

# Antinomy of One and Many in Bhartrhari's *Vākyapadīya*

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*Bhartrhari's Vākyapadīya (VP) is notorious for the multiplicity of the mutually exclusive doctrines expounded there, without any final solution. This paper aims to demonstrate that in the case of every controversial question discussed in VP, the variety of views on it can be reduced to a basic antinomy which serves as a kind of proposition for the problem under consideration. These antinomies are sometimes expressed explicitly but very often they are hidden in the text of VP. The fundamental dichotomy is the opposition between pluralism and monism, the origin of which in turn can be traced in the contradiction between the grammatical background and ontological trends of Bhartrhari's philosophy.*

*The way in which Bhartrhari integrates these extremities into a total system is analyzed in this paper on the basis of some passages, dealing with a certain semantic problem, from the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> kāṇḍas of VP. Attention is focused on the concept of activity and its role in Bhartrhari's philosophical discourse.*

The *Vākyapadīya* is well known as a treatise on grammatical philosophy, which presents an ontological dimension of Vyākaraṇa. In the modern methodological paradigm, however, grammar and philosophy are usually distinguished and treated as different disciplines. As a result, there emerge two major approaches to the interpretation of *VP*. The first of them deals mainly with ontological problems, whereas the second emphasizes grammatical facets of *VP* regarding them from the point of view of either the Pāṇinian tradition or of the modern linguistics. Nevertheless, in the text of *VP*, grammar and ontology are really never separated.

Another problem that inevitably arises in the interpretation of *VP* is the problem of attribution. As a rule, in Indian philosophical texts one or several *pūrvapakṣas* are followed by *uttarapakṣa*, which is the view of the author of the text. Bhartrhari, on the contrary, is notorious for the multiplicity of the mutually exclusive doctrines he expounded in *VP*, without specifying which of them his own one is.

This methodological approach, designated by J. Houben as perspectivism (Houben 1995a, Houben 1997), was in concordance with the traditional status of Vyākaraṇa as a science embracing all other disciplines. The reason for Bhartrhari to be so careful in drawing firm conclusions was probably the complexity of the issues he was talking

about, for he was not a realist of the Nyāya type and therefore did not have to believe in direct correspondence between words and reality.

A study of Bhartṛhari may consist in the analysis of individual standpoints, which is justified, because one cannot fully understand the text unless every part of it is understood properly. On the other hand, as it is emphasized by the concept of *the hermeneutic circle* proposed by Friedrich Schleiermacher and later on developed by modern hermeneutics, the parts can be understood only from the whole.<sup>1</sup> Therefore another approach is necessary that provides us with a kind of synthesis, which enables to reconstruct the original complexity of the text.

This paper aims to demonstrate that in the case of every controversial question discussed in *VP*, the variety of views on it can be reduced to a basic antinomy which serves as a kind of proposition for the problem under consideration. These antinomies are sometimes expressed explicitly but very often they are hidden in the text of *VP*.

The fundamental dichotomy in Bhartṛhari's philosophy is the opposition between monism and pluralism. The ontological views of *VP* can be characterized as non-dual monism. Still every strict monistic system obviously tries to eliminate the diversity of the world, regarding it to be unreal. Bhartṛhari, on the other hand, was a follower of the Vyākaraṇa and therefore had to acknowledge the existence of the objects of grammatical analysis. That accounts for the variety of pluralistic doctrines in the text of *VP*.

It can be assumed that for each school of Indian Philosophy the acceptance of monistic or pluralistic ontology was not the result of arbitrary decision. On the contrary, it was stipulated by the character of the non-philosophical practical activity that historically had formed the basis of this school. Accordingly, it would be natural that on the basis of the Vyākaraṇa there emerged a discontinuous system of language philosophy which would be closer to the Vaiśeṣika. In reality, however, grammatical ontology turns out to be more similar to the Advaita-vedānta.

The way in which Bhartṛhari integrates these polar trends into a total system is demonstrated in this paper on the basis of some passages dealing with certain semantic problem, from the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> kāṇḍas of *VP*.

### **Preliminary remarks on the concept of activity**

It is worth noting that Indian semantics, unlike European, has never operated with static structures. It has considered the word and its meaning not *per se*, but as items involved in verbal communication. Already the first vārttika of Kātyāyana claims that

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<sup>1</sup> Or, translating this idea into the language of Indian Grammar: to understand individual *śabdā*s from the text, we have to understand the whole text as a single *śabda*, and vice versa.

the relation between *śabda* and *artha*, i.e. the word and its object, is permanent because of the usage by people and that grammar imposes restrictions on this verbal usage in the same way as other restrictions regulate other kinds of worldly and ritual activity.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of activity plays a very important role in Bhartṛhari's philosophy. Attention to it, as will be shown below, provides us with solution of some controversial points in *VP*. This is why a brief analysis of terms used by Indian grammarians with concern to activity is quite helpful here.

Among the Sanskrit words expressing the idea of activity, the most common is *vyavahāra* which in grammatical context unambiguously means 'verbal communication.' In such meaning it is already used in the *Mbh* (*Mbh* 1880–1885, I: 2) and many times by Bhartṛhari.

For a grammarian, verbal communication (certainly the correct one, not *apaśabda*) is an important justification of his discourse. On the other hand, each kind of activity is not necessarily connected with a certain theoretical outlook and can therefore be explained by means of different concepts. As Bhartṛhari points out in *VP* 1.71:

Practical activity is accomplished resting on different doctrines. And what some hold as principal, can be contrary for the others.<sup>3</sup>

*Vyavahāra* is opposed to *paramārtha*, the ultimate ontological reality, which is beyond relativization. For Bhartṛhari, *paramārtha* is the ultimate reality or *śabdatattva*, the absolute non-dual principle. The *pāramārthika* level is certainly unique, but there are many different *vyāvahārika* levels. Different aspects of the phenomenal world can be explained by means of different doctrines, each of them implying a specific operative reality. These realities can be characterized as quasi-ontological, because they are not ultimate.

The distinction between relative and ontological levels of description plays a fundamental role in Bhartṛhari's philosophy. As a result, among the variety of ways of considering each problem enumerated in *VP*, one usually represents the ontological point of view whereas the others express different pragmatic (i.e. grammatical) approaches to the issue under discussion.

Another term that refers to activity is *vyāpāra*, which literally means 'occupation, action.' In contrast to *vyavahāra*, *vyāpāra* has a narrower meaning, denoting an individual process, a distinct action (see *VP* 3.3.28).

The word *kārya* has a wide range of meanings, including that of 'grammatical operation', i.e. an exemplary activity in the context of grammatical philosophy (cf. *VP* 1.59).

<sup>2</sup> *siddhe śabdārthasambandhe lokato 'rthaprayukte śabdaprayoge śāstreṇa dharmaniyamaḥ, yathā laukikavaidikeṣu.*

<sup>3</sup> *bhinnadarśanam āśritya vyavahāro 'nugamyate / tatra yan mukhyam ekeṣāṃ tatrānyeṣāṃ viparyayaḥ // 1.75 //*  
Numeration of the *kārikās* is given according to Rau's critical edition.

In some passages of *VP* ‘activity’ is also referred to by such words as *pravṛtti* ‘application’ and *pradeśa* ‘context’ (the latter term is understood in *VP* 1.70 as the context of a certain activity).

All these aspects of activity *per se* must be distinguished from physical actions (*kriyā*, *karman*) defined ostensibly by Patañjali as “moving, stirring, winking”<sup>4</sup> (*Mbh* 1880–1885 I:1), as well as from the six transformations of being (*śadbhāvavikārāḥ*). The latter are mentioned in *VP* 1.1.3, but for the first time they appear in Yaska’s *Nirukta*:

There are six transformations of Being, according to Vārṣyāyaṇi: to be born, to exist, to change, to grow, to diminish, to perish.<sup>5</sup>

The internal structure of these six actions is quite clear and can be easily divided into three pairs on account of the following features:

origination (*jayate*) – destruction (*vinaśyati*),  
static being (*asti*) – essential alteration (*vipariṇamate*),  
quantitative increase (*vardhate*) – quantitative decrease (*apakṣīyate*).

These six modes and processes are considered as basic on account of the functioning of the objects. However, the idea of activity, referred to by *vyavahāra* and other related terms, is centered on the subject which is involved in this activity and serves as a reference point for it.

### The fundamental antinomy of the word

According to the first *kārikās* of *VP*, the integral indivisible word, the *śabda-brahman*, is the foundation and the source of the universe. Being integral, it appears as separate, because of the recourse to different capacities from which it in fact is not separate.<sup>6</sup> Still, for a grammarian who deals with the functioning of the word in the course of verbal communication, the plurality of acoustical manifestations of the word as well as of its meanings is quite obvious.

Having finished the introductory part of the first *kāṇḍa*, in *VP* I.44 Bhartṛhari turns directly to this problem, claiming that *śabda* is composed of two separate aspects, each of them also called *śabda*.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the ambivalence of *śabda* was already emphasized

<sup>4</sup> iṅgitaṃ ceṣṭitaṃ nimeṣitaṃ [...]

<sup>5</sup> śadbhāvavikārā bhavanti vārṣyāyaṇiḥ. jayate ‘sti vipariṇamate vardhate ‘pakṣīyate vinaśyati (Yaska 1985:105). This phrase is also cited by Patañjali in A 1.3.1 (*Mbh* I: 258).

<sup>6</sup> anādinidhanam brahma śabdatattvam yad akṣaram /  
vivartate ‘rthabhāvena prakriyā jagato yataḥ // 1.1 //  
ekam eva yad āmnātam bhinnaśaktivyapāśrayāt /  
aprthaktve ‘pi śaktibhyaḥ prthaktvene va vartate // 1.2 //

<sup>7</sup> dvāv upādānaśabdeṣu śabdau śabdavidō viduḥ /  
eko nimittaṃ śabdānām aparo ‘rthe prayujyate // 1.44 //

by Patañjali who defined it as “that by utterance of which [the referent] is apprehended [...],” but also as an articulated sound.<sup>8</sup>

Following this trend, Bhartrhari specifies that there are at least two attitudes towards the nature of these *śabdās*. Some claim that there is an essential difference between them, whereas others suppose the indivisible to be taken as different due to the duality of mind.<sup>9</sup> In the following *kārikās* (*VP* 1.44–71) arguments are sometimes posed in favour of the first and sometimes of the second opinion.

This passage was analyzed by Houben who arrived at a conclusion that for Bhartrhari both approaches are alternative and equivalent. Houben proposed the concept of two models: the ‘two-level’ and the ‘two-capacity’ models according to which he explained the contents of the passage. The former model represents the essential difference between the acoustic and semantic levels of the word, whereas in conformity with the latter the integral “word has two capacities: it reveals its own form and the thing-meant” (Houben 1995c: 69–75).

There may be a few disagreements about Houben’s interpretation of certain single *kārikās*, e.g., *VP* 1.52<sup>10</sup> which he explains as illustrating the ‘two-level’ model (Houben 1995c: 70), although the idea that different stages of the development of an egg are of different nature obviously contradicts the *satkāryavāda* principle.<sup>11</sup> More important is that every model, being only an imitation of reality, cannot comprise all the facets of such multidimensional text as *VP*. The weak point in Houben’s concept is that it neither explains the chaotic way in which the *kārikās*, belonging to different models, are expounded in *VP*, nor demonstrates the place of these models in the text as a whole.

The following part of the paper proposes an alternative analysis of the passage starting with the *kārikā* *VP* 1.44, where it is claimed that the word is composed of two separate aspects. Since in the next *kārikās* several potential pairs of such aspects are adduced, it can be concluded that the dual character of the distinction appears only because it is convenient to operate with binary oppositions. In the passage under consideration, two major parts can be distinguished. In the first of them Bhartrhari examines the plural external manifestations of the indivisible word and in the second he turns to the plurality of its meanings.

<sup>8</sup> *yenoccaritena [...] sampratyayo bhavati sa śabdaḥ. athavā pratītapadārthako loke dhvaniḥ śabda ityucyate (Mbh I: 1).*

<sup>9</sup> *ātmabhedam tayoḥ ke cid astīty āhuḥ purāṇagāḥ /  
buddhibhedād abhinnasya bhedaṁ eke pracakṣate // 1.46 //*

<sup>10</sup> *āṇḍabhāvam ivāpanno yaḥ kratuḥ śabdasaṁjñakaḥ /  
vṛttis tasya kriyārūpā bhāgaśo bhajate kramam // 1.52 //*

<sup>11</sup> Cf. fn.14. The alternative interpretation of the *kārikā* is given by J. Bronkhorst: “The word, which in itself has no parts and no sequence, unfolds itself as to give rise to something that appears to have both, just as the vital essence (*rasa*) of a pea-cock’s egg, which does not possess the variety of colours of a peacock, unfolds itself so as to give rise to a peacock that does” (Bronkhorst 2001: 481).

### The plurality of the audible manifestations of the word

In everyday practice, the unchangeable mental image of the word (*buddhisthaḥ śabdaḥ*) can be naturally distinguished from its different acoustic manifestations. Still this does not mean that they are of different nature. In *VP* 1.47 it is claimed that the former is the cause of the latter:

Like the light concealed in the piece of kindling wood is the cause of the manifestation (*prakāśa*) of another [light], in the same way the mental word is the cause of every audible [word].<sup>12</sup>

According to the *Vṛtti*, the fire, potentially concealed in the kindling wood, once inflamed, illuminates itself (cf. *VP* 1.56) as well as other objects. It is the same way with the levels of word manifestation. The mental word, corresponding to the *madhyamā* level, causes the manifestation of individual audible words belonging to the *vaikharī* level.<sup>13</sup> This conclusion follows from Bhartṛhari's acceptance of the *sat-kāryavāda*, which is in turn obvious from the first *kārikā* of *VP*, where it is claimed that the whole object world spreads (*vivartate*) from the *śabda-brahman*.<sup>14</sup>

In the next *kārikās* it is claimed that although the distinction between the mental and the audible words may be useful for the description of a verbal communication, from the ontological point of view it is invalid. It is the indivisible word that acquires succession in the phonemes as if being differentiated. Modifications, which the mental word is subject to in the course of audible manifestation, have the same character as the changes which the reflection of an object undergoes because of the movement of water.<sup>15</sup>

Summing up the passage *VP* 1.47–50, it can be assumed that the first line of the *kārikā* 1.46 is probably not Bhartṛhari's final solution.<sup>16</sup> On the contrary, the adoption of the essential difference between the *śabdās* could have been the viewpoint of some of his opponents. But it is also possible that both outlooks expounded in this *kārikā* do

<sup>12</sup> araṇisthaṃ yathā jyotiḥ prakāśāntarakāraṇam /  
tadvac chabdo 'pi buddhisthaḥ śrutīnāṃ kāraṇam pṛthak // 1.47 //

<sup>13</sup> Explicitly the concept of the three speech levels was expounded only in *VP* 1.159.

<sup>14</sup> It's true that Bhartṛhari's treatment of *satkāryavāda* doesn't confirm to its traditional division into *vivartavāda* of the Advaitavedāntins and the *pariṇāmavāda* of the adherents of Sāṃkhya (Cf. Pandit 2004: 145–148). Subramania Iyer on some other occasion notes that even the distinction of the *sātkārya-* and the *asatkāryavāda* is based upon the alleged difference of Being and non-Being and therefore is senseless (Subramania Iyer 1991: 216). This is, however, the next step towards the absolute monism.

<sup>15</sup> nādasya kramajātātvaṅ na pūrvo na paraś ca saḥ /  
akramaḥ kramarūpeṇa bhedaṅ iva jāyate // 1.49 //  
pratibimbaṃ yathānyatra sthitaṃ toyakriyāvaśāt /  
tatpravṛttim ivānveti sa dharmāḥ sphoṭanādayoḥ // 1.50 //

<sup>16</sup> The more so as the opinion in the first line is marked by *ke cid*, and according to Aklujkar, referred to by Houben (Houben 1992: 221), "a view attributed to *apare* is usually acceptable Bhartṛhari, and a view attributed to *ke cid* is unacceptable or acceptable only with qualifications."

not represent the divergence of rival traditions, but express different methodological approaches, each of them justified in a certain cognitive situation.

Discussing the way in which the word operates in the course of verbal communication, it is natural to regard it as a composite unit. Still, because the primary intention of Bhartṛhari was apparently the ontologisation of grammar, he naturally had to specify the ontological status of the components introduced. And then, after all, it is the doctrine of the integral word that solves this problem. No wonder, in the kārikā 1.46 it was quoted in the second place as *uttarapakṣa*, i.e. the opinion of the author of the text.

### The plurality of meanings

In the passage *VP* 1.51–71, the antinomy of the integral vs. compound nature of the word appears in a different exposition. Here Bhartṛhari examines the plurality of meanings of the indivisible *śabda*. He claims that apart from the thing-meant the word refers to its own form (*śabdavarūpa*) which thus becomes distinctly signified. That is to say, each word is a signifier of itself—of an integral word that has a signifier and a signified aspect.

The starting point for this idea is a well-known Pāṇinian sūtra A 1.1.68: *svaṃ rūpaṃ śabdasyāśabdasaṃjñā*. According to the *Kāśikāvṛtti*, this sūtra concerns only grammar, maintaining that grammar operates with the words and not with their referents. Patañjali, in his commentary on this sūtra, at first also tends to agree that its scope is restricted to grammar. But then he quotes a vārttika of Kātyāyana, according to which (although this view seems to be open to argument) even in ordinary speech the apprehension of the word always precedes the apprehension of the referent.<sup>17</sup> For instance, in the situation of asking to repeat one's words it is the form but not the meaning of the word which has been asked about.<sup>18</sup>

Bhartṛhari's attitude towards the *śabdavarūpa* is quite controversial. Hideyo Ogawa in his article "Bhartṛhari on A 1.1.68" proposes a very sophisticated interpretation. He claims that "A.1.1.68 never describes the self-referring nature of the linguistic item" (Ogawa 2001: 536). Attempting to represent the kārikās of *VP* as a kind of formal *anuvṛtti* on Pāṇini, Ogawa does not use the term 'metalanguage,' but in his view *śabdavarūpa* in fact appears to be a kind of an intermediate item separating the metalanguage of the sūtras from the generated object language. The question of the ontological status of this item is disregarded, and from several standpoints, expounded

<sup>17</sup> Na vā śabdapūrvako hyarthe saṃpratyayastasmād arthanivṛtṭiḥ Vt. 2 (498) on 1.1.68 (*Mbh* 1: 176). (On the meaning of 'na vā', see Kiparsky 1979).

<sup>18</sup> śabdapūrvako hyarthasya saṃpratyayaḥ. ātaśca śabdapūrvako yo 'pi hyasāvāhūyate nāmnā nāma yadānena nopalabdhaṃ bhavati tadā prcchati kiṃ bhavānāheti (*Mbh* I: 176). Also Bhartṛhari in *VP* I.58 gives this example.

in the *Vṛtti* on *VP* 1.69–70, the only one is quoted which is in agreement with the chosen interpretation.

Still Bhartṛhari in *VP* 1.64–65 points at the weak place of each concept of metalanguage, however useful it may seem to be. Every procedure of analysis, he claims, can be repeated many times, therefore there would be an infinite regress of intermediate (*guṇaḥ* – *VP* 1.63) items, in the very same way as every common property, which is the basis of comparison, can itself act as an object of comparison on account of another property, etc.<sup>19</sup>

### Self-reference in *VP*

#### *Pro*

In the first *kāṇḍa* as well in the *Sambandha-samuddeśa*, the question of self-reference of the word is discussed more comprehensively. In the passage *VP* 1.51–70 it is claimed that in every word the form of the referent as well as its own form are manifested.<sup>20</sup> The proper form is essential in every verbal communication, because both the speaker and the hearer grasp it, often unconsciously, before drawing attention to the meaning.<sup>21</sup> It happens so because the word, similarly to light, has two capacities: to be perceived and to cause perception.<sup>22</sup>

In the situation when the connection between the name and the thing named has not been established yet, the word, too, has its own form as does its meaning. Otherwise, in a phrase like *gaur vāhikaḥ* ‘*vāhikaḥ* is cow’, the words ‘*vāhikaḥ*’ and ‘*gau*’ would be meaningless, because they don’t refer to any object. Thus, the first *vārttika* of *Kātyāyana* would be violated.

In the initial verses of the *Sambandha-samuddeśa*, the proper form is proclaimed to be understandable from the word, along with the external referent, and the intention of the speaker being the most intrinsic thing-meant of the three.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> sāmānyam āśritaṃ yad yad upamānopameyayoḥ /  
tasya tasyopamāneṣu dharmo ‘nyo vyatiricyate // 1.64 //  
guṇaḥ prakarṣahetur yaḥ svātantryeṇopadiśyate /  
tasyāśritād guṇād eva prakṛṣṭatvaṃ pratīyate // 1.65 //  
<sup>20</sup> artharūpaṃ tathā śabde svarūpaṃ ca prakāśate // 1.51 //  
<sup>21</sup> yathā prayoktuḥ prāg buddhiḥ śabdeṣv eva pravartate /  
vyavasāyo grahīṭṛṇām evaṃ teṣv eva jāyate // 1.54 //  
<sup>22</sup> grāhyatvaṃ grāhakatvaṃ ca dve śaktī tejaso yathā /  
tathaiiva sarvaśabdānām ete prthag avasthite // 1.56 //  
<sup>23</sup> jñānaṃ prayoktur bāhyo ‘rthaḥ svarūpaṃ ca pratīyate /  
śabdair uccaritais teṣāṃ sambandhaḥ samavasthitaḥ // 3.3.1 //  
pratipattur bhavaty arthe jñāne vā saṃśayaḥ kva cit /  
svarūpeṣūpalabhyeṣu vyabhicāro na vidyate // 3.3.2 //



*et contra*

A very strong objection to the idea of self-reference can be found in the *Sambandha-samuddeśa* (VP 3.3.26), which claims that a signifier cannot be the signified thing in the same context (*pravṛtta*).

This problem arises in connection with the so-called *Unnameability Thesis* (the term introduced by H. and R. Herzberger (Herzberger H., and R. Herzberger 1981)). This thesis claims that there is something which is unnameable. An example of such unnameable thing is relation which, being extremely dependent upon the entities it joins, can be defined only through them, but not *per se*. As Raghunātha Śarmā observes in his commentary on Helārāja, ‘relation is only deduced from its auxiliary status.’<sup>24</sup>

As a result, the question naturally arises whether to call something ‘insignifiable’ means to signify it. If yes, it would thus be apprehended as signifiable, otherwise there would be no understanding of the issue spoken about.<sup>25</sup> These kārikās (VP 3.3.20–21) are well-known as Bhartṛhari’s paradox, similar to the Liar paradox in Greek philosophy, and were extensively studied by different scholars (for an exhaustive analysis of these inquiries, see Houben (Houben 1995b) and also a more recent article by Parsons (Parsons 2001) where a formalized study of the paradox is undertaken).

As Houben (Houben 1995c: 232) points out, “in contrast with most Western treatments of the paradox, for Bhartṛhari ‘true or false’ is not an interesting question, but whether or not the speaker succeeds in expressing his point.” Thus, VP 3.3.20–1 can be called a paradox not in the formal logical, but in the etymological sense: something ‘against’ (‘para’) ‘[common] opinion’ (‘dox’) (*REPh* 1998). A verbal communication is not successful unless the hearer understands the intention of the speaker. The situation described in the kārikās seems to be of this sort. Still it is obvious that somehow people manage to deal with this kind of expressions.

Therefore, Bhartṛhari claims, when something is spoken of as insignificant, the very situation of insignifiability is not prohibited.<sup>26</sup> A signifier cannot be the signified thing in the same context (*pravṛtta*). That by means of which something is expressed cannot be expressed at the same time.<sup>27</sup> According to Helārāja, it happens so because of the unidirectional function (*vyāpārasyaikatva*) of the sense organs on account of which it is impossible to fix attention on the meaning and the proper form of the word simultaneously (*Vākyapadīya* 1991: 266).

<sup>24</sup> upakāreṇa sarvatṛnumīyamānasvarūpasattvaḥ sambandhaḥ (*Vākyapadīya* 1991: 247).

<sup>25</sup> avācyam iti yad vācyam tad avācyatayā yadā /

vācyam ity avasīyeta vācyam eva tadā bhavet // 3.3.20 //

athāpy avācyam ity evaṃ na tad vācyam pratīyate /

vivakṣitāsya yāvasthā saiva nādhyavasīyate // 3.3.21 //

<sup>26</sup> tathānyathā sarvathā ca yasyāvācyatvam ucyate /

tatrāpi naiva sāvasthā taiḥ śabdaiḥ pratiśidhyate // 3.3.22 //

<sup>27</sup> na ca vācakarūpeṇa pravṛttasyāsti vācyatā /

pratipādyam na tat tatra yenānyat pratipadyate // 3.3.26 //

## Synthesis

The total rejection of the self-reference, however, apparently contradicts the passage *VP* 1.51–70, especially the *kārikā* 1.58 which proclaims the word to function differently from the sense organs the form of which is not apprehended when they reveal an object.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, on the one hand, Bhartṛhari cannot neglect the obvious cases of self-reference which were already pointed out by his predecessors. On the other hand, these facts can be hardly explained by means of traditional concepts. This is why, in the *Sambandha-samuddeśa* 28 (*VP* 3.3.28), Bhartṛhari proposes a very advanced and distinguished solution. He claims that during one process no other process is operative, therefore there would be no contradiction or infinite regress.<sup>29</sup> That is to say, while expressing the meaning of the word ‘unsignifiable,’ the very process of expressing cannot simultaneously be the object of another activity.<sup>30</sup>

With respect to the question of self-reference of the word, this means that in some *vyāvahārika* situations, e.g., in the situation of asking to repeat one’s words, *śabdavarūpa* is really the actual signified aspect of the word. But there will be no possibility of infinite regress, because the act of knowledge, which leads to this regress, cannot take place at the same moment. In other communicative situations, though the proper form is also present as a potential word-meaning, it is not emphasized because it is shaded by the external referent. Thus, in this *kārikā* the paradox is eliminated by the recourse to the successfulness of verbal communication.

The ontological basis of such solution can be found in *VP* 1.59:

Two aspects of a word, distinguished artificially and perceived as separate, stipulate different activities without contradiction.<sup>31</sup>

As Harivṛṣabha notes:

[...] although potencies of the expressed and the expresser are extracted artificially from the words by mental procedure (*buddhyā*), in grammar different operations are prescribed with regard to the signifier, signified and their relation, etc., as if these were independent objects.<sup>32</sup>

This *kārikā* 1.59 can be called the methodological credo of the *VP*. The word *apoddhāra* from which the derivative is used can be translated as ‘analysis, artificial extraction of parts from an integral unit.’<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *nendriyāṇaṃ prakāśye ‘rthe svarūpaṃ gṛhyate tathā // 1.58 //*

<sup>29</sup> *vyāpārasyāparo yasmān na vyāpāro ‘sti kaś ca na / virodham anavasthāṃ vā tasmāt sarvatra nāśrayet // 3.3.28 //*

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Helarāja on 3.3.28: *avācyaśabdasya svārthapratipādane yo vyāpāro ‘bhīdhālakṣaṇastasyānyo vyāpāraḥ svaṣiṣayastadānīmeva nāstī [...] (Vākyapadīya 1991: 271).*

<sup>31</sup> *bhedenāvagṛhītau dvau śabdadharmāv apoddhṛtau / bhedakāryeṣu hetutvam avirodhena gacchataḥ // 1.59 //*

<sup>32</sup> [...] *śabdeṣvapi buddhyā pariṅhītagrāhyagrāhakaśaktyapoddhāreṣu mukhyārthaviṣayāṇi iva śāstre saṃjñāsaṃjñīsaṃbandhādīni bhedakāryāṇi vidhīyante (Vākyapadīya 1966: 117).*

Ontologically, the word is integral. This is why all the modes of linguistic analysis carried out in *VP* have the nature of *apoddhāra*. It means that all the elements extracted from the word in the course of this analysis are ultimately unreal. But they are valid when we describe the processes that take place at the level of the relative operative reality. Each kind of activity, i.e. each kind of communicative situation, has its own reality which in some way differs from the realities of other situations.

In the text of *VP* these different pragmatic realities are correlated by different types of analysis. Thus, while questioning how the ontologically indivisible word can manifest itself in the plurality of sounds at the acoustic level or in at least two meanings (the external referent and the proper form) at the level of semantics, in each case such questioning possesses a particular structure and implies a specific underlying reality. The elements that are relevant in the context of one activity are not valid in the context of another. For example, the proper form is the only thing-meant of the word while asking to repeat one's words or while giving a definition (*VP* 1.58, 1.57), but in some other situations (e.g., the one mentioned in *VP* 3.3.27) the apprehension of the proper form is shaded by the external referent (cf. the Helarāja's commentary on *VP* 3.3.2). Therefore, paradoxes appear only in a formal, logical treatment of the language, in which the specific character of different kinds of activity is ignored.

Two aspects of the word, spoken of in *VP* 1.59, refer directly to the *kārikā* 1.44 where the two *upādānaśabdā*s in the word are postulated for the first time. It was already noted that in the passage after this *kārikā* Bhartṛhari introduced several pairs of such aspects. But perhaps the most general of them is the distinction of *grāhaka* and *grāhya*, the expresser and the thing expressed.

Thus, in *VP* 1.59 the question of the ontological plurality of the word has been eliminated. The solution is based on the idea that each thing can be cognized not *per se* but only in the context of the activity in which it is involved.

Let us get back to the problem of the signifiability of relation, formulated at the beginning of the *Sambandha-samuddeśa*. According to the solution expounded in *VP* 3.3.28, the word 'relation' can be efficiently used in verbal communication. It does not mean, however, that this or some other designation must define the relation *per se* (*svadharmeṇa* – *VP* 3.3.4). In other words, practical efficiency is not identical to objectivity.

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<sup>33</sup> According to Subramania Iyer's definition: "Whenever what is united in reality is divided merely for practical purposes, there is *apoddhāra*" (Subramania Iyer 1992: 220). This word is very symptomatically used at the beginning of the *Jāti-samuddeśa* concerning the extraction (*apoddhṛtya*) of the words from the sentence, and immediately, in the second *kāṇḍa*, it was proclaimed to be an indivisible unit.

### Conclusion

According to Bharṭṛhari's method, alternative grammatical theories are overcome and transcended by non-dualistic ontology. This ontology, however, does not reject the relative value of the theories by means of which different aspects of the language–world relation can be explained.

Certain parallels can be drawn between Bharṭṛhari's emphasis on the role of the practical (*vyāvahārika*) situation stipulating the character of the philosophical discourse, and some ideas of modern Western philosophy (instrumentalism, functionalism and especially the Moscow methodological circle founded by G.P. Shchedrovitskii). Still all these schools contest metaphysics, and it was only Bharṭṛhari who managed to combine, in a dialectical way, ontology with everyday practice.

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