

ISSUES CONCERNING THE THEOLOGICAL ELEMENT OF CLASSICAL YOGA PHILOSOPHY AND THEIR REASSESSMENT IN TWO CONTEMPORARY READINGS OF THE *YOGASŪTRA*

QUESTÕES ACERCA DO ELEMENTO TEOLÓGICO DA FILOSOFIA DO YOGA CLÁSSICO E SUA REAVALIAÇÃO EM DUAS LEITURAS CONTEMPORÂNEAS DO *YOGASŪTRA*

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Resumo: No presente artigo, examinamos o elemento teológico do *Yogasūtra* e duas das mais recentes interpretações provocativas apresentadas sobre esse assunto. Considerando inicialmente alguns autores cujas obras foram consideradas de autoridade durante o século XX, discutimos suas opiniões críticas sobre o assunto. Depois de examinar as principais passagens nas quais a noção de *īśvara* aparece no *Yogasūtra*, analisamos duas leituras relativamente recentes do *Yogasūtra* que têm uma relação direta com a questão de como a introdução de *īśvara* por Patanjali deve ser entendida. Analisamos a posição de Maas, que, desenvolvendo uma hipótese originalmente apresentada por Bronkhorst, sugere que o *Yogasūtra* e o *Yogabhāṣya* de Vyāsa (juntos conhecidos como *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*) devem ser considerados como constituindo um todo unificado compilado e composto por um único autor, possivelmente Patañjali. Também levamos em consideração a tradução e o comentário de Bryant sobre o *Yogasūtra*, onde ele afirma que Patanjali era um devoto de um deus pessoal como *Kṛṣṇa*, e que sua noção de *īśvara-praṇidhāna* pode ser entendida como "devoção a Deus". Discutimos brevemente, finalmente, a compatibilidade mútua dessas interpretações.

Palavras-chave: *Yogasūtra*, teologia, *īśvara*, *Yogabhāṣya*

Abstract: In the present paper we examine the theological element of the *Yogasūtra* and two of the newest provocative interpretations put forward about this issue. Considering initially a few authors whose works were regarded as authoritative during the XXth century, we discuss their critical opinions on the subject. After examining the main passages in which the notion of *īśvara* appears in the *Yogasūtra*, we analyse two relatively recent readings of the *Yogasūtra* that have a direct bearing on the question of how Patanjali's introduction of *īśvara* should be understood. We analyse Maas' position, who, developing a hypothesis originally introduced by Bronkhorst, suggests that the *Yogasūtra* and Vyāsa's *Yogabhāṣya* (together known as the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*) should be taken as constituting a unified whole compiled and composed by a single author, possibly Patañjali. We also take into consideration Bryant's translation and commentary on the *Yogasūtra*, where he asserts that Patanjali was a devotee of a personal god like *Kṛṣṇa*, and that his notion of *īśvara-praṇidhāna* can be understood as "devotion to God". We briefly discuss, finally, the mutual compatibility of these interpretations.

Key words: *Yogasūtra*, theology, *īśvara*, *Yogabhāṣya*

INTRODUCTION

*Īśvara-praṇidhānād vā*Or from the concentration (of the mind) in the Lord¹

With just three words Patanjali manages to give rise to a heated dispute about what seems to be an important element in the system he is expounding.² And he achieves this not only in relation to the successors of his own tradition but, what is even more remarkable, to people distant in time and space and also culturally and linguistically. What is the nature of the Lord (īśvara)? What does Patañjali mean with concentration (*paraṇidhāna*)? What is it exactly that arises from the concentration of the mind in the Lord? And as an alternative to what (*vā*) is this concentration presented? Maybe we can ask, before we begin our analysis, if inducing all these questions and the attempts to answer them might not have been part of Patañjali's purpose with his cryptic and condensed sutric speech. We must have in mind that, according to our text, the study of sacred texts (*svādhyāya*), referring oneself to tradition (*āgama*) and the application of inference (*anumāna*) seem to be three of the necessary means to answer the questions just posed. Two of these (*āgama*, *anumāna*), as is known, are means for right knowledge (*pramāṇa*).³ The other one (*svādhyāya*), is one of the three constituents of *kriyā-yoga*, useful for weakening the *kleśas* (*kleśatanūkarāṇa*) and for bringing about *samādhi* (*samādhibhāvana*).⁴ It seems, thus, that Patañjali's sharp stitch has fastened us not only to knowledge but also to the path towards *samādhi*, without us even noticing it.

In the present paper, however, we do not focus primarily on trying to answer all these questions. We examine critically, on the contrary, some of the interpretations that important scholars of the last century or so have put forward about Patañjali's notion of *Īśvara* and the role it plays in the system. We also consider two relatively new contributions to this debate, those of Philip Maas and of Edwin Bryant which taken together can help us build a fresh and innovative understanding of the issue.

¹ YS I 23.

² For a general introduction to the *Yogasūtra* and to its commentarial tradition, see Martino (2015: 429-444).

³ YS I 7.

⁴ YS II 1. It is also one of the *niyamas* (YS II 32), together with *Īśvarapraṇidhāna*.

1. TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ROLE OF *ĪŚVARA* IN *PĀTAÑJALA-YOGA*

Let us make reference, in the first place, to the German indologist Richard Garbe (1857-1927). In an article published in *The Monist* in the year 1894 with the title “Outlines of a History of Indian Philosophy” the author writes the following lines:

At bottom, all that Patanjali did was to embellish the *Sāṃkhya* system with the Yoga practice, the mysterious powers, and the personal god; his chief aim had, no doubt, been to render this system acceptable to his fellow-countrymen by the eradication of its atheism. (GARBE, 1894, p. 588).

This passage contains a view that Andrew Nicholson has called a conventional wisdom clearly expressed by Garbe in the late nineteenth century and that can be found defended by scholars even in the early twenty-first. (NICHOLSON, 2010, p. 68). The German author considers that the “original” *Sāṃkhya* was atheistic and that Patañjali brings into it the notion of a deity in order to vanish this aspect of the system, which, as Garbe argues, was not acceptable to Patanjali’s orthodox contemporaries. The atheistic character of *Sāṃkhya*, as is known, is proper of the *Sāṃkhyasūtra*, a text believed to have been composed around the fifteenth century. There also seems to be other earlier references to the atheistic character of *Sāṃkhya*. Mādhava’s *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, for example, of the XIII-XIVth century, distinguishes between the *Pātañjala-darśana* which is a system of theistic *Sāṃkhya* philosophy, and the *Sāṃkhya-darśana*, identified with the view of *Īśvarakṛṣṇa* which, according to Mādhava, rejects God completely.⁵ In the eighth century, another doxographical work, the *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*, written by Haribhadra, states that some followers of the *Sāṃkhya darśana* are atheists while others have *īśvara* as their deity.⁶ It is worth noting that neither of both doxographical works make reference to the theistic strand of *Sāṃkhya* as the *Yoga-darśana*. For these authors, Patañjali seems not to be the founder or expounder of a system different from *Sāṃkhya*. It took the word “Yoga” a long time to gain currency, as Bronkhorst has shown, as a synonym to Patañjali’s “Sāṃkhyan” philosophy. Mādhavasarasvatī’s *Sarvadarśanakaumudī* (XIVth century), uses “Yoga” to denote this philosophy. Another example is Vijñānabhikṣu’s *Sāṃkhyapravacanabhāṣya* (XVIth century). (BRONKHORST, 1981, p. 315).

⁵ SDS XIV-XV.

⁶ Nicholson (2010, p. 182) suggests that the atheist followers of the *Sāṃkhya* alluded to by Haribhadra might be taken as “*Sāṃkhyas* without a creator god” while the theists would be “*Sāṃkhyas* with a creator god”.

Apart from the works mentioned, however, ancient texts such as the *Kaṭha* and the *Śvetāśvatara* Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Mokṣadharmā* section of *Mahābhārata* XII, which include diverse expositions of *Sāṃkhya*, are thoroughly theistic. In fact, already in 1924 in his article about the meaning of *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga* Edgerton asserted that the study of the epic and other early materials had convinced him that there was not a single passage in which the disbelief in Brahman or God was attributed to *Sāṃkhya*. “Where, then, -he asks- do we find that ‘original’ atheistic view expressed? I believe: nowhere.” (EDGERTON, 1924, p. 8).

On the other hand, as Nicholson has pointed out, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* includes a lengthy section that purports to be an account of Kapila, the founder of the *Sāṃkhya* school, who is depicted teaching a form of *Sāṃkhya* integrated with the practice of *bhakti* and with a Vedantic conception of Brahman (NICHOLSON, 2010, p. 169). Nicholson also suggests that the most influential commentary of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, the *Tattvakaumudī* of Vācaspati Miśra (Xth century), also implicitly accepts God (NICHOLSON, 2010, p. 174). It seems, argues the author, that the historians of philosophy interested in *Sāṃkhya* have focused on few texts⁷ of a more or less non- or atheistic framework, identifying them as authentic representatives of the school. This procedure, he adds, leaves out an enormous body of literature that claims to represent *Sāṃkhya* teachings and that is theistic in its outlook (NICHOLSON, 2010, p. 168).

Jonathan Dickstein has very recently carried out an interesting study that examines the contexts and possible motivations of Garbe’s interpretation of *Sāṃkhya* discussed in the previous paragraphs. He points out that although the influence of the German orientalist waned considerably in late twentieth century scholarship, his impact on the Western reception of *Sāṃkhya* has remained intact. “*Sāṃkhya*’s presupposed atheistic base, he says, has led to the continued trivialization and elimination of the theistic dimension of *Sāṃkhya* and especially of “classical” Yoga” (DICKSTEIN, 2015, pp. 3-33).

Later scholars have also found the notion of *īśvara* in the *Yogasūtra* a pain in the neck, improper of a coherent Yoga system. Mircea Eliade, for example, in his *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom* holds that although it was Patañjali who introduced this new

⁷ The *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, the *Tattvasamāśasūtra*, and the *Sāṃkhyasūtra*.

and “perfectly useless” element in the dialectic of the *Sāṃkhya* soteriological doctrine, he does not give *īśvara* the significance the late commentators will accord him. In the *Yogasūtra*, says Eliade, *īśvara* does not have the grandeur of the omnipotent Creator-God, neither the *pathos* that surrounds the dynamic and solemn God of other mystical schools. *īśvara* is, at most, an archetype of the yogin, a macroyogin, which has only a minor role for the yogin who takes him as the object of his concentration. Patanjali’s introduction of God into Yoga, believes Eliade, occurred because *īśvara* was an “experiential datum”, since there was a “mystical” tradition of yoga in which the last stages of its practice were at least made easier by devotion, even though an extremely rarefied, “intellectual”, devotion to a God. (ELIADE, 2009 [1954], pp. 73 and ff.).

Frauwallner, on the other hand, in his two-volume *History of Indian Philosophy* asserts he must “shortly describe” a doctrine regarding a special peculiarity of the classical Yoga-system, “but which, in reality, represents only a later external supplement or addition to the system, viz. the doctrine of God.” Frauwallner holds, moreover, that this doctrine contains contradictions in relation to the basic views of the system, although he prefers to attach no weight to them, and states that the Godhead in the *Yogasūtra* “is dealt with as almost unemployed and idle”: “besides him (God), the entire course of the world unrolls independently.” He also claims that in the chief steps of the Yoga-way, God is not generally mentioned, that the devotion to God is mentioned as helpful only in a marginal manner, that it is only a means among other ones, and that it is in no way necessary. (FRAUWALLNER, 1973, pp. 334-335). Let us mention, as well, Feuerstein, who considers that the concept of *īśvara* fits ill into the dualistic system propounded by Patañjali, and that its inclusion might have met psychological rather than philosophical needs, or the diplomatic purpose of appeasing the authorities of mainstream Hinduism. (FEUERSTEIN, 1987, p. 391).

This kind of opinions have led recently a specialist like Lloyd Pflueger to believe that Patañjali condenses his theistic philosophical worldview in such a way that his complete theology must be derived from a total of eight aphorisms (PFLUEGER, 2005, p. 29). The “rather strange” concept of God in the philosophy of classical Yoga has led the author to explore it in a “fresh way from the *sūtras* themselves”, taking into consideration only the eight aphorisms he believes pertinent and with as much

independence as possible from the traditional commentaries which, he says, were written hundreds of years later (PFLUEGER, 2005, p. 31 and note 3).

As our exposition so far attempts to show, for more than a century, scholars have been troubled by and have discussed the (im)pertinence of *īśvara* in the ideological context of Patañjala-yoga. Neglecting the theistic contexts in which *Sāṃkhya* expositions appear in ancient texts, historians have persistently interpreted the *Yogasūtra* in line with Garbe's view, projecting over the text an atheistic proto-*Sāṃkhya* conception to which Patañjali would have added "his" strange and clumsy notion of *īśvara*. Cutting Patañjali out from the tradition he himself explicitly enrolls in with his treatment of the notions of *svādhyāya* and *āgama* (and not less with *īśvarapraṇidhāna*), many scholars have tended to artificially read Patañjali as a new starting point, incriminating him for introducing a notion which already belonged to *Sāṃkhyapracāsa*, so to say, and accusing him of poorly portraying his God because he didn't include in his *sūtras* what the previous tradition had already said about *īśvara*. Specialist, as we mentioned, have also preferred to minimize the role of *īśvara* as a mere accessory, when a close reading of the *sūtras* shows that Patañjali includes the notion of concentration in the Lord in three different key moments that tightly tie up this practice with the attainment of *samādhi*. In what follows, let us briefly discuss this issue before dealing with two relatively new interpretations of our text.

1.1 *ĪŚVARA* ACCORDING TO PATAÑJALI

It is known that Patañjali first introduces the notion of *Īśvarapraṇidhāna* in *sūtra* 23 of the first book. As we cited above, the aphorism can be translated as "or from concentration in the Lord".⁸ It has been discussed what is the other member of the disjunction (*vā*).⁹ There is some agreement, however, that the first part of the disjunction is found in the two previous *sūtras* where Patañjali explains that the nearness to the goal to be achieved¹⁰ depends on the intensity of the application of the yogi to the practice.¹¹

⁸ YS I 23. *Īśvarapraṇidhānādvā*

⁹ R. S. Bhattacharya (1985) considers that the disjunction refers to *sūtra* I 12 (Cited by Bryant, 2009, p. 86 note 129).

¹⁰ Tola and Dragonetti (2006, p. 167), for example, understand that the goal referred to here is *nirodha*. Larson and Bhattacharya (2008, p. 164) consider that Patañjali refers to *samprajñāta samādhi*.

¹¹ YS I 21. *Tīvrasmṛvegānāmāsannaḥ*. Near for those with strong intensity.

YS I 22. *Mrdumadhyādhimātratvāt tato 'pi viśeṣaḥ*. Hence, a difference even arises from the fact that it is excessive, medium or mild.

We can understand, hence, that the text is establishing that a difference arises from the fact that the application is mild, middle or extreme (s. 21, 22), or from concentration in the Lord (s. 23). Notice that Patañjali is neither putting in disjunction alternative practices nor alternative causes of the achievement of *samādhi*. He is just mentioning the possible origins from where the difference regarding the nearness (*āsanna*) of the goal arises.¹² Between those who are similarly devoted to the Lord the difference would arise from their degree of effort and application, but for those who are equally applied, the difference is due to the concentration in the Lord. The nearness, thus, seems to depend on two different variables, effort and application, on the one hand, and *īśvarapraṇidhāna* on the other, and the two can combine in various ways.

The next place where Patañjali introduces *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is in the first *sūtra* of the second book. Here it is stated that *kriyā-yoga* consists of austerity (*tapas*), study of sacred texts (*svādhyāya*) and concentration in the Lord. It must be noticed that there is no disjunction (*vā*) introduced here, and that Patañjali is not merely describing possible causes for a difference in the attainment of *samādhi*. He is enumerating the three practices that together are included in *kriyā-yoga*. We should remember, as well, that *sūtra* II 2 states that the purpose of *kriyā-yoga* is to bring about *samādhi* and to make afflictions (*kleśas*) weaker.

The third place where *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is dealt with is in the exposition of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. In the description of the *niyamas* or observances, the second *aṅga*, Patañjali enumerates purity (*śauca*), contentment (*santoṣa*), austerity (*tapas*), study of sacred texts (*svādhyāya*) and, again, concentration in the Lord. In this new instance, Patañjali doesn't make concentration in the Lord an option either, just as none of the other four *niyamas* is optional. *Niyama*, in its place, isn't an optional *aṅga* of the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* either, just as none of the other seven *aṅgas* are.

Our brief exam of the three instances in which Patañjali introduces the notion of concentration in the Lord has tried to show that they don't seem to present this practice

¹² Notice that *sūtra* 22 is composed of a noun in the nominative case and a compound in the ablative case, while *sūtra* 23 only consists of a compound in the ablative case with the disjunction *vā*. The two compounds in the Ablative case, hence, can be understood as the two different causes for the difference (*viśeṣa*) of which Patañjali is talking about.

as a mere dispensable alternative. Not more dispensable, at least, than any of the other disciplines with which it appears mentioned in the *Yogasūtra*. The notion is in fact included in the two different systematizations about yoga that Patañjali offers in the treatise: the *yogāṅga* and *kriyā-yoga*. Furthermore, when Patañjali dedicates one *sūtra* to each of the *niyamas*, in *sūtra* II 45 he states that from concentration in the Lord the perfection of *samādhi* arises. It must also be noticed that in the previous *sūtra* (II 44), when dealing with the *niyama svādhyāya* (the study of sacred texts), Patañjali says that from it the conjunction with the desired *devatā* arises. This connection between *svādhyāya* and *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is not only evidenced by their common presence in the two systematizations of yoga (as *niyama* in the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and in *kriyā-yoga*), but it is also explicitly stated in terms of an internal relationship between the two practices. If we accept, furthermore, that the terms *devatā* (II 44) and *īśvara* (II 45) refer to the same entity, the study of sacred texts leads to concentration in the Lord. This last conclusion reminds us of the narrowness of the approaches that restrict Patañjali's theology to the wording in some of his *sūtra* and ignore the intertextual character of his work, which he makes explicit in his treatment of notions such as *āgama* and *svādhyāya*, closely related to *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, as we already stated.

2. TWO NEW INTERPRETATIONS

Let us now turn to the already mentioned interpretations of Philipp Maas and Edwin Bryant. Philipp Maas, in the first place, has questioned the commonly assumed view that the *Yogasūtra* and the *bhāṣya* attributed to Vyāsa are two different works composed by two different authors. Following previous authors as Jacobi (1929: 584), Venkatarama Raghavan (1938-1939: 84) and Bronkhorst (1985: 203f.), he points out that there are a number of comparatively early primary Sanskrit sources, dating from the tenth century onwards, which contradict that common view. He mentions, in fact, different works that refer to *bhāṣya* passages as having been composed by Patañjali¹³ and asserts that all the authors he cites indicate that the *Pātanjala-yoga-śāstra* (i.e. the *sūtra* passages together with the *bhāṣya* part of the work) is a unified whole that was possibly composed

¹³ Maas (2013, p. 57). "In all cases, we find citations of *bhāṣya*-passages ending with the statement *iti patanjaliḥ*", says the author.

by one single author. In his doctoral thesis published in 2006, in which he carried out a critical edition of the first book of the *Pātañjala-yoga-śāstra* (PYŚ) he also provides further evidence for this hypothesis. After assessing the wording of the chapter colophons of the twenty-five manuscripts he had access to, he concludes that they indicate that the oldest reconstructable title of the work is *Pātanjala-yoga-śāstra Sāṃkhya-pravacana*, i.e. *The authoritative exposition of yoga that originates from Patanjali, the mandatory Sāṃkhya teaching (pravacana)*. He further asserts that the references to the title *Yogabhāṣya* and to the name Vyāsa or Vedavyāsa as its author are only transmitted in a few manuscripts of limited stemmatic relevance.¹⁴ Originally, the work had neither the title *Yoga-bhāṣya* nor did it contain the personal name Vyāsa. He also points out that the *Yogasūtra* appears to have no manuscript transmission independent from that of the PYŚ, because the manuscripts of the *Yogasūtra* he had access to consist of extracts from the PYŚ only. Maas gathers, in sum, considerable and valuable evidence that supports his hypothesis according to which the *Pātañjala-yoga-śāstra* “is the result of a single, roughly datable philosophical authorial intention.” He also states that:

The *sūtra* part taken for itself consists of 195 (or, in other versions, of 196) brief statements that in some cases are not even full sentences. Because of the brevity of these statements and because of the shortness of the *sūtra* part as a whole, the *Yogasūtra* cannot be interpreted convincingly without taking recourse to its historical and cultural contexts. (MAAS, 2013, pp. 69).

Moreover, Maas considers that “the text-immanent approach to the *Yogasūtras* was indeed used frequently to project anachronistic ideas upon this text.” (MAAS, 2013, pp. 69).

On the other hand, Edwin Bryant, in his thorough study, commentary and translation of the *Yogasūtra*, defends an interpretation according to which although Patañjali, like the *Bhagavad Gītā*, does not deny that the *ātman* can be attained by self-effort, favors a theistic approach (BRYANT, 2009, p. 86). He points out that texts such as the *Mahābhārata*, the *Gītā* and later *Upaniṣad* indicate that *īśvara* was associated with a personal God.

One would need compelling grounds, says Bryant, to renegotiate the meaning of the term (*īśvara*) as it is used and understood by the entire later philosophical tradition in general

¹⁴ Prof. Ashok Aklujkar, who was present in the audience, pointed out to me the possibility of taking Vinḍhyavāsin as the author of the *bhāṣya*. Cfr. Larson – Bhattacharya (2008, pp. 40 ff.).

in the premodern period. The term cannot be extricated from its traditional context. (BRYANT, 2009, p. 86).

In accordance with this approach, the author asks “in Patañjali’s day and age, what options would there have been for any type of *īśvara* theism other than the *Nārāyaṇa/Viṣṇu* or *Śiva*-derived traditions?” (BRYANT, 2009, p. 92). “Patañjali’s system, concludes Bryant, can stem only from these preexisting *Vaiṣṇava* or *Śaivite* strains” (BRYANT, 2009, p. 94). Furthermore, the author argues that even though Patañjali never refers to Brahman in the *sūtra*, he consciously equates the Upaniṣadic *Brahman* with the personal *īśvara* by means of the common denominator *om̐* introduced in *sūtra* I 27 (BRYANT, 2009, p. 106). The author’s general position, hence, considers that *īśvara* is the generic name for God in the Hindu theistic traditions and that when used alone like in Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* it tends to refer to a philosophical category, that of a supreme creator God, rather than a specific divine manifestation of this supreme Being in the forms of *Viṣṇu*, *Śiva* and *Kṛṣṇa*, who all lay claim to the title *īśvara* in the *Purāṇas* and the epic texts. Factually, however, points the author, yogis over the past two millennia have been associated with these devotional sects and tend to interpret this category in terms of a specific chosen *devatā* and to add its name onto the *om̐* mantra. (Bryant, 2009, p. 108).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Having thus briefly examined the main appearances of the notion of *īśvara* in the *Yogasūtra* and Maas’ and Bryant’s recent works that deal with this notion, we would like to conclude our exposition offering a few remarks about these new possibilities regarding the interpretation of Patañjali’s theology. The first element that should be analyzed is the compatibility of the two interpretations discussed. If Bryant’s reading is accurate, the *bhāṣya* part of the *PYŚ* –if we accept Maas hypothesis- should not contradict it. It can be pointed out, in this regard, that the commentary describes *īśvarapraṇidhāna* as a *bhakti-viśeṣa*, a special kind of devotion (*bhakti*).¹⁵ This term clearly reminds us of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and its devotional *milieu*. In the commentary to the *sūtra* I 28, on the other hand, there is a quotation of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, a very important text which contains different

¹⁵ *PYŚ* I 23.

stories about the avatars of God Viṣṇu and, especially, Kṛṣṇa. It is important to notice, as well, that the verse included from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* in the commentary to the *sūtra* which states that *japa* on the meaning of *om* should be performed, includes the notion of *svādhyāya*. This reinforces the idea we suggested above which linked *svādhyāya* with *īśvarapraṇidhāna* and implies that *īśvara* has to be understood in the terms in which the sacred traditional texts available to Patañjali deal with it, and not in some autonomous patanjalian sense, as many scholars have contended.

These very few examples, we believe, are enough to give us a hint of the fruitfulness of reading the theological aspect of the *Pātañjala-darśana* taking as our starting points the interpretation of Maas regarding the *Yogaśāstra* and the stress that Bryant puts in the necessity of reading the *Yogasūtra* in its context. It should be the aim of a new investigation to carry out an interpretation of our text under these premises, in order to provide enlightening conclusions about this aspect of its content. Our analysis also shows us that our knowledge of at least some aspects of Indian Philosophy still need some revisioning. We consider that there is much to be improved in terms of the methodologies we apply in our investigations and in terms of the presuppositions we project over the texts we read. But something seems even more urgent: there is still quite a lot of work to be done in terms of what the texts themselves that we study are, their unity, limits and their relation to their contexts. We can finally suggest that these latest endeavors of scholars of the twenty-first century are new ways of practicing *svādhyāya* or the study of sacred texts which, if they won't take us to *samādhi*, at least will hopefully lead us to the correct knowledge of tradition.

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