An Irrational Redaction:
World Creation from the Unmanifest in the Yājñavalkyasmṛti

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1. Introduction

The Yājñavalkyasmṛti (YS), one of the most famous and influential dharmaśāstras, can, according to recent studies, be dated to approximately the fifth or sixth century. Its redacted version ("Vulgate") can be dated to around mid-ninth or mid-tenth century. A majority of scholars agree that the text (YS_B) contained in Viśvarūpa’s (fl. 800–825) commentary Bālakṛṣṭa (BK) is close to the original YS, which has many textual differences with the Vulgate—such as the text (YS_M) contained in Vijñāneśvara’s (twelfth century) commentary Mitākṣarā (MA) and that (YS_A) contained in Aparārka’s (twelfth century) commentary Yājñavalkyasmṛtiṭīkā (YST). However, how and why the redaction was made has not been fully uncovered. This paper aims to shed significant new light on the process of redaction by focusing on textual differences pertaining to the world creation, expounded in Śaṅkhyā terms in the third chapter of the YS.

2. Textual Difficulty in the Vulgate

This section investigates the following passage from YS 3.180–81.

From the Unmanifest (avyakta) [is generated] the intellect (buddhi), and from this [intellect] is generated the egoity (ahaṃkāra). From this [egoity] are generated ether and other [elements] with a one-by-one increase in properties (ekottaraguṇāni).
The properties of these [elements] are sound, touch, color, taste, and smell. The [property] resting on one of these [properties] is dissolved in the very resting one.

In this extract, the most noteworthy reading is *tasmāt khādīni jāyante* (“from this [egoity] are generated ether and other [elements],” *YSb*), its variant being *tanmātrādīny āhaṃkārāt* (“from the egoity [are generated] the *tanmātras* and others,” *YSmA*). The key difference lies in the derivatives of the egoity, yet the latter reading is difficult to interpret in terms of the relationship to the following *ekottaragunāni* (“with a one-by-one increase in properties”). If we adopt the former reading, the “properties” (*guṇa*) of ether and other four elements, which, as indicated in the following 3.181, refer to sound and others, increase one by one; ether has sound as its property, wind has sound and touch as its properties, fire has sound, touch, and color as its properties, and so forth. On the other hand, if we adopt the latter reading, it will be difficult to rationally interpret how the properties, sound and others, of the *tanmātras* (i.e., sound, touch, color, taste, and smell) and others will increase one by one. Similarly, in this case, interpreting the *tad- of tadguṇāḥ* (3.181) as signifying the *tanmātras* will be a challenge. As if aware of this textual difficulty, the Vulgate’s commentators exclusively accept the accumulation of properties in the elements, not in the *tanmātras*; however, this interpretation appears far-fetched as it excludes the *tanmātras* from this accumulation contrary to the reading *tanmātrādīni*. Consequently, this corroborates the validity of the reading of *YSb*, suggesting that its redactor did not maintain consistency with the context. It prompts questions of why the valid reading was altered, in the first place. One possible answer is the spread of the classical Sāṃkhya evolutionary scheme. Some sources of early Sāṃkhya, such as the Mokṣadharma section of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Buddhacarita*, represent the view that the elements are derivatives of the egoity, instead of the *tanmātras*. Meanwhile, later sources of classical Sāṃkhya, represented by the *Sāṃkhyaṅkārikā* (*SK*), view the *tanmātras* as derivatives of the egoity. Assuming that the proto-readings were altered in accordance with the spread of the classical Sāṃkhya doctrine, then the Sāṃkhya terms of the proto-text are presumed to be derived from sources of early Sāṃkhya. We will examine this presumption by clarifying the referent of the *avyakta* (“unmanifest”), which occurs as the cause of the intellect.

3. Ātman as the Avyakta

To examine the philosophical inclination toward early Sāṃkhya in the *YS*, this section in-
vestigates the referent of the *avyakta* in *YS* 3.180. The term *avyakta* is a known synonym for Primal Matter (*mūlaprakṛti, pradhāna*), as represented by the classical Śāmkhya system, where the dualistic view of the self (*puruṣa, ātman*) and Primal Matter is held. In fact, Vijñāneśvara and Aparārka interpret this *avyakta* as signifying Primal Matter, whereas Viśvarūpa introduces *YS* 3.180 as expounding “the step of generation of the *kṣetrajña*” (*kṣetrajñotpattikrama, BK 64.21*), that is, how the world is created from the *kṣetrajña* (lit., “field-knower”), which is synonymous with the self. Thus, there is a conflict of views regarding the cause of the world, or the referent of the *avyakta*. The term *avyakta* occurs only twice in *YS* 3.179–80, and thus, in order to determine the referent of the *avyakta*, the only occurrence, in the immediately preceding verse 3.179, needs to be examined.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{avyakta}^{*1} & \text{ ātma kṣetraṅah kṣetrayāsyāya nigadyate} \\
\text{īśvarah sarvabhūtānāṃ}^{*2} & \text{ sann asan sad asac ca sahg\textsuperscript{*3}} \\
\end{align*}
\]

*1: avyakta*] *YS*\textsubscript{b}; *AP* 375.25; *avyaktam* *YS*\textsubscript{M,A}  
*2: sarvabhūtānāṃ*] *YS*\textsubscript{b}; *sarbabhūtasthāḥ* *YS*\textsubscript{M,A}; *sarbabhūtasya* *AP* 375.25  
*3: sahg*] *YS*\textsubscript{b}; *AP* 375.25; *yah* *YS*\textsubscript{M,A}

Here, the commentaries on the Vulgate, which above read “*avyaktam*” instead of “*avyakta*,” connect it to “*kṣetrasya*,” likewise, interpreting the *avyakta* as Primal Matter.\textsuperscript{7} However, it is syntactically difficult to relate these two words of different grammatical cases. Meanwhile, the case of “*avyakta*” above can be analyzed as either nominative or locative. Viśvarūpa, in fact, presents both interpretations, according to which, in the case of locative, the *kṣetrajña* is connected to the unmanifest action (*karman*), and, in the case of nominative, the self is qualified by *avyakta*, which means “not attached to color and other [objects]” (*rūpādyasaṃsrṣṭa*).\textsuperscript{8} Viśvarūpa does not determine which case should be adopted, and, thus, modern scholars who adopt “*avyakta*” translate it differently: “*mikengen no ātoman* 未顕現のアートマン” [the unmanifest ātman] (Ikari and Watase 2002, 167) and “the self within the unmanifest principle” (Olivelle 2019, 259). We settle this issue of interpretation by resorting to the fourth chapter Śārīrasthāna (ŚS) of the *Carakasamhitā*, which is considered one of original sources of the *YS*.\textsuperscript{9}

The ŚS expounds the creation from the *avyakta*, a process identical to the proto-*YS* text above (1.66),\textsuperscript{10} and the one-by-one increase of properties in the five elements (1.27–28). In this context, the term *avyakta*—first appearing as a neuter adjective (1.60) qualifying Being (*sat*, 1.59)—is referred to as neuter in apposition with the masculine ātman and *kṣetrajña* in 1.61, 65. There, the *avyakta* is described as the beginningless puruṣa, which is
constant, all-pervading, and imperishable. Furthermore, the puruṣa, which is referred to as an aggregation (rāśi), comprises twenty-four constituents: eightfold bhūtaprakṛti ("material nature," i.e., avyakta, intellect, egoity, five elements) and sixteen-fold vikāra ("modification," i.e., five sense faculties, five faculties of action, manas, five objects; 1.35, 63–64). The puruṣa is divided into the beginningless and the impermanent (1.59), the latter of which is presumed to be the puruṣa as an aggregation compared with the beginningless paramātman ("supreme ātman," 1.53). Now, how can we make the avyakta as comprising the impermanent puruṣa compatible with the beginningless puruṣa? ŚS 5.5 mentions the six constituents of the world (loka), or puruṣa—that is, the five elements and the unmanifest brahman, paraphrased as the inner ātman (antarātman).11) Furthermore, ŚS 4.8 refers to the inner ātman, brahmā, puruṣa, avyakta, individual self (jīva), and other synonyms for the elements of consciousness.12) This indicates that when the beginningless ātman (puruṣa), which is the Unmanifest (brahman) by nature, is connected with the body at conception, it is considered to be "born" as the individual self.13) Accordingly, the two puruṣas are essentially identical, as also conceivable from the individual self bhūtātman, which becomes identical with the brahman at liberation (1.155). Thus, the ŚS, with its monistic view, expounds the twenty-four constituents of the world, as opposed to the dualistic view of the SK.

This cosmology in the ŚS basically corresponds to that in the YS. According to the YS, as sparks arise from a heated iron ball, so all the ātmans are generated from the sole ātman (3.67), and as the sun is reflected on the surface of a lake, so the sole ātman appears as multiple ātmans (3.144).14) Considering the generation of the ātman from the brahman and the five elements—which are the six constituents of the world—with the following similes, such as a potter producing a pot from clay and other materials (3.145–48),15) the brahman is likely to produce the ātman from itself and the five elements as its materials. It is probable that this ātman made of the five elements corresponds with the empirical self, termed bhūtātman; thus, the brahman is the transcendental ātman called kṣetrajña, as suggested by the differentiation between bhūtātman and kṣetrajña (3.34). Furthermore, the ātman, which is unborn by nature, is considered to be “born” by acquiring the body (3.69), the beginningless ātman begins with the body/world (3.117), and the ātman comes into being as the inner self through the connection with the body (3.125).16) In addition, in the view of 3.179, seen above, and 3.178, which lists twenty-three constituents termed kṣetra,17) the body/world consists of twenty-four elements. These statements basically agree with those in the ŚS, al-
though it appears that the ŚS does not clearly explain the generation of multiple ātman from the sole ātman. Thus, it is most probable that the “avyakta” of “avyakta ātma” should be the nominative case, which qualifies the ātman. This can be corroborated by examples of avyakta as denoting the ātman in the Mokṣadharma.¹⁸)

4. Concluding Remarks

In considering the world creation in the YS, we conclude that the Vulgate reading is clearly inconsistent in terms of context, and that the reading of YSb, which makes sense, should be considered the original. Furthermore, this paper has demonstrated that the redaction of the YS accords with the historical transition of Sāṃkhya doctrine. According to the view based on the proto-YS text, from the ātman or brahman, which is termed avyakta, the intellect, egoity, and five elements are generated. This monistic view, which contrasts sharply with the dualistic classical Sāṃkhya, is likely to have its origin in sources of early Sāṃkhya, such as the ŚS, which does not clearly explain the generation of multiple ātman from the sole ātman.¹⁹) In this case, it is conceivable that, at the initial compilation of the YS, the SK might not have been composed yet, or, even after the composition of the SK, it might not have had a significant influence, giving us a new lens to determine the date of the SK.

Notes

1) See Ikari and Watase 2002, 360; Olivelle 2019, xiv. 2) See, for instance, Ikari and Watase 2002, 361; Olivelle 2019, xxix–xxxi. Here we note the YS editions used in this paper. YSb (BK): The Yājñavalkyasmrī with the Commentary Bālakrīda of Visvarūpāchārya, 2nd ed., ed. T. Ganapati Sastri, 2 parts (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1982); YSM (MA): Yājñavalkyasmrī of Yogīśvara Yājñavalkya with the Commentary Mitākṣarā of Vijnāneśvara, 5th ed., ed. Narayan Ram Acharya (Bombay: Nirmaya Sagar Press, 1949); YSA (YST): Aparārādhābhidhāparādityaviracitaṭīkāsametā Yājñavalkyasmrīth, 2 vols. (Punyākhyapattana: Ānandāśramamudrālaya, 1903–1904). In addition, regarding the verse number of the YS, we follow Olivelle 2019. 3) MA (395.8–9): adīgraḥanād gauṇādīni tāni caikottaragunaṇy utpadante. See also YST 2:1015.10–13. 4) The readings close to YSb, though with slight differences, are observed in Agnipurāṇa (AP) 375.26–27 (Agni purāṇa, ed. Rājendralāla Mitra, 3 vols. [Calcutta: printed at the Ganeśa Press, 1873–1879]): buddher utpattir avyaktā tato ‘hanākarasambhavah | tasmāt khaḍīni jāyanta ekottaragunāni tu || śabdaś ca sparśaś ca rūpam ca gandhaś ca tadgūnāh | yo yasminn āśritaś caiva sa tasminn eva liyate || 5) See, for instance, Strauss 1925, 129–30. 6) MA (395.6–7): satvadīgunasāmyam avyaktaṃ. MA (394.31): avyaktaṃ prakṛtir ity etat kṣetram asya . . . See also YST 2:1015.26. 7) BK (2:64.11, 14–15): . . . avyakte ca karmanya avasthitah karmaivaḥ kṣetrajña ity evam . . . yad vātmaviśeṣanavatenaḥ avyakta ity etad yojanīyam. avyakto rūpaṃ saṃśrṣṭa ity arthaḥ. 8) See esp. Yamashita 2003. 10) ŚŚ
(Carakasamhitā, ed. Trivikramātmaja Yādavaśarman, 3. avṛtti [Mumbai: Nirnayasāgarayantrālaya, 1933]) 1.66: yajyate buddhir avyaktād buddhyāham iti manyāt | param khādīny ahakārād upadyante yathākramam

11) ŚS 5.5 (364.24–365.4): saḍ dhātavah samuditaḥ “loka” iti śabdāṃ labhante; tad yathā—prthivī āpas tejo vāyur ākāśam brahma cāvyaktaṃ iti; eta eva ca saḍ dhātavah samuditaḥ “purusā” iti śabdāṃ labhante. tasya puruṣasya prthivī mūrtir āpāḥ kledas tejo bhisaṃtāpo vāyuh prāno viyac chidrāni brahmānātāmām. 12) ŚS 4.8 (356.19–23): tatra pūrvaṃ cetanādhaṭvah . . . brahma viśvakarmā viśvarūpāḥ puruṣaḥ prabhava ’vyayō nitya gunā grahanām pradhānām avyaktām jīvā jaṅga pugalās cetanāvān vilīṇaḥ bhūtātāma cāntaratāmā ceti. See also ŚS 3.14 (350.16–18). 13) See also ŚS 3.14 (350.18–20).

14) YS 3.67: niścaranti (YS khó) niḥsaranī (YSM khó) yathā lohapiṇḍat taptā sphulingkāḥ | sakāśād ātmānāḥ sarva ātmāno ’pi tathāiva (YSm khó) tadvad ātmānāḥ prabhavanti (YSM khó) hi | 3.144: ākāśam ekaṃ hi yathā ghatādisu prthag bhave | tathāmaito hy anekaś ca jalādhyāsya ivāṃśāmān

15) YS 3.145–48: brahma khātilacetajām (em. [see Olivelle 2019, 250]; brahmakārō YS) jalaṃ bhāṣ ceti dhātavah | ime lokā eṣa cātmā tasmāc ca sacarācaram | mṛdandacakrasamyogāya kumbhabhākārō yathā ghatam | karoṭī trīnakrāṣṭḥair grham vā grhakārakah | hemamātram (YSM khó) mātrām (YSm khó) upādāya rāpam vā hemakārakah | nijalālāsamāyogāya kośam vā kośaḥkārakah | karaṇāny (YSm khó) kāraṇāny (YSM khó) evam ādāya tāsa tāsa iha yonisu | śrṣtyā ātmānam ātmaiva (YSM khó) ātmā ca (YSm khó) saṃbhāya karaṇāni ca | 16) YS 3.69: nimmattām aksaraṇī (YSm khó) aksaraḥ (YSM khó) kartā boddhā brahma gunī vāṣt | ajāḥ sārthagrahaṇaḥ sa jāta iti kāryte | 3.117: anādīr ātmā kathitas tasyādī ca (YSm khó) sarīrakām | ātmanāḥ ca (YSm khó) jñāt sarvam jñātaś cātmāsaṃbhavah |

17) YS 3.178: buddhiḥ pratyayāya ca vāṣṭ (YSm khó) sarvāni AP 375.24) manah karmendrayaṇai ca | ahākārāca ca buddhiḥ ca prthyvāyāṇe caiva ha (YSm khó) hi (YSM khó) 18) See Kanō 2000; Malinar 2017, 617. 19) For instance, the ātman documented in the YS is possibly relevant to Mahābhārata 12.211.13, according to which Āsuri, alleged to be the direct disciple of Kapila, the founder of Sāṃkhya, learns that the sole brahma assumes various forms. Mahābhārata 12.211.13 (The Mahābhārata, vol. 15, ed. Shripad Krishna Belvarkar [Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1954]): yat tad ekāṣaṉe brahma nānāraṇap prarādyate | āsurī manḍale tasmin pratipede tad avyayam

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(This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 20K12801.)

Key words Sāṃkhya, Viśvarūpa, Bālakṛṣṇa, Carakasamhitā, Śārīrasthāna, aavyaka, ātman

(PhD)