


Discussion on *Śrotavya*, *Mantavya* and *Nididhyāsītavya* in the Early Vedānta

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Abstract. This paper presents and compares different interpretations of the passage from *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 2.4.5/4.5.6, according to which one should hear about the Self, reflect, and meditate on it. In his commentary, Śaṅkara cites the view, in sub-commentaries attributed to Bhartṛprapañca, according to which this cognitive process is divided into three parts. Furthermore, different parts of the *Upaniṣad* are responsible for each stage of the process. According to this view, the third part, which states that one should meditate on the Self, is a *vidhi*, i.e. an injunction for mental action that leads to knowledge. This paper shows why this is unacceptable for Śaṅkara and his followers, why the cognitive process can neither be separated nor enjoined. The paper shows that this discussion in Advaita Vedānta is primarily hermeneutical because in fact, in the background, it is a discussion of the hierarchy of importance of the texts of the Vedic canon; the *Upaniṣad* must be a valid means of cognition, and thus more important than *Brāhmaṇas*, which contain injunctions for action.

Key Words: Śaṅkara, Advaita Vedānta, knowledge, injunction, action

Razprava o *śrotavyi*, *mantavyi* in *nididhyāsītavyi* v zgodnji Vedānti

Povzetek. V članku predstavim in primerjam različne interpretacije odlomka iz *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣade* 2.4.5/4.5.6, ki govori o tem, kako naj slišimo, razmišljamo in meditiramo o Sebstvu. Śaṅkara v svojem komentarju navede stališče, ki je v podkomentarjih pripisano Bhartṛprapañci, da je ta spoznavni proces razdeljen na tri dele. Za vsako stopnjo tega procesa so odgovorni različni deli *Upaniṣad*. V skladu s tem stališčem je tretji del, ki pravi, da naj človek meditira o Sebstvu, *vidhi*, tj. navodilo za umsko delovanje, ki vodi do spoznanja. V članku prikažem, zakaj je to za Śaṅkaro in njegove privržence nesprejemljivo, zakaj spoznavni proces ne more biti niti razdeljen niti

zapovedan. Pokažem, da je ta razprava v Advaiti Vedānti predvsem hermenevtična, saj je v ozadju pravzaprav razprava o hierarhiji pomembnosti besedil vedskega kanona: *Upaniṣade* morajo biti veljavno sredstvo spoznavanja in zato pomembnejše od *Brāhmaṇ*, ki vsebujejo navodila za delovanje.

Ključne besede: Śāṅkara, Advaita Vedānta, vednost, navodilo, dejanje

Bhārtrprapañca and Śāṅkara on *BĀU* 2.4.5/4.5.6

In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 2.4.5 and 4.5.5, a well-known passage is found that speaks of one's Self (*ātman*) to be seen and heard, to be reflected and concentrated on; by knowing one's Self, the whole world is known (*BĀU* (K and M) 2,4,5 (≈ [K and M] 4.5.6); Olivelle 1998, 69):

*ātmanā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo
maitreyi | ātmano vā are darśanena śravaṇena matyā vijñānenedaṃ
sarvaṃ viditam ||*

You see, Maitreyi—it is one's self (*ātman*) which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate. For by seeing and hearing one's self, and by reflecting and concentrating on one's self, one gains the knowledge of this whole world.

This short passage is located between two passages; the first part of the *BĀU* 2.4.5 (4.5.6) extolls *ātman* as the substratum of all that is dear (*priya*), while 2.4.6 (4.5.7), placed after our passage, describes *ātman* as the essence of the universe. In between is this passage which describes *ātman* as a substratum, the knowledge of which enables the knowledge of everything.¹

The notions *draṣṭavya/darśana*, *śrotavya/śravaṇa*, *mantavya/matyā* and *nididhyāsitavya/vijñāna*² mentioned in this short passage provoked

¹ For a detailed account of interpretations of the conversation between Maitreyī and Yājñavalkya in Indological scholarship up to 2000, see Reinvang (2000). For, in my opinion, a most convincing analysis of the text history and emendations, see Brereton (2006). As for the above-mentioned section *BĀU* 2.4.5–6 (4.5.6–7), Deussen (1879, 417; see also Reinvang 2000, 177) considered that the quoted passage should be placed after 2.4.6 (4.5.7) Hanefeld, who analysed the entire dialogue in detail (1976, 71–115), also distinguished three different sections in 2.4.5–6. *BĀU* 2.4.5 was expanded under the influence of 2.4.6, and the quoted passage was inserted between them.

² Hanefeld (1976, 90) noticed that the first three terms match in the first and second sentences, but the last term does not. As terms derived from the verb *vi√jñā* play a prominent role in the continuation, and *ni√dhyā* no longer occurs, Hanefeld considers *nididhyāsitavya* to be a *lectio difficilior*.

an interesting discussion in early Vedānta philosophy. Although Śaṅkara's commentary on *BĀU* is the oldest preserved, it contains fragments and paraphrases of an earlier commentator whom Śaṅkara's disciple Sureśvara, in four passages (*BĀUBhV* 1.4.1164, p. 666, 1.4.1188, p. 671, 4.4.412, p. 1789, 4.4.741, p. 1843.) of his sub-commentary *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya-Vārtika* (*BĀUBhV*), calls Bhartṛprapañca.³ Ānandagiri, author of a sub-commentary on Śaṅkara's commentary,⁴ and a sub-commentary on Sureśvara's *BĀUBhV*,⁵ identifies all passages where Śaṅkara refers to Bhartṛprapañca. Apart from Bhartṛprapañca and Śaṅkara, Padmapāda, Sureśvara, Bhāskara, Vācaspatimiśra, as well as later followers of the Advaita Vedānta school, gave their opinion on *śravaṇa* 'hearing', *manana* 'reflection', and *nididhyāsana* 'concentration' and their role in the process of cognition. In this paper, I will present the development of this controversy and try to answer how and why Vedāntic interpretations of this cognitive process came about.

In Śaṅkara's introduction to his commentary on the *BĀU* 2.5 'Madhubrahmaṇa', a rather short passage is found (*BĀUBhTPU*, p. 770, lines 7f):

*anyair vyākhyātam ā dundubhidṛṣṭāntāc chrotavyārtham
āgamavacanam prāṇmadhubrahmaṇān mantavyārtham
upapattipradarśanena madhubrahmaṇena tu nididhyāsanavidhir
ucyata iti |*

Others interpret that the utterance of the sacred text before the example with the drum serves to be listened to (*śrotavya*), the part before 'Madhubrahmaṇa' serves to be reflected on (*mantavya*) because it points to evidence, while the injunction of concentration (*nididhyāsana*) is given with the 'Madhubrahmaṇa.'

Although this passage occurs at the beginning of Śaṅkara's commentary on the 'Madhubrahmaṇa' ('Chapter on Honey'), it refers to *BĀU* 2.4.5, a part of the 'Maitreyībrahmaṇa' ('Chapter on Maitreyī'). This is the passage where it is said that it is one's Self (*ātman*) that should be seen and heard of, and on which one should reflect and concentrate. According

³ On Bhartṛprapañca see Andrijanić (2016), where further information on secondary literature can be found.

⁴ Ānandagiri's sub-commentary on Śaṅkara's *BĀUBh* is titled *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya-Ṭikā* (*BĀUBhṬ*).

⁵ Ānandagiri's sub-commentary on Sureśvara's *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya-Vārtika* is titled *Śāstraprakāśikākhyāṭikā* (*śp*).

to the interpretation mentioned by Śaṅkara, the part from the beginning of ‘Maitreyībrāhmaṇa’ (*BĀU* 2.4.1) to *BĀU* 2.4.7, where the parable with a drum occurs, serves for hearing about the Self. The text from *BĀU* 2.4.7 to the end (*BĀU* 2.4.13) serves for reflection on the Self, while the next chapter, ‘Madhubrāhmaṇa’ (*BĀU* 2.5), enjoins the concentration on the Self (*nididhyāsana*). In this passage, Śaṅkara conveys someone else’s opinion, but similar to Sureśvara, does not specify whose opinion it is. Ānandagiri finally identifies him in his *BĀUBhT* and *ŚP* as *Bhartṛprapañca*.⁶

Śaṅkara criticizes such an interpretation and argues that it is unnecessary. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that everything said in the first two chapters of the *BĀU* is summed up (*upasaṃhriyate*) in ‘Madhubrāhmaṇa’ (*BĀU* 2.5), which emerges as the culmination of the first *kāṇḍa* of the *BĀU* (‘Madhukāṇḍa’). According to Śaṅkara, reflection (*manana*) guided by inference (*tarka*) must be in accordance with revelation (*āgama*), while concentration (*nididhyāsana*) must be in accordance with reflection, which already agrees with inference and revelation. This makes the separation of listening, reflection, and concentration meaningless (*anarthaka*). Thus, a separate injunction (*vidhi*) for concentration is also unnecessary. Śaṅkara does not agree with the separation, let alone with the gradation of the process of cognition that culminates in concentration. In his commentary on the passage in which the statement on listening, reflection, and concentration occurs (*BĀU* 2.4.5), Śaṅkara explains that the unity of all three concepts (listening, reflection, and concentration) leads to a correct perception of the oneness of the *brahman* (*BĀUBh* 2.4.5, *TPU*, p. 760, line 20f):

*yadaikatvam etāny upagatāni, tadā samyagdarśanam
brahmaikatvaviṣayam prasīdati | nānyathā śravaṇamātrena |*

When the unity of these concepts is obtained, the correct perception of the oneness of the *brahman* is achieved, not only through hearing.

Sureśvara, in his sub-commentary (*BĀUBhV*), agrees with Śaṅkara and his claim that these three processes become one.⁷ He further analyses in depth the notion of concentration (*nididhyāsana*), which for him means immersion, absorption (*niṣṇāta*) in the object that has been heard from

⁶ *BĀUBhT*, p. 365, line 5; *ŚP* 2.5.14, p. 1115 (commentary on Sureśvara’s *BĀUBhV* 2.5.14).

⁷ A very similar interpretation is offered by Jñānaghana (in *Tattvaśuddhi* 12, 56–57) where he claims that there is no indication in the *Upaniṣad* text that there is any temporal distinction between the three.

the tradition (*śravaṇa*), which is confirmed by inference (*manana*).⁸ Concentration/absorption is also such vigilance for the unity of the Self that is aligned with the teaching of the scriptures and the teacher, intuition, and proof.⁹

He equates revelation (*śruti*) and the teacher's instruction with the concept of *āgama* (what has come down to us) that appears in Śaṅkara, while the inference (*tarka*) for reflection (*manana*) is the same in both Sureśvara's *sloka* and in Śaṅkara. Sureśvara concludes (*BĀUBhV* 2.5.17; Hino and Jog 1988, 7):

*nididyāsanāsiddhyartha yatno 'to 'yam anarthakaḥ |
pratyagyāthātmayasambodhamātratvādeva hetutaḥ ||*

Therefore, this effort (of this section of the *Upaniṣad*) for showing that (it is intended) to establish *nididhyāsana* (declared by Bhartṛprapañca) as unnecessary, since the cause of one's (acquisition of) the knowledge of the true nature of the individual consciousness consists only in informing (one about it).

Hino and Jog translate the word *sambodha* as 'informing' in this verse. Such a translation agrees with Sureśvara's (and Śaṅkara's) idea that the information about the true nature of the Self from the scriptures is sufficient for its cognition. As it will be shown, Vācaspatimiśra will deviate from such an opinion. Nevertheless, this opinion will be accepted by Prakāśātman.

What Śaṅkara wants to avoid is that the *Upaniṣad* text becomes an injunction (*vidhi*), as suggested by Bhartṛprapañca. An injunction to act with some desired effect in mind is different from knowledge because knowing injunctions leads only to the awareness that something needs to be done, which does not represent the true liberating knowledge of the Self. For Śaṅkara, knowledge cannot be the consequence of action, not even of mental action. Śaṅkara vividly describes this in *BSBh* 3.2.21, where he says that *BĀU* 2.4.5 serves to draw attention to expressions in the *Upaniṣads* that describe the true nature of *brahman* and that this leads to knowledge of *brahman* in the same way other valid means of cognition (perception, inference) lead to knowledge of their respective objects.

⁸ *śruta āgamato yo 'rthas tarkeṇāpi samarthitaḥ | sa evārthas tu niṣṇāto nididhyāsanam ucyate ||* (*BĀUBhV* 2.5.15).

⁹ *śāstrācāryānubhāvanair hetubhiḥ ca samarthitaḥ | idṛgāikātmyasambodho nididhyāsanam ucyate ||* (*BĀUBhV* 2.5.16).

In *BĀUBh* (1.4.7), a discussion takes place about the sentence ‘The Self alone should be meditated upon.’¹⁰ In the course of this lengthy discussion, Śāṅkara refutes two anonymous (Bhedābheda-vāda?)¹¹ views. The first one (p. 661, lines 1–21) equates knowledge (*jñāna*) and devout meditation (*upāsana*).¹²

In *BSBh* (4.1.7), Śāṅkara defines *upāsana* as a ‘lengthened carrying on of an identical train of thought’ (Thibaut 1896, 349).¹³ *Upāsana* is always a contemplation on a section of holy text (most usually *Upaniṣads*, but also *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas*; *BSBh* 3.3) which, according to Śāṅkara, speaks of a personal deity and is related to ritual, so *upāsana* for Śāṅkara means devout contemplation on the conditioned *brahman*. This means that Śāṅkara’s understanding of the term *upāsana* is something like ‘devout contemplation’ or ‘devout meditation’.¹⁴

According to this objection, the optative *upāsīta* ‘should be meditated upon’ must be understood as an injunction that leads to an unseen transcendental result (*apūrva vidhi*).¹⁵ As the result is unseen, its accomplishment acquires injunction. According to this view, the sentence ‘The Self alone should be meditated upon’ is similar not only to the usual ritual injunctions but also to injunctions for mental performance such as *śrotavya*, *mantavya*, and *nididhyāsītavya*. Gerundives *mantavya* ‘to be reflected on’ and *nididhyāsītavya* ‘to be meditated on’ therefore convey injunctions (*vidhi*) for meditation (*upāsana*) and for knowledge that is the same as devout meditation.¹⁶ Knowledge is a mental act (*mānasī kriyā*), the same

¹⁰ *ātmety evopāsīta* (*BĀU* 1.4.7).

¹¹ Bhedābheda-vāda teaches that knowledge can be acquired through a combination of knowledge and action (*jñānakarmasamuccaya*).

¹² *Upāsana* is a noun formed from the compound verb *upa√ās*, which Bodewitz (2011, 414) translates as ‘to seat oneself near, to approach’, ‘to approach mentally’, ‘considering, examining, contemplating, esteeming’, ‘to worship’.

¹³ *upāsanaṃ nāma samānapratyayappravāhakarāṇaṃ* (*BSBh* 4.1.7).

¹⁴ For more on the practice of *upāsana* and its relationship to meditation (*nididhyāsana*) in Śāṅkara, their psychological and epistemological properties, see Dalal (2014; 2020).

¹⁵ In *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 2.1.5 (and Śābara’s commentary), a general law is established that every act enjoined in Vedas brings a transcendental result that is unseen at first (*apūrva*). In *mīmāṃsā* 2.1.6 rites are divided into Primary (*pradhāna*) and Subsidiary (*guṇa*). According to Śābara’s commentary, a Primary Act directly leads to a transcendental result (*apūrva*), while a Subsidiary brings some concrete result that will be used in the Primary ritual act.

¹⁶ This interpretation is different from Bhartṛprapañca’s because to him, the whole of *Madhubrahmaṇa* is an injunction for concentration. It is therefore not surprising that commentators do not attribute this interpretation to him.

as meditation. According to this view, there are three parts (*aṃśatraya*) of such a mental act.¹⁷ The first determines the subject of devout meditation (*kimupāsīta*), the second the means of meditation (*kenopāsīta*), and the third the mode of meditation (*katham upāsīta*). The fruit of such an act is liberation and the disappearance of ignorance (*mokṣo 'vidyānivr̥ttir vā*). According to the second view (p. 661, line 22–p. 662, line 1), meditation (*upāsana*) creates a special kind of cognition (*viśiṣṭam vijñānam*) that removes ignorance; according to this interpretation, Vedic dictum alone does not remove ignorance.¹⁸

Śaṅkara responds to these two objections with an important remark (*TPU*, p. 662 lines 1–7):

*na, arthāntarābhāvāt | na ca ātmety evopāsīta ity apūrvavidhiḥ |
kasmāt? ātmasvarūpakathanānātmapratiṣedhāvākyaajanitavijñāna-
vyatirekeṇa arthāntarasya kartavyasya mānasasya bāhyasya
vābhāvāt | tatra hi vidheḥ sāphalyam yatra vidhivākyaśravaṇa-
mātrajanitavijñānavyatirekeṇa puruṣapravr̥ttir gamyate |
yathā darśapūrṇamāsābhyāṃ svargakāmo yajeta ityevamādau |
na hi darśapūrṇamāsavidhivākyaajanitavijñānam eva
darśapūrṇamāsānuṣṭhānam |*

No, on account of absence of another thing. [The sentence] ‘One should devoutly meditate on the Self’ is not an injunction with unpreceded result. Why? On account of absence of another thing, i.e. on account of absence of anything external and mental to be done, that is, beyond the knowledge that results from [Upaniṣadic] statements that deny the non-Self and reveal the Self’s own nature. The injunction is fruitful only there where one thinks of human activity beyond the knowledge that arises only from listening to the words of injunctions, just as [in the sentence] ‘those who desire heaven should perform New and Full moon sacrifice’¹⁹ and the like. The knowledge that arises from the injunctions to perform New and Full moon sacrifice is certainly not the actual performance of the New and Full moon sacrifice.

¹⁷ These three parts can be compared to Bhartṛprapañca’s three-fold division of the *BĀU* text that corresponds to *śrotavya*, *mantavya*, and *nididhyāsītavya*. None of the commentators specify who is the author of this view.

¹⁸ Sureśvara and Ānandagiri do not specify whose opinion Śaṅkara conveys.

¹⁹ *darśapūrṇamāsābhyāṃ svargakāmo yajeta*. This a very common example of a *vidhi* that appears often in Śabara’s *Mīmāṃsāsūtrabhāṣya* (cf. 3.7.18, 6.1.1., 6.1.4 etc.).

But, according to Śaṅkara, the knowledge that arises from the sentences ‘The Self alone should be meditated upon’ (*BĀU* 1.4.7), ‘(the Self) should be heard about etc.’ (*BĀU* 2.4.5/4.5.6) is everything that is required, and nothing beyond that (actual performance of ritual in injunctions) exists. With the sentences *atmety evopāsita* and *śrotavya* etc., self-reflective knowledge is conveyed and not enjoined. These sentences are in themselves the knowledge they should enjoin, unlike the ritual injunctions which enjoin the performance of ritual. In these sentences, if both are understood as injunctions, heaven and liberation are analogous concepts, as are ritual (which leads to Heaven) and knowledge (which leads to liberation, i.e. self-knowledge). Why is this wrong for Śaṅkara? The action, ritualistic or otherwise, may be enjoined, but the knowledge cannot be enjoined. It comes or does not come, and it does not depend on the willing decision to carry out the process. In fact, the knowledge that arises from ritual injunction is merely the understanding that one attains Heaven by performing a certain ritual; it is not a performance of the ritual itself. The *Upaniṣad* reveals knowledge itself (more specifically, the Upaniṣadic text removes ignorance, knowledge is always here),²⁰ not the knowledge of how knowledge is attained. The sentence ‘one should think about one’s Self’ refers to an intuitive flash of knowledge that is structurally different from the judgment ‘ritual action reaches heaven.’ *Upaniṣad* statements lead to knowledge that can only mean the cessation of action. In this way, Śaṅkara distinguishes denotative meaning from injunctive.²¹

Śaṅkara on *BĀU* 2.4.5/4.5.6 in *Brahmasūtras*

In order to better understand Śaṅkara’s position in *BĀUBh*, it should be considered what he says about *BĀU* 2.4.5 in his commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* (*BSBh*). In this most significant of his works, the terms *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* and their related gerundive forms *śrotavya*, *mantavya*, and *nididhāsitavya* occur in several passages.

²⁰ *tasmād brahmavijñānād evaṃlakṣaṇāt pūrvam api brahmaiva sadavidyayābrahmāsīt . . .* : ‘Therefore, even before the cognition of *brahman* that is marked in this way, he was *brahman*, but because of the ignorance of the truth, he was non-*brahman*’ (*BĀUBh* 2.5.15, *TPU*, p. 775, lines 13f).

²¹ Maṇḍanamiśra (1937, 74–76) interestingly argues that the knowledge of *brahman* cannot be enjoined because, if we need an injunction to understand a sentence, we would also need an injunction to understand the sentence by which the injunction is expressed, which would lead to an infinite regress. Activity, according to Maṇḍanamiśra, follows cognition, while listening and comprehension take place simultaneously.

In *Brahma-Sūtra* 1.1.4 (p. 13, lines 13ff), *pūrvapakṣin* seeks to show that ignorance is not necessarily removed after one merely hears the truth. According to this objection, in *BĀU* 2.4.5, after one listens (*śravaṇa*) about one's Self, reflection (*manana*) and concentration (*nididhyāsana*) are enjoined. Just as with ritual injunctions, one performs a ritual after knowing that ritual action leads to Heaven. Listening is, according to this observation, not sufficient to attain knowledge. Hearing needs to be followed by mental action. Therefore, *śāstra* (scriptural authority, i.e. *Upaniṣads*) can serve as means of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) of *brahman* only if *brahman* is related to injunctions (such as injunctions for reflection [*mantavya*] and contemplation [*nididhyāsitavya*]).²²

This explanation differs from Bhartṛprapañca's interpretation, according to which the entire Madhubrāhmaṇa is an injunction; in objections raised in *BĀUBh* 1.4.7, as well as in *BSBh* 1.1.4, gerundives *śrotavya* and others are treated as injunctions.

In his extensive response, Śaṅkara first focuses on the difference between the fruit of knowledge of *brahman* and fruits of action. The fruits of action are in ritual literature described in terms of injunctions and prohibitions. These are related to physical and mental experiences, and experiences are subjected to gradation. On the other hand, the knowledge of *brahman* means liberation, which is eternal, indivisible, and unchangeable. If *brahman*, like action, was connected with injunctions in the sense that it would be a consequence of injunctions (for *brahman* and his cognition are the same), he himself would be structurally similar to the consequences of injunctions, i.e. *brahman* would be perishable, divisible, and subject to gradation. On p. 16, lines 8–10, Śaṅkara clearly defines the relationship between knowledge and action:

ato na puruṣavyāpāratāntrā brahmavidyā |
kiṃ tarhi pratyakṣādipramāṇaviṣayavastujñānavadvastutantrā |
evaṃbhūtasya brahmaṇas taj jñānasya ca na kayācid yuktyā
śakyaḥ kāryānupraveśaḥ kalpayitum |

Therefore, the knowledge of *brahman* does not depend on human activity but depends on the knowledge of things that are similar to the objects of valid means of cognition such as perception and oth-

²² *śravaṇottarakālayor manananididhyāsanayor vidhir darśanāt | tasmāt pratipattividhi-
viṣayatayaiva śāstrapramāṇakaṃ brahmābhyupagantavyam iti | (BSBh 1.1.4, p. 13, lines
10–11).*

ers. It is inconceivable by reason to imagine the connection of such a brahman and his cognition with action.

The Self cannot be connected to injunctions in the same way as an observed object has nothing to do with one's urge to observe it, nor does it need any further actions to be enjoined to cognize it. We perceive an object or not regardless of the incentives or the efforts we make. The knowledge of the Self does not depend on the daily activity;²³ it is similar to knowing things that are the object of valid means of cognition such as perception and others. Here we see in what sense knowledge of the Self cannot be a consequence of action according to Śaṅkara. Knowledge arises spontaneously as in perception; it does not depend on enjoined action.

We could draw this analogy: if the chair is within the range of valid means of cognition, i.e. perception, and if all is well with our cognitive apparatus and external conditions, we will know it. But although Heaven is within the reach of its means of attainment, i.e. the rite, we will not reach it immediately; we need action, we need an injunction to encourage and assure us to perform the rite. In the matter of cognition, therefore, no injunction is required, and thus no action. For Śaṅkara, in this analogy, the *Upaniṣads* correspond to valid means of cognition. The valid means of cognition and ritual action are obviously substantially different.

From these two examples (*BĀUBh* 1.4.7; 2.4.5 and 2.5 on the one hand, and *BSBh* 1.1.4 on the other), it could be concluded that Śaṅkara is focusing on the difference in the structure of self-reflexive (and liberating) knowledge and action and that he tries to prove that knowledge cannot have anything to do with injunctions. According to Śaṅkara's interpretation, in the first step, some knowledge is mediated. In *BĀU* 2.4.5 (*śrotavya, mantavya*, etc.), knowledge of the nature of the Self is mediated; in sacrificial injunctions the knowledge is mediated in that by performing a certain rite one attains Heaven. In the first case, however, there is no second step, since the knowledge has already been attained, whereas, in the case of injunctions, the second step, the actual performance of the ritual takes place.

In Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahmasūtra* 4.1.1, a surprisingly different kind of discussion on *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* occurs. Following the *sūtra* 4.1.1, Śaṅkara discusses the role of repetition of certain notions (*pratyaya*) in cognition. According to him, notions should be re-

²³ *ato na puruṣavyāpāraṇātrā brahmavidyā* (*BSBh* 1.1.4, p. 16, line 8).

peated, as in the example of *śravaṇa* etc., until they culminate in ‘seeing’ (*darśana*). Most probably, Śāṅkara refers to the intuitive cognition by using the word *darśana*.²⁴ In *BSBh* 4.1.1, Śāṅkara equates *nididhyāsana* with *upāsana*, ‘devout meditation, contemplation’.

In *BSBh* 4.1.1, Śāṅkara claims that both *upāsana* and *nididhyāsana* are actions (*kriyā*) that involve repetition (*āvṛtti*). The question that arises here is how Śāṅkara may understand *nididhyāsana* in *BSBh* 4.1.1 as an act (*kriyā*), even though in numerous passages, he emphasises that knowledge has nothing to do with action.

In *BSBh* 4.1.2, the objection is raised as to what repetition may have to do with the knowledge of *brahman* who is the universal Self? If this is not known the first time it is heard, it will not be known even if it is heard more than once. The possible solution suggested is that listening is not enough, it must be augmented by reflection and concentration. And this is the same objection that we find in *BĀUBh* 1.4.7 and *BSBh* 1.1.4. Śāṅkara also responds extensively here, but the core of his response is found in *BSBh* 4.1.2, at p. 462, lines 6–7:

*drśyante hi sakṛc chrutād vākyān mandapratītaṃ vākyārtham
āvartayantas tat tad ābhāsavyudāsenā samyak pratipadyamānāḥ |*

When listening to a sentence for the first time, when the meaning of the sentence is not fully understood, it is evident that correct understanding, with the cessation of false appearances, is achieved through repetition.

From this, however, it is evident that Śāṅkara maintains his view, in which he sharply distinguishes and separates cognition from the action. The only concession he makes is that he admits that cognition need not arise immediately at first hearing. But that does not detract from the idea that cognition arises immediately.

Post Śāṅkarian Vedānta on Śrotavya, Mantavya, and Nididhyāsītavya

Relatively early after Śāṅkara, about one generation after him, Bhāskara composed a commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*.²⁵ However, *bhedābheda-vādin* Bhāskara has a different view of *BĀU* 2.4.5/4.5.6, which reflects his ideas about the combination of knowledge and action. If for Śāṅkara and Vācaspatimiśra, the *Upaniṣad* statements such as *śrotavya* and others are

²⁴ Thibaut and Gambhirananda translate *darśana* as ‘intuition’.

²⁵ For Bhāskara’s date, see Kato (2011, xxiv–xxv).

only denotative, for Bhāskara they can also be injunctive. For Bhāskara, devout contemplation (*upāsana*) is enjoined in the form of injunctions such as *nididhyāsītavya*. Bhāskara interprets the terms *śrotavya* and others (*BĀU* 2.4.5/4.5.6) on p. 7 (lines 7–15). He explains that cognizing Self, *vijñānātman*, is revealed with *draṣṭavya*, ‘has to be shown’; the real state of the highest Self is revealed with listening (*śrotavya*), *mantavya* reveals the knowledge that is the essence of sacred texts, while *nididhyāsana* is the meditation (*dhyāna*) on the sacred texts. All four constitute the four-fold injunction (*caturvidhena vidhinā*).

*ko ’sāv ātmety apekṣāyām svarūpāvabodhaparāṇi ’idaṃ sarvaṃ yad
ayam ātmā’* [*BĀU* 2.4.6 = 4.5.7] *’sa ya eṣo ’nimaitadātmyam idaṃ
sarvaṃ’* [e.g. *ChU* 4.8.7; 9.4; 10.3] *ity ādīni prativēdāntaṃ.
pravartante | vidite cātmatattve pratyayāvrttilakṣaṇam.
tadupāsanam upadiśyate ’nididhyāsītavyo’* [*BĀU* 2.4.5; 4.5.6]
’vijñāya prajñāṃ kurvīta’ [*BĀU* 4.4.21] *iti*

With regard to the inquiry: ‘What is the Self (*ātman*)?’ there are statements in every Upaniṣad such as ‘all that is nothing but this self,’ ‘the finest essence here – that constitutes the self of this whole world’ and so on, that serve to teach the true nature [of *ātman*]. When the nature of *ātman* is known, then the dedication to it, which is characterised by the repetition of knowledge, is taught as follows: ‘[on which] one should concentrate,’ ‘by knowing [that very one a wise Brahmin] should obtain insight for himself.’ [Kato 2013, 144–145; 2011, xxxiii–xxxiv]

Bhāskara’s view is close to that of Śaṅkara’s objector. Bhāskara allows for the possibility that the Upaniṣad text *śrotavya*, *mantavya* expresses injunctions, and for meditative action. Thus, just like Bhartṛprapañca, he allows the process to be divided first into listening and observing, and then into reflection and concentration. Reflection and listening, however, are forms of imposed action, and the *Upaniṣad* text takes on a denotative and injunctive aspect.

Śaṅkara’s successors follow in principle the path laid out by Śaṅkara. We have already set forth Sureśvara’s remarks on the unity of listening, reflection, and concentration culminating in intuitive cognition. Padmapāda discusses in the ninth *varṇaka* of his *Pañcapādika* whether *brahman* is the object of the injunction for meditation. In connection with this discussion, he cites the objection that *nididhyāsana* should be enjoyed after hearing to facilitate cognition. On p. 93 (lines 21ff),

Padmapāda states that *śravaṇa*, ‘hearing’, serves for deliberation (*vicāra*) into Upaniṣad statements and conceiving the Self, and *manana* is for interpreting Upaniṣad parables such as the parable with the drum from *BĀU* 2.4.7. *Nididhyāsana* means becoming steadfast in the realm of the meaning of a sentence established by *manana*.²⁶ It is interesting to note here the formal similarity with Bhartṛprapañca’s interpretation of *manana* as applied to parables with the drum and others. The meaning, however, is different, because for Bhartṛprapañca *nididhyāsana* is an enjoined action that follows and complements listening, while in Padmapāda, just as in Śāṅkara and Sureśvara, *nididhyāsana* is part of the indivisible process of cognition. On p. 94, Padmapāda offers a new grammatical interpretation of the gerundives *śrotavya*, *mantavya*, and *nididhyāsitavya*. According to him, the suffix *kr̥tya* (-*tavya* gerundive, or *participium necessitatis*) does not imply injunction, but the meaning ‘deserving’, ‘worthy of’ (*arha*). According to Padmapāda, *śrotavya*, *mantavya*, and *nididhyāsitavya* do not enjoin listening, reflecting, and concentration, but indicate that the Self is worthy of listening, reflecting, and concentrating on. Padmapāda refers here to the Pāṇini’s sutra 3.3.169 *arhe kr̥tyatṛcaś ca* ‘Affixes *kr̥tya* and *tṛC*, and *LIN̄* as well, occur after a verbal root, when the agent is denoted as deserving’ (Sharma 1995, 582). It is interesting to note that Sarvajñātman gives the same grammatical explanation in *saṃkṣṣ* 2.51. According to Sarvajñātman (*saṃkṣṣ* 2.50–2.51), the notions of *draṣṭavya* and others are not injunctions, but notions that convey the fact that cognition is present in the Self because the truth about the Self is unknown, i.e. obscured by ignorance. In *saṃkṣṣ* 2.52, Sarvajñātman explains (1972, 282–283):

*rūpyādivibhramam apekṣya hi śuktikādau satsaṃprayogajanitaiva tu
buddhivṛttih | tām apy apekṣya sati saṃhṛtasarvabhede
satsaṃprayogajanitā matir abhyupeyā ||*

The mental state of the form of shell, etc, may be regarded as arising from the contact of sense of sight with a real object (shell) only when contrasted with the mental state of illusory silver. But when contrasted with the mental state of shell, the mental state of the self

²⁶ *tathā ca śravaṇaṃ nāma ātmāvagataye vedāntavākyavicārah, śārīrakaśravaṇaṃ ca | mananaṃ vastuniṣṭhavākyāpekṣitadundubhyādidiṣṭāntajanmasthitilayavācārambhāṇa-
tvādiyuktārthavādānusandhānaṃ, vākyārthāvirodhyanumānānusandhānaṃ ca | nididhyā-
sanaṃ mananopabr̥ṃhitavākyārthaviṣaye sthiribhāvaḥ, vidheyasyopāsanaṃ paryāyasya
niṣphalatvāt | (PañcP, p. 93, lines 21–25).*

which is free from any difference should be accepted as arising from the association of the sense (that is, intellect) with a real object (the self).

Vācaspatimiśra follows Śaṅkara in his commentary on the passage from *BSBh* 1.1.4 (Suryanarayana Sastri and Raja 1992, 239–240) and argues that *mantavya* and *nididhyāsītavya* cannot be injunctions. He first eliminates the possibility that *mantavya* and *nididhyāsītavya* are injunctions like those that enjoin principal rites (*pradhānakarman*) that produce invisible results. Reflection and concentration make *brahman* directly known (*brahmasākṣātkāra*) because the Self of all is not unknown. Hearing Vedic words (*śravaṇa*), on the other hand, conveys only indirect knowledge of *brahman* and does not bring liberation. The word, even the Vedic, conveys meaning through symbols, not directly. Vācaspatimiśra holds (Suryanarayana Sastri and Raja 1992, 162) that if listening (*śravaṇa*) alone is sufficient, then why are reflection and concentration mentioned in *BĀU* 2.4.5/4.5.6 in addition to listening? *Mantavya* and *nididhyāsītavya* are not comparable to the main ritual act, but neither are they comparable to secondary rites such as cleansing rice. Indeed, if the knowledge of *brahman* is the result of action comparable to secondary ritual acts, then *brahman* would be something that can be used later (in the main act). Therefore, Vācaspatimiśra completely rejects the possibility that these are injunctions, but he does not admit the possibility that *śravaṇa* could suffice for the realization of *brahman* (cf. *BS* 4.1.1–2).

It is interesting to note that Prakāśātman reverses the hierarchy of concepts and, quite unlike Vācaspatimiśra, designates reflection and concentration as aids to listening, *śravaṇa*, which becomes instrumental of direct knowledge of *brahman* (*PañcPV*, p. 104, lines 9–13; cf. Cammann 1965, 160–161).

Concluding Remarks

There are two main reasons why the followers of Advaita Vedānta cannot accept the claim that the gerundives *śrotavya*, etc. are injunctions. The first is that knowledge becomes more important than action, which makes the *Upaniṣads*, i.e. parts of the Vedic corpus dealing with knowledge (*jñānakāṇḍa*), more important than the Brāhmaṇas, the part dealing with sacrificial injunctions (*karmakāṇḍa*). Śaṅkara, in a commentary on *BSBh* 1.1.4, claims that knowledge is not mental action (*mānasī kriyā*) because action depends on the will of the person. Any action can be done,

not done, or done differently because it depends on the person,²⁷ unlike knowledge, which arises spontaneously from the valid means of cognition.²⁸ Knowledge, whose object is truth, cannot be done or not done. It does not depend on injunctions that enjoin the act of cognition, but only on the object.²⁹ Therefore, the parts of the sacred text that lead to knowledge have greater authority in describing reality than those that enjoin action. Injunctions only guide awareness of what needs to be done but cannot create knowledge.

If Śaṅkara admits to Bhartṛprapañca that different parts of the text refer to different parts of the mental process of knowing one's Self, knowledge ceases to be something that arises spontaneously, and *brahman* can be known by the command to know it. This also puts Śaṅkara in danger of accepting that the parts of the injunction for (mental) action are separate, thus recognizing the authority of the *Brāhmaṇas* whose main parts are injunctions to perform the rites. For the representatives of the Bhedābhedavāda, this equation would not be a problem because they taught a combined path of action and knowledge. Thus, the representatives of the Pūrvamīmāṃsā claim that action is above knowledge, *bhedābhedavādins* claim that they are equal, while Śaṅkara claims that knowledge is above action. According to Bhedābhedavāda, the *Upaniṣads* also enjoin, i.e. encourage mental action that leads to knowledge, unlike Pūrvamīmāṃsā, according to which only the *Brāhmaṇas* enjoin, while the *Upaniṣads* serve only as an explanation/eulogy (*arthavāda*) for the injunctions.

Śaṅkara radicalizes the attitude of the Vedānta and turns the hierarchy of sacred texts completely in favour of the *Upaniṣads*. If we understand Pūrvamīmāṃsā as the first step, Bhedābhedavāda would be a transitional step in the development that ends with Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, where, by reversing the significance of knowledge and action, the hierarchy within the sacred canon is reversed. In this way, the *Upaniṣads* lead directly to the knowledge of the *brahman*, which becomes the only measure of the authority of the sacred text.

²⁷ *puruṣena kartum akartum anyathā vā kartuṃ śakyaṃ puruṣatantratvāt* (BSBh 1.1.4, p. 18, lines 14f).

²⁸ *jñānaṃ tu prāmaṇajanyam* (BSBh 1.1.4, p. 18, line 15).

²⁹ *pramāṇaṃ ca yathābhūtavastuviṣayaṃ ato jñānaṃ kartum akartum anyathā vā | kartumaśakyaṃ, kevalam vastutantrameva tat | na codanāntantram | nāpi puruṣatantram |* (BSBh 1.1.4, p. 18, lines 15f).

Abbreviations

- $B\bar{A}U$ (κ) = *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (Kāṇva).
 $B\bar{A}U$ (M) = *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (Mādhyamīna).
 $B\bar{A}UBh$ (TPU) = *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya*, see Śaṅkara (1964).
 $B\bar{A}UBhT$ = *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya-ṭikā*, see Sureśvara (1892a; 1892b; 1893).
 $B\bar{A}UBhV$ = *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya-Vārtika*, see Sureśvara (1892a; 1892b; 1893).
 $PañcP$ = *Pañcapādikā*, see Padmapāda (1891).
 $saṃkṣ$ = *Samkṣepaśārīraka*, see Sarvajñātman (1972).
 $PañcPV$ = *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa*, see Prakāśātman (1892).
 $ŚP$ = *Śāstra-Prakāśikā*, see Ānandagiri (1891).
 $BSBh$ = *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, see Śaṅkara (1985).
 $Mims$ = *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtras*.
 BS = *Brahma-Sūtras*, see Śaṅkara (1985).
 chU = *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, see Olivelle (1998).

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