and reaching out to objects. The reflexivity established in this philosophy is not that of momentary consciousness, neither is it the consciousness that is separated from modifications and conceptualizations. This is in the very mode of expression, whether expressed in perceiving, inferential, or verbal modes of recognition, *vimarśa* plays a distinctive role to make those aspects of consciousness possible. Furthermore, speech remains at the heart of this reflexivity and this speech or *vāc* is not merely internal mechanism of consciousness as it penetrates even the externalized objects.

What I have addressed so far does not cover all aspects of *vimarśa* though. If we closely explore ĪPVV I.5.11-13, we will encounter two additional domains of *vimarśa*: that it has an embodied aspect, and also that *vimarśa* is linked with amazement, *camatkāra*, a central category in Abhinavagupta's aesthetics. The first aspect makes embodiment central to consciousness. Accordingly, the duality based on body and mind or matter and consciousness is flimsy as it does not stand the paradigm of Pratyabhijñā where corporeality is embedded within the concept of *vimarśa*. Accordingly, *vimarśa* is not a mere passive reflection, and not even a mere reflexive self-affirmation, but rather an immersion, a rapture, a blissful expression, an effulgence, that escapes the immanence of consciousness and discovers its externality and transcendence. It is in this rapturous domain that *vimarśa* gives an orgasmic account of materiality, a fulfilment of consciousness expressing itself in myriad forms and actualizing all those forms within its immanence.

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