

Article

The Puzzle of Playful Matters in Non-Dual Śaivism and Sāṃkhya: Reviving *Prakṛti* in the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* through Goethean Organics

Geoffrey Ashton

Department of Philosophy, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA 94117, USA; gashton@usfca.edu

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Abstract: Abhinavagupta is widely viewed to be a cautious, perceptive, and sympathetic reader (even of his opponents), with some researchers even celebrating him as a pre-modern intellectual historian. But scholars all too often underestimate how and why Abhinava misreads many of his rivals. Abhinava's treatment of the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* (SK) illustrates this. Abhinava and Sāṃkhya alike hold to the doctrine that effects share identity with or reside within their cause (*satkāryavāda*). But according to Abhinava, Īśvarakṛṣṇa (and other Sāṃkhya thinkers) fails to explain how a cause (*sat*) can give rise to its effects (*kārya*, including the manifestations of effects) without ceasing to be itself, since the underlying material cause (*mūlaprakṛti*), e.g., a square, changes its identity from one manifestation (*vyaktaprakṛti*) to the next, e.g., a triangle. In place of this, Abhinava argues that only the Pratyabhijñā approach can account for *satkārya* and *abhivyakti* (manifestation). Causes and effects, Abhinava tells us, are but expressions of how divine super-consciousness (Śiva) appears to itself through the playful manifestation of a seemingly material other (Śakti). However, a closer reading of the canonical Sāṃkhya text, the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā*, reveals that this system originally advocated a metaphysics of living nature, not inanimate matter. From this basic yet important correction, Sāṃkhya could explain the very same playful interface between cause and manifest effect described by Abhinava, since the manifest procreativity (*vyaktaprakṛti*) of organic nature exhibits constancy in the midst of its self-transformations. I draw this out through a critique of the modern scientific assumptions that underlie much Sāṃkhya research, and in its place I develop an organicist reading that is informed by Goethe's phenomenological science of life. This approach helps to resuscitate core Sāṃkhya metaphysical categories in terms of their directed and intelligent aliveness (not just their materiality). Moreover, it offers clues to why Pratyabhijñā misinterpreted the SK: (1) it gave allegiance to classical Sāṃkhya commentaries (many of which misconstrued Īśvarakṛṣṇa's views), and (2) its organizing philosophical narrative precluded metaphysical dualism and the self-sufficient power of nature to conceal itself.

Keywords: *satkāryavāda*; *vyaktaprakṛti*; *abhivyakti*; Sāṃkhya; Pratyabhijñā

"Nature loves to hide."

Heraclitus, Fragment 123¹

"Nobody is more tender than nature. When she realizes, 'I have been seen,' she never again comes into the sight of the witness-self."

¹ Quoted at Hadot 2006, p. 17: Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ.

Īśvarakṛṣṇa, *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* 61²

1. Introduction

Abhinavagupta is widely viewed to be a cautious, perceptive, and sympathetic reader—even of his opponents. Lawrence McCrea points this out and more, even suggesting that Abhinava displays features of a genuine intellectual historian (2016).³ McCrea takes the example of Abhinava’s study of Buddhist philosophy. He observes that Abhinava

broke important new ground in the analysis and presentation of Buddhist thought and its relation to [the Pratyabhijñā position] . . . and, in doing so, quite transformed the nature of the argument between these competing forces, in effect replacing a clash of abstracted, depersonalized and dehistoricized philosophical positions with a narrative account, in which the proponents of the various Buddhist positions each develops his own view through the analysis and critique of his predecessors (2016, pp. 263–64).⁴

In constructing this historical narrative of ideas, Abhinava ascribes names where earlier Pratyabhijñā thinkers (including Utpaladeva) did not (McCrea 2016, p. 266). He demonstrates a notable concern for accuracy: again introducing a new practice for non-dual Śaiva commentators, Abhinava verifies Pratyabhijñā claims about Buddhist theories by referencing the actual corresponding Buddhist texts (2016, p. 265). Lastly, Abhinava frequently shows more interest in the question of “intellectual legacy and interpretation” (e.g., of Dharmakīrti’s works) than he does “in attempting to adjudicate the question, [‘whose view is right?]; he does not appear to make any effort to declare whether he finds the *vijñānavādin* or the *bāhyārthavādin* reading of Dharmakīrti to be the more plausible” (McCrea 2016, pp. 276–78).⁵ But McCrea notes some exceptions to this approach. For example, Abhinava concurs with the Buddhist idealist, Śāṅkaranandana, that the denial of mind-independent objects demands the rejection of *adhyavasāya* (determination) in all valid awareness (*pramāṇa*) (McCrea 2016, pp. 271–81). However, in demonstrating the superiority of Śāṅkaranandana’s view over other Buddhist positions, Abhinava “leaves unaddressed what had already become by his time arguably the dominant Buddhist view,” namely, Prajñākaragupta’s argument that idealism entails determination (*adhyavasāya*) for all *pramāṇas* (McCrea 2016, pp. 280–81).⁶ What makes this gap in Abhinava’s study peculiar is that Abhinava was familiar with Prajñākara’s *Pramāṇavārttikālamkāra*, the text best known for advocating a synthesis of the anti-*bāhyārtha* (“external objects do not exist”) and pro-*adhyavasāya* positions (McCrea 2016, p. 281).⁷ What sense are we to make of this lacuna in Abhinava’s writings? Is he just a bad intellectual historian, or were other factors at play in his adoption of Śāṅkaranandana’s account?

² Own translation: *prakṛteḥ sukumārataṃ na kiñcid astīti me matir bhavati | yā dṛṣṭāsmīti punar na darśanam upaiti puruṣasya*. The full translation is: “The thought occurs to me, ‘Nobody is more tender than nature.’ When she realizes, ‘I have been seen,’ she never again comes into the sight of the witness-self.”

³ McCrea writes: “Abhinavagupta’s bibliographically ambitious and historically nuanced recapitulation of Buddhist thought on the *bāhyārtha* [external objects exist] issue, and on many others of course, forms one of the central components of what is arguably his magnum opus, and is one of the features that most obviously sets it apart from both earlier and later works in the Pratyabhijñā tradition” (2016, p. 283).

⁴ Pratyabhijñā is a medieval school of thought from Kashmir, India, that sought to articulate the personality of the divine figure, Śiva, and the non-dual relation of the devotee with Śiva consciousness. To this end, it articulated an idealist philosophy whereby one could experience the “recognition” (“*pratyabhijñā*”) of one’s essential identity with Śiva.

⁵ A point of contention between many Buddhists of Abhinava’s time concerned how to interpret Dharmakīrti’s metaphysical stance. *Vijñānavādins* took Dharmakīrti to be one of their own (i.e., “one who affirms that only consciousness exists”), while *bāhyārthavādins* viewed him as “one who affirms that external objects exist.”

⁶ Abhinava never quotes the *Pramāṇavārttikālamkāra*, and in the lone instance where Abhinava names Prajñākara, he does not refer to Prajñākara’s views on determination (*adhyavasāya*) (McCrea 2016, p. 281).

⁷ McCrea explains: “This interesting and distinctive doctrine of Prajñākara’s, which Eli Franco has investigated in some detail, is fairly recondite, and Abhinavagupta’s familiarity with it suggests that he had more than a casual, second-hand awareness of Prajñākaragupta’s work and most likely had access to his *Pramāṇavārttikālamkāra*” (2016, p. 281). See Franco 2007.

Given the careful attention that Abhinava typically shows toward rival views and his awareness of the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* and its significance, it seems plausible that the absence of Prajñākara's ideas in Abhinava's story was not a mere accident. McCrea acknowledges "this oversight on Abhinavagupta's part" and points us in the right direction when he suggests that "Abhinavagupta's reconstruction of Buddhist philosophical opinion . . . [is not] free from distortions and biases" (2016, p. 281). But McCrea does not investigate or explain these "distortions and biases"; he does not explore what these distortions and biases are, wherefrom they arise, etc. Interestingly, though, probing these questions might sharpen our appreciation for Abhinava as an intellectual historian by clarifying his attitude toward others' ideas and his self-understanding as a story teller.⁸

Concerning Abhinava's biases, we know that he regularly interprets his opponents' positions with a view to incorporating their insights into the non-dual myth of Śiva consciousness.⁹ His inclusion of Śaṅkaranandana's idealism over that of Prajñākara corroborates this. The non-dual Śaiva view that the world (i.e., Śakti) only seems to exist external to consciousness (Śiva) is not incompatible with the respective ontologies of these two Yogācārins. However, Śaṅkaranandana's dismissal of *adhyavasāya* (determination) (in contrast with Prajñākara's acceptance of it) helps to better stage the same formulation by Abhinava. This suggests that Abhinava composed his history of ideas based upon criteria that were not those of McCrea's intellectual historian (e.g., accuracy with respect to historical fact, attention to variation within opponents' traditions). Rather, they were the criteria of a comparative philosopher intent to broaden the horizons for inquiry into the meaning of concepts and the experiences to which they correspond.

Seen in this light, Abhinava's misrepresentation of the historical reality of Buddhist thought was not a mere "distortion," as McCrea puts it. It was an attempt to "climb higher and higher . . . [and] come to see the true nature of things." Abhinava elaborates that this

is made possible by the series of stairs-of-discernment constructed by the predecessors [e.g., Śaṅkaranandana]. It would, I think, be quite surprising if anyone could by themselves arrive at the correct conclusive view of the thing to be known, just in the first go, without any previous support. Once, of course, you have been put on the right path to a destination, the building of bridges and foundation of a new dwelling-place, etc., are not that surprising. Therefore . . . I have not denigrated the views of the good thinkers (who have come before me), but it is those very (apparently rejected) views which I have developed, improved and distilled.¹⁰

In his evaluation of Buddhist philosophy, Abhinava regarded Śaṅkaranandana as a "predecessor" or "good thinker" whose "views" could serve as "bridges and [a] foundation" to be "developed" on the pathway to "the correct conclusive view of the thing to be known"—in this case, the interrelation between omnipresent consciousness, the seemingly external world, and the means by which we become aware of how things are. Prajñākara, however, was deprived of such recognition (Abhinava deletes him from his story in spite of his actual influence). These choices involved circumscribing intellectual historical questions (e.g., "What exactly did Buddhist idealists assert?") within a philosophical inquiry

⁸ This is in keeping with the spirit of McCrea's own inquiry. He writes: "Abhinavagupta's turn toward intellectual history should itself be seen as a noteworthy historical event in Kashmiri intellectual and cultural life at the turn of the millennium, and richly deserves to be made the subject of long and searching scrutiny" (2016, p. 283).

⁹ This is clearly argued in Lawrence 2013. This issue is also explored in the context of Abhinava's writings on aesthetics, specifically, his treatment of Śaṅkara's writings on *anukṛti* (*mimesis*, imitation, or representation). For more on this, see Dave-Mukherji 2016; Ashton 2019.

¹⁰ "Ūrdhvordhvamāruḥya yadarthatattvaṃ dhīḥ paśyati śrāntimavedāyanti | phalaṃ tadādyaiḥ parikalpitānāṃ vivekasopānaparamparāṇāṃ || citraṃ nirālanbanameva manye prameyasiddhau prathamāvātāram | sanmārgalābhe iti setubandhaprurapratiṣṭhādi na vismayāya | tasmātsatāmātra na dūṣitāni matāni tānyeva tu śodhitāni" (Abhinava's commentary on Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, 6.33, in the *Abhinavabhāratī*. Translation by Arindam Chakrabarti. Personal correspondence.) For more on this well-known and often translated section from the *Abhinavabhāratī*, see Cuneo 2017 (especially pp. 239–47). In this piece, Danielle Cuneo examines various interpretations of this verse with a view to exploring how Abhinavagupta negotiates tradition and innovation.

("What ought it mean to be an idealist?"). Abhinava's study of Buddhist idealism was already delimited by the Pratyabhijñā concern to develop ontological and epistemological frameworks that could support the growth of recognitive awareness (which for Abhinava entailed rejecting both the existence of mind-independent objects and the necessity of *adhyavasāya* for valid awareness). Founded upon the mythical narrative of Śiva at play with his consort and other, Śakti, Abhinava deployed an interpretive strategy that acknowledged the historicity of both texts and our understanding of them (including the alterity of texts and the limits of our understanding of texts). However, this hermeneutic did not reduce the object of study to a history that unfolds independent of the researcher. It rather sought to investigate how consciousness (e.g., the consciousness of the interpreter) understands itself by othering and subsequently recognizing itself in the object (e.g., the text). Abhinava situated the views of his Buddhist opponents by presenting them as seemingly consciousness-independent facts-in-themselves and then carefully recasting them (unless he excludes them outright) as supporting actors in a drama whose outcome has been determined ahead of time, namely, the conclusive victory of non-dual Śaivism.

By displacing literal facts and reorganizing them in order to advance his own philosophical agenda, Abhinava's methodology indeed performs a certain violence upon his object of study—and McCrea's "distortions" comment rightly captures this. Ironically, though, McCrea's characterization of Abhinava enables this violence to continue and misconstrues Abhinava's own writings, while Abhinava reinvigorates his object of study (albeit, by remodeling the object). For one, McCrea allows the distortions in Abhinava's history of Buddhist ideas to stand by commending him as an intellectual historian and then not interrogating behavior that contradicts this portrayal. Particularly given Abhinava's influence upon how posterity would view the intellectual history of South Asia, we might do well to take seriously the questions, "Was Abhinava a *good* intellectual historian?" and by extension, "Should Abhinava's narratives be trusted, let alone considered, as reliable accounts of historical actuality?" A second point follows upon these questions. Insofar as Abhinava is not committed to the kind of historicism that McCrea envisions, he cannot even be called a "failed" historian. According to McCrea's approach, the intellectual historian is to overcome all prejudices toward the object of study in order for the object to reveal itself on its own terms (*from the inside-out*, as it were). But this quest to retrieve the original meaning of the text ("Where and when was the text produced?", "Who was the intended audience of the text?", etc.) belies a prejudice against prejudice itself. And as Gadamer aptly warns, this "hidden prejudice" is the most dangerous of biases, since its claims to objective knowledge "make us deaf to what speaks to us" through the encounter with the text, namely, the respective traditions of both the text and the reader (Gadamer 1994, p. 272). Not only do historical objects not exist in-themselves (independent of the researcher's fore-conceptions), they often bear meanings whose disclosure requires us to participate in a co-creative process of renewing and investigating the traditions that speak through the encounter with the object, including our own tradition.¹¹ This is especially true when the object of study is a philosophical text, and Abhinava's reading of Buddhist texts confirms this. He re-enacts these texts' call to inquiry in order to understand their tradition (even if he modifies certain details within the tradition), and he does so with a view to restoring his own. Importantly, however, this involves self-consciously putting at risk his own assumptions, e.g., concerning the nature of consciousness, the world, what constitutes valid knowing.¹²

In order to appreciate Abhinava's story of Buddhist ideas, then, it is insufficient to merely deploy historicist and philological methodologies. Like the physicist who corroborates a peer's findings by performing the same experiment (in order to determine if the same results follow),

¹¹ As Gadamer writes, "it is senseless to speak of a perfect knowledge of history, and for this reason it is not possible to speak of an 'object in itself' toward which its research is directed" (1994, p. 285). For this reason, he concludes that historical knowledge cannot "stand on par with the knowledge of nature achieved by modern science" (1994, p. 277).

¹² David Lawrence illustrates this in his analysis of how the *Pratyabhijñā* school formulated a critical epistemology and ontology that could be suitably intelligible to others as a kind of "denaturalized discourse." In order to internalize selected concerns of the Hindu orthodoxy with its iconographic symbolism and social-ritual praxis, Abhinava and other non-dual Śaivas put their own theological presuppositions at risk. See Lawrence 1999, pp. 13, 29.

so too must we re-enact Abhinava's study through our own philosophical inquiry—and not just into the formal definitions or common usages of “*bāhyārtha*,” “*adhyavasāya*,” and so on, but by directly investigating the experienced phenomena that have been so named. This requires us to examine our own presuppositions about what the English terms, “external objects exist,” “determination,” etc., could mean in our linguistic and philosophical register. Neglecting to do so would not only compromise one's ability to render the nuance of Abhinava's words into English, it would transgress the hermeneutic inquiry performed in his writings (that is, it would fail to read his text *from the inside out*). This by no means denies or diminishes the importance of the rigorous curatorial work of intellectual historians and philologists. Above all, we must understand the historical circumstance of Abhinava and his opponents if we are to effectively engage their ideas in dialogue. But such research should not transpire as a neutral description. By drawing Abhinava's comments on the ideas of others into the orbit of historical science, intellectual history suppresses the agency of Abhinava's and his opponents' writings as *philosophical texts*, divorces us from the life of these texts' traditions, and blinds us to the assumptions of modern scientific objectivity that underlie much of recent scholarship on South Asian philosophies. In short, to cast Abhinava as a proto-historicist sets the wrong intentional frame by which to approach his writings. He meant to be taken seriously as a philosopher and only secondarily as an historian of ideas. As philosophical texts, the writings of Abhinava and other South Asian thinkers invite readers to similarly engage in philosophical inquiry—an inquiry that calls for heightened attunement to how our biases open (not just distort) a fusion of horizons with the text.

I stage the essay in this way in order to set an appropriate context for encountering Abhinava's treatment of another rival tradition: Sāṃkhya. Abhinava stages a debate with Sāṃkhya concerning how an effect can exist latent within its cause (*satkāryavāda*). Not surprisingly, Abhinava emerges victorious in this competition, and by all accounts his victory is well-earned.¹³ It bears noting, however, that Sāṃkhya can provide a much more robust defense against the Pratyabhijñā attack, and the resources for such a defense are available in its canonical text, the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* (SK), which (I argue below) grounds *satkāryavāda* in a phenomenological theory of *prakṛti* as organic nature. Moreover, Abhinava was directly aware of the SK and its central place in the tradition, but he overlooked its alternative, more formidable view of *prakṛti* and *satkāryavāda*. The question thus arises again: why did Abhinava not portray his opponents (Sāṃkhya) with more attention to their variation and sophistication?

To a certain degree this is an intellectual historical matter. But I approach it by way of the philosophical hermeneutic advocated above.¹⁴ This paper seeks to resuscitate a philosophical question that has been forgotten (or least taken for granted) in readings of the SK, namely, the question of the meaning of nature. Through this, I hope to spark a fresh reading of the SK from which Sāṃkhya can withstand Pratyabhijñā criticisms. But this approach also opens up a richer exploration of the historical dynamics underlying Abhinava's portrayal of Sāṃkhya. As I demonstrate later, the question of nature has been disregarded by the two research traditions most responsible for representing Sāṃkhya to a wider audience: classical, post-*kārikā* Sāṃkhya and modern Sāṃkhya scholarship. Both failed to appreciate the meaning of “*prakṛti*” by reducing it to inanimate nature or inert matter, and they respectively informed Pratyabhijñā and contemporary interpretations of Sāṃkhya. Investigation of the intellectual historical problem, “Why did Abhinava neglect the SK?”, thus turns upon the philosophical query, “Why did Abhinava forget the question of the meaning of nature in his study of Sāṃkhya?” Of course, there is some circularity here: Abhinava's inattention to the meaning of *prakṛti* in the SK is at least partly due to his reliance upon Sāṃkhya commentaries that themselves ignored the

¹³ Abhinava is the victor not just in his rendering of the debate but also in the memory of South Asian intellectual history. The Sāṃkhya tradition would continue its slide into relative obscurity, especially compared to the growing influence that nondual Śaivism would enjoy. Abhinava's cogent refutation of Sāṃkhya and defense of his own tradition are but one amongst other reasons for this. Ratié aptly observes how persuasive Abhinava's formulation of *satkāryavāda* is over and against that of Sāṃkhya (2014).

¹⁴ In important respects, this approach is not unlike what Jonardon Ganeri and others have called Global Philosophy (Ganeri 2016).

question. But the root of the problem does not bottom out at a first historical moment, since (as I argue below) Abhinava's own philosophical biases predisposed him to the post-*kārikā* attitude toward nature (instead of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's). For this reason, Abhinava's lack of care for the nuances of the SK cannot be exposed strictly through the historicist approach. Examination of Abhinava's Pratyabhijñā-Sāṃkhya debate concerning *satkāryavāda* must ground itself in a philosophical exploration of the meaning of nature, and from there, a philosophical exploration of the meaning of nature in the SK and non-dual Śaivism. We should renew the inquiry undertaken in the SK, namely, "What is the meaning of nature?", as a live philosophical question, not just a question about the SK as a relic of the past. And this requires consideration of our own assumptions about the meaning of nature, especially since our current understanding of the SK has been largely framed by the scientific materialist biases of modern Sāṃkhya scholarship.

The paper thus begins by examining non-dual Śaiva criticisms of the Sāṃkhya theory of causation (*satkāryavāda*). It then moves to re-articulate the Sāṃkhya defense by thinking from the SK independent of its historically later commentaries. This, however, requires deconstructing how our current understanding of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's system has been framed by modern scientific theories about "nature," "duality," and "causation." From this, the essay reconsiders the meaning of these English concepts and closely related terminology in the SK ("*prakṛti*," "*saṃyoga*," and "*satkāryavāda*") through the lens of an alternative science: Goethe's phenomenological science of life. As we shall see below, a Goethean interpretation succeeds where post-*kārikā* Sāṃkhyans failed: it rebuts Pratyabhijñā criticisms of the Sāṃkhya version of *satkāryavāda*. Finally, the paper suggests an explanation for why Utpala and Abhinava misread the SK: (1) they relied upon its classical commentaries, which made Sāṃkhya vulnerable to its opponents' attacks concerning *satkāryavāda*; and (2) non-dual Śaivas read their own biases toward dualism and nature into Īśvarakṛṣṇa's doctrine.

2. The Pratyabhijñā Critique of Causality and Manifestation in Sāṃkhya

It is well known that Sāṃkhya made a tremendous impact upon the Pratyabhijñā system, with thinkers such as Utpala and Abhinava adapting Sāṃkhya theories in order to develop the theological agenda of non-dual Kashmir Śaivism. This is illustrated in how they treated Sāṃkhya notions of causality and manifestation.¹⁵ In commenting on SK 9's doctrine of *satkāryavāda*, Utpala and Abhinava defend the view that the effect must exist before the operation of its cause, since effects cannot be created out of non-existence.¹⁶ But they then criticize Īśvarakṛṣṇa. At IPK 2.4.3c Utpala charges that, if the effect already exists in the cause, then "there is no point in [the effect's] acquiring existence" (*na punaḥ sattālābhenārthaḥ*), since this would render the cause useless (in other words, there is no point in creating that which already exists) (Ratié 2014, p. 135). Abhinava supports this point by invoking the stock analogy of clay and pot as cause and effect, respectively: "if, on the other hand, the pot exists [before the operation of its cause], then what else could [still] be asked from the [potter's] stick, wheel and thread [that are supposed to cause the pot's existence]?" (Shastri and Shastri 1918–1921, p. 139; quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 135).¹⁷

¹⁵ Concerning this point, Ratié writes: "Śaiva traditions (both dualistic and non-dualistic) have early on integrated many aspects of Sāṃkhya to their metaphysics, cosmology and psychology, so much so in fact that Śaiva authors sometimes feel the need to specify that 'the Sāṃkhyas too' hold theses that were obviously borrowed from them. From this point of view, Utpaladeva's borrowing of the *satkāryavāda* is in keeping with the general Śaiva attitude towards Sāṃkhya" (2014, p. 128).

¹⁶ Ratié explains that "the argument used here is obviously the first reason adduced in *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 9 in favour of the *satkāryavāda*, namely, 'because there is no production of the non-existent' (*asadakaraṇāt*)" (2014, p. 132). She later notes how Utpaladeva re-states "the reason that legitimates the Sāṃkhyas' *satkāryavāda*: the effect must exist before the operation of its cause, because according to the first reason adduced in *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 9, there can be no production of what is non-existent, since such a production would be contradictory with its non-existent nature" (2014, pp. 134–35). Please note that my analysis of Utpala's and Abhinava's treatment of these themes in Sāṃkhya literature is largely based upon Ratié's impressive 2014 study.

¹⁷ Ratié notes that Utpala and Abhinava utilize standard criticisms (and their corresponding examples, namely, clay and pot) of Īśvarakṛṣṇa. This includes Nāgārjuna's (1977) critique of Sāṃkhya in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (in particular, MMK 1.6)

In response to this objection, the Sāṃkhya interlocutor replies with a theory of *abhivyakti* (manifestation): what the cause (*mūlaprakṛti*) produces is not the existence of the effect (since the effect already exists latently in the cause) but only its manifestation (*abhivyakti* or *vyaktaparakṛti*) (Wezler and Motegi 1998, pp. 128–29; quoted in Ratié 2014, pp. 136–37). This protects the view that the effect already exists before its so-called production without rendering the cause useless, since the cause is required *just* for manifesting the effect (i.e., the cause is not required for affecting the actual existence of the effect itself).

Not to be outdone, Abhinava subjects the Sāṃkhya *abhivyakti* theory to the same analysis as for the produced effect: either the manifestation brought about by the cause did not exist before the operation of the cause, or it did (Ratié 2014, p. 141). If the production of the manifestation did not already exist before the cause, then its production is impossible, since something cannot come from nothing. (This is the *asatkāryavāda* view, which of course, Sāṃkhya does not admit.) But if the manifestation did already exist in the cause, then the production of the manifestation is useless, “since there is no point in revealing what is already manifest” (Ratié 2014, p. 143). The ontological status of the effect (*kārya*), even conceived as manifestation, thus remains a problem.

Non-dual Kashmir Śaivas claim to avoid the dilemma just described by arguing that causes, effects, and manifestations are “nothing but ways in which Śiva consciousness appears to itself” (Ratié 2014, p. 150). According to Utpala’s formulation of *satkāryavāda* and *abhivyakti*, material things (e.g., the pot) and their manifest appearances comprise a collection of effects, and these effects do not exist separate from their cause, namely, the manifesting activity of universal consciousness. Utpala explains:

[In fact] this [production of the manifestation] is not new at all. For [when we say] “the lamp produces the manifestation of, e.g., an already existing pot”, [in fact] it is the thing itself [i.e., the pot,] that is acted upon [and therefore constitutes the effect of the action]. And so just as [one can say that] there is a production called the “manifestation” of an existing [effect] such as the pot, in the same way, [one can say] that there is a production by a lamp for instance of the manifestation itself, which [insofar as it is regarded as an effect, merely] consists in the thing [itself, so that just as the thing itself, it] already exists . . . Therefore, the thesis that the effect exists [before the operation of its cause] is equally applied to everything, since even manifestation, insofar as it is not distinct from the [object that it manifests], is equivalent with the [already] existing effect that is the thing. And manifestation is the fact that . . . [it] consists in the manifesting [agent] (*prakāśa*); it is the existence (*avasthāna*) in this or that form of the manifesting [agent] that is consciousness, [a manifesting agent] that is devoid of beginning or end (*anādinidhana*), [i.e.,] that [always] already exists.

In order for manifestation to take place, there must first be a unified entity that self-manifests as the causal process—a process that includes both the apparent material cause (e.g., the clay pot) and the effect (the appearance of the pot). Consciousness represents just such an entity. From an inward intentionality, consciousness turns outward or externalizes itself as the clay, the pot, and even the potter and his instruments. Abhinava explains in the IPV, using the example of a mirror:

[O]ne cannot say that being an object of knowledge for both [internal and external] sense organs is in turn either existing or nonexistent [before the operation of the cause], because the [following] is the ultimate truth as regards this [property of being the object of sense organs]: just as, when there is a reflection, inside a mirror, of e.g., a pot that is [in the process of] being created by a potter [also reflected in the mirror], the might (*mahimān*) of such a manifestation belongs to the mirror alone; in the same way, [when there is a reflection], in the vision of a

and Uddyotakara’s comments in the *Nyāyabhāṣyavārttika*, which “put forward a somewhat similar argument [to that of Nāgārjuna]” (Ratié 2014, pp. 135–36).

dream, [of a pot being created by a potter, the might of such a manifestation] belongs to [the dreaming] consciousness.¹⁸

Like a mirror, consciousness reveals various forms (clay, a pot, a potter, etc.) without failing to exist as the self-same entity—namely, the omnipotent, omni-present, shape-shifting super-agent, Śiva (Ratié 2014). “[S]uch [an agency] is possible in the unitary [and] limpid [entity] consisting in consciousness,” Utpala writes, “because [in it] there is no contradiction [between its unity and] its receiving manifold reflections (*pratibimba*).”¹⁹ Abhinava echoes this point in the IPV:

[T]he sovereign power (*māhātmya*) [called] ‘limpidity’ is both a differentiation into innumerable manifestations, and unity. And [somebody] standing on the top of a mountain [embraces] in one single cognition the manifestation of the innumerable things found in a city; therefore, agency is possible only for that which consists in consciousness, because [only consciousness] can possess the power of action, since [only consciousness] is capable of assuming differentiation [while remaining] undifferentiated.²⁰

Consciousness bears a universal, dynamic power of illumination (*prakāśa*) that does not get diminished through seemingly incompatible manifestations. In theorizing this, non-dual Śaivas believe that they explain not just how the material pot gets produced but how the manifestation or consciousness of the pot arises. The pot, the manifestation of the pot, and indeed, the potter’s consciousness of the pot, all exist as everlasting consciousness revealing itself in a particular form (e.g., the pot) and whose necessary existence resides “beyond rational examination (*acintya*) and cannot be put into question (*aparyanuyojya*),” as Abhinava tells us (Shastri and Shastri 1918–1921, p. 141; quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 148).

The Sāṃkhyan might object that he allows for such an entity that continually transforms itself, namely, primordial matter or primordial nature (*pradhāna*, *mūlaprakṛti*) (Ratié 2014, pp. 153–54; Moriyama 2016, p. 293). But Utpala and Abhinava again challenge: Sāṃkhya’s *prakṛti* lacks the power to endure such transformation, since “an insentient object cannot undergo a change of form without ceasing to exist as such: a square that ceases to have four sides [for example] ceases to be a square” (Ratié 2014, p. 154).²¹ They elaborate that Sāṃkhya fails to accommodate this special *mahimān* (might)

¹⁸ Shastri and Shastri 1918–1921, p. 141 (quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 148): “*na ca vācyam ubhayendriyavedyatvam api sad asad veti, yato’yam atra paramārtho yathā darpanāntaḥ kumbhakāranirvartyamānaghāṭāḍīpratibimbe darpaṇasyaiva tathāvabhāsanamahimā, tathā svapnadarsāne samvidāh.*”

¹⁹ The entire passage reads: “*jaḍasyābhinnātmano bhedenāvasthiter virodhād ayuktam, svacche cidātmany ekasminn evam anekapratibimbahāranenāvirodhād yujyate*” (Torella 2002, p. 60; quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 154). In his *vṛtti* on the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, Utpala likewise comments that “all effects [are indeed mere manifestations of the cause but] exclusively consist in Śiva, who is nothing but consciousness, according to the principle [stated in] the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā* [treatise]” (*iti cinnayaśīvarūpataiva sarvakāryāṇām īśvarapratyabhijñānāyena*) (Torella 2002, p. 186; quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 154). Abhinava similarly explains in the IPV that consciousness is like a mirror that can take several forms: “For it is experience itself [that makes us know that] the form of a limpid [entity] such as a mirror can be differentiated into innumerable forms—such as a mountain, an elephant, and so on—while its own nature remains perfectly intact” (*anubhavād eva hi svacchasyādarśāder akhaṇḍitasvasvabhāvasyaiva parvatamataṅgajādirūpasahasrasambhinnaḥ vapur upapadyate*) (Shastri and Shastri 1918–1921, p. 177; quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 155).

²⁰ Shastri and Shastri 1918–1921, p. 177 (quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 155): “*nirmalatāmāhātmyam etad yad anantāvabhāsasambhedaś caikatā ca. giriśikharoparivartinaś caikatraiva bodhe nāgaragatapadārthasahasrābhāsa iti cidrūpasyaiva kartṛtvam upapannam, abhinasya bhedāveśasahiṣṇutvena kriyāśaktyāveśasambhavāt.*”

²¹ Ratié points us to IPK 2.4.19, where Utpala states: “And such [an agency] is not possible for [something] insentient, because of the contradiction between the difference and identity [that would ensue for this insentient entity] due to the difference between [various] manifestations [that transformation involves]; whereas it is possible in the unitary [entity] consisting in consciousness” (*na ca yuktaṃ jaḍasyaivaṃ bhedābheda virodhataḥ | ābhāsabhedād ekatra cidātmani tu yujyate*) (Torella 2002, p. 186; quoted in 2014, p. 154). Abhinava comments (in the IPV) on Utpala’s views: “Such [an agency] means the following. The agency in the action that is transformation (*pariṇamana*)—which [Utpaladeva] has described [earlier] as characterized by the freedom (*svātantrya*) to divide and unite numerous, constantly flowing properties [and] as belonging to a property-bearer having an undivided nature—is not possible for [something] such as matter, because [matter] is insentient. For what [we] call insentient has a [self-]confined (*parimīṣṭhita*) nature, it has fallen into the state of object of knowledge; and [if we assume it to be such an agent, we] must declare that it is differentiated (*bhinna*) due to the difference between the [various] forms [that it supposedly assumes,] such as blue and yellow, etc.; and [yet], since it has a unitary nature, [it must be]

or *śakti* (power) because its dualism prohibits a mature articulation of *satkāryavāda* and *abhivṛtyakti*. This is for the following reason: the dualism of *prakṛti* (matter) and *puruṣa* (consciousness) implies that the actual material object (*mūlaprakṛti*, or the pot as unmanifest before consciousness) and its manifestation before consciousness (*vyaktaparakṛti* as manifest appearance of the pot) are distinct realities, with the pot in-itself (i.e., the pot as unmanifest) serving as a material cause for a new, ontologically distinct effect, namely, the appearance or consciousness of the pot. But this violates the *satkāryavāda* premise that the cause (the pot as unmanifest material thing) and the effect (consciousness of the pot) are *not* different, thus implying *asatkāryavāda*. In short, Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Sāṃkhya generally cannot explain the power of manifestation (*abhivṛtyakti* or *vyaktaparakṛti*), since, among other reasons, it is neither the case that *prakṛti* (the pot in-itself) can produce its own manifestation (it requires the presence of *puruṣa*, and even then it ceases to be itself as it changes across moments) nor that *puruṣa* can generate *prakṛti*'s appearance (since the *puruṣa* is inactive and impotent).²² Given the inability of Sāṃkhya to account for this underlying creative potency (a potency that can produce contradictory forms), Utpala and Abhinava reformulate power and consciousness such that the *śaktis* of procreativity derive not from *prakṛti* (inanimate matter) but from consciousness, with consciousness now understood as “the agent called the Great Lord” (Shastri and Shastri 1918–1921, p. 148; quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 149). Thus subverting the view of their rival *satkāryavādins*, Pratyabhijñā philosophers claimed that *only* their theory of consciousness can safeguard the independence and power required for the playful creativity that manifests in but is irreducible to materiality.

3. Shortcomings in the Standard Modern Interpretation of Sāṃkhya

As compelling as Utpala and Abhinava are, I suspect that Sāṃkhya can provide a more robust formulation of matter, manifestation, and cause–effect relations, and that such a formulation would adequately respond to the Pratyabhijñā attack. In a subsequent section of this paper, I explore the broader context of Utpala's and Abhinava's treatment of Sāṃkhya, and from this I offer further justification for the methodology that I deploy below. For now, I articulate an alternative Sāṃkhya reply to the non-dual Śaiva criticism by establishing three moves. First, I take the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* (SK) as the resource from which to formulate this rejoinder. Understandably, this move might seem peculiar. The Sāṃkhya views represented in Pratyabhijñā texts were mostly consistent with how classical Sāṃkhya commentaries presented their own tradition, and these commentaries widely recognized the SK to be its canonical source. It thus appears that Īśvarakṛṣṇa has already been spoken for in the debate staged by Utpala and Abhinava. But as I demonstrate later, Sāṃkhya commentators neglected important nuances of the SK's philosophy, which in turn made Sāṃkhya on the whole susceptible to the non-dual Śaiva critique. This prompts my second move: I reconstruct Īśvarakṛṣṇa's ideas about matter, manifestation, and causality independent of subsequent commentaries. These two moves prepare the way for the third. In order to articulate a formidable Sāṃkhya in the face of Pratyabhijñā arguments, we must recuperate the question of the meaning of nature in the SK. Above all, this requires a deconstruction of the scientific assumptions that prevail in modern interpretations of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's text.

undifferentiated, as the blue is. But the same nature cannot bear to be both differentiated and undifferentiated, because [this would entail] a contradiction between an affirmation and [its] negation with regard to the same [thing] at the same time” (*evam ityabhinmarūpasya dharmiṇaḥ satatapravahadbahutaradharmabhedasambhedasvātantryalakṣaṇaṃ pariṇamanakriyākariḥ katvaṃ yad uktaṃ tat pradhānāder na yuktaṃ jaḍatoāt. jaḍo hi nāma pariniṣṭhitasvabhāvaḥ prameyapadapatitaḥ; sa ca rūpabhedād bhinnō vyavasthāpanīyo nilapītādīvat; ekasvabhāvatvāc cābhinnō nilavat. na tu sa eva svabhāvo bhinnāś cābhinnāś ca bhavitum arhati vidhimiśedhayor ekatraikadā virodhāt*) (Shastri and Shastri 1918–1921, pp. 176–77; quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 154).

²² Pratyabhijñā thinkers leveled additional criticisms against Sāṃkhya related to this topic. Analysis of these complicated arguments is beyond the scope of this paper (in many ways these criticisms are elaborations on the arguments summarized already). For more on Somānanda's and Utpala's criticism that Sāṃkhya cannot explain the relation between unmanifest material cause (*prakṛti*) and manifestation (*abhivṛtyakti*), see Ratié 2014, pp. 152–60. An additional criticism that nondual Śaivas bring against Sāṃkhya is the “infinite regress” argument. For more on this, see Ratié 2014, pp. 145–47, 163–67. I respond to these and other non-dual Śaiva arguments brought against Sāṃkhya in a separate in-progress paper on the *buddhi*.

Modern science approached its object of study (nature) through the lens of Newtonian physics, and Newton viewed nature according to 3 basic premises: (1) external causation: the activity or movement of objects gets caused from without; (2) mereology: objects are constituted from part to whole (and hence, the parts of an object precede the whole); and (3) mechanical behavior: the movements of objects can be measured and predicted according to fixed, mechanistic laws. The example of a billiard ball game illustrates this. As a whole object, a billiard ball can be dissected into strong plastic materials (i.e., parts), with the ball itself comprising part of a greater totality (a billiard game); the motion of the billiard ball requires an external force to act upon it (one billiard ball moves when another collides with it); and the movements taking place within a billiard game operate based upon set rules.

The modern scientific attitude toward nature has deep roots in Cartesianism.²³ Three basic presumptions characterize Descartes' understanding of the natural world: (1) matter (as *res extensa* or extended substance) and mind (as *res cogitans* or thinking consciousness) are fundamentally divided; (2) the activity of objects is independent of our own purposes; and (3) matter is just extended substance and hence lacks intensity or concentrated vital force. Set against the animation, alertness, and autonomy of the cogito, nature qua mere extension involves lifeless, mechanical bits of matter that bear no internal relation to each other and whose motion results from their colliding against each other.²⁴

These assumptions are evident in the standard modern interpretation of Sāṃkhya.²⁵ According to this reading, creation happens when a *puruṣa* (a detached witness consciousness) approaches consciousness-independent *prakṛti* ("nature") and incites *mūlaprakṛti* ("primal nature" or "fundamental matter") to transform into the observable natural world (*vyaktaparakṛti*).²⁶ *Prakṛti* has its own design, but it lacks sentience and the capacity to initiate its own movement. In order to explain how *prakṛti* unfolds in the first place, scholars such as Mysore Hiriyanna invoke Newton's "First Law of Motion": just as a material body remains motionless unless acted upon by an outside force, so too does *prakṛti* (comprised of three *guṇas*) rest in equilibrium until an external trigger, namely, the presence of *puruṣa*, acts upon it (1993, p. 273). By virtue of *puruṣa*'s viewing attendance, *prakṛti* extends into space, with *vyaktaparakṛti* representing the manifest effect (*kārya*) that pre-exists in *mūlaprakṛti* as its unmanifest, material causal ground (*sat*).²⁷ As for the constitution and behavior of *prakṛti*, interpreters offer a mereological, mechanistic explanation. Various metaphysical categories (*tattvas*) are said to represent the parts that make up the larger whole, *prakṛti*—with many scholars even implying that the *tattvas* subsist independent of each other.²⁸ Meanwhile, these "parts" function according to fixed, natural (i.e., mechanistic) laws that lie dormant within *mūlaprakṛti* until a separate cause (*puruṣa*) sets them into motion.

²³ This brief overview is widely confirmed in scholarship on these topics. For more on the early history of modern science, its roots in Cartesianism, and the prevailing influence of the Cartesian–Newtonian paradigm in modern thinking about nature, see Collingwood 1945 (this monograph on the history and philosophy of science is well-known), Brady 1998 (which focuses upon Goethe's response to these issues), and Lafleur 1950 (a short but clear account of these issues).

²⁴ Descartes famously conceived of animals as machines ("*bête machine*"), specifically, machines that are unable to think. This differentiated animals apart from humans ("*l'homme machine*"). This mechanistic attitude pervades Descartes' physiology. For more on this topic, see Antoine-Mahut and Stephen 2017.

²⁵ The following studies of Sāṃkhya and/or the SK (this being a non-exhaustive list) exhibit scientific realist predilections: Colebrooke and Wilson 1837; Davies 1894; Sastri 1948; Radhakrishnan 1927; Sinha 1958; Eliade 1969; Catalina 1968; Trimbak Govind 1972; Larson 1969a; Hiriyanna 1993; King 1999; Berger 2015. Burley's 2007 monograph brilliantly diagnoses the external realist biases of Sāṃkhya scholarship. However, he does not identify the modern scientific basis of this trend in Sāṃkhya scholarship.

²⁶ Gerald Larson, among others, uses these translations. See 1969a, p. 242.

²⁷ Larson writes: "it must be stressed that the manifest world is not derived from *puruṣa*. It is derived, rather, from the *mūlaprakṛti*, which is characterized by the three *guṇas* and which emerges or evolves itself in terms of *satkāryavāda*—i.e., transformation, or modification of itself, but always in terms of itself" (1969a, pp. 176–77).

²⁸ Consider, for example, that the customary reading of Sāṃkhya metaphysics takes the material world (*prakṛti*)—e.g., the *mahābhūtas* as the "atomic particles," "gross elements," or building blocks of complex entities, and so on—to exist independent of and external to our experience. Burley examines such theories that predominate in modern readings of Sāṃkhya (2007, pp. 116–24).

This interpretation misconstrues the meaning of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's doctrine. I briefly touch upon just a few points. First, the *puruṣa* is not a mind, cognizing ego, illuminating light, or efficient cause. It is a purely passive, non-intentional, structureless witness (SK 19). Contrary to the Aristotelian or Christian notion of a soul, Descartes' *cogito*, or Newton's scientist, the *puruṣa* is not even proto-rational, nor does it *have* experiences, *per se*.²⁹

Many scholars have recognized this, pointing out how Cartesianism, in particular, distorts the meaning of "*puruṣa*." Gerald Larson, one of the leading researchers of the SK, typifies this trend. In some of his later writings, Larson explicitly warns us against correlating the *puruṣa* to a Cartesian ego.³⁰ Ironically, however, he envisions *prakṛti* in terms of a material "natural world" quite similar to that recognized by Descartes and Newton. This is evident in his early and widely influential monograph, *Classical Sāṃkhya: An interpretation of its History and Meaning* (1969). Here Larson renders "*mūlaprakṛti*" as "primal nature," "fundamental matter," or "material reality," which implies an ultimate, self-existent, Cartesian-like substance that extends in space and endures over time (Larson 1969a, pp. 167, 242).³¹ He develops this interpretation further in his 1983 essay, "An Eccentric Ghost in the Machine." He characterizes *prakṛti* as follows:

Both analytically and synthetically, we are dealing with a closed causal system of reductive materialism . . . From an analytic point of view, every 'component' of the system is a 'part' of the totally functioning 'whole' (and may well explain why the Sāṃkhya lends itself to a purely mathematical formulation . . .). From a synthetic point of view, every empirical manifestation is an 'effect' that is finally a mere modification of one ultimate, unconscious (*acetana*) material 'cause' (*mūlaprakṛti*) (1983: 230; text in parentheses is from Larson).

While this reading liberates the concept of *puruṣa* from the biases of Cartesianism and modern science, *prakṛti* as "nature" continues to be riddled with them. Larson portrays *prakṛti* as a lifeless, insentient machine, reducible to its parts, mathematically ordered, and rule-bound.³² The biases

²⁹ The external realist thesis continues to have purchase in scholarship on classical Sāṃkhya. For example, Berger's very impressive study of the concepts of luminosity and personhood across the philosophical traditions of South and East Asia holds to this view. Berger writes about the orientation of the *puruṣa* toward material reality: "It is these modifications, and the temporal determinations that emerge from them, that are the objects of the conscious, primordial person (*puruṣa*), which itself supposedly never changes. The experience of temporality, then, in Sāṃkhya, involves the apprehension by spirit [*puruṣa*] of various kinds of actual modifications of primal matter" (2015, p. 77).

³⁰ Larson's 1969a study frequently implies (although seemingly with some ambivalence) that the *puruṣa* makes sense of or is conscious of its object, "the world" (*prakṛti*). He writes: "the world is understood primarily from the point of view of the individual, witnessing *puruṣa*. The analysis of the world in classical Sāṃkhya is in terms of how the world appears to the individual consciousness. In one sense, then, the classical Sāṃkhya analysis is a description of what consciousness sees" (Larson 1969a, p. 178). In his 1983 essay, however, he explicitly notes that the *puruṣa* cannot at all be understood in a Cartesian light. He explains: "Whether one considers the Cartesian position or . . . the modern, analytic restatement of it, the interpreter of Sāṃkhya must admit that the Sāṃkhya is not a dualism in these senses" (1983, p. 219). Larson then clarifies that Sāṃkhya (and specifically, the doctrine of the SK) is not such a dualism on account of its conceiving of the *puruṣa* as not a typical "ghost in the machine," but as an "eccentric ghost in the machine": "Sāṃkhya represents a critique of the traditional or conventional dualist position and approaches [e.g., Platonic, Aristotelian, Paulinian, Augustinian, Cartesian, Kantian, Jain, Vedāntin] . . . [it rather advocates] a philosophical view which 'reduces' 'mind'-talk or 'mentalist'-talk to 'brain-processes'-talk or, in other words, construes mind, thought, ideas, sensations, and so forth, in terms of some sort of material stuff, or energy, or force . . . For, according to classical Sāṃkhya, the experiences of intellect (*buddhi*), ego (*ahaṃkāra*), and mind (*manas*), and the 'raw-feels' such as 'pain' (*duḥkha*) or 'pleasure' (*sukha*) . . . are simply subtle reflections of a primordial materiality (*prakṛti*)—a primordial materiality undergoing continuous transformation . . . Sāṃkhya, as it were, refurbish[es] the 'ghost [in the machine],' stripping it of its conventional attributes and reintroducing it as what I am calling in this paper 'an eccentric ghost,' eccentric in the sense that it no longer has anything to do with 'mind'-talk or 'mentalist'-talk or 'ego-talk, all of which are fully reducible to *guṇa*-talk in good reductive materialist fashion" (1983, p. 220).

³¹ Larson's 1969a monograph stands as his most influential work on the subject and arguably the most authoritative interpretation of Sāṃkhya and the SK.

³² Note Larson's intrigue with a mathematical approach to Sāṃkhya—an approach that is compelling but nonetheless portrays Sāṃkhya metaphysics as an inquiry into something static, formal, and lifeless. He writes: "Sāṃkhya philosophy can be construed as generating the natural world utilizing a 'mathematical' model or paradigm in a manner not unlike that of ancient Pythagorean philosophy . . . [C]onstruing Sāṃkhya as a kind of archaic mathematical physics (on analogy with Pythagoreanism) may provide one useful avenue for attempting to decipher the nature of the peculiar Sāṃkhya dualism and its 'eccentric ghost in the machine'" (1983, pp. 224–25). Mathematics, of course, became a core feature of Cartesian and modern scientific thinking about nature.

evidenced here are not idiosyncratic. The first comprehensive survey of Sāṃkhya (Garbe's (1917) *Die Sāṃkhya-Philosophie*) approached *prakṛti* through the lens of the physics-dominated natural sciences.³³ Over a decade later, Dasgupta's influential *History of Indian Philosophy* explicitly studied *prakṛti* by way of theories in physics (Dasgupta 1922–1955).³⁴

In demonstrating the shortcomings of this reading, I make just a few points. For one, *prakṛti* qua the field of manifest reality is not *mere* matter. "Matter" typically connotes only that which is the object of experience, though most of the *tattvas* (e.g., *buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra*) are not "material" in any obvious sense, and they certainly are not Cartesian extended substances (Burley 2007, p. 99).³⁵ Furthermore, the *tattvas* are not separable "'part[s]' of the totally functioning 'whole,'" per Larson's statement above, since they lack empirical representability in isolation from each other. In short, *prakṛti* neither behaves like nor is configured as a machine.

Standard modern readings of the SK also misconstrue its dualism. Duality in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's system is neither "a metaphysical substance-dualism" (since *prakṛti* is not a substance) nor that of ego (or scientist) set against the natural world (Burley 2007, p. 75).³⁶ The latter form of dualism is implied by common renderings of "*prakṛti*" as "world."³⁷ As Mikel Burley notes, "world" suggests a mind-independent, "extensive realm of things and events that we have experiences of and thoughts about . . . and that invariably stands in opposition to the cognizing subject or mind" (2007, pp. 76–77). The Cartesian–Newtonian paradigm adheres to such a view of the world, but the SK does not. Mind ("*manas*") and "world" emerge alongside each other and within the *prakṛtic* field. *Kārikās* 24–25 specify how this occurs with the *ahaṃkāra*'s "double-barreled creation (*dviṅghaḥ sargaḥ*)": the empirical self can be seen as comprised of "the group of eleven" (*ekādaśakaḥ*) (including *manas*, the five modes of sense experience, and the five modes of action), while the five subtle elements (*tanmātraḥ pañcakaḥ*) generate the five gross elements that support the external world. Importantly, this indicates not only that the relation between ego and world is internal to *vyaktaparakṛti* but that this relation is fundamentally non-dual. The cognizing subject and the natural world are held in the *mahat-buddhi* as an aboriginal

³³ In the early 1900s, the natural sciences were deeply entrenched in the methodologies of the physical sciences. I comment upon this more below.

³⁴ Seen in this light, Larson's 1969a and 1983 analyses represent part of an unmistakable trend in Sāṃkhya scholarship that still prevails. As just noted, Larson's depictions of *prakṛti* as "nature" envision a field of lifeless machinery that extends on a map of numerical, Cartesian coordinates and performs unchanging physical operations.

³⁵ The *prakṛtic* evolutes generate experience itself, with the very awareness of being an "I" at all resulting from the activity of *prakṛti*, namely, when the *ahaṃkāra* produces an ego (SK 24). Burley was attuned to this. He notes that we can speak of *prakṛti* as "matter," but only insofar as this implies "everything that is not the pure subject [i.e., *puruṣa*]"—including acts and formal structures of experience as well as experiential content—as material . . . [I]f we do use 'material' in this broad sense, then we ought to take special care not to conflate it with its narrower sense of mere experiential content" (2007, p. 100).

³⁶ Another problematic translation of *prakṛti* frequently employed by realist interpreters is "substance" (see Radhakrishnan 1927). Larson, who uses similar terminology with respect to *mūlaprakṛti*, does recognize that these translations are in some ways incomplete. But he does not tell us exactly why they are problematic, and he continues to use some of these translations (1969a).

³⁷ This view is exemplified in the writings of Sāṃkhya scholars such as Mircea Eliade, Jadunath Sinha, and Berger, among others. Eliade writes: "For Sāṃkhya and Yoga, the world is real (not illusory—as it is, for example, in Vedānta)" (1969: 9; quoted in Burley 2007, pp. 76–77, 125). Sinha, meanwhile, naively remarks that "According to the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, perception depends upon two metaphysical conditions. In the first place, it implies the existence of an extra-mental object. In the second place, it implies the existence of the self (*puruṣa*)" (1958, I: 124; quoted in Burley 2007, pp. 76–77, 125). Even Berger implies the realist misreading that the empirical world exists independently of *puruṣa* (which, for its part, merely "reveals" the world). "Without this luminosity [of *puruṣa*], while the natural world would still undoubtedly be there, and would still bring about things, bodies, impulsive affects, and constant dynamic transformation, none of this would be revealed to anyone and would never serve anything that could deservedly be called a purpose [e.g., *puruṣa-artha*]" (2015, pp. 194–95). *Puruṣa-prakṛti* dualism, as demonstrated in this section, is not equivalent to mind-world dualism—if for no other reason than because *prakṛti* (in either its unmanifest or manifest form) does not correspond to an extra-mental object. Interestingly, some of Larson's earlier writings hint at a more nuanced interpretation of Sāṃkhya metaphysics along the lines of Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenological ontology (Larson 1969b). Presumably, this approach underlies Larson's "humanization" of Sāṃkhya metaphysics in his larger, more prominent work, *Classical Sāṃkhya*. But this monograph (*Classical Sāṃkhya*) does not work out the philosophical nuances of Sartrean phenomenology for Sāṃkhya metaphysics, and consequently falls prey to many of the same problems found in other realist interpretations. For example, Larson's reading carries many of the same realist misunderstandings concerning the nature of *prakṛti* examined above. He frequently translates "*prakṛti*" as "matter" or "nature," and elsewhere applies the term "world" in an uncritical manner that bears clear realist connotations (1969a, p. 175).

unity, and when they do emerge through the powers of the *ahaṅkāra*, they emerge as already together in relation.³⁸

In clarifying the nature of Sāṃkhya dualism, note that modern interpretations widely fail to identify its two fundamental duads as *puruṣa* and just *mūlaprakṛti*—not *prakṛti* on the whole. The SK separates out two distinct categories within the concept of “*prakṛti*”: “*mūla-prakṛti*” and “*vyakta-prakṛti*.” Only *mūlaprakṛti* is a duad to *puruṣa*, since only these two tattvas are eternal or equi-primordial. *Vyaktaprakṛti* bears an entirely different relation to *puruṣa* than does *mūlaprakṛti*. *Kārikā* 21 gives us perhaps the most clear account of this: “Like the coming together (*saṃyogaḥ*) of the blind and the lame, creation (*sargaḥ*) takes place (*kṛtaḥ*) thusly as the compresence [*saṃyogaḥ*]³⁹ of the two [*mūlaprakṛti* and *puruṣa*] for the purpose of seeing *pradhāna* [*mūlaprakṛti*] and isolating *puruṣa*.”⁴⁰ *Puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* are not self-sufficient candidates for generating *vyaktaprakṛti*. *Puruṣa* cannot beget *vyaktaprakṛti* because it is lame (*andha*), and *mūlaprakṛti* cannot produce on its own because its causal potency is blind (*paṅgu*) and hence is not compelled *by* or *toward* anything in particular.⁴¹ Only together are they able to bring *vyaktaprakṛti* into being; or rather, only their togetherness begets manifest reality, since even the mere sum of these two lacks purposiveness. Īśvarakṛṣṇa states this much when he writes “creation (*sargaḥ*) takes place (*kṛtaḥ*) thusly as the compresence (*saṃyogaḥ*) of the two [*mūlaprakṛti* and *puruṣa*].”⁴² Seen in this light, Sāṃkhya’s two duads—*puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti*—are inadvertent, non-intentional attendees to the birth of *vyaktaprakṛti*, which spontaneously arises from the bi-polar friction between these two.

In support of this textual argument, there are at least two philosophical reasons to reject the standard version of Sāṃkhya dualism, i.e., that *mūlaprakṛti* and *vyaktaprakṛti* form a unified “*prakṛti*” that is set against the *puruṣa*. The first rides on a puzzle. Modern scholars claim that (a) *vyaktaprakṛti* represents the self-disclosure of *mūlaprakṛti*, (b) this fused and continuous *prakṛti* manifests as a world of objects persisting external to and independent of the multiple *puruṣas* for whose sake it emerges (*puruṣa-artha*), and (c) the cosmos (*prakṛti*) desists from its activity and dissolves into its unmanifest source (*mūlaprakṛti*) when a lone individual attains liberation.⁴³ But if this is the case, then how can it be that, when one individual realizes *kaivalya*, the “world” (*prakṛti*) continues to exist for other persons who have not yet achieved liberation? Should not the cosmos dissolve for them as well?⁴⁴ The second reason involves another conundrum. Prevailing interpretations hold that, according to the SK, the unfolding of the physical universe shows the increasing predominance of *rajas* (dynamism, activity) and *tamas* (inertia, heaviness) along with the dilution of *sattva* (illumination, lightness). By implication, *mūlaprakṛti* (as the material causal ground of manifest *prakṛti*) should bear the highest concentration of *sattva* and the lowest proportion of the other two *guṇas*. But this is not the case: *mūlaprakṛti* is characterized by an equal proportion of the three *guṇas*, while the *tattvas* of the inner instrument

³⁸ For more on this topic, see [Ashton 2018](#).

³⁹ I take the term, *saṃyoga*, to be duplicated, as implied by “*vad.*” I translate it as “compresence” in order to convey the sense in which *mūlaprakṛti* and *puruṣa* are ontologically distinct from each other (the basis of Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s dualism), and yet, insofar as *vyaktaprakṛti* exists, they are mutually present or together with each other.

⁴⁰ SK 21: “*puruṣasya darśanārthaṃ kaivalyārthaṃ tathā pradhānasya | paṅgvandhavadubhayorapi saṃyogastatkṛtaḥ sargaḥ.*” All translations of the SK are my own unless noted otherwise.

⁴¹ By virtue of its lame-ness, *puruṣa* cannot generate even a thought, feeling, desire, or volition, let alone an object or event.

⁴² The passages preceding SK 21 corroborate this interpretation. I briefly take this up later in the paper.

⁴³ Burley deserves credit for bringing attention to this puzzle (as a result of which, *vyaktaprakṛti* is seen to be the outgrowth of *mūlaprakṛti*, with these two together comprising a consciousness- or mind-independent *prakṛti*). For more on this topic, see [Burley 2007](#), pp. 72–82.

⁴⁴ This problem applies to Larson’s model, and it is one for which he does not pretend to have an answer. Larson writes that “Clearly the exposition of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* on this point leaves much to be desired” (1969, p. 196). This puzzle hinges on the notion that “the world” (*prakṛti*) does not continue after attaining liberation (*kaivalya*)—with it either dissolving immediately upon the isolation of the *puruṣa*, or continuing temporarily just until the moment of the subtle body’s death, as suggested by SK 68. Questions concerning the exact nature of *kaivalya* in Sāṃkhya persist. Most interpreters understand liberation to consist in the cessation of experience (including [Burley 2004](#); [Pflueger 1998](#)). Others, such as Eliade, suggest that what terminates is simply the relation between the individual (among many) *puruṣa* and the singular “world” (*prakṛti*). He writes: “It [*kaivalya*] is the enstasis of total emptiness . . . [it is] without sensory content or intellectual structure, an unconditioned state that is no longer ‘experience’ (for there is no further relation between consciousness and the world) but ‘revelation’” (1969, p. 93). For more on this topic, see [Burke 1988](#); [Burley 2004](#); [Catalina 1968](#); [Larson 1983](#); [Sharma 2004](#).

(*antaḥ-karaṇa*) show a comparatively higher intensity of *sattva* (over and against *rajas* and *tamas*) than does their supposedly material causal “root” (*mūlaprakṛti*). In both of these dilemmas, the standard interpreter struggles to reconcile basic Sāṃkhya doctrines with the view that *prakṛti* is a singular, metaphysically autonomous entity: the first puzzle cannot account for the plurality of *puruṣas* (SK 18), while the second contradicts the equilibrium of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* in *mūlaprakṛti* (SK 16). I do not believe that these are inconsistencies in the SK itself (a claim that I defend in the next section). Instead, these problems reveal limitations in the customary reading of Sāṃkhya—i.e., the one based on modern science.⁴⁵

This has significant implications for re-thinking *satkāryavāda*. Interpreters commonly take this doctrine to imply material causation. The 20th-century Sāṃkhya commentator, Swami Hariharananda Aranya, typifies this view by invoking the stock Indian example of the jar produced from clay.

A lump of clay is shaped by the potter as a jar. Here nothing that did not exist before comes into existence, but there is only change of position in space of the particles of the stuff. Anyone who could see the clay in minute portions will see that those portions are only rearranged in a particular manner in the jar. But those who see the whole and are familiar with the use of a jar, will call it a jar and in common parlance may say that a thing that was not in existence before has come into existence. In reality, however, there is only a spread of the mass of clay in a particular manner (Aranya 1977, p. 27; quoted in Burley 2007, p. 93).

The jar (effect) exists latently in the clay (material cause) as one of its possibilities, and change involves the mere transformation (or rearrangement) of that which was already present. Wilhelm Halbfass and Larson call attention to SK 9 as “the *locus classicus* for the *satkāryavāda*” and its usage of the expression “*upādāna-grahaṇāt*,” or “because of the need [*grahaṇāt*] for an (appropriate) material cause [*upādāna*]” (Halbfass 1992, p. 56; Larson 1969a, p. 258).⁴⁶ Elsewhere (e.g., SK 3) the text appears to detail how the 23 manifest *tattvas* and perceptible objects flow forth as the causal effects of *mūlaprakṛti* (and other *tattvas* endowed with creative capacities).⁴⁷ All of the manifest *tattvas*, it would seem, are latent within and materially derive from *mūlaprakṛti*, just as the jar (as effect) latently exists in and derives from the clay (the material cause).

However, this interpretation misconstrues the relationship between unmanifest and manifest *prakṛtis*. Consider that, as just shown, *vyaktaprakṛti* does not emerge from *mūlaprakṛti* alone. That which “causes” the manifest *tattvas* is the compresence of *mūlaprakṛti* and *puruṣa*. One might defend the standard reading by arguing that the creation of the jar requires not just a material cause (the clay) but also an efficient cause, namely, the potter’s action, which actualizes the potential of the clay to take the form of a jar. Similarly, *vyaktaprakṛti* requires both *mūlaprakṛti* (as material cause) and *puruṣa* (as efficient cause). But this bears clear problems. For one, *puruṣa* is not an active agent; “neither creative nor created” (*na prakṛtirna vikṛtiḥ puruṣaḥ*), *puruṣa* does not do anything at all (SK 3). Second, the clay-jar analogy describes a relation between two manifest spatiotemporal objects, whereas that between *mūlaprakṛti* and *vyaktaprakṛti* respectively involves an unmanifest *prakṛti*-in-itself and its appearance. That is, causation implies temporal succession. But *mūlaprakṛti* is unconditioned, non-spatial, inactive, and eternal or *atemporal*, i.e., it “stands ‘outside’ [of] time” (Burley 2007, p. 94). The relation between

⁴⁵ My analysis of this puzzle is informed by Burley’s writings in 2007. I am grateful for Burley’s clarification of this issue and his conclusion that standard, i.e., realist models cannot account for this problem.

⁴⁶ The term “*grahaṇa*” means “grasping.” A more accurate translation (not inconsistent with Larson’s) is “because of the grasping [*grahaṇāt*] of a material cause [*upādāna*].” For more on this, see Burley 2007, pp. 94–95.

⁴⁷ SK 3 reads as follows: “Root-procreativity (*mūlaprakṛti*) is uncreated; the seven—the great one (*mahat*) and so on—are procreative and created, though the 16 are [merely] created; the *puruṣa* is neither procreative nor created.” (*mūlaprakṛtiravikṛtirmahadādyāḥ prakṛtīvikṛtayaḥ sapta | śoḍaśakastu vikāro na prakṛtirna vikṛtiḥ puruṣaḥ*). The 23 manifest *tattvas* are divided into two groups. The essential difference between these two groups is that each member of the set of seven (*buddhi* [or *mahat*], *ahaṃkāra*, and the five *tanmātras*, which cause the *mahābhūtas*) has creative power, while the 16 other *tattvas* (*manas*, the *buddhīndriyas*, the *karmendriyas*, and the *mahābhūtas*) are not productive, i.e., they lack causal power with respect to other *tattvas*.

unmanifest *prakṛti* and manifest *prakṛti*, then, cannot be one of material causation. The SK denies causal dependency in both efficient and material senses of the term.

In making sense of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's metaphysics, especially his understanding of *prakṛti*, dualism, and *satkāryavāda*, I do not support the idealist position—a conclusion that Burley advocates (2007). I retain the view that *prakṛti* denotes “nature” (and that nature has a material form), that the SK holds to a genuine duality of *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti*, and that causality is a real phenomenon (it is irreducible to a condition for mental appearances). Nevertheless, I believe that modern Sāṃkhya scholarship wrongly imputes the assumptions of modern scientific rationality. In order to establish an appropriate context for making sense of Sāṃkhya (or at least, Īśvarakṛṣṇa's version of this doctrine), we must, therefore, return to the question, “what is the meaning of *prakṛti* as ‘nature’?” But this requires foregrounding the hidden implications of the translation, “nature.” Researchers of Sāṃkhya would do well to at least recognize the distinction between animate and inanimate domains of nature, and they would do far better to deploy an interpretive framework that can disclose the *aliveness* of *prakṛti*, not just its materiality. One might consider a biological reading of *prakṛti* and related terms, but this would still impose the assumptions of the Cartesian–Newtonian paradigm. This is because, as Newtonian physics unified the natural sciences—with chemistry first giving way, and only later biology—the principles by which scientists examined inert material phenomena came to dominate how living things were perceived. Indeed, modern physics achieved an explanatory power that helped us to identify (and at times control) the physical and chemical constituents of organic phenomena, not just inorganic ones. However, these findings were widely taken to be exhaustive, which turned the organism into a mechanism and ignored the meaning of nature's vitality. Living things, though, are not mere arrangements of parts, nor is their activity generated and ordered from things external to them. Rather, the organism is marked by an inner organic unity that produces and structures the organism's movements from within. Wholeness precedes the manifestation of the living thing's “parts” without being separate from the parts—since the parts are expressions of the living whole. In order to thus recuperate the vital meaning of *prakṛti* as “nature” and respond to some of the puzzles ascribed to Īśvarakṛṣṇa's system, let us move beyond the standard modern reading of the SK and revisit the question of *prakṛti* through an alternate philosophy of nature.

4. A Goethean Interpretation of the Sāṃkhya Kārikā

What we see largely depends upon our intentional (or interpretive) frame. If we already anticipate that something is inert, non-living, and mechanical, then our analysis will either bear this out or lead to an impasse if the object does not conform to the conditions of intelligibility demanded by our intentional context. This pertains to how we understand Īśvarakṛṣṇa's philosophy of nature, which has both revealed itself and confounded us in terms of our prevailing, scientific realist frame of reference. Notably, Kant's “rational organics” sharply critiques the Cartesian–Newtonian view of living nature, and a few impressive Kantian-based interpretations offer an alternative way of approaching the SK.⁴⁸ But Īśvarakṛṣṇa neither espouses idealism (Kant was a transcendental idealist) nor does he negate the life of nature by reducing it to mere appearances that are constructed by a transcendental ego (which effectively divorces living things from their own vital power).⁴⁹ In order to step outside of the

⁴⁸ The most influential Kantian-based studies of the SK include Burley 2007 and Bhattacharya 1956. Other readings of the SK that display at least some idealist leanings include, among others, Davies 1894 and Singh 1976. To my knowledge, there is no study of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's Sāṃkhya through the lens of Kant's organics. In a larger work (currently in progress), I explore the implications of such an approach in greater detail.

⁴⁹ Kant attempts to refashion biology as a science of how life appears to us in terms of the concept-forming activity of the understanding. But this merely re-inscribes several of the core assumptions of modern science (i.e., objects are shaped by fixed natural laws) within his analysis of the powers of reason (for Kant, “natural” laws are laws of the understanding). That is, his study of living nature re-locates the powers that produce an organism's unity (the unity of the various parts of the living thing) within the transcendental ego. Kant's primary comments on the teleology of organic phenomena (to be distinguished from organic *things-in-themselves*) are given in the second part of his *Critique of Judgment* (1987).

realist–idealist debate that has delineated recent studies of the SK, and with a view to underscoring the life of nature in Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s system, I turn to the theory of organics devised by the German polymath, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. With a thriving scientific research program, Goethe explored nature at an historical point where modern biology was still defining itself and had not fully taken on Newtonian values. In developing his thinking about nature, Goethe echoes some of Kant’s own criticisms of modern biology. But in contrast with a post-Enlightenment audience, Goethe was not indebted to Kantian assumptions about nature; in contrast with Kant, Goethe did not view nature as a field of mental appearances that were tightly determined by rules of understanding.⁵⁰ Standing between Newtonian science and Kantian organics, Goethe provided a theory of nature that highlighted its vivacity. Goethe’s appraisal of his contemporaries (modern scientists, Kant) maps extremely well onto a criticism of modern Sāṃkhya scholarship. A Goethean approach bolsters a critique of the two most influential paradigms that have framed modern scholarship on the SK: modern science and Kantian idealism. More importantly, it helps to resuscitate the themes of nature (*prakṛti*), cause–effect relations (*satkāryavāda*), and manifestation (*vyakti*), and thereby enable a robust Sāṃkhya reply to the dilemma poised by Pratyabhijñā thinkers.

Goethe warned that Newton’s approach was only useful for studying inorganic nature and impoverished our understanding of natural life. In developing an alternative science of life, Goethe drew upon Kant’s critique of Cartesianism and the epistemology of biology. He incorporated many of Kant’s valuable insights into what Goethe termed “morphology.”⁵¹ This focused upon the structures and limbs of organisms as metamorphoses of a primal phenomenon or “*Urphänomen*.” All manifestations of a plant, for example, are transmutations of the self-same primal or *ur*-plant, which bears an inner antecedent unity that organizes its parts and shows itself in a continuous sequence of regular transformations. This already distinguishes Goethe’s view from that of modern biology. Goethe was centrally concerned with the question of procreativity. His *ur*-phenomenon bears an organic wholeness that links together the processual design of the organism with its underlying productive power. Outward variations (e.g., the axil [point where the leaf starts to grow], the petiole [main support of the leaf], the veins of the leaf blade, and so on) are expressions of the living thing’s (the leaf’s) inner procreative drive to formation (*Bildung*)—a feature that inanimate nature lacks. Modern biology, however, fails to capture this basic aspect of the organism by approaching living nature as reducible to its physical and chemical parts (as if the parts pre-existed the whole, were subsequently combined, and could be separated without losing their essential identity) and whose movements can be captured through mechanistic analysis (e.g., the law of gravity), etc.

Goethe’s emphasis upon the invigorating principle of organisms also distinguishes his science of life from Kantian organics. Goethe was in search of the actual thing-form of the organism, not the abstract structure of the living thing as mental appearance. His *ur*-phenomenon bears an organic wholeness that is both formal (it has a structured design) and vital (it births itself of its own power at each moment). Kant, however, deprives the organism of its continual, inward–outward becoming by subsuming the organism to law-like mental operations (that is, the rules by which the understanding constructs the appearance of an organism), thereby stripping the living thing of connection to its antecedent, vital unity (Kant 1987). The organic variations with which Goethe was concerned emerge differently. They reveal the outward forms of the *Urphänomen’s Bildung*, or the inner procreative drive to formation that animates all living things. From this, the essence of nature, and hence the object of study for the biologist, is not “nature (already) natured” (*natura naturata*), e.g., nature as pre-determined by natural scientific laws or Kant’s rational laws of the understanding. Rather, nature should be

⁵⁰ Goethe was a contemporary of Kant and a committed interlocutor of “the philosopher,” as Goethe referred to Kant. But he rejected Kant’s rational organics for the reasons just given. Above all, he believed that Kant failed to establish an appropriate science of life *as living*.

⁵¹ Goethe first uses the term morphology in his 1796 notes, although he only uses it in the context of a larger philosophy of biology in his 1817 essay, *Zur Morphologie*. See Goethe 2016.

approached in terms of its “naturing” (*natura naturans*), that is, the active, purposive vitality that continually discloses itself through coordination of the organism’s limbs, structures, and movements.⁵²

In accounting for how there is an *Urphänomen* at all, Goethe posits that at the ground of living nature lies an oppositional tension or polarity, not a single entity (a monistic, material substance, a unifying natural law, or a world-construing subjectivity). The living *Urphänomen* manifests from and as the dialectical equipoise of two principles: a blindly creative will and formal rules that constrain this drive.⁵³ Plants, for example, develop naturally—that is, according to their proper *Bildungstrieb*—when a balanced opposition is achieved between the unbridled drive of natural life and the compensatory limitations that dwell within the plant.⁵⁴

Polarity remains an essential part of the organism’s development throughout its growth. Goethe explains that the organism’s will to formation proceeds as an “intensification” (*Steigerung*) of the dialectical interplay underlying nature’s internal form. This indeed involves a real causality, but it is not the causality of mechanics. Unlike the cause–effect relations that characterize the interactions of billiard balls, the movements of living things represent ordered intensifications of the polarity that is internal to the organism. Importantly, living “parts” (e.g., a plant stem) share not just a relation to other living “parts” (the flower that blooms upon the leaf-stem). As Brady explains on behalf of Goethe, the parts share a relation to the singular “representative whole that is *continually* brought forth [through its many parts]. [The parts represent] an immediate expression of the informing power” that derives from the intensified polarity of the unrestrained will and the organism’s form (Brady 1998, p. 101). The physicality of the organism is alive, self-generating, and spontaneously overflows from a concentrated present that shows itself as behaving through “a flux of continual motion” (Brady 1998, p. 99). “‘Natural system’: a contradictory expression,” Goethe writes. “Nature has no system; and she has—she is—life and development from an unknown centre toward an unknowable periphery” (Goethe 1998, p. 35; quoted in Weik 2017, p. 341). The cause of life is not separate from the immediate transformations presented by the organism, since living beings *are* their becoming.

Largely because of Goethe’s vision of transmutation as evidence of an original life form, some scholars have considered Goethe to be a kind of proto-Darwinian. But what exactly is it that descends and gets modified? In distinguishing their views on this, consider how they understood organisms’ parts in relation to the corresponding “original” life form. Darwin explored the genealogy of successive organisms-in-themselves that could be traced chronologically back to an historical ancestor. All changes of a given plant leaf, for example, were seen to be derived from an earlier existing leaf that evolved through various stages of transformation (Brady 1998, pp. 92, 95). But this does not safeguard the kind of organic wholeness that Goethe envisioned. The leaves of Goethe’s *ur*-plant are irreducible stages of any other leaves; they are not the mere effects of a temporally prior leaf. This is because Goethe’s ancestral plant is not an already formed organism that stands in a linear relation to subsequent plant leaves and other parts. Instead, plant leaves represent spontaneous metamorphoses of a dynamic, formative life-process that continuously generates itself in and through the plant’s appendages. The *ur*-plant as originary life form self-originate not at a single historical moment—in which case, we could exclude its

⁵² In order to demonstrate how the organism discloses itself through limbs, structures, and movements that are coordinated in terms of a vital program, Goethe here borrows Spinoza’s distinction between *natura naturata* (“nature already natured” or determined) and *natura naturans* (“nature in its naturing”). Others (notably, those in the “New Materialism” circle) have since used Spinoza (among others) in order to show how all material processes, including inorganic ones, have their own creativity, agency, and self-organization.

⁵³ In his experiments with color, Goethe demonstrated that the *Urphänomen* of color was not an extra-mental property that could be quantifiably measured in relation to white light. Rather, it is produced in the converging boundary between light and darkness, and hence is itself half-darkness just as much as it bears a degree of lightness. He applies this analysis to living forms. For more on this, see Goethe’s *Theory of Colours* (Goethe 1982).

⁵⁴ Goethe explains that the primal plant comes into being through the dialectical equipoise of a “vertical tendency” (the “inescapable need to grow upward”) and an “horizontal tendency” (“the nourishing, expanding principle that gives solidity to the plant”) (Seamon 1998, p. 4). He further links the polarity in plants to a creative tension between nutritive energies (as pure, unrestrained life force) and the organic form of the primal leaf (with its structuring laws).

primal creativity at other moments or perceive its originality as somehow diminished across moments. Rather, it enacts itself at each moment that the parts manifest any vitality at all. It portrays itself “as alive and active, with its efforts directed from the whole to the parts” and the connection between “the whole” and “the parts” expressing an immediate procreativity (Brady 1998, p. 96).⁵⁵ From this, it would be a mistake to perceive the previous leaf form (e.g., a green leaf during Spring) as the cause of the next (a red leaf during Autumn), as if the existence of the immediately present organism results from something chronologically prior (and hence external) to it. Equally so, it would be a mistake to view the manifold forms of the plant as contradictory or incompatible. Rather, the manifest parts (plant stem, blooming flower on the stem; green leaf, red leaf) uncover what their seeming stillness conceals: the organic wholeness of the *Urphänomen* as a suddenly arising, “constant relation . . . [not] a static particular” (such as an original historical ancestor that uniquely created later organisms in kind) (Brady 1998, p. 106).⁵⁶

Goethe’s organics establishes a more appropriate framework for investigating the Sāṃkhya of the SK than do prevailing interpretations. The reconstruction offered here focuses upon three basic aspects of Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s metaphysics: *prakṛti*, the dualism of *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti*, and *satkāryavāda*. First, a Goethean approach correctly emphasizes that the question of the meaning of living nature is central to the SK. This is evident in the etymology of “*prakṛti*.” The term is cognate with the Latin, “*prōcreātrix*,” and it bears some of the same ambiguities as does the English “procreation” (which itself derives from “*prōcreātrix*”). “*Pra-kṛti*” consists of the prefix “*pra-*” and the abstract noun “*kṛti*.” “*Pra*” is related to the Latin-English prefix “*pro-*” and conveys the sense of “forward,” “forth,” “in front,” “onward,” “before,” “away.” “*Kṛti*” derives from the verbal root, “√*kṛ*” (“to do, make”) and the primary suffix, “*-ti*.” According to Pāṇini, the affixation of “*-ti*” to the verbal root (here: “√*kṛ*”) signifies either the action or a participant in the action (*kāraṇa*)—although the grammatical agent (*karṭṛ*) is excluded from being one of these participants in the action.⁵⁷ Insofar as it denotes a participant in the action, the nominal stem (“*-ti*”) implies a passive meaning, such as when “*prakṛti*” signifies the result of an action, e.g., “procreation” as progeny or that which has been produced. Insofar as “*-ti*” connotes the action itself, “*prakṛti*” (again, much like “procreation”) indicates a “procreating activity,” e.g., “Procreation gives rise to offspring”. This is not unlike the active meaning of “*kṛti*” as “doing,

⁵⁵ Brady elaborates Goethe’s view: all forms of the plant are engaged in “the act of becoming something else . . . [they] emerge as partial and become a disclosure of another sort of form,” such as when one leaf modification gives way to the next (1998, p. 106).

⁵⁶ This distinction between the originary life forms of Darwinian evolution and Goethean morphology is corroborated by Goethe’s warning against a *Gestalt*-based formulation of life. He explains: “The Germans have a word for the complex of existence presented by a physical organism: *Gestalt*. With this expression they exclude what is changeable and assume that an interrelated whole is identified, defined, and fixed in its character. But if we look at all these *Gestalten*, especially the organic ones, we will discover that nothing in them is permanent, nothing is at rest or defined—everything is in a flux of continual motion” (Goethe 2016, p. 979). Ascertaining a living thing in terms of its supposed *Gestalt* renders an identified stage of development into “an abstraction held in arrest by our sensible experience” (Brady 1998, p. 105). This mistakenly implies the organism’s self-completion within the specified phase of growth and obstructs the dynamic interdependence between this and other stages. Darwin’s model indeed represents an advance over Linnaeus’s strong dependence upon permanent structures (in his taxonomic categorization of plants into parts, shapes, and other structural features, as generic characteristics of immutable, natural kinds, species, family, etc.). Nonetheless, a Goethean interpretation suggests that Darwin’s evolutionary study typifies the *Gestalt*-approach. Darwin reifies the so-called historically original form of a given organism. This smuggles into living nature a fixity of representation by stabilizing (and hence, subordinating) the self-manifesting vitality of multiple “derivative” forms in terms of a purported “original,” uniquely self-determining one. The organic variations with which Goethe was concerned emerge differently. They reveal the differing outward expressions of the *Urphänomen* as an animating power that may weaken from one moment to the next but nonetheless continues to overflow from an intensified present, not an ever-receding past. My analysis here is influenced by Brady’s study of Goethean organics and Darwinian evolution (see Darwin 1859; Brady 1998).

⁵⁷ Pāṇini addresses this ambiguity at 3.3.94: “*-ti*” is to be used in the feminine gender as the primary derivational affix to the verb in the sense of the action itself and/or in the sense of a participant in the action other than the agent (*striyām ktin bhāve akartari ca kāraṇe . . . kṛt-pratyaya*). Although this *sūtra*, 3.3.94, merely states “*striyām ktin*,” it can be clarified further by reference to 3.3.18–19. I am grateful to Sthaneshwar Timalisina, David Buchta, and Danielle Cuneo for drawing my attention to these passages and their help in thinking through these passages’ significance for the meaning of “*prakṛti*” (personal communications).

manufacturing, making, creating” (Apte 1998, p. 1282).⁵⁸ As an action noun, *prakṛti* refers not just to that which is procreated but also to that process which itself is “procreating,” a “procreating entity” (e.g., a procreating “organ”), or a “procreatress”—albeit, a procreatress who is not an agent in the customary sense (e.g., a grammatical agent).⁵⁹

This latter meaning, “procreatress,” underscores another association that “*prakṛti*” shares with its Latin cousin, “*prōcreatrix*.” In addition to the meanings given just above, “*prōcreatrix*” connotes “she that brings forth, a mother,” or a “matrix” (cognate with the Latin “*mater, matris*,” and the Sanskrit “*mātr*”) (Lewis 1918, p. 654; Partridge 1966, pp. 1921–22).⁶⁰ This rendering is especially pertinent for two reasons. First, the suffix, “-ti,” is a commonly used feminine stem ending, e.g., “*kṛti*” (“*kṛ*” + “*ti*” = “doing”), “*śruti*” (“*śru*” + “*ti*” = “hearing”), and “*pakti*” (“*pac*” + “*ti*” = “cooking”). From a radically detached philological perspective, the gender signification might seem irrelevant. But the meaning of words is rarely (if ever) born in a vacuum of linguistic abstractions. Words also derive their meaning from their performative context, their cultural situatedness, and indeed, their philosophical overtones (among other things). This is certainly true with respect to “*prakṛti*” and the terminology of the SK and other Sanskrit philosophical texts. That *prakṛti* rests at the heart of Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s metaphysical inquiry, and that this heart should be feminine, is no small coincidence. The broader significance of “*prakṛti*” as feminine stems not just from the authority of grammarians (e.g., Pāṇini), it draws largely from, among other sources, the Śākta literature where the goddess is revered as *prakṛti*. This is certainly evident in the works of historically later Tantric and Purāṇic authors, who deployed this term in view of conveying the feminine potency of nature as a generative matrix—and indeed, these authors frequently associated *prakṛti* with Śakti. Not coincidentally, “*śakti*” evinces the same linguistic structure as does “*prakṛti*”: the verbal root “*śak*” + the affix, “-ti.” No doubt, countless South Asian philosophers deployed the term, *śakti*, precisely because its grammatical features (action noun, feminine gender) had positive devotional, ritual, and philosophical significance. In the case of the SK, this enriched meaning of *prakṛti* as a powerfully feminine procreating entity helps to unify the ambiguous associations of “*prakṛti*” as the procreative activity itself and the procreated result of that act. The linguistic features of *prakṛti* strongly suggest a maternal, self-generating nature (or “naturing”) that spontaneously (since it lacks grammatical agency) manifests as seemingly distinct products of nature’s own fecundity.

Such practical deployments of *prakṛti* have a deep history in South Asia, and the SK’s metaphysical inquiry qua philosophical practice should be situated within this history. This occasions a second consideration of *prakṛti* as a *prōcreatrix*. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, among others, aligns an “original” Sāṃkhya with indigenous Indian belief systems that revered a primordial maternal principle whose reproductive activity manifests as the natural world (Chattopadhyaya 1973, p. 181). Although he does not explicitly claim that early Sāṃkhya was an *organic* materialism (he merely argues that it was a materialism), Chattopadhyaya’s interpretation supports this more nuanced description.⁶¹ “*Prakṛti*”

⁵⁸ There is some scholarly thinking that “*pra-kṛti*” includes “*kṛti*” as a present participle form, hence suggesting “procreating.” While this is philosophically provocative, this interpretation appears to lack substantial philological support. Nevertheless, the meaning of the noun, “*prakṛti*,” is active, which supports the argument presented here and helps to prevent its more sterile connotations elsewhere as static, inert matter.

⁵⁹ Here I borrow Cuneo’s interesting translation of “*prakṛti*” as “procreatress” (personal communications with Cuneo). The Sanskrit “*prakṛtri*” also can be rendered as “procreatress,” although its grammatical construction carries more explicitly agential connotations that Pāṇini disallows for “*prakṛti*.” As for the notion that *prakṛti* could be an organ, this follows from the discussion above. The term *śruti* (formed of the verbal root “*śru*” and the suffix, “-ti”) can refer to both the act of “hearing” and the “ear” (Apte 1998, p. 1577). Similarly, the meaning of “*prakṛti*” as “*pra*” + *kṛti*” includes both the act of procreating and the organ or instrument of procreating (since this organ is one among other participants in the procreative act, and yet it is not the grammatical agent).

⁶⁰ Although the term matrix typically conjures up more recent meanings of “matrix” as some sort of mathematical organizational structure, it originally indicated “mother” (“*mater*”), “breeding female” (Latin), and “womb” (Middle English). These associations are found in the Sanskrit term for mother, “*mātr*” (Partridge 1966, pp. 1921–22).

⁶¹ Sonali Bhatt Marwaha oddly refers to Chattopadhyaya’s characterization of Sāṃkhya as one of “reductive materialism” (2013, p. 195). She uses this characterization in explicit reference to Larson’s interpretation of Sāṃkhya, doing so presumably in order to legitimate her interpretation by appealing to an influential reading of the Sāṃkhya system. However, this “reductive materialist” characterization (which she only gives once in the paper) is inconsistent with the rest of her otherwise very

originally conveyed something that was neither dead, nor inert, nor a mere object of metaphysical speculation and human control; it did not imply “nature natured” (*natura naturata*), as it does in the modern reading of Sāṃkhya. Rather, “*prakṛti*” denoted the self-ordering, living cosmos, and its vitality was seen to reveal itself as the constantly unfolding, psycho-physical universe (or “nature naturing” [*naturata naturans*], as Goethe terms it). I believe that essential features of this conception of *prakṛti* are retained in the SK. Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s “*prakṛti*” connotes the subtle power of natural life, a self-sufficient principle of maternal creativity that underlies—and indeed, gives body to—the life-begetting activity of nature.⁶² Since the “transformations of primeval matter [*prakṛti*]” are not different than the *prōcreatrix* itself, the results of *prakṛtic* activity are governed by their own “natural laws” (albeit, not the mechanistic laws of modern science); they require no spiritual principle or super-agent (e.g., an omnipotent self or God) (Marwaha 2013, p. 193). In other words, *prakṛti* as a procreating entity (which includes the action, the result of the action, and other participants in the activity besides the grammatical subject) does not depend upon an agent (in keeping with Pāṇini’s philological point). (She is empty of “I,” as it were.) Early Sāṃkhya was principally concerned with the disclosure of this “ultimate female principle” that dwells within all things, including one’s own body, and the Sāṃkhya of the SK followed suit (Marwaha 2013, p. 184).

These considerations suggest that, instead of exploring the nature of being and associated themes (e.g., “*mūlaprakṛti*” as “an undifferentiated plenitude of being,” as Larson terms it [1969, p. 201]), Īśvarakṛṣṇa continued a typically Tantric-Sāṃkhyan inquiry: “why is there procreativity instead of infertility?”, and “what is the purpose or meaning of procreativity’s manifestation?” This is quite unlike what modern scholars have in view when they take Sāṃkhya’s *prakṛti* to be an inanimate material that is unable to reproduce, move, or manufacture itself. Left to themselves, merely physical things sit, sink, and submerge—like the clay that bears only the static weight of materiality but not the onward-making impetus (the *pra-kṛti*) for a particular form. Not coincidentally, Īśvarakṛṣṇa never appeals to the clay-pot-potter analogy (or any other image of inorganic matter) in order to illustrate the nature of *prakṛti*. That this analogy was widely deployed in Indian texts (including later Sāṃkhya commentaries) suggests that Īśvarakṛṣṇa was aware of its availability but, not unlike early Sāṃkhyans, deliberately used organic images instead (and indeed, images that evoke a *prōcreatrix*)—such as at *kārikās* 39–43, where he speaks of *prakṛti*’s unfurling as an embryo born of “mother and father” (*mātāpitṛjāh*, SK 39), or at *kārikā* 57, which likens the “profusion” of *mūlaprakṛti* to the nourishing “profusion of unknowing milk” (*kṣīrasya pravṛtṭiḥ ajñāsya*).⁶³ *Prakṛti* in the SK is alive and life-giving, like the sap of plants or the milk secreted by a baby’s mother. As organic nature, *prakṛti* is never divorced from its animating power, contrary to prevailing interpretations.

A Goethean interpretation corrects our understanding of the ground of this informing potency by re-envisioning Sāṃkhya dualism as a creative oppositional tension, not one involving a detached yet intentional subject (e.g., a Cartesian ego or Newtonian scientist) and a lifeless yet natural world-in-itself. Recall that, as noted above, the SK separates out two distinct categories within the concept of “*prakṛti*.” We can now translate these categories in terms of the theme of procreativity: “*mūla-prakṛti*” or “root-procreativity” and “*vyakta-prakṛti*” or “manifest procreativity.” *Mūlaprakṛti* corresponds to the first of Goethe’s polarities: the unbridled creative energy that is necessary for things to emerge but in and of itself cannot beget anything because it lacks intention, an objective, or what Goethe identifies as

persuasive study of materialism in early Sāṃkhya—which really implies an organic materialism, not material qua inert, lifeless matter.

⁶² Borrowing from B. N. Seal, Marwaha refers to *prakṛti* as “a positive principle based on the conservation, the transformation, and the dissipation of energy” (Seal 1915, p. 251; quoted in Marwaha 2013, p. 186).

⁶³ Simon Brodbeck observes similar organicist connections (even portraying *vyaktaprakṛti* as an embryo) in pre-*kārikā* texts that deploy Sāṃkhya categories. He writes: “The end and re-beginning of the cyclic cosmos (on which we see *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 4.1, with *śakti* as the female; *Bhagavadgītā* 8.17-19) matches the death of one body and *ātman*’s taking another. The ‘evolutionary’ cosmic model, whereby the material principle is gradually ‘unpacked’, fits the sexual model: the fertilized egg/foetus develops and grows. The four sets of five in the *sāṃkhya tattva*-lists are like fingers and toes” (Brodbeck 2007, p. 169, n. 36).

a form that could provide direction. Admittedly, the *puruṣa* is not equivalent to the second of Goethe's two principles; it does not represent or contribute the form that guides raw creativity. Nevertheless, Goethe's polarity thesis elucidates the role of *puruṣa* in generating *vyaktaprakṛti*. According to this reading, manifest procreativity emerges from the tensional polarity between root-procreativity and pure, nonintentional consciousness. *Mūlaprakṛti* is the "foundation" of *vyaktaprakṛti* insofar as it secures its "root" or "bottom" ("*mūla*"), while *puruṣa* represents the opposing pole—one that effects a counterposing lift or levitation, as it were. Both principles transcend manifest reality; they are always already present by virtue of their absence. Īśvarakṛṣṇa implies this at SK 21, where he writes that creation occurs (*kr̥ta-sarga*) for two purposes (*artha*) that have yet to be realized in empirical life: the purpose of isolating *puruṣa* (*puruṣasya kaivalyārtham*) and the purpose of seeing *mūlaprakṛti* (*pradhānasya darśanārtham*), both of which cannot be ordinarily perceived because they transcend space and time.⁶⁴

This does not wholly deny the common translation of *mūlaprakṛti* as "primal matter" or "fundamental nature." But it specifies that this "matter" or "nature" is alive, potent, and forward-moving (albeit, it bursts forward without a sense of direction due to its lack of sight). Furthermore, while root-procreativity participates in the emergence and sustenance of *vyaktaprakṛti* as its grounding life force, it does not comprise the lone source of manifest procreativity. This extends another Goethean insight. That which *vyaktaprakṛti* manifests (*vyakta*) as a procreating (*prakṛti*) is not a blind urge. Rather, it exhibits the dynamic interplay between polar life forces: *mūlaprakṛti* and *puruṣa*. SK 21 highlights this. *Vyaktaprakṛti* represents the self-manifestation not of *mūlaprakṛti* but of the *saṃyoga* of *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti*. Other passages in the text support this reading. Recall *kārikā* 39's use of the metaphor of the human embryo for *prakṛti*. Just as the embryo depends upon a mother and a father (*mātāpitṛjāḥ*) who can fertilize the mother-to-be's egg, so too does the manifestation of procreativity (*vyaktaprakṛti*) require the consummation of a coming together (*saṃ-yoga*) of maternal "root-pröcreatrix" (f.) and male *puruṣa* (m.).⁶⁵ Creation results from a kind of alchemical reaction involving a balanced opposition between gendered principles. This polarity thesis offers an important corrective to prevailing explanations of Sāṃkhya dualism. The *puruṣa-mūlaprakṛti* dichotomy is nothing like what modern philosophers and scientists mean by a subject–object duality. It rather denotes a fertile friction. *Puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* are underlying poles of a genesis linked together by a tensional polarity whose dialectical interplay begets the living phenomenon (*vyaktaprakṛti*). Īśvarakṛṣṇa highlights this at SK 20: "The non-conscious subtle body (*liṅgam*), as if conscious, comes to life (*bhavati*) owing to the compresence (*saṃyogāt*) of those two (*tat*) [*puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti*]." ⁶⁶ The subtle body (the "*liṅgam*," here synonymous with *vyaktaprakṛti*) manifests "as if conscious" and "comes to life" due to "the compresence" of "that" (*tat*), namely, *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti*. The usage of "*tat*" is significant.

⁶⁴ *Mūlaprakṛti*'s transcendence comes from below, i.e., from "*mūla*" as the "root," "foundation," or "the bottom" of *vyaktaprakṛti*. Its self-concealment owes to its resting submerged just beneath the surface of the field of experience. In this respect, *mūlaprakṛti* is characterized by a certain *gravitas*: a force or potency that pulls downward into a gravitational epicenter. Nonetheless, this ubiquitous power cannot be perceived directly; *mūlaprakṛti* is known only through its effecting things of weight. *Puruṣa*, meanwhile, transcends *vyaktaprakṛti* from above. Many of the world's religions, Indo-European ones especially, deploy motifs of levitation and lightness in order to convey the otherworldliness of a pure, ethereal self. This holds for Sāṃkhya as well. The SK comprises part of a long and rich history of nuanced Sāṃkhya usages of "*puruṣa*" as a cosmic, spiritual essence that is detached from worldly affairs. Burley makes the suitable comparison between the *puruṣa* and Wittgenstein's "philosophical self" or "metaphysical subject," which is "not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather . . . the limit of the world—not a part of it" (Wittgenstein 1974, p. 70 [5.641]; quoted in Burley 2007, p. 148). Each individual *puruṣa* passively observes the happenings of space and time from a periphery that demarcates *vyaktaprakṛti* just as it recedes from it. But going beyond other formulations of a transcendental consciousness (e.g., Wittgenstein, Husserl), Sāṃkhya's *puruṣa* represents more than just an outsider peering into an arena of experience. The SK makes the *puruṣa* into a metaphysical principle that counterposes *mūlaprakṛti*. The *puruṣa* denotes a kind of lifting force that extends *vyaktaprakṛti* in an upward direction through its positive resistance to the rooting of *mūlaprakṛti*.

⁶⁵ Just above I referenced SK 39's account of how *vyaktaprakṛti* unfurls as the fertilized seed of "mother and father" (*mātāpitṛjāḥ*). This exemplifies what Marwaha calls a "genealogical cosmogony": the universe was produced, she writes, "by sexual urge (*kāma*) . . . born of the female (*vamobhāva*) and as the result of her union with the male" (Marwaha 2013, p. 182). Here Marwaha is elaborating on Chattopadhyaya's view.

⁶⁶ SK 20: "*tasmāt tatsaṃyogādacetanaṃ cetanāvādīva liṅgam | guṇakartṛtve ca tathā karteva bhavatyudāsīnah.*"

By grammatically subordinating *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* to *saṃyoga* in a genitive *tat-puruṣa* compound (i.e., “the compresence of witness consciousness and root-procreativity”), the *kārikā* highlights *saṃyoga*’s ontological immediacy with respect to *vyaktaparakṛti* (“*liṅgam*”). It establishes compresence as that which not only holds together *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* in a procreative relation, but also that which mediates the relationship between, on the one hand, *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* as inadvertent parents (as it were), and on the other hand, *vyaktaparakṛti* as the “procreativity made manifest” (i.e., the result of the procreating activity). Importantly, this verse appears just prior to passage 21’s explanation that the *puruṣa* or *mūlaprakṛti* cannot give birth alone, since they bear neither the desire nor the design to produce anything in particular. *Puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* are fundamental principles, and *saṃyoga* represents the conjoining of these two forces in a dynamic, life-giving interchange.

From this, we can respond to the two puzzles noted above and reformulate the Sāṃkhya doctrine that the effect exists in its cause (*satkāryavāda*). The first involves the dilemma of the plurality of *puruṣas* and the singularity of a metaphysically autonomous, fused *prakṛti* (nature as a consciousness-independent world-in-itself) whose manifestation (*vyakta*) ceases upon one person’s attaining *kaivalya*. In responding to this, I first note that in Chattopadhyaya’s view, pre-Vedic Sāṃkhya viewed the workings of nature (*prakṛti*) through a unified “agriculture-human fertility concept”: it perceived “the human body and nature as two aspects of the same fundamental reality . . . in the form of [organic] matter” (Marwaha 2013, p. 182; Chattopadhyaya 1973, p. 333). Īśvarakṛṣṇa deviates from this earlier view insofar as he does not offer a cosmology. Instead, he provides something that is strikingly proximate to Goethe’s organics: a phenomenological account of how a dynamic, dialogically structured *saṃyoga* manifests as a numerically singular organism—specifically, a human organism. Just as there are multiple *puruṣas*, so too are there multiple *vyaktaparakṛtis* (or manifestations of human-like procreativity). Since each “manifest procreating entity” is generated from a particular *saṃyoga* (of *mūlaprakṛti* and a corresponding *puruṣa*), then each *vyaktaparakṛti* represents the dialectically ordered, animate naturing that flows through the given living organism. The metaphysics of the SK thus continues the spirit of early Sāṃkhya: *vyaktaparakṛti* is a living, life-giving *Urpḥänomen* that represents a microcosm of the greater universe.⁶⁷ This opens up a reply to the first puzzle. One organism’s realization of *kaivalya* entails the dissolution of only its own lived reality, not that of another.

Having established that *vyaktaparakṛti* discloses the informing, vital power of *saṃyoga* (not *mūlaprakṛti* or the *puruṣa*), *satkāryavāda* can now be construed in terms of the spontaneous, organic intensification of *saṃyoga* as polarity. In contrast with unseeing *mūlaprakṛti* and impotent *puruṣa*, *vyaktaparakṛti* is a processual, well-coordinated power. Moreover, its forward-focused, vital design is inscribed within *saṃyoga*’s own “thing-form” (as Goethe would call it)—a “thing” insofar as it really exists (*vyaktaparakṛti* is not illusory or merely mental), and a “form” insofar as it bears a dialectical structure (involving two polarized principles).⁶⁸ Accordingly, *vyaktaparakṛti* unfurls its organic wholeness through an on-going, internally coordinated series of configurations (*tattvas*) that transmutate “out of each other [and] . . . into each other” (Goethe 1840, p. 71; quoted in Weik 2017, p. 342).

Larson captures some of this in his rendering of *kārikā* 22: “From [*mūla*-]*prakṛti* (emerges) the great one (*mahat* [or *buddhi*]); from that (comes) self-awareness (*ahaṃkāra*); from that (comes) the group of 16” (1969, p. 262).⁶⁹ This translation describes how various forms or “parts” sequentially follow after each other (e.g., the *ahaṃkāra* succeeds *mahat*). However, it is not the case that the wholeness of *vyaktaparakṛti* derives from its parts—as if the manifest *tattvas* are irreducible pieces (e.g., wheels,

⁶⁷ Notably, the cosmos in the “original” Sāṃkhya was not a cosmic man (as depicted in the *Puruṣa Sūkta*) but a fertile mother. We find this here as well: *vyaktaparakṛti* denotes the manifestation of the feminine procreatress (not to be confused with root-procreativity, and certainly not representing the self-manifestation of a cosmic *puruṣa*).

⁶⁸ To make this claim more precise, it is not the case that the dialectical form of *vyaktaparakṛti* is inscribed within *mūlaprakṛti* or the *puruṣa*, with one of these duads subsequently incorporating its other.

⁶⁹ SK 22: “*prakṛtermahāmstato’haṃkārastasmād ganaśca ṣoḍaśakah | tasmādapi ṣoḍaśakāt pañcabhyaḥ pañca bhūtāni.*”

reins, a frame, an axle) that pre-exist the whole (a chariot) and, when assembled together in the right way, give the appearance of a composite whole.⁷⁰ Rather, the wholeness of *vyaktaprakṛti* is organic, and this part-antecedent, inner unity is what is revealed through the activity or manifestation of the created (*vikṛtic*) *tattvas*. That is to say, *mahat*, the *ahaṅkāra*, etc., and their ordered unfolding express a primordial informing power; they do not express themselves as participants that are separate from or only extrinsically related to the procreating activity. This gets overlooked in Larson's translation and commentary (just as it gets overlooked in customary readings of the SK), and this neglect stems from his modern scientific biases, namely, mereology, matter as bereft of vitality, etc.

A Goethean interpretation of *satkāryavāda* features what the standard reading cannot: the connection between *vyaktaprakṛti*'s productive power and its processual form. My own translation of SK 22 attempts to relate this: "Of [the nature of] procreativity (*prakṛteḥ*) there is the great one (*mahāṃs*), from that there is the *ahaṅkāra*, from that there is the body of 16, while from five of those 16 [i.e., from the five subtle elements] there are the five gross elements." Each *tattva* (e.g., the *ahaṅkāra*) represents not just a transformation or re-configuration of the previous *tattva* (the *mahat-buddhi*), it represents the effect (*kārya*) of *saṃyoga*'s procreative intensified presence (*sat*).⁷¹ "*Vyakta-pra-kṛti*" thus makes "manifest" the "forward-procreating" of the *mūlaprakṛti-puruṣa* polarity, a disclosure that spontaneously generates life from an overflowing vital intensity. Indeed, *mūlaprakṛti* conceived as inert matter cannot turn itself inward-outward; lifeless things are unable to enact *pra-vṛtti* ("forward-turning") because they lack the intentionality, design, or fertility that would inform their so-called "*prakṛti*." But organic nature does exhibit this capacity as a feature of its self-development (*bildung*). In fact, living things (*vyaktaprakṛtis*) display this manifestation of procreativity relentlessly, even disclosing shapes and forms that only *seem* to contradict temporally prior shapes and forms, such as when a green leaf appears to transform into a red leaf. From the perspective of Goethean organics, cause-effect relations in Sāṃkhya metaphysics do not portray one empirical form (e.g., the *mahat-buddhi*) changing into another empirical form (the *ahaṅkāra*). Rather, they disclose *vyaktaprakṛti* qua the *Urphänomen* that metamorphosizes from one *vikṛtic tattva* to the next. The empirical *tattvas* are the constant but organized becoming of *vyaktaprakṛti* ("manifest procreating").

In developing this point, recall the second puzzle that undermines the prevailing modern interpretation of the SK. As per this reading, *prakṛti* is a unified *mūlaprakṛti-vyaktaprakṛti* that evolves from one *tattva* to the next, and with each stage of evolution (e.g., from *mūlaprakṛti* to the *mahat-buddhi*, from the *mahat-buddhi* to the *ahaṅkāra*, etc.) there occurs a steady diminishing of *sattva* and an increase of *rajas* and *tamas*. But while this pattern does hold amongst relations between the empirical *tattvas*, upon closer inspection it does not hold for the transition from *mūlaprakṛti* to the *mahat-buddhi*. Not coincidentally, scholars widely mistranslate *kārikā* 22 to connote that the *mahat-buddhi* derives from *mūlaprakṛti* by way of material causation.⁷² But *mūlaprakṛti* is not referred to in this passage—only *prakṛti* is. And as explained above, it cannot be the case that *vyaktaprakṛti* emerges from *mūlaprakṛti* through material causal succession. Goethe's account of causation—along with my Goethean-informed translation of the SK—offers a corrective to both the puzzle of the *guṇas* and the meaning of "*prakṛti*" at the start of verse 22. Consider that *saṃyoga* is inextricably linked to space and time, and hence it can causally support *vyaktaprakṛti* through its continual intensification. The compresence of *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* has a beginning point (the coming together of two principles that were previously not

⁷⁰ Though there are some striking philosophical parallels and a deep historical connection between Buddhism and Sāṃkhya, Īśvarakṛṣṇa does not subscribe to the mereological thinking of Abhidharma. [Osto 2018](#) explores some interesting themes at the intersection of Classical Sāṃkhya and Theravāda, but the topic of part-whole relations (so far as it concerns Sāṃkhya and Buddhism) is not discussed here or in any other research literature, to my knowledge.

⁷¹ This does not forgo that *mūlaprakṛti* is a cause in the broad sense of the term: it participates in or contributes to the emergence of *vyaktaprakṛti* in some way. But modern scientific-based models of causality (material, efficient, final) cannot capture this.

⁷² The first word in SK 22 is *prakṛti*. In his commentary on this verse, Larson makes it clear that "*prakṛti*" should be taken to mean "*mūlaprakṛti*." He explains that it is *mūlaprakṛti* that "undergo[es] transformation or modification [and] issues in the manifest world" (1969a, p. 173).

in proximity to each other); it carries a long history of many lives; and *saṃyoga* will cease upon the realization of *kaivalya*, although *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* will persist (SK 68).

This view is supported by the apposition of “*saṃyoga*” and “*kr̥ta-sarga*” at SK 21: “creation (*sargaḥ*) takes place (*kr̥taḥ*) thusly as the compresence (*saṃyogaḥ*).” “*Kṛta-sarga*” here is equivalent to *vyaktaprakṛti*, which implies an additional correspondence between *saṃyoga* and *vyaktaprakṛti* (i.e., it is equally true that *vyaktaprakṛti* “takes place thusly as the compresence”). The connotations of “*sarga*” give clues to why Īśvarakṛṣṇa links together these concepts. The term *sarga* means the “creation,” “begetting,” or “procreation” of “nature” or “the universe” (Apte 1998, p. 1655; Monier-Williams 1899, p. 1040). Additional meanings include: “rush, onset, advance (of troops)”; “stream, gush, rush, or downpour (of a fluid)” (Apte 1998, p. 1655); “origin”; “a created being; offspring” (Monier-Williams 1899, p. 1040). This is confirmed by “*sarga*”’s own verbal root, “√*srj*”: “to create, produce, make; to procreate, beget; to emit, shed, effuse, pour forth or out” (Apte 1998, p. 1701). From this, we can understand manifest procreation (*vyaktaprakṛti*) to be an “emission” or “effusion” that “rises up” from a “source” (all meanings of “*sarga*”)—or as Burley interestingly puts it, “*sarga*” connotes a “surging forth,” “rising up,” or a “swelling” (2007, p. 112).⁷³ The grammatical parallel of *saṃyoga* and the *kr̥ta-sarga* at *kārikā* 21 widens these meanings and extends the interpretation of *satkāryavāda* as a doctrine of “intensification.” The creation, production, or procreation indicated by “*sarga*” involves an outpouring or swelling of the oppositional tension that “takes place thusly as the compresence (*saṃyoga*)” (SK 21). Exploring the intimate association between “*vyaktaprakṛti*” and “*sarga*” thereby gives further nuance to how, according to Īśvarakṛṣṇa, cause (“origin”), activity (“begetting”), and effect (“offspring”) are unified in a natural causal process.

Satkāryavāda can now be seen as encompassing two distinct but related meanings of causation, and this pertains to completing a response to the puzzle of the *guṇas*. Within the domain of experienced reality—that is, within the field of succession that includes a dwindling of *sattva* and an amplification of *rajas* and *tamas*—causation can be understood in terms of a “manifesting,” “transforming,” or “swelling” in the sense of “B” surges forth from “A” as its temporally prior source. SK 22 utilizes a typical meaning construction of the ablative case in order to specify those manifest *tattvas* that bear the power of procreation (or the ability to surge forth) (namely, the *mahat-buddhi*, the *ahaṃkāra*, the five *tanmātras*) and then displays these *prakṛtic* categories in a series. If we interpret these various forms of *vyaktaprakṛti* as changes in inanimate nature or inert matter, then the newly produced effect loses its essential identity (i.e., when the *mahat-buddhi* gives way to the *ahaṃkāra*, it is no longer the *mahat-buddhi*). Even a biological model can deprive *vyaktaprakṛti* of its procreativity, such as in the case of a Darwinian account wherein the *tattvas* would be seen to evolve from an historical ancestor. This is because, if *satkāryavāda* is understood solely in terms of an advance from one empirical form to the next, then manifest procreativity remains bereft of (or at least, diminished with respect to) the power that would enable it to sustain its identity, continuity, or unity across moments of transformation. In other words, the modern scientific reading of the SK only allows difference to show itself across change, and hence already prevents nature from exhibiting the capacity to assume distinct forms without ceasing to be itself. In order to rectify this misunderstanding, my interpretation of SK 22 excludes the transition from *mūlaprakṛti* to the *mahat-buddhi* as part of this succession, and instead it opens with a clarification: “Of [the nature of] procreativity (*prakṛteh*).” All of the *tattvas* mentioned here (the *mahat-buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra*, etc.) bear a particular kind of causal power, namely, the causal-generative potency of *prakṛti* qua *prōcreatrix*.⁷⁴ *Kārikā* 21’s implication that manifest reality is a surging forth (*sarga*)

⁷³ Burley points to Partridge 1966, p. 683, and contends that “*sarga*” may be cognate with the English “surge,” which derives from the Latin “*surgere*” (“to rise up, swell, arrive”) (Burley 2007, p. 112). These terms are certainly equivalent in sound, but deeper etymological connections are difficult to corroborate. In any case, relating the meaning of “*sarga*” in terms of “surge” is philosophically revealing.

⁷⁴ Cross-referencing passage 22 against others in the text supports this claim. As SK 3 relates, the *tattvas* fall into four broad categories: (1) that which is procreative but is not itself created (“*avikṛtīḥ*”), which includes only *mūlaprakṛti*; (2) that which is procreative and created (“*prakṛtīvikṛtayah*”), including “the seven” (“*sapta*”): *mahat-buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra*, and the five *tanmātras*;

bolsters this point. Cause and effect are not ontologically distinct entities or life forms that are tenuously connected by similarity, e.g., “the green leaf changed into a red leaf,” whereby the subsequent leaf represents the effect that replaces (and resembles) the prior leaf as cause. Rather, the appearance of the two as distinct (though related) leaves discloses the well-coordinated swell of vital intensity that is the *ur-plant*. Seemingly contradictory life forms are thus taken as “A” (*vyaktaprakṛti*) manifesting as “B” (*mahat-buddhi*), “A” (*vyaktaprakṛti*) manifesting as “C” (*ahaṃkāra*), and so on.⁷⁵ These manifestations of the living phenomenon (*vyaktaprakṛti*) that can be ordered in a temporal succession (e.g., green leaf and red leaf, or *mahat-buddhi* and *ahaṃkāra*) are nothing more than the surging emissions of a playful procreatress that loves to hide “in broad daylight,” as Goethe aptly comments (quoted in Hadot 2006, p. 375).⁷⁶

5. Why Non-Dual Kashmir Śaivas Misread the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā*

I believe that a Goethean reading of the SK not only remedies the misunderstandings induced by modern scholarly interpretations, it enables a viable rejoinder to the Pratyabhijñā critique. Recall that Utpala and Abhinava dispute *prakṛti*'s capacity to maintain itself across varying manifestations (“*abhivoyakti*” or the “*vyakta*” of *vyaktaprakṛti*), just as a square “ceases to be a square” once it loses one of its sides and becomes a triangle (Ratié 2014, p. 154). Where *Sāṃkhya* fails to explain how material nature bears the power (*śakti*) to appear as a multitude of shapes and forms, non-dual Śaivas posit consciousness as that which unifies manifestation and power.⁷⁷ However, it bears noting that Utpala and Abhinava envision *Sāṃkhya*—including Īśvarakṛṣṇa's doctrine—in terms that are not dissimilar to the version typically offered by modern scholars: “*prakṛti*” denotes mere matter or inert nature; material reality (*prakṛti*) is the fundamental duad to the *puruṣa*; and *mūlaprakṛti* stands as the material cause of its own manifestation qua *vyaktaprakṛti* (with the *puruṣa* obscurely theorized as a pseudo-efficient cause or illuminating light). In order to counter this interpretation, I have focused my attention upon the *Sāṃkhya* of the SK and claimed that (1) its metaphysics is a phenomenology of living nature, (2) its dualism connotes an oppositional tension between two polar life forces (*puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti*—not *prakṛti* at large), and (3) *vyaktaprakṛti* does not depend on the causal-creative intentionality of either

(3) that which is not procreative but is still created (*vikārah na prakṛtiḥ*), which includes “the 16” (*ṣoḍaśakah*): *manas*, the 10 *indriyas*, and the five *mahābhūtas*; and (4) that which is neither procreative nor created, including only *puruṣa*. Karika 3's attention to group (2) is especially important for understanding SK 22. The same “seven” (and only these seven) *tattvas* of the second category are indicated in verse 22, and they are again mentioned in association with their procreative powers. My rendering of “*prakṛteḥ*” in the genitive case captures this: amongst the manifest *tattvas*, only *mahat-buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra*, and the five *tanmātras* are “of the nature of procreativity (*prakṛteḥ*).” This is not an anomaly. The grouping of “the seven” by virtue of their *prakṛtic* prowess occurs elsewhere in the text. SK 8, for example, relates that the seven *tattvas* of passage 3 share the “same procreative nature” (“*prakṛtisarūpaṃ*”) as *mūlaprakṛti*, while the other *vikṛtic* *tattvas* (i.e., the group of sixteen) do not. SK 9 continues by linking “*prakṛti*” to the doctrine of *satkāryavāda*: the effect (*kārya*) is “of the [same] nature as the cause” (“*kāraṇa-bhāvāt*”). This gives important clues to the kind of cause–effect relation that is at stake between *mūlaprakṛti* and *vyaktaprakṛti*, particularly at SK 22, and it does so within the broader context of *saṃyoga*'s dynamic intensity. Rather than comprising part of an unbroken series of ablative-declined terms that connote successive material causations (with the final cause or *telos* latent within *mūlaprakṛti* as “fundamental matter”), “*prakṛteḥ*” indicates that procreativity is a basic feature that these seven *tattvas* inherit from *mūlaprakṛti* (by way of a kind of genetic trait inheritance).

⁷⁵ To give another example: a caterpillar does not cease to be what it essentially is when it transforms into a butterfly (that is, when a butterfly manifests *from* or *as* a caterpillar).

⁷⁶ In keeping with many scientists, poets, and philosophers before him in the history of Western studies of nature, Goethe often comments on Heraclitus' cryptic observation that “Nature loves to hide.” For more on this theme, see Hadot 2006. Heraclitus and Goethe occupy a central place in Hadot's study.

⁷⁷ Ratié tells us that Abhinavagupta “emphasizes that the main goal of the nondualist Śaivas in appropriating the *Sāṃkhya satkāryavāda* is to show that the relationship between the *Sāṃkhya* notions of potentiality (*śakti*) and manifestation (*vyakti/abhivoyakti*) can only make sense if they are interpreted along Śaiva non-dualistic lines” (2014, p. 166). She then cites Abhinava's IPVV: “Therefore it is only in the doctrine of the non-duality [of everything with] consciousness (*cidadvayavāda*), [i.e.,] if one acknowledges that all entities consist in reflections (*pratibimba*) in the mirror of consciousness, that the distinction between potentiality (*śakti*) and manifestation (*vyakti*) becomes possible, [since this distinction is then understood as] having as its real nature the acts of folding (*nimeṣana*) and unfolding (*unmeṣaṇa*) [through which consciousness conceals and manifests its nature and] which take [infinitely] variegated appearances (*citṛita*) thanks to the power of consciousness—and not otherwise” (*tasmāc cidadvayavāda eva saṃviddarpanapratibimbarūpebhāvōkalāpe' bhyupagamyamāne śaktivyaktivibhāgaḥ saṃvicchakticitritanimeṣaṇonmeṣaṇaparamārtha upapadyate, nānyathā*) (Shastri 1938–1943, pp. 312–13).

mūlaprakṛti as material cause or *puruṣa* as efficient cause, but instead reveals the spontaneous, organic intensification of the two in compresence (*saṃyoga*). I believe that this reformulation of *prakṛti*, Sāṃkhya dualism, and *satkāryavāda* adequately defends at least the SK against the Pratyabhijñā attack. *Prakṛti* is the procreativity or vital power of living nature. *Vyaktaparakṛti* represents nature in its own purposive naturing; *vyaktaparakṛti* is procreativity made manifest as an internally designed, forward-directed, living organism. The underlying, informing power that this living *ur*-phenomenon manifests (through its naturing) is neither blind procreativity nor an impotent consciousness but the dialectical opposition between them. *Vyaktaparakṛti*'s "parts," meanwhile, are expressions of the self-same organic wholeness—an antecedent vital unity that relentlessly swells, expands, and pours forth (as *sarga*) in various shapes and forms. This involves nothing like the causal models to which modern interpreters and Śaiva interlocutors appeal in their renditions of Sāṃkhya.

Ironically, this rejuvenated *vyaktaparakṛti* exhibits some of the very same features highlighted by Utpala and Abhinava in their account of Śiva consciousness. In both frameworks, the various manifestations that arise within phenomenal reality express an informing potency whose design is inherently dialogical—and at that, a dialogue marked by gendered poles. We can thus appropriate Ratié's description of Śiva consciousness for depicting manifest procreativity: "*śakti* and *abhivṛtyakti* are only two different aspects of the same reality: the pure dynamism of [*vyaktaparakṛti*]" (my own brackets; 2014, p. 168).⁷⁸ Manifestation consists in the fact of living nature's autopoiesis. This is indicated by the compound term, "*vyakta-prakṛti*": manifestation (*vyakta*) and creative power (*prakṛti*) are not separate, but are already fused together in nature's naturing. Manifest reality is the causal power of nature's procreative intentionality disclosing itself from within to without in each and all of its diverse manifestations, as well as across its sequenced development. Irreducible to its contents, *vyaktaparakṛti* represents a unified procreating entity that wills its own transmutation in the form of a generative organic process. As evidenced in the strengthening and wilting of the *ur*-plant, or the change from yellow to green to brown colored leaves, *vyaktaparakṛti* qua living *ur*-phenomenon "is capable of assuming differentiation [while remaining] undifferentiated"—not unlike Śiva consciousness (Shastri and Shastri 1918–1921, p. 178; quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 156).

This rearticulation of Sāṃkhya materialism as an organicism satisfies the demands of Utpala's and Abhinava's dilemma, and it does so without adhering to Śaiva metaphysical and theological assumptions. It is true that Sāṃkhya's *vyaktaparakṛti* is not consciousness or an emanation of consciousness (*puruṣa*), as non-dual Kashmir Śaivas point out. But contrary to Pratyabhijñā assertions, *vyaktaparakṛti* is not an extension of inanimate matter or even raw procreative power, and it certainly is not devoid of agency. Though *vyaktaparakṛti* is not a self, "I," or super-agent (a cosmic *Puruṣa* or Śiva), its manifesting power nonetheless exhibits agential-like capacities that non-dual Śaivas reserve only for consciousness—since indeed, organic nature "can take an infinite variety of forms that are incompatible with each other without ceasing to exist as [itself]" (Ratié 2014, p. 155). Based on Ratié's account, let us suppose that the non-dualist Śaivas concede that it is possible for some agency or quasi-agency besides consciousness to manifest things by assuming their various forms. Even then, Utpala and Abhinava counter, "the main problem inherent in the Sāṃkhya theory of causality is its wrong representation of manifestation: manifestation can only occur if the manifesting and the manifested entity are not distinct" (Ratié 2014, p. 155). Although the reductive materialist rendition of Sāṃkhya struggles to defend itself against this charge, the Goethean organics version does not. *Vyaktaparakṛti* qua self-manifesting, living nature includes nature's own naturing activity (i.e., the *ur*-plant enacting its drive to formation) and the created forms themselves (the axil, the petiole, the veins of the leaf blade, etc.). I have further supported

⁷⁸ The whole quotation from Ratié is as follows: "The Sāṃkhya/Saiddhāntika notion of potentiality (*śakti*) thus gets filled with a completely different meaning: it no longer designates a latent, unmanifest and passive state, but rather, the ever manifest power that consciousness has of concealing itself while remaining manifest—a power that eventually is just another way for consciousness of manifesting itself, so that for the nondualist Śaivas, *śakti* and *abhivṛtyakti* are only two different aspects of the same reality: the pure dynamism of consciousness" (2014, p. 168).

this argument through philological analysis of the feminine “-ti” stem ending of the active noun, *prakṛti*. This equally applies to *vyaktaprakṛti* as both the act of manifest procreating (or procreativity manifesting itself) and the result of this activity, namely, procreation made manifest. The manifestation of *prakṛti* thus differentiates itself as active manifesting and manifested entity while remaining undifferentiated as the dynamic *prōcreatrix* continually engaged in recreation.

In staging their inter-scholastic debate with Sāṃkhya, Utpala’s and Abhinava’s goal was to “achieve [a] complete reversal of meaning of the *satkāryavāda* principle” and thereby prove the agency of consciousness as the ground of manifest reality (Ratié 2014, p. 129). This exchange was fruitful—at least for non-dual Śaivism. It helped them to clarify and then resolve a possible glitch in the theory of how an effect could exist within its cause (per their theory of manifestation as a power of consciousness and their critique of Sāṃkhya’s *abhivyakti* theory).⁷⁹ Through this, Utpala and Abhinava advanced “the original way in which they understand consciousness and its relationship to manifestation” (Ratié 2014, p. 164). But while they made efforts to (more or less) accurately represent the accepted Sāṃkhya position of their time, their formulation of Sāṃkhya nevertheless misrepresents the view of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, whose SK was available to them (if only indirectly by way of later commentaries).⁸⁰ Above all, they take the Sāṃkhya *satkāryavāda* to be centrally concerned with the causation of inorganic material, although as I have demonstrated above, this is not the case in Īśvarakṛṣṇa text: cause-effect relations involve the intensification of living nature. My comments here do not intend to demonstrate that the Pratyabhijñā critique of Sāṃkhya *in general* lacks sound philosophical backing. To say the least, Utpala and Abhinava persuasively argue that a translation of Sāṃkhya terminology into their closest Pratyabhijñā equivalents cannot resolve the dilemma at issue. However, they do not foreclose all other possible Sāṃkhya responses to the problem that they highlight. Certainly, the SK can supply one such possible response. Viewed as a metaphysics of procreativity, Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s Sāṃkhya offers a compelling theory of how an effect can exist within its cause and still accommodate the relationship between nature (as cause) and its own self-manifestation. It follows from this that, if one accepts the legitimacy of the interpretation that I presented above, then Utpala and Abhinava did not achieve a “complete reversal of meaning” or a “perfect contradiction with the Sāṃkhya dualism of matter and consciousness”—or at least, they did not achieve this with respect to the dualism, etc., of Sāṃkhya’s definitive text, the SK (Ratié 2014, p. 127). What they have instead reversed or contradicted is a version of Sāṃkhya that failed to sophisticate the procreative naturing of nature.

The oversights of Abhinava are especially curious given (a) how cautious, incisive, and charitable an interpreter he typically is, (b) his awareness of the SK and its central importance to Sāṃkhya, and (c) the considerable attention that he devotes to Sāṃkhya throughout his writings on causality and manifestation—in spite of Sāṃkhya’s decline in influence by the time of Utpala and Abhinava. Sāṃkhya is one of Utpala’s and Abhinava’s most frequently referred-to interlocutors on the interrelated topics of causality and manifestation, though other *darśanas* (Nyāya, for example) appear to have shown a “relative indifference to this opponent” (Taber 1986, pp. 128–29; quoted in Moriyama 2016, p. 287). This moves the question: why did Utpala and Abhinava neglect the organicist features of Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s theories of causality and manifestation? Did they operate with an overly simplified version of Sāṃkhya, or were other factors (e.g., hidden prejudices) at play here? I explore two reasons for this: (1) they based their interpretation of the SK upon Sāṃkhya commentaries, although these commentaries themselves misconstrued Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s understanding of *prakṛti*, dualism, *satkārya*, and manifestation; and (2) their treatment of Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s system was motivated to recapitulate a

⁷⁹ On the importance of Sāṃkhya for nondual Śaivism, see Torella 1999.

⁸⁰ Utpala and Abhinava may (or may not) have misread other Sāṃkhya texts as well. This question is not at issue here and is beyond the scope of this paper. My concern is simply with how, in the process of their presenting the Sāṃkhya position, they overlooked important nuanced differences between Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s ideas and those of later Sāṃkhya thinkers, and in doing so, how they misrepresented the philosophy of the SK.

philosophical narrative that precluded metaphysical dualism and the self-sufficient power of nature to conceal itself.

5.1. Reliance upon Classical Sāṃkhya Commentaries

We cannot say with certainty why Utpala and Abhinava did not give more careful attention to the SK. But one reason likely concerns the materials to which they had access in making sense of Sāṃkhya theories of causation and manifestation. It appears that Utpala and Abhinava depended upon classical Sāṃkhya commentaries that were not committed to Īśvarakṛṣṇa's organicism.

Recent scholarship suggests that Pratyabhijñā thinkers engaged the SK primarily by way of its historically later Sāṃkhya interpretations. For example, Abhinava's approach to the question of causality at SK 9 imitates the methodology found in several commentaries, including the *Māṭharavṛtti*, *Gauḍapādabhāṣya*, the *Jayamaṅgalā*, the *Tattvakaumudī*, and the *Yuktidīpikā*. Ratié observes:

[These texts] vary greatly as regards the number of theses [that are given in *kārikā* 9 about *satkāryavāda*] ... almost all these Sāṃkhya commentaries introduce the verse in the same way, i.e., by insisting that there is a disagreement (*vipratipatti*) among various masters on the subject, so that the list of reasons adduced to prove the *satkāryavāda* is necessary so as to get rid of the doubt (*saṃśaya*) bound to arise due to the multiplicity of contradictory theses held in this regard (2014, pp. 133–34).

Going further (and echoing the early discussion in this paper), Abhinava (along with Utpala) defends “the ontological status of the effect” in a manner that “is reminiscent” of how the *Māṭharavṛtti* introduces *satkāryavāda* (Ratié 2014, p. 132).⁸¹

Amongst post-*kārikā* commentaries, the *Yuktidīpikā* (YD) and the *Tattvakaumudī* (TK) seem to have been the most influential (Ratié 2014; Moriyama 2016). The YD was studied in Kashmir alongside other Kashmir Śaiva texts, and it is plausible that Utpala and Abhinava were themselves familiar with this text.⁸² Meanwhile, Abhinava echoes Vācaspati Miśra when he playfully writes that blue cannot come from yellow—an example meant to illustrate the SK-supported view that the effect cannot arise from non-existence (Srinivasan 1967, pp. 96–98; cited in Ratié 2014, p. 134).⁸³ Pratyabhijñā reliance upon commentarial literature is even more obvious in its treatment of the Sāṃkhya notion that the cause produces only the manifestation of the effect, not the actual existence of the effect. The YD and the TK appear to be those texts from which Utpala and Abhinava derived *abhivyakti* as a mechanism for explaining *vyaktaprakṛti* as the mere appearance of the effect (i.e., not the effect itself) of its supposed cause, *mūlaprakṛti*. Certainly, non-dual Śaivas could not have taken this doctrine from the SK itself, since Īśvarakṛṣṇa never refers to “*abhivyakti*” nor does he develop such a theory of

⁸¹ Ratié notes that Abhinava's IPVV argument in favor of *satkāryavāda* “is obviously the first reason adduced in *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 9” (2014, p. 132). She further writes that Abhinava's “dismissal of the thesis that the effect is inexplicable, i.e., both and neither existent and nonexistent, is quite close to that found in the *Māṭharavṛtti*” (2014, pp. 133–34).

⁸² Moriyama observes this. He writes: “For instance, with regard to the above term *sādhyavāda*, Wezler and Motegi have documented a marginal note found in a Kashmir manuscript of the YD as follows: ‘YD, p. 123, marginal note (5): *sādhyavāda itī. na hi sarvathaiḥvāpsu na vidyate*’ *ṅkuraḥ. yā hy āpo bījadesānupraveśenāsīnād upādānād antarviparivartitayāṅkuraṃ janayantīti tāsv apy āṅkuro* ‘*sty eveti*’. According to the editors’ introduction (YD, pp. xxiv–xxv), “[t]he author, or one of the authors, ... was remarkably familiar with Mahāyāna Buddhism, a fact that would suggest that he/they may have lived before the extinction of Buddhism in Kashmir, i.e., in the 14th century A.D.’ There is also another marginal note where we find the words ‘Abhinavagupta's *Sāṃkhyanirṇaya*,’ which A. Sanderson has identified as a section of the *Tantrāloka* (YD, p. xxv). From such information, it is at least possible to say that this unique Sāṃkhya text had a certain impact in the Kashmir region, where it was studied together with Kashmir Śaiva texts” (2016, pp. 292–93). Elsewhere Moriyama writes concerning Utpala's familiarity with the YD: “is there any evidence for Utpaladeva's familiarity with the YD? The latter is not unimaginable when considering Kashmir Śaivism's close relation to the Sāṃkhya text” (2016, p. 292).

⁸³ Ratié cites Vācaspati Miśra: “[The author of the *Sāṃkhyakārikās*] states the reason why [the effect must exist before the operation of its cause by saying] ‘because there is no production of the non-existent.’ [That is to say:] if the effect is nonexistent before the operation of its cause, its existence cannot be produced; for even innumerable artists cannot make the blue yellow!” (*atra hetum āha: asadākaraṇāt. asac cet kāraṇavyāpārāt pūrovaṃ kāryaṃ nāsyā sattvaṃ kartuṃ śakyam. na hi nilaṃ śilpisahasreṇāpi pītaṃ kartuṃ śakyate*) (Srinivasan 1967, pp. 96–98; quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 134).

manifestation (the SK never theorizes manifestation apart from the powers of *prakṛti*). Ratié helpfully shows that the YD and the TK appropriate this doctrine from Vārṣagaṇya (or Vṛṣagaṇa), author of the important but now lost Sāṃkhya text, the *Śaṣṭitantra* (2014, p. 130).⁸⁴ This suggests the following. First, the YD and the TK (among other post-*kārikā* texts) recognized the SK to be specially authoritative in conveying Sāṃkhya doctrine but also requiring further articulation and development in order for the system to adapt to emerging challenges in the South Asian academy. By revising Sāṃkhya through an appeal to the *Śaṣṭitantra* (among other likely sources), commentators preserved the doctrine against its opponents. Second, Utpala and Abhinava (and many other opponents of Sāṃkhya) may have taken it for granted that classical Sāṃkhya commentaries represented the best available defense of their canonical texts (i.e., the SK). At least partly for this reason, they leaned heavily upon the YD, the TK, and other commentaries in order to clarify Īśvarakṛṣṇa's text and Sāṃkhya generally.

But while classical commentators successfully defended Sāṃkhya against some criticisms by going beyond the SK, they nonetheless made the system vulnerable to other attacks by overlooking important nuances of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's philosophy. Consider, for instance, that the Pratyabhijñā criticism of Sāṃkhya's *satkāryavāda* is predicated on the view that "the Sāṃkhya explains the evolution of the world from a single, material cause" (Moriyama 2016, p. 295). The YD, the TK, and most other commentaries hold to such a reading of Sāṃkhya metaphysics. Among other things, this is implied by their deploying metaphors of inanimate material things, such as the stock example of clay and pot.⁸⁵ But this fails to develop the centrally important organic dimension of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's materialism, and it also ignores the intimate relationship that Īśvarakṛṣṇa marks out between procreativity and manifestation. In the SK, "*vyakta*" is tied to—indeed, it is grammatically and ontologically subordinate to—"prakṛti." An inquiry into the nature of manifestation ("*vyakta*" or "*abhivyakti*"), then, should take place within the context of the larger question, "What is the meaning of *prakṛti*?", that is, "What is the meaning of procreativity made manifest?" However, this is neglected in the *abhivyakti* theory of the YD and the TK. Instead of theorizing matter and its appearance as expressions of nature's living power, the authors of the YD and the TK re-articulate Īśvarakṛṣṇa's system as a kind of reductive materialism—precisely the kind of materialism that came under attack by non-dual Śaivas.

This is illustrated in how Utpala and Abhinava interpret SK 9 through the YD's theory of *sahakārin*. "*Sahakārin*" denotes "auxiliary cause," of which there are two types: (1) those that, "uniting with the material cause, give rise to the effect through transformation of the material cause," and (2) those that "do not unite with the material cause but operate externally to it, e.g., the stick and wheel a potter uses to fashion clay" (Taber 1986, p. 120; quoted in Moriyama 2016, p. 289). In both varieties, the *sahakārin* (e.g., a stick, a wheel, or even a soul or *puruṣa*) "penetrates" (*praveśa*) into the material cause (the clay) in order to create or manifest specific features (*viśeṣa/śeṣa*) in the form of the effect

⁸⁴ Ratié elucidates: "Thus the *Yuktidīpikā*, relying on Vārṣagaṇya's assertion that the universe appears and disappears without coming into being or being altogether destroyed, explains that although the effect is not made to exist by the cause—since it already exists in the cause in a latent form or as a potentiality (*śakti*)—it is revealed or made manifest by the cause; and just as it is not really produced but merely manifested by the cause, in the same way, it does not really suffer destruction but only ceases to be manifested. The effect is thus the result of a process of transformation (*pariṇāma*) explained in terms of mere appearance (*āvirbhāva*) and disappearance (*tirobhāva*) and not in terms of arising and annihilation" (2014, pp. 136–37). In support of this claim, she cites the YD: "*kāraṇānāṃ tu yaḥ parasparasamsargāt saṃsthānaviśeṣaparigrahaḥ, tasya virodhīśaktyantarāvīrbhāvād vyaktis tirodhīyata ity etad vināśasābdena vivakṣitam. tathā ca vārṣagaṇāḥ paṭhanti—tad etad trailokyam vyakter apāiti na sattvāt. apetaṃ apy asti vināśapratīṣedhāt. samsargāc cāsyā saukṣmyam saukṣmyāc cānupalabdhiḥ. tasmād vyaktyapagamo vināśaḥ.*" "Rather, the manifestation (*vyakti*) of the [effect], which has assumed a particular arrangement through the merging of [its] causes into one another, disappears due to the manifestation of another potentiality (*śakti*) that contradicts [the first one]—this is what the word 'destruction' [really] means. And accordingly, the followers of Vṛṣagaṇa teach [the following]: 'All this threefold world withdraws from manifestation, [but] not from existence. [And] even though it withdraws [from manifestation], it exists, because [we] deny [the possibility of] destruction. And because of its merging [into primordial nature, the world] is subtle; and due to its subtlety, it is not perceived. Therefore, destruction is the disappearance of manifestation'" (Wezler and Motegi 1998, pp. 128–29).

⁸⁵ As alluded to earlier, there are countless examples of post-*kārikā* commentaries that use the clay-pot analogy, including the YD, the TK, and the *Mātharavṛtti*. Much of this is demonstrated in Ratié 2014, (e.g., pp. 132–33, 138) and Moriyama 2016, (e.g., p. 291).

(e.g., the pot) (Moriyama 2016, p. 291). But this portrayal of Sāṃkhya metaphysics does not convey Īśvarakṛṣṇa's vision. As demonstrated above, *vyaktaprakṛti* in the SK is not inert, non-intelligent matter that requires something to unite with it or an external cause (*sahakārin* types 1 and 2, respectively). Rather, it is a living organism that generates itself of its own power and design. *Mūlaprakṛti*, for its part, is a raw, non-intentional procreativity that contributes to the birthing of *vyaktaprakṛti* but connotes neither a material cause (it is not "primordial nature," as implied by the YD's interpretation) nor something that transforms itself into *vyaktaprakṛti* (for reasons given above) (Wezler and Motegi 1998, p. 129; quoted in Ratié 2014, p. 136). This leads to consideration of a related incongruity between the YD's *sahakārin* thesis and the doctrine of the SK. According to Īśvarakṛṣṇa, it is the *saṃyoga* of *mūlaprakṛti* and *puruṣa* that self-manifests in the form of *vyaktaprakṛti*. The YD, however, alters the nature of this "compresence" (*saṃyoga*) with its auxiliary cause hypothesis. In the SK, the only "thing" that transcends and subsists independent of *mūlaprakṛti*—and hence, could "unite with" or "operate externally to" *mūlaprakṛti*, per the YD description of *sahakārins* 1 and 2, respectively—is the *puruṣa*. But from the perspective of the SK, it cannot be the case that the *puruṣa* is a supporting cause, since the *puruṣa* is neither an agential nor an efficient cause. Moreover, taking the (SK's) *puruṣa* to be a *sahakārin* wrongly implies a "causal complex" (what Abhinava terms a *sāmagrī*) or a collection of various other *sahakārins* that are equiprimordial to and subsist independent of *mūlaprakṛti* (Moriyama 2016, p. 293).⁸⁶ It is not surprising that Īśvarakṛṣṇa never mentions a theory of *sahakārin* or anything like it. Contrary to the YD's portrayal, he does not enlist the *puruṣa* to "take the role of a *sahakārin* as a co-operating factor for the arising of various things from primordial matter" (Moriyama 2016, p. 293).⁸⁷ From this, the "auxiliary cause" theory not only disregards important features of the SK's *satkāryavāda*. It misconstrues it (albeit, perhaps unbeknownst to its own authors) by claiming to illuminate or amplify our understanding of the views given in (or at least implied by) the SK.⁸⁸

The YD (in addition to the TK and other SK commentaries) misrepresents subtle but nonetheless core aspects of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's system, including the causal-creative relationship between *mūlaprakṛti*, *puruṣa*, and *vyaktaprakṛti*. Moreover, this oversight, conjoined with its explicating the "*vyakta*" of "*vyaktaprakṛti*" in terms of *abhivyakti* theory, effectively made Sāṃkhya's doctrine of cause-effect relations susceptible to Pratyabhijñā criticism. Indeed, based upon the YD's account, manifestations (clay pots) qua mere material things cannot undergo transformation (once a clay pot, now a clay figurine) without losing their essential identity, since they have already been stripped of their vital nature (*prakṛti*).

5.2. Utpala and Abhinava as Philosophical Readers

In probing other reasons for why Utpala and Abhinava misread Īśvarakṛṣṇa's doctrine, consider their respective treatments of non-Pratyabhijñā systems generally. Utpala presents Sāṃkhya ideas of

⁸⁶ Abhinava and other non-dual Kashmir Śaiva philosophers often sought to articulate the Sāṃkhya view of causality in terms of a network of causal factors. This is seen as early as the writings of Somānanda, who also seems to have articulated the Sāṃkhya doctrine in terms of the YD and TK commentaries. Ratié explains: "In a particularly telling passage, Somānanda reminds us that the Sāṃkhyas justify the preexistence of the effect in its cause by arguing that the effect can only arise if it is related to the factors of action, so that it must exist when these factors of action engage in activity, because their action must be exerted on something: according to the *Yuktidīpikā*, the object on which the causes act, i.e. the effect, must exist when they start acting, otherwise the relation (*sambandha*) between the effect and the factors of action would remain inexplicable" (2014, p. 151).

⁸⁷ It also is not the case that the *puruṣa* is a "soul" in Sāṃkhya (or at least, not in the SK), counter to Moriyama's translation at 2016, p. 293. It is unclear whether this is Moriyama's own translation of "*puruṣa*" or whether this translation gets suggested by the YD itself.

⁸⁸ Several Sāṃkhya scholars contend that the YD largely fails to develop the philosophy of the SK. Burley, for example, writes: "Although its rediscovery has been heralded by some as being of such great significance as to render all previous scholarship 'outdated,' my own view is that such claims are exaggerated. The *Yuktidīpikā*'s significance derives mostly from the information it provides about disputes between proponents of Sāṃkhya and those of rival Indian systems, especially Buddhism. What it does not do, in my opinion, is shed any new light upon the meaning of the classical text itself. While I have, then, consulted the available editions, I have not treated the *Yuktidīpikā* as any more or less authoritative than the other traditional commentaries" (2007, pp. 9–10). I agree with Burley's point here.

causation, manifestation, and liberation alongside his treatment of Nyāya theories of the same in his *Īśvarasiddhi*. His interest in Nyāya largely centers around the now lost argument for the existence of God given by the classical Nyāya philosopher, Aviddhakarṇa: Utpala was intent to establish the reality of Śiva, and Nyāya was useful to this end (Moriyama 2016, p. 287). However, in order to determine the nature of God's personality and its significance for the individual person's attaining liberation—that is, in order to show that God is Śiva and Śiva is a playful, creative divinity—he ultimately had to refute Nyāya. This offers clues to understanding Utpala's appraisal of Sāṃkhya. Sāṃkhya helped Utpala to demonstrate that effects (e.g., phenomenal reality) exist latent in their cause (Śiva). But of course, in order to secure non-dual Śaiva theological goals—namely, Śiva alone is the cause that exhibits itself in all things—he had to discredit the Sāṃkhya view that phenomenal reality results from *prakṛti*. I believe that this abiding concern at least partly underlies his clustering together of Īśvarakṛṣṇa's doctrine with that of historically later Sāṃkhya commentaries. Sāṃkhya views of the material world, causation, dualism, and so on, were strategically generalized and then recast in order to portray how “Śiva, understood as a universal and all-encompassing consciousness, is the sole agent” of creation (Ratié 2014, p. 128).

This proclivity on the part of Abhinava is more subtle. In drawing this out, recall the earlier discussion of how Abhinava omits important contributions in the history of Buddhist thought (e.g., the *Pramāṇavārttikālamkāra*) and oversimplifies significant ideas (*vijñānavāda* or “mind-only”). I revisit this issue here in order to draw a parallel with how Abhinava approaches the history of Sāṃkhya philosophy. While classical commentators influenced Abhinava's thinking about the SK, he was not a passive recipient of the text's meaning through these commentaries. He read Sāṃkhya texts with a certain intent—an intent to organize them into a story of ideas (in this limited respect I agree with McCrea's argument). However, Abhinava exercised a methodological choice different than that of McCrea's intellectual historian. He overlooked important distinctions in Sāṃkhya in order to absorb the views of his rival into the mythical narrative of Śiva at play with his consort and other, Śakti. Abhinava subordinated historical facts to a philosophical story wherein Śiva only *pretends* to be a passive, impotent self (*puruṣa*) juxtaposed against seemingly insentient matter (*prakṛti*). Lawrence's comment here applies: Abhinava's (as well as Utpala's) underlying goal was to demonstrate how the individual can re-enact “the non-dual Śaiva myth and rituals of Śiva emanating and controlling the universe through his power and consort Śakti [. . .] lead[ing] the adept towards identity with Śiva by disclosing his or her possession of his immanent Śakti” (2013, p. 90). Terms (*prakṛti*, *satkāryavāda*, etc.) and structures (dualism) of the SK registered within Abhinava's history of ideas only insofar as they could be overcoded within the central myth of Śiva-Śakti. This meant that the autopoietic unfolding of nature had to be re-thematized as the self-expression of a divine Super-Agent (i.e., Śiva).

By way of a lengthy Conclusion, let us thus consider two philosophical biases that are encrypted in the non-dual Śaiva treatment of Sāṃkhya and the SK, in particular: anti-dualism and anti-naturalism.

5.2.1. Anti-Dualism Bias

One prejudice that we find Utpala and Abhinava reading into Īśvarakṛṣṇa's system is that of anti-dualism. Recall that, in their treatment of Sāṃkhya's *abhivyakti* doctrine, Utpala and Abhinava render the *puruṣa-prakṛti* dichotomy in terms of a duality between awareness of manifestation (of the material object) and the material object itself, respectively. Ratié summarizes the Pratyabhijñā view examined above: “The Sāṃkhya notion of *śakti* eventually boils down to the idea that things can exist apart from their manifestation, since for the Sāṃkhyas it designates the unmanifested state [*mūlaprakṛti*] in which the effect exists before the cause reveals it, or the state in which the effect could be manifested but is not” (2014, p. 166). While this criticism may hold with respect to some Sāṃkhya commentaries, it misrepresents Īśvarakṛṣṇa's dualism. For one, duality in the SK involves *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti*, not *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Second, this dichotomy of *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* is not one of awareness of manifestation and the thing-to-be-made-manifest, respectively. As a non-intentional, inactive, structureless awareness, the *puruṣa* neither manifests objects nor cognizes things *as objects* (SK 21). In fact,

Īśvarakṛṣṇa ascribes the power of *prakāśa* (illumination or manifestation) to *vyaktaprakṛti*—specifically, to the *mahat-buddhi*.⁸⁹ *Mūlaprakṛti* also transcends space and time, and hence never presents itself (as implied by SK 21). This raw, undirected, procreative power is not even an unmanifest thing or the seedbank wherefrom objects arise. Manifest objects rather emerge from within the capacities of *vyaktaprakṛti* itself. Manifesting awareness, manifest object, and their interrelation are held in an aboriginal unity within *vyaktaprakṛti* (specifically, the *mahat-buddhi*) (Ashton 2018). The dichotomy of *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* is thus not at all a subject–object relation, as implied by Utpala’s and Abhinava’s account. Instead, it marks a tensional polarity that begets living nature (*vyaktaprakṛti*) and nature’s own interplay of manifestor and manifested.

While Utpala and Abhinava may simply be unaware of these details of Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s dualism, even so, their misunderstanding is not purely accidental.⁹⁰ One reason why they devoted so much attention to refuting Sāṃkhya was to discredit the dualism of their rival Saiddhāntikas. Moriyama notes that “Utpaladeva’s *Īśvarasiddhi* was motivated by Sadyojyotis’ *Nareśvaraparīkṣā*, an important work on Śaiva dualism” (2016, p. 288). Ratié further explains that non-dual Śaivas “adopted not only the principle of the *satkāryavāda* but also the Sāṃkhya distinction between *śakti* and *abhivyakti*: the latter distinction fits with a dualistic system in which things and their phenomena can exist apart from each other. Yet, as Somānanda and Utpaladeva point out, this distinction remains problematic in a dualistic system” (2014, p. 166).⁹¹ Pratyabhijñā thinkers were concerned to articulate the re-absorption of manifest reality (*śakti*) within consciousness (*Śiva*). To this end, they overcoded terminology and frameworks from rival systems in order to more clearly formulate the non-duality of consciousness (*Śiva*) and its unified powers of creation and manifestation (the *śaktis*, with “*Śakti*” also designating Śiva’s consort). Ratié writes:

The non-dualist Śaivas, on the other hand, can afford to solve the problem of *abhivyakti* by merely playing with the two principles that constitute the very foundation of their metaphysics: everything is a manifestation of consciousness, and the essence of consciousness is a freedom to apprehend itself as what it is not without ceasing to be itself. The Sāṃkhya/Saiddhāntika notion of potentiality (*śakti*) thus gets filled with a completely different meaning: it no longer

⁸⁹ The SK uses the metaphor of a lamp (*pradīpa*) in order to relate the meaning of the *mahat-buddhi*. It appears to do so in order to specify two features or powers of the *mahat-buddhi* (notably, two operations that are commonly thematized in Indian epistemologies): illumination (*prakāśa*) and discernment (*adhyavasāya*). Īśvarakṛṣṇa specifies the *buddhi* (not just *prakṛti* or the *kāraṇa*) as the precise source of *prakāśa*. However, much Sāṃkhya scholarship muddies this issue by wrongly attributing illumination to *puruṣa*. Classical Sāṃkhya commentators help to perpetuate this misunderstanding. Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhikṣu, for example, tell us that the *buddhi* makes the subtle body (*liṅgam*) appear “as if conscious” (*cetanāvād ica*, SK 20) by reflecting the light (*prakāśa*) of *puruṣa*. However, the SK positively denies that *puruṣa* bears any aptitudes, per se (since *puruṣa* is “lame” [*paṅgu*]). As a passive witnesshood (*akartṛbhāvaḥ, sākṣitvam*), the *puruṣa* does not possess the capacity for assertion—not even shining (*prakāśa*) (SK 19). Furthermore, Īśvarakṛṣṇa himself, in contrast with later commentators, never mentions together “*prakāśa*” and “*puruṣa*,” and even implies that the illuminatory potencies of the *buddhi* stem from its relation with *mūlaprakṛti*. Consider that *prakāśa* is attributed to the *buddhi* due to its uniquely high concentration of the *sattva guṇa*; it is *sattva* which enables the *buddhi* to shine a light “like a lamp” (*pradīpa-vaḥ*, SK 13). But the *sattva guṇa* (along with *rajas* and *tamas*) derives from *mūlaprakṛti*, not *puruṣa*. This represents an important deviation from the Vedāntic-leaning texts of *adhyātma* (as well as a distinction from classical schools such as Nyāya), wherein the *buddhi* participates in the reality of the self. According to Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s more unorthodox view, the *buddhi* cannot represent an attribute or stage in the evolution of the self (*puruṣa*). For further analysis of this issue, see Ashton 2018.

⁹⁰ In the least, non-dual Śaivas recognized Sāṃkhya’s *puruṣa* to be a purely passive witness consciousness. Ratié cites Abhinava’s introduction to IPK 2.4.19, where he writes that Sāṃkhyans “do not consider that this [matter] has no agency, contrary to the Person (*puruṣa*) [who remains inactive]” (*na hi puruṣavad asyākarṣṭv tvam iṣyata*) (2014, p. 154). Of course, this meaning becomes altered in the Pratyabhijñā system. Meanwhile, non-dual Śaivas do not appear to have a correlative category for *mūlaprakṛti*.

⁹¹ Ratié elaborates: “While criticizing the way in which the Sāṃkhyas understand the distinction between potentiality and manifestation, the Śaiva non-dualists might thus be implicitly targetting by the same token their dualist cousins: whereas a Saiddhāntika scripture such as the *Mrgendratanttras* adopts the theory of *abhivyakti* but shows no knowledge of the dilemma that the *asatkāryavādins* oppose to this theory and that the Śaiva non-dualists exploit, his commentator Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha (an important Saiddhāntika author who had read Utpaladeva) seems to be painfully aware of it. Quite amusingly, he justifies this scriptural silence as an expression of contempt for a purely sophistic argument, but the way in which he himself attempts to overcome this difficulty seems to leave unresolved the problematic statement that the effect’s manifestation preexists in some unmanifest state” (2014, p. 167).

designates a latent, unmanifest and passive state, but rather, the ever manifest power that consciousness has of concealing itself while remaining manifest—a power that eventually is just another way for consciousness of manifesting itself (2014, pp. 167–68).

But this excludes the formulations of nature and manifestation in the SK. As I have argued above, Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *vyaktaprakṛti* is not passive, unintelligent matter, but self-animating, directed, living nature that bears its own capacities to conceal its integral unity (i.e., the non-duality of cognizing self and cognized object) in the midst of disclosing its many organic forms. *Prakṛti* denotes the power (or *śakti*) of procreation. This power construed as *vyaktaprakṛti* includes the capacity to manifest or reveal an interplay of shapes, forms, and identities. From this, the *śakti* of living nature in the SK is not different than the manifestation of Śiva's non-dual consort, Śakti, although this dynamism (in the SK) pertains to nature itself, not consciousness. But Utpala and Abhinava neglect this subtle but important nuance, and this at least partly results from a hermeneutic attitude that oversimplifies Sāṃkhya as a subject–object dualism—likely in order to discredit the dualist vision of their closest rivals, the Saiddhāntikas.

5.2.2. Anti-Naturalism Bias

A second bias that we find in Pratyabhijñā readings of the SK is anti-naturalism. In demonstrating this, I return to some comments made earlier: organic materialism (or organicism) has a deep history in South Asian thought and culture, and Sāṃkhya may be closely tied to this history. Chattopadhyaya, for example, vigorously argues that a proto-materialistic, Tantric worldview predates the appearance in India of Brahmanical emphases on a masculine “Supreme Being” that controls or oversees the natural world (e.g., a cosmic soul, *puruṣa*, or *ātman*) (1973).⁹² He further theorizes that Sāṃkhya was closely aligned with this pre-Aryan, anti-Vedic, naturalistic view, and represented “a more explicit philosophical re-statement of the theoretical position implicit in Tantrism” (Chattopadhyaya 1973, pp. 359–48; quoted in Marwaha 2013, p. 185).⁹³ Chattopadhyaya's contention that Sāṃkhya materialism (by which he really meant an organic materialism) grew from a Tantric thought complex is not idiosyncratic (1973, p. 442). Sonali Marwaha draws our attention to how similar observations are made by H. P. Sastri, Heinrich Zimmer, Dandekar, and Garbe (2013, p. 187).

Many of these same scholars (including Chattopadhyaya, Jacobi, Dahlman, and Garbe) point out that Sāṃkhya underwent significant alteration in its later iterations. Among other things, this involved an increased emphasis upon metaphysical speculation over pragmatic concerns and greater focus upon an audience of “trained dialecticians” instead of “the masses” (Marwaha 2013, pp. 186–87). Of particular significance to this discussion is a shift within Sāṃkhya from a naturalist or organic “materialistic basis to a spiritualistic one,” which several researchers link to the influence of Vedānta (Bhattacharya and Larson 1987, p. 43; Chattopadhyaya 1973, p. 431; Larson 1969a, p. 27; Marwaha 2013, p. 187). In keeping with his hypothesis that Sāṃkhya predated the arrival of the Aryans, Chattopadhyaya identifies this “spiritualistic” turn occurring as early as the first Upaniṣads—a claim that challenges common views that these texts contain the “germs of original Sāṃkhya thought”

⁹² According to Chattopadhyaya, Tantra is older than the written form, and for this reason it is difficult to trace its origins. He points to concrete material relics that were found in the Indus ruins, which he suggests place Tantra's origins or existence to at least 5000 BCE (Chattopadhyaya 1973, pp. 320–23). He further notes that, according to S.B. Dasgupta, “Tantrism is neither Buddhist or Hindu in origin: it seems to be a religious undercurrent, originally independent of any abstruse metaphysical speculation, flowing on from an obscure point of time in the religious history of India” (Dasgupta 1946, p. 27; quoted in Chattopadhyaya 1973, p. 182).

⁹³ The details of this hypothesis are beyond the scope of this work. Marwaha, however, does offer the following note concerning Chattopadhyaya's justification for this thesis. She writes: “References supporting this hypothesis are found in the *Kapilasya Tantra*, the *Saṣṭitantra*, also in the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā*, the *Patañjala Tantra* and the *Atreya Tantra*. He further adds that if the term Lokāyata originally stood for the beliefs and practices broadly referred to as Tantrism, the original Sāṃkhya may be viewed as the most important development of the Lokāyata tradition in Indian philosophy. This implies that original Sāṃkhya was a form of uncompromising atheism and materialism” (Chattopadhyaya 1973, pp. 362–63; cited in Marwaha 2013, pp. 185–86).

(Marwaha 2013, p. 187).⁹⁴ He contends that the early (as well as middle) Upaniṣads look to assert the superiority of Vedāntic concerns (the unity of consciousness and Being) over pre-Vedic Sāṃkhya ones (investigation of the workings of nature), often by rendering Sāṃkhya categories (e.g., *pradhāna*) subservient to an all-powerful, omniscient God who “produces [the natural world] with his own magical powers” (Chattopadhyaya 1973, pp. 253–54; quoted in Marwaha 2013, p. 187). Marwaha observes that this attack against Sāṃkhya was often linked to an anti-materialism bias—and I would argue, an anti-organic materialism or anti-naturalism bias—that runs throughout much of the history of Indian philosophy and is especially observable in later Vedānta. Among others, Bādarāyaṇa, Śaṅkara (Thibaut 1890, p. ii. 1.2), and Rāmānuja (Muller 1879, pp. xviii, 411) defended the doctrine of Brahman against the Sāṃkhya position by recasting typically Sāṃkhya terminology in a Vedāntic frame (cited in Marwaha 2013, pp. 187–88).⁹⁵

The influence of Vedānta manifests even in the commentarial tradition of Sāṃkhya. Larson and Bhattacharya write: “[One] wonders what Sāṃkhya was before the Vedāntins got their hands on it ... Somewhere in these ancient traditions there appears to have been a clear break with the original genius and vitality of the system, and the later traditions of *Kārikā-Kaumudī-Sāṃkhya*, *Samāsa-Sāṃkhya*, and *Sūtra-Sāṃkhya* present the system through a Vedānta prism” (Larson and Bhattacharya 1987, pp. 40–41). Daya Krishna likewise observes that many interpretations of the SK are rather un-Sāṃkhyan in character by virtue of their “repeated tendency to assimilate Sāṃkhya to something else, whether theistic or monistic, [is this] not a violation of the spirit of Sāṃkhya as a distinctive philosophical position?” (Krishna 1968, p. 198). While atheism and (a unique form of) dualism are essential to Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s doctrine, we should carefully note that *prakṛti* as living nature is equally central to the SK and that naturalism may be even more definitive of early Sāṃkhya as a “distinctive philosophical position” (to echo Krishna) than were atheism and dualism. In other words, it may be organicism that links the SK to “the original genius and vitality of the system” (repeating Larson and Bhattacharya). By contrast, the commentaries examined above (especially the YD and the TK) express the anti-organicism trend as found in Vedāntic treatments of Sāṃkhya (albeit, to a lesser degree). Among other things, this is evidenced in their lack of attention to the organic nature of *prakṛti* and the SK’s theorization of manifestation as a power of living nature. Through their oversimplification of *prakṛti* as mere matter (e.g., in their deployment of the clay-pot analogy) and their analysis of *abhivyakti* as uprooted from procreativity, they abandoned a core feature of Sāṃkhya (namely, its recognition of nature as an intelligent, self-manifesting organism) in lieu of a felt need to render it intelligible within a Vedāntic frame.

Īśvarakṛṣṇa was not immune to Vedāntic influence. He incorporates several Brahmanical themes into his system, e.g., the *puruṣa* as transcendent self, liberation (*kaivalya*) as an organizing goal, etc. However, the SK remains committed to the organic materialism of earlier Sāṃkhya. Consider that Īśvarakṛṣṇa formulates the *puruṣa* (and other orthodox Indian categories) in terms of a genealogical metaphysics—although significantly, a metaphysics of the individual natural organism, not nature writ large (i.e., this is not a cosmology). As a numerically singular procreation (*vyaktaparakṛti*) that

⁹⁴ Oldenberg, for example, sees Sāṃkhya as originating in the early Upaniṣads. Chattopadhyaya instead hypothesizes that Sāṃkhya originates much earlier but is only acknowledged here (cited in Marwaha 2013, p. 187).

⁹⁵ Bādarāyaṇa, for example, refers to Sāṃkhya as “*pradhāna vāda*” and “*pradhāna kāraṇa vāda*” (“the doctrine of primal nature” and “the doctrine of primal nature as the first cause,” respectively) (quoted in Marwaha 2013, pp. 187–88). Marwaha explains: “This was in contrast to the Vedānta philosophy of *Brahma vāda* or *Brahma kāraṇa vāda*, wherein Brahman was the first cause, the ultimate reality and the principle cause of consciousness. As Chattopadhyaya notes (1973, pp. 372–75), Bādarāyaṇa devotes a considerable portion of the *Brahma Sūtra* [to] the refutation of the materialist position of early Sāṃkhya. Of the 555 *sūtras* of the text, at least 60 were designed to refute the doctrine of the *pradhāna*, while only 43 were devoted to the refutation of other rival schools such as the Jaina and Buddhist views. Furthermore, of the 60 aphorisms refuting the doctrine of *pradhāna*, 37 were designed to prove its non-Vedic and anti-Vedic character. After a further analysis, Chattopadhyaya concludes that if Sāṃkhya was not understood as a materialistic tradition, there would have been no need for the substantial opposition that it faced from the idealistic schools, which held that the first cause was a spiritual principle. However, the later *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* and the *Sāṃkhya Sūtra* compromised on the original position and conceded to the orthodox Vedāntic viewpoint” (2013, p. 189).

manifests (*vyakta*) the dialectical interplay of two gendered principles (*puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti*), the concept of *vyaktaprakṛti* replicates the Sāṃkhya paradigm (commonly found in pre-*kārikā* texts) of the individual living body as an energetic focus or microcosm of the greater universe qua macro-organism. This emphasizes the real-ness of phenomenal life; it closely aligns the generative *śakti* that is *prakṛti* with the powers of manifestation (powers that the *puruṣa* and *mūlaprakṛti* lack); and it establishes continuity between the experience of *kaivalya* and the natural development of the organism (what Goethe refers to as *Bildungstrieb* or “inner drive to formation”).⁹⁶ Unlike in many Vedāntic systems, liberation (*kaivalya*) in the SK is the telos of nature’s own play of revealing and concealing, progressively leading to the full disclosure of *puruṣa*’s already-given freedom.

Utpala, Abhinava, and other non-dual Śaivas failed to recognize these subtle dimensions of Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s organic materialism, and instead generalized the concept of *prakṛti* in terms of post-*kārikā* commentarial views. This is illustrated in Pratyabhijñā analysis of *prakṛti* in terms of the clay-pot analogy—a move that enabled Utpala and Abhinava to theorize *prakṛti* qua inert matter as the *other* to *puruṣa*, and to also render *prakṛti* as dependent upon the creative intentionality of an external entity (just as clay requires a potter to transform the clay into a pot). Since the only being that Sāṃkhya recognizes as external to *prakṛti* is the *puruṣa*, and Sāṃkhya’s *puruṣa* is bereft of the requisite agential powers, the only solution, Pratyabhijñā thinkers argued, was to absorb the Sāṃkhya notion of the *puruṣa* into its agential narrative ontology (as the twelfth of 36 *tattovas*) and reformulate the true self as the super-agent, Śiva. This is in keeping with their treatment of other rival schools: non-dual Śaivas overcame philosophical ambiguities in Sāṃkhya by eliding nuance and variation and, wherever possible, recapitulating Sāṃkhya categories (*puruṣa*, *prakṛti*) in terms of the central myth of Śiva-Śakti. Indeed, Śakti is not *actually* a dull material body that acts over and against the self. The Pratyabhijñā system evinces many of the same Tantric assumptions found in Chattopadhyaya’s “original” Sāṃkhya, e.g., its positive valuation of the feminine, materiality, and the manifestation of otherness. Nevertheless, the same anti-naturalist bias that is evident elsewhere in much of orthodox Indian philosophy also displays itself in non-dual Śaivism (albeit, to a lesser degree). Depriving nature of her playful procreativity, Utpala and Abhinava recast *prakṛti* as inert, unintelligent matter that merely gets presented (as a square, as a triangle) but never gets to hide.

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⁹⁶ Marwaha makes the following keen observation about the *puruṣa* (and *prakṛti*) from a Tantric point of view: “If the tradition of the original Sāṃkhya is traced back to [the] early Tantra view (with primacy [ascribed] to the procreation process, [and with] the literal meaning of the term *puruṣa* as male and *prakṛti* as female), then referring to the original meaning of *puruṣa* [as male] may be more appropriate. Chattopadhyaya cites the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* to clarify the meaning of *puruṣa*, where words such as *pumān* and *pumśaḥ* (meaning, the male) (Sāṃkhya Kārikā, 11, 60) are used as substitutes for *puruṣa*. The *puruṣa* of Sāṃkhya is not to be seen in the Vedāntic sense; rather, it is conceived as the solitary, bystander, spectator and passive witness of procreation. It was the passive spectator of an essentially real-world process. Chattopadhyaya reminds us of the Tantra view of the human body as a replication of the larger universe. Thus, just as a child in the [early] matriarchal society has no real kinship with the father, so the universe, in spite of being real, has no real relationship with the *puruṣa*. (1973, pp. 407–8)” (cited in 2013, p. 193).

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