



DEVADATTA KĪRTIDEVA AŚVAMĪTRA

5. THE *ADHYĀROPĀPAVĀDA* IN THE EXAM OF THE THREE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS:

AVASTHĀTRAYA MĪMĀMSĀ

The *avasthātraya mīmāṃsā* is the highest among the Vedāntic methods so far described. It is identified with the *advaita vicāra* itself and, therefore, leads to the final Liberation from ignorance. The profane and even the initiates of the Non-supreme knowledge¹, only take into consideration the waking state of human life. Therefore, they think that the dream is a mere mental imagination and that deep sleep is simply a state of mental rest, more so when even fantasy is put to silence. This psychological judgment of dream and sleep depends exclusively on what it is thought of them when one is awake. This is known as the “prejudice of the wake” (*jāgrat sākīṛta*). In fact, the *Ātman* in his apparent form of *jīva* experiences the condition of life not only during the waking, but also in the other two states which, far from being only psychological phenomena, must be considered as states (*avasthā*) of Consciousness. As it has been sufficiently demonstrated in the first chapter of this *Mīthyā vīnaśana*, Consciousness is synonymous with existence. Therefore the *avasthās* are states of existence. To better understand what follows, let’s analyze this passage taken from Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*:

Vaiśvānara, who has the waking (jāgarita) as a state of existence (sthāna²), is the person who is in the waking state. He, who takes awareness (prajñā) of the exterior (bahiḥ) objects other than him, is the person conscious of what is external (bahiḥ-prajñāḥ). (MUŚBh 3)

From Śaṅkara’s commentary we draw the following information: when *Ātman* has the waking state of existence, he is the person of the waking (*jāgrat puruṣa*)³, who becomes aware of the objects appearing external and different from him. Based on the authority of next passages of the *Māṇḍūkya*, we add that these objects, taken as a whole, constitute the waking world (*jāgrat prapañca*). Therefore there are three concepts concerning the waking: first the waking state (*jāgrat avasthā*) itself; then the waking person staying in it as subject (*viśaya*); finally the multiplicity of objects (*viśayī*) external to the person, constituting together the waking world. Therefore, both the person and the waking world with all its components are contained in the waking state of consciousness. Similarly:

Taijasa, who has the dream (svapna) as a state of existence (sthāna), is the person who is in the dream state (svapnasthānaḥ). When he is in the waking state, although he is always in a mental condition, he is endowed with different faculties that make him apparently involved in external objects imprinting their forms in the mind. [...] He, who in dream takes awareness (prajñā) of the interior (antaḥ) of those forms imprinted in the mind is the person conscious of what is internal (antaḥ-prajñāḥ). (MUŚBh 4)

¹ The dualistic *Vedāntins*, like the *dvaitins* of Madhva and the *viśiṣṭādvaitins* of Rāmānuja, who also follow the upaniṣadic teachings and know the doctrine of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* regarding the four *pāda* of *Ātman*, neglect the method of *avasthātraya mīmāṃsā*, basing their research on the sole waking experience. For these Vedāntic schools, *avasthātraya* represents only a doctrine explaining the pervasiveness of Brahman in the whole universal manifestation. Therefore, aside from Vedāntic texts, they base their teaching on practical methods (*prakriyā*) of bodily, spoken or meditated actions. Some post-śaṅkarian *advaitins*, even historically prominent, who evidently had not reached the desired goal through the *avasthātraya mīmāṃsā*, have turned to those methods of step-by-step paths characteristic of the non-Supreme knowledge (*aparavidyā mārga*). Their opinion according to which after *śrāvāṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, only *mantras* or *upāsānās* should be used to reach *mokṣa* is a real deviation from pure *Advaita Vedānta*.

² *Sthāna* is the place where one stays; synonymous with *avasthā*, state.

³ The *Upaniṣad* attributes to him the name of *Viśvānara* (in its adjectival form *Vaiśvānara: Vaiśvānara sthāna*, the state of *Viśvānara*, i.e. the state experienced by the *jāgrat puruṣa*) the Universal Man. However, to be precise, given the reduced conditions of this degree of existence, its universality is here represented only by the generality of the bodily mode (*adhībhūta*). See *infra*. Man, in order to be universal in its completeness, must also extend himself to the totality of the cosmic level including its subtle mode (*adhidaiva*), thus associating (or aggregating) himself with *Hiraṇyagarbha*.



When the *Ātman* has the dream as his state of existence is the person of the dream (*svapna puruṣa*) who becomes aware of the internal objects. Together these objects constitute the dream world (*svapna prapañca*). Therefore, here too, we find three concepts concerning the dream: first the dream state (*svapna avasthā*) itself; then the dream person staying in it as a subject; finally the multiplicity of objects internal to the person, constituting the dream world. Therefore, the dreaming person and the dream world, comprehending its multiple components, are both contained in the dream state of consciousness. The only apparent difference is that the interior objects perceived in dream by the dreaming subject are forms perceived in the waking world¹ that *Ātman* brought into the dream world as mental impressions (*saṃskāras*). However, when Śaṃkara affirms that “one always remains in a state of mind” even in the waking state, he already anticipates the solution of the problem of the reciprocity between the waking and the dream states. In fact, the waking person does not know the “external objects” by direct contact, because this mental knowledge is mediated by the faculties of perception. The mind does not have the certainty of the real existence of the external objects. Therefore, the information coming to the mind of the subject through the senses, could be mental impressions proceeding from the dream world (*svapna prapañca*). It is, therefore, essential to reflect on the close correspondence existing between the waking state, its contents, namely the *puruṣa* and the objects of the waking world, and the dream state that includes the *puruṣa* and the objects of the dream world. The correspondence is such that the person who dreams considers the dream as the waking. Therefore, what is necessary to understand is that the two states of waking and dream are mutually incompatible. One state and everything it contains, i.e. the conscious subject, the world and its objects, its governing laws, its conditions of existence, time, space, relations and causality is incompatible with the other state and all the things contained therein. Moreover, one excludes the other, in the sense that when the waking is (*sat*), the dream is not (*asat*) and when the dream is (*sat*), waking is not (*asat*). That is, when the dream is present (*bhāva*), the waking is absent (*abhāva*) and *vice versa*². However, this subject has been already discussed elsewhere³.

As for the state of deep sleep, Śaṃkara states:

*Deep sleep, consisting in the [mental] non-consciousness of Reality is a common feature of the two states where there are [alternately] the presence and absence of the [respective] perceptible objects. Therefore the adverbial clause: “... where the sleeper does not desire any enjoyable thing and does not see any dream”⁴ is used in order to keep in view the state of deep sleep. Since *susupti*, appearing as non-consciousness in those realities, is equally present in all the three states [...] He is said to be undifferentiated, since the whole host of duality, that are diversified in the two other *avasthās* and are but mental modifications (*mānasa vṛttis*), here become non-discernible without losing their aforesaid characteristics, just as the day together with the phenomenal world becomes non-discernible under the cover of nocturnal darkness. As such, conscious experiences, being but mutable mental modifications in the waking and dream states, become immutable here. This state is called homogeneous consciousness (*prajñāghana*), since it is characterized by the absence of differentiation. (MUŚBh 5)*

From the words of Śaṃkara it is clear that also the distinction among the three states is a product of the individual mind (*antahkāraṇa*). Unable to conceive the undifferentiated Consciousness, the mind projects the imaginary state of deep sleep upon it in order to somehow represent what is outside the scope of its investigation, however vaguely sensing its existence. In fact, although nobody knows how to describe it, on awakening everyone intuitively knows he has been in deep sleep. If deep sleep was pure

¹ The *Ātman* or *Sākṣin* is the common substratum of the three *avasthās*. These impressions, therefore, are not brought from one state to another by individual modes, since there is no continuity among the *avasthās*. Those impressions can also be forms of objects perceived in the waking state of one or more previous births.

² In this case the *āgama-apāyin vicāra* (the discrimination between the impermanent and the permanent, *nitya*) is used as an auxiliary method.

³ “*Alcune precisazioni sul metodo dell’Advaita II*”, <https://www.vedavyasamandala.com/alcune-precisazioni-sul-metodo-dell-2>

⁴ MU 5. Here the adverb *where* does not indicate a spatial location.





non-existence, its intuition could not even be possible at all. Therefore *susupti* is a mental overlap that hides *Turīya*, the true nature of Brahman-*Ātman*. That is, when *susupti* is no longer a state imagined by the individual mind, but is realized intuitively, it is *Turīya* itself. At this point we understand why it is “equally present in all the three states”.

Having clarified the *avasthātraya* doctrine, let us now address the discussion on the method of *adhyāropāpavāda* applied to the three states of Consciousness. We have seen that in the doctrine the subject-object relationship plays an important subsidiary function. To proceed further, we must also understand what exactly is the Vedāntic view on the relationship between the general and the particular (*sāmānya-viśeṣa sambandha*)¹. This relationship is by its nature applicable to different levels that can be described in various ways, but that traditionally, as it happens for example in the *Yoga darśana*, are enumerated from the most limited particular to the broadest general². For example, my hand is a part of my body. My body is of my own individuality. I am part of my family as a single individual. My family belongs to a certain caste (*varṇa*), the caste to the human species and so on³. The general (*sāmānya*) encompasses every particular (*viśeṣa*) and arranges it in cosmic order (*ṛtu*). The most extensive case of the relationship between the general and the particular is that elapsing between macrocosm, i.e. the universal (*samaṣṭhi*), and the microcosm, the individual (*vyāṣṭhi*)⁴. However, to fully understand their relationship, we must also add the category of subject-object (*grāhāgrāhakhāva* or *viśaya-viśayī sambandha*). From this perspective, the individual representing here the particular is also the knower-subject (*viśaya* or *jñātr*, *pramātr*) and the other things and beings included in the universal are the objects of his knowledge (*viśayī*, *jñeya* or *prameya*)⁵. That is to say, the individual consciousness (*ahaṅkāra*) that, however partial, allows him to be a knower, exerts its cognitive activity (*jñāpti*) in relation to the objects of knowledge. To the subject, the latter ones appear to be non-conscious (*acit*), even when they are other conscious beings, as they remain passive objects of his cognitive act. Naturally, the individual consciousness (*jīvātman* or *aham*) is such only if considered as a limited form of the true Consciousness (*Caitanya*), since its real nature (*satya svarūpa*) is the very *Ātman*. To better understand this idea of the limitation of the individual consciousness, we recall the following traditional example. The sun at night radiates its light in every direction of space. Its light appears invisible in the

¹ Viz. between the genre (*janus*) and a part of it (*aṃśa*); or between a whole (*sarva*) and a single component (*kāla*).

² As also the *Vaiśeṣika* does, whereas the *Sāṃkhya* proceeds from the general to the particular.

³ An peculiar case of this particular-general relationship is between a specific individual (*jāta*, *viśeṣin*) and the species (*jāti*, *viśeṣaṇa*) of its belonging. Here *jāti* does not mean caste but the species in which one is born.

⁴ This brief definition is sufficient to understand that the universal is the “universe world” (Lat.: *universus mundus*) synthetically understood as a whole and not as the sum of the objects and beings contained in it. When we speak of the “Universal Man” (*Viśvānara*), we mean he who has extended all his bodily components (*bhūtas*) to the whole waking world represented by *Virāṭ*, the principle of gross manifestation; or, he who has extended all his bodily and subtle components to the whole world represented by *Hiraṇyagarbha*, the principle of subtle and gross manifestation; that is to say, the integration of the complete individuality starting from the body. Naturally, the first case does not deal with a complete universalization, as it still corresponds to the integration of every part on the general individuality staying only in the gross mode. This is the *ādya puruṣa* (primordial man). Since we said that the universal is the world taken as a whole where also the individual subject has been reintegrated, it is self-explanatory that the Universal Man is one with the world. Therefore, for the *Vedānta* the only universal is the totality of the manifested world. This does not at all mean that it is the Absolute, as too often someone mistakenly supposes, since the Absolute is the metaphysical reality, whereas the universal is the manifested world. Thus, the Universal Man, no matter how high his realization is, is not at all Liberated from *saṃsāra*, as demonstrated by the fact that he returns to manifest himself even just to fulfill some “mission” (*dautya*). Moreover, it appears obvious why the problem of the “universals” that has preoccupied Western philosophy and theology for two millennia, does not even arise in India. In fact, the “universals” of the West are only sub-categories corresponding to the genres which, as it is evident, are neither real nor eternal because if they exist in the wake, they do not exist in the dream and *vice versa* (i.e. they are *satasat*); nor are they even speculative abstractions, as has been argued with petty intellect by the “nominalists”.

⁵ For this reason the universal cannot be considered only as the sum of the generals, but as the synthetic consciousness of the whole state. In this case one is not yet the *Sākṣin*, pure Consciousness (*śuddha Caitanya*), but the waking consciousness (*jāgrat cetanā*).



darkness, unless the moon interposes, interrupting a part of the sunrays' flow. Thus, the light that the moon is reflecting is only a small part of the total sunlight. Similarly the individual consciousness is only a partial reflection of the *Ātman-Caitanya* on the limited surface of the *buddhi*¹.

In waking, the individual corresponds to the *ego* identified with the body, and the universal corresponds to the *Vaiśvānara* state (*Virāt*). In dreaming, the individual corresponds to the *ego* identified with the mind and the universal corresponds to *Taijasa*, i.e. to *Hiraṇyagarbha* (*MU* III-IV). In other words, the *aham* is the particular subject related to the maximum knowable object of its own state (*avasthā*). *Virāt*, however, is the projection of *Hiraṇyagarbha* in the *jāgrat avasthā*, in the sense that it represents the “body” of *Hiraṇyagarbha* in the waking world. Similarly, *Hiraṇyagarbha* is the *jīva* of *Virāt* in the dream world. However, this is a point of view limited to the individual since both the waking and dream *avasthās*, integrated into one universal reality, are not different from the Witness (*Sākṣin*)², that is to say, from *susupti*.

In this case, we consider the *Sākṣin* only at the universal level, that is to say, referring to the two states, as one who lends “part” of his consciousness to the *jīvātman*, as in the previous example of the sunlight and the moon. However, one must understand that we are still speaking only from the point of view of *adhyāropa*. The following *śruti* explains us the reason:

While the kettle-drum is being beaten, one would not be able to grasp the external sounds by themselves, but the sound is grasped only through conceiving it as of the drum, as the sound arising from the beating of the drum. (BU II.4.7)

In his *Bhāṣya* Śaṅkara comments in this way:

*An illustration is being given: we see in life that if a thing cannot be perceived apart from something else, the latter is the essence of that thing. As, for instance, when a drum or some similar [instrument] is beaten with stick etc., one cannot distinguish its various particular notes from the general note of the drum, but they are included in, taken as modifications of the general note. We say these are all notes of the drum, having no existence apart from the general note of the drum. Or the particular notes produced by different kinds of strokes are included in the general sound produced by those strokes. They cannot be perceived as distinct notes, on account of having no separate existence. Similarly nothing particular is perceived in the waking and dream states apart from Pure Consciousness (*prajñāna*). Therefore those things should be considered non-existent apart from Pure Consciousness. (BUŚBh II.4.7)*

Śaṅkara adds an important annotation concerning the multiplicity of genres merged in the universal:

*The citation of many examples here is for indicating varieties of genres. In fact there are many distinct kinds of genres, sentient and insentient. It is to show how through a series of intermediate steps they are included in a supreme genre, “Pure Consciousness”, that so many examples are given. Just as a drum, a conch and a *viṇā* have distinct general and particular notes of their own, which are included in the general harmony, so during the continuance of the universe we may know all things to be unified in Brahman, because the varieties of genres and particulars are not different from It. (BUŚBh II.4.9)*

Thus, it becomes clear that here the nature of Brahman considered as a supreme genre, that is to say, as universal, must not be taken literally, because everything that is not the Self is not real, and therefore cannot be considered as part of a generality represented by Brahman³. From this it follows that *Ātman* is not a genre to which subordinate parts can be attributed. Thus, when Brahman is presented as if it were

¹ Sometimes the individual consciousness is considered to be a part, and the Consciousness (*Caitanya*) to be the general in its maximum extension, i.e. the universal. But this conception is wrong because Consciousness is the Absolute. The particular-general relationship is only possible from the empirical viewpoint (*vyāvahārika dṛṣṭi*), but it is impossible between an empirical reality (*vyāvahārika sattā*) and the Absolute (*pāramārtika sattā*).

² *Sākṣin*, therefore, is beyond the knower-known or subject-object duality. It can be reached by the intuitive understanding of the incompatibility of the simultaneous presence (*bhāva*) and absence (*abhāva*) of the waking and dream states.

³ As already stated, the relation between particular and general is possible only in an empirical reality, whereas it is impossible between relative and Absolute.



the universal, we are actually in the presence of Hiranyagarbha. With regards to Brahman considered as absolute and not as a universal formed by parts, Śaṅkara, commenting on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, declares:

Everyone knows that for everything there are two concepts qualifying each other, like the two notions in the formula “blue lotus”¹. We also find two concepts similarly combined when we think of an “existing vessel”, an “existing dress”, an “existing elephant” and so on. Of these two notions “vessel” etc. are variable, as we have already shown above; but this [variability] cannot be apply to the notion of “existing”. So on the question of whether the essential nature of the two notions is existence or non-existence, Ātman or anātman, the knowers of the truth conclude that what always exists, is, while what does not exist, never is. (BhGŚBh II.16)

Furthermore, since there can be no general without parts, one must conclude that Ātman is a genre only from the point of view of *adhyāropa*, used exclusively for didactic purposes. This is how we must consider all three states of consciousness when the *śruti* attributes them to Ātman. For example:

He who is in the waking state of outward consciousness is Vaiśvānara, equipped with seven limbs and nineteen mouths², experiencer of the gross objects: this is the first pāda. (MU 3); He who is in the dream state of inward consciousness is Taijasa, equipped with seven limbs and nineteen mouths, experiencer of the subtle objects: this is the second pāda. (MU 4); He who is in the sound sleep state without desirable objects and without dreams is unique undifferentiated Consciousness (Prājñā), homogeneous Consciousness (prajñāghana), substantiated by bliss (ānandamaya): this is the third pāda, experiencer of bliss and door through which he testifies [about the first two states]. (MU 5)

These three quotations from *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* describing the Ātman in *ādhibhautika*, *ādhidāivika* and *ādhyātmika* sequence, in its aspects enlarged to the maximum conceivable microcosmic and macrocosmic extent, are proposed only as *adhyāropa*. The *apavāda* corresponds instead to the following quote of the same *Upaniṣad*:

*[The jñānis] know that Turīya (the fourth) is not that which is conscious of the external world nor that which is conscious of the internal world; and not even that which is conscious of both those worlds³; [they know that Turīya] is not even that unique undifferentiated Consciousness, homogeneous Consciousness, and not even is absence of Consciousness [as the mind of the waking imagines *suṣupti*]. [The jñānis know] that it is invisible (*adr̥ṣṭa*), beyond any empirical relationship (*avyavahārya*), free from being an agent subject (*agrāhya*⁴), non-inferable (*alākṣana*⁵) [through logic], inconceivable (*acintya*⁶) [to the thought], indescribable (*avapadeśya*⁷) [by words, *padas*], whose only valid proof (*sāra*⁸) of existence is the consciousness of existing as the only Self (*eka Ātma pratyaya*⁹), beyond the mundane phenomena*

¹ The two concepts are “lotus” and “blue”. The first, the “lotus”, represents the main notion, that is the existing object that supports the other notion, the “blue”, which is the secondary notion being a variable characteristic attributed to the lotus. The other examples, in which existence itself is the principal notion, present an anomaly in their formulations: in them, the “vase”, the “elephant” etc., appear as if they were the main notion and “existence” the secondary and adjectival one. This anomaly common in all the languages should be corrected as follows: “vase” existence, “elephantine” existence, etc. This happens because all the languages, including the sacred ones, can only express *vyāvahārika* realities.

² The seven limbs are the five elements, the sky and the sun. All this constitutes the external world. The nineteen mouths are the individual components that relate to the outside world: the ten faculties of sensation and action, the five *prānas*, the memory (*manas*), the imagination (*citta*), the intellect (*buddhi*) and the *aham* .

³ In these two cases we are still dealing with the individual consciousness, even if taken in its maximum extent in the universal. For, even at the Hiranyagarbha level, the ties with individuality have not yet been broken.

⁴ *Grāha* (he who grabs) means subject.

⁵ Not-inferable, because it has no characteristics (*lakṣaṇas*) on which to base a deductive process.

⁶ That cannot be imagined, thought and meditated (*cintya*) in any way.

⁷ Impossible to define in words (*pada*).

⁸ *Sāra* means eternal essence, unquestionable fixed point, and unshakable certainty. It corresponds to the idea of “supreme *pramāṇa*”.

⁹ *Ātma pratyaya*: the certainty of existing and of being conscious.



(*prapañcōpaśama*¹), impassible (*sānta*), auspicious (*śiva*), non-dual (*advaita*), the *Ātman* that must be known in such way. (MU 7)

He who knows this is liberated in life (*jīvan mukta*).

Now let us consider why the method based on *avasthātraya mīmāṃsā* is superior to any other *prakriyā*. The method to distinguish the observer from the observed (*dr̥g-dr̥śya viveka*), goes along with its subsidiary technique, that is to say the reflection to establish the subject-object relation (*viśaya-viśayī sambandha vicāra*) to find out if the object is liable to true knowledge (*vidyā-avidyā vicāra*). This is mainly based on the use of applied logic (*pramāṇa tarka*). They are put into practice in contemplative form by listening (*śrāvaṇa*) to the upaniṣadic arguments (*śrauta tarka*) taught by the *guru*. The result of this method is the discrimination through “*neti neti*”, which dissipates the distinctions between the observing person and the observed objects. Similarly, we understand that a cognitive investigation is not true knowledge. And since *Ātman* cannot be the object of knowledge, true *jñāna* must necessarily be understood as Self Consciousness. Therefore, these preliminary phases correct the distorted angle to which we have been related since birth. With the application of these techniques the erroneous extended view of our experience is demolished, making the empirical reality inconsistent.

The application of the method based on the five layers (*pañcakośa vicāra*) of *Ātman* is accompanied by the argumentation on the manifestation, preservation and dissolution of the world (*sr̥ṣṭi-sṭhiti-saṃhāra vicāra*). Oral learning leads to reflection (*manana*), ending with the certainty of the delusive nature of time relation. A powerful tool for this intellectual process is the *kārya-kāraṇa sambandha vicāra*, which demonstrates the inexistence of the cause-effect duality. In this way it is also proved that there is no cause-effect relationship beyond the limited condition of the temporal existence. In short, the listed techniques allow us to understand the delusion of the whole manifested world, considered as comprehensive of the two states of existence, the *jāgrat* and *svapna avasthās*. Beyond these illusory states the existence of an underlying Reality is implied.

In the more intellectual *sādhana*s of non-supreme knowledge (*aparavidyā*), analogous considerations lead the disciple towards renunciation (*vairāgya, samnyāsa*) provided the method contemplates some meditative levels² and therefore is not limited to the use of *mantras* and *yantras*. This level of practice is what the *Vedānta* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* define *karma yoga* and represents the necessary purification of the mind as preparation and outset of the *jñāna*³.

In order to proceed, we must resort to the *sāmānya-viśeṣa viveka* method. This starts from one’s particular consciousness (that is, the individual one, the *ahaṃkāra*), considered as the person-subject of waking, and gradually integrating all the waking objects into their general categories. This *reductio ad unum* ends with the synthesis of all the genres in the universal of the waking world. In this way, a micro-macrocosmic relationship is realized coinciding with the duality of one single subject and one single object: the *aham* and the *prapañca* as a whole. This is the vedāntic realization achieved by following the dualist current of Madhva (*Dvaita Vedānta prasthāna*). To proceed further, one must extend the limits of his own particular *aham*, recognized as fictitious, until they coincide with the general. Thus, to give an example, the human individual disappears in his particularity up to incorporate the entire human species, and so on for all the other generalities of which he is a part. This happens through the integration of all the individual components and ends with the identification of the

¹ *Upāśama* literally means pacified. *Prapañcōpaśama*: pacified, having overcome the worries of the world.

² In this case one says that the *sādhaka* has become an *upāsaka*. Otherwise the perfecting of the individual will allow his posthumous universalization at the conclusion of *devayāna*.

³ In *Advaita Vedānta* this phase of mental purification is not achieved by going through the use of rituals performed with the body and the word, but through *śrāvaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana*. The purification of the mind corresponds to what is defined elsewhere as “perfection of the individual state”. In the paths of non-supreme knowledge, the attainment of this state can also be accompanied by extraordinary powers and phenomena of rejuvenation and correction of bodily defects, which are altogether avoided by *Vedāntins*.



individual consciousness with the whole waking state consciousness. In this way, any trace of the subject-object duality, the *aham* and the world, eventually dissipates. It remains only the being that has assimilated the whole waking state, which is himself the waking state, the Universal Man, integrated¹ into Hiranyagarbha. This is the Vedāntic realization that can be achieved by following the *sādhanā* of the “Non-duality with distinction” of Rāmānuja (*Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta prasthāna*).

The direct intuition of the real nature of the absolute Consciousness, accessible only with the Śaṅkara’s *Advaita Vedānta*, takes place at the conclusion of the *avasthātraya sādhanā*, mostly taught in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. We want to omit here the different angles from which one must pay attention when, comparing the three *avasthās* according to his own experience apt to favor intuition, since these can be of interest only to *advitīya sādhakas*. The supreme method is the understanding of what Gauḍapāda describes as follows:

There is no manifestation neither dissolution nor limitation; there is no one who strives or aspires to obtain Liberation; and there is not even any freed. This is the supreme truth. (MU II.32)

This is a purely cognitive method or, in better words, a method to intuit one’s eternal, pure, conscious, free existence: *nitya, śuddha, buddha, mukta sambhava*. Even the discrimination of *anātmans* at this point clearly appears to have been an *adhyāropa*, since also the *vyavahāra* is reabsorbed into the supreme Identity of the absolute Consciousness.

Anything seems to be born because of the empirical point of view: therefore there is nothing that is eternal. But from the view of Reality all things are the Ātman without birth (aja); therefore there is no destruction (ucchedaḥ). (MU IV.57)

In this lies the metaphysical superiority of *avasthātraya mīmāṃsā* over any other *sādhanā*.

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To our own knowledge, the only initiatic form using the doctrine of the three states of Consciousness in a way comparable to the Vedāntic one is Taoism². We rely on the excellent translation by Léon Wiegier³ of the quotations we are presenting hereunder for the reader’s attention. We have deliberately omitted any part considering the dream and the deep sleep from the psychological or divinatory point of view in order to highlight the most significant doctrinal statements. Let the reader draw the reflections that may arise from the comparison with the *avasthātraya mīmāṃsā* method of *Vedānta*.

At the south-west corner of the earth [...] there is the village called Kou-mang. Its inhabitants [...] sleep almost continuously, waking up once every fifty days. They consider what they experienced in the sleep state to be real, and what they felt in the waking state an illusion. (In China) [...] people talk and act a lot. They alternate waking and sleep and what they felt in the waking state they consider real and what they experienced in sleep they consider fictitious. At the northeast corner of the earth [...] there is the village of Fou-lao. Its inhabitants [...] are almost always in motion and rest little. They stay awake long and sleep little. They only consider what they experienced in the waking state to be real. (Lie-tzeu, 3.C, p. 88)

Everything is one: during sleep the undifferentiated soul is absorbed in that unity. In the waking, distracted, it distinguishes different beings. (Tchoang-tzeu, 2.B, p. 158)

¹ He cannot be considered “identified”, as he is still in the manifestation submitted to duality; therefore in this state a certain subtle distinction (*viśiṣṭa*) is maintained.

² In tantric *Yoga* and Buddhism the practices of *yoga nidrā* and “lucid dreaming” can be taught. However, these are psychological experiences that have clearly nothing to do with the *avasthātraya mīmāṃsā*.

³ L. Wiegier, *Les pères du système taoïste*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1950.



The True Men of yore were not disturbed by any dream during the sleep nor were burdened with sadness during the waking. (Tchoang-tzeu, 6.B, p. 178)

There are no real individuals as such, but only prolongations of the Tao. Tchoang-tzeu tells: “Once at night I was a butterfly that was fluttering happy with its fate. Then I woke up and I was Tchoang-tzeu. Who am I? A butterfly that dreams being Tchoang-tzeu, or Tchoang-tzeu who imagines being a butterfly? Are they two different individuals? Has there been a real transformation of one individual into another?” The comment says: neither one nor the other. There have been two unreal transformations of the one Being, of the universal Tao, in which all beings, in all their states, are one. (Tchoang-tzeu, 2.J, p. 163)

The Producer-Transformer produces and transforms, becomes perceivable, takes on forms, takes on the intellect, acquires the energies, acts and goes to sleep, always remaining with himself. To say that distinct beings are produced and transformed, become perceivable, takes on forms, take on the intellect, acquire the energies, act and go to sleep, it is a mistake. (Lie-tzeu, 1.B, p. 59)

Life ends with a sleep followed by a new awakening. (Tchoang-tzeu, 6.F, p. 182)

The dream is a contact made with the soul; the reality (of objective perception) is a contact with the body. Diurnal thoughts and nocturnal dreams are all but [mental] impressions. Therefore those who have a stable soul think and dream little and attach little importance to their thoughts and dreams. They know that thought and dream do not have the reality they seem to have, but are reflections of the cosmic phantasmagoria. The ancient sages thought very little when they were awake and did not dream at all when they were sleeping; nor did they talk about their thoughts and their dreams, because they considered very little both of them. (Lie-tzeu 3.C, p. 88)

Will not life be a dream? Some people, called to wake up from a pleasant dream, are displeased. Others, freed by the awakening from a sad dream, rejoice. Both believed in the reality of the dream when they were dreaming. Upon awakening they said that it was only a vain dream. This also happens at the great awakening, the death, after which it is said that life has been nothing but a long dream. But among the living only few understand this. Almost everyone believes they are really awake. Indeed, some believe they are Kings, others servants. We all dream, you and me. I, who am telling you that you dream, dream my own dream. (Tchoang-tzeu, 2.H, p. 162)

For him [the wise] the state of life and the state of death are the same thing. He does not distinguish any anteriority or posteriority between these states, since he considers them rings of an infinite chain. He believes that all beings inevitably undergo successive transformations that they must endure in peace, without worrying about it. Plunged in the current of these transformations, the being has only a confused understanding of what happens to him. All life is like a dream. You and I who are discussing, we are two dreamers not awakened. [...] Nobody knows exactly why he is who he is, nor the intimate nature of this “I”. (Tchoang-tzeu, 6.H, p. 184)

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