the work of Gergonne on definition to the attention of the new logic.)

ZENO SWIJTINK

BHARTRHARI (c. 5th century)

Bhartrhari is the Indian philosopher of grammar par excellence. Drawing on practically all the schools of thought of his time – religious, philosophical, linguistic and ritual – he uses elements from them to create a philosophy. This philosophy, while claiming to be grammatical, goes far beyond traditional grammar, constituting a new and remarkably original system of thought.

1 Life, works and influence
2 Philosophical outline
3 Role of grammar

1 Life, works and influence

Bhartrhari is the author of the *Vākyapadīya* or *Trikāndī* and probably the *Mahābhāsyatīkā* or *Mahābhāsyadīpikā*, perhaps the earliest commentary on the *Mahābhāsya* of Patañjali, which survives only in part. The Indian tradition also ascribes to Bhartrhari the *Vākyapadīyavrtti*, the earliest surviving commentary on the first two books of the *Vākyapadīya*, but this is doubtful.

Bhartrhari was long believed to have lived in the seventh century AD, according to the testimony of the Chinese pilgrim Yijing (eighth century AD). However, as his *Vākyapadīya* was known to the Buddhist philosopher DIGNĀGA, this has pushed his date back to the fifth century AD. It is unlikely that Bhartrhari was active any earlier than Kālidāsa, a famous Sanskrit poet and playwright, who is widely believed to allude to the Gupta emperor Candragupta II (375–413 AD).

The philosophy of Bhartrhari is expressed in the *Vākyapadīya*, a difficult work whose serious scholarly study remains in its infancy. Later grammarians claim Bhartrhari's philosophy to be inseparable from the grammatical tradition and cite from the *Vākyapadīya* selectively. However, other thinkers, such as Abhinavagupta and Dharmapāla found aspects of his text with which they concur. The Buddhist Dharmapāla is known to have written a commentary (now lost) on part of the *Vākyapadīya* and the Chinese pilgrim Yijing mistook Bhartrhari for a Buddhist. Hindu Tantric thinkers (especially ABHINAVAGUPTA) took a deep interest in Bhartrhari's work. His philosophy is also often looked upon as a form of Vedānta (see VEDĀNTA). All these links and claims are justified by certain aspects of Bhartrhari's thought, but they do not provide an integrated picture of his philosophy.

2 Philosophical outline

In order to understand Bhartrhari on his own terms, he must be read in the context of his time. The *Vākyapadīya* must be understood against the background of the philosophical and religious currents with which Bhartrhari was acquainted and to which he refers, although often implicitly. These references show that Bhartrhari was a Vedic *brāhmana* (most probably belonging to the Maitrāyanīya branch of the black Yajurveda), who was strongly influenced by the Vaiśesika philosophy and especially by Mādhyamika Buddhism (see NYĀYA-VAIŚESIKA; BUDDHISM, MĀDHYAMIKA: INDIA AND TIBET). He was first and foremost a grammarian who claimed allegiance to Patañjali and tried to elevate grammatical studies to the rank of a philosophy with the further implication that its study would provide access to liberation. Bhartrhari combined these and other ideas to produce a philosophy of his own for which he claimed no originality. However, his work stands apart from all that preceded and followed him, including the philosophy of the later grammarians who present themselves as his inheritors.

Modern scholarship has not yet reached agreement on the precise nature of Bhartrhari's philosophy. His philosophy distinguishes between two levels of reality, a higher and a lower. Only the higher reality can be considered to be real; lower reality is not real in an absolute sense. Language cannot describe higher reality. Indeed, language plays a major role in bringing about the lower reality, which is the reality of everyday experience. The resemblance between these ideas and those current among the Buddhists of the time is striking. There are, however, a number of major differences. First, for Bhartrhari language is not just any language: it is Sanskrit, the sacred language of the Brahmans, which took form in the Veda, the corpus of canonical texts believed to be eternal. The world of everyday experience is in this way created, or organized by the Veda. At this point, Bhartrhari turns an essentially Buddhist argument into a confirmation of the pre-eminence of the Veda.

A second major difference concerns the nature of the higher, absolute reality. Variant schools of Buddhism had various ideas about this, depending on the school to which they belonged: consciousness, emptiness, the fundamental elements of existence (*dharma*). Bhartrhari accepts none of these positions.

For him the absolute is the totality of all there is, has been and will be. He used this idea, borrowed from earlier Brahmanical thinkers, as an element in his own philosophy.

Lower reality is the result of a division of the absolute. The precise nature of this division is determined, among other things, by language. Sometimes Bhartṛhari also mentions analytical imagination (*vikalpa*), but there is reason to believe that he looked upon these different factors as amounting to the same thing. The 'parts' resulting from this division undergo the influence of a number of powers (*śakti*) of the absolute, foremost among them time and space. These operations bring about the objects of everyday experience, which are accordingly looked upon as consisting of 'real' and 'unreal' parts. Bhartṛhari is not categorical as to what constitutes the 'real' parts of familiar objects. Among the various possibilities he proposes are that the substance of, or the universal inhering in the object is its 'real' part. He does not choose between these alternatives. This is due to what J.E.M. Houben (1995) has called Bhartṛhari's perspectivism: reality is different from different points of view. This perspectivism is a pervading characteristic of Bhartṛhari's thought. It applies to lower reality, but not to the absolute.

Bhartṛhari's vision of the absolute as the totality of all that exists, has existed and will exist, has repercussions in the realm of ordinary reality. For Bhartṛhari, any totality or whole is more real than its constituents. A vase, for example, is more real than its parts. Again we see how Bhartṛhari uses a Buddhist position for his own purposes, by turning it into its opposite. For the Buddhists wholes do not exist: only their ultimate parts (*dharma*) (see BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY, INDIAN). To Bhartṛhari, a whole is more real than its parts and the absolute whole is absolutely real.

3 Role of grammar

Bhartṛhari considers himself a grammarian. Generally, grammar deals with the analysis of language and produces words from stems and suffixes. Language also obeys the general rule that totalities are more real than their constituents. This is particularly clear in the case of words which convey meaning, whereas their constituents do not. Grammatical analysis, Bhartṛhari argues, is artificial as stems and suffixes are the inventions of grammarians. In this respect his position appears to be very close to that of Patañjali. Words, too, are merely the result of an artificial analysis of sentences which, in their turn, are parts of more encompassing and therefore more real, linguistic units.

Once again, Bhartṛhari uses ideas which he borrowed from Buddhism. The Sarvāstivādins postulated long before Bhartṛhari the existence of three entities (*dharma*), corresponding to individual phonemes, words and sentences. Bhartṛhari accepts these entities, but orders them in an hierarchical ontology in agreement with his overall vision of reality.

Grammar allows its practitioner to 'ascend' from the smallest elements isolated by grammatical analysis, such as phonemes, stems and suffixes, to 'higher' units of speech. This way he will learn about the world, which is largely determined by the linguistic analysis that is imposed upon it. He will also learn to appreciate the unreality of the everyday world. In the end, the realization that the highest reality is beyond language and concerns the totality of things can be attained. Insight into the all leads to liberation, as it does in a number of classical texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is in this sense that Bhartṛhari states at the beginning of his *Vākyapadīya* that grammar is the door to liberation.

Bhartṛhari's remarks concerning the nature of language should be understood in the light of the above. There has been much confusion among recent scholars about Bhartṛhari's concept of the absolute, which is often depicted as being of the nature of speech. The *Vākyapadīya* does not support this point of view. Bhartṛhari does discuss the distinction between the real word, sometimes called *sphoṭa* and the sounds which manifest it. The real word, he believes, has no sequence. It is only the sounds that manifest it which are sequential. Among the manifesting sounds, he makes a distinction between primary (*prākṛta*) and secondary (*vaikṛta*) sounds. The former have the duration attributed to the real word, the latter are responsible for the differences of pronunciation between different speakers. Bhartṛhari's perspectivism in the *Vākyapadīya* is pertinent here, implying that a different explanation of the same fact may be presented elsewhere in the same text without clear indication to that effect. As well as this explanation of the duration of a word in terms of primary sounds (*Vākyapadīya* 1.77) there are verses in the text (1.105–6), which speak of the *sphoṭa* as the first sound produced, whose duration is not affected by the sounds produced subsequently.

See also: LANGUAGE, INDIAN THEORIES OF; PATAÑJALI

List of works

Bhartṛhari (*c.*5th century AD) *Vākyapadīya* (Bhartṛhari's Vākyapadīya), ed. W. Rau, Wiesba-

den: Franz Steiner, 1977. (A difficult work whose serious scholarly study remains in its infancy.)

—— (c.5th century AD) *Mahābhāṣyaṭīkā (Mahā-bhāṣyadīpikā)*, ed. and trans. by V.B. Bhagavat, S. Bhate, J. Bronkhorst, G.V. Devasthali, V.P. Limaye, G.B. Palsule, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1985–91, 8 vols. (Perhaps the earliest commentary on the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, which survives only in part.)

References and further reading

Bronkhorst, J. (1991) 'Studies on Bhartṛhari 3: Bhartṛhari on *sphoṭa* and universals', *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 45 (1): 5–18. (A discussion of Bhartṛhari's notion of *sphoṭa* – the distinction between the real word and the sounds which manifest it.)

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—— (1996a) 'Sanskrit and reality: the Buddhist contribution', *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit: Contributions to the history of the Sanskrit language*, ed. J.E.M. Houben, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 109–35. (A discussion of the Sanskrit language.)

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Iyer, K.A. Subramania (1969) *Bhartṛhari*, Poona: Deccan College. (The most comprehensive study of Bhartṛhari, his works and thought.)

Ramseier, Y. (1993) 'Bibliography on Bhartṛhari', *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 47 (1): 235–267. (A complete bibliography of Bhartṛhari's work. Contains translations of the *Vākyapadīya* and the *Mahābhāṣyaṭīkā*.)

JOHANNES BRONKHORST

BHĀVAVIVEKA *see* BUDDHISM, MĀDHYAMIKA: INDIA AND TIBET

BIBLE, HEBREW

Although the Bible is not a work of systematic philosophy, it none the less contains a wide variety of philosophical and theological ideas which have served as the framework for rabbinic speculation through the centuries. Although these views about the nature and activity of God are not presented systematically, they do provide an overview of the ancient Israelite understanding of the Godhead, creation, divine providence and human destiny. Throughout rabbinic literature these notions served as the bedrock for theological speculation, and with the emergence of systematic Jewish philosophy in the Middle Ages, they came to preoccupy a variety of thinkers. Similarly, in the post-Enlightenment period until the present, scriptural teaching has served as the starting point for philosophical and theological reflection.

Foremost among scriptural beliefs is the conviction that one God has created the cosmos. As the transcendent creator of the universe, he reigns supreme throughout nature and is intimately involved in earthly life. God is both omnipotent and omniscient and exercises divine providence over all creatures – from on high he oversees all the inhabitants of the earth. In exercising his providential care, Scripture repeatedly asserts, God is a benevolent ruler who shows compassion and mercy to all. Furthermore, as lord of history, he has chosen Israel to be his special people and has revealed the Torah to them on Mount Sinai. The Jewish people are to be a light to the nations, and from their midst will come a Messianic redeemer who will inaugurate a period of divine deliverance and eventually usher in the world to come. Israel thus plays a central role in the unfolding of God's plan for all human beings.

1 Divine unity
2 Transcendence and immanence
3 Omnipotence and omniscience
4 Creation and providence
5 Goodness, revelation and sin
6 The chosen people
7 The Messiah

1 Divine unity

Pre-eminent among scriptural ideas is belief in the existence of one God. In the Hebrew Bible, the Israelites experienced God as the lord of history. The