

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

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A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Religious Studies
2015

This thesis entitled:
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The Language Philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya
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Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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

I would like to take the opportunity to extend my gratitude to Madhura Godbole and Minal Kulkarni and of the American Institute for Indian Studies in Pune, India for their tireless support and skilled instruction in all aspects of the Sanskrit literary corpus. I am grateful to the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder for two sizeable and generous grants during 2013 and 2014 to do much of the necessary language training and original-source research sufficient to engage Sanskrit works in a meaningful way. So much of my intellectual training, especially in areas of Continental thought and contemporary issues of religion, I owe to the scrupulous and methodical instruction and unwavering guidance of Ruth Mas as well as the numerous hours spent talking with colleagues in India, Canada, and the US. I would like to thank my committee members - Loriliai Biernacki, Elias Sacks, and David Mellins - for their critical engagement with my work and their productive feedback throughout the writing process of this thesis.

With Gratitude,

Jonathan Peterson

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सुरभी ~ '*fragrant, charming, lovely*'

Figure 1 - Text, Author, Date Reference

Text Name	Abbreviation	Author	Approximate Date
<i>Mīmāṃsāsūtra</i>	MS	Jaimini	~2 nd BCE
<i>Mahābhāṣya</i>	MBh	Patañjali	~2 nd BCE
<i>Brahmasūtra</i>	BS	Bādarāyaṇa	~2 nd CE
<i>Śabarabhāṣya</i>	ŚBh	Śabara (Svāmin)	4 th CE
<i>Mahābhāṣyadīpika</i>	MBhD	Bhartṛhari	5 th CE
<i>Vākyapadīya</i>	VP	Bhartṛhari	-
<i>Vākyapadīyavṛtti</i>	VPVr	Bhartṛhari	-
<i>Pramāṇasamuccaya</i>	PS	Dinnāga	5 th CE
<i>Ślokavārttika</i>	ŚV	Kumārilabhaṭṭa	7 th CE
<i>Tantravārttika</i>	TV	Kumārilabhaṭṭa	-
<i>Brahmasūtrabhāṣya</i>	BSBh	Śaṅkara	7 th /8 th CE
<i>Nyāyaratnākara</i>	NR	Pārthasārathimiśra	10 th CE
<i>Mahābhāṣyapradīpa</i>	MBhP	Kaiyaṭa	11 th CE
<i>Vākyapadīyapaddhati</i>	VPP	Vṛṣabha	†
<i>Jaiminīyanyāyamālā</i>	JNM	Mādhavācārya	14 th CE

† 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 Vṛtra due to Vṛtra’s mispronunciation of the incantation ‘herayo herayah’.^{3,4} Commenting on the merits of grammatical study, Patañjali writes:

The demons who were pronouncing ‘helayo helaya’ [instead of ‘herayo herayah’ (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 ‘indraśatruḥ’ [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 Vṛtra 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

² (Pollock 2006: 47)

³ RV 18.4

⁴ “Oh Enemies! Oh Enemies!”

⁵ Bhartṛhari states: “[we take] *apabhāṣaṇam* in the sense of *mlecchanam*. What was incorrectly said by the demons? There, some say that according to Pāṇini’s *sūtra* ‘*haihe prayoge haihayoḥ*’ 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)

“*apabhāṣaṇam mlecchanam / kiṃ punaratrāsurairapabhāṣitam / tatra kecidāhuḥ haiheprayoge haihayoḥ iti plutaḥ na kṛta iti / apare bruvate kṛtaḥ plutaḥ kiṃ tu svarasamdhīḥ kṛto na prakṛtibhāva iti / apara āha helayo helaya iti dvirvacanam kṛtamiti / apare atirlakārādirayaṃ na bhavati*” (Bh.Dī 11.17-21)

⁶ “*te asurāḥ / te asurāḥ helayaḥ helayaḥ iti kurvantaḥ parā babhūvuḥ / tasmāt brāhmaṇena na mlecchītavai na apabhāṣītavai / mlecchaḥ ha vai eṣaḥ yat apaśabdaḥ / mlecchāḥ mā bhūma iti adhyeyam vyākaraṇam / te asurāḥ*” (MB 4.1)

“*duṣṭaḥ śabdaḥ svarataḥ varnataḥ vā mithyā prayuktaḥ na tam artham āha / saḥ vāgyajraḥ yajamānam hinasti yathā indraśatruḥ svarataḥ aparādhāt / duṣṭān śabdān mā prayukṣmahi iti adhyeyam vyākaraṇam / duṣṭaḥ śabdaḥ*” (MB 4.2)

⁷ RV 10.90.9

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 (*vaiyākaraṇa*) 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.

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 *Brahmasūtra* is written in a style similar to those of the MS of Jaimini. Clooney writes: “Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara are first-class *Mīmāṃsakas*, who read, arrange, and in a sense ‘bind’ the *Upaniṣads* 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' (*Varṇavādins*), 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 eternality 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 (*pauroṣeyatva*). 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 *Devatādhikaraṇa* by arguing that the eternal connection between language and meaning is established through an object's universal property (*ākṛti*) 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*.

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 Brahman 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 *sphoṭa*. 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 *MĪMĀMSĀ*: 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 *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* titled *Devatādhikaraṇa*.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 *pūrvapakṣin*) 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

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. Śāṅkara 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 assenting 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, Śāṅkara cannot accept that Vedic language is finite in the way that the *Mīmāṃsaka* opponent suggests follows from admitting to the corporeality of the gods. Śāṅkara'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 Śāṅkara

²⁶ "mā nāma vighrahavattve devādīnāmabhyupagamyamāne karmaṇi kaścīdvirodhaḥ prasañji / śabde tu virodhaḥ prasajyeta /katham / autpattikaḥ hi śabdasyārthena sambandham āśritya 'anapekṣatvāt' iti vedasya prāmāṇyaṃ sthāpitam" (BSBh 1.3.28)

²⁷ *ibid.* - "idānīm tu vighrahavatī devatābhyupagamyamānā yadyapyaiśvaryayogād yugapadaneka-karmasambandhīni havīṃṣi bhūñjīta tathāpi vighrahayogād asmad ādivajjanamarāṇavatī seti nityasya śabdasya nityenārthena nitye sambandhepratīyamāne yadvaidike śabde prāmāṇyaṃ sthitaṃ tasya virodhaḥ syāditi 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 'upadeśa' (injunction), (which) incapable of contradiction; it is authoritative with regard to the object not perceived (before), because it is independent, - so says Bādarāyaṇa." (Jha. 2009 - 282)

"autpattikastu śabdasyārthena sambandhastasya jñānamupadeśo 'vyatirekaścārthe 'nupalabdhe tatpramāṇaṃ bādrāyaṇasyānapekṣatvāt" (MS 1.1.5)

²⁹ "prasiddham hi loke deva-dattasya putra utpanne yajñadatta iti tasya nāma kriyata iti" (BSBh 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.”³⁰

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 *Brahmansūtra* 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 (*guṇa*), 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 adjunct 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

³⁰ *ibid.* “*ataḥ prabhavāt / ata eva hi vaidikācchabdādevādikaṃ jagatprabhavati*”

³¹ *ibid.* “*nanu janmādyasya yataḥ (bra. 1.1.2) ityatra brahmaprabhavatvaṃ jagato 'vadhāritam, kathamiha śabdaprabhavatvamucyate*”

³² *ibid.* “*nacedaṃ śabdaprabhavatvaṃ brahmaprabhavatvavadupādānakāraṇābhiprāyeṇocyate*”

³³ See the following section on Śaṅkara’s use of *ākṛti* compared to that of the *Mīmāṃsakas* and Patañjali. Provisionally I take Śaṅkara’s use of the term *ākṛti* to be synonymous with the term *jāti*.

³⁴ “*nahi gavādivyaktīnāmutpattimattve tadākṛtīnīmapyutpattimattvaṃ syāt / dravyaguṇakarmanām hi vyaktaya evotpadyante nākrtyaḥ / ākṛtibhiśca śabdānām saṃbandho na vyaktibhiḥ*” (BSBh 1.3.28)

³⁵ The ontological distinction of Śabara / Kumārilabhaṭṭa’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.³⁶

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 eternality of the universal, no contradiction whatsoever is to be observed in words such as 'Vasus', 'Rudras', 'Āditis', '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.'. ³⁷

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*.

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 prajāpatirdevānasrjatāsrgamiti manuṣyānindava iti pitṛmstiraḥ pavitramiti grahānāśava iti stotraṃ viśvānīti śastramabhisaubhagetyanyāḥ prajāḥ' iti śrutih" (BSBh 1.3.28)

³⁷ "tathā devādivyaktiprabhavābhyupagame 'pyākṛtinityatvānna kaścidvasvādiśabdeṣu virodha iti draṣṭavyam / ākṛtiviśeṣastu devādīnāṃ mantrārthavādādībhyo vighrahavattvādyavagamādavagantavyaḥ / sthāna-viśeṣasambandhanimittāścendrādiśabdāḥ senāpatyādiśabdavat / tataśca yo yastattatsthānamadhirohati sa sa indrādiśabdairabhidhīyata iti na doṣo bhavati" (BSBh 1.3.28)

1.2) *MĪMĀMSĀ* AND THE ‘REALIST ONTOLOGY’³⁸ 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 CE³⁹ to the late 7th and early 8th centuries CE,⁴⁰ 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 Diñnāga.⁴¹

Prior to Diñnāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, 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. Diñnāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 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.”⁴² In the wake of Diñnāga’s novel discursive strategy and philosophical critiques in his *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, Kumārilabhaṭṭa and his contemporary Prabhākara consolidated *Mīmāṃsā* doctrine around Śabara’s *Śābharabhāṣya* instead of the more laconic Jaimini *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*,⁴³ which solidified Śabara’s work as the inevitable urtext of subsequent *Mīmāṃsā* thought.⁴⁴ Although Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Prabhākara diverged in their

³⁸ See footnote 52

³⁹ (Dasgupta 2004)

⁴⁰ See footnote 2

⁴¹ (McCrea 2013)

⁴² *ibid.* 130

⁴³ McCrea states: “Precisely because Diñnāga 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 *Mīmāṃsā* thinking,⁴⁵ they both agreed on the primacy of the *Śābarabhāṣya* for subsequent *Mīmāṃsā* exegesis and expression.⁴⁶

Perhaps more important to this study than Diñnāga's novel discursive strategy that led Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Prabhākara to establish *Śābarabhāṣya* as the *Mīmāṃsā* urtext was Diñnāga's critiques of *Mīmāṃsā* ontology, specifically his critique of inherent cognitional validity (*svataḥprāmāṇya*) first elaborated by Śabara.⁴⁷ The foundation of Diñnāga'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, [Diñnāga]⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹

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, Diñnāga denies the possibility of an object's universal property. For Diñnāga, the notion of universalism belongs specifically to language itself and has no connection to the ontic nature of an object.⁵⁰ Diñnāga's critique directly refutes the possibility of an object's inherent validity (*svataḥprāmāṇya*), a cornerstone of *Mīmāṃsā* ontology.

Mīmāṃsakas responded to Diñnāga's critique with exceptional verve. Kumārilabhaṭṭa argued that Diñnāga's critique is untenable given that the cognition of an object is itself proof of the object's basis in external reality (*ālabhana*). He goes on to argue in the *Ślokavārttika*⁵¹ 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 (*vyāvṛtti*) from dissimilar objects on the basis of its individualized traits (*vyakti*), both of which are inherent characteristics of an object instead of fictitious impositions.⁵² Taking the common example of observing a cow, Diñnāga suggests that the entire process of identifying

⁴⁵ Termed *Bhāṭṭa* and *Prābhākara*, 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 *Mīmāṃsā*, all but displacing the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* itself as the foundational text of the entire discipline." (McCrea 2013: 127)

⁴⁷ "While the theory of *svataḥprāmāṇya* 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 *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 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.* Diñnāga instead of Dignāga.

⁴⁹ (McCrea 2013: 133)

⁵⁰ See (Matilal 2009: 34) It should be noted that Diñnāga does, however, admit to an object's *svalakṣana*, which Matilal translates as 'unique particular'.

⁵¹ See *ŚV 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.⁵³ 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.^{54, 55} From this, it is clear how Deshpande claims that “*Mīmāṃsā* epistemology and ontology are closely interrelated.”⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷

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.⁵⁸ 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

⁵³ (Matilal 2009)

⁵⁴ (Deshpande 2007: 22)

⁵⁵ On the basis of *ākṛti* and *svataḥprāmānya*, there does not seem to be all that much variation between Śabara and Kumāriḷa. 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 prescind 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.⁵⁹

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 Śāṅkara 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 Śāṅkara 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 Śāṅkara's concept of the language and the universal property (*ākṛti*) and that of his *Mīmāṃsaka* rival's is evident in another problem that Śāṅkara articulates in an earlier section of the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*. Commenting on *Brahmasūtra* 1.1.1, Śāṅkara calls to attention an important difference between his thought and those of his *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* opponents, namely the desire to know the divine (*brahmajijñāsa*) versus the desire to know correct action (*dharmajijñāsa*).⁶⁰ The difference between the two, according to Śāṅkara, 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].⁶¹

⁵⁹ "If *vyaktiḥ* were the *śabdārtha*, it could not be employed in the case of another *vyaktiḥ*. If it is used in the case of another *vyaktiḥ*, still *vyaktiḥ* cannot be the *śabdārtha*, since *vyaktiḥ* is free of all common characteristics." ŚBh 1.3.9.33 (D'Sa 1980: 89)

⁶⁰ It should be noted that Śāṅkara did not coin the terms *dharmajijñāsa* and *brahmajijñāsa*. Bādarāyaṇa uses *brahmajijñāsa* in his work, and Śabara writes at length on *dharmajijñāsa*.

⁶¹ *na / dharmajijñāsāyāḥ prāgapyadhītavedāntasya brahmajijñāsopapatteḥ / yathāca hṛdayādyavadānānām-ānantaryaniyamāḥ, kramasya vivakṣitatvānna tatheha kramo vivakṣitaḥ... dharmabrahmajijñāsayoḥ phalajijñāsasyabhedācca / abhyudayaphalaṃ dharmajijñānaṃ taccānuṣṭhānāpeḥṣam / niḥśreyasaphalaṃ tu brahmavijñānaṃ na cānuṣṭhānāntarāpeḥṣam / bhavyaśca dharmo jijñāsyo na jñānakāle 'sti, puruṣavyāpāratratvāt / iha tu bhūtaṃ brahma jijñāsyam*

The distinction that Śāṅkara articulates between the desire to know the divine (*brahmajijñāsa*) and the desire to know correct ritual action (*dharmajijñāsa*) is reflective of a broader problem between Śāṅkara and his *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* opponents, namely the problem of sequence (*krama*), impetus (*codana*), and action (*karma*) in relation to a divine which, as Śāṅkara argues, cannot be the object of action, nor is it to be attained by means of injunctive ritual statements.⁶² While both *Mīmāṃsakas* and Śāṅkara 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 *brahmajijñāsa* and *dharmajijñāsa*.

As mentioned before, *Mīmāṃsakas* such as Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Śābara 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 Śābara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa maintain the cognitional 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 Śāṅkara, 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 *Vaiśeṣika* notion that the universal property, preceding the particular, ultimately inheres (*samavāya*) in the individual object.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ 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 annunciative force of ritual statement as purely

nityatvānna puruṣavyāpāraṇtram / codanāpravṛttibhedācca / yā hi codanā dharmasya lakṣaṇam sā svaviśaye niyuñjānaiva puruṣamavabodhayati / brahmacodanā tu puruṣamavabodhayatyeva kevalam avabodhasya codanā 'ajanyatvānna puruṣo 'vabodhe niyuñjyate / (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 *Brahman*.

"asya jagato nāmarūpābhyāṃ vyākṛtasyānekakarṭṛbhokṛtsamyuktasya pratiniyatadeśakālanimittakriyāphalāśrayasya manasāpyacintyaracanārūpasya janmasthitibhaṅgam yataḥ sarvajñātsarvaśakteḥ kāraṇādbhāvati tadbrahmeti vākyāśeṣaḥ" (BSBh 1.1.2)

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 *Ākṛtivādaḥ* 8-10 (D'Sa 1980: 154)

See also the Buddhist *pūrvapakṣin* objection that such a move makes *akṛti* an erroneous category, since an individual object has the capacity to produce a unified cognition. (ŚV *Ākṛtivāda* 13-18)

immanent in the world, ultimately elevating the action of ritual proceedings above anything else (*dharmajijñāsa*).^{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 *Mīmāṃsā*'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 (*jāti*) 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 Kumārilabhaṭṭa 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 *Mīmāṃsakas*.

Before being able to assess the major distinction between Śaṅkara's use of the word *ākṛti* from the *Mīmāṃsakas*, 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 (*saṃsthāna*). 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 "niḥśreyasaphalaṃ tu brahmavijñānaṃ na cānuṣṭhānāntarāpekṣam" - 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 eternity of the universal in manifest particulars, no contradiction whatsoever is observed for words such as 'cow' etc."

"vyaktīnām ānanyāt sambandhagrahaṇānupapatteḥ / vyaktiṣūtpadyamānāsvapyākṛtīnām nityatvācca gavādiśabdeṣu kaścdivirodho dṛśyate" BSBh 1.3.28

⁶⁹ Bhartṛhari's connection to Patañjali will be elaborated in subsequent footnotes.

⁷⁰ The latter part of this paper will deal with the details of this disagreement at considerable length.

⁷¹ 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 (Aklujkar, et al. 2008).

⁷² 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.”⁷³ The fifth-century grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari, who authored the first significant commentary on Patañjali’s *Mahābhāṣya* (*Mahābhāṣyadīpikā*), presents a clearer depiction of the *ākṛti* and the *jāti* of an object in a section of the *Vākyapadīya* called the *jāṭisamuddeśa*. Bhartṛhari writes:

In every existent 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’.⁷⁴

Bhartṛhari 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 (*sambandhin*) imposed onto a non-dual and eternal substratum, the *jāti*. Although Bhartṛhari was not explicitly writing within the rubric of Vedic hermeneutics,⁷⁵ this aspect of his thought has the indelible mark of the monistic idealism of non-dual *Vedānta* thought.

“*evam hi drśyate loke / mṛt kayā cit ākrtyā yuktā piṇḍaḥ bhavati / piṇḍākṛtim upamṛdya ghaṭikāḥ kīryante / ghaṭikākṛtim upamṛdya kuṇḍikāḥ kriyante / tathā suvarṇam kayā cit ākrtyā yuktam piṇḍaḥ bhavati / piṇḍākṛtim upamṛdya rucakāḥ kriyante / rucakākṛtim upamṛdya kaṭakāḥ kriyante / kaṭakākṛtim upmṛdya svastikāḥ kriyante / punaḥ āvṛttaḥ suvarṇapiṇḍaḥ punaḥ aparayā ākrtyā yuktāḥ khadirāgārasavarṇe kuṇḍale bhavataḥ / ākrṭiḥ anyā ca anyā ca bhavati dravyam punaḥ tad eva / ākrtyupamardena dravyam eva avaśiṣyate*” (MBh *Paspaśāhnikam*)

It should be noted that Patañjali shifts his argument slightly from understanding the *ākṛti* as an impermanent 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)

⁷³ (Deshpande 2007: 25)

Deshpande also relays that while commentators such as Kaiyaṭa 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)

⁷⁴ Deshpande’s translation. (Deshpande 2007)

“*satyāsatyau tu yau bhāgau pratibhāvaṃ vyavasthitau / satyaṃ yat tatra sā jātir asatyā vyaktayaḥ smṛtāḥ // 3.1.32 // sambandhibhedāt sattaiva bhidyamānā gavādiṣu / jātir ity ucyate tasyāṃ sarve śabdā vyavasthitāḥ // 3.1.33 // tāṃ prātipadikārthaṃ ca dhātvarthaṃ ca pracakṣate / sā nityā sā mahān ātmā tāṃ āhuḥ tvatalādayaḥ // 3.1.34 //*” (VP *Jāṭisamuddeśa*)

⁷⁵ See (Bronkhorst 2013: 28). Bronkhorst also remarks that contrary to the *Mīmāṃsakas*, including Śaṅkara, Bhartṛhari 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 Śabara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa 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 Bhartṛhari 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 *Brahman*. 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 cognize 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, assents 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 Bhartṛhari 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 Kaiyaṭa, who was influenced by Bhartṛhari, as follows: "It is possible to argue that the real substance (*dravya*) signified by all words is ultimately Brahman, and nothing else. All words signify the same ultimate reality of Brahman, except that each word signifies Brahman as qualified by a different unreal adjunct property." (Deshpande 2007: 26)

"*dravyapakṣe 'pi sarvaśabdānām asatyopādhyavacchinnam brahmatattvam vācyam iti nityatā*" (MBhP)

§2) MEANING AND THE ETERNAL WORD

2.1) AGAINST THE *SPHOṬAVĀDINS*: 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 *Sphoṭavādins* 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 *sphoṭa*. 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 *Aṣṭādhyāyī* largely informed Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*. 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.⁷⁷ Patañjali's notion of *sphoṭa* is largely a re-presentation of Kātyāyana's *varṇa-vacana* division of sound where *sphoṭa* refers to Kātyāyana's *varṇa* and *dhvani* refers to Kātyāyana's *vacana*.⁷⁸ It was not until nearly seven hundred years later through the work of Bhartṛhari that the term *sphoṭa* took on the meaning implied in Śaṅkara's *pūrvapakṣin* argument.⁷⁹ Bhartṛhari writes:

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) 80}

Some centuries later, Śaṅkara wrote:

Inssofar 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.'⁸¹

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.⁸² 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 pronunciation of the final phoneme, meaning presents itself unobstructed.⁸³ 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 vāṅmalānāṃ cikitsitam / pavitraṃ sarvavidyānām adhividyam prakāśate / yathārthajātayaḥ sarvāḥ sabākṛtinibandhanāḥ / tathaiva loke vidyānām eṣā vidyā parāyanam*" (VP 1.14-15)

⁸⁰ "*nādair āhitabījāyām antyena dhvaninā saha / āvṛttapariṣkāyām buddhau śabda 'vadhāryate'*" (VP 1.84) "*nādaih śabdātmānamavadyotayadbhiryathottarotkarṣeṇādhiyante vyaktapariṣchedānugūṇasamskārabhāvanābījāni / tataścāntyo dhvaniviśeṣaḥ paricchedasamskārabhāvanābījāvṛttilābhapṛāptayogyatāpripākāyām buddhāvupagraheṇa śabdasvarūpākāram samniveśayati*" (VPv 84)

I am translating the term *Bhāvanā* as an effect in the sense of a cognitional effect from an input. See (Freschi 2013) for a study on *Bhāvanā* in Kumārilabhaṭṭa's *Mīmāṃsā*.

⁸¹ "*sa ca ekaikavarṇapratyayāhitasamskārabīje 'ntyavarṇapratyayajanitapariṣkāre pratyayinyeka-pratyayaviśayatayā jhaṭiti pratyavabhāśate / nacāyamekapratyayo varnaviśayā smṛtiḥ / varṇānāmanekatvādekapratyayaviśayatvānupapatteḥ ... tasmān nityācchabdasphoṭa-rūpādabhidhāyakāt kriyākārahālakṣaṇam jagadabhidheya-bhūtam prabhavatīti*" (BSBh 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 as memory by 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.⁸⁴ The process of gradually revealing an eternal *sphoṭa* 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".⁸⁵ 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*.⁸⁶

Like Śaṅkara's assessment of the *Sphoṭavādins*, 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."⁸⁷ 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.(1.83)"

"*yathānuvākaḥ śloka vā soḍhatvam upagacchate / āvṛtṭyā na tu sa granthaḥ pratyāvṛtti nirūpyate*" (VP 1.82)

"*pratyayair anupākhyaḥ grahaṇānugūṇais tathā / dhvani prakāśite 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 *sphoṭa* that Bhartṛhari presents in VP 1.81.

⁸⁵ (D'Sa 1980: 122) See ŚV *Sphoṭavāda*. 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. Kumāriḥa 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 (*sphoṭa-dhvani*) present in Kumārilabhaṭṭa's thinking as *śabda-dhvani* (*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 one's 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.

"*nanūtpannapradhvamsitvaṃ varṇānmuktaṃ, tanna / ta eveti pratyabhijñānāt / sādrśyāt pratyabhijñānaṃ keśādiṣiviveti 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.⁸⁸ 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.⁸⁹

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, conveys 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.⁹⁰

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

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

⁸⁹ “*pūrvapūrvavarṇānubhavajanita-saṃskārasahito 'ntyo varṇor'thaṃ pratyāyayīṣyatīti yadyucyeta / tanna / sambandhagrahaṇāpekṣo hi śabdaḥ svayaṃ pratiyamānor'thaṃ pratyāyayeddhūmādivat / naca pūrvapūrvavarṇānubhavajanitasamskārasahitasāntyavarnasya pratītirasti, apratyakṣa-tvāt saṃskārāṇām*” (BSBh 1.3.28)

⁹⁰ “*tadyathā prakāśo janmānantarameva ghaṭādīnām grahaṇe hetuḥ avatiṣṭhamānastu grahaṇaprabandha-heturbhavati evamabhivyakte śabde dhvaniruttarakālamānūvartamāno buddhyanuvṛttiṃ śabdaviśayāṃ viśayābhivyaktibalāghānādūpasamharati*” (VPVṛ 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.⁹¹ In this way, Bhartṛhari 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,⁹² is ‘everywhere’ (*vyāpita*) and ‘eternal’ (*vibhū*), whereas phonemes are simply ubiquitous (*sarvagatatā*).⁹³ 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 Bhartṛhari, 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, Śāṅkara sides with the *Mīmāṃsaka*, but with some important distinctions. Śāṅkara, like Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Bhartṛhari, contends that there are two properties of a manifest phoneme - its fundamental state and its adjunct properties. Śāṅkara 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?”⁹⁴

Śāṅkara 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.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Bhartṛhari also makes the two-fold distinction of sound seen with Kātyāyana and Patañjali. Sound, according to Bhartṛhari, 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 *sphoṭa* being unmanifest would be indeterminate, whereas the term ‘derivative’ is that by which the manifest form of *sphoṭa* is again and again, without interruption, understood temporally.”

“*iha dvividho dhvaniḥ prākṛto vaikṛtaśca / tatra prākṛto nāma yena vinā sphoṭarūpamanabhivyaktaṃ na paricchidyate / vaikṛtastu yenābhivyaktaṃ sphoṭarūpaṃ punaḥ punaravicchedena pracitataram kalamupalabhyate*” (VPVṛ 1.76)

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

⁹² (D’Sa 1980: 117)

⁹³ *ibid.* 120

⁹⁴ “*katham hyekasminkālaṃ bahūnāmuccārayatāmeka eva sangakāro yugapadanekarūpaḥ syāt*” (BSBh 1.3.28)

⁹⁵ “*udāttaścānūdāttaśca svaritaśca sānunāsikaśca niranunāsikaśceti / athavā dhvanikṛto ‘yaṃ pratyayabhedo na varṇakṛta ityadoṣaḥ*” (*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 Kumārilabhaṭṭa on the matter of a manifest phoneme and its relationship to Kumārilabhaṭṭa's notion of eternal *śabda*. Like Kumārilabhaṭṭa, however, Śaṅkara differentiates himself from the *sphoṭavādins* 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 *sphoṭa* may be plausible - thus like the phonemes 'da-au', even the phonemes 'ga-au' would be dispensable.⁹⁷

Śaṅkara's understanding of the *sphoṭavādins* position is very similar to Kumārilabhaṭṭa's argument against *sphoṭa* 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. Kumārilabhaṭṭa 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 Kumārilabhaṭṭa conclude that the idea of *sphoṭa* 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 *sphoṭavādin* argues that phonemes

⁹⁶ "tannibandhanāś codāttādayo viśeṣā na varṇasvarūpanibandhanāḥ, varṇānāṃ pratyuccārāṇaṃ pratyabhijñāyamānatvāt / evaṅca sati sālambanā udāttādiṇipratyayā bhaviṣyanti / itaradhā hi varṇānāṃ pratyabhijñāyamānānāṃ nirbhedaṭvātsamyogavibhāgaktā udāttādiviśeṣāḥ kalperan" (ibid. 1.3.28)

⁹⁷ "ekaikavarṇagrahaṇottarakālā hīyamekā buddhir-gauriti samastavarṇaviśayā nārthāntaraviśayā / kathametadavagamyate / yato 'syāmapī buddhau gākārādayo varṇā anuvartante natu dakārādayaḥ / yadi hyasyā buddhergākārā-dibhyor'thāntaram sphoṭo viśayaḥ syāttato dakārādaya iva gākārādayo '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 *sphoṭa* or one specifically directed towards Bhartṛhari. Śaṅkara's assessment of *sphoṭa* in this case more closely resembles one of the three notions of *sphoṭa* Bhartṛhari refutes before articulating his notion of *sphoṭa*.

function to gesture beyond themselves to an established meaning, and where meaning is increasingly clear based on the sequential cognition of phonemes, Śāṅkara and Kumārilabhaṭṭa argue that *sphoṭa* is simultaneously impossible to demonstrate independently, and is also an unnecessary and convoluted step.

Both Śāṅkara 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 Śāṅkara 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 Śāṅkara 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.

Śāṅkara, 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 Śāṅkara 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 Śāṅkara. In this way, Śāṅkara 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

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 "yadyadvistarārtham śāstram yasmātpuruṣaviśeṣātsambhavati, yathā vyākaraṇādi pāṇinyāderjñeyaika-deśārthamapi sa tato 'pyadhikataravijñāna iti prasiddham loke" (BS 1.1.3)

For Śāṅkara, 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 Śāṅkara 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 Śāṅkara 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 Śāṅkara 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 *sphoṭa*, 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 consequentially, how meaning is expressed through finite phonemic units. Kumārilabhaṭṭa maintains that the *ākṛti* of an object exists only insofar as 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. Śāṅkara 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*). Śāṅkara, 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 Śāṅkara's interest in scripture and the *Mīmāṃsakas*. Śāṅkara 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 Śāṅkara, Kumārilabhaṭṭa, Bhartṛhari, Patañjali, and no doubt many others, clearly have broader ontological, epistemological, and metaphysical motivation. Both Śāṅkara, 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 Śāṅkara's *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, while brief, requires the examination of numerous elements in tandem with the prominent ideas against which Śāṅkara's thought was crafted. The two most prominent elements in Śāṅkara'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? Śāṅkara 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 *sphoṭavādin* who claims that eternal meaning

can only be accessed by finite phonemes through a flash of insight, Śāṅkara 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 *sphoṭa*. Śāṅkara'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 Śāṅkara'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, Śāṅkara 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. Śāṅkara's *Mīmāṃsā* is no exception.

APPENDIX: SANSKRIT TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1.3.28

Translated by Jonathan Peterson, Sanskrit transliteration retrieved from GRETIL.

śabda iti cen nātaḥ prabhavāt pratyakṣānumānābhyām | 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 vighrahavattve devādīnāmabhyupagamyamāne karmaṇi kaścidvirodhaḥ prasañji / śabde tu virodhaḥ prasajyeta /katham / autpattikaṃ hi śabdasyārthena saṃbandham ā-śritya 'anapekṣatvāt' iti vedasya prāmāṇyaṃ sthāpitam / idānīm tu vighrahavatī devatā-bhyupagamyamānā yadyapyaiśvaryayogād yugapadanekakarmasambandhīni havīmṣi bhujñīta tathāpi vighrahayogād asmad ādivajjananamaraṇavatī seti nityasya śabdasya nityenārthena nitye saṃbandhepratīyamāne yadvaidike śabde prāmāṇyaṃ sthitam tasya virodhaḥ syāditi cet /

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 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.

nāyamapyasti virodhaḥ / kasmāt /ataḥ prabhavāt / ata eva hi vaidikācchabdādevādikaṃ jagatprabhavati /

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 brahmaprabhavatvaṃ jagato 'vadhāritam, kathamiha śabdaprabhavatvamucyate / apica yadi nāma vaidikācchabdādāsya prabhavo 'bhyupagataḥ, kathametāvatā virodhaḥ śabde parihṛtaḥ yāvatā vasavo rudrā ādityā viśvedevā maruta ityeter'thā anityā evotpattimattvāt / tadanityatve ca tadvācinām vaidikānām vasvādiśabdānāmanityatvaṃ kena nivāryate / prasiddham 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*’, ‘*Āditis*’, ‘*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.

na / gavādiśabdārthasambandhanityatvadarśanāt / nahi gavādivyaktīnāmutpattimattve tadākṛtīnīmapyutpattimattvaṃ syāt / dravyaguṇakarmaṇāṃ hi vyaktaya evotpadyante nākr̥tayaḥ / ākr̥tibhiḥśca śabdānāṃ sambandho na vyaktibhiḥ / vyaktīnām ānantiyāt sambandhagrahaṇānupapatteḥ / vyaktiśūtpadyamānāsvapyākṛtīnāṃ nityatvācca gavādiśabdeṣu kaścivirodho dṛśyate / tathā devādivyaktiprabhavābhyupagame 'pyākṛtīnityatvānna kaścivasvādiśabdeṣu virodha iti draṣṭavyam / ākr̥tiviśeṣastu devādīnāṃ mantrārthavādādibhyo vighrahavattvādyavagamādavagantavyaḥ / sthānaviśeṣasambandhanimittāścendrādiśabdāḥ senāpatyādiśabdavat / tataśca yo yastattatsthānamadhirohati sa sa indrādiśabdairabhidhīyata iti na doṣo bhavati / nacedaṃ śabdaprabhavatvaṃ brahmaprabhavatvavadupādānakāraṇābhiprāyeṇocyate / kathaṃ tarhi sthite vācakātmanā nitye śabde nityārthasambandhini śabdavyavahārayogyārthavyaktiniṣpattirataḥ prabhava ityucyate kathaṃ punaravagamyate śabdāt prabhavati jagaditi / pratyakṣānumānābhyām / pratyakṣaṃ śrutih, prāmāṇyaṃ pratyanapekṣatvāt / anumānaṃ smr̥tih, prāmāṇyaṃ prati sāpekṣatvāt / te hi śabdapūrvo sṛṣṭim darśayataḥ / 'ete iti vai prajāpatirdevānasṛjātāsṛgramiti manuṣyānindava iti pitṛmstiraḥ pavitramiti grahānāśava iti stotraṃ viśvānīti śastramabhisaubhagetyanyāḥ prajāḥ' iti śrutih / tathānyatrāpi 'sa manasā vācaṃ mithunaṃ samabhavat' (br. 1.2.4) ityādinā tatratatra śabdapūrvikā sṛṣṭih śrāvyate /

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*’, ‘*Āditis*’, ‘*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 said 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’¹⁰³ 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.”¹⁰⁴ Everywhere [in scripture], the word precedes creation.

smṛtirapi- 'anādinidhanā nityā vāgutsrṣṭā svayambhuvā / ādau vedamayī divyā yataḥ sarvā pravṛttayah' // iti / utsargo 'pyayaṃ vācaḥ saṃpradāyapravartanātmako draṣṭavyaḥ, anādinidhanāyā anyādrśasyotsargasyāsambhavāt / tathā 'nāma rūpaṃ ca bhūtānāṃ karmanāṃ ca pravartanam / vedāśabdebhya evādau nirmame sa maheśvaraḥ' // (manu. 1.21) iti / ' sarveṣāṃ tu sa nāmāni karmāni ca pṛthakpṛthak / vedāśabdebhya evādau pṛthaksamsthāśca nirmame' // iti ca / apica cikīrṣitam artham anuṣṭhāstasya vācakaṃ śabdāṃ pūrvaṃ smṛtvā paścāttamarthamanuṣṭhātīti sarveṣāṃ naḥ pratyakṣametāt / tathā prajāpaterapi sraṣṭuḥ sṛṣṭeḥ pūrvaṃ vaidikāḥ śabdā manasi prādurbabhūvuh, paścāttadanugatānarthānsasarjeti gamyate / tathāca śrutiḥ - 'sa bhūriti vyāhārātsa bhūmimasṛjata' (tai.brā. 2.2.4.2) ityevamādikā bhūrādiśabdebhya eva manasi prādurbhūtebhyo bhūrādīlokānsrṣṭāndarśayati / kimātmakaṃ punaḥ śabdāṃ abhipretyedaṃ śabdaprabhavaṭvamucyate / sphoṭamityāha /

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 teaching¹⁰⁵ 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,”¹⁰⁶ and so forth.

¹⁰³ “ete asṛgramindavastaraḥpavitramāśavaḥ”

¹⁰⁴ Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. 1.2.4

¹⁰⁵ Footnote states “sampradāyo guruśiṣyaparamparādhyayanam” - “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 *sphoṭa*.

*varṇapakṣe hi teṣāmutpannapradhvamṣitvānnityebhyaḥ śabdebhyo devādivyaktīnām
prabhava ityanupapannaṃ syāt / utpannadhvamṣinaśca varṇāḥ, pratyuccāraṇamanyathā
cānyathā ca pratīyamānatvāt / tathāhi- adṛśyamāno 'pi puruṣaviśeṣo 'dhyayanadhvani-
śravaṇādeva viśeṣato nirdhāryate devadatto 'yamadhīte yajñadatto 'yamadhīte iti / nacāyaṃ
varṇaviśayo 'nyathātvapratyayo mithyājñānaṃ, bādhakapratyayābhāvāt / naca
varṇebhyor'thāvagatiryuktā / na hyekaiko varṇor'thaṃ pratyāyayet, vyabhicārāt / naca
varṇasamudāyapratyayo 'sti, kramavattvādvarṇānām / pūrvapūrvavarṇānubhavajanita-
saṃskārasahito 'ntyo varṇor'thaṃ pratyāyayiṣyatīti yadyucyeta / tanna / saṃbandha-
grahaṇāpekṣo hi śabdāḥ svayaṃ pratīyamānor'thaṃ pratyāyayeddhūmādivat / naca
pūrvapūrvavarṇānubhavajanitasamskārasahitasyāntyavarṇasya pratītirasti, apratyakṣa-tvāt
saṃskārānām / kāryapratyāyitaiḥ saṃskāraiḥ sahito 'ntyo varṇor'thaṃ pratyāya-yiṣyatīti cet /*

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.

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 kramavartitvāt / tasmātsphoṭa eva śabdaḥ / sa ca ekaikavarṇapratyayāhitasamskārabīje 'ntyavarṇapratyayajanitapari pāke pratyayiny-ekapratyayaviśayatayā jhaṭiti pratyavabhāsate / nacāyamekapratyayo varṇaviśayā smrṭiḥ / varṇānāmanekatvādekapratyayaviśayatvānupapatteḥ / tasya ca pratyuccāraṇaṃ pratyabhijñāyamānatvānnityatvam / bhedapratyayasya varṇa-viśayatvāt / tasmān nityācchabdaspḥoṭarūpādabhidhāyakātkriyākārakaphalalakṣaṇaṃ jagadabhidheya-bhūtaṃ prabhavātīti / varṇā eva tu na śabdaḥ iti bhagavānupavarṣaḥ /

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 Upavarṣa said “letters alone are not the word.”

nanūtpannapradhvamsitvaṃ varṇānmuktaṃ, tanna / ta eveti pratyabhijñānāt / sādrśyāt pratyabhijñānaṃ keśādiṣvivetī 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 each time they are produced], as are the hairs [on your head], etc.¹¹⁰

na / pratyabhijñānasya pramāṇāntareṇa bādhānupapatteḥ /

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

pratyabhijñānamākṛtinimittamīti cet /

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

na / vyaktipratyabhijñānāt / yadi hi pratyuccāraṇaṃ gavādīvyaktivadanyā anyā varṇa-vyaktayaḥ pratīyeraṃstata ākṛtinimittaṃ pratyabhijñānaṃ syāt / natvetadasti / varṇa-

¹¹⁰ footnote to the text reads “vapanānantaram ta evame keśā iti dhūrbhrāntiriti yuktam, bhedadhīvirodhāt”

“After shaving the head, it's fitting to have the thought that ‘those alone are these hairs.’”

*vyaktaya eva hi pratyuccāraṇaṃ pratyabhijñāyante / dvirgośabda uccārīta iti hi pratī-
pattirna tu dvau gośabdāviti /*

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 apyuccāraṇabhedena bhinnāḥ pratīyante devadattayajñadattayor-
adhyayanadhvaniśravaṇādeva bhedapratīterityuktam /*

[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’.

*atrābhīdhīyate- sati varṇaviśaye niścite pratyabhijñāne saṃyogavibhāgābhīvyāṅgyatvād-
varṇānāmabhīvyāṅjakavaicitryanimitto 'yaṃ varṇaviśayo vicitraḥ pratyayo na svarūpa-
nimittaḥ / ¹¹¹apīca varṇavyaktibhedavādināpi pratyabhijñānasiddhaye varṇākṛtayaḥ
kalpayitavyāḥ / tāsū ca paropādhiko bhedapratyaya ityabhyupagantavyam / tadvaraṃ
varṇavyaktiśveva paropādhiko bhedapratyayaḥ svarūpanimittam ca pratyabhijñānamiti
kalpanālāghavam / eṣa eva ca varṇaviśayasya bhedapratyayasya bādhaḥ pratyayo
yatpratyabhijñānam / katham hyekasminkālam bahūnāmuccārayatāmeva sangakāro
yugapadanekarūpaḥ syāt / udāttaścānudāttaśca svaritaśca sānunāsikaśca niranunāsikaś-ceti
/ athavā dhvanikṛto 'yaṃ pratyayabhedo na varṇakṛta ityadoṣaḥ / kaḥ punarayaṃ
dhvanirnāma / yo dūrādākarṇayato varṇavivekamapratipadyamānasya karṇapatham
avatarati / pratyāsīdataśca paṭumaṭutvādibhedaṃ varṇeśvāsañjayati / tannibandhanāś
codāttādayo viśeṣā na varṇasvarūpanibandhanāḥ, varṇānām pratyuccāraṇam
pratyabhijñāyamānatvāt / evaṅca sati sālambanā udāttādipratyayā bhaviṣyanti / itaradhā hi
varṇānām pratyabhijñāyamānānām nirbhedaṭvātsaṃyogavibhāgakṛtā udāttādiviśeṣāḥ
kalperan / saṃyogavibhāgānām cāpratyakṣatvācca tadāśrayā viśeṣā varṇeśvadhyā-vasiṭum
śakyanta ityato nirālambanā evaita udāttādipratyayāḥ syuḥ / apīca naivaitad
abhiniveṣṭavyamudāttādibhedena varṇānām pratyabhijñāyamānānām bhedo bhavediti /
nahyanyasya bhedenānyasyābhīdyamānasya bhedo bhavitumarhati / nahi vyaktibhedena
jātim bhinnām manyante / varṇebhyaścārthapratīteḥ sambhavātsphoṭakalpanānarthikā /*

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 “tālvādideśaiḥ koṣṭhasthavāyusaṃyogavibhāgābhīyām vicitrābhīyām
vyaṅgyatvādvārṇeṣu vaicitryadhīrityarthaḥ”

(those who adhere to the doctrine of different individual phonemes), that recognition of difference is a subsequent qualification is 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, 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 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].¹¹² 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 inaudibility¹¹³ of conjunction and disjunction, it [naturally] follows that the cognition of accent, etc., would be baseless. Moreover¹¹⁴, to assent to this¹¹⁵ [would mean that] through the difference of accents, etc., there would be difference of phoneme-recognition. As such,¹¹⁶ 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 *sphoṭa* is useless.

*na kalpayāmyahaṃ sphoṭaṃ pratyakṣameva tvenamavagacchāmi, ekaikavarṇagrahaṇā-
hitasamśkārayāṃ buddhau jhatiti pratyava ūbhāsanāditi 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 *sphoṭa*, I understand it solely as direct perception.

¹¹² Footnote states “*pratyuccāraṇaṃ varṇāḥ anuvartante dhvanirvyāvartata iti bhedaḥ*” - phonemes obey pronunciation whereas sound becomes distinct - that is the difference.

¹¹³ *apratyakṣatvam* is taken as *asrāvaṇatvam* – imperceptibility is taken as inaudible

¹¹⁴ ‘moreover’ is glossed in a footnote as follows – “*yathā khaṇdamuṇḍādiviruddhānekavyaktiṣvabhinnāṃ gotvaṃ tathā dhvaniṣu varṇā ābhinnā evetyarthaḥ*” - “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’ – *udāttādirhdvanistadbhedena hetunā varṇānāmapīti yojanā*

¹¹⁶ Footnote states “*yathā khaṇdamuṇḍādiviruddhavyaktiṣvabhinnāṃ gotvaṃ tathā dhvaniṣu varṇā abhinnā evetyarthaḥ*” - just as cowness persists in those individual cows hindered by a lack of horns or handicap, in the same way, letters persist amongst sounds - this is the meaning.

*na / asyā api buddhervarṇaviṣayatvāt / ekaikavarṇagrahaṇottarakālā hīyamekā buddhir-
gauriti samastavarṇaviṣayā nārthāntaraviṣayā / kathametadavagamyate / yato 'syāmapī
buddhau gākārādayo varṇā anuvartante natu dakārādayaḥ / yadi hyasyā buddhergākārā-
dibhyor'thāntaraṃ sphoṭo viṣayaḥ syāttato dakārādaya iva gākārādayo 'pyasyā buddher-
vyāvarteran / natu tathāsti / tasmādiyamekabuddhivarnaviṣayaiva smṛtiḥ /*

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 *sphoṭa* 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.

*nanvanekatvādvārṇānām naikabuddhiviṣayatopapadyata ityuktaṃ, tatpratibrūmaḥ saṃ-
bhavatyanekasyaṅpyekabuddhiviṣayatvaṃ, pañktirvanam senā daśa śataṃ sahasram-
ityādidarśanāt / yā tu gaurityeko 'yaṃ śabda iti buddhiḥ, sā bahusveva varṇeṣvekāarthā-
vacchedanibandhanaupacārikī vanasenādibuddhivadeva /*

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.

*atrāhayadi varṇā eva sāmastyenaikabuddhiviṣayatāmāpadyamānāḥ padaṃ syustato jārā
rājā kapiḥ pikaḥ ityadiṣu padaviśeṣapratipattirna syāt / 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 vadāmaḥ - satyapi samastavarṇapratyavamarśe yathā kramānurodhinya eva pipīlikāḥ
pañktibuddhimārohanti, evaṃ kramānurodhana eva varṇāḥ padabuddhim āroksyanti / tatra
varṇānāmaviśeṣe 'pi kramaviśeṣakṛtā padaviśeṣapratipattirna virudhyate / vṛddhavyavahāre
ceme varṇāḥ kramādyanugrhitā grhītārthaviśeṣasaṃ-bandhāḥ santaḥ svavyavahāro
'pyekaikavarṇagrahaṇānantaram samastapratyava-marśinyām buddhau tādrśā eva
pratyavabhāsamānāstaṃ tamarthamavyabhicāreṇa pratyāyayiṣyantīti varṇavādino laghīyasī
kalpanā / sphoṭavādinastu dr̥ṣṭahāniradr̥ṣṭa-kalpanā ca / varṇāśceme krameṇa grhyamānāḥ
sphoṭam vyañjayanti sa sphoṭor'tham vyanaktīti garīyasī kalpanā syāt, athāpi nāma
pratyuccāraṇamanye 'nye varṇāḥ syuḥ, tathāpi pratyabhijñālambanabhāvena*

varṇasāmānyānāmavaśyābhyupagantavyatvādyā varṇeṣvarthapratipādanaprakriyā racitā sāmānyeṣu saṃcārayitavyā / tataśca nityebhyaḥ śabdebhya devādivyaktīnāṃ prabhava ityaviruddham // 28 //

To this, we reply that even while there is memory¹¹⁷ 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 *sphoṭa* – there is a diminution of the seen and the augmentation of the unseen.¹¹⁸ To proclaim that phonemes that are understood through sequence cause *sphoṭa* to manifest, and that *sphoṭa* 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 words from eternal words is indisputable.

¹¹⁷ a footnote glosses *pratyavamarśa* as *smṛti*

¹¹⁸ Footnote states “*dr̥ṣṭam varṇānāmarthabodhakatvam adr̥ṣṭaḥ sphoṭaḥ*” - the ‘seen’ is taken as the instruction of the meaning of phonemes, whereas the unseen is taken to be *sphoṭa*.

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