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CHAPTER 1:

CONCEIVING RITUOGRAMMATICS: RITUAL, GRAMMAR AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION

I.   Introduction: Bṛhadāraṇyaka on Language, Action & Embodiment

The first *adhyāya* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* contains a passage quite extraordinary on many accounts:

> This (universe) was then undifferentiated. It differentiated only into name and form—it was called such and such, and was of such and such form. So to this day it is differentiated only into name and form—it is called such and such, and is of such and such form. This Self has entered into these bodies up to the tip of the nails—as a razor may be put in its case, or as fire, which sustains the world, may be in its source. People do not see It, for (viewed in Its aspects) It is incomplete. When It does the function of living, It is called the vital force; when It speaks, the organ of speech; when It sees, the eye; when It hears, the ear; and when It thinks, the mind. These are merely Its names according to functions. He who meditates upon each of this totality of aspects does not know, for It is incomplete, (being divided) from this totality by possessing a single characteristic. The Self alone is to be meditated upon, for all these are unified in It. Of all these, this Self alone should be realized, for one knows all these through It, just as one may get (an animal) through its footprints.[1]

Not only is this one of the earliest references to the pair *nāmarūpa* central to later Vedantic and Buddhist discourse and commentary, it codifies an entire philosophy of language and metaphysics, seamlessly stringing the Vedic sphere with the Vedantic, insofar as the two names (Veda and Vedānta) invoke a supersessionist logic.[2] This is often articulated in terms of the respective priorities of the ritual portion (*karmakāṇḍa*) and the knowledge portion (*jñānakāṇḍa*), one concerned with dharma, the other with Brahman, one with action and creation, the other with self-reflection and contemplation. Yet, the above passage complicates this apportioning of tasks and priorities. And it suggests a potential reading of '*advaita*',

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[1] taddhedaṃ tarhy avyākṛtam āsīt | tan nāmarūpābhyām eva vyākriyatāsau nāmāyam idaṃrūpa iti | tad idam apy etarhi nāmarūpābhyām eva vyākriyata asau nāmāyam idaṃrūpa iti | sa eṣa iha praviṣṭa ā nakhāgrebhyo yathā kṣuraḥ kṣuradhāne 'vahitaḥ syād viśvambharo vā viśvambharakulāye | taṃ na paśyanti | akṛtsno hi saḥ prāṇann eva prāṇo nāma bhavati | vadan vāk paśyaṃś cakṣuḥ śṛṇvañ chrotraṃ manvāno manaḥ | tāny asyaitāni karmanāmāny eva | sa yo 'ta ekaikam upāste na sa veda | akṛtsno hy eṣo 'ta ekaikena bhavati | ātmety evopāsīta | atra hy ete sarva ekaṃ bhavanti | tad etat padanīyam asya sarvasya yad ayam ātmā | anena hy etat sarvaṃ veda | yathā ha vai padenānuvinded. BU 1.4.7. Madhavananda tr. All translations of Śaṃkara's commentary to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* refer to Madhavananda 1950. All translations of the early Upaniṣads use Olivelle 1998, unless specified otherwise.

[2] Even if the latter is often construed as only the conceptual distillate (*anta*) of the former (Veda).

decipherable in Śaṃkara himself, that has not gained much traction in recent scholarship. This reading centers action as analytic category as best representing key concepts of Advaita.

Firstly, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* explains the *substantial* being of things in terms of their *actional* origin and persistence, thus offering a metaphysics not so much of *what* is, but *how* it is.[3] It *is* to the degree that it fulfills a specific function in relation with a specific purpose. Purposes and functions endow existents their purposive and functional being. "When 'It' thinks, it is called the mind." The characteristic activity of each existent congeals it into existence. The description of a thing's essence in terms of its characteristic activity is rampant in *brāhmaṇa*, *āraṇyaka* and *upaniṣad* discourse. As for the seeming autonomy of things suggested by their proper names, 'These are merely Its names according to functions'. I will not presently pose the question, worth asking, whether there are any such things as proper names. This manner of thinking at any rate, eminently Sanskritic in ways we will see, tends towards regarding names as *descriptions*. A parallel view in contemporary philosophy is identifiable in the debate originating from Bertrand Russell's work on definite descriptions and later Saul Kripke's own. In the early Indian context, however, descriptions typically name the action or function most characteristically exhibited by and therefore definitive of an entity. This is what, in essence, *nirvacana* (the tradition of semantic analysis) sought to do. In principle, one may reduce every name to such an actional/functional description. Further, echoing Kripke, it is possible to furnish alternative descriptions and therefore, from the *nirvacana* point of view, alternative *essences*, corresponding to the same name, depending on its functional segmentations; thus weakening the claim of a single privileged description associated with the name.[4] The sun is at the same time, *bhāskara*, 'the maker of light', *divākara*, 'the creator of

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[3] Sue Hamilton has similarly emphasized that early Buddhist teachings are best represented as giving an account of the *how* of subjectivity (how am I?) than its *what* (What am I?): "Buddha also teaches that the analysis of the human being into five *khandhas* is not an analysis of what the human being consists of, but of those processes or events with which one is constituted that one needs to understand in order to achieve Enlightenment" (1996, xxiv). In fact, process and action (though not event) are centered here as providing eminently useful categories in the interpretation of the Upaniṣads and Advaita (in spite of the fact that they are often considered as foils to more processual perspectives of self and world, something I address a little later on).

[4] This being, of course, a problem, to the extent that under the classical theory of names as found in Russell and Frege, and critiqued by Kripke (1980), names may be identified by definite descriptions. From the point of view of *nirvacana* analysis, the possibility of multiple equivalent descriptions isolating the same phenomenon, in either case, tends to weaken the status of proper names as such. Moreover, with Sanskrit the distinction between definite and indefinite descriptions itself cannot be strictly maintained. The context will provide the requisite information about how to interpret a name in terms of its local environment and contextual function, including the degree of definiteness demanded. This would be more generally true of other languages

day', *khaga*, 'that which moves in the sky', *pūṣan*, 'that which nourishes'. One could go on. The phenomenon of extreme synonymy in Sanskrit is well-known, often leading to extreme anguish. But these are not so much redundant synonyms as alternative descriptions eliciting the distinct functional being or feature called forth in varying contexts of use.

I will try to convince the reader that this logic provides the best hermeneutic to interpret the claims of Advaita. In brief, Advaita absorbs and radicalizes the actional explanation of how realities come to be, of *how* they are. It only presses further that such functional being be recognized as such: emergent, contingent, dependent on action, and therefore aspectual, not whole (*akṛtsna*): 'Its names according to functions'. Its concern then is the interrogation of this nebulous 'It' that thinks, acts, sees, prior to its congealing into concrete emergents and being veiled over by its functional segmentations: 'He who meditates upon each of this totality of aspects does not know, for It is incomplete, (being divided) from this totality by possessing a single characteristic'. Brahman, as it turns out, is another word for this non-actional, non-differentiated presence prior to the individuating, differentiating activity of *nāmarūpa*, which latter is appropriated into and responds to the tasks and purposes of everyday life calling forth such actional diversification. This passage thus offers a coherent account of the meaning of '*advaita*' pursued in the dissertation[5], closer to a sense of 'non-difference' (*abheda*) elsewhere used by Śaṃkara to denote the absence of distinctions set up by action, actional factors and results (*kriyākārakaphalabheda*). The non-duality of self (*jīva*) and Brahman, its popular meaning, would perhaps follow from this, but it is the relation with pragmatic action and function that eminently brings out the original context and motivation of Śaṃkara's Advaita I wish to pursue.

This functional ontology is reflected in its philosophy of language. The birth of language is entangled with the birthing of the world—'*vyākriyate*' does not merely signify a cosmogony but the simultaneous origin of language, words and their corresponding form, *nāma* and *rūpa*. In naming the discipline of grammar, its

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that do not likewise clearly maintain the distinction. Eivind Kahrs, in his study of *nirvacana* analysis, passingly refers to the classical theory in noting that, by Russell's method too names turn out to be abbreviated or disguised definite descriptions (1998, 26). But, perhaps, as suggested in the context of Sanskrit, there is some virtue in playing down any categorical difference of definiteness and indefiniteness with respect to descriptions.

[5] As Śaṃkara says, "For It, this Self, is incomplete (*akṛtsna*), being divided from this totality of aspects doing the functions of living etc. by possessing a single characteristic, and not including the other characteristics"; kasmāt akṛtsno 'samāpto hi yasmādeṣa ātmā asmātprāṇanādisamudayāt | ataḥ pravibhakta ekaikena viśeṣaṇena viśiṣṭa itaradharmāntarānupasaṃhārādbhavati. BUB 1.4.7.

nominal form, '*vyākaraṇa*', literally, *manifesting/differentiating*, thus identifies both the grammar of language *and* the grammar of the world. It is, again, action (*kriyā*), the act of bringing something into being, that unites these grammars. Action congeals and internally differentiates the originally amorphous reality into recognizable forms, furnishing substantial being. Ontological and linguistic segmentation run parallel. Madhav Deshpande has noted of the verbs *vi + kṛ* and *vi + ā + kṛ*:

> [T]he verb *vi + ā + kṛ* refers to an internally or externally brought about differentiation …both verbs signify the process of differentiation which moves in the direction of parts of a whole becoming more vividly manifest and perceptible. While the process of internally brought about differentiation of an originally unitary principle is seen in the various accounts of creation of the world, the externally brought about differentiation expressed by *vi + ā + kṛ* is more directly relevant to the development of the system of grammatical thought (*vyākaraṇa*) (Deshpande 1997, 81-2).

This ontolinguistic differentiation/creation is founded on action. After noting that action has name and form as its auxiliaries, Śaṃkara comments, "It will be said later on, 'This (universe) indeed consists of three things: name, form and action'…These are simply Its names according to functions, not describing reality *as it is*. Hence they do not express the nature of reality as a whole. Thus reality is differentiated by the activities of living etc. into name and form…which are engendered by those different activities, and is manifested at the same time".[6] He is quoting the soon to follow *brāhmaṇa* (BU 1.6.1) that explicitly adds *karman* to the pair of *nāma* and *rūpa* as completing a triad, but also as that which stands at the head of the triad, causing the differentiation of name-form from an original amorphous presence. He has in fact just cited the case of the cook (*pācaka*) and the woodcutter (*lāvaka*), stock examples of grammarians, as instantiating the functional being of existents. A cook is a cook with respect to the *activity* of cooking; outside of this activity s/he ought not, strictly speaking, be called one. Likewise it is the *act* of cutting wood that justifies the appellation of woodcutter, not the profession or vocation. He elaborates further in the context of what happens to a person and her relational being in deep sleep in *brāhmaṇa* 4.3.7:

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[6] trayam vā idaṃ nāma rūpa karma iti hi vakṣyati…tānyetāni prānādīni asyātmanaḥ karmanāmāni karmajāni nāmāni karmanāmānyeva na tu vastumātravisayāṇi; ato na kṛtsnātmavastvavadyotakāni, evam hysāvātmā prāṇanādikriyayā tatkriyājanitaprāṇādināmarūpābhyām vyākriyamānaḥ avadytotyamānaḥ. BUB 1.4.7. My tr.

His fatherhood towards the son, as being the begetter, is *due to an action*, from which he is dissociated in this state. Therefore the father, notwithstanding the fact of his being such, is no father, because he is entirely free from the action that relates him to the son. Similarly we understand by implication that the son also ceases to be a son to his father, for the relation of both is based on an action, and he is beyond it then…Likewise a mother is no mother…[7]

The comment is on BU 4.3.22: "In this state [of deep sleep] a father is no father, a mother no mother, the worlds no worlds, the gods no gods, the Vedas no Vedas. In this state a thief is no thief, a *Cāṇḍāla* no *Cāṇḍāla*… (This form of It) is untouched by good work and by evil work".[8] Sleep has been studied from medical, biological, psychosomatic perspectives. Advaita is unique in bringing sleep (and not just dreaming as is more typical) right into the domain of metaphysical reasoning. It is not what *we* do, as sentient beings seeking rest and rejuvenation, but the *ontological* condition whereby the self's relational and functional being is suspended, put out of play. It is presence prior to its differentiation (*vyākaraṇa*) based on differentiating action. This is what endows sleep its rejuvenating capacity; the fact that, just briefly, we are not the thousand things we are in our waking life, all the actional and relational identities we assume as mothers, sons, friends, doers, agents, recipients, consumers, seekers, achievers. It is thus not the 'I' that rests, for the waking 'I' is nothing but these relational identities put out of play. It is the suspension of relational being, which is the 'I', we call sleep or rest. Sleep names reality as such in its *untaken* or *unsegmented* aspect, not a state sentient beings pass through.

Lastly, all these accounts of language, action and world have centrally to do with embodiment and the embodied (*śārīraka*) self, from how this originally nebulous presence manifests or enters "into these bodies up to the tip of the nails", to accounts of dreaming and deep sleep, to detailed descriptions of bodily and sense faculties. The Upaniṣads and Advaita appear to be heavily invested in the nature and functioning of the embodied self, and I focus on Śaṃkara's own conception of his project as a *Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā*, a

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[7] tasya ca janayitṛtvādyatpitṛtvaṃ putraṃ prati tatkarmanimittaṃ tena ca karmaṇāyamasaṃbaddhaḥ asminkāle tasmātpitāputrasaṃbandhanimittāt karmaṇo vinirmuktatvātpitāpyapitā bhavati | tathā putro'pi pituraputrobhavatīti sāmarthyādgamyate | ubhayorhi saṃbandhanimittaṃ karma tamayamatikrānto vartate. BUB 4.3.22.

[8] atra pitāpitā bhavati matāmātā loka alokā devā adevā vedā avedāḥ | atra steno 'steno bhavati… cāṇḍālo 'cāṇḍālaḥ paulkaso 'paulkasaḥ śramaṇo 'śramaṇas tāpaso 'tāpasaḥ | ananvāgataṃ puṇyenānanvāgataṃ pāpena | tīrṇo hi tadā sarvāñ śokān hṛdayasya bhavati. BU 4.3.22. Madhavananda tr.

hermeneutics of embodiment and the embodied self (announced early in his *Brahmasūtra* commentary). These three foci—grammar, action and embodiment—guide my treatment of the material.

One may recall Nietzsche's remark (*Genealogy of Morals* 3.17) about the world-weary Indian philosophers as "exhausted pessimists who are too tired even to dream" referring, clearly, to the Vedantic discourse of deep dreamless sleep (*suṣupti*). And perhaps, in a sense, there was a sense of exhaustion, a sort of ritual weariness with respect to the ritually obsessed *mīmāṃsā* from which Vedānta seeks a philosophical exit. Nonetheless, non-action (*niṣkriyatva*) is not about falling asleep but *understanding* the non-actional basis of the world's actional being. And as the Gītā reminds us (BG 4.16), what is action (and what is not) is a problem confounding the most keen-sighted philosophers.[9] At the least, it presented itself as a philosophical problem to which Indian philosophers, especially Advaitins, gave the keenest attention. As I intend to show, many aspects of Advaita but also disciplines of grammar, ritual theory, hermeneutics and philosophy are rendered transparent by centering action as an analytic category. I will thus refer to action-centrism (*kriyāparatva*) as a determining feature of the shape that theory takes in these disciplines, as well as Advaita's response to such an actionally driven account of self and world. As *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4.7 so well exemplifies, the interlocking themes of language, action, ritual, embodiment and grammar will comprise the thematic framework through which the Advaita of Śaṃkara will be approached. As in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* metaphor, the actional 'footprints' of Brahman will guide us to the animal that Advaita is.

II.   Action as Analytic Category: Framework and Argument

In accordance with the above scheme, I articulate the intellectual and practical priorities of Advaita in terms of its framing under what I refer to as the *rituogrammatic* paradigm, which furnishes a theoretical framework as well as real-world context that can explicate the focus on process (*bhāva*) and action-centrism (*kriyāparatva*) in the traditions and disciplines in play. More generally, this is a call towards centering action as an analytic category in the study of Indian philosophy.[10] This focus has a likely origin in the ritual praxis and

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[9] *kiṃ karma kim akarmeti kavayo' pyatra mohitāḥ.* BG 4.16.

[10] Even if its ideally suited to understand the inner dynamics of Advaita in the lineage of Śaṃkara.

philosophy emerging from Vedic, Upanishadic and Mīmāṃsā attention to the actional being of language and world explored in subsequent chapters. The explanans and explanandum of both ritual and linguistic theory, as we will see, remains action. I follow this intuition in the articulation of *rituogrammatics* as a paradigm whereby both, the action-centrism of grammar and, conversely, the grammaticality of action theory are brought into relief. It sets out to isolate procedures involving ritual and grammatical elements functioning in tandem as an organic whole. A common feature of these theories, emerging from ritual-exegetical and grammatical perspectives on action, will be the significance attributed to wholes, and the concomitant notion that parts receive their meaning and ontological status as participant nodes in such a whole. In grammar this is evident in the preponderance of sentence-meaning over individual words and, in ritual, in the emphasis on the organic unity of the rite over ritual components. Generally, states of affairs or situations gain precedence over substances or autonomous realities implicated in them.

As Sanskritic linguistic theory clearly shows, such action-centrism leaves the ritual arena far behind to universalize and 'secularize' itself as a generic model of explanation. The mundane act of cooking (*pakti*), for instance, (and not sacrificing) becomes the paradigmatic case of explaining and debating issues of grammar, reference and meaning. Cooking (*pakti*) is aptly situated to serve as a paradigm of Vaiyākaraṇa-Mīmāṃsaka reasoning for a variety of reasons. Just like the Vedic *yajña*, it often involves multiple actors/ agents; diverse materials that undergo transformation to yield a final product; both involve an 'offering' into the fire with *ghṛta*; in both one may meaningfully distinguish between action for oneself (*svārtha*) or for another (*parārtha*), between the actor and the recipients; both are 'developmental' or temporally irreversible processes bringing something new into being; both maximally and analogously exploit the full range of the *kāraka*s of Sanskrit grammar; both typically involve fire and its transformative capacities; both include multiple sub-actions subserving the generation of a final product. It is these features of intentional activity yielding a future product that are seized as a model of grammatical and ritual thinking. What is thus *motivated* by an explanation

and exegesis of ritual (or technical grammar), *ends up* as a more generalizable theory of action as such. These conceptions can contribute significantly to contemporary debates in philosophy of action and event theory.[11]

Advaita's presumed relation with rituality and ritual performance can therefore be complicated along at least two independent lines, each pursued independently in the dissertation. This relation is often approached as antithetical, owing to Śaṃkara's well-known critique of ritual.[12] Recently however, Advaita's rituality and performativity have been explored along at least a few divergent sets of intellectual presuppositions (in the work of Clooney, Loundo, Locklin, Suthren Hirst, Halbfass and others). Suthren Hirst (2005), for instance, has developed the pedagogical dimension of Śaṃkara, centering the teacher-student dynamic as determining the shape of Advaitic dialectics. Halbfass (1991) has discussed Advaita with respect to the therapeutic paradigm in Indian philosophy. Clooney (1993) has emphasized the ritual of reading as central to the disclosure of the Advaitic Brahman. They all share the primary intuition that Śaṃkara's critique of ritual cannot yet sever Advaita from its basically ritual and practical situatedness. It is only a question of recuperating the subliminal ritual architectonics of the system. Advaita is heir to Pūrva Mīmāṃsā as the latest hermeneutic of Vedic meaning and purport, a purport that, as I understand, cannot be far removed from its ideological location in the sacrificial altar and the matrix of performers encircling it, carrying out diverse functions, employing diverse means, accomplishing various ends and expecting diverse fruits. This compels me to read Advaita as primarily a metareflection on the nature of the ritual and the identity of the ritual agent. On this account, Advaita's central claims purport to say something about the deeper realities and dynamics of the ritual arena and agents involved: that is, these dynamics are most intelligible under the presumption of the ritual subject/agent as a non-agent and the ritual arena itself as a propaedeutic workshop towards that realization. From this perspective, the ultimate 'fruit' of Vedic ritual is the liberation of such an agent from all ritual involvement and sacrificial dynamics (even if he has to pass through such a dynamics). The self comes to realize that its identity is not completely exhausted in its subsumption into an agent-enjoyer (*kāraka/kartṛ-*

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[11] In contemporary Analytic philosophy one may cite, with benefit, the debate amongst Donald Davidson, Daniel Bennett and others over the ontology of actions and events. As a first-order recuperation of action-centrism from the primary sources, I do not here engage with the work of analytic philosophers, focusing more on its immediate relation to Advaita.

[12] By this is meant Śaṃkara's strong insistence that action and ritual are finally both undesirable and ineffective in the domain of self-knowledge and the ultimate well-being of the person.

bhoktṛ) framework. There is something more to subjectivity, a non-actional witness dimension realized as the distillate of ritual logic pursued to its extreme. Therefore, I read Advaita as the natural consequence of what happens when the ritualist, one may say, ritual action as such, turns upon itself to reflect on its own nature. Advaita is but action introspecting upon itself.

I say *action* since it is clear that Śaṃkara's stance towards ritual—however we may isolate ritual from mundane activity in contemporary ritual theory—is symptomatic of a more general analysis of action within which ritual activity is accommodated (as we saw in the example of cooking). The nature and limits of ritual point to the nature and limits of goal-oriented activity as such, sacred or secular.[13] So while I'll be attentive to the boundaries of Vedic ritual, my attempt will be to recuperate the more general analysis of action conducted by Śaṃkara and his predecessors in terms of which, as I argue, Śaṃkara frames the Advaitic project. This only serves to further concentrate the inherent paradox of Advaitic anti-ritualism: an ostensibly operational and result-seeking program that can yet get away with parading itself as a critique, even antithesis, of action. And, while it attempts to disclose a pre-existent (*bhūta/siddha*) order of being without assembling or bringing anything new (*bhavya/sādhya*) into existence, as Śaṃkara never tires of clarifying, it nonetheless retains the *logic* of a result-oriented performance. While nothing new is achieved or assembled, Advaitic method culminates in the 'attainment' (*prāpti*) of what always stands attained (*prāptasya*). The categories furnished by ritual and action therefore inform Advaita both *thematically* as a tradition that thinks seriously and has something to say about the nature of action (and non-action), as well as *methodologically*, as a system that behaves like an intentional

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[13] My approach to ritual, then, will take the middle way between its broader construal as a specific form of action on one hand and its implication in a singularly 'religious' dimension on the other, the dimension that accounts for features of ritual often absent from secular" activity. Wherein lies the *ritualness* of ritual, then, remains an open question which I shall not attempt to settle but perhaps intimate as an effect of the sum total of my arguments about its meaning and place as an intellectual-analytic category. Ritual has been demarcated from secular or mundane activity along various lines by ritual theorists. For instance, refer Axel Michaels (2016) in the context of South Asian ritual practice. Generally, ritual performativity is often conceived as a symbolic or repetitive socially significant activity whose intrinsic semanticity is not typically what is at stake. From the point of view of the Vedic exegetes, this is a complicated question, since they often conceived of ritual as intrinsically meaningful and its meaningfulness as intrinsic to its purposivity. It is therefore noteworthy that while current theory in both domains (linguistics and ritual) often relied on Indic/Vedic material (Durkheim, Mauss and Hubert drew heavily from the detailed and comprehensive descriptions of Vedic ritual and, in grammar, the varied resources furnished by the discovery of Sanskrit and Sanskrit grammatical analysis were integral to the work of Saussure, Bloomfield, Bopp and other founders of modern linguistics), the deeper emic epistemes and ontologies from which they emerged were often neglected. In centering action and intentional goal-oriented activity as the primary object of theoretical attention for the Indian grammarians, ritualists and many philosophers, I hope to bring attention to some of these emic schemes and concerns undergirding their theory.

goal-oriented performance. The latter is the primary frame of reference of chapters 2 and 3, and the former of chapters 4 and 5.

III. Framing Advaita: Between Philosophy, Hermeneutics, Experience

Abheda (non-difference), understood as the absence of differentiating, segmenting action (as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* passage intimated) is not simply synonymous with the tradition's namesake, *advaita* (non-duality). The latter connotes a few different senses. In the global spread of a popularized and spiritualized Neo-Advaita[14], it is presented as outlining a mystical, unitive 'cosmic consciousness' with the subject overcoming any sense of otherness with the cosmos. Early Western Indological attention to Vedāntic inter-school polemics emphasized the non-duality (*advaita*) of self and Brahman/Īśvara (god) as its defining feature. *Advaita* can also mean the non-difference of subject and object. Lastly, it could simply stand for the underlying oneness (*abheda/ekatva*) of all existents by virtue of sharing in a common ontological substrate. In each case, it is historical context, intersectarian and doxographic identification that determines the emphases of 'Advaita': it was *brahmavāda* and *ātmavāda* to the Buddhists, but *māyāvāda* and *advaitavāda* to its Vedantic neighbors. The last (*advaitavāda*) becomes the preferred form of identifying the tradition at some point, perhaps in relation to the increasingly polemical atmosphere of the second millennium, where the intra-Vedāntic context becomes definitive, i.e., the question of the disputed relation of the embodied self (*jīva*), world (*jagat*) and god or first cause (*īśvara*/Brahman) becomes the focal point of Vedānta inter-school polemics and apologetics. The affixation of its intellectual emphases as -*vāda*s (-isms)—*brahmavāda, advaitavāda, māyāvāda* etc.—is also not entirely innocent. Such affixation is what reduces Advaita to its doxographic

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[14] To be distinguished from Neo-Vedānta, an earlier attempt at reconstructing Advaita Vedānta (popularized by the likes of Swami Vivekananda) in the complex of British rule, anti-colonial struggle and the place of Vedānta (and Indian thought generally) in the global order and canon of philosophy. Neo-Advaita, as emerging from the teachings of twentieth-century Advaitic sages and teachers such as Ramana Maharishi and H.W.L. Poonja, has a largely Western audience and a number of Western 'self-realized' teachers bearing a complex relationship with traditional or shastric Advaita. In general, it represents a non-academic (if not always non-scholarly) network of institutions and teachings loosely derived from Advaitic source texts. In fact, Neo-Advaita represents an anti-Shankarite tendency to downplay the role of language and study of scripture, emphasizing immediate experience that can often come unannounced and unplanned; but at the same time a strong Shankarite emphasis on the futility of effort and action in the 'realization' of self. This dual attitude has led some to be doubly circumspect, in that Śaṃkara's critique of action and effort is at least consistent with, and in fact commends, a comprehensive program of study and practice. Neo-Advaita's parallel critique simple does away with the need to read texts or engage in a definite program of self-culture.

identity as a school definable in terms of a set of doctrines or views about reality or self. According to the approach pursued here, Advaita's import will be understood along a performative and pragmatic framework emerging from its ritual location. Here the consideration and rebuttal of views/doctrines, its properly *philosophical* work, is one element contributing to a wider nexus of pedagogical, ritual, hermeneutic and linguistic imperatives generative of the final cognition of self-Brahman. Śaṃkara's own preferred terms are *Vedānta Mīmāṃsā* and *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* (as declared in his *Brahmasūtra* commentary along with references to *Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā* and *Brahma Mīmāṃsā*).

It is, then, appropriate to begin with its function as a hermeneutics, its most direct and immediate context patently recognized by Śaṃkara and his successors. It is worth noting, however, that already we are witness to a triplication of frames that have determined the sense and reception of Advaita in modernity; Advaita framed as *philosophy* (as a distinctive part of and contribution to the philosophical canon), *theological hermeneutics* (as offering a particular reading of the Veda and taking its word as intrinsically true) and direct, often mystical *experience* (as in both Neo-Vedantic and Neo-Advaitic popularizations of the tradition to a global public). In fact, these three readings directly correspond to the triple program of Vedāntic study enjoined in the earliest stratum of Advaitic canon, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, where Yājñavalkya tells Maitreyi: "This Self should be seen, heard, reflected (deliberated) and dwelt (meditated) upon" (BU 2.4.5)[15]; each step subsequently expanding into a quasi-autonomous reading of its purport: *śravaṇa* framing Advaita as a tradition of Vedic hermeneutics and verbal testimony, *manana* as philosophy and the rational consideration of views, and *nididhyāsana* as focusing on first-personal experience (*anubhava*). The modern framings of Advaita may thus be read as taking forward and developing each of Yājñavalkya's triple recommendation along independent trajectories, of what appears, at least for Yājñavalkya, a holistic program of self-transformation. The self should be heard, reflected and meditated upon precisely so that it can, finally, be recognized or 'seen' as such (*draṣṭavya*) in its highly elusive nature.[16] What I will call the *rituogrammatic* frame attempts to recover

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[15] ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo maitreyi | ātmano vā are darśanena śravaṇena matyā vijñānenedaṃ sarvaṃ viditam. BU 2.4.5.

[16] The three steps in the development of wisdom/insight in Buddhist praxis seem to mirror the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* scheme (called the *śrutamayī prajñā*, *cintāmayī prajñā* and *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*). It is another question to what degree its modern framing may be determined by the approaches commended under each stage.

these different imperatives (philosophical, hermeneutic, experiential) as interacting in a holistic pedagogical environment that puts a non-dual grammar of language into action in a quasi-ritual production of its telos, the cognition of Brahman. I therefore bring linguistics and ritual theory to bear on my reading of Advaita as precariously situated between these multiple discourses and agendas.

Not all traditions will be seen to be answerable to such opposing pulls tugging at their intellectual center. For one, Advaita is committed to the centrality of language (*śabda* is the primary means of knowing Brahman) while also severely limiting its powers in relation to Brahman owing to its ineffability.[17] Is Advaita the tradition par excellence of the *via negativa*, of apophasis, or is it the philosophy of the (Vedic) word? The inner tensions of Advaita are equally evident in the contemporary articulation of Advaita as one of the three above: philosophy, theology or experiential praxis, representing, respectively, the ideals of unencumbered reason (typified by Nyāya), scriptural hermeneutics (Pūrva Mīmāṃsā) and self-validating personal experience (Yoga). Is Advaita, again, in the status it came to acquire, the most Brahmanic, the example of orthodoxy, what Jacques Derrida would call, the most *proper,* or is it an instance of the transgressive, antinomian, the very example of heterodoxy that forced Bhāskara and Rāmānuja, Vedantin neighbors, to so forcefully admonish, even heap abuses, on Śaṃkara and his non-dualism (as being most un-Brahmanic)? What sociology, again, does Advaita recommend? Is it the lifestyle of the ascetic, the renunciant with bowl and walking staff, or the Vedic householder, the keeper of the fires, urban and settled? Is it, again, the very example of *śāstra* and Sanskritic high culture, or is it disseminated across the Indian sub-continent in traditions, practices, vernaculars, transcendences that suggest, instead, a long history of a *greater* Advaita Vedānta? As I discuss below, a response to these questions, along with the core concern of Advaitic purport (*tātparya*), must be able to incorporate its philosophical, hermeneutic, theological and experiential locations without being reduced to them singly or collectively.

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[17] In Śaṃkara this is articulated in terms of the impotency of signification and direct reference with respect to Brahman, conveyed by terms such as *abhidhānaśakti* and *vācyatva*.

The Advaita of Śaṃkara and his successors is a hermeneutics of the Upaniṣads centering certain Vedic tendencies over others, reversing the logic and order of Vedic priority presumed by Pūrva Mīmāṃsā: centering the present (and presence) over future, non-action over action, description over transformation, and bare attention over creation and full-scale ritual action. It is thus, as Johannes Bronkhorst has noted (2007, 40), an inner 'palace revolution', leaving the system intact (mostly)—in that ritual action is not jettisoned but accommodated as indirectly instrumental in the generation of self-knowledge—but offering a whole new reading of its central purport.[18] That is, not only the Upaniṣads but the Veda as a whole must be about non-action. I read this in terms of a novel claim about what constitutes subjectivity (*ātmasvarūpa*), agency (*kartṛtva*) and individuality (*ahaṃkāra/ahaṃkriyā*), insofar as one's agential being critically determines individuality and self-identity of persons for Advaitins. Nonetheless, in spite of its revisionary project, it stays firmly within the Mīmāṃsā paradigm of hermeneutic reasoning, adopting and innovating upon extant principles to arrive at the very opposite conclusion about Vedic import than its ritual predecessors; that the Veda's final purport is non-action (*niṣkriyatva/naiṣkarmya*).

Much scholarship has engaged the question of the relation of the two Mīmāṃsās, including the question of whether they originally constituted a single system (Parpola, Halbfass, Bronkhorst amongst others). Certain insights emerging from the debate are helpful in thinking through some issues of Advaita's function as *mīmāṃsā*. Bronkhorst (2007) has attempted to distinguish between a scriptural Vedānta and a non-scriptural one, that is to say, one could very well be a Vedantin without being a Mīmāṃsaka. Such a Vedantin does not presume that the knowledge of Brahman can be obtained from the Upaniṣads alone by applying principles of Mīmāṃsā, extended beyond their ritual use to apply to the disclosure of *ātman*/Brahman. Such forms of Vedānta were allegedly always around, not necessarily attached to Vedic Mīmāṃsā. Bronkhorst therefore argues against an originally single system. Most recently, Alexander Uskokov has stressed two points about the Advaitic doctrine of liberation. Firstly, irrespective of the above considerations, both Pūrva

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[18] As I discuss in Chapter 2, I take *artha* (purport) as the combined purpose and import, thus accommodating both semantic meaning and ritual function or purposivity of various Upanishadic textual and ritual units.

Mīmāṃsā and the Advaita of Śaṃkara were concerned with liberation, contra Bronkhorst according to whom the former concerned itself only with the attainment of heaven, and the latter with liberation. In fact, for Uskokov Mīmāṃsā offered a doctrine of heaven as a competing account of liberation needing rebuttal by Śaṃkara. Secondly, he notes what was truly new and original about Śaṃkara: "Śaṃkara in this discourse on liberation stood alone in claiming that liberation was achieved simply through knowledge of Brahman, knowledge *qua* knowledge, attained when the teachings of the Upaniṣads were fully understood. Such doctrine was a novel phenomenon in this shared sphere of commitment that I call Vedic theology" (Uskokov 2018, 5).[19] The name Śaṃkara is now synonymous with the attainment of Brahman/self simply by the understanding or knowledge resulting from the operation of a means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). No further move from knowing to 'realizing', theory to praxis, is called for.

This is indeed what marks Śaṃkara's *philosophical* point of departure. His system is primarily constrained by its commitment to *vastusvarūpapratipādana*, the elaboration of the nature of the thing or reality as it is. This also grounds Śaṃkara's crucial distinction between the domains of *vastutantra* and *puruṣatantra*, the former indicating a program constrained in its results by the nature of reality as such, the latter resting instead on the side of creative and volitional aspects of the subject's engagement with the world. The former is epistemically bound to the results generated by the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*s). Just this feature alone— the constraining of thinking by the nature and features of things as they are—suffices to interpret Śaṃkara's project as eminently philosophical even if, according to Bronkhorst and others, Vedantic Mīmāṃsā allegedly has no room for logical proofs, relying completely on the Veda for the knowledge of Brahman or God (as opposed to other Vedantins who did not subscribe to such a view): "Vedānta conceived of as Mīmāṃsā is not a form of philosophy which uses various means of knowledge to establish its positions" (Bronkhorst 2007, 26).

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[19] We may also observe, with Tillman Vetter, that Śaṃkara's originality, on Vetter's account, lay in being the first to think about applying *mīmāṃsā* principles to the interpretation of the Upaniṣads.

While the emphasis on *vastusvarūpapratipādana* complicates this reading, there has been a recurrent attempt to demarcate Advaita as philosophy and Advaita as a scriptural hermeneutics. The former is premised upon suspending all discourse that exceeds clear rational demonstrability. This is reminiscent of the much earlier reading by Eliot Deutsch, self-consciously sub-titled 'a philosophical reconstruction': "The exegetical dimension of Vedānta is of great interest to students of linguistics and Indian cultural history (and naturally to Indian scholars themselves) but it is of very little interest to Western students of philosophy. We do not accept the authority of the Veda…Our criterion of philosophical truth or significance is not whether a particular system of thought is consistent with some other body of work; rather, it is whether that system of thought is 'consistent' with human experience." (Deutsch 1969, 5). More recently, Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad presents an Advaita metaphysics and epistemology (Ram-Prasad 2002) by bracketing out all that in Advaita that transcends ordinary human consciousness, particularly what comprises, ironically, its core tenet of the self-Brahman identity. Philosophy can only speak about what, firstly, submits itself to rational analysis and reflection and, secondly, what is available to ordinary human awareness. He goes on to offer a sophisticated account of Advaita as non-realism presenting two of its underlying philosophical motivations: Philosophy trains consciousness bringing it to maturity (where realization of Brahman-ātman identity is attainable), and philosophy establishes the intellectual coherence of the Advaita understanding of Upaniṣads.

Indeed, the traditional practice of *manana* (reflection) reflects something like this role of reason in Advaita dialectics, especially in its consideration of other views (*mata/vāda*). This pertains to the alleged 'negative' function of reason in Advaita (the warding off of erroneous views) and with its concern with establishing its vision as the most coherent in the philosophical marketplace, even if this is only propaedeutic to Advaita proper, to the eventual accommodation of *anumāna/tarka* into *śabda*. This latter concern also explains, as I understand, much of what is called Advaita doxography. As Bouthillette (2020) has discussed,

such doxographic activity may be understood within a performative and soteriological context where wrong

views are exposed for what they are in order for the student to not be misled by them.[20]

Under the philosophical frame, such rationally driven and defensible aspects of a system can often

appear disjoined from its not so ostensibly defensible components. From a hermeneutic lens, however,

whatever its function be in the system's inner hierarchy of purposes, philosophical discourse is one organ of

the larger linguistic-dialectic-pedagogic organism the Upaniṣads are; an application of Vedic language (*śabda*)

that will disclose the Brahman-ātman identity at pedagogically opportune moments. As Halbfass notes,

legitimate reasoning is received and revealed as a pedagogical device and instrument of explication (Halbfass

1991). It is thus necessary to disengage such a conception of *śabda* from the kind of scriptural authority

presumed to transgress the domain of knowability. Halbfass further notes the deep intertwining of inferential

and revelatory schemes:

> Thus the Upaniṣads are not a set of dogmas against which human reason would have to
> revolt or assert itself, but rather a source to which it traces itself and its own legitimacy, a
> universe of meaning in which it can exercise its potential without having to proclaim its
> autonomy, and to which it can subordinate itself without having to sacrifice itself (Halbfass
> 1991, 180).

The Upaniṣads, as revelatory scheme, are not something to which reason is 'appended' or which

sometimes breaks through into rational discourse while, at other times, soars into transcendental, unverifiable

claims[21], a view that still carries some of the tensions of the modern bifurcation of religion and reason. The

meaning of 'reliance on the Veda', therefore, as it stands, remains underdetermined. Reminding us that there

is nothing like the classical Greek or Cartesian self-proclamation of human reason in Indian thought, Halbfass

further observes that "the Indian tradition and Advaita in particular have developed their own ways of

contrasting, interrelating, or reconciling these two dimensions of human thought and orientation, and we

have to be ready to question and to readjust our Western conceptual patterns while using them as tools of

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[20] The extent of *manana* can be more comprehensive to include the reflective assimilation of a tradition's own insights that are subtle and difficult to grasp.

[21] The use of *anvayavyatireka* (refer Chapter 5) as a form of 'reasoning' in Advaita, for instance, cannot be divorced from its revelatory and phenomenological dimensions as we will see in subsequent chapters.

interpretation" (Halbfass 1991, 134). Closer attention to these ways reveals that all 'Brahman-talk' in Advaita is of a piece with its more empirical and verifiable components. Advaita epistemology appears to be juggling between three different epistemic reference-points—direct experience, reason and revelation, but is in fact united by one fundamental methodology: the employment of impersonal ontolinguistic schemes and rituogrammatic procedures—what Halbfass has otherwise referred to as "an eternal, impersonal structure of soteriologically meaningful discourse" (Halbfass 1990, 388)—to engender certain alterations/rearrangements in the identity of the practitioner-subject.

Advaita as Theology

It is ironical that a sound theological framework has only been fairly recently applied to the representation of Advaita, given Advaita's ancient roots in scriptural exegesis. Such contemporary theological intervention, while a necessary corrective to an otherwise theologically purged Vedānta typical of an earlier era, has been mediated by scholarship engaged in the project of cross-cultural, inter-religious and comparative theology (Clooney, Rambachan, Locklin amongst others), with Christianity as the primary interlocutor.[22] Such interventions have grappled with settled frameworks of philosophical and experiential interpretations. While Rambachan's *Accomplishing the Accomplished* (1991) inveighed against the understanding of Advaita as primarily mystical/experiential, he has elsewhere noted problems with the view of Advaita as philosophy: "In the East, the faith dimension of Advaita is not always readily admitted and there is a preference for characterizing it as philosophical. While there are characteristics of Advaita, as presented in this study, that do not easily situate it in the theological traditions of the West, it is wrong also to deny this character and to present it as entirely philosophical" (Rambachan 2006, 4). It is noteworthy, however, that he and Clooney[23] allocate a central place

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[22] So that 'inter-religious' has often meant 'Christian-Hindu'. That this will have implications on the precise shape of Vedantic interpretation I take as axiomatic.

[23] "I refer to Advaita as 'theology', as faith seeking understanding, a salvation-centered explication of the world generated out of an exegesis of sacred texts which seeks to commit the listening (reading) community to specific ritual and ethical practices. These features make the appellation 'theology' more appropriate than alternatives such as 'philosophy', 'mysticism', 'ontology' etc., even if an outstanding feature of theology, its focus on the 'study of God', is absent from Advaita" (Clooney 1993, 26).

to *śraddhā* as 'faith seeking understanding' invoking St. Anselm himself.[24] What are we to make of these Anselmian gestures made all the more intriguing by the coalescence of a generalized non-God-centric, non-culture-centric theology with the singular, less explicit, allusion to the specificity of the work that such faith accomplishes for the medieval Christian practitioner? For such 'faith seeking understanding' already presumed, at least for Anselm, a recognition or avowal of basic Christian theological facts prior to a demand for further understanding.[25] *Śraddhā* or trust in the words of the teacher and the text is in fact an important component of Advaitic textual engagement, committing the practitioner to certain receptive attitudes but, perhaps, the process can be interpreted on the model of how verbal cognition works generally: I trust the words I hear to be *prima facie* meaningful, purposive, even true, and this usually provides sufficient grounds for my religious or mundane behavior, their fruitfulness being the final test of their truth.[26] As I later discuss, this aspect of verbal testimony/cognition (*śabdapramāṇa*) furnishes a straightforward model of how 'faith' often works in the student's spiritual itinerary.

Noting, further, that mainstream approaches have typically employed philosophical lenses of interpretation, Clooney (1993) cites three reasons for this practice. To begin with, Śaṃkara's project is indeed more philosophical than theological as compared to, say, Rāmānuja. He even admits that the distinctions made by Śaṃkara (between higher and lower knowledge) "lend themselves to the supersession of much of what counts for theological discourse" (1993, 27). Second, as we observed, the tendency to think of theology as subserving an authority, scriptural or human, thus paving the way for philosophy, without any such encumbrances, to assume the central frame of reference. And lastly, the capacity of Advaita as philosophy to

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[24] And referring to Brahman as the 'ultimate mystery', something extraneous to Śaṃkara's own thought and Advaita epistemology generally. This also seems to run against his own presentation of Advaita as *pramāṇa*, a valid means of knowledge, in other works.

[25] As sought, for instance, in the ontological 'argument' that Anselm offers in due course. The argument evidently serves to further corroborate, clarify or simply serve as a meditation on what a good Christian already knows (beliefs about the Trinity, Resurrection etc.) although what these terms connote is not immediately evident. Is such faith already secure and stable which then, subsequently, seeks ever greater clarity regarding its subject-matter, perhaps even deepening itself in the process, or is it more precarious, contingent upon final understanding which then pre-empts the need for faith altogether, surpasses it? That faith remains at the center of Christian practice is incontrovertible, and to whatever extent faith may serve as a useful hermeneutic frame in the clarification of Advaitic praxis, its meaning must be fixed with in its application to the latter.

[26] This is of course reminiscent of the Mīmāṃsā theory of *svataḥprāmāṇyavāda* (cognition as self-validating), one model of understanding how 'faith' may work in the Advaitic context. I discuss 'fruitfulness' (*phalavattva*) in Chapter 2.

make a cross-cultural, even universal, outreach, which the faith commitments demanded of a theological approach (here the acceptance of the Upaniṣads as revelatory) make difficult.

In response, Clooney makes a convincing case, in some ways echoing Halbfass, that reason does not function independently in Advaita but only operates within exegetical and scripturally-formed thinking. While philosophical systematizations may be able to extract 'essential ideas' or 'central themes' from source texts, the literary and rhetorical qualities of Advaita texts make them by design unsuitable for such substitution. He thus argues for the "permanent location of those systematized meanings in exegesis, not liable to extraction and independent use" (1993, 29). This pertains to his central thesis, contra Deutsch earlier, that Advaitic truth cannot be rendered neutral to its sources and exegetical activity, to be morphed into a generalizable language with universal consumption, but that Advaitic truth always occurs *post-textually*:

> Essential to the genius of Advaita is the care with which it inscribes the truth of the Text within the Text, making it available, but only to those who commit themselves to the long process of becoming the kind of persons who read properly…[T]ruth occurs in an understanding of Brahman located in the Text, acquired through reading and rereading, and not apart from these activities. Though Brahman is neither a fiction (as might be a character in a novel) nor a textual production (as might be a ritual vis à vis the texts that accompany it), Advaita's truth about Brahman does not exist outside the texts (Clooney 1993, 33).

The contrast with experiential and philosophical framings of Advaita could not be more evident. But what does it mean to say that the 'truth about Brahman' cannot exist outside of the texts? Crucial here is Clooney's triple-commitment to the i. Advaita text, ii. truth in and through the text, that is, post-textual truth, and iii. reader, who becomes the location of the realization of the truth. Ultimately the subject, the reader (or hearer), is transformed in her very being in a text-effected reorientation and repositioning with respect to the world and the text itself. A continual and persistent engagement with the words of the text, its rhetorical and pedagogic qualities, its reorganization and representation of a textually-mediated world, serve to make the final event of truth happen or culminate in the reader. As a new perspective or a new point of realization is achieved by the reader— ultimately as the notions of 'I' and 'Brahman' themselves are revised through the *mahāvākya*s— such an "elusive and never forthrightly demarcated location" is where, according to Clooney, Advaita can be properly said to 'occur' in accordance with the higher grammar now much more intelligible.

Such readings (including Suthren Hirst 2005, Rambachan 2006, Locklin 2011[27] and others) have helped advance Advaita scholarship beyond settled frameworks of interpretation. My approach echoes this focus on the performative and pragmatic aspect of Advaita, interpreting it along ritual lines consistent with Pūrva Mīmāṃsā. At the same time, such a performative frame can be too closely aligned to practices of reading and exegesis. So when Clooney convincingly argues that the 'system' of Advaita "is a well-planned event, not a theory", the exemplary events of Advaitic practice comprise the reader's ever-evolving relationship with the text, the transformations such a relationship elicits in the reader and all the small epiphanies that accompany such deep exegetical attention to the text of Advaita. The contours of the ideal Advaita practitioner appear to be too closely tied with the literate reader and the erudite commentator, and (while we will occasionally learn about the 'hearer' of the texts) the interpretive program is exemplary of an erudite commentarial tradition that invokes a very specific type of Advaitic subject-formation. This is also not surprising since the paradigm of such textual engagement is the *Brahma Sūtra* and its commentarial corpus, which has not only been historically at the center of Advaitic commentarial flourishing, but itself takes up the task of Upanishadic interpretation and hermeneutics. It is therefore already most amenable to a hermeneutic-exegetic approach. While assuming this centrality of the Upanishadic text/word as the location of the occurrence of truth, exposure to it can take a plurality of forms, thereby invoking a plurality of subjectivities formed in excess of the theological ideal of attention to textual exegesis. Indeed, following the lead of the Upaniṣads' own exemplary pedagogical environments, the teacher-pupil relationship emerges as an alternative location of Advaitic praxis, as emphasized by Swami Dayananda, Suthren Hirst and others, on which I focus as a crucial site of interpreting Advaita's rituality.

This location also affords an ideal perspective to explore and develop an account of Advaita's character as a *Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā*, as announced by Śaṃkara early in his *Brahmasūtra* commentary. I therefore focus on the categories of body and embodiment as taken up in Advaitic pedagogy to inform and contextualize its work as a textual hermeneutics.

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[27] Locklin 2011 also presents a model of Advaita as oral performance and sacramental practice, but relying on a different set of interpretive tools and strategies. To summarize, he understands Śaṃkara as engaging in the performance of a set of rhetorical and pedagogical strategies that rehearse certain scripts, comprising a kind of liturgy.

As a third frame (theological hermeneutics and philosophy being the others), the rhetoric of experience has been applied to the interpretation of Advaita (and Indian philosophy) for a variety of ideological and political purposes. Robert Sharf helpfully distinguishes between two senses of the term (Sharf 1995). Experience as i. participation in or living through (something), and ii. directly perceive, observe, be aware of (something), suggesting a subjective 'mental event' or 'inner process'.[28] Rambachan (1991), has questioned its application to Advaita, as a school affording 'direct experience' of Brahman, as modern representatives of Advaita like Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan and Mahadevan maintained. Radhakrishnan wrote that in India "every doctrine has been turned into a passionate conviction, stirring the heart of man and quickening his breath, and completely transforming his personal nature. In India, philosophy is for life; it is to be lived. It is not enough to *know* the truth; the truth must be *lived*. The goal of the Indian is not to know the ultimate truth but to *realize* it, to become one with it" (Radhakrishnan 1957, xxii).[29] The essence of religion is thus divorced from both ritual/ceremony (which will be important for us later on) and rationality or academic abstraction.

The category of religious experience has received extensive attention by scholars of religion. Forsthoefel helpfully identifies three independent problematics (Forsthoefel 2002). First, the problem of *identification*, of defining/demarcating what a 'religious experience' even is. Second, the question of *constructivism*, the understanding that all religious experience must be socially or culturally constructed or determined (at least to some degree), thus problematizing the claim that it is possible to have a religious,

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[28] It is the latter sense that is central to what Sharf takes to be a misappropriation of the rhetoric of experience by modern representatives of Eastern spiritual traditions like Buddhism. Such an appropriation permitted these representatives to portray their traditions as both scientific and experientially (therefore empirically) grounded. An ethnographic analysis, on the contrary, reveals that the principle determinant in the production of the extensive meditative literature was, in his own words, not 'phenomenological description' but 'ideological prescription'. Parallel claims about Advaita, however, are not based on primary sources but rely on Halbfass's discussion of neo-Vedantins like Radhakrishnan, largely repeating them. Moreover, Sharf's arguments take the form of genealogical analysis. However, to trace the genealogy of a concept (here 'experience') to a certain location in history does not preempt possible alternative genealogies of terms, often emic, isolating familial concepts. Terms such as '*anubhava*' (or '*avagati*', '*anubhūti*', '*sākṣātkāra*') have been central to Advaita dialectics at least since Śaṃkara, clearly locating Advaita praxis in an experiential discourse, even as it does not share the semantics of the term 'experience' understood as mental event or inner subjective process (as discussed above).

[29] Or elsewhere, "Intellect is subordinate to intuition, dogma to experience, outward expression to inward realization. Religion is not the acceptance of academic abstractions or the celebration of ceremonies, but a kind of life or experience…" (Radhakrishnan 1927, 13). Similar rhetoric is evident in the writings of Prabhavananda, Vivekananda and Mahadevan.

mystical or transcendental experience free from or prior to its specific cultural, material or institutional 'expression' or 'manifestation'. Third, the problem of *epistemology*, the evaluation of the claim whether religious experience can afford knowledge of any kind, especially that which is not available by other means. The epistemic framing of religious experience sees the primary significance of such experience in terms of the knowledge it affords of transcendent or supernatural claims, or the justification it offers in holding various sorts of beliefs about God. Many recent defenses of religious experience—William Alston (1991), Wolterstorff (1984), Alvin Plantinga (1983)—presume such a framing in attempting to justify religious beliefs against Enlightenment-influenced evidentiary criteria by revising, expanding or challenging such evidentialism.

In the context of Advaita, the discourse around religious experience is, firstly, indexed to a very different program. It is not linked to the kinds of appeal made as seeking evidence of mystically or transcendentally available truths. That is, it is not concerned with an epistemic *justification* of truth-claims by direct experience or realization. Rather, as Forsthoefel suggests in the case of Śaṃkara, Advaita is concerned with the nature of experience *per se.* That is to say, by reflecting on the nature of consciousness, self-awareness and immediacy, it offers a *metaphysic of experience* as such.[30] Experience in Advaita is indexed, not so much to a specific set of mental or inner events, but to the very nature of the self as Brahman; the self, as revelatory consciousness, is of the very nature of pure experience (*anubhūtisvarūpa*). Thus while the application of the rhetoric of experience to Advaita may be illegitimate in its meaning as a special set of epistemically significant experiences—and Halbfass is right in pointing out that Śaṃkara nowhere speaks of *anubhava* in these terms, as a means to 'confirm' what was previously known through verbal testimony—yet there cannot be a more apt category to elucidate some of its central metaphysical insights.

Identifying the category of religious experience, therefore, can be quite a slippery affair, dominated as it is by an epistemic framing according to which the most important function of such experience is to justify certain truth-claims, often in conflict with empirical evidence. The Veda as "an eternal, impersonal structure

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[30] This might be contrasted with, say, certain varieties of Buddhism, where the personal experience of the Buddha (or the adept) may count as both epistemologically authoritative and furnishing an emulative ideal for others to follow. Of course, early Buddhism offers its own metaphysic of experience and the *Nikāya*s may be said to present an account of experience as such.

of soteriologically meaningful discourse" (Halbfass 1990, 388) is what must ultimately circumscribe and delimit the role of *anubhava* in the broader dialectics of Advaita. That is also why, perhaps, a claim of the sort that "religious experience is a relatively late and distinctively Western invention" (Sharf 1995, 98) is attached to a very restricted conception of religious experience—as a phenomenological field furnishing evidence for mystical or transcendental truths.

If the appeal to experience signals a turn to an ontology of the experiencing subject, Indian traditions, especially Advaita, may be seen to have a deep historical preoccupation with ontological and phenomenological categories emerging from deliberation upon the nature of subjectivity. Indeed, the extension of such categories derived from the subjective domain (of the mind, self, sentience or consciousness) to that of nature challenges any simple opposition between the subjective and objective, mental and physical, inner and outer, presumed in the rhetoric of experience—of an inner personal mystical or transcendental experience disjoint from the realm of intersubjective and determinate meaning. A crucial insight of the Sāṃkhya, Advaita and early Buddhist deliberations on experience is that, perhaps, *everything* is nature, including what has, since modernity, been taken to fall on the side of the subject (thought, feeling, emotion, willing, knowing etc.). The categories of the subject are deeply entangled with those of the 'external' world or cosmos. Such entanglement complicates the characterization of religious experience as isolating the subject into an inner mental realm divorced from the categories of mundane experience. At the least it suggests an alternative paradigm from the conception of experiential praxis in which the subject seeks a transcendence from the domain of thought and language. Far from being 'inner', 'subjective' or 'ineffable', experience opens up the domains of self and cosmos as interpenetrating and boundary-less. This equally pertains to its philosophy of language, which does not name a realm of arbitrary or conventional signs that function in a mental or psychological space divorced from reality. Rather, the world is as such *languaged*, permeated by linguistic categories. Both experience and language, therefore, must be understood within such an ontological frame opposed to a psychologization of language and experience where linguistic and experiential categories are referred to the meaning-making activity of the experiencing-knowing subject.

What's referred to as the ineffability paradox, therefore, only has limited relevance to Advaita: If the ultimate (Brahman) is ultimate in its transcendence of all that is accessible to ordinary experience, what is the status of the texts, and the language they use and the concepts they deploy?[31] For, after all, to understand that something is ineffable is to understand that it cannot be understood. What may be overlooked here is that Advaita is at least as anxious to assert Brahman's immanence as its transcendence and, concurrently, its linguistic embeddedness. It indicates, minimally, the transparency and self-reflexivity of consciousness associated with the first-person standpoint. Not quite something that fits the definition of a full-fledged 'experience' yet perhaps a grounding possibility for an experience to even occur. We have at least an inkling here of a paradigm where the transcendence of 'all that is accessible to ordinary experience' is mitigated by the immanence of a sphere that undergirds and informs all ordinary experience, such that its ineffability is not so much a closed door as a sign of its unmediated transparency. Śaṃkara himself is quite clear that words are directly effective in the revelation of Brahman if its non-dual grammar is properly brought out. Language and consciousness therefore find themselves deeply entangled with the experiential domain as naming the horizonal field and possibility of the functions of seeing, knowing, experiencing. For it implies that, even if we are willing to go with the rhetoric of 'experience', language and its attendant intersubjectivity, publicity and determinacy determine the unfoldment of such experience.

The textual center of the Advaitic debate regarding the role of *anubhava* in liberation is a contentious passage in Śaṃkara's commentary to *Brahma Sūtra* 1.1.2.[32] Here Śaṃkara asserts (one hoped with more transparency) that while the inquiry into *dharma* is dependent entirely upon '*śruti* etc. ' as the only *pramāṇa*s, the inquiry into Brahman is dependent both on '*śruti* etc.' and '*anubhava* etc.'.[33] This may be taken to mean that for Śaṃkara *anubhava* is as foundational a *pramāṇa* as *śruti*. Śaṃkara's intention here, in distinguishing between the two *mīmāṃsā*s, is certainly that an inquiry into *dharma* does not have the same prerogative of appealing to and

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[31] As formulated by Ram-Prasad (2002, 2). This is close to Sharf's own argument about the untenability of being able to claim anything at all about transcendental meditative experience.

[32] na dharma-jijñasāyām iva śruty-ādaya eva pramāṇaṁ brahma-jijñāsāyām. kintu śrutyādayo 'nubhavādayaś ca yathā-sambhavam iha pramāṇam, anubhavāvasānatvād bhūta-vastu-viṣayatvāc ca brahma-jñānasya. BSB 1.1.2. It is variously interpreted by Rambachan, Sharma, Upadhyaya, Clooney, Halbfass, Comans, Forsthoefel and others.

[33] The '*ādi*' at the end of each compound also suggests that, perhaps, what is at stake is not an immediate tension between scriptural/verbal authority and direct experience.

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relying on immediate experience as conferring certainty on its subject matter as is the case with an inquiry into Brahman. Because Brahman is the self, one is furnished with an immediate field of phenomenological transparency not available to the Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka enquiring into *dharma*. For him the subject-matter will remain forever remote (*parokṣa*). But this does not make *anubhava* a *pramāṇa* an autonomous knowledge-generating cognition. K.N. Upadhyaya insightfully points out that in Advaita *anubhava* is not so much a *pramāṇa* as the very end or culmination of *all pramāṇa*s (Upadhyaya 1991,130). And Śaṃkara's use of terms like '*anubhava*', '*avagati*', '*sākṣātkāra*' etc. is comprehensive, in the sense that, as pointing to the very nature of selfhood, they comprise the foundation of all empirical and transcendent knowledge. The entire universe, in order to be known, is dependent on the revelatory consciousness that Brahman is. From this perspective, 'knowing' Brahman is simply directing attention to the already inhabited or 'known' self, as the very condition of possibility of knowing anything at all. *Anubhava* is neither a transcendent experience nor a special means of knowledge affording cognition of Brahman; it is the underlying horizon of experience, meaning-making and veridical activity. On this analysis, Advaita may be seen as making a transcendental point about the nature of experience, a fact that has not gone unnoticed. In Chapter 4 I take the *Taittirīya* Brahman definition to be isolating precisely this transcendental-horizonal nature of the self/Brahman distinguished from *a posteriori* truths about the self.

The precise manner, then, of the interaction between this horizonal awareness and the linguistic knowledge afforded by the Upaniṣads is what constitutes *pramāṇatva* for Śaṃkara. For him the means for knowing Brahman is unambiguously *śabda*, with the caveat that the common causal sense implied by it, associating it with a specific domain that is its sole competence, is cast aside (Uskokov 2018, 449). Upanishadic statements generate meaning in the mind of the hearer as any collocation of meaningful words. '*Pramāṇatva*' merely stands for the collaborative outcome of listening, reflection and meditation that renders Upanishadic sentence-meaning transparent, with *śabda* propelling this incremental movement towards ever-

greater clarity to the point that such 'linguistic' transparency dissolves into phenomenological and experiential transparency.[34]

IV.   Advaita as Grammar

The above account of experience suggests that Upanishadic language be conceived along the lines, not so much of scriptural authority, but verbal cognition and testimony. It is the focus on the nature and capacities of language as such that grants Upanishadic language its soteriological efficacy, not the privileged or special status of religious language. Andrew Ollett has made a similar point about Vedic language as exploited by Pūrva Mīmāṃsā: "The general principle underlying both the theory of and the argumentation for *bhāvanā* is that Vedic language is just language; it is neither an esoteric mystical jargon, nor it is burdened with the historicity of speakers and their often-perverse intentions; to understand how Vedic language works is to understand how language *per se* works" (Ollett 2013, 258). I extend this approach to Vedic language with reference to the non-dual (*advaita*) and non-actional (*niṣkriya*) capacities of language recovered by Advaita. The so-called Advaitic 'reliance on the Veda', a somewhat underdetermined idea as noted, is thus furnished with concrete content.

This approach is adopted in the treatment of Advaitic grammar in chapters 4 and 5. Language so employed may be considered as a potentially knowledge-producing *pramāṇa* on par with other *pramāṇa*s,[35] without there being anything supersensory or divinely authoritative about it, the latter reading tying it back to

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[34] As discussed in Chapter 4, the self is both linguistically disclosed *and* beyond all expression and intellection. Self-knowledge, in other words, affords the singular circumstance where language may be effective and fruitful (*phalavat*) without occasioning or, better, relying on meaning-generation and comprehension (denoted by Śaṃkara's use of '*vāc*' and its cognates).

Moreover, experience names, in Advaita, a province that not only helps *recognize* facts about oneself (relevant to an epistemic frame)—insofar as Brahman is the horizonal field/capacity of awareness—but contributes to *altering* facts about oneself, transforming oneself; a mode of production and performance over and above a sphere of cognition, revelation or knowledge, something that I draw out within its *rituogrammatic* framing.

[35] Provided that the pertinent non-dual/ non-actional features of ordinary language are properly drawn out. Refer, for instance, to Śaṃkara's comments in the *US* and elsewhere: 'The notion, 'I am the existent', arises from right means of knowledge (*pramāṇotthā*) [while] the other notion has its origin in fallacious means of knowledge'. US I.18.7; 'It is said that the Vedas alone are the right means (*pramāṇam*) to acquire knowledge (*jñānasya adhigame*) with regard to *Ātman.*'; 'The oneness of *ātman* should indeed be known through the understanding of the meaning of sentence (*vākyārthapratipattitaḥ*)'. US I.17.9; sad asmīti pramāṇotthā dhīr anyā tannibhodbhavā. US I.18.7; pramāṇaṃ veda evātra jñānasyādhigame smṛtaḥ. US I.17.8; ekatvaṃ hy ātmano jñeyaṃ vākyārthapratipattitaḥ. US I.17.9. Commenting on I.17.8 above, Rāmatīrtha supplies "*vākyād ātmatattvāvagamamātreṇa*", i.e., the mere understanding of the nature of self from the sentence. Likewise, I.18.7 affirms that the liberating knowledge is firmly established and borne of the correct employment of the requisite means of knowledge (*pramāṇotthā*), here *śabda*.

the evidentiary model of *anubhava* considered earlier. Moreover, a lens of religious textual hermeneutics treating the Vedic (and Upanishadic) corpus as conferred with intrinsic truth simply because of its religious or divine origin or status, can obfuscate the underlying dynamics of Advaitic approaches to language. While Advaitins were certainly hermeneuts at one level, seeking to explain and cohere indefinite, ambiguous or contradictory passages of the Upaniṣads, and taking for granted the intrinsic validity of the Veda, they were far more than just that. The recovery of a non-dual grammar can thus help locate the specificity and singularity of Advaitic 'hermeneutics' often overlaid by a transference of categories derived from approaches familiar to us in the context of the so-called religions of the book. The status of 'the Veda' as such a unitary book remains contested but, more importantly, it is the nature and capacities of language (*śabda*) as such that is at the center of Advaitic attention to language, quite distinct from presuppositions accompanying the category of the *biblio/bible/book* in religious hermeneutics. It is the capacity of certain sentences to generate immediate, infallible knowledge—a true cognition or *vṛtti* pertaining to the self—that confers upon them their epistemic authority. On this account, the importance of the Upaniṣads lies in their particularly and eminently embodying such a use of language. Even the Advaitic *mahāvākya* will owe its importance to the fact that, as identity statement, it exploits an inherent capacity of language, the disclosure of sentential identities behind the otherwise relational and actional thrust of language.

For Śaṃkara, such a true cognition, reflective of a real state of affairs, is the final purpose of the Advaitic *pramāṇa*, being self-validating like any other valid cognition. This also provides another perspective on why the frames of philosophy, hermeneutics and theology, taken individually, are limited in their interpretation of the central import of Advaita. For Śaṃkara, simply understanding what certain words mean, provided they are found in appropriate mutual relations, results in self-knowledge, just as correctly understanding the meaning of the words, 'This is a post (not a person)'[36] immediately results in a parallel corrective cognition in the hearer. This is why I here set out to articulate a *grammar* of non-dualism, a set of linguistic phenomena that result in a *cognition* of non-dualism. Advaitins primarily deal in this language of cognition/knowledge, on par with perceptual cognition; hermeneutics, apologetics and interpretation may be

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[36] Referring to a distant post that may be confused for a standing person.

said to be operative at earlier stages of inquiry. That is, once the general purport of the Vedānta has been determined by hermeneutic effort, and possible misreadings cast aside—such as by the *Brahmasūtra* in clarifying the nature of Brahman as the core object of Vedantic inquiry, warding off misconceptions about it—one can go about the more serious business of sentential analysis (*vākyaśāstra*), unfolding the non-dual grammar of identity statements directly resulting in the cognition of Brahman. At this point the grammatical operations of continued presence and absence (*anvayavyatireka*), *lakṣaṇā* (oblique indication), nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) etc. take over. This approach is not inconsistent with the attempt to distinguish, as in Bronkhorst, a scriptural and non-scriptural Advaita. But, perhaps, it is better conveyed along a distinction that can be made between an Advaita relying on verbal cognition—a *śabdaprāmāṇika* Advaita—and that which does not so rely on the inherent capacities of language to engender self-knowledge.

V.   Being, Bhāva & Brahman

The two *mīmāṃsās* are often distinguished according to their respective emphases on action (*karma*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) as constituting the proper objects of hermeneutic inquiry. The *jñāna-karma* distinction is thus seized as the primary distinguishing feature of their respective readings of the Veda, i.e., whether the Veda ultimately commends actional or, instead, epistemic comportments as fundamental to religious and mundane life and behavior. Not that doing and knowing must intrinsically be at odds, but the inner tension between Pūrva and Uttara Mīmāṃsā exaggerates the distinction: *knowing* is about epistemically recognizing or attending to an extant state of affairs (*siddhavastu*), *doing* about bringing a non-existent reality or state of affairs (*sādhyavastu*) into being. Śaṃkara critiques action to the extent that it is futile in the domain of those realities that are already available to us without any necessity to engage in action in order to *produce* or *attain* them. Production and attainment are the domain of action, bringing something that was not in existence into existence, or what was not in proximity proximate. Everyone's self, however, is already available to them as an obtaining presence that need be neither produced nor attained. In laying out this vision of a non-actional reading of the Veda, Śaṃkara is obviously responding to the Mīmāṃsā principle, as laid out by Jaimini, that any purely descriptive or informative statements must be interpreted as subservient to injunctions and the

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larger fulfillment of a ritual telos accommodating all language use, unless they be construed absolutely meaningless (MS 1.2.1).[37]

Foregrounding this opposition as determining Śaṃkara's point of departure for an Uttara Mīmāṃsā can nonetheless be misleading in a few ways. For one, action (*kriyā/karman*) can serve as an eminently useful category to explore the inner dynamics of Advaitic praxis, tracking its embeddedness in the world of ritual instrumentality, means and ends. Particularly, Śaṃkara's Advaita involves, as I understand, a sophisticated adoption of ritual procedures and methodologies with a concurrent repudiation of the program of bringing into being (*bhāvanā*) and ritual productivity. This is mediated, as I discuss in Chapter 2, by two maneuvers. Ritual is first internalized and psychologized, a phenomenon already at work in the *Brāhmaṇa*s and *Āraṇyaka*s but, as opposed to them, is now dictated by epistemic and truth-conducive procedures, most characteristically by the regulation and management of attention (*avadhāna*) in what is referred to as the *noetic* ritual.

This approach further provides a perspective on the oft noted hermeneutic indebtedness of Advaita to Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and how, in extending and innovating upon extant Mīmāṃsā interpretive principles, Advaita is better understood as a hermeneutic and exegetical enterprise than a (purely) philosophical one (Clooney 1993, Parpola 1981, Bronkhorst 2007, Uskokov 2018 and others). Empathetic to this train of thought, I further argue that Advaita stands in direct hermeneutic continuity with Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and is able to adopt their hermeneutic tools precisely *because* it is itself constituted as ritual. Hermeneutic continuity, therefore, is only a symptom of a deeper ritual-centrism and action-centrism shared by both. A mere emphasis on the former can keep Advaita at the level of textual exegesis. In arguing that final liberative knowledge (*ātmajñāna*) is constituted as an event and quasi-ritual performance, the rationale and justification behind Advaita's adoption of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics becomes transparent—such hermeneutic categories are aptly suited to analyze goal-oriented activity and therefore readily applicable to the Advaitic program of generating self-knowledge.[38] Action also ideally furnishes, as the initial foray into the

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[37] āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyam atadarthānām. MS 1.2.1.
[38] Secondly, it may appear that the claim of ritual or grammatical indebtedness of a given tradition (such as Advaita) can be made merely on the basis of an adoption of terminology or method. The ubiquity, for instance, of grammatical terms and modes of reasoning in Indian philosophy is well known. However, these tools are methods are not free-floating signifiers that can be

Bṛhadāraṇyaka suggested, the *philosophical* import of Śaṃkara's Advaita, as unfolding its vision of the self, Brahman and world precisely in terms of the question of the nature and role of action (*karman*) in keeping the self identified with the agential self. The nature of Brahman is also clarified in terms of its relation to the functional differentiation resulting from action and production.[39]

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applied or borrowed into a new domain at will without carrying something of their original framework or context into the new. Methods and terminologies also instantiate, if you will, a metaphysics, a certain theoretical orientation accompanying their methodology. It is in this sense that I recuperate Advaita's indebtedness to extant disciplines of ritual theory and grammar; not merely as a borrowing of terms and tools but as the transposition of an entire organic structure of thinking in terms of productivity, outcomes, results, tools and instruments i.e., thinking *ritually*, but further, under the Advaitic innovation, thinking spiritually, insofar as Advaita applies such ritual thinking to the unfoldment of the Upanishadic spirit or self (*puruṣa/ātman*).

[39] As hinted there, this manner of thinking likely evolved in an early Vedic milieu going on to determine the various Vedic sub-disciplines (*upāṅgas*) such as semantic analysis, grammar and ritual theory. One may approach the Rigvedic corpus through a ritual lens seeing *ṛk* mantras as accompaniments to ritual, or as presenting a cosmology or mythology depicting various creation myths, cosmic processes, gods and divinities. In either case a deeply processual ontology emerges as the basis of the Rigvedic weltschmerz. As Brian Smith (1989) has pointed out, the concerns reflected in the ritual and action-oriented universe of the Veda betray a preoccupation, not with apprehending or cognizing reality, but with constructing it, not *grasping* the real but *making* real. Notably, this already prefigures the *jñāna-karma* opposition later exaggerated by the two mīmāṃsās. The means by which this is accomplished is ritual activity, which is the 'cosmos-making tool', the 'workshop in which all reality was forged' (Smith 1989, p.51). Creation is sustained by activity, human and divine, determined according to various articulations of cosmic order, as codified in the *brahman*—formulations of truth or poetic formulae—activated and exploited in Vedic ritual. This is one way in which linguistic formulations are activated or realized in action and contribute to the creative act.

The construction of such a cosmos proceeds by a grossification of creative energy into the physical universe explicated through various models, as for instance from the evolution of elements (*bhūta*), or in the various personifications of the creative process, such as Prajāpati, Puruṣa, Viśvakarma or Hiraṇyagarbha. The creative energy is focused and channelized in ritual, what Smith (1989, p.64) refers to as the "structuring effect of ritual", whose internal logic reflects cosmic connections microcosmically and contributes to the maintenance of cosmic order. The pioneering work of Paul Mus and Lilian Silburn has also contributed to showing how the sacrificer's own self was constructed out of ritual activity. Such construction identified the sacrificer with the cosmos and Prajāpati, whose primordial self-construction constituted the original act of sacrifice. In parallel one finds missing a static conception of the universe. Creativity is not exhausted in the production of the world, but rests in an unstable equilibrium sustained by ritual action, in the absence of which the world would slowly deteriorate. *Ṛta*, a central term for cosmic order in the *Ṛgveda,* is not a pre-established, autonomous principle transcendentally governing the world; it is in constant need of being upheld, an upholding which becomes a central function of ritual, the means available in the human realm of realizing the creative potential of the Word (*vāk*). Vedic cosmology also neither posits an absolute, transcendent creator-god existing necessarily, nor conceives of creation as a *fait accompli.* As Dandekar (1972, 3) points out, "according to the Ṛgveda, creation is not a single definite act— it is regarded as ever proceeding. It is a process and not a single event". Various gods serve to execute distinct functions in the creative process, as personifications of creative acts. Importantly it is their specific activities that define their being. Take away the characteristic activity and there is no god. There is no place in this universe of an *ineffective* god, a god who does or effects nothing but is simply god by some inherent or natural divinity or godliness.

Gonda, Kahrs and others have clarified that disciplines such as semantic analysis (*nirukta*) seem to have inherited this mode of analysis. *Nirvacana* worked on the premise that the description of an entity comprised an analysis of the entity into its characteristic act. The idea that root-meaning (*dhātvartha*) denotes an action flows into the theories of the grammarians. With some exceptions, the grammatical tradition is unanimous on the construal of root-meaning as action (*kriyā*) or becoming/ occurring (*bhāva*). Again, the grammatical conception of the verb (*ākhyāta*) as the fulcrum of a sentence, the parallel subordination of the subject, and the *kāraka* theory (dealt with in Chapter 4) all point towards the actional and processual semantics that dominated these Vedic sub-disciplines, going on to influence key Pūrva Mīmāṃsā concepts.

It may be possible to trace a genealogy of this line of thinking. The description of a thing's essence in terms of its characteristic activity is consistent with the general action-centrism of Vedic accounts of creation, and the accompanying presupposition that what a thing *is* is determinable by what it *does* or accomplishes. The essence of the various gods consisted in their specific activities of maintaining the cosmic order (*ṛta*) and expressing their unique power (*brahman*) in their respective domains. This is precisely the model adopted by *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4.7 in explaining production and languaging in terms of functional segmentation. The centrality of the creative process, and the general premium placed on divine and human action as key to the sustenance of the world, perhaps led to the first etymological reflections (*niruktis*) offering explanations of words in terms of the characteristic action signified by them, and the centering of verbal action in sentential analysis. Such a semantics of

I identify this ethic and metaphysic of process, action and production in terms of what I refer to as the *bhāva* paradigm, accommodating the theoretical articulation of such related notions as *bhāvanā*, *kriyā*, *karma* and *kāraka*. *Bhāva* (process/being/becoming) will thus come into play as identifying an ideology, articulated in grammar, ritual theory and hermeneutics, signifying the *philosophical* opposition to the Advaitic conception of Being (*sat*). I engage this opposition in Chapter 4 as explicating the grammatical tension between the paradigms of *bhāva* and *sat*, the former determining the shape that theory takes for the grammarians and ritual theorists, the latter for the Advaitins following Śaṃkara. Adopting an interdisciplinary and intersectarian perspective on *bhāva* in early Indian intellectual history can therefore reveal a shared set of presuppositions across disciplines as diverse as grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), semantic analysis (*nirukta*), *mīmāṃsā* (Vedic hermeneutics), ritual theory (*kalpa*), meditative praxis (*yoga*), even dramaturgy (*nāṭya*). While these various genres exploit different senses of the polysemic domain of *bhāva*, such as 'state' or 'emotion' (in dramaturgy), 'existent thing' (in Buddhist and Brahmanic yogic praxis), 'becoming' or 'process' (in *vyākaraṇa*) etc., they all connote a sense of *emergent* being, that is, a state, emotion or thing that is cultivated or otherwise brought into being dependent on a set of productive causes, motives or triggers. The Upanishadic paradigm of *sat*, on the other hand, denotes Being in its non-emergent constitutive aspect, as the horizon of the emergence of particular existents and emergents. *Bhāva* or being/existence is thus theorized in dynamic and processual terms, echoing the grammarian's intuition that it signifies the bare processuality conveyed by any verbal root (*dhātvartha*). As I argue in Chapter 4, it is this metaphysical framework that sees everything through the lens of the inherent dynamism of being against which Śaṃkara, following the Upaniṣads, develops an account of non-action.

What appears to be an intra-Mīmāṃsa opposition of action (*karma*) and knowledge (*jñāna*), turns out to be, therefore, representative of deeper metaphysical faultlines. Edwin Gerow has discussed the cross-cultural significance of the grammatical tradition's "rationale for the transformation of a word for 'action' (*karma*) into the status of a world- or reality-principle in Indian speculation, a status that words for 'being'

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action continued to be a central motif in the speculations of the earliest grammarians, hermeneutists and philosophers such that one may speak of a *brāhmaṇa-nirukta-vyākaraṇa-kalpa* nexus.

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enjoy in our own" (Gerow 1982; 90), further noting that '*karma*' ought to be rendered, not as το πραγμα but as το ον; that is, *karma* does not merely signal a philosophy of action, but in fact a theory of being as such, what it means for an entity, for anything at all, *to be*. It is against this paradigm of *bhāva* that Śaṃkara develops a non-actional and non-agential account of the nature of subjectivity. Eivind Kahrs also notes the following about the grammatical sense of *bhāva*:

> Thus *bhāva* would be a kind of substratum for the fact that something is taking place. It is always there as a constant possibility, and it is subject to these six modifications when it is realised by a finite verb form, a verbal noun, or verb and noun in general in a sentence. Thus *bhāva* is expressive of the fact that 'something [hitherto unspecified] is taking place', much in the same way as 'it is' when we say 'it is raining' or similar impersonal constructions where no specific agent is stated (Kahrs 2013, 323).[40]

With respect to this paradigm, construing *being* literally as an action noun, an incessant taking place, the Advaitic Brahman turns out to be rather a novelty and exception, with the intellectual center of gravity in this period seeming to lie on the side of processual and actional accounts of reality. In fact, this obtaining context best provides the motivating basis of Śaṃkara's thought; it becomes possible and necessary to recover a non-actional, non-processual pole of reality that does not submit to Vedic (and non-Vedic) action-centrism determining the shape and content of *śāstra*. It is perhaps in this spirit that Kahrs argues that "not all Brahmanical soteriological tradition is about knowing. It is also in various ways about doing, and the notion of *bhāva* ties together all of these" (Kahrs 2013, 328).

Nonetheless, it is the ethic of *doing* and *constructing/producing* that turns out to be the status quo, the established ideology determining shastric priorities, as I understand, even for an allegedly knowledge-centric tradition like Advaita. For one, self-knowledge is mediated, as discussed in Chapter 2, as an elaborate *noetic* ritual that mirrors and tracks a ritual logic of performance but deploys it towards opposite purposes: not the production or attainment of ritually mediated realities but the noetic 'attainment' of self. Śaṃkara's Advaita

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[40] Sections of the second half of Kahrs' article (2013) bear a striking resemblance, both in argument and language, with Edwin Gerow's 1982 essay, "*Kiṃ Karma* (What is Karma?): An Exercise in Philosophical Semantics". Gerow is nowhere cited or referred to in the article. These sections pertain to the discussion of the passive-voice (*bhāve-prayoga*) and its philosophical significance that Gerow deftly draws out in its relevance to the development of the theory of karma in his own essay.

thus involves, in my understanding, a sophisticated adoption of ritual procedures with a concurrent repudiation of the program of bringing into being. This is mediated by two maneuvers. Ritual is first internalized and psychologized, a phenomenon already at work in the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas* but, as opposed to them, is now dictated by epistemic and truth-conducive procedures.[41]

Self-knowledge can thereby remain an epistemic enterprise even as such seeing is mediated by all kinds of procedures and truth-conducive activities adapted from ritual, and which exceed the paradigmatic knower-known (*pramātṛ-prameya*) framework of knowledge generation well-known to *pramāṇa-śāstra*. Such a framework (of knower-knowing-knowledge) is clearly debunked by Śaṃkara as irrelevant to self-knowledge. Developing such a notion of 'truth-conducive activity', oxymoronic as it appears, will be crucial to the articulation of the ritual dimension of Advaita. For me this comprises one of the most intriguing developments in Advaita: the manner by which it inserts ritual technologies into what is finally an ostensibly epistemic enterprise. Yet, as pointed out earlier, the distinctive sense in which the Advaita program may be termed epistemic—the fact that it does not submit itself to the knower-known framework—suggests that this knowledge is already bound to a ritual and action-centric ecosystem in which its epistemic aspects are well integrated. The liberative transformation such knowledge is supposed to engender in the visions of personal liberation such as Advaita's is already indexed to a weighty conception of *bhāva,* that is, the transformation of and bringing into being—of a new self, a new mode of being, a new identity—that implicates all dimensions of one's being and bodily identity in the process of liberation. It may be possible, then, to synthesize the epistemic features of a tradition with its ritual dimensions, insofar as the ritually transmuted personal identity of the subject is epistemically regulated and responsive all along the way.

Advaita will thus be seen to endorse a ritual mode of thinking, captured eminently, for instance, by Clooney in his elaboration of the system of Jaimini—invoking the *doing* subject as the one primarily addressed and implicated in such thinking; the proper subject of shastric injunction and instruction. Philosophically, this position will be reminiscent of Martin Heidegger's critique of the dominance of the epistemic glance in

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[41] Thus keeping it dependent on the nature of the thing (*vastusvarūpa*) itself, as opposed to the creative application of thought in ritual, not so bound by epistemic constraints.

modern philosophy from Descartes to Husserl, pushing him to conceive of phenomenology as going beyond the subject's epistemic orientation towards the world and accommodating all kinds of being-there (*da sein*) that may be as, or perhaps more, intrinsic to worldly being than the epistemic. This includes a reversal of the long history of Western thought that has given more importance to the *knowing* subject than the *doing* subject. We see a parallel development in the case of an ascendant *pramāṇaśāstra* in second-millennium India, with philosophers across traditions debating the nature, kinds and limits of knowing, making logic and epistemology the core of shastric intellectual activity. The figure of the epistemic agent (*pramātṛ*)—in a relation of knower-known with the world it inhabits— thus emerges as the primary, one may say, hegemonic location of theoretical debate and polemics. Nonetheless, while Advaita is not unaffected by this discourse, it is deeply responsive to the subject's non-epistemic comportments and ways of being in the world, furnishing, as I explore in Chapter 3, an embodied hermeneutics of the self and its entanglements at various levels of material and worldly being; the 'total subject', not merely an epistemic one, as Debabrata Sinha reminds us in his articulation of an Advaitic phenomenology of embodiment (Sinha 1985).

VI.   Thinking Ritually: Action & Rituogrammatics

The grammatical paradigm has often been recognized as determinative of the styles and method of Indian philosophy, on par with the role geometrical thinking is supposed to have played in Western philosophy (Staal 1965, Ingalls 1954). Nonetheless, perhaps we ought to be speaking, not so much of Euclid and Pāṇini in the same breath, but Euclid and Āpastamba. That is, grammar itself may be seen to have a provenance in the circles of ritual that prioritize action as the explanans and explanandum of theory. This also has the virtue of explaining why, to begin with, traditional *vyākaraṇa* also relies on action as intrinsic to the explanation of radical, verbal and sentential meaning, while grammars need not and typically do not take this route. Ritual and ritual theory, however, outside of their clear pertinence to Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, have not been considered relevant to the philosophical development of thought, and do not quite have the eminent status attributed to grammar. Approached as a religious or socio-cultural phenomenon attached to the human-scientific disciplines of sociology, anthropology and religion, ritual is prevented from speaking more directly

to the *philosophical* understanding of Indian philosophy. Such regimentation of ritual theory, and the elevation

of the discipline of linguistics in the West in early to middle twentieth-century, partially explain the latter's

status as the alleged mother of the sciences and philosophy.[42] For instance, "In the West, the recognition that

linguistic structures play a decisive role in philosophy is slowly gaining ground. In India, it has long been

explicit" (Staal 1965, 160). Nonetheless, rituality and ritual theory can and ought to be restored as a location

of thematic and methodological resource of philosophy in like manner as linguistics. If anything, what are

taken to be originally linguistic conceptions, now well-known to be determinative of many subsequent

methodological developments in Indian philosophy, have a simultaneously and often eminently ritual origin.

This applies to a central grammatical category in the dissertation, *kārakatva*, about which Madhav Deshpande

has noted: "Pāṇini's syntactic prototypes, in all likelihood, have a genetic association with his acquaintance

with Vedic ritual, as well as with his keen analysis of prototypical linguistic behavior" (Deshpande 1991, 478).

But already Renou had earlier noticed:

> These stylistic and terminological parallels between ritual and grammatical theory show that
> we are dealing with disciplines which originated in the same circles, but which answered
> complementary needs. Both pertain to the practice of the *śiṣṭa*, the specialists…When dealing
> with a particular term, it is not easy to establish whether it originated with the grammarians
> or the ritualists: in the absence of a fixed chronology of texts, and with the general
> parallelism of techniques in ancient India, such a search becomes arbitrary. However, in the
> majority of the cases it is clear that the point of departure lies in the religious texts. Grammar
> appears as a specialized investigation within the larger domain of explicit ritual science. The
> extent and importance of the religious literature, the undeniable priority of the *mantras* and of
> the ritual forms which they presuppose, invite us to look for the origins in that domain
> (Renou 1942, 456).

I take Renou's suggestion seriously that "grammar appears as a specialized investigation within the

larger domain of explicit ritual science", further exploring this link in the Advaita of Śaṃkara and his

successors. Paul Kiparsky has similarly argued that:

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[42] Even though ritual theory was also seeing considerable activity around this time. This is all the more ironic since, as we see
below, a crucial element of both disciplines, *syntax*, gained weight as explanatory category. One could for instance, speak of the
syntax of rituals or the syntax of cultural forms, as much as the syntax of languages.

The science of language in India probably has its ultimate intellectual roots in the richly developed science of ritual. The sūtra style of analysis and some of the technical concepts of grammatical description originated in the methods developed for codifying complex Vedic sacrifices. On a philosophical level, ritual is also probably the origin of a leading idea behind grammar as well as other disciplines such as yoga in ancient India: that human activities, even those normally carried out in an unconscious or unselfconscious way, can be analyzed by explicit rule systems, and that performing those activities in awareness of the rules that govern them brings religious merit (Kiparsky 2005, 2918).

The emphasis on rule-following brings out another crucial element of the methodological presuppositions of these thinkers of language and ritual, the focus on syntax and form, most eloquently developed by Staal. Following the intuition that ritual may not have an immediately evident *meaning* but certainly has manifest *structure*, Staal focuses on such phenomena as embedding, modification and recursivity in the *Śrauta Sūtras*. Staal is able to identify "certain very specific and unobvious rules"—phrase-structure rules, transformational rules and self-embedding rules—that occur in the syntax of both ritual and language. Crucial to Staal's account is the freshness with which he poses the question of whether syntax (as we know it) originated in ritual or language, testing our common-sense about the naturalness of syntax to language. Indeed it is not unimaginable to conceive of syntax as a sort of survival into language of a phenomenon originating in ritual. After all, as Staal suggests, the rigidity of syntax (as a feature of languages) demands explanation and, noting the *compulsiveness* that follows upon all language and ritual performance, he poses the question of its necessity and origin. Meaning and communication, after all, may proceed (and often does) without such 'ritualistic rigidity' characteristic of linguistic syntax. While Staal leaves the question open, he leans towards the origin of language and linguistic phenomenon in ritual:

> It is we who are obsessed by language and who have (despite survivals) lost touch with ritual. Hence it is only natural that the view that language is primary, would appeal to us. But for Early Man, ritual was at least as important as language is for us. Ritual, after all, is much older than language. Unlike language, it can originate on all fours. It is common among animals…Another hypothesis is consistent with the view that syntax has a ritual origin: the hypothesis that syntax is older than semantics…In Vedic ritual, as in *mantra* meditation, the function of language is phonetic and syntactic, not semantic…I am inclined to believe that what we witness here is not a curious collection of exotic facts, but a remnant or resurgence of a pre-linguistic stage of development, during which man or his ancestors used sound in a purely syntactic or ritual manner (Staal 1980, 136).

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The idea that "Early Man was just as obsessed by ritual as Later Man is by language" (discounting for the moment its essentialist formulation), while it may not come any closer to deciphering the contested question of the meaning/purpose of ritual activity, does serve to foreground the *naturalness of language* and the simultaneous *alienness of ritual* typical of the recent intellectual activity around these disciplinary domains. In asking this question he makes us rethink our own attitudes towards them and why they have followed such divergent trajectories in modernity in spite of their structural kinships.

There is a preponderant narrative casting Indian thought as eminently formal, even locating the origins of structuralism in such Vedic forms of ritual and grammatical intellectual activity; from Al-George's claim that we may account for modern structuralism finding many of its concepts and descriptive techniques anticipated in the texts of Indian grammarians (Al-George 1968, 3)[43] to Annette Wilke's observation that grammar in India produced at a very early stage a structural theory. People learned to think in structures and abstract from the material (Wilke 2010, 223). But already Staal had announced in 1982: "Emphasis on form is a general characteristic of Indian civilization. The Vedas refer more to the forms of language and rites, than to their meanings and function" (Staal 1982, 28). Nonetheless, the pertinence of a rituogrammatic frame to Advaita is limited if construed solely in structuralist and formalist terms. Such a frame also connotes, often enough, a metaphysics. If one were to attend specifically to the substance of cosmogonic accounts from the earliest Rigvedic strata to later Brahmanic material and even the early Upaniṣads, language will unveil itself as an ontological principle whose formal features may subsequently be analyzed into rules, though not without conserving its creative and (re)productive features (as retained in the *kāraka* theory for instance). Cosmogony integrates ritual and language in a unitive framework presupposing an actional ontology. As we saw in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4, language does not merely name but *births* what it is naming in the process. Language henceforth possesses not only a communicative function but a creative one; it is co-implicated in the very

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[43] For instance, "F. de Saussure's assertion that language is a form, not a substance, was a divorce from the substantialist tradition starting with Aristotle. The Indian ritualist thinking…is not dominated by a substantialist point of view, being an eminently formal one. In the mentality of the archaic world, any object can be substituted to another object to the extent in which they both fulfill the same function within an analogous structure; things are not considered as to their substance only, but, particularly, as to the function they fulfill, to the system of relations and participations they are included in" (Al-George 1968, 4).

constitution of an entity even before (or even as) it enters the space of communication and transaction. In Western philosophy this will be reminiscent of the Heideggerian vision of language that 'worlds' (as the 'house of Being'), intertwined with Being in all sorts of ways.

But the example serves to further demonstrate that such a linguistic co-constitution of the world is negotiated in the context of specific motives and purposes, that is, the pragmatic horizon of languaging and naming. A certain shape of clay—to invoke the well-known *Chāndogya* reference[44]—is designated 'pot' to the extent that it serves the function of holding, storing, acting as receptacle. Other shapes the clay may adopt remain nameless (and thereby 'beingless') insofar as they are 'functionless', unidentifiable and unresponsive to worldly activity. Outside of this pragmatic horizon, entities would lose the individuating motives that identify and isolate them, bestowing upon them their *being*. The clay as ontological mold, then, serves as a double metaphor not only to designate the inherent *motivatedness* underneath all our ontologies, but also to implicate the actors, activities and instruments of action involved in the individuation of entities. Such action-centrism integrates emic accounts of ritual creation with Sanskrit grammar in a manner that better explains the 'fortuitous' equivalences of ritual and language, going beyond merely 'formal' and 'methodological' equivalence to which scholarship has confined itself.

More recently, the work of Francis Clooney and Annette Wilke has utilized the nexus of language, grammar and ritual to articulate the inner workings, respectively, of the systems of Mīmāṃsā and Bhartṛhari. While the case for a ritual provenance of Sanskrit syntax accounts for such crucial grammatical phenomenon as its verb-centrism and *kāraka* theory, Clooney ties Vedic *textuality* to the domain of ritual performance in a way that it often becomes impossible to speak of linguistic 'meaning' outside of a ritual-performative context; reminding us how the Mīmāṃsaka sees language 'with ritual eyes'. Restricting his analysis to four terms: *vākya, prakaraṇa, mantra, brāhmaṇa*, he notes that the 'meaning' (*artha*) of a sentence is typically a *ritual referent*: "[An] aspect of the ritual referred to by the words in the prose passage, and not a coherent syntactical meaning separable from the ritual context" (Clooney 1987, 669). Such a "ritual location" alone may determine the limits of a "sentence," and not some independent reading of the words contained therein. In other words,

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[44] *Chāndogya* 6, discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

"One cannot even read properly without knowing the ritual context" (Clooney 1987, 669). Linguistic *artha* (meaning), then, is indeterminable without taking into account the ritual *artha* (purposivity) identifying units of meaning:

> [T]he meaning of texts is ascertained by reference to ritual actions, which are themselves meaningful; meaning contributes to purposefulness, and purpose is first of all ritual purpose. The position suggests that for the Mīmāṃsakas, intelligibility— in the widest sense— is a property neither of independent texts, nor of the actions taken separately from the words pertaining to them, nor of external referents such as performers and gods, both of whom are merely actors within the language-ritual process. Rather, meaning is disclosed in the complex, multi-perspectival sacrificial event, which includes all these (Clooney 1987, 670).

What, if any, are the implications of this position for a not exclusively Vedic textuality theory of meaning? Is it possible to locate in 'the language-ritual process' a theoretical basis for a generalizable account of meaning generation and expression? If ritual signals, as it has both for Sanskrit grammarians and Vedic exegetes, a broader set of performative localities and actional contexts pervading mundane behavior, then a rituogrammatic framework can provide the requisite categories and tools to articulate an account of intelligibility in the widest sense, based on an actional analytical frame.[45]

In her analysis of the ritual manual *Paraśurāma-Kalpasūtra* of the Śrīvidyā Tāntric tradition, Annette Wilke has extended a unitary sentence view to the analysis of rites by developing an account of a 'unitary ritual view' (Wilke 2010). Her approach rests on the insight that categories of grammar, especially Bhartṛhari's analysis of sentential meaning, can be productively transposed onto a ritual sphere accounting for certain features of ritual, especially those that remain unexplained under current theories of ritual. It may thus be possible to articulate a syntax, morphology, pragmatics and even semantics of ritual based on a Bhartrharian model. This is a promising approach to ritual theory, speaking to the rituogrammatic transitivity and translatability of analytic categories emphasized here, although it may just have inverted the genealogy. Perhaps it is ritual itself, or actional frameworks influenced by ritual-centrism, that led Bhartṛhari to articulate a theory that is perfectly poised to be applied, subsequently (and retroactively), to a theoretical analysis of

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[45] Much later the *anvitabhidhāna* ('related designation') theory of the Prābhākaras will also ground the determination of meaning on the actional contexts undergirding expression and communication.

ritual. Whatever be the direction of causality, it is clear that the 'unitary sentence view' and the 'unitary ritual view' betoken a synthetic actional conceptual framework undergirding both. To cite Wilke,

> This is how ritual is conceived as well. We perceive actions and simultaneously some encompassing sense in and behind them. Similar to the linguistic *sphoṭa* which refers at once to the chains of sound, to the object referred to and to the mental image and cognition, ritual transports images of world order, sacred power, efficiency and so on…*sphoṭa* has for Bhartṛhari a material dimension (language sounds) and an immaterial one (meaning), it is both the physical sign which reveals itself to sensory perception as well as the signifier connoting something beyond the sound material. This means that Bhartṛhari does not strip language from its physical substrate, even when he speaks of conceptual and mental forms…Unlike Europe, India never gave up oral-aural communication systems even after developing written traditions. Bhartṛhari's language paradigm must be seen in the context of a performance culture and has therefore more affinities to ritual than the linguistic theories of the western scholars (Wilke 2010, 226).

The argument for a potentially ritual equivalent of linguistic *sphoṭa* is suggestive and Wilke is correct in situating Bhartṛhari's theories closer to a 'performance culture' than the ritually expurgated contemporary theories of language.[46] Wilke's extension of four crucial notions taken from Bhartṛhari's philosophy of language—temporal power/sequence, relation/inherence, means of expression and imagination/ construction—to the ritual sphere serves well to illumine how the categories of time, relationality, expression and construction are perfectly assimilable to the analysis of ritual, and action generally. They come together in procedures of 'world-making' and 'fractification of revelation' that unites linguistic expression and ritual creation as discussed here.[47]

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[46] Semiotics-inspired models have been a dominant mode of interpretation in ritual theory. The question is whether, conversely, it may not be fruitful to interpret language on the paradigm of ritual performativity. The scholarship engaged in this section may be read as suggesting likewise.

[47] Her application of such a Bhartṛhari-inspired unitary ritual view to a later Tantric text also confirms that the discernment of a rituogrammatic framework across disciplinary and confessional lines can reveal significant aspects of those traditions. Natalia Isayeva's articulation of the pulsating dynamism, creativity and world-making potency inherent in the systems of Gauḍapāda, Bhartṛhari and Abhinavagupta (Isayeva 1995) also indicates the discursive spread of such an entwining of the domains of ritual and language, reducing the conceptual distance between expression and creation, imagination and construction.

VII. Thinking Spiritually: Advaita & Rituogrammatics

As I hope to show, the Advaitic innovation upon and application of the rituogrammatic paradigm suggests more a program of 'world-unmaking' than 'world-making'. While still viewing the world 'with ritual eyes', it does not see virtue in the productive, proliferative thrust of Vedic ritual. Rather, an introspective turn away from a logic of ritual productivity towards attending to obtaining features of the self is commended in an epistemic itinerary culminating in self-knowledge. This turn away from the processual to non-processual dimensions of reality as most pertinent to the well-being of the individual subject to Vedic instruction-injunction is often construed as a turn towards the inert substantiality of being. Advaita has thus stood in the scholarly imagination as a trope for metaphysical conservatism, a variety of substance metaphysics grounded in the claim of Brahman as the ontological substrate of everything. The *Advaitaness* of any novel iteration of Advaita, even outside of a Sanskritic cosmopolis in the many vernacular South Asian tongues or modern Western neo-Advaitic representations, can be identified by isolating minimally two features: a final recourse to Brahman and the identification and reduction of everything, notably the personal self, to it. Since the early Buddhist responses to Vedic and Upanishadic thematics, Advaita has also come to stand in as keeper of an intransigent symbolic opposition[48] between Brahmanic and Buddhist ethico-philosophical programs. The assertion or denial of self—with their attendant tropes, respectively, of control or lack thereof, a fundamental ontology (or ontotheology) or the reluctance to posit a final *theos* or being—serves as an ideological fissure dividing two discursive formations allegedly resting on not only divergent metaphysical but equally ethico-political programs.

Here the greatest interpretive value of some of Steven Collins' observations lies in showing the socio-cultural, and not merely philosophical or doctrinal, work done by some of the fundamental oppositions set up in early Buddhist apologetics and polemics (Collins 1990). Something of such a *symbolic* opposition continues well unto this day, both in scholarly and wider perceptions. The persistence of such an opposition perhaps testifies to some sort of correlation between inner textual, ideological or institutional dynamics, and the

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[48] For more on the nature of this opposition, refer Collins 1982 from whom I borrow the phrase 'intransigent symbolic opposition'.

ethico-politics they have come to represent. But the temptation to such an overarching opposition has repeatedly elided a far more complex reality. In the ensuing chapters I employ apparently counterintuitive frames in the interpretation of Advaita, locating its core not in the stolid, inert being of Brahman but in the interesting tension obtaining between action-centrism and its non-actional basis. The use of actional frames will render transparent many features of Advaitic praxis.

While there has been increasing caution in applying western process-philosophical frameworks to the interpretation of South Asian, particularly Buddhist, philosophy, a vague shared commitment to an ontology of process and flux has nonetheless kept scholars occupied in drafting a cross-cultural philosophical enterprise. Buddhist discourse has been recruited as model of critiquing both foundationalist theology and metaphysics of substance.[49] Here 'Brahmanism' comes to stand in as the South Asian equivalent for the substance-metaphysical and onto-theological tradition of European thinking challenged by process-philosophical frameworks from Hegel, Heidegger and Spinoza to William James, Henri Bergson or A.N. Whitehead. The question is whether the network of themes collected under the rubric of Brahmanism, and particularly Vedānta, actually do the work of standing in such symbolic and philosophical opposition as counter-narratives of Western philosophy[50] require from their own intellectual history. While this is not obvious at all, Advaita has remained, in spite of a deeply elusive purport, an exemplar of essentialist accounts of subjectivity, causality and ontology. This continues even as the overarching symbolism just outlined has been challenged by the outline of a deeply processual thematics of self and world in the *Āraṇyaka*, *Brāhmaṇa* and early Mīmāṃsā genres (by Lilian Silburn, Francis Clooney, Eivind Kahrs, Stephanie Majcher and others). We have already noted Kahrs' attempt to isolate "a different strand in Brāhmaṇic thought" where ultimate

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[49] Keeping only, for the time being, to scholars of early Buddhism, such a rhetoric may be discerned in the works of Richard Gombrich, Noa Ronkin, Rahula Walpula, Bhikkhu Bodhi and many others.

[50] Much discourse in contemporary Continental thought may be read as providing such original counter-narratives of Western thought, each of which weaves its own hegemonic narrative it seeks to counter or undermine. These could be articulated in terms of a metaphysics of presence, ontotheology, substance metaphysics, some form of idealism, rationalism or logocentrism. While each thinker is unique in his diagnosis of the central malady, they often tend to share a common set of values and strategies, centering around openness (or futurity), play, some form of materialism, process, body or immanence. The work, for instance, of Nietzsche, Spinoza, Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida, Whitehead, Bergson, or Bataille will fit this description. Schools of Indian philosophy do not appear to be revisionary in this way at first glance, but as co-existing (if conflicting) snapshots of reality that need not be reconciled with each other or accommodated under a grand procession or unfolding of truth. The setting up of the Buddhist-Brahmanic opposition, however, serves precisely to construct such an emancipatory trajectory in South Asian intellectual history.

reality is not the 'unchanging, inert entity' it is for Vedantins such as Śaṃkara but a dynamic non-dualism, a universal of action (Kahrs 2013, 317).

Ignoring the question of whether this is really true of Śaṃkara's system—and its concomitant valuation as a system founded on conservative ideals and an ultimately inert being—it is an open question whether such revisions tend to disintegrate or further consolidate symbolic orders. Salvaging 'trends' within orthodox Brahmanism tending towards non- or anti- essentialist/substantialist accounts can keep extant ethico-politico-metaphysical oppositions intact, even cement them further, insofar as the foundationalist core of Brahmanic thought is reaffirmed in infinitely repeated discursive gestures. My reading of Advaita as noetic ritual attempts to disengage the Advaita of Śaṃkara and his successors from some of these familiar gestures and turns of thought. However, I do not engage with process theory as such. I am concerned with Advaita's immersion in the rituogrammatic paradigm and its unfoldment as a noetic ritual, which provide an ideal set of analytic tools to articulate Advaita's performative and processual foci. More generally, ritual and grammatical categories can speak to a characteristically South Asian articulation of processual themes employing emic categories including but not restricted to *bhāva* and *bhāvanā*, *sādhya* and *sādhana*, *kriyā, karman* and *kārakatva*, *vyāpāra*, *utpatti* and *utpāda*.

Crystal-Gazing: The Texture of Advaitic Rituogrammatics

To state a thesis at the very outset, Śaṃkara is committed to the belief that the world is constituted as a process and product, such that the deep structure of any stable, abiding realities will be seen to be permeated by categories of action and process. Śaṃkara takes recourse to a variety of concepts to communicate this. The world is seen as a conglomeration of action, factors of action and their result (*kriyākārakaphala*): "The differentiated universe consists of means and ends…[T]his differentiated and undifferentiated universe is made up of action, their factors and their results, consists only of name, form and action…".[51] As we saw at the very beginning of Chapter 1, it is alternatively described in terms of name, form and action

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[51] kathaṃ punarasya vyākṛtāvyākṛtasya kriyākārakaphalātmanaḥ saṃsārasya nāmarūpakarmātmakataiva. BUB 1.6.1. Madhavananda tr.

(*nāmarūpakarma*) (BUB 1.4) or as constituted by desire and action (*kāmakarma*). Exploiting their etymological sense, both *saṃsāra* or *jagat* (Sanskrit words for 'world') are used to evoke the sense of a universe constantly in motion or involving the incessant movement of sentient life from one plane of existence or embodied form to another. The world has a continually fabricated being, suggesting that every existent thing is created or fabricated out of sentient, human or divine activity. This was explicated earlier in terms of *bhāva*. Śaṃkara may also be read as an interesting philosopher of creation or cosmogony as sport. While the concept of *līlā* (sport/playfulness) has a complex history, Śaṃkara has offered some of the most articulate accounts of the creation of the world out of sportive desire and acts (refer BSB 2.1.33 amongst other discussions). All these accounts necessitate reading Śaṃkara as an interesting philosopher of process in his own right, even if they may appear to deflect from the Advaitic hermeneutic focus on Brahman. On the contrary, I argue that they are necessary to understand the work that Brahman does for Śaṃkara and are integral to his thought, not merely the characteristics of an unreal world that will be cast aside at the dawn of knowledge.

This forms the second-half of the thesis: if *jagat* or *saṃsāra* is the being of the world implicated in action, instruments and products of action, Brahman is the being of the world independent of its implication in action and its results. They are two sides of the same coin and the former presupposes the latter. This may be articulated in his own idiom. Following the model of ritual instrumentality, Śaṃkara conceives of existent things in their relationship to the production of some new being or entity. As in the logic of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* passage considered earlier (BUB 1.4.7), everything is either an emergent or instrumental in the production of an emergent. Existents are described in terms of the function they fulfill in a larger productive network relating existent things (*bhūtavastu*) with potential emergent things (*bhavyavastu*).

This clarifies a core aspect of the work 'Brahman' does in the system of Śaṃkara: Brahman (to be precise, *nirguṇa-brahman*) is simply a name for reality appropriated in our pragmatic and actional engagements; existence prior to its functional segmentation as we saw early on with respect to *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4. In other words, if everything in the world is understood by Śaṃkara as implicated in actions, instruments and functions, i.e., reality appropriated or *taken* in some aspect or form—explained by the Upaniṣad in terms of

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their pragmatic function—then Brahman is the constitutive horizon of the emergence of functional

segmentations and the functional being of things.[52]

This may be understood in terms of the action-instrument-result (*kriyākārakaphala*) structure of

everyday existence employed by Śaṃkara and the corresponding *kāraka* theory of the grammarians.[53] Entities

may fulfill their actional roles by assuming the status of any one or more grammatical *kāraka*s or factors of

action. States of affairs represent entities playing some *kāraka* role, as agent, object, instrument etc. (which,

for Advaita, are not merely post-hoc functions of autonomous realities, but what furnishes their functional

being at the first place). Brahman, then, is that aspect of reality that pre-exists its *kāraka* deployments and

Śaṃkara refers to it as such—*akāraka* (US I.17.80).

In another register, if the processual and generative features of the world invoke *bhāva* (productive

being/becoming) as explanatory category, *sat* is used to connote the underlying Being subject to ontolinguistic

differentiation and segmentation with respect to practical activity. *Bhāva* and *sat* then are not oppositional,

representing distinct moments in the creative process; reality conceived either with respect to action and

actional segmentation or independent of it. This complementarity offers a unique account of the relationship

between philosophies of substance and process. They are not in a mutually inconsistent or supersessionist

relationship. As noted, philosophic-historical narratives of Western thought offered by philosophers of

process often take this route, setting philosophies of substance as a foil against which to offer an alternative

metaphysics. Tensions between varieties of Vedānta and Buddhism also get read along a similar oppositional

model. Wolfgang Fasching, amongst others, has offered a philosophical synthesis of processual and non-

processual dimensions of being in light of the respective Advaitic-Buddhist philosophical emphases on the

'abiding/permanent' and 'streaming' aspects of experience.[54] While the *sat-bhāva* distinction introduced here

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[52] Its reading as the constitutive horizon of experience is developed in Chapter 4 with respect to the *Taittirīya* Brahman definition
(*satyaṃ jñānam anantam brahma*).

[53] Refer Chapter 4 for a fuller discussion of Śaṃkara's critique of the *kāraka* framework.

[54] "So the indubitable evidence of my experiences in their very being-experienced is always their evidence as passing the thereby
'abiding dimension of first-personal experiencing'. And, therefore, the absolute evidence of my present existence is the evidence
of my present living through these streaming experiences. The being-experienced of the streaming experiences as streaming
implies the permanence of the actuality of experiencing itself, which is the being of my 'I'. Therefore I, qua consciousness, am
not the passing experiences, but rather their manifestation *as* passing, which does not pass with them: the abiding experiencing of
the changing experiences. So the question of whether the subject is something that can exist, in an irreducible sense, as one and

(and developed in Chapter 4) does not quite amount to the same thing, such a dual aspect of being as simultaneous abiding and streaming offers one way of interpreting the distinction.

All this is mirrored in the Advaitic use of the crystal metaphor, found across Śaṃkara's corpus (such as in BUB 4.3.30). The crystal (*sphaṭika*) is itself transparent, free of any self-nature or positive attributes. But when I gaze at the crystal placed in front of an object, it takes on the color and attributes of that object, now presumed as indistinct from them. The originally non-actional and non-qualified being likewise takes on the nature and attributes of (and thus becomes identified with) whatever emergents arise in the course of our practical engagements and purposes. Its ability to take on those attributes is, in fact, precisely a function of its own transparency or emptiness. The crystal after and before its perception through particular adjuncts (*upādhi*s) mirrors reality perceived in its untaken and taken aspects respectively.[55] This is a core argument of the thesis. Advaita displays a rituogrammatic organization of parts that is paradoxically geared towards the revelation of the being (*nirguṇa-brahman*) that pre-exists any ritual or pragmatic appropriation, its revelation (as one's own nature) directly resulting in the attainment of a central human aspiration—freedom or wholeness.[56] But it is not only its result-drivenness and instrumental organization of parts that suggests its perpetuation of the rituogrammatic paradigm. As discussed in Chapter 2, such a paradigm conceives of and describes beings in terms of the operational teleologies they participate in and the purposes they accomplish. The theoretical and descriptive categories, classifications, hierarchies and terminology—in short, the 'grammar' of such a paradigm—orders existents (and existence as such) along such a performative and operational hierarchy. Not only do we find an elaborate articulation of a grammar of ritual activity (and goal-oriented action in general)

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the same at different times, must, I believe, be answered in the affirmative: It only exists as now-transcending from the start; in contrast to the fleeting experiences it abides as the presence of the streaming experiences as streaming. Experiences only exist in being experienced, that is, experientially present, and they are essentially present as streaming, which implies the abidance of this presence itself. This abidance cannot be constituted by relations between momentary 'experience-stages', because there simply are no experience-stages that would not have their primary presence as temporally passing. That is: There is no experiential evidence prior to the evidence of the 'standing' of the experiencing 'I'" (Fasching 2010, 205-6).

[55] Crystals are also a good representation of the reversal of the ritual program that Advaita negotiates using precisely a rituogrammatic logic. They focus attention to phenomena occurring at the plane of seeing, perceiving, appearing, manifesting, everything that is more proximate to a *noetic* order than a *causal* one (discussed in Chapter 2). Advaitic rituality manifests at this plane of consciousness, not in the actual causal production of beings. Crystalgazing reflects the Advaitic epistemic turn to knowledge as the way out of the human predicament in a way that preserves the rituogrammatic logic inherited from its predecessors.

[56] Śaṃkara can therefore counterintuitively claim (BUB 4.4.22) that the purport of the whole Veda as such is the Self (and Self-knowledge) to which even ritual action is preparatory and subservient.

but, conversely, grammar is ritualized in the above sense of being deployed in the production of some result. Advaitic purport (*artha*), as I will show, subscribes to the same logic and instrumental organization of parts and depends on procedures analogous to, often identical with, those of grammar and ritual theory.

VIII.   The Advaitic Corpus: Śaṃkarādvaita and Greater Advaita

The textual focus of the rituogrammatic reading of Advaita attempted here will be the commentarial corpus of Śaṃkara, his *Upadeśasāhasrī*, and the work of some subsequent Advaitins such as Sureśvara, whose thinking tracks Śaṃkara closely with respect to the grammatical and performative foci of his thought.[57] I first address Śaṃkara's own works. His commentaries on the early Upaniṣads, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya*, as well as *Taittirīya*, will be a central focus. As is well known, many later Upaniṣads develop themes already articulated here, and Śaṃkara himself considers sections of these (*Taittirīya* 2, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4.3, *Chāndogya* 6) to be fundamental to the unfoldment of Brahman and the *ātman*-Brahman identity. I further engage with the verse portion of the *Upadeśasāhasrī,* centrally Chapter 18 but also others, that discuss crucial aspects of Advaitic grammar, particularly Advaitic morphology, sentential analysis and co-reference. They also supply an account of Advaitic psychology and theory of the person. Lastly, I read Śaṃkara's opening account of superimposition (*adhyāsabhāṣya*) in the *Brahmasūtra* commentary as well as his various intimations about Advaitic methodology across the work. The *adhyāsabhāṣya* represents Śaṃkara's deeply self-conscious articulation of his own program as a Vedānta Mīmāṃsā and Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā, wrapping the *Brahmasūtra* under the interpretive frame of superimposition as the obtaining and undeniable existential fact of the embodied subject. It will thus be crucial to the articulation of Advaita as a hermeneutics of embodiment discussed in Chapter 3. The context of the *Bhagavadgītā*, in time, genre and sensitivities, is further removed from the world of the Upaniṣads in which, as I understand, Śaṃkara feels most at home. Nonetheless his discussion of some of the verses (I mainly restrict myself to chapters 2 and 13) will be taken up in chapters 3 and 4.

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[57] With some exceptions, there is general consensus on the authenticity of the works under consideration as Śaṃkara's own. Likewise the *vārttika*s on Śaṃkara's commentaries on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Taittirīya*, along with the *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*, are generally recognized to be composed by Sureśvara.

The early Upanishadic context ideally situates my reading of Advaita in the grammatical and ritual features I intend to bring to the fore. This may be by virtue of its chronological proximity to the *Āraṇyaka* and *Brāhmaṇa* literature with which it exists in a conceptual continuum. Moreover, it locates Śaṃkara's understanding of Advaitic method in the teacher-pupil dynamic patent in these early strata of the genre. This pedagogical location grounds my reading of the performative and ritual dimension of Advaita emphasized in the dissertation. Others have attempted such a reading by focusing, for instance, on the *Brahmasūtra* (Clooney) or *Upadeśasāhasrī* (Locklin) to determine the sense of Advaita's rituality. I hope to complement this work by focusing on the early Upaniṣads and their pedagogical location in developing its ritual dimension. Such a pedagogical focus in the interpretation of Śaṃkara has been foregrounded by the work of Swami Dayananda and Suthren Hirst, according to whom Śaṃkara is first a teacher and then commentator or philosopher (Suthren Hirst 1990). There is virtue in following this approach in the interpretation of the meaning and significance of Śaṃkara's corpus. In fact, Śaṃkara considers the Upaniṣads as the single direct cause of freedom, offering a semantic analysis (*nirukti*) of the term '*upaniṣad*' as that which completely overcomes and uproots worldliness (*saṃsāra*) and its causes (*sahetu*) (BUB 1.1.1).

The focus on Śaṃkara himself as the key Advaitic thinker of engagement is owing to a few reasons. Firstly, Śaṃkara is comprehensive. Unlike commentators and founders of other schools of Vedānta, Śaṃkara offers comprehensive commentaries on not only the Bhagavadgītā and *Brahmasūtra*, what subsequently became standard practice, but also the major Upaniṣads. Not only are his commentaries the earliest fully intact and coherent reading we have of all three source genres,[58] his practice of profuse cross-referencing and citation introduces a new radical model of inter-textual coherence. Moreover, as the earlier discussion clarified, in his epistemic focus on Advaita as primarily concerned with *vastusvarūpapratipādana*—attending to and being constrained by the nature of reality—Śaṃkara introduces an eminently philosophical reading of the Upaniṣads that resonates with various subsequent Advaitic philosophers well into modernity. At the same time, as Vetter (1979, 125) has noted, Śaṃkara is one of the first to apply principles of *mīmāṃsā* to the interpretation of the Upaniṣads, and does so comprehensively to produce a coherent and defensible

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[58] Śaṃkara makes reference to some earlier commentators whose works have not survived apart from stray references to them.

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alternative reading of Vedic import (than that of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā). Other innovations in the grammatical sphere, including his accounts of oblique indication (*lakṣaṇa*) and co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) become a source for centuries of subsequent Advaitic attention to language. The emergence of Advaitic sub-traditions into Vivaraṇa, Bhāmati and Vārtika too follows from their respective readings of key moments in Śaṃkara's commentary.[59] Śaṃkara is deftly able to weave together all the elements of Advaita as philosophy, hermeneutics, experiential praxis, pedagogy and grammar without a one-sided development in just a single direction. The result is a rich layering of text operative at various simultaneously, permitting subsequent thinkers to extract or expand upon one or the other systemic elements.[60] His work remains a fertile resource of ideas, arguments and approaches, even if there is disagreement and innovation in points of doctrine and method across classical and vernacular Advaita-aligned thinkers and writers.

The decisiveness, therefore, with which Śaṃkara weaves the texture of Advaita for subsequent thinkers to develop, resist and innovate guides my engagement with Advaita. Sureśvara, his student and contemporary, and Sarvajñātman track his thinking closely in their philosophy of language. Sureśvara also centers action (and non-action) as a central category to think with, and I refer to his works (*Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣyavārtikā* and *Taittirīyopaniṣadbhāṣyavārtikā*) at appropriate points to clarify Śaṃkara's own. Nor is Śaṃkara's importance to the later Advaita restricted to the shastric (or scholastic) realm, that is, the domain of formal Sanskrit discourse and erudite commentary. Vernacular thinkers like Niścaldās and many others adopt characteristically Shankarite concepts and methodologies, and I cite them at appropriate points to discuss the evolution of certain methodological tools (such as *adhyāropāpavāda*) from Śaṃkara's time.

Thus while keeping focus on Śaṃkara, I sometimes engage later thinkers in a conceptual and methodological continuity we may call Śaṃkarādvaita (or a Shankarite Advaita), including, apart from his immediate disciples, sub-commentators like Prakāśātman, medieval thinkers such as Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya and Sadānanda, or modern Advaitins such as Swami Satchidanandendra and Swami Dayananda. We are already

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[59] Corresponding, respectively, to the doctrines of *pratibimbavāda*, *avacchedakavāda* and *ābhāsavāda*, but also suggestive of other points of difference in doctrine and method. Refer Venkatkrishnan for a more detailed assessment of *Bhāmati* and *Vivaraṇa*.

[60] It is perhaps for this reason that Paul Deussen and others found his thinking 'unsystematic' and inconclusive in points of doctrine that later Advaitins struggle to clarify and articulate, leading to various doctrinal differences.

familiar with some of the features of such an Advaita, including the focus on the capacities of language itself to generate immediate verbal cognition of Brahman. A further emphasis on an underlying methodology of *adhyāropāpavāda* (discussed in Chapter 3) or its equivalent may also be discerned. Such an Advaita is often a *scriptural* Advaita, as Bronkhorst notes in Śaṃkara's own case, to the extent that it takes the Upanishadic corpus as its point of departure and applies *mīmāṃsā* principles to its interpretation. But this categorization must be distinguished from two others that have come up, a *shastric* Advaita and a *śabdaprāmāṇika* Advaita. The former stays within the genre and sensibilities of formal Sanskrit discourse without necessarily claiming the Upaniṣads or Veda as the source and basis of its ideas.[61] Lastly, a *śabdaprāmāṇika* Advaita considers language, typically sentential comprehension of identity statements, as such to be the immediate cause of self-knowledge and liberation. Śaṃkara's happens to be all three but Advaita or Advaita-aligned texts may fall into one category without confirming to others. *Vicārasāgar* represents a case of an originally non-shastric, vernacular Advaita subsequently reformulated into the genre of Sanskrit *śāstra*. Texts such as this, the *Vṛttiprabhākara* or the *Vedāntamahāvākyabhāṣā* of the Niranjani monk Manohardas represent a *śabdaprāmāṇika* Advaita, but in vernacular form. Thus following Bronkhorst, while discerning non-scriptural Advaitas from scriptural is important, further nuances of genre and emphasis need to be acknowledged in assessing the true extent of Śaṃkarādvaita as a tradition centrally concerned with sentential comprehension as generative of self-knowledge.

The relation of Śaṃkarādvaita with what has been referred to as 'greater' Advaita or vernacular Advaita[62]—all kinds of non-shastric vernacular forms of Advaita—is therefore a complex one. Greater Advaita surveys the broader scope and appeal of Advaita beyond its shastric formulation as a pan-Indic web of networks and traditions, not necessarily following a top-down flow of concepts from śāstra to the vernacular. This reading of the wider reach and cultural diffusion of Advaita also seeks to resist a strand of scholarship according to which twentieth-century Indologists and figures like Swami Vivekananda repackaged and popularized Advaita as the alleged core of Hinduism responding to various colonial pressures. While this

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[61] The *Āgamaśāstra* of Gauḍapāda would perhaps fall in this category, and such texts as the *Mokṣopāya*, both of which are considered by Bronkhorst as examples of non-scriptural Vedānta.

[62] Allen 2017, Venkatkrishnan 2020 and others.

may provide perspective on anglicized forms of Advaita, it ignores the fact that diverse traditions, shastric and vernacular, flourished well into modernity and continue to do so. At the same time, one almost senses an apologetic tone in the recuperation of such a greater Advaita to the extent that, if only unwillingly, it reinscribes Advaita as the core of Hinduism or Brahmanism. But ironically it is precisely the reading of Advaita as such an alleged core, formulated under Indological and colonial contexts of Indian modernity, that is put into question. If anything, as Chapter 4 will discuss, the Advaitic Brahman constituted the outlier and exception to the norm of Brahmanic thought for centuries during which the intellectual center of gravity clearly rested on the side of processual and actional theories invoking *bhāva* and *kriyā* as key categories.

While the question of the direction of influence in the pan-Indic and now global diffusion of Advaita (and Neo-Advaita) has many dimensions, including the complex relation of shastric, scriptural, vernacular, *śabdaprāmāṇika* and anglicized Advaitas, it is worth noting that, perhaps, Hegel was not entirely wrong in identifying Advaita (and the philosophy of the Upaniṣads) as a variety of pantheism, if only to suit his needs of a global intellectual hierarchy of thought.[63] For, this is what 'Advaita' names at the most quotidian level, the view that divinity is immanent in creation, including, eminently, the subject. The *mahāvākya*s of scripture only represent this formally: the self *in* the world is none other than Brahman, the self *of* the world. From this perspective the alleged identity of self and Brahman, what Śaṃkara is most anxious to clarify, is merely the shastric echo of what is a generalized and diffused feature of South Asian religiosity.[64] When Dobe poses the question with respect to vernacular Vedānta, particularly the genre of autobiography writing, "How does one write one's life story when, as Rāma Tīrtha put it, God is the 'first person'?" (Dobe 2014, 184), the formulation expresses precisely the dilemma of the Shankarite *mahāvākya*: I am *both*, an individualized embodied being and the trans-individual being present in all individuated selves.

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[63] A not uncommon gesture by Germans at the time (including Schlegel). Reference to Indian and particularly Upanishadic thought as pantheistic may be found in stray remarks across texts such as the *Science of Logic*, *Philosophy of the Right* etc.

[64] Shared, of course, by the great and little traditions of Tantra, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta lineages, not to speak of Sufi and *bhakti* traditions.

PART I (chapters 2 and 3) articulates the ritual and performative architecture of Advaita as a *noetic* ritual.

Following Clooney's account of thinking *ritually* (Clooney 1990), in CHAPTER 2 I track the persistence of

this way of thinking in the Advaita of Śaṃkara. Thinking *ritually* may now be said to be deployed towards

thinking spi*ritually*, i.e., applying ritual thinking to the Upanishadic spirit or self.[65] This happens, as I argue, in

two ways. Firstly, Advaita borrows, wholesale, the ritual and performative model of analysis in its program of

generating self-knowledge. In other words, Advaita is ritually constituted, and better understood under a

model of *performative* coherence as opposed to simply *hermeneutic* coherence. I specifically argue that it

functions as a *noetic* ritual, 'noetic' serving to identify its differentia from regular goal-oriented activity. This is

articulated in terms of the Advaitic turn from the *actional* to the *attentional*, as a governance of the attentional

landscape of the subject in order to recognize obtaining features of self and embodiment. Thus, while

assimilating to a ritual model of purport (*artha* as purpose + import), in its focus on the pre-existent and

obtaining features of existence *(bhūta, siddha, vastutantra)*—as opposed to the Vyākaraṇa and Mīmāṃsā

preoccupation with the presently non-existent *to be produced* or brought into being (*bhavya, sādhya,*

puruṣatantra)—it marks a symbolic turn away from action-centrism.

CHAPTER 3 explores the *embodied* landscape of the Advaitic noetic ritual, developing a reading of

Śaṃkara's affirmation of his project as *Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā*, a hermeneutics of embodiment. I thus complement

the well-studied arena of Advaitic *textual* or *scriptural* hermeneutics with an *embodied* hermeneutics, and what

this adds to our understanding of Advaita as *mīmāṃsā*. Here I especially consider Debabrata Sinha's account

of *Śārīraraka Mīmāṃsā* as a *phenomenology* of embodiment, further engaging with the work of Suthren Hirst,

Loundo, Satchidanandendra and others in distinguishing between two closely related terms, *adhyāsa* and

adhyāropa, both meaning, generally, 'superimposition', but pedagogically employed towards contrasting ends.

PART II moves to the grammatical dimension of Advaitic rituogrammatics, showing how the turn

away from ritual action-centrism is mediated *linguistically* by Advaitins. That is, how Śaṃkara and his

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[65] As exemplified in Yājñavalkya's question to Śākalya that he was unable to answer: "I ask you about the spirit/person that is only to be known from the Upaniṣads"; tvaṃ tv aupaniṣdam puruṣam pṛcchāmi. BU 3.9.26.

successors develop a Sanskrit grammar of non-action (*niṣkriyatva*) as opposed to the extant action-centrism (*kriyāparatva*) of grammar theory. Just as grammarians and ritual theorists brought into focus the actional analyses of *kāraka* theory, *bhāva* and verb-centrism to support their action-centrism, so Śaṃkara recuperates certain phenomena of language—particularly nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), nominal sentences, noetic and existential verbs—to ground an Advaitic non-dual grammar of the sentence. I particularly develop the idea that their difference may be parsed in terms of their endorsement, respectively, of a *bhāva*-based and *sat*-based metaphysics; both (*bhāva* and *sat*) meaning, loosely, 'being', but connoting very different *philosophical* positions about reality. By employing such a non-dual grammar in the explication of certain sentences, particularly the Upanishadic identity statements, the alleged oneness of self and Brahman acquires a grammatical texture and basis. 'Realizing' the so- called identity of self and Brahman turns out, therefore, to be an intrinsically *grammatical* cognition and operation. CHAPTER 4 discusses the *kāraka* model of analysis and its critique by Śaṃkara, as well as the non-dual grammar of existential and noetic verbs. CHAPTER 5 articulates the concept of nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), more generally, sentential analysis (*vākyaśāstra*) furnishing an Advaitic grammar of non-action.

PART I: MATERIAL & ATTENTIONAL LANDSCAPES OF THE EMBODIED SELF

CHAPTER 2: ATTENTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND THE NOETIC RITUAL OF ADVAITA

I.   Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, I read Advaita as the consequence of action introspecting upon itself, of what happens when the ritualist, one may say, ritual action as such, turns upon itself to reflect on its own nature. This reflective turn is epitomized in the successfully executed noetic performance explored in this chapter culminating in the event of self-knowledge (*ātmajñāna*). Non-dualism (or non-action) is here not so much a view or theory to be defended but a task to be carried out, assimilating Advaita into the ritual nexus of instrumentalities, even if the defense and critique of certain theories/views remains a significant ritual component.[1] It is this goal-oriented, executional framework pending the realization of actual performance that provides the most intelligible model of Advaitic purport (*artha*), accommodating various sub-elements, philosophical, hermeneutic and pedagogical, in its broader program.

Advaita's rituality evinces a certain paradox in that it is geared towards achieving a telos antithetical to the ritual productivity preoccupying Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, articulated in terms of what may be called the purposivity paradox or the attainment paradox. That is, Advaita's critique and transcendence of ritual purposivity itself takes the form of a highly purposive enterprise. Overcoming purpose, it seems, is a deeply purposive endeavor. Put differently, while Advaita is emphatic that there is nothing to be attained by the self seeking self-knowledge, (precisely because the self is not something remote or distant from oneself that can be 'attained'), there is still an attaining of sorts to do, justifying the whole Advaitic project. As an interiorized ritual of unmaking or anti-ritual—something it is able be on account of the *noetic* topography it inhabits and governs[2]—its use of rituogrammatic procedures, therefore, is in some ways counterintuitive insofar as it is based on *niṣkriyatva* (non-action) as a regulative ideal; something neither ritual nor grammar theory were geared for. On the contrary, a claim of the dissertation is that Sanskrit grammar colludes with ritual theory in offering a fundamentally *actional* account of language and reality, which ritual as analytic category can help

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[1] This work, of the consideration and rebuttal of philosophical positions or views about the self, is undertaken in the practice of reflection (*manana*), often articulated in the genre of Advaitic doxographies.

[2] I discuss and define the notions of 'noetic', 'interiorized' and 'anti-ritual' in Section III below.

illumine. Advaita, in mediating a turn from the *actional* to the *attentional*, as I show, brings non-action and Being back to the center of grammatical, ritual and philosophical discourse.

Acknowledging such a fundamental operational dynamics makes Advaita's claims all the more fascinating and worthy of attention, beyond being merely an interesting hermeneutics of the Veda. Advaita makes a claim about agency as such and the relationship obtaining between the domain of self summoned by actional involvements and performance of duties in the world on one hand, and a domain of self apparently immune to such worldly involvement on the other. While they co-exist in any individual, an increasing cognizance of the latter, the non-actional aspect (*niṣkriyatva*) of selfhood, becomes instrumental in generating a certain realization of freedom in the person.

Here one must be attentive to both horns of Advaita's 'as if discourse', that is, the recurrent recourse, through the use of forms such as *iva or -vat,* to double meaning or metaphor in the explanation of seemingly actional, temporal or result-oriented phenomena such as doing, attaining, achieving, reaching, moving etc., such that their application to the self/Brahman cannot be literal. The Upanishadic precedent of such discourse is the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* verse, "[It] meditates, *as it were*, moves, *as it were*".[3] On one hand Advaita sincerely and, as I understand, consistently reads its actional language to be only seemingly implicated in actional categories (of doing, achieving, attaining, generating etc.) but on the other hand, it lays out a clear program of leading the subject-practitioner from her state of suffering and ignorance to suffering-eliminating knowledge. Therefore, it evinces a logic of progress, achievement and futurity. No program, including Advaita, can purge itself of such an actional dynamics of human aspiration, embodied performance and result-seeking. The ostensible form of Advaita practice mirrors any such aspirational goal-directed pursuit. There is a subject aspiring towards a goal, and in the process employing diverse means. I argue that in doing so it deploys a ritual logic of result-driven performance which can be distinguished from traditional ritual in some significant ways, including what I refer to subsequently as its noetic character.

Section II addresses current theory on Advaita's rituality and ritual immersion. Section III introduces the conceptual vocabulary used in the course of the chapter, situating Advaita within its Vedic and ritual pre-

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[3] *dhyāyatīva lelāyatīva.* BU 4.2.7.

history, particularly developing the idea of Advaita as a form of 'attentional governance' and 'noetic ritual'. Section IV, comprising the main argument of the chapter, explores Advaita's rituogrammatic architecture along four primary elements of its rituogrammatic organization: fruitfulness (*phalavattva*), subsidiaryness (*aṅgatva*), enaction procedures (*prakriyā*) and instrumentality (*sādhanatva*).

II.   The Texture of Advaita's Rituality: Clooney and Locklin on the Ritual of Advaita

In furnishing an account of Advaita as noetic ritual, and as ritual introspecting upon itself, I hope to provide a stronger reading of its ritual immersion than has been offered. As noted, there has been increasing resistance against reading Advaita as a philosophy or metaphysics divorced from a performative grounding and culture. Advaita, as has become increasingly clear, must be intelligible in one or the other practical or performative contexts—as a reading practice (Clooney), teaching pedagogy (Suthren Hirst), therapy (Halbfass) etc. The work of Francis X. Clooney especially has urgently called for a revision of the standards of reception in the interpretation of Advaita discourse, arguing that Advaita is a practice fundamentally different from the philosophy it has generally been conceived to be (Clooney 1993, 14). In his own words,

> Though Advaita argues at length that knowledge is not an action, and that "to know" cannot necessarily be consequent upon "to do," in its emphasis on meditation and the textual path to knowledge, in its modes of exegesis, in its recognition that knowledge is gained gradually through an engagement in the texts which are the subjects of exegesis, and even in its treatment of the final realization of Brahman as an event, it shares the Mīmāṃsā concern for performance…it too keeps all theoretical and doctrinal pronouncements rooted in textual knowledge, and so persistently orients the understanding reader back into a world of practice (Clooney 1993, 25).

These are all good reasons. For Clooney the return to practice, as we saw, implied a turn to theology. Advaita is a ritual of reading and textual engagement where the recognition of oneself as Brahman is negotiable only through the text. It is post-textual. Such a reading, however, can tie Advaita too closely to practices of reading and literate commentary centering the *text* as the primary location of where truth happens. Calling Advaita a ritual, however, is more than a cipher for a practical or performative location of its sense. Clooney's emphasis on performance does well to contextualize and locate philosophical framings of

Advaita within a legitimate if only circumscribed domain of intelligibility. But performativity can mean many things. While reading may constitute a 'ritual' of sorts (like other mundane activities such as playing, eating, talking etc.), I hope to place Advaita's rituality firmly within the originary sacrificial arena propelling Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. That is to say, it is Vedic rituality as such that most pertinently informs the interpretation of Advaita. Even words and language remain crucial to uncovering such a ritual dynamic insofar as hymns, mantras and other textual units are integral components of ritual meaning and efficacy. The emphasis on textuality, however, with its accompanying set of presuppositions, reading practices and comportments, may blunt the immediate force of ritual transformation and sacrifice that the *yajña* or sacrifice carries. Advaitic performance may, after all, be read as sort of *yajña* in which the self is offered up in the fire of knowledge (*jñānāgni*).[4] Such a *strong* reading of Advaita as ritual performance, again, does not conceive of such statements (as *ātmayajña* or *jñānāgni)* as metaphorical. In a very real sense, Advaita conducts itself as an *ātmayajña* (self-sacrifice) on the model of a prototypical Vedic ritual. It remains to be seen how.

Reid Locklin has likewise argued that Advaita does not, in spite of itself, represent a complete rejection of ritual, but a transformation and transposition of ritual activity. Shifting emphasis from ritual to ritualized practice, and constructively employing practice and ritual theory (Catherine Bell, Talal Asad), Locklin explores the specifically Advaitic *habitus* of scripted performance, dialogue (*saṃvāda*) and meditation (*nididhyāsana*) (Locklin 2011). Such forms of intentional, repeated and cultivated practice represent typically Advaitic forms of *ritualization*. Each chapter of the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, Locklin's textual focus, thus represents a teaching script mediating a gradual, performative reshaping of the disciple and his environment. The emphasis on the embodied nature of Advaitic practice is also helpful.

Two points bear attention. Firstly, Locklin has directed attention to what must inevitably be borne in mind in assessing Śaṃkara's critique of ritual, that is, it must be firmly placed within an acknowledged embodied and ritual dynamics. The issue remains whether such acknowledgment blunts or otherwise complicates Śaṃkara's hardline anti-ritualism. Attending to the embodied, ritualized dimension of Advaitic practice is to admit, as suggested, the underlying logic of any organized, intentional human pursuit. The

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[4] The oblatory metaphor for self-knowledge is often used in the *Bhagavadgītā* (such as BG 4.19).

question is whether Śaṃkara can remain consistent on his 'thorough rejection of ritual' knowing fully well that a significant quantum of Advaitic practice is ritualized in ways clarified by Locklin and Clooney.

Secondly, while Locklin does not deny the *philosophical* force of Śaṃkara's claim, the cumulative effect of the emphasis on habitus and repeated performance can detract from the specifically truth-aiming nature of Advaitic discourse—the fact that ultimately it aims to uncover a deeper order of how things are and that this order dictates the soteriological progress of the disciple. Moulding persons and personality may be a significant dimension of what religious traditions do, but Advaita's singularity as an epistemic (*prāmāṇika*) procedure finally exceeds this project. In its own terminology, if the Advaitic project is mediated and epistemically constrained by the nature of reality as such (*vastutantra*), not dependent on human effort and habitus (*puruṣatantra*), then the central hermeneutic issue is not one of *conceding* the ritualized dimension of Advaita but *interpreting* its rightful place therein. The identification of ritual with *ritualized*—repeated, scripted, rehearsed, habituated—while illuming some crucial aspects of Advaitic habitus and sociocultural embodiment, yet leaves the philosophical and truth-conducive dimension of Advaita unaddressed. Moreover, reading tradition through the frame of 'script' comes with its own set of presuppositions tracking a more liturgical framework of interpretation, such as Locklin advances. While there is something to be said about the rehearsed nature of the presentation of themes in the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, I read them along a different framework in alignment with Advaita's immediate ritual environment than more liturgical or script-based frames of interpretation.

This brings us to the crux of the problem of applying ritual or more generally performative frames to reading Advaita. It presents itself as a paradox. On the one hand one must attend to the specifically epistemic (and *vastutantric*) nature of Advaita practice, how Advaita lets itself be guided by what are primarily truth-bearing and truth-conducive procedures. On the other, it must be possible to read its epistemic function secured by what are basically ritual procedures. We may, then, ask how what is admitted as the 'philosophical' crux of Advaita is as such ritualized. That is to say, ritual and performative categories do not merely enter into the scene by problematizing the emphasis on theory, philosophy or 'pure' knowledge. Nor are they concessions to the public, rehearsed, habitual, historical or socially embedded nature of tradition. Eventually

it is a question of unsettling any vestige of a theory-praxis dualism such that theory (for Advaita, its conception of pure knowledge) may be seen to be ritually coded in all sorts of ways. The interesting problem that presents itself is one of how epistemology as such may be seen to follow a sacrificial logic; and how rituality is intrinsic to the production of self-knowledge.

III.   Advaita as Ritual: Theoretical Framework and Nomenclature

I begin by laying out the global schematics of Advaita, how and why it is structured as ritual and conducts itself as ritual, progressing to the nuts and bolts of how Advaita conducts itself as ritual in Section IV. I first set up my theoretical framework and nomenclature. These critical-constructive categories (noetic performance; attentional governance; anti-ritual or ritual of unmaking; interiorized ritual) will be used to interpret and render intelligible the ritual and sacrificial organization of Advaita. Subsequently in Section IV. I extract and consider four crucial concepts directly from Śaṃkara and subsequent Advaitins to dilate on the precise texture and organization of Advaita as noetic ritual.

III.i   Governing the Attentional Landscape

Attention can be a useful hermeneutic category to render intelligible Advaita's quasi-actional dynamics. On one hand attention, at least from Advaita's own viewpoint, is not something that must be generated (US I.12.15) or in any other way externally secured. It is a quality of awareness or consciousness (*caitanya*) as such, the capacity by virtue of which the self comes to be aware of an object of awareness. It only has to be redirected towards or ushered along certain directions of awareness as opposed to others, bringing certain phenomenological facts into focus as opposed to others. This is mediated by activity of the intellect. Speaking of this relation, Andrew Fort notes that "the *antaḥkaraṇa* only registers manifestations arising from the senses. The intellect's attention (*avadhāna*) or non-attention to this sense data is what varies in perception (*upalabdhi*); thus, the intellect is the cause of apparent change and diversity. The self is the constant knower (*cetāyatṛ*), or witness, of the intellect and is itself the basis of perception" (Fort 1984, 279).

One may thus distinguish at least two elements of attention from the Advaitic standpoint: the basic and horizonal field of awareness and the particular 'events' of attention corresponding to some particular object in the attentional-intentional field. While I have a certain degree of freedom to determine the precise focus in my attentional field, it is already circumscribed by the objectivity with which this field impinges itself upon consciousness. The objective scenery as I stare out of the window delimits the attentional landscape within which I may choose to focus or dwell on a particular aspect, form or feature. That is to say, there is an epistemic constraint as well as volitional dimension to the directionality of attention. On Fort's reconstruction above, the senses simply and neutrally transfer the sense data to the intellect, whose active *attending to* a particular sense-datum determines the final epistemic result.

Advaita employs this directionality of attention mediated by the intellect towards the recognition of hitherto unrecognized or unattended dimensions of selfhood. In other words, it turns the attentional gaze back to the self's interiority to register particular aspects of embodied being, instead of surveying the 'external' landscape of experience. The dynamics of this process are outlined in Chapter 3 ('Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā & the Hermeneutics of Embodiment'). It is such a management of attention towards *registering* obtaining realities or features of self that guides the pedagogy of Advaita. Śaṃkara addresses the mode of attentional dynamics employed by Advaita in relation with the negative or apophatic character of Advaitic method:

> [W]hat is denoted by the term 'thou' is the inward Self; which is agent in seeing and hearing, is (successively) apprehended as the inward Self of all the outward involucra beginning with the gross body, and finally ascertained as of the nature of intelligence…And although the object to be known, viz. the Self, does not consist of parts, yet men wrongly superimpose upon it the attribute of being composed of many parts, such as the body, the senses, the manas, the buddhi, the objects of the senses, the sensations and so on. Now by one act of attention (*avadhānena*) we may discard one of these parts, and by another act of attention another part; so that a successively progressive cognition may take place.[5]

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[5] tathā tvaṃpadārthaḥ api pratyagātmā śrotā dehāt ārabhya pratyagātmatayā saṃbhāvyamānaḥ caitanyaparyantatvena avadhāritaḥ | tatra yeṣām etau padārthau ajñāna saṃśaya viparyaya pratibaddhau teṣāṃ tatvamasi ityetat vākyaṃ svārthe pramāṃ na utpādayituṃ śaknoti padārthajñānapūrvakatvāt vākyārthasya iti atastāt pratyeṣṭavyaḥ padārthavivekaprayojanaḥ śāstrayuktyabhyāsaḥ | yadyapi ca pratipattavya ātmā niraṃśaḥ tathā api adhyāropitaṃ tasmin bahu aśatvaṃ deha indriya mano buddhi viṣaya vedanādi lakṣaṇam tatra ekena avadhānena ekam aṃśam apohati apareṇa aparam iti yujyate tatra kramavatī pratipattiḥ | tat tu pūrvarūpameva ātmapratipatteḥ. BSB 4.1.2. Thibaut tr.

Attention (*avadhāna*, as Śaṃkara calls it) is thus serially focused on certain aspects of embodiment in order to attend to the subtle distinction between the self as the non-actional witness/seer, and the various domains of embodiment it comes to be identified with in everyday existence. A simple *attending to* an obtaining reality or extant state of affairs pertaining to the self is recommended, by which the radical difference between the witness self and the witnessed-objectifiable self will emerge in a moment of discrimination (*viveka*) induced by the quality of such attentiveness. No *acting upon* the object of attention is desirable, for this distracts from the emphasis on bare attention upon an obtaining (*bhūta/siddha*) state of affairs, allowing reality to guide awareness towards elements demanding attention in our field of awareness. Advaita emphasizes and exploits this epistemically constrained nature of attention, even if it recognizes its volitional aspects of perceptive and cognitive processes.

This is one way of parsing the fundamental Shankarite distinction of *puruṣatantra* and *vastutantra* domains of existence. The former captures that domain of existence that submits to our volitional and actional trajectories of behavior, the latter that which constrains us to recognize and accord ourselves with the unchanging or *intransigent* dimension of existence, that is, the epistemic intransigency of being constrained by things as they are in their intrinsic nature (*yathāvastujñāna*). Śaṃkara explains the distinction: "[H]ence also, the science of the knowledge of Brahman [*brahmavidyā*] does not depend on some sort of operation by man (*na puruṣavyāpāratantra*). What is it then? It is that which depends upon the thing itself (*vastutantrā* eva), even as is the knowledge of thing which is the subject of the right means of knowledge such as direct perception."[6] Śaṃkara's focus on the epistemic constraints imposed by reality as it is—and which shapes Advaitic concerns along a mould of a truth-seeking inquiry, a *pramāṇaśāstra*—may be contrasted with trajectories of attention in other traditions, such as yoga, meditation, prayer or worship where attention is led constructively towards the pursuit of creative ends, such as active visualization, imagination or production of certain internal forms of deity. While still involving attention, such pursuits already transgress towards a more *purushatantric* framework insofar as there enters, minimally, an element of will or choice, and maximally, an element of mental or physical action. While subserving its own ends, such a trajectory of action—exceeding bare

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[6] ato na puruṣavyāpāratantrā brahmavidyā | kiṃ tarhi pratyakṣādipramāṇaviṣayavastujñānavadvastutantrā. BSB 1.1.4. Apte tr.

attention/attending to—has already left reality (*tattva*) behind in the pursuit of constructive ends, as Śaṃkara points out: "That is called action which is enjoined by disregarding the nature of things as they are" (BSB 1.1.4).[7]

Actional and Attentional Semantics of Injunction: Śaṃkara on the Śravaṇavidhi

On the other hand, such a reorientation nonetheless minimally retains a logic of *doing something*; even if such doing must now be reformulated along the Advaitic agenda of governing the attentional landscape. When Advaitins argue with Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas about the actional force of injunctives, as in the famous and contentious *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 'injunction' to know the self[8]—"The Self is to be seen, heard, reflected and meditated or dwelt upon" (BU 2.4.5)—the Advaitic response may be read as the attempt to turn the directive force of the injunction (*vidhi*) from an *actional* to an *attentional* semantics. This is, at least, the argument here. The above statement stands at the center of centuries of hermeneutic attention by Advaitins of various denominations, insofar as it becomes symbolic of the very justification and program of Vedānta, as a point of departure for the truly Vedantic pursuit or inquiry as opposed to the Vedic pursuit of ritual means and ends. It thus, by the same stroke, is condemned to a performative contradiction: if the justification of Vedantic enquiry comes as a *directive*, how can it escape the very same calculus of means, ends, action and injunction that drives the Vedic universe? For it would imply that seeing, hearing etc. also submit to trajectories of *action*, and not only *attention*, as argued here, by virtue of the fact that there simply exists the directive to know; the possibility that a directive may not be followed opens the pursuit to personal choice and prerogative, the domain of *puruṣatantra*. This brings us back to the question: is knowing/perceiving closer to the domain of acting or the domain of being?

Anand Venkatkrishnan identifies the crux of the problem (we stay with Śaṃkara's commentary on the fourth verse of the *Brahmasūtra*.):

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[7] kriyā hi nāma sā yatra vastusvarūpanirapekṣaiva codyate. BSB 1.1.4.

[8] "ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ" (BU 2.4.5 & 4.5.6) For an account of the subsequent history of the *parisaṅkhyā vidhi*, especially in the Vivaraṇa tradition, refer Venkatkrishnan, "Hermeneutical Innovation in Prakāśātman's *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa*".

In the course of arguing this point in *Brahmasutrabhaṣya* 1.1.4, Śaṃkara imagines an objection from a Mimaṃsa opponent: You claim that Vedanta has nothing to do with injunctions. But what about sentences in the Upaniṣads that seem a lot like *vidhi*s? Take, for example, *atma va, are, draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyasitavyaḥ*, "*Atman*, my dear, is to be seen, to be heard about, to be reflected upon, to be meditated upon." The *-tavya* affix to each of these verbs expresses the gerundive, a verbal adjective whose noun deserves to be the object of that action—in other words, the object of a *vidhi*, an injunction. So much for your exclusive reliance on knowledge. Here is a clear instance of an act - "*Ātman* must be known" - that your own texts enjoin…Śaṃkara interprets this sentence, and others like it, in a purely negative fashion; he says that they only have "the semblance of *vidhi*s" and are exclusively intended "to turn one away from the things to which one naturally gravitates" (Venkatkrishnan, 6-7).

Venkatkrishnan's last reference is to Śaṃkara's explanation of the purpose of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* directive as the directing of attention away from objects and concerns (Śaṃkara's term above being '*viṣayavimukhīkaraṇa*') typically preoccupying our attention, towards more subtle features of subjectivity. Indeed, recourse to a discourse of the directing of attention (*viṣayavimukhīkaraṇa*) only further clarifies the nature of Advaitic method as a form of attentional management or governance. Subsequent Advaitins, particularly Sureśvara and Padmapāda, as Venkatkrishnan notes, tread the same line.

According to Śaṃkara, it is an injunction of the relevant kind, the *parisaṃkhyā vidhi*, that serves the purpose of turning one away from that towards which one naturally gravitates.[9] This may be distinguished from the *apūrva* and *niyama* kinds of injunction, which typically involve a clear course of activity to be pursued. Subsequent commentators, including Sureśvara and Padmapāda, reaffirm that the practical force of the injunction culminates in the cessation of any activity other than the redirection of attention. Indeed, a directive such as 'See the self!', has the psychological force of an inhibitory or privative speech act—since my nature, according to Advaita, is already of the unseen seer, the directive is telling me that I should *refrain from* indulging in any actional trajectory exceeding the self's natural and intrinsic capacity of awareness or attending to. This is nothing but the realignment and remapping of attentional landscapes.

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[9] In Pūrva Mīmāṃsā the *parisaṃkhyā vidhi*, to be precise, excludes an alternative course of action instead of enjoining one of its own. In either case, it serves well the Advaitic program of explaining certain statements as being meaningful, and fruitful, without recommending a positive course of action but merely by directing attention back to an obtaining presence.

Refraining from activity, especially when it is demanded as an exhortation to know, see, attend to, is not an activity in any overt sense; nonetheless it requires a refocusing and reorientation of awareness in order to inhabit and disclose veiled or obscured features of subjectivity. In the moment that I face the exhortation to know or see the self, I drop all potential causal directionalities of action, attainment and instrumentality, and realign focus to observe obtaining facts in my psychological and bodily environment. Advaita pulls the ritual enthusiast back from an active and relentless pursuit of ends and means to observe, see, attend to the subject and agent of ritual action. The logic of *attending to* therefore allows Advaitic method to tread the razor's edge between performance on one hand and perception or observation on the other; or between what I call causal and noetic orders of being.

From Action to Attention: Causal and Noetic Orders of Being

Advaita (literally non-dualism) is *effected* as the successful performance of a ritual that distinguishes itself from other Vedic rituals as *noetic*, a term I use that attempts to bring together multiple dimensions of the Advaitic epistemic and ontological focus on attention (*avadhāna*), awareness (*caitanya*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and superimposition (*adhyāsa*). While the full sense of the term will emerge in the course of the chapter, a brief definition may be in order. A *noetic* performance may be distinguished from a *causal* one (such as the solemn Vedic ritual or a secular activity like cooking) that culminates in the production or modification of an entity. While the latter, to use Śaṃkara's phrasing, depends on the employment of contributory factors (*kāraka*) in the realization of a central act (*kriyā*), the former invokes phenomena of seeing, seeming, appearing, witnessing, attending and awareness—all of which, for Advaita, are precisely not kinds of activity. One may understand the *causal* domain as the matrix where, well, things happen, changes occur, elements transform into one another, causes generate effects. It is the order inhabited by the Vedic ritualist and the Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka. Śaṃkara uses various different tropes to indicate this order of productive causality, amongst others, the classification of the four kinds of results possible through intentional activity: creation, modification, attainment, refinement. Speaking of the nature of freedom (*mokṣa*) he says:

For him however who holds freedom as something to be effected [created] (by action) (*utpādya*), it would be logical to say that it depends upon mental, vocal or bodily action. Freedom would certainly be transitory also in the case of those who consider it as being something that undergoes modification (*vikārya*). In the ordinary worldly life, things like curds which result by modification (of milk) and things like an earthen pot which are the result of manufacture (from earth), are not observed to be everlasting. Not can there be any expectation of some sort of action, by considering freedom as something to be obtained (*āpya*) for, as Brahman is of the nature of one's own self, it is not capable of being obtained (from outside)…Nor is freedom something which admits of being subjected to a process of refinement (*saṃskārya*), so that it should expect some sort of operation. Refinement can be effected either by the addition of some attribute (to a thing), or by the removal of some blemish (in it).[10]

The passage can be read as defining, if not exhausting, the primary kinds of change causally inducible in entities; I can either create something new, modify an existing thing, attain or obtain an existing thing, or refine it, i.e., add or take away one or more of its perceived attributes. The scheme, in fact, as Uskokov has amply discussed (2018), was employed by Mīmāṃsakas to classify sub-types of ritual assistance (*sannipātyopakārakatva*) where these four processes were employed to produce results subordinate to ritual elements. Śaṃkara turns the scheme upon its head, using it as a model of critiquing and identifying the nature and limits of causation and action. And in the same passage, already gives us a hint towards what the *noetic* order—as opposed to the causal, looks like. Freedom, he says, cannot be obtained (*āpya*) for it is already the nature of one's own self. Being my own nature, I am yet in ignorance of it. The only solution, then, is to *recognize*, i.e., turn my attention (*avadhāna*) to an already obtaining fact. All I need is to correct my perception, cleansing the proverbial doors of perception. Action and causation cannot be invoked in the achievement/attainment of something that is already 'attained', on the Advaitic example of a person looking for her lost necklace all the time she was wearing it. The popular Advaitic manual *Ātmabodha* says, "The self is always already attained (*prāpta*) but seems unattained owing to ignorance. It appears to be attained (*prāptavad bhāti*) at the cessation of this ignorance, just as in the example of one's necklace" (*Ātmabodha* 44). A

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[10] yasya tūtpādyo mokṣastasya mānasaṃ, vācikaṃ, kāyikaṃ vā kāryamapekṣata iti yuktam | tathā vikāryatve ca tayoḥ pakṣayormokṣasya dhruvamanityatvam | nahi dadhyādi vikāryaṃ, utpādyaṃ vā dhaṭādi, nityaṃ dṛṣṭaṃ loke | nacāpyatvenāpi kāryāpekṣā, svātmasvarūpatve satyanāpyatvāt | svarūpavyatiriktatve 'pi brahmaṇo nāpyatvaṃ, sarvagatatvena nityāptasvarūpatvātsarveṇa brahmaṇaḥ, ākāśasyeva | nāpi saṃskāryo mokṣaḥ, yena vyāpāramapekṣeta | saṃskāro hi nāma saṃskāryasya guṇādhānena vā syāddoṣāpanayanena vā. BSB 1.1.4. Apte tr. I have made the alteration of rendering *mokṣa* as 'freedom', not 'final release'.

vocabulary of 'attainment' is still pertinent insofar as my realization that the necklace was always with me is still *resultative of* the cessation of action and a simultaneous state of contentment (on 'finding' the necklace, even if it was never truly lost). This is the seeming attainment paradox. But what is here called noetic 'attainment' is simply the turning of attention to an aspect of reality already available to the subject. It is a 'result' only in terms of my altered perception of my self and world.

Such a noetic logic of attainment and fulfillment may be seen to have universal application. But it particularly comes to ground Advaitic method. This noetic *attainment* (*prāpti*) further corresponds to an Advaitic conception of noetic *creation* or production (*utpatti*). Outside of the causal domain in which actions are performed and ends realized, we also inhabit a world where all kinds of new emergents come into existence not only *causally* but *inter-subjectively*, that is, the contribution of the perceiving subject, or a collectivity of subjects, must be invoked in explaining the co-emergence or co-construction of an entity. Think societal constructs like institutions or nations, cultural constructs like gender, Buddhist constructs such as chariots or persons, Advaitic constructs such as pots or oceans. While they are not all the same and may be said to exist on a gradient of concreteness, what unites them is that their 'production' or 'construction' is not always causally mediated. That is, a literal appeal to the language of emergence or construction is inadequate here insofar as it inhabits a causal semantics. Rather, all kinds of emergent realities are 'products' of collective superimposition and linguistic or societal convention, and their origin cannot be explained purely by reference to productive causality. An appeal to linguistic or conceptual categories employed by a collective or interpersonal subjectivity will be a crucial component of the story of their origin and persistence. This is another distinction of the noetic order from the causal. In his commentary to the *Chāndogya* 6 verse[11], Śaṃkara takes the example of the productivity of clay to indicate such a noetic order of emergence: "It is just as all this is spoken of in the ordinary world. In the morning, one sees the potter spreading out clay for making the jar and other things, and then having gone away to another village, and returning in the afternoon, sees in the same place, many products in the shape of jars, saucers and other articles, all of diverse kinds—

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[11] "In the beginning, my dear, this was Being only, one, without a second. Some say that, in the beginning, this was Non-being, only one, without a second. From that Non-being sprang Being." CU 6.2.

One says that 'all this, jar, saucer and the rest, was, in the morning clay only'—so it is said here that 'in the beginning there was Being only'."[12]

The example of clay and pots, used by the Upaniṣad itself to speak of the underlying persistence of Being through temporal change, is complicated since it contains an element of causal productivity (unlike, say, the case of ocean and waves). But Śaṃkara quickly assuages the concern by further commenting on the phrase 'One, without a second': "One; What is meant of the assertion that it was *one only,* is that even in the form of its product, it does not become something else—*Without a second;* what is denied by this negation is the likely idea that—'Just as in the making of the jar and other things, it was that, apart from the clay, there were other efficient causes—in the form of the potter and others—so in the case of the Products of Being also, there would be other accessory causes, apart from the Being'—There is no entity, *second* to it, hence it is *without a second.*"[13]

The force of the suggestion that "even as 'product', it does not *become* other" is precisely the negation of a causal order of emergence. 'Products' of noetic emergence, at least in the current *Chāndogya* discussion, intersubjectively and linguistically emerge for whatever human purposes they serve, without the underlying basis undergoing real change, just as clay does not cease to be clay in its appropriation as a pot when it assumes a shape useful for human purposes. Moreover, such emergents and constructions, when they need to be undone or 'deconstructed', such as in Advaitic pedagogy, may only undergo the deconstruction *noetically.* That is to say, they simply need to be recognized or seen for what they are—constructs. The carriage need not be disassembled into its parts, nor gender renounced. The pot or waves need not be transformed into back into clay or water. Rather, a noetic recognition of their constructed, conventional or linguistic nature is called for. This is the underlying principle Advaitic pedagogy works with.

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[12] yathedamucyate loke pūrvāhne ghaṭādi sisṛkṣuṇā kulālena mṛtpiṇḍaṃ prasāritamupalabhya grāmāntaraṃ gatvā pratyāgato 'parāhne tatraiva ghaṭaśarāvādyanekabhedabhinnaṃ kāryamupalabhya mṛdevedaṃ ghaṭaśarāvādi kevalaṃ pūrvāhne āsīditi tathehāpyucyate sadevedamagra āsīditi. CUB 6.2.1. Jha tr.

[13] advitīyamiti | mṛdvyatirekeṇa mṛdo yathānyadghaṭādyākāreṇa pariṇamayitṛkulālādinimittakāraṇam dṛṣṭaṃ tathā sadvyatirekeṇa sataḥ sahakārikāraṇaṃ dvitīyaṃ vastvantaraṃ prāptaṃ pratiṣidhyate 'dvitīyamiti | nāsya dvitīyaṃ vastvantaraṃ vidyata ityadvitīyam. CUB 6.2.1. Jha tr.

The term, however, accommodates far more than an appeal to convention and constructedness. As the *Chāndogya* passage indicates, it ultimately refers itself to the *ground* on which conventional categories and realities emerge and manifest according to Advaita—the horizonal conscious presence or awareness (*caitanya*) accommodating specific instances of knowledge, cognition and sense-perception. Therefore, a recourse to subjectivity, and attendant categories of language, convention, representation or mental construction, does not itself imply a noetic order of emergence. Equally crucial is a structure of manifestation, disclosure, reflection and superimposition, captured by the Sanskrit terms *vivarta*, *ābhāsa*, *vikṣepa* and *adhyāsa*. The appeal to subjectivity, individual or collective, is tied to the manner in which a *substratum* assumes a form, appears as something other than itself without really undergoing a real transformation. That is, it undergoes a *noetic* and not *causal* transformation. Deconstruction of emergent entities, selves or identities then proceeds through a process of reducing a construction to its ontological ground, simultaneously as its conventionality or artificiality is demonstrated.

The emphasis on the Advaitic anti-ritual as *noetic* is thus meant to communicate its function in the direction and governance of attention on one hand, and its basis in the phenomena of manifestation (*avabhāsa/āvirbhāva*) and appearance (*vivarta*) on the other, revealing how an obtaining presence assumes a new reality or *nāmarūpa* (literally, name-form) in relationship to human purposes and projects; as when the formless lump of clay takes on the nomenclature of 'pot', 'jar' etc. in its appropriation into particular human purposes. Such pragmatic 'emergence' or 'construction' of new entities is construed as a particularization or manifestation of an indeterminate or originally formless presence Advaita calls Brahman. This was earlier explicated in terms of the differentiation/segmentation (*vyākaraṇa*) of Being as outlined in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4. The Advaitic manipulation of the attentional landscape is a noetic ritual insofar as it accomplishes such a reduction of manifest entities and selves to realities undergirding them typically below the phenomenal radar. Knowledge (*jñāna*) is generated in a gradual movement across the phenomenal landscape of concealments and disclosures, light and darkness, manifest and unmanifest. Advaitic epistemology functions within this more encompassing horizon of Being-Consciousness and its 'transformation' into emergent beings and selves that must be *seen* to be non-different from their substratum. Attending to, recognizing, observing certain features

of our subjective and objective landscape thus results in all kinds of noetic deconstructions of seemingly self-standing phenomena, making up the inner epiphanies and insights instrumental in the removal of ignorance. The use of the term 'noetic' is meant to open up this vaster space exceeding the purely cognitive or epistemic dimension of the subject. It thus accommodates more than what is conveyed by such terms as 'cognitive', 'rational', or 'psychological'. It ultimately refers itself to consciousness (*caitanya*) as the field or horizonal presence accommodating specific knowledge-events.

While, for the Advaitin, knowing may not constitute an activity in significant ways, it is nonetheless, as I argue, an intricately conducted performance relying on an elaborate ritual organization of parts; structured not causally but noetically. It does not employ certain means to bring about certain other ends not available to the subject prior to the employment of those means. This is the realm of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka hermeneutics of Vedic ritual. Instead, it instigates an epistemic reorientation by which existent facts about self and world are bright into relief and made manifest or disclosed. This is effected through the management and direction of attention. This indicates the differentia of a noetic performance, in which nothing is causally brought into being but only assimilated into and managed within an attentional order. It also situates attention as a phenomenon precisely between purushatantric and vastutantric frameworks of intelligibility: attention is partially something we are in control of but also partially something dictated and constrained by our environment. It is not assimilable into the realm of imagination (*kalpanā*) that can leave reality far behind but is continually responsive to environmental facts and phenomenon, first person states of awareness, bodily awareness, interpersonal and environmental awareness.

Advaitic non-dual grammar (topic of chapters 4 and 5) is particularly geared towards the recognition of an already obtaining (*bhūta*) reality leading to the cessation of any futural and causal logics of attainment. In particular, a special class of verbs, what are called noetic verbs, derived from the root cluster *budh-jñā-cit* (all meaning 'to know'), do not have the typical verbal sense of action (which is the consensus of most grammarians and ritualists); but remain exceptional in disclosing a noetic field or horizon of awareness/ knowing that cannot be reduced to a sub-type of action. Along with existential verbs (derived from the root

cluster *bhū-as-vid*) they are crucial to negotiating the attentional turn back from involvement in action to the obtaining fullness (*kṛtsnatā*) of being.

III.ii   Rituals of Unmaking: Advaitic Ritual as Anti-Ritual

Patrick Olivelle has studied the 'metaritual' innovations of Advaitic renunciation whereby renunciation is constituted as the very abandonment of and opposition to ritual activity, the Vedic sacrifice in particular (Olivelle 1986, 1992). Olivelle lays emphasis on the *transcendence* of ritual and the ritual sphere as the hallmark of a metaritual state. Tracking this sense of metaritualism, I further explore how metaritual states are nonetheless deeply structured *as* ritual. This sense is latent in Olivelle's analysis, but is often interpreted as an *allegorization* of ritual, as in his reading of *Nirvāṇa Upaniṣad*. Reading, for instance, the verse 'Undivided is his activity', he notes, "We can see here too an allegory of the metaritual state. Ritual activity *(pravṛtti)* is divided into numerous parts, whereas the activity of a liberated renouncer is undivided and has no parts, for it consists only of the mental reflection on the unity of all reality. Hence it is called non-activity *(nivṛtti)*" (Olivelle 1992, 228). I hope to foreground the metaritual dimension of Advaita (as an anti-ritual and interiorized ritual) taking seriously the claim that Advaita is intrinsically structured as ritual, focusing on the *epistemic* and spi*ritual* significance of thinking ritually; as opposed to the focus (in Olivelle and Locklin) on actual rituals of the Advaitic renunciate order.

Leaving the actional sphere and entering the attentional serves a double purpose for Advaita. It realigns Uttara Mīmāṃsā hermeneutic foci towards knowledge (*jñāna*), redirecting it away from activity (*karma*), the object of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. But it also negotiates an introspective turn in the constitution of the subject-practitioner. In doing so it has the opposite effect of the very *raison d'être* of Vedic ritual, the construction and creative rebirth of self and various sub-domains of creation. Advaitic methodologies, if only indirectly, serve to deconstruct the self and world by 'in-volving' the evolutionary thrust of creation. Peter Scharf has noted that "the model of the absolute and the first stages of creation mirror the descriptions of the development of enlightenment in foundational texts of Vedānta and systematic analyses of Yoga." (Scharf 2020, 751). In other words, cosmogony and pedagogy go hand in hand: the reason

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why cosmogony is presented the way it is in Upanishadic accounts of creation is to indicate the pedagogical imperative of seeking to reverse the creative and proliferative thrust of creation where desire (*kāma*) and action (*karman*) operate in tandem to manifest or bring into being desirable future states of affairs in the secular and religious spheres. Advaitic methodologies are, to this extent, *anti-rituals*: rituals that have reversed the very teleology of sacrificial performance.

The cosmogonic context of Vedic ritual is well-studied, the Vedic ritual arena even having been referred to as a cosmos-making workshop (Smith 1989). Perhaps one way of making sense of the Upanishadic and Shramanic reappraisal of Vedic cultural and intellectual values is to consider deconstruction (and deconstructive maneuvers) or *unmaking* as a new focal point of religious activity. The early Upaniṣads share with the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas* and philosophy of Sāṃkhya a cosmogonic model of the world emerging from pure nothingness (for Śaṃkara, pure being; the two being, for him, practically indistinguishable)[14] towards grosser forms of creation, passing through subtle (*sūkṣma*) levels of creation that microcosmically constitute the energetic and mental bodies of the individual. Sāṃkhya praxis can be seen as attempting to reverse such creative-proliferative activity (*prapañcana*, literally the five-folding of creative elements) by dis-identifying consciousness (*puruṣa*) from each consecutive product of creation with which it comes to identify. Likewise, Alexander Wynne has directed attention to Buddhist and Brahmanic practices of "element meditation" in which Brahmanic cosmogonies are 'inverted': "[E]lement meditation in early Brahminism, like element meditation in early Buddhism, was based on Brahminical cosmogonies which were thought to provide meditative 'maps' of the path to liberation. Element meditation, so we must understand, was thought to be the yogin's way of reversing the creation of the cosmos and attaining liberation" (Wynne 2007, 34). Reversing creation in such manner meant, at least in Brahmanic praxis, the recovery of an original state of pristine actionless Being untouched by the proliferative thrust of the ignorance-desire-action (*avidyā-kāma-karma*) nexus.

Advaitic method, in any case, distinguishes itself as a *pramāṇa*-driven enterprise, driven by cognitions produced by the successful operation of a means of knowledge (typically *śabda* or verbal testimony), not

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[14] Refer, for instance, his commentary on CU 6 or TU 2.1, discussed in Chapter 4.

reliant on meditative 'activity'. Meditation, insofar as it involves conceptual or imaginative construction and is dependent on human will, falls squarely in the domain of human volition and choice (*puruṣatantra*). Advaita, on the other hand, lets itself be guided by epistemic disclosures and epiphanies (being *vastutantra*) that arise in the course of various linguistic operations. It is important to note the filiality as well as disparity of both approaches. Both (meditative and epistemic activity) focus on mental or inner operations at the expense of full-scale physical or ritual activity. In doing so they contract or truncate ritual action to subtler levels of inner psychological activity. This already has a sobering effect on the proliferative (*prapañcana*) potential of ritual. Abiding in and working at the psychological or subtle (*sūkṣma*) plane of creation, they point back towards the uncreated and non-actional being to which the first subtle cosmic manifestations, notably *buddhi* (cosmic intelligence), are the most proximate. The increasing significance of the witness (*sākṣin*) and witnessing, in Sāṃkhya and Advaita, testifies to the contraction of sentient activity to its barest denominator, its capacity to be merely conscious.

Witnessing is the most proximate kind of 'activity' to the original and intrinsic nature of Brahman as the pure witness or consciousness. Andrew Fort (1984) has distinguished two senses of the crucial Advaitic conception of witness (*sākṣin*), one indicating the pure field or space constituting the principle or capacity of awareness, the other appealing to the passive observer or knower that witnesses, insofar as witnessing may be construed as a form of sentient 'activity', howsoever passive or truncated. Clearly, the second sense verges on being classified as an action, although for the Advaitin this is a classical instance where the overt sense or grammar of the term proves deceptive. While appearing as an act (of 'witnessing') it does not demand, from the subject, any particular effort or will. Witnessing is being. This liminality of the semantic domain of *sākṣin* only further testifies to the complexity of the 'thematics of seeing', interpreted in Advaita (and Sāṃkhya) more along a model of *being* than *doing*. And thus most proximate to the nature of Brahman.

Even if its ostensible grammar accommodates it into the paradigm of verbs, as such a phenomenon—a being more than a doing—it signals the turn away from action-orientedness in general. Advaitic performance appeals to such a reduced witness-consciousness, also shared by other forms of meditative praxes, but which latter may also be involved in more active or constructive mental activity,

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something Śaṃkara does not deem profitable in the domain of self-knowledge. Self-knowledge includes the recognition of an existent state of affairs, an epistemic commitment, that is mediated by the direction and governance of attention back towards obtaining facts about oneself. The final liberating knowledge occurs at the cognitive plane as a generation of the appropriate knowledge-event (*jñānavṛtti*). The Uttara Mīmāṃsaka *turn* from the domain of action to the domain of knowledge and attention is, then, simultaneously a *return* to ontologically prior and subtler states of being, proximate to the 'apophatic' (*nirguṇa*) aspect of Brahman as such.[15]

As in other such early practices, what we may call *rituals of unmaking*, the self progressively dis-identifies with grosser evolutes of creation until even the most subtle products of creative activity are seen as non-self. Meditative praxes in Buddhism, Sāṃkhya and Advaita involved parallel procedures of analytically isolating and identifying every component of personality (in the latter two, conceived as the products of creation, subtle and gross) such that objectifying them in this manner amounted to rendering them impersonal and of lesser value. Advaita's ritual structuring can be understood precisely as the negotiation of such an unmaking or deconstruction of self. It is a ritual technology—possessing its own teleology and instrumental organization of parts geared towards the production of a final result (self-knowledge)—that reverses the very *raison d'être* of Vedic ritual, leading the subject back to identifying itself with the being (Brahman) before its segmented/differentiated (*vyākṛta*) existence. And it does so keeping within a purely attentional and epistemic set of operations that serve to reverse the actional directionality of ritual.

III.iii   Interiorized Ritual

I call Advaitic ritual *noetic* not only to distinguish it from prototypical Vedic ritual but also from meditative praxes that equally enforce a retreat to the subject in alternative ways. It is marked off as primarily an epistemological enterprise even if epistemology must be recast in a typically Advaitic mould. That 'noetic

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[15] This coincides with the understanding of the self as unconditioned/infinite Being-Consciousness (*satyam jñānam anantam*), the 'essential nature' (*svarūpa*) of Brahman independent of its evolution into mental and physical cosmic emergents.

ritual' as terminology remains somewhat oxymoronic serves precisely to sustain the tension that drives

Advaitic method: the employment of *ritual* technology driving an *epistemic* program of self-knowledge.

What prevents us from reading the noetic ritual, in any case, as an innovation upon extant

interiorized rituals that were rampant around the time of the early Upaniṣads? Is it Śaṃkara's insistence on

the ritual-knowledge dichotomy? Or our own modern presumptions about the theoretical or doctrinal nature

of the corpus of the Upaniṣads and Advaita, and the accompanying ritual-doctrine opposition? Both

developments tend to obscure its deep ritual immersion. In Śaṃkara, as I argue, the underlying ritual

architecture is still discernible through the cracks, which contemporary framings of Advaita, philosophical,

theological or experiential, tend to invisibilize. Śaṃkara's stance towards ritual, and action generally, however,

can be accounted for by a relatively straightforward consideration: the carving out of a legitimate space for a

knowledge-based approach to the Veda. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā's almost totalitarian assimilation of Vedic

intelligibility into ritual action[16] extracted from Śaṃkara an equally emphatic recovery of the Veda as a source

of knowledge (esp. self-knowledge), at the expense of severely fracturing the actional and contemplative

dimensions of Vedic ritual.[17] Granted the *philosophical* significance of the action-knowledge distinction, one

wonders whether Śaṃkara's outright denial of ritual purposivity would have been so emphatic, his apologetics

so elaborate, if it were not responding to such an insulated and uncompromising, and somewhat idiosyncratic,

reading of the Veda.[18]

Keeping safe distance from both the mature hermeneutics (*mīmāṃsā*s) of the Veda reveals a far more

complex reality. Knowledge of the deeper connections (*bandhu*s) relating various sub-domains of the cosmos

was a virtue even outside of its ritual employments and, as we know, the virtuosity of the Rigvedic poet lay

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[16] Most characteristically symbolized by the Jaimini in MS 1.2.1: *āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyam atadarthānām* ("Owing to the action-centrism of the Veda, whatever does not have that meaning is [rendered] meaningless"). This idea is further developed by subsequent Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas into a generalized theory of Vedic purport as such, incorporating any non-actional, non-productive or purely informative elements in the Veda into an actional or generative scheme.

[17] Śaṃkara's *sambandhabhāṣyam*s (relational commentaries), commencing his *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya* commentaries and elsewhere, linking the *Upaniṣad* with what comes before (the ritual, *Brāhmaṇa* or *Āraṇyaka* sections), serve precisely the apologetic function of justifying the very possibility of self-knowledge as a legitimate Vedic pursuit and the autonomy of Upanishadic texts as culminating in just knowledge without any subservience to ritual projects or productive teleologies.

[18] Over time, especially closer to the time of Śaṃkara, there are attempts to combine ritual and knowledge in a syncretic or complimentary approach to liberation, for instance, in the very different combinatory (*samuccaya*) approaches of Maṇḍana Miśra and Kumārila Bhaṭṭa.

precisely in discovering and articulating such connections. At the same time, there is an emphasis on understanding the deeper or inner meaning of ritual that renders the ritual more efficacious. Already, then, ritual has begun to introspect upon itself. This is often, and increasingly, complemented by the conception of the 'inner' fire ritual as *replacement* for the outer, both within and outside the Vedic milieu. Origins of such interiorized ritual have been attributed to the pragmatics of traveling Brahmins temporarily distanced from their sacred fires, prompting the replacement of sacred fire with breath.[19] Yael Bentor helpfully maps out the sheer diversity of such inner rituals in Brahmanic and Buddhist praxis in five categories: fire rituals of breathing (and subtle body), mental fire offering, food rituals, ignorance-destroying rituals and offerings performed with a consort (Bentor 2000).

Keeping to the first, knowledge of oneness in some of the *Āraṇyakas* and early *Upaniṣads* was often constituted as such a sacrificial performance. As Bentor notes, offering to the vital self (*prāṇātman*) in the early Upaniṣads was conceived as a means to realize the oneness of self and Brahman (Bentor 2000, 599). There is indeed, what we may call, a *passivization* of performance, with the Upaniṣads placing greater emphasis on understanding the sacrificial ordering of life as such compared to actually performing a sacrifice. The *Kauṣītakī* rereads the Agnihotra from a shallower, punctuated, active and intentional performance to a continuous and involuntary breathing rite performed by all human (if not sentient) beings: "Next, the control of Pratardana, which is also called 'the daily fire sacrifice offered internally'…One offers these two endless and deathless offerings without interruption, whether one is awake or asleep. All other offerings, on the other hand, are limited, for they consist of ritual activities. It is because they knew this that people in ancient times refrained from offering the daily fire sacrifice."[20] The Vaidikas of ancient times 'knew' that the involuntary movement of ingoing and outgoing breaths constituted a kind of sacrifice. And the mere observation or attention to such movement constituted an *activity* that could henceforth replace voluntary performance. Coomaraswamy notes, in the context of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*:

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[19] Beyond such pragmatics, fire, breath and life already share a conceptual intimacy in various Vedic correspondences.

[20] athātaḥ saṃyamanam prātardanamāntaramagnohotramityācakṣate yāvadvai puruṣo bhāṣate na tāvad prāṇitum śaknoti prānam tadā vāci juhoti yāvadvai puruṣaḥ prāṇiti na tāvad bhāṣitum śaknoti vācam tadā prāṇe juhotyete anante amṛte āhutī jāgracca svapaṃśca santatam juhotyatha yā anyā āhutayo' ntavatyastāḥ karmamayyo hi bhavanti tadhha smaitat pūrve vidvāṃso'gnihotraṃ na juhavāñcakruḥ. KauU 2.5. Olivelle tr.

A distinction is thus clearly drawn between mere performance and the understanding of what is done, performance as such and performance as the support of contemplation; and between an objective performance on stated occasions and a subjective and incessant performance. The first of these distinctions is made again in ŚB.X.4.2.31, "Whosoever as a Comprehensor performs this sacred work, or even one who is a Comprehensor (but does not actually perform the rites), puts together again this (divided) Prajapati, whole and complete" (and therewith at the same time reintegrates himself); and SB.XIII.1.3.22 where the distinction is drawn between those who are merely "seated at a sacrificial session" (*sattrasadaḥ*) and those who are "seated in reality" (*satisadaḥ*), only those who thus sacrifice in truth being "seated amongst the very Gods" (*satīsu devatāsu sīdantaḥ*).The *satisad* is the same as the Ātmayājī referred to above, one viz. who is his own priest. The ātmayājī is "one who knows, 'This (new) body of mine hath been integrated (*saṃskriyata*), hath been superimposed (*upadhīyate*) by that body (of the Sacrifice)'...The distinction is of active and passive viae, of "salvation" from "liberation." The Ātmayājī is "one who sacrifices in himself " (*ātmann eva yajati*, MU.VII.9). "Seeing the Self impartially in all beings and all beings in the Self, the Ātmayajī obtains autonomy (Coomaraswamy 1942, 381-2).

Śaṃkara could not have himself better distinguished between the knowers or 'comprehensors' 'seated in reality', with its focus on Being (*sat*), and those 'seated in the sacrificial session'. The question whether *comprehending, observing, witnessing, attending to* are activities in the strict sense brings us squarely back to the problem of the nature of noetic phenomena, which Advaita brings to the fore. In either case it reopens the basic Advaitic methodological paradox: Advaita is a result-driven performance that does not follow, in fact reverses, the teleology of action.

This logic culminates in understanding all of life as ritual, one's daily inbreaths and outbreaths as ritual, every moment of life, insofar as it involves the *activity* of being, as ritual. Here the *understanding* of the ritual, sacrificial or actional basis of everything comprised the ultimate distillate of the ritual logic taken to its extreme—to *see* the self and world as sacrificially ordered is to *perform* the ritual. Such knowledge of the deeper processual metaphysics of self and world, made and unmade by ritual activity, human and divine, I argue, comprises a clear passage into Advaita proper. Understanding *that* the very being of the self and world is necessarily implicated in action and actional categories is crucial to passing beyond it, to recognizing the non-actional (*niṣkriya*) dimension of creation (*nirguṇa*-Brahman). Uskokov has in this spirit noted that "[t]he arising of knowledge just meant understanding that the results of ritual were transient; that one cannot win

immortality by wealth, the necessary means of ritual; that the unmade (*akṛta*) cannot be won by the made (*kṛtena*). To continue performing ritual in such circumstances would be kind of schizophrenic, affirming what one is trying to negate" (Uskokov 2018, 369).

As we will see in Section IV, this is precisely how ritual and other *āśrama* activities of Advaitic aspirants are accommodated into the epistemic program of self-knowledge, as generating dispassion resulting from seeing that everything in the universe is changing, contingent and therefore unsatisfactory. Advaita scholarship has recognized that self-knowledge actively functions as a negative disqualification of everything that is not the authentic self, that is to say, that 'I am Brahman' is mediated, moment to moment, in the ceaseless recognition that I am not the body, sensations, thoughts, feelings or anything else the 'I' may come to identify with. This implies a kind of incessant continued performance (even if for some, like the *jīvanmukta*, it becomes effortless).

We are therefore already witness to a transition, around and prior to the *Kauṣītakī* and other early Upaniṣads, from a *purushatantric* (dependent on human effort or will) to a *vastutantric* (dependent on how things are) paradigm of performance where *recognition* of a universally obtaining state of affairs—typically recognizing the ritual or sacrificial basis of all phenomena—is more significant than actual performance. This may be distinguished from the class of more actively constructed or imagined mental offerings reliant on intentional, voluntary activity, such as the *upāsanā*s of the *Āraṇyaka*s critiqued by Śaṃkara, although voluntary and involuntary practices, contemplations and visualizations, are not always easily separable. It is not always possible to practically distinguish between merely *understanding* a cosmic relation and creatively sustaining or *superimposing* it, as in the many Upanishadic *vidyā*s. While the realization of Brahman in the *Brahmasūtra* often appears to involve some kind of proactive mental activity, it is possible to nonetheless discern an increasing emphasis on knowledge in Vedantic folds already before Śaṃkara. The various articulations of *prasankhyāna* meditation seem to carry such an epistemic focus bearing a likeness to the analytic procedures (*saṃkhyāna*) emanating from Shramanic and Sāṃkhya traditions discussed earlier.

Any attempt to neatly demarcate interiorized ritual proper from a 'purer' contemplation or metareflection on the ritual, and further, contemplation/reflection form what Advaita calls knowledge (*jñāna*),

will have its problems. Śaṃkara's own demarcation along a *puruṣatantra-vastutantra* divide, as we saw, is a good one, but cannot of itself accomplish the fracture of the Upanishadic corpus (and its Advaitic emphasis) from the pre-Upanishadic critique and interiorization of ritual. The performance of the 'true' ritual demanded all sorts of cognitive comportments and, conversely, knowledge and contemplation occur along a deeply ritual axis—to *know* or *understand* is to know or understand the deeper meaning or dynamics of ritual and, further, such knowledge itself comprises a sort of performance, a trimmed ritual—rather a meta-ritual—without the paraphernalia. This is where the lines begin to blur and ritual begins to enter the noetic domain. The *Maitrāyaṇīya* says: "The fire-laying of the ancient was a Brahman rite (*brahmayajña*). Therefore the sacrificer (*yajamāna*), having laid (*citvā*) these fires, must think upon himself (*abhidhyāyet*)" (MaiU 5.1.1; Buitenen tr.). The Upaniṣad is here referring to the esoteric performance of the *agnicayana*. The enjoined self-reflection (*abhidhyāyet*) is constituted as a sacrificial 'performance'.[21] In either case, knowledge itself is a kind of sacrifice bearing the fruit of eternal life, shared by the ritual teleologies prior to it.[22]

That knowledge has always been *transformative* for Advaita only speaks to its ritual ordering, having the capacity to burn ignorance and its attendant defilements.[23] Perhaps the Advaitic ritual innovation can be explained, as I have argued, along a distinction between the more actively constructed or performed ritual and the noetic ritual more reliant on governing the attentional order, and appealing to the witness dimension of the subject. In either case, I have tried to show that not only the active mental staging of cosmic correlations but also recognizing obtaining facts about oneself and the world, constitute a kind of inner or interiorized 'ritual' not fundamentally at odds with the former. And that Śaṃkara's critique of the more actively staged *upāsanā*s and *vidyā*s does not preclude the articulation of self-knowledge (*ātmajñāna*) as itself a kind of interiorized noetic ritual.

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[21] Buitenen notes that here the *brahmayajña* is a rite that is more than the observance of ritual details, comprising the esoteric knowledge of the macro and microcosmic connections implied (Buitenen 1962). Here the semantics of '*citvā*' also deserve attention. Denoting the process of piling up, forming layers/stratums, it also comes to denote the process of knowing, being conscious, standing for the nature of the self as consciousness (cit/caitanya).

[22] If only along a different model of eternity (*nityatva*) than that gained by ritual performance.

[23] References to the 'fire of knowledge' (*jñānāgni*), as in the Bhagavadgītā and elsewhere, often intend precisely that knowledge somehow literally 'burns' undesirable defilements, ignorance etc., and is therefore immediately effective in this purgative sense.

Nor can the conception of self-knowledge as *brahmayajña* or *ātmayajña* (the sacrifice of Brahman or self) be conceived as simply metaphorical. Even if the sacrificial metaphor comes to be increasingly ubiquitous in South Asian cultural and intellectual domains, evidence suggests that self-knowledge (*ātmajñāna*) fell squarely within the dynamics of the rite or *yajña*. If anything, other domains of intelligibility—in philosophy, grammar, poetics, meditative praxis, asceticism—are metaphors *of* the sacrificial understanding of life, where the continuous exchange of energies and substances, the transformation or resolution of one thing into another, the instrumental and operative being of things, make up the epistemological grammar of the world.

Advaita too may be characterized as a sacrificial performance wherein the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) offers her little self up in the fire of knowledge (*jñānāgni*) to yield a higher self, in the same way that the interiorized *agnicayana* required the substitution of the mortal self with a more durable reconstituted self. The innovation lies in the discovery that even the most sophisticated ritual technology cannot escape the constitutive nature of action, that is, nothing that is produced, being a *product* (composite/constituted) can lead the *yajamāna* to real immortality. Not only is such self-knowledge, then, sacrificially ordered, but it alone constitutes the true sacrifice, the offering up of one's very sense of individuality (*ahaṃkāra*). The question, even for Advaita, is not one of accepting or rejecting sacrifice, but discovering the true one.

In the context of the emerging distinction between the *devayājin* (one who worships or offers to the gods) and the *ātmayājin* (one who offers to the self)[24] in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and elsewhere (SB 11.2.6.13-14), the work of Heesterman (1993) and Tull (1989) has clarified that the new sacrifice of the self (*ātmayajña*) is associated with knowledge and centered on the individual self, representing an experience independent of the ritual specialist. It is a ritual without the ritualists. Such individualization and interiorization of sacrifice, then, is already evocative of a monistic impetus in that the collapse of cosmic correspondences (*bandhu*) into an ultimate identity of self and Brahman is mediated by them. Clemens Cavallin has noted that "the tendency is that the sacrificer also becomes the goal of the ritual activity…The efficacy is thereby both dependent on

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[24] The compound (*ātmayājin*) may alternatively be rendered as 'the one who offers *in* the self' or 'one who offers *oneself* sacrificially'. Refer Coomaraswamy above (III.iii).

the self– as knowledge of the correspondences is a pre-requisite for the attaining of the fruits of the ritual actions– and, at the same time, directed towards it." (Cavallin 2003, 230). What is read as the *introspective* or *speculative* turn initiated by the Upaniṣads is an intensification of the ritual logic now directed towards and concentrated on the subject and performer. The *yajamāna* has been forced to turn back upon himself to attend to the domain of conscious subjectivity to find a permanent solution to the problems he attempts to solve through ritual technology. And ritual itself has evolved from an ethic of productivity to an ethic of withdrawal and reflection.

I maintain that this intensification of the sacrificial logic culminates in the Advaitic *anti-ritual* or ritual of unmaking that employs ritual means to reverse the ritual telos. There is a return away from the progressive construction of future selves and worlds (and the attendant 'cosmos-making' thrust of ritual activity) towards the original Being prior to its entanglement in the desire-action (*kāmakarma*) network. Microcosmically, away from the subject as ritual agent-actor towards the subject as the underlying witness consciousness. And away from reality conceived as *bhāva* towards reality conceived as *sat*.[25] The 'is' of the ultimate oneness between *ātman* and Brahman is an existential identity indicating a state of affairs that must be understood or recognized as such (via noetic procedures) and not a cosmic equivalence to be realized in ritual. 'Attaining' such realization will always be an ironical endeavor: an overt logic of attainment must operate concurrently with the confession of the to be realized/known Brahman as already the nature of the performer and therefore always already 'attained'. Nonetheless, there is an attaining to do; only now it must be arbitrated *noetically*, the differential means of 'attaining' what is *bhūta* (already available), not *bhavya* (to be attained by ritual means).

IV.   The Advaitic Ritual Architecture

I now consider four driving elements of Śaṃkara's Advaita that will situate its concerns, methods and purposes within a precise ritual organization of parts. These are *phalavattva* (fruitfulness/result-drivenness), *aṅgatva* (subsidiaryness), *prakriyā* (enaction procedure) and *sādhanatva* (instrumentality). Whether a given

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[25] I develop the distinction between *bhāva* and *sat* reliant metaphysics in chapters 1 and 4.

principle originates in the ritual domain or the grammatical (or both), in each case it will turn out to rely on analogous paths and pattens of thinking shared under the rituogrammatic paradigm. The emphasis in this chapter is on the ritual coding of Advaitic discourse. Chapters 4 and 5 will articulate Advaita's organization as a grammar. This is only a pragmatic division of its ritual and grammatical sub-elements, emphasizing one or the other aspect of the Advaitic noetic performance as the context demands.

IV.i Phalavattva (Fruitfulness/Result-Drivenness)

Phalavattva, the quality of possessing a result or being oriented towards a result, a concept extracted from the ritual domain, is one of the fundamental organizing principles of Śaṃkara's Uttara Mīmāṃsā, functioning in close concert with four other motivating principles, *artha* (meaning-purpose), *prayojana* (use-purpose), *pramāṇa* (authorizing warrant) and subsidiaryness (*aṅgatva*). For Śaṃkara it serves as a criterion to distinguish, arrange and hierarchize discrete Vedic units of meaning relative to each other. Nothing in the *Upaniṣads*, or the entirety of the *Veda*, may be without consequence or result (*phalavaikalya*). While it is natural to apply this to the rituals of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā geared towards generating one or the other result (*phala*), seen or unseen*,* a closer look at Śaṃkara's organizational scheme in the commentaries reveals the same result-orientedness as the driving criterion of Upanishadic intelligibility (*artha/tātparya*). In fact, the pervasiveness of what we may call 'result (*phala*) discourse' in Śaṃkara has not received sufficient attention in situating Śaṃkara's own conception of his program (as opposed to reading him through our sensibilities, as a philosopher, theologian, exegete or something else). Such philosophical, theological or exegetical elaboration of text is meaningful and complete to the extent that it is productive of the fruit or result of 'attaining' (that is, understanding) the nature of self as Brahman (*brahmātmabhāva*), failing which the Upanishadic *artha*—or 'purport', as signifying both purpose *and* import—remains unfulfilled. Upanishadic text, when decoded under the right hermeneutics and grammar, as we will see, has the capacity to generate certain and fruitful knowledge of self (*niścitaphalavadvijñānotpādakatva*) as Śaṃkara argues in BUB 1.4.7. This remains for Śaṃkara the final arbiter of the purport of Upanishadic-Advaitic discourse.

The domain of fruitfulness—already articulated under the Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka calculus of mundane and supernatural ends of ritual—is expanded by Śaṃkara to accommodate and hierarchize the Veda as such, with each unit of meaning-purpose—ritual (*yajña*), meditation (*upāsanā*) and ignorance-removing knowledge (*jñāna*)—possessing a result that orders it within an intricate calculus of relative worth and usefulness. Indeed, the legitimacy, even intelligibility, of the Upanishadic program of self-knowledge lies in its being ultimately fruitful in delivering more (*atiśayaphala*) than what any ritual technology can offer.[26] As in Jaimini and other interpreters of ritual, fruitfulness and usefulness thus comprise Śaṃkara's meta-hermeneutics of the very *raison d'être* of Vedic discourse. The whole Veda, Śaṃkara affirms early on in his *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* commentary, "is devoted to setting forth the means of attaining what is good (desirable) and disengaging from what is evil (undesirable), insofar as these are not known through perception and inference, for all people naturally seek these two ends".[27] This may be read as the claim that Vedic intelligibility and meaningfulness are answerable and responsive to fundamental human drives and aspirations. The Upanishadic corpus is also intelligible as a set of procedures that *effectuate* the realization of the most fundamental human aspiration of freedom and wholeness. To this extent, *phalavattva,* the capacity of Advaitic discourse to result in self-knowledge, is tied to the fulfillment of the human good, the *puruṣārtha*, which drives the pedagogical program from its inception. The fulfillment of such a *puruṣārtha* is also articulated in terms of the satisfaction of the final purpose (*prayojana*) of Advaitic inquiry by Śaṃkara, and in the common practice of indicating the four textual parameters (*anubandhacatuṣṭaya*) in practices of Advaitic manual and commentarial writing.

The end 'product' of the Advaitic *noetic* ritual is the removal of ignorance (*avidyā*), its attendant effects, desire (*kāma*) and action (*karma*) and the ensuing suffering (*śoka, duḥkha*). Countering the objection that self-knowledge serves no useful purpose (*prayojanābhāva*), Śaṃkara cites *śruti* as clearly enlisting the results of self-knowledge (*phalaśravaṇa*):

> [Opponent:] [T]he knowledge of the supreme self etc. serves no useful purpose like that of Meru and so forth. [Reply:] Not so, for the Śruti mentions such results as, 'The knower of Brahman attains the highest' (TU 2.1.1), 'The knot of the heart (intelligence) is broken' (MU

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[26] yata evamatiśayaphalaiṣā brahmavidyātaḥ sā prakārāntareṇāpi vaktavyeti. CUB 3.12.1.

[27] sarvo 'pyayaṃ vedaḥ pratyakṣānumānābhyām anavagateṣṭāniṣṭaprāptiparihāropāya- prakāśanaparaḥ. BUB 1.1.

2.2.8) etc. We also find cessation of ignorance and other evils which are the root of relative ignorance. Besides, since the knowledge of Brahman does not form part of anything else (ex. an action), the results rehearsed about it cannot be a mere eulogy as in the case of the sacrificial ladle.[28]

The very division of the Vedic canon into a ritual (*karma*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) portion is based on the distinctive results produced by each (*phalabhedāt*) (BSB 1.1.1). It will be apt to remind ourselves here of the paradox of such 'result discourse' employed by Advaita, along the lines, explored earlier, of the paradox of Advaitic 'attainment (*prāpti*) discourse' which, as argued, must be understood noetically, not causally. Likewise, '*phala*-talk' is also immersed in the language and world of causalities and actional trajectories, most eminently capturing the result of the grammatical act, the *karmaphala*. As originally belonging to the world of actions and actors (*kāraka*s), fruitfulness must be reconceived along an Advaitic ethic: The Upanishadic text operates towards effecting a certain 'fruit', but its distinctive result (*phalabheda*) comprises the noetic recognition of the self as non-actional, and therefore ultimately outside the very domain of action-actor-result (*kriyākārakaphala*).

Even if under a noetic frame of interpretation, the result-orientedness of the Advaitic program situates it firmly within a ritual paradigm of purposivity, where ritual or discursive units are assessed according to their instrumentality towards the production of some outcome. The productive contribution of such a unit, what it does or accomplishes, is the real arbiter of its meaning. This constitutes a coherent model to understand the practical or performative dimension of Advaita stressed in contemporary scholarship, such as conceptions of Advaita as therapy (Halbfass) or theological hermeneutics (outlined in Chapter 1). Advaita as a result-driven noetic ritual can go further in explaining the actual dynamics and details of this practical emphasis. Situating Advaita praxis in its immediate environment of Vedic sacrificial dynamics as an innovation upon extant ritual practice offers, therefore, a coherent account of its practical focus; even if doing

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[28] na, brahmavidāpnoti param bhidyate hṛdayagranthiḥ iti phalaśravaṇāt, saṃsārabījāvidyādidoṣanivṛttidarśanācca | ananyaśeṣatvācca tajjñānasya, juhvāmiva phalaśruterarthavādatvānupapatti. BUB 1.3.1. The reference is to the statement 'There is Mount Meru' which, being a purely descriptive statement, serves no useful purpose and is there not fruitful, according to the ritual theorists.

so appears counterintuitive under the view of Advaita as anti-ritualist or indifferent to ritual.[29] The element of *phalavattva* ensures that Advaita is ritually driven and organized at its very core. The end product guides and shapes the whole enterprise.

The assertion of Advaita's practical or performative orientation remains a soft and somewhat uncontentious claim. A stronger claim is that the very nuts and bolts of Advaitic methodology, what renders Advaita intelligible and meaningful, is such result-drivenness. For Śaṃkara fruitfulness controls the very organization of Upanishadic units of meaning, functioning in close association with three other related organizational criteria: *artha* (meaning-purpose), *pramāṇa* (authorizing warrant) and *prayojana* (use-purpose). I translate *artha* as 'purport'—comprehending both a teleological *purpose* and semantic *import*—to capture the polyvalence of a term denoting both the meaning of a semantic unit (word, sentence or passage) and its implication in a larger calculus of uses and purposes. An Upanishadic unit has purport to the extent that it not only forms a coherent meaningful whole but also accomplishes some real-world purpose. That is to say, such a unit has purport insofar as it has a result (i.e. it is *phalavat*). Commenting on the interpretation of cosmogonic passages dealing with change and transformation (BS 1.4.14; 2.1.27), Śaṃkara is anxious to clarify that their purport cannot lie in the exposition of creation as an end in itself, nor should we worry about conflicting accounts of creation (*vigāna*), since the final determinant of purport (*artha*) are not the ostensible word- or sentence-meanings, but the deeper performative coherence of seemingly conflicting passages. Meaning (*artha*) is determined by what the passage *achieves*. The mere exposition of change and transformation has no result and therefore cannot be its real purport. In a key passage, Śaṃkara outlines the tight relation of result, meaning, purposivity and expedient means while explicating the cosmogonic passages of the Upaniṣads:

> That there is no discrepancy about the creator, is so, also because, all such sets of scriptural passages which expound the nature of the cause, do not show (that they have) any discrepant significance (*avigītārthatvāt*). Discrepancy (*vigāna*) with respect to the things created is no doubt observable, inasmuch as sometimes it speaks of creation, in which Ākāśa (space) is

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[29] More generally, such sacrificial dynamics, I argue, furnishes a coherent account of the very meaning of 'praxis' in a South Asian context, and the repeated emphasis therein of the 'practical' nature of Indian philosophy, which may very often be theorized in terms of the sacrificial or ritual dimension of philosophy developed here with respect to Advaita.

created first, and sometimes, it speaks of creation in which Teja (fire) is created first. It is not therefore possible to be able to say, on the ground of this discrepancy as regards the order of creation, that the cause i.e. Brahman also, which is understood from the scriptural passages as not having any discrepancy (*avigīta*), deserves to be something which is not intended to be spoken of, because it would be indiscrete or impudent…Besides, discrepancy with respect to things created, may well be there because the scriptures do not purport to expound that. It is not here intended to speak at length about creation. We neither see nor find it mentioned by the Scriptures that any particular consummation devoutly to be wished for by man (*puruṣārtha*) is bound up with it, nor is it possible to imagine so, because it is understood from the introductory and concluding portions, that the details about creation are in complete conformity (*ekavākyatā*) with passages in various places dealing with Brahman. The Scriptures further do indicate how the account of creation *in extenso* has the purpose of making one understand Brahman from it (*brahmapratipattyarthatā*)…It is understood from the illustration about clay etc., that it is with a desire to speak as to how the effect is not different from the cause, that the Scriptures given an account of creation *in extenso*. Those who are conversant with the tradition of the Scriptures also say similarly—"The different illustrations about clay, gold and the sparks of fire, which make us understand the diversity of creation in different places, are only meant to serve as an expedient (*upāya*) for making a person realize (Brahman), though Brahman as such does not admit of any differences (*Māṇḍūkya* 3.15)".[30]

The final test of conflict/discrepancy (*vigāna*) or consistency/harmony (*avigītārthatva/ekavākyatā*) of units of Upanishadic language is the result of correctly comprehending the nature of Brahman (*brahmapratipattyarthatā*), even if purely textually or hermeneutically, various passages appear in conflict. To seek *conceptual* coherence, that is, a coherent view or philosophy across diverse texts and passages, and not find it, is to play the wrong kind of language-game. It is performative coherence resulting in the removal of ignorance and its effects that arbitrates the final *artha* (meaning + purposivity) of scriptural language. A little later Śaṃkara says so rather explicitly and tersely:

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[30] evañjātīyakasya kāraṇasvarūpanirūpaṇaparasya vākyajātasya prativedāntamavigītārthatvāt | kāryaviṣayaṃ tu vigānaṃ dṛśyate kvacidākāśādikā sṛṣṭiḥ kvacittejādiketyevañjātīyakam | naca kāryaviṣayeṇa vigānena kāraṇamapi brahma sarvavedānteṣvavigītamadhigamyamānamavivakṣitaṃ bhavitumarhatīti śakyate vaktum | atiprasaṅgāt | samādhasyati cācāryaḥ kāryaviṣayamapi vigānaṃ 'na viyadaśruteḥ' ityārabhya bhavedapi kāryasya vigītatvamapratipādyatvāt | nahyayaṃ sṛṣṭyādiprapañcaḥ pratipādayiṣitaḥ | nahi tatpratibaddhaḥ kvacitpuruṣārtho dṛśyate śrūyate vā | naca kalpayituṃ śakyate, upakramopasaṃhārābhyāṃ tatra tatra brahmaviṣayairvākyaiḥ sākamekavākyatāyā gamyamānatvāt | darśayati ca sṛṣṭyādiprapañcasya brahmapratipattyarthatām- 'annena somya śuṅgenāpo mūlamanvicchadbhiḥ somya śuṅgena tejo mulamanviccha tejasā somya śuṅgena sanmūlamanviccha' iti | mṛdādidṛṣṭāntaiśca kāryasya kāraṇenābhedaṃ vadituṃ sṛṣṭyādiprapañcaḥ śrāvyata iti gamyate | tathāca sampradāyavido vadanti- 'mṛllohavisphuliṅgādyaiḥ sṛṣṭiryā coditānyathā | upāyaḥ so 'vatārāya nāsti bhedaḥ kathañcana. BSB 1.4.14. Apte tr. I replace his 'Brahma' with 'Brahman' here and elsewhere.

Nor have the scriptural passages which speak of Brahman as undergoing change the purpose of teaching the fact of change (*pariṇāmapratipādanārthā*); for such instruction would have no fruit (*phalānavagamāt*). They rather aim at imparting instruction about Brahman's Self as raised above this apparent world; that being an instruction which we know to have a result of its own (*phalāvagamāt*). For in the scriptural passages beginning 'He can only be described by No, no [*neti neti*] (which passage conveys instruction about the absolute Brahman) a result is stated at the end.[31]

Here, such fruit is the attainment of fearlessness (*abhaya*). '*Artha*' in the compound

'*pariṇāmapratipādanārthā*' is best rendered as indicating the *purpose* of the teaching resulting in an outcome

determining the contested sense (*artha*) of such accounts. Less intuitive is the Vedic, and Vedantic, conflation

of *phalavattva* and *pramāṇatva*, bringing Advaita epistemology straight into the pragmatic nexus of ritual.

Whether a statement or passage counts as authoritative or epistemically reliable is adjudicated in light of its

pragmatic efficacy. Redolent of the Buddhist *arthakriyākāritva* (doctrine of causal efficiency), this is tied to the

idea that *śruti* is answerable to basic human aspirations. Such a human perspective assures that the attainment

of what is desirable (*iṣṭaprāpti*) and disengagement from what is undesirable (*aniṣṭaparihāra*) drive an account of

what constitutes epistemic authority: if a statement is not conducive towards an actual result, it cannot be

conferred the status of a reliable warrant. For Pūrva Mīmāṃsā the central criterion of such usefulness is a

relation with the exposition of action (*kriyānvākhyāna*). A mere exposition of an obtaining state of affairs

(*vastvanvākhyāna*) cannot comprise a reliable warrant because it subserves no immediate human goal. Śaṃkara

has a mouthful to say in response:

The test of the authority or otherwise (*prāmāṇyaaprāmāṇyakāraṇa*) of a passage is not whether it states a fact or an action, but its *capacity to generate certain and fruitful knowledge*. A passage that has this is authoritative, and one that lacks it, is not. But we want to ask you: Is or is not certain and fruitful knowledge generated by passages setting forth the nature of the Self, and if so, how can they lose their authority? Do you not see the *result* of knowledge in the removal of the evils which are the root of transmigration, such as ignorance, grief, delusion and fear? Or do you not hear those hundreds of Upanishadic texts such as, 'Then what delusion and what grief can there be for one who sees unity?', 'I am but a knower of (Vedic) Mantras, not of the Self, so I am tormented with grief, and you, sir, must take. me beyond the reach of it'. Do passages like, 'He cried,' lead to this kind of certain and fruitful

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[31] naceyaṃ pariṇāmaśrutiḥ pariṇāmapratipādanārthā, tatpratipattau phalānavagamāt |
sarvavyavahārahīnabrahmātmabhāvapratipādanārthā tveṣā, tatpratiphalāvagamāt. BSB 2.1.27. Thibaut tr.

knowledge? If they do not, they may well be without authority. But how can the fact of their having no authority take away the authority of passages leading to certain and fruitful knowledge? And if these are without authority, what trust can one repose in passages dealing with the new and full moon sacrifices, for instance? (italics mine).[32]

The redefinition and expansion of *prāmāṇya* as that which has the capacity to generate certain and fruitful knowledge (*niścitaphalavadvijñānotpādakatva*) allows Śaṃkara to tread the fine line between maintaining a typically ritualist criterion of *pramāṇa* as pragmatically relevant on one hand, without succumbing to its action-orientedness (*kriyārthatva*) on the other. 'Fruitful knowledge' can do the twin work of being practically efficacious while keeping within the Advaitic noetic paradigm not reliant on proliferative or productive activity.

IV.ii   Aṅgatva (Auxiliaryness)

If Advaitic *phalavattva* takes its bearings from the ritual domain, *aṅgatva* is a central organizing principle of both ritual and grammar. An *aṅga* is a part, subsidiary or dependent element, presupposing another as the primary or whole (*pradhāna/mukhya*). In both ritual and grammar texts, such subsidiary, auxiliary or dependent elements are recruited in various procedures that move from part to whole, subsidiary to the autonomous or means to end. The being subsidiary (*aṅgatva*) of the *aṅga* is only intelligible within a performative teleology, the accomplishment of a final result that surrounds and gives it its place within a complex dynamic hierarchy. In Mīmāṃsā this is the principal ritual action to which other rites, instruments or accessories are auxiliary. In Vyākaraṇa this is often the final word produced by grammatical enaction procedures (*prakriyā*s), affixes, stems, roots etc.[33] Advaitic method transposes this procedure to the

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[32] na vākyasya vastvanvākhyānaṃ kriyānvākhyānaṃ vā prāmāṇyāprāmāṇyakāraṇam, kiṃ tarhi? niścitaphalavadvijñānotpādakatvam | tadyatrāsti tatpramāṇaṃ vākyam, yatra nāsti tadapramāṇam | kiṃñca bho pṛcchāmastvām ātmasvarūpānvākhyānapareṣu vākyeṣu phalavanniścitaṃ ca vijñānamutpadyate, na vā? utpadyate cetkathamaprāmāṇyamiti? kiṃ vā na paśyasi avidyāśokamohabhayādisaṃsārabījadoṣanivṛttiṃ vijñānaphalam | na śṛṇoṣi vā kim tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvamanupaśyataḥ mantravidevāsmi nātmavitso 'haṃ bhagayaḥ śocāmi taṃ mā bhagavāñchokasya pāraṃ śocāmi tārayatu ityevamādyupaniṣadvākyaśatāni? evaṃ vidyate kiṃ so 'rodityādiṣu niścitaṃ phalavacca vijñānam | na cedvidyate 'stvaprāmāṇyam | tadapramāṇye phalavanniścitavijñānotpādakasya kimityaprāmāṇyaṃ syāt. BUB 1.4.7. Madhavananda tr.

[33] An *aṅga*, in grammar, is an open and relative category. Different grammatical items can receive that designation if some action or transformation is intended with respect to them. It designates a state of intermediacy or process upon which the final product is incumbent.

performance of the noetic ritual in order to accomplish the end 'product' of self-knowledge, reflecting its deep ritual and rituogrammatic organization.[34]

Aṅgatva (being subsidiary, auxiliary or dependent) functions in dependence on *phalavattva* (fruitfulness) that helps determine the specific meaning and purpose (together, the *artha* or purport) of a ritual unit or element. That is, fruitfulness is the central criterion decisive of which Upanishadic units of *artha* (purport, as the synthesis of *purpose* and *import*) are autonomous or primary and which are dependent or subsidiary. This follows the basic principle of ritual organization that the fruitful should be the primary (*mukhya*) of that which is not (MS 4.4.7).[35]

To begin with, Śaṃkara clarifies that the knowledge conveyed by the Upaniṣads as a whole is itself not auxiliary to something else, that is, the ritual section of the Veda. Commenting on BS 1.1.4, Śaṃkara questions the position that any Vedic segment that is purely informative, descriptive of an existent state of affairs or entity (*kevalavastuvādī vedabhāgaḥ*), without further imperative towards some engagement or refrainment, is meaningless and purposeless. His rebuttal simply takes note of the fact that the Self spoken of in the Upaniṣads (the *aupaniṣada puruṣa* of BU 3.9.26) in not subservient or subsidiary (*śeṣa*) to action or anything else, it is *ananyaśeṣa* (BUB 1.3.1). If anything, according to the Vedāntic reading of the Veda, ritual is now subservient to knowledge to the extent that it may be instrumentalized towards the generation of self-knowledge. This is expressed in Śaṃkara's *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* commentary in terms of the deeper unity of purpose and meaning (*ekavākyatā*) of all portions of the Veda in the liberating cognition of Brahman: "Thus the entire body of regular rites…serves as a means to liberation through the attainment of Self-knowledge. Hence we see that the section of the Vedas dealing with knowledge has the same import (*ekavākyatā*) as that dealing with rites."[36] Śaṃkara thus, while adopting the Mīmāṃsaka notion, subverts the obtaining principal-auxiliary relationship of action and knowledge by arguing that all enjoined activity is finally generative of insight into

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[34] Sometimes Śaṃkara will use the terms '*upayoga'* and '*viniyoga',* but more commonly their verbal derivatives '*upayujyate'* or '*viniyujyate',* to convey the sense of the participation or appropriation of something into the noetic performance.

[35] phalavad voktahetutvād itarasya pradhānaṃ syāt. MS 4.4.7. Also refer MS 4.4.34 below.

[36] evaṃ kāmyavarjitaṃ nityaṃ karmajātaṃ sarvamātmajñānotpattidvāreṇa mokṣasādhanatvaṃ pritapadyate / evaṃ karmakāṇḍenāsyaikavākyatāvagatiḥ. BUB 4.4.22. Madhavananda tr.

the self and reality.[37] Sureśvara, sub-commenting on Śaṃkara above, will explicitly say that the ritual portion of the Veda (*karmakāṇḍa*) is auxiliary (*śeṣa*) to the knowledge-portion (*jñānakāṇḍa*).[38] The Upanishadic corpus thus constitutes a single unit with its own independent and central (*pradhāna*) purport, the discovery of the self as the unqualified, formless and non-actional Brahman, all accompanying or preceding activity being subservient to it.

But, more significantly, the primary-subsidiary or principal-auxiliary relation obtains between segments *within* the Advaitic noetic ritual architecture. Something is an *aṅga* in the generation of self-knowledge because its purport (*artha*) does not reside in itself but is instrumental in the accomplishment of the final result (*phala*) sought by the noetic procedure. In Advaita, such an independent result can only accrue to the more negative or 'apophatic' sections, especially those that directly inform the student-practitioner of her non-difference or non-dualism with Brahman. This information or knowledge is directly fruitful (*phalavat*) terminating in the overcoming of ignorance. It is therefore primary (*pradhāna*). Various other Upanishadic units of purport neither present such an attributeless Brahman nor negotiate an identification of self (*ātman*) with Brahman. On the contrary, much Upanishadic discourse is invested in unfolding the complex makeup and constitution of the world and the individual (in terms of the three bodies, five sheaths, five elements etc.). Commenting on BS 3.2.14: "(Brahman) of course is devoid of any form, because, that is the main purport (of the Scriptures)", Śaṃkara notes:

> Brahman ought to be understood to be without any form etc. and not as having form. Whence is it so? Because that is the main purport (*tatpradhānatvāt*) (of the Scriptures). That, those scriptural passages such as 'Neither gross not fine, nor short nor long' (BU 3.8.8); '(It is) without any sound, touch, form, decay' (KU 3.15; MukU 2.72) [etc.]—have the same Brahman-Self, which is without any transmigratory nature i.e. without any extension (*Niṣprapañca*), and nothing else, as their only purport, has already been established…All other passages which refer to qualified Brahman as having a form, are not passages which display

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[37] This will become clear in the ensuing section on instrumentality (*sādhanatva*), where the relevant passage (BUB 4.4.22) is discussed at length.

[38] jñānakāṇḍārtha-śeṣatvaṃ karmakaṇḍasya yat punaḥ | viniyojakahetv etat tayor vākyaikavākyataḥ. BUBV 278.

the chief purport (*na tatpradhānāni*). Their purport is to speak of an injunction to meditation.[39]

As before, the question of interpretation or the correct textual 'hermeneutics' of such a passage is about what is efficacious. Just as with Jaimini's ritually ordered universe, it is the results accrued by the subsidiary elements, the positive descriptions of self and reality, to the primary—the unqualified Brahman as the underlying nature of self—that guarantees the final result of realization of self as non-actional (*niṣkriya*). Any other ordering, for instance, regarding such passages as having equal weight, will not produce a definite result. The primary difference (from its sister Mīmāṃsā), however, is that the nature of accrual of various sub-elements to the primary in the Advaitic ritual is *noetic*, not causal. The results and changes are of the nature of a correction/revision in my perception, cognition or understanding; they are not attempts to alter extant states of affairs or bring something into new into being. While the various conflicting positive accounts may seem to lack conceptual coherence, both amidst themselves and in their opposition to more negative/apophatic accounts of self and world, the criteria of fruitfulness and purport—exceeding merely semantic or conceptual import to include practical purposivity—negotiate a deeper performative coherence.

To the extent that such a unit of purport (for instance, the exposition of the five sheaths of the self in the *Taittirīya* or the three bodies in the *Māṇḍūkya*) cannot directly accomplish a result but contributes to the realization of the final fruit of the Advaitic ritual (the knowledge of identity of self with the attributeless Brahman) in some manner, it partakes of *aṅgatva* or subsidiaryness. Advaitic methodology as a set of noetic procedures works precisely with such subsidiary and primary elements, mirroring the ritual organization of parts and wholes, instruments and ends. They share a complex and dynamic relationship where the more subsidiary elements lend their purposes to primary ones which, absorbing the output of the subsidiary elements, effect the final outcome. The contributory elements themselves display a complex inner division of

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[39] rūpādyākārarahitameva brahmāvadhārayitavyaṃ na rūpādimat | kasmāt | tatpradhānatvāt asthūlamanaṇvarhrasvamadīrdham aśabdamasparśamarūpamavyayam ākāśo vai nāma nāmarūpayornirvahitā te yadantarā tadbrahma 'divyo hyamūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ sabāhyābhyantaro hyajaḥ tadetadbrahmāpūrvamanaparamanantaramabrahmamayamātmā brahagma sarvānabhūḥ' ityevamādīni vākyāni niṣprapañcabrahmātmatattvapradhānāni narthāntarapradhānānītyetatpratiṣṭhāpitaṃ 'tattu samanvayāt' ityatra | tasmādevañjātīyakeṣu vākyeṣu yathāśrutaṃ nirākārameva brahmāvadhārayitavyam | itarāṇi tvākārapavadbrahmaviṣayāṇi vākyāni na tatpradhānāni. BSB 3.2.14. Apte tr.

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actional or productive contributors on one hand, and noetic contributors on the other; a distinction that will become explicit in the discussion of instrumentality (*sādhanatva*) that follows, where I further elaborate on *aṅgatva* in terms of an internal-external (*antaraṅga-bahiraṅga*) division. We may hear directly from Śaṃkara:

> [W]hile the cognition of the unity of Brahman is the instrument of freedom (*mokṣasādhana*), there is nothing to show that any independent result (*svatantrameva kasmaicit phalāya*) is connected with the view of Brahman, by undergoing a modification, passing over into the form of this world…We have then to accept the following conclusion that, in the sections treating of Brahman, an independent result (*phalasiddhau satyām*) belongs only to the knowledge of Brahman as devoid of all attributes and distinctions, and that hence whatever is stated as having no special fruit (*aphalam*) of its own—as, for instance, the passages about Brahman modifying itself into the form of this world—is merely to be applied (*viniyujyate*) as a means for the cognition of the absolute Brahman (*brahmadarśanopāyatvena*), but does not bring about an independent result; according to the principle that whatever has no result of its own, but is mentioned in connection with something else which has such a result (*phalavat sannidhau*), is subordinate to the latter (*tadaṅgam*).[40]

The principle invoked here, that whatever has no result of its own, but is mentioned in connection with something else that does, is subordinate to that (*phalavat sannidhau aphalam tadaṅgam*), has a clear basis in the adjudication of the relative place of a given rite within a larger ritual hierarchy. In fact it seems to be Śaṃkara's paraphrase of Jaimini's principle regarding the relative placement of rites, worth reproducing in full:

> MS 4.4.34: The characteristic of the primary (rite) is that it has a result; if [a sacrifice] not concerned [with a result] is mentioned in close proximity to such a primary, [that sacrifice] should be regarded as subsidiary to that primary.[41]

The terms *mukhya*, *yatphalavattva*, *tatsannidhau* and *tadaṅga* confirm that Śaṃkara is recalling this *sūtra* to conceive the relationship of various Upanishadic elements and sees them as analogously arranged. While the passages just noted exemplify dependence or auxiliaryness, Śaṃkara is explicit that knowledge of Brahman

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[40] brahmaprakaraṇe sarvadharmaviśeṣarahitabrahmadarśanādeva phalasiddhau satyāṃ yattatrāphalaṃ śrūyate brahmaṇo jagadākārapariṇāmitvādi tadbrahmadarśanopāyatvenaiva viniyujyate, phalavatsaṃnidhāvaphalaṃ tadaṅgamitivat | natu svatantraṃ phalāya kalpyata iti. BSB 2.1.14. Thibaut tr.

[41] tatpunarmukhyalakṣaṇaṃ yatphalavatvaṃ tatsannidhāv asaṃyuktaṃ tadaṅgaṃsyādbhāgitvāt. MS 4.4.34

alone constitutes the primary (*pradhāna*) element towards which other Upanishadic elements contribute. The concept of *arthākṣiptatva* (BSB 1.1.1) also comes into play, meaning not only that subsidiary elements bestow or confer their meanings to the primary but that they contribute their subordinate purposes to the purpose of generating self-knowledge. Even if Śaṃkara's project as a *Brahmasūtra* commentator is to seek *hermeneutic* coherence and confirmation of the attributeless Brahman as the central teaching of the Upaniṣads, the manner in which Upanishadic elements arrange themselves is ultimately a matter of performative coherence. Brahman's centrality (*pradhānatā*) as the primary hermeneutic object established through a detailed consideration of Upanishadic passages (*padasamanvaya*) is only propaedeutic to its centrality (*pradhānatā*) as the primary object of attainment, a result to be accomplished in a ritual-like telos.

The ritually expedient and subsidiary feature of various Upanishadic units of purport will also become evident in Śaṃkara's conception of *sādhanatva* and *upāyatva*, both ideas occurring in the above passage. Instrumentality (*sādhanatva*) is the fourth element extracted in consideration of the primary elements undergirding the Advaitic ritual architecture. '*Upāya*', however, is a difficult term to translate. Śaṃkara often means something like a pragmatic means, instrument or maneuver, even an artifice, employed to achieve a certain end. The sense of expediency is reminiscent of early Buddhist uses of *upāya*. An *upāya* is necessarily an *aṅga*, bearing no independent fruit of its own, but implicated (*viniyujyate*) in the accomplishment of the central result. It connotes the same sense of ritual expediency and pragmatic relevance that undergird Advaitic method in general, but is especially related to the conception of a *prakriyā* that will be discussed next.

IV.iii   Prakriyā (Procedure/Production/Enaction)

*Prakriyā*s are standard grammatical procedures used to derive fully-formed words from smaller morphological units. '*Prakriyā*' has been translated as derivation, selection procedure, method, performance, enaction, even production[42]. This is not surprising as the derivation of the final word is conceived as its

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[42] Often meaning 'manner', 'method' or 'production', it has a more technical use in grammar with respect to derivation procedures of verbs and nouns. I follow Edwin Gerow's recommendation—enaction procedure—to emphasize the dynamic recruitment of rules and sūtras to accomplish a purpose within a functional whole. As he observes: "This 'enaction' of grammar, now seen as a total functional system, is termed *prakriyā*, which here acquires its most trenchant sense: something like performance or 'production'" (Gerow 2002, 684).

production, and a *prakriyā* involves whatever it takes, initial morphological units, rules of deployment, principles ordering the application of rules etc., to ensure such production. A quasi-ritual logic is operative in the generation of an end, the final word (*pada*), by recruiting subsidiary elements arranged in terms of their operational relevance according to extensive rules stipulating their application. Different types of words require different selection/productive procedures. *Prakriyā* can denote either the type of procedure or the token instance of actually carrying one out. Even outside of its technical grammatical use, *prakriyā* can carry a sense of either procedure or production, and its Advaitic use too is informed by both senses: the production of a final knowledge by means of a set of noetic procedures.

The terminology of *prakriyā* came to be increasingly applied by post-Śaṃkara Advaitins as a retrospective organizational scheme to order Upanishadic units of purport. The question of when it was so ubiquitously adopted into contemporary Advaitic method remains open. I will venture a more concrete claim regarding the why and how of its adoption. Advaitins came to increasingly employ the category of *prakriyā* to explicate what can be seen as latent in Advaitic method from very early on (since at least the time of Śaṃkara) thus capable of serving as an invaluable analytic category to decode Advaita method, insofar it displays a ritual organization. The production of the final result (*phala*) of the Advaitic noetic performance (Section IV.i) through the adoption of various subsidiary elements or *aṅga*s (Section IV.ii) can be understood along the model of the grammatical *prakriyā*. Both evince a movement from part to whole, subsidiary to primary, means to end. The Advaita *prakriyā* is the operation activating and recruiting subsidiary elements and expedients (*upāya*s) in the noetic ritual to effect the product of self-knowledge. A *prakriyā* thus enlivens the Advaita text in the realization of its purport (*artha* as purpose-import). Following Edwin Gerow, I translate it as 'enaction procedure' (Gerow 2002). Before offering my arguments, I briefly address the prehistory of the term.

While not a stock term in Śaṃkara, his few allusions to it provide a clue to its subsequent adoption history. Śaṃkara is discussing a *Taittirīya* passage in context of an all important *sūtra*, BS 3.2.22: "For (the clause 'Not so, not so') denies (of Brahman) the suchness which forms the topic of discussion; and (the text) announces something more than that (Thibaut tr.)". It clarifies that the famous two negatives 'Not this, not this' of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* does not negate, as might be imagined, the conditioned reality as well as the

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unconditioned Brahman (corresponding to each of the two negations). The opponent says, "We feel that by the first, the phenomenal (i.e. the corporeal and the incorporeal) aspects of Brahman are denied, and by the other, Brahman, of which they are the two phenomenal aspects, that is denied" (BSB 2.1.22); the spirit of the objection being that the negative or apophatic accounts of Brahman—such as the *Taittirīya* 'From where the speech together with the mind turns back'—render it practically non-existent, since any such reality beyond mind and speech, not possessing any positive attributes, simply does not exist. This denial is the function of the second 'Not so'. Śaṃkara, predictably, counters that an unqualified, *non-phenomenal* reality is not equivalent to a *non-existent* one. Citing the very same verse introduced by the objection, he says:

> The statement that Brahman is beyond comprehension by speech and mind is not meant to imply its total non-existence. After expounding Brahman in the Vedānta with such great trouble, by means of such scriptural passages as 'One who knows Brahman attains that transcendent one' (TU 2.1.1), 'Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, and Eternity' (TU 2.1.1), no one would seek to imply its non-existence…The [above] scriptural passage is but a technical manner of expounding (*pratipādanaprakriyā*) it, and it means that, Brahman is beyond (comprehension by) speech and the mind, that it does not fall into the category of any (external phenomenal) object, that it forms the Universal Self.[43]

Non-comprehension is thus not non-existence. Śaṃkara's argument here is that the very effort and elaborate schematics of expounding Brahman would be futile if it were not indicating something real and, further, fruitful—by the scriptural declaration of the fruit (*phalaśruti*) of the teaching at the very beginning, 'The knower of Brahman attains the Transcendent One'. It is in this performative and pedagogical context that the negation of Brahman (as non-phenomenal) must be understood as a 'technical manner of expounding' (*pratipādanaprakriyā tu eṣā*). Thibaut alternatively translates it as 'intimating Brahman'. Both translations are quite general. The suggestion seems to be that the Upaniṣad may adopt a style or method of teaching or expounding that is expedient in generating a particular insight (in this case, the understanding of a being that is both existent and attributeless or non-phenomenal).

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[43] vāṅmanasātītatvamapi brahmaṇo nābhāvābhiprāyeṇābhidhīyate | nahi mahatā parikarabandhena brahmavidāpnoti param satyaṃ jñānamanantaṃ brahma ityevamādinā vedānteṣu brahmapratipādya tasyaiva punarabhāvo 'bhilapyeta | prakṣālanāddhi paṅ kasya dūrādasparśaṃ varam iti hi nyāyaḥ | pratipādanaprakriyā tveṣā 'yato vāco nivartante | aprāpya manasā saha iti | etaduktaṃ bhavati vāṅmanasātītamaviṣayāntaḥpāti pratyagātmabhūtaṃ. BSB 3.2.22. Apte tr.

A similar sense is conveyed by his reference to *prakriyā* while opening and introducing the important second part of the *Brahmasūtra* (BS 2.1.1) on non-conflict (*avirodhādhyāya*), whose purpose is to establish the deeper coherence of seemingly conflicting passages. He says: "Now the second *adhyāya* is begun for the purpose of propounding the refutation of the opposition of Smriti and Nyāya to our own view i.e. to show…as to how in every Vedānta the doctrines about the mode of Genesis of all things in general (*sṛṣṭyādiprakriyā*), are not in conflict with each other (*avigītatvam*)."[44] The reader will be reminded of BSB 1.4.14 treated earlier (under '*Phalavattva*') where Śaṃkara suggests that conflict with respect to accounts of creation (*vigāna*) does not amount to conflict (*avigītatva*) with respect to the deeper motive or *function* of such accounts: "The Scriptures further do indicate how the account of creation *in extenso* has the purpose of making one understand Brahman from it (*brahmapratipattyarthatā*)…Those who are conversant with the tradition of the Scriptures also say similarly—'The different illustrations about clay, gold and the sparks of fire, which make us understand the diversity of creation in different places, are only meant to serve as an expedient (*upāya*) for making a person realize (Brahman), though Brahman as such does not admit of any differences'.[45]

Prakriyā suggests here a sense of a style, manner or method of exposition, '*sṛṣṭyādiprakriyā*' above indicating the particularly cosmogonic modes of teaching. Indeed, later Advaitic method will rather explicitly designate, by the term '*sṛṣṭiprakriyā*', the subset of enaction procedures (*prakriyā*s) dealing with cosmogonic passages. In Śaṃkara this sense is latent, but *prakriyā* has not quite morphed into a stock Advaitic methodological term. My rendering of 'enaction procedure' presupposes this development, also serving to concentrate the performative thrust of such procedures. Nonetheless, the contexts of application indicate that the use of the term was still largely restricted to particularly cosmogonic contexts of teaching, as illumined by Sureśvara's use of the term. It is, now, to Sureśvara that we must turn in order for a more explicit definition. He makes ample use of it and, in a revealing set of verses, sets the tone for the subsequent use of *prakriyā* well into pre-modern and modern eras:

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[44] idānīṃ svapakṣe smṛtinyāyavirodhaparihāraḥ, pradhānādivādānāṃ ca nyāyābhāsopabṛṃhitatvaṃ, prativedāntaṃ ca sṛṣṭyādiprakriyāyā avigītatvamisyarthajātasya pratipādanāya dvitīyo 'dhyāya ārabhyate. BSB 2.1.1; Apte tr.
[45] mṛllohavisphuliṅgādyaiḥ sṛṣṭiryā coditānyathā | upāyaḥ so 'vatārāya nāsti bhedaḥ kathañcana. BSB 1.4.14. Apte tr.

1.4.401 There is no limitation/rule for a *prakriyā* since what is primary is the generation of knowledge in the human being. They are also seen to be differently articulated/presented in different Vedic statements.
1.4.402 By whatever (means) a human being comes to the knowledge of the innermost self, that is a *prakriyā*, and is effective without there being any fixity about it[46].[47]

A *prakriyā*, then, is whatever aids the student in coming to an understanding or knowledge (*vyutpatti*) without any clear systematicity or fixity about their use (*anavasthitā*), except that they must culminate in a result (*phala*), which is how the commentator glosses '*sādhvī*'. But *prakriyā* is a difficult term to translate in this period. It is likely that the term means nothing more than 'creation' or 'production' here, suggested by the context of Upanishadic cosmogonies being treated in these verses. The meaning, then, would be restricted to different models of creation adopted by *śruti* and the question of their performative coherence, and not a generic sense of any Advaitic teaching procedure. This is closer to the meaning of 'production' than 'procedure' that it subsequently comes to acquire.

Nonetheless, such productive or cosmogonic passages of the Upaniṣads comprised (as they do today) the paradigmatic instances of Advaitic method at work. Almost every major Upaniṣad (and various minor ones) contains a rehearsal of creation from an original or primordial being to a fully manifest and sentient universe, whose purposivity, as explained already, lay in showing the underlying unity of the present being of the self with the being before creation or name-form (*nāmarūpa*). It is therefore understandable why the term '*prakriyā*' then comes to designate Advaitic procedure generally. Not only such cosmogonic passages but any result-driven procedure effecting certain insights in the student has been incorporated into its fold over time. I first address the prehistory of the term in grammatical circles before arriving at the mature sense of the term in post-Śaṃkara Advaita.

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[46] Or perhaps, "[T]hat *prakriyā* is here effective without there being any fixity about it."

[47] prakriyā niyamo nāpi pumvyutpattipradhānataḥ | pratiśrutivigītiśca prakriyāṇaṃ samīkṣyate. BUBV 1.4.401.
yayā yayā bhavet puṃsāṃ vyutpattiḥ pratyagātmani | sā saiva prakriyeh syātsādhvī sā cānavasthitā. BUBV 1.4.402. My tr.

Grammarians generally speak of two basic methods or styles of studying grammar following either an *Aṣṭādhyāyī-krama* (AK) or *Prakriyā-krama* (PK). Texts that explain the *sūtra*s by following the order in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* are said to follow the AK method, while those which do not follow the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* sequence but *thematically* arrange them to according to grammatical topics follow the PK method. The *Vaiyākaraṇa Siddhānta Kaumudi*, while not the first of its kind, marks a landmark shift towards the PK method that is now standard in traditional and university grammar studies in India.[48] What recommends the PK approach is its ease and approachability. Pāṇini's organization of *sūtra*s, sometimes thematic, is dependent on more complex considerations of operational ordering and an intricate intra-textual coherence that necessitates a mastery (and memorization) of text. The PK may be said to do some violence to this tight intra-textuality and internal coherence by a thematic organization of its material such that *sūtras* relevant to a given *prakriyā* are placed alongside to the extent possible. That such reorganization of the source text (the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*) was especially supposed to recommend it to the mediocre (*manda*) and the middling (*madhyama*) student shows that the *prakriyā* approach was considered more 'user-friendly' in the context of shifting institutional and pedagogical environments where recitation, memorization and traditional mastery become increasingly difficult or irrelevant.

Now I argue that something like this logic may be operative in the practice of isolating Advaitic *prakriyās* from its own source texts, the Upaniṣads. Passages and statements distributed across different Upaniṣads or at different textual locations in the same Upaniṣad, are now culled together under the same topic or theme insofar as they are potential components of the same noetic operation awaiting enaction.[49] What precisely are these procedures? An enaction procedure, as we will see, is what does the actual work of redirecting attention and generating knowledge in a noetic ritual. Alternative taxonomies of *prakriyā* somewhat differ in their enumeration of these procedures, but we may safely bifurcate a majority of them

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[48] Scholars have then spoken of a '*prakriyā* age' somewhat loosely, from the 15th century onwards.

[49] This may have well begun with Śaṃkara's own heavy intra-textual and inter-textual citational practices with respect to the culling together of pedagogically and performatively similar Upanishadic passages.

under two heads: objective and subjective enaction-procedures or, less misleadingly, *tat-pada* and *tvam-pada* centered procedures, focusing on the two poles of the *mahāvākya* 'You are that' (*tat tvam asi*). The former work towards a reassessment of what we posit as truly existent and the criteria employed in such judgment; shifting our ascription of reality from things or beings to Brahman as the horizonal Being of beings. The latter work towards reassessing our conception of our own existence as conscious beings, in short, subjectivity; realigning our sense of subjectivity away from episodic and changeful consciousness to the underlying witness-consciousness. To put it differently, the former deal with the existential (*sat*) aspect of reality, the latter with the conscious (*cit*). Under the former are collected the cosmogonic enaction-procedures (*sṛṣṭiprakriyā*) and the cause-effect procedures (*kāraṇakāryaprakriyā*). Under the latter, most famously, the three states (*avasthātraya*), five sheaths (*pañcakośa*) and seer-seen (*dṛgdṛśya*) procedures, all of the above extracted from various Upanishadic passages. Each one can take multiple Upanishadic points of reference as exemplary of the same procedure, such that very differently situated accounts, dispersed across the corpus, may nonetheless be said to be performatively identical or equivalent.

There are other arrangements of *prakriyā*. Vidyāraṇya in his *Pañcadaśī* follows a complex textual organization mixing such an objective-subjective classification with sections chapterized according to the description of creation in terms of one of three *vāda*s, reflection model (*pratibimbavāda*), qualification model (*avacchedavāda*) and appearance model (*vivartavāda*), each serving a unique pedagogic purpose. Other manuals (including, if we may, the *Upadeśasāhasrī* itself) loosely follow the Advaitic ordering of listening (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*) and meditation (*nididhyāsana*). Satchidanandendra's masterful *Vedāntaprakriyāpratyabjijñā* offers an extensive, if not exhaustive, account of Advaitic *prakriyās* adopted over its long history.

Advaitic Manuals

This may help to clarify its relationship with another term '*prakaraṇa*' (topic/theme) and the creation of namesake texts (*prakaraṇa-grantha*), many of which seem to be preoccupied with the project of identifying and isolating such procedures. In grammar the two terms *prakriyā-grantha* and *prakaraṇa-grantha* are often used interchangeably. To be sure, as in the case of *prakriyā,* the term is only retrospectively applied to a variety of

texts that do not necessarily employ such self-description. But it is evident that such texts are involved in synthesizing statements and teachings distributed in 'disorderly' fashion across the Upaniṣads under a single umbrella or theme. Upanishadic statements now may be said to follow a '*prakriyā-krama*', not their own original textual ordering. As if to help the disciple recall and mentally bring to the fore all the pertinent Upanishadic *vākya*s to be employed in a given pedagogic scenario, a *prakaraṇa-grantha* arranges them under the same topic or theme. But it is important to note that such ordering is an aid, a *post-hoc* thematization of what are originally parts of an organic and active pedagogic operation. That is to say, a *prakaraṇa-grantha* is a register or record of *prakriyās*, Upanishadic units of purport united by the common operations or selection procedures they will undergo in the performance of the Advaitic noetic ritual. It is performative coherence that ties passages and statements under the same head, since they will be employed towards the production of the same result (*phala*). The ritual sense of *prakaraṇa*, as one of the six *pramāṇa*s or criteria of application[50] of organizing Vedic language, is also worth noting. *Prakaraṇa*, meaning contextual unity or mutual expectancy, signifies the mutual need or context that statements may have when they are in each other's environment but with no explicit indication of their relationship. It requires bringing together utterances and statements that were not originally found together. A *prakaraṇa-grantha* also relies on contextual unity to identify statements under one *prakriyā* or integrate *prakriyās* subserving the same goal.

The appellation of 'manual' serves well to describe their contents to the extent that they constitute a set of tools, rules and instructions to self-operate the Upanishadic machine so to speak. So while '*prakaraṇa*' can often just mean 'theme/topic' or 'discussion/treatment', its Advaita employment, as argued, is best understood as a thematization based on a pedagogical organization of meaning units. Different manuals, however, may execute such purposivity along very different styles and the term '*prakaraṇa*' itself comes to stand, in Advaita, for any textual production outside of the *śruti* and *smṛti* (and their commentarial lineages), so that it will become almost impossible to provide a stylistic definition that can be all-accommodative.[51]

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[50] The six being *śruti, liṅga, vākya, prakaraṇa, krama, samākhya.*

[51] One very general definition offered by the *Nyāyāmṛtādvaitasiddhī* goes as follows: *śāstraikadeśasambaddhaṃ śāstrakāryāntare sthitam | āhuḥ prakaraṇaṃ nāma granthabhedaṃ vipaścitaḥ.*

Nonetheless my attempt is to describe a set of criteria that can explain the dynamics at work in the production of a large number of Advaitic manuals as registers of enaction procedures.

Advaitic manuals also borrow the idea, from grammar, that such texts are meant to aid the middling or mediocre student. As in evolving attitudes towards the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, they complement and sometimes may even render superfluous a direct study of the Upaniṣads themselves so long as they retain their pedagogic spirit and function. Upanishadic passages may either be paraphrased or quoted directly into a manual verse to inform its pedagogy, such that it is an essential function of these manuals to point back to the original passages and statements (Upanishadic *vākya*s) whence they derive their efficacy. In either case, they attempt to simulate the Upanishadic pedagogic environment in a more user-friendly presentation of the teaching so that the aspirant may clearly discern the teaching methodologies and spiritual itineraries she is expected to follow. This can happen in two ways. Either a manual aims to furnish the entire span of Advaitic pedagogy and *prakriyās* as an organic whole (such as *Ātmabodha* or *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*), or it presents a special set of *prakriyās* united by a common function. *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* and *Dṛgdṛśyaviveka* would be instances of the latter[52]. A fuller consideration of Advaitic manual production will take us beyond our immediate concerns but I will note that manuals are typically punctuated on either end by a discussion of the fourfold preamble (*anubandhacatuṣṭaya*), dilating especially on the qualifications of the aspirant (*adhikāra*) and ending with the final fruit or result of the study (*phala*), mirroring the Upanishadic *phalaśruti*. Some, like the *Pañcadaśī* of Vidyāraṇya, are lengthy, exhaustive works extending into hundreds of verses. In either case their structure, style and purpose may be understood in terms of the actual enaction procedures they circulate.

IV.iv   Sādhanatva (Instrumentality) & Upakārakatva (Assistance)

With *sādhanatva* we come squarely back to the ritual domain of instrumentalities and purposes. Advaita displays an evident ritual organization of parts in being likewise arranged along a gradient of proximate and distant instrumentalities, mediate and direct causalities. *Aṅgatva* (auxiliaryness) is a more abstract and fluid principle functional in the grammatical and ritual realms. *Sādhanatva* is deeply entrenched in

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[52] *Dṛgdṛśyaviveka* explicates its namesake enaction procedure, the 'discrimination of the seer and the seen' in detail.

the ritual terminology of means (*sādhya*) and ends (*sādhana*), and the ritual preoccupation with productivity and bringing into being (*bhāvanā*). Its pertinence to Advaita is evident in the question, 'What is the Advaitic means to freedom (*mokṣasādhana*)?'. While knowledge (*jñāna*) will come to mind, the answer is more complicated. Advaita takes recourse to a miscellany of means (*sādhana*) comprising both ritual and epistemic components in the 'production' of final liberation, even if it ostensibly denies the role of any non-noetic component in the generation of self-knowledge.

Here, as before, the same purposivity paradox presents itself under a different guise. Strictly speaking, a *sādhana* is deeply implicated in the *causal* nexus of productivities and results, and Śaṃkara, in discussing *sādhanatva*, is typically in the mode of critique, trying to establish that the realm of means and ends (the realm of ritual) is limited and not conducive to ultimate well-being. But *metaphorically* he will also sometimes speak of knowledge as a means (*sādhana*) to freedom, as a *mokṣasādhana* (as in BSB 2.1.1, 2.1.4, 2.1.14, 2.2.1 etc.), although it is clear that *jñāna* and *mokṣa* cannot, strictly speaking, share a means-end (*sādhanasādhya*) relationship insofar as freedom and/or Brahman are the already obtaining intrinsic nature of self; they can neither be 'attained' nor brought into being: "[S]ince everything is our own Self, and we are the Self of everything; and just because it is our Self, It cannot be produced, attained, modified or improved by any means" and, "Since action is impossible when the Self is known, as is expressed in the words, 'What should one see and through what?'—only reflection can take place" and further, "There are no means to be desired for realizing this Self that is free from all such relative attributes as ends and means".[53]

This presents itself as a dual problem: How can knowledge (*jñāna*) be an instrument or means (*sādhana*) of *mokṣa*—being outside of the causal network of means and ends—but, further, how can anything else but knowledge be the *mokṣasādhana*, by the Advaitin's own criterion that only knowledge dispels ignorance?

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[53] tasmānnātmadarśanavyatirekeṇānyadvyutthānakāraṇamapekṣate...sarvaṃ hyasmākamātmabhūtameva sarvasya ca vayamātmabhūtāḥ | ātmā ca nā'tmatvādeva na kenacitsādhanenotpādya āpyo vikāryaḥ saṃskāryo vā...tatkena kaṃ paśyedvijñāyīditi ca...na cā.'syā'tmanaḥ sādhyasādhanādisarvasaṃsāradharmavinirmuktasya sādhanaṃ kiñcideṣitavyam | sādhyasya hi sādhanānveṣaṇā kriyate. BUB 4.4.22. Madhavananda tr.

It is perfectly consistent to maintain, as an Advaitin, that nothing is a means (*sādhana*) for *mokṣa*, since it is the 'attainment' of what always already obtains (*prāptasya prāpti*) as one's first-personal being; except that it is not very helpful in explaining the intricate network of instrumentalities and purposes it takes for granted. It is better to jettison the language of literal and metaphorical since it has little explanatory purchase. Knowledge is, in a very real sense, a *mokṣasādhana* insofar as it is supposed to result in the removal of ignorance and ensuing suffering. The counterfactual—no knowledge, no end to ignorance/suffering—brings this into relief. But such instrumentality is evidently of a different order. And we already have a vocabulary to render this intelligible. I suggest that instrumentality (*sādhanatva*) is implicated in two very different orders of meaning in Advaita: a *causal* and a *noetic* one.

We are already familiar with the basic contours of a noetic performance, and the contrast between noetic and causal orders of explanation. With this distinction at our disposal, the intricate ordering of Advaitic means (*sādhana*) will be much more intelligible. In essence, I argue that we see two sorts of instrumentality at work—causal and noetic, finely adjusted in a complex coalition culminating in liberation. To be sure, it is knowledge alone, and the attendant noetic and attentional ordering, that is directly instrumental in the removal of ignorance, since the problem happens to be one of misapprehension and superimposition. But Śaṃkara also lays out a complex hierarchy of ritual, meditative and ethical activity instrumental to self-knowledge and liberation. Following the ritual organization of primary actions and those that are accessory to them (*upakāraka*), Śaṃkara conceives Advaitic *sādhana* precisely in terms of the contribution of various accessory activities to the primary and direct instrumentality of knowledge (*jñāna*) in the removal of ignorance. He even adopts from Pūrva Mīmāṃsā the sub-categorization (see further below) of ritual assistance (*upakārakatva*) into two types, direct assistance (*ārād-upakārakatva*) and proximate assistance (*sannipātya-upakārakatva*).[54] This is not because, as might be claimed, Śaṃkara adapts Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka 'hermeneutic terminology' to his own purposes as an Uttara Mīmāṃsaka. Rather, more directly, he can do this *because* Advaita is as such ritually ordered.

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[54] For a detailed discussion of kinds of ritual assistance and their Advaitic employment, refer Uskokov 2018 and Pereverzev 2015.

To begin with, as discussed in the topic of auxiliaryness (*aṅgatva*), the self-knowledge conveyed by the Upaniṣads as a whole is not subsidiary (*śeṣa/aṅga*) to something else (the ritual section of the Veda); it is *ananyaśeṣa* (BUB 1.3.1). In fact, under Śaṃkara's Copernican turn, it turns out to be the reverse, with the Veda as such being about self-knowledge, all action being subservient to that. Interestingly now, in the language of instrumentality (*sādhanatva*), one may say that it is action and ritual that are instrumental to the birth of self-knowledge; they now, counterintuitively, assume the status of being an instrument (*sādhana*) of Advaitic liberation: "Thus the entire body of regular rites—not rites that have material ends—serves as a means to liberation (*mokṣasādhanatvam pratipadyate*) through the attainment of self-knowledge. Hence we see that the section of the Vedas dealing with knowledge has the same import as that dealing with rites".[55]

The Veda as such, in the Advaitic reading, is ultimately organized and instrumentalized towards the realization of the non-actional Self spoken of by the Upaniṣads (the *aupaniṣadam puruṣam* of BU 3.9.26). This is one way in which, as I argue, Advaita constitutes a metareflection on the nature of the agent of (ritual) action; the purpose of all positive engagement with action and desire being its sublimation in a liberating cognition of self (as the non-actional witness dimension of all activity and change). This is what grants action its ultimate relevance and purport (purpose + import), as Śaṃkara explains in introducing the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* section to be commented:

> Now it has to be shown how the whole of the Vedas is applicable (*upayukta*) to this subject of Self; hence the present paragraph is introduced. By recapitulating the topic of Self-knowledge with its results in the way it has been dealt with in this chapter, it is sought to show that the entire Vedas, except the portion treating of ceremonies having material ends, are applicable (*upayoga*) to this.[56]

As we will see, this function of action is mediated by the purification of mind resulting from the performance of the regular ritual (*nityakarma*). Moreover, we understand the way in which Advaita is ritually ordered, even if its ritual organization ultimately repurposes the very point and significance of ritual action:

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[55] evaṃ kāmyavarjitaṃ nityaṃ karmajātaṃ sarvamātmajñānotpattidvāreṇa mokṣasādhanatvaṃ pritapadyate / evaṃ karmakāṇḍenāsyaikavākyatāvagatiḥ. BUB 4.4.22.

[56] tacca tathāsminprapāṭhake 'bhihitaṃ saprayojanamanūdyātraivopayogaḥ kṛtsnasya vedasya kāmyarāśivarjitasyetyevamarthaṃ uktārthānuvādaḥ sa vā eṣa ityādiḥ. BUB 4.4.22.

the realization of the self as free from all actional frameworks and entanglements. The language of use/applicability (*upayoga/upayukta*) in the above passage further clarifies the interpretation of the sense of various units of meaning—belonging either to the ritual portion (*karmakāṇḍa*) or knowledge portion (*jñānakāṇḍa*) of the Veda—according to their pertinence to the generation of a transformative cognition/insight in the acting, desiring, engaged and embodied self. The following section deals with the precise make-up of actional and causal components of Advaitic *sādhana* functioning in tandem with the noetic.

Antaraṅga & Bahiraṅga Instrumentalities

The principle of auxiliaryness (*aṅgatva*) as manifest in the internal-external or central-peripheral (*antaraṅga-bahiraṅga*) distinction of grammarians and ritualists is further utilized by Śaṃkara to arbitrate the relative ordering of Advaitic instrumentalities. In grammar, the *antaraṅga-bahiraṅga* distinction is a relatively fluid framework distinguishing the contextually more central and immediate operations from the peripheral or distant ones. It helps to determine the order of priority and sequencing of operations. In ritual, again, it helps to determine which elements or rites are more immediately or urgently implicated in a ritual context and which contextually peripheral. Advaita displays the same rituogrammatic organization in arranging the various components of self-knowledge in a center-periphery logic. The relativity of the distinction is also carried over. An element of Advaitic ritual causality can be central relative to a more external component, but itself peripheral to a more central one.

More concretely, I argue that *noetic* instrumentality—mediated by the employment of various Advaitic insight-generative *prakriyā*s or enaction procedures—makes up the innermost and direct means to self-knowledge, while *causal* instrumentality makes up the relatively outer frame of the instrumental hierarchy. Further, within the latter, proximate assistance (*sannipātya-upakārakatva*) is relatively inner to direct assistance (*ārād-upakārakatva*). Assistance (*upakārakatva*), then, still functions somewhat within the realm of ritual causality (the domain of creating, modifying, generating, bringing not being) even if it is repurposed along

Advaitic lines. With the pedagogical employment of the enaction procedures (*prakriyā*s), however, we are strictly within the noetic domain of direct instrumentality in the removal of ignorance and superimpositions. It is helpful to hear from Śaṃkara himself:

> We therefore accept as settled the following conclusion: All works of permanent obligation, such as the Agnihotra—whether joined with or devoid of knowledge—which have been performed before the rise of true knowledge, either in the present state of existence or the former one, by a person desirous of release with a view to release; all such works act, according to their capacities, as means of the extinction of evil desert which obstructs the attainment of Brahman, and thus become causes of such attainment (*brahmādhigamakāraṇa*), subserving the more immediate causes (*antaraṅgakāraṇāpekṣa*) such as the hearing of and reflecting on the sacred texts, faith, meditation, devotion, etc. They therefore operate towards the same effect (*ekakārya*) as the knowledge of Brahman.[57]

Śaṃkara gives us a sense of what is really internal (*antaraṅga*) in the Advaitic noetic performance—the processes of listening and reflecting (making up the domain of operation of *prakriyā*s) along with some other meditative, devotional and ethical comportments and practices. These are relatively internal to the ritual and *āśrama* practices enjoined for the Vaidika. Even here, the actual noetic component of listening and reflecting, comprising the domain of knowledge (*jñāna*), is further internal to devotional and ethical components (Śaṃkara is here likely referring to the six qualities of the disciple or *ṣaṭsampatti* to which we will just come).

Here the precise Advaitic makeup and allotment of direct (*ārād*) and proximate (*sannipātya*) assistance (*upakārakatva*) can be spelt out. Under direct-assistance (*ārād-upakārakatva*) Śaṃkara has in mind Vedic ritual but also other distinct *āśrama* activities. The idea is that performing such activity dutifully, without seeking reward and accompanied by *upāsanā* can bring about purification of mind (*sattvaśuddhi*), an essential component of the knowledge process.[58] By proximate assistance (*sannipātya-upakārakatva*), Śaṃkara refers variously to ethical and ascetic qualities and practices, often in the form of the six virtues or qualities of the aspiring disciple (*ṣaṭsampatti*). These are familiar technologies and virtues employed and inculcated by Vaidika,

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[57] tasmāt vidyāsaṃyuktaṃ nityam agnihotrādi vidyāvihīnaṃ ca ubhayam api mumukṣuṇā mokṣaprayojana uddeśena iha janmani janmāntare ca prāk jñāna utpatteḥ kṛtaṃ yat tat yathāsāmarthyaṃ brahma adhigamapratibandhakāraṇa upāttaduritakṣayahetutvadvāreṇa brahma adhigamakāraṇatvaṃ pratipadyamānaṃ śravaṇa manana śraddhā tātparyādi antaraṅgakāraṇāpekṣaṃ brahmavidyayā saha ekakārya bhavati iti sthitam. BSB 4.1.18. Thibaut tr.

[58] *ātmasaṃskāradvareṇa ātmajñānasādhanatvam api karmaṇām*. BUB 4.5.15.

yogic and ascetic traditions, and it is natural that Śaṃkara conceived them to be integral to the soteriological

process. Notably, and unsurprisingly, they will be more integral to the process than direct assistance offered

by disinterested ritual performance. These qualities, so to say, are the natural accompaniments of the aspirant

on the path of knowledge and persist as lifelong virtues. Alexander Uskokov has explained the manner in

which Śaṃkara derives the Advaitic *upakāraka*s from Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, arguing that this segment of the

knowledge process is modeled after Bhāṭṭa-Mīmāṃsā ritual causality. Also helpful is the suggestion that

Śaṃkara endorses a model of mediate causality (*pāramparya*)[59] influenced by his Mīmāṃsā predecessor. He

explains:

> Both ritual and renunciation of ritual had direct relationship to knowledge, but under
> different causal models. The first was an *ārād-upakāraka,* while Śaṃkara called the second,
> the *ṣaṭ-sampatti* complex, *sannipātyopakāraka*s, essentially related to knowledge. This was so
> because without mind and sense control and a healthy dose of humility, knowledge—
> dispassion—was impossible. And, the first was related to liberation, the result of knowledge,
> mediately, through giving rise to knowledge which independently produces its own result*,*
> while the second, *competent* to give rise to knowledge, was *necessary* after such rise had taken
> place, and until the full understanding of unity…(Uskokov 2018, 370-71).

Śaṃkara finds a way to fill the Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka conceptions of *ārād-* and *sannipātya- upakāraka* with

an Advaitic purposivity, as being instrumental in the knowledge process leading to freedom. They lead to the

kind of discriminative dispassion and non-involvement in other pursuits desirable both at the very outset and

later as one progresses towards perfect abidance in knowledge (*jñānaniṣṭhā*).[60] Their *sādhanatva*

(instrumentality) is also evident in their relationship to the well-known Advaitic fourfold means

(*sādhanacatuṣṭaya*). The practice of the *ṣaṭsampatti*, the spiritual practices proper*,* directly results in the

purification of the mind/self while disinterested ritual performance can independently result in attainment of

discrimination (*viveka*) and dispassion (*vairāgya*) by the purification resulting from such disinterested practice.

Insofar as these practices result in the actual purification and transformation of the individual, her

habits, psychological makeup and traits, their instrumentality remains causal and, therefore, external

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[59] As opposed to a *samuccaya* or combinatory model of causality.

[60] Also refer Pereverzev 2015 for Sureśvara's understanding of proximate and direct assistance closely tracking Śaṃkara.

(*bahiraṅga*), even if the spiritual practices proper (*ṣaṭsampatti*) are inner (*antaraṅga*) *to* ritual performance. The Advaitic noetic performance mediated by the employment of enaction procedures (*prakriyā*s) during listening (*śravaṇa*) and reflecting (*manana*) constitutes the Advaitic method proper, being directly productive of knowledge. The performance has here moved from the causal order to the noetic. Finally, it will yield the *phala* (fruit/result) of the elimination of ignorance simultaneously as freedom (*mokṣa*) is 'attained'. Crucially the fusion of attentional, noetic and non-noetic productive elements constitutes a complex ordering of Advaitic rituality generative of the final result. Śaṃkara can thus accommodate action (*karma*) into what is primarily the path of knowledge (*jñāna*). Moreover, the intricate adjustment of causal and noetic orders in the production of knowledge follows a ritual paradigm of productivity even if it reverses, as I argue, the very teleology of ritual productivity. As an interiorized and noetic anti-ritual, it stays firmly within the ritual paradigm.

CHAPTER 3: ŚĀRĪRAKA MĪMĀṂSĀ AND THE HERMENEUTICS OF EMBODIMENT

I.   The Enactment of the Advaitic Ritual

Not only the Advaitic ritual architecture (Chapter 2), but the very texture, the process and content of self-knowledge, is rituogrammatically underpinned. Such knowledge will, in every case, be seen to result from some rituogrammatic operation, the focus in this chapter being the corporeal and embodied dimension of the noetic performance. As before, the argument is a stronger one than the claim of Advaita's hermeneutic or terminological indebtedness to Mīmāṃsā that has often been made. Following Clooney's suggestion of reading the knowledge of Brahman (*brahmajñana*) along ritual lines, particularly as a 'ritual event' (Clooney 1993), the argument is that Advaita is able to transpose an extant repertoire of hermeneutic and grammatical tools precisely because it is already rituogrammatically structured and operates in the manner of a ritual performance. Grammatical and ritual procedures are synthetically constitutive of the knowledge that can put an end to ignorance. Since subjectivity is permeated by language[1], Advaitic non-dual grammar (Chapters 4 and 5) can act upon the landscape of subjectivity towards the transformation of self-identity. If, as argued there, Upanishadic language operates as a grammar, its field of operation is the linguistically coded subject seeking an altered relationship with language. Here I continue to focus on the *performative* aspect of the Advaitic rituogrammatic repertoire; how self-knowledge (the insight into the non-actional dimension of self Advaita calls Brahman) is *achieved* or *generated* through quasi-grammatical noetic procedures. As Dilip Loundo has argued (while explicating the method of *adhyāropāpavāda*), the attempt will be "to re-energize the pragmatic principle of self-transformation as the ultimate criterion to assess discursive consistency" (Loundo 2015, 66). He goes on to say:

> Śaṃkarācārya and, above all, the Upaniṣads, are, therefore and ultimately, the name for an efficient epistemological event of self-transformation…[T]he expression 'non-duality' (*advaita*) is descriptive of the method's operationality, rather than of any monist metaphysics: Wherever an erroneous 'substantive other-ness' (*dvaita*) is detected, the cutting edge of non-duality' should be applied; instead of affirming an ontology of the One at the expenses of

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[1] Refer chapters 1 and 4 for Śaṃkara's explication of *nāmarūpa* (name-form) as permeating the subject and world, derived from passages in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya*, particularly BU 1.4.

Many, *advaita* acts as an ontology of disclosure, resorting to the concept of *brahman* to critically rebut 'substantive other-ness' and 'substantive self-ness' (Loundo 2015, 66).

It is this performative context that must situate the elusive discursive purport (*artha* or *tātparya*) of Advaita, accommodating its subsequent framing in terms of one of the three dominant interpretive frames we have seen (in Chapter 1): Advaita as philosophy, theological hermeneutics or direct personal experience. Loundo also identifies another dimension emphasized in the dissertation, namely that *advaita* is not so much a *view* to be argued/defended but a *result* to be achieved/realized, disclosing its ritual-like function.[2] Uskokov has also noted that Advaita "developed as a soteriological enterprise, and ventured into theology and philosophy out of apologetic concerns. Although Vedic theology was fully dominated by action and meditation…it also provided the categories in which the Advaita form of soteriology wad expressed—as results, means, procedures, forms of causality, the central role of desire and the suitable candidate (*adhikārin*)" (Uskokov 2018, 143). He prefers to use the language of soteriology and theology, but the same result-orientedness undergirds his reading of the Advaitic enterprise. While this action-centrism seeps into Śaṃkara's philosophy of language as the normative paradigm of meaning-making driving the conventional and *shastric* realms—and challenged, as I argue, by his 'non-dual grammar' of Being—here such action-centrism determines the operative paradigm undergirding Advaitic method. In either case, both Śaṃkara's thematic and methodological contributions respond to an extant action-centric paradigm. *Thematically*, as I have argued, his Advaita may be read as a meta-reflection on the nature of the ritual and ritual agent—concluding in the insight that such an agent is ultimately non-agent (*akartṛ*) partaking of a non-actional (*niṣkriya*) or witness (*sākṣin*) dimension. *Methodologically*, his Advaita functions like a ritual, immersed in the world of instrumentalities, means, ends, expedients and enaction procedures (as explored in Chapter 2).

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[2] Loundo bases his conclusions primarily on Satchidanandendra's reading of Shankarite method. While this is an important contemporary explication of Śaṃkara's Advaita, I also rely more directly on Śaṃkara's commentarial corpus.

The principle behind taxonomies of *prakriyā*, referred to as *adhyāropāpavāda*, derives from Advaita's

commitment to the ineffability of *Brahman*. But Advaita is equally committed to *śabda* (language) as the

primary instrument of self-knowledge.[3] Advaita's unique challenge may be said to lie in its negotiation of

these two seemingly inconsistent commitments. The Advaitic *prakriyā* is fundamentally a procedure of

unfolding what defies words, through words, the disclosure of the self-confessed extralinguistic nature of

Brahman linguistically.[4] Advaitins have always thought this not only possible but definitive of their method. It

is worth noting that they often considered their approach superior to the Buddhist's because of their alleged

possession of such a method. Accepting that the results of a philosophy like Madhyamaka are often

indistinguishable from their own—such as the idea that the real is free of any conceptual imputations or,

more generally, sharing anti-realist/non-realist intuitions about the world—it really comes down to the

superior *upāya* (means). Advaita often attempts to distinguish itself as a *pedagogical* method, a set of tools and

schemes compassionately employed by the Upaniṣads themselves to lead the student out of suffering. Suthren

Hirst has noted that

> Scripture provides the Advaitin teacher and commentator not only with the content but with
> the methods of an Advaitin way of teaching, thereby guaranteeing their effectiveness in
> contrast to the expedient and contradictory methods of the Buddhists and others who ignore
> a proper scriptural foundation for their soteriology. The methods, like the content, have
> been faithfully transmitted by the author of the *Brahmasūtra*s and others in the correct
> teaching tradition, and Śaṃkara…implements them as such. Finally, his fundamental
> framework of superimposition and elimination, which functions in complex conceptual and
> methodological ways, is safely grounded and erected, for it is seen to be scripture's own
> (Suthren Hirst 2005, 88).

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[3] Refer BSB 1.1.4 and statements dispersed across Śaṃkara's works arguing that *śabda* as the primary epistemic means (*pramāṇa*) in the generation of the knowledge of *Brahman* (*brahmajñāna*). Similarly, his comments on the well-known *Taittirīya* verse "From where words turn back…" (TU 2.1) and elsewhere stress that *Brahman* is outside the reach of language.

[4] The recourse to grammatical resources that permit this disclosure is dealt with in chapters 4 and 5; it remains to be shown how such grammar is put into practice or *instrumentalized towards* such disclosure.

The Advaitic commitment to method, resulting in the employment of *prakriyā*s or enaction

procedures, is meant to echo the Upanishadic concern for the ultimate well-being of the aspirant. Of course,

the Mādhyamika will deny that he lacks a soteriological method, and the notion of *upāya* has a long prehistory

in Buddhism. In either case, it is worth noting that Advaita, in its own self-conception, considers itself as

having developed a sophisticated and systematic method of disclosing the extralinguistic linguistically. Such a

method is what is identified as that which must come to define Advaita, not some representation of its results

abstracted from its performance and presented as an account or philosophy of Brahman or *ātman*-Brahman

identity.[5]

This "fundamental framework of superimposition and elimination" (as Suthren Hirst calls it) or

adhyāropāpavāda is at the performative core of Advaitic method, named as such by Śaṃkara in his Gītā

commentary (BGB 13.13).[6] *Adhyāropāpavāda* is itself not a *prakriyā* or enaction procedure, but the operative

principle (*nyāya*) behind it. The essence of the principle is based on Advaita's double commitment, as

indicated, to the inexpressibility of Brahman and the epistemic capacity of words (*śabdpramāṇatva*) to disclose

Brahman, the linguistic disclosure of an extralinguistic reality. This is negotiated by an *ad hoc* avowal of an

ontological or phenomenological scheme followed by its subsequent relinquishment. The principle simply

recognizes that any conceptual category, classification or scheme adopted by the Advaitin serves a specific

(ritual) telos and its provisional acceptance does not imply a commitment to an underlying ontology.

Pedagogical, performative and ritual imperatives thus come together in the principle of *adhyāropāpavāda*

employing *both* affirmative (*cataphatic*) and negative (*apophatic*) language in the unfoldment of the real (*brahman*),

even if it is committed to *Brahman*'s ineffability.

Particularly, I explore the relationship of the Advaitic noetic ritual, described as a mode of attentional

governance in Chapter 2, with the principle of *adhyāropāpavāda*. If, as argued, Advaita is primarily an exercise

in the governance of the modes and objects of attention, what kinds of attention does Advaita commend and

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[5] As discussed in Chapter 1, such a performative lens to interpret Advaitic import has been emphasized by Clooney, Suthren Hirst and others along different trajectories, but each may be seen to adopt pragmatic frames in its reading of Advaita contextualizing and grounding its more philosophical and hermeneutic dimensions.

[6] I render it differently as 'strategic affirmation/assertion and subsequent negation/retraction' for reasons that will soon become clear.

what are their object-domains? What are the elements of subjectivity one must attend to in order to recognize the actionless dimension of self? Briefly, I show that the field of attention and operation of the Advaitic noetic ritual is the embodying environment of the subject, that is, all the overt and covert phenomena making up the physical, psychical and phenomenal life of the individual. The enactment of the Advaitic noetic ritual thus occurs over the phenomenal landscape of the body, expansively understood; that is, understood in a more expansive sense of the psycho-physical sheathing enveloping the embodied one than a narrower reference to the physical body.[7]

To anticipate the argument, in the noetic ritual attention is directed from more gross and material levels of phenomenal sheathing towards finer and subtler ones until, finally, it recognizes the still, non-actional domain of self Advaita calls '*brahman*' typically covered over by the everyday preoccupation of attention by grosser realities. Attention is cautiously led through a graded succession of stages towards subtler truths that would not be possible in a direct renegotiation of self-identity, for consciousness must be sensitized to the finer realms of bodily inhabitation before acknowledging the subtlest reality of 'pure' consciousness (*śuddhacaitanya*). Śaṃkara often addresses a recurrent anxiety that the student may take the Advaitic self/Brahman to be non-existent because it lacks any positive attributes (TUB 2.1, BSB 3.2.22, CUB 8.1, for instance). The guiding of the attentional order is meant precisely to condition consciousness to acknowledge subliminal features of subjectivity in a graded itinerary; in the same way as eyes need to adjust to the darkness of a room one walks into, before beginning to sense the outlines of shapes and objects. Being made to simply attend to specific features of self, realizations dawn that eventually lead to understanding a core dimension of self as *niṣkriya*. This in any case, I argue, is what the self-Brahman identity effectively amounts to, insofar as Brahman is but the non-actional dimension of self and existence. And it is negotiated through such a governing of the attentional landscape in a strategic synthesis of affirmations and negations.

The schemes or classifications set up by Advaita will often be seen to constitute phenomenal maps of the body affirmed (*adhyāropita*) by scripture and unavailable prior to such *shastric* indication. This *adhyāropa*

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[7] This is typical of Indic conceptions of materiality where the physical body and what we understand by 'mind', 'psyche' or 'consciousness' rest on the same side of the material sheathing of existent things. On the other side lies what is called, as in Advaita and Sāṃkhya-Yoga ontologies, the witness consciousness (*cit* or *sākṣīcaitanya*).

functions differently from another synonymous term, *adhyāsa*, describing the nature of existence as mutual superimposition, famously in Śaṃkara 's commentary to the *Brahmasūtra* (BSB 1.1.1). While both pertain to the interpenetration of the subject and object, consciousness and body, the latter is typically of the nature of universal error (*avidyā*) leading to all sorts of suffering, while the former appears as a set of deliberate superimpositions affirmed by scripture. In parsing their difference, I take a lead from Śaṃkara's own depiction of his project as a *Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā*, a hermeneutics of embodiment, in his *Brahmasūtra* commentary. I thus articulate what Śaṃkara envisions as a core agenda of the *Brahmasūtra,* clarifying the relationship between attentional governance and embodiment crucial to grasping Advaitic method.

We can thus appreciate the relation between Uttara Mīmāṃsā as a *textual* hermeneutics (*Vedānta Mīmāṃsā*) and an *embodied* hermeneutics (*Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā*)—both terms employed by Śaṃkara at the inception of his *Brahmasūtra* commentary (BSB 1.1.1)—seeing how a hermeneutics of text or Vedic language becomes a potent tool for reconfiguring corporeal identity. Since embodiment occurs by way of the successive grossification of name and form (*nāmarūpa*),[8] the materiality of self is the outcome of the *materialization* of the metaphysical dimensions of language. The individual subject is therefore a linguistically coded subject susceptible to transmutation under a textual-cum-embodied hermeneutics. Together they lead self-identity away from that of an agent-enjoyer (*kartṛ-bhoktṛ*) to the non-actional witness self (*Brahman*). Chapters 4 and 5 explore how some functions and features of language are exploited by the Advaitin to disclose a non-actional (*niṣkriya*) non-dual dimension of the subject. Here I discuss the dynamics of the underlying methodology of strategic affirmation and negation, that is, the precise domain and manner of operation of the principle of *adhyāropāpavāda.*

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[8] "This universe was then unmanifest. It manifested itself only as name and form—it got such and such name and such and such form. So even now the universe is manifest only as name and form…This Self has penetrated into all these bodies up to the nail ends—just as a razor lies in its sheath, or fire in its source"; tad dhedaṃ tarhy avyākṛtam āsīt | tan nāmarūpābhyām eva vyākriyatāsau nāmāyam idaṃrūpa iti | tad idam apy etarhi nāmarūpābhyām eva vyākriyata asau nāmāyam idaṃrūpa iti | sa eṣa iha praviṣṭa ā nakhāgrebhyo yathā kṣuraḥ kṣuradhāne 'vahitaḥ syād viśvambharo vā viśvambharakulāye. BU 1.4.7.

II.   The Bodily Arena of the Noetic Ritual: Attention & the Hermeneutics of Embodiment

Amongst the many names for what is most familiar to us as Advaita Vedānta, 'Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā' is lesser known and understood. Another term, 'Uttara Mīmāṃsā', and its equivalent 'Vedānta Mīmāṃsā', come to designate the differentia of a tradition centering the Upaniṣads as the hermeneutic focus of attention (as opposed to the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā focus on ritual performance). Thematically, terms like *advaitavāda* (non-dualism), *brahmavāda* (doctrine of *Brahman*) or *māyāvāda* (doctrine of *māyā*) have been alternatively used, sometimes inaccurately, to identify the core concerns of tradition. The first (*'advaita'*) at some historical juncture comes to retrospectively crystallize a homogeneous tradition with a central thematic (non-dualism, literally, *a-dvaita*) becoming definitive of its program, although perhaps it is most pertinent only to Vedantin inter-sectarian disputes around the question of the relation between the individual (*jīva*) and the whole (*īśvara*).[9] None of the above terms is consistently or persistently used by Advaitins to definitively identify the central method or import of their own scholarly activity. Here the term 'Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā' (that I translate as 'hermeneutics of embodiment'), employed by Śaṃkara at the inception of his *Brahmasūtra* commentary (BSB 1.1.1), may provide a key resource to think with Advaitins and address the question of what is really at stake for Śaṃkara and his successors.[10] Amongst other things, I show that Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā captures core concerns and insights of the tradition, which, when approached as a philosophy of non-dualism, can be

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[9] That is, it is most germane to positions of other Vedānta traditions (Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Śuddhādvaita etc.) that disagree with Advaita on the disputed relation between the individual (*jīva*) and godhead (*brahman/īśvara*). Outside of this, *'advaita'* is not the privileged form of identifying the core concerns of tradition. As seen earlier, non-dualism itself can mean many things in the various contexts that invoke the name. In the Neo-Advaita popularization of the tradition globally, Advaita is presented as expounding a mystical, unitive cosmic consciousness. Early Western Indological attention to Vedāntic inter-school polemics emphasized the non-duality of self and *Brahman/Īśvara* (god) as its defining feature. Non-dualism can also mean the non-difference of subject and object. Lastly, it could simply mean the underlying oneness of all existents by virtue of sharing in a common ontological substratum. In each case, it is historical context, intersectarian and doxographic identification that determines the emphases of 'Advaita' tradition: it was *brahmavāda* and *ātmavāda* to the Buddhists, but *māyāvāda* and *advaitavāda* to its Vedantic neighbors. The last becomes a preferred form of self-identification in the increasingly polemical atmosphere of the second millennium as noted. Śaṃkara's own preferred terms are *Vedānta Mīmāṃsā* and *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* (as declared in the *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* along with the reference to *Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā*). The majority of texts employing the label of '*advaita*' (such as *Advaitasiddhi, Advaitamakaranda, Advaitadīpikā* and others), for the same reason, were composed in the second millennium CE, especially from the 15th century. There is indeed another term, '*abheda*', in the semantic environs of *'advaita'*, often used by Śaṃkara, but this often connotes, not the oneness of self and Brahman, but the underlying non-difference when the functional differences emerging from action along with its attendant factors (kriyā*kārakabheda*) are rendered quiescent or deactivated.

[10] While the focus of the paper is Śaṃkara, the continued use of tools and tropes adopted by him (including that of 'Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā') well into premodern and contemporary Advaita reveals a more enduring Shankarite embodied hermeneutics. As we will see, not only his immediate successors such as Sureśvara and Sarvajñātman, but later thinkers like Sadānanda and Vidyāraṇya follow him closely in tracking such an embodied hermeneutics, and emphasizing pedagogical and methodological principles such as *adhyāropāpavāda*.

obscured.[11] Advaita, following the Upaniṣads, is on this account invested in clarifying the dynamics of human embodiment and the subject's immersion in various domains of materiality.

The term is employed by Śaṃkara at the inception of his *Brahmasūtra* commentary, setting the stage for his subsequent exegetical project: "How this is the meaning of all Vedānta we will endeavor to show in this present Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā."[12] The meaning that Śaṃkara is specifying here, as we will see, refers to the embodied condition of the subject, enveloped in layers of bodily identity to be individually discerned and teased out for the 'innermost self', i.e., Brahman, to be discerned with respect to them. The Advaitic noetic ritual (Chapter 2) is operative over this embodied landscape of the subject. In traditional circles '*śārīrakam*' persists as a preferred appellation for Śaṃkara's *Brahmasūtra* commentary, also contained in many colophons to the text. The important Chapter 4.3 of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* is also referred to as the *Śārīraka Brāhmaṇa*, and the later *Śārīraka Upaniṣad* also draws upon such ideas (in combination with a Samkhyaesque metaphysics).

II.i   Advaita and Embodiment

By realigning the emphases of tradition towards mapping and articulating embodied being (and away from expounding some disembodied cosmic unity or oneness portrayed under its various modern framings), Advaita is well-placed to make significant interventions in the materialist turn in philosophy and religion, permitting a uniquely Advaitic articulation of the body and its relationship to mind/consciousness. Particularly, it can intervene in the vexed question of the relation of material and immaterial dimensions of being, steering clear of both materialist reductionisms and idealist reifications of self, such as the very dichotomy of soul or mind and body that undergird these schemes. More pertinently for us, though, it is essential to grasping the way in which *adhyāropāpavāda* works as method. Recent theological approaches to Advaita have pointed out the ritually embodied dimension of Advaitic praxis (Clooney 1993; Locklin 2011).

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[11] As discussed in Chapter 1, F.X. Clooney has also questioned the framing of Advaita as primarily a philosophy, focusing on its deep, textually embedded thinking about Brahman. He says, 'To generalize, we can say that Advaita Vedanta is a *philosophy* insofar as it stresses the role of the Upaniṣads as indicative of a reality beyond them, and that it is an *exegesis* insofar as it treats the Upaniṣads as the location where *brahman* is to be known and "read". The interplay of these two tendencies, not either alone, shows us the full texture of Vedanta' (Clooney 1991, 49). I only add that, beyond these, it is an *embodied hermeneutics* insofar as the Upanishadic text is itself vivified by and intended to clarify the dynamics of embodiment.

[12] yathā cāyamarthaḥ sarveṣāṃ vedāntānāṃ tathā vayamasyām śārīrakamīmāṃsāyām pradarśayiṣyāmaḥ. BSB 1.1.1. Apte tr.

Nor has the possibility gone unnoticed to Vedānta-influenced thinkers of the last century, such as K.C. Bhattacharyya and Debabrata Sinha, the latter having this to say about the Advaitic conception of *jīva* as a total subject:

> [T]he understanding of the human body as the network of subtly interacting factors and forces—corporeal, vital, sensory, and even mental, that is, pertaining to the internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*)—cuts across the dualism of the physical body vis-a-vis nonphysical mind as in traditional Western metaphysics. On the other hand, it almost seems to anticipate a current trend in phenomenologically-oriented philosophical anthropology to view the 'body-proper' as a *phenomenon* (Sinha 1985, 241).

Sinha goes on to develop an Advaitic account of the embodied subject and its resonance with late-twentieth century phenomenological insights into the body as lived and experienced, noting that Vedānta would "find a closer ally in Merleau-Ponty, in respect of this accent on the union or identification between body ad subjectivity. Both would agree that the so called body-soul relation does not simply indicate the juxtaposition of two mutually external terms, that is, the objective-material process in itself and *cogitatio*, but that it is rather a case of 'the living subject of my own body'." (Sinha 1985, 244) The Advaitic appeal to a deeper subjective core (*ātman*) further recognizes a dimension of self that, in grounding the lived, experienced totality of the *body-phenomenon*, escapes the 'natural-objective attitude'. This core of subjectivity would represent the "mystic fringe of the inner dimension" resisting any facile identification or indication as *object*: 'What is intended by the word *I* cannot be characterized even in the lowest stage of subjectivity as simply *this* object'. (Bhattacharya 1976, Chapter 3).[13]

I reiterate this commitment to the thoroughgoing entanglement of the immaterial and material dimensions of self, of the self as subject *and* object—theorized, as we will see, in Śaṃkara's diagnosis of the human condition in terms of superimposition (*adhyāsa*)—as the existential horizon of any search for greater subjective depths. From this perspective, it is the framing of Advaita as a *hermeneutics of embodiment* that provides the most pertinent lens to understand its discursive and methodological commitments. '*Śārīraka',* '*śarīrin', 'dehin'* are used interchangeably in Advaita to stand for that which is present or which *obtains in* the

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[13] As quoted in Sinha 1985.

body (*śarīra*, *deha*),[14] and therefore not entirely assimilable to it. This is the argument, then, that the use of such terms is not incidental or arbitrary. '*Śārīraka*'—literally, the embodied one—as a linguistic form closely associated to its primitive '*śarīra*' (body) (or '*dehin*' with '*deha*') mirrors an ontology where the one that obtains in the body bears an intimate relation with the body without being reducible to it. On this account, the central task of Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā is to disclose a dimension of self not entirely assimilable to materialist explanations of self but intelligible in relation to them.

The body (*śarīra*/*deha*) is here the locus, the abode or domicile, to locate the elusive presence of the embodied one (*śarīrin*/*dehin*) behind the material constitution of self. Just as one is likely to find the inhabitant of a house (*purasvāmin*) in the environs of his home (*pura*), so the body is the appropriate locus to search for the embodied.[15] This could mean a couple of things. Firstly, it suggests the pedagogical imperative of where to direct the student to go looking for the self—in the intimate bodily environs of the subject. As we will see, this is what we find when we look at the breadth of the Upanishadic corpus, which may be said to unfold numerous relations of the embodied with materiality.

But, further, it comprises the stronger claim that it makes sense to even *speak of* the embodied one, the Upanishadic self, only in its relationality to the body. That the *deha* (body) is the dwelling-place of the *dehin* (embodied) implies that the body is the ontological and linguistic horizon that renders intelligible the non-empiricality of the embodied. This suggestion is in agreement with actual Advaitic soteriological practice where selfhood is ascertained by a negative determination of what it is not, a practice famously associated with the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* directive of 'Not this, not this' (BU 2.3.6.). That is to say, determining the self proceeds by discerning what it is *not*, yet sufficiently proximate with it so as to be indiscernible. The subsequent *Śārīraka Brāhmaṇa* (the 'Chapter on the Embodied one') of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* exemplifies this approach, initiating a detailed engagement with various faculties and phenomena of the embodied subject. Śaṃkara reads: "Though the Self has been proved to be other than the body and organs, yet…Janaka cannot

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[14] While all three are found in the works of Śaṃkara and other Advaitins, the third, '*dehin*', is especially pertinent to the Bhagavadgītā whose second chapter presents a metaphysics of *dehin* and *deha*.

[15] Following Upanishadic allusions to the body as a *pur/pura*, Śaṃkara also sometimes refers to the *deha-dehin* relation in term of the *pura-purasvāmin* dynamic. Refer BSB 1.3.13, for instance.

decide whether the Self is just one amongst the organs (bodily components) or something different…The misconception is quite natural, for the logic involved is too subtle to grasp easily."[16] It is, then, the invocation of the immediate bodily environs that is directly instrumental in the realization of what the Self is—by the result that the embodied (*śarīrin*) or innermost self (*pratyagātman*) is what is found when the bodily environs have been thoroughly surveyed.

It is noteworthy that here Śaṃkara himself adopts the vocabulary of attention (*avadhāna*) employed in this chapter to interpret Advaitic method as a mode of attentional governance. The innermost self is pointed to, indeed recognized as such, by the aid of the superimposition and subsequent negation of successively subtler realities (body, mind, intelligence) in a graded itinerary such that attention is slowly sensitized to the subtlest of all realities, the Self without any attributes or parts. One place Śaṃkara outlines such an approach is his *Brahmasūtra* commentary:

> [W]hat is denoted by the term 'thou' is the inward Self, the hearer, is (successively) apprehended as the inward Self of all the outward involucra beginning with the gross body, and finally ascertained to be the nature of consciousness…And although the object to be known, viz. the Self, does not consist of parts, yet the attribute of being composed of many parts is superimposed (*adhyāropita*) on it, such as the body, senses, mind, intelligence, sense-objects, sensations etc. Now by one act of attention (*avadhānena*) we may discard one of these parts, and by another act of attention another part; so that a successively progressive cognition may take place.[17]

The Self is thus presented *as if* composed of parts and various bodily identities are superimposed upon it in order to direct attention to it by pointing to the nearest tangible reality and negating its being as being non-Self. As we will see, *adhyāropa* initiates such a thorough reclamation and recalibration of the corporeal landscape in search of the embodied one. As the subject surveys its phenomenal field (in reflection

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[16] yadyapi vyatiriktatvādi siddhaṃ tathāpi samānajātīyānugrāhakatvadarśananimittabhrāntyā karaṇānāmevānyatamo vyatirikto vetyavivekataḥ pṛcchati-katama iti | nyāyasūkṣmatāyā durvijñeyatvādupapadyate bhrāntiḥ. BUB 4.3.7.

[17] tathā tvaṃpadārthaḥ api pratyagātmā śrotā dehāt ārabhya pratyagātmatayā saṃbhāvyamānaḥ caitanyaparyantatvena avadhāritaḥ | tatra yeṣām etau padārthau ajñāna saṃśaya viparyaya pratibaddhau teṣāṃ tatvamasi ityetat vākyaṃ svārthe pramāṃ na utpādayituṃ śaknoti padārthajñānapūrvakatvāt vākyārthasya iti atastāt pratyeṣṭavyaḥ padārthavivekaprayojanaḥ śāstrayuktyabhyāsaḥ | yadyapi ca pratipattavya ātmā niraṃśaḥ tathā api adhyāropitaṃ tasmin bahu aśatvaṃ deha indriya mano buddhi viṣaya vedanādi lakṣaṇaṃ tatra ekena avadhānena ekam aṃśam apohati apareṇa aparam iti yujyate tatra kramavatī pratipattiḥ | tat tu pūrvarūpameva ātmapratipatteḥ. BSB 4.1.2. Thibaut tr.

and meditation), it unearths deeply embedded entanglements of subject and object, layers of bodily identity subsisting below conscious life. Every hidden layer of corporeal being is owned up as 'This is I, this is also I'. But, paradoxically, by the same movement, the I senses, 'I am more than this, vaster than this'. And, perhaps, even 'I am not this'—the capacity to objectify a bodily landscape permits the realization that the one surveilling the bodily phenomena must be something other than the surveilled. There must be a phenomenal distance of the subject as seer from the subject as entangled subject-object. This is captured by the well-known procedure of discriminating between the seer and the seen (*dṛgdṛśyaviveka*), first making appearance in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka,* and subsequently diffusing into a variety of texts, including the Advaitic manual *Dṛgdṛśyaviveka.* Following this, Jonardon Ganeri, for instance, has interpreted the Upanishadic metaphor of the self hidden in the cave as the claim that the self is not a possible object of consciousness. It is just too close to be seen, or, as present in any act of seeing, is itself non-objectifiable (Ganeri 2007, Chapter 1).

This 'more', of course, is not numerical; not a plus one, a something beyond or above the body. Its otherness*, moreness*, is its privative relation with concreteness; the relational emptiness of the seer-witness surveying and traversing its phenomenal field. The 'embodied one' is nothing but the very breadth or extent of the body as the horizon of its surveying 'activity'. The Advaitic self is, in this light, a *nothing* that receives depth, form, intelligibility in the mirror of its bodily inhabitations, its essence determined as its *difference from* the tangible, perceptible, material. The apparent neutrality and indefiniteness of the term 'embodied one' captures precisely this insight, deliberately evading a more positivist or concrete reference to its nature (such as 'spirit' or 'soul'). Like the crystal that assumes the color of the cloth placed behind, a stock Advaitic metaphor, the embodied one is identifiable (and intelligible) only in terms of the corporeal layers that envelop and color it. For the same reason, the final discernment of a conscious being irreducible to the body is a painstaking and subtle art that must disclose a presence so subtle (because non-objectifiable) that it can be mistaken as non-existent.[18]

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[18] This anxiety is addressed, for example, in TUB 2.1, BSB 3.2.22 or CUB 8.1, where it is acknowledged that *Brahman* may come across as a bare nothing or emptiness owing to its non-objectifiability, subtlety or lack of attributes.

This explains the perhaps slightly distinct points of emphases in this exposition and Sinha's reading of embodiment. For him Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā names an inquiry into the *individual* self, the *jīva* in its phenomenal totality: "[T]he very naming of Vedanta as '*Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā*'—that is, the enquiry pertaining to the essential nature of the individual self as residing in the body—expresses the truism that the individual has primarily to be considered as embodied, notwithstanding the ultimate identity of his nature with self as equivalent of pure consciousness (*cidātman*)" (Sinha 1985, 240). On our reading, the phrase, in its very phrasing, names the unnameable *moreness* of subjectivity—'*śārīraka/ dehin*' naming this subjective being both as exhausted by *and* as something more than the *śarīra/deha*—as the true subject-matter of Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā. That is, the so-called 'pure consciousness' even as the grounding principle of embodiment, and therefore transcendent to it, is precisely what a hermeneutics of embodiment must be about. It is not so much the individual self that is embodied; it is the elusive *dehin*, the embodied one, whose embodying event and environment we term 'individuality'. Further, the focus here is on Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā as a 'hermeneutics' of embodiment, a more literal reading of the phrase than Sinha's emphasis on a 'phenomenology' of embodiment. Sinha is in conversation with Continental phenomenological theories of the body, showing how the Advaitic intervention can overcome embedded dualisms of mind-body. Here I dwell on tools and methods employed by Śaṃkara in articulating a hermeneutics of embodiment, in particular, how textual hermeneutics becomes a potent tool for reconfiguring corporeal identity in the application of *adhyāropāpavāda*.

This witness dimension is indicated by identifying the *brahmatva* (the being *Brahman*) of the self, which most typically denotes a domain of self impervious to the calculus of agents, actions, desires and results regulating everyday life.[19] It is otherwise spoken of by Śaṃkara, Sureśvara, Sarvajñātman and others as the *niṣkriya* (still, non-actional, quiescent) dimension of self.[20] On this account, the subject, by virtue of being the *surveillor* of all phenomenal activity, falls outside of it. Its non-participative witness dimension salvages a

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[19] '*Kriyakārakaphalalakṣaṇa*' ('of the nature of action, actional factors and results') is a favorite phrase of Śaṃkara (in characterizing the world) occurring throughout his commentarial corpus. For this and other discussions of the actional being of the world, refer BSB (for example, 2.2.40) CUB Chapter 6, BUB chapters 3 and 4.

[20] The term is ubiquitous in Śaṃkara, along with others such as *niṣkarma*, *akāraka*, *akārya*, *naiṣkarmya*, etc., the last figuring in the title of Sureśvara's *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*, whose thought tracks Śaṃkara closely. Refer to the *Saṃkṣepaśārīkam* for Sarvajñātman's use of the words. In light of this commitment, I hope to realign Advaitic foci along the discursive center of *niṣkriyatva* (stillness, actionlessness) as informing Śaṃkara's Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā.

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freedom from the very domain of everyday action it participates in as the fuller, more robust *jīva*. This is tied to the observation that seeing is not another activity, another *doing*; the very *being* of the embodied one constitutes its *seeing*, just as the being of the sun may be referred to as its 'activity' of shining and emanating heat (BSB 1.1.5).

A final note of caution. The above account might seem to suggest that the *brahmatva* (being *Brahman*) of the self is somehow dependent or at least minimally tied to the body, a suggestion not always consistent with more 'transcendent' Upanishadic accounts of self. But it is in agreement with other descriptions. And it explains why the Upaniṣads, in spite of ostensibly occupied with 'pure consciousness', indulge in such elaborate descriptions of the self's material immersion and constitution (discussed below). Moreover, it is perfectly consistent with the Advaitic emphasis on the possibility, even desirability, of living liberation (*jīvanmukti*). This implies that the self can come to a clear insight into its own being *even as* it continues to occupy and persist in its bodily environs. One may say that it can come to such an insight precisely *because* of its proximity to its bodily environs—no other insight into or account of the embodied one can be meaningful to *us*; which is not to deny a post-mortem, disembodied or extra-material being of Brahman, but only to assert that such a conception has less pertinence or intelligibility for us while we are living. Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā captures what it means to uncover this subtle dimension of self (and live with a certain degree of freedom incumbent on this knowledge) even as we persist on this earth as walking, talking, breathing, bleeding, embodied beings.

III.   Adhyāsa & the Metaphysics of Embodiment

The textual locus of Śaṃkara's articulation of a Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā is informative for other reasons. Called the '*adhyāsabhāṣya*', it introduces the text of the *Brahmasūtra* simultaneously as it articulates what becomes the preferred articulation of the problem of existence for Advaitins. *Adhyāsa (*superimposition) is here presented as the basic feature of everyday life, making desuperimposition, as we will see, the core task of Advaitic practice. That we inhabit a world of superimposition means that for Śaṃkara two starkly distinct domains have been conflated with each other such that we can hardly tell them apart in everyday life

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(although we have ample indications to the contrary). These are the domains of seer (conscious presence) and the seen or objectifiable (inert, material being):

> That the object (*viṣaya*) and the subject (*viṣayin*) within the range of the denotative power of the words 'you' and 'I' respectively, and have natures as opposed to each other as darkness and light, cannot assume each other's nature, being firmly established…therefore, the superimposition of the objects within the range of the denotative power of the word 'you' and its attributes, on the subject within the range of the denotative power of the word 'I', of the nature of consciousness, and its attributes, is necessarily erroneous…[21]

One must note the idiosyncratic nature of this peculiar opening statement to the fundamental text of all schools of Vedānta well into modernity. *Adhyāsa* is nowhere a concern in the text of the *Brahmasūtra* itself, and it is clear that Śaṃkara is wrapping the text with an entirely new and characteristically Advaitic hermeneutic frame. This allows Śaṃkara to accomplish a few things. Firstly, in presenting *adhyāsa* as the mutual superimposition of the domains of self and non-self, he lends the ensuing hermeneutic project of the *Brahmasūtra* (of correctly interpreting the central purport of the Upaniṣads) a pressing urgency. Distilling the meaning of the term 'brahman' from its myriad Upanishadic uses, a central task of the *Brahmasūtra*, is not a mere academic or intellectual enterprise but immediately relevant to the well-being of the individual whose insight into the *brahmatva* (being Brahman) of her own self can liberate her from immense suffering. Śaṃkara's opening statement—that we always already find ourselves in a world where the domains of self and non-self are superimposed upon each other leading to all sorts of confusions—grants the project of the *Brahmasūtra* the urgent instrumentality of leading us out of such confusion.

Further, the focus on *adhyāsa*, and the subsequent reference to a hermeneutics of embodiment, permits Śaṃkara to capture something essential about the subject matter and concerns of the Upaniṣads, *Brahmasūtra* and the Vedanta traditions they spur, that is, they are primarily invested in offering alternative accounts of embodiment and the self's complex phenomenal relations with and implication in various domains of materiality. So while the Vedantic enterprise may be framed in terms of God or Brahman as its

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[21] yuṣmadasmatpratyayagocarayor viṣayaviṣayinos tamaḥprakāśavdviruddhasvabhāvayor iteretarabhāvānupapattau siddhāyām...ityataḥ asmadpratyayagocare viṣayiṇi cidātmake yuṣmadpratyayagocarasya viṣayasya taddharmāṇām cādhyāsaḥ, tadviparyayeṇa viṣayiṇastaddharmāṇām ca viṣaye'dhyāso mithyeti bhavitum yuktam. BSB 1.1.1. My tr.

hermeneutic center, it is the unfoldment of the nature and conditions of the *śarīrin*, the embodied, that drives the project at the first place. Seen this way, the Vedantic project, at least from an Advaitic lens, articulates the existential and phenomenal environment in which the self is implicated in its ordinary being, eventually working towards generating the conditions for a more salutary or wholesome state of being. This latter is achieved by identifying a feature of the self—its *brahmatva*, that is, its freedom from any implication in action, agency and the network of desire, performance and result driving the Vedic and mundane realms—whose recognition permits an immediate freedom from the infinite calculus of ends and means in which we are ordinarily entangled.

Śaṃkara's *adhyāsabhāṣya* lays out these superimpositions at the rudimentary level, and one must note that for him they are universally applicable to all beings human and animal. These are the identification of self with attributes of i. the physical body (*dehadharmān*), ii. the senses (*indriyadharmān*), and iii. the inner instrument (*antaḥkaraṇadharmān*)[22], which, as Uskokov explains exhibit a mirror-like recursivity:

> These are like mirrors within mirrors, and the Self could potentially identify—have the notion "This is who I am"—in regard to any of them, contingent on one's discriminative ability…The *buddhi/antaḥkaraṇa/vijñāna* is the first adjunct of the Self, giving it the name *vijñanatman,* but the rest become its adjuncts as well. This principle can be extended even to things that are merely related to oneself, considered "my," and Śaṃkara calls the whole field of potential items of identification *aham-mama-gocara,* "the sphere of 'I' and 'my.'" This field or sphere is concretized in relation to the sense of Self and becomes "the notion of 'this'," *idam-dhi,* where *idam* is a variable that stands as a complement to the notion of "I" and forming a complex with it—"I am *this*"—whose value can be anything from the sphere of "I and mine," any property of the non-Self that one can superimpose over the Self…We can now appreciate one of the most striking passages written in the history of Indian philosophy: "As we said, superimposition, to define it, is the notion of something in regard to something else. It is like when one superimposes external properties over the Self, thinking, "I myself am injured" or "I myself am whole" when one's son or wife is injured or whole; or when one superimposes properties of the body and thinks, "I am fat," "I am lean," "I am fair," "I stand," "I go," or "I leap;" or when one superimposes properties of the senses, as in "I am dumb," "I am blind in one eye," "I am emasculated," or "I am blind;" or when one

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[22] "Just as it is, for instance, when a person superimposes on his Self attributes external to his own Self, i.e., when his son or wife etc. are in sound health or otherwise, he considers himself to be in sound health or otherwise, or when he superimposes the attributes of the body on his Self, thus--"I am stout or lean or fair, or I am standing or going or crossing over", or when he superimposes the attributes of his sense-organs on his Self, thus-- "I am dumb or squint-eyed or impotent or deaf or blind", or when he superimposes on his own Self the attributes of his internal sense (*antaḥkaraṇa*) i.e., the mind, viz., desire, intention, doubt, determination etc." BSB 1.1.1; Apte tr.

superimposes properties of the internal organ, such as desire, resolve, doubt and certainty (Uskokov 2018, 304-05).

For Śaṃkara, these are on par with what appear to be more evident cases of superimposition, as when I am affected when a family member or dear one is unwell. All these comprise paradigmatic cases of *adhyāsa*. One would presume, then, that subsequent work requires their undoing or desuperimposition such that they are recognized for what they are: attributes assumed by the self in its phenomenal being but not intrinsic to it. As Śaṃkara says, "In this manner there is beginningless and endless natural superimposition…which promotes the notion of the Self as agent and enjoyer, perceived by all. It is with a view to undo this cause of all anguish…that Vedānta is begun. How this is the meaning of all Vedānta we will endeavor to show in this present Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā".[23]

Discerning superimposed layers of identity and patiently exfoliating each one therefore becomes the central task of a *śārīraka mīmāṃsā*. However, as I argue, this is not simply a negative process of withdrawing an 'authentic' self from its subsequent entanglements in domains of material and psychic life, a process we may term *desuperimposition* or *apavāda*. Rather, Advaitic method relies on an embrace of the self's immersion in its bodily environs as a necessary passage to the recognition of an agentless, egoless witness dimension of self, negotiated in the Advaitic maneuver of *adhyāropa*. Here it may help to pause on the actual dynamics of superimposition. Desuperimposition can work because everyday life as such, for Advaita, is already constituted as a play of superimpositions, the appearance of one thing as/in another (called *adhyāsa* by Śaṃkara). Thus the soteriological path can take the precise form of desuperimposition or *apavāda*. The obtaining dynamic of our collective human condition sets up the therapeutic response. Advaitic pedagogy thus responds in the terms already set up by the human condition: undo or de-superimpose every layer of identity the self assumes in its phenomenal being (and therefore undo the suffering borne of such identification).

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[23] evamayamānandirananto naisargiko'dhyāso mithyāpratyayarūpaḥ kartṛtvabhoktṛtvapravartakaḥ sarvalokapratyakṣah | asyānarthahetoḥ prahāṇāya ātmaikatvavidyāpratipattaye sarve vedāntā ārabhyante | yathā cāyamarthaḥ sarveṣāṃ vedāntānām tathā vayamasyām śārīrakamīmāṃsāyām pradarśayiṣyāmaḥ. BSB 1.1.1. Apte tr.

However, what one actually finds in Advaitic method is the exact reverse. Following the lead of the Upaniṣads, Advaita indulges the aspirant in a series of novel material and psychic identities to which she is quite likely unacquainted prior to her exposure to Advaita śāstra. It is as if Advaita amplifies one's extant material entanglements with a set of newly acquainted identities on the material plane. Or, rather, it opens up the phenomenal landscape of consciousness to hitherto unrecognized domains of corporeal being submerged underneath conscious awareness; but which need to be unearthed and owned up before one may commence on the journey of dissociating the embodied one from its embodying habitat. This is an expansive process that, as I show, reconfigures and expands one's sense of self-identity preparing it for more subtle forms of discernment that follow upon it.

IV. Advaita as Method: Adhyāropa and Apavāda

Advaitins employ another term, '*adhyāropa*,' when speaking of superimposition, often synonymous with '*adhyāsa*'. However, distinguishing their semantic nuances and contexts of use can disclose something about why and how Advaita takes recourse to a process of 'resuperimposition' as suggested above, as opposed to a desuperimposition of acquired identities. I show that *adhyāropa* is deeply implicated in the resuperimposition of corporeal identities as a core Advaitic tool, and therefore carries an additional semantic layer in comparison to *adhyāsa*, which is typically used to identify the problem of existence and its Advaitic diagnosis. In other words, although both mean the same thing (superimposition), *adhyāsa* marks the existing state of affairs leading to all sorts of suffering (and therefore to be undone), while *adhyāropa* is a desirable, motivated and manufactured imposition of identity serving to distinguish the embodied from its phenomenal embodiments. Notably, later Advaitins like Sadānanda also include views of other schools under the category of *adhyāropa*.[24] The idea seems to be that such a consideration of other views of self and being can complement the extant Upanishadic repertoire of superimpositions in providing the student with alternative

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[24] Refer *Vedāntasāra*, Chapter 3.

maps of selfhood, ultimately misguided but instrumental in overcoming grosser or more erroneous views of self.[25] But more needs to be said about *adhyāropa* before I present the argument.

Research on *adhyāropa* (and *adhyāropāpavāda* as method) is still fledgling.[26] Swami Satchidanandendra's *Vedāntaprakriyāpratyabhijñā*[27] is the first detailed historical treatment of the method. Loundo conducts an analysis of Satchidanandendra's treatment focusing on the pragmatic and result-oriented nature of the method, briefly noting that *adhyāropa* ought to be distinguished from natural superimposition (*adhyāsa*) as it is deliberately framed by instructional process (Loundo 2015, 70). Suthren Hirst, on the other hand, provides a wider context of its use in Śaṃkara. For her superimposition (*adhyāsa/adhyāropa*) provides the basic framework for Śaṃkara's teaching, determining its pedagogical procedures, and itself informed by scripture as exemplifying such procedures. Comans 2000, Mahadevan 1985, Bouthillette 2020 and others have addressed it circumstantially.[28] Nowhere are *adhyāropa* and *adhyāsa* compared in their contextual nuance as proposed here.

Adhyāropa constitutes the first half of a central Advaitic method known as *adhyāropāpavāda*, superimposition or assertion followed by negation or retraction. Śaṃkara's clearest statement of the principle is found in the Bhagavadgītā commentary: *tathā hi sampradāyavidāṃ vacanam adhyāropāpavādābhyām niṣprapañcam prapañcyate iti* (BG 13.13), asserting that the inexpressible/indescribable can be expressed by affirmation/superimposition and negation/retraction.[29] Śaṃkara is here explicating the verse: "With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes and heads and mouths everywhere, with hearing everywhere, That exists

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[25] C.S. Bouthillette notes a structural feature of some Advaitic doxographies where a subsequent view is used to counter the previous in a graded succession of 'right view' culminating in the Advaitic position. Each view, then, is both useful, in capturing some insight into the nature of self and being, but also eventually misguided and to be eventually discarded (Bouthillette 2020). This mirrors the pedagogical insights undergirding *adhyāropāpavāda*.

[26] Professor Daniel Arnold has brought to my attention a fairly typical reference to the pairs *adhyāropa-apavāda* and *samāropa-apavāda* by Buddhist thinkers (*samāropa* is sometimes used synonymously with *adhyāropa* in Advaita too). *Samāropa/ adhyāropa* refers to the tendency to superimpose or reify, that is, erroneously attribute a quality to an object it does not possess, such as imputing self-nature (*svabhāva*) to phenomena. *Apavāda*, in contrast, denies the presence of something or some positive quality, such as denying the conventional reality of phenomena. Further inquiry is called for in this regard. But preliminarily it appears that the Advaitic usage of the terms is strategic: *adhyāropa/samāropa* and *apavāda* are deliberate pedagogical moves whose provisional acceptance does not commit one to an underlying ontology. The Buddhist usage appears to be identifying incorrect or mistakenly held views or doctrines about the self and world.

[27] Translated into English as *The Method of the Vedānta* by A.J. Alston (1989).

[28] Traditional Advaitic pedagogy in contemporary India, in any case, has come to regard it as definitive of Advaitic method.

[29] tathā hi sampradāyavidāṃ vacanam adhyāropāpavādābhyāṃ niṣprapañcaṃ prapañcyate iti. BGB 13.13.

enveloping all".[30] The thirteenth chapter operates with the terminology of the field (*kṣetra*) and the field-knower (*kṣetrajña*), roughly parallel with the terms at stake here, the body (*deha/śarīra*) and the embodied (*dehin/śarīrin*). The problem immediately presents itself as to how the field-knower, the Advaitic witness-consciousness, can partake of limbs, eyes, mouths and sensible functions, a concern also illustrative of other scriptural passages where Brahman is spoken of in positivist terms. In this context Śaṃkara explains the reference to limbs, capacities and the like by arguing that any such reference is a methodological tool to convey what cannot be conveyed by other means:

> The existence of the Field-Knower (*kṣetrajña*) is indicated by the limiting adjuncts of the sense-organs of all living beings. Field-Knower...is so called because of the limiting adjunct of the Field (*kṣetra*); and this Field is of various forms, such as hands, feet etc. All the variety caused in the Field-Knower by the variety of limiting adjuncts of Field is but illusory, and it has therefore been said—in the words "It is not said to be either '*sat*' or '*asat*'"—that It should be known as devoid of all variety. Though what is caused in the Field Knower by limiting adjuncts is unreal, still it is spoken of as though it were an attribute of the Knowable (*jñeya*) only with a view to indicate Its existence (*astitvādhigamāya*). Accordingly there is the saying of those who know the right traditional method of teaching—which runs as follows: "That which is devoid of all verbality/expressibility (*niṣprapañca*) is expressed (*prapañcyate*) by *adhyāropa* and apavāda, i.e. by superimposition and negation, by attribution and denial".[31]

Here, according to Śaṃkara, the purported teaching is the indication of the existence (*astitvādhigamāya*) of the field-knower (*kṣetrajña*) through reference to the limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*s) of the field (*kṣetra*). The logic, as explained earlier, seems to be that the non-objectifiable seer/surveillor can only be reached or indicated by reference to the seen/surveilled; the field-knower by reference to the field; the intangible by reference to the closest tangible realities it is associated with. Also notable is the reference to those who know the tradition (*sampradāyavit*), a move typically made by Śaṃkara to indicate something of central importance. Elsewhere he will use terms like '*apoha/apohana*' (BSB 4.1.2; BUB 1.4.10; 2.3.6) '*apagama*'

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[30] sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṃ tat sarvato 'kṣiśiromukham | sarvataḥ śrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati. BG 13.13 (Shastri tr).

[31] kṣetrajñaś ca kṣetropādhita ucyate | kṣetraṃ ca pāṇipādādibhir anekadhā bhinnam | kṣetropādhibhedakṛtaṃ viśeṣajātaṃ mithyaiva kṣetrajñasya, iti tad-apanayanena jñeyatvam uktam na sat tan nāsad ucyate iti | upādhikṛtaṃ mithyārūpam apy astitvādhigamāya jñeyadharmavat parikalpya ucyate sarvataḥ pāṇi-pādam ity ādi | tathā hi saṃpradāyavidāṃ vacanam adhyāropāpavādābhyāṃ niṣprapañcaṃ prapañcyate iti. BGB 13.13. Shastri tr. I have substituted English words for those left untranslated ('field knower' for *kṣetrajña*, 'limiting adjunct' for *upādhi*), and used 'verbality/expressibility' for *niṣprapañca* instead of 'devoid of all duality'.

(BUB 1.4.10) or '*nivṛtti/nivartakatva*'[32] and their cognates in place of *apavāda*. The principle is further adopted by later thinkers such as Sadānanda and Vidyāraṇya. Its centrality is also attested to by the *Pañcīkaraṇa*, a text of disputed date and authorship but whose importance to Advaita praxis is well known (as a manual for Advaitic renunciants or *paramahamsa*s). Various Advaitic manuals come to endorse the principle, especially the *Pañcadaśī* of Vidyāraṇya (Chapter 7.68) and *Vedāntasāra* of Sadānanda (chapters 2, 3, 4).

Adhyāropa represents the affirmative stage of the method, the categories and classifications it sets up. (In the passage above, this will comprise the reference to all the limiting adjuncts, sense-organs, eyes, limbs, hands, feet etc.) *Apavāda* indicates their subsequent suspension or disavowal. But what is gained in the assertion and subsequent retraction if the latter cancels out the effect of the former? It will be clear that this technique permits the Advaitin to disclose phenomena typically below the phenomenal radar. The affirmative stage acts as a rung to climb and negotiate an evolved, expansive or subtler conception of self. Ultimately it will lead, as Śaṃkara stresses above, to conveying the existence (*astitvādhigamāya*) of the subtlest Being lacking any positive empirical attributes ascertained as the innermost nature of the self. Often this will require the articulation and disclosure of subliminal phenomenal structures of subjectivity (see the five-sheath and three-state analysis below) typically unavailable to conscious awareness. The negation signifies the *ad hoc* avowal of these conceptual schemes to be subsequently discarded. The student is thus slowly and cautiously led through a graded succession of stages towards subtler and harder to grasp truths that would be impossible in a direct leap from gross to subtle. Advaitic method thus adapts to the phenomenal structures of the person inhabiting a complex layered individuality, each layer needing to be teased out, brought into relief, before it can be surpassed. This requires an affirmation of our complex corporeality and its implication in vaster networks and matrices of nature as we will see.

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[32] CUB 6.2.1; 6.16.3; BUB 1.1.1; 1.3.1; BGB 2.18; BSB 1.1.4

IV.i   Corporeal Landscapes of Consciousness: Adhyāsa, Adhyāropa and Embodiment

While the above explanation accounts for the *methodological* work done by the *adhyāropāpavāda* principle, what permits this principle to work at the first place is the happy concurrence of superimposition-desuperimposition as the central Advaitic *explanation* of how things are; a coincidence of method and metaphysics crucial to understanding why the method works in the first place. It can work because, as pointed out, everyday existence is already constituted as a play of superimpositions, the appearance of one thing as/in another (*adhyāso nāma atasmiṃstadbuddhir*, BSB 1.1.1). *Adhyāsa*, then, marks the existing ontological condition borne of (and often equated with) ignorance (*avidyā*). *Adhyāropa* names the methodological counterpart exploiting this condition by reconfiguring superimposed identities along lines more conducive to an expansion of self-identity intended by Advaitic method.[33]

In other words, *adhyāsa* and *adhyāropa*, although mapping the same fundamental dynamics of existence, are somewhat different in their construal of the precise texture and form of superimposition. That is, the superimpositions we naturally make (*naisargika*) and the superimpositions the Veda wants us to make (let us call them *shastric*) do not map onto each other. And for good reason. Failure to appreciate the fine distinction between them (henceforth *naisargika* and *shastric* superimposition) can obscure the precise methodological work done by deliberate superimposition. The latter is, properly speaking, a thoughtfully contrived set of identifications unavailable prior to *shastric* indication. To this extent I second Loundo and Suthren Hirst in emphasizing the pedagogical and pragmatic character of Śaṃkara's Advaita; that Śaṃkara is first a teacher and then commentator or philosopher. Correspondingly, his Advaita is more intelligible in terms of what it does or achieves than what it says or expounds.[34]

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[33] It is thus possible to construe Advaita talk of Brahman, and the concurrent non-realism of the world, in short, its *metaphysics* (Refer Ram-Prasad 2002 for reading Advaita in non-realist terms)*,* in correlation with its *method* or procedures, such that they eventually converge. This is not to shirk away from what may be extracted as its underlying metaphysical scheme. Any methodology may be said to presuppose a metaphysics, even if unstated, and, as mentioned earlier, the method works precisely because reality as such is already set up this way. However, the perspectival shift helps to construe Advaita as primarily a set of pragmatic tools and procedures to undo the work done by natural *adhyāsa*. Superimposition happens. Non-deliberately and universally. Undoing it takes work, the kind that Advaita sets out to do and conceives as its very *raison d'être.* Realigning Advaitic foci along such operational lines of addressing and countering natural superimposition better situates its Brahman-talk.

[34] For other performative framings of Advaita, refer Clooney 1993, Suthren Hirst 1990, 2005, Loundo 2015, Halbfass 1991.

To be sure, Śaṃkara sometimes uses *adhyāropa* synonymously with *adhyāsa* to indicate the mutual superimpositions of the witness self with the wider, fully robust self possessing agency (*kartṛtva*) and enjoyership (*bhoktṛtva*) (See, for instance, BUB 1.1.1; 1.4.7; 1.4.10; BGB 4.18; 13.2 and elsewhere). These are natural (*naisargika*).[35] In the *adhyāsabhāṣya*, Śaṃkara identifies other con-fusions of identity characterizing everyday existence, extending from the corporeal to sensory and psychological. Śaṃkara conceives them as universally obtaining across culture, race, gender and species. On the other hand, contexts where deliberate *shastric* superimposition is discussed, *adhyāropa* is the preferred terminology. It alone occurs in the hyphenated phrase identifying Advaitic method as such (*adhyāropa-apavāda*) in Śaṃkara's commentary, *Pañcīkaraṇa* or, later, in Sadānanda's *Vedāntasāra*, Vidyāranya's *Pañcadaśī* and other manuals. In Śaṃkara (BGB 13.13) it appears as a borrowed phraseology from a more ancient tradition. Elsewhere in Śaṃkara's corpus, it is referred to as *adhyāropāpagama* (BUB 1.4.10) or, abstractly, *adhyāropaṇa-nivartakatva* (BGB 2.18). It is clear that what is intended to be expressed here is the self-conscious and deliberate pedagogical prerogative of setting up superimpositions and retracting them. In contrast, the point of emphasis in the use of '*adhyāsa*', since Śaṃkara, has been the superimposition borne of ignorance (*avidyā*), therefore natural and non-deliberate. And while *adhyāropa* may also carry this sense, its further location in contexts of metareflection on Advaitic method (in Śaṃkara or later works stated above), connotes a sense of deliberate and active superimposition. Advaitins often speak of *adhyāsa* as a part of the problem we find ourselves in and *adhyāropa* as the *shastric* response or solution. Or we could parse the difference in terms of *adhyāsa* as explanatory/metaphysical versus *adhyāropa* as methodological category without assuming a watertight distinction. In his *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* commentary, Śaṃkara will summarize the essence of the principle as follows:

> This is the purport of the whole Upaniṣad put in a nutshell. It is to bring home this purport that ideas of projection, maintenance, dissolution etc., as well as those of action, its factors and results were superimposed on the Self. Again, by their negation (*apohana*)—by the elimination (*apanaya*) of the superimposed (*adhyāropita*) attributes through a process of 'Not this, not this'—the truth has been made known. Just as, in order to explain the nature of numbers from one up to a hundred thousand billions, a man superimposes them on certain

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[35] Moreover, either of them may be used to denote *meditative* superimposition (*upāsanā*) defined by Śaṃkara as the imaginative imposition of a form/symbol/image upon something else (BUB 1.1.1). I focus here on the epistemic dimension of *adhyāsa/adhyāropa* as cognitive error and correction unrelated to the contexts of meditative praxis.

lines (digits), calling one of them one, another ten, another hundred, yet another thousand, and so on, and in doing so he only expounds the nature of numbers but never says that the numbers *are* the lines; or just as, in order to teach the alphabet, he has recourse to a combination of leaf, ink, lines, etc. and through them explains the nature of letters, but never says that the letters *are* the ink, lines etc., similarly in this exposition the one entity, the *brahmatattva*, has been inculcated through various means such as the projection (of the universe). Again, to eliminate the differences created by those hypothetical means (*kalpitopāya*), the truth has been summed up as 'Not this, not this'.[36]

Śaṃkara makes explicit here the difference between what we have called natural (*naisargika*) and deliberate (*shastric*) superimposition, the latter strategically employed by the Upaniṣads and, following them, the Advaitin, as convenient fictions pointing to the real. These latter are also not available to us outside of their Upanishadic presentation, such as the above reference to 'projection, maintenance etc.' referring to the cosmogonic enaction-procedure (*sṛṣṭiprakriyā*) central to Advaitic method (refer Chapter 2). Keeping with this working distinction, it may be possible to draw out the special character and purpose of *shastric* superimposition. These are almost never presented in the simple terms of *naisargika* superimposition ('I am the mind, body, senses' etc.). Rather, depending on the Upaniṣad, a highly complex and contrived ordering of the subject is presented, in terms of which the subject is not likely to conceive herself *before* the presentation, but which can nonetheless function as persuasive alternative snapshots of the subjective landscape. I focus on two such textual locations from the *Taittirīya* and *Māṇḍūkya*, describing the *pañcakośa* (five sheaths) and *avasthātraya* (three states) procedures respectively. Similar corporeal 'maps' may be found in almost all the primary Upaniṣads. The former partitions the individual according to five layers of self-identity from the grossest (the physical or *annamaya* self) to the subtlest (blissful or *ānandamaya*) with three others intervening:

> Now, a man here is formed from the essence of food. This here is his head; this is his right side; this is his left side; this is his torso (*ātman*); and this is his bottom on which he rests. On this, too, we have the following verse: From food, surely, are they born; all creatures that live on earth. On food alone, once born, they live; and into food in the end they pass…From

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[36] etasyaivārthas samyakprabodhāyotpattisthitipralayādikalpanā kriyākārakaphalādhyāropaṇā cā'tmani kṛtā tadapohena ca neti netītyadhyāropitāviśeṣāpanayadvāreṇapunastatvamāveditam | yathaikaprabhṛtyāparārdhasaṃkhyāsvarūpaparijñānāyā rekhādhyāropaṇaṃ kṛtvaikeyaṃ rekhā daśeyaṃ śateyaṃ sahasreyamiti grāhayatyavagamayati saṃkhyāsvarūpaṃ kevalaṃ na tu saṃkhyāyā rekhātmatvameva yathā cākārādīnyakṣarāṇi grāhayati tathā cehotpatyādyanekopāyamāsthāyaikaṃ brahmatattvamāveditam | punastatkalpitopāyajanitaviśeṣapariśodhanārthaṃ neti netīti tattvopasaṃhāraḥ kṛtaḥ | tadupasaṃhṛtaṃ punaḥ pariśuddhaṃ kevalameva saphalaṃ jñānamante 'sya kaṇḍikāyāmiti. BUB 4.4.25.

food beings come into being; By food, once born, they grow. 'It is eaten and it eats beings.' Therefore it is called 'food.' Different from and lying within this man formed from the essence of food is the self (*ātman*) consisting of lifebreath, which suffuses that man completely…the self consisting of lifebreath assumes a manlike appearance. Of this self, the head is simply the out-breath; the right side is the inter-breath; the left side is the in-breath; the torso (*ātman*) is space; and the bottom on which it rests is the earth…For lifebreath is the life of beings, so it's called 'all life.' Of that, this here is the embodied self (*ātman*); this belongs to the former.[37]

I enlist here the first two bodily sheaths in the progression of five, of food and breath. As the passage unfolds, it seeks to recalibrate self-identity from ordinary superimpositions (of the physical body, senses or mind as enlisted in the *adhyāsabhāṣya*) towards a deeper understanding of the impersonal basis of individuality. The physical body is nothing but food (*anna*). It is an unstable point of intercourse between the body as the agent, object and locus of consumption. We are the consumer and the consumed. We partake in a cosmic cycle of give and take where we are food to others and others to us. This recognition, then, achieves a perspectival shift on the body, locating its materiality in a more expansive and non-localized environment of material exchange. Likewise, the body is next conceived as a subtler material of energy-breath, a localized intersection of cosmic energies distinguished by their various bodily functions. Through such a graded phenomenal itinerary the self gains insight into the most subtle of all insights, the recognition of the non-objectifiable, non-participative and nonactional *(niṣkriya)* dimension of self. Śaṃkara takes recourse to the Advaitic 'moon on the bough' technique (*śākhācandranyāya*) to explicate the process (TUB 2.1.1). While the technique is well-known, its application towards an embodied itinerary of attention deserves emphasis. Says Śaṃkara:

The intention here is to make that very human being enter into the innermost *Brahman* through knowledge. But his intellect, that remains engaged in the particulars that simulate

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[37] sa vā eṣa puruṣo 'nnarasamayaḥ | tasyedameva śiraḥ | ayaṃ dakṣiṇaḥ pakṣaḥ | ayamuttaraḥ pakṣaḥ | ayamātmā | idaṃ pucchaṃ pratiṣṭhā | tadapyeṣa śloko bhavati annādvai prajāḥ prajāyante | yāḥ kāśca pṛthivīṃśritāḥ | atho annenaiva jīvanti | athainadapi yantyantataḥ | annaṃ hi bhūtānāṃ jyeṣṭham | tasmāt sarvauṣadhamucyate | sarvaṃ vai te 'nnamāpnuvanti | ye 'nnaṃ brahmopāsate | annaṃ hi bhūtānāṃ jyeṣṭham | tasmāt sarvauṣadhamucyate | annādbhūtāni jāyante | jātānyannena vardhante | adyate 'tti ca bhūtāni | tasmādannaṃ taducyata iti | tasmādvā etasmādannarasamayāt | anyo 'ntara ātmā prāṇamayaḥ / tenaiṣa pūrṇaḥ | sa vā eṣa puruṣavidha eva | tasya puruṣavidhatām | anvayaṃ puruṣavidhaḥ | tasya prāṇa eva śiraḥ | vyāno dakṣiṇaḥ pakṣaḥ | apāna uttaraḥ pakṣaḥ | ākāśa ātmā | pṛthivī pucchaṃ pratiṣṭhā… prāṇaṃ devā anu prāṇanti | manuṣyāḥ paśavaśca ye | prāṇo hi bhūtānāmāyuḥ | tasmāt sarvāyuṣamucyate | sarvameva ta āyuryanti / ye prāṇaṃ brahmopāsate | prāṇo hi bhūtānāmāyuḥ / tasmāt sarvāyuṣamucyata iti | tasyaiṣa eva śārīra ātmā | yaḥ pūrvasya. TU 2.1-3. Olivelle tr.

the outer objects, thinking them to be the Self, though they are non-Selves, cannot without the support of some distinct object, be suddenly made contentless and engaged in the thoughts of the inmost, indwelling Self. Therefore, on the analogy of the moon on the bough, the text takes the help of a fiction that has affinity with the identification of the Self and the physical body; and leading thereby the intellect inward.[38]

The intended recalibration of self-identity, from the entanglement of subject-object Advaita calls *jīva* to the recognition of the subject as the witness-seer (disentangled from its material immersions), would be impossible without the patient steps up the phenomenal ladder śāstra lays out; just as the moon hidden behind the trees cannot be located without bringing the onlooker successively closer by pointing to the (sub-) branches 'surrounding' the moon. Each step up is significant in its own right, negotiating an expansion of self beyond its materially circumscribed gross body before finally yielding the subtlest self of all, the subject in its witness dimension surveying and therefore one with what it surveilles—most intimately, its own bodily environs—but, by the same movement, something more; an excess and a nothing simultaneously. The *Māṇḍūkya* indicates this *excess* by partitioning the individual and phenomenal experience into three states (*avasthā*s); three layers of subjectivity (*viśva, taijasa, prājña*) corresponding to three domains across which the subject traverses in its daily existence (waking, dream and deep sleep). Notably, the fourth 'state' (or Brahman) beyond is not some deeper spiritual reality hiding underneath; it is not something in excess of them, but simply the *nothing* that secures embodiment in their material folds, the sheer transparency of the seer, as in the crystal metaphor, absorbed, commingled in the objects it sees:

> *Brahman* is this self; that [*brahman*] is this self (*ātman*) consisting of four quarters. The first quarter is *Vaiśvānara*—the Universal One—situated in the waking state, perceiving what is outside, possessing seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and enjoying gross things. The second quarter is *Taijasa*—the Brilliant One—situated in the state of dream, perceiving what is inside, possessing seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and enjoying refined things. The third quarter is *Prājña*—the Intelligent One—situated in the state of deep sleep—deep sleep is when a sleeping man entertains no desires or sees no dreams—become one, and thus being a single mass of perception; consisting of bliss, thus enjoying bliss…Thus consider the fourth quarter as perceiving neither what is inside nor what is outside, nor even both together; not as a mass of perception, neither as perceiving nor as not perceiving; as unseen; as beyond the

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[38] sa hi puruṣa iha vidyayā āntaratamaṃ brahma saṅkrāmayitum iṣṭas tasya ca bāhyākāraviśeṣeṣv anātmasvātmabhāvitā buddhir anālambya viśeṣaṃ kaścit sahasā āntaratam apratyagātmaviṣayā nirālambanā ca kartum aśakyeti dṛṣṭaśarīrātmasāmānyakalpanayā śākhācandranidarśanavadantaḥ praveśayann āha. TUB 2.1.1. Gambhirananda tr.

reach of ordinary transaction; as ungraspable; as without distinguishing marks; as unthinkable; as indescribable… That is the self (*ātman*), and it is that which should be perceived.[39]

The *Māṇḍūkya* recalibration of the phenomenal self takes it further beyond the individuality of the waking self towards a vaster sphere of functioning in dream and deep sleep. As before, such a renegotiation of personal identity further unhinges the self from its grossest identifications towards subtler loci of phenomenal inhabitation masked underneath conscious awareness. Similar Upanishadic passages elsewhere work to bring hidden domains of subjectivity into the clear light of awareness, expanding and reorienting self-identity along certain phenomenal channels. From this perspective, *brahman* itself is nothing but this most newly acquired and deeper sense of self in relation to its environment. Eventually these renegotiations of self will culminate in its recognition as the quiescent, stillness of the subtlest *brahman*, the *brahman* without any attributes (*nirguṇa*) equivalent to the 'fourth quarter' above.

Evidently the spiritual aspirant did not conceive of herself in such terms before *shastric* superimposition. Yet she must subsequently reimagine and readjust her phenomenal being in such terms. Firstly, Advaitic method works on the presumption that such a readjustment is realistic and negotiable. But what is gained by such a recalibration of the subjective landscape? It seems that through such recalibration, itself ad hoc and intermediary, *śāstra* can better fulfill its aim of leading the aspirant cautiously away from the most corporeal 'earth-bound' identities we assume, and which occupy our utmost attention, to subtler ones in a graded and realistic phenomenal itinerary. Subliminal layers of *adhyāsa* hiding underneath the overt awareness of self as a psychophysical being are teased out and made the explicit object of attention.

To go with the analogy of landscape, each of the two procedures magnifies, so to speak, the texture of bodily inhabitation, as if under a lens, bringing into relief hidden features of the subjective terrain. The

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[39] sarvaṃ hy etad brahmāyam ātmā brahma so 'yam ātmā catuṣpāt | jāgaritasthāno bahiḥprajñaḥ saptāṅga ekonaviṃśatimukhaḥ sthūlabhug vaiśvānaraḥ prathamaḥ pādaḥ | svaprasthāno 'ntaḥprajñaḥ saptāṅga ekonaviṃśatimukhaḥ praviviktabhuktaijaso dvitīyaḥ pādaḥ | yatra supto na kañcana kāmaṃ kāmayate na kañcana svapnaṃ paśyati tat suṣuptam | suṣuptasthāna ekībhūtaḥ prajñānaghana evāndamayo hy ānandabhukcetomukhaḥ prājñaḥ tṛtīyaḥ pādaḥ | eṣaḥ sarveśvara eṣa sarvajña eṣo 'ntaryāmy eṣa yoniḥ sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām | nāntaḥprajñaṃ na bahiḥprajñaṃ nobhayataḥprajñaṃ na prajñānaghanaṃ na prajñaṃ nāprajñam | adṛṣṭam avyavahāryam agrāhyam alakṣaṇam acintyam avyapadeśyam ekātmapratyayasāraṃ prapañcopaśamaṃ śāntaṃ śivam advaitaṃ caturthaṃ manyante | sa ātmā sa vijñeyaḥ. MU 2-7. Olivelle tr.

avasthātraya (three-state) procedure further uncouples personal identity from its narrow identification with the physical body by extending its domain into the selves we inhabit in dream and deep sleep. First, the sense of self is enlarged beyond the physical plane in the manner above. Subsequently, all the planes of habitation (waking, dream and deep sleep) are shown to be manifestations of an indeterminate elusive conscious presence Advaita calls *caitanya* (*Brahman* in its aspect of witness consciousness). This already constitutes the *apavāda*, since, from the newly acquired vision, the three 'states' and corresponding selves are not autonomously existing realities but manifestations in/of *Brahman*; not unreal but, now, real *as Brahman*. Such a graded transition is what makes the transfer of personal identity from the psychophysical to non-objectifiable non-actional *(niṣkriya)* being possible. Lastly, nothing else need be 'done' apart from such a management of the attentional landscape. Śāstra being merely informative (*jñāpaka*), not prescriptive (*kāraka*) (Refer BUB 1.4.10), it is only necessary to direct awareness towards obtaining features of self covered over by grosser realities saturating ordinary awareness. Through this work, *shastric* superimposition can gradually disentwine the embodied one from its embodying environs, just as the inner stalk of the *muñja* grass is extracted from its surrounding blades.[40]

Conclusion

Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā situates Śaṃkara's hermeneutic, philosophical and pedagogical imperatives in the unfoldment of the complex dynamics of embodied being. This embodied being—an entangled lattice of intersecting forces and material planes enmeshed over one another—must be the point of departure for any inquiry into a deeper self, world or God. This body is all I have. As both the subject and object of self-inquiry, the expansive and conscious body determines for Advaita the existential and interrogative horizon of philosophical and hermeneutic activity. Even if, therefore, the ostensible subject-matter of Advaitic hermeneutics is some sacred *text* (such as the Upaniṣads) in need of clarification or interpretation, what is

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[40] Śaṃkara often takes this example (as in BUB 4.3.7) to show the fineness and subtlety of the process of 'extracting' the witness self from its embodying environs.

really at stake is the nature of the embodied one (*śarīrin*), and the event of embodiment. Textual hermeneutics thus becomes a device for recalibrating corporeal identity.

For Advaita, interrogating the phenomenon of embodiment points to a subtle presence non-different from yet in excess of the body it both surveilles and inhabits. Any endeavor to recognize or track this conscious fringe of embodiment must first pass through and embrace every material entrenchment of consciousness (*adhyāropa*), every entanglement of subject and object. The Upanishadic indication of the self's oneness with all existence (*sarvātmabhāva*) is thus a deeply embodied experience drawing on the subject's material engrossment at various levels. *Self*-knowledge, for Advaita, must therefore be knowledge of the *other*, of the matrices and energies that interpenetrate nature and self, mind and body, object and subject. The Advaitic self is discernible only in this other-orientedness, recognizing itself in the mirror of the spaces and identities it inhabits in ordinary life.

PART II: THE NON-DUAL GRAMMAR OF ADVAITA

CHAPTER 4: KĀRAKATVA, EXISTENTIAL AND NOETIC VERBS

I.   Introduction

If Advaita comports itself as a ritual it can do so because its rituality manifests at the noetic plane, as the subtle regulation and adjustment of the noetic landscape. Pre-Upanishadic Vedic ritual operated with grossified forms of materiality, involving embodied activity and material instruments geared towards the realization of material gains. Vedic language subserved these purposes with the ritual philosophers eliciting a productive result-oriented teleology from the very grammar of Vedic language—*bhāvanā* (bringing into being) was thought to regulate the very construction and import of verbal and sentential meaning. But *bhāvanā* was just one amongst other linguistic devices exploited to articulate a characteristically actional account of language and its workings. Nor was this a purely Mīmāṃsaka innovation. Sanskrit grammar, as I show, already offered a paradigmatic model of explanation inclined towards an actional account of grammar and its relationship to real world items. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā thus found itself felicitously placed upon an extant foundation of an actional grammar, semantics and morphology articulated in semantic analysis (*nirukta*) and grammar (*vyākaraṇa*) reflecting a ritually inscribed action-centrism (*kriyāparatva*).[1]

Advaita, displaying its own level of noetic rituality, demands its own grammar disclosing the *brahmatva* of being, that is, the dimension of being unrelated to the actional (*kriyākārakaphala*) framework of existence. If, as in Mīmāṃsā, a productive teleology is mirrored in the very structure and import of Vedic injunctions and ritual language, which import is exploited in the ritual production of some entity, the obtaining Advaitic identity of self and Brahman (and their non-actional basis) are equally mirrored in Vedic language. It is only a matter of recovering those linguistic phenomena making them the new hermeneutic center of gravity.

This sets up Advaita's fundamental challenge: how to conceive a philosophy of language outside the circuits that have historically tracked and organized themselves around a deeply actional account of language.

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[1] I render *kriyāpara/kriyāparatva* as action-centric/action-centrism. The related *kriyārtha/kriyārthatva* is translated, depending on the context, either as 'the meaning of action/action-meaning' or 'purposivity of action' or just 'action-orientedness', conveying the distinct senses of '*artha*' as both meaning and purpose.

The productive ethos of a ritual philosophy of language is at odds with the non-productive, non-proliferative thrust of Advaita. Here the primary task is the *recognition* of an obtaining state of affairs (*siddhavastu*) mediated through the governance of attention (as seen in Chapter 2), as opposed to the production of new realities (*sādhyavastu*). Nothing new ought to be brought into being. Śaṃkara's innovations (and those of Advaitins generally), I argue, primarily lie in the elaboration of such a non-actional *(niṣkriya)* grammar, the disclosure of linguistic phenomena that, so to speak, betray or leak non-dualism and non-action in a language that is otherwise geared towards formulating diversity, difference and action. This may be true of language generally (not merely Sanskrit) insofar as worldly life, as mirrored in language, is characterized by action, achievement, change, purposivity and intentionality. The Advaitic genius, on this account, may be said to lie in the exposure of those linguistic features, in principle extant in any language, that are able to communicate the non-dual non-actional aspects of existence. Thus while such instances may typically be outweighed by the everyday thrust of language towards the description of the diversity and diversifying activity of mundane life —the *nāmarūpakarma* of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4—the Advaitic wager is that language can be refined and reapplied so as to communicate non-difference and non-action. Advaita may thus be defined as a set of tools systematically employing words to communicate what is not the primary function of language, but which capacity may be teased out of language itself and exploited towards disclosing non-actional features of the world.

The argument takes the form that Advaita recuperates certain linguistic outliers or heterotypes— phenomena that were considered marginal or peripheral to the mainstream grammar of action—making them the new discursive center of attention. This presupposes the notion that extant grammar, as well as philosophy and hermeneutics, worked with a paradigmatic model of how meaning is generated, what and how words mean, what constitutes correct syntax, semantics and etymology, such that certain other forms were considered non-paradigmatic or anomalous. I bring this paradigm into focus by appealing to the notion of *bhāva*, showing that while it comprised a central criterion of meaning and intelligibility for the grammarians, semantic analysts, Vedic exegetes and others, it was *sat,* Being as conceived in the Upaniṣads*,* that came to

crystallize the new intellectual center of gravity around which Advaita organized its grammar, meaning and syntax.[2]

A crucial argument will be that Advaitic self-knowledge conceives itself precisely in terms of the negation of action and factors of action that make up the building blocks of Sanskrit grammar, Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics and, one may say, mundane existence. The very dismantling of such categories *constitutes* self-knowledge. The categories of agency (*kartṛtva*) and enjoyership (*bhoktṛtva*) connected to grammar theory pervade human subjectivity, leading to suffering. The Advaitic response is to indicate an alternative dimension of the subject—an awareness free of any sense of agency, enjoyership or factors of action (*kāraka*)—with its own attendant non-dual grammar that discloses a non-actional (*akriya/niṣkriya*), non-agential (*akartṛ*) and non-causal (*akāraka*) conscious being. Brahman is just another name for this conscious being prior to its entanglement in the complex web of actional relations we call *saṃsāra*.[3] The Advaitic critique of action, turned towards the ritual world of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, is therefore not merely preparatory to Advaita proper, to its core 'doctrines' of Brahman, *māyā*, consciousness, personal identity etc. Rather, all these become pertinent and meaningful in the final disclosure of the non-actional (*niṣkriya*) and quiescent dimension of self called Brahman.

I.i   Situating Advaitic Grammar: Advaita, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā & Vākyaśāstra

In rendering explicit an Advaitic grammar, I consider Advaita's contribution to and exploitation of linguistic theory and philosophy of language, already considerably developed in Vyākaraṇa and Pūrva-

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[2] The final and core (*antaraṅga*) Advaitic event of self-knowledge was articulated (in Chapter 2) as being *rituogrammatically* constituted, i.e., constituted as a set of result-driven procedures exploiting the depth-grammar of reality. A grammar (what I refer to here as a non-dual depth-grammar) is deployed towards the generation of a final result and, conversely, such generative procedures are grammatically ordered. This interplay and co-extensiveness of language and being comprise a central feature of the rituogrammatic paradigm, along with the accompanying notion that a grammar of language can be uncovered to disclose the grammar of being. In Advaita this transpires as a noetic performance orchestrating attention towards certain obtaining features of selfhood. The *prakriyā*s or enaction procedures of Chapter 2 operated with linguistic data and phenomena—Upanishadic statements deciphered through *lakṣaṇā*, continued presence and absence (*anvayavyatireka*) etc.—leading a language-inscribed consciousness along certain directions of psychic and corporeal awareness. There the emphasis lay on the performativity and rituality of Advaitic knowledge procedures. Here I elaborate on the dynamics of an Advaitic grammar, rounding up the account of Advaitic rituogrammatics.

[3] Śaṃkara and Sureśvara define *saṃsāra* as nothing but such an infinite web of action, actors and results; for instance, BGB 18.41: sarvaḥ saṃsāraḥ kriyākārakaphalalakṣaṇaḥ.

Mīmāṃsā but reconceived in Śaṃkara's establishment of non-action (*niṣkriyatva/naiṣkarmya*) as the central

purport of Advaita, and therefore, controversially, of the Veda itself.[4] Śaṃkarādvaita is, first and foremost, a

vākyaśāstra, a discipline of sentential comprehension, in particular, a non-dual depth-grammar of the real,

whose disclosure of sentential *unities*—as opposed to intra- and inter-sentential *relations* preoccupying

grammar and ritual theory—is directly instrumental in the generation of self-knowledge. The items requiring

the keenest grammatical attention are nominal co-reference (*sup-sāmānādhikaraṇya*[5]), special classes of verbs

with their related root clusters (*bhū-as-vid* and *budh-jñā-cit*) and the nominal sentence. As will be argued, it is the

notion of nominal co-reference, taken over from grammar, that comes to regulate Advaitic grammar,

becoming an indispensable cognitive tool for attaining self-knowledge. That is to say, liberation is deemed

possible on the recognition of a non-dual depth-grammar that is the task of Advaita to render transparent.[6]

By the term 'depth-grammar' I direct attention to Śaṃkara's presentation of the deeper semantics,

syntax and morphology of various features of Upanishadic language. In uncovering such a depth-grammar, he

is only following the lead of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, which claimed to uncover its own order of a deeper level of

morpheme-, word- and sentence-level semantics and morphology. The term 'non-dual' tends to indicate its

differentia: For Śaṃkara Upanishadic words and sentences work (i.e., generate knowledge of Brahman/self)

by processes of negation, retraction and exclusion that render transparent aspects of reality not accessible to

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[4] Pūrva and Uttara Mīmāṃsā do not merely attempt at interpreting their respective portions of the Vedic canon, the *karma-* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa*s respectively, but seek to subsume the whole Veda under one overarching interpretive model. While for the Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas this is the Veda's *kriyārthatva* (having action and its results as the primary aim or purpose), it will be shown that the core idea of Śaṃkara's non-dual grammar is *niṣkriyatva/naiṣkarmya* (non-action) as the final purport of the whole Veda. Thus, paradoxically, for Śaṃkara, the causal, motivating and obligatory power of the Vedic word with respect to action is secondary and preparatory to the recognition of the actionlessness of the self, and *kārakatva* (involvement or participation in action) is enjoined ultimately only as a means to realizing the self as *akāraka*. Of course, the distinction between *jñānakāṇḍa* (knowledge portion) and *karmakāṇḍa* (ritual portion) is itself a later innovation since, according to Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, whatever is purportedly the content of *jñānakāṇḍa* is explicable within its own actional paradigm. But Advaitic grammar does not merely stop at carving out a separate domain for the interpretation of Upaniṣad *vākya*s; it claims that the Veda as a whole ultimately conveys the truth of *naiṣkarmya* (BUB 4.4.22; US I.17 and elsewhere).

[5] Pāṇinian technical term for 'nominal co-reference' or synthetic co-presence. This is opposed to verbal co-reference, *tiṅ-sāmānādhikaraṇya*, the former being by far the more common. '*Sup*' and '*tiṅ* denote the nominal or verbal affixes turning a stem either into a nominal or verb. I work with nominal co-reference and will simply use '*sāmānādhikaraṇya*' to refer to it.

[6] This does not discount the role of other elements active in Śaṃkara's system, especially the complicated relationship persisting between *śruti* (revelation), *yukti* (reason) and *anubhava* (experience), not the least because Śaṃkara speaks of different kinds of reasoning, some more directly pertinent, others less. If anything, the focus will be on 'grammatical reason', synthesizing the often seemingly conflicting domains of reason and revelation, insofar as the latter as explored here, operates as a non-dual grammar.

positivist and empirical uses of language, but which are nonetheless available to a non-actional depth-grammar that co-exists with the surface-grammar mirroring the actional being of the world.

Some attention has been directed to the hermeneutic and exegetical character of Śaṃkara's Vedānta, its continuity with Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, and its exploitation and application of typically Mīmāṃsā tools of interpretation and analysis.[7] These efforts have questioned the construal of Advaita Vedānta as a mere philosophy or school of thought whose doctrines can be extracted from its literary corpus and presented as an autonomous teaching or 'position' on ontological, epistemological or other topics of philosophy. This chapter attempts to build on this project by construing Śaṃkara's Advaita primarily as a tradition of sentential interpretation and analysis, with special emphasis on its linguistic basis and horizon. Significant progress has been made in this direction with respect to Pūrva Mīmāṃsā itself[8], which is shown to have been deeply immersed in a ritual context, its detailed exegesis and discussion of seemingly philosophically irrelevant ritual concerns and problems. Scholarship on Advaita/Uttara Mīmāṃsā, on the other hand, does not seem to be on par with its sister discipline in the acknowledgment of its ritual-performative basis. For one, the explicit ritual concerns of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā somewhat explains the (if only unjust) separation of its 'philosophy' from its exegesis of ritual performance. But in the case of Advaita there does not appear, at first glance, any ostensible pragmatic concern driving the system (except perhaps its emphasis on liberation). But, as Clooney (1993) and others have pointed out, it would be a disservice to the tradition of Advaita to ignore the exegetical, even ritual, grounding of the tradition, portraying it as primarily philosophical. This dissertation builds on his observation that "though Advaita may appear much more philosophical than Mīmāṃsā, its articulation of theory and doctrine resides within the confines of Mīmāṃsā's practical emphasis; it too keeps all theoretical and doctrinal pronouncements rooted in textual knowledge, and so persistently orients the understanding reader back into a world of practice" (Clooney 1993, 25). This perspective provides another key to understanding its debt to and continuity with Mīmāṃsā.

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[7] Refer, for instance, Nakamura 1983, Modi 1956, Parpola 1981, Clooney 1993, Bronkhorst (ed.) 2007.

[8] For instance, Clooney 1990, and McCrea 2000: "Any serious effort to come to terms with the fundamental project of Mīmāṃsā will have to treat it as a system, rather than as an adjunct to the epistemological and ontological theories advanced in the Tarkapāda or as a collection of more or less unrelated observations on specific points of ritual procedure" (McCrea 2000, 451).

At the same time, while the apologetics, hermeneutical and ritual context of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā have led scholars to under-appreciate some of its philosophical contributions (Arnold 2001), important aspects of Advaita are sidelined owing to the perception that its texture is primarily philosophical. Taking this as a point of departure, by paying attention to its grounding in *vākyaśāstra*, *vyākaraṇa* and *mīmāṃsā*, I intend to trace 'the world of practice' in which the reader/listener closely participates in the text of Advaita initiating an ongoing process of self-transformation that self-reflexively deconstructs the 'text' on which it is based as much as it deconstructs the embodied textuality of the subject as reader/listener.

In systematically expanding the *mīmāṃsā* repertoire of hermeneutic theory, supplementing a pre-existent action-centric (*kriyāpara*) hermeneutics of process and action (of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā) with a non-actional (*niṣkriya*) hermeneutics of non-processual being, Advaita therefore represents the dialectical completion of the discipline of hermeneutics initiated by the Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas, appropriating their own methods and principles and applying them for converse ends. That is, for showing that the central purport (*tātparya*) of the Veda lies in the disclosure of the non-actional dimension of subjectivity, not the injunction to action: "Now it has to be shown how the whole of the Vedas is applicable (*upayukta*) to this subject of Self…[I]t is sought to show that the entire Vedas, except the portion treating of ceremonies having material ends, are applicable (*upayoga*) to this."[9] Just as Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas seek grammatical confirmation and resources in the etymological, verbal, optative and morphological features of Sanskrit language, or the theories of the grammatical tradition, to justify and establish the action-orientedness (*kriyārthatva*) of the Veda, so Śaṃkara finds an alternative linguistic center of gravity—features of nominals, special verbs, nominal sentential analyses etc.—to establish non-action (*niṣkriyatva*) as its final purport. Together, the two systems thus give a comprehensive account of the nature of Vedic language, one may say, of language generally, each emphasizing one of two critical functions language may be said to serve—denote action and relation (the fundamental feature of the mundane and Vedic worlds), and disclose non-action and non-processual being, a

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[9] etasminn ātmaviṣaye sarvo vedo yathopayukto bhavati tat tathā vaktavyam...tac ca yathā asmin prapāṭhake abhihitaṁ saprayojanam anūdya atraivopayogaḥ kṛtsnasya vedasya kāmya-rāśi-varjitasya. BUB 4.4.22. Madhavananda tr.

somewhat underdeveloped aspect of the Indian grammatical and hermeneutic traditions (one may say, of grammar and hermeneutics generally) that eventually finds a sophisticated articulation in Advaita.

Section II attempts to delineate certain paradigmatic features discernible in the grammatical tradition as early as Pāṇini and his commentators that appear to rest on a structure of desire and action found in the Vedic tradition, and which Śaṃkara eventually attempts to dismantle. Sections III and IV explore the non-dual grammar of existential and noetic verbs, the two limiting cases of verbality that are arguably better explained under a non-actional grammar than an actional one. Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and its commentators Kātyāyana and Patañjali will form the basis of the analysis of the grammatical sources. Amongst Śaṃkara's works the focus will be on sections of his commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā*, *Chāndogya* and *Taittirīya* and the *Upadeśasāhasrī,* while the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* of Jaimini in the lineage of Śabara and Kumārila will be the focal point of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā tradition.

II.i   Kāraka Theory & the Desire-Action-Actor Framework

Following the Upaniṣads, Śaṃkara targets an underlying actional framework of the ritual paradigm that comes to hegemonize linguistic, ritual, philosophical and hermeneutic discourse. While I have elsewhere spoken of action-centrism as such a hegemonizing discourse, I here develop its relation with desire, insofar as desire is a primary motivator of action,[10] particularly focusing on the *kāraka* theory and what Śaṃkara's perspective on it. As one would imagine, desire-impelled activity is the root of the problem of worldly existence for Śaṃkara—*avidyākāmakarma* (ignorance-desire-action) being a stock idiom in his works—and its negation takes precisely the form of the negation of grammatical *kārakatva*, along with an attendant discourse of desire.[11] Śaṃkara directly attacks such a framework of desire and action instantiated in Sanskrit grammar in more than one place:

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[10] The other being duty or obligation. Some schools like the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, for instance, question the centrality of desire as a motivating factor in ritual performance, emphasizing, instead, on one's obligation to do so.

[11] I understand this association as prefiguring grammar theory, resting on a structure of desire (*kāma/icchā/abhilāṣā/rāga*) and its satisfaction through action (*kriyā/karman/yajña/kratu*) presumed in Vedic ritual. Creation in the Vedic corpus is often depicted as a product of an original desire motivating the creative act, a structure paralleled in ritual performance. Desire—construed more broadly as an aspiration for the sum of all ends salutary and advantageous from the human perspective—was a crucial component in the set of factors preceding and impelling the ritual act, setting in motion various ritual procedures. One may, going further,

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US[12] I.18.119 As [the object of perception] is most desired, it is the object of an action. One who is desirous of obtaining it is enjoined to perform the action…

US I.18.132 The object of an action is declared to be that which it is intended should be always affected by the action of some agent. Therefore it is accepted that the object of an action depends upon the agent [and] not upon anything else.[13]

Śaṃkara is here directly quoting the Pāṇinian definition of the grammatical object[14] as regulating the structure of behavior of the enjoined or desire-motivated individual. Grammar, so articulated, appears to structurally exemplify a logic of action and desire. *Kāraka* analysis and terminology have been studied from the point of view of their relationship to Vedic ritual (Renou 1941-42, Deshpande 1991), where Renou admits a limited correspondence between *kāraka* categories and ritual terminology, Deshpande arriving at a more direct correspondence. There are some clear parallels between the central ritual act, the *yajñakarma*, and the action-actor (*kriyākāraka*) analysis of the grammarians. The involvement of the various nominal items in accomplishing the central action denoted by the verb is reflective of the use (*prayoga*) of the various sacrificial elements in a ritual as construed by Jaimini. Cardona observes that "[a] *kāraka* is not a thing in itself but viewed in relation to an action. As Patañjali says, a thing becomes a *kāraka* with respect to the accomplishment of an action in which it participates…Since, moreover, such a thing plays a role in the

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generalize from this a logic of desire and performative satisfaction governing mundane existence as much as it regulated the ritually circumscribed life of the Vaidika (a significant difference being the often supernatural ends and accompanying means found in the Vedic arena). Its precise historical diffusion may be difficult to assess. The systematization of the *puruṣārtha* (the four ends of life) scheme rested on the idea that no one ever initiates an action without a desire or end purpose, and that such purposes could be schematized as a way to regulate Vedic life. The term *'puruṣārtha'* itself may be traced to the pertinence of the Vedic ritual to its performers and beneficiaries, as opposed to other orders of meaning within which the ritual act could be be framed, such as *kratvartha* or *śabdārtha*. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā theory was already founded on a logic of desire and its performative satisfaction, captured in such Vedic utterances as the paradigmatic '*svargakāmo 'yajet*' ('May one desirous of heaven sacrifice') establishing the casual link between desire and ritual. The shramanic milieu may also be described as bearing a certain axiological skepticism with respect to such a desire-action framework. From the perspective of the Buddhist analysis of experience, *taṇhā* (yearning/craving) was seen as the driving impulse behind worldly existence (*saṃsāra*), leading to suffering-generative activity, mirroring the desire-action framework. Words like *rāga* (desire/attachment) and *dveṣa* (hatred/repulsion), moreover, become stock terms in the vocabulary of Yoga, Vedānta and even the epics, presenting a fundamental problem confronting the individual who finds his everyday life determined by a network of desires and ends, further reinforced, in the Brahmanic lifestyle, by Vedic ritual, but is faced with an evolving ethic that prioritizes their regulation and eventual cessation. Gītā's proposal of action without desire (*niṣkāmakarma*) is one late response to the problems opened up by the diffused presence of the desire-action (*kāmakarma*) framework in Indian thought. As a Vedic auxiliary discipline (*vedāṅga*), grammar may thus be also seen to assimilate elements of such a desire-action framework.

[12] All translations of the *Upadeśasāhasrī* follow Mayeda 1979.

[13] karmepsitatamatvāt sa tadvān kārye niyujyate | ākāro yatra cārpyeta karaṇaṃ tad ihocyate. US I.18.119.

vyāptum iṣṭaṃ ca yat kartuḥ kriyayā karma tat smṛtam | ato hi kartṛtantratvaṃ tasyeṣṭaṃ nānyatantratā. US I.18.132. Mayeda tr.

[14] kartuḥ īpsitatamaṃ karma. A 1.4.49.

accomplishment of an action, it is also spoken of as the locus of a capacity (*śakti, sāmarthya*)" (Cardona 1974, 246). This echoes Jaimini's notion of *dharma* as the "functional description of a sacrificial element" (Clooney 1990, 155), further explicated as follows: "To know the *dharma* of some element is to know what the element does, what is done to it, what it is related to, when it appears in the sacrifice and when it leaves it" (1990, 155).

If one replaced the term 'sacrifice' by 'sentence'—both comprising the larger wholes which other subordinate ritual and sentential elements subserve—we have here a good paraphrase of the functional existence of nominal items in a typical verbal sentence, whose existence is justified primarily by their involvement in action-accomplishment. Just as in the sacrifice, neither the *puruṣa* nor the *karman* nor the *phala* constitutes the focus and center of sacrificial meaning and value (Clooney 1990, 147), the human performer too being an accessory in the central motivating act, so sentential meaning is ultimately referenced, not to the initiating agent, object etc., but to the overall activity (*kriyā*) to be accomplished.

To whatever extent the action-orientedness (*kriyārthatva*) of the sentence (*vākya*) or language tracks the action-orientedness of the Veda and Vedic ritual—as in Jaimini's statement about the action-centrism of the Veda, that whatever is not so subject to or contributes towards it, is [rendered] meaningless"[15]—it is clear that the Vedic ritual was truly an anthropocentric event involving conscious agents with desires and intentions who self-consciously collaborated to execute an action. The scope of language, on the other hand, extends beyond such a rhetoric of self-conscious performers with patent intentions and desires, to accommodate inert subjects, inanimate processes and a variety of usages that fall outside the realm of the agent-action-reward schema. Linguistic analysis cannot follow the structural paradigm of desire and action as prototypical without doing violence to the complexity and diversity of linguistic usage. Nonetheless, it does appear that the grammarians (as their Mīmāṃsaka counterparts) beginning with Pāṇini himself, assumed such a desire-action framework and attempted to accommodate unassimilable elements by its extension to other cases.[16] Below are some of the important semantic rules from the *kāraka* section of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

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[15] āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyam atadarthānām. MS 1.2.1.

[16] Refer Deshpande 1991.

A1.4.24 *dhruvam apāye apādānam* (definition of ablative as 'a point of departure')

A1.4.32 *karmaṇā yam abhipraiti sa sampradānam* (dative as 'one whom (an agent) intends as goal of the object of his action')

A1.4.42 *sādhakatamaṃ karaṇam* (instrumental as 'the means par excellence of accomplishing an action')

A1.4.45 *ādhāro 'dhikaraṇam* (locus as 'a substratum' of activity)

A1.4.49 *kartur īpsitatamam karma* (accusative as 'what the agent most desires to attain through his action')

A1.4.54 *svatantraḥ kartā* (agent as that *kāraka* which is independent relative to others)

Firstly, there is no patent logic determining why certain meanings are primary or paradigmatic for each *kāraka*. For instance, the *karmakāraka* (object/goal) is defined as *kartur īpsitatamam* (1.4.49), that which the agent most desires to attain through his action. It suggests an anthropocentric semantics presupposing deliberate action and accomplishment. Note as well the vocabulary of desire (*īpsitatama*). The rule links the object explicitly with the agent (*kartṛ*) as the goal of her desire. The agent, moreover, is defined as autonomous (*svatantra*) relative to other participatory elements in the action. The agent therefore is one who, *desiring* a specific goal, willfully and independently initiates an action involving one or more other subordinate accessories. Pāṇini takes as paradigmatic the event of individuals undertaking desire-motivated actions, often leaving out instances where the paradigm is not explanatorily ideal or where the schema of agent, desire and action appears forced. Nonetheless it becomes theoretically possible to accommodate them under a *kāraka* paradigm, with the various nominal components regarded as instantiating some *kāraka*. For instance, Devadatta becomes the 'agent' of the act of inhabiting in a sentence such as 'Devadatta is in the room' (one could replace Devadatta with an inanimate object) even if we do not intuitively understand inhabiting, being or occupying a space as an activity. The general tendency therefore is to extend the scope of self-conscious human-agentive action to a wider grammatical application. It becomes the regulative ideal by which commentators conduct semantic analyses of Pāṇinian grammar.

Deshpande argues that such prototypicality—of self-conscious human-agentive action—is not only a typical feature of Pāṇinian grammar, it also reflects everyday linguistic behavior. To be sure, the term

'prototype' is reused by Deshpande with respect to its applicability to Pāṇinian grammar, different from Langacker's own prototype-based grammar:

> Is Pāṇini's grammar a kind of prototype-based linguistics like that of Ronald Langacker (1987)? I would argue that it is not, in that it does not create, as its final theoretical stand, a prototype-based grammatical description of Sanskrit. It does not say that its rules are applied in degrees of any kind. However, the notion of prototype is important in understanding Pāṇinian syntax, in that the process of defining the *kāraka* terms begins with some sort of *cultural prototypes* and ends up with non-prototypical formal categories. We can possibly come up with a list of what Pāṇini considered to be prototypical *kāraka* conceptions. (Deshpande 1991, 468).

Proceeding by an analysis of 'pre-formal' elements in Pāṇinian semantics, he argues that the *kāraka*s represent prototypical semantic associations that fit extremely well with the participant categories of Vedic ritual. He observes that certain *kāraka*s in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* are explicitly defined in term of a conscious and volitional vocabulary—the prototypical agent (as *svatantra*) or the receiver (*sampradāna*) defined as 'one whom the agent intends goal of his action'). For others an inanimate terminology is instead applied. In cases of the instrument (*karaṇa*) (defined in impersonal terms as *sādhakatama*), locus or *adhikaraṇa* (the inert basis of action) and ablative or *apādāna* (as '*dhruva*', the stable source or point of departure). But when formalized these definitions take on non-prototypical cases: "[T]he formal term *kartṛ* is not understood in the prototypical sense of the word 'agent'. Just as the term 'action' is extended to include stative verbs, so is the term 'agent' extended to include the 'most independent' element in the case of stative verbs" (1991, 472), thereby explaining cases such as 'Devadatta is in the room' earlier.

This distinction, more importantly, mirrors precisely the animate-inanimate differentiation of Vedic ritual: the agent and receivers of ritual are conscious human beings while the instruments, oblations, locus etc. are inanimate objects. Pāṇini's *kāraka* allocation, therefore, appears to mirror ritual dynamics at least at a pre-formal prototypical level, although the formalization of the theory implies an extension of *kāraka* allocation to types of non-assimilable elements that are non-prototypical. This also results in the 'syntacticization' of nominal semantics by which what was originally purely semantic (*kāraka*) role-play transfers to a syntactic categorization irrespective of the specific meanings of nominal items and their (non-)association with action.

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He concludes that "Pāṇini's syntactic prototypes, in all likelihood, have a genetic connection with his acquaintance with Vedic ritual, as well as with his keen analysis of prototypical linguistic behavior" (1991, 478), thus making a case for both the deep Vedic cultural entrenchment of *kāraka* theory, as well as, paradoxically, its resonance with recent work in cognitive psychology and linguistic theory (Lakoff, Rosch, Langacker) describing prototypical linguistic behavior.[17]

II.ii   Śaṃkara's Critique of the Linguistic Paradigm of Action & Desire

Such linguistic prototypicality in grammar has some of the following significant consequences:

i. The paradigmatic sentence is the verbal, containing a verb and exemplifying action.

ii. A verbal root typically denote an action (*kriyā*).

iii. The agent (*kartṛ*) is typically animate, human, volitional and responsible.

iv. Nominal items are construed as *kāraka*s[18] engaged in the accomplishment of action.[19]

Even if, as Deshpande argues, Pāṇinian grammar extends the scope of terms to include non-prototypical elements, the broader action-centric philosophy of language of traditional grammar (*vyākaraṇa*) as such remains unaltered. We will note, for instance, the durability and historical persistence of the following phenomena in subsequent linguistic theory (of Kātyāyana, Patañjali and later commentators): nominal sentences are either not linguistically permissible or reduced to surface-level verbal sentences; existential verbs are interpreted along the model of action verbs; nominal items not involved in action accomplishment are nonetheless construed along a semantics of action; etymological roots necessarily possess an actional sense.

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[17] It should not come as a surprise that such behavior follows the same prototypical structure of a conscious volitional agent responsible for bringing about a transformation in the patient (object) in a single event uniting the two as found in Vedic ritual. The Vedic paradigm of desire and action may be read as a specific, intensified form of the structure of human motivation and agency that may be prototypical of general natural language behavior. That is to say, the fire-ritual or rite symbolizes the deed in its purest, most intensified form providing a paradigm of desire and performative fulfillment that may be said to percolate into the action-centrism of language, for our purposes the explicit linguistic analyses of the grammatical tradition, as much as it enters into Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics.

[18] Or words in co-reference with *kāraka*s, the so-called adjectives, which, by virtue of the co-reference, fall within *kāraka* designation as much as nouns.

[19] Refer Deshpande 1991 for a fuller treatment of the various prototypes.

Pūrva Mīmāṃsā does not merely take up a neutral grammatical register, applying its resources to a hermeneutics of ritual (and eventually developing sophisticated theories of *bhāvanā*, *tiṅ-sāmānādhikaraṇya*, *anvitābhidānavāda* or *abhihitānvayavāda*) but the grammatical tradition is already complicit in a deeply actional philosophy of language. This complicity defines the double task ahead of a truly Advaitic grammar: the recuperation of an alternative interpretive paradigm that explains apparent linguistic anomalies for what they are—features that can only be interpreted along the action-centric paradigm with violence—thus liberating language from the straitjacket of an actional semantics; and secondly, the establishment of the proper object of Advaitic grammar through such an expansion and reformulation of linguistic theory. This object is Brahman, and its non-actional being (*niṣkriyatva*) becomes its proper subject-matter, providing the theoretical basis for a non-actional grammar of Sanskrit. Śaṃkara can thus justify the possibility of knowledge arising from sentential comprehension (*vedavākyajanyajñāna*) purely on the basis of the semantic, morphological and syntactic features of language.

Each subsequent section shows how Śaṃkara's Advaita prioritizes precisely those linguistic phenomena not amenable to a *kriyārtha* semantics—existential and noetic verbs, the controversial nominal sentence, statements of identity and particular nominal types—applying specific linguistic resources of verbal morphology (*tiṅartha* analysis), nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), oblique indication (*lakṣaṇā*) etc. to build an Advaitic grammar from the ground up. Apart from these positive interventions he conducts a scathing critique of the desire-action framework in general and the *kriyākārakabhāva* in particular as representative of the human situation, with which I commence.

Śaṃkara on Action, Actors and Agency

We noted earlier Śaṃkara's articulation (in the *US*) of the desire-action framework exemplified in Sanskrit grammar as keeping the individual bound in the nexus of action and desire. The overall program of the text is to lead the disciple's sense of self away from such an actional framework, particularly from agency (*kartṛtva*) as definitive of his identity, towards understanding the self in terms of the witness dimension of self. More generally, in his corpus, Śaṃkara negates agency/doership (*kartṛtva* and *kārakatva*) as a category descriptive of

the self, arguing that it is superimposed on the self through ignorance (*avidyā*) and the real self is, in fact, *akāraka* (US I.17.80), quiescent and free of any participation in action. It lies outside the web of *kāraka* relationships. However, I make the error of seeing my everyday being as entirely assimilated into this web of relationships, this structure of desire and action resting on erroneous understanding (conveyed by the stock phrase '*avidyākāmakarma*' across Śaṃkara's works). As a subject of desire I am the enjoyer (*bhoktṛ*); as the agent seeking to fulfill that desire through action I am now the agent (*kartṛ*), the two original forms of egoity (*ahaṃkāra*) for Śaṃkara.[20]

Śaṃkara deploys this analysis of the structure of desire and its fulfillment against the basic feature of Vedic existence, the desire-action framework of the Vedic rite to which the Vaidika is subject. Vedic injunctions are incumbent only upon those capable of purposively engaging in action, that is, possessing a sense of agency with respect to an intended goal. In his *Brahmasūtra* commentary Śaṃkara says that the injunctive portion of the Veda operates only by recourse to the idea of agency created by ignorance (BSB 2.2.40).[21] In other words, the Vaidika must take himself to be determined by and assimilated into the network of *kāraka* relationships necessary for the pursuit of goals. In particular, he must identify himself as the agent (the grammatical *kartṛ*), the independent initiator of action as defined by Pāṇini, through the identity 'I am the doer'. This ego is the prerequisite for an individual to be even legitimately subject to (*adhikṛta*) Vedic injunction, and authority in general. The grammar of actional involvement, it appears, is directly tied to metaphysical ignorance and existential suffering:

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[20] The manner by which the subject expresses and is subject to desire is as follows (This explanation tracks Śaṃkara's exposition of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4.3). The self, to begin with, is not an individualized entity separate from the world. Being minimally (i.e. prior to any superimposed identities) of the nature of the horizonal being-consciousness immanent in everything, the core of self-identity is at the same time the underlying nature of all existents. Being so it cannot possibly desire any object because nothing is external to it. But owing to ignorance and the imposition of name-form (*nāmarūpa*) it identifies itself with the limited mind-body-sense complex and therefore creates the intentional space for the now circumscribed self to desire and seek the objects external to it. An intentionality of desire (*bhoktṛtva*) turns the subject towards sensual objects. Being inherently whole, the self is ever-content (*nityatṛpta*) and one whose desires are ever fulfilled (*āptakāma*), but ignorance and the accompanying false imposition of name-form ensure that the reality is now approached through a self-other relation, constructing a false distance between the now name-form-delimited individual self and 'external' object. Owing to such 'transfer' of being-consciousness to the now individualized self and delimited worldly objects. This alienation explains the original causality of desire, and what 'desire' means in Śaṃkara's Vedānta—the attempt of the self to reunite with itself, its own nature apparently externalized—thus indicating the futility of desire itself.

[21] avidyākṛtam kartṛtvam upādāya vidhiśāstram pravartiṣyate. BSB 2.2.40.

The ordinary man has such notions as— "I shall perform these actions, the Agnihotra and the rest", "I am entitled to the performance", "The results of these acts I shall enjoy in this world and in the other' or "Having done these acts, I shall be happy and contended"— all these notions, which involve the idea of the *Self* being the actual performer and enjoyer, are set aside by the assertion that "Thou art That Being which is the root of the universe, one, without a second", for the man who has become awakened to true knowledge; that the said notions are set aside by this last assertion follows from the fact that the two are mutually contradictory.[22]

The negation of agency (*kartṛtva*) and enjoyership (*bhoktṛtva*) often followes upon the mention of ignorance (*avidyā*) as its two accompanying effects covering up the self's being Brahman (*brahmatva*). Superimposition (*adhyāsa*), likewise, in the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* (BSB 1.1.1) is described the instigator of agency and enjoyership (*kartṛtvabhoktṛtvapravartaka*).[23] Elsewhere he explicitly employs the term '*akāraka*' for the self indicating that it lies outside the network of *kāraka* relationships defining Vedic and mundane existence[24], and makes clear reference to the grammatical *kāraka*s while refuting them: "Based on differences of apprehensions of *kāraka*s such as agent, the action itself, the result etc., the Vedic injunctions on the rites operate".[25] Even ordinary epistemic means presuppose the *kāraka* framework, such that the knower-knowledge (*pramātṛ-prama*) relation is assimilated into that of agent-action.[26]

Elsewhere he explains the limits of action in terms of one of the four possible ways an agent can relate to an object: creating or bringing the object into existence (*utpādya*), modifying it (*vikārya*), cleansing or purifying it (*saṃskārya*) and attaining or reaching it (*āpya*); the point being that Brahman can neither be brought into being, transformed, purified or attained. The scheme was in fact employed by Mīmāṃsakas to classify sub-types of ritual assistance (*sannipātyopakārakatva*) where the four processes were employed to produce results subordinate to ritual elements.[27]

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[22] aham evaṃ kariṣyāmi agihotrādīni karmāṇi, aham adhikṛtaḥ, eṣāṃ ca karmaṇāṃ phalam iha amutra ca bhokṣye kṛteṣu vā karmasu kṛtakartavyas syām ity evam kartṛtva-bhoktṛtvayor adhikṛto 'smi ity ātmani yadvijñānam abhūt tasya, yad sajjagato mūlam ekam eva advitīyam tat tvam asi ity anena vākyena pratibuddhasya nivartate, virodhāt. CUB 6.16.3. Jha tr.

[23] evam ayam anādir ananto naiasrgiko' dhyāso mithyāpratyayarūpaḥ kartṛtvabhoktṛtvapravartakas sarvalokapratyakṣaḥ. BSB 1.1.1.

[24] niskriyo 'kārako' dvayaḥ. US I.17.80.

[25] kartrādikārakakriyāphalabhedapratyayavatvaṃ hi nimittam upādāya karmavidhayaḥ pravṛttaḥ. CUB 2.23 and elsewhere.

[26] pratyakṣam anumānaṃ vā vyavahāre yad icchasi, kriyākārakabhedais tad abhyupeyaṃ dhruvaṃ bhavet. US I.18.150.

[27] Refer Uskokov 2018 for a more detailed account.

But it appears that even the grammarians came to speak of the grammatical object in precisely these terms; another instance of the rituogrammatic sphere of application of these categories. The options above are used to explain the way in which a *grammatical* object is created (*nivartya*), modified (*vikārya*) or attained/reached (*prāpya*), thus specifying the kinds of grammatical object (*karman*) there are.[28] It is clear that each of the terms in the three pairs is related semantically, and it is likely that the non-ritual context of grammar permitted them to do away with the fourth, *'saṃskārya'* (referring to purificatory rites and the ritual objects so purified), as being less pertinent to a generalized (and not only Vedic) account of grammatical objects. Śaṃkara's 'adaptive reuse' of this classification provides a moral twist to an extant rituogrammatic category: the fourfold or threefold classification manifest in grammar and ritual theory furnishes for us the very limits of the actional paradigm, of what action accomplishes with respect to its object of attainment. Understanding the self requires a transcendence of this framework of agent-action-acted upon.

In the Gītā commentary (BGB 18.41) the world is itself understood as a conglomeration of *kriyā* and *kāraka*s.[29] Such usages suggest that Śaṃkara saw the world as circumscribed, in fact defined, by the same relationships emphasized in the sentential analysis of the grammarians. This ontolinguistic pervasion of language, world and self by actional relationships is the real cause of suffering binding the self in an unending cycle of desire, action and result extending into innumerable lifetimes. The only possible exit, for Śaṃkara, is to understand oneself as non-actional (*niṣkriya*) and actorless (*akāraka*), a realization made possible by indicating an alternative ontolinguistic order whose operation, just like the dynamics of an actional (*kriyāpara*) grammar, may be recovered by linguistic analysis.

We noted that the theoretical attention to ritual provides a likely milieu for Sanskritic philosophy of language and Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics prioritizing the categories of action, actors and results. But further, this *grammatical* representation of the actional paradigm may be said to have an *ontological* equivalent elevating *situations* (or states of affairs) and situational wholes over individuals, *relationships* over autonomous realities, *actions* over substance, *how* over what, *futurity* over the present, and engaged actors or *doers* over passive

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[28] Refer, for instance, *Vākyapadīya* 3.7.79 or *Kāsikā* on A 3.2.1.
[29] sarvaḥ saṃsāraḥ kriyākārakaphalalakṣaṇaḥ. BGB 18.41.

epistemic subjects. These categories would account for a characteristically Sanskritic philosophy of action and process thought, towards which I make some intimations but whose articulation lies beyond the scope of the dissertation. What is directly pertinent to us is that Śaṃkara's interventions comprise a linguistic and theoretical resistance to this actional paradigm without succumbing, at the other end, to a substance metaphysics prioritizing autonomous self-sufficient realities at the expense of their mutual dependence, relationality and actional involvement. The Advaitic Brahman evades both formulations of process or substance metaphysics recuperating a dimension of non-actional being that persists underneath and alongside the actional web of relationships constraining and defining mundane existence.

III.   The Non-Dual Grammar of Existential Verbs

Śaṃkara's non-dual grammar first challenges the hegemonic extension of a semantics of action to encompass all verbal forms. Some 'verbs' simply fall outside the realm of action. The first group of such forms is the existential, the root cluster *bhū-as-vid*. Their meaning, in order to be correctly comprehended, requires an altogether new grammar grounded upon non-action (*niṣkriyatva*). I first consider the treatment of existential verbs by grammarians and Mīmāṃsakas whose accounts may be said to largely cohere on many fronts in spite of differences of emphasis. As I show, they collectively read all verbs, including existential, as having to do primarily with *bhāva* (and *bhāvanā*), terms that are glossed and interpreted along slightly different trajectories by various commentators but indicative of, as I argue, a single *bhāva* (process/becoming) paradigm of being. I progress towards articulating the tension between this paradigm of being and one inaugurated by the Upaniṣads in their Advaitic interpretation—the *sat* (Being) paradigm most famously associated with Uddālaka's *sadvidyā* (the science of Being) of *Chāndogya* 6. I then come to the treatment of existential verbs under Śaṃkara's non-dual grammar, and how their meaning is interpreted under the Upanishadic paradigm to disclose the non-actional horizonal Being comprising the core of self-identity, as affirmed in the identity statements, and therefore instrumental in the correct comprehension of such statements.

III.i   Existential Verbs in Vyākaraṇa & Pūrva Mīmāṃsā

While Śaṃkara recovers existential verbs as a primary object of a non-dual grammar, the question of their nature and status was already addressed by the grammatical and Mīmāṃsā traditions along somewhat independent lines; in fact, the case of existential verbs is recognized as a *prima facie* objection to claiming the action-meaning (*kriyārthatva*) of all verbs, since, by their very nomenclature and function, they denote mere existence or being, not ostensibly some kind of act. Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* remains the locus classicus of the discussion clearly prefiguring later debates within hermeneutics and grammar, Kumārila included, at the same time bringing earlier conceptions of Pāṇini and his commentator Kātyāyana into relief. Kātyāyana and Patañjali are here explicating Pāṇini's definition of a verbal root (*dhātu*): 'Bhū etc. are the roots'[30] (A 1.3.1). Kātyāyana offers two possible interpretations of its meaning in order to arrive at a general definition free of defects. They may be called i. *kriyā*-based and, ii. *bhāva*-based definitions. The *kriyā*-based definition understands verbal meaning on the paradigm of the meaning of the root √*kr* (to do), referred to as '*karotyartha*', whose meaning is glossed as "having the sense [he/she/it] 'does'". According to the grammarian Patañjali[31], this paradigmatic sense is presupposed by, literally is in co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) with, the sense of every verb. Thus, when one is asked, 'What is he *doing*?', one responds 'He eats/walks/cooks etc.' (MB 3.1.1). Verbs and verbal roots are, at bottom, about doing.

Soon after considering the first possibility of a *kriyā*-based definition, that roots refer to action (*kriyāvacana*), Kātyāyana considers that existential roots be included in the definition, thus accommodating the *bhū-as-vid* complex into verbal meaning interpreted as action.[32] That is, √*bhū*, √*as* and √*vid* are also to be construed as verbal roots whose meaning (*dhātvartha*) denotes activity, simply by virtue of the fact that they are roots. It is to be noted that Pāṇini himself makes no direct indication that such verbs must necessarily be included within an existential, stative or dynamic understanding of root-meaning, although he does inherit the general Vedic presumption of the action-meaning (*kriyārthatva*) of roots in general. In any case, at this point Patañjali considers a possible objection that one never answers the question 'What is he doing?', by saying,

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[30] bhūvādayo dhātavaḥ. A 1.3.1.
[31] See footnote 35 on how Kumārila tracks Patañjali closely in his own discussion of verbal meaning.
[32] astibhavatividyatīnāṃ ca dhātutvam. MB 1.3.1.

'He is existing.' Our common-sense intuitions tell us that existential roots do not, perhaps, indicate a doing or acting.[33]

After considering some resolutions, Patañjali offers the alternative, *bhāva*-based definition, interpreting verbal meaning on the paradigm of the meaning of √*bhū* ('to be'). Interestingly here too a co-reference is observed, somewhat forced, understanding all verbs on the pattern of the meaning of 'to be' (*bhvartha*), i.e., as denoting existence or being.[34] The reasoning is something like this: every activity, eating, cooking, walking etc. may be understood as a kind of *be-ing*, where every verb conveys the specific manner in which this being is accomplished, as a walking, sitting, eating etc. On this analysis too, then, the point can be expressed in terms of all verbs being co-referential with being: 'The one who is cooking, eating etc. *exists*' etc. Patañjali will later find this alternative inadequate, but it is worth noting that this presages the later Mīmāṃsaka interpretation of activity in terms of *bhāvanā*. Indeed, just later Patañjali offers three alternative ways to understand the word '*bhāva*': as meaning existing (*bhavana*), what comes into being (*bhavatīti*) and what is brought into being (*bhāvyate yaḥ*), ultimately settling on the second meaning of 'what comes into being'. It is clear that Kumārila picks up and develops the meaning of *bhāva* in the second and third senses, and interpreting the latter in terms of the former by reading *bhāvanā* to be the final and settled meaning of action (*kriyārtha*). Here, of course, he is only exploiting the interpretive space opened up by Jaimini's original conjunction of *bhāva* and *kriyā* in the definition of a verb.[35]

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[33] na tathāstyādīnāṃ niḍarśyate, na hi bhavati— kiṃ karoti, astīti. MB 1.3.1.

[34] *eteṣāṃ bhavatinā sāmānādhikaraṇyam.* MB 1.3.1.

[35] *bhavārthāḥ karmaśabdās tebhyaḥ kriyā pratītyetaiṣa hy artho vidhīyate.* MS 2.1.1. Much earlier Śabara's reading of Jaimini's definition already opened the interpretive space in which such an interpretation as Kumārila's could be developed. The term '*kriyā*' in Jaimini's definition is crucially read, not merely as an act but as the production of a result, a bringing into being. Kumārila himself narrows down the generality and ambiguity of *bhāva* by two other words commonly used to denote the underlying activity, *vyāpāra* and *kriyā*. Kumārila defines *vyāpāra* (TV, 376-77) as "that thing which is provided with a definite power, whose 'being what it is; is fundamentally processual, whose nature is dispersed across multiple points, which is organized into prior and subsequent parts, and which has left its initial state without having attained its final state". Opposed to this, nominals denote relatively static referents not subject to changes of state, self-identically persistent over time and, crucially, lacking the power (*śakti*) that actions possess. This definition, and the reference to power, is crucial to Kumārila's broader project of interpreting all action-meaning (*kriyārtha*) as a 'bringing into being' (*bhāvanā*). A first moment in Kumārila's thought process is to distinguish a common meaning to all verbs, which he discovers as 'doing', since to the question 'What is he doing?' the response is some or the other activity. But this meaning of 'doing' (*karotyartha*) is found to be wanting on many fronts and Kumārila eventually arrives at the articulation of verbal meaning as *bhāvanā*. In this way *bhāvanā* comes to be understood as consisting of action (*kriyātmaka*) or of the form of action (*kriyārupa*). As the reader will note, his discussion of *karotyartha* closely tracks Patañjali's. Further, the Mīmāṃsā reorganization of the semantics of action is grounded in a parallel morphological reconfiguration. While from a strictly grammatical perspective the root meaning (*dhātvartha*) signified the pure underlying

To recapitulate, Patañjali sees no reason to deviate from Kātyāyana's comments accommodating existential verbs (*bhū-as-vid*) into a structure of action, either as an explicit doing (*karoti*) or as a being (*bhavati*), which still carries a thin semantics of action, a semantics that the Mīmāṃsakas exploit to the fullest. In fact, faced with the same question of the unique status of the *bhū-as-vid* cluster, Kumārila himself offers an alternative explanation of how being may be construed as an activity. *Being* a doctor, for instance, would consist in being an agent who 'brings into being' the requisite conditions (knowledge, skills etc.) justifying his appellation as a such. Ollett explains, "[I]n order to explain the injunction 'therefore on the days of the initial offerings one should become an *ṛtvik*' (*tasmāt prāyaṇīyasyāhna ṛtvijā bhavitavyam*), Kumārila reformulates it as: 'a person who already exists in a certain state (*siddha*) should 'bring into being' (*bhāvayet*) something which 'comes into being' (*bhavat*) and which can provide the basis for construing this activity with a goal, namely the state of his being a *ṛtvik*, by means of particular activities of speech, body and mind'. By construing a *state of being* (italics mine) as something that can be 'brought into being,' Kumārila opens up a pathway for fitting even existential verbs into the tripartite structure of *bhāvanā*." (Ollett 2013, 243). The state of being a *ṛtvik* (priest) is manifested precisely by doing the kinds of things, in body, speech and mind, that most characteristically instantiate being a priest. In fact this logic will be reminiscent of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4 (Chapter 1) according to which an existent is defined by what action or purpose it accomplishes, even if, as here, it is one of mere subsistence or existence. We are thus furnished with two distinct senses of the verb 'to be' at play, along the trajectories of *bhāva* and *sat* as I develop below.

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activity (for example, 'cooking'), and the suffix indicated the agency or *kartṛtva* ('He cooks') of the act in active voice, the Mīmāṃsakas sought to somehow read *bhāvanā* into the root-suffix (*prakṛti-pratyaya*) schema, and the question arose as to the specific part wherein rested the actualizing power of *bhāvanā*. Kumārila was non-committal regards this, often tending towards the suffix as the seat of *bhāvanā* and this seems to have eventually become the standard position. I do not here pursue the long and rich history of the transition of the meaning of a verb from *bhāva* to *bhāvanā* in the Mīmāṃsā tradition, its subsequent refinement, and the exegetical uses to which it is put. It is clear that it signifies Mīmāṃsā's divergence from the grammarian's understanding of verbal meaning as mere change of state or 'becoming' (although it is clearly based on that notion) to accommodate a sense of *energeia* or force that allows the Mīmāṃsaka to center injunctive language (*vidhi*) as Vedic language, or simply language, par excellence. That is, if verbs are the core of a sentence then, further, the core of all verbal meaning is the power of bringing something into being inherent in all verbs. The Veda is about enjoining and producing what is not yet in existence, a *sādhyavastu*, and not a pre-existing thing, *siddhavastu,* for which our ordinary means of perception are sufficient. Thus a statement like 'One desirous of heaven should sacrifice' (*svargakāmo yajet*) has the following deeper structure (in terms of *bhāvanā*): One desirous of heaven, by means of sacrifice, should bring heaven into being (*svargakāmo yajñena svargam bhāvayet*). Later Mīmāṃsakas engaged in more nuanced philosophical reflection on the nature of action, its product and their relationship.

Weighing various pros and cons, Patañjali eventually offers his own definition of *kriyā*[36] again seeking to explain existential verbs in actional terms, offering two more arguments worth citing. Firstly, he argues, being/existing shares with all verbs the quality of association with time[37], something echoed again in Kumārila. Secondly, it is stressed that the six famous modifications of being (*bhāvavikāra*) of the *Nirukta* also include *asti* (existence) as one amongst the various kinds of modification possible (others being birth, growth, transformation, deterioration and cessation). The novelty in these two arguments lies in their explicit inclusion of the meaning of root √*as* (*astyartha*), and not merely the meaning of root √*bhū* (*bhavatyartha*) into the structure of action. Later grammarians and Mīmāṃsakas further refine these ideas but none fundamentally challenge the action-centrism (*kriyāparatva*) of verbal meaning in general.[38]

This also raises the question of the precise sense of the individual roots treated collectively as existential. While they clearly have their specific contexts of use, the grammarians and Mīmāṃsakas collectively read them as connoting being/existing as an explicit doing, occurring or self-maintaining. The Advaitins and Śaṃkara will, however, seize upon √*as* to convey a meaning that wrests it—and along with it the very sense of existential verbs—away from process, becoming and action. This sense will interpret existential verbs as conveying the bare ontological fact *that* something is, the Being of beings independent of its actional involvements. There is, in fact, something in the semantic domains of these verbs that justifies the respective interpretations. Words emerging from √*bhū*—*bhāva, bhāvanā, bhavya* etc.—have been used across disciplines and genres, from Buddhist meditation and Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics to Sanskrit poetics and theatre, in the sense of *generating* or bringing a reality, psychical or physical, internal or external, into being.[39] Words emerging from √*as* do not carry this sense, often suggesting simply the ontological fact of the bare existence of something, as Śaṃkara's reference to *astitā* ('isness', derived from √*as*) will show.

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[36] *Kriyā* as kārakānāṃ pravṛttiviśeṣaḥ. MB 1.3.1.

[37] bhūtabhaviṣyadvartamānāḥ kālā vyajyante. MB 1.3.1.

[38] One difference in their approaches is that grammarians generally tend to be more pragmatic in their approach, considering and disregarding various proposals as they work to describe the actual behavior of language. Thus while introducing interesting philosophical ideas, they do not care much about articulating them thoroughly or even defending them beyond a point. Mīmāṃsakas, as other philosophers, tend to be a little more dogmatic to the extent that they must explicitly vouch for and 'confess' a philosophical position characteristic of their school.

[39] Often *bhāvanā*, especially in the context of meditative and yogic praxis, Buddhist and Brahmanic, is rendered as 'cultivation', suggesting the idea of bringing something into being mentally and sustaining it for definite periods.

III.ii   Bhāva & Being

The two possible alternatives set up by Patañjali and Kātyāyana in considering the ambiguous status of existential verbs—whether a verbal root (*dhātu*) denotes activity (*kriyāpradhāna*) or becoming (*bhāvapradhāna*)—while in apparent tension, presume a singular overarching paradigm of temporal becoming and processuality. This paradigm applies equally to existential verbs in the sense of *existing* or *being* as a process unfolding in time. Being as such, on this account, is literally (as the action noun reveals) a *be-ing*, a taking place or occurring, an active self-maintenance or *enduring as oneself* in time. All this, as noted, is already prefigured in the oft-quoted and favorite reference to the *bhāvavikāra* scheme attributed to Vārṣyāyaṇi, incorporating existence ('*asti*') as one of the six modifications (*vikāra*) of being (*bhāva*). This being is articulated by Patañjali and his commentators variously in terms of i. association with time (*bhūtabhaviṣyadvartamānāḥ kālā vyajyante*), ii. six modifications of being (*ṣaḍbhāvavikāra*s), iii. existence (conveyed by existential verbs) conceived as an active self-maintainence (*ātmabharaṇa*), and in other ways. Kaiyaṭa, Patañjali's commentator, glosses *bhāva* as action (*kriyā*) in general or simply actionality (*kriyāsāmānyatva*), and elsewhere as bare actionality (*kriyāmātratva*). As Edwin Gerow notes, following K.A.S. Iyer, "Words for 'being' when they do occur in the discussion [i.e. grammatical discussions of *bhāva*] (as in the *Vārttika* '*bhāvavacano* dhātuḥ' or Yāska's '*bhāvaparadhānam ākhyātam*') are invariably interpreted in actional terms (as Kaiyaṭa, '*bhāvavacanaḥ kriyāmātravācī*')" (Gerow 1982, 90). Later grammarians and Mīmāṃsakas pick up many of these threads, often regarding *kriyā* and *bhāva* as synonymous.

In making the radical √*as* the core of his non-dual grammar, Śaṃkara attempts to recuperate the atemporal dimension of being as comprising a coherent alternative to such a metaphysics. As we will see, its derivative '*sat*' as elaborated in the Upaniṣads—and particularly the *sadvidyā* (science of Being) of the *Chāndogya*—standing for atemporal, unconditioned Being, opens up a genuine alternative to thinking being in Indian philosophy. This constitutes, as argued here, nothing less than a paradigm shift in the conception of being in Indian, particularly Vedic, thought up until the time, a new deployment of grammar, centered on the root √*as*, that initiates Śaṃkara's presentation of a 'radical metaphysics', as Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad has

noted (Ram-Prasad 2013, 2). In short, it is a conception of being that wrests it away from a metaphysics of process, becoming and action, which I collectively address as the metaphysics of *bhāva*.

The *philosophical* problem here is one of whether reality as such is to be construed in actional or non-actional terms at the most fundamental level. Edwin Gerow suggested something like this a long time ago in his exposition of *karman*: [A]nd this surely is the *general* issue that focuses our interest in the Indian's 'exaggeration' of karmic matters, and expresses best the alienation we feel in the presence of the notion '*karma*'; for (to capture its philosophical seriousness) we ought to be able to translate it not as το πραγμα but as το ον" (Gerow 1982, 90). That is, *karma* gestures a discourse not only about action or deed but, more fundamentally, about the nature of reality, a discourse I have articulated in terms of the metaphysics of *bhāva*. Gerow goes on to discuss the significance of emerging notions of *bhāva* in shaping the discourse around the pan-Indic theory of karma, further noting the grammatical tradition's "rationale for the transformation of a word for 'action' (karma) into the status of a world- or reality-principle in Indian speculation, a status that words for 'being' enjoy in our own" (Gerow 1982, 90). Jessica Frazier has also noted that the theoretical articulation of *bhāva*[40] is an "instructive challenge to Western thinking about fundamental ontology" and that "such approaches challenge our own basic ontological categories at the root…While the cross-cultural study of categories can help us to build an effective model of the world, they also expose the contingency of metaphysical narratives, showing us ways in which reality could admit of quite different cuts than those to which we are most accustomed" (Frazier 2014, 160). Kahrs has similarly attempted to draw out "a different model of the absolute" from that of Upanishadic monism and Brahman as a changeless, inert trans-individual entity. He proceeds to cite the historical influence of the Upanishadic Absolute from classical Brahmanism well into contemporary Neo-Hinduism in opposition to another lesser acknowledged strand of thought: "The thinking seen in the works of Yāska, Durga, and others draws attention to a different strand in Brahmanical thought, a dynamic non-duality where the absolute is not an unchanging, inert entity as it is for Vedāntins

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[40] She particularly has in mind the 'sequential embodied' definition of *bhāva* in grammar, interpreting being as a process or train of events.

such as Maṇḍana Miśra and Śaṃkara, but rather a universal *of* action. To widen this picture just a little, Bhartṛhari does not exclude action, nor does the later Kashmirian Pratyabhijñā" (Kahrs 2013, 328).

All these attempts are concerned with elaborating an alternative Brahmanic conception of the 'absolute', 'τo ov', ultimate reality. It may be tempting, however, to ascribe to such a metaphysics of *bhāva* a derivative or marginal status owing to the dominance of such 'Western thinking about fundamental ontology' rooted in a static or timeless conception of Being, apparently reflected in the hegemony of the Vedāntic Brahman in Indian thought (not to speak of the Nyāya conception of being as *sattā*). In Chapter 1 I approached this question in the context of extant narratives of early Indian intellectual history that see a substance-process dichotomy of Western thought reflected, in a South Asian context, in the metaphysical faultlines assumed to hold between Brahmanism and Buddhism; the former, Vedānta and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika included, representing the exemplary case of fundamental ontology, and the latter introducing more anti-essentialist, non-reificatory intuitions about the world. I argued that it is misleading to transpose this opposition upon the trajectory of early Indian intellectual history which reflects a very different reality. If anything, the dissertation pursues action as an analytic category, along with attendant categories of becoming and process, as best capturing the texture of Vedic and Brahmanic thought (and more generally cross-disciplinary and intersectarian discourse). The thinking of Yāska and Durga, Jaimini and Kumārila, Patañjali and Bhartṛhari (one could go on) does not represent the exception but the norm of Brahmanic thinking about being. Perhaps, the inclination to recuperate *bhāva* as conveying a 'different model of the absolute' originates precisely from taking for granted such a dominant reading of Indian intellectual history, such that the *bhāva* paradigm appears as the exception. Once the reading is set aside, we see that a metaphysics of *bhāva* was the *status quo* against which the Upaniṣads, in their Advaitic lineage, inaugurate a truly novel paradigm of Being, and which seems to have attained a more normative status in more recent history. Outside of the neo-Hindu recuperation of Advaita as the alleged core of Hinduism, and the more general expansion of Vedānta into pre-modernity and modernity, the Advaitic 'Absolute' is more of an exception with respect to the normative action-centrism (*kriyāparatva*) of Brahmanism as articulated here, the truly 'radical metaphysics' as Ram-Prasad has observed (Ram-Prasad 2013, 2).

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Frazier's reference to 'fundamental ontology' is therefore quite on point, if only somewhat ironically. As a term reminiscent, most of all, of the Heideggerian conception of Being—which is in fact adduced here to explicate features of the Upanishadic conception of Being—it tends to connote the very same idea of a fundamental Absolute, the Being of beings beyond time and change. For one, as a thinker of process, Heidegger is deeply critical of the metaphysical-theological tradition (*ontotheology* as he calls it) placing being over becoming, substance over process.[41] While my arguments only pertain to Advaita, both (Advaita and Heidegger) may be read as synthesizing or at least complementing the metaphysics that go by the call-signs of 'substance' and 'process'.[42] With respect to Advaita, this manifests in terms of the complementarity of action and non-action, becoming and being as the two poles of subjectivity—the former representing the everyday actional-existential being of the individual (*ahaṃkartṛ/kartṛ*), and the latter conveying the non-actional witness dimension of self.

For Heidegger, posing the question of Being is to return to the marvel of the bare fact of existence—*that* beings are, as opposed to what they are, their causal relations or their empirical characteristics—a marvel succinctly captured in what ought to be for Heidegger (taking the lead from Leibniz) the first question of metaphysics: Why is there being and not nothing? Steiner elaborates on what the question of Being (the *Seinsfrage*) amounts to:

> It is the unique and specific business of philosophy, therein and at all times referential to its Greek inception, to be incessantly astonished at and focused on the fact that all things *are*; that there is a universal and totally determinant attribute to things, which is that of existence. This astonishment and the meditation which it entails—what Heidegger will call 'the thinking of Being', 'the endeavour to think Being' — sets philosophy on the way towards the question of what *it* is that *is*, of what it is that indwells in all extant things, of what it is that constitutes beingness (Steiner 1987, 32).

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[41] Fundamental ontology, in its Heideggerian iteration, may in fact be said to embrace processual philosophical accounts of reality; its distinction, for Heidegger, being that it sought to return Western thought to what ought to have been its central task, an inquiry into the Being of beings, something that was, for him, already lost with the Greeks.

[42] What is more, as Chapter 2 shows, Advaita fulfills its task—of disclosing the horizonal Being of beings—by confirming to a ritual paradigm of thinking in its adoption of performative and operational modes of thought and praxis. It thus responds to and absorbs elements of the ritual and action-centric paradigm both *methodologically* and *philosophically*.

Śaṃkara, following the lead of the Upaniṣads, has some such conception of Being in mind (that I capitalize as 'Being' to distinguish it from the action noun 'being') in his elaboration of the nature of Brahman, which is the interrogative center of, and finally answerable to, the inquiry: 'What it is that *is.*' Its metaphysics may be read as concerned with the question of understanding *that by virtue of which* entities are entities, evading the very tension of a substance-process opposition. Śaṃkara articulates such a conception of Being in his commentary on Chapter 6 of *Chāndogya*, also referred to as the 'science of Being' (*sadvidyā*), which begins with the namesake:

> In the beginning, son, this world was simply what is existent (*sat*)—one only, without a second. Now, on this point some do say: 'In the beginning this world was simply what is nonexistent (*asat*)—one only, without a second. And from what is nonexistent was born what is existent.' But, son, how can that possibly be?" he continued. "How can what is existent be born from what is nonexistent? On the contrary, son, in the beginning this world was simply what is existent—one only, without a second."…"The existent (*sat*), my son, is the root of all these creatures—the existent is their resting place, the existent is their foundation. I have already explained to you, son, how, when they enter a man, each of these three deities become threefold. When a man is dying, my son, his speech merges into his mind; his mind, into his breath; his breath, into heat; and heat, into the highest deity. The finest essence here—that constitutes the self of this whole world; that is the truth (*satya*); that is the self (*atman*). And that's how you are, Śvetaketu.[43]

Śaṃkara immediately glosses '*sat*' as 'mere *isness*' (*astitāmātra*), the bare fact of being, going on to discuss how this Being constitutes the ontological ground of all beings; as the bare *isness* of existence, indistinguishable from non-being or nothingness (*asat*).[44] The very next lines address this dilemma: "Now, on this point some do say: 'In the beginning this world was simply what is nonexistent (*asat*)'" (CU 6.2.1). Two things are then emphasized by the Upaniṣad itself: that there is an ontological basis of all existents by virtue

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[43] sad eva somyedam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam | taddhaika āhur asad evedam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam | tasmād asataḥ saj jāyata. kutas tu khalu somyaivaṃ syād iti hovāca | katham asataḥ saj jāyeta | sat tv eva somyedam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam…sanmūlāḥ somyemāḥ sarvāḥ prajāḥ sad āyatanāḥ satpratiṣṭhāḥ | yathā nu khalu somyemās tisro devatāḥ puruṣaṃ prāpya trivṛt trivṛd ekaikā bhavati tad uktaṃ purastād eva bhavati | asya somya puruṣasya prayato vāṅ manasi saṃpadyate manaḥ prāṇe prāṇas tejasi tejaḥ parasyāṃ devatāyām. sa ya eṣo 'ṇimaitad ātmyam idaṃ sarvam | tat satyam | sa ātmā | tat tvam asi śvetaketo iti | bhūya eva mā bhagavān vijñāpayatv iti | tathā somyeti hovāca. CU 6.2-11. Note Olivelle's choice of rendering *'tattvamasi'* as 'that's how you are', not 'that you are'.

[44] Commenting on 'this' (in "Being indeed *this* was in the beginning"), he further explains: "As a matter of fact it is only the Being or Entity that comes to subsist and be spoken of 'this'" (CUB 6.2.2), the demonstrative pronoun serving to identify any potential object available to experience.

of which they may be said 'to be'. Secondly, this Being does not have any tangible features or positivity, so that it is literally indistinguishable from nothingness or non-existence. Indeed, Heidegger will address the same anxiety about such a pure, rarified idea of Being: "The Being that we are asking about is almost like Nothing… The word 'Being' is then finally just an empty word. It means nothing actual, tangible, real" (Heidegger 2014, 39). This particularly comes into focus in Uddālaka's subsequent example (CU 6.12) of the *nyagrodha* seed and tree. Finally, on being told to break open the seed, and finding nothing but emptiness inside, Śvetaketu is reminded of the core teaching of the chapter; that this (seeming emptiness) is the Self, is Being, and 'That you are'.[45]

Chāndogya's engagement with non-being is brief, and meant to finally convey that beings cannot emerge from mere emptiness, even if the two, Being and Nothingness, are finally indistinguishable. This emergence is articulated in terms of the three fundamental constituents of every ontological emergent, the three 'deities' above, Food, Water and Fire, which further diversify into the plurality of the world. The pedagogical point, which will soon emerge, is that philosophic-scientific inquiry often proceeds by reducing emergent realities to more basic or primitive ones in an ontological ladder. However, for the Upaniṣad, as for Heidegger, the discourse of Being itself, while in one sense at the top of the ontological ladder, belongs to a wholly different order of explanation, insofar as Being is not another entity or reality, howsoever fundamental, to which others can be reduced. It is simply that by virtue of which beings *are*. Śaṃkara will therefore comment on why Being as such is not subject to ontological reduction as other realities, including the universe as a whole. Speaking of the ontological makeup of existents, in terms of finer and deeper realities, each more ontologically primitive than the previous, he says:

> [O]f the universe (*jagat*) also, the universeness (*jagattva*) should vanish. Similarly, food also being a product of water, water alone would be the only real element in it, and the food would only be a modification of words. Similarly, Water also being the product of fire, water would be a mere modification of words, and Fire would be the only real factor in it. Of fire

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[45] I track the traditional Vedāntic reading of *tattvamasi* as 'That you are' as opposed to Olivelle's 'That's how you are'.

also—inasmuch as it is the product of Being—fire would be a mere modification of words, and Being would be the only real factor.[46]

Hence, my dear, all the creatures—in the shape of animate and inanimate things—have their root—cause—in Being. It is not only that they have their root in Being—even now, during the time of their existence, they reside in Being—subsisting in Being itself; as for example, without subsisting in clay, the jar has no existence or continuance; hence, as Being is the root of all creatures, like the clay of jar etc. These creatures reside in Being; and at the end they rest in Being, that is, they have their rest, they become merged, and have their end, in the same said Being.[47]

The concluding statement, 'Being would be the only real factor' sounds almost trivial in Sanskrit: '*Sad eva iti satyam*' i.e., 'Being alone has being (or, is real)'. Whatever may be said to emerge as an independent reality *is* insofar as it has Being: "[A]ll through this infinite series of constituents, there runs the notion of their being 'Beings'—there is no cessation of their 'existence' (character of 'being')" (CUB 6.2.2). So reality may be ascribed to whatever it is that, at any given moment, appears as real and autonomously existing, but the very assertion 'x has being' implies that Being as such may be ontologically distinguished from whatever it is predicated of. In the *Chāndogya*, *Gītā* and *Taittirīya*, as I discuss below, Śaṃkara goes on to develop an account of how every entity may be said to have a twin dimension: Being (*sat*) and name-form (*nāmarūpa*), the latter accounting for the specific features individuating it, reliant on language (*vācārambhaṇa*). The difference is parsed precisely in terms of Being as that element by virtue of which entities 'are' (*astitāmātra*); while *nāmarūpa* individuates an entity isolating its particular features, it could not be said to 'be' or 'exist', were it not for the existential element furnished by what is referred to as 'Being'.

Fundamental ontology, so understood, is empathetic to processual accounts of reality, insofar as its claims do not intervene at the actional and temporal level of description. This position may be distinguished from an ontology of substance, such as that of Vaiśeṣika, where things and realities *in the world* and *in time* are claimed to have substantial being and autonomous existence. Śaṃkara in fact fully endorses a dynamic and

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[46] adapāgājjagato jagattvam | tathānnasyāpyapśuṅgatvādāpa ityeva satyaṃ vācārambhaṇamātramannam | tathāpāmapi tejaḥśuṅgatvādvācārambhaṇatvaṃ teja ityeva satyam | tejaso 'pi sacchuṅgatvādvācārambhaṇatvaṃ sadityeva satyamityeṣor'tho vivakṣitaḥ. CUB 6.4.4. All translations of the *Chāndogya* commentary use Jha 1942 unless specified otherwise.

[47] yasminsarvamidaṃ vācā'rambhaṇaṃ vikāro nāmadheyamanṛtaṃ rajjvāmiva sarpādivikalpajātamadhyastam avidyayā tadasya jagato mūlamataḥ sanmūlāḥ satkāraṇā he somyemāḥ sthāvarajaṅgamalakṣaṇāḥ sarvāḥ prajā na kevalaṃ sanmūlā evedānīmapi sthitikāle sadāyatanāḥ sadāśrayā eva |nahi mṛdamanāśritya ghaṭādeḥ sattvaṃ sthitirvāsti. CUB 6.8.4.

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processual account of the world such that nothing may be said to have an essential nature or autonomous being, everything being subject to modification (*vikāra*) and reliant on linguistic construction (*vācārambhaṇa*). The very nature of the world (*jagat/saṃsāra*) is to be subject to action (*kriyā*) and process (*bhāva*): "The whole world is a conglomeration of action, factors of action and their results".[48] The only qualification is that for him the metaphysics of *bhāva* or—in his preferred vocabulary in *Chāndogya 6*—*vikāra*, does not exhaust the description of reality, but is simply the conditioned, actional or temporal dimension of being (what Śaṃkara otherwise just terms s*aṃsāra*). And the so-called Advaitic 'absolute' comprises the unconditioned/atemporal dimension of reality, not the 'inert absolute' or metaphysical 'entity' as it is sometimes referred. Adopting the *temporal* and *actional* perspective on reality[49]—emphasizing its dynamic and fecund aspects exploited towards the production and transformation of being—results in a metaphysics of *bhāva*; the *atemporal* perspective in the Upanishadic metaphysics of Being (*sat/satya*).

Such a move away from a preoccupation with beings to the very Being of beings is familiar to us in the context of Western thought (in such thinkers as Heidegger), but it is useful to remind ourselves of the paradigm shift it inaugurates with respect to the obtaining conception of processual and dynamic being with which Vedic thinkers were occupied. As we have seen, in spite of their different senses, *bhāva* and *kriyā* are often explicated in terms of each other such that action (*kriyā*) gets integrated within a broader metaphysics of *bhāva*, and *bhāva*, in turn, is often read in actional terms, that is, as processual goal-oriented intentional or sentient activity. The task of an Advaitic non-dual grammar, on this account, is to extricate Being from this paradigm of action and becoming, explicating it in terms of pure presence, isness (*astitā*) and thatness (*tattva*).

Thus, corresponding to the distinction set up between two different paradigms of being (being as *bhāva* or temporal, conditioned being, and being as *sat* or atemporal, unconditioned being), we find two Sanskrit radicals (√*bhū* and √*as*) at the core of each metaphysics. The former, capturing the temporal, dynamic dimension of being, generates its core metaphysical terms, *bhāva* and *bhāvanā*. The latter, generating the terms *sat, sattā, sattva, astitā* etc., stands at the root of the Upanishadic conception of Being. It is worth noting that

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[48] sarvaḥ saṃsāraḥ kriyākārakaphalalakṣaṇaḥ. BGB 18.41. My tr.

[49] Note that grammarians often defined action in close association with the notion of time.

Heidegger too, in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, parses the Sanskrit radicals along some such terms.[50] Both the roots, √*bhū* and √*as*, stand for being, and for two discernibly distinct sorts of permanence; the former (related to the Greek *phuo*) indicating the permanence of continual becoming, and the latter (related to the Greek *einai*, *ousia*, *parousia* and Latin *esse*) meaning the permanent as such, the *enduring*, closer to a Parmenidean conception of Being (and cognate with *sat/satya* of the Upaniṣads). The latter also furnishes two of the central words for Being in the history of Western thought (according to Heidegger), *ousia* and *parousia*. Mistakenly translated as 'substance,' *parousia*, as George Steiner explains, carries a sense of integral presentness or thereness, a standing in and by itself, and is patently contrasted with *physis*: "*[O]usia* signifies stable, enduring being. Being in its dynamic aspects is *physis*" (Steiner 1987, 50).

This is precisely the difference between *bhāva* and *sat* (cognate, respectively, with *physis* and *ousia*) as they are respectively elaborated by the grammarians and ritualists on one hand and Advaitins on the other. Within the Upanishadic canon, the lucid existential thrust of existential verbs, clustering around the root √*as*, comes to indicate the very horizon of Being encompassing the temporal being of entities. Its derived forms like *satya*, *sattā* or *astitā* indicate, for Śaṃkara, pure 'thatness' (literally, *tattva*). When subjected to the right grammar, a non-dual grammar, they can therefore generate direct 'realization' of Brahman.

Naturally the semantic domains *bhāva* and *sat* overlap and, as mentioned earlier, verbs from the existential root-cluster *bhū-as-vid* are often used interchangeably, conveying a generic sense of being/ becoming/ existence. But their theoretical elaboration leads them along different semantic trajectories. The existential root cluster is theoretically interpreted as being conditioned by the two different senses of being elaborated above. That is, its semantics is either made to gravitate, as a whole, towards the sense and metaphysics of √*bhū*, or the sense and metaphysics of √*as* insofar as it is the elaboration of these two radicals

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[50] Heidegger's engagement with the Sanskrit etymology of existential verbs is largely restricted to one book. Early on in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Heidegger 1959, 53-4), Heidegger distinguishes between three origins of the meaning of our modern conception of being, introduced through the Sanskrit radicals √*bhū* and √*as*—which comprise, as we saw, the first two of existential root cluster treated by Patañjali and Kātyāyana. To summarize, the first (related to the Greek *phuo*), giving us the modern term 'physics,' denotes, most generally, the domain of nature. Heidegger associates it with a sense of growing, emerging. This agrees with the family of meanings of words associated with the root √*bhū*, such as *bhāva*, *bhāvanā*, *bhavana*, connoting a sense of dynamic becoming or occurring. The second root √*as* (related to the Greek *einai*, *ousia*, *parousia* and Latin *esse*) means for Heidegger the self-standing, the enduring or permanent, pure or self-enclosed being, and comes to correspond, as we will see, to the meaning of being seized by Śaṃkara as the definitive meaning of Being in the Upanishadic canon.

in particular that occupies, respectively, the ritual exegetes and grammarians on one hand, and Advaitins on the other. These two roots and their accompanying semantic fields, then, form the gravitational centers around which the very sense of existential verbs is determined; including the question of whether we should even designate them as 'existential verbs (*sattāvācaka*),' 'stative verbs (*bhāvavācaka*)' or a limiting case of 'action verbs (*kriyāvācaka*).' I engage primarily with Śaṃkara's commentaries on three texts, *Taittirīya* 2.1. *Chāndogya* 6 and *Bhagavadgītā* 2.16. The profuse cross-referencing by Śaṃkara himself across these three textual sources also justifies the recuperation of a unified account of a non-dual grammar of Being.

III.iii   The Brahman Definition

How does Śaṃkara mediate the transition *grammatically* from the *bhāva* paradigm to that of Being (*sat*)? From the point of view of Kumārila and the Mīmāṃsakas, Śaṃkara's response is to locate an alternative center of gravity that grounds grammatical theory on a semantics of non-action (*niṣkriyatva*) as opposed to action (*kriyā*), Being (*sat*) as opposed to becoming and process (*bhāva*), and the present or presence (*vidyamāna/bhūta*) as opposed to the future (*bhavya*). This is accomplished by a double stroke: While Mīmāṃsā makes imperative verbal forms the paradigm of all verbs—even taking ordinary finite verbs to contain a deeper structure of *bhāvanā*—Śaṃkara sees in existential verbs the truest reflection and representation of reality in language. This is related to a more specific revision of Vedic values: while *karoti* ('does') symbolized the verb par excellence for Mīmāṃsakas and, to a lesser extent, grammarians, Śaṃkara makes *asti* ('is') basic to his grammar. This is achieved by leading the semantics of existential verbs away from any notion of action or becoming into the realm of pure ontology (*sattāmātratva*), a reorientation of Vedic values based on an innovative hermeneutics of the Vedic word. This section shows how the metaphysics of √*as* guides and regulates the spiritual-intellectual itinerary of the Advaitic student-practitioner. Crucially, it is by means of the access granted by the Upanishadic terms for being and their correct grammatical analysis, that the cognition of Brahman is grammatically mediated.

The textual locus of the discussion of Being in *Taittirīya* revolves around the famous definition of Brahman: Being, Consciousness, Unconditioned (*satyam jñānam anantam brahman*, TU 2.1). '*Satya*' of *Taittirīya* is

practically equivalent with '*sat*' in the *Chāndogya* and elsewhere in Śaṃkara's corpus. It occurs early on in the second chapter clarifying the intrinsic nature of Brahman whose knowledge is the desired objective. It is answerable to the claim just made that the knower of Brahman attains the highest. The definition initiates an extended treatment of the five sheaths of embodied being culminating in the innermost being of Brahman; the very same Brahman that stands at the beginning of the evolution of elements resulting in the psychophysical makeup of the human being. In its own way, therefore, the text enacts a version of the identity conveyed by the well-known identity-statements (*mahāvākya*s). The Being of beings, at the bottom of and from which all psychophysical creation springs, stands at the subjective core of sentient being. The commentary opens as follows:

> [Statement:][51] The sentence *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*—Brahman is being, consciousness, infinite—is meant as a definition of Brahman. For the three words beginning with *satya* are meant to distinguish Brahman which is the substantive…And just because (Brahman and *satya* etc.) are related as the substantive and attributives, the words beginning with *satya* have the same case-ending, and they stand in apposition. Brahman, being qualified by the three adjectives, *satya* etc., is marked out from other nouns. Thus indeed does a thing become known when it is differentiated from others; as for instance, in common parlance, a particular lotus is known when it is described as blue, big and sweet-smelling.

> [Objection:] A noun can be distinguished only when there is the possibility of its ruling out some other adjective (that does not belong to it), as for instance a (white) lotus can be distinguished by ruling out either red or blue. An adjective is meaningful when there are many nouns which belong to the same class and which are capable of having many adjectives; but it can have no meaning with regard to a single noun, where there is no possibility of any alternative adjective. There is a single Brahman, just as there is a single sun; there do not exist other Brahmans from which It can be distinguished, unlike a blue lotus…

> [Answer:] No, there is nothing wrong since the adjectives are used by way of definition…Since the adjectives bear a predominantly defining sense and not a qualifying sense…An adjective distinguishes a noun from things of its own class, whereas a definition marks it out from everything else, as for instance (the definition of) *ākāśa* is that which provides space.[52]

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[51] All translations of Śaṃkara's *Taittirīya* commentary are from Gambhirananda 1957, unless otherwise specified. I go with the terms predicate and subject for '*viśeṣaṇa*' and *viśeṣya*, as opposed to the translator's 'adjective' and 'substantive'; also I render '*satya*' as 'being' (not 'truth') and '*jñāna'* as consciousness. Lastly, following Lipner, I translate '*vācya*' as 'signified' and '*lakṣaṇā*' as 'oblique indication'.

[52] satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma iti brahmaṇo lakṣaṇārtham vākyam | satyādīni hi trīṇi viśeṣaṇārthāni padāni viśeṣyasya brahmaṇaḥ | viśeṣyam brahma vivakṣitatvād vedyatayā | vedyatvena yato brahma prādhānyena vivakṣitam, tasmād viśeṣyam

Śaṃkara explains that the three defining terms are predicative (*viśeṣaṇa*) of the subject (*viśeṣya*)

Brahman, which elicits an objection from the opponent to the effect that predicates are meaningful when

there are multiple nominal items belonging to the same class and capable of assuming various predications.

But the singularity of Brahman vitiates this possibility. The rationale seems to be that substantives, such as

'lotus', admit of being potentially qualified by alternative predicates, such qualification being the only mode of

distinguishing one from another. Predicative activity presupposes the existence of multiple substantives of the

same species distinguishable from each other by virtue of picking out a set of attributes. Conversely,

predication presumes that a substantive can possess multiple attributes, simultaneously or sequentially.

Brahman, however, is allegedly one of its kind and admits neither of genera nor species. It cannot be

distinguished from other kinds of brahman, neither is there any genus outside of Brahman. All this is because,

as noted earlier, Brahman is simply the constitutive ontological horizon within which beings appear as beings.

Śaṃkara subjects the definition to closer scrutiny, comparing it to a standard case of predication. *The Taittirīya*

definition of Brahman is stated below, with the example to which Śaṃkara compares it:

i. *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*

ii. *nīlam mahat sugandhi utpalam*

Both are instances of three predicative items qualifying a subject. After acknowledging that the predicative

items—being (*satya*), consciousness (*jñāna*), infinite (*ananta*)—are in grammatical co-reference, Śaṃkara goes

on to distinguish such co-reference from that occurring in ordinary statements. That is, he attempts to show

that i. and ii. although bearing a superficial resemblance hide a deeper difference, and that *satya*, *jñāna*, *ananta*

are, in fact, not really predicative (*viśeṣaṇa*) but definitional (*lakṣaṇa*). Predicates usually serve to distinguish an

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vijñeyam | ata asmād viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyatvād eva satyādīny ekavibhaktyantāni padāni samānādhikaraṇāni | satyādibhis tribhir
viśeṣaṇair viśeṣyamāṇaṃ brahma viśeṣyāntarebhyo nirdhāryate | evaṃ hi tajjñātaṃ bhavati yad anyebhyo nirdhāritam | yathā
loke nīlaṃ mahatsundhyutpalam iti | nanu viśeṣyaṃ viśeṣaṇāntaraṃ vyabhicaradviśeṣyate, yathā nīlaṃ raktaṃ cotpalam iti | yadā
hy anekāni dravyāṇy ekajātīyāny anekaviśeṣaṇayogīni, tadā viśeṣaṇasyārthavattvam | na hy kasminn eva vastuni
viśeṣaṇāntarāyogād yathāsāv eka āditya iti, tathaikam eva ca brahma, na brahmāntarāṇi yebhyo viśeṣyeta nīlotpalavat | na |
lakṣaṇārthatvād viśeṣaṇānām | nāyaṃ doṣaḥ | kasmāt | yasmāl lakṣaṇārthapradhānāni viśeṣaṇāni, na viśeṣaṇapradhānānyeva | kaḥ
punar lakṣaṇalakṣyayor viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyayor vā viśeṣa iti | ucyate | samānajātīyebhya eva nivartakāni viśeṣaṇāni viśeṣyasya,
lakṣaṇaṃ tu sarvata eva, yathāvakāśapradātrākāśam iti. TUB 2.1.1.

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entity from comparable entities, that is, from entities of the same class (*jāti*), but a definition (*lakṣaṇa*) distinguishes it from everything else. A definition, then, does not even *distinguish* Brahman so much as *isolate* it altogether in its three-fold nature (being, consciousness, infinite) as being entirely unique. There are thus at least two kinds of co-reference for Śaṃkara, one wherein the co-referential terms mark off the referent from others of its class or genus (*samānajātiyebhyaḥ nivartakaḥ*), and the other where they isolate the referent (*Brahman*) from every existent thing (*sarvataḥ nivartakaḥ*). We will see what this singularity of Brahman amounts to. On my account, the definition specifies that such 'Brahman-talk' must submit to a different order of discourse insofar as Brahman is the transcendental horizon of being and experience, and not itself something *within* the horizon it thus constitutes.

The Fourfold Ground of the Application of Words

For Śaṃkara the three terms of the definiens do not bear a subject-predicate or qualifier-qualified relation with Brahman (invoked only to initially point out Brahman as that which stands to be defined). We may formulate this in terms of the standard syntax of predicative assertions of the kind, x is y, where the copula identifies a state, attribute, action, class property or any predicative relationship between x and y in the above schema—x is y. Śaṃkara has just identified class (*jāti*) as a predicative relation that does not hold with respect to Brahman (because it does not belong to any class): "An adjective distinguishes a noun from things of its own class, whereas a definition marks it out from everything else". A little further down the commentary, Śaṃkara furnishes a more exhaustive list of such copulative relations with class being the first—class (*jāti*), quality (*guṇa*), action (*kriyā*) and relation (*sambandha*)—as the fourfold set determining the very application of words (*śabdapravṛttihetu*):

> Hence Brahman is not the direct referent *(vācya)* of the word *jnana*. Still, it is defined *(lakṣyate)* by the word *'jnana'* (which must be given a *bhāvavyutpatti*)…It is not directly designated by the term since it is devoid of properties, such as class-property (*jāti*), [quality, action and relation] which are the grounds for the applications of words (*śabdapravṛttihetu*).[53]

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[53] jñānaśabdena tal lakṣyate, na tūcyate, śabdapravṛttihetujātyādidharmarahitatvāt | tathā satyaśabdenāpi. TUB 2.1.1. Bartley tr.

This is in fact a stock reference across Śaṃkara's corpus identifying all the copulative relations expressible in language, to which Brahman does not submit. We may understand Śaṃkara to say that here, through this fourfold schema—class, quality, action and relation—all predicative or copulative assertions of the kind, x is y, are exhausted. Of course, this treatment of assertions does not include what is, from an Advaitic perspective, the most significant set of propositions in ordinary language, the so-called identity statements (superficially mirroring an 'x is y' syntax). They are of a radically different order: no genuine relationship obtains between the two items 'related' in the proposition (such as class-membership, substance-attribute relation etc.) for what is intended is the very identity of the relatables. Excepting this limiting case, then, language needs the crutch of the four categories in order to function (*śabdapravṛtti*) and possess significative power (*abhidhānaśakti*).

On this reading—that by the fourfold criteria stated above, Śaṃkara has in mind all predicative activity of the kind, 'x is y'—Śaṃkara already gives us a clue as to why the Brahman definition is unique: the obtaining relation amongst words in the definition cannot be represented as a subject-predicate (*viśeṣyaviśeṣaṇa*) relation where something (a quality, action, class property etc.) is predicated of something else. Rather, Śaṃkara will show, in a gradually progressing logic through his *Taittirīya* 2.1 commentary, how the terms in the definition disclose the nature of ultimate reality without appealing to this fourfold ground of linguistic application (*śabdapravṛttihetu*). The underlying rationale seems to be that if it were subject to the fourfold ground (quality, class property, action or relation), it would not be fundamentally distinct in nature from other entities; since it would also possess *some* quality, class property, action or relation.[54] But since we are talking about the Being of beings, we need to appeal to a different order of discourse, a different mode of linguistic unfoldment of its sense. The Brahman definition is simply not *informative* in this way, if we understand by 'information' the knowledge of an entity's states, attributes, actional involvements, class-memberships or relationships with other entities. In fact, Śaṃkara intends to say that the Brahman definition is simply not

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[54] As Śaṃkara has just argued, for an item x to assume the subject position (to be the *viśeṣya*) in the syntax 'x is y,' it is presupposed that x be subject to predicative activity and identifiable according to its class or universal (TUB 2.1.1).

informative in *any* way insofar as the above characterizations of an object exhaust our knowledge of it. Nonetheless, while not submitting to the normal modes of linguistic operation, the unique relation of the definitional terms can be drawn out by a deeper grammatical analysis of the sentence. This is mediated by Śaṃkara, as I show, by distinguishing three levels at which the predication-definition (*viśeṣaṇa-lakṣaṇa*) distinction can be interpreted, all of which are introduced by Śaṃkara but need to be individually drawn out.

Four Levels of Discernment in the Brahman Definition

LEVEL 1: Distinguishing Description from Definition
Śaṃkara has early on in his commentary affirmed that the Brahman definition is not like other definitions or empirical descriptions:

> [Opponent:] An adjective is meaningful when there are many nouns which belong to the same class and which are capable of having many adjectives; but it can have no meaning with regard to a single noun, where there is no possibility of any alternative adjective. There is a single Brahman, just as there is a single sun; there do not exist other Brahmans from which It can be distinguished, unlike a blue lotus (that can be marked out from a red one). [Response:] No, there is nothing wrong, since the 'adjectives' are used by way of definition. [Opponent] How? [Response:] Since the adjectives bear a predominantly *defining* sense and not a *qualifying* sense.[55]

At this first level, it appears that the distinction seeks to separate an empirical *description* from a *definition.* Descriptions tend towards isolating the individual detail and depth of things, how one existent thing is different from a similar or distinct one. Definitions aspire to capture the generality that assimilates diverse individuals under the same category. The statement 'The lotus is fragrant, blue and large' isolates a specific lotus distinct from others by naming its unique predicates. A different set of predicates will isolate a different lotus of the same class. Śaṃkara has said of descriptions: "Brahman, being qualified by the three adjectives, *satya* etc., is marked out from other nouns. Thus, indeed, does a thing become known when it is differentiated

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[55] yadā hy anekāni dravyāṇy ekajātīyāny anekaviśeṣaṇayogīni, tadā viśeṣaṇasyārthavattvam / na hy kasminn eva vastuni viśeṣaṇāntarāyogād yathāsāv eka āditya iti, tathaikam eva ca brahma, na brahmāntarāṇi yebhyo viśeṣyeta nīlotpalavat / na / lakṣaṇārthatvād viśeṣaṇānām / nāyaṃ doṣaḥ / kasmāt / yasmāl lakṣaṇārthapradhānāni viśeṣaṇāni, na viśeṣaṇapradhānānyeva. TUB 2.1.1.

from others; as for instance, in common parlance, a particular lotus is known when it is described as blue, large and fragrant" (TUB 2.1.1). Initially, then, Śaṃkara simply marks the general character or structure of the Brahman definition, as isolating a substantive by means of pointing out its specific set of attributes (the *viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva*). But, soon enough, this is found to be inadequate since Brahman is not something that can be subject to description; it is not an empirically available entity like others (as the ontological horizon of being). Moreover, there are not other brahmans from which it can be distinguished in its unique collocation of predicates. Rather, the verse under question is better read as an instance of a definition (*lakṣaṇa*) than description (*viśeṣaṇa*).

The uniqueness of a definition is marked out here from any general collocation of predicables isolating a subject, such as we find in typical descriptions. That is, the above verse is now to be understood as a *definiens-definiendum* relation, and not a general subject-predicate relation typical of descriptions. But equally, while it appears that Śaṃkara is merely carving out a sub-class of subject-predicate relations in distinguishing definitions from descriptions (See, for instance, Uskokov 2018, 415)—i.e., *lakṣaṇalakṣya* as a sub-type of *viśeṣaṇaviśeṣya*—he is really after an altogether different order of relation obtaining in the Brahman definition, clarified at the next level below. Here, we must be mindful of two different senses in which the term '*viśeṣaṇa*' is employed, as predicate and as description. As the former, it can very well persist into the domain of definitions marking them as a sub-type of a generic subject-predicate or qualifier-qualified structure, the most general form of such statements (see Level 2). As the latter, it marks the specific trait of Level 1 (that of description).

Definitions, in any case, pick out precisely those features that are general enough to classify an entire range of entities sharing common characteristics. They often work to single out the *essential* aspects of an entity as opposed to descriptions. This is precisely what, at the preliminary level, the Brahman definition seeks to do, marking out the *essence* of Brahman as characterized by infinite/unconditioned being and consciousness. This is how the *lakṣaṇa-viśeṣaṇa* (definition-description) distinction may be parsed at the most rudimentary level, and this is where, I argue, further nuance is possible. The Brahman definition may thus be read as marking the constraints upon a discourse of ultimacy or 'Brahman-talk', allowing a further refinement

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of the nature of the Brahman definition. By a 'discourse of ultimacy' I refer to the radical distinction of

Brahman-talk as isolating the horizonal and constitutive dimension of reality from existents available *within*

this horizon constituted by/as Brahman. This isolation is mediated precisely by invoking a different order of

word and sentential reference than regular predication and signification. Chris Bartley has explained this with

respect to the term *jñāna*, but it applies equally to *satya*, the two primary items in the Brahman definition: "The

term *jñāna* usually has as its direct referents (*vācya*) transitory and discrete cognitive episodes which are in fact

reflections, captured in the *buddhi,* of the transcendental and immutable consciousness that is the identity of

ultimate reality (Brahman-*atman*). When semantically refined, the term can disclose that ultimate state

definitionally. When applied in this extraordinary sense, it differentiates Brahman from everything else"

(Bartley 1986, 111). The successive narrowing of the sense and definition of Brahman as the commentary

progresses is meant precisely to convey the 'extraordinariness' of Brahman; the 'ultimate state' as Bartley calls

it, but whose 'ultimacy' is perhaps not so much a 'state' but the transcendental horizon of being-experiencing.

LEVEL 2: Distinguishing Predicative Definition from Transcendental Definition

If we were merely distinguishing a definition (*lakṣaṇa*) from a description (*viśeṣaṇa*) we would not get very far

in conceiving the singularity of Brahman-talk. While the former indicates a more abstract theoretical level of

engagement with existents than descriptions, it is susceptible to the same kind of predicative activity. For

instance, the definition of a table ('a piece of furniture with a flat top and one or more legs, providing a level

surface on which objects may be placed') must take recourse to a variety of genus and differentia, all

predicables (*viśeṣaṇa*s) in their own manner, such as furniture, legs, surface, flat etc., in order to reach the

essence of tableness. The description-definition distinction as understood above, therefore, can only go so far

in isolating the uniqueness of a discourse of ultimacy even if it has, at the first stage, marked out the abstract

character of Brahman. For our purposes we may call a definition of the former sort *predicative*.

The next step would be to further distinguish such definition dependent on predicative activity—

otherwise articulated in terms of the fourfold criterion of the application of words (*śabdapravṛttihetu*)—from a

definition that does not. But what sort of definition would identify the definiendum without appealing to this

fourfold criterion? Śaṃkara provides a clue in a subsequent passage: "An adjective distinguishes a noun from things of its own class, whereas a definition marks it out from everything else, as for instance, (the definition of) space is that which accommodates or provides space (*avakāśāt atra ākāśamiti*). And we said that the sentence (under discussion) stands for a definition" (TUB 2.1.1). In the definition of space as 'that which accommodates or provides space' we have an interesting case of isolating a reality not ostensibly taking recourse to predicative activity. Space is *nothing but* a constituting criterion for extended things to subsist. It cannot be marked off from other things by identifying features it does or does not possess with respect to them. While it is absolutely unique, this uniqueness does not lie in its possessing a unique set of predicates. Rather the definition somewhere transcends a subject-predicate syntax owing to its abstractness or transcendentality.

Space is such an ontologically basic kind. As it happens, the *Taittirīya* passage under discussion almost immediately proceeds to the indication of space (*ākāśa*) as the first product or creation from ultimate reality (*brahman*) that is infinite being and consciousness. It is 'first' because, as the very principle of spatiality, it is the constitutive basis for any further material evolution to proceed. From the next evolute (*vāyu*) onwards, down to the most material and evolved, all products subsist *in* space. Another such an ontologically basic kind would be light (*prakāśa/jyoti*). As it happens, Brahman is time and again compared by Śaṃkara to space and light in order to convey aspects of its nature by pointing to these two as its closest analogies. Firstly, they are closest to Brahman in their subtlety and primitiveness; they come before anything else, and are, in a sense, *constitutive*. Further, the former (space) is often used to convey Brahman's omnipresence, infinitude (*ānantya*) and its remaining unaffected by what it accommodates. Light is used to convey its self-illuming/ self-aware nature while also indicating Brahman as constituting the principle of disclosure of all things. One may say, in fact, that space provides the closest conventional example to indicate pure Being (*satya*), while light pure Consciousness or self-disclosedness (*cit*) of Brahman.

It is clear that Śaṃkara's use of the term '*lakṣaṇa*' does not simply refer to any attempt at abstraction or essential definition. It is a peculiar kind of definition that is only applicable to certain ontologically

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constitutive or basic kinds. We may refer to it as a *transcendental* definition, that which constitutes or opens up

a domain of being and action but whose own features cannot be positively identified.[56]

LEVEL 3: Distinguishing Transcendental Definition from the Brahman Definition

If the Brahman definition appears as a kind of transcendental definition, aiming to single out the unique

nature of the absolute as undergirding and constituting all conventional activity and languaging, it is still a step

removed from the cases furnished above. For Śaṃkara, space (or light), while sharing with ultimate reality the

nature of being constitutive, non-empirical, ontologically primitive or subtle, nonetheless fall within the

domain of phenomenality and conditionedness, even it is not of the same nature as existent entities. Finally,

the language employed in a discourse of ultimacy or Brahman-talk must be of a radically different order than

anything else. And space is considered by Śaṃkara to be itself a product; he says, in discussing the three kinds

of infinitude:

> There are three kinds of infinitude: spatial, temporal and inter-objective. To illustrate: Space
> is infinite *spatially*, for it has no spatial conditionedness. But space is not infinite *temporally* or
> *inter-objectively*. Why? Since it is a product. Ultimate reality (*Brahman*) is thus not finite in time
> like space, since it is not a product. A created thing is circumscribed by time, but ultimate
> reality is not created. Hence it is infinite temporally as well. Similarly, inter-
> objectively…Since it is non-different from all objects. An object that is different (from
> another) limits the other. For when the intellect gets occupied with something, it becomes
> detached from something else. That because of which an idea becomes circumscribed, acts
> as a limit to that idea. To illustrate: The idea of cowness is repelled by the idea of horseness;
> hence horseness debars cowness and the idea (of cowness) becomes limited indeed. This
> limitation is seen for distinct objects. Brahman in not differentiated this way…[57]

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[56] Spinoza's definition of substance, 'That which in itself and conceived through itself (*Ethics* 1.3), comes to mind.

[57] tatra trividhaṃ hy ānantyaṃ deśataḥ kālato vastutaś ceti | tad yathā deśato 'nanta ākāśo, na hi deśatas tasya paricchedo 'sti | na tu kālataś cānantyaṃ vastutaś cākāśasya | kasmāt kāryatvāt | naivaṃ brahmaṇa ākāśavat kālato 'py antavattvam akāryatvāt | kārya hi vastu kālena paricchidyate | akāryaṃ ca brahma | tasmāt kālato 'py anantam | tathā vastutaḥ | kathaṃ punar vastuta anantyaṃ sarvānanyatvāt | bhinnaṃ hi vastu vastvantarasyānto bhavati | vastvantarabuddhir hi prasaktād vastvantarān nivartate | yato yasya buddher nivṛttiḥ sa tasyāntaḥ | tad yathā gotvabuddhir aśvatvād vinivartata ity aśvatvāntaṃ gotvam ity antavad eva bhavati | sa cānto bhinneṣu vastuṣu dṛṣṭo, naivaṃ brahmaṇo bhedaḥ | ato vastuto 'py ānantyam. TUB 2.1.1. My tr.

Clearly Śaṃkara is making the point that the very notion of ultimate reality is not limited by anything created or derivative (and, therefore, by anything at all) since everything, according to Advaitic logic, is created, partite, produced, conditioned, emergent; and nothing in the phenomenal, conditioned domain can be included in a definition of *Brahman*, since ultimate reality must be, on its account, ontologically primitive, i.e., uncreated and non-emergent. Otherwise it loses its status as such. A discourse of ultimacy cannot take recourse to any such derivative, emergent or conditioned concepts.

This can be expressed differently. Another feature of a conditioned entity is that it is potentially subject to referential and predicative activity. Insofar as anything has an identifiable form or mark (*rūpa*) it must have a corresponding name (*nāma*). While space, time, light etc. do not possess any ostensible form, they are nonetheless subtle emergents reciprocally tied up with (and inferable from) existents that persist in space and time. And they can be identified by their referential terms. Every emergent entity, physical or psychological, is thus subject to *nāmarūpa*. This terminology of *nāmarūpa* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (borrowed and converted by Śaṃkara into a stock Advaitic term) is closely tied with another from the *Chāndogya*, from the well-known statement, "Just as through a clod of clay, all that is made of clay would become known; all products being reliant on words, a mere name…" (CU 6.1.4). Śaṃkara comments; "What is reliant upon words?—All product, which thus, is mere name; the term '*nāmadheya*' is formed with the term '*nāman*' having the reflexive suffix '*dheya*' added to it; the sense is that there is no real entity in the form of the Product, it exists in name only, being based upon words".[58] '*Vācārambhaṇa*' means something like supported by or reliant on speech (*vāc*). Note as well the reference to '*vikāra*' (product/ modification). Anything created or emergent is accompanied by name and reliant on speech. Śaṃkara, though, often uses derivatives of √*vac* to refer specifically to signification, tied to the direct referential connection between a name and corresponding form. Indeed, further along in the commentary (see below), Śaṃkara will stress the difference between the relation of the terms 'being' and 'consciousness' with their referential domain, and any typical relation between signifier and signified.

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[58] ko 'sau vikāro nāmadheyaṃ nāmaiva nāmadheyaṃ svārthe dheyapratyayaḥ |vāgālambanamātraṃ nāmaiva kevalaṃ na vikāro nāma vastvasti paramārthato. CUB 6.1.4.

What we see, as Śaṃkara proceeds further in his commentary, is a subtle transition in the meaning of 'lakṣaṇārtha'. While we saw the sequentially finer and restricted sense in which Śaṃkara intends the *Brahman* definition, he now takes recourse to a different oppositional scheme, the distinction between primary meaning (*abhidhāna/śabdavācya*) and secondary or oblique meaning (*śabdalakṣya*):

> It (ultimate reality) cannot even be signified by the word '*jñāna*' (knowledge). Still ultimate reality is *obliquely indicated*, but not *signified* by the word '*jñāna*' which really stands for a semblance of consciousness referring to an attribute of the intellect; for ultimate reality is free from such things as class etc. which make the use of the word ('knowledge') possible. Similarly ultimate reality is not signified even by the word '*satya*' (being), since it is by nature devoid of all distinctions. In this way, the word '*satya*,' which means external reality in general (*bāhyasattāsāmānya*), can obliquely indicate ultimate reality (in expressions) as '*Brahman* is being,' but it cannot signify it. Thus the words 'being etc.' occurring in mutual proximity, and restricting and being restricted by each other, distinguish ultimate reality from other objects signified by the words 'being etc.' and thus become fit for defining/obliquely indicating it. So in line with the Vedic texts, 'Failing to reach which words, along with the mind, turn back'…it is proved that ultimate reality is indescribable, and that unlike the construction of the expression, 'a blue lotus', ultimate reality is not to be construed as the import of any sentence.[59]

Julius Lipner (1997) has pointed to this subtle shift of meaning in the course of the argument, arguing that Śaṃkara exploits the double meaning inherent in his use of the compound '*lakṣaṇārtha.*' According to the new scheme, the conventional denotation (*śabdavācya*) of the term 'Being' continues to be "external reality in general" but its oblique function (*śabdalakṣya*), in the second meaning of the compound (*lakṣaṇā + artha*) points to the Being beyond all attributes and distinctions. From the *Chāndogya*, *Gītā* and other commentaries of Śaṃkara, this '*satya*' is to be grasped as none other than '*sat*,' the pure Thatness of existence (*astitāmātra/sanmātra/tattva*). This sense is the inner meaning 'obliquely' indicated (*lakṣya*) by the Upanishadic terms for Being through, as seen in Chapter 2, an elaborate noetic ritual aimed towards the discernment of the inner meaning—we may say, the non-dual grammar—of the words for Being. As suggested in the passage

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[59] tasmād eva ca na jñānaśabdavācyam api tadbrahma | tathāpi tadābhāsavācakena buddhidharmaviṣayeṇa | jñānaśabdena tal lakṣyate, na tūcyate, śabdapravṛttihetujātyādidharmarahitatvāt | tathā satyaśabdenāpi | sarvaviśeṣapratyastamitasvarūpatvād brahmaṇo bāhyasattāsāmānyaviṣayeṇa satyaśabdena lakṣyate satyaṃ brahmeti | na tu satyaśabdavācyam eva brahma | evaṃ satyādiśabdā itaretarasannidhānād anyonyaniyamyaniyāmakāḥ santaḥ satyādiśabdavācyāt tannivartakā brahmaṇo, lakṣaṇārthāś ca bhavantīti | ataḥ siddhaṃ "yato vāco nivartante | aprāpya manasā saha", "anirukto 'nilayane" iti cāvācyatvaṃ, nīlotpalavadavākyārthatvaṃ ca brahmaṇaḥ. TUB 2.1.1 My tr.

above, this 'meaning' is radically different from that disclosed by the signifying or denotative function of those terms.[60] While Śaṃkara has named the grammatical alternative (*lakṣaṇā* as oblique reference) that can successfully 'reach' Brahman, it still remains to be seen how this is accomplished. In anticipation, the argument will be that the words 'being' and 'consciousness' are unique (in any language) in singling out precisely that dimension of existence that is available to us prior and independent of any denotative/ signification function. One may say, we possess a pre-theoretical and pre-linguistic familiarity with the oblique (*lakṣya*) sense of those words by virtue of simply existing as conscious beings. We are. And we are conscious.[61] These two features of our being are ontologically primitive, non-emergent and unsublatable. Languaging, including the signification function by which all words, including these two, assume their significative function (*abhidhānaśakti*) is subsequent and derivative.

Infinitude (Ānantya)

On the above explanation, for Śaṃkara, each of the three definitional items (being, consciousness, infinite) provides an ontologically basic and constitutive aspect of ultimate reality—a way of talking about the non-emergent, non-derivative constitutive horizon of reality—without sharing with the definiendum the typical relationships between subjects and predicates, and without sharing with their object domains the typical signifier-signified relations. But what relations obtain amongst them mutually? Looked at one way, no relation can obtain amongst them. Such relationships are typical of predicative assertions where each predicate, in tandem with others, restricts the overall meaning of a sentence to isolate the individual subject of predication (such as in 'the lotus is large, blue and fragrant'). In other words, typical descriptions and predicative assertions set up complex intra-sentential relations such that the overall sentence meaning is the product of

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[60] Śaṃkara will say in his *Chāndogya* 7 commentary that the very distinction between the signified (*abhidheya*) and signifier (*abhidhāna*) is ontologically derivative: *abhidhānābhidheyabhedasya-vikāratvāt.* CUB 7.1.3.

[61] Of course, this formulation reverses the Advaita logic according to which, it is not so much existence and consciousness that are predicative of the individual ('I am/conscious') but the other way around. In either case, the two are not emergent or derivative 'features' possessed by existents but the very constitutive horizon encircling them. I discuss further below (III.iv) Śaṃkara's comment on Gitā 2.16 which can be read as the Advaitic equivalent of what is more well-known in its Kantian formulation, that existence is not a predicate.

the mutually qualifying function of the individual words in a sentence. This would hold true for almost all statements in language (excluding of course the identity statements picked out by Advaitins). Advaitins cannot accept this implication in the Brahman definition—thus Śaṃkara's clarification above that ultimate reality is not to be construed as the import of a sentence (*avākyārthatvaṃ ca brahmaṇaḥ*)—because it would result in the verbality of Brahman knowledge. This ties into a larger debate amongst s (significantly between Śaṃkara and Maṇḍana Miśra) about whether sentential knowledge is necessary and sufficient for the knowledge of Brahman, or whether it needs a further action of meditation or contemplation upon sentential meaning, thus conferring a more direct, extralinguistic realization of Brahman.

Śaṃkara is clear that no such extra 'realization' is incumbent beyond simple sentential or linguistic comprehension. To understand the real meaning of words (in a sentence such as 'you are that' or 'ultimate reality is being, consciousness, unlimited') is to be immediately cognizant of truth. No further extra-linguistic 'experience' need be sought to confirm this. This would, in fact, be silly since sentential comprehension is a self-sufficient *pramāṇa* needing no further corroboration. The only problem is that typical sentential relationships are verbal, relying on the kind of predicative relations we have discussed. The Advaitin challenge is to find the middle way of a linguistic domain that permits sentential comprehension without relying on sentential relation and predication.[62] One solution is taking recourse to identity statements, since they are structured precisely as cancelling intra-sentential relationship (See Chapter 5). The other is taking recourse to *lakṣaṇa/lakṣaṇā* as Śaṃkara does here. By doing this, the real import of the Brahman definition can be shown to be non-reliant on both the signification function (*vācyatva*) and intra-sentential or verbal meaning (*vākyārthatva*).

But, further, no relation *need* obtain amongst the three terms because, like the definition of space, each independently comprises a constitutive criterion of ultimate reality: ultimate reality *is* Being, it *is* Consciousness, it *is* Unconditioned. We can look at ultimate reality in *either* of these three ways, each constituting an autonomous definition. Śaṃkara says, "The words, *satya* etc., are unrelated among themselves,

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[62] This is taken up under the Advaitic methodological principle of *adhyāropāpavāda* (Chapter 3): how to communicate the extralinguistic linguistically.

since they subserve something else; they are meant to be applied to what is qualified by them (*viśeṣyārthā hi te*). Accordingly each of the qualifying terms is related with the word 'brahman' without expecting the other: ultimate reality is *satya*, ultimate reality is *jñāna*, ultimate reality is *ananta*" (TUB 2.1.1). This does away with the requirement to posit a predicative relation amongst them.

Nonetheless, there is a negative or privative way in which the defining terms are internally 'related', compelling Śaṃkara to say (in the passage above) that "the words 'being etc.' occurring in mutual proximity, and restricting and being restricted in turn by each other (*anyonyaniyamyaniyamakāḥ*), distinguish ultimate reality" (TUB 2.1.1). A little earlier, he is addressing the concern that if the definitional terms serve merely to negate the opposites of being, consciousness and infinite, then, lacking a positive sense, Brahman would be no different from mere nothingness. The term 'consciousness', for instance, serves merely to indicate that ultimate reality cannot be non-conscious. If it meant to positively assert consciousness or sentience as a quality or feature of Brahman, it would cease to be Brahman: "If Brahman be the agent of knowing, being and infinitude cannot justly be attributed to it; for as an agent of knowing, it becomes subject to modification" (TUB 2.1.1). That is to say, if consciousness is construed as an empirical predicate or feature—equivalent to making a positive claim about the nature of ultimate reality (as conscious)—then this cannot comprise a discourse of ultimacy. But this is prevented by the mutual work done by the other two words in cancelling its empiricality—'being' and 'infinite' guarantee that this consciousness is not an empirical 'feature' of the ultimate reality; it *is* ultimate reality as the constitutive experiential horizon of everything.

He goes on to say: "Among these (three) words, the word '*ananta*' serves as a qualification by negating finitude; whereas the words '*satya*' and '*jñāna*' do so even while imparting their own positive senses to the substantive" (TUB 2.1.1). We are now to understand that while all three terms serve to negate their opposite meanings (non-being, non-consciousness, conditionedness/finitude) even as they mutually cancel the undesirable empirical sense of their meanings, the first two retain a certain residue of positivity. This is because while any empiricality must be eradicated from their senses—with help from the third item (*ananta*) that restricts their meaning to 'infinite being' and 'infinite consciousness'—they indicate that ultimate reality is not an absolute nothing. It is a conscious presence (almost) indistinguishable from nothingness owing to its

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lack of any positive empirical features. But it *is*. And it is not non-conscious. In other words, while me may bracket or suspend judgment on all our conventional claims to knowledge, minimally two things can never be doubted: that there is *something*, and an *awareness* acknowledging this.

The definition thus shows how Brahman-talk is radically different from standard language use. For Śaṃkara, as mentioned, derivatives of √*vac* convey standard referential activity presuming a signifier-signified relationship, i.e., the power or function of signification (*abhidhānaśakti*). This may be influenced by the well-known verse (occurring later in the *Taittirīya*) "From where words turn back…" (*yato vāco nivartante*) often used to suggest Brahman's ineffability. Śaṃkara's project (and the Advaitin project generally) may be understood as recuperating a grammar and syntax of words that disclose ultimate reality on the premise that words (*vācaḥ*) in their typical significative/referential sense cannot be employed in a discourse of ultimacy explicating the horizonal being-consciousness encompassing all experience. This is the grammatical resolution of how the extralinguistic may nonetheless communicated linguistically.

Howsoever one interprets the sense of '*lakṣaṇa(ā)*'—either as setting up a distinction between transcendental definition and predication (as we see early on in the *Taittirīya* 2.1 commentary), or between direct signification and oblique indication (the later sense that emerges in the commentary)—the point seems to be that standard predication and signification fail in undergirding a discourse of ultimate reality. Employing such linguistic tools and forms in a discourse of ultimacy will end up reducing the ultimate to the status of an existent (howsoever divine, exalted or special, such as god); an existent that is emergent (and therefore non-primitive), nameable and circumscribable by its form or identifying marks. The alternative is to employ words in a way that subverts their significative use without rendering them futile. Advaita, after all, is deeply committed to language as the only means to the knowledge of reality (*tattvajñāna*). We will subsequently see, in our reading of parallel passages from *Chāndogya* and *Gītā*, just how a non-dual grammar resting on oblique indication permits the terms 'being' and 'consciousness' to disclose their 'object' (Brahman) without resorting to predicative or significative language use.

III.iv   The Cognition of Being in the Gītā: Śaṃkara on Sadbuddhi

Verses 16-21 of *Bhagavadgītā* Chapter 2 are well-known for their presentation of the nature of ultimate reality. Verse 16, to which Śaṃkara devotes significant attention, asserts that the unreal has no being, and the real is never found to have non-being. The seers of reality/thatness (*tattva*) see the final truth of both.[63] Śaṃkara cites two reasons for the non-being (*na bhāva*) of that which is unreal (*asat*). It is a modification or emergent (*vikāra*) and hence, being ontologically dependent on its material cause, has no autonomous reality of its own. Relatedly, any such emergent is not available prior to its origin and posterior to its cessation; unlike Being (*sat*) that perdures through the origin and cessation of emergent entities. At this point Śaṃkara addresses an objection that if every entity is reducible to its material cause and the cause itself to its own material cause and so on, then there follows the consequence of nihilism, since nothing can be said to truly exist at bottom. He responds:

> For, every fact of experience involves twofold consciousness (*buddhi*), the cognition of Being (*sat*) and the cognition of non-being (*asat*). Now that is Being which forms the objective correlate of cognition not subject to change. And that is non-being which forms the objective correlate of that cognition which is subject to change. Thus the distinction of real and unreal depends on cognition. Now in all our experience, this twofold cognition is available with reference to one and the same substratum, as 'an existent cloth,' 'an existent pot,' 'an existent elephant' etc.—not as in the expression 'a blue lotus.' Of the two, the cognition of pot etc., is subject to change, as already pointed out, but not the cognition of Being. Thus, the objective correlate of the cognition of pot etc., is unreal, because subject to change; but the correlate of the cognition of Being is real because it is not subject to change.[64]

Thus in every perception there exists a twofold cognition, the cognition of Being (*sadbuddhi*) and the perception of everything else (*asadbuddhi*). The latter tracks the career of each entity as it comes into or goes out of existence. For instance, it attaches itself to a pot when it is created out of clay, and, if the pot is broken, it attaches itself to the pot-shards that may now be said to come into being. But *sat-buddhi* tracks the

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[63] nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ | ubhayor api dṛṣṭo 'ntas tv anayos tattva-darśibhiḥ BG 2.16

[64] sarvatra buddhi-dvayopalabdheḥ, sad-buddhir asad-buddhir iti | yad-viṣayā buddhir na vyabhicarati, tat sat | yad-viṣayā vyabhicarati, tad asat | iti sad-asad-vibhāge buddhi-tantre sthite | sarvatra dve buddhī sarvair upalabhyete samānādhikaraṇe na nīlotpalavat, san ghaṭaḥ san paṭaḥ, san hastī iti | evaṃ sarvatra | tayor buddhyoḥ ghaṭādi-buddhir vyabhicarati | tathā ca darśitam | na tu sad-buddhiḥ | tasmāt ghaṭādi-buddhi-viṣayo 'san, vyabhicārāt | na tu sad-buddhi-viṣayaḥ, avyabhicārāt. BGB 2.16. My tr.

existential element of entities, their pure *isness*, as they come in and out of existence. For example, if the pot breaks, the cognition of Being simply attaches itself to pot-shards that have now come into existence. The bare sense of *being* perdures through all change and the subject's phenomenal experiences even if individual things and experiences are changeful and subject to cessation. For the same reason such isness (*sattā/astitā*) is often referred to as *avikriya,* not subject to change, being the one unchanging element in all experience.

How precisely does the blue lotus serve as a counterexample—to that of the existent cloth, pot etc.—as Śaṃkara intends it? Unfortunately, he is himself quite laconic on this point. One difference emerges from his earlier discussion of the *Taittirīya* use of the large, blue, fragrant lotus. There the Brahman definition was distinguished from the example of the lotus to the extent that the terms in the latter description share a predicate-subject (*viśeṣaṇaviśeṣya*) relation. It was also clarified that this is possible because the lotus is an existent thing that may be discerned from others of its type by virtue of the application of one or more predicates. 'Being', on the contrary, was not predicative of Brahman, merely serving to isolate the bare existential element of reality; what is here (in the Gītā) tracked by *sadbuddhi.* More generally, we may say, evoking a Kantian formulation, that Being (*sat*) is not a predicate at all. If it were, it would appeal to precisely the kinds of predicative relations put out of play in the context of Brahman. These, in the *Taittirīya*, were expressed in terms of the fourfold ground of the application of words (*śabdapravṛttihetu*), class-property, quality etc. None of the terms in the Brahman definition invoke these relations. This is because, as we saw, Being names the very ontological horizon within which emergent entities appear *as* entities. The sub-commentator Ānandagiri, glossing on Śaṃkara's Gītā commentary above, supports this point by noting that the counterexample of the blue lotus works by setting up a substance-attribute (*dharmadharmin*) relation between the items in apposition. 'Existent cloth', on the other hand, works by a relation of continuance and cessation (*anuvṛtti* and *vyāvṛtta*). Both are instances of nominal apposition where two or more terms are in co-reference. In the former, both have terms the same ontological status and qualify each other, that is, blue and lotus are both conventional and derivative realities. In the latter, one is real—*sat* or the existential element—

and the other conventional and derivative upon this reality.[65] Thus, existence *as such* or Being is simply not of the same ontological order as clothes, pots, lotuses etc. sharing a relation of subject-predicate with their respective qualifiers. We take note of the account of *sadbuddhi* and *asadbuddhi* here as we track his discussion of Being in the *Chāndogya* below in order to recover a coherent account of how the linguistic disclosure of Brahman is different from the linguistic expression of other realities.

III.v   Chāndogya on the Science of Being (Sadvidyā)

Chāndogya's *sadvidyā* was briefly introduced earlier (Section II) in interpreting the Advaitic project as the disclosure of Being, that which lends being (*sat*) or isness (*astitā*) to all existents. I here consider subsequent sections of Śaṃkara's exposition of *sadvidyā* pertinent to the linguistic/extralinguistic understanding of Brahman pursued here; 'linguistic' since the knowledge of Brahman is primarily sentential, 'extralinguistic' insofar as this knowledge does appeal to the conventional functions of verbal and sentential meaning, such as signification (*vācyatva* and *abhidhānaśakti*) and predication (*viśeṣaṇatva*). Śaṃkara begins by considering an objection;

> [Objection:] Is not this *Being* there now, at the present time—that it has been qualified—as 'Being so *in the beginning*?' [Answer:] Not so. [Objection:] Then why the qualification 'In the beginning?' [Answer:] What is meant is that even now, at the present moment, it is *Being,* but it is accompanied by differentiation of Name and Form, the object of the idea of the term 'this', and as such it becomes *this.* Before birth—*in the beginning*—however, it was answerable only to the idea and term 'Being'; hence it is emphasized that '*in the beginning this was Being only'.* Before its birth, no object can be apprehended as being such and such name, or having such and such a form; It is exactly as during the time of deep sleep...What is meant that immediately on waking from deep sleep, all that one is conscious of is mere existence of things, while during deep sleep, he is conscious of pure Being alone as the only entity; and so also *in the beginning*—before the birth of the universe. It is just as all this is spoken of in the ordinary world. In the morning, one sees the potter spreading out clay for making the jar and other things, and then having gone away to another village, and returning in the afternoon, sees in the same place, many products in the shape of jars, saucers and other articles, all of

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[65] nīlamutpalamitivaddharmadharmiviṣayatayā sāmānādhikaraṇyasya suvacatvānna vastvaikyaviṣayatvamiticenetyāha na nīleti. nahi sāmānyaviśeṣyorbhede'bhedeca tadbhāvo bhedābhedau ca viruddhāvato jātivyaktayoḥ sāmānādhikaraṇyaṃ nīlotpalayoriva na gauṇaṃ kiṃtu vyāvṛttamanuvṛtteḥ kalpitamityekaniṣṭhamityarthaḥ. Ānandagirivyākhyā on BGB 2.16.

diverse kinds. One says that 'all *this*, jar, saucer and the rest, *was*, in the morning, clay only'—so it is said here that '*in the beginning* this was Being only'.[66]

Śaṃkara's entire treatment of the *Chāndogya* Chapter 6 proceeds to unlock the real meaning of this past tense '*āsīt*' ('was') of the opening verse, 'In the beginning there *was* being alone'[67], by showing that the only difference between *asti* and *āsīt*, 'is' and 'was', is the appendage of name-form (*nāmarūpa*) to Being (*sat*). Prior to creation, reality may be indicated directly by the mere term for and cognition of 'Being' (*kevala-sat-śabda-buddhi-mātra-gamya*). But the activity (*kriyā*) of creation ('May I become many'/'May I be born as many')—and all that it brings into being, as in the metaphor of the clay jars, saucers etc.—does not detract from the underlying cognition of being (*sadbuddhi*) that continues in co-reference with whatever novelty the act of creation introduces. This runs parallel, therefore, with his commentary above on the Gītā where the underlying cognition of Being (*sadbuddhi*) is concurrent with the changing perceptions of whatever it is that is being perceived. Here the context is more trans-historical: process, change and history leave the underlying *thatness* of being unaltered, so that the Upaniṣad can subsequently claim 'You *are* that' (*tat tvam asi*) in the present tense. The Being that was *is* the Being that obtains here and now, as your obtaining nature (with, of course, additional layers of identity that may in principle be distinguished from the bare being/existentiality immanent in them). The central play of 'was' (*āsīt*), 'is' (*asti*) and '[you] are' (*asi*) in the dialogue is meant to indicate the non-actional (*niṣkriya*) being prior to creation is unaffected by the activity of creation and coeval with it.

Reading the two commentaries together in their treatment of the cognition of Being (*sat-buddhi*)—both taking recourse to the idea of *sadbuddhi*—we observe that such a cognition is presented from both cosmic-cosmogonic (*Chāndogya*) as well as phenomenal-phenomenological (*Gītā*) standpoints. The former unfolds Brahman as the underlying ontological substratum of everything past, present or future insofar as we

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[66] kiṃ nedānīmidaṃ yadyenāgra āsīditi viśeṣyate | na, kathaṃ tarhi viśeṣaṇam | idānīmapīdaṃ sadeva kintu nāmarūpaviśeṣaṇavad idaṃśabdabuddhiviṣayaṃ cetīdaṃ ca bhavati | prāgutpattestvagre kevalasacchabdabuddhimātragamyameveti sadevedamagra āsītityavadhāryate | na hi prāgutpatternāmavadrūpavadvedamiti grahītuṃ śakyaṃ vastu suṣuptakāla iva |…yathedamucyate loke pūrvāhne ghaṭādi sisṛkṣuṇā kulālena mṛtpiṇḍaṃ prasāritamupalabhya grāmāntaraṃ gatvā pratyāgato 'parāhne tatraiva ghaṭaśarāvādyanekabhedabhinnaṃ kāryamupalabhya mṛdevedaṃ ghaṭaśarāvādi kevalaṃ pūrvāhne āsīditi tathehāpyucyate sadevedamagra āsīditi. CUB 6.2.1.

[67] sadeva saumya idamagre āsīt. CU 6.2.1

may say of it, 'It is'. The latter establishes the underlying persistence of being from a phenomenological point of view, perduring through all our everyday activities, states and relationships. However, by combining the phraseology of the two commentaries it is possible to decode the precise difference between the cognition of Being and the perception of ontologically derivative and conventional realities. The phrase '*kevala-sat-śabda-buddhi-mātra-gamya*' is composed of two parts that may be parsed as follows:

i. *sat-śabda-mātra-gamya*: intelligible through the mere term 'being'

ii. *sat-buddhi-mātra-gamya*: intelligible through the mere cognition of being

This is in contrast to the situation where Brahman has evolved into the world such that this world or any worldly object is now approachable not only as existing, but as existing *plus* name-form (*nāmarūpa*). For instance, as Śaṃkara will go on to say, the perception of an emergent reality like fire is available as '*agni-śabda-buddhi-gamya*' (CU 6.4) that is parsed as follows:

iii. *agni-śabda-gamya*: intelligible through the term 'fire'

iv. *agni-buddhi-gamya*: intelligible through the consciousness of fire

Here the form (*rūpa*) of fire and the corresponding name (*nāma*) mediate the perception of Being (CUB 6.2). Being perdures as the underlying cognition in and through all states of affairs and states of experience; phenomenally, however, we are aware of an additional layering of the cognition of the *specific* name and form (*nāmarūpa*) of phenomenal objects. Even these, of course, strictly speaking address and identify the underlying Being insofar as it is the ontological element in them. Therefore, a few passages down (CUB 6.2.3), Śaṃkara clarifies that when manifest entities or products are seen to be what they are—modifications (*vikāra*)—and Being as such (*sat*) is recognized as the ontologically perduring element in all perception, then effortlessly any modification-related names and cognitions vanish away (*anyavikāraśabdabuddhī nivartante*). Moreover, he remarks: "Because Fire still exists as mere consciousness and word, as declared in the text—'Fire is only a modification of words, a mere name, nothing more than a name'—hence, the consciousness of fire is also unreal" (TUB 6.4.2).

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A crucial difference thus emerges between the word (*śabda*) and consciousness/cognition (*buddhi*) of Being on one hand, and everything else on the other: the latter are entirely dependent on language and linguistic representation in order to be cognized and rendered intelligible. The perception of fire is not possible without its linguistic mark 'fire' and this is true for all *vikāra*s (products/ emergents/ modifications). The cognition of Being, on the other hand, is possible without the mediation of language and linguistic representation. That is, even in the absence of name and form (*nāmarūpa*), the cognition of Being does not cease, something which cannot be said of phenomenal beings or entities. This is precisely the question posed to Śaṃkara at the inception of his Chapter 7 commentary:

> [Opponent:] But the Self is also denoted (*abhidhīyate*) by the term 'Self' (*ātman*) (so that it would be a product)?
> [Śaṃkara:] Not so, because of the following Vedic declarations 'Wherefrom speech recoils' (*Taittirīya* 2.9.1), 'Wherein one sees nothing else,' and so forth (which shows that the self is beyond words).
> [Opponent:] How then do such words as 'the Self below,' 'that is Self' and the like convey the idea of the Self?
> [Śaṃkara:] What happens is that the word '*ātman*' 'Self' is actually applied in usage to the Counter-self (the 'Living Self' born in the body), which is subject to notions of differentiation—and when the idea of body and other appurtenances being 'Self' is, one by one, set aside, then by the process of elimination, it comes to indirectly *indicate* the *Being*, even though this latter is beyond the reach of the word (*sadavācyamapi pratyāyayati*).[68]

This is a crucial passage to understand Śaṃkara's views on linguistic comprehension and its inefficacy with respect to Brahman. The set of distinctions at play here anticipate Śaṃkara's treatment of nominal signification in the *Taittirīya* to which we proceed next. Just earlier Śaṃkara has condensed his core argument by saying that the very distinction between the denoted (*abhidheya*) and its denotation (*abhidhāna*) is ontologically derivative; it only applied to emergent entities and is itself emergent.[69] Apparently, as the *Taittirīya* commentary will clarify, the terms for Being (and Self) do not share the same relation with the reality they circumscribe as other terms do with their referents, the signifier-signified relationship. In Śaṃkara's

[68] nanvātmāpyātmaśabdenābhidhīyate | na "yato vāco nivartante" | "yatra nānya paśyati" ityādiśruteḥ | kathaṃ tarhyā'tmaivādhastāt' 'sa ātme'tyādiśabdā ātmānaṃ pratyāyayanti | naiṣa doṣaḥ | dehavati pratyagātmani bhedaviṣaye prayujyamānaḥ śabdo dehādīnāmātmatve pratyākhyāyamāne yatpariśiṣṭaṃ sadavācyamapi pratyāyayati. CUB 7.1.3.
[69] abhidhānābhidheyabhedasyavikāratvāt. CUB 7.1.3.

terminology this is consistently clarified as the *abhidhāna-abhidheya* or *vācaka-vācya* relation, such that Being remains *avācya* (non-signified). Two things must be noted. Firstly, the words and language of Being cannot signify Being.[70] Nonetheless, they may be employed in Advaitic pedagogy to obliquely indicate this Being otherwise incommunicable.

Sadbuddhi, in any case, is of a radically different order of knowing than the awareness of ontologically derivative entities (*asadbuddhi* or *vikārabuddhi*). For Śaṃkara, there is no existent entity, and no concurrent awareness of it, in the absence of a corresponding *nāmarūpa*. Expressions iii. and iv. above may thus be said to be mutually implicating and necessary. Expression ii., however, is not tied with or dependent on i. in the same manner. The cognition of Being is independent of any reference to language; in fact pre-exists all language use. Nonetheless, as pointed out, the terms for Being can be used as to *obliquely* indicate this extralinguistic reality through a manipulation of their direct sense (and reference) by exploiting its underlying non-dual grammar. This is done quite patently in the *Taittirīya* (and partially in *Chāndogya* Chapter 7) in Śaṃkara's treatment of nominal signification.

We can thus recreate a coherent picture of the deeper grammar of Being from Śaṃkara's intimations about *sadbuddhi* (the cognition of Being) and *sat-śabda* (the terms for Being) in the *Chāndogya* and *Gītā*, along with the term 'satya' in the *Taittirīya*. We already know from the first two sources that the cognition of Being is perdures through all subjective experience and objective history. The *Taittirīya* analysis can further reveal precisely how and why, linguistically, the cognition of Being is different from the perception of everything else (i.e., things that are derivative, conventional). The latter require the crutch of language and linguistic capacities that make signification (*abhidhānaśakti*) possible, by exploiting the fourfold ground of the application of words (class property; quality, action and relation). On the other hand, Being (*sat*) is the obtaining reality we are 'aware of' simply by virtue of *being* or existing. We live in (to use a Heideggerian turn of phrase) a pre-reflective, but also prelinguistic 'understanding' of Being simply by virtue of the fact that we exist. The cognition of Being (*sadbuddhi*) is natural and intrinsic to all experience. It is both pre- and

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[70] Śaṃkara's entire discussion of *sadbuddhi* in the *Gītā* commentary also occurs independently of any reference to *sat-śabda*, the words for Being.

extralinguistic. For, Brahman, in its aspect of Being (*sanmātra*), is the ontological horizon within which beings appear *as* beings, and which begins to diversify and multiply *ontolinguistically* in time, that is, proliferate simultaneously in language and being as the world evolves and grows more complex. The generation of *asadbuddhi* (cognition of what does not have intrinsic being) or *vikārabuddhi* (cognition of modification/product), however, needs the mediation of language. This mediation is such that, by taking recourse to the categories of class, attribute, relation etc., a word can delimit and identify its signified from other signifieds. The perception of anything but Being—because it is a modification, product, emergent— requires its corresponding verbal handle (*nāmadheya*).

The term 'Being' (*sat-śabda*) then shares a very different relationship with its referent (Being) insofar as Being is capable of being directly perceived or intuited under the mode of oblique indication (*lakṣaṇā*) to the extent that we inhabit such a pre-reflective prelinguistic awareness of it. If the definitional terms were merely serving a negative function, warding of erroneous conceptions of Brahman, we would not get very far. *Lakṣaṇā* points to the constitutive and obtaining horizon of Being-Consciousness that is pre-linguistic and accompanying every cognition and experience, even as *ananta* negates their finite or limited understanding as qualifying particular existent things ('an *existent* tree', 'a *conscious* person'). Referring to the mode of negation (*apavāda*) adopted by Advaita here and elsewhere, exemplified by the famous '*neti neti*' of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, Comans says:

> Thus I believe there is a single method in the hermeneutics of liberation in the Advaita of Śaṃkara, and this method necessitates the use of *lakṣaṇā*…It is true that for Śaṃkara the Upaniṣads culminate in the statement "*neti neti*" which negates all superimpositions in their entirety. But the negation itself functions in the context of our ignorance of something which cannot be removed without pointing out the nature of the thing about which there is ignorance…I believe that all the major statements, those which reveal in a "positive" fashion, as well as those which negate, such as "*neti neti*" are ultimately to be understood through *lakṣaṇā*. There is more than one technique (*prakriyā*) in the Upaniṣads to reveal the acosmic (*niṣprapañca*) Brahman: there is the discussion of Brahman as the cause of the world (*kāraṇakāryaprakriyā*); there is the analysis of the three states of experience, waking, dream and deep sleep (*avasthātrayaprakriyā*), and there is the analysis of the "five sheaths" (*pañcakośaprakriyā*) as we see in the *Taittirīya*. Yet there is a single fundamental method in the Upaniṣads and it consists in negation coupled with the use of *lakṣaṇā*: to negate the unreal and point to the real (Comans 2000, 289; 300).

Of course, in a sense Brahman is always so intuited as our very nature, the horizonal being and awareness accompanying all experience. But Advaitic language operates to turn one's attention (*avadhāna*) *explicitly* towards this bare fact in order for the self to realize it as constitutive of its identity. Being and consciousness enjoy this privilege since they alone are directly available as one's own self, as the conscious presence that does not require the aid of language to mediate between the self and world. Everything else falls in the domain of *nāmarūpa* or, to use the *Chāndogya* formulation, *nāmadheya*, dependence on names. While Being and the cognition of Being are always obtaining facts, directing attention to them—for they are easily overlooked owing to their subtlety—requires the occasioning of oblique indication through the term '*sat*' in an appropriate pedagogical environment. The real grammar of 'being' therefore accounts for how the ultimately real is beyond all language and reference—famously captured by the *Taittirīya* formulation, 'wherefrom words recoil' (*yato vāco nivartante*) (TU 2.9.1)—yet capable of being obliquely indicated by certain words if subjected to the right grammar.[71] We now consider its accompanying aspect of consciousness as implicated in a non-dual grammar.

IV. The Non-Dual Grammar of Noetic Verbs

As the last section argued, existential verbs (derived from the root cluster *bhū-as-vid*) found themselves at the center of two opposed metaphysical paradigms, leading their collective sense either, following the grammarians and Mīmāṃsakas, towards action and becoming (*kriyā* and *bhāva*) or, following the Advaitins, non-actional being (*sat*). While Śaṃkara admits, in fact endorses, the actional basis of worldly existence, language provides certain limiting cases, such as existential verbs and noetic verbs that cannot be fully accounted for without taking leave of a *bhāva*-centric metaphysics. Bringing rather contrary intuitions about being (*bhāva*/*sat*) into play, existential verbs indicated for Śaṃkara a dimension outside the framework of time, change and action. Noetic verbs, those which denote the process of knowing, will also be found to have such a non-actional and non-processual basis. Śaṃkara's analysis of forms such as *jānāti* or *bodhati* will

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[71] Chapter 5 will further explore how this element of isness conveyed by existential verbs is implicated in the cognition of sentential meaning in the analysis of the identity statements (*mahāvākya*s) and nominal sentences.

identify their semantic core as indicating the horizonal awareness constitutive of particular knowledge acts, instead of the particular acts themselves. Unless this non-processual dimension of the grammar of *budh-jñā-cit* is extracted out of its processual surface grammar, one cannot rightly understand the consciousness component of the Brahman definition (The *Taittirīya* definition: *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*), thwarting the correct comprehension of the identity statements equating the self and Brahman.

Language may thus point to this actionless substratum of existence, but not without a process Chris Bartley has referred to as 'semantic refinement' (Bartley 1986), which refers to the process of extracting this non-dual and non-actional depth-grammar of noetic and existential verbs from their overt processual sense. In Advaita this occurs in a few ways, including distinguishing the significative and the indirect oblique functions of nominals, thus 'refining' their meaning; particularly those standing on either side of the Upanishadic identity statement, the 'you' (*tvam*) and 'that' (*tat*) of *tattvamasi*. Indeed, the core objective of the Advaitic noetic ritual, dealt with elsewhere, is nothing but the refining of everyday language in the correct comprehension of statements of identity. The non-dual grammar of existential verbs directed attention to the non-actional (*niṣkriya*) dimension of being, conveyed most emphatically by √*as* and its derivatives. What I refer to as *noetic* verbs (derived from the root cluster *budh-jñā-cit*) provide the other limiting case of words indicating a dimension of being outside of the *bhāva* paradigm. The fact that there exist in language these two sets of limiting cases (existential and noetic verbs) of a generalized theory of verbal semantics centered on action, and exactly these two, is not accidental. As *Taittirīya* 2.1 indicates, they comprise the only two sets of words that can disclose the actionless being underneath the surface actional semantics and syntax of everyday language; of course only after they have undergone the refinement disclosing their depth structure. As in the *Taittirīya* definition (*satyam jñānam anantam brahma*), Being and knowledge/consciousness alone unambiguously indicate Brahman. The noetic roots generate nominal forms such as *jñāna, prajñā, jñapti, bodhātmaka, avabodha, ātmabodha, cit, caitanya* etc., but it is in their verbal form that their actionlessness is most polemically relevant, since it is argued that even as verbs they may carry a non-actional sense. As I show, both can be interpreted *actionally* and *temporally*: existing and knowing as processes in time; as well as *non-actionally* and *atemporally*: as the horizonal being-consciousness accompanying all experience. The former is the familiar turf of grammar and

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Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. The latter introduces Advaita's grammatical interventions. The correct grammar of such verbs will be directly effective in the cognition of Brahman, that is, recognizing a core dimension of self (*ātman*) as non-actional.

We saw earlier that both grammarians and Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas at least recognize the problem of the inclusion of existential verbs within a purely action-centric paradigm attempting to accommodate them in all sorts of ways. Words derivative of noetic roots, on the other hand, are often unproblematically taken to stand for some kind of process or action, as for instance, sense-perception. For the Advaitin, while knowing includes processual elements, it is founded on a non-processual and non-actional substratum of a witness self, understood as a field of consciousness accommodating particular knowledge events. This can be stated as the thesis that knowing is not an activity or process but the very nature of the self. Andrew Fort has discussed the notion of a 'field (*kṣetra*) of consciousness' as one of the two ways in which witness-consciousness (*sākṣicaitanya*) is conceived by Advaitins, the other being that of a more literal witnesser of events or actions, itself actionless:

> Adherents of Advaita Vedānta in particular have examined the fundamental difference between the knowing self and the intellect. In Advaita, the knowing self is often called the *sākṣin*, commonly rendered witness…It is eternal, non-dual, and unchanging; moreover, it is particularly differentiated from the mind or intellect (*antaḥkaraṇa, dhī, buddhi*) and the perceiver, perceiving, perceived triad. The *sākṣin* is also linked with pure consciousness (*caitanya*) and the self (*ātman*, versus the *jīva* or *īśvara*). It is self-luminous and self-evidencing. The image of pure light is suggestive here: like the *sākṣin*, light immediately reveals all objects and is not dependent on them; the *sākṣin* and light are pervasive and unconditioned (Fort 1984, 278-9).

My task will be to uncover the grammatical basis of this distinction in Śaṃkara, showing how the two paradigms of knowing—knowing as actional/processual or the non-actional field or witness—are grounded in distinct linguistic features of noetic verbs, partaking of both actional and non-actional features, beginning with the non-dual/non-actional grammar of noetic verbs laid out by Śaṃkara in his *Taittirīya* 2 commentary

and then the *Upadeśasāhasrī*.[72] The discussion of knowledge/consciousness (*jñāna, jñapti, cit, caitanya, bodha*) in Śaṃkara will show, parallel to the case of Being (*sat*), that self-knowledge is incumbent on the disclosure of the appropriate depth-grammar and semantics of certain key words and sentences.

IV.i   The Depth-Semantics of Knowing in Taittirīya 2.1

We are already partially familiar with Śaṃkara's treatment of knowing/knowledge, particularly the semantics of '*jñāna*', from his general discussion of the *Taittirīya* Brahman definition. At one level, the non-dual grammar of *knowing* operates in parallel with the grammar of *being*; the deeper semantics of both '*satya*' and '*jñāna*' is uncovered by parallel grammatical procedures, such as the demonstration of the impossibility of denotative (*abhidhānābhidheya*) and predicative (*viśeṣaṇaviśeṣya*) activity with respect to them, the two linguistic procedures singled out by Śaṃkara as natural to conventional language, but ineffective in the disclosure of Brahman. Predication (as the attribution of a predicate to a subject, schematized in 'x is y') is impossible with respect to the definitional items of the Brahman definition because of the absence, in them, of the fourfold ground of the application of words (class, attribute, action, relation). Signification (*abhidhānatva* or *vācyatva* as a relation between words and their reference) is also put out of play owing to the activation of the oblique function (*lakṣaṇā*).[73] Śaṃkara will eventually engages the specificity of the term '*jñāna*' a little further down in the commentary:

> *Jñāna* means knowledge (*jñapti*)[74], consciousness (*avabodha*). The word '*jñāna*' conveys the abstract notion of the verb (*jñā*, to know); and being an attribute of Brahman along with being and infinitude, it does not indicate the agent of knowing. If Brahman be the agent of knowing, being and infinitude cannot justly be attributed to it. For as the agent of knowing, It becomes changeful and, as such, how can it be true and infinite? That, indeed, is infinite which is not separated from anything. If it be the agent of knowing, It becomes delimited by

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[72] The naming of the root cluster *budh-jñā-cit* (as *noetic* roots) is my own. But it reflects Advaita's unitary treatment of those verbs, just as existential roots (*bhū-as-vid*), in spite of their subtle differences, were considered one unit for all practical purposes by the grammarians. Having the well-accepted meaning of knowing, being aware, registering, the real debate will wage around the question whether this meaning ought to be understood actionally or non-actionally. Śaṃkara alternates between these roots and their radical meanings depending on the text he is commenting on and its preferred vocabulary. For *Taittirīya* it is *jñāna/jñapti*.

[73] Both of these, signification (*vācyatva*) and predication (*viśeṣaṇatva*), are treated at length in the earlier discussion of TUB 2.1.

[74] Śaṃkara wants to suggest, by the term '*jñapti*', the bare sense of the root, i.e., 'knowing', at this point understood actionally, as all verb-meanings, but later to be explicated in non-actional terms.

the knowable and the knowledge, and hence there cannot be infinitude, in accordance with another Vedic text: "That is the Infinite in which one does not know anything else. And that in which one knows anything else is limited (CU 7.24.1)".[75]

Śaṃkara here chooses to go with derivatives of √*jñā* and √*budh* in glossing *jñāna*, but elsewhere derivatives of √*cit* are the preferred mode of explanation. He is here clarifying that the sense of the root in play is to be understood as the 'abstract notion', what grammarians refer to as *bhāvasādhana*, i.e., the root-meaning is manifest in the general and abstract processuality intimated by the root, without the particular instrumentality or role of any actional factors or *kāraka*s. It might be supposed that the self is the agent of knowing, owing to the inclusion of '*jñāna*' in the Brahman definition.[76] To address this possible misreading, Śaṃkara enters into asemantic analysis of the term '*jñāna*' as founded on the abstract sense of its root. This avoids the unwanted implication that self-Brahman is an agent who may sometime know and sometimes not know, since with agency come choice and impermanency; one is an agent only insofar one is engaged in an activity requiring an agent. Consciousness, however, is an abiding condition or capacity. Chris Bartley explains:

> It is possible to analyze a word such as *jñāna* as meaning either one of the six factors associated with an action *(kārakavyutpatti)* or as expressive of a static condition *(bhāvavyutpatti)*. It could be the case that *jñāna* means 'means of knowledge' *(jñāyate'neneti jñānam)*. This would be an instance of a *kāraka-vyutpatti*, specifically *karaṇavyutpatti* (v. Pāṇini 1.4.42) *Sādhakataṃ karaṇam* 'that which is especially effective is called the instrument'. Alternatively, it could be construed as expressing the *kartṛ-kāraka* and meaning cognitive agency. Śaṃkara thinks that in this context *jñāna,* since it refers to the Absolute, cannot be analyzed as expressing a *kāraka* since that would imply modification and distinction between subject, means and object. The word must therefore be construed as conveying a static condition *(bhāva)* (Bartley 1986, 107-8).

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[75] jñānaṃ jñaptir avabodho bhāvasādhano jñānaśabdo na tu jñānakartṛ, brahmaviśeṣaṇatvāt satyānantābhyāṃ saha | na hi satyatānantatā ca jñānakartṛttve saty upapadyete | jñānakartṛtvena hi vikriyamāṇaṃ kathaṃ satyaṃ bhavedanantaṃ ca? yad dhi na kutaścit pravibhajyate tad anantam | jñānakartṛtve ca jñeyajñānābhyāṃ pravibhaktam ity anantatā na syāt | yatra nānyadvijānāti sa bhūmātha yatrānyad vijānāti tadalpam. TUB 2.1.1.

[76] It may appear that the present context is the definition of Brahman and not the nature of self but it is typical of Advaita to switch talk of Brahman and self since they indicate the same reality, the horizonal conscious presence behind the seemingly distinct referential domains demarcated by the words.

Note Bartley's rendering of *bhāvasādhana* as 'static condition'. Its virtue is that it conveys Śaṃkara's emphasis on the non-actional or 'static' nature of consciousness, as opposed to the dynamism of mind and intelligence (manas/*buddhi*). But I go with Ganganath Jha's 'abstract notion' since as a standard grammatical procedure, it tends to convey the pure actionality of the verb/verbal root in the absence of any particular factors of action. This can be understood with reference to the Sanskrit voice-system, comprising the active (*kartari*), passive (*karmaṇi*) and impersonal (*bhāve*). While the first two require the activation of an agent or object as the subject of a sentence, thus involving a *kāraka* analysis, the last absolves the requirement of any actional factor taking the subject position. Now *bhāva* itself—the bare processuality or activity conveyed by the verb—is the primary reference of the sentence. Such processuality, moreover, is the generic sense of every verb (*kriyāsāmānyatva*), for instance, eating, walking, cutting, cooking etc. In the same way, at the derivational (*vyutpatti*) level (etymological as opposed to morphological or sentential), *bhāvasādhana* conveys the bare processuality without any further isolation of a *kāraka* in relation to the process or action conveyed by a word *prior to* its sentential role/location.

Gerow has (in the same paper '*What is Karma?*') considered the relationship of the passivization of Sanskrit syntax, and the increasing prevalence of the impersonal, with the philosophies of Advaita and Buddhism, arguing that they overcome *karman* by a process similar to the syntactic passivization of Sanskrit. Put simply, it is no co-incidence that the two philosophies locate the crux of the problem of existence in the sense of agency accompanying worldly existence, or ego (*ahaṃkāra*) in Advaitic parlance. The Advaitic appeal to the impersonal Brahman cannot therefore be far removed from the linguistic recourse to the passive 'impersonal' leading sentence-meaning away from resting in the agent or object. Actions without agents—or at least without an accompanying *sense* of agency, i.e., *kartṛtva*—is exactly the cure commended by Śaṃkara. For Gerow, in all Advaitas, including Bhartṛhari's *Śabdādvaita*, it is the proper understanding of agency that unlocks the basic ontological confusion. He concludes,

> We can say, if agency goes, all that remains on which to ground the assertion is '*karmaṇi*' (for those propositions where the act does pertain to an external 'object' ('the town is walked to [by...X] ') or '*bhāve*' (for intransitive verbs and existential predications, where no ground is available *ex hypothesi* save the act asserted itself: It is sat down [by…X]. We thus see in the

proper (true) Advaitic assertions the correct realization of the grammatical categories themselves. Which came first, the chicken or the egg? The 'grammatical' problem for Advaita is neatly solved by making all sentences with real content 'passive' (*karmaṇi/bhāve*), in fact 'impersonal' (Gerow 1982, 112-13).

Consciousness is at the center of this re-evaluation of experience and language, for, to continue in Gerow's voice, "the point of philosophical re-evaluation of this experience…is to disassociate consciousness and agency: the 'unconscious' (*prakṛti*) becoming the 'agent' of all true propositions, the conscious 'subject' being liberated of all predicates" (Gerow 1982, 112). This is precisely Śaṃkara's agenda in the *Taittirīya* commentary. Real activity, active knowing, belong to the mind-intellect (*manas-buddhi*) complex, while the self is the pure non-actional witness (*sākṣin*). Moreover, this realization is grammatical; it is the knowledge of the correct denotation of 'I' (and other personal pronouns)—as indicating the witness consciousness and not the agent of action—that leads to the realization of self as the actionless substratum of experience.

I address two further considerations that Gerow's thesis leaves open. For him, the Advaitic grammatical solution is ultimately insufficient insofar as it does not adequately account for *contentless* sentences, even if it is able to account for *agentless* ones (by making sentences passive/impersonal): "We now assert two instead of one: « *It* is cold, hot... » and « I am (...) ». Grammatically speaking, simple assertive propositions involving personal agents are no longer possible, and each one has to be analytically dissolved into a predicate (or content: hot, etc.) and a « subject ». But terms as such cannot *be* propositions; in the place of one, we must apply a « dummy » subject for the real predicate (the English « it » - *prakṛti*) and an empty predicate for the real subject (*puruṣa/ātman*, as unqualified « consciousness »)" (Gerow 1982, 112). However, the recuperation of an Advaitic non-dual grammar can address this concern. As Chapter 2 discussed, the crucial Advaitic move is to communicate the extra-linguistic linguistically by recovering a grammar that can do so. Such an alternative non-dual grammar can account for both contentless and agentless sentences without giving up the subject/self as ontologically primitive. One only has to recover sentences that do not rely on predication, thereby salvaging sentential meaning without positing otherness or content. This is exactly what Advaitic *mahāvākya*s (identity statements) seek to do, as a special case of identity statements in language, such as 'x is y' where the copula is not predicative but assertive of identity (such as the statement

'the morning star *is* the evening star'). Moreover, it is not so much that pure consciousness or Brahman—the non-actional sentential subject—is now rendered contentless. Rather, it is the content of any predicate freed from its limiting or conditioning features; 'pure' Being and Consciousness (as the *Taittirīya* Brahman definition earlier clarified)[77] simply isolate the existential and conscious element of every existent thus becoming, on the one hand, contentless but, on the other hand, representing the real *substantial* element of any content, furnishing its existential concreteness, not its particularities.

Identity statements and nominal sentences thus provide one subset of the kinds of linguistic phenomena seized by Advaita to disclose a non-actional grammar of self. While appearing to be trivially true—for identity statements only affirm an obtaining identity couched in apparent difference—they are contentful in their own right insofar as they do the work of pointing to an underlying identity not apparent to the untrained eye.[78] This is the underlying logic of 'I am Brahman' (*ahaṃ brahmāsmi*). The 'I' undergoes semantic shifts in its domain of application, never vanishing entirely. Or, more accurately, emptied of all positive content (the body, mind, ego etc. being negated of the self), the 'I' is simultaneously expanded to a non-localized universal signifier: 'I am Brahman' means that the self is non-different from whatever it encounters in its field of awareness and activity, by way of isolating its underlying horizonal aspects of being and consciousness. This is one reading of the ample references, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and elsewhere, to the liberated condition as one of *sarvātmabhāva* (a condition of oneness with everything). In either case, the typical Advaitic negation of each and every positive or determinate content associated with the 'I' (in any statement with 'I' as subject) runs parallel with a deeper identity with the non-actional substratum (Brahman) of its predicated content.

More pertinently, while the emphasis on *bhāva* and *kriyā* offers one path to the overcoming of agency/egoity in the manner developed by Gerow, permitting actions without actors, processes without agents, it is still intimately tied to the *bhāva* paradigm that Śaṃkara will eventually take leave of. It is the eventual substitution of *bhāva* by *sat* as the alternate linguistic center of gravity that furnishes the genuine

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[77] "Brahman (is) being consciousness infinite"; satyam jñānam anantam brahma. TU 2.1.
[78] Identity statements are treated at length in Chapter 5.

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alternative of a non-agential, non-actional Advaitic grammar. For, the presuppositions of the *bhāva* paradigm seep right into the standard procedures of the grammarians, from the passive impersonal (*bhāve-prayoga*) to the conception of the radical abstract notion (*bhāva-sādhana*), indicating the bare processuality conveyed by verbs. The real meaning of '*jñāna*', however, can have nothing to do with the processuality or becoming characteristic of root meaning (*dhātvartha*). This is where, it seems, the radical difference of noetic and existential verbs from all others is located by Śaṃkara. He will therefore take leave of even his earlier recourse to *bhāvasādhana*, as a kind of intermediary means (*upāya*) to be discarded:

> [Objection:] For even if it be considered that *jñāna* is understood as Consciousness, in the sense of *bhāva* (*bhāvarūpatā*)[79], Brahman will still be open to the charge of impermanence and dependence. For the meanings of verbal roots are dependent on actional factors (*dhātvarthānaṃ kārakāpekṣatvāt*). And '*jñāna*' too is a root-meaning…

> [Response:] No, since without implying that knowledge is separable from Brahman, it is referred to as an activity only conventionally…Knowing is the nature of the self, is inseparable from the Self, and so is eternal. Still the intellect, the limiting adjunct of the Self, gets transformed in the shape of the objects while issuing forth through the eyes etc…These semblances (*avabhāsa*) of Self-consciousness…designated by the word '*jñāna*' (*vijñānaśabdavācyāḥ*) and bearing the root-meaning (*dhātvarthabhūtāḥ*) are imagined by the non-discriminating to be qualities of the Self…Thus, since this knowing is not a form of action (*akriyārūpatvāt*), it does not also bear the root-meaning of the verbal root (√*jñā*)…And again because of this, Brahman cannot even be signified by the word '*jñāna*'. Still Brahman is obliquely indicated (*lakṣyate*), not signified (*na ucyate*), by the word '*jñāna*' which really stands for a semblance of Consciousness referring to an attribute of the intellect; for Brahman is free from such things as class etc., which make the use of the word '*jñāna*' possible.[80]

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[79] Owing to the use of *bhāvasādhana* in its interpretation.

[80] yadi nāma jñaptir jñānam iti bhāvarūpatā brahmaṇaḥ tadāpy anityatvaṃ prasajyeta, paratantryaṃ ca | dhātvarthānāṃ kārakāpekṣatvāt | jñānaṃ ca dhātvarthaḥ…na, svarūpāvyatirekeṇa kāryatvopacārāt | ātmanaḥ svarūpaṃ jñaptir na tato vyatiricyata ato nityaiva | tathāpi buddher upādhilakṣaṇāyāś cakṣurādidvārair viṣayākāreṇa pariṇāminyā ye śabdādyākārāvabhāsāḥ ta ātmavijñānasya viṣayabhūta | utpadyamānā eva ātmavijñānena vyāptā utpadyante | tasmād ātmavijñānāvabhāsyāś ca te vijñānaśabdavācyāś ca dhātvarthabhūtā ātmana eva dharmā vikriyārūpā ity avivekibhiḥ parikalpyante | yat tu brahmaṇo vijñānaṃ tatsavitṛprakāśavad agnyuṣṇatvavac ca brahmasvarūpāvyatiriktam svarūpam eva tat | na tatkāraṇāntarasavyapekṣam | nityasvarūpatvāt sarvabhāvānāṃ ca tenāvibhaktadeśakālatvāt kālākāśādikāraṇatvāc ca niratiśayasūkṣmatvāc ca | na tasyānyad avijñeyaṃ sūkṣmaṃ vyavahitaṃ viprakṛṣṭaṃ bhūtaṃ bhavad bhaviṣyad vāsti | tasmāt sarvajñaṃ tadbrahma | mantravarṇāś ca — "apāṇipādo javano grahītā paśyaty acakṣuḥ sa śṛṇoty akarṇaḥ | sa vetti vedyaṃ na ca tasyāsti vettā tam āhur agryaṃ puruṣaṃ mahāntam" iti | "na hi vijñātur vijñāter viparilopo vidyate 'vināśitvān na tu tadūdvitīyam asti" ity ādiśruteś ca | vijñātṛsvarūpāvyatirekāt karaṇādinimittānapekṣatvāś ca brahmaṇo jñānasvarūpatve 'pi nityatvaprasiddhiḥ | ato naiva dhātvarthas tadakriyārūpatvāt | ata eva ca na jñānakartṛ, tasmād eva ca na jñānaśabdavācyam api tadbrahma | tathāpi tadābhāsavācakena buddhidharmaviṣayeṇa | jñānaśabdena tal lakṣyate, na tūcyate, śabdapravṛttihetujātyādidharmarahitatvāt. TUB 2.1.1. My tr.

The opponent's argument that root-meanings are intrinsically tied to actions and actors (*dhātvarthānaṃ kārakāpekṣatvāt*) is meant to directly weaken Śaṃkara's claim that the word '*jñāna*' be understood in its bare root sense, for this sense, its '*bhāvarūpatā*', would make knowledge/consciousness impermanent and conditional. Śaṃkara responds by presenting an argument for the absence of any action and actional factors in consciousness. Consciousness is the very nature of the Self and, not being other than the Self, any '*kārya* discourse' with respect to it—i.e., talk of knowledge/consciousness having to be produced as an outcome of a process or act—is only metaphorical or conventional (*upacāra*). What then does root-meaning denote? For it must denote something and all root-meaning conveys a sense of an underlying processuality or activity. It is the limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) of the intellect that takes on the role of the underlying activity denoted by the verbal root (*dhātvarthabhūta*). Knowledge as such is actionless, *akriyārūpa*, being the witness-dimension of self.

The *vācya-lakṣya* distinction is already familiar to us as a device for Śaṃkara to isolate the non-actional inner or depth-semantics of '*satya*' and '*jñāna*'. Brahman is outside the *significative* reach of words because of the absence in Brahman of the fourfold criterion of application of words (class, action, attribute, relation). By mutual control, the three definitional items (*satya, jñāna, ananta*) are able to restrict and lead each other's meaning to a non-actional conscious presence behind the actional semantics of conventional language. The novelty of this argument, however, is to relate root meaning as such (*dhātvartha*) with the significative and referential reach of words. We are now to understand that the very etymological basis or ground (literally, *dhātu*) of language, the root-meanings, operate entirely within the actional grammar laid out by the grammarians and Mīmāṃsakas. Verbal meanings thus refer to and isolate the realm of *śabdavācya*, the signification of words. But the verbal root cluster *budh-jñā-cit* (noetic verbs), as well as *bhū-as-vid* (existential verbs), are subject to a further deep structure uncovered by the *oblique* function of words (*śabdalakṣya*), revealing the underlying non-actional basis of Being and Consciousness: "Still Brahman is obliquely indicated (*lakṣyate*), not signified (*na ucyate*), by the word '*jñāna*' which really stands for a verisimilitude of Consciousness as referring to an attribute of the intellect; for Brahman is free from such things as class etc., which make the

use of the word '*jñāna*' possible." This relation of consciousness with the active intellect is articulated in the *Upadeśasāhasrī*.

IV.ii   The Grammar of Conventional Knowing: Agency and Subjectivity in US I.18

The Advaitic analysis of noetic roots such as √*jñā* is meant to lead the concept and language of knowing from a familiar actional paradigm to a non-actional one. Knowing is explained as an intrinsic quality or feature of being (*ātmasvarūpa*) than an episodic act of the self. It is fundamentally a *being* rather than *doing*. As Mayeda states, "Śaṃkara and other Advaitins, however, stand on the Upanishadic axiom that knowledge or perception is *Ātman* itself. But the word 'perception' (*upalabdhi*) is generally conceived to mean an 'action' of perceiving which is indicated by the verbal root (*dhātu*) *upa-labh*; action is nothing but change (Mayeda 1992, 38)." Mayeda immediately addresses the grammatical point at the heart of the problem: all roots indicate activity; how then can verbs like 'knows' (*jānāti*) that apply to perception make reference to a non-actional being? Mayeda is here paraphrasing a view expressed in US II.2: "Perception is what is meant by the verbal root, that is, nothing but change (*vikriyā*); it is contradictory [to this fact] to say that [the nature of] the perceiver is transcendentally changeless" (US II.2.76). We will see just how Śaṃkara responds to this, but the grammatical basis of both the interjection and subsequent response is worth noting. The interjection is in fact reminiscent of the problematic status of existential roots discussed earlier which, while often just connoting bare existence, were nonetheless construed along a processual mode. The liminal status of existential verbs in Patañjali's discussion is here assumed by noetic verbs: like all verbal roots they must connote action/process, yet be revelatory of an actionless dimension of knowledge emphasized by Advaita. As before, the Advaitic response will take the form of an appeal to a non-actional/non-dual grammar, this time of noetic verbs, that permits words to transcend their changeful (*vikriyā*) nature articulated in traditional grammar.

As in the case of the nominal '*jñāna*' (from the *Taittirīya* Brahman definition), this unchanging *being* element (as opposed to the *doing* element*)* of knowing can be carefully extracted from its overt processuality by directing attention to an unsublatable-unchanging aspect of the meaning of words for knowing. This is mediated, as suggested in Śaṃkara's *Taittirīya* commentary, by separating the knowledge process into two

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halves: the first, an element of bare consciousness, the basic capacity to be aware, to register, and a processual element involving actual and active apprehensions. The first, witness consciousness (*sākṣicaitanya* or simply *caitanya*) can be understood as a capacity, field or horizon in which particular cognitions can occur. It is just there, as an ever-present field or substratum of potential cognitions; not quite assimilable into the domain of *bhāva* (action/becoming/process) but serving as the ground for particular acts of knowing.

This bifurcation reappears in US I.18, with slightly different emphases. Conventional knowledge is set up on the obtaining fact of superimposition (*adhyāsa*), between the self and non-self, as having already occurred. This is what guides Śaṃkara's treatment of knowing in US I.18 as opposed to *Taittirīya,* where at issue was the nominal term '*jñāna*' as a definitional item (crucial to understanding Brahman as infinite consciousness). Here, Śaṃkara is concerned with explaining conventional knowledge exemplified in the verbal form '*jānāti*' ('knows') as a *post hoc* feature of experience founded on superimposition (*adhyāsa*), and therefore reminiscent of his treatment of superimposition (*adhyāsa*) in the *Brahmasūtra.* In terms of a non-dual grammar, it is significant because it illumines what, according to Advaitins, comprises subjectivity or agency in a sentence such as 'I know', 'S/he knows' (or any statement of the kind 'S/he does or acts') involving agential actions. Śaṃkara thus provides an Advaitic perspective on actional statements—the paradigmatic kind of statements for Sanskrit grammarians—the precise relation between their agents and actions, what constitutes conventional agency and, more generally, the conventional self or 'I'. Moreover, the discussion in US I.18 sheds light on the designation of indexical items, such as 'I', 'You', 'This', 'That'. It is only be clarifying their overt and covert referential domains that Advaitic sentences, particularly the *mahāvākya*s, can be rendered soteriologically effective.

The Knowledge Process in the US

Śaṃkara's *Taittirīya* commentary, as we saw, set up the intellect-consciousness bifurcation in terms of the signified (*vācya*) and obliquely indicated (*lakṣita*) domains of the term '*jñāna*' respectively, the point being that the denotative reach of words typically extends to the domain of action (*kriyā*) and actional factors (*kāraka*);

as if language was primarily, if not exclusively, meant to designate action. Here the distinction is articulated in terms of the constitution of the verbal suffix in any statement containing finite verbs:

> [Objection:] The meaning of the verbal root and verbal suffix, though different [from each other], are seen to have one and the same subject as in '*karoti*' (he does), '*gacchati*' (he goes), etc., according to universally accepted opinion…Explain why in construing '*jānāti*' (he knows) there should be two subjects.
> [Reply:] It is the reflection of *Ātman* that is expressed by the verbal termination whereas the meaning of the root is the action of the intellect. And it is on this account of the absence of discriminating knowledge that the two [*Ātman* and intellect] are wrongly said to 'know' (*jānāti*). Knowledge does not belong to the intellect and *Ātman* has no action. Therefore 'to know' is not applicable to either of them. Therefore the word 'consciousness' (*jñapti*), which implies action, has no application [to *Ātman*] either. For it is not anything changing…*Ātman* is never taken to be expressible by words or cognizable, according to those who [realize that] *Ātman* is only one, free from pain and changeless. If the bearer of the 'I'-notion were *Ātman*, then [*Ātman*] would be the primary meaning of a word. But as [the bearer of the 'I'-notion] has hunger etc., it is not in the Śruti taken to be *Ātman*.[81]

The above passage highlights Śaṃkara's grammatical articulation of a framework that is pervasive in the *US*, indeed may be the core framework by which the *US* approaches Advaitic metaphysics and epistemology. One way to express this is to note that the *US* is largely preoccupied with the *subjective* aspect of its metaphysics, conveyed by the personal pronouns in a *mahāvākya*—the *you* of 'You are that', the *I* of 'I am Brahman'. It is of course finally shown to be non-different from the *objective* dimension articulated through various Upanishadic accounts of cosmogony (*sṛṣṭi*), god (*īśvara*) and nature (*bhūta*). In the language of enaction procedures (*prakriyā*s) discussed in Chapter 2, we may say that the *US* focuses on subject-centric procedures as opposed to nature or world-centric. This framework, dispersed across its chapters, is that of the everyday self or 'I' as a hybrid of an underlying changeless consciousness and a changeful intellect coming together in a

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[81] prakṛtipratyayārthau yau bhinnāv ekāśrayau yathā | karoti gacchatītyādau dṛṣṭau lokaprasiddhitaḥ.
nānayor dvyāśrayatvaṃ tu loke dṛṣṭaṃ smṛtau tathā | jānātyartheṣu ko hetur dvyāśrayatve nigadyatām.
ātmābhāsas tu tiṅvācyo dhātvarthaś ca dhiyaḥ kriyā | ubhayaṃ cāvivekena jānātīty ucyate mṛṣā.
na buddher avabodho 'sti nātmano vidyate kriyā | ato nānyatarasyāpi jānātīti ca yujyate.
nāpy ato bhāvaśabdena jñaptir ity api yujyate | na hy ātmā vikriyāmātro nitya ātmetiśāsanāt.
na buddher buddhivācyatvaṃ karaṇaṃ na hy akartṛkam | nāpi jñāyata ity evaṃ karmaśabdair nirucyate.
na yeṣām eka evātmā nirduḥkho 'vikriyaḥ sadā | teṣāṃ syāc chabdavācyatvaṃ jñeyatvaṃ cātmanaḥ sadā.
yadāhaṃkartur ātmatvaṃ tadā śabdārthamukhyatā | nāśanāyādimattvāt tu śrutau tasyātmateṣyate. US I.18.51-58. All *US* translations use Mayeda 1992.

cognitive act. The former grants the cognition its conscious or perceptive capacity, the latter its processual or actional dimension that responds to an external or internal object or stimulus.

A discourse of reflection (*ābhāsa*) is invoked to explain their relation. It is because of the reflection of the self-effulgent self in the intellect (taking the place of the mirror in the reflection metaphor), by nature unconscious, that the latter appears conscious and, conversely, the underlying self (that which is reflected), owing to its proximity with the mirror of the intellect, is mistakenly conceived as changeful (in the same way as any features of a reflecting medium, such as a scratch or blot on the mirror, will tarnish the image, without affecting the original). This conventional self, the conscious agent, is thus a hybrid product of consciousness and agency as really belonging to two different orders: reality as such (as infinite/unconditioned consciousness) and the emergent or evolute of *buddhi* which, owing to its emergent nature, is changeful like everything else. The mutual superimposition of self and non-self generates the everyday sense of 'I' where one is unable to distinguish oneself as the underlying witness-consciousness free of the actional and changeful attributes superimposed by the intellect. The *US* thus closely tracks the superimposition (*adhyāsa*) discourse of Śaṃkara's *Brahmasūtra* commentary giving it further detail and depth.

It is this scheme that is grammaticalized in the verses quoted above. Verse 57 echoes the *Taittirīya* understanding that the real self (*ātman*) can never be directly expressible by words (*na śabdavācyatvaṃ*), only obliquely indicated (*lakṣita*). As we saw, derivatives of √*vac*—as when he denies that the *ātman* is expressible (*vācya*) by words—are ascribed a technical sense of conventional linguistic reference/signification by him. Such reference is only possible with respect to the everyday self (*ahaṃkāra*) that exists and functions within the realm of everyday language. The *US* here repeats the *Taittirīya* argument that this is owing to the fact that the conventional 'I' is subject to the fourfold ground of the application of words (class, action, quality and relation) and therefore subject to signification (*vācyatva*). Further, in any actional sentence, the verbal counterpart of the nominal 'I' reflects this very distinction between the real and conventional self in its own internal morphology outlined in the verses above. Mayeda explains:

> One expresses one's experience of perception by means of language and says, *jānāmi* (I know) or *jānāti* (he knows). According to the ordinarily accepted understanding of this

sentence, 'I' or 'he' who is the subject of knowledge, 'knows' some object of knowledge, just as, in case of the sentence *devadattaḥ karoti*, Devadatta, who is the agent of action, performs a certain action by himself. The verbal root denotes action while the verbal suffix indicates an agent. Thus the meanings of the verbal root (*prakṛti*) and the verbal suffix (*pratyaya*) are different from each other, but they have a common substratum, namely Devadatta. Therefore, the two meanings belong to one and the same subject; Devadatta is the agent who actually performs an action. Likewise the verbal root *jñā* refers to the action of perceiving while the verbal suffix *-ti* or *-mi* indicates the agent. Therefore, 'I' or 'he', like Devadatta, is the agent who actually perceives the object of perception. Ordinary people consider this 'I' or 'he' to be *ātman* and think of themselves as different from Brahman, which is actionless (*akriya*) and constant (*nitya*).

Rejecting this ordinary understanding, Śaṃkara asserts that the verbal suffix indicates merely the reflection (*ābhāsa*) of *Ātman* which is in the *buddhi*, and that the verbal root means action (*kriyā*) of the *buddhi*. People say *jānāti* because they fail to distinguish *Ātman* from its reflection and the *buddhi* (*Upad* I,18,53). Perception (*avabodha*) does not belong to the *buddhi* and action does not belong to *Ātman*. For this reason the expression *jānāti* is applicable neither to the *buddhi* nor to *Ātman* (*Upad* I,18,54). Neither *Ātman* nor the *buddhi* can be the subject of the sentence *jānāti,* which requires the subject to be possessed of both perception and action.

Then what is the subject of this sentence? When consciousness (*caitanya*), the nature of *Ātman*, is superimposed upon the *buddhi* which is unconscious and of the nature of action, the *buddhi* becomes consciousness-like (*cinnibha*, *Upad* I,18,65; 68), assuming the form of *Ātman*…This *ahaṃkartṛ* is the subject of the sentence *jānāmi* or *jānāti* (Mayeda 1992, 39-40).

I first take up Śaṃkara's non-dual morphological analysis of verbs considered by Mayeda, set up in clear opposition to parallel Vyākaraṇa and Mīmāṃsā morphological analysis. Subsequently I discuss the nature and constitution of this *ahaṃkartṛ,* taking the place of the sentential subject in actional statements. I show how the status of such an everyday sense of 'I' is tied closely with the grammatical categories of *kartṛtva* (agency/doership) and *kārakatva* (actional factor or constituents). Given this fact, the Advaitic response will be to refine the referential field of this 'I' from standing for everyday agency/enjoyership to the narrower witness-consciousness. This means, as I argue, that the core Advaitic task is to transcend conventional grammar that keeps us bound in action, desire and *saṃsāra.* The treatment of the sentential subject (*ahaṃkartṛ*) and verb (*kriyā*) in the *US* is mutually reinforcing. Evaluating its content as organized around these two key sentential components can make the grammatical basis of its insights more transparent.

IV.iii   Advaitic Morphology of the Stem-Suffix

The mode of deep structure analysis found in Pūrva Mīmāṃsā finds a new articulation in Śaṃkara's

explication of the ultimate-conventional framework. The ultimate (*pāramārthika*) truth of non-action

constitutes the deep structure of the surface level action-centrism of Vedic and conventional language. It may

thus be possible to recover a non-actional aspect to all verbs even if noetic and existential verbs stand out as

the privileged instances of a non-actional semantics. In the *Upadeśasāhasrī* Śaṃkara offers a morphological

basis to non-action, just as Kumārila and others more famously attempted along action-centric lines. As

mentioned earlier, Kumārila reads the force of *bhāvanā* into the very meaning of the verbal affix. Pāṇini and

his commentators simply understood the suffix as supplying agency (*kartṛtva*) (in the active voice) to the finite

verb along with other essential information like tense, mood and number. This common-sense view of the

grammarians is transformed by Pūrva Mīmāṃsā into one centered on not merely the central verbal action but

the injunction to action. Śaṃkara too senses the need to locate his hermeneutic within a linguistic framework.

But how is it possible to read non-action (*niṣkriyatva*) into verb-meaning itself?

Śaṃkara's solution is to read the ultimate-conventional (*pāramārthika-vyāvahārika*) distinction into the

morphology of the verb. The verb stem derived from the root typically denotes the specific kind of activity

under consideration. Regarding the verbal suffix, Śaṃkara is in agreement with the general grammatical

principle that it is symbolic of the doer (*kartṛ*) of the activity (in active voice), hence in direct agreement with

the noun signifying the agent in the sentence. However, from Śaṃkara's point of view agency (*kartṛtva*) is a

product of the superimposition of the non-self upon the self. The non-actional self appears to be involved in

activity on account of its identification with the real agent, the *ahaṃkāra/ahaṃkartṛ* ('I'-sense/ego), that is the

locus of all action and worldly experience. Redolent of the superimposition account of *Brahmasūtra*, Śaṃkara

here provides a more detailed grammatical account of the nature of superimposition (*adhyāsa*):

> US I.18.64 And because they do not discriminate between this [*Ātman*] which becomes
> falsely manifest in that [intellect] and that [intellect] in which this [*Ātman*] becomes falsely
> manifest, all people naturally use the verb '*jānāti*'.

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US I.18.65 Superimposing the agency of the intellect [upon *Ātman*], [they] say that the Knower (= *Ātman*) 'knows' (*jānāti*). In like manner superimposing the Pure Consciousness [of *Ātman* upon the intellect], [they] say in this world that the intellect is the knower.[82]

The everyday self or ego (*ahaṃkāra*) is the product of this mutual superimposition, constituting the sentential agent and what any references to the self isolate. This ego is entirely within the domain of verbal reference, while any reference to the witness self, as we saw earlier in the *Taittirīya* and *US* commentaries, must happen indirectly through oblique function (*lakṣaṇā*), not direct reference (*vācyatva*): "If the bearer of the 'I'-notion (*ahaṃkāra*) were *Ātman*, then [*Ātman*] would be the primary meaning of a word. But as [the bearer of the 'I'-notion] has hunger etc., it is not in the Śruti taken to be *Ātman*" (US I.18.58).

It is this *ahaṃkāra/ahaṃkriyā*, as the begetter of agency, that connects and accommodates the self within the network of *kāraka* relationships essential to construing any activity. It draws the self down to and at par with other constituents of and adjuncts to action, by means of which the agent (*kartṛ*) may now interact with and wield other *kāraka*s to accomplish an act.[83] The self does indeed contribute something, the fact of the individual being 'conscious', which is nothing but the consciousness (*caitanya*) aspect of reality (Brahman) reflected in the intellect (*buddhi*), the psycho-physiological element most proximate to the self. This picture has been outlined above. The ego is the first superimposition on the self as well as the seat for all further impositions of agency etc. born of the 'I'-sense. The self reflected in the mind-ego, the *ātmābhāsa*, is fundamentally non-different from the real self (being only a reflection in the reflecting medium of the intellect) although it appears to take on characteristics of the reflecting medium, thus explaining the individual's complete identification and absorption in worldly existence. It is this reflected self that is denoted by the verbal suffix. The verbal stem symbolic of the actual activity being undertaken is likewise symbolic of the ego that is the real originator and locus of all action. Śaṃkara says that "it is the reflection of *ātman* that is expressed by the verbal termination whereas the meaning of the root is the action of the intellect" (US I.18.53). The respective morphological perspectives of the three schools may be schematized as follows:

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[82] yatra yasyāvabhāsas tu tayor evāvivekataḥ | jānātīti kriyāṃ sarvo loko vakti svabhavataḥ.
buddheḥ kartṛtvam adhyasya jānātīti jña ucyate | tathā caitanyam adhyasya jñatvaṃ buddher ihocyate. US I.18.64-5.
[83] The *ahaṃkartṛ* or ego is the topic of the next section.

	prakṛti (stem)	*pratyaya* (suffix)
Vyākaraṇa	*dhātvartha*	*kartṛtva/karmatva/bhāva*
Pūrva Mīmāṃsā	*karotyartha* (as the distilled meaning of all *dhātvartha*)	*bhāvanā*
Advaita/Uttara Mīmāṃsā	*ahaṃkartuḥ kriyā*	*niṣkriyātmābhasa*

The morphological division reflects the Advaitic principle of the stark opposition between action (*karman/kriyā*) and knowledge (*jñāna/avabodha*), not merely in the trivial sense of its condemnation of Vedic ritual activity, but by asserting the erroneous nature and origin of activity *as such*, based on the fabrication of a sense of 'I'. The suffix comes to symbolize knowledge or awareness, as the constitutive feature of the reflected self who is conscious by nature (*caitanyarūpa*). The stem, on the other hand, is symbolic of activity (of the ego) and designates a 'lower' rung in the ladder of reality insofar as all participants in action, including the central agent (*kartṛ*), are constructs emergent upon the 'I'-sense, itself a product of ignorance. Śaṃkara's understanding of the fundamental human error as one of superimposition (*adhyāsa*) explained as the non-discrimination between self and non-self (*asmad-yuṣmad*) or real and unreal (*satyānṛta-mithunīkaraṇa*) is thus located in grammar, paving the way for liberation by a transformed engagement with and experience of language. And by taking the verbal suffix to denote the (reflected) Self, Śaṃkara grants non-action the linguistic space and authority to counter hermeneutic and grammatical action-centrism.

IV.iv   Grammatico-Ontological Agents: Ego, Agency & the Everyday Constitution of 'I'

Śaṃkara's account in the *US* provides the grammatical basis of conventional existence, showing how the agency of the conventional agent, the *ahaṃkartṛ*, is set up and mediated grammatically as a hybrid product of unchanging consciousness and changing intellect. That is to say, the origin of this sense of 'I', or any form of sentient agency, is grammatical. The *everyday* subject—the locus of the sense of 'I' we ordinarily inhabit—is tied closely to the notion of the *grammatical* subject. In other words, conventional subjectivity is set up and

activated in the course of the actional involvements and projects taken up by the self, and disclosed by the categories of grammar.

This may appear to attribute too much importance to grammar, lest one remember that it is only reflective of the categories of action already thought to pervade conventional existence and behavior for Advaita. As seen earlier, the world is repeatedly spoken of by Śaṃkara as characterized by action, actional factors and results of action (*kriyākārakaphalalakṣaṇa*). These, as I show, reflect the grammatical organization of the language and the world they mirror. Grammar simply brings these categories to the fore. Śaṃkara would implicitly endorse the action-centrism of Sanskrit articulated by the grammarians and Mīmāṃsakas. But for him this means two things. Firstly, the real everyday subject actually conceives and conducts herself entirely along such actional lines, imagining her being to be completely exhausted by such doership/agency (*kartṛtva*) and enjoyership (*bhoktṛtva*). This is a mistake. Secondly, this actional framework must be shown to be derivative, non-intrinsic and sublatable. Advaitic non-dual grammar is thus meant to provide an alternate conception of the subject prior to and free of the actional framework, discoverable by the comprehension of certain non-actional features of language.

The profuse reference to agency and enjoyership as the basic features of existence by Śaṃkara thus bears directly on the grammatical categories they enlist. More generally, Śaṃkara's description and evaluation of worldly existence (*saṃsāra*) is determined by its complete subsumption in actional-grammatical (what I've called 'rituogrammatic') categories keeping the self tied to the unending chain of desire, action and result. In US I.12.17 Śaṃkara says: "[The notion that] *Ātman* is a doer is due to factors of action [whereas the notion that It] is not a doer is due to Its own nature. It has been fully ascertained that the understanding 'I am a doer', 'I am an enjoyer' is false." The translation conceals the force of the original assertion—*kartṛtvaṃ kārakāpekṣaṃ*—showing the complete dependence of the sense of doership/agency upon factors of action such that agency may be said to be intelligible only with reference to the *kāraka*s; as one of the *kāraka*s. The sense (*vijñāna*) 'I am a doer' (*kartāham*) is thus informed by and entangled with grammatical categories. Śaṃkara's doer/agent (*kartṛ*) is specifically and concretely the grammatical *kartṛ*, and not any generic subject

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or agent in the world. This overcoming of the actional grammar and structures of everyday existence is the driving concern.

Getting rid of existential suffering too therefore has a grammatical basis. One may say, suffering itself is the result of the self being assimilated into the categories articulated by traditional grammar. The *kāraka* scheme thus codifies the ontological framework to which the self is made to assimilate in its identity with the body and mind. This is how, I argue, the subject's everyday inhabitation of the world is completely defined by her assimilation into the actional framework. I cannot ordinarily imagine myself as a being outside of my worldly projects, tasks, duties, courses of action, the choices or decisions I make and goals I pursue. This acting, choosing, experiencing subject constitutes the everyday 'I' or *ahaṃkāra*. In other words, the crucial Advaitic insight here is that worldly existence (*saṃsāra*) or being a *subject in* in the world is nothing but being *subject to* desire and action, and therefore be the (grammatical) *subject of* desire and action, the *kartṛ* and *bhoktṛ*. Overcoming *saṃsāra* therefore implies overcoming this sense (*pratyaya/vijñāna*) of agency, enjoyership and the grounding I-sense (*ahaṃkāra*) set up in and through them. Nothing more need be done to disclose the real nature of self as Brahman (as the *mahāvākya*s seek to accomplish) as Brahman is nothing but the remainder witness-self once it is disentangled from the actional framework. The *US*, as discussed below, exemplifies this amply.

Ahaṃkāra and the I-notion

Agency and enjoyership are something the self assimilates into or 'takes up' in its worldly involvements; that is, Śaṃkara conceives the *sense* (*pratyaya, vijñāna, dhī*) of agency and enjoyership—the sense 'I am an agent', 'I am an enjoyer'— as the necessary prerequisites or conditions for worldly activity; but something that can be potentially discarded as we will see. I emphasize 'sense' because such agency-enjoyership appears as a kind of non-deliberate or non-conscious understanding of being an agent-enjoyer, a precondition for engaging in worldly activity. This sense/understanding is natural and primitive to the everyday self, accompanying all worldly cognition and activity; perhaps hiding beneath an overt awareness of the fact, yet something that can

potentially be recovered upon self-reflection. The *US* refers to it by the words '*pratyaya*' and '*vijñāna*'.[84]

'*Pratyaya*', when used in conjunction with 'I' (*aham*) gives rise to the 'I'-sense or, as Mayeda calls it, the 'I'-notion (*ahampratyaya*), standing for the general sense of *egoity* or individuality assumed by the self in its everyday being. As a crucial concept in the *US* it is referred to by other words such *ahaṃdhī*, *ahaṃkriyā* and *ahaṃkāra* or simply *aham*. Mayeda explains that "[w]hen consciousness (*caitanya*), the nature of the *Ātman*, is superimposed upon the *buddhi* which is unconscious and of the nature of action, the *buddhi* becomes consciousness-like (*cinnibha*, Upad I,18,65; 68), assuming the form of *Ātman*. Then the notion (*dhī*) that 'I am Seeing (*Dṛṣi* = *Ātman*)' occurs to the *buddhi* (Upad I,18,84; 89)" (Mayeda 1992, 39-40).

Egoity is the transference of the nature and capacity of consciousness to the actional and unconscious psychic apparatus beginning with the *buddhi*. This transference leads to subsequent identification with the psychic (and subsequently physical) apparatus as myself, as 'I'. It is not as if a pre-existent sense of self or identity simply shifts from the real self or *Ātman* to the *buddhi*. Rather it is set up, generated as such in the process. While this process is well-known, I emphasize that the ego thereby instantiates the convergence of two entirely different domains of being, actional and non-actional. Consciousness is the bare capacity of awareness. The intellect is actional by nature. In fact, not only is the intellect inherently actional, as noted by Mayeda above, but egoity itself displays an actional structure and origin, set up with respect to and through the grammatical categories of action. The ego is the sense of self generated in the pursuit of desire and action, as the grammatical agent of action (*kartṛ*) and recipient of the fruits of action (*bhoktṛ*). This was clearly stated by Śaṃkara in US I.12.17: "[The notion that] *Ātman* is a doer is due to factors of action (*kartṛtvaṃ kārakāpekṣam*)". I consider some further verses:

> US I.1.14 Knowledge destroys the factors of action as [it destroys] the notion that there is water in the salt desert…
> US I.14.8 The intellect becomes instrument, object, agent, action, and result in the dreaming state. Since [the intellect] is also see in the same way in the waking state, the Seer is different from it.

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[84] US II.2.52-3; I.1.19; I.4.1 etc. Also BSB 2.3.38.

US I.4.1 When action, which has the 'I'-notion as its seed and is in the bearer of the 'I'-notion (=intellect), has been burnt up by the fire of the notion that 'I am not [an agent or an enjoyer],' how can it produce a result (*karma*).

US I.14.43 Since every change such as the 'I'-notion, etc. has its agent, it is connected with the result of actions, and is illumined, as by the sun, on all sides by [*Ātman*, which is] of the nature of pure consciousness…[85]

These verses clarify a few points. Firstly, the grammatical *kāraka*s are deeply implicated in the project of attaining or returning to the non-actional self; as precisely the categories that need to be abandoned or dis-identified with. Secondly, egoity is deeply intertwined with, one may say, even defined by one's identification with the *kāraka* framework, particularly the grammatical agent. Commenting on the *US*, Ānandajñāna and Rāmatīrtha read the '*nāhaṃpratyaya*' ('I am not [an agent or an enjoyer]') of US I.4.1 as "*nāhaṃ kartā bhoktā vā kiṃ tu brahmaivāsmīti (yaḥ pramāṇajanitaḥ) pratyayaḥ*"; that is, the very sense of ego or individuality takes the form 'I am an agent, enjoyer'. This is what it means to be an individual. US I.14.8 also clarifies that the intellect functions by way of assuming various *kāraka* roles in accomplishing its functions. We thus witness an *ontologization* of the *kāraka* framework or, conversely, the *grammaticalization* of the subject. The everyday self moves and functions in this grammaticalized space determined by action and actional categories. And freedom is incumbent upon dis-identifying with this grammaticalized space of action.

It may be natural to see the ego as some sort of substance or abiding presence or entity inhabiting the subject. In terms of the tension between substance-metaphysical and process-metaphysical perspectives broached earlier, the ego is often be construed along the lines of the former, as some sort of non-physical entity. However, the account of the *US* clearly tends towards a conception of the ego as intrinsically changeful and generated by virtue of and with respect to the activities it takes up. In US I.14.43 (above) Śaṃkara uses four terms in grammatical apposition: *ahaṃkriyādyāḥ, samastavikriyāḥ, sakartṛkāḥ*, and *karmaphalena saṃhatāḥ*. That is, beginning with the ego itself—described as *ahaṃkriyā*, literally the action of

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[85] kārakāṇy upamṛdnāti vidyābbuddhim ivoṣare. US I.1.14.

karaṇaṃ karma kartā ca kriyā svapne phalaṃ ca dhīḥ | jāgraty evaṃ yato dṛṣṭā draṣṭā tasmāt tato 'nyathā. US I.14.8

ahaṃpratyayabījaṃ yad ahaṃpratyayavatsthitam | nāhaṃpratyayavahnyuṣṭaṃ kathaṃ karma prarohati. US I.4.1

ahaṃkriyādyā hi samastavikriyā sakartṛkā karmaphalena saṃhitā | citisvarūpeṇa samantato 'rkavat prakāśyamānāsitatātmano hy ataḥ. US I.14.43.

taking up 'I'-ness—all psychological categories and functions are intrinsically changeful, connected with an agent and the result of action. This is consistent with descriptions of the ego elsewhere in the *US*. There is no abiding or pre-existing ego standing at the basis of worldly existence; what we call 'egoity' is nothing but the psychological apparatus *in action*, performing this or that function or action that necessitates the generation of 'I'-ness. The everyday subject is nothing but this continuous series of functions and actions that give rise to a sense of an uninterrupted self.

The specifically Advaitic conception of the ego, therefore, especially as iterated in the *US*, tends towards an expedient or pragmatic account of the self; it is something created by, for and through the uses or functions that call forth the ego to carry themselves out. Its being is set up and intelligible only with respect to them; it is inherently functional. This is consistent with the general psychology of Vedānta and Sāṃkhya-Yoga where what we call the mind or psyche is an uninterrupted flow of thought-events (*cittavṛtti*s) carrying out some or the other function. There is no reified 'mind' or 'psyche' standing behind these thought-events. The same holds true for the ego. This is also in line with the actional basis of the world introduced at the very outset in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4 (Chapter 1): Anything, physical or psychological, *is* to the degree that it carries out certain allotted functions and purposes endowing it being.

Grammatically, this sense is better conveyed by '*ahaṃkriyā*'—the action of being the self—than '*ahaṃkāra*' which can suggest a more abstract or stable sense of self. As pointed out, these are only two of the many words designating the ego in the *US* (*ahaṃpratyaya, ahaṃdhī, ahaṃ* being the others). The *ahaṃkāra* may be said to designate a generic selfhood, a series of potential actions taken up or actualized by the agent in executing some function. When actuated it takes on the role the *ahaṃkartṛ*, another closely related term occurring in the *US*. That is, in an actual and specific act of the intellect (*buddhi*), this generic sense of self we call ego is actualized as the agent of this or that action, initiating it towards completion. Mayeda notes that "[t]he *buddhi* as the bearer of *ahaṃkāra* is called the *ahaṃkartṛ*…This *ahaṃkartṛ* is the subject of the sentence *jānāmi* or *jānāti* (Upad I,18,65), since the meaning both of the verbal root and verbal suffix belong to it" (Mayeda 1992, 40).

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The Advaitic agent, as such a sentential agent of 'I know/do', 'S/he knows/does', is thus only intelligible with respect to the verbal activity invoking the self's agency. In other words, if there is no action, there is no agent or agency independent of the action (as in US I.12.17: *kartṛtvaṃ kārakāpekṣam*). It is action that grants the ego its mundane, relative being. And giving up this sense of being an agent, the grammatical *kartṛ*, immediately resolves the self back to its natural non-actional being; in the language of . The ego or *ahaṃkāra* is set up in one's call to action and assimilation into the desire-action framework. By not initiating such purpose-driven activity, and not succumbing to the structure of desire and action, one's identity or being does not get implicated in action. This is what, in my reading, the realization of the self-Brahman identity amounts to; understanding the self as free of all actional categories and entanglements. In the language of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4, conceiving being in its unsegmented, undifferentiated wholeness (*kṛtsnatā*).

Indeed, the understanding 'I am Brahman' cannot co-exist with 'I am a doer/enjoyer' and serves as the countering antidote to the latter. The *US* states this at various occasions, as in US I.12.4: "Explain reasonably how the two incompatible notions 'You should act' and 'You are that,' can exist at the same time and have the same locus." As the liberating insight of my own non-actional being, the cognition 'I am Brahman' generated by the Advaitic noetic ritual serves the function of keeping the self a safe distance away from the actional framework of the world. Advaitic practice, in fact, necessitates constant remembrance of this identity to prevent relapsing back into thinking of agency and enjoyership as my natural traits. In other words, while *theoretically* there is no dearth of Advaitic and Upanishadic pronouncements about Brahman as an eternal, pristine, pure, transcendent or super-sensuous reality, the alleged real nature of the self, what it *practically* amounts to is the severance of self-identity from agency-enjoyership and the actional framework at large. In other words, the pragmatic use of such word as 'eternal', 'everlasting', 'pristine' etc. in the Upaniṣads serves the ritual imperative of severing or disentangling the sense of self from the changeful agent/ego. This is what noetic 'verbs' finally clarify, that what is uncovered by their non-dual grammar is the non-actional witness dimension of knowing, discernible from its actional dimension. It is thus possible to inhabit the world and live in a way that agency (*kartṛtva*) and ego (*ahaṃkriyā*) are in a sort of suspended animation; not vanishing entirely but rendered powerless in their control of the subject's behavior and sense of self.

CHAPTER 5: SĀMĀNĀDHIKARAṆYA AND SENTENTIAL ANALYSIS

I.   Vākya and the Nominal Sentence

As argued earlier, the realms of both ritual performance and mundane activity are articulated by grammarians, hermeneuts and some philosophers primarily along an actional framework. Goal-oriented performance—from the secular act of cooking (*pakti*) to the Vedic rite (*yajña*)—is taken up as a paradigm of theoretical explanation and elaboration, and, in fact, comes to determine the theoretical apparatus of many Brahmanic thinkers. The centrality of actional categories and frameworks articulated in the dissertation with respect to the disciplines of Vyākaraṇa and Mīmāṃsā (more generally of semantic analysis and ritual theory) manifests at various levels of analysis. We saw how, at the etymological and verbal level, all semantics is founded on a processual basis; all root-meanings (*dhātvartha*) indicate *bhāva* or *kriyā*, often considered synonymous and glossed in terms of each other. Śaṃkara must take great pains to show how the noetic and existential verbs are exceptional in further carrying a non-processual and non-actional sense. Certainly, these two cases are significant insofar as they become the contested ground between two contrasting ideologies of being and knowing; one ideology conceiving being and knowing along the *bhāva* paradigm, and the other (Advaita) along *sat,* knowing and being understood as non-processes; as the horizonal and constitutive features of all experience. As Śaṃkara notes (BSB 1.1.5) knowing, in fact, is itself a *being*, not something over and above it, in the same way as the sun's 'activity' of shining is nothing other than its being, its simply self-existing.[1]

But the same action-centrism manifests even more emphatically at the sentential level. Sentences convey actions, potential or actual, or directives to future action. And sentences not overtly connoting activity must somehow be explained in terms of it. In this chapter I outline an Advaitic grammar of the sentence, showing the manner in which the core Advaitic event of self-knowledge is reliant on, indeed constituted as, a set of quasi-grammatical operations. The inner noetic ritual of Advaita (Chapter 2) is then nothing but the

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[1] We also noted that their unique status as verbs has an ontological basis. Knowing and being, or their nominal equivalents, Consciousness (*jñāna*) and Being (*satya*) define the intrinsic nature of Brahman as the horizonal being-consciousness accompanying particular experiences and events.

non-dual grammar of Advaita put into operation. It is grammatical, particularly nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya,* or *tulyanīḍatva,* the Advaitic counterpart for the grammatical notion) that will ground the final knowledge of the identity of self and Brahman.

The argument will take the form that the alleged identity of *ātman* and Brahman whose understanding is key to liberation in Advaita, is simply the grammatical identity of nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), and such understanding is therefore grammatically constituted. As discussed in Chapter 1, this does away with a mystical, transcendental or suprarational reading of the self-Brahman identity allegedly transcending the proper bounds of reason and what can be said about Brahman from within our ordinary epistemic constraints, a recurring concern of the framing of Advaita as philosophy. If anything, we are furnished with a model of an eminently *grammatical* mode and model of reason, working in tandem with first-person experience (*anubhava*) and hermeneutics. As a further implication, aspects of the nature of Brahman will be rendered more transparent by considering it as such a grammatical substrate of properties on par with the grammatical referents of co-reference. But first, the notions of sentence (*vākya*) and meaningfulness (*sāmarthya*) will have to be first addressed, in order to appreciate the larger shift of grammatical priorities from action-centric (*kriyāpara*) to non-actional (*niṣkriya*) language.

For the grammarians and ritual philosophers, the verb was the hinge of sentence-meaning. Now the Advaitic intervention at the sentence level may be said to be two-tiered. Firstly, to argue that not only nouns and nominals but verbal forms too make reference to non-processual and actionless modes of being, so that the action-centrism (*kriyāparatva*) of verbal sentences, and more broadly language, must finally be questioned. This actional telos, already latent in grammar theory, is radicalized by Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas according to whom it is the element of becoming (*bhāva*) or bringing into being (*bhāvanā*) that is the predominant sense of any sentence. McCrea explains:

> [I]t is the verbal element that stands in need of the others, and they aid in, and hence are subordinate to, that 'coming into being' which is expressed by the verb. This reasoning is summed up in the often-cited *bhūtabhavyanyāya* ('principle of that which exists and that which must be brought into being'): 'When something which exists and something which must be brought into being are mentioned together, that which exists is pointed out for the sake of that which is to be brought into being.' (McCrea 2000, 434).

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Advaita seeks an ideological reversal of this kind of reasoning (*nyāya*). The existent or present does not derive its worth with respect to something else, it is not for the purpose of or subordinate to anything. It stands whole in its present fullness, a wholeness that must be attended to in a noetic governance or management of attention (*avadhāna*) (refer Chapter 2). Language may convey this non-actional presence of the present in a few ways, central amongst which for the Advaitin is the identity statement.

Secondly, Advaita considers the particular case of non-verbal or nominal sentences where the verb does not comprise the sentential core.[2] Can sentences that altogether lack an explicit verb even be considered autonomously meaningful or valid? This remains a debated problem in grammar as we will see. Further, do they contribute in any way to countering the action-centrism of the various Vedic sub-disciplines? For if Sanskrit allows a perfectly meaningful sentence in the absence of a verb, and further, takes such a construction to be standard, the construal of a verb (*ākhyāta*) as the syntactical-semantic core of a sentence must be reconsidered. And so must the accompanying action-centrism of its grammar. As we will see, such non-verbal forms are largely ignored by the action-centric (*kriyāpara*) emphasis of Vyākaraṇa and Mīmāṃsā, but comes to ground the non-dual grammar of Advaita. It may be worth mentioning that the Nyāya school also sought a reversal from action to substance in its prioritization of the nominal as the more significant component of sentence than verb. In this context George Cardona has argued:

> Such a shift in addition to ontological considerations, allows the Naiyāyikas to reassert the independence of and the prominence of the nominal sentence and of the nominative as the focus of the sentence-structure (*prathamānta-mukhyaviśeṣyaka-śabdabodha*). The Mīmāṃsakas, on the other hand, remain primarily concerned with the interpretation of the Vedic ritual texts, and assert the primacy of the verbal sentence type, often referring to Kātyāyana, and come up with their theory of the verb-ending as the focus of the sentence (*bhāvanā-mukhyaviśeṣyaka-śabdabodha*)…However, given that these are reductionist theories in essence, Kātyāyana and the Mīmāṃsakas are more successful in reducing the nominal sentence type to the verbal sentence through ellipsis (Deshpande 1987, 87).

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[2] While not synonymous, nominal sentences are considered to be sub-types of the broader category of non-verbal sentences.

We will subsequently appreciate some of the reasons for the greater success of the grammarians and the ritual philosophers. I have stressed the performative focus of ritual thinking as percolating into the style of thinking of the grammarians and philosophers emphasizing action and, therefore, the verb as the fulcrum of meaning and sentential syntax. But the Advaitic intervention seeks to accomplish this reversal under a very different set of presuppositions than Nyāya. For the latter, nominals name substances or essences, there being almost a one to one correspondence between them. The Advaitic prioritization of the nominal is to direct attention to the pre-existent (*bhūta*) dimension of reality completely outside the ritual calculus of ends and means. It is not a theory of substance (*padārtha*)—that is, not an appeal to a fundamental ontology of substance or kinds of being—and, as argued earlier, falls outside the straightforward metaphysical evocation of a substance-process opposition. Nonetheless, as a method of attentional governance (Chapter 2), it seeks to direct attention to obtaining features of self and being in order to disclose significant facts about the nature of embodied being. This is the context of the *Advaitic* preoccupation with nominal constructions. As we will see, both the Brahman definition and the *mahāvākya* prioritize non-actional nominal relations as determining the more significant kind of meaning than that generated by verbal forms; thus accomplishing *grammatically* the turn from the *bhāva* paradigm, as I have called it, to that of *sat*—epitomized in the *sadvidyā* ('Science of Being') of *Chāndogya* 6; the capitalized 'Being' serving to mark it off from the temporal and processual being of all existent things it grounds. At the center of this nominal turn is co-reference (*sāmānādhikaranya*). We will progress from the consideration of the generic notion of sentence (*vākya*) to the idea of meaningfulness (*sāmarthya*) that guides the transition to nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaranya*), finally to the treatment of continued presence and absence (*anvayavyatireka*).

Classical Theory of Vākya

As before, the notion of a sentence (*vākya*), in spite of being an ostensibly grammatical category, has parallel histories in the traditions of Mīmāṃsā and Vyākaraṇa, the former often borrowing and developing the categories of traditional grammar, although the case of *vākya* is complicated. Sentential analysis is a crucial component of Jaimini's rules where the notion of *vākya* is construed inter-sententially. That is, to put it

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crudely, sentences do not necessarily begin and end with full stops. Indeed, at least it appears following its Mīmāṃsaka articulation, that the *vākya* is not so much a syntactic but a syntactic-semantic category. Jaimini explained the sentence as follows: "A single sentence [exists] because of unity of purpose; it would stand in need [*ākāñkṣā*] if there were a division of [of its parts] (MS 2.1.46; McCrea tr.[3])."[4] McCrea explains that "it is functional unity that determines the unity of the sentence. The individual parts of the sentence connect with the whole because they subserve the overall purpose of the sentence and are thus 'needed' by it. It is only in response to this 'need' (*ākāñkṣā*) that any expressive element of language can associate itself with any other." It is ultimately this unity of the sentence (*ekavākyatā*) that is constitutive of the sentence (McCrea 2000, 433). This is further elaborated in Śabara and Kumārila to argue for the singular purport (*ekavākyatā*) of the Veda along actional, particularly injunctive lines.

As opposed to the Mīmāṃsaka delimitation of the *vākya* over potentially larger units of textual meaning, the grammarians, reflecting the common-sense view, seem to have understood a *vākya* intra-sententially. Kātyāyana defines a sentence as *eka-tiṅ*, a collection of words with one finite verb. It thus appears that Kātyāyana would not permit the existence of purely nominal sentences. Whenever a verb is absent in a sentence, a form of existential verb must be implied.[5] The question remains whether this represents the unified grammarian view or Kātyāyana's innovation. Madhav Deshpande has shown that Pāṇini himself does not seem to hold on to the view that a sentence must be of necessity *eka-tiṅ*, and any such reading understands Pāṇini retrospectively through the eyes of later grammarians (Deshpande 1987). It would seem Pāṇini had no *prima facie* objection to the existence of purely nominal sentences, and did not interpret them as elliptical verbal sentences.[6] Consider the following sentences:

i. *rāmaḥ sundaraḥ* ('Rāma [is] handsome.')

ii. *devadatta pācaka odanasya* ('Devadatta [is] the cook-er of rice.')

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[3] In McCrea 2000.
[4] *arthaikatvād ekaṃ vākyaṃ sākāñkṣaṃ ced vibhāge syāt.* MS, 2.1.46.
[5] *astir bhavantīparaḥ prathamapuruṣo'prayujyamāno'py asti.* Vārtikā 11 on A 2.3.1.
[6] "Our judgements about 'natural ellipsis' in Sanskrit cannot be imputed into the works of ancient grammarians." (Deshpande 1987, 57).

For Pāṇini both these sentences appear to be meaningful without the postulation of a copula or existential verb like 'is' (as bracketed above) to render them complete. The first is a simple instance of a quality predicated of a subject, the second of an agent involved in an activity. Although this may challenge common-sense notions of sentential structure, Sanskrit grammar does not seem to require the postulation of copulae or verbs (apparently omitted at the surface level). 'Rāma handsome' perfectly well conveys what is intended without postulating an 'is' to complete the assertion. Moreover, in neither case is the speaker necessarily committed to the existence of Rāma (who may very well be a fictional character) and the copula serves more to establish a relation of prediction than carry an existential thrust. Distinguishing these senses, for instance, is particularly useful in the interpretation of a sentence like:

iii. The inhabitants of Mars are blond.

For if the copula here serves merely predicative purposes there is no need to worry about the implication of inhabitants of Mars actually existing which would render the negation of the above sentence ambiguous.[7] Appealing to a very different genre of linguistic analysis, we see that George Boole's treatment of categorical propositions such as above lay in the revolutionary idea that some propositions simply lack 'existential import'.[8] Boole himself, of course, does not appeal to the diverse semantics of a copula, staying within a set-theoretical analysis of propositions in terms of whether the classes involved contain any members to justify existential import. But it equally suggests that a mere statement of predication need not commit to existential import. The question, then, from the point of view of Sanskrit grammar, is whether the copula itself is essential to predication in cases such as '*rāmaḥ sundaraḥ*' (permissible under Pāṇinian rules as we will see), since it does not seem to accomplish any function not already served by other words.[9] The oddity of a sentence like 'Inhabitants of Mars blond' may arise more from linguistic conditioning than any *a priori* logical

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[7] Depending on whether the negation is predicative or existential.

[8] As figured in George Boole's *The Mathematical Analysis of Logic* (1847) and its subsequent refinement and development in Brentano, Pierce and Venn.

[9] In Sanskrit this work is done by the notion of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* subsisting between nominals, often not requiring the presence of a copula.

incompleteness. Secondly, we may ask whether the same can be said of statements that really do possess existential thrust. Sanskrit (like some other languages that permit nominal sentential constructions) does not seem to distinguish between the two, and a statement like '*rāmaḥ sundaraḥ*' may well reference an existing person.[10]

In either case, from a grammatical point of view, as far as various instances of nominal sentences show, as those above communicating predication (*viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva*) or others indicating relation or *sambandha* ('*rāmasya pustakam*' rendered into English with the possessive verb 'Rāma *has* a book'), the grammatical notion of nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) is uniformly employed to explain the process of multiple nominal items (such as nouns with their accompanying adjectives or predicative sentences, as in '*rāmaḥ sundaraḥ*') referencing a single entity, with or without the postulation of a copula or existential verb.[11] This grammatical co-reference will, in fact, come to ground the non-actional (*niṣkriya*) grammar of Advaita.

But where is the grammatical license that annuls verbal ellipsis and permits the existence of nominal sentences? We must delve a little here into Pāṇini's conception of case-allocation. Pāṇini allocates case forms to nominal stems depending on their relation to the overall activity being represented by the sentence, that is, on their specific roles as *kāraka*s or participants in action. For instance, in 'Devadatta cooks the rice' (*devadattaḥ pacati odanam*), 'rice' takes the accusative representing the object/goal of action in the active voice. Interestingly, however, the nominative case is not allocated on the basis of *kāraka* relations at all. The crucial rule here is A 2.3.46: *prātipadikārtha-liṅga-parimāṇa vacana-mātre prathamā*. For Pāṇini, while other case-forms denote particular *kāraka*s, "the nominative case is used merely to indicate the meaning of the nominal stem

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[10] For Boole, this condition is satisfied by the explicit mention of existential import (through the sign ∑[x]).

[11] At least for Śaṃkara, the only statements that may be said to possess existential import are those denoting Brahman, either directly through the nominal forms of Brahman/*sat*/*ātman* etc. or, alternatively, by the presence of a finite existential verb which, as we have seen, indicates the pure is-ness of Brahman only deceptively appearing to reside in the accompanying nominal owing to the imposition of name-form (*nāmarūpa*). All other statements, either predicative or actional, would lack an ontological thrust accompanying the ostensible sentential meaning. At one point (TUB 1.11) he explicitly states this with respect to actional factors: "The Veda simply accept the *kāraka*s as they are presented in ordinary experience…They are not concerned with affirming that the *kāraka*s actually exist". This implies that for Śaṃkara even if ordinary language behavior establishes its own contingent reality (*vyāvāhārikasattā*), any existential claim must invoke Brahman as the real locus of its existential element, all other specifics belonging to the domain of name-form (*nāmarūpa*). The presence of existential and stative verbs or copulae in predicative or relational sentences may serve a whole variety of purposes from establishing relations to predication to conveying states of being, without possessing existential import. Brahman would be implicated the moment existence is indicated. This may be one manner of interpreting Śaṃkara's position on existentially committed language. Vedantic *mahāvākya*s (identity statements), although parallel in structure to relational or predicative statements, possess existential import, not by virtue of the connecting copula which only serves to relate the two terms, but owing to their reference to Brahman.

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(*prātipadikārtha*), its gender and number". But how then, in the foregoing example for instance, do we impute

agency (*kartṛtva*) to Devadatta as the agent of cooking? In the Pāṇinian system agency is already allocated to

and symbolized by the verbal affix (*tin-pratyaya*) so that the nominal only serves to indicate the extra

information such as gender, number and nominal stem meaning. In other words, the nominative, so to say,

lies outside the *kāraka* system, the network of relationships established to successfully execute an action

represented by the finite verb. The nominative is used whenever any syntactic-semantic roles like 'agent',

'object' etc. do not remain to be indicated or, more significantly for us, do not need to be; a sort of syntactic-

semantic remainder. Under these conditions, therefore, a nominal sentence like '*rāmaḥ sundaraḥ*' may be

derived without any reference to a finite verb, thus pre-empting the need to posit verbal ellipsis. This could

very well be Pāṇini's view of the matter.[12] This further corroborates the action-centrism under issue from

another perspective, to the extent that the linguistic weight often attributed to the subject is stripped away

and transferred to the verbal action and its realizers (the *kāraka*s).

The further peculiarity of a sentence like i. lies in the fact that the two nominal stems here are

connected by a relation of co-reference *(sāmānādhikaraṇya)*. That is, the same referent (the person Rāma) is

identifiable as the potential subject of one or more predicates (like *sundara* etc.), such that multiple predicates

are united by their reference to a single reality. The question arises whether this relation is already covered by

the rule or needs an additional statement. In paraphrasing Kātyāyana's view of the matter Paul Thieme notes,

> [I]n a sentence like *vīraḥ puruṣaḥ*…we have conveyed not only two notions (*vīra* and *puruṣa*)
> and their gender and number (by the ending -s), but also an additional idea, the idea of
> identification: we understand that the *puruṣa* has the characteristics of a *vīra*…in a nominal
> sentence, where what we call 'subject' and 'predicate' refer to the same concept under
> different names, in our case: *vīras* and *puruṣas* refer to the same person, because there is
> something additional (*adhika*) [not only just the names of the two concepts and the
> designation of their number and gender, namely *the idea of identification* (Thieme 1956, 3-4).

Kātyāyana concludes that an additional statement is unnecessary and the co-presence of the two

words is enough to establish their co-reference *(sāmānādhikaraṇya)*, what Thieme calls 'identification'. Such

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[12] Any other case (than the nominative) represents something more than the mere stem meaning, conveying its role in the larger *kāraka* network. The nominative is therefore, in another way, the default case.

identification may hold between purely nominal words without positing a finite verb in cases where the sentence makes no ostensible reference to an action or state. As we will see, Śaṃkara will draw explicitly ontological implications from this grammatical insight: the alleged oneness of self and Brahman is nothing but the sentential identity of self and Brahman tracking the same grammatical logic Thieme identifies as *identification*, and what Deshpande (1987) calls the *equational* sentence—such an equational sentence revealing the underlying structure of the Advaitic *mahāvākya* (identity statement). This is one way in which Śaṃkara's Advaita, both in its philosophy and soteriology, is grammatically underpinned.

These considerations suggest that the Vyākaraṇa and Mīmāṃsā centralization of the finite verb symbolic of action, the corresponding *kāraka* paradigm and the verbal sentence in general tends to disregard other features of sentential semantics; features picked up by the non-dual grammar of Śaṃkara. Minimally, it suggests that it may be possible to articulate sentential grammar on certain alternative non-processual elements of language to the extent that these elements, nominal sentences, identity statements etc., may be construed as an autonomous unit with its own operational dynamic that does not depend on actional analyses, but on actionless co-reference between nominal items. That is, such sentences rely on a different order of meaningfulness (*sāmarthya*); that of nominal co-reference.

II.   Sāmarthya: Meaningfulness outside the Actional Order

Considerations of the last section have hinted at the specific resource that will be exploited by Śaṃkara, the analysis of nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), to counterbalance the one-sided articulation of verbal and actional aspects of language. To appreciate this subtle tectonic shift at the core of linguistic analysis we first approach the grammatical conception of meaningfulness (*sāmarthya*). I suggested that non-verbal sentences—which we can understand as those where the verb is not the fulcrum of sentential meaning, or simply those we refer to as nominal—may be construed as an independent subset with its own dynamics that does not depend on actional analyses, but on the actionless being or co-reference of nominal items. That is, such sentences rely on a different order of meaningfulness (*sāmarthya*) than those that are typically parsed along a *kriyākāraka* model, the paradigmatic form of sentential analysis in Vyākaraṇa, Mīmāṃsā and

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Nirvacana. Indeed, I here consider if nominal co-reference constitutes an autonomous mode of meaning generation with a sound grammatical basis. This would require an analysis of the varieties of meaningfulness possible in grammar.

II.i   Sāmarthya in Pāṇini and Indian Grammar

Meaningfulness (*sāmarthya*) simply refers to the manner in which individual words combine to produce larger units of meaning, often sentential, but the process by which this is achieved is a contentious issue in Indian philosophy of language. The Pūrva Mīmāṃsaka theories of *anvitabhidhānavāda* and *abhitānvayavāda* are two of many theories offered to explain the generation of meaning at the sentential level. Bhartṛhari's *sphoṭavāda*, with its aligned *akhaṇḍavākyārthavāda* is another. In spite of their divergent accounts of meaning generation, they all share, unsurprisingly, the ideology of the primacy of the verb and action. From the point of view of Pāṇini, however, *sāmarthya* appears to be a more flexible, less ideologically motivated concept which may be investigated at this early stage of grammatical theory prior to the more philosophical accounts subsequently offered by hermeneuts, philosophers and grammarians. Pāṇini is, first and foremost, a pragmatist and later grammarians often seem to favor theoretical coherence over the bare task of descriptive analysis. Here any potential resources for an aspiring non-dual grammar may be sought. To begin with, as discussed by Deshpande (1987), *sāmarthya* for Pāṇini primarily refers to intra-sentential relationships and is a more central concept than *vākya*. While we saw earlier that Kātyāyana defined a sentence as that which contains a finite verb, Pāṇini appears to rely more on the notion of *sāmarthya*[13] when requiring to refer to larger units of meaning than individual words, but which do not necessarily constitute a complete proposition. *Sāmarthya*, translated as 'syntactic-semantic relationship,' may thus hold for any of the following kinds of relationship categorized by linguistic analysis:

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[13] Refer rules A 2.1.1, 4.1.82, 8.1.28.

i. Co-Referential: *nīlaḥ aśvaḥ* ('black horse')   *sāmānādhikaraṇya*

ii. Relational: *devadattasya putraḥ* ('devadatta's son')   *sambandha*

iii. Prepositional: *grāmam anu* ('towards the village')   *upapada*

iv.[14] Actional: *pacati odanam* ('cooks the rice')   *kriyākārakabhāva*

All these may count as alternative models of *sāmarthya* for Pāṇini and, as evident, may denote kinds of intra-sentential relationships often inadequate to convey complete sentential meaning or genuinely novel and useful information. The last, iv., nonetheless, is an example of a relationship exemplifying *kriyākārakabhāva* and complete (with an implied agent). Although meaningful relationships in themselves, ii. and iii., indicating relation in general (*sambandha*) and prepositional co-occurrence respectively, remain semantically incomplete in generating full propositional meaning; for Kātyāyana, an incompleteness of syntax that could be rendered complete by a finite verb.[15] The last (iv.), it appears, is the only instance of a syntactic-semantic relationship—other than the paradigmatic action-actor-relation (*kriyākārakabhāva*)—that is not only grammatically permissible (according to Pāṇini) but also conveys useful information (indicating that the horse is black, or that there is a black horse) such that the assertion is complete without postulating an implicit verb.

Sāmarthya is therefore, as noted by Deshpande, a more elastic concept in Pāṇinian grammar. In our context, it furnishes a path extending beyond the semantic action-centrism and syntactic verb-centrism prototypical of subsequent linguistic and hermeneutic theorization. Even for Pāṇini, to be clear, the paradigmatic sentence is the verbal, wherein various *kāraka* relationships unfold in the accomplishment of an

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[14] Refer Deshpande 1987 for a more detailed analysis of the above scheme.

[15] For Pāṇini, as we saw, this condition may be overridden by the consideration that the nominative case may be added to an item if any semantic roles (*kāraka*s) do not need to be indicated (A 2.3.46), thereby potentially permitting the existence of a sentence without a finite verb. Case-allocation for nominals accompanied by prepositional co-occurrence (*upapada*), as in iii., is governed by its own set of rules and does not take the nominative. In either case, iii., may be rendered 'complete' with the addition of a finite verb (say '*gacchati*') making the sentence '(She) goes towards the village'. And ii. could well be an instance of a noun taking the nominative case by the application of A 2.3.46 merely denoting the stem-meaning (*prātipadikārtha*) in the absence of any reference to semantic roles, but we are in the dark about what the assertion could mean on its own unless, again, a verb (like '*asti*' or '*gacchati*') is supplied.

action, as described in *Aṣṭādhyāyī's kāraka* section (A1.4.23: *kārake*). Nonetheless he appears to admit the existence of nominal sentences as a legitimate and autonomous grammatical unit and, as the above examples show, it is the category of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* or co-reference as a case of *sāmarthya* that paradigmatically fulfills this role. In a statement of co-reference or, what Deshpande calls, an *equational* sentence, new and useful information may be communicated without subserving to the actional category of *kriyākārakabhāva* prototypical of grammatical analysis. The Brahman definition and equation of self and Brahman—as we will see, at least two of the four Upanishadic *mahāvākya*s represent paradigmatic nominal sentences—turn out to be special cases of such grammatical co-reference.

III.   Co-Reference and the Non-Dual Grammar of Śaṃkara

It is this nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*)—as both a syntactically valid as well as semantically meaningful and complete case of syntactic-semantic relationship (*sāmarthya*)—that upends the action-actor-relationship (*kriyākārakabhāva*) as the primary explanandum of an Advaitic grammar. It permits a mode of sentential analysis that is free of any reference to action or grammatical features descriptive of action, grounding itself, instead, on the nominal and pure 'non-actional' relation of one nominal to another; such as we find in the relationship between noun and adjective. Śaṃkara and his successors construe this non-actional sentential meaning as the basis of a non-dual grammar relating the various 'characteristics' of Brahman (*satya, jñāna, ananta*) on one hand, and the 'individual' subject with the 'universal' Brahman (as in the *mahāvākya*s) on the other. The understanding of such co-reference may be said to be the proximate cause of freedom (*mokṣa*) itself. Almost all theories put forward by later Advaitins and Śaṃkara himself to explain the dynamics of sentential comprehension—from *anvayavyatireka* to the various theories of *lakṣaṇā* (secondary/indirect meaning)—assume co-reference as a central principle of Advaitic sentential analysis without always making it explicit; at the same time signaling a general hermeneutic shift towards a paradigm of nominal language invoking presence and present entities, as opposed to verbal language about processes, future products and actions.

But what precisely does the concept mean? It will be outside the scope of the chapter to explore its rich history in Indian grammar, philosophy and theology but I attempt to address the use of the term in the domain in which it is most often applied, the analysis of Sanskrit sentences containing nominal items. It will be helpful to parse a linguistic and an ontological sense of *sāmānādhikaraṇya*. As in the case of the term '*kāraka*', the term appears to cover an ontolinguistic field accommodating words as well as real-world referents. Philosophers clearly draw ontological implications from it, and it becomes a key concept to analyze for thinkers such as Śaṃkara and Rāmānuja. Calling it correlative predication (CP) Julius Lipner has, for instance, noted: "[I]t must be kept in mind that the Vedantic discussion in this respect takes place with reference to Sanskrit. CP is a very important concept for our purposes because the main scriptural statements of the two kinds distinguished above…conform syntactically to CP. Their correct interpretation would depend on a correct understanding of CP" (Lipner 1986, 26).

The two kinds of scriptural statements Lipner is referring to were just stated as those that make the identity of self and Brahman known (of the *mahāvākya* category), '*tat tvam asi*' ('that you are') being paradigmatic here, and those that define the intrinsic nature of Brahman, '*satyam jñānam anantam brahman*' being the classic instance of the latter. Our own organization of the discussion will follow the application of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* to these two cases, noting their contextual application, while appreciating the sense and significance of an overarching framework of nominal co-reference prioritized by Advaitic grammar. But I first approach the grammatical understanding of the term, noting the deeper philosophical and ontological implications it carries *in potential*, actualized by Śaṃkara subsequently.

III.i   Sāmānādhikaraṇya and The 'Hindu Logic' of Nominal Co-Reference

Semantically, the concept of nominal co-reference helps determine meaning by construing the meaning of two or more nominal items together (such as the convergence of the meanings of 'large', 'blue', 'fragrant' and 'lotusness' in one external referent, the lotus). Syntactically, this is accomplished by identifying words with the same nominal ending in order to isolate semantically meaningful intra-sentential units. But its characterization as '*sāmānādhikaraṇya*,' literally, 'same-locus-ness' indicates that the grammarians justified this

practice by an ontological presupposition along the lines that the various nominal items denote qualities that are located in one and the same object/locus, thereby permitting the allocation of the same nominal endings to those items, just as in the phrase 'the blue lotus' blueness and lotusness reside in one common external referent. From the point of view of Sanskrit grammar, there seems to be no *prima facie* justification for the ontological priority of a substantive over the attributive, as the real identity or essence of an entity such as a lotus. The concept of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* merely states that all words in the same case—including the one doing the contextual work of the 'noun'—have the same ontological referent, and thus be semantically united. The ontological referent, therefore, may be said to ground the attribute of 'lotusness' in the same way as it grounds 'blueness', being equally neutral to both.

Julius Lipner, calling this a unique characteristic of 'Hindu logic' (Lipner 1986), says that 'lotus' and 'blue' are both equally to be regarded as predicates describing the referent (the external lotus):

> Even in this example, where, in accordance with Western logic there appears to be but one qualifying predicate, 'blue'…that in CP [correlative predication] more than one differentiating word is applied to a single referent is justified. For according to Hindu logic 'lotus' and 'blue' are both regarded as predicates describing the referent (the external lotus). In other words, through these two terms appropriately inflected in the Sanskrit (here, in the nominative), this existential statement is saying that there is an object out there which instantiates the synthetic co-presence of 'lotusness' and 'blueness'. Subsequently, when clarity seems to require it, we shall call the term standing for the referent in existential statements the 'referent term' ('lotus' in our example), and the other terms predicated of the referent 'qualifier terms' (e.g. 'blue') (Lipner 1986, 153-54).

There are, here, two qualifying predicates (lotusness and blueness) and not just one (blueness) as would be dictated, perhaps, by our standard intuitions. Following this logic to its natural culmination would require that, strictly speaking, we do not conceive the external referent as the substantive lotus but simply as a neutral referent or substratum grounding and possessing the characteristic of being 'lotus' just as much as other characteristics (blue, large etc.). This has interesting philosophical implications, suggesting that the mere existential assertion of an entity contextually picks out an element designated by what Lipner calls the referent term (here 'lotus') while other features may be denoted by the 'qualifier terms', without presuming that 'lotusness' picks out something more ontologically primitive than 'blueness' etc. There, of course, appears to

be a relation of principal and subordinate obtaining between the adjectival and substantive words occurring in

a sentence such that adjectives are often sub-ordinate to nouns, reflecting a qualifier-qualified (*viśeṣaṇaviśeṣya*)

relation between them. Nonetheless, what is important from the point of view of 'Hindu logic' that Lipner

identifies—by which he is isolating, more than anything else, the grammarian's standpoint—is the interesting

insight that *both* kinds of terms be regarded as *predicates* describing the external lotus, even if there is an

internal relation of priority obtaining between them. George Cardona, following Patañjali, further notes that

in such nominal sentences as '*vīraḥ puruṣaḥ*' (heroic man) or '*nīlaḥ ghaṭaḥ*' (blue pot):

> [T]he items *vīra-, puruṣa-, nīla-, ghaṭa-* are considered first to denote only *someone* (italics mine)
> who is heroic, man, a blue thing, a pot. Hence the nominative occurs. From the
> juxtaposition of *vīraḥ* and *puruṣaḥ* and *nīlaḥ* and *ghaṭaḥ*, one understands that the denotata of
> each pair of noun forms are related. More particularly, one understands that they are related
> by identity. These examples allow one to see what is meant by *abheda*. With respect to the
> semantics of [*vīraḥ puruṣaḥ*], Patañjali notes that the locus of heroicness (*vīratva*) is the same as
> the locus of manhood (*puruṣatva*). That is, there is a single referent who is both a man and
> heroic (Cardona 1974, 248).

The single referent may thus be said to constitute a kind of the neutral ontological substrate of which

we may predicate all sorts of natures and characteristics, manhood, heroism etc. Both kinds of nominals

(nouns and adjectives) are equally predicative of the neutral existent or substrate—the shared (*samāna*) locus

(*adhikaraṇa*)—that takes on various linguistic attributions and imputations. Firstly, this manner of thinking

suggests that the substrate itself be conceptually empty of any intrinsic or positive nature described by

nominals; for *any* positive assertion or description of it may be distinguished from the abstract referent or

substrate free or 'empty' to take on such predications. As Lipner and Cardona suggest, this idea is

presupposed in the very practice of *sāmānādhikaraṇya*. Substantive or attributive, all predications identify a

common existent locus that serves to unite diverse descriptions in one common referent. This suggests that

the substrate itself, as already pointed out, be free of the differentiations introduced by the items predicated

of it. That is, the qualifiers applying to it bring with them the distinctions characterizing the object typified in

the qualifier-qualificand (*viśeṣaṇaviśeṣya*) relation. Now this represents a clear ontological position on the nature

of existents, as a response to the following question: Is the existent/substance itself internally differentiated

according to the qualifiers applying to it or, as suggested, they are posterior or, in principle, distinguishable from the substance such that the substance is not itself internally differentiated?

As it happens, this is precisely the philosophical point of difference between the non-dualists and qualified non-dualists. Śaṃkara's and Rāmānuja's readings of the Brahman definition hang on this distinction, on the philosophical implications of differently reading the grammatical phenomenon of nominal co-reference. Viśiṣṭādvaitins affirm that the differentiation introduced by the predicates actually belong to the substance. Advaitins argue that existence and existent entities are not intrinsically differentiated, but differentiations are introduced through our mundane acts of thinking and languaging. They will take the 'single referent' of co-reference as indicating the non-relational and homogeneous nature of an essentially simple entity, subjective modes of presenting "a single, simple thing" as Chris Bartley observes (Bartley 1986, 111).

Ontologically, the Advaitic intuition will lead, as I show, to the idea of the qualityless (*nirguṇa*) Brahman as such; while what Cardona refers to as *abheda* indicates the unity of the single referent that grounds various predications constituting a semantic unity, from an Advaitic perspective, Brahman would name such a common neutral substrate of any and all positive ascriptions. What Cardona notes of the grammatical phenomenon—that "the relation called *abheda* is simply the semantic counterpart of co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*)" (Cardona 1974, 249)—is ontologized as the non-difference (*abheda*) of all existents by virtue of being united under the most all-encompassing nominal there is, Brahman. For Advaitins then, as I hope to show, non-dualism/non-difference (*advaita/abheda*) comprises the radicalization of the *philosophical* sense of co-reference. Brahman, on this account, is nothing but this neutral existential substrate, the existential (*sat/satya*) dimension of Being free of and neutral to any positive characterization; and therefore capable of grounding or taking any and all characterizations. For Śaṃkara it is therefore only natural that words pick out specific features (*nāmarūpa*) of an entity, which all must be in co-reference with each other, without touching the *existential* aspect of the entity—the *that* as opposed to *what*—which, because it is the neutral substrate awaiting linguistic ascription (picking out one or the other of its features) appropriately takes

the status of 'Brahman' in Advaita. Brahman is, as the discussion of the *Taittirīya* definition clarified, 'pure' or infinite/unconditioned (*ananta*) Being (*sat*), the predicateless substrate of all predications.

This is another way in which a central thesis of the interweaving of actional and non-actional in mediated in Advaita, overcoming simple substance-process oppositions. From the point of view of the neutral ontological substrate, reality is both non-qualified (*nirguṇa*) and non-actional (*niṣkriya*). From the perspective of the positive qualities and actions predicated of it, that is, all potential predicables standing in co-reference with respect to the substrate, this reality is qualified (*saguṇa*) and actional (*sakriya*). 'God' in Advaita is thus nothing but the totality of all predicables potentially applicable to reality considered as a dynamic unity and whole, *saguṇa-brahman*. And the Advaitic *nirguṇa-brahman* is the neutral substrate *awaiting* predication of any and all qualities, relations and actions. The two stand in a complementary, not contrasting or competitive relation. From this perspective, the question of whether God (*īśvara*) is granted a lower or secondary status by Advaitins misses the point; which is rather to identify two distinct *moments* reflectively discernable in thinking *ontologically* (and not only *theologically*).

Moreover, *sāmānādhikaraṇya* may be said to support grammatical action-centrism from another perspective. As we saw earlier, in Pāṇini agency is already allocated by the verbal affix, the nominal only indicating extra information such as gender, number and stem meaning. The nominative, so to say, lies outside the *kāraka* system, the network of relationships carrying out the central action. Paul Thieme has noted that "for Pāṇini there exists no grammatical category that would correspond to the concept 'subject'" (Thieme 1956, 1). The same would hold true for the notion of 'predicate'. The verb-centrism of Sanskrit grammar implies that sentence structure is better parsed in terms of the distinction between verbal *action* and its nominal *realizers* taking on various oblique cases (as opposed to a subject-predicate schema). The apparent sentential 'subject' is what the verbal action isolates as the primary initiator of the action (*kartṛ*), or its objective culmination (*karman*) (in the passive). One implication is the immediate renunciation of the notion of a grammatical subject corresponding to and naming a metaphysical substrate or substance. What nominals identify are existents *in potency*, i.e., in light of their potential recruitment towards some or the other action or production, reminiscent of the *bhūtabhavya* logic of the Mīmāṃsakas—the existent is for the purpose of the *yet*

to come in existence. On the subject-predicate view, the noun could be identified as isolating a metaphysical referent whose attributes, modes and activities are identified by predicates. The substantive lotusness of the lotus is metaphysically basic; other aspects being secondary. As I understand, *sāmānādhikaraṇya* makes possible such an action-realizer logic. It supports the turn away from subject-centrism (the taking the category of the grammatical subject as primitive) by flattening the subject-predicate distinction and, more generally, the linguistic weight attributed to the subject—all nominals in co-reference equally qualify the external co-referential substrate (*adhikaraṇa*). Both '*rāma*' and '*sundara*' (in the sentence, '*rāmaḥ sundaraḥ*'), and not merely the latter, are predicative of the substrate of co-reference. And in a typical verbal sentence, co-reference does the work of identifying units that collectively partake or participate in the realization of an action or function if they are in apposition. By centering action as metaphysically primitive, and organizing existence and existent items around it, this view supports a metaphysics according to which we may be said to inhabit a world, not of substances (indicated by the grammatical subject) possessed of attributes (indicated by grammatical predicates), in certain relationships with each other, but of actions (*kriyā*) and their accomplishing factors or instruments (*kāraka*).

Of course, the grammarians themselves did not explicitly endorse such a process-philosophical view of the world. They left ontology and ontological implications of co-reference to the philosophers. And we know them to have maintained, largely, a position of common-sense realism. But clearly their grammatical insights were pregnant with deep philosophical implications as I have attempted to draw forth. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā exploited many such intuitions that supported a philosophy of action, creation and productivity, as for instance, the prioritization of the future (*bhavya*) over present (*bhūta*), or the accompanying notion of bringing into being (*bhāvanā*). Advaita, likewise, may be said to recuperate Sanskrit grammatical intuitions that support, in contrast, a philosophy of non-action (*niṣkriyatva*), and non-difference (*abheda*). To this extent, *sāmānādhikaraṇya* and grammatical *abheda* clearly furnishes a model of thinking about ontological non-difference (*advaita/abheda*). It may not always be possible to demonstrate a clear conceptual trajectory from the grammatical to the philosophical, yet, as we will just see, Śaṃkara's notion of *tulyanīḍatva (*same locus-ness)

in the *US* serves as the word for word *philosophical* equivalent of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* (*tulya* = *samāna*; *nīḍa* = *adhikaraṇa*). It is improbable that Śaṃkara did not have the grammatical concept in mind.

Grammatical *sāmānādhikaraṇya* will provide Śaṃkara with an invaluable tool to work out an Advaitic *ontology* of the relationship—or identity—of items in certain sentences, just as Pūrva Mīmāṃsā used *kriyākārakabhāva* to determine intra-sentential relation. It also redirects attention away from the standard Sanskrit actional semantics to the semantics of pre-existent (*bhūta*) being; attending to which is soteriologically effective insofar as freedom is incumbent on recognizing an obtaining (*siddha/bhūta*) state of affairs pertaining to the self, and not creating, producing or modifying an existent entity towards a projected future purpose.

Mutual Qualification and Control

For the grammarians the specification of this substrate is mediated by the mutually qualifying relationship now obtaining amongst various words in co-reference. Let us take the sentence '*nīlaḥ aśvaḥ*' (blue/black horse). Now there obtain, in this sentence, two ideas or predicates in mutual juxtaposition, one denoting quality (*blueness*) and the other class (*horseness*), between which obtains the relation of nominal co-reference. Both apply to the neutral substrate collectively describing its nature, kind or specific attributes. Horseness identifies the class and blueness the particular attribute. The grammarians consider such mutual juxtaposition, made possible through co-reference, to be the crucial factor in the fixing of this emergent sense of the whole. That is, it is only because we see or hear certain words (in co-reference) juxtaposed that we ascribe their senses to converge in a single common substrate. In the process, the various terms in co-reference mutually restrict each other in order to identify the nature and characteristics of the entity in question. Blueness restricts the meaning of the universal horseness to apply only to horses that are blue, while horseness restricts the attributive of blueness to apply only to horses. Capturing Bhartṛhari's view in light of earlier commentaries, Kapila Deva Sastri explains:

> Now, if the two words signify only their basic sense, how can the relation of qualifier and
> qualified (*viśeṣyaviśeṣaṇa*) be established between them? In reply to this, Bhartṛhari takes the
> instance of the two words *kṛṣṇaḥ* (black) *tilaḥ* (sesame). He says that the word *kṛṣṇaḥ* as a

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universal (*sāmānya*) denotes some indefinite substance possessing blackness. Similarly, *tilaḥ* as a universal denotes a substance with an indefinite quality. In their universal state, there can be no relation between the two words. For, when the word *kṛṣṇaḥ* alone is uttered, the listener cannot determine to what substance it refers. It can refer to substances other than sesame. Similarly, when the word *tila* alone is uttered, the hearer remains undecided as to what variety or quality of sesame is intended. It is only when they are combined in the phrase *kṛṣṇaḥ tilaḥ* that the relation of qualifier and qualified is automatically established between them. For, then both the words refer to a specific variety of sesame, namely the black variety (Sastri 1964, 43).

To be sure, there are two positions on the manner of determining sentential meaning from the premise that words refer to universals, discussed by Mīmāṃsakas (such as Kumārila commenting on Śabara) and grammarians (Patañjali and Bhartṛhari), those of *bheda* and *saṃsarga*. The former works by differentiating one entity from another, the latter by combining them. Cardona explains, "Suppose that *nīla* signifies any blue-black thing at all, *utpala* any lotus at all. Linking the two terms…has the effect of narrowing down possible referents, excluding blue things other than lotuses and a lotus that is not blue. Suppose, on the other hand, that *nīla* signifies the property of being blue-black, *utpala* the property of being a lotus. Relating the terms…has the effect of showing that the two properties are combined in an individual" (Cardona 1981, 89-90). Advaitins such as Sureśvara and Śaṃkara[16], adopt the *bheda* standpoint, insofar as the senses of terms occurring in the *mahāvākya* serve to exclude mutually inconsistent meanings, as in the *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*: "On our view, that which is not the meaning of any sentence is immediately apprehended as the meaning of 'that' and 'thou' through the exclusion (*vyavṛtti*) of meanings arising from the grammatical apposition (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) of the words etc."[17]

But, strictly speaking, the above distinction applies only to relational sentences, that is, sentences where meaning is determined relationally by the co-occurrence of individual word-meanings. Vedantic statements, however, do not talk about relations but *identities*, even if there is a surface-level talk of sentential relation in terms of qualifiers and qualificands (*viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva*).[18] So Sureśvara will go on to say: "Their

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[16] Sureśvara will often use the term *vyāvṛtti* to connote the exclusive function of nominals in apposition (for instance, NS 3.9).

[17] sāmānādhikaraṇyader ghaṭetarakhayor iva vyāvṛtteḥ syād avākyārthaḥ sākṣān nas tattvamarthayoḥ. NS 3.9. Alston tr.

[18] A surface-level talk that is subsequently abandoned, as in the cases of the Brahman definition (*Taittirīya* 2.1) and *mahāvākya* analysis.

presence as qualifier and qualified is for the purpose of indicating something which stand beyond either synthesis (*saṃsarga*) or exclusion (*bheda*), and so is not the meaning of any sentence (*avākyārtha*)."[19] We saw this in the case of the Brahman definition where its initial affirmation as such a sentence is immediately overridden by the invocation of a definiens-definiendum (*lakṣaṇalakṣyabhāva*) relation. A parallel process will be seen to be at work in the *mahāvākya* '*tat tvam asi*' but suffice it to say that Advaita can affirm the co-reference at work in nominal relationships, while denying *viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva* as intrinsic to parsing such relationships. At the same time, as we will see, a parallel process of mutual qualification/exclusion is, in fact, adopted by Advaitins to parse the most important Advaitic statements (both the Brahman definition and '*tat tvam asi*') but, importantly, in a way that does not appeal to the idea of relationality typified by the qualifier-qualificand relation.

Practically, it is sentential apposition or the placing together of two or more terms that enables the mutually qualifying function determining the final unitive meaning. The juxtaposition permits the conclusion that different nominal items refer to the same substrate or external referent. The context of sentence alone guarantees this further sense of identity (*abheda*). In a nominal sentence such as '*nīlaḥ aśvaḥ*', this collective and complete sense would thus emerge without any reference to a verb or action conveyed by it. This is grammatically permissible because, as we saw, nominal stems can take the nominative without taking on a *kāraka* role or being related to the verbal action—the only case which can do so, and which marks the nominal sentence. Pāṇini's stipulation in A 2.3.46 indicated that the nominal case is applied to a nominal stem only to signify its basic sense (*prātipadikārtha*), number and gender. As seen earlier, this stipulation also permitted nominals to be sententially implicated without any reference to the verbal action, as opposed to the stipulation of other cases that require some *kāraka* role to be realized through them.[20] Here Kātyāyana considered the possibility that, perhaps, the nominal should indicate, over and above the basic sense of the

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[19] tattvamarthayor viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāvo bhedasaṃsargarahitāvākyārthalakṣaṇayaivety upasaṃhārah. NS 3.26. Alston tr.

[20] Deshpande explains that "the nominative case is used when no additional syntactic meanings such as agent or patient need to be or remain to be denoted. Thus, an expression such as *rāmaḥ sundaraḥ* 'Rama (is) handsome' can be derived without any reference to a finite verb. Here, Rama is neither agent nor patient of any stated or understood verb and hence such roles do not need to be expressed by any item. This makes the nominals *rāma* and *sundara* eligible for the residual or default case, the nominative case" (Deshpande 1987, 72).

stem, number and gender, the idea of identification in a case of nominal co-reference; and rejected the possibility on the grounds that this further sense is a *sentential* emergent, conveyed when two or more terms in co-reference are mutually juxtaposed. While this point has been briefly discussed, we now see that, by this process of mutual juxtaposition and qualification, nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) becomes the primary mode of expression and meaning (*sāmarthya*) in a nominal sentence, making no reference to the mode of explanation relying on action and actional factors *(kriyākārakabhāva)*. Not unsurprisingly, the realities communicated by Advaita are often represented in the nominal sentence, including the *Taittirīya* Brahman definition, and the *mahāvākya*s (*prajñānam brahma* and *ayam ātmā brahma*). One would be reminded here of Emily Benveniste's opinion that the nominal assertion in the Indo-European is inherently timeless, impersonal and non-modal (Benveniste 1971, 137); and therefore outside the domain of time and process implicated by verbs and verbal action.

A version of mutual qualification and even mutual exclusion will be at play in the Advaitic grammar of nominal sentences and identity statements. We can thus theorize an open-ended procedure of mutual qualification/restriction/control at work in the interpretation of nominal constructions, further nuanced by Advaitins in their focus on nominal sentences and *mahāvākya*s. *Sāmānādhikaraṇya*, and the Advaitic equivalent *'tulyanīḍatva'*, will do significant philosophical and ontological work for Śaṃkara mirroring and developing the grammatical work towards which *sāmānādhikaraṇya* is deployed. I now take up the two paradigmatic instances in which *sāmānādhikaraṇya/tulyanīḍatva* is employed by Śaṃkara to articulate an Advaitic non-dual grammar. Not surprisingly these comprise the two most significant aspects of Advaita Vedānta: i. the definition of Brahman, and ii. the identity statements or *mahāvākya*s.

III.ii   Grammatical Co-Reference & Brahman

Regarding both, Śaṃkara's primary motive in the use of co-reference is to establish the identity of one and the same referent implicated in the reference to two or more nominal items. In this he is only attempting to mirror the dynamics of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* employed in grammatical analysis but explicating and elaborating its presuppositions and internal distinctions. In the latter case (the *mahāvākya*s) the question

pertains to the very possibility of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* (between *ātman* and Brahman) that must be established, while in the former (Brahman definition) the question hinges on the nature of the co-reference between the co-referential terms occurring in the definition. It will be argued here that Śaṃkara's analysis of the definition of Brahman (TU 2.1) provides a unique perspective on the hermeneutics of nominals, developing a sophisticated account of the nature of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* obtaining between them.

There is a classification of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* that Śaṃkara himself offers in the *Brahmasūtra* (BSB 3.3.9)[21], classifying it into four types I refer to as: i. qualifier-qualified relation (*viśeṣaṇa*), ii. identity (*ekatva*), iii. identification (*adhyāsa*), iv. correction (*apavāda*). The first is the typical and most common instance of two words in a subject-predicate relation, such as 'the blue lotus' (*nīlotpala*). The second identifies the *same* substrate or referent implicated in distinct domains of sense, such as, for instance, Frege's well-known example 'the morning star *is* the evening star'.[22] The third is the deliberate identification of two or more *distinct* referents for practical purposes, as in the case of what is pejoratively termed idol-worship, a deity/god superimposed on what is very well known to be a material object (such as stone).[23] Lastly, we have the case of epistemic *correction* where two referents are erroneously identified, the statement of co-reference serving to correct the error, for instance, when we say, 'the snake is a rope', or 'the silver is a shell'. It is evident that this classification of co-reference is not so much grammatical (what we focus on here) but what subserves Advaita's philosophical sensitivities. In fact, all the latter three (ii., iii., iv.) come into relief in Advaitic method. Although Śaṃkara does not put it this way, the identity of self and Brahman is equivalent to the case of

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[21] adhyāsāpavādaikatvaviśeṣaṇapakṣāṇāṃ pratibhāsanātkatamo 'tra pakṣo nyāyyaḥ syāditi vicāraḥ | tatrādhyāso nāma dvayorvastunoranivartitāyāmevānyatarabuddhāvanyatarabuddhiradhyasyate | yasminnitarabuddhiradhyasyate 'nuvartata eva tasmiṃstadbuddhiradhyastetarabuddhāvapi | yathā nāmni brahmabuddhāvadhyasyamānāyāmapyanuvartata eva nāmabuddhirna brahmabuddhyā nivartate | yathāvā pratimādiṣu viṣṇvādibuddhyadhyāsaḥ | evamihāpyakṣara udgīthabuddhiradhyasyata udgīthe vākṣarabuddhuriti | apavādo nāma yatra kasmiṃścidvastuni pūrvaniviṣṭāyāṃ mithyābuddhau niścitāyāṃ paścādupajāyamānā yathārthā buddhiḥ pūrvaniviṣṭāyā mithyābuddhernivartikā bhavati | yathā dehendriyasaṃghāta ātmabuddhirātmanyevātmabuddhyā paścādbhāvinyā 'tattvamasi' ityanayā yathārthabuddhyā nivartate | yathā vā digbhrāntibuddhirdigyāthātmyabuddhyā nivartyate | yathā vā digbhrāntibuddhirdigyāthātmyabuddhyā nivartyate | evamihāpyakṣarabuddhyodgīthabuddhirnivartyata udgīthabuddhyā vākṣarabuddhiriti / ekatvaṃ tvakṣarodgīthaśabdayoranatiriktārthavṛttitvam | yathā dvijottamo brāhmaṇo bhūmideva iti / viśeṣaṇaṃ punaḥ sarvavedavyāpina omityetasyākṣarasya grahaṇaprasaṅga audgātraviśeṣasya samarpaṇam | yathā nīlaṃ yadutpalaṃ tadānayeti. BSB 3.3.9.

[22] It is useful to parse ii. in terms of Frege's sense-reference distinction.

[23] Or various kinds of meditations requiring the imaginative imposition of one idea upon something else. At least Śaṃkara is clear that this is how deity worship or, in the Vedic context, *upāsanā* is supposed to work, a self-conscious and deliberate act of superimposing one thing upon another, the latter often serving as a material locus of the former.

ekatva, 'the morning star *is* the evening star' to the extent that it is one and the same reality conventionally understood as belonging to different semantic fields (the 'individual self' and 'Brahman'). Epistemic correction becomes pertinent in the context that the embodied individual self is mistakenly identified with various features of embodiment (body, sense-faculties etc.), thus needing a subsequent corrective of the kind 'this self is not x or y', the two sides being in nominal co-reference. And co-reference as identification (*adhyāsa*) is relevant to the extent that this is precisely what is negated or corrected by iv. (correction), the only difference being that the identification so corrected is made erroneously, not deliberately (as in typical cases of iii.).[24]

We may thus classify nominal co-reference into two major types, dealing either with *relations* (the qualifier-qualified relation of i.) or *identities* (as in ii., iii. and iv.). Naturally Śaṃkara gravitates towards and centers the latter as the proper subject of a non-dual grammar. As we will see, sentential identities are what Advaitic nominal and identity statements serve to disclose. The larger sentential meaning is not the product of intra-sentential 'relations' determined by *viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva*, but an essentially simple relationless, non-actional unity of an underlying substrate.

Some stock examples of nominal co-reference will be at play, as before—the blue/black horse, blue lotus or water-lily[25], heroic person—with reference to and contrast with which Śaṃkara will bring out the unique nature of nominal relations obtaining amongst items in Advaitic statements. The first case of nominal co-reference informing the interpretation of a core Upanishadic source is the *Taittirīya* Brahman definition (*satyam jñānam anantam brahma*), considered earlier in the treatment of existential and noetic verbs. There we

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[24] The Chapter 3 account of *adhyāropāpavāda* as an Advaitic methodological principle seems to combine the phraseology of categories iii. and iv. here. The sense of *adhyāropa*, a synonym of *adhyāsa*, as we saw there, is deliberate superimposition evoked in the context of the Advaitic noetic ritual, and not superimposition in the ritual and meditative context of imaginatively identifying two different domains (as in iii. above). In either case, nominal co-reference may be said to ground not only Advaitic sentential analysis but also, from the point of view of Chapter 3, the central Advaitic method of attentional governance.

[25] There is the question of the interpretation of Śaṃkara's example of the lotus/water-lily, '*utpala*' often alternatively translated as one or the other. This matters because it is an open question whether the example refers to contingent qualities a thing may possess, like a lotus that just happens to be large, blue and fragrant or whether it 'defines' an *utpala*, referring to its essential qualities, in which case it is possible to take it as a particular kind of water-lily (possibly the *nymphaea nouchali* or *nymphaea caerulea*) distinguished by its blue color, characteristic fragrance and size. This would completely change the point of the example. The latter parallels the definition of Brahman more closely than the former where the lotus could be of a different kind, for instance, small and pink, yet continue being a lotus. In other words, just a *description* as opposed to a *definition*. In the latter interpretation, just as it is Brahman's defining nature to be *satya*, *jñāna* and *ananta*, so it is the *utpala*'s defining characteristic to be blue, large and fragrant. Translations of the above passage do not seem to have addressed this problem. Also note that the first component of *nīlāśva* has been translated as either 'blue' or 'black'.

considered Śaṃkara's non-dual/non-actional reading of the words for being (*satyam*) and knowing (*jñānam*), showing that for Śaṃkara, these two special sets of verbal roots indicate a dimension of actionless being-consciousness free of the processual features characteristic of verbal meaning (*dhātvartha*). I now consider, in depth, the intra-sentential reciprocal relations obtaining amongst the various nominal items of the Brahman definition exemplifying the application of *sāmānādhikaraṇya*. To recapitulate, we saw the following progression in Śaṃkara's reading of the definition, each stage qualifying the previous and introducing a new element:

a. *Satya, jñāna* and *ananta* are *predicates/qualifiers* of Brahman, sharing a relationship of *viśeṣaṇaviśeṣya* (qualifier-qualified) with Brahman.

b. Strictly speaking, they are not qualifiers (*viśeṣaṇa*) of Brahman, but its *definiens* (*lakṣaṇa*).

c. They are not even, strictly speaking, regular definiens but, as I argue, comprise a *transcendental* definition of Brahman, isolating Brahman as absolutely unique and unamenable to predication and description.

d. Each of the three definitional items constitutes the essential nature of Brahman; it *is* Brahman, not a quality/attribute of Brahman.

e. Being so, each construes directly with the substantive (as its essential nature), instead of mutually qualifying each other, as typical predicates do, to generate sentential meaning (*vākyārtha*).

f. The Brahman definition, therefore, is not a typical sentence; strictly speaking, its meaning is *avākyārtha*, generated by processes that do not rely on mutual relation and sentential dependency.

g. Nonetheless, there is an element of *mutual qualification/control*, insofar as the definitional items reciprocally govern each other to eliminate undesirable or erroneous notions associated with Being and Consciousness (for ex. that consciousness is a process/act).

h. Each term thus has a *negative* function, warding off ideas of what Brahman is not, the first two (*satya* and *jñāna*) also retaining a thin positive (*svārtha*) sense above their apophatic function.

i. The definitional terms communicate the nature of Brahman by oblique predication (*lakṣaṇā*) and not direct reference (*abhidhāna* or *vācya*). [As Lipner has shown, this reading dominates the later sections of Śaṃkara's analysis on the basis of an alternative reading of the compound *lakṣaṇārtha* (analyzable either as *lakṣaṇa + artha*, emphasizing the initial focus on definition, or *lakṣaṇā + artha*, emphasizing the later focus on oblique predication).]

j. Oblique predication is able to disclose the non-actional and non-processual dimension of Being and Consciousness covered over by the processual semantics of their overt grammar. That is, Being and Consciousness name, ultimately, the unconditioned/'infinite' horizontal dimension of all experience not subject to time, change and process.

Now, many of these considerations bear directly upon the relation of co-reference obtaining between the four items in the definition. That *sāmānādhikaraṇya* determines the sentential dynamics here is beyond dispute, as both Śaṃkara and Rāmānuja agree. The real question is of the precise reading and implications of

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this relationship. As Julius Lipner and others have noted, the grammar of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* has clear

ontological implications for Advaita (Lipner 1986, 29). And as suggested earlier, it may be possible to read

two different ontologies into the phenomenon of co-reference, supporting a non-dualist (Shankarite) and a

qualified non-dualist (Ramanujian) reading of the nature of Brahman. The primary issue it all boils down to,

as Rāmānuja explains, keenly sensitive to the Advaitin opponent whose view he does an excellent job of

paraphrasing, is the following: Is reality as such—the so called external 'neutral' referent/locus of nominal co-

reference—internally differentiated according to the various predications asserted of it (the Viśiṣṭādvaita

view), or is it *truly* neutral to these predications, not internally or ontologically mirroring the natures

predicated of it *linguistically* (the Advaita view)? The question then, as I would like to emphasize, pertains to

one or the other ontological reading of a grammatical phenomenon. Bartley explains as follows,

> Interpretations of the *mahāvākya* '*Satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*' illustrate the centrality of the
> question of the import of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* (co-referentiality) constructions in Vedantic
> theological dialectic. *Sāmānādhikaraṇya* is standardly defined as 'the application to one object
> of a number of words having different grounds for their applications'…For the Advaitin,
> ultimate reality—the *Brahman-atman* identity state—is undifferentiated and objectless
> consciousness. The co-referential statement '*Satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*' allegedly
> expresses that state. The Advaitin puts the emphasis on *sāmānādhikaraṇya's* unity of reference
> and concludes that the different grounds for the application (*pravṛttinimitta*—'senses') are not
> objective characteristics of the referent but purely subjective modes of presentation
> belonging exclusively to the level of understanding. On this view, co-referentiality expresses
> pure identity. Its referent is the simple unity of the essential nature of the entity devoid of
> properties and relations (Bartley 1986, 104).[26]

As Lipner has explained in his study of Rāmānuja, from the Viśiṣṭādvaita perspective, nominal co-

reference affirms "a real correspondence between differentiation in the terms predicated and differentiation

in the referent. And this the Advaitic interpretation of the *Taittirīya* text does not do" (Lipner 1986, 33). For

Rāmānuja, the explanation of co-referentiality must essentially presuppose a reference to an entity as qualified

by more than one property. In contrast, the referent of *sāmānādhikaraṇya*, according to the Advaitin, is the

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[26] Interestingly, Bartley considers the Brahman definition as a *mahāvākya*, a somewhat uncommon position. If anything, as
Uskokov has amply discussed, it is the soon to follow verse '*tasmād etasmād ātmana…*' ('from that Self which is this…') that
constitutes the *Taittirīya* iteration of the *mahāvākya* and, as he argues, anchors the very notion of identity statement culminating
in the *mahāvākya* in Sarvajñātman (Uskokov 2018, 405).

"simple unity of the essential nature of the entity devoid of properties and relations" (Bartley 1986, 104). Co-referentiality names pure identity. As he later observes, "the Advaitin puts the emphasis on the unity of the referent where unity is incompatible with being the substrate of properties" (Bartley 1986, 111). As stated earlier, this idea is somewhere latent in the very idea of *sāmānādhikaraṇya*: what permits the substrate of co-reference to serve as the ground of semantic unity, the receptacle of all predications, substantive or attributive—both manhood and heroicness in the sentence '*vīraḥ puruṣaḥ*'—is its apparent neutrality to any positive nature identified by predication. Cardona has noted, following Patañjali, that "the locus of heroicness (*vīratva*) is the same as the locus of manhood (*puruṣatva*). That is, there is a single referent who is both a man and heroic" (Cardona 1974, 248).

Nonetheless, this view could be susceptible to the weakness of being unable to explain the apparently strong, natural relation obtaining between predicates and what they are predicates of. The relation between them is now, at best, contingent, non-essential, if not purely subjective as Bartley puts it. On our account, as articulated by Cardona and Lipner, both substantives and attributives equally identify a nameless, characterless referent of which they predicate some or the other nature/attribute, thus collectively categorizable as 'predicative'. This understanding, as argued, goes against the grain of the more common-sensical or at least pervasive view of regarding predicates as applying to subjects already possessed of specific natures. On this account, the question is not so much whether predication is subjective. There may, in fact, be a real basis of why things are the way they are, why, for instance, cows have horns and hares do not. Advaita affirms mundane relations as real in their own domain (of convention, subject to sublation if a stronger countering *pramāṇa*, such as the Advaitic *śabdapramāṇa*, is able to negate the results of the conventional means of knowledge). More importantly, this view of predication can preserve the tight natural relation obtaining between qualificands and their qualifiers (what is called *viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva*). The cow, for example, will always be found to be four-legged and with horns. But reality as such, the neutral substrate subject to predicative activity, and the unitive basis of the application of *sāmānādhikaraṇya*, is, by the same stroke, neutral to the entirety of *viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva* taken together. To reiterate Lipner's articulation: "'[L]otus' and 'blue' are both regarded as predicates describing the referent (the external lotus). In other words, through these two

terms…this existential statement is saying that there is an object out there which instantiates the synthetic co-presence of 'lotusness' and 'blueness'" (Lipner 1986, 153-54).

Again, for the Advaitin, this is a point of *reflective* discrimination. It is neither possible nor desirable to seek a separation of substrate and predicate—or in terms of their philosophical equivalents, Brahman as substrate and *Īśvara* as the totality of all predicables—as if they were independent realities; only in one's understanding is it possible to distinguish the two reflective moments of the predicateless (*nirguṇa*) and predicated (*saguṇa*) aspects of reality. As the constitutive and horizonal Being-Consciousness (*satyam jñānam anantam*), Brahman is the predicateless dimension of reality ontologically grounding conventional reality. This mirrors the ontological reflection, rather, radicalization of grammatical *sāmānādhikaraṇya*.

To take the stock example from *Chāndogya* 6, I may conceive of a pot (*ghaṭa*) as the predicateless and formless clay (*mṛttikā*) inhabiting a certain shape or, alternatively, in its specificity of shape, size etc. as a particular and individual being. This is, in fact, the further implication of Śaṃkara's and Rāmānuja's distinct stances on the nature of *sāmānādhikaraṇya*, for it grounds the Advaitic distinction between Brahman as the *nirguṇa* (predicateless) aspect of reality and God (*īśvara*) as the *saguṇa* (predicative). For Rāmānuja the very distinction is groundless, for the predicateless or unconditioned dimension of reality is simply not admitted. But for the Advaitin, Brahman as such a neutral ontological substrate, the 'pure' qualityless or *nirguṇa* Brahman, is just such 'a single, simple thing' (Bartley 1986, 111) taking the role of the paradigmatic locus (*adhikaraṇa*) of all predications. Śaṃkara, in fact, often puts things this way, explaining how Brahman as pure and simple Being serves as the locus of application of all *nāmarūpa* (name-form), the term identifying all possible linguistic ascriptions upon the real, substantive or attributive. In his *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* commentary where the term occurs, Śaṃkara explains the reference to 'then' as a past-tense marker in the verse: "This (universe) was then undifferentiated. It differentiated only into name and form—it was called such and such, and was of such and such form".[27] He says that "'this' refers to the universe differentiated into name and form…The co-ordination of the two words 'that' and 'this', denoting respectively the past and present states of the universe, indicates an identity of the universe in the two states, meaning that which was this, and this

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[27] tad dhedaṃ tarhy avyākṛtam āsīt | tan nāmarūpābhyām eva vyākriyatāsau nāmāyam idaṃrūpa iti. BU 1.4.7.

which was that was *undifferentiated…It*, this sort of universe, having been undifferentiated, *differentiated into name and form*" (BUB 1.4.7).[28] While the distinction is here set up temporally, the whole point of the teaching is to indicate that *even now* the undifferentiated aspect of reality co-exists with the differentiated. While this explains the manifest, differentiated nature of existents possessing specific natures (according to their specific *nāmarūpa*), the underlying undifferentiated Being perdures through their manifestation, and potential cessation; distinguishing the *thatness* of their being from their *whatness*, the latter being the domain of predication and *viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva.* [This was explained by Śaṃkara in the *Gītā* commentary in terms of the perdurance of the cognition of Being (*sadbuddhi*) in and through the perception of the particularities of individual things (BGB 2.13).] And in his *Chāndogya* Chapter 6 commentary, from where we get the clay-pot metaphor, Śaṃkara says that "all through this infinite series of constituents [existents], there runs the notion of their being 'Beings' (positive entities)—there is no cessation of this 'existence' (character of 'being')".[29] It is this purely *existential* dimension of reality—the *sat* of *Chāndogya's sadvidyā*—that identifies the neutral ontological substrate of *sāmānādhikaraṇya*, with all predicables identifying the domain of *nāmarūpa.*

Kenosis and the Brahman Definition

Mutual qualification/control is one way in which grammarians explained the generation of sentential meaning, showing how predicative items relate, qualify and mutually determine each other's senses. It was pointed out that this is exactly the relation that various items of the Brahman definition do not possess. Each item in the definiens independently constitutes the nature of Brahman: Brahman is Being, Brahman is Consciousness, Brahman is Infinite. At the same time, some kind of relation does obtain between them on the model of mutual qualification but radically different from the mutually qualifying function of regular nominals (relying on the fourfold criterion of linguistic operation: class, attribute, relation and action, as seen in the *Taittirīya* commentary). Firstly, all the three terms carry a clear negative function of negating

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[28] tadidamavyākṛtaṃ vastu etarhyetasminnapi kāle nāmarūpābhyāmeva vyākriyate asaunāmāyamidaṃ rūpa iti. BUB 1.4.7.

[29] ityevaṃ prasaṅgasyānivṛtteḥ sarvatropamardānupapattiḥ | sadbuddhyanuvṛtteḥ sattvānivṛttiśceti sadvādināṃ sata eva sadutpattiḥ setsyati. CUB 6.2.2. Jha tr.

characteristics falsely imputed of ultimate reality. The negative force of '*satyam*' lies in its distinguishing Brahman from mutable and emergent realities; that of '*jñānam*' in distinguishing Brahman from the inanimate; and that of '*anantam*' in its negation of Brahman as finite or conditioned. Śaṃkara is here addressing the objection that it is meaningless to assert the positive existence of something (Brahman) that is, firstly, entirely unknown and, secondly, is only defined in negative terms. The exclusive or evacuative function of the terms renders the definiendum an empty and abstract concept (TUB 2.1).

But Śaṃkara clarifies that the two terms '*satyam*' and '*jñānam*' do not lose their proper (*svārtha*) senses. The invocation of oblique predication (*lakṣaṇā*) simply qualifies their primary sense to indicate infinite/unconditioned being and consciousness, not subject to mutation and action. As Bartley explains with respect to the latter: "*Jñānam* loses its connotations of empirical limitations and means neither the subject, object nor act of knowledge when applied to Brahman" (Bartley 1986, 109). It now stands for the immutable and horizonal Advaitic field-consciousness. The terms, then, are to be purified of their connotation of limitation or conditionedness. We are also to understand that the third term (*anantam*) serves a purely negative function, and may be construed with each of the other terms to further distinguish their proper sense (*anantam satyam* and *anantam jñānam*). In this way, all the terms mutually control each other's sense to determine the proper meaning of Brahman:

> Thus the terms '*satyam*' etc., being in mutual proximity and controlling and being controlled by one another *(itaretarasaṃnidhav anyonyaniyamyaniyāmakāḥ)* negate of Brahman that which they do not express and have the force of defining it. Thus it is established that Brahman cannot be directly designated *(avācyatva)* and that it is not the object *(avākyārtha)* of statements such as 'The lotus is blue' in accordance with the *śrutis,* 'Whence words return with the mind, not attaining it' and 'Inexpressible and without support'.[30]

Construing together this complex hermeneutic of the definition together from beginning till end, we can surmise that the Brahman definition constitutes a unique sort of nominal sentence analyzable into three independent statements about Brahman: *satyam brahma, jñānam brahma, anantam brahma*. As Bartley notes, "each

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[30] evaṃ satyādiśabdā itaretarasannidhānād anyonyaniyamyaniyāmakāḥ santaḥ satyādiśabdavācyāt tannivartakā brahmaṇo, lakṣaṇārthāś ca bhavantīti | ataḥ siddhaṃ yato vāco nivartante | aprāpya manasā saha. TU 2.1.1. Bartley tr.

differs in subjective sense or cognitive significance in that each negates different properties of the Absolute. One and the same thing is negatively presented in three ways" (Bartley 1986, 112). Being so, there is no need to invoke predicative relation (*viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva*) to explain the mutual relation of items, which here function definitionally, not adjectivally. Nonetheless, in being construed with each other, they help negate erroneous notions about ultimate reality. Nominal co-reference still relies on a version of mutual qualification, that of mutual control (*anyonyaniyamyaniyamakatva*), different from that exerted by typical nominal sentences (that is, nominal sentences relying on *viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva*).

Following Bardieu, many scholars have noted how processes of definition in disciplines of Indian philosophy, logic and grammar work more by identifying the distinguishing or separating mark of an entity rather than describing features it has in common with others. In the context of Brahman, Śaṃkara's recourse to definition (*lakṣaṇa*) seeks to further isolate Brahman from any possible relationship or similarity with existent entities. The various items of the Brahman definition not only mutually control each other's sense but, in fact, empty each other of any positive or empirical meaning. Julius Lipner, referring to this phenomenon as the 'kenotic function' of the term, notes that

> *Satyam* and *jñānam*…must be eviscerated of that empirical content which fails to do justice to the utter and simple (viz. divisionless) perfection of their referent, Brahman. In other words, though they are positive semantic controls, they do not connote any kind of existential or epistemic mutability. This emptying or kenotic function is signaled by the use of the term *anantam*. By negating any principle of division (*antavattva*) in Brahman, the term 'infinite' functions as a negative control and requires of us an epistemically purified understanding of the nature of Brahman. Brahman is real, but not real in the way empirical objects are. Brahman is knowing, but not in our way of knowing…Brahman is reality-knowledge per se. What exactly does this mean? The answer is that the epistemic content of this expression is methodologically elusive. The negative control of *anantam* does not permit a straightforward empirical understanding of the terms *satyam* and *jñānam* (Lipner 1997, 311-12).

It is, in other words, a very special case of nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) whereby the 'related' terms are not really related (*asaṃsarga*), and the ensuing sentence meaning is not, strictly speaking, a

sentence meaning at all (being *avākyārtha*).[31] The emergent sense, as dictated by the recovery of the correct grammar, reveals an essentially simple, one, unrelated, internally undifferentiated Being.

The three definitional terms may thus be said to exhibit an '*a priori*' function owing to the fact that they do not pick out anything from the semantic content representing features of the world. Brahman, as unconditioned/infinite Being-Consciousness, cannot be meaningfully said to exist or be conscious in any conventional sense, thus preventing the application of *sat* and *cit* to Brahman as attributes or predicates. That *satyam* (being) and *jñānam* (consciousness) constitute the definition (*lakṣaṇa*) of Brahman implies that they empty Brahman of all content whatsoever, simultaneously permitting it to serve as the empty locus of all predication. *Sāmānādhikaraṇya* in this sense ought, therefore, to assume Brahman as the only true ground/referent (*adhikaraṇa*) of predicative ascription. Brahman, being the existential (*sat/satya*) aspect of any existent, its *quoddity* or thatness (as opposed to its qualitative, empirical features), functions as the unifying ground for the grammatical application of co-reference over several nominal items, being neutral to actional, adjectival or generic predication. In the construal of the definition of Brahman as a special case of nominal co-reference, Śaṃkara thus places nominal relationships, rather nominal *identity*, at the heart of grammatical analysis, replacing the action-actor frame of the ritual philosophers and grammarians. Conversely, Advaitic knowledge of the one non-dual reality is a linguistic cognition accommodating not only co-reference and oblique predication but, as we will see, the method of agreement and difference (*anvayavyatireka*) already well-known to the grammarians. But first, I address another crucial application of nominal co-reference in Śaṃkara's Vedānta, as applicable to the *mahāvākya* or equational/identity statement.

III.iii   Co-Reference in the Mahāvākya

It is telling that Sureśvarācārya in the *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* (*The Establishment of Non-Action*) takes Śaṃkara's example of the blue lotus/water-lily in explicating the dynamics of the *mahāvākya* (NS 3.1). Although both, the definition of Brahman and the equation of *ātman* and Brahman, comprise instances of

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[31] Since, as explained earlier, sentence meaning is typically relational, emerging from the related and mutually qualifying function of the nominal terms.

nominal co-reference, their unfoldment seems to require the application of slightly distinct techniques, complicating the borrowing of the example. The challenge of explaining the co-reference of *ātman* and Brahman lies in its frustration or repudiation of common-sense: how can the limited, bodily individual be identical with the unlimited cause of the universe? This problem is not addressed by an example like the blue lotus in which the possibility of co-reference is not debated. Śaṃkara's own example in his *mahāvākya* analysis in the *US,* 'the black horse' (*nīlāśva*), suffers from the same limitation. His intention, though, only seems to be to indicate a certain parallel between the *mahāvākya* and predicative utterances like 'the black horse' (that of nominal co-reference) without drawing any further implications. In either case, it is nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), again, that stands at the basis of the correct comprehension of the identity statements. As in the case of the Brahman definition, it is by decoding the correct grammar of certain statements that self-knowledge becomes possible; the correct *grammatical* intuition or understanding constituting the core event of self-knowledge. The final emancipatory knowledge is nothing over and above the linguistic cognition of the meaning of certain statements, correctly decoded. As we saw, part of this grammatical work requires the recuperation of kinds of sentences, primarily nominal and non-verbal, as opposed to the conventional prioritization of the verbal sentence as paradigmatic. This implied securing for non-action (*niṣkriyatva*) or pre-existent (*siddha/bhūta*) being an equally strong foundation in grammar as action (*kriyā*) and becoming (*bhāva*). Identity statements and nominal sentences take on this role in Advaita's non-actional grammar.

Identity Statements

Sāmānādhikaraṇya is one of the core ideas regulating nominal relationships that helps secure this domain. In the case of the Brahman definition, nominal co-reference regulated the dynamics of primarily the nominal sentence. The nominal sentence also regulates the syntax of two of the four well-known *mahāvākya*s (iii. and iv. below). But the most important one, and the one under consideration in the *US,* is *Chāndogya*'s 'That you are' (*tat tvam asi*). This being a copulative, and particularly an identity statement, demands a slightly different procedure of unfoldment of co-reference, as Śaṃkara and others set out to do. It will, in fact, require the application of another grammatical procedure, *anvayavyatireka*, to be clarified and established, further

implicating the so-called Brahman 'realization' in what are primarily grammatical intuitions and grammatically induced cognitions. It will be useful to note some peculiarities of the individual identity statements, the so-called *mahāvākyas*, preparatory to the subsequent analysis of '*tat tvam asi*' as discussed by Śaṃkara in light of grammatical and ontological co-reference. Where do these statements stand in light of the previous discussion? The four well-known *mahāvākya*s are[32]:

i. *tat tvam asi.* CU 6.8.7

ii. *ahaṃ brahmāsmi.* BU 1.4.10

iii. *ayam ātmā brahma.* MāU.2.1

iv. *prajñānaṃ brahma.* AU 3.3

These statements are significant for asserting the identity between the limited, finite self (*jīvātman*) and the unlimited self (*sarvātman/paramātman*), the subjective/personal and objective/impersonal 'poles' of Brahman, presupposing a complex propaedeutic required to make the equation intelligible. It is noteworthy that the first two appear to be on par with verbal sentences while the latter with the nominal sentence. Earlier considerations suggested that iii. and iv., as nominal sentences do not require the postulation of an 'is' to render them complete. The Upaniṣads, for that very reason, do not feel compelled to append a verb or copula. But what of the expressions i. and ii. that explicitly contain finite verbs?

The first thing to note is that i. and ii. are statements in the first and second-person while iii. and iv. find a neutral third-person expression. Indeed, nominal sentences are most visible in Sanskrit in the third-person, usually expressive of co-reference already observed in such cases as '*rāmaḥ sundaraḥ*'. The didactic context may further clarify the situation. The first is integrated in a long dialogue where Uddālaka is presenting self-knowledge to his son and student Śvetaketu who is repeatedly told (eight times) 'You are that' at the end of each provisional unfoldment of the self. In the second case (ii.), 'I am Brahman' simply records the direct first-person realization of Prajāpati, and subsequently Vāmadeva or another human being, as a

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[32] It is not presumed here that the four *mahāvākya*s are especially unique or sacrosanct in some way as compared to other equational statements occurring in the Upanishadic corpus but, nonetheless, they remain exemplary, especially '*tat tvam* asi' which is the most important statement of identity for Śaṃkara.

response to the question 'What did he know that he became all?'. On the other hand, iii. and iv. are entirely free of any dialogical context or reference to first-person states, as parts of a complete self-contained instruction with no assumed speaker or audience. In these cases the identity is expressed as a matter of fact, as already known and subsequently communicated. In i. and ii., however, the identity is of the nature of a discovery, conveyed by a teacher (*Chāndogya*) or understood by the subject (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*). The unknown is made known. This may in part explain the absence of the copula in other cases. All four are, for Śaṃkara, cases of an underlying *sāmānādhikaraṇya* where the overt difference between the individual and Brahman co-exists with a covert non-duality, but only in i. and ii. is non-duality of the manner of a realization, a discovery, allocating to the copula the task of positively asserting or revealing the oneness. Other cases simply state the co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), the non-duality taken for granted between the terms in apposition. The copula thus serves the purpose of underscoring an identity not immediately evident, eroding the subject's common-sense view. Emily Benveniste's understanding of the nominal sentence, in his classical treatment of the nominal sentence in the Indo-European with a keen sensitivity to Sanskritic forms, supports this special sense of iii. and iv. For him, the nominal sentence conveys, in the Indo-European, a meaning that is inherently timeless, impersonal and non-modal (Benveniste 1971, 137), therefore ideally suited to denote timeless or universal scientific or philosophical truths. This is precisely what a statement like '*prajñām brahma*' ('consciousness brahman') intends to convey. Indeed, it suggests the proximity of Advaitic declarations of self-Brahman identity with the nature of scientific claims as uncovering timeless truths about the self not subject to change.

This purpose is bolstered by another consideration. The *mahāvākya*s of *Chāndogya* 6 and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4 both carry a trans-temporal dimension by which Brahman prior to creation is equated with the temporal self within creation: '*Sad eva saumya idam agre āsīt*' (CU 6.2.1) and '*ātmaiva idam agre āsīt*' culminate respectively in the mahāvākyas reproduced here by way of equating *āsīt* ('it was') with *asi* ('you are') and *asmi* ('I am'). This equation would not be possible without the presence of the copulae in i. and ii. that explicitly identify the non-actional pre-existent Brahman (indicated in the past-tense) with the individual here and now, negating the capacity of time (*kāla*) and name-form (*nāmarūpa*) to separate the being immanent in creation from the

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transcendent Brahman.[33] *Mahāvākya*s thus need not be considered elliptical verbal sentences, and verbal forms, even when they do occur, have no bearing on the actional semantics foregrounded in Vyākaraṇa and Mīmāṃsā. They either simply denote existence or being, as in a simple existential assertion, or equate two or more existent items in a statement of identity, as in identity statements.

III.iv   Co-Reference and the Ātman-Brahman Identity

The Advaitic project can come across as a purely philosophical response to questions pertaining to selfhood and personal identity. Nonetheless aspects of Advaita are better understood as engaging not so much with the question 'Who am I?' but "What is the true reference of the term 'I'?". This is most evident in his introduction to the *Brahmasūtra* outlining the confusion of the referential domains of 'you' and 'I', regarding which Mattia Salvini has noted: "Advaita is an exercize in clarifying the proper referents of personal and non-personal pronouns: when properly understood, some terms refer to the ultimately existent" (Salvini 2017, 103). The question of self-identity is framed as a grammatical problem[34] with the ensuing response attempting to disclose the underlying grammar of the terms 'I' (*aham*), 'you' (*tvam*) or 'that' (*tat*); such that the final event of self- knowledge is nothing but the correct 'fixing' of their referential domains. The general dynamics by which this meaning is fixed is well known.[35] The noetic ritual proceeds by a sustained and ever intensifying enquiry into the referential domains of 'you' (*tvam-pada*) and 'that' (*tat-pada*) clarifying or 'refining' their meanings until the disclosure of a remainder left over after all non-essential or contingent meanings of the terms drop out. What is really happening through the *grammatical* inquiry, in any case, is the *ontological* discarding of every *adhyāsa* one by one to reach the underlying basis (or remainder) of all superimpositions. The grammatical and particularly sentential nature of the inquiry and the ensuing result is affirmed by the *US* in I.18, with respect to the most discussed and commented *mahāvākya*:

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[33] The term 'transcendent' is used with caution here, as a possible rendering of *nirguṇa* and related concepts. Brahman, as the Upaniṣads and Śaṃkara himself is most insistent, is not transcendent in the sense of being epistemically or experientially unavailable to the embodied subject; being the most familiar, intimate and well-known as the fact of first-personal awareness.

[34] yuṣmadasmatpratyayagocarayor viṣayaviṣayinos tamaḥprakāśavdviruddhasvabhāvayor iteretarabhāvānupapattau siddhāyām...BSB 1.1.1.

[35] Advaitic metareflection on its own method often uses the terms '*vicāra*' (deliberation) or '*śodhana*' (investigating/refining) to denote the process.

US I.18.196 When the result of the [sentence] 'Thou art That' is understood in such a way, how is it said that this [sentence] is not the means of knowledge and that it depends upon action.

US I.18.199 It is true that [only] indirect knowledge arises from sentences referring to things other than *Ātman*. But it cannot be doubted that [direct knowledge arises from the sentence] which refers to the inner Ātman, just as the [true] number [ten] was obtained [from the sentence, 'You are the tenth'].[36]

Śaṃkara here cites another ordinary 'identity statement' ('You are the tenth') to explain the nature of linguistic cognition resulting from the correct comprehension of non-actional sentences. His emphasis is on the practical or *efficacious* nature of such comprehension, an efficacy that lies outside the action-centric framework of conventional grammar. That is to say, even non-actional sentences can be fruitful and soteriologically effective, without their cognition requiring a further *application* or the proverbial move from theory to practice. Certain sentences, especially those pertaining to the inner self, can be directly effective merely by the grasping of their correct sense. We know this to be the case, from previous discussions, with instances where language works negatively, warding off erroneous conceptions thus thwarting certain trajectories of action and attention. What, however, are the specific stakes of nominal co-reference in the case of 'You are That'? Uskokov explains:

[O]n the level of the identity statement, the two categories of *tat* and *tvam*, standing for Brahman the great Being out there…and the inner Self that is tinged by ignorance and is liable to suffering that is transmigration, restrict one another because of being co-referential, and there obtains a special meaning of the identity statement in which the reference is neither external nor liable to transmigration. Śaṃkara makes the point of emphasizing that this special meaning obtains without the respective categories giving up their individual meaning. This must be interpreted to mean that the respective categories do not directly obtain a secondary signification function in the sentence because the primary is blocked…However, when combining in sentences through the *viśeṣyaviśeṣaṇa-bhava*, some restriction of meaning must obtain, as in Bhartṛhari's black sesame or Śaṃkara's black horse. This is not an equivalent case, as neither of the two *padartha*s have a respective class from which it can be delimited, but it is quite like the definition of *satyam jñanam anantam brahma* where something from the scope of the collocated categories had to drop. What drops in the

[36] evaṃ tat tvam asīty asya gamyamāne phale katham | apramāṇatvam asyoktvā kriyāpekṣatvam ucyate. US I.18.196.
satyam evam anātmārthe vākyāt pārokṣyabodhanam | pratyagātmani na tv evaṃ saṃkhyāprāptivad adhruvam. US I.18.199.

meaning of the sentence is Brahman's being external and the Self being liable to transmigration. In other words, clarifying the meaning of the *tvam-padārtha,* one had reduced the scope of the word through removing the sheaths covering the Self, only to realize that s/he had not considered the one point of identification that made the removal possible, Brahman the light of awareness. One learns from the sentence that this inner Self of mine is Brahman, that great unlimited Being that is not liable to change and transmigration, but is not extraneous either. It is in this tiny space between the literal and indicated meaning, both of which are necessary, that liberation becomes possible (Uskokov 2018, 432-33).

Uskokov lays out the precise nature of the co-reference obtaining between the individual self and Brahman, requiring a partial repudiation of the meanings of 'you' and 'that' for the co-reference to hold. Yet, as in the case of the Brahman definition, this repudiation does not imply a simple recourse to secondary or metaphorical meaning. As Lipner explained in the case of Brahman definition, and Uskokov highlights here, it is in "this tiny space between the literal and indicated meaning, both of which are necessary" that the cognition of inner Self is negotiated. Again, as in cases of nominal co-reference seen before, the identity statement under consideration follows a negative logic of 'ascertaining by distinguishing' at work here, what Uskokov calls 'restriction of meaning', by way of separating out or filtering the senses of the two words ('you' and 'that') in mutual tension. In referring to the stock examples used by Śaṃkara, he particularly cites the grammarians' viewpoint:

> In sentences and phrases such as *kṛṣṇaḥ tilaḥ,* 'black sesame,' or *nilam utpalam,* 'a blue lotus,'…there obtains a relation between the two words with different meanings so that they both denote a particular, a specific variety of lotus…To paraphrase Bhartṛhari, in *kṛṣṇaḥ tilaḥ,* the word 'black' is used in the sense of some black substance whose genus is unknown, whereas the word 'sesame' is used in the sense of a genus whose quality is unknown. Since their generalities do not relate, they first mutually specify their meaning: in the sentence, 'black' gets to stand for the black color specified by the being of a sesame seed, and 'sesame' stands for the being of a sesame seed specified by the black color. Their word denotations have changed, and now the two words are relatable. Finally, these two transformed denotations merge in one, and the whole phrase gets to denote a particular black sesame seed. The last was what Mīmāṃsakas call a *vākyārtha,* a sentential denotation (Uskokov 2018, 407-08).

The primary difference, as noted earlier, in the application of these logics of mutual control/ restriction is that in normal predicative utterances, the qualifier-qualified relation properly holds (owing to the

fourfold criterion of the application of words) while in the case of the *mahāvākya*, as in the Brahman definition, another sort of mutual restriction must be at work. While there is an ostensible qualifier-qualified (*viśeṣaṇaviśeṣya*) relation between 'that' and 'you'—in the statement 'you are that', 'that' is predicated of 'you'—the statement is ultimately one of identity and not an adjective qualifying a noun. Moreover, the purified domains of 'you' and 'that' must ultimately be free of the fourfold ground of the application of words on which predication relies, since the real Self/Brahman is free of them. Thus mutual restriction works not by controlling the domain of the universal (*jāti*) conveyed by other terms, but, as just seen, abandoning the inconsistent element that would frustrate the assertion of identity. The key *US* passages run as follows:

> US I.18.169 Since [in the sentence 'Thou art That' the words] 'Thou' and 'The Existent' (=That) have the same referent, this [sentence] is comparable to [the sentence] 'The horse is black.' Since the word 'Thou' is [used] in apposition to [a word—'Existent'—which] refers to the Painless One (= *Brahman*), it [too] refers to that [Painless One].
> US I.18.170 Likewise, since the word 'That' is [used] in connection with [the word which] denotes the inner *Atman,* [it refers to the inner *Atman*]. [Just like the sentence] 'You are the tenth,' the sentence ['Thou art That'] means the inner *Atman.*
> US I.18.171 Without abandoning their own meanings [the words 'Thou' and 'That'] convey a special meaning and result in the realization of the inner *Atman.* Therefore there is no other meaning contradictory to this meaning.[37]

For the co-reference to hold, there must be a justification of the unity of the single locus of both self and Brahman. Any mutually inconsistent senses must drop. As it happens, something does obtain as a common referent or substratum (*samāna/eka* + *adhikaraṇa*) when the overt senses of the two words in mutual tension are relinquished. 'You' in apposition with 'that', Brahman, the great Being, must give up its sense of finitude and being subject to personal suffering and transmigration. 'That' in apposition with 'you', the self, must give up the sense of being other or non-self, i.e., give up its *third-personness*. Cardona best articulates the process as follows:

> Both of these [*tat* and *tvam*] are deictic terms, which can have various referents, but every referent of *tad* has one property and every referent of *tvam* has another. Whenever *tad* is used

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[37] vaṃsatos tulyanīḍatvān nīlāśvavad idaṃ bhavet | nirduḥkhavācinā yogāt tvaṃśabdasya tadarthatā. US I.18.169. pratyagātmābhidhānena tacchabdasya yutes tathā | daśamas tvam asīty evaṃ vākyaṃ syāt pratyagātmani. US I.18.170. svārthasya hy aprahāṇena viśiṣṭārthasamarpakau | pratyagātmāvagatyantau nānyo 'rtho 'rthād virodhy ataḥ. US I.18.171.

one understands that what is referred to is not directly before one's eyes, that is, is separated from one in time and space. The term *tvam* is used with reference to a single person to whom one speaks directly, an individual who is part of the cycle of life and susceptible of suffering. If, then, *tvam* in [*tat tvam asi*] refers to a qualificand of whom it is predicated that he is what *tad* designates, a problem arises. One cannot rightly say of the person to whom *tvam* refers that he is not before one's eyes and not subject to pain. But if the referent of *tvam* keeps these properties, he cannot enter into a qualifier-qualificand relation with the referent of *tad*. The conflict of qualities which precludes this relation is resolved, however, if one considers that having the entities which *tad*, *tvam* directly designate stand in an apparent impossible relation serves an ulterior motive: to have these significands related to another entity, which is to be signified secondarily, namely the inner self…In other words, the conflict is eliminated by ones understanding to set aside the conflicting properties in the significands of *tad* and *tvam*. One this is done, one is left with a single unqualified entity, the self. Thus interpreted, [*tat tvam asi*] teaches that there is no distinction between one self and the ultimate self, Brahman (Cardona 1981, 88-9).

Cardona weaves together the many different strands of Advaitic grammar at work in the determination of nominal language: co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), qualifier-qualificand relation (*viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva*), primary and secondary signification (*abhidhā* and *lakṣaṇā*) and, what we will soon approach, the method of agreement and difference (*anvayavyatireka*). The simultaneous application of these grammatical procedures generates the sentential cognition conveying the non-distinction of self and Brahman. This realization remains a deeply *grammatical* experience of the underlying co-reference/identity of apparently disjointed semantic and syntactic units.

This identity is asserted by the copula (*asi*) identifying the non-conflicting or 'refined' senses of 'you' and 'that'. This is the primary difference between the co-reference obtaining in Brahman definition and the *mahāvākya*; the former being a nominal sentence asserting a timeless truth or reality, the nature of Brahman, and the latter making a positive statement of identity mediated by the copula between two terms which, on the surface-level, identify distinct referential domains. Śaṃkara's word for this co-reference, in US I.18.169, is *tulyanīḍatva*, an exact equivalent of *sāmānādhikaraṇya*, but, perhaps, having greater ontological purchase. Because 'you' and 'that' have the same (*tulya*) locus (*nīḍa*) their relation is equivalent to that of 'the black horse'. As just indicated, this is only meant to isolate a general relation of nominal co-reference without further equating the two cases. In fact, Mayeda translates *nīlāśva* as a copulative assertion—'the horse *is* black', to correspond to the identity statement 'you *are* that'—while the text simply states a nominal sentence ('black

horse'). Attending to these nuances can help locate the finer distinctions between the different nominal constructions prioritized by Advaitic grammar, even if they all collectively elevate *sāmānādhikaraṇya* to the status of the primary object of grammatical inquiry. All such cases of nominal co-reference rely on *some* parallel mode of mutual restriction/control/qualification characterizing purely nominal relations.

At the same time, Śaṃkara's repeated emphasis that the final meaning of such non-verbal or nominal constructions is non-sentential (*avākyārtha*) intensifies the paradox of Advaita as a *vākyaśāstra*, a discipline of the statement/sentence. The sentences under consideration succeed in generating a final sentential meaning that is free of both action (*kriyā*) as the fulcrum of sentential meaning, and the predicative relations (*viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva*) typically characterizing sentential meaning and relying on mutual intra-sentential relationships. While appealing to parallel modes of qualification/restriction, Advaitic grammar steers clear of this model of nominal relation that becomes, in fact, the definitive sense of sentential meaning (*vākyārtha*)— the final sentential sense *must* ordinarily be reliant on such mutual qualification/relation. One may venture to say, the primary function of language is to express *relationships* (themselves typically subordinated to a central action). In suggesting that the nominal constructions it cares about generate a final sense that is *avākyārtha*, Advaita realigns nominal relations along the model of identity/non-difference (*abheda/advaita/ekatva*) as opposed to relationality. The so-called realization or experience of final non-duality between self and Brahman is, therefore, primarily a grammatical insight into the real 'relations' between certain existent (*bhūta*) items. And the mode of accomplishing this is another technique already well-known to the grammarians, *anvayavyatireka*.

IV. Anvayavyatireka

Anvayavyatireka has received extensive attention in Advaitic scholarship (Hacker, Halbfass, Mayeda, van Buitenen, Vetter, Cardona, Bader and others). I approach it in the particular context of the grammatical embeddedness of Advaitic procedures and revaluating its function in light of its articulation as noetic ritual. Wilhelm Halbfass has observed that the "Vedic texts, though 'sentences', can produce the knowledge of the *ātman*, which is not the meaning of any sentence, if their hearing is preceded by *anvayavyatireka*" (Halbfass

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1992, 175). George Cardona has correctly shown that its Advaitic application is perfectly in accordance with its grammatical uses and comprises a continuation of fundamentally the same kind of reasoning. This reasoning involves the determination of i. what meanings may be attributed to given terms, and ii. what properties may be said to characterize given things (Cardona 1981, 91); the Advaitic terms of concern being 'I/you' and 'that'. '*Anvaya*' or continued presence is proof that an essential relationship obtains between two items, such that each is seen to occur with the other and not without the other. '*Vyatireka*' or absence is evidence that such a relationship does not obtain and either a term cannot be attributed with the alleged meaning or an entity cannot be said to possess an alleged property. The relevant verses from the *US* run as follows:

> US I.18.176 For when the meanings of the words in a sentence, while they are being listened to, are remembered by the method of agreement and difference, then the meaning of the sentence is understood.
> US I.18.177 When the meanings of words in eternal sentences are clarified in order to convey the knowledge of the meaning of the sentences [to a pupil], then the question ['How am I *Brahman*?'] is out of place.
> US I.18.178 The method of agreement and difference has been mentioned for the purpose of remembering the meanings of the words, for nobody can know the meaning of a sentence without remembering [the meanings of words].
> US I.18.179 In such sentences as 'Thou art That,' the meaning of sentences—[namely] 'I am ever-free'—is not manifested from them because the meaning of the word 'Thou' has not been analyzed.
> US I.18.180 The method of agreement and difference has been mentioned for the purpose of analyzing out the [meaning of the word 'Thou'] and for no other purpose; for [it is only] when the meaning of the word 'Thou' has been discriminated, like a *bilva* fruit placed on the palm [of the hand],
> US I.18.181 the meaning of the sentence becomes manifest. And thus [the meaning of the sentence] is the One Apart, since the inner *Ātman* is ascertained by the exclusion of the [meaning] 'experiencer of pain' from the meanings of the word 'I.'[38]

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[38] vākye hi śrūyamāṇānāṃ padānām arthasaṃsmṛtiḥ | anvayavyatirekābhyāṃ tato vākyārthabodhanam. US I.18.176
yadā nityeṣu vākyeṣu padārthas tu vivicyate | vākyārthajñānasaṃkrāntyai tadā praśno na yujyate. US I.18.177
anvayavyatirekoktiḥ padārthasmaraṇāya tu | smṛtyabhāve na vākyārtho jñātuṃ śakyo bi kenacit. US I.18. 178
tattvamasyādivākyeṣu tvaṃpadārthāvivekataḥ | vyajyate naiva vākyārtho nityamukto 'ham ity ataḥ. US I.18.179
anvayavyatirekoktis tadvivekāya nānyathā | tvaṃpadārthaviveke hi pāṇāv arpitavilvavat. US I.18.180
vākyārtho vyajyate caivaṃ kevalo 'haṃpadārthataḥ | duḥkhīty etadapohena pratyagātmaviniścayāt. US I.18.181.

The above verses clearly state the importance of *anvayavyatireka* particularly to the fixing of the referential field of singular personal pronouns. Sureśvara is also explicit about the importance of the method to the understanding of the *ātman*-Brahman identity gained from identity statements:

> It has thus been taught that one who has performed reasoning (on the meaning of the words) by the method of agreement and difference understands from the very sentence itself that which is not the meaning of any sentence. To explain this further, an aphorism (*sutra*) is now added...[H]aving given up the whole sphere of the you (*yuṣmad*) as unreal, by reasoning through the method of agreement and difference (*anvaya* and *vyatireka*).[39]

We have already seen what meanings of '*tvam*' are to be discarded at the application of the method: the sense of self as subject to suffering and transmigration, in other words, the agent-enjoyer (*kartṛ-bhoktṛ*). This meaning cannot be attributed to it because it is inconsistent with and cannot stand in co-reference with the immutability and freedom from suffering/transmigration characteristic of the inner self or Brahman. Since the two terms are in apposition, any inconsistent senses need to be addressed and ironed out. Cardona explains:

> One uses reasoning by *anvaya* and *vyatireka* to determine what meanings may be attributed to given terms and to see what properties may be said to characterize given things. Reasoning thus, one learns to discriminate between what is self and what is not the self…A person who has learnt to discriminate between what is and is not the self and who knows what *tvam* can refer to is capable of grasping the import of a *mahāvākya*…the terms *tad* and *tvam* stand here in the…relation of having the same referent (*sāmānādhikaraṇya, tulyanīḍatva*) (Cardona 1981, 92).

For Cardona, as a mode of reasoning *anvayavyatireka* merely determines what is or is not the meaning or reference of a given term or what properties essentially accompany a phenomenon, with particular reference to singular personal pronouns in its Advaitic use. In this emphasis on *anvayavyatireka* as a 'mode of reasoning', Cardona's presentation has taken issue with an interpretation of the procedure as a kind of Vedantic meditation (Mayeda 1992). Mayeda himself, however, appears to have emphasized its meditational

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[39] evam kṛtānvayavyatireko vākyād evāvākyārtham pratipadyata ity uktam atas tad-vyākhyānāya sūtropanyāsaḥ... anvaya-vyatirekābhyāṃ tyaktvā yuṣmad aśeṣataḥ. NS 3.2, 3.4. Alston tr.

aspect in response to Halbfass's presentation of the technique as an *exegetical* method (Halbfass 1992, 162-82): "Whatever its specific details may be, *anvayavyatireka* has to do with positive and negative concomitance…As such, it exemplifies the nature of human reasoning (*yukti, tarka, upapatti, anumāna*), which is groundless in itself and has no legitimate direction, if it is not guided by Vedic revelation" (Halbfass 1992, 174).

We are already witness, here, to three different frames of reading a procedure regarding whose basic dynamics they would fundamentally be in agreement. Halbfass's exegetical emphasis is in keeping with his concerns of reading Advaitic uses of reason within the broader horizon of revelation and the manner in which *śruti* may employ or accommodate itself to human reason and permit certain 'legitimate' modes of reasoning not independent in their rationality. A one-sided emphasis on Śaṃkara's reliance on *anvayavyatireka* as a form of inference or reasoning (*anumāna/tarka/yukti*) can be misleading in its apparent autonomy in arriving at results. Further, according to Halbfass, the US I.18.180 statement of the application of the technique to the determination of the referent of 'you' may lead to an incorrect and somewhat dangerous conclusion that inference is fundamental to the determination of the subjective side of the *mahāvākya* equation (the '*tvam*' side of *tat tvam asi*) while revelation is more fundamental to the objective ('*tat*'). Such a clear division of responsibilities ('Verteilung der Aufgaben' in Vetter's articulation) of reason and revelation is problematic insofar as, for Halbfass, reason must remain be continually guided by revelation.

It is true that we may be inclined to read discourse on the objective ('*tat*') side as revelation-based, owing to the centrality of the creation passages here that variously recount the generation of the world from a first being. Allegedly this must be outside any human rational means to verify. However, as I have tried to show, the purport (*tātparya*) of such passages is not such a recounting that human reason must believe or acquiesce to. It is, rather, an enaction procedure (*prakriyā*) employing reason, amongst other means, to undo identification with grosser levels of personal identity. Śaṃkara will say in commenting on BS 1.4.14: "[T]he creation that is variously taught in terms of clay, iron, sparks etc. is only an expedient means (*upāya*); in reality there is no difference (*bheda*) at all."[40] Revelation culminates in such a direct knowledge of non-difference

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[40] mṛllohavisphuliṅgādyaiḥ sṛṣṭiryā coditānyathā | upāyaḥ so 'vatārāya nāsti bhedaḥ kathañcana. BSB 1.4.14. Thibaut tr.

through the use of enaction-procedures that work analogously on both ends (objective and subjective) employing reason, perception (*anubhava*) and grammar in a collective process of attentional governance.

The framing of the problem as a balance of responsibilities, then, between *anvayavyatireka* as a mode of i. reasoning, ii. meditation, iii. exegesis ties back to a not so helpful division of Advaita along the three trajectories discussed in Chapter 1—Advaita as philosophy, experience and scriptural hermeneutics. While Advaita may be seen to employ modes of reasoning, hermeneutics and direct perception (*anubhava*), successively or in tandem, the unfoldment of Advaita as noetic ritual can preempt the tensions that accompany the framing of Advaita along one or the other line exclusively. Advaita as scriptural hermeneutics will be seen to transcend the domain of legitimate inference-based truth-claims to which Advaita as *philosophy* wants to restrict itself. And Advaita as direct personal experience appeals to norms of epistemic immediacy that neither Advaita as philosophy nor hermeneutics accept as legitimate. And while Halbfass does not necessarily perceive a tension between human reason and Vedic revelation, the former nonetheless remains subservient and answerable to revelation as an ultimate superordinal authority. A dualism of reason and revelation, if not outright tension (as in other authors), appears intact. This is clearly evident in Jonathan Bader's work on meditation in Śaṃkara. Bader is mystified by how knowledge can arise upon simply and immediately hearing the word 'you', an idea that presumably assumes some belief in the mysterious power of the word (Bader 1990, 71). The way out, I suggest, is to retain the simplicity of such sentence-meaning (being directly communicative of Brahman) on par with regular sentence-meaning cognition in daily life; the difference being that Advaitic grammar recovers and prioritizes non-verbal, nominal language over verbal and actional. This is precisely the force of Śaṃkara's example of the tenth-man (US I.18.199)[41]: on hearing that he is the tenth (and realizing that he was forgetting to count himself every time) his predicament is immediately resolved and he no more goes about the task of figuring out the missing person. This is because, while being simply informative on one hand, the knowledge so gained immediately halts further activity in its tracks. From this perspective, the person is thus 'liberated' from any further seeking he may do to resolve his

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[41] US I.18.199: It is true that [only] indirect knowledge arises from sentences referring to things other than *Ātman*. But it cannot be doubted that [direct knowledge arises from the sentence] which refers to the inner Ātman, just as the [true] number [ten] was obtained [from the sentence, 'You are the tenth'].

conflict. It is this negative task of language that is also exploited by Advaita in the suspension of *actional* trajectories. Liberation is liberation *from* the sense of self as *kartṛ-bhoktṛ* and subjection to the desire-action-means-ends framework. The hearing of 'you' can lead to liberation because it is preceded by the necessary grammatical work done by nominal co-reference, oblique indication, *anvayavyatireka* etc., for it to become soteriologically effective. When the aspirant recognizes the referent of personal pronouns as first-personal awareness minus agency and enjoyership—that is, minus the actional framework subsuming both conventional grammar and conventional world—there is an immediate cognition of awareness as unconditioned by action and the limitations of *nāmarūpa* introduced by action. Awareness is not any more seen to be circumscribed by the boundaries of ego and agency introduced by action. *Śabda* is therefore plain and simple verbal cognition as Śaṃkara intends it. Rendering it as scriptural authority or revelation can often obfuscate the directly grammatical nature of the Advaitic intervention.[42]

It is such a self-conscious program of altering self-identity that unites various Advaitic instrumentalities as an organic whole. Anything that is instrumental in the revelation of the obtaining self—reason, direct perception, experience, sentential analysis—is 'revelatory'. *Anvayavyatireka* is not a form of human reasoning 'employed by' *śruti*; it is *śruti* itself manifest as the particular noetic procedure of continued presence and absence. What makes it revelatory is the specific collocation of ends, results and procedures into which it is assimilated; the premeditated order of words and sentences that will direct attention along certain noetic channels.[43] The recognition of Upaniṣads as such a composite of words/sentences arranged in a specific hierarchy to disclose a depth-grammar (of 'you' and 'that') reveals the precise texture of Advaitic revelation—a grammatically driven system employing the requisite procedures, rational, phenomenological, hermeneutic, to fix the correct denotations of '*tat*' and '*tvam*'.

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[42] A recourse to *śruti* as the final arbiter of meaning and truth is therefore unproblematic, reflective of Śaṃkara's own understanding. The question concerns the nature of its revelatory function and authority. As noetic ritual, '*śruti*' is the set of noetic operations and enaction procedures it sets up, the special arrangement of words and sentences that reverse the trajectory of attention—in its role as a mode of attentional governance discussed earlier—towards an obtaining presence not reducible to the corporeal, material dimensions of subjectivity. And it is a depth-grammar whereby common meanings of words are cast aside to disclose the transcendentally constitutive horizon of ordinary being.

[43] This is in keeping with the understanding that what is unique about Vedic text or revelation is the precise order or configuration (syntax) of words, and not any special content or meaning of words standing for super-sensible or otherwise unavailable realities.

So while the characterization of *anvayavyatireka* as a mode of reasoning is not inaccurate, its particularly Advaitic iteration is easily to overlook. Its operation is not purely 'cognitive', as perhaps in the disciplines of grammar and logic. Advaitic *anvayavyatireka* is phenomenologically located. Of the two items whose continued presence or absence is to be determined, the first is the bare minimal fact of consciousness (*caitanya*), being aware. The question is whether other attributes commonly identified as my self, over and above this bare denominator, may be included in the referential field of 'I'. The *anvayavyatireka* procedure is supposed to fix this once and for all. But what is unique about awareness, from the Advaitic perspective, is that it is non-objectifiable and therefore fundamentally different from the cognitive, conceptual or grammatical items comprising the terms of procedure in grammar and logic. In Advaita *anvayavyatireka* becomes a relentless phenomenological inquiry, even a kind of ceaseless 'meditation', conducted across the states of waking, dream and deep sleep, such that awareness or consciousness is *both* the subject conducting the inquiry and the object of inquiry. The pure subject of awareness sees its own *anvaya* (continued presence) across all modalities of self and sees the *vyatireka* (absence) of other features. It is thus finally determined as the true referent of 'I'. The articulation of a meditational mode of *anvayavyatireka* (as in Mayeda 1992), therefore, is not entirely unwarranted. More crucially, 'meditational', 'rational' and 'exegetical' are not mutually tensional, but components of one rituogrammatic operation of fixing the correct referent of 'I'.

I further suggest that *anvayavyatireka* is useful in giving a concrete functional sense to the Advaitic claim of Brahman's eternality (*nityatva*) or imperishability (*akṣaratva*). From the above analysis we can say that 'eternal' in Advaita is simply whatever withstands the *anvayavyatireka* operation. That is, the notion of eternality, if originally nebulous or speculative, is *rituogrammatically* fixed and arbitrated. This is in keeping with Śaṃkara's conception of reality or truth as that which withstands cancellation across the three states (*trikālabādharahita*). Other alternative terms used in the context of *anvayavyatireka*, like '*nitya*' or '*avyabhicāra*'[44] seem to be doing parallel work for the Advaitin.[45] Moreover, the Advaitic use of *anvayavyatireka* also shows that, like its employments in grammar and logic, it is used to arrive at a determinate result, the fixing of the

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[44] Often used synonymously with '*anvaya*' in the context of the *anvayavyatireka* procedure by both Advaitins and grammarians.

[45] There are of course other senses of *nityatva* across the Upanishadic-Advaitic corpus, but this furnishes a pragmatic criterion of determining or fixing what is really abiding and what is contingent in an Advaitic operational context.

denotation of 'I'. It is a practical procedure to remove ambiguities and confirm truths. The real denotative field of 'I' is determined as the *outcome* of a procedure, not posited as an account or *theory* of self. In other words, it is the result (*phala*) of a rituogrammatic procedure.

CONCLUSION:

THOUGHT & METAPHOR IN BṚHADĀRAṆYAKA 4.3 (SVAYAṂJYOTI BRĀHMAṆA)

Although the linguistic and hermeneutic innovations in the modes of analysis employed by Śaṃkara underwent finer adjustments at the hand of later Advaitins, they continue to build on the ground laid by this early attention to nominal identities and co-reference. Henceforth it may be said to comprise the proper subject-matter of Advaitic grammar, in lieu of the more dominant and normative *kriyākāraka* mode adopted by other philosophers and hermeneuts. Theorization of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* and *lakṣaṇā* is in fact already prefigured in Pūrva Mīmāṃsā where it became important, for instance, to interpret Vedic statements like 'the grass-bundle is the sacrificer' (*yajamānaḥ prastaraḥ*) that necessitated the positing of metaphorical or secondary meaning.[1] However such indicative statements were subsidiary to the performative linguistics of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā that prioritized action-conveying utterances. A non-actional (*niṣkriya*) grammar was, therefore, curtailed by their own performative commitment. It is the non-dual grammar of Śaṃkara that fully articulated a systematic grammar of non-action by exploring the deeper implications of nominal co-reference (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*), oblique predication (*lakṣaṇā*), continued presence and absence (*anvayavyatireka*), as well as the deeper semantics of existential and noetic verbs. *Lakṣaṇā* is not, strictly speaking, metaphor (we have, following Lipner, translated it as 'oblique function/indication') and the broader use of metaphor as we know it in Advaita dialectics remains a moot point. At the same time, the question of the interpretation of such Vedic statements as above compelled some of the earliest attention and recourse to the phenomenon of metaphor in Indian thought, in order to render intelligible units of meaning where direct significative sense (*abhidhānaśakti*) simply did not work.

The two sets of verbs (existential and noetic) were identified as particularly isolating a non-actional dimension underneath their ostensible processual semantics, identifying their constitutive and horizonal function in human experience. It may be worthwhile, in conclusion, to identify a third cluster of root-

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[1] It was also applied in the interpretation of sentence-meaning by Kumārila, since the Mīmāṃsakas were compelled to admit the *lakṣaṇā* or secondary meaning of words, owing to their belief that words primarily denoted universals. But implied/suggested meaning did not constitute a central object of hermeneutic analysis as it did for Advaitins.

meanings, related to the former and cohering them further. This is the subset of roots conveying the meanings of shining, illumining, appearing, best represented by the Sanskrit radicals *bhā, ruc, kāś, dyut, dīp* and others, indicating (for Advaita) the self-illumining nature of self/being. And the same questions that were posed of existential and noetic verbs may be asked of this sub-class of roots: do they imply action, process? Or, instead, something along the horizonal order of manifesting, appearing that evades a semantics of action? Is shining a being or a doing? These verbs are crucial to Advaitins in that they simultaneously represent both aspects of Brahman—being and consciousness, denoted by existential and noetic verbs respectively—to the extent that the *being* of an illumining source, like the sun, consists in its *appearing*. Moreover, just as, from the subjective side, things 'appear to' consciousness, so, from an objective point of view, reality itself 'appears as' one thing or the other, conveying the duplicity of the term 'phenomenon'.[2] As discussed in Part I, it is through such a noetic management of attention over the field of its embodied, phenomenal landscape that Advaita negotiates the incremental recognition of subliminal features of self, uncovering/unhiding them as they come into the 'light' of awareness, ideally exemplified in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 4.3.

One wonders, here, whether the recourse to light—to the extent that it is integral to the Advaitic discourse of covering and uncovering, seeing and hiding, darkness and light, sleep and waking—is merely 'metaphorical', in light of the facility with which recourse to metaphor is often made in theory. Philosophical priorities can indeed often be illumined and exposed by the metaphors they invoke; metaphors that are not merely explanatory or *illustrative* of concepts but which often intrinsically *structure* thought from the inside.[3] One may think of the stage-dancer of Sāṃkhya metaphysics or the early Buddhist chariot or the Vedic-Buddhist recourse to fire (and *nirvāṇa* as the extinguishing of the fire)[4] or the Shankarite crystal. If one tracked the discourse of luminosity in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* with which we began in Chapter 1, light and awareness here

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[2] The Sanskrit *bhā* and Greek *phā/phai* have been considered cognate. Heidegger has this to say about its etymology: "The Greek expression *phainomenon*…comes from the verb *phainesthai,* meaning 'to show itself'. Thus *phainomenon* means what shows itself, the self-showing, the manifest…*Phaino* belongs to the root *pha-,* like *phos-,* light or brightness, i.e., that within which something can become manifest, visible in itself. Thus the meaning of the expression 'phenomenon' is established as *what shows itself in itself,* what is manifest. The *phainomena,* 'phenomena', are thus the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to light'" (Heidegger 1927 in Krell (ed.) 1993). This double sense of phenomenon is especially pertinent to the development of phenomenology.
[3] As noted by Lakoff and Johnson 2003. The theory has applied to the understanding of early Indian yogic and meditative praxis by O'Brien-Kop 2022.
[4] In direct symbolic opposition to the creative-transformative aspects of fire pertinent to a Vedic context.

are not so much metaphorically related but, in fact, identical as the one principle of disclosure, uncovering, unhiding. Within the illumined circle of light-consciousness, beings come and go—come and go out of *existence* as they come and go out of the horizon of *awareness*[5]—the twin dimension of all existents conveyed, respectively, by existential and noetic verbs. Sāṃkhya's driving metaphor of the stage dancer and audience is driven by the same logic of luminosity. Creation, like the dancer, unfolds itself in the spectating gaze of the seer and, having satisfied it, recedes into nothing. The same scheme of the interrelationship of desire, otherness, seeing and being activates *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4 with which we began our journey. In the beginning there was nothing. Pure darkness. Then arose an amorphous presence, a stirring of being the text refers to by *'ahaṃ', 'puruṣa', 'virāṭ'* and other names. It was lonely, perhaps only because it alone was everything, and therefore sought otherness. Then developed a desire with respect to what it created to overcome its loneliness. We do not quite know what came first, the desire or the otherness, but creation as we know it is now motivated and, as *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4 conveyed, emergents begin to populate the world as the original *ahaṃ*, the first being, both sees as *witness* and conducts as *actor* the creative process.

But if one had to reduce to the barest denominator the founding 'metaphor' of Advaita, it is neither that of the performer appearing and withdrawing from stage, nor the ample references to the snake-rope, shell-silver, clay-pot etc. that also evoke the dynamics of seeing, manifesting and appearing. One must strip the Sāṃkhya stage here to its barest core, take away the dancer and the audience. Even take away the ground on which the stage paraphernalia rest, all the props and the stage itself. Stripped to its barest denominator, the metaphor asks us to conceive just the lone light shining from above illuming the stage—except that now there is no stage, nothing. Light shining upon nothing, illuming nothing. And then a final question: can this light be seen if there is nothing for it to illumine? Is this situation even conceivable, intelligible? The *svayaṃjyoti brāhmaṇa* (BU 4.3) says: "That it does not see in that state is because, although seeing then, it does not see; for the vision of the witness can never be lost...but there is not that second thing separate from it which it can see".[6] The absence of an intentional correlate to consciousness (the lit object under a ray of light)

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[5] Not individual awareness, of course, but awareness as horizonal, and therefore, trans-personal.
[6] yad vai tan na paśyati paśyan vai tan na paśyati | na hi draṣṭur dṛṣṭer viparilopo vidyate 'vināśitvān | na tu tad dvitīyam asti tato 'nyad vibhaktaṃ yat paśyet. BU 4.3.23.

leads to the natural but perhaps erroneous conclusion that consciousness itself as such *is* not. What we call 'sleep' is nothing but such intentionality put out of play temporarily. An intentionality that, when active in the waking, intends, not so much the intentional objects of our epistemic glance, but the intentional aims, purposes, desires in the realization of which the functional segmentation and evolution of the world (as described in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4) proceeds.

It is this almost non-existent quasi-real, quasi-unreal being of light, or the light of being that, as I understand, Advaita wants us to recognize, appreciate, and around which it coordinates such an exquisitely conducted noetic performance. The play of this liminal being through our waking, sleeping and dreaming regulates and is regulated by the exigencies of embodied existence, our movements, desires and motives, from the inside, even as the numerous functional segmentations of name-form (*nāmarūpa*) set up an actional order that controls us on the outside as it were: one the order of *attention*, and the other the order of *action*. In other words, the non-actional *witness* and the functionally engrossed *agent*, the *spiritual* and the *ritual*, the interplay comprising our everyday embodied being (*śarīrakatva*) as a simultaneity of actor and audience.[7]

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[7] This is perhaps one way of parsing the apportioning of priorities along a Vedic-Vedantic, or action-knowledge (*karma-jñāna*) continuum to the degree that it is useful.

ABBREVIATIONS

A – Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*

AK – Aṣṭādhyāyī-krama

AU – *Aitareya Upaniṣad*

BG – *Bhagavadgītā*

BGB – Śaṃkara's *Bhāṣya* on the *Bhagavadgītā*

BS – *Brahma Sūtra*

BSB – Śaṃkara's *Bhāṣya* on the *Brahmasūtra*

BU – *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*

BUB – Śaṃkara's *Bhāṣya* on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*

BUBV – Sureśvara's *Vārttika* on BUB

CU – *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*

CUB – Śaṃkara's *Bhāṣya* on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*

KU – *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*

KauU – *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*

MāU – *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*

MaiU – Maitrāyaṇīya *Upaniṣad*

MB – Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, and *Kātyāyana's Vārttikas*

MS – *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* (attributed to Jaimini)

MU – *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*

NS – Sureśvara's *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*

PK – Prakriyā-krama

ŚB – *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*

SŚ – Sarvajñātman's *Saṅkṣepaśārīrakam*

ŚV – Kumārila's *Ślokavārttika*

TU – *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*

TUB – Śaṃkara's *Bhāṣya* on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*

TUBV – Sureśvara's *Vārttika* on TUB

TV – Kumārila's *Tantravārttika*

US – Śaṃkara's *Upadeśasāhasrī*

V – Kātyāyana's *Vārtika*s on Pāṇini's *Aṣṭadhyāyī*

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