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An Analysis of the Notion of *Vijñānātman* in the Context of the Advaitic Interpretation of the Relation between the Absolute Subject and the Relative Subject

Abstract

The main aim of this article is to show how some philosophical concepts developed in the period of the Upaniṣads — the most important time for building the contextual background for further philosophical speculations — as well as to contribute to the discussion how on the base of introspective experiences formed the Upaniṣadic view of the world and how that view could have been adopted in Advaita thought.

The topic of this article is to show the relation between two dimensions of reality; one of them is denoted by the term *akṣarātman* — 'imperishable *ātman*', which is related to the Absolute dimension, and the other by the term *vijñānātman* — 'reasonable *ātman*', which is related to the empirical perspective of reality. The term *vijñānātman* occurs only twice in the classical Upaniṣads. We can find it in the Praśna. This analysis follows the hermeneutical methodology. All consideration are based on the main text of the Praśna with some additional remarks to the other texts belonging to the line of the Atharvaveda, to the Muṇḍaka and to the Māṇḍūkya. The leading idea of the Praśna and Muṇḍaka is the deliberation between *parā* (higher) and *aparā vidyā* (lower wisdom), and the special emphasis devoted to describing the details of yogic procedures.

Upaniṣads, Advaita Vedānta, *akṣarātman*, *vijñānātman*, Absolute Subject, higher knowledge, relative knowledge, yogic procedures

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Artykuł ukazał się w polskiej wersji językowej pod tytułem *Analiza pojęcia widźnianatman w kontekście advaitycznej interpretacji relacji pomiędzy podmiotem absolutnym a względnym*, "Studia Litteraria Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis" 10 (2015), zesz. 3.

The period of the Upaniṣads is the most important time for developing philosophical speculations that, over the following centuries, would be shaped to particular schools — *darśanas*. During that time a plethora of ideas, concepts and concrete terms started to appear. Initially, many of them were used metaphorically but later on, some of them would be treated as technical terms, for precise ideas, while others would still retain their ambiguous meaning.

In this paper I will focus, due to the above context, on one term only — the *vijñānātman*, the 'reasonable *ātman*' that occurs in the canon texts only twice. All the considerations will be based on the texts belonging to the line of the Atharvaveda. I would like to show that these three texts — the Praśna, Muḍaka, Māṇḍūkya — have a common special interest in yogic, ascetic procedures. Their authors elaborated a specific paradigm for the reality that would have occupied a significant position in the later philosophical schools, especially in Advaita and Yoga. In this analysis, I refer to the sources texts, to commentaries on the Upaniṣads, and to the Gauḍapāda written by Śaṃkara.

As is widely known, the relation between the Absolute Subject and the empirical subject is one of the leading topics in the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. Reflections on the topic do not only focus on a simple analysis of the essence of the being but, more importantly, they also discuss the relation between the Absolute dimension of reality and the objective, depicted, empirical reality. According to the sources, the nature of the Absolute Subject does not require any reconstruction; it has already been defined in *śruti* and is generally accepted in the texts of the Advaita tradition as a record of authority. It has also been expressed in many passages of the Upaniṣads; for the purposes of these reflections I will assume the well-known definition of the Absolute Subject formulated in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.2.1: *sat ekam advitīyam* — 'one only, existing without a second'. A precise description of the nature of the empirical subject proves far more problematic. In this case we are faced with a number of questions which should precede any statements with regards to the issue at hand. One such question is whether it is more important to point out the primary attributes defining the empirical subject or if one should rather focus on the function and the role of the subject. Attempts at a precise resolution of these problems that aim at a technical, accurate description of the nature of the empirical subject and how it functions in the world are present in the oldest texts which form the Advaita tradition, such as those of Gauḍapāda, Śaṃkara and their direct students' as well as the continuators of their thought throughout the subsequent

centuries. All such considerations refer to *śruti*, either directly or indirectly, as it is in those texts — especially the Upaniṣads — that Advaitins seek inspiration, or rather justification for their resolutions. In this short draft, I will try to contribute to the discussion on the topic. The relation mentioned in its title will be presented based on an analysis of the dimension of the Absolute Subject in relation to that of the empirical subject, expressed in the terms *akṣarātman* and *vijñānātman*. The term — or rather the expression[1] — *vijñāna ātman* only appears twice throughout the whole canon of classical Upaniṣads, and in one specific text — Praśna 4.9. and Praśna 4.11.

The Praśna Upaniṣad belongs to the Atharvaveda lineage, along with two other Upaniṣhads — Muṇḍaka and Māṇḍūkya. The close relation between the Muṇḍaka and the Praśna is indicated by Śaṃkara in the first words of the commentary on the Praśna[2]. One of the main motifs of both Upaniṣads is a reflection on the relation between the Absolute and relative dimensions of the reality, as well as one on the difference between higher and lower knowledge — *parā* / *aparā vidyā*[3]. In the classical, later tradition of Advaita, and even in the Māṇḍūkya we can already notice a fairly radical distinction between higher knowledge, which is pure *sat*, described as Brahman, and the dimension of empirical, conventional reality — *vyāvahārika*. Even though both the Praśna and Muṇḍaka point out the difference explicitly, neither of them radically depreciates the dimension of empirical reality. At this point we come across some discrepancies. The Muṇḍaka (2.2.8) even states: "When one sees him — **both** the high and the low". However, the detailed discussion of the relation between the concepts of *para* / *apara* and the entities denoted by them in different Upaniṣads of the canon is a topic worthy of at least a separate paper.

The present considerations are then mainly restricted to an analysis and interpretation of a fragment of a single text, albeit also including some references to other pieces of the canon where necessary. Hence, in my analysis of the notion of *vijñānātman* the reflections are mainly based on the Praśna, while some explications and clarifications draw upon the Muṇḍaka and Māṇḍūkya. The Māṇḍūkya is, in this case, of crucial importance not just because it is also a text belonging to the Atharvaveda. It is, in a sense, a text that lies betwixt the philosophical contents expressed poetically or metaphorically and the terse, technical language of the sutras. I take the Māṇḍūkya not only as an Upaniṣad, as it can be formally described, but also as the oldest sutra of the Advaita tradition.

The nature of the highest reality and how to achieve it is described in the text in the form of six questions (*praśna* — as indicated by the title) and their answers. As one could remark — a classic topic for the Upaniṣads. What distinguishes this Upaniṣad from other texts in the canon is an in-depth reflection on *prāṇa* and the procedures of *prāṇayama*, far more thorough than in other classical texts. For the same reason it is classified as one of

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1 The words *vijñāna* as well as *ātman* both appear much more often by themselves than in phrases.

2 This *brāhmaṇa*, Vedic explanatory text, is commenced to explain, in elaborate terms, what the mantras [of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*] have already stated. The narrative form, embodying a dialogue among seers, is adopted for the purpose of highlighting the exacting seriousness of Self-knowledge (Gupta 1991: 351).

3 As the scholars of Brahman say, one should achieve two types of knowledge — the higher and the lower. The lower knowledge is: the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda, the Sāmaveda and the Atharvaveda, phonetics, the ritual science, grammar, etymology, metrics, and astronomy. The higher knowledge, in contrast, is that by which one grasps the imperishable (Muṇḍaka 1.1.4−5.) All excerpts off Muṇḍaka, Praśna and Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣads in the present article are taken from Olivelle (2008).

the so-called Sāṃkhya-yogic Upaniṣads. According to Zysk (2007: 107) the Muṇḍaka and Praśna concentrate largely on the analysis of *prāṇa* and the explanation of the procedure of *prāṇayama* and are considered to be related to an ancient group of ascetics called *Vrātya*. However, to this day no consensus has been reached among Indologists as to who exactly the *Vrātyas* were[4]. What is important for our considerations is that we can be sure that they were a group of ascetics, *Śramaṇas* functioning within the orthodox strand, rather than Brahmins, specialized in and periodically performing very detailed rituals and sacrificial ceremonies. Therefore, based on their personal experiences, the *Vrātyas* would discuss and analyse various techniques and procedures related to the breath of life. As Zysk (2007: 107) points out, the three levels of *prāṇa's* meaning, which would later become a topic of reflection for the entire later orthodox Brahmin literature, were ideas born into ascetic circles. These levels are: the level of the microcosm, or the physical level, locating the aforementioned breath in the body, the macrocosmic level of nature, locating the breath in the natural world, and the religious dimension, focused on the worship of a greater power. The authors of the Atharvavedic Upaniṣads discussed in this paper, especially the Praśna, underline the superiority of ascetic techniques and the knowledge thereof over proficiency in even the most advanced ritual practices. Therefore, they point not only to the classical Upaniṣadic opposition of ritual–knowledge, but also that of: ritual / ascetic or yogic exercises. The second contradistinction introduces new themes to the mainstream of the Upaniṣadic reflections. In a manner typical of the codifiers of the Brahmin canon, new content from outside of the mainstream is presented in the form of the most traditional narrative. Therefore, in this case, six prophets — ṛṣis — visit sage Pippalada, in accordance with the tradition, as students requesting instruction[5] (Black 2007). Pippalada is the name of the teacher after whom the school of Atharvaveda was named. As for the questioners, who later came to live with him as Brahmacārin, they are representatives of the Brahmin class, whose descent is additionally confirmed in other parts of *śruti*.

Below are fragments from the fourth Praśna, which touch upon the issue under analysis:

> Then Sauryāyaṇī Gārgya asked him:
> "Lord, which are the ones that go to sleep within a person here? Which are the ones that keep awake in him?
> Which of these deities sees dreams? Who experiences this bliss?
> And which is the one in which all these are established?" (4.1)

Gārgya's question refers to the description of the nature of the states of consciousness that are, according to Advaita, dimensions of reality at the same time. This question instantly invokes an association with the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. As is widely recognized, the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, although exceptionally concise, consisting of only 12 verses, sums up the entire teachings regarding the four states of consciousness of the Upaniṣad canon using remarkably terse language, close to that which is most characteristic of sutras. Therefore, according to the Māṇḍūkya, the waking state is *Vaiśvanāra*; dreams can be seen in the *Taijasa* state and bliss can be experienced in the state of deep sleep — *Prājña*. Due to the fact that the Māṇḍūkya

[4] A two-day panel on the *Vrātyas* organized during the 16th World Sanskrit Conference 2015 in Bangkok could serve as a testimony to the lasting or possibly renewed interest in the topic.

[5] The monography of Brian Black although does not deal with philosophical issue but wonderfully elaborates the methods of discussion between many Upaniṣadic characters, especially between teacher and pupil.

was deemed fundamental by Gauḍapāda and first chapter of his work is a commentary on this Upanishad that is considered the foundation of the Advaita tradition, the terminology devised here is the starting point for the development of the language of this school of thought. From a methodological standpoint, it is very helpful to compare terms from other Upaniṣads to the Māṇḍūkya. While analyzing the Praśna we can notice some differences in the usage of terms, while some of them also remain the same. Here the first and the second states are denoted by the same terms: *jāgrat* and *svapna*. However, it is not the case with the third state. The technical term from the Māṇḍūkya is *suṣupti*. In the Praśna, on the other hand, it is not explicitly named, instead the text contains its description. Effectively, based on those descriptions, or rather metaphors, we can interpret it as the third state of consciousness. Praśna 4.1 contains the expression *sukham bhavati* — and it can be treated analogically to the terms from Māṇḍūkya 5: *ānanadamaya* and *ānandabhuk* — consisting of bliss and enjoying bliss.

> He told Sauryāyaṇī:
> As, when the sun is setting, all the rays of light
> gather together within that glowing orb and shoot out again every time it rises,
> so, Gārgya, all of them gather together
> within the highest deity — the mind.
> As a result, a person in that condition does not hear, does not see, does not smell, does not taste, does not feel,
> does not speak, does not grasp, does not experience sexual pleasure, does not excrete, and does not move about.
> About him people say: "He is asleep". (4.2)

The next verse of the Praśna indicates the same features of the third state of consciousness as Māṇḍūkya 5. Both speak of the halted activity of the senses, both external and internal, and of the functioning within the realm of mind — *manasi* (Praśna 4.2), *cetomukha* (Māṇḍūkya 5). At this point one can also indicate another difference. The description in the Praśna is written from the outside perspective of one's observation of a person in a state of deep sleep, while the Māṇḍūkya offers coverage referring to one's personal experience.

> It is the fires that are the breaths which keep awake in this fort.
> Clearly, the householder's fire is this in-breath,
> and the southern fire is the inter-breath.
> Because of its being taken out (*prāṇayama*) — since it is taken out of the householder's fire — the offertorial fire is the out-breath (*prāṇa*). (4.3)

> The link-breath (*samāna*) gets its name from the fact that it makes these two offerings alike (*sama*) —
> the exhalation and the inhalation. The patron of the sacrifice, clearly, is the mind.
> The very fruit of the sacrifice is the up-breath, and every day it conducts the patron of the sacrifice to brahman. (4.4)

Verses 4.3 and 4.4 show how internal experiences connected with the practice of breathing exercises translate into specific elements of the sacrificial ritual. They also point out the three basic fires which constantly accompany a Brahmin priest: *gārhapatya* — the householder's fire, *anvāhāryapacana* — the southern fire of the sacrifice and *āhavanīya* — the ritual fire. As explained by Śaṃkara in the commentary (Gupta 1991: 398), the sacrificial

fires are comparable to breaths since, as in a dream state, the sense organs are dormant and the life functions are sustained by breaths; hence they are similar to the fires which endlessly guard the householder's fire. When the *Agnihotra* sacrifice is ignited, the fire is taken from the fireplace of the householder's fire, and in this sense it is called 'sustaining', alike to *apāna*. Just as during the *Agnihotra* sacrifice, the priest (*hotar*) maintains the balance between two sacrifices, two basic breaths — the inhalation and exhalation maintain the vital force of a human being. In this way, as Śaṃkara goes on to say, the dream of a knower is in itself a performance of *Agnihotra*. When a wise man sleeps, their speech and their breath give an offering, as do all the senses. Therefore the mind (*manas*) is a sacrificer and, like sacrificial fire, it moves upwards, invoking an association with the act of directing the breath upwards in yogic procedures, which leads to liberation (Gupta 1991: 399). In these verses we can see a classic example of how procedures which, in a sense, do not belong to the mainstream — in this case the ascetic breathing exercises — are accepted into the orthodox set of beliefs by relating them to a ritual.

> There, in sleep, this deity experiences his greatness. He sees again whatever he has seen before;
> he hears again the very things he has heard before;
> and he experiences over again what he has experienced before in various places and in remote regions.
> Being himself of the whole world, he sees the whole world —
> things he has seen and things he has not seen, things he has heard and things he has not heard,
> things he has experienced and things he has not experienced,
> the real and the unreal. (4.5)

> When, however, he is overpowered by heat, this deity does not see any dreams here.
> Then, in this body there arises this bliss. (4.6)

Verses 4.5 and 4.6 concern the description of the second and the third states of consciousness — the reality. The subject, witness, here referred to by deva — a deity, luminous — experiences all the activities imagined by the mind in a dream state. They experience both what they have seen in the waking state and what they have not seen. They experience everything in the mind and those experiences are not limited by anything, such as those in reality. As stated by Śaṃkara, the phrase 'experiences greatness' should be interpreted as taking different forms in the dream state, both subjective and objective (Gupta 1991: 400) and assuming that what is just an impression or product of the imagination is real. The term 'things he has experienced' denotes 'experienced by the mind' and 'things he has not experienced' — what was experienced by the mind in a different life (Gupta 1991: 402). The contents of this Upaniṣad do not state so explicitly, but the notion pertains to the fact that the things we see and feel in the dream state stem from previous experiences, and the traces of those are stored in the mind in the form of saṃskāras. Those mechanisms would be subject to a detailed discussion in later the Yoga Sūtras but, as we can extrapolate, the authors of the Upaniṣads were already familiar with such experiences and interpreted them thus. In the state of svapna, the senses are kept active by means of the mind and all vital activities are sustained in the same way that a priest sustains sacrificial fires.

As birds rest on the tree where they nest,
so, my friend, all these rest on the highest self (*ātman*). (4.7)

In the state of deep sleep of one who has mastered all the senses, the power — or, more specifically, the flame it gives birth to — causes experiences which initiate other experiences, and hence induce karmic effects, to cease, leaving only the all-encompassing bliss. All kinds of activities are united in their own basis, their origin, called here *para ātman* — the supreme *ātman* (4.7). Thus, we find the answer to the question asked by Gārgya, the one in which everything is established. The answer itself is preceded by a description of the process of consecutive, emanated entities entering into their origins.

Earth and the elements of earth; waters and the elements of water; fire and the elements of fire;
wind and the elements of wind; space and the elements of space;
sight and visible objects; hearing and aural objects;
smell and olfactory objects; taste and gustatory objects; touch and tactile objects;
speech and the objects of speech; hands and the objects that can be grasped;
sexual organ and objects that can be enjoyed; anus and what can be excreted;
feet and objects across which one can travel;
mind and the objects of the mind; intellect and the objects of the intellect;
the perception of ego and the objects falling under that perception;
reason and the objects of reason; light and the objects that can be illuminated;
life breath and what it can support. (4.8)

Verse 4.8 lists the elements which enter into their origin and remain there in a latent form. Therefore, in the language of Sāṃkhya, what is named are the great elements — *mahābhūta*, the subtle elements — *tanmātra* and the internal organ — *antaḥkaraṇa*, described in a fairly detailed manner. According to the Praśna, the internal organ consists of more elements than it does in the classical interpretations of Sāṃkhya or Yoga. The text first names the same components as the classical Sāṃkhya: the mind — *manas*, that which is the product of the mind, reason — *buddhi* and that which is the object of reflection, understanding, cognition, 'I-maker' — *ahaṁkāra*, which confirms the functioning and the sense of functioning of the empirical subject. Additionally, the Upaniṣad names: consciousness, 'awareness' — *citta* — and the aware subject, heat, fire — *tejas* and all that ignites it, the life breath — *prāṇa* and all that is to be sustained by the breath. As Śaṃkara explains in the commentary (Gupta 1991: 407), the term *tejas* denotes a luminous body, and is therefore different from a body understood as an object of touch. He goes on to explain that *Prāṇa*, in turn, is *Hiraṇyagarbha*[6].

[6] The commentary does not explain how exactly the term *hiraṇyagarbha* should be understood. The most straightforward understanding in this case would seem to be that related to the Golden Egg, but not the oldest reading, present in the Vedas, but what functions in Sāṃkhya philosophy, analogic to the primary function of Prakṛti. Yet another way of understanding the term *hiraṇyagarbha* is present in ritual ceremonies. It is a great gift, an offering (*mahādāna*) related to the primitive concept of death and resurrection. The one making (ordering) the offering should bring a golden, cylindrically shaped container, step into it and assume a foetal position inside. The priest then repeatedly chants the mantras for conception over the golden container. Next he initiates the departure from the container of the one making the offering and performs the twelve sacraments. This way the one making the offering receives a new body and is deemed to be reborn. This rite of passage means a transition from one state in one's life to a different one (Bhattacharya 1999: 68). It could be then that in this fragment Hiranyagarbha as *prāṇa* means the thread which supports and helps sustain the continuity of consciousness and the sense of unity of all elements which enter into *parātman* in the state of deep sleep, and after the awakening the *nāmarūpas* function in the very same form in reality.

Prāṇa assumes the role of a framework, or rather a pillar of support for all the elements mentioned above, integrating them into a single unit — *nāmarūpa*. In the state of deep sleep, they all enter into the *parātman* — the supreme *ātman*.

Even though we cannot find the same key term in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, we encounter a remarkably similar one. In the verse 3.2.7[7] we find the expression: *vijñānamaya ātman*, 'the *ātman* made from reason, cognition', which denotes the essence of the empirical subject — this is noticeably similar to what we see in the Praśna. The absolute dimension is described using the exact same terms as in the Praśna: *para* and *avyaya* — imperishable. While studying and comparing this terminology, it is not difficult to notice the process of consistent construction of the later technical terminology.

> This intelligent self, namely the Person — who is really the one who sees, feels, hears, smells tastes, thinks, understands, and acts —
> **rests on the highest**, **that is**, the imperishable self, **and attains the highest**, **the imperishable**. (4.9)

> Whoever perceives that shining imperishable
> devoid of shadow, body, or blood
> — whoever perceives, my friend —
> knowing the whole, he becomes the whole world.
> On this there is this verse: (4.10)

> That on which rest the breaths and beings,
> and, with all the deities, **the intelligent self**;
> Whoever knows that, my friend, as the imperishable,
> He, knowing the whole world, has entered the whole world indeed. (4.11)

The three next — and the last — verses of the fourth Praśna are first discussed below in general, after which a collective interpretation is presented. Verse 9, essential for our considerations, lists the functions of a subject. The term *ātman* appears in it twice, along with different descriptions. The first *ātman* is the *vijñānātman* — the knower, *puruṣa* — the individual, which first indicated the activity of five senses, and then the sixth is mind[8]: *draṣṭā* — the seer, *spraṣṭā* — the toucher, *śrotā* — the hearer, *ghrātā* — the smeller, *rasayitā* — the taster, *mantā* — the thinker, *boddhā* — the determiner and *kartā* — the doer. This *ātman* rests in an individual and finds support in an individual; hence, it is dependent on an individual. The Absolute Subject, in turn — *ātman* can be supplemented by: *para* — the supreme and *akṣara* — immutable, eternal, imperishable. As Śaṃkara points out in the commentary, the term *vijñānātman* should be thought to have a broader meaning that the one suggested in dictionaries — one which views it as a subject whose nature is cognition itself. The appearance of the term *puruṣa* is then explained by him by referencing its etymology. It denotes that it fills — *pūrṇātvāt* — the entire body, meaning the whole psychophysical complex (Gupta 1991: 408).

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[7] The fifteen parts return to their due places, and all the senses — to their respective deities.
The deeds and the ātman created from wisdom,
all of this becomes one in that which is supreme and imperishable.

[8] It is worth noting that only five senses were named, instead of six, which is more typical of Buddhist than Brahmin thought.

The next verse contains a description of a correctly cognised reality, and that cognition becomes synonymous with liberation. The cogniser achieves the supreme — *para*, and the immutable — *akṣara*. Hence, this is a reiteration of the general description from the previous verse. What is *akṣara* is recognised in: *acchāyam* — devoid of shadow, *aśarīram* — devoid of body, *alohitam* — devoid of colour, blood *śubhram* — pure. Śaṃkara (Gupta 1991: 408) explains these attributes. It is 'devoid of shadow', because in it (the highest, supreme) there is no darkness; there is no ignorance, 'devoid of body', because it does not possess any body, as it would have intrinsic limits in the form of *nāmarūpa* as well as various distinctions and individualities. It is 'devoid of colour, blood', because it does not have any particular properties; hence, it can be described as 'pure'. The one who knows all of this becomes all of it. In the Upaniṣads we can encounter the concept that we become what we imagine and we identify with the objects of our cognition quite frequently — and this is reflected in this text[9]. Desires are what drive our cognitive acts, our behaviours, and specific desires direct us towards specific objects. When we rid ourselves of particular desires, everything becomes an object of our cognition and he who cognises in this way becomes the whole world. The Upaniṣad pertains to that truth in its final section in the form of a poem.

On the basis of these verses that close this Praśna, it is noticeable that the primary term for describing the relative subject in view of the Absolute Subject is *vijñānātman*. All of the aforementioned attributes supplement the description of its nature, or function. In the language of the Advaita system *vijñānātman* has the same function as the individual soul — *jīva*. This soul governs the deities — *deva*. This is synonymous with the term: senses — *indriya*. General consensus with the fact that they both refer to the same idea can be noticed in the Upaniṣads — one of its earliest literal uses can be found in the Aitareya. Moreover, it is those terms that we can see listed in Praśna 4.8. The life breath — *prāṇa* — is indicated as the basic function of the soul, attesting to its living status — *jīva*[10]. Everything that together composes the psychophysical organism rests in the supreme, immutable, imperishable *ātman*. This *vijñānātman*, who knows those mechanisms, who knows all the elements and processes they are subject to, and hence all-knowing (*sarvajña*) enters into this origin. The phrase from the previous verse is repeated here almost word-for-word; instead of 'becomes the whole world', we read: 'has entered the whole world'. It can be interpreted more as referring to the process, the mechanism of entering, merging, instead of focusing on the effects of that same process.

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[9] Let us, for instance, recall this excerpt from Muṇḍaka:
"Whatever world a man, whose being is purified, ponders with his mind, and whatever desires he covets;
that very world, those very desires, he wins. (3.1.10)
One who hankers after desires in his thoughts,
is born here and there through his actions.
But when one's desires are fulfilled, and one's self is made perfect,
all his desires disappear in this very world". (3.2.2)

[10] An excellent example of the connection between *jīva* and *prāṇa* is the following excerpt from Maitri 6.19 (from: Hume 1985: p. 436).

Verily, when a knower has restrained his mind from the external,
and the breathing spirit (*prāṇa*) has put to rest object of sense,
thereupon let him continue void of conceptions.
Since the living individual (*jīva*) who is named "breathing spirit",
has arisen here from what is not breathing spirit, therefore, verily, let the breathing spirit restrain his breathing spirit in what is called the fourth condition (*turya*).

As mentioned above, what proves to be of great help in the interpretation of this excerpt is the Māṇḍūkya. Even though Gārgya's question is formulated to ask about all states of consciousness, the analysed Praśna focuses primarily on the relation between the third and the fourth ones. Let us recall the terms used in Māṇḍūkya to describe the fourth, highest state[11]. As the full phrases can be found in the footnote, I only list those which find their equivalents in the Praśna. The first one would be *ātman*, described as being *akṣara*. The term *akṣara* does not only denote that which is immutable, but it also a syllable which refers to the eternal, primal Om Mantra. This double meaning is traditionally assumed in the interpretation of the Māṇḍūkya, as its second part describes the four states of consciousness by interpreting the components, as well as Om itself. Such an interpretation is certainly also justified in the analysis of the Praśna, as this is the subject of the fifth question. Both sources also use the term *sarvam* (everything) as a description of a universal reality that is synonymous to Atman-Brahman. In both texts we encounter several crucial notions which are even referred to by the same terms; hence, they clearly denote the fourth, highest state of consciousness. As for the rest of the words and phrases, they can be treated as their corresponding expressions. I will only mention one example of two expressions referring to the same issue — concerning the ultimate factor in achieving liberation. *Sa sarvajñaḥ sarvam evāviveśeti* — 'He, knowing the whole world, has entered the whole world indeed' (Praśna 4.11). *Ātmaiva saṁviśaty ātmanātmānaṁ ya evaṁ veda* — 'Anyone who knows this enters the self (*ātman*) by himself (*ātman*)' (Māṇḍūkya 12).

Let us now take a look at the notions and terms denoting the third state of consciousness. In the Māṇḍūkya[12], it is called *prajña* — consciousness. The closest term in the Praśna is *vijñānātman*. Both Upaniṣads describe precisely what kind of consciousness it is; most importantly, it is directed at the mind — *cetomukha*, instead of outside objects, regardless of whether in the state of *svapna* or the state of *jāgrat*. A parallel characteristic can be found in the Praśna (4.6): 'this deity does not see any dreams here'. The descriptions of the third state are quite detailed in the analysed Upaniṣad and have been discussed above. At this point I would like to consider some new elements. In addition to the term *vijñānātman*, the Praśna also offers another term — *puruṣa*. It is different from other terms in that it indicates a subject

[11] Om — this whole world is that syllable! Here is a further explanation of it…
Brahman is this self (*ātman*); that [*brahman*] is the self (*ātman*)
consisting of four quarters. (1–2)
They consider the fourth quarter as perceiving neither what is inside nor what is outside, nor even both together; not as a mass of perception, neither as perceiving nor as not perceiving;
as unseen; as beyond the reach of ordinary transaction; as ungraspable; as without distinguishing marks; as unthinkable; as indescribable;
as one whose essence is the perception of itself alone; as the cessation of the visible world; as tranquil; as auspicious; as without the second.
That is the self (*ātman*), and it is that which should be perceived. (7)
Accordingly, the very self (*ātman*) is Om.
Anyone who knows this enters the self (*ātman*) by himself (*ātman*). (12)

[12] Deep sleep is when a sleeping man entertains no desires
or sees no dreams —
The third quarter is *Prājña* — the Intelligent One — situated in the state of deep sleep — Deep sleep is when a sleeping man entertains no desires or sees no dreams —; become one, and thus being a single mass of perception; consisting of bliss, and thus enjoying bliss; and having thought as his mouth. (5)
He is the Lord of all; he is the knower of all; he is the inner controller; he is the womb of all —
for he is the origin and the dissolution of beings. (6)

understood anthropomorphically. In this context, the analogical term in the Māṇḍūkya would be *sarveśvara* — Lord of the entire universe. I do not wish to conduct a detailed analysis compiling the differences and similarities between the words *puruṣa* and *īśvara* in the Upaniṣads or later schools of Vedānta; I shall only point to the issues which are most crucial to our considerations. As I have already indicated in the introduction, I am assuming the perspective of the Advaita; nevertheless, I do feel that the standpoint of the Sagunic Vedanta could prove difficult to defend. According to the Advaita Vedānta and the fragments of the Upaniṣads referred to by the advocates of this school of thought, the depicted universe we, as non-liberated individuals, perceive as real, emerged as a result of an initial cognitive error[13]. As a consequence of this primary cognitive act which is, in a sense, a self-cognitive act, the first depiction emerges — a very subtle subject that has also simultaneously become an object. There are many names for the first depiction but two very common terms describing it can be found in the Praśna; *deva* — luminous, a deity and *puruṣa*. Moreover, they can be treated as different names for the soul — *jīva*. In the Advaita the level of many individual souls is also additionally assumed to have a governor of sorts, named Iśvara — the Lord.

Here we arrive at the essential difference between the two Upaniṣads. The description in the Praśna is written from the perspective of an individual observer and, likewise, it focuses on the experiences of an individual. The Māṇḍūkya, on the other hand, by introducing the character of Iśvara and indicating his role in sustaining balance in the world, includes a cosmological perspective, in addition to the psychological, yogic dimension.

The aim of the above analysis is to show the way the image of the world assumed by the philosophers of the Advaita Vedanta school of thought was shaped through individual experience. It also presents the road towards the elaboration of a relatively common terminology, while regarding the process of change in the meaning and significance of specific words, moving from Upanishadic towards becoming technical terms, especially for those elements of Advaitic vocabulary which used to be supplementary epithets. Finally, it demonstrates how the experiences of certain Upaniṣadic sages were compiled into a single body — the philosophy of the Advaita Vedānta, initiated by Gauḍapāda's commentary on the Māṇḍūya Upaniṣad.

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[13] A more in-depth elaboration on this topic can be found in: Kudelska 2009.

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