

JOHANNES BRONKHORST

Review of:

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHIES, V:
THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE GRAMMARIANS.

Edited by Harold G. Coward and K. Kunjunni Raja.

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Traditional Sanskrit grammar is primarily a technical enterprise, which does not constitute, in and by itself, a system of philosophy. Grammatical discussions may, and do, from time to time touch upon philosophical questions, but the idea [719] of a grammarians' philosophy might not have arisen were it not for Bhartṛhari. This thinker of the fifth century (as seems now as much as certain) worked out a philosophical system which he claimed to be 'grammatical', and which (or parts of which) came to be accepted by later grammarians as belonging to their own tradition. Moreover, this philosophy came to be included in such works as Sāyaṇa-Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanaśāstra* (14th century).

In spite of Bhartṛhari, most grammarians went on to write technical grammar, with at best the odd reference to what came to be looked upon as their philosophy. Works wholly or mainly dedicated to this philosophy are few, and include primarily Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* and the commentaries thereon, and some relatively late authors (from the 17th century onward), chief among them Koṇḍa Bhaṭṭa and Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa.

One of the main aims of the present volume of the *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies* (as it was of preceding volumes), is to provide summaries of primary sources. No need to say, by far the longest summaries are those that concern Bhartṛhari and Koṇḍa Bhaṭṭa. And the summary of Bhartṛhari's ideas (by Ashok Aklujkar) has, inevitably, to be looked upon as something like the pivot of the book.

"The summaries of primary sources" — the Preface elucidates — "aim at making available the substance of the main philosophical ideas contained in these works, so that philosophers who are unable to read the original Sanskrit and who find difficulty in understanding and finding their way about in the translations (where such exist) can get an idea of the positions taken and arguments offered." This is a laudable aim, which can, however, only be realized where the philosophical ideas concerned *are* clear to those who *are* able to read the original Sanskrit and find *no* difficulty in understanding and finding their way about the translations. As far as Bhartṛhari is concerned, we are still very far from such an understanding. Radhika Herzberger has rightly drawn attention to "the absence of an integrated portrait of Bhartṛhari's thought, a portrait that would convey the essential links between his grammatical ideas and his metaphysical ones" (Bhartṛhari and the Buddhists, D. Reidel, Dordrecht, 1986, p. 10). And there are numerous other obscure aspects and points of

dispute in Bhartṛhari's thought. Presenting Bhartṛhari to outsiders, therefore, implies making them aware of the difficulties and disagreements that exist, and providing them with the means to turn to the existing translations, secondary literature and even primary sources.

Unfortunately the summary of Bhartṛhari's thought does nothing of the kind. It begins with a "Brief analysis" of almost four pages, which contains virtually no justifications and no references. Its very beginning (p. 122) exemplifies its apodictic approach: "Language (*vāc*) has four levels or phases: speech (*vaikharī*), mental/intellectual or potential speech (*madhyamā*), latent totality of units (*paśyantī*), and pure, basic language principle (*parā paśyantīrūpā*)." As it happens, there is disagreement among scholars regarding the [720] precise number of levels accepted by Bhartṛhari (he may have accepted only three of them), but nothing in the "Brief analysis" hints at this. Nor is there any indication where in his work Bhartṛhari presents these levels of speech.

It will be instructive to pursue the inspection of this first section of the "Brief analysis" somewhat further, for it illustrates the difficulties users of this book will encounter. Imagine an innocent philosopher who reads this section and believes — understandably — that this first section describes an important aspect of Bhartṛhari's philosophy. He wishes to know where Bhartṛhari discusses this point. Since the "Brief analysis" does not tell him, our philosopher turns to the index at the end of the book. He finds here the terms *vaikharī*, *madhyamā*, and *paśyantī*, but notices with surprise that there is no reference to page 122, which is the page from which he started. If he takes the trouble to investigate this enigma, he finds out that the page numbering in the index is too high by 2 for part of the book: page 122 corresponds to p. 124 in the index. Our philosopher now looks for a page number in the index that corresponds to the summary of contents of the *Vākyapadīya*, pp. 126-172, i.e., presumably, pp. 128-174 in the index. But none of these three terms occur here, at least if the index is to be believed. Suppose now that our philosopher does not give up, and reads through the summary. He will find on p. 137: "Grammar is the highest station of the threefold speech (*vāc*) of *vaikharī*, *madhyamā*, and *paśyantī*, and it appears in a different form in each of its loci." It is only in the description of the contents of the *Vṛtti* that the philosopher will find a mention of the fourth level. If he now recalls from the very beginning of the section on Bhartṛhari (p. 121) that it only "seems likely that Bhartṛhari also composed the commentary called *vṛtti* on at least the first two chapters of the [*Vākyapadīya*]", he may wonder just how central the four levels of speech are to the philosophy of Bhartṛhari. If he further knew that it is not at all certain, even unlikely, that the *Vṛtti* was written by Bhartṛhari, he might prefer to leave the whole section on the four levels of speech aside as not established, and in any case of peripheral importance. But this far he will not get, for the book he is reading does not tell him about these uncertainties.

But what will our philosopher think of the statement that "grammar is the highest station of the threefold speech ..., and it appears in a different form in each of its loci", which he has just read? Does he from these lines "get an idea of the positions taken and arguments

offered”? One doubts it. Yet much of the *Vākyapadīya* is difficult and requires further study by specialists before it will be understood. In the situation one can only hope that the philosopher will not feel called upon to write about Bharṭṛhari and thus add to the confusion surrounding the ideas of this author, and that he will leave it to philologists to make further headway first.

Confusion about Bharṭṛhari’s intentions is not confined to minor points of doctrine and isolated verses of the *Vākyapadīya*. Consider the central question of what there is. The “Brief analysis” (p. 125) has this to say about the subject: [721] “one who is out to find what really exists will realize that *ultimately only the physical things and the language principle exist*; the rest of the multiplicity of objects is simply a result of the interaction of these two existents. Qualities ..., capacities ..., relations ..., universals ..., numbers ..., phases ..., grouping ..., and absence ... do not have any existence of their own *apart from the physical objects.*” (emphasis mine). But in the section on “Buddhist logicians” of the same book, written by Shoryu Katsura, we read (p. 27): “Bharṭṛhari too seems to have held an idealistic view of reality”. And on p. 91 we find what must be the opinion of the editors of the volume: “Bharṭṛhari identifies ... the ultimate being with the essence of the speech principle ... The entire world is an appearance ... of this speech principle. ... It is *the same speech essence* that appears in the form of various ideas and meanings on the one hand and their symbols — words and sentences — on the other, and thus *constitutes the phenomenal world. This speech essence is of the nature of consciousness.*” (emphasis mine). Different interpretations of an essential aspect of Bharṭṛhari’s philosophy occur therefore in different parts of the same book. Which of these interpretations is to be accepted by the non-specialized reader to whom the book addresses itself, and who is not even warned, much less informed, about the differences of interpretation that exist regarding many aspects of the *Vākyapadīya*?

Bharṭṛhari’s philosophy, as will be clear from the preceding paragraph, is not only discussed in the summary of his work referred to above, but also in various passages of the “Introduction to the philosophy of the grammarians”, which covers pp. 3-97. It is not possible to deal with these passages in further detail here. Suffice it to say that throughout the book, wherever Bharṭṛhari’s philosophy is discussed, more often than not it is the particular interpretation of the author of that section that is presented. Such interpretations are not necessarily without interest within the context of the ongoing exploration of Bharṭṛhari’s thought (provided that justifications and references are provided, which is not always the case), but they are hardly the kind of more or less definite knowledge that one would like to present to complete outsiders. As far as Bharṭṛhari is concerned, the statement in the Preface according to which “[t]he summaries ... are intended primarily for philosophers and only secondarily for indologists” seems therefore particularly inappropriate.

Before leaving Bharṭṛhari, one further observation must be made. The *Vākyapadīya* has been edited a number of times, and several of these editions call themselves critical, yet only one of them is critical in the true sense of the term: this is the edition by Wilhelm Rau. It

is true that Rau based his edition only on mss of the *kārikās*, not on mss containing also one or more commentaries. Yet only in the case of Rau's edition is it possible to choose a reading, not on the basis of personal inclination or ad hoc reasoning, but with an awareness of the relative importance of various mss-readings. It is true that further studies could, and should, be carried out in order to ascertain the position of the archetype and hyparchetypes of Rau's mss with regard to the texts used by the commentators. [722] But as long as no such studies have been carried out, Rau's edition is the best we have and it should be used as a matter of course. Most regrettably, most recent studies of Bharṭṛhari ignore Rau's edition completely. Sometimes this leads to misinterpretations that could have been avoided (see, e.g., *Études Asiatiques / Asiatische Studien* 45, 1991, p. 9-11). In all cases it shows a lack of appreciation of what textual scholarship is all about. Unfortunately the book under review is no exception. References are made to Iyer's non-critical editions (which, for no clear reason, call themselves critical), without any explanation as to why Rau's edition is not used.

Later grammatical philosophers lend themselves more easily than Bharṭṛhari to a presentation in the Encyclopedia, the main reason being that their works, though perhaps sometimes difficult, present no insurmountable problems of interpretation. One notices with appreciation the elaborate summary of Koṇḍa Bhaṭṭa's *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa* by S. D. Joshi (pp. 255-308). Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa has been given a less generous treatment: his *Mañjūṣā* and *Laghumañjūṣā* have not been summarized; only summaries of the *Paramalaghumañjūṣā* and the *Sphoṭavāda*, as well as of some relevant portions of the *Mahābhāṣyapradīpodyota*, have been included.

Bharṭṛhari's predecessors are dealt with, sketchily, in the 'Historical Résumé' (pp. 3-32), and in the summaries dedicated to Vedic literature, Yāska's *Nirukta*, Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, and Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*. No mention is anywhere made of the Sarvāstivādins. Yet these Buddhists accepted the three dharmas called *nāmakāya*, *padakāya* and *vyañjanakāya*, entities which are very similar to, if not identical with, the different kinds of *sphoṭa* that are so important in the grammarians' philosophy. These dharmas might very well be the historical precursors and sources of inspiration of the *sphoṭa*. Some words about them would have been appropriate.

The body of the book is divided into two parts. Part One is called "Introduction to the philosophy of the grammarians" (pp. 3-97) and deals not only with grammarians; it pays also some attention to other thinkers about language, such as the Mīmāṃsakas, the Naiyāyikas, the Buddhist Logicians, and the authors of Literary Criticism. Part Two, which calls itself "Survey of the literature of grammarian philosophy" (pp. 101-431), confines itself primarily to grammarian writers on philosophy.

A checklist of authors and works on Vyākaraṇa philosophy is provided on p. 22 f. of the Historical Résumé in Part One. Here we find, of course, Patañjali and Bharṭṛhari, and all those who defended the grammarians' position on the *sphoṭa* in original works or commentaries. We find here besides the authors of commentaries on Bharṭṛhari's

Vākyapadīya, also authors of commentaries on Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya. This last circumstance explains the length of the list, which contains no less than 63 authors. Most of these have been given a section in Part Two, of which there are altogether 85.

The number of original and significant authors in the field of grammarian [723] philosophy is however far smaller than 63 or 85. This fact must be held partly responsible for a feature that will strike anyone who leafs through the book: the large number of empty or nearly empty pages. The explanation is as follows: Each author gets a section, each section start on the right hand page, and sections about authors who have written nothing of interest about philosophy (or whose works have not yet been studied, or even edited) range between short and very short. The result is more than seventy (!) completely empty pages in Part Two, and about as many that are more than half empty. This is not only regrettable for ecological reasons. The empty pages, as well as the pages that begin a new section, carry no page numbering. Long stretches of the book under review are therefore without a single page number. Yet the index at the end refers to these. The practical use of the book is in this way seriously impeded.

Pp. 433-548 contain a "Bibliography on grammar (*vyākaraṇa*)", compiled by Karl H. Potter. Unlike the main parts of the book, this bibliography deals with grammarians in general, not only with philosophers among them. Surprisingly, this bibliography contains no entries more recent than 1983. Even more surprisingly, the information it contains has not been systematically used by the authors of Part Two. This is strikingly illustrated in section 11 of Part Two (p. 199). The whole of this section reads: "PRAMEYASAMGRAHA. The unknown author of a lost commentary on the Vākyapadīya called Prameyasamgraha must have lived about A.D. 1000." No notes, no references. The bibliography (G900, p. 475) is better informed: "Prameyasamgraha on book 2 of Bhartṛhari's Vākyapadīya ... Edited by Wilhelm Rau. Munich, 1981." But not even the bibliography is aware of the review of Rau's edition in *Kratylos* 27, 1982 [1983], pp. 78-81, which shows that the Prameyasamgraha is not a commentary but an independent work, and that it is almost certainly younger than the commentator Puṅyarāja.

Unfortunately this is not the only lacuna in the bibliography, even where publications from before 1983 are concerned. Major works such as Pierre Filliozat's translations into French of the Mahābhāṣya (first volume published in 1975) and Kielhorns' English translation of the Paribhāṣenduśekhara are missing. The only critical edition of Bhartṛhari's Vākyapadīya, by W. Rau, which is arguably the single most important work to be mentioned in this bibliography, is described incorrectly as "with word index" (p. 469); the book contains a pāda-index. (A word-index has been published separately by W. Rau in 1989.)

The bibliography, in spite of these and other shortcomings, will be gratefully used by all those who are interested in the Indian grammatical tradition. Yet its lack of connection with the other parts of the book in which it is published will be experienced as disturbing. Part Two, to give another example, dedicates one of its sections to Yāska's Nirukta, the

bibliography, as against this, announces that "... sciences, such as *nirukta*, are not covered" (p. 433). Pāṇini's date is "350 B.C.?" according to the bibliography (p. 441), about the fifth century B.C. [724] according to pages 4 and 111. (The former of these two dates appears to be correct; see O. v. Hinüber, *Der Beginn der Schrift und frühe Schriftlichkeit in Indien*, Stuttgart 1989, p. 34.) Durgasiṃha (sic), who wrote a commentary on the Kātantra grammar, lived "around or before A.D. 800" according to p. 17, around "950?" according to the bibliography (p. 475). (This time it is the compiler of the bibliography who appears to have made a slip; he refers to Belvalkar (*Systems of Sanskrit Grammar*) p. 73, which however states: "As Durgasiṃha is quoted by Hemachandra, and as he knew the Chāndra Dhātupāṭha, on the basis of which he put together another Dhātupāṭha for the Kātantra, Durgasiṃha probably is to be assigned to the eighth century.") The bibliography assigns the date 1540 to Śeṣa Kṛṣṇa, author of the *Sphoṭatattvanirūpaṇa*; p. 22 repeats this date. But section 19, which is dedicated to this author, presents an argument to push back the time in which he must have flourished to 1510 (p. 215). The date assigned to Śeṣa Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa in the bibliography is 1546, with a reference to Yudhiṣṭhira Mīmāṃsaka's *Samskṛta Vyākaraṇa-Śāstra kā Itihāsa* vol. 1 p. 405 f., which contains no such date. The section dedicated to the same author observes, on the other hand, that "this writer must have flourished about 1540 (though Yudhisthira Mimamsaka gives a date half a century earlier)", without offering any justification. P. 22 mentions as main philosophical work of Bhaṭṭoji Dikṣita the *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakārikā*. This work, also known by the names *Vaiyākaraṇamatonmajjana* and *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇakārikā*, is the basic text on which Koṇḍa Bhaṭṭa's famous *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa* is a commentary. Yet the section dedicated to Bhaṭṭoji Dikṣita (no. 30, p. 241-42) makes no mention of this work, and provides only a summary of the philosophical ideas in the *Śabdakaustubha*. The bibliography mentions both works.

A 'Cumulative index' covers the last pages (563-609). While using this index it is to be kept in mind that the page numbering used here does not always correspond with the actual page numbering of Part One (see above).

A serious shortcoming of the main portions of the book is the frequent lack of references. This was pointed out above in connection with the sections on Bharṭhari, on the *Prameyasamgraha* and on Śeṣa Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, but these are not the only examples in Part Two. The same shortcoming is present in Part One. The section on Literary Criticism (pp. 28-32), for example, contains one reference to John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies unto This Last* (London, 1952), and one to *Ṛg Veda* 10,71.2c; that's all. The discussion it contains of the ideas of Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja, never refers to passages in their works, nor to any secondary literature. P. 52 states that "Bharṭhari in his *Mahābhāṣyaṭīkā* accepts three *pramāṇas*: perception ..., inference ..., and scripture" but refers to no precise passage. P. 58 refers to some paradoxes discussed in the *Vākyapadīya*, but does not tell us where to find them. These and many other instances seriously reduce the value of the volume.

Sometimes the information provided is misleading at best. P. 44, for example, states: “Before Bhartṛhari, Patañjali in his Mahābhāṣya included in the aims of [725] grammatical study (*vyākaraṇa*) the attainment of heaven (*svarga*) through the correct use of words and liberation from bondage (*mokṣa*).” This is misleading, for Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya does not even contain the word *mokṣa*. A note refers to K. A. Subramania Iyer’s article “Bhartṛhari on *vyākaraṇa* as a means of attaining *mokṣa*” (ALB 28, 1964, 112-131) pp. 112-113. But these pages do not contain the words liberation and *mokṣa* either (except of course in the title). In fact, Iyer concludes his first section with the words: “Thus, *according to Bhartṛhari*, the author of the Mahābhāṣya looked upon both *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa* as two of the aims of the study of grammar” (my emphasis). Be it noted that not even *niḥśreyasa* is offered by Patañjali as an aim of grammar. One regrets once again that a work meant for non-Indologists (i.e., for those who cannot, or are not likely to check what is presented to them) is so sloppy in the information it provides.

To conclude, the volume on The Philosophy of the Grammarians is as a whole rather disappointing. Let us hope, however, that it will inspire others to improve upon it, and especially that it will induce them to participate in the exploration of Bhartṛhari’s philosophy, and of the role of language in Indian thought in general.