

Bhartrhari on the Non-distinction between Reality and Unreality

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0. Introduction

In his *Vākyapadīya* Bhartrhari argues that language and reality are never disconnected: Language touches on reality through the unreal appearances of reality, that is, what all words refer to is the ultimate reality, Brahman. This view is, of course, a close reflection of the idea that the phenomenal world, which is the realm of verbal communication (*vyavahāra*) or the semantic field, is a manifold appearance of the one absolute reality. If both one word for *x* and another word for *non-x* refer to the same reality (*x* and *non-x* being equally nothing but the unreal appearances of Brahman), then the concepts of *x* and *non-x* will not be differentiated from each other. This is the relativism Bhartrhari holds. For Bhartrhari, therefore, things in the phenomenal world which seem to be contradictory to each other are relativized, whereas the non-dual entity is beyond relativization; with regard to this non-dual reality various conceptualizations occur which provide it with all kinds of delimitations that have no absolute status. Even the one reality, thus, cannot stand on its rights if it is relativized. What is interesting is that, in order to explain the manifold appearance of Brahman, Bhartrhari introduces the notion of capacity (*śakti*), so that he can secure for Brahman the transcendence of unity and multiplicity. Brahman is assumed to have a variety of conceptualizing capacities by virtue of which it is seen differently and its appearances are conceptualized differently, and with reference to which verbalization takes place (*Brahman* → *śakti* → *darśanavikalpa* → *vyavahāra*). This is a simplified process of verbalization.¹

¹Bhartrhari mentions three factors necessary for communication (*vyavahāra*): seeing something (*rūpaṇa*, *ālocana*, *darśana*), conceptual cognition (*jñāna*, *vikalpa*) which determines it, and its verbal expression (*vyapadeśa*, *abhilāpa*). See VP3.3.55: *rūpaṇavyapadeśābhyāṃ laukike vartmani sthitau / jñānaṃ praty abhilāpaṃ ca sadṛśau bālapaṇḍitau //* ('When they are in the course of everyday life, the ignorant and the wise [communicate something] by means of seeing it and

Taking up now VP3.3.87, this is the *kārikā* which adequately expresses Bhartṛhari's thought as stated above: the semantic field is that in which things contradictory to each other, such as existence and non-existence, are mutually relativized and the appearing of the ultimate reality as the phenomenal world makes possible its verbalization. It reads as follows:

VP3.3.87: *tasmāc chaktivibhāgena nityaḥ sadasadātmakaḥ /*
eko 'rthaḥ śabdavācyaṭve bahurūpaḥ prakāśate //

At first sight, it might appear that interpreting this *kārikā* is not difficult. But, since the essence of Bhartṛhari's linguistic thought is condensed there, its clear understanding is essential for placing the *kārikā* in question in conformity with his intention. Now the interpretations scholars have attempted in the past are as follows:

Iyer [1971: 119]: "Therefore, the one eternal Reality, consisting of existence and non-existence, shines through its different powers, in many forms when conveyed by words."

Raghunātha Sarmā [1974: 334]: *tasmāt sarvavyavahārāṇāṃ pūrvoktarītyā vikalpaprabhavadvenāsadvīṣayakatvāt, nityaḥ kūṭastho nirvikāraḥ sadasadātmakaḥ svasminn avidyākalpitabhāvābhāvatādātmyādhyāsāpannaḥ, ekaḥ sarvavidhabhedaśūnyaḥ, artho brahmarūpaḥ śabdavācyaṭvadaśāyāṇ śaktivibhāgena svāśrītānantaśaktibhedena bahurūpaḥ anantabhāvābhāvarūpaḥ, prakāśate pratīyate / (the portion underlined: "sadasadātmaka" means [the entity (*artha*)] which acquires the superimposition of the identity with both existence and non-existence that are the conceptualized due to nescience upon the entity itself.)*

Houben [1995: 315]: "Therefore, in accordance with a differentiation of capacities, the permanent, one Thing-meant, which is of the nature of existent and non-existent, manifests itself as manifold when it is expressed by words."

The question is how we should take the phrase *sadasadātmaka* in *pāda* b. Every interpretation is misleading except Raghunātha Śarmā's. In view of Bhartṛhari's expressing it in words. They are alike in that they resort to [conceptual] cognition and verbal expression [in communication.] From his non-dualistic viewpoint, the ultimate object of the seeing should be Brahman, which is seen differently due to the capacity of nescience (*avidyāśakti*). See *Paddhati* on *Vṛtti* ad VP1.9 which will be dealt with later. And also, for the connection of conceptualization and verbalization see Ogawa [1999].

fundamental thesis that the ultimate reality, the undelimited, appears as delimited, we have to say that the one permanent reality appears as being of the nature of existence and non-existence and not that what is of the nature of existence and non-existence appears as something. For Bhartṛhari, the ultimate reality Brahman is beyond relativization and cannot involve a contradiction in it. Therefore, against the interpretations by Iyer and Houben who understand that Bhartṛhari considers Brahman to have the two aspects of *sat* and *asat*,² I would like to argue that taking *sadasadātmaka* as qualifying the appearances of Brahman (*bahurūpa*) is more consistent with Bhartṛhari's thesis. As will be seen later, Helārāja interprets it in that manner. We must give his views careful consideration. To my understanding, his interpretation faithfully reflects the core of Bhartṛhari's linguistic thought.

The question of the *sadasadātmaka*-interpretation is related to the questions of the verbalization of Brahman, the relativism holding in the domain of the things in the phenomenal world, and the capacities of Brahman underlying its verbalizations. In this paper, examining these questions, I shall propose a new interpretation of the *kārikā* under consideration.

1. Convergence of all words upon the ultimate reality

In Paspasāhnika, commenting on Kātyāyana's first vārttika: *siddhe śabdārthasambandhe* stated with regard to the permanence of word meanings, Patañjali puts forward the view that a substance (*dravya*) is permanent and its forms (*ākṛti*) are transient, and the view that a class property (*ākṛti*) is permanent and a substance is transient.³ In either view what is denoted by a word is eternal and real. In agreement with these views, in the Jāṭisamuddeśa and Dravyasamuddeśa, Bhartṛhari deals with the word meanings which are abstracted from a sentential meaning, a single indivisible entity, and which are to be equated with the absolute reality. They are a universal (*jāti*) and a substance (*dravya*). In VP3.1.2 Bhartṛhari states as follows:

VP3.1.2: *padārthānām apoddhāre jātir vā dravyam eva vā /
padārthau sarvaśabdānām nityāv evopavarṇitau //*

“When word meanings are abstracted [from a sentential meaning], for any linguistic unit [in the form of a word] its meaning is nothing other

²Houben [1995: 315]: “This ultimate reality is said to be permanent, and of the nature of the existent and non-existent.”

³MBh on vt. 1 in Paspasāhnika: *ākṛtir hi nityā dravyam anityam / . . . dravyam hi nityam ākṛtir anityā /*

than either a universal or a substance. They have been declared to be indeed eternal [by Patañjali in *Paspasāhnikā*].”

It is well known that Patañjali mentions Vājapyāyana as a proponent of the theory that a word denotes the universal and Vyāḍi as a proponent of the view that it denotes a substance. Bhartṛhari tries to establish the universal validity of these theories – such establishment being the theme of these *Samuddeśas* – not only from a viewpoint of how things are denoted by words (*vyāpāralakṣaṇa*)⁴ but also from a metaphysical point of view.

In the *Jātisamuddeśa*, Bhartṛhari attempts to establish the universal validity of the theory that the word denotes the universal by introducing the *Sattā*-model. He states as follows:

VP3.1.32: *satyāsatyau tu yau bhāgau pratibhāvam vyavasthitau /
satyam yat tatra sā jātir asatyā vyaktayaḥ smṛtāḥ //*

“It is traditionally said that, of the real and unreal aspects which are determined with reference to every entity, the real [aspect] is the universal, whereas the unreal one is the individual (*vyakti*).”

VP3.1.33: *saṃbandhibhedāt sattaiva bhidyamānā gavādiṣu /
jātir ity ucyate tasyām sarve śabdā vyavasthitāḥ //*

“Being itself, being differentiated according to the things related to it, is called the universal [such as *gotva* (‘cowness’)] when [abiding] in an [individual such as] a cow: every word is determined to denote that [Being].”

VP3.1.40: *āśrayaḥ svātmamātrā vā bhāvā vā vyatirekiṇaḥ /
svāśaktayo vā sattāyā bhedadarśanahetavaḥ //*

“It is its substratum or its own elements (*svātmamātrā*) or entities different from it or its own capacities which are the causes of its appearing

⁴Grammarians’ main concern is what the words express and not the actual state of affairs. In VP3.1.11 Bhartṛhari states that the meanings of words are determined by what the words actually convey (*vyāpāralakṣaṇā yasmāt padārthāḥ samavasthitāḥ*). From this point of view, the following *kārikās* are stated: VP3.1.12: *jātau padārthe jātir vā viśeṣo vāpi jātivat / śabdair apekṣyate yasmād atas te jātivācīnaḥ //* (“On the view that the universal is a word meaning, even when the word *jāti* refers to the universal itself or even when the word *devadatta* to the particular, those words expect their referents to be like the universal; therefore, they are regarded as what denote the universal.”) VP3.1.13: *dravyadharmā padārthe tu dravye sarvo ’rtha ucyate / dravyadharmāśrayād dravyam ataḥ sarvo ’rtha iṣyate //* (“On the view that a substance is a word meaning, on the other hand, any meaning that is expressed [by the word] has the property of substance. Therefore, any meaning is accepted as a substance by resorting to the property of substance.”)

as differentiated (*bhedadarśanahetu*).”

Every word denotes Being (*sattā*), which is Brahman and the highest universal. The individual being the locus of Being, one has a specific universal like cowness (*gotva*) through the differentiation of Being by the unreal. Cowness, being a delimited form of Being, is also mentally constructed (*parikalpita*) and hence unreal, since such lower, specific universals are what are conceptually assumed to be parts (*mātrā*) of a Being which is in essence partless. Thus a word which denotes cowness, going beyond it, ultimately refers to Being. Moreover, everything in the phenomenal world that is verbalizable has Being. In this sense also all words denoting things in the phenomenal world can be said to refer to Being. Therefore it follows that every word denotes the universal in that they all refer to the highest universal, Being.⁵ It is important to note in this connection that Bhartṛhari does not say *bhedahetu* but *bhedadarśanahetu*, intending to imply that Being which has absolute unity appears to be differentiated by its relata. The causes of making Being appear differently are said to be its substratum or an individual, its own divisions such as cowness, external entities like place, and its own capacities. Among these delimiting factors, preference is obviously given to the capacities of Being, Brahman. For these delimiting factors are the unreal appearances of Brahman by virtue of its capacities, which is in consonance with Bhartṛhari’s fundamental position.⁶ This point will be explained later.

In regard to the view that every word denotes a substance, the following kārīkās in the *Dravyasamud-deśā* are worthy of note:

VP3.2.2: *satyaṃ vastu tadākārair asatyair avadhāryate /
asatyopādhibhiḥ śabdair satyam evābhīdhīyate //*

“The real entity is determined through its forms which are unreal. It is the real [entity] that is denoted by words through the unreal adjuncts.”

The view presented here that all words refer to the real entity Substance is instantiated by Crow model and Golden Necklace model. Of the Crow model it is said as follows:

VP3.2.3: *adhruveṇa nimittena devadattagrhaṃ yathā /
grhītaṃ grhaśabdena śuddham evābhīdhīyate //*

⁵ Helārāja on VP3.1.35: *tataś ca sarvaśabdānāṃ sattāvacanatvāj jātīpadārthavyāptiḥ /*

⁶ VP3.8.36: *sattā svaśaktiyogena sarvarūpā vyavasthitā / sādhyā ca sādhanam caiva phalaṃ bhoktā phalasya ca //* See also VP1.4: *ekasya sarvabījasya yasya ceyam anekadhā / bhoktṛ bhoktavyarūpeṇa bhogarūpeṇa ca sthitiḥ //*

“For example, Devadatta’s house which has been understood through an unfixed cause [i.e., a crow on the top of the house] is denoted precisely in its purity by the word *gṛha* (‘house’).”

Of the Golden Necklace model, on the other hand, Bhartṛhari states as follows:

VP3.2.4: *suvarṇādi yathā bhinnaṃ⁷ svair ākārair apāyibhiḥ/
rucakādyabhidhānānāṃ śuddham evaiti vācyatām //*

“For example, the gold and the like, though differentiated by their own impermanent forms, become the denotata of words like *rucaka* in their purity.”

The Crow model shows that, as the word *gṛha* is applied to Devadatta’s house itself on the occasioning ground (*nimitta*) of the crow which is an unfixed and tentative determiner (*upalakṣaṇa*) of the house, so are words applied to the real entity on the occasioning ground of the unreal adjuncts. According to this model, it follows that the things in the phenomenal world, the unreal adjuncts to the reality Substance, are nothing but the occasioning grounds for the application of the words to it. On the other hand, the Golden Necklace model, which Helārāja considers to be a better example for the reference of the word to Substance, shows that, just as the word *rucaka* denotes a particular modification of gold but goes beyond it and refers to the gold itself, similarly the word, going beyond its unreal forms, refers to the real entity. In this respect the Golden Necklace model has the same structure as the *Sattā*-model: like the *Sattā*-model, this model shows that what is denoted by a word is a delimited form of the real entity (Substance).⁸ According to the Golden Necklace model, therefore, it is established that every word refers to the substance on the grounds that all words refer to the real entity, going beyond its unreal forms.

These views do not differ from each other in that both of them reflect an idea that all words refer to the permanent entity, Brahman. In the view that a substance is a word meaning, the Substance Brahman, which is differentiated by its different adjuncts, is referred to as self-subsistent (*pariniṣṭhita*), that is, as something without entering into any relationship to others; in the view that the universal is a word

⁷I have adopted Iyer’s reading instead of Rau’s: *yuktaṃ*.

⁸Helārāja on VP3.2.5: *pratiniyatākāraparicchinnavṛttivāt sarvārthatvapatibandhād asaṅkaraḥ/*

meaning, the *Sattā*-Brahman is referred to as persisting in everything.⁹ In either view what Helārāja remarks holds:

Helārāja on VP3.2.2: *iha sarvaśabdānām pāramārthikam tattvaṃ sāksāt spraṣṭum aśaktānām anekopādhiviśayanīhitapadānām tadrūpālīnganaṃ vyavahāre samālakṣyate /*

“Here [in our system of thought] it is observed in verbal transactions (*vyavahāre*) that all words that cannot directly touch on the ultimate reality (*tattva*) embrace it when they are applied to various objects of adjuncts.”

Thus what is clear from the arguments in the *Jāṭisamuddeśa* and *Dravyasamuddeśa* is that all words refer to the ultimate reality, while denoting its unreal adjuncts and that the unreal adjuncts to it play a role of the occasioning ground for the application of the word to it.¹⁰ Now let us consider the following *kārikā* in which Bhartṛhari declares Brahman to be the ultimate referent of the word (*vācya*):

VP3.2.16: *vācyā sā sarvaśabdānām śabdās ca na pṛthak tataḥ / aprthaktve ca saṃbandhas tayor nānātmanor iva //*

“That [ultimate original source (*parā prakṛtiḥ*)] is what all words refer to and these words themselves are not distinct from it, so that there is a relation between them only as if it were between two separate entities, although there is no true distinction.”

It is not until Brahman appears as the word (*śabda*) and the meaning (*artha*) that it enters the semantic field. Therefore, what is indispensable for the reference of the word to Brahman is, we may say, the appearance of Brahman as the phenomenal world.

⁹Helārāja on VP3.1.35: *tataś ca sarvaśabdānām sattāvacaṇatāj jātipadārthavyūptiḥ / yady api ca dravyapadārthe 'pi brahmadravyasyābhidhānam upādhībhedabhinnasya vakṣyati tathāpi tātparyabhedād avasthābhedāḥ / jātipadārthe sarvatrānvyayirūpaṃ jātyātmanā brahma vivakṣitam / dravyapadārthanaye tu pariniṣṭhitarūpaṃ paramārthatayeti darśanavikalpaḥ /*

¹⁰According to Helārāja [on VP3.2.1] *dravya* ('substance') dealt with in the *Dravyasamuddeśa* is called *pāramārthikadravya* ('substance of an ultimate value'), which forms a contrast to *vyāvahārikadravya* ('linguistic substance'). The ultimate reality (*tattva*) is the universal in the form of *sattā* in the *Jāṭisamuddeśa* and the former substance in the *Dravyasamuddeśa*. The fault of *sārvārthya* that anything could be denoted by any word, which refers to the same reality, is avoided by resorting to the restriction of our cognitive faculty of realizing the reality. This is comparable to that the capacity of the visual organ is limited when something is looked through a tube. See VP3.2.5: *ākāraś ca vyavacchedāt sārvārthyam avarudhyate / yathaiḥ cakṣurādīnām sāmārthyam nālikādibhiḥ //*

2. Bhartṛhari's relativism

All that is directly denoted by words, the adjunct delimiting the ultimate reality, constitutes the phenomenal world in which things contradictory to each other (*viruddha*, *virodhin*) are observed. Bhartṛhari states:

VP3.2.17: *ātmā paraḥ priyo dveṣyo vaktā vācyaṃ prayojanam /
viruddhāni yathaikasya svapne rūpāṇi cetasaḥ //*

VP3.2.18: *ajanmani tathā nitye paurvāparyaivivarjite /
tattve janmādirūpatvaṃ viruddham upalabhyate //*

“Just as, in a dream, the one mind appears in contradictory forms, as the self and the non-self, friend and foe, the speaker and the spoken, [the act of speaking and] the purpose; in the same way, while the ultimate reality is unborn, eternal and devoid of inner sequence, we see it as having birth and other contradictory attributes.”

The pairs of things in contradiction with each other, the most fundamental and representative of pairs of such things in the phenomenal world, are given in the verse adduced by Bhartṛhari.

Vṛtti on VP1.1: *vyatīto bhedasamṣargau bhāvābhāvau kramākramau /
satyānṛte ca viśvātmā pravivekāt prakāśate //*

“The soul of the universe, [Brahman], which is beyond *bhedasamṣarga* (‘differentiation and unification’), *bhāvābhāva* (‘existence and non-existence’), *kramākrama* (‘sequence and non-sequence’, and *satyānṛta* (‘truth and false’), appears as diversified.”

According to this verse, those mutually contradictory things are: *bhedasamṣarga* (‘differentiation and unification’), *bhāvābhāva* (‘existence and non-existence’), *kramākrama* (‘sequence and non-sequence’), *satyānṛta* (‘truth and false’). Each item of each pair is relativized and deprived of absolute status.

For the Advaitin (‘monist’) Bhartṛhari, one absolute reality, Brahman, is beyond differentiation and unification (*bhedasamṣargasamatikrama*), being free from any conceptualization (*sarvavikalpātītattva*). This implies that, due to nescience (*avidyā*), the reality may be so conceptualized that one can assume it, in contradictory manners, as one and diversified.

He argues, based upon a similar analytical method to Madhyamaka's, that those which are incompatible with each other are not self-subsistent. He states:

*VP3.6.26: naikatvaṃ vyavatiṣṭheta nānātvaṃ cen na kalpayet /
nānātvaṃ cāvahīyeta yady ekatvaṃ na kalpayet //*

“If one did not assume plurality (*nānātva*), singularity (*ekatva*) would not hold; and if one did not assume singularity, plurality would be abandoned.”

What the *kārikā* actually shows is that the mutually exclusive concepts of unity and plurality are contrast terms – each is defined through a contrastive exclusion from the other. They are not differentiated from each other.

*VP3.7.40: yat pṛthaktvaṃ asaṃdigdhaṃ tad ekatvān na bhidyate /
yad ekatvaṃ asaṃdigdhaṃ tat pṛthaktvān na bhidyate //*

“The plurality which is [established] beyond doubt is not differentiated from singularity; the singularity which is [established] beyond doubt is not differentiated from plurality.”

It is interesting to note here that in his *Vṛtti* on *VP1.2* Bhartṛhari distinguishes between a sort of absolute singularity and a sort of relative one, the former being related to the original source Brahman (*prakṛtyekatva*) and the latter to the phenomenal world (*vikāravikāriṣaya*).¹¹ The reason for non-differentiation between the singularity and the plurality, therefore, lies in their unreal status in relation to the absolute reality. For Bhartṛhari, one and the same reality, Brahman, manifests itself as differentiated and unified and relativization works only within the unreality (*avastupatita*). That is to say:

*VP3.7.39: paramārthe tu naikatvaṃ pṛthaktvād bhinnalakṣaṇam /
pṛthaktvaikatvarūpeṇa tattvaṃ eva prakāśate //*

¹¹ *Vṛtti* on *VP1.2*: *yāvad vikāravikāriṣayam ekatvarūpaṃ pṛthaktvarūpaṃ vā sarvaṃ tat prakṛtyekatvānatikrameṇety etad āmnātam / Paddhati* on *Vṛtti* ad *VP1.2*: *dividham ekatvaṃ prakṛtaṃ vaikṛtaṃ ca / tatra vaikṛtaṃ yad vyaktau kāryakāraṇagatam ekatvasaṃkhyāyogena / prakṛtaṃ yad brahmaniṣayaṃ bhedavyavacchedamātraṃ na tv ekatvasaṃkhyāyogena / tasyāḥ pṛthakte 'pekṣitatvāt, tirohitabhedarūpatvāc ca brahmaṇo vyatiriktasaṃkhyābhāvāc ca /* According to *Paddhati*, the singularity relating to the original source Brahman is never of numerical value; it is nothing but the exclusion of plurality (*bhedavyavacchedamātra*). On this point see section 4.

“From the viewpoint of the ultimate truth, however, there is no singularity whose characteristic is distinguished from that of plurality. It is the ultimate reality that manifests itself as differentiated and unified.”

VP3.6.24: *ekatvaṃ āsām śaktīnāṃ nānātvam veti kalpane /
avastupatite jñātvā satyato na parāmṛśet //*

“Concerning the capacities in the form of these [directions (*dis*)], one may conceive them as unified or as differentiated. Once one realizes that the conception in either way refers to the unreality, one cannot reflexively grasp it in reality.”

The twofoldness based upon singularity and plurality is nothing more than the conceptualized (*vikalpita*), since both of them are the conceptualized in themselves. In this connection, let us look at the discussion about existence and non-existence (*bhāvābhāva*).

VP3.3.60: *yathā bhāvam upāśritya tadabhāvo 'nugamyate /
tathābhāvam upāśritya tadbhāvo 'pi anugamyate //*

“Just as the non-existence of a thing is understood on the basis of its existence, similarly the existence of a thing is understood on the basis of its non-existence.”

VP3.3.61: *nābhāvo jāyate bhāvo naiti bhāvo 'nupākhyatām /
ekasmād ātmano 'nanyau bhāvābhāvau vikalpītau //*

“Neither does non-existence become existence nor does existence become something indefinable in itself [i.e., non-existence]. Existence and non-existence are the conceptualized and are not different from the one reality (*ātman*).”

Thus it is clear that for Bhartṛhari what is subject to relativization is not real but the conceptualized and that things relative to each other, being equally the conceptualized and being not distinct from the reality, are not distinguished from each other. The same is true of Bhartṛhari's view of reality. He states:

VP3.2.7: *na tattvātattvayor bheda iti vṛddhebhya āgamaḥ /
atattvam iti manyante tattvam evāvicāritam //*

“The tradition handed down from the elders declares that there is no distinction between the real and the unreal. They hold that the very reality [which is accepted] insofar as it has not been analytically investigated is the unreality.”

Even the reality cannot stand on its rights if it is relativized in terms of analytical investigation (*vicāra*). On this point Helārāja’s remark is noteworthy. He states:

Helārāja on VP3.2.7: *tathā cāvīāritaramaṇīyaṃ parikṣayā vyavasthāpitaṃ tattvam evābhinnaṃ tīrthikā bhedadarśanavyavasthitā bhedātmakam attatvaṃ manyante . . . /*

“Such being the case, the very reality, i.e., the unity, which is beloved insofar as it has not been analytically investigated and which is posited through examination is considered to be the unreality, i.e., the multiple in essence, by the pagan who adhere to seeing it as differentiated.”

What is considered to be real from one viewpoint can be regarded as unreal from another viewpoint. Once something is analytically investigated, it should be relativized and loses its absolute status. Thus we can see that for Bhartṛhari there is a sharp distinction between the realty which is relativized, namely, the phenomenal world, and the reality which is beyond relativization or conceptualization, namely, Brahman. The ultimately real, which is never an object of analytical investigation and hence beyond relativization, appears simply as real and unreal.¹²

Concerning Bhartṛhari’s relativism, consequently, we may say that its underlying idea is: If one conceives of a certain thing as *x*, say, *satya* (‘real’), then room for dualism necessarily is given because *x* presupposes *non-x*, say, *asatya* (‘unreal’); in order to avoid falling into dualism, the non-distinction between *x* and *non-x* is to be established by giving relative status to them. Their relative status is guaranteed by the fact that they are equally the appearances of the ultimate reality and the conceptualized in relation to it. It is such relativism that enables Bhartṛhari to render existence and non-existence and other pairs of contradictory things merely phenomenal and to relegate them to the phenomenal realm.

¹²*Paddhati* on Vṛtti ad VP1.1: *tathā vicāraṣayatuāt satyāṅṛtayoḥ, vicāraṣayatuāc ca tasyāsambhavaḥ / yato vicāro bhinnadharmaviṣayaḥ brahmaṇas cābhedāt sa nāsti /*

3. Capacities and appearances of Brahman

It is on the basis of the capacities attributed to Brahman that a pair of things contradictory and relative to each other appears. How things in the phenomenal world are depends upon how the capacities of Brahman are. Consider the following statements:

Vṛtti on VP1.2: ekatvasyāvirodhena śabdatattve brahmaṇi samuccitā virodhinya ātmabhūtāḥ śaktayaḥ /

“In Brahman, the Word-principle, there are combined, without contradicting its unity, capacities that are contradictory and identical with it.”

Vṛtti on VP1.2: tad evam aprthakvaṃ prthakpratyavabhāsamānām api mithaḥ sarvaśaktīnām /

“Thus, in this way, all capacities, though manifesting themselves as differentiated, are not different from one another.”

Vṛtti on VP1.4: ekasya hi brahmaṇas tattvānyatvābhyāṃ sattvāsattvābhyāṃ cāniruktāvirodhiśaktiyupagrāhyasyāsatyarūpapravibhāgasya svapnavijñānapuruṣavad bahistattvāḥ [read: abahis-tattvāḥ] parasparavilakṣaṇā bhokṛḥbhoktavyabhogagranthayo vivartante /

“Indeed, the One, Brahman, receives the capacities which are defined neither as identical with [it] (*tattva*) nor as different from [it] (*anyatva*) and neither as existent (*sattva*) nor as non-existent (*asattva*), and which are not contradictory to each other (*avirodhin*).¹³ Its divisions are unreal (*asatyarūpapravibhāga*). It appears as entities (*tattva*), which are not existent separately from it, as does the self (*puruṣa*), which is awareness in essence, in a dreaming state (*svapnavijñānapuruṣa*); the [appearing entities] are the mutually differentiated knots, that is, the enjoyer, the enjoyed and the enjoyment.”

From these statements we may say the following about the capacities of Brahman:

- 1) Their manifoldness does not contradict the oneness of Brahman (*avirodha*).
- 2) The capacities that are assumed to be in Brahman are contradictory to one another (*virodhin*).

¹³ *Paddhati on Vṛtti on VP1.2: avirodhinyaḥ iti, viruddhakāryaprasavānumitavirodhā apy ekaminn ādhāre yaugapadyena vṛtter avirodhinyaḥ /*

- 3) They are identical with Brahman (*ātmabhūta*).
- 4) The capacities of Brahman are not differentiated from one another (*apṛthaktva*).
- 5) The capacities are defined neither as identical with Brahman nor as different from it and neither as existent nor as non-existent, which implies that they are unreal (*asatya*).¹⁴
- 6) The capacities contradictory to one another produce the appearances different from one another.

What is true for the capacities of Brahman is said of the things in the phenomenal world as well. Thus it has been stated:

Vṛtti on VP1.9: *ihaivaikasmin sarvarūpe brahmaṇi yaḥ parikalpaḥ sa viruddharūpābhimatebhyo parikalpāntarebhyo na bhidyate /*

“Here [in our system of thought], one conceptualization with reference to Brahman, One and All, is not differentiated from the other conceptualizations that are believed to be contradictory to it.”

This is for the following reason:

Vṛtti on VP1.9: *yataś caite sarvavikalpātīta ekasminn arthe sarvaśakti-yogād draṣṭṛṇām darśanavikalpāḥ /*

“For these [different views reflect] the [different] conceptualizations (*vikalpa*) of the appearances (*darśana*) of a single entity devoid of any conceptualization; with reference to it, there occur such conceptualizations to those who see it (*draṣṭṛ*) since it is connected with all capacities.”

¹⁴Helārāja on VP3.3.9: *śaktīnām vasturūpatve tattvānyatvavicāraṇā / yujyate kalpitānām tu yuktā dvayaviyuktatā //* (“If capacities were essentially real, then it would be proper to investigate whether they are identical with or different from [the real]; however, it is proper that they are destitute of both [identity with and difference from it] since they are the conceptualized.”) *Paddhati* on *Vṛtti* ad VP1.1: *śaktīnām ca svarūpatve tattvānyatvavicāraṇā / yujyate kalpitānām tu yuktānvayavivartatā //* (“If capacities were the essence [of the reality], it would be proper to investigate whether they are identical with or different from [it]; however, it is proper that they are excluded from the connection with [both identity with and difference from it] since they are the conceptualized.”) The source of the verse, to which Helārāja and Vṛṣabha give a slightly different reading, is not traceable. See TS 340 (Ātmaparīkṣā): *bhedābhedavikalpasya vastvadhīṣṭhānabhāvataḥ / tattvānyatvādyanirdeśo niḥsvabhāveṣu yujyate //* Vṛṣabha in *Paddhati* on *Vṛtti* ad VP1.1 introduces the argument against the reality of capacities as follows: *na tarhi śaktayaḥ santi, tattvānyatvābhyām anirvacanīyatvāt, śaśaviṣṇāvat /* ([Thesis] Capacities are really nonexistent. [Reason] Because of being indefinable either as identical with [the reality] or as different from it. [Example] Like a rabbit’s horn.)

It is to be noted in passing that when in VP3.3.9 Bhartṛhari defines the capacity as being beyond difference and identity (*tām śaktīm . . . bhedābhedāv atikrāntām . . .*), he naturally means to say that it is unreal because of being the conceptualized. This point Houben [1995: 184] misses.

One sees and conceptualizes the one absolute reality as the enjoyer and the enjoyed or as the *kāraṅkas* and the act of enjoying due to its capacities.¹⁵ These appearances of it are equally unreal because their causes themselves are unreal. The relative concepts of the enjoyer and the enjoyed are mutually undifferentiated since the capacities for bringing them about are not distinct from each other. Thus the non-differentiation of relative concepts comes from the fact that different conceptualizations arise with reference to a sole object, Brahman, and, as a consequence of this, their status is unreal in relation to Brahman.

Whatever are considered to be the results of Brahman's capacities are neither differentiated from one another nor real, since the capacities are such. On this point Bhartṛhari states as follows:

VP3.1.22: *sarvaśaktyātmabhūtatvam ekasyaiveti nirṇayaḥ /*
bhāvānām ātmabhedasya kalpanā syād anarthikā //

“The final and ultimate truth (*nirṇaya*) is that [Brahman which is] the One is identical with all *śaktis* [it has]. [Such being the case,] it would be purposeless to assume that entities are in essence different from one another.”

If one can explain the variety of the phenomenal world in terms of that of the capacities of Brahman, then one need not go on to assume that things in the phenomenal world are themselves differentiated.

4. Seeming identity between Brahman and its appearances

For Bhartṛhari relativism consists in non-differentiation of relative concepts, which is closely connected with the thesis that all words correspondent to the unreal appearances converge upon the absolute reality. How is it possible that a word goes beyond unreal adjuncts and refers to the reality? The answer seems to be given in the following *kārikā*.¹⁶

¹⁵For Bhartṛhari the function of conceptual knowledge is to determine representations appearing to mind (*ākāranirūpaṇā*). It is to what has been determined (*nirūpitārtha*) by conceptual knowledge that the word is applied. For details see Ogawa [1999].

¹⁶Bronkhorst [1991:13], explaining VP3.1.33, says: “There is the division of Brahman into universals. These universals are essentially identical with Brahman . . .” Houben [1995: 97], while surveying the *Dravyasamuddeśa*, states: “In VP3.2.6 it is emphasized that, ultimately, these forms too are identical with reality (or Substance).” It seems to me that they overlook the difficulty in harmonizing the identity between Brahman and its adjuncts with the unreal status of the adjuncts.

VP3.2.6: *teṣv ākāreṣu yaḥ śabdāḥ tathābhūteṣu vartate /
tattvātmakatvāt tenāpi nityam evābhidhīyate //*

“Even the word which denotes those forms of such [an impermanent nature] refers to the very eternal [Substance], since these are essentially identical with it.”

It is said that the word refers to Brahman because of the identity between Brahman and its appearances (*tattvātmakatvāt*). Judging from what has been pointed out concerning the capacities of Brahman, that is, their identity with it (*ātmabhūta*), that seems to be plausible. However, if Bhartṛhari here intended really to say that the real entity and its appearances are identical with each other, how could one say that the forms the real entity has are unreal? As has been suggested, the appearances of the ultimate reality, being reduced to the capacities that cannot be defined either as identical with the reality or as different from it (*tattvānyatvānirvacanīya*), are unreal. If the appearances were identical with Brahman, Brahman could not be one; on the other hand, if they were distinct from it, duality would result.¹⁷ What does Bhartṛhari mean by saying that the adjuncts to the reality are identical with it?

The question raised here cannot be worked out without taking Bhartṛhari’s notion of *vivarta* into consideration. It is well known that Bhartṛhari has defined *vivarta* as follows:

Vṛtti on VP1.1: *ekasya tattvād apracyutasya bhedānukāreṇāsatyavibhaktānyarūpopagrāhitā vivartaḥ /*

“*Vivarta* means that the one [reality], not deprived of its essence, assumes the forms of those other things (*anya*) which are unreal (*asatya*) and distinct from one another (*vibhakta*), with seeming distinctness.”

Vṛṣabha explains this as follows:

¹⁷In connection with Brahman’s transcendence of differentiation and unification (*bhedasaṃsargasamatikrama*), Vṛṣabha in *Paddhati* on *Vṛtti ad VP1.1* states as follows: *tarhi śaktayo yadi brahmaṇo vyatirikṭāḥ sa eva siddhāntavyālopaḥ, ekam eva yadāmnātam iti sarvādvaitasyāśrītatvāt / athāvyatirikṭās tata ekasmād brahmaṇo ’vyatirekān nānekalā, tataś ca nānāparikalpotpattyabhāvaḥ, śaktibhyo vānanyatvād brahmaṇo ekatvavādāvasādaḥ /* (“Then, if the capacities were distinct from Brahman, the very established view of ours would be abandoned because we admit the non-duality of everything, as Bhartṛhari states in *VP1.2* that Brahman is memorized in the Veda as one; but if they were not distinct from that one Brahman, [they] would not be manifold because of its non-distinction from the latter and hence there would not occur various conceptualizations; or, the theory that Brahman is one would be ruined because of its non-difference from the capacities.”)

Paddhati on Vṛtti ad VP1.1: bhedaṣṣatyavabhāṣayogyatāprabhāvād bhinnam iva ṣṣatyava-bhāṣate tad abhinnam aṣṣi, tad bhedaṣṣam anukaroti veti / etad uktaṣṣ bhavati / ekaṣṣ vastu svarūṣṣam aṣṣarityajad bhedaṣṣnukāreṣṣa mithyāṣṣekarūṣṣpāvabhāṣitaṣṣ ṣṣratipannaṣṣ vivṛttaṣṣ ivety ucyate / yathā rajjudravyaṣṣ viparyastadarśanaṣṣnāṣṣm acetanārūṣṣam ajaṣṣat sarṣṣparūṣṣpāṣṣnukāreṣṣa sarṣṣparūṣṣam ity ucyate /

“By means of its potentiality of manifesting itself as manifold, that [reality] manifests itself as if it were divided although it is the undivided; or, it intimates division. The following is meant: When a single reality is understood to be what has appeared, without abandoning its own form, as the manifold things that are false, it is said of the entity that it has appeared as if in a different form. For example, it is said that, for those whose perception is distorted, a substance rope appears as a snake with the seeming form of the snake, without giving up its insentient form.”

Thus what is meant by *vivarta* is that the one absolute reality, without transcending its essence, here its oneness, appears with the resemblance of the division which is unreal because of being susceptible of relativization. Taking into account that the structure *what is not x appears as if x (or what is with [without]x appears as if without [with] x)* is recognized with reference to Brahman, it will be suggested that *vivarta* simply means that something appears or occurs (*vartate*) in a different (*vi-*) form from the one in which the original source stays; the appearing forms do not affect the original (*tattvāt apracyutasya*), as is suggested by the word *iva* (‘as if’) in Vīṣṣabha’s explanation.¹⁸ Such being the case, the meaning of *vivarta* might be formulated as follows: *Vivarta* means that *something appears as if in a different form from its original one*. Then, within the scheme of *vivarta*, it is natural that the identity of the appearances of the reality with that reality should call for an interpretation suitable for that scheme.

The following two *kārkās* are the ones which talk about the relationship between

¹⁸It is important that the notion of *vivarta* is paraphrased with the use of the word *iva* in the sense of *utprekṣā* (‘imagination’). Note that Bhartṣṣhari states in *VP3.3.86cd* that nobody can be prevented from imagining totally non-existent things (*avastuṣṣv aṣṣi notprekṣā kasya cit ṣṣratibadhyate*). See also *Paddhati on Vṛtti ad VP1.24-26: puruṣṣās tu svām utprekṣāṣṣm nibandhanikṣṣṛtya vikalpāṣṣn āṣṣnayanti*.

I totally agree with Houben [1995: 308-309] who proposes the new translation of *vivartate* as ‘behaves in various ways’ in order to show that *vivarta* for Bhartṣṣhari has a wider sense than that in classical Advaita Vedānta.

the reality and its appearances, in which Bhartṛhari's notion of *vivarta* as formulated above is clearly seen.

*VP3.2.10: tathā vikārarūpāṇām tattve 'tyantam asaṃbhavaḥ /
tadātmeva ca tat tattvam atyantam atadātmakam //*

“In the same way, it is utterly impossible that there be the forms of the transformation in the reality. That reality which is absolutely not identical with them appears as if identical with them.”

The point made here is: The reality which is not identical with its appearing forms (*atadātmakam*) appears as if it were so (*tadātmeva*).¹⁹ Bhartṛhari, on the other hand, states in *VP1.2* that there is no separation between Brahman and capacities, that it appears as though distinct from these capacities; and that it appears as distinct things by virtue of its several capacities.

*VP1.2: ekam eva yad āmnātaṃ bhinnaśaktivyapāśrayāt /
aprthaktve 'pi śaktibhyaḥ pṛthaktveneiva vartate //*

“Brahman is memorized in the Veda as one. It appears as if distinct from capacities although not distinct, by virtue of its several capacities.”

According to this *kārikā*, Brahman which is not separate from capacities appears as if distinct from them (*aprthaktve 'pi pṛthaktveneiva*).

The important points to note here are that Brahman is said to be not identical with its appearances and that it is said to be not separate from its capacities. These seem to go against the principle that Brahman is beyond difference and identity. However, we have to consider that this principle is reflected in Bhartṛhari's explanation of the manner in which the reality appears in these *kārikās*. With special reference to Bhartṛhari's description of it as not being separate from its capacities, Vṛṣabha faces the same difficulty, getting over it by giving the following interpretation:

*Paddhati on VP1.2: nanu śaktiṣu tattvānyatvavyatikrama ākhyātaḥ / tat
kim ucyate aprthaktve 'pi iti / aprthaktvaṃ na ekatvam, api tu bhedapra-
śedhaḥ, pṛthaktveneiva iti ekatvapraśedhaḥ / tad ubhayasamatikrama
ākhyāta ity avirodhaḥ /*

¹⁹According to Helārāja, the essence of the adjuncts is the reality and the adjuncts are never the essence of the reality. The reality appears as adjuncts and not vice versa. Helārāja on *VP3.2.6: tattvam ātmā hy upādhinām, na tu tasyātmānaḥ /*

“[Question] As for capacities, it has been explained that they transcend both the identity with [Brahman] and the difference from it. And yet Bhartṛhari states, “even if [Brahman is] not distinct [from capacities] (*aprthaktve 'pi*). How is it to be justified?” [Answer] [The word] ‘*aprthaktva*’ does not mean identity (*ekatva*) but the negation of difference (*bhedapratishedha*).²⁰ By saying, “it appears as if distinct from them” (*prthaktvенеva*), he means to imply the negation of identity (*ekatvaniṣedha*). Thus the transcendence of the identity and the difference has been explained, so that there is no contradiction.”

We see that Vṛṣabha is so careful in interpreting Bhartṛhari’s words that may signify the identity of Brahman with its adjuncts that the above-mentioned principle can be maintained. According to him, it follows: When Bhartṛhari says that the reality which is not identical with its appearing forms appears as if identical with them, he wishes to imply both the negation of identity and that of difference; when he states that Brahman which is not separate from capacities appears as if distinct from them, he means both the negation of difference and that of identity.²¹ Thus, we may say that, with reference to what is beyond difference and identity, when it is said that it is identical with or not distinct from its adjuncts, the negation of difference or separateness from them is implied.

To return to the point, in VP3.2.6 Bhartṛhari has stated that the appearances of the reality are identical with that reality (*tattvātmakatva*). Recall that, regarding existence and non-existence, in VP3.3.61 they are said to be the conceptualized and to be not different from the ultimate reality (*ananya*), and that the capacities attributed to Brahman are considered to be identical with it (*ātmabhūta*). Vṛṣabha takes the word *ātmabhūta* here as implying the negation of difference (*bhedanirāsa*), just like the word *aprthaktva* in VP1.2.²² Therefore, in VP3.2.6, by saying that the appearances of the reality are identical with that reality, Bhartṛhari intends to imply

²⁰This shows that Vṛṣabha takes the negative particle of ‘*a-prthaktva*’ as *prasajyapratishedha* (‘non-affirmative negation’) and not as *paryudāsa* (‘affirmative negation’).

²¹In VP3.8.35ab Bhartṛhari states that the reality, being All, appears as if occurring in a sequence (*sarvarūpasya tattvasya yat krameṇeva darśanam*). If we take into consideration Vṛṣabha’s interpretation here, it follows that the reality is beyond sequence and non-sequence (*kramākrama*), which is consonance with his basic standpoint of Brahman. See VP3. 3. 84, where it is stated that sequence is not differentiated from non-sequence (*kramān na yaugapadyasya kaś cid bhedo 'sti tattvataḥ / yathaiva bhāvān nābhāvaḥ kaś cid anyo 'vasīyate //*).

²²*Paddhati* on Vṛtti ad VP1.2: *ātmabhūtāḥ iti / tadavyatirikṭās tā iti yāvat / bhedanirāsaś cāyaṃ naikatvakathanam / Helārāja on VP3.2.6: paramārthatas tattvād avyatiṛekād upādhiṅām . . . /*

the negation of their difference from the reality. Then what does the negation of such a difference mean? Consider the following *Vṛtti*:

Vṛtti on VP1.2: *apṛthaktve 'pi śaktibhya iti / na khalu jātivyaktivyavahāra-
vad anyāḥ kāścic chaktayo brahmaṇo vyatirekiṇyo vidyante /*

“*apṛthaktve 'pi śaktibhyaḥ*’: the same thing as we say about the universal and the individual is true of this case. That is, it is indeed never the case that there are capacities which are different from Brahman and that they exist separately from it.”

As is clearly shown by this *Vṛtti*, what the negation of the difference of the appearances from the reality means is that they have no existence or reality separate from it (*avyatireka*) and not that they are one with it (*ekatva*). In this connection it must be recalled here that Bhartṛhari describes the adjuncts in the form of capacities as indefinable as either existent or non-existent. According to Vṛṣabha, when they cannot be determined separately from the reality, it is not possible to define them as existent.²³ Therefore, from the viewpoint of *vivarta*, as stated in VP3.2.10, that those appearances have seeming existence and have no existence separate from the reality means that they are nothing but the conceptualized with reference to the one ultimate reality Brahman. Thus we can find the reason for Brahman being a sole referent of all words in that various conceptualizations take place pointing to Brahman which is itself beyond conceptualization and verbalization²⁴ but, by virtue of its capacities, paradoxically, enters the semantic field with its delimited forms to be denoted by words, rather than in the simple identity (in the sense of *ekatva*) between the reality and its adjuncts.

5. Conclusion

It is not until Brahman appears as the phenomenal world (*vivarta*) that it falls into the realm of verbalization. The realm of verbalization is the phenomenal world in which things contradictory to each other are relativized. The capacities imposed upon Brahman, which are contradictory to one another and yet which are combined

²³ *Paddhati* on *Vṛtti* ad VP1.4: *tathā sattvāsattvābhyām, tadvyatirekeṇānavadhāryamāṇatvāt sattvenāvācyāḥ, bhinnakāryodayānumīyamānasattvāc cāsattvenāvācyāḥ /* Thus it is plain that the ‘relational’ definition of the capacity as *tattvānyatvānirvacanīya* is closely related with its ‘ontological’ definition as *sattvāsattvānirvacanīya*.

²⁴ VP3.2.8ab: *vikalparūpaṇi bhajate tattvam evāvikalpitam /*

in it, bring about different conceptualizations. These conceptualizations, being relativized, are not mutually distinguished on the basis that their objects are nothing but the unreal appearances of one and the same reality. Verbalizations stem from the conceptualizations. Therefore, although all words denote their distinct objects that appear in conceptual knowledge, they refer to the ultimate reality without distinction. It is the ultimate being, Brahman, that is indeed the ultimate original source (*parā prakṛtiḥ*) of verbalization. It is as if one and the same thing were seen and spoken of differently from different angles.

Now let us return to the question of the interpretation of VP3.3.87. Helārāja comments on this kārikā as follows:

Helārāja: *sarvaparikalpātītaṃ tattvaṃ samāviṣṭaṃ sarvābhiḥ śaktibhir
brahma yathāyathaṃ vyavahāre bhāvābhāvarūpatayā tattadupādhihacitaṃ
śabdāḥ pratipādayantīty abhāvābhīdhā-yinām api bhāvaśabdais tulyaḥ saṃ-
bandho 'viśeṣac chabdānām iti prakaraṇatātparyam upasaṃhṛtam / eka iti
/ bhedasyābhāvanirāseṇa pratiśiddhatvāt / ata eva nityaḥ, abhāvābhāvāt
kāryakāraṇ abhāvasya ca niṣedhāt / śabdavyācyatve iti / śabdavyavahārār-
thaṃ nimittasaptamī prajoyanakathanāt / bahurūpāḥ iti kramākramādi-
rūpatayā prāguktayādvayasyaiva tattvasya prakāśanāt //*

“The purport of this section is summarized as follows:

Brahman is the reality which is beyond any conceptualizations and which is endowed with all capacities. In verbal communication words convey Brahman [appearing], according to cases, as existence and non-existence through the association with particular adjuncts. The [words] which denote non-existence and the words which denote existence equally have the relation with [their meanings] since, as words, they are not distinct from each other.

‘*ekah*’ (‘one’): Because division is denied through the rejection of non-existence. Precisely for this reason it is permanent (*nitya*): Because there is no non-existence, and because the cause-effect-relation is denied. ‘*śabdavyācyatve*’: this means ‘for the sake of verbal expression’, since the purpose is stated by using *nimittasaptamī* (‘seventh triplet for cause or purpose’). ‘*bahurūpāḥ*’ (‘as manifold’): The non-dual reality appears as

the before-mentioned [things relative to each other], such as sequence and non-sequence.”

First of all, Helārāja describes Brahman as being beyond any conceptualizations and endowed with all capacities, following *Vṛtti* on *VP1.1*.²⁵ By virtue of its capacities, Brahman appears as differentiated with its adjuncts. Its appearances are of the nature of either existence or non-existence. In short, just as the ultimate reality manifests itself as differentiated and unified (*VP3.7.39cd: pṛthaktvaikatvarūpeṇa tattvam eva prakāśate*), similarly, Brahman appears as existence and non-existence, the categories under which all things in the phenomenal world come. Words refer to Brahman in its delimited form, in the form of existence and non-existence (*brahma bhāvābhāvarūpatayā śabdāḥ pratipādayanti*). Moreover, it is said that the non-dual reality appears as sequence and non-sequence (*kramākramādirūpatayā advayasyaiva tattvasya prakāśanāt*). The sequence and non-sequence or the absence of sequence come under the categories of existence and non-existence, respectively. Therefore, it is obvious that he takes the phrase *sadasadātma* not as a qualifier of the word *artha* but as that of the word *bahurūpa*. What is of the nature of existence and non-existence is not Brahman but the phenomenal world. Suppose that Brahman is of the nature of existence and non-existence; then from the viewpoint of *vivarta*, it would follow that Brahman appears as if it were devoid of the nature of existence and non-existence and hence that the phenomenal world is not of the nature of existence and non-existence. This is absurd. In verbal usage, we use the words which denote existence and the ones which denote non-existence.²⁶

²⁵ *Vṛtti* on *VP1.1: sarvavikalpātītātattvaṃ bhedasaṃsargasamatikrameṇa samāviṣṭaṃ sarvābhiḥ śaktibhir . . . brahmeti pratijñāyate /*

²⁶ Houben [1995: 315-316] observes: “Helārāja, too, interprets the ‘existent and non-existent’ [*sad-asad*] as a reference to *bhāva* and *abhāva*. These, however, he does not interpret as a pair of dichotomously opposed notions, but as a [*sic.*] an asymmetric pair of which one, *bhāva*, remains as ultimately true. For, he explains that the thing-meant expressed in language is *eka* ‘one’ “because division is denied through the rejection of non-existence” (*VP IIIa: 180.16-17*) and it is *nitya* ‘permanent’ “because there is no non-existence, and because the cause-and-effect relation is denied” (*VP IIIa: 180.17-18*.)” No doubt Helārāja interprets the ‘existent and non-existent’ (*sad-asad*) as a pair of dichotomously opposed notions, as is clear from his commentary. The main reason for Houben’s misunderstanding is that he takes the clause ‘*sadasadātmaḥ*’ as a qualifier of the word ‘*arthaḥ*’ (‘Thing-meant’, according to him). What is of the nature of the existent and non-existent is not Brahman but the phenomenal world. For Brahman cannot contain any contradiction in it. Even granted that, as Houben believes, Helārāja interprets *bhāva* and *abhāva* as an asymmetric pair, that clause should qualify the word ‘*bahurūpaḥ*’. For, as is clear from the argumentation on the theme that all words refer to Brahman, such an asymmetric pair is taken into consideration in regard to the semantic field. See *VP3.1.32*. Helārāja is fully aware that Brahman has absolute oneness and existence, so that he makes the statements as quoted by Houben.

Helārāja asks us to take the seventh triplet of the word *śabdavācya* as denoting the cause or purpose (*nimittasaptamī*). This is very important. Recall the Crow model which has been employed in order to illustrate the view that every word refers to Substance. According to this model, the delimiting factors of Brahman have been regarded as the cause (*nimitta*) for the reference of the word to it. The delimitation of Brahman through its conceptualization is necessary for its verbalization. In this connection, VP3.2.16 is to be taken into account which says that what all words refer to is the ultimate original source, Brahman, and that Brahman appears as the word and the meaning in order to be referred to by the word. For all words their ultimate referent is one (*eka*), Brahman. In this sense it is not by chance that Bhartṛhari uses the word *artha* here. He deals with Brahman in the context of *śabdārtha* ('word and meaning').

Thus VP3. 3. 87 should be interpreted as follows:

VP3.3.87: *tasmāc chaktivibhāgena nityaḥ sadasadātmakaḥ /*
*eko 'rthaḥ śabdavācya*ve *bahurūpaḥ prakāśate //*

"Therefore, in order to be conveyed by words, the one, permanent *meaning* appears, on the basis of its different capacities, as manifold things (*bahurūpa*) which are of the nature of existence and non-existence."

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Helārāja see Subramania Iyer [1963].

MBh Patañjali's *Vyākaraṇamahābhāṣya*. See Vedavrata [1962-63].

Paddhati see Subramania Iyer [1966].

TS Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṃgraha*. See Krishnamacharya [1924].

VP see Rau, Subramania Iyer. [Kārikā numbers are given according to Rau's edition.]

Vṛtti see Subramania Iyer [1966].

(keywords: Bhartṛhari, śakti, bhedasamarga)