"With the Word 'Gods' He Created Scripture" The Language Philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya as presented in Brahmasūtrabhāṣya 1.3.28

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“WITH THE WORD ‘GODS’ HE CREATED SCRIPTURE”
The Language Philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya
as presented in Brahmasūtrabhāṣya 1.3.28

Written by
Jonathan R. Peterson
B.S. University of Colorado Boulder, 2009

A thesis submitted to the
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"WITH THE WORD ‘GODS’ HE CREATED SCRIPTURE"
The Language Philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya
as presented in Brahmasūtrabhāṣya 1.3.28
written by Jonathan Peterson
has been approved for the Department of Religious Studies

________________________________________
Loriliai Biernacki

________________________________________
Elias Sacks

Date________________

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
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Advisor: Loriliai Biernacki

Title: “WITH THE WORD ‘GODS’ HE CREATED SCRIPTURE” The Language Philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya as presented in Brahmasūrabhāṣya 1.3.28”

Abstract: In the following pages I analyze the language philosophy that the 8th century South Asian philosopher Śaṅkara puts forth in his commentary on the Brahmasūtra. His philosophy is largely framed in relation to two specific streams of South Asian philosophy - Mīmāṃsā (hermeneutics) and Vyākaraṇa (grammar). A common thread between all three streams of thought (Vedānta, Mīmāṃsā, Vyākaraṇa) is the impulse to preserve the legitimacy of the Vedas. This impulse is largely maintained through complex thinking on the nature of language itself.
May, 2015

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With Gratitude,

Jonathan Peterson
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WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED: ....................................................................................... X
सुरभी ~ ‘fragrant, charming, lovely’
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† Date unreliable
“It is because the Sanskrit language is uncreated and without origin that the Veda itself could be considered beginningless and uncreated, and so immune to the kinds of error, and unconstrained by the kinds of limits, to which all other human communication is subject.”

~ Sheldon Pollock²

Introduction:

Writing in the second century BCE, the eminent South Asian grammarian Patañjali conveys a famous story of Indra’s victory over Vyṛtra due to Vyṛtra’s mispronunciation of the incantation ‘herayo herayḥ’.³ ⁴ Commenting on the merits of grammatical study, Patañjali writes:

The demons who were pronouncing ‘helayo helaya’ [instead of ‘herayo herayḥ’ (Oh enemies! Oh enemies!)]⁵ perished. Therefore, improper [words should not be uttered] by a priest. For a mispronounced [word] is an incorrect word. Grammar should be studied so that we will not [utter] mispronounced word […] Due either to an incorrect accent or an incorrect phoneme, it is said that an incorrect word does not intimate [the intended] meaning. Just as the word ‘indrastruh’ [uttered] with the incorrect accent harms the host of the sacrifice, [in the same way] those incorrect words, which are like thunderbolts, [harms the speaker]. [Therefore] grammar should be studied so that we do not pronounce [words with] incorrect accents.⁶

In the cases of both the demon Vyṛtra and the host of the sacrifice, their utterance of incorrect words roused great misfortune, a misfortune directly linked to the unbecoming use of language. The power of language, and specifically the efficacy for scriptural language to bear its fruit according to Patañjali, is cultivated through the instrument of grammar. While the power of language is the subject of a small number of early Vedic passages,⁷ it was not until the late centuries BCE into the early centuries CE that the subject of language and scriptural interpretation became the central concern of South Asian intellectuals.⁸

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² (Pollock 2006: 47)
³ RV 18.4
⁴ “Oh Enemies! Oh Enemies!”
⁵ Bhartrhari: “[we take] apabhāṣāṇam in the sense of mlecchanam. What was incorrectly said by the demons? There, some say that according to Pāṇini’s sūtra ‘haihe prayogye haihayoh’ the lengthened vowel was not made. Others say, however, that the lengthened vowel, which was coalesced, was not a natural [inflection]. Others say that the words ‘helayo helaya’ are two different words. Others still claim that there should not be the syllable ‘la’…” (Bh.Dī 11.17-21)
⁶ “te asūrāḥ / te asūrāḥ helayaḥ helayaḥ iti kurvantaḥ parā babhūvah / tasmāt brāhmaṇena na mlecchitaiva na apabhāṣitaiva / mlecchhaḥ ha vai esah yat apasaśādhaḥ / mlecchāḥ ma bhūma iti adhyeyam vyākaraṇam / te asūrāḥ” (MB 4.1)
⁷ “duṣṭāḥ sabdāḥ svarataḥ varṇataḥ vā mithyā prayuktah na tad artham āha / saḥ vāgvyāraḥ yajamānah hinaśī yathā indraṣṭruh svarataḥ aparādhāḥ / dusṭān sabdān mā prayukṣmaḥ iti adhyeyam vyākaraṇam / duṣṭāḥ sabdāḥ” (MB 4.2)
⁸ With the notable exception of early thinkers such as Yāska, whose Nirukta most definitely constitutes an early impulse to organize and interpret scriptural language.
The proliferation of speculative thought on the nature of language may be linked to a socio-linguistic imperative to defend the legitimacy of the Vedas and the knowledge they present from the anti-Vedic sentiments of Buddhists who, at the time, had enjoyed increased royal patronage and legitimation under the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka. 9 According to the Buddhists of late Mauryan period, Madhav Deshpande writes “there was no positive value attached to Vedic texts, nor were the authors of Vedic hymns particularly authoritative as knowers of truth.” 10 He continues, “the Vedas were not viewed by the Buddhists as eternal texts, but were viewed as being works of human authors, who were not particularly knowledgeable.” 11 Vedic authorlessness is perhaps the foundational argument for the authority and validity of Vedic knowledge and even the language used to communicate it. Naturally such opprobrium would motivate the defense of Vedic scriptural authority with renewed vigor, a vigor that continued throughout many South Asian intellectual systems and textual traditions for millennia. 12 So much so that certain scholars consider the tradition of grammatical speculation to be one of South Asia’s most significant intellectual developments in history. 13

Two ardent defenders of Vedic and Sanskritic authority were the grammarians (vaivākaraṇa) and Vedic hermeneuticists (mīmāṃsaka), who grappled with problems associated with language, meaning, and interpretation, all within the broader imperative of establishing the language of the Vedas as indisputably authoritative. Far from being in agreement with one another, even thinkers who set out to establish the authority of the Vedas still disagreed on foundational linguistic issues - positions that reflect a multitude of metaphysical and ontological attitudes. A significant chapter in the extensive conversation about scriptural authority revolves around the efforts of Vedic hermeneuticists (Mīmāṃsakas) who, while relying heavily on principles of language and instruments of grammatical analysis developed by grammarians, set out to definitively establish the authority of the Vedas and the role that scripture provides for ritual vis-à-vis injunctive Vedic statements. This stream of Vedic hermeneutics known as Pūrva Mīmāṃsā formed the fodder for subsequent theorists who, like the Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas, still maintained the authority of the Vedas, but whose principle interpretative efforts were directed towards definitively establishing the role of scripture for attaining self-liberation. 14

The soteriological imperative of the ‘later’ group of hermeneuticists (Uttara Mīmāṃsā), while still maintaining the authority of the Vedas, relied on different assumptions about the nature of the world such that the final goal of liberating the human spirit from the ignorance that binds it took precedence over ritual action. Naturally, the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā defense of ritual action and the Uttara Mīmāṃsā soteriology are reflected in their respective language philosophies.

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9 See the chapter ‘the Policy of Dhamma’ (Thapar 1997) and see (Deshpande 1994)
10 (Deshpande 1994: 96)
11 ibid.
12 I elect to use Patil and McCrea’s term ‘textual tradition’ in place of the more often used ‘school of thought’. See (McCrea, Patil 2010).
13 See (Ganeri 1999)
14 For more evidence suggesting that Vedānta be read as a form of Mīmāṃsā, see (Clooney 1990) where he claims that Bādarāyaṇa’s Brahmastūra is written in a style similar to those of the MS of Jaimini. Clooney writes: “Bādarāyaṇa and Āṇārakāra are first-class Mīmāṃsakas, who read, arrange, and in a sense ‘bind’ the Upanisad according to the norms of classification and evaluation articulated in Jaimini’s Mīmāṃsā.” (Clooney 1990: 257)
Therefore, the principle aim of this study is first and foremost to elaborate the language philosophy of an important figure in the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* tradition, Śaṅkarācārya (7th/8th century C.E.),15 whose arguments about language have been eclipsed in modern scholarship in place of his more extensively elaborated non-dual metaphysics. This neglect may be due to, as some scholars have suggested, Śaṅkara’s apparent ‘ambivalence’16 towards language. Yet by heeding the recommendations of other scholars who have suggested that *Vedānta* be seen “as an extension of … *(Pūrva) Mīmāṃsā* to include the Upaniṣads”,17 one would expect Śaṅkara to engage problems of language, meaning, and interpretation, all of which are foundational to the work of *Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas* such as Śabara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa. When examining Śaṅkara’s writings in the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, it is apparent that Śaṅkara engages these very problems though certainly not to the extent seen in *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*.18

Śaṅkara articulates his theories of language in a dialogical format widely used in commentarial traditions. His arguments are presented in response to expected critiques of unnamed opponents (*pūrvapakṣin*) who are taken to be representative of a particular style of thinking. Despite Śaṅkara’s opponents remaining unnamed except for the general classification of ‘those who adhere to the doctrine of *sphoṭa* (*Sphoṭavādins*), or ‘those who adhere to the doctrine of phonemes’ (*Vārvavādins*), the content of the *pūrvapakṣin* critiques suggest that Śaṅkara’s imagined interlocutors were grammarians who propounded theories of *sphoṭa* such as Patañjali and Bhartṛhari, and *Mīmāṃsakas* who adhered to doctrines of phonemic eternity such as Śabara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa.19

There are two semantic problems that underpin Śaṅkara’s language philosophy. The first problem asks whether the connection between a word and its meaning is originary (*autpattikatva*) or conventionally constructed (*pauruseyatva*). Because Śaṅkara is invested in defending the authority of scripture, the originary connection between a word and its meaning must be maintained. If the connection between a word and its meaning were simply conventional, then language and meaning must necessarily be man-made and therefore scripture must necessarily be created and fallible. Śaṅkara defends the originary relationship between a word and its meaning in the first portion of a section in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* titled the *Devatādhikarana* by arguing that the eternal connection between language and meaning is established through an object’s universal property (ākrti) instead of its individuating and particularizing qualities (vyakti). Śaṅkara’s primary interlocutors for the defense of the originary relationship between a word and its meaning are the *Mīmāṃsakas*.

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15 Regarding the dates of Śaṅkara’s life, Karl Potter notes that “work by Allen Thrasher based on a study of Maṇḍana Miśra confirms the dating of Śaṅkara in the late seventh and early eighth centuries rather than the frequently cited 788-820 dates of Dasgupta and others.” (Potter 1981: 116)
16 (Potter 1981: 54)
17 (Clooney 1990: 257); see also (Bronkhorst 2003)
18 This is likely due to their overtly opposed interests in scripture. It makes sense that the *Mīmāṃsakas* would elaborate theories of language and meaning to a greater extent given that their ritual activity employs the use of language directly in order to achieve a desired result. Śaṅkara, on the other hand, employs scriptural language heuristically, ultimately understanding that the realization of Brahma is an extra-linguistic event.
19 The relative dating of Patañjali, Bhartṛhari, Śabara, and Kumārilabhaṭṭa, as well as my greater justification for electing them as Śaṅkara’s interlocutors, will be presented later in this paper.
The second section of this study will be devoted to another semantic problem motivating Śaṅkara’s theory of language, namely how one apprehends meaning from any given word. Here, Śaṅkara presents two conflicting positions, that of the Mīmāṃsaka and the Sphoṭavādin. The Mīmāṃsaka argues that meaning presents itself at the moment of cognizing the last phoneme of a word, where each prior phoneme is apprehended serially and meaning conveyed collectively. Meaning for the Mīmāṃsaka is established through the collective sequence of phonemes themselves and cannot be ascribed to any extra-linguistic factors. Contrary to the Mīmāṃsaka position, Śaṅkara presents the sphoṭavādin view that argues the impossibility of apprehending singular meaning from a sequence of multiple phonemes. Meaning, for Sphoṭavādins such as Bhartṛhari, bursts forth at the end of a word through an extra-linguistic intermediary known as sphaṭa. Śaṅkara presents his theory of meaning-apprehension in opposition to the Sphoṭavādins by siding with the Mīmāṃsakas in arguing that meaning is apprehended on the basis of the phoneme itself. The purpose of this study is to present the language philosophy of Śaṅkara along side those of Mīmāṃsā and the grammatical tradition of Bhartṛhari – both of which are positions Śaṅkara uses to articulate his basic theories of meaning. Śaṅkara, Kumārilabhaṭṭa, Bhartṛhari, and others, put forth their respective language philosophies with the foremost attention to bolster the legitimacy and authority of the Vedas. As such, the legitimation of scripture, specifically the Vedas, is a continual concern for the thinkers presented in this study and is an undeniable impulse in the endeavor of putting forth a philosophy of language.
§1) LANGUAGE AND ETERNAL MEANING

1.1 - AGAINST Mīmāṃsā: ETERNAL MEANING AND THE PROBLEM OF GODS WITH BODIES

Situated within a broader debate about the corporeality of the gods and their efficacy to engender the intended purpose of ritual sacrifice, Śaṅkara expounds his theory of language in a section of the Brahmaśūtrabhāṣya titled Devatādikaraṇa.\(^{20}\) In it, Śaṅkara responds to the arguments of a Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka opponent who claims that the deities invoked in ritual proceedings need not be corporeal given that their efficacy lies not in their physical embodiment (vigrahavattvam) but in the utterances of their names in ritual performance.\(^{21}\) Here, the Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka argues that the efficacy of ritual is distinctly linked to the actions of the ritual proceedings themselves, and is therefore efficacious irrespective of a god’s existence independent of the Vedic scripture. As the fourth-century Mīmāṃsaka Śabara writes:\(^{22}\)

> It ultimately does not matter if the deities exist apart from the Veda, their 'linguistic reality’ [is what matters]: ‘in that case (says the pūrva-pāksīn) it is the word (the name) alone that constitutes the deity.’ We (the siddhāntin) need not refute this [idea], because if expressed it does not militate against our view.\(^{23}\)

As Śabara explains, the gods’ ‘linguistic reality’, the reality of producing their names through utterances in the context of ritual, is far more necessary a criteria to the efficacy of ritual than the gods’ supposed existence independent of scripture, and in fact, Śabara goes so far as arguing that the gods should in fact be understood metaphorically.\(^{24}\) In assenting to the opponent’s claim that ‘the word alone constitutes the deity’,\(^{25}\) Śabara denies the independent existence of the gods and relegates their manifestation to the domain of language and speech-utterances. The basis for relegating the existence of the gods to their linguistic manifestation is motivated by the understanding that if the gods were themselves embodied, then they would be subject to the same process of creation and dissolution that impacts all sentient and insentient objects. If this were the case, that the gods themselves are subject to birth and death, then their being the subject of Vedic passages would necessitate the admission that the Vedas themselves are also impermanent.

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\(^{20}\) (BSBh 1.3.26-33)

\(^{21}\) "To state the Mīmāṃsā view positively: deities do not need to be corporeal in order to function in the sacrifice in a fashion compatible with the tradition and the old formula... when the deity has been invoked, the material is relinquished, offered up." (Clooney 1988: 283)

\(^{22}\) All translations in this study are mine, unless otherwise noted.

\(^{23}\) Translated by Francis Clooney: See (Clooney 1988: 284) (ŚBh 10.4.23)

\(^{24}\) “Śabara argues, first, that there are no positive proofs of divine corporeality; the adduced texts in this regard are merely representative of popular traditions, and are better, more simply, interpreted metaphorically." (Clooney 1988: 282)

\(^{25}\) “śabda eva devatā prāpnoti” - (ŚBh 10.4.23)
ultimately subverting the claim of Vedic authorlessness and atemporal authority. Śaṅkara claims, however, that there need not be a problem with admitting to the gods’ corporeality. He writes:

No opposition whatsoever follows from admitting to the corporeality of the gods insofar as [ritual] action is concerned. However, [The Mīmāṃsaka will argue that] there should be opposition in the context of language. How so? [They claim that] having admitted to an originary relationship between meaning and a word, the authority of the Vedas is established irrespectively.26

He goes on to summarize the Mīmāṃsaka critique as follows:

[The Mīmāṃsaka claims that] even if accepting corporeality of the gods in the context of oblations that depend on multiple actors simultaneously, then [one has to admit that] the gods themselves are subject to the same birth, life, and death as we are due to the method of understanding them employing division. [And if this is so, then] there would be opposition [to the idea that] the authority of Vedic language is established by asenting to an eternal relationship between eternal words and eternal meaning.27

Referencing Jaimini’s Mīmāṃsāsūtra 1.1.5,28 the Mīmāṃsaka opponent claims that the authority of the Vedas is established on the basis of an eternal connection between a word and its meaning. By admitting to the corporeality of the gods, the Mīmāṃsaka would then have to admit that the name of a god, occurring in the Vedas, would have to originate in conjunction with the creation of the god itself. “For, [as the Mīmāṃsaka claims,] it is well known that when Devadatta’s son is born, he is given the name Yajñadatta.”29 If the gods obtain their name upon their origination, then it follows naturally that Vedic language itself is created and is therefore temporal.

Maintaining the atemporality of the Vedas, Śaṅkara cannot accept that Vedic language is finite in the way that the Mīmāṃsaka opponent suggests follows from admitting to the corporeality of the gods. Śaṅkara’s solution to this problem is that he admits that the relationship between a word and its meaning is indeed eternal, but that the word itself precedes creation. As Śaṅkara

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26 “mā nāma vigrahavatve devādīnāmabhyupagamyamāne karmani kaścidvirodhah prasaṇji / śabde tu virodhaḥ prasajyeta /katham / autpatiṣṭhāhi sabdasyārthena sambiladhām aśritya ‘anapekeṣṭvāt’ iti vedasya prāmāṇyaṃ sthāpi tam” (BS Bh 1.3.28)
27 ibid. - “idānāṃ tu vigrahavātī devatābhhyupagamyāmāna yadyāpyaisvayyayogād yugapadaneśe karmasambandhitānī haviṁśi bhunjīta tathāpi vigrahavagād asmad ādīvaijananamaraṇyavaṇaḥ seti nityasya sabdasya niyānārthena nitye sambiladheṣyāmāne yadvaidike śabde prāmāṇyam sthitam tasya virodhaḥ svādītī cet”
28 (Jha 2009) translates as the following: “Constant is the relation between the Word and its denotation; and the means of knowing it is the ‘upadesa’ (injunction), (which) incapable of contradiction; it is authoritative with regard to the object not perceived (before), because it is independent, - so says Bādarāyana.” (Jha. 2009 - 282)
29 “autpatiṣṭhāhi sabdasyārthena sambiladhāsyā jīnānāyupadeśo ‘vyatirekaścārthe ’pañalabdhe tatpramāṇaṃ bādāvayaṃ anapekeṣṭvāt”’ (MS 1.1.5)
29 “prasiddhāḥ hi loke deva-dattasya putra utpanne yajñadatta iti tasya nāma kriyata iti” (BS Bh 1.3.28)
articulates regarding the aphorism 1.3.28 of the Brahmasūtras, “[the word] ‘on account of its origin,’ [means that] Vedic words create the world, the gods, and so on.”

Having identified a direct contradiction with Śaṅkara’s claim that the world and the gods are created from language and not Brahman, the Mīmāṃsaka opponent naturally asks:

Here in [aphorism 1.1.2 that states that] ‘[Brahman is that] from which birth, life, and death [come]’, Brahman is understood to be the origin of the world. How then do you say that the word is the origin?31

The Mīmāṃsaka opponent argues that even in the Brahmasūtra itself, the text on which Śaṅkara is commenting, Brahman is explicitly stated to be the origin of the world, and so it is obviously inconsistent to proclaim that language is the origin instead. Expecting this critique, Śaṅkara goes on to make the necessary distinction between the material cause of the world and the cause of the world vis-à-vis language. He claims that language is not to be understood as the material cause of the world in the way that Brahman is.32 Instead, Śaṅkara positions language as an immaterial condition in which the eternal relationship between word and meaning is bound up with an object's generic or universal property (ākṛti).33 Śaṅkara states:

While there is origination of the particular, such as an [individual] cow, and so forth, there cannot be the origination of the universal property. Particulars are created as substance, quality, and action, not the universal, [and] there is relation between words and universals, not with particulars.34

In the previous passage, Śaṅkara states that language operates at the level of the universal property, which is unchanging and atemporal.35 Given that the particular (vyakti) is characterized by substance (dravya), quality (guna), and action (karma), all of which are subject to transformation, it would then be untenable to contend that language operates at the level of the particular (vyakti) if the eternal connection between a word and its meaning is to be maintained. For example, the universal property of cow-ness is the enduring characteristic that inheres within all cows irrespective of their individual traits, and is that which gives the word ‘cow’ its specific meaning. In this way, when one cognizes a cow, one cognizes the universal property of cowness in conjunction with adjacent properties of the individual cow. The universal property of the word exists prior to its specific material condition and only instantiates in the particular. This maneuver allows Śaṅkara to make the claim that there is no contradiction whatsoever in

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30 ibid. “atah prabhavāt / ata eva hi vaidikācchabādādevādirjagatprabhavati”
31 ibid. “nānu janmādyasya yataḥ (bra. 1.1.2) ityatra brahmaprabhavatvam jagato ’vadhāritam, kathamiha sabdaprabhavatvamucyte”
32 ibid. “nacedām sabdaprabhavatvam brahmaprabhavatvavadvādākārānāḥbhīprāyeyocye”
33 See the following section on Śaṅkara’s use of ākṛti compared to that of the Mīmāṃsakas and Patanjali. Provisionally I take Śaṅkara’s use of the term ākṛti to be synonymous with the term jāti.
34 “nāhi gavādyavaktināmuttattvatvam tadākṛtināmapyuttattimatvam syāt / dravyagunakarmanām hi vyaktyay evotpadyante nākṛtyayaḥ / ākṛtibhiṣca sabādānām samandha na vyaktyibhiḥ” (BSBh 1.3.28)
35 The ontological distinction of Śabara / Kumārila’s use of ākṛti and Śaṅkara’s will be elaborated later in the paper.
maintaining that the word precedes creation, since the universal property of an object precedes an object’s individualized manifestation.  

It is through the same argument that Śaṅkara also resolves the problem of individuated gods. Admitting that the gods are corporeal while at the same time maintaining that there is eternal connection between the word and its meaning necessitates the understanding that Vedic occurrences of the gods’ names are not specific to an individuated god itself, but are rather the designation of a universal property that relates to a particular god upon their creation, much like the universal property of cow-ness is inherent in an individual cow. Śaṅkara writes:

In assenting to the origin of particular gods, due to the eternity of the universal, no contradiction whatsoever is to be observed in words such as ‘Vasus’, ‘Rudras’, ‘Ādītis’, ‘Maruts’, and so forth. Through understanding individuation by means of the gods’ mantras and encomiums, the distinction of the [gods’] universal will be understood. Words such as Indra and so forth, whose motive is the relationship between position and distinction, are similar to a word like ‘army leader’. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with statements such as ‘whosoever occupies that particular place, he is indeed understood by words such as Indra, etc.’.  

Śaṅkara’s rebuttal of the Mīmāṃsā critique that gods cannot have bodies lest the authority of the Vedas be compromised necessarily begs the question of how the Mīmāṃsaka conceives of the relationship between language, the universal property, and the particular, and how specifically Śaṅkara’s understanding of this relationship differs from that of Mīmāṃsā.

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36 Śaṅkara supports this claim further by citing a scriptural passage that explains how language was first manifest in the mind of the creator prior to origination: “With the word ‘those’, Prajāpati created the gods; with the word ‘blood’, he created mankind; with the word ‘moons’, he created the fathers; with the word ‘soma strainer’, he created the planets; with the word ‘horses’, he created the hymn; with the word ‘gods’, he created scripture; with the word ‘great prosperity’, he created other beings.”

“ete iti vai prajāpatīdevānasṛṣṭāṣrygramitī manusyānindava iti pitrāntritaraḥ pavitrāmitī grahānāsava iti stotram viśvānīti sastramabhistāsabhaṅgyanyāḥ prajāh’ iti śrutih” (BSBh 1.3.28)

37 “tathā devādhyaṅkprabhavāhībhupagame ‘pākṛtityatvānna kaścidvavāśīśabdeṣa virodha iti draṣṭavyam / ākṛtivāṣastu devadānāṁ mantrāṁrāhāvaḍādibhyo vigrāhavatvādyavagamadavagantavyaḥ / sthānā-viśeṣasambandhanimitāścendradāśdāḥ senāpatyāśīśabdhavat / tataśca yo yastattatstānāmadhirohati sa sa āndrdāśābhairahādhiḥyata iti na doṣo bhavati” (BSBh 1.3.28)
1.2) *Mīmāṃsā* and the ‘Realist Ontology’ of the Universal Property (*ākṛti*)

Responding to the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* critique that argues the authority of the Vedas is compromised by admitting to the corporeality of the gods, Śaṅkara develops the idea that language operates at the level of the universal property (*ākṛti*) instead of the individual or particular (*vyakti*). In making this move, Śaṅkara is then able to maintain, much like the *Mīmāṃsaka*, that there is indeed an eternal link between language and meaning, an assumption necessary to maintain the timeless authority of the Vedas. Yet, as the following section will demonstrate, Śaṅkara’s argument that language operates at the level of the universal property (*ākṛti*) is not necessarily novel. Both Śabara’s and Kumārilabhaṭṭa’s philosophy of language also depends on this distinction. Despite being in agreement that language functions at the level of the universal property (*ākṛti*), Śaṅkara and his *Mīmāṃsaka* opponents disagree on the nature of the universal property and its relationship with the particular.

Before considering the differences between Śaṅkara and his *Mīmāṃsaka* opponent’s conception of *ākṛti* and language, it is first necessary to trace an internal development in *Mīmāṃsā* between Śabara (4th century CE) and Kumārilabhaṭṭa (7th century CE) that will elucidate an important development in *Mīmāṃsā* ontology. Recent attempts at dating Śaṅkara have shifted the supposed dates of his life from the late 8th and early 9th centuries CE to the late 7th and early 8th centuries CE, situating Śaṅkara as a possible contemporary of Kumārilabhaṭṭa. The adjustment to Śaṅkara’s dates are important insofar as it necessitates considering Śaṅkara’s work in the context of significant discursive and doctrinal developments made in 7th century *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*. The two developments of interest here are Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Prabhākara’s textual consolidation around Śabara’s *Śābharabhāṣya* instead of Jaimini’s *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, and Kumārilabhaṭṭa’s efforts at reinvigorating a *Mīmāṃsā* defense of cognition’s dependence on ontologically stable objects - both of which can be traced to the Buddhist thinker Diṇṇaṭa.

Prior to Diṇṇaṭa’s *Pramāṇasaṃuccaya*, the extensive use of a rival tradition’s textual material, apart from stating an unspecified and conventional view of an opponent’s philosophical position, was rare. Diṇṇaṭa’s *Pramāṇasaṃuccaya* made, as Larry McCrea states, “the systematic investigation of and response to the texts of rival philosophical traditions a basic organizing principle of his own work.” In the wake of Diṇṇaṭa’s novel discursive strategy and philosophical critiques in his *Pramāṇasaṃuccaya*, Kumārilabhaṭṭa and his contemporary Prabhākara consolidated *Mīmāṃsā* doctrine around Śabara’s *Śābharabhāṣya* instead of the more laconic Jaimini *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, which solidified Śabara’s work as the inevitable urtext of subsequent *Mīmāṃsā* thought. Although Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Prabhākara diverged in their

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38 See footnote 52
39 (Dasgupta 2004)
40 See footnote 2
41 (McCrea 2013)
42 ibid. 130
43 McCrea states: “Precisely because Dignāga is attacking a specific text, rather than generic and more or less ill-defined doctrines or positions, his attack pushes defenders of *Mīmāṃsā* (and other rival traditions as well, of course) in the direction of apologetics.” (McCrea 2013: 131)
44 Efforts have been made in recent scholarship to ‘extract’ Jaimini’s *Mīmāṃsā* doctrine from his commentators. See (Clooney 1990).
interpretations of Śabara, eventually forming two specific currents of Mīmāṁsā thinking, they both agreed on the primacy of the Śābarabhāṣya for subsequent Mīmāṁsā exegesis and expression.

Perhaps more important to this study than Diṅnāga’s novel discursive strategy that led Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Prabhākara to establish Śābarabhāṣya as the Mīmāṁsā urtext was Diṅnāga’s critiques of Mīmāṁsā ontology, specifically his critique of inherent cognitional validity (svatahprāmāṇya) first elaborated by Śabara. The foundation of Diṅnāga’s complaint, as McCrea paraphrases, is as follows:

> When we first see an object, we do not see it as anything: as a member of a class, or as the bearer of a name... we see only the bare, uncharacterized particular. Our awareness of class-assignment, name, and the like come only in subsequent moments of awareness and, for this very reason, [Diṅnāga] and his followers insist that they do not reflect the real nature of the object - which already appeared to us in the initial, non-conceptual, awareness - but are instead simply fictitious products of our own mental construction.

By arguing that the so-called ‘real’ or universal nature of an object is essentially a fiction born of one’s imagination and subsequently grafted onto an object during cognition, Diṅnāga denies the possibility of an object’s universal property. For Diṅnāga, the notion of universalism belongs specifically to language itself and has no connection to the ontic nature of an object. Diṅnāga’s critique directly refutes the possibility of an object’s inherent validity (svatahprāmāṇya), a cornerstone of Mīmāṁsā ontology.

Mīmāṁsakas responded to Diṅnāga’s critique with exceptional verve. Kumārilabhaṭṭa argued that Diṅnāga’s critique is untenable given that the cognition of an object is itself proof of the object’s basis in external reality (ālambana). He goes on to argue in the Ślokavārttikā that the cognition of an object is reliant on two simultaneous factors inherent to the object itself - an object’s inclusion in a class based on an object’s universal property (ākṛti), and an object’s exclusion (vyāvr̥tti) from dissimilar objects on the basis of its individualized traits (vyakti), both of which are inherent characteristics of an object instead of fictitious impositions. Taking the common example of observing a cow, Diṅnāga suggests that the entire process of identifying

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45 Termed Bhāṭṭa and Prabhākara, respectively. It is unnecessary at this time to treat the principle differences of Kumārilabhaṭṭa’s and Prabhākara’s interpretation of Śabara.

46 "Kumārila and Prabhākara are agreed in taking Śabara’s commentary to form the basis for all subsequent discussions in the field of Mīmāṁsā, all but displacing the Mīmāṁsāsūtra itself as the foundational text of the entire discipline." (McCrea 2013: 127)

47 “While the theory of svatahprāmāṇya is very forcefully articulated and its implications are set forth with masterful clarity by Kumārila, it cannot quite be said to represent a major innovation on Kumārila’s part, simply because the theory is already present in its essentials in the work of the Vṛttikāra, quoted and paraphrased at length by Śabara in his commentary on the Mīmāṁsāsūtra 1.1.5.” (McCrea 2013: 134)

48 I elect to spell the name with the guttural nasal ‘ṅ’ instead of the guttural ‘g’, which is how McCrea elects to spell it - i.e. Diṅnāga instead of Dignāga.

49 (McCrea 2013: 133)

50 See (Matilal 2009: 34) It should be noted that Diṅnāga does, however, admit to an object’s svalaksana, which Matilal translates as ‘unique particular’.

51 See SV Codanāsūtra

52 See (Deshpande 2007: 30)
generic properties (ākṛti) and individualized traits (vyakti) are mere mental fabrications imposed upon the cow in the moment following its perception. Using the same example, Kumārilabhaṭṭa is saying that the very possibility of cognizing the cow is dependent upon the two processes of inclusion and exclusion - the inclusion within a generic property (ākṛti) such that a cow is identified with cowness; and the exclusion of one cow from another based on its external and individualized traits (vyakti) - which are not only inherent to the cow itself, but are proof of its external validity. From this, it is clear how Deshpande claims that “Mīmāṃsā epistemology and ontology are closely interrelated.” For Mīmāṃsakas such as Śabara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa, the validity of a cognition is directly contingent on the external reality of an object. As Deshpande articulates:

According to Mīmāṃsakas, a generic property is directly perceived through the same sense organ which perceives an object, and such cognitions are proofs in themselves of the external existence of entities which appear in the contents of these cognitions... [The] ākṛti of Mīmāṃsakas is not just a logical or mathematical class-concept, but is a factor of a realist ontology.

Based on the ‘realist ontology’ of Mīmāṃsaka’s such as Śabara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa, it becomes clear why they must admit to language operating on the level of the universal property (ākṛti) instead of the individual (vyakti). If the Mīmāṃsaka were to contend that language operates at the level of the particular (vyakti), contradictions would arise for core tenets of Mīmāṃsā ontology, namely the authority of the Vedas and the central role of ritual as a mode of producing results qua the illocutionary forces of Vedic injunction. Like Śaṅkara, the Mīmāṃsaka has to maintain that the relationship between the meaning of the word and the word itself is permanent in order to defend the timeless authority of the Vedas. Śabara articulates the eternal connection between a word and its meaning by emphasizing that it is non-manmade (apauruṣeya), as is also the case for the Veda itself. The major import of this claim for the Mīmāṃsaka rests in asserting the primacy of ritual. If language functioned at the level of the particular, the Mīmāṃsā claim to the preeminence of the ritual would be subverted on the basis that Vedic injunctive

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53 (Matilal 2009)
54 (Deshpande 2007: 22)
55 On the basis of ākṛti and svatahprāmāṇya, there does not seem to be all that much variation between Śabara and Kumārila. D’Sa summarizes Śabara’s understanding of ākṛti and vyakti as follows: “ākṛtiḥ is the way of looking at things in such a manner that the individualization is not taken note of; one prescinds from the individualization. And vyaktiḥ is not mere individualization but the individualized ākṛtiḥ. Strictly speaking ākṛtiḥ and vyaktiḥ are two closely related moments in the process of knowing. Not every act of knowing goes as far as ending in a vyaktiḥ; it can be that it stops short of the ākṛtiḥ. But there can be no process of knowing, not even in perception, where the moment in which ākṛtiḥ is cognized is absent.” (D’Sa 1980: 87)
56 (Deshpande 2007: 30)
57 ibid. 22
58 “The relation of a word with meaning is a-personal (apauruṣeya - non man-made). The knowledge of this significance (arthasya) [which is] characterized by agnihotram, etc., is not known by means of perception, etc. In this way [Significance] characterized by the codanā is true knowledge.” (ŚBh 1.1.1.5)
Translation is D’Sa’s - (D’Sa 1980)
statements would manifest differently every time they were pronounced at each different ritual event.\footnote{If vyakti were the śabdardha, it could not be employed in the case of another vyakti. If it is used in the case of another vyakti, still vyakti cannot be the śabdardha, since vyakti is free of all common characteristics. ŠBh 1.3.9.33 (D’Sa 1980: 89)}

The universal property (ākṛti) is understood to be, as was mentioned before, the common trait that allows one to assess an object’s inclusivity within a particular class. The particular trait (vyakti) is the quality of an object that allows one to distinguish it from other objects of the same or different class. The vyakti of an object relies on the exclusivity of an object’s unique traits. Therefore, if the authority of the injunctive statements of Vedic ritual is to be maintained, its authority relies on those statements being replicable from one ritual to another, which is a specific characteristic of the universal property (ākṛti) and not the individual trait (vyakti). In this regard Śaṅkara and the Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas are in agreement. Both admit to language operating at the level of the generic property of an object and not its particular, and both believe that admitting otherwise compromises the authority of the Veda. While Śaṅkara does not elaborate his theory of ākṛti with the same detail and rigor as his Mīmāṃsaka opponents, it is possible to elaborate a general position on ākṛti from other aspects of his work.

A distinction between Śaṅkara’s concept of the language and the universal property (ākṛti) and that of his Mīmāṃsaka rival’s is evident in another problem that Śaṅkara articulates in an earlier section of the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya. Commenting on Brahmasūtra 1.1.1, Śaṅkara calls to attention an important difference between his thought and those of his Pūrva Mīmāṃsā opponents, namely the desire to know the divine (brahmajīñāsa) versus the desire to know correct action (dharma-jīñāsa).\footnote{It should be noted that Śaṅkara did not coin the terms dharma-jīñāsa and brahmajīñāsa. Bādarāyaṇa uses brahmajīñāsa in his work, and Śabara writes at length on dharma-jīñāsa.} The difference between the two, according to Śaṅkara, is articulated in the following passage:

It is possible to desire to know the divine during Vedic study and even before the desire to know proper ritual action. And, as sequence is implied as a basic precept in the [ritualistic] preparations of the heart, and so on, sequence is not implied [in the desire to know the divine] given that the distinction between the desire to know the divine and the desire to know ritual action is the desire to know an effect… Knowledge of ritual action, whose result is favorable, is expected from the performance [of action]; whereas knowledge of the divine, whose result is ultimate bliss, is not expected from the performance [of action]. Given that ritual action depends on the activity of a person, it does not exist at the moment of [its] knowledge, [but] in the future. Given that the divine is eternal [and] does not depend on the activity of a person, it is existent at the moment of inquiry. The difference [between the two being] the application of impulse which, as the hallmark of ritual action, enjoins one’s field of action and instructs a person; whereas the impulse of the divine only instructs a person given that the impulse of understanding is un-originated, [and] that a person does not enjoin knowledge [of the divine].\footnote{na / dharma-jīñāsāyaḥ prāgapyadhītavedāntasya brahmajīñāsopapateḥ / yathāca hṛdayādyavavādānām-ānantarāniyamāḥ, kramasya vivakṣitavānā tathēka kramo vivakṣitāḥ… dharma-brahmajīñāsāhos phalajīñāsasasyabhedāca / abhyudayaphalāṃ dharma-jīnānāṃ taccānuṣṭhānāpekṣaṁ / niḥśreyasaphalāṃ tu brahmajīñānāṃ na cānuṣṭhānāntārāpekṣaṁ / bhavyaśca dharma jīñāsya na jñānakāle ’sti, puruṣavyāpāra-tantratvāt / iha tu bhūtaṃ brahma jīñāsyām}
The distinction that Śaṅkara articulates between the desire to know the divine (brahmajijnāsa) and the desire to know correct ritual action (dharmaṇijjnāsa) is reflective of a broader problem between Śaṅkara and his Pūrva Mīmāṃsā opponents, namely the problem of sequence (krama), impetus (codana), and action (karma) in relation to a divine which, as Śaṅkara argues, cannot be the object of action, nor is it to be attained by means of injunctive ritual statements. While both Mīmāṃsakas and Śaṅkara agree that language operates through the universal property of an object instead of through the individual, their differing perspectives on the ontological and epistemological import of this claim are mirrored in the differences between brahmajijnāsa and dharmajijnāsa.

As mentioned before, Mīmāṃsakas such as Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Śabara contend that language’s efficacy is established at the level of an object’s universal property. This claim allows the Mīmāṃsaka to defend not only the atemporal legitimacy of Vedic statements, but also circumvents a potentially catastrophic contradiction for the efficacy and consistency of the Vedic ritual to produce its desired effects. Because Śabara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa maintain the cognitonal validity of external objects such that the perception of an object is proof of its existence (svataḥprāmāṇyam), it naturally follows that the basis (ālambana) of valid cognition is the object’s universal property. Yet, unlike Śaṅkara, the universal property for Kumārilabhaṭṭa is not permanent in the sense that it exists independent of the particular. Kumārilabhaṭṭa postulates that the existence of the universal property and the individual are mutually dependent, and as such dispenses with the Vaiṣeṣika notion that the universal property, preceding the particular, ultimately inheres (samavāya) in the individual object. Kumārilabhaṭṭa reinforces the immanence and legitimacy of ritual action and its merits by dispensing with the notion that the universal property inheres in the individual. If the universal property for Kumārilabhaṭṭa were accorded an existence independent of its manifest particular, then on the level of language, the effects of the injunctive forces of the Vedas would have to be accorded a power beyond the words themselves, ultimately placing the merits of the ritual beyond the domain of the ritual performers and their actions. Kumārilabhaṭṭa's assertion that the the generic property and the particular are mutually dependent reinforces the annunciateive force of ritual statement as purely

\[ \text{nityatvānā puṣuṣavāpyāpratantram} / \text{codanāpravṛttibhedācca} / \text{yā hi codanā dharmasya lakṣaṇam sā svaviśaye niyuṇjānaya puṣuṣavamabodhayati} / \text{brahmacodanā tu puṣuṣavamabodhayateva kevalām avabodhasya codanā avajanyatvānā puruṣo tatabhāvani niyuṇjīyate} / (BSBh 1.1.1) \]

62 That which is all-knowing, the cause of all powers, and from which birth, life, and death [come forth]. That from which the forms and names of this world [come forth] - a world that is developed, joined with many doers and enjoyers, which is the abode on which direction, time, cause, action, and effect are each fixed - [and] whose nature is rendered unfathomable even by the mind. That is Brahma.


63 See Deshpande 2007

64 "There is an eternally mutual dependence between the universal and the particular. For the universal is of the particulars and they of the [universal]. A universal without particulars does not exist, [it would be] like the horns of a hare. And the particulars without the universal [would be] like them, too." ŚV Ākritivāda 8-10 (D’Sa 1980: 154)

See also the Buddhist pūrva pakṣin objection that such a move makes akṛti an erroneous category, since an individual object has the capacity to produce a unified cognition. (ŚV Ākritivāda 13-18)
immanent in the world, ultimately elevating the action of ritual proceedings above anything else (dharmaṇi jñāsa). 65, 66

Owing to Śaṅkara’s soteriological interests where the divine, according to him, is “not expected from the performance [of action]”, 67 it naturally follows that Śaṅkara would oppose Māṇjasā’s concept of mutual dependency between the universal property and individual manifestation. Rather than claim that the ākṛti exists only insofar as it is manifest in the particular, evidenced by Śaṅkara’s defense of the embodiment of the gods, it is clear that the universal property for Śaṅkara endures irrespectively of the particular, 68 a position that is perhaps closer to the notion of the universal (jātī) expounded earlier by the grammarian Bhartṛhari (5th CE). 69 Although Bhartṛhari was a proponent of the sphoṭa doctrine (sphoṭavādin), a theory that Śaṅkara, Śabara, and Kumārila Bhaṭṭa are united in their disagreement, 70 it appears that Śaṅkara’s understanding of an object’s universal property and its implications for language are closer aligned with the thought of Bhartṛhari than with the Māṇjasāsakas.

Before being able to assess the major distinction between Śaṅkara’s use of the word ākṛti from the Māṇjasāsakas, it is important to note that there are two differing uses of the word amongst South Asian intellectual communities. The second-century BCE grammarian Patañjali, whom Bhartṛhari’s work is indebted, 71 vacillates between the two meanings of ākṛti that get later reified both by his commentators and in subsequent textual traditions. At times, Patañjali uses the word to denote a configuration or shape (samsthāna). He writes:

It is seen in the world that earth, when given a particular (spherical) shape, becomes a ball; after crushing the ball, small pitchers are made and after breaking the pitchers, small vases are made. Similarly, gold, when given a particular solid shape, becomes a bar; after changing the bar-form, rucaka ornaments are made, and after changing the rucaka-form, armlets are made, and after changing the armlets svastika ornaments are made. The gold can be given the shape of a couple of resplendent ear-pendants red like burning embers of Khadita wood. Thus, it is clear that form (ākṛti) changes from one to another, while the abiding substance (gold) remains the same (gold). Even though forms are changed one after the other, the substance remains in tact. 72

65 See ŚV Ākṛtivāda.
66 See Clooney 1988
67 “niḥśreyasaphalam tu brahmavijñānam na cānuṣṭhānāntarāpēkṣam” - BSBh 1.1.1
68 “Because there are infinite particulars, there being [an eternal] relationship [between a word and the particular] is not tenable. [But] because of the totality of the universal in manifest particulars, no contradiction whatsoever is observed for words such as ‘cow’ etc.”
69 “vyaktīnām ānanyāt saṃbandhagrahaṇānupatteḥ / vyaktīsūtpadyamānāsvapyaḥkṛtiḥ nityatvāca gavādīśahdeṣu kaścidvirodho dharmyate” BSBh 1.3.28
70 Bhartṛhari’s connection to Patañjali will be elaborated in subsequent footnotes.
71 The latter part of this paper will deal with the details of this disagreement at considerable length.
72 The intermediating six hundred years or so between Patañjali and Bhartṛhari was witness to a significant attenuation of the Mahābhāṣya tradition. Numerous theories abound as to what happened to the grammatical tradition during this time as the historical and textual record is sparse. Some suggest that the Buddhist philosopher Candragomin, Bhartṛhari’s ‘grand-teacher’, revived the Patañjali Mahābhāṣya tradition. (Deshpande 1992) Still others have suggested that the Mahābhāṣya tradition thinly continued through this period in Kashmir (Aklujiak, et al. 2008).
73 Translation is Abhyankar’s (Abhyankar 1975: 28)
In the passage above, Patañjali indicates that the ākṛti of an object is its shape, which is subject to transformation. In this example, the substance (dravya) is the enduring quality. At other times, Patañjali insinuates the term to indicate an enduring generic property or universal. In this sense, the ākṛti is understood as a fluidly eternal property (pravāhanityatā) where, as Deshpande remarks, “in the midst of all kinds of change, the essential nature [of an object] is not lost.” The fifth-century grammarian-philosopher Bhartrhari, who authored the first significant commentary on Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya (Mahābhāṣyadipikā), presents a clearer depiction of the ākṛti and the jāti of an object in a section of the Vākyapadīya called the jātisamuddeśa. Bhartrhari writes:

In every existing object, there are two aspects [of which one is] real and [the other is] unreal. Among these [two aspects], the real [aspect] is called jāti, while the unreal [aspect] is the individual. The pure existence, differentiated into [objects like] bulls, etc., on account of the difference in [unreal] adjuncts, is called jāti. That [pure existence] is also said to be the meaning of [all] nominals and verb roots. It is eternal. It is the intelligence. It is the self. It is signified by affixes like -tva ‘ness’ and -tal (tā) ‘ness’.

Bhartrhari argues that there are two simultaneous aspects of an object - the universal property (jāti), which is ultimately real, and the adjunct and individualizing properties which, being subject to transformation, are considered to be ultimately unreal. The universal is ascribed adjunct properties that ultimately engender the cognition of its individual configuration. The ontological implications of this claim imply that the attributes one perceives and ascribes to the world are ultimately unreal adjunct properties (saṁbandhin) imposed onto a non-dual and eternal substratum, the jāti. Although Bhartrhari was not explicitly writing within the rubric of Vedic hermeneutics, this aspect of his thought has the indelible mark of the monistic idealism of non-dual Vedānta thought.

“evam hi drṣṭaye loke / mṛt kāya cī ākṛtyā yuktā piṇḍah bhavati / piṇḍākṛtim upamṛdyā ghaṭikāh kiryaṇte / ghaṭikākṛtim upamṛdyā kundikāh kriyaṇte / tathā suvarṇam kāya cī ākṛtyā yuktam piṇḍah bhavati / piṇḍākṛtim upamṛdyā rucakāh kriyaṇte / rucakākṛtim upamṛdyā kamkāh kriyaṇte / kamkākṛtim upamṛdyā svastikāh kriyaṇte / punah āvṛttaḥ suvarṇapiṇḍah punah aparayā ākṛtyā yuktah kharādvārasavane kundale bhavataḥ / ākṛtiḥ anyā ca anyā ca bhavatī dravyam punah tad eva / ākṛtyapamardena dravyam eva avasiṣyatye” (Mbh Paspaśāhnikam)

It should be noted that Patañjali shifts his argument slightly from understanding the ākṛti as an imperfect shape to a more permanent configuration. Deshpande states that “the configuration could be considered to be permanent, even though one can crush it to create another object from the same substance, because while we can destroy it in one object, the same configuration can be found in other objects.” (Deshpande 2007: 24)

Deshpande also relays that while commentators such as Kaiyata interpret ākṛti in the context of the pravāhanityatā passages as indicating jāti, such a connection is not necessarily supported by the text. (Deshpande 2007: 25)

"satyāsātyau tu yau bhāgaḥ pratibhāvam vyavasthitau / satyam yat tatra sa jātir asatyā vyaktayāḥ smṛtāḥ // 3.1.32 // saṁbandhibhedā sattaiwa bhidyamāṇa gavādiṣu / jātir ity ucya teṣāṃ sarve śabdā vyavasthāḥ // 3.1.33 // tāṃ prātiṣṭhitāṃ ca dhātvarthaṃ ca praçakṣate / sā nityāḥ sa mahān ātma tāṃ āhā tvatālayāh // 3.1.34/" (VP Jātisamuddeśa)

See (Bronkhorst 2013: 28). Bronkhorst also remarks that contrary to the Mīmāṃsakas, including Śaṅkara, Bhartrhari does not present his work as following naturally from the correct interpretation of the Vedas. (Bronkhorst 2013: 29)
Therefore, when considering the manner in which the word ākṛti is used in Śaṅkara, while he aligns with his Mīmāṃsaka opponents when admitting to language functioning on the level of ākṛti, it is clear that there are ontological stakes between the two uses of the word. Ākṛti for Mīmāṃsakas such as Śābara and Kumārila-bhaṭṭa is denied an existence independent of the particular. Whereas for Śaṅkara, based on his example that the ākṛti of a god precedes its individuation, he seems to be using the term in the sense of an enduring universal property that precedes its instantiation into the particular, in the way that Bhartrhari uses the term jāti. Despite Śaṅkara’s agreement with the Mīmāṃsaka’s on the issues of eternal connection between a word and its meaning, the ontological stakes of their respective understanding of the ākṛti and vyakti of an object are made clear by looking towards Śaṅkara’s distinction between the desire to know the divine versus the desire to know correct ritual action, where he clearly indicates the impossibility of employing action in the pursuit of Brahma. In the process of justifying action as the principal aim of the Vedas, the Mīmāṃsaka is required to reposition the ritual actors, and more specifically their actions, including Vedic utterances, as the primary element for the receipt of merit. In so doing, they must necessarily conceive of the ākṛti as a kind of generic property of an object such that one can reliably and repeatedly cognitive the object as being included in a particular class, while also denying the universal property an ontological status beyond the manifestation of the particular, which allows the Mīmāṃsaka to use the language of the Vedas to generate particular material effects. Whereas Śaṅkara, whose express purpose is not the acquisition of merit through the correct performance of Vedic injunctions but is instead the realization of the divine, asents to the ontological status of the universal property of an object independent of the object’s individualized manifestation. This position is only amenable to Śaṅkara’s explicit non-dual metaphysics by understanding the universal property as an aspect of the divine that is assigned unreal adjunct properties, much in the same way Bhartrhari claims that there are two aspects to the word, one real and one unreal.76 Therefore, while Śaṅkara and the Mīmāṃsakas are in agreement about language functioning through the universal property of an object, they disagree on the ontological stakes of such a claim, and their disagreement can be explained by looking at the purported utility of scripture as either useful for begetting merit through action or through obtaining knowledge of the divine.

76 Deshpande paraphrases Kaiyata, who was influenced by Bhartrhari, as follows: “It is possible to argue that the real substance (dravya) signified by all words is ultimately Brahma, and nothing else. All words signify the same ultimate reality of Brahma, except that each word signifies Brahma as qualified by a different unreal adjunct property.” (Deshpande 2007: 26)

“dravyapakse 'pi sarvasabdānām asatyopādhyavacchinnam brahmatattvam vācyam iti nityatā” (MBhP)
§2) MEANING AND THE ETERNAL WORD

2.1) AGAINST THE SPHOTAVĀDINS: A PROBLEM OF UNDERSTANDING

The prior section detailed the relationship between a word and its referent in Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta. The relationship between a word and its referent, Śaṅkara claims, is eternal and permanent because a word does not designate an object per se, but rather an object’s universal property. Because an object’s universal property exists irrespective of an individual object’s manifestation, there is no problem assenting to the corporeality of the gods since the names of the gods refer not to their corporeal and thus temporal manifestation but rather to their universal and enduring property. Śaṅkara admits that words relate to the universal property of a word’s referent instead of the referent’s individualized traits. This section will grapple with problem of how a word’s eternal meaning is conveyed by the word itself. How can a word relate an eternal meaning, which is admitted to be infinite and everlasting by nature, through the sequence, cadence, and duration of a word’s utterance? If a word does not reliably relate an eternal meaning through its utterances, then the claim of Vedic authority is inherently subverted. Situated against two conflicting perspectives, the Sphotavādins and the Mīmāṃsakas, who both defend the authority of the Vedas, Śaṅkara grapples with this problem by siding with the Mīmāṃsakas in saying that meaning is reliably conveyed through the phonemes themselves and not through an extra-linguistic intermediary known as sphaṭa. In doing so, Śaṅkara must answer how phonemes inherently convey meaning, how a singular meaning can be derived from multiple phonemes, and how eternal meaning can be conveyed through sounds that are observably finite. Śaṅkara is not the first person to grapple with these problems, the problem of eternal meaning and finite words has an extensive speculative history in the grammatical tradition articulated first by Kātyāyana and Patañjali, and later by Bhartṛhari.

The basic problem fronting proponents of eternal meaning is that by its very nature, that which is eternal cannot be limited, physically, phonemically, or temporally. Admitting to eternal meaning raises a problem for attempting to account for how a word, which relies on both phoneme and time, can convey eternal meaning. This problem can be traced as early as Kātyāyana in the 3rd century BCE, whose commentary on Pāṇini’s Aṣṭādhvyāṭi largely informed Patañjali’s Mahābhāsyas. Kātyāyana dealt with the problem of eternal meaning and temporally limited words by suggesting that each sound had a fixed nature (varṇa) and an impermanent nature (vacana), where meaning is conveyed through a sound’s fixed nature, while the secondary or adjunct properties such as inflection, accent, or duration, are expressed through a sound’s impermanent nature. Patañjali’s notion of sphaṭa is largely a re-presentation of Kātyāyana’s varṇa-vacana division of sound where sphaṭa refers to Kātyāyana’s varṇa and dhvani refers to Kātyāyana’s vacana. It was not until nearly seven hundred years later through the work of Bhartṛhari that the term sphaṭa took on the meaning implied in Śaṅkara’s pūrvaṇaūcāraśāsana argument. Bhartṛhari writes:

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77 (Deshpande 2013)
78 ibid. 9 - The fixed nature of sounds (avasthitā varṇāḥ)
79 The teacher of Bhartṛhari’s teacher, Candragomin, undoubtedly grappled with similar issues yielding different results. Bhartṛhari, like both Patañjali and Kātyāyana, and unlike Candragomin, maintained the
In the intellect, where seeds of tone have been deposited and are in the process of maturation, a word is understood by sounds coupled with the last sound.  

(VP 1.84) By the sounds that illuminate the nature of the word, memory-traces, effects, and potentials are increasingly understood as such according to the resolution of a word’s manifestation. Therefore, the last specific sound [of a word] enters into the mind - in which a suitable maturation has been attained through the nature of distinct memory-traces, effects, and potentials - by making the contours of a word’s form its own.  

(VPv 1.84) 

Some centuries later, Śaṅkara wrote:

Insofar as the seed of memory-traces are deposited through the cognition of each [individual] phoneme, and [they] rely on the maturation engendered by the cognition of the last letter, the sphoṭa appears instantly as the object of a single cognition, and this single cognition is not the object of phonemes as memory because it is untenable that multiple phonemes would be the object of a single cognition... The Sphoṭavādins say ‘thus, eternal words signify, are [purely] the nature of sphoṭa, [and] produce the nameable objects of the world which are characterized by action, agent, and effect.’

The Sphoṭavādin, according to both Śaṅkara and Bhartṛhari, maintains that the meaning of a given word or sentence presents itself in a ‘burst’ only upon the cognition of the terminal phoneme of a word. This ‘burst’ of meaning issues forth upon the maturation of a word’s prior phonemes in the intellect. Bhartṛhari likens this process to the gradual apprehension of a Vedic passage. A pupil studying the Vedas understands the import of a passage with greater clarity upon every recitation. In the same way, the meaning of a word becomes increasingly clear with every phoneme pronounced, where, upon the presentation of the final phoneme, meaning presents itself unobstructed. In this way, the sphoṭa of a word is always already existent as a

primacy of the Vedas. Bhartṛhari ardently defended the indisputable authority of the Vedas. (VP 1.10) Because all knowledge, according to Bhartṛhari, depends on language, it follows that the science of linguistic analysis (vyākaraṇa) is the most ‘immediate path’ to enlightenment. He wrote “Grammar as the door to liberation, the cure for speech-maladies, the purifier of science, shines in all branches of knowledge. Just as all universal meaning is connected with the configurations of words, in the same way indeed grammatical knowledge is the essence of all knowledge in the world.”

“tad dvāram apavargasya vāṁmalanāṁ cikistitam / pavitram sarvavidyānāṁ adhividyam prakāsate / yathārthajātayah sarvāḥ sabākṛtunibandhanāḥ / tathaiva loke vidyānām esā vidyā parāyanam” (VP 1.14-15)

“nādair āhitabijāyāṁ antyena dhvaninā sāha / āvṛttaparipākāyāṁ buddhaḥ śabdo ’vadhāryate” (VP 1.84) “nādaiḥ śabdātmānamavadyotayabhīrnyathottarokarpērērēnte vyaktapariparicchedamūṇa-ṃ ṣamskārabhūvānabījāni / tataścāntyo dhvaniviśeṣaḥ paricchedasamāskārabhūvānabījāntvīrtti- lābhaprāptayogatāprākāyāṁ buddhāvapagrhena śabdavāraṇākāraṁ samāvēcayati” (VPv 84)

I am translating the term Bhāvanā as an effect in the sense of a cognitive effect from an input. See (Freschi 2013) for a study on Bhāvanā in Kumāriliḥṭhaṭa’s Mīmāṁsā.

81 “sa ca ekākavānapratyayāhitaṃsaṃskārabīje ‘ntyavānapratyayayanitaparipāke pratayayineka- pratyayavāsityayā jhāṭitā pratayavābhāsate / nacāyamakapratyayo vāraṇasyāḥ smṛtiḥ / vāraṇānamkevatākapratyayavāsityavānupapateḥ ... tasmān nityācchadāsphoṭa-rūpādabhidhāyakāt kriyākārakalahalakaṇṭam jagadabhidheya-bhūtām prabhavaśī” (BS Bh 1.3.28)

82 Bhartṛhari argues that the sentence is the foundational meaning-unit of speech.

83 “Just as a chapter of the Veda or a verse is held in the mind by memory because repeated recitation although the section is not understood prior to repeated recitation; in the same way the word, which is
word’s eternal meaning, and the impermanent and temporal utterances of a word’s phonemes only act to reveal or indicate an eternally existent meaning. The process of gradually revealing an eternal sphota through sequentially cognized phonemes allows Bhartṛhari to work around the problem of how a series of multiple phonemes can engender a single cognition. This basic problem is answered variously between Mīmāṃsā and Bhartṛhari. Where Bhartṛhari maintains that the sequentiality of sounds only act to reveal what is already existent through the process of serially cognizing impermanent phonemes, Kumārilabhaṭṭa argues that “it is an [incontrovertible] fact that the meaning of a word arises directly from the syllables which constitute that word”. Where Bhartṛhari claims meaning is conveyed extra-phonemically - sounds indicate a pre-existing meaning independent of the sounds of the phonemes themselves - Kumārilabhaṭṭa maintains that meaning is conveyed endo-phonemically - the phoneme is the meaning-bearing unit of speech and nothing else, and the phoneme itself is eternal insofar as it is an aspect of the eternal quality of sound known as śabda.

Like Śaṅkara’s assessment of the Sphotaśāstras, Bhartṛhari states in VP 1.84 that “in the intellect, where seeds of tone have been deposited and are in the process of maturation, a word is understood by its last sound. “ The sounds of pronounced phonemes leave memory-traces in the mind which mature to the point of manifesting the meaning of a word instantly upon the apprehension of the last phoneme. Śaṅkara and Bhartṛhari are in agreement on the issue of eternal meaning preceding the articulation of a word, evidenced by Śaṅkara’s admission that manifest through sound, is understood as its own form by successive sounds which are, although impossible to be named, still suitable for cognition. (VP 1.83)"

“yathānuktāḥ śloko vā sōdhvatam upagacchate / āvṛttyā na tu sa granthāḥ pratyāvṛtti nirāpyate” (VP 1.82)

“pratyayair anupākhyeyair grahaṇānuguṇais tathā / dhvaniprakāśite śabde svarūpam avadhāryate”

(VP 1.83)

84 It is important to note that Śaṅkara does not give any mention to the gradual increase of meaning-resolution. It is possible that Śaṅkara conflates aspects of the three styles of sphota that Bhartṛhari presents in VP 1.81.

85 (D’Sa 1980: 122) See ŚV Sphotaśāstra. D’Sa has an interesting discussion on Kumārilabhaṭṭa’s position on this matter. He argues that Kumārilabhaṭṭa had to “make use of both śabda and the varṇas in such a manner that on the one hand the uniqueness and indivisibility of śabda could be retained and on the other he could demonstrate that it still was of tremendous relevance in the process of human discourse. Kumārila achieved this extraordinary feat by postulating that our experience of śabda is varṇa-wise and is brought about with the help of dhvani, which is the occasion of its manifestation.” (D’Sa 1980: 122) One cannot help but to identify the two-fold ontological division of the enduring property of sound and the property that is subject to qualification developed by Kātyāyana (śabda-vacana) and Patañjali (sphota-dhvanī) present in Kumārilabhaṭṭa’s thinking as śabda-dhvanī (nāda).

86 Śaṅkara paraphrases this position by saying “[The opponent claims] that what was said about phonemes having the property of beginning and end is not true given that phonemes alone are recognized as the same [again and again each time they are produced], as are the hairs [on your head], etc.” The metaphor of the hairs on one’s head can be taken to mean that despite cutting one’s hair, and incorrectly assessing the clippings of one’s hair as different from those on the head, those hairs are really of the same fundamental property as those hairs remaining on ones head. In the same way, although distinct from one another in annunciation, phonemes are really of the same fundamental property regardless of when they are pronounced.

“nānāpannapradhvamsitiṃ varṇānuktāṃ, tanna / ta eveti pratyabhijñānāt / sādṛṣyāt pratyabhijñānāṃ keśādiṣviveti cet” (BSBh 1.3.28)

87 See footnote 77.
language functions on the level of the universal instead of the particular. However, Śaṅkara denies the possibility that meaning is cognized through the intermediary maturation of memory-traces deposited by phonemes. According to Śaṅkara, there is no need to convolute the process of understanding meaning by adding the extra step of the memory-trace. Instead, a phoneme or sound intimates meaning in and of itself, in the same way that smoke itself indicates fire. Śaṅkara argues:

If one were to say that the last phoneme [of a word], which is connected with a memory-trace engendered by each previous phoneme, will intimate meaning, then we refute this assertion because a word that depends on ascertaining a relationship between the universal and the particular, that is intimating itself, ought to convey meaning just as smoke does. Because of the uninferability of memory-traces, clear apprehension of the last phoneme, which is connected with the memory-trace engendered by ascertaining each previous phoneme, is not possible.

For Śaṅkara, postulating a memory-trace is an unnecessary step in accounting for the cognition of words. Śaṅkara no doubt assents to the necessity of understanding the meaning of a word based on the sequence of its phonemes, but rejects the Sphoṭavādin claim that meaning presents itself after the maturation of each phoneme-induced memory-trace. Instead, Śaṅkara agrees that memory plays an important role in understanding meaning, but that the capacity of a memory-trace to intimate a singular extra-phonemic meaning beyond itself is implausible. Instead, Śaṅkara sides with the Mīmāṃsakas in claiming that word-meaning is derived from phonemes only.

Regardless of whether meaning is conveyed extra or endo-phonemically, sound is the fundamental conveyor of meaning, and if meaning is to be eternal, then one has to account for how sound, which appears to have duration, covers eternal meaning. Bhartṛhari’s notion of sound operates, as he says, like a light in a dark room revealing what is already there. Bhartṛhari writes:

Just as light is the cause for perceiving a jar immediately following the manifestation of light, and the continuation of light becomes the occasion for the jar’s continual perception; in the same way, from stoking the power of the manifested object, the accompanying sound of a manifest word sustains the continuation of the word in the mind.  

The primary sound of a word, according to Bhartṛhari, is the instrument by which eternal meaning becomes cognizable in the mind (prākṛtadhvani). Through repetition, a sound’s indicated meaning becomes more firmly established in the intellect through the derivative quality of sound (vaikṛtadhvani). In this way, Bhartṛhari assents to the manifestation of the universal or

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88 Smoke here refers to the argument that wherever smoke is perceived, it stands to reason there must also be fire.

89 “पुर्वपुर्ववर्ननुभवाजनीता-संस्कृतसहितो 'न्यो वर्णन्तम प्रत्ययाविशयति यदुयस्मिता / तन्म / संभांद्रहनानेपक्षो हि साधाः सवयां प्रत्ययादिवेद्यहुमादिव / नास पुर्वपुर्ववर्ननुभवाजनीसंस्कृतसहितसंवादित्यस्मितयाजि संवादितया श्रवणितस्य अप्रत्यायक्षा-व्यस्त संवादितस्य” (BSBh 1.3.28)

90 “तत्तत्त्वा प्रकाशो जन्मानन्तरावेवा ग्रहाचे ग्रहाचे हेतुव अवतिष्काणनामस्याधारान्तराप्रबंधं हेतुववहावती वेवामहियाक्ते शाबदे ध्वनिरत्तराकालानुवर्तकानां बुद्ध्यावृत्तिः शाबदविषायां विशायाभिव्यक्तिबलाणिहानुपसम्पर्करति” (VPV† 1.77)
eternal meaning of a word and its relationship to a fundamental property instead of the derivative or secondary property of sound. The fundamental and derivative properties can be understood to mean the atemporal aspect of sound without which an eternal meaning cannot be indicated, and the temporal quality is that which indicates eternal meaning through duration and repetition.\(^9\) In this way, Bharthṛhari employs a two-fold ontological distinction between an atemporal and temporal sound-property similar to that seen with Kātyāyana, Patañjali, and Kumārilabhaṭṭa. Kumārilabhaṭṭa writes that śabda, which is anything discernible to the ear,\(^9\) is ‘everywhere’ (vyāpita) and ‘eternal’ (vibhū), whereas phonemes are simply ubiquitous (sarbagatātā).\(^9\) The difference between śabda and varṇa for Kumārilabhaṭṭa is that the phoneme is simply one aspect of the eternal śabda. Śabda, therefore, precedes the phoneme and as such cannot be understood as possessing the same mutual dependency as the relationship between a generic property (ākṛti) and the particular (vyakti). The significance of the śabda-varṇa distinction for Kumārilabhaṭṭa is that he is able to simultaneously account for the infinite linguistic reality of the Vedas (śabda) while also accounting for the conveyance of meaning through distinct phonemic units (varṇa). Unlike Bharthṛhari, Kumārilabhaṭṭa will not admit that the sound of the phonemes gesture beyond themselves towards a pre-existent yet occluded meaning. Instead, Kumārilabhaṭṭa maintains that the phonemes, as an aspect of the eternal śabda, possess meaning inherently.

On this matter, Śaṅkara sides with the Mīmāṃśaka, but with some important distinctions. Śaṅkara, like Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Bharthṛhari, contends that there are two properties of a manifest phoneme - its fundamental state and its adjunct properties. Śaṅkara asks, “at one moment of various pronunciations [of the phoneme ‘ga’], how could there be only one true syllable ‘ga’, where various qualities [of it] are [present] simultaneously?”\(^9\)

Śaṅkara answers as follows:

One would expect there to be multiple pronunciations such as high, low, accented, non-accented, with nasal tone, and without nasal tone. There is merit, then, in contending that the ascertainment of [those various pronunciations] are engendered through sound and not by the phonemes themselves.\(^9\)

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\(^9\) Bharthṛhari also makes the two-fold distinction of sound seen with Kātyāyana and Patañjali. Sound, according to Bharthṛhari, is understood to have two properties - fundamental and derivative: “Here, the two-fold nature of sound is 1) fundamental and 2) derivative. The term ‘fundamental’ means without which the form of sphota being unmanifest would be indeterminate, whereas the term ‘derivative’ is that by which the manifest form of sphota is again and again, without interruption, understood temporally.”

“īha dvividhā dhvanīḥ prākṛto vaikṛtaśca / tatra prākṛto nāma yena vinā sphoṭarūpamanabhivyaktaṁ na paricidyate / vaikṛtastu yenābhivyaktaṁ sphoṭarūpaṁ punaḥ punaravicchedena pratītataṁ kālamupalabhīye” (VPYṛ 1.76)

Here, a sound’s fundamental property (prākṛtadvīna) is understood to be the basic property of sound without which the sphota of a word cannot manifest. The derivative property of sound (vaikṛtadvīna) is the property of sound that allows sphota to manifest again and again.

\(^9\) D’Sa 1980: 117

\(^9\) ibid. 120

\(^9\) “kathāṃ hyekasminkālaṁ bahūnāmucchārayatāme eva sangakāro yugapadane karīpaḥ svaṁ” (BSBh 1.3.28)

\(^9\) “udāttaścānudāttaśca svarāśca sānumāśaśca niramāśāśca / athavā dhvaninākṛto ‘yam / pratayabhēdo na varṇakṛta ityados̄aḥ” (ibid. 1.3.28)
Śaṅkara continues:

Distinctions such as accent, etc., that are connected with sound, are not connected with the self-nature of the phonemes because there is recognition in the pronunciation of phonemes [irrespective of accent]. And the cognition of phonemes will be dependent on this being so (the phoneme being cognizable irrespective of accent). Otherwise, [one would have to admit that] accent-distinction, which is made through conjunction and disjunction, would result from unbroken phonemes in the process of recognition.\(^{96}\)

Here, Śaṅkara assents to the two-fold distinction between a phoneme’s fundamental and secondary property. Because one is able to cognize a phoneme irrespective of accent, Śaṅkara ascribes accent and tone as a secondary property linked to a phoneme’s manifest sound which is ascertained on the basis of a phoneme’s articulated quality. The self-nature of a phoneme, however, is the meaning-bearing unit of sound, which endures irrespective of accent or tone. Śaṅkara does not provide any insight as to how he might differ from Kumārilabhatṭa on the matter of a manifest phoneme and its relationship to Kumārilabhatṭa’s notion of eternal śabda. Like Kumārilabhatṭa, however, Śaṅkara differentiates himself from the sphonatavādins by arguing against the idea that meaning is engendered through sound which, by nature, only gesture beyond themselves towards a pre-existent meaning. Śaṅkara writes:

The intellect understands the word ‘cow’ at a time subsequent to apprehending each letter, [therefore, the intellect] is the object of phoneme-units, not of something else. How so? [When understanding the word ‘cow’ (gau in Sanskrit),] the phonemes ‘ga-au’ are expected, and not ‘da-au’. If another meaning follows from the phonemes ‘ga-au’, then sphonata may be plausible - thus like the phonemes ‘da-au’, even the phonemes ‘ga-au’ would be dispensable.\(^{97}\)

Śaṅkara’s understanding of the sphonatavādins position is very similar to Kumārilabhatṭa’s argument against sphonata as well. If meaning is merely indicated by phonemes and not communicated from the phoneme itself, then there would be no reason why an incorrect word would be ineffectual at communicating a meaning correctly denoted by another word. Because the word ‘dau’ does not bring to mind the meaning ‘cow’, but the word ‘gau’ does, meaning is clearly linked with specific phonemes. Kumārilabhatṭa articulates a similar position by arguing that the meaning ‘cow’ is directly linked to the phonemic sequence ‘ga-au’, and not some other arbitrary sequence of phonemes.\(^{98}\) Here, both Śaṅkara and Kumārilabhatṭa conclude that the idea of sphonata is useless on the basis that it does not properly account for the connection between a word’s phonemic sequence and its meaning.\(^{99}\) Where the sphonatavādin argues that phonemes

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\(^{96}\) “tannibandhanāś codattādayo viśeṣā na varnasvarūpānibandhanāḥ, varṇānāṃ prayuuccāraṇaṃ prayabhijñāyamāntavāt / evaḥcā satī sālambanā udāttādipratyayā bhaviṣyante / itaradhā hi varṇānāṃ prayabhijñāyamānānāṃ nirbhedatvātsamyogaviibhāgakṛtā udāttādiviśeṣāḥ kalperān” (ibid. 1.3.28)

\(^{97}\) “ekaikavarnanrahaṇottarakālā ṭīyamēkā buddhir-gauriti samastavarnaviṣayā nārthāntaraviṣayā / kathametadavagamaye / yato śvāmapi buddhu gakārādayo varṇā anvartante natu dukārādayah / yadi hyasyā buddhagakārā-dibhyor thāntaram sphonato viṣayāḥ svāttato dukārādayaiva gakārādayo ‘pyasyā buddher-vyāvarteran / natu tathāsti” (ibid. 1.3.28)

\(^{98}\) (D’Sa 1980: 131)

\(^{99}\) It is not clear, however, whether Śaṅkara is describing a generalized notion of sphonata or one specifically directed towards Bhartṛhari. Śaṅkara’s assessment of sphonata in this case more closely resembles one of the three notions of sphonata Bhartṛhari refutes before articulating his notion of sphonata.
function to gesture beyond themselves to an established meaning, and where meaning is increasingly clear based on the sequential cognition of phonemes, Śaṅkara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa argue that sphoṭa is simultaneously impossible to demonstrate independently, and is also an unnecessary and convoluted step.

Both Śaṅkara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa agree that sequenced phoneme cognition produces meaning upon the apprehension of the final letter, but meaning itself is conveyed through a phoneme’s fundamental quality. Answering to the problem of how an eternal meaning can be communicated through impermanent sounds, they both assent to the two-fold distinction between the fundamental and adjunct properties of sound which is seen in the earlier grammatical tradition. Tone quality and accent, according to both Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Śaṅkara are adjunct properties to the fundamental sound and therefore cannot be the meaning-bearing unit a word. Instead, meaning is predictably and repeatedly conveyed through a sound’s fundamental property. Where Śaṅkara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa diverge in the conception of sound and meaning relates to Kumārilabhaṭṭa’s insistence on the mutual dependency of the generic and enduring property and the particular. Because Kumārilabhaṭṭa admits that the ākṛti and vyakti are mutually dependent100 - the generic property particularizes in the individual and the individual universalizes in the generic property, an admission that forces Kumārilabhaṭṭa into denying the existence of the generic property independent of the particular - Kumārilabhaṭṭa naturally cannot identify the eternal aspect of sound with the generic property of the particular sound because ākṛti is by definition mutually dependent on vyakti and is denied an existence independent of the particular. If a phoneme were an ākṛti it would be denied an existence independent of the vyakti. The reverse is also true. Kumārilabhaṭṭa has to maintain that a phoneme “is eternal because it is not an individual of a class”.101 Therefore, in order to maintain the authority of the Vedas on the basis of eternal meaning, Kumārilabhaṭṭa cannot ascribe the universal aspect of a phoneme as either an ākṛti or vyakti. Instead, Kumārilabhaṭṭa must ascribe the eternal quality of sound to something altogether different, namely the śabda, which is itself eternal and unmediated by the problem of the mutual dependency between a the generic property and the particular.

Śaṅkara, however, seems to be content saying that an eternal word is understood through the eternal and universal aspect of a phoneme, without having to postulate a third category different from ākṛti altogether. Much in the same way that Śaṅkara admits that the name of the gods are eternal signifiers for the impermanent material condition of their existence, the eternal quality of a phoneme is the occasion for grasping eternal meaning from manifest sounds. Yet meaning itself does not necessarily correlate to knowledge for Śaṅkara. In this way, Śaṅkara admits that language broadly, and scriptural language in particular, functions to produce knowledge that is irreducible to the language itself. He writes:

Just as grammar of Pāṇini and other subjects where the subject-matter in one area is to be known, the understanding [from it] is more than the śāstra itself. In the world this is known.102

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See VP 1.81. Bhartṛhari is aware of this problem and clear states that different combinations of sounds indicate different sphoṭas.

100 See section one.
101 (D’Sa 1980: 130)
102 “yadyadvistārārtham śāstraṃ yasmātpruṣaviveṣātsambhavati, yathā vyākaraṇādi pāṇinyāderfēnyaika-desārthamapi sa tato ‘pyadhikataravijñāna iti prasiddham loke” (BS 1.1.3)
For Śaṅkara, scriptural knowledge is altogether different from the scriptural meaning, and yet scriptural meaning is necessary component of knowledge itself. No doubt the distinction between Kumārilabhaṭṭa, the Mīmāṃsakas, and Śaṅkara can be attributed to differing visions for the intended purpose of scripture. While Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas such as Kumārilabhaṭṭa were devoted to proper scriptural interpretation such that one could maximize the fruits of ritual action, Uttara Mīmāṃsakas such as Śaṅkara were interested in the utility of scripture to instruct true knowledge of the divine, which it can only do heuristically. The difference in intended scriptural purpose underpins their respective language philosophies. While there are numerous similarities between Śaṅkara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa’s language philosophies - both assent to language operation at the level of the universal, both reject the possibility that meaning is conveyed via the extra-linguistic factor known as sphaṭa, and both accept that meaning is conveyed through the collection of phonemes apprehended serially - all of which are assumptions that perpetuate their shared goal of defending the legitimacy of the Vedas based on their eternality, they begin to deviate from one another in their respective conceptualizations of how the generic property relates to the individual, and consequently, how meaning is expressed through finite phonemic units. Kumārilabhaṭṭa maintains that the ākṛti of an object exists only insofar is it is particularized in the individual, and vice versa. This admission is necessary for Kumārilabhaṭṭa given that it allows him to place the results of ritual squarely on the action of the ritual actors themselves instead of elsewhere, and true knowledge of ritual is accessible directly through scripture. Śaṅkara admits, however, that scripture is a necessary step in attaining true knowledge of the divine, but that knowledge of the divine is not reducible to scriptural language.

Naturally, however, admitting to the eternality of the Vedas also necessitates admitting to an eternal component of the word itself. Kumārilabhaṭṭa does so by arguing that eternal sound (śabda), which by definition is not an ākṛti, conveys meaning occasioned through its manifest form (dhvani). Śaṅkara, however, does not need to go through the trouble of differentiating between the fundamental property of sound as the meaning-bearing unit and the ākṛti, which may be due to the difference between Śaṅkara’s interest in scripture and the Mīmāṃsakas. Śaṅkara admits to scripture’s limitations in achieving knowledge of the divine and so there is no need to go through such strenuous efforts to differentiate between the generic property (ākṛti) and the fundamental meaning-bearing aspect of sound because the divine itself is not reducible to either ākṛti or sound.

The language philosophies of Śaṅkara, Kumārilabhaṭṭa, Bhartṛhari, Patañjali, and no doubt many others, clearly have broader ontological, epistemological, and metaphysical motivation. Both Śaṅkara, Kumārilabhaṭṭa, and Bhartṛhari, while all defending the eternality and authority of the Vedas articulate their language philosophies with radically different implications for the relationship between language, meaning, and the knower. The passage on language in Śaṅkara’s Brahmasūtrabhāṣya, while brief, requires the examination of numerous elements in tandem with the prominent ideas against which Śaṅkara’s thought was crafted. The two most prominent elements in Śaṅkara’s philosophy of language answer to two foundational questions - how can the language of the Vedas, which is seemingly finite, be purported to be authoritative on the claim that it is eternal? Śaṅkara replies that Vedic language is eternal because it operates at the level of the universal, not the particular. The second question is how eternal meaning is conveyed through finite words. Responding to the sphaṭavādin who claims that eternal meaning
can only be accessed by finite phonemes through a flash of insight, Śaṅkara sides with the Mīmāṃsakas in arguing that meaning is conveyed through the collection of individual phonemes without having to admit to the unprovable and unnecessary step of sphota. Śaṅkara’s language philosophy looks very similar to that of Kumārilabhaṭṭa’s with some notable exceptions. Those deviations were mainly centered around Kumārilabhaṭṭa’s insistence on the mutual dependency of the ākṛti and vyakti, and Śaṅkara’s position that the ākṛti exists independent of the vyakti. Their disagreement can be accounted for in their respective ritualistic or soteriological imperatives. Despite their respective aims, Śaṅkara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa both assent to the authority of scripture and the interpretability of its language. The philosophy of language for both acts not simply as a means to understand the nature of language, but is rather the logical process whereby the Vedas themselves are legitimized and their interpretation systematized. Taken as such, a coherent philosophy of language is indispensable to the endeavor of Vedic hermeneutics. Śaṅkara’s Mīmāṃsā is no exception.
APPENDIX: Sanskrit to English translation of Brahmasūrabhāṣya 1.3.28

Translated by Jonathan Peterson, Sanskrit transliteration retrieved from GRETIL.

śabda iti cen nātaḥ prabhavāt pratyakṣanumānābhyyām | B.S.Bh 1.3.28 |

If [one were to proclaim that a contradiction arises with regard to] the word, then [we maintain that one] does not on account of its origin being direct perception and inference.

mā nāma vigrahavatvā devādīnāmabhypagyamānē karmanī kaścidvirodhaḥ prasaṇji / śabde tu virodhaḥ prasajyē / katham / autapattikaḥ hi śabdasyārthena saṃbandham ā-śrīya 'anapekṣatvā' iti vedasya prāmāṇyaṁ sthāpitam / idānīṁ tu vigrahavatī devatā- bhypagyamānā yadyapyaiśvaryayogād yugapadane kārmasaṃbandhīni havīṁsi bhunījita tathāpī vigrhayaogād asmad ādīvajjananamaraṇavatī setī nityasya śabdasya nityenārthena nīyate saṃbandhepratiyamānē yadvaidike śabde prāmāṇyaṁ sthitam tasya virodhaḥ syādīti cet /

No opposition whatsoever follows from admitting to the corporeality of the gods insofar as [ritual] action is concerned. However, [The Mīmāṁsaka will argue that] there should be opposition in the context of the word. How so? For having submitted to the inherent relationship between meaning and word, the authority of the Vedas is established irrespectively. (This is a reference to MS. 1.1.5)

However, if actual understanding of the gods employs oblations that depend on multiple actors simultaneously through divine connection, then [one has to admit that] the gods themselves are subject to the same birth, life, and death as we are due to the method of understanding them employing division. [And if this is so, then] there ought to be opposition [to the idea that] the authority of Vedic words is established by assenting to an eternal relationship between eternal words and eternal meaning.

nāyamapavyasti virodhaḥ / kasmāt / atāḥ prabhavāt / ata eva hi vaidikācchabādevādikām jagatprabhavatī /

But there need not be opposition to this. Why? [The aphorism 1.3.28 proclaims] – “on account of its origin.” Thus Vedic words create the world, and the gods, etc.

nanu janmādyasya yataḥ (bra. 1.1.2) ityatra brahmaprabhavatvam jagato 'vadhāritam, kathamiha śabdarpaśwavaratvamucyate / apica yadi nāma vaidikācchabādevāsya prabhavo 'bhyupagataḥ, kathametāvatā virodhaḥ sabde parirhootaḥ yāvatā vasavō rudrā ādityā viśvedeveda maruta ityeter'tha anityā evotptimattvāt / tadanityatve ca tadvacināṁ vaidikānāṁ vasāvāsabādānāmanitvāt kena nivāryate / prasisddhāṁ hi loke deva-dattasya putra utpanne yajñadatta iti tasya nāma kriyata iti / tasmādvirodha eva śabda iti cet /

[The opponent will object] – Here in [aphorism 1.1.2] “[Brahman is that] from which birth, life, and death [come],” [and as such] Brahman is understood to be the origin of the world. How then
do you say that the word is the origin? Moreover, if the origin is accepted to be from so-called Vedic speech, then how is a contradiction avoided to the extent that because of origination, the meaning of the words ‘Vasus’, ‘Rudras’, ‘Aditis’, ‘Maruts’ are themselves impermanent? And what’s more, regarding the impermanence of those meanings, how could the impermanence of Vedic significations such as ‘Vasu, and so forth, be avoided? For it is well known that when Devadatta’s son is born, he is given the name Yajñadatta. Therefore, there is indeed contradiction [to the assertion that the origin of the world is] the word.

Because we see the innate relation between a word and [its] meaning, such as ‘cow’, etc., [To this objection, we reply] no. While there is origination of the particular, such as a cow, and so forth, there cannot be the origination of the universal. Particulars are created as object, quality, and action, not the universal, [and] there is relation between words and universals, not particulars. Because there are infinite particulars, there being [an eternal] relationship [between a word and the particular] is not tenable. [But] because of the eternality of the universal in manifest particulars, no contradiction whatsoever is observed for words such as ‘cow’ etc. As such, in assenting to the origin of particular gods, due to the eternality of the universal, no contradiction whatsoever is to be observed in words such as ‘Vasus’, ‘Rudras’, ‘Aditis’, ‘Maruts’, and so forth.

Through understanding individuation by means of the gods’ mantras and encomiums, the distinction of the [gods’] universal will be understood. Words such as Indra and so forth, whose motive is the relationship between position and distinction, are similar to a word like ‘army leader’. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with statements such as ‘whosoever occupies that particular place, he is indeed understood by words such as Indra, etc.’. And, unlike origination through Brahman, the origination through the word is not accepted to be the material cause.
Insofar as eternal words are established through the nature of speech in relation to eternal meaning, how is the particular produced through meaning that is transactionally connected with the word?

Therefore, regarding the word ‘origin’ they ask - how again is it understood that from the word the world is produced? From direct perception and inference. Direct perception, taken as scripture, is irrespectively authoritative. Inference, taken as tradition, is respectively authoritative. Direct perception and inference demonstrate that creation is preceded by the word. Thus scripture proclaims –

With the word ‘those’ Prajāpati created the gods, with the word ‘blood’ he created mankind, with the word ‘moons’ he created the fathers, with the word ‘soma strainer’ he created the planets, with the word ‘horses’ he created the hymn, with the word ‘the gods’ he created scripture, with the word ‘great prosperity’ he created other beings.

Elsewhere, scripture proclaims “with his mind, he became united with speech.” Everywhere [in scripture], the word precedes creation.

smṛtirapi- 'anādinidhanā nityā vāgutsṛṣṭā svayambhuvā / ādau vedamayı divyā yataḥ sarvā pravṛttayāh' // iti / utsargo 'pyaṣaṃ vācaḥ sampradāya pravartanātmako draṣṭavyāh, anādinidhanayā anyādṛṣṣayotsargsaryāmsabhavāt / tathā 'nāma rūpaṃ ca bhūtānāṃ karmanāṃ ca pravartinam / vedaśabdehyā evādau nirmane sa maheśvarah' // (manu. 1.21) iti / sarvesaṃ tu sa nāmāni karmāṇi ca prthakprthak / vedaśabdehyā evādau prthaksamsthāśca nirmane' // iti ca / apica cikīṣitam artham anunīṣṭamastasya vācakaṃ śabdam pūrvaṃ smrtvā paścātmarthamanuṣṭhāti sarvesaṃ naḥ prayatkaṃsetat / tathā prajāpaterapi sṛṣṭuh sṛṣṭeh pūrvaṃ vaidikāḥ śabdā manasi prādurbhāvuh, paścāttadanugatānaṁsthāsavajjye / tathāca śrutih - 'sa bhūriti vyāhārataś bhūmīmāṣṭajā' (tai.brā. 2.2.4.2) ityevamādikā bhūrādīśabdehyā eva manasi prādurbhūtehyo bhūrādīlokaṁ kṣaṇamdharayati / kimātmakaṃ punaḥ śabdam abhipretyedam śabadaprabhavatvamucyate / sphaṭamāyaḥ /

Tradition also proclaims - “Of its own, speech was produced without beginning or end, [and is that] from which everything came forth.” This utterance is to be understood as forming the nature of religious teaching because it is not possible that [this utterance], which is without beginning or end, nor is it seen elsewhere, could be created. Thus [tradition proclaims] - “in the beginning, Maheśvara fabricated the name and form of beings and the order of actions from the words of the Vedas,” “but in everything, from Vedic speech one by one he fabricated each name and action [in such a way that it] appears distinct,” and so forth.

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103 “ete asāgramindavastarahpavitramāśavaḥ”
104 Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. 1.2.4
105 Footnote states “sampradāyo guruṣya paramparābhyaṃ” - “religious teaching being the teaching of a lineage between a student and a teacher.”
106 Manusmṛti 1.21
Moreover, it is apparent to all of us that having remembered a previously spoken word where an intended meaning is operative, that very meaning is established thereafter. Therefore, we recognize that even before Prajāpati’s creation, Vedic speech was manifest in his mind, and only thereafter is observed meaning created. Thus scripture states “Prajāpati first said ‘Bhū’, [then] the worlds are created by words previously manifested in his mind.”\(^{107}\)

It is asked again – “what is the nature of the word with regards to its origin?” Some call it the spherā.

\[\text{varṇapakṣe hi teṣāṃutpannapradhvamsitvānitye bhyaḥ śabdebhayo devādityaktiṁām prabhava ityanupapannam syāt / utpanadhvamsinaśca varṇāḥ, pratyuccāraṇamanyāthā cānyathā ca pratiyamānātvāt / tathāhi- adṛśyamāno 'pi puruṣaviśeṣo 'dhyayananadhvani-śravaṇādeva viśesato nirdhāryate devadatto 'yamadhīte yajñadatto 'yamadhīte iti / nacāyaṃ varṇaviṣayaḥ nyathātvapratyayā mithyājñānam, bādhakapratyābhāvāt / naca varnebhyor 'tāvagatiryuktiḥ / na hyeikaiko varṇor 'tham pratyāvayet, vyabhicārāt / naca varṇasamudāyapratyayo 'sti, kramavādvādvārṇānām / pūrvarūvravārṇānubhavajanita-\]

\[\text{saṁskārasahiḥo 'ntyō varṇor 'tham pratyāvimagātyatī ityadyucyeta / tanna / saṁbandha-} \]

\[\text{grahaṇāpekho hi sābdah svayam pratiyamānār 'tham pratyāyayedhūmādivat / naca pūrvarūvravārṇānubhavajanitasamskārasahityasyantyavarnāsyā praṭītirasti, apratyaṃkṣa-tvāt saṁskārānām / kāryapratyāyitaiḥ saṁskāraḥ sahiro 'ntyō varṇorthānām pratyāva-imagātyatī ceti / \]

For the proponents of phonemes, [the idea that] the origination of particular gods, etc., from eternal words would be untenable due to a word’s impermanence. Impermanent phonemes are understood one way or another based on pronunciation. For example, a specific person, although unseen, is understood individually as either Yajñadatta or Devadatta through hearing the sound of their voice. Because of the absence of contrary evidence, that a phoneme’s object is ascertained through difference is not a false conception.

Nor is understanding meaning through phonemes [themselves] suitable. For it is unreasonable that letters would convey meaning [in and of themselves].\(^{108}\) Nor will a collection of phonemes convey meaning [simply due to] their sequentiality.

If one were to say that the last phoneme [of a word], which is connected with a memory-trace engendered by each previous phoneme, will intimate meaning, then we refute this assertion because a word that depends on ascertaining a relationship between the universal and the particular, that is intimating itself, ought to convey meaning just as smoke does.\(^{109}\) Because of the invisibility of memory-traces, clear apprehension of the last phoneme, which is connected with the memory-trace engendered by ascertaining each previous phoneme, is not possible.

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\(^{107}\) Taitirīya Brahmana 2.2.4.2

\(^{108}\) Vyabhicārāt is also described in the footnote as meaning ‘because of the observation of recognizing meaning from one letter, and from observation of recognizing the uselessness in other letters.

\(^{109}\) Smoke here refers to the argument that wherever smoke is perceived, it stands to reason there must also be fire.
[The opponent will argue that] the last letter, connected with memory-traces that are intelligible because of their effects, will intimate meaning.

na / saṃskārakāryasyāpi smaraṇasya kramavartītvā / tasmātsphoṭa eva śabdaḥ / sa ca ekaikavarnapratyayāhitasamskārabīje 'nyavarnānapratyayajanitapatīrī pāke prativyiny-ekapratyayaviṣayatavā jhaṭitī pratyavabhāsate / nacāyamekapratyayo varnaviṣayā smṛtiḥ / varṇānāmanekatvādekapratyayaviṣayavānupapatteḥ / tasya ca pratyuccāraṇaṃ pratyabhijñāyamāṇāntvānītyatvam / bhedapratyayasya varna-viṣayatvāt / tasmān nityācchabdasphoṭarūpābhidhāyakātṛiyākārakaphalalakṣanaṃ jagadabhidheya-bhūtam prabhavatiti / varṇā eva tu na śabdaḥ iti bhagavānupavaraḥ /

This cannot be so because memory, which is also the effect of memory-traces, depends on sequentiality, Therefore, sphoṭa alone is the word. Insofar as the seed of a memory-trace is deposited through the cognition of each letter, and is reliant upon a maturation engendered by the cognition of the last letter, the sphoṭa appears instantly through the object of that singular cognition [of the word], and this single cognition is not the object of phonemes as memory because it is untenable that multiple letters would form the object of a single cognition. And [also] the pronunciation of a word is eternal due to [its] recognition [in the mind], because a phoneme’s object is cognized through difference.

They say “Because of the expressive nature of the sphoṭa of a word, which is eternal, the world, whose nature is action, agent, and effect, exists to be known” For the venerable Upavarsa said “letters alone are not the word.”

nanūtappanapravdaṁsitvam varṇānmaṇtakaṁ, tanna / ta eveti pratyabhijñānaḥ / sādṛṣyāt pratyabhijñānam keśādiśviveti cet /

[The opponent claims] that what was said about phonemes having the property of beginning and end is not true given that phonemes alone are recognized as the same [again and again time they are produced], as are the hairs [on your head], etc.110

na / pratyabhijñānasya pramāṇāntareṇa bādhanupapatteḥ /

This cannot be so, given the impossibility that recognition is another means of knowledge.

pratyabhijñānamākṛtinimittamiti cet /

[Yet the opponent will still claim] that recognition is caused by the universal.

na / vyaktiṃpratyabhijñānaḥ / yadi hi pratyuccāraṇaṃ gavādvyaaktivadanyā anyā varṇa- vyaktayaḥ pratīyeraṃstata ākṛtinimittam pratyabhijñānaṃ syāt / natvetaḍaṭi / varṇa-

110 footnote to the text reads “vapanānandaram ta evame keśā iti dhīrbṛāntinītī yuktam, bhedadhīvīrodhārā”
“After shaving the head, it’s fitting to have the thought that ‘those alone are these hairs.’
vyaktaya eva hi pratyuccāraṇaḥ pratyabhijñāyante / dvirgośabda uccārita iti hi prati-
pattirna tu dvau gośabdāvīti /

On account of the recognition of the particular, this [assertion] cannot be so. For if [during] the pronunciation [of a word] the individual phonemes were understood differently, like individual cows [are perceived differently], then recognition being caused by the universal might be tenable. But this is not so because individual phonemes only are recognized as the utterance. [For example, we] acknowledge that the word ‘cow’ pronounced twice does not mean ‘two cows’.

nanu varṇā apyuuccāraṇabhedena bhinnāḥ pratiyante devadattayajñadattayor-
adhyanadhanīśrvanādeva bhedapraśīteityuktam /

[But the opponent will point out] that [we] said that individual phonemes are cognized as disjoined because of differences in enunciation, [as was the case] in hearing intelligible distinction in the vocalization of ‘Devadatta’ [or] ‘Yajñadatta’.

atrābhidhiyate- sati varṇavisaye niścite pratyabhijñāne samyogavibhāgabhiprayaṅvatād-
varṇāmaḥvivāyaṇjakavicīryāṇimīnto ‘yaṁ varṇaṁśaya vicīraḥ pratyaya na svarūpa-
nimīntaḥ / 111 apiṣ ca svarṇavivakṣhetvadāvināpī pratyabhijñānasiddhayā varnākṛtyaḥ
kalpayitavyāḥ / tāsu ca paropādhiho bhedaprataya ityabhupagantavyam / tadvaraṃ
varṇavyaktiṣeveda paropādhiho bhedapratayaḥ svarūpanimīntat ca pratyabhijñānamiti
kalpanālādhaṃ / eva eva ca varṇavisayaḥsva bhedapratoṣṭaḥ pratyayā
yatpratyabhijñānam / kathāḥ hyekasminkāḥl bhinnaṁuccāraṇatāmekā eva sangākāro
yugapadanekarāpāḥ syāt / udāttaścāntudāttaśa svaritaśca sānunāśīkaścna nirunāśīkaś-ceti
/ athāvā dhvanikro ‘yaṁ pratyayabheda na varṇakṛta ityodosāḥ / kah punaravaṃ
dhvanirnāma / yo dūrādākāraṃyaḥ varṇavisvamapratipadyāmnaysa karṇapatham
avatārati / pratyāśīdataṣaḥ paścumaṇtvadibhedam varṇesvāśaṃjayati / tannibandhanāś
codātādaya viśeṣā na varṇasvarīpanibandhanāḥ, varṇānām pratyuccārinam
pratyabhijñāyamāṇatvāt / evaṇca sati sālambanā udāttadipratyayā bhavisyanti / itaradhā hi
varṇānām pratyabhijñāyanāṃ nām nirbhedatvātsamyogavibhāgaṅkṛtā udāttadivēśeṣāḥ
kalpanaṃ / samyogavibhāgaṃ cāpratyaṅkṣatvāccee taddāśrayā viśeṣā varṇesvādhyauṣātm
śakyaṇaṃ ityato nirālambanā evaita udāttadipratyayāḥ syuh / apica naivaicad
abhiniveśavayadūtābhedānaṃ varṇānām pratyabhijñāyamāṇāṃ bheda bhavediti /
nahyanyasya bhedenānyaśābhidyamāṇasya bheda bhavītumahati / nahi vyaktibhededena
jātiṃ bhinnāṃ manyante / varṇebhyāṣcārthapraśīteḥ sambhavātśphoṣakalpanānarthikā /

Here, [we] reply – insofar as it is decided that the object of phonemes is recognition, the object of a phoneme is variegated cognition (recognition) which is caused by the multiplicity of a phoneme’s manifestation due to their being produced through conjunction and disjunction, and not caused by the self-nature of the phoneme itself.

Moreover, even for those who adhere to the doctrine of different individual phonemes, the result of recognition being the universal of the phoneme would be a fallacious. And amongst them

111 Footnote states “tāl̄vadhideśaḥ koṣṭhasthavāyuṣaṁyogavibhāgabhyāṁ vicīraḥbhyāṁ
vyāṅyamūḍvaṁvarṇasvva cūcītyadhūricaritah”
(those who adhere to the doctrine of different individual phonemes), that recognition of difference is a subsequent qualification to be understood. Instead of this, it is a simpler notion to accept that cognition of difference being a subsequent qualification is the cause of the self-nature of the phoneme, and is the cause of recognition. And this subsequent qualification alone is the false cognition of a phoneme’s object as the cognition of difference, which is recognition. For how could multiple people pronounce the syllable ‘ga’ at any one time? One would expect there to be multiple pronunciations such as high, low, accented, with nasal tone, and without nasal tone. There is merit, then, in contending that the ascertainment of [those various pronunciations] are engendered through sound and not by the letters themselves.

What is this so called ‘sound’? Sound is that which heard from a distance, [although entering the range of hearing, does not produce insight of phonemes; [whereas] for proximate sounds the difference of hard and soft accent cohere into phonemes. Distinctions such as accent, etc., that are connected with sound, are not connected with the self-nature of the phonemes because there is recognition in the pronunciation of phonemes [irrespective of accent]. And the cognitions of phonemes will be dependent on this being so (the phoneme being cognizable irrespective of accent). Otherwise, [one would have to admit that] accent distinctions, etc., which are made through conjunction and disjunction, would result from the continuity of phoneme-recognition.

[In saying that] it is not possible to ascertain distinctions that are dependent upon phonemes [themselves] given the inaudibility of conjunction and disjunction, it [naturally] follows that the cognition of accent, etc., would be baseless. Moreover, to assent to this would mean that through the difference of accents, etc., there would be difference of phoneme-recognition. As such, the idea that distinction of cognized letters would be because accent-distinction is untenable since it is not reasonable that through the divisions of one thing there would be the division of an entirely different thing that is in itself indivisible. For one does not think that through individual differences the class-configuration is [itself] fragmented [also]. Given that the cognition of meaning is engendered through phonemes, the notion of sphaṭa is useless.

na kalpayāmyahāṃ sphaṭam pratyaksameva tvenamavagacchāmi, ekaikavarnagrahaṇā-hitasamskārāyāṃ buddhau hjaṭitī pratyaya ūbhāsaṇādīti cet /

[The opponent argues] that because of the instantaneous presentation in the intellect, where memory-traces are established through successive apprehension of each phoneme, I do not [simply] imagine sphaṭa, I understand it solely as direct perception.

112 Footnote states “pratyuccāraṇam varṇāḥ anuvartante dhvaniṛvyāvartata iti bhedaḥ” - phonemes obey pronunciation whereas sound becomes distinct - that is the difference.
113 pratyaksatvam is taken as asrāvanatvam – imperceptibility is taken as inaudible
114 ‘moreover’ is glossed in a footnote as follows – “yathā khaṇḍaṁuddādiviruddhān eva eva kavyaktisvabhinnam gotvam tathā dhvaniṣu varṇāḥ abhināḥ evetyarthāḥ” – just as the quality of cow endures in individual cows that are hindered by deformities such as partial or broken horns, in the same way phonemes endure amongst sounds – this is the meaning.”
115 ‘that’ – udāttādīrhdvanistadbhedenā hetunā varṇānāmapi ti yojanā
116 Footnote states “yathā khaṇḍaṁuddādiviruddhān eva eva kavyaktisvabhinnam gotvam tathā dhvaniṣu varṇā abhināḥ evetyarthāḥ” – just as cowness persists in those individual cows hindered by a lack of horns or handicap, in the same way, letters persists amongst sounds - this is the meaning.
na / asyā api buddhervarṇaviṣayatvāt / ekaikavaranṇagrahanottarakālā hiyamekā buddhir-gauritī samastavarṇaviṣayā nārthāntaraviṣayā / kathametadvagamyate / yato 'syāmapi buddhau gakārādayo varṇā amuvarante natu dákārādayah / yadi hyasyā buddhergakārā-dibhyor' thāntaraṃ sphoto viṣayah syāttato dákārādaya iva gakārādayo 'pyasyā buddher-vyāvartet / natu tathāsti / tasmādiyamekabuddhirvarṇaviṣayavaiva śmṛtiḥ /

But this cannot be so given that the intellect is the object of phonemes also. The intellect understands the word ‘cow’ at a time subsequent to apprehending each letter, [therefore, the intellect] is the object of phoneme-units, not of something else. How so? [When understanding the word ‘cow’ (gau in Sanskrit), the phonemes ‘ga-au’ are expected, and not ‘da-au’. If [when understanding the word ‘cow’], another meaning follows from the phonemes ‘ga-au’, then sphota may be plausible - thus like the phonemes ‘da-au’, even the phonemes ‘ga-au’ would be dispensable. But this is not so. Therefore, this single cognition, which is the object of phonemes, is memory.

nanvanekatvādvarṇānāṃ naikabuddhaviṣayatopapadyata ityuktam, tatpratibrūmaḥ sam-bhavatyanekāśyapēyekabuddhaviṣayatvām, pānktsirvanāṃ senā daśā śatam sahasram-ityādiṣanāt / yā tu gaunityeko ‘yaṃ sabda iti buddhiḥ, sā bahuṣveva varṇেṣvēkārthā-vacchedanībandhanaupacārikī vanasānaḥuddhivadeva /

Nevertheless, the opponent argues that multiple letters cannot engender a single discernible object, but to this we argue that even from multiple [letters] it is clear that a single cognition is produced, as is the case for a row [of multiple things], a forest [of multiple trees], an army [of multiple soldiers], the number ten, one hundred, a thousand, and so forth. But, the cognition of ‘gau’ as one single word is not literally dependent on the distinction of a singular meaning amongst many phonemes alone, like in the case of discerning a forest, an army, and so forth.

atraḥayadi varṇā eva sāmastvenaika-buddhaviṣayatāmāpadyamānāḥ padam syustato jārā rājā kapiḥ pikaḥ ityādiṣu padaviṣeṣapratipattirna svāt / ta eva hi varṇā itaratra cetaratra ca pratyavabhāsanta iti /

Here [the opponents say that] if through their entirety, letters were indeed engendering the object of singular cognition, then it would be impossible to discern particular [heteropalendromic] words such as ‘jārā (old), rājā (king), kapiḥ (monkey), pikaḥ (cuckoo). For these letters appear one way and the other.

atra vādāmah - satyani samastavarnapratyaavrasē yathā kramāṇurodhinā eva piplikāḥ pāktibuddhimārohanti, evam kramāṇurodhā eva varṇāḥ padabuddhim āroṣyanti / tatra varṇāṇāmasaveṣe ‘pi kramavāśekṛtā padaviṣeṣapratipattirna virudhyate / vṛddhavyāvahāre ceme varṇāḥ kramāṇyanugṛhitā gṛhitārthaviṣeṣasam-bandhāḥ santaḥ svavyavahāro ‘pyekaikavaranṇagrahanānantarī samastapratyava-māryāty buddhaḥ tādṛśa eva pratyavabhasamānānātmaṃ tamarthamavavyābhirērēnā pratyavīṣyantīti varnavādiño laghīyasī kalpanā / sphotoavādinastū drṣṭāhānirdrṣṭa-kalpanā ca / varṇāceme kramena grhyamānāḥ sphotoṃ vyānjoyanti sa sphotoh’tham vyānktīti garīyasī kalpanā svāt, athāpi nāma pratyuccāraṇamanye ‘nye varṇāḥ syuh, tathāpi pratyabhijñālāmbanabhāvēna
To this, we reply that even while there is memory\(^{117}\) of letter units, the discernment of words from letters arranged in series would arise much in the same way that ants that are arranged in series engender the cognition of a row. Thus, it is indisputable that even for uniform phonemes, those for which a specific sequence has been made, distinct words are produced.

The simplest notion of those who understand the word to be made up of phonemes is stated as the following – phonemes in mature linguistic usage, which are understood through sequence and which are related to a specific - agreed-upon - meaning, any of which are manifesting in the mind where, after having grasped each individual phonemes, there is reflection on the compounded form [of the phonemes], will without a doubt intimate this or that meaning.

But of those adhering to the doctrine of s\(ph\)o\(t\)a – there is a diminution of the seen and the augmentation of the unseen.\(^{118}\) To proclaim that phonemes that are understood through sequence cause s\(ph\)o\(t\)a to manifest, and that s\(ph\)o\(t\)a engenders meaning, is an even more convoluted idea. So much so that were a pronunciation to produce different phonemes [every time a phoneme was pronounced], then due to the inevitable acquiescence to the generality of phonemes as the basis for recognition, the process of producing meaning amongst phonemes which has been shown, would have to be connected with the generality [of phonemes]. Therefore, the idea that the origin of individual gods from eternal words is indisputable.

\(^{117}\) A footnote glosses \(pratyavamar\)\(ś\)a as sm\(ṛ\)t\(ī\)

\(^{118}\) Footnote states “\(d\)\(ṛ\)ṣ\(ṭ\)am \(v\)arn\(ā\)n\(ā\)mar\(ṭ\)habodhakatvam \(a\)\(ḍ\)\(ṛ\)ṭ\(ḥ\) \(s\)\(ph\)o\(ṭ\)a” - the ‘seen’ is taken as the instruction of the meaning of phonemes, whereas the unseen is taken to be s\(ph\)o\(ṭ\)a.
WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED:


