The Collision of Language and Metaphysics in the Search for Self-Identity:
On "Ahaṃkāra" and "Asmitā" in Sāṃkhya-Yoga

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ABSTRACT

The author of this paper discusses three major points: (1) a significant feature of linguistic analysis in the classical Indian philosophical tradition; (2) the role of the religious practice (*īśvara-pranidhāna*) in the search for true self-identity in Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools (*darśana-s*) with special reference to their gnoseological purposes; and (3) some possible readings of "ahaṃkāra" and "asmitā" displayed in the context of Sāṃkhya-Yoga phenomenology and metaphysics. The collision of language and metaphysics refers to the risk of paralogism caused be the common linguistic procedures making the subject define its identity within the semantic order (that is verbal conventions and grammatical rules) which do not reflect the actual metaphysical situation of the self, though it determines one's self-understanding in the empirical sense. Whereas Sāṃkhya-Yoga aims at recognizing, reorganizing and, finally, going beyond these procedures regarded as the obstacles on the path towards self-knowledge and liberation from metaphysical ignorance.

1. IS THE GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS USEFUL ON THE PATH OF LIBERATION?

Even though neither Sāṃkhya nor Yoga is famous for their special concern with grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), or linguistic analysis, both classical *darśanas* share a general view of the Indian grammarians that language has both phenomenal and metaphysical dimensions, which can be uncovered only if one uses it in a correct and insightful manner mastered thanks to some i g n o r a n c e - c l e a r i n g a c t i v i t i e s . *Yogasūtra* (III.17), which refers to the way language is generated and understood,

recommends that one should concentrate on a distinction (*pravibhāga*) between three elements: a word (*śabda*, or *pada*), the meaning (*padārtha*, or *artha*), and presented-idea (*pratyaya*, or *smṛti*) in order to efface ignorance (*avidyā*). The yogin makes a virtue out of a natural inclination to fuse and confuse these three distinct components by using it as a starting-point for an exercise in concentration and meditative-absorption (*samādhi*).[1] In this way, Patañjali argues, a yogin can have knowledge of the language of all living beings.[2] Of course, there is no a single language that is used by all living beings. So, what Patañjali suggests pointing to this rare *vibhūti*, or supernatural power, is that a yogin becomes omniscient (*sarvavid*) thanks to overcoming all the limits that every language imposes upon the perceiving being. When commenting on sutra (III. 17) Vyāsa states that the bond between these three elements: *śabda*, *artha* and *pratyaya*, is merely a v e r b a l c o n v e n t i o n (*saṃketa*) consisting in wrong identification of one with another. Therefore, the author of *Yogabhāṣya* recommends grammatical analysis (*vyākaraṇīya*), so that one can grasp the difference between these elements and thereby avoid mixing verbs (*kriyā-vācaka*) and nouns (*kāraka-vācaka*).

However, in the context of YS, any mental activity involving naming or denoting (*vyapadeśa*), and every reflection based merely on the analysis of words is called *vikalpa*, or conceptualization (YS I. 9), which is recognized as the afflicted, troubling fluctuation of mind (*kliṣṭa citta-vṛtti*). *Vikalpa*, contrary to a valid cognition (*pramāṇa*), never reaches the right insight into reality, because it i m p l i e s i g n o r i n g t h e d i f f e r - e n c e between the words and their meaning, or intended-objects and presented-ideas (YS, YBH, TV I. 41). That is why the author of YS warns us against undue trust of language and conceptualization (*savitarka*). Nevertheless, the risk of wrong usage of the words may only be eliminated through purifying the mind and freeing it from all gross and subtle objects. And here again, a careful grammatical analysis proves to be the best means for initial purification.

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[1] Cf. *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali. A New Translation and Commentary*, trans. G. Feuerstein (1989: 105–106).

[2] *Yogasūtra* (III.17): *śabdārthapratyayānām itaretarādhyāsāt saṅkaraḥ tatpravibhāgasaṃyamāt sarvabhūtarūtajñānam.*

2. WHAT IS ACTUALLY THE GOD THAT SĀṂKHYA AND YOGA DO OR DO NOT BELIEVE IN?

Now, before we master "the language of all living beings" and have an accomplished mind of diminished fluctuations (*nirvicāra samāpatti*, YS I.41), like a clear jewel assuming the colour of any near object, we can try to get a closer look at the Sanskrit grammatical structure and metaphysical connotations of some important terms occurring in the oldest preserved texts of Yoga and Sāṃkhya. The selection of the terms is, naturally, determined by the theme of the panel.[3] While Patañjala Yoga, often called "Sāṃkhya with God" (*seśvara*), seems appropriate for this session, referring to grammar and God in classical Sāṃkhya, codified by Īśvarakṛṣṇa in *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (c. 450 AD), may seem odd because it is commonly thought to be atheistic or non-theistic. But should we simply follow this popular slogan? In fact, what we can learn about God from the passages of *Yuktidīpikā*, as well as Gauḍapāda's and Māṭhara's commentaries to SK is that *īśvara* is not a cause of the world.[4] Sāṃkhya is *svābhāvika*, which means that it believes the world arises spontaneously from its own inherent nature; therefore, the process of the so-called creation of the world needs no additional transcendental cause and reason. Nevertheless, Sāṃkhya philosophers do not openly and unequivocally deny a category of God as such but rather confine themselves to rejecting a strong metaphysical concept of God as Creator and Ruler of the world. YD even suggests that God acquires the instrument of understanding (*buddhi*) and also adopts a material body to take over the power, which belongs to that body. God takes a bodily form, for instance the body of a divine warrior, like Śiva (YD 72.9–10), or the great seer being the incorporation, or embodiment of God.[5]

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[3] An early version of this paper was presented at the panel on "Grammar and the Gods: When Metaphysics and Language Rules Collide", during the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (Chicago, Nov 2, 2008). Then it was slightly developed and re-edited thanks to some valuable comments and hints I owe to Arindam Chakrabarti (University of Hawai'i, USA) and Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad (Lancaster University, UK). Though their critical remarks inspired me greatly, any errors or mistakes are my own.

[4] The *Yuktidīpikā* (68.20–74.15) considers the following causes of the world, which all are subsequently rejected: the atoms (*paramāṇu*), the Self (*puruṣa*), God (*Īśvara*), work (*karman*), fate (*daiva*), time (*kāla*), chance (*yadṛcchā*) and absence (*abhāva*). God, like the Self, is here defined as non-active (*akartṛ*), but His existence as such is not rejected at the same time. Cf. *Yuktidīpikā* (1998).

[5] The commentary argues that God can take a body of dignity (*māhātmyaśarīrādiparigrahāt*, YD 72.13) which is *Āpta* 'authoritative' (YD 45.10–11) like *Īśvaramaharṣis*, that is the great seers who are [incorporations of] God, and who are "devoid of blemishes such as pas-

On the other hand, Patañjala *darśana* has been commonly recognized as "Sāṃkhya with God"[6] due to the fact that the author of *Yogasūtra* (c. 300 AD) refers to *īśvara* or *īśvara-praṇidhāna* in eleven aphorisms (YS I.23–29; II.1–2, 32, 45). In the first *pāda*, where the dynamics of yogic practice (*abhyāsa*) is elucidated, meditation on *īśvara* seems to be a means to *samādhi*, though not the highest *samādhi* enabling distinguished discernment (*viveka-khyāti*). Whereas in the second *pāda*, both in the context of the three-step *kriyā-yoga* and as one of the five *niyama-s* included in the practice of *aṣṭaṅga-yoga*, it is just a means for purification of the *sattva-buddhi*[7] and effacement of the impact of *karmāśaya*. Besides, *īśvara-praṇidhāna* is mentioned in the third chapter of YS where the methods of inducing the supernatural powers (*siddhi-s*) are discussed. Generally speaking, Patañjali considers *īśvara* to be the Self distinguished by the empirical consciousness (*citta*) in the course of discriminative discernment (*viveka-khyāti*), and an i d e a l m o d e l   o f   t h e   e m p i r i c a l   s e e r present permanently in ourselves in the form of inward consciousness (*citi*), but accessible only through meditative effort and one-pointed, intentional *samādhi* (*ekāgra*). Such a concept of the ideal preceptor, or the perfect inner *guru*, lets us suppose that *īśvara*, in the context of yogic pedagogy, is a counterpart of *jīvan-mukta* whose doctrine was not developed by Patañjali otherwise. As G. J. Larson rightly suggests, *īśvara* for classical Yoga is c o u n t l e s s   i m p e r s o n a l   c o n s c i o u s n e s s that can only manifest or reveal itself in the presence of perfectly pure *sattva* (*prakṛṣṭa-citta-sattva*); therefore, "worship" or "prayer" in the Patañjala

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sion, whose opinions are free from doubt, who see things that cannot be reached by the senses". For a detail analysis of the idea of God in the commentaries to *Sāṃkhyakārikā* cf. Johannes BRONKHORST (1983: 149–164). Bronkhorst gives three readings of the term *īśvaramaharṣīṇām* (152–153): (1) if we read it as a *dvandva* compound, it means 'to God and the great seers'; (2) when read as a *karmadhāraya* compound, it means 'to the great seers, who are [incorporations of] God'; and (3) 'to the seers, who are Gods' (this last option Bronkhorst rightly considers inapplicable).

   [6] Patañjali's philosophy has been called "Sāṃkhya with God" at least since Sāyaṇamādhava's *Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha* and the *Sarvasiddhāntasaṅgraha* (14th century) or even since Śaṅkara (8th century). However, F. EDGERTON (1924: 38) argues that Yoga, originally, did not refer to Patañjali's philosophy, because it is not a "system" of belief or of metaphysics, and it was always just a way, a method, of getting something, and not one of the Sāṃkhya schools. Moreover, as Bronkhorst (1981: 309–320) tries to convince us, Yoga in an early date referred rather to Nyāya and/or Vaiśeṣika instead of Patañjali's views presented in *Yogasūtra*, therefore, the expression '*seśvara sāṃkhya*' may have referred to the Pāñcarātra system.

   [7] These two understandings of *īśvara-praṇidhāna* are also clearly distinguished by T. S. RUKMANI (1999: 738).

Yoga ought to be understood as a profound meditation and longing (*bhakti-viśeṣa*) for the e t e r n a l   e x c e l l e n c e (*śāśvatika utkarṣa*) of p e r f e c t   e m b o d i m e n t (*prakṛṣṭa-sattva*).[8]

Thus, the difference in attitude to God between Sāṃkhya and Yoga does not prove to be so big as one might initially think, since the systems share basic metaphysical assumptions and skepticism towards the idea of an Almighty God Creator being the highest entity. And more importantly, they both accept a similar conception of t h e   e m b o d i e d S e l f, which can manifest itself as a distinguished and perfect subject perceived as *īśvara*. Therefore, when we consider the idea of God in the context of these two schools, we must make the analysis of "subject" and "self-identification" our starting point. While doing so we must refer to semantic, cognitive, and ontological perspectives on subjectivity.

3. ABOUT GRAMMAR OF "AHAṂKĀRA" AND "ASMITĀ"

There are numerous terms naming different aspects of subjectivity recognized by Patañjali and Īśvarakṛṣṇa, such as *draṣṭṛ*, *sākṣin*, *citta*, *buddhi*, *manas*, *antaḥkarāṇa*, *puruṣa*, *svāmin*, *bhoktṛ*, *ātman* etc., but here I am going to discuss only two of them, namely *ahaṃkāra* and *asmitā*. They are worth analyzing even more carefully than others in the present paper due to a crucial role they play in the cosmological, psychological and, above all, soteriological context of Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition.

At first glance, both terms seem to be equivalent, as they come from the grammatical category of the first-person singular pronoun, and the verb "to be" conjugated as "(I) am". In his commentary to YS (III.47) when explaining the nature of five afflictions (*kleśa-s*), Vyāsa clearly identifies both terms.[9] The issue of wrong self-understanding and a delusive subjectivity based on the concept of "I" (*ahaṃkāra*), and "mine" (*mamakāra*), or egotism (*abhimāna*) and I-am-ness (*asmitā*), has been quite common in the Indian thought. It first came up in the older Upaniṣads[10] and then is carefully discussed in Buddhism[11] and in Nyāya. But at least since Pañaśikha Sāṃkhya distinguishes "I-sense" (*ahaṃkāra*) as a separate in-

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[8] The phrase "eternal excellence" was suggested by G. J. LARSON in his paper *The Eccentric God of Yoga: A New Approach to 'Worship' and 'Prayer'* presented at 4th Dharma Association of North America Conference (Washington DC, Nov. 17–19, 2006).

[9] Īśvarakṛṣṇa uses this term three times *aham* (SK 61, 64, 66) and *ahaṃkāra* (SK 22, 24, 25).

[10] Cf. M. STEINER (1927: 109–114).

[11] Cf. R. O. FRANKE (1913: 44).

strument, which functions as activity or *kriyā* of the empirical conscious-
ness rather than its static cosmological principle. Whereas *asmitā,* more
often used in the Yoga school, has a rather static connotation. This dis-
tinction is also confirmed by the grammatical structure of both two-word
compounds. In the case of *ahaṃkāra*, first-person pronoun is followed by
a suffix formed of a verbal root, and as such it can cover two major cate-
gories of meaning: that of the verbal action itself,[12] and that of a partici-
pant of action, or agent.[13] In the case of *asmitā*, a verb conjugated in first
person singular is followed by a suffix *tā* (feminine), which is, together
with *tva* (neuter), a very common ending to form abstract nouns mean-
ing "being such, the quality of being so and so".[14]

3.1. A h a ṃ k ā r a

In *ahaṃkāra* composed of *aham* "I", and *kāra*, the latter component is
not unequivocal and has several different meanings, especially when it
occurs in conjunctions. What is more, *kāra* can be derived either from
√*kṛ* 'to do, make, perform, accomplish, cause, prepare, work, employ, use,
utter, pronounce', or from √*kṝ* 'to pour out, scatter, throw, cast, disperse',
and also 'to hurt, injure', or 'to kill'. If we include all these connotations
recorded in Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, the term *kāra*
envelops the following meanings: a) 'making, doing, working, making
a sound, utterance'; b) 'a maker, doer'; c) 'an act, action, effort, exertion,
determination, religious austerity'; d) 'a master, lord'; and also e) 'killing,
slaughter'; f) 'bringing down, humiliation'.

Now, taking into account the philosophical usage of this term in
Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition, I suggest that we distinguish between three
main readings of *ahaṃkāra*, which may be called: (1) c o s m o l o g i c a l,
(2) p h e n o m e n o l o g i c a l, and (3) s o t e r i o l o g i c a l. All of them

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[12] Like in *phutkāra* 'puffing, blowing'.

[13] For instance in *vārttikakāra* 'composer of *vārttikas*', or 'commentator'. As G. A. TUBB
notices, the formulas of analysis in ordinary language used by the commentators to explain
kṛt formations follow very closely the treatment of these formations in Pāṇini's grammar.
Cf. G. A. TUBB and E. R. BOOSE (2007: 50).

[14] PĀṆINI, *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (5.1.119), cit. after TUBB and BOOSE (2007: 177). It is worth
mentioning that both suffixes *tā* and *tva* are identical in meaning, so we cannot distinguish
between these abstract nouns; for instance both *śuklatā* and *śuklatva* mean 'being white,
whiteness', both *aśvatā* and *aśvatva* mean 'being a horse, horseness'. However, when it
comes to the philosophical technical terms, there may be some subtle difference in mean-
ing, i.e. *ahaṃtā* being pure "I", undifferentiated consciousness (Kashmir Shaivism), *ahaṃ-
tva* — being "I" (ego), individuality, mine-ness (*Rāmāyaṇa* 3.5.31).

are accepted to be complementary rather than competitive or exceptive, though they capture the ego-maker from quite different perspectives.

In the first suggested reading *ahaṃkāra* means 'cry' (*aham!*). The uttering "I" is here regarded as a key stage of the world creation. It plays a similar role to an original being from Vedic cosmogony who, when about to create the world, cries out "Here am I". In this meaning, *ahaṃkāra* is not a psychological category, but a cosmic and evolutionary principle, or *tattva* derived from *buddhi*, and in turn producing the five sense-capacities, the five action-capacities, inner sense (*manas*), and the five subtle elements (*tanmātras*). This cosmogony-oriented understanding is characteristic of the early pre-classical and theistic phase of Sāṃkhya school development when *ahaṃkāra* was even identified with Prajāpati, the mythical Father of creation who produces the world as sacrificial food for himself by knowledge, austerity and self-formulation. By placing the I-making principle in the sequence of the creation stages, early Sāṃkhya acknowledges the ancient speculations on c r e a t i o n-b y-n a m i n g or f o r m a t i o n-b y-f o r-m u l a t i o n, which consider name and form (*nāma-rūpa*) to be inseparable. This early meaning of *ahaṃkāra* is positive: the original being naming himself 'I' is originally incomplete and needs to be completed in creation.[15] Interestingly, in the Indian grammarian tradition of Pāṇini no sharp distinction is drawn between the verbs "knowing" and "doing". This is so not because the Indian grammarians simply ignore this distinction, but because they are aware of a deeper truth that the two are not dichotomous.[16] As F. Staal aptly noticed while analyzing the ritual function of *mantra*, language is not something with which you n a m e something, but it is something with which you d o something.[17] However, in the later stages of Sāṃkhya tradition this perspective undergoes a radical change. In SK and YS "the doer" and "the knower", or the agent of doing and the subject of knowledge are clearly distinguished. While the activity of any kind characterizes the nature (*prakṛti*) and all its *sattva-rajas-tamas* manifestations, the power of knowing, or consciousness (*cit*) comes only from the Self (*puruṣa*).

The second meaning of *ahaṃkāra*, which I call p h e n o m e n o l o g i-c a l, or epistemic, is 'I-making', or 'individuality-making', but also 'indi-

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[15] Cf. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (1993: 124, 253, 274, 301).

[16] See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Śvetāśvatara* Upaniṣads, and *Mokṣadharma*. *Bṛh*. (I.4, 17): "In the beginning, this (world) was just the self, one only. He desired, 'would that I had wife, then I may have offspring. Would that I had had a wealth, then I would perform rites'."

[17] This is true in many other cases of verbs too. It is said, for example, that the word "to exist" or "to be" (*as*) is to be used in the sense of 'to become' (*bhuvi*), and "to become" (*bhū*) in the sense of 'to be' (*as bhuvi bhū sattāyām*). Cf. Kamalalar MISHRA 1981: 10–11.

vidual's making' in the sense 'making by the individual'. One could also render it as "I-sense". This reading of *ahaṃkāra* indicates the significance of the phenomenal consciousness in the process of perception. Here, *ahaṃkāra* instead of "creating" is rather responsible for "reflecting" or "projecting" the empirical self on nature, *prakṛti*, and consequently imposing on the world the individual point of view. More precisely, all the mental and physical objects, including the agent of the empirical perception, i.e. the mind-and-senses complex, are themselves manifestations, or projections of the ego-principle. Thus, *ahaṃkāra* is unique in marking the common meeting point for the knower and the known, or knowable, alike. It stands for the intentionality of mind and plays a crucial role in the process of perception. In the statement "I know that I am the knower of objects", the self implied by the first "I" is the pure seer (*puruṣa*) which is the reflector of the *buddhi* or the empirical ego. This non-objectified ultimate self enables the embodied ego to operate as the present subject. Whereas the second "I" implies the subject of the phenomenal experience (*bhoga*) being the illusory self. But who, after all, is the cogniser of the contact between the seer and the seen? It is "I" (*aham*) who am its cogniser, because I think I am the body etc., as well as that I am the knower. But *ahaṃkāra* is also the product of that union. Therefore, how can I know that union? In fact, I come into being or I come to know the union after the contact (*saṃyoga*) takes place. During each act of knowing, the knower and the known appear united; after that by analysis we know that t h e r e   a r e   s e p a r a t e   e n t i t i e s therein as the knower and the knowable. In other words, while capturing these two in one conception we undergo the illusion and ignorance. We think "I can know myself" because the faculty of self-awareness, or light of consciousness is reflected in the *sattvic ahaṃkāra*. That is why although "I-sense" is the result of the contact and its instrument, I understand that I am both the seer and the seen.

In the third s o t e r i o l o g i c a l reading, *ahaṃkāra* is the w r o n g "I", or egotism, which requires bringing down one's delusive self and mastering it through spiritual determination and, finally, "killing" or "resolving" it back unto unmanifest and unindividualized form of nature (*pradhāna*). Here, the emphasis is placed on the illusory aspect of the "I"-maker. The emergence of *ahaṃkāra* stands for the bifurcation of subjectivity into the empirical "I" and the transcendental true self. And this splitting up is the root cause of ignorance (*avidyā*) and all mundane suffering (*duḥkha*). Wrong self-identification, namely the identification of the ego with the true self (*puruṣa*), leads to a mistaken self-understanding and disables the realization of the true knowledge and freedom from misery. To achieve the ultimate

soteriological goal, Sāṃkhya advocates dissolving *ahaṃkāra* through discriminative cognition (*viveka-khyāti*) of *prakṛti* — both the manifest and unmanifest — and *puruṣa*. One may gain access to the state of liberation (*mokṣa*) only through the "implosion" of one's ego, which as a result of the analysis of *tattvas* arising in the form of discrimination (*nāsmi na me nāham* — SK 64), which means that I am not what I thought myself to be under the delusion in the state of bondage; I am neither my body nor the contents of my consciousness and nor even ego itself. In this way, one attains the knowledge of the distinction between the unchangeable and ultimate true self and the mutable phenomenal self, functioning only as a p r o v i s o n a l a n d t r a n s i t i o n a l s u b j e c t. Thus, the wrong "I", on the one hand, makes individuality as such possible — both objective and subjective — and introduces the element of subjectivity and self-reflection into the unconscious material world but, on the other hand, it enables the transcendental consciousness of *puruṣa* to evoke the personal dimension and, in consequence, to release the subject from the false self-identity with the I-sense.

3.2. A s m i t ā

Now, let us consider *asmitā*, coming from first-person conjugation of the verb *to be* followed by the abstract noun ending *tā*. This term is more typical of Yoga than Sāṃkhya system, quite the opposite to *ahaṃkāra* being more often used in the Sāṃkhya texts. While in SK it does not have a single occurrence, Patañjali refers to *asmitā* several times. Firstly, when he talks about an advanced stage of meditation (*saṃprajñāta-samādhi*, YS I.17, I.41, III.47). At this stage one is aware only of himself (*ekātmika*), which means that the only object (*viṣaya*) of perception is the subject of knowing himself, the present "I", or the grasper (*grahītṛ*). Secondly, Patañjali uses this term when explaining the doctrine of ignorance (*avidyā*) to name one of its manifestations (*kleśa* — YS II.3, 6). And thirdly, *asmitā* is referred to in the context of the emergence of the empirical consciousness (YS IV.4). So, even though the etymology of this term does not seem as problematic as *ahaṃkāra*, and the literal meaning is clear: "I-am-ness", or "being I, the quality of being I", here too three different readings may be distinguished.

One pointed ego-consciousness, which may be also called pure I, or I-hood. This state of consciousness is achieved when the self-identification excludes everything considered to be mine, like "my body", "my feelings", "my sensations" etc., apart from ego itself; then "I" appears dis-

tinguished from its attributes, and any external objects associated with, referred to, or intended by ego. This "I" expressed as *asmitā* is identified with pure *sattvic buddhi* devoid of all disturbing fluctuations.

The second reading of *asmitā* may be e g o t i s m, closely connected with ignorance and a dualist perspective towards self-knowledge. I-am-ness is understood here as predominance of an ego-centric attitude manifested in all our desires, aversions and habituations (*rāga + dveṣa + abhiniveśa*). Of course, this understanding of *asmitā* does not have as affirmative a significance as it has in the first reading. A synonymous term to this reading of *asmitā* is *abhimāna*, or self-conceit, which could be technically defined as an undue extension (*abhi-*) of the I-notion to entities foreign to it. SK (24), in turn, identifies *abhimāna* with *ahaṃkāra* as its function. The self-conceit, similar to the sense of ownership, involves some ambiguity. It brings forth a common feeling of pride, which may be of two basic types. Pride in the first meaning is respect, regard, honour, consideration of oneself and others; this kind of pride gives strength, power and can lead to victory over all obstacles (*kleśa*-s) and ignorance (*avidyā*) if one manages to withdraw the destructive aspects of pride, which are egotism, arrogance and selfishness. Without pride in the first meaning, without respect towards oneself and deep trust in one's power and potential, no progress in self-knowledge would ever be possible. Thus, the positive aspect of pride coming from *abhimāna* is a necessary prerequisite of the auto-soteriological perspective, so common in Indian thought.

In the third reading *asmitā* reveals itself as *aviśeṣa*, or *asmitā-mātra* that is the subtlest, non-specific or imperceptible dimension of *prakṛti*. At first glance, it may seem that this reading gets *asmitā* pretty close to the cosmological principle of *ahaṃkāra* as *tattva*. However, the context of usage of the term in YS is definitely epistemic and not ontological. Here the individual empirical minds (*nirmāṇa citta-s*) take their beginning. Since there is plurality or diversity (*bheda*) of the individual mental processes (*pravṛtti*; YS IV.4–5), the existence of one prior and pure intellect (*eka-citta*) being the initiator of others is accepted.

CONCLUSION

Sāṃkhya and Yoga believe that all verbal conventions we are so attached to, including the ways we address ourselves, are manifestations of ignorance. And the language rules are precondition of every conceptualization of our experience unless *buddhi* becomes purely *sattvic* and free of

all *kleśa*-s. Therefore, the grammatical rules impose some limitations on the self-knowledge as well. The main collision between language and metaphysics of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, or rather its mystical phenomenology, occurs when the grammatical tools used to express the sense of subjectivity prove to be misleading for the seeker of the true self-identity. Counter intuitively, the language forms (i.e. usage of first person pronoun and the verb *am*) seem to mask and petrify our wrong self-knowledge, which is to be eradicated thanks to discriminative discernment (*viveka-khyāti*).

The two terms discussed above are not used in the Sanskrit texts consequently. In some places they seem equivalent, while in others they may be clearly distinguished or even contrasted in a sense. Putting it most synthetically, there are two aspects of I-sense, or two stages of self-consciousness namely: (1) the sense of p u r e   s u b j e c t i v i t y, or self-consciousness (*aham asmi* or 'I am') without the consciousness of the object; this is the awareness of m y   m e r e   e x i s t e n c e and the sense of I without differentiation of myself from others; (2) the sense of intentionality, or the awareness of I as distinct from not-I; this is the consciousness of the object (*aham idam* or 'I [am] this'), which is related to or dependent on the consciousness of the "thou" or the object. Thus, the expressions of 'I' may serve in Sāṃkhya and Yoga both as the sense of intentionality and the sense of subjectivity, which stand for the lower and higher aspects of self-consciousness.

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