

11: Mithya, Open Architecture and Cognitive Science

1 Original: 'Purnam adah, purnam idam purnat purnam udachyate; purnasya purnam adaya purnam evavashyate.' (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 5.1.1).

2 Difference and non-difference: Vijnanabhikshu argued that the terms difference (bheda) and non-difference (abheda) can each be understood in at least two ways. In Naiyayika, non-difference is understood as identity (tadatmya) while difference is the negation of identity, called 'mutual absence' (anyonyabhava). However, these two terms can also be understood to mean separation (vibhaga) and non-separation (avibhaga) of self from Brahman. By adopting this alternative interpretation, it is possible to explain both the statements of difference and the statements of non-difference that appear in the Vedas without arbitrarily subordinating one to the other. He argues this by appealing to the authority of the grammatical Dhatupatha, which sets down the meanings of Sanskrit verbal roots: And it is not the case that when there is the word 'non-difference' (abheda) in the sense of 'non-separation' (avibhaga) there is a figurative usage, due to the rule of the root 'bhid': 'bhid', in the sense of splitting (vidarana), meaning also in the sense of separation (vibhaga). Vijnanabhikshu takes pains to emphasize that 'separation' is a primary meaning of the word 'difference'; not a figurative meaning. Establishing this allows him to argue that understanding difference as 'separation' is just as legitimate as understanding it as mutual absence (anyonyabhava). (Nicholson 2010, 44). Wholes and Parts: To show that the doctrine of part and whole is logically coherent, Vijnanabhikshu makes a subtle distinction between two different Sanskrit words that are both typically translated as 'part': amsa and avayava. While the selves are the amsas of Brahman, they are not the avayavas of Brahman. Vijnanabhikshu wishes to make this distinction by saying that an avayava can be understood in the everyday sense of the word 'part'. However, an amsa has a specific technical meaning in the Brahmasutra and in his philosophical writings: to be a part (amsa), something must be of the same class (sajatiya) as the whole (amsin) and be the adjunct of non-separation (avibhagapratiyogin). The whole is the subjunct of non-separation (tadanuyogin). When referring to the part as being of the same class as the whole, one must be consistent with regard to the property under discussion. For instance, when discussing the part being a self, one should say it falls under the class of selfhood (jivatva). When discussing the part as existent, etc., one

should refer to it as falling under the class of existence (sattva), etc. Following this procedure, there will be no confusion. In this passage, Vijnanabhikshu employs two relational terms from Navya-Nyaya: subjunct (anuyogin) and adjunct (pratiyogin). In the Naiyayikas' stock example, 'there is absence of the pot in the ground', the pot is the adjunct in the relation, while the ground is the subjunct. It is important to see that the relation of absence only goes one way: to say that there is absence of the pot in the ground is not the same as saying there is absence of the ground in the pot. Likewise, although it is possible to say the selves are parts of Brahman, it is something else to say that Brahman is the part of the selves. Therefore, to avoid the possibility that Brahman could also be called a 'part' and the selves called the 'whole', Vijnanabhikshu must argue that separation is a one-way relation, not a two-way relation. In the relation of separation or non-separation, the anuyogin is the locus while the pratiyogin is that which separates from the locus. In the example of leaves falling from a tree, the leaf would be the pratiyogin of separation while the tree would be the anuyogin. In the case of the selves and Brahman, it is the selves that separate from Brahman at the time of creation and re-attach themselves to Brahman at the time of the world's dissolution. Throughout this entire process, Brahman, the whole, remains unchanged. This one-way relation of separation may be explained by paradoxical statements of difference and non-difference, such as one of Vijnanabhikshu's favourite passages from the Vishnupurana: 'There is nothing different from it, yet it is different from everything.' (1.16.78). Although all of the selves are its parts, Brahman is not dependent on, or affected by, the states of bondage and liberation of those same selves. (Nicholson, 2010, pp. 52-53) Western academics and their Indian followers typically translate Bhedabheda as 'Difference-in-Identity' philosophy, presumably to link it with Western thinkers such as Bonaventure, Spinoza, and Hegel. Although there are meaningful similarities with some Western thinkers, purely on the basis of Sanskrit grammar 'difference-in-identity' cannot be the translation of bhedabheda. According to Nicholson, a preferable translation would be the more literal 'difference and non-difference', because linguistically it leaves open the question of whether difference is ultimately subsumed under non-difference, or vice versa. (Nicholson, 2010, p. 39). The Upanishads contain two types of passages: statements of difference (bhedavakyas) and statements of non-difference (abhedavakyas). Since the Vedas must be unified, there are multiple interpretative strategies. Advaitins subordinate statements of difference to statements of non-difference, while Dvaitins do the opposite.