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A Buddhist Refutation of *Sphoṭa*

Sara McClintock

1 Introduction

This contribution examines arguments against the *sphoṭa* theory of language¹ made by the eighth-century Buddhist philosophers Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla in their twin treatises, the verse composition *Tattvasaṃgraha* (TS) and its prose commentary, the *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* (TSP; for convenience, we refer to the two texts jointly as TS/P).² In keeping with their larger project to defend a metaphysics of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which rejects the possibility of any ultimately real singleness or permanence, the primary arguments against *sphoṭa* are aimed mostly at its supposed indivisibility and eternality. Using mereological arguments similar to those they deploy against other such purportedly ultimately real entities as universals (*sāmānya*), natures (*svabhāva*), the Self (*ātman*), and God (*īśvara*), Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla reject this theory that posits a unitary and permanent entity to account for the capacity of language to disclose its meanings. One line of their argument focuses on the problem of how *sphoṭa*, literally a bursting or disclosure, remains indivisible when language has parts—whether understood primarily in terms of phonemes (*varṇa*), words (*pada*), or sentences (*vākya*)—that must be arranged sequentially to express any meaning. In addition, these Buddhists also attack the idea that *sphoṭa* could be eternal, given that the cognition of meaning manifests only in the wake of particular linguistic expressions and not perpetually.

One of the most surprising aspects of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's refutation of *sphoṭa*, at least initially, is their heavy reliance on arguments provided by the Mīmāṃsaka Kumāṛila, a figure who more typically appears in the TS/P as a target of attack. While disagreements remain, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla do not hesitate to make direct use of Kumāṛila's rebuttals of *sphoṭa* as advanced in his *Ślokaṇvārttika* (ŚV). Of course, Kumāṛila's views on the

eternality of language and the authority of the supposedly authorless Veda come in for much criticism throughout the TS/P.³ However, in this particular instance, the Buddhists find themselves aligned with their Mīmāṃsaka nemesis, and they make free use of his work.⁴ Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla also draw heavily on previous Buddhist refutations of the *sphoṭa* theory, especially as articulated by Dharmakīrti in his *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti* (PVSV),⁵ and further elaborated by Śākyabuddhi in his sub-commentary on the PVSV, the *Pramāṇavārttikaṭīkā*. Dharmakīrti's arguments in turn rely on Vasubandhu's earlier criticism of the little-studied Buddhist Vaibhāṣika theories resembling those of the Grammarians (Vaiyākaraṇas) on the topic of signification, but these controversies seem to have receded by the time of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla.⁶ We can note as well that the independently minded Maṇḍana Mīśra in his famous *Sphoṭasiddhi* offered numerous rebuttals to both Buddhist and Mīmāṃsaka arguments against *sphoṭa*, and that these rebuttals were later addressed in turn by the Buddhist Karṇakagomin in his *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛttiṭīkā*.⁷ Unfortunately, space does not allow us to examine all these materials here, and we must limit ourselves to the arguments as they appear in the TS/P.

2 Rejection of the Eternal Verbum

We begin with the arguments found in the chapter known as the investigation of the eternal verbum (*śabdabrahmaparīkṣā*). According to the Grammarian Bhartṛhari, the entire world may be seen as the manifestation of an ultimate reality known as *śabdabrahman* or the eternal verbum—a kind of unchanging primordial essence (*brahman*) consisting in language or sound (*śabda*). The chapter takes up the problem of the eternal verbum with particular reference to Bhartṛhari's magnum opus, the *Vākyapadīya* (VP). Even though the term *sphoṭa* does not appear in it, the chapter nevertheless sets out the baseline Buddhist objections to the idea of an eternal element of language that accounts for the capacity of words and sentences to convey meaning. As such, these arguments are relevant to the more explicit critique of *sphoṭa* found later in the TS/P. After all, the *sphoṭa* that explains the comprehension of language might easily be characterized as a particular form of the eternal verbum.⁸

Śāntarakṣita describes the foundational view of the eternal verbum in the first verse of this chapter as follows:

This multitude of things is recognized to be the transmutation (*pariṇāma*) of that highest *brahman*, made of sound, which is untouched by destruction or production.⁹

As Kamalaśīla renders explicit through a direct quotation, this verse is a gloss on Bhartṛhari's opening verse in the VP, here in B. K. Matilal's translation:

The essence of *language* has no beginning and no end. It is the imperishable Brahman, the ultimate consciousness, which is *transformed* in the form of meanings and which facilitates the functioning of the world.¹⁰

Although the precise nature of the equation of *sphoṭa* and the eternal verbum according to Bhartṛhari is a topic that exceeds the scope of this chapter, we can note that the two concepts share many features and are closely linked.¹¹ Most pertinently, both are understood, at least by these Buddhist thinkers, to be eternal and single,¹² and to stand in a relationship of serving as a basis or source of the various manifestations of language and, in the case of the eternal verbum, the entire world. For these Buddhists, therefore, both *sphoṭa* and the eternal verbum are subject to a similar set of arguments rooted in a mereological analysis which aim to demonstrate the impossibility of an eternal and single cause for that which is patently ephemeral and diverse in nature.

2.1 Eternality and Sequence Are Incompatible

A fundamental axiom running throughout Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's thought is that eternity is incompatible with sequence (*krama*) of any kind—whether of time, place, or manifestation. We find a version of this argument in the chapter on scripture, where the authors seek to refute that the Veda is eternal and authorless.¹³ Arguing that the Veda cannot be eternal—and that it must therefore have an author—since it manifests sequentially (i.e., in terms of its phonemes, words, sections, and so on), Śāntarakṣita states:

And there is no sequential manifestation in what is eternal, since its manifestation is not reasonable.¹⁴

Kamalaśīla adds the following helpful commentary:

That is to say: first of all, a temporal sequence—such as that of seed, seedling, and tendril—is not reasonable since all the linguistic elements of the Veda would be simultaneous due to being eternal. Nor is a spatial sequence—such as that of a line of ants and so on—reasonable, since all linguistic elements are situated in a single atmosphere. Nor is a sequence of manifestation reasonable, since there can be no manifestation of that which is eternal due to it not having supplementary qualities associated with it which could cause it to manifest at some times and not others.¹⁵

For those Indian philosophers who wish to hold any element of language to be eternal, there is the problem of how to account for its sequential and temporally intermittent nature. One standard strategy is to propose that while language is eternal, its manifestation (*vyakti*) is not. For Buddhist thinkers, this is untenable. For the eternal language to manifest at some points in time and not others, there would have to be some special or supplemental quality (*atiśaya*) that could intermittently be associated with the eternal language to cause it to manifest at some times and not others.¹⁶ On the Buddhist analysis, however, this presents a contradiction since it means that the purportedly eternal, by which they also understand unchanging, language has undergone a change from a non-manifest to a manifest state, as well as from an independent to a dependent state. The very notion of sequence is at odds with the idea of something unchanging and autonomous—whether that is language itself or *sphoṭa*.¹⁷

2.2 Further Arguments on Eternality, Sequence, and Change

We can now briefly examine two passages from the chapter on the eternal verbum that foreshadow the explicit critique of *sphoṭa* that occurs later in the text. The first passage deals with the supposed eternality of language, and the second with the problem of sequence. In both cases, the core issues have to do with the problem of the multiplicity and changeability of the manifestations and how to reconcile those with the singleness and eternality of either the eternal verbum or *sphoṭa*. We begin with two verses:

And if for every entity there were asserted a single, undifferentiated nature of language, then everything would come to exist in a single location and all knowledge would have the same phenomenal content. But if the nature of language were different for each of its manifestations, then there would be the undesired consequence that *brahman* would become multiple, due to having the form of a nature that is distinct and multiple, in accord with the differences in the manifestations.¹⁸

Kamalaśīla's commentary makes it clear that this twofold objection is offered in response to Bhartṛhari's idea, seen in the quotation of VP, I.1 above, that the eternal verbum undergoes a transmutation (*pariṇāma*) in order to manifest as the various objects of the world. Here, the Buddhists resort to their standard mereological analysis to urge unwanted consequences by showing that the eternal verbum, as a single entity, can be neither the same as nor different from its purported transmutations, the manifold entities of the world.

This argument about the problem of the variegated manifestation of that which is single will return again in the specific context of the refutation of *sphoṭa*, examined below. Likewise, the following argument about the impossibility of sequence for an unchanging entity also foreshadows arguments specific to the refutation of *sphoṭa*. Śāntarakṣita lays out the idea in a verse:

But even if the world consists in the eternal verbum in terms of being its effect, nevertheless, because the eternal verbum cannot be modified, there can be no sequential production from it at all.¹⁹

This reasoning is then cogently unpacked by Kamalaśīla in the commentary:

Indeed, since language cannot be modified due to its being eternal, therefore, no sequential production can be obtained from it. Rather, everything would be produced simultaneously due to the cause being complete, unobstructed, and efficacious. For effects are delayed due to an incomplete cause; and if that eternal verbum is complete, then how could it be dependent on some other thing, such that its effects would not be simultaneous?²⁰

Crucial to this line of thinking is the idea that an eternal entity must be changeless, and the very act of producing multiple entities entails some kind of change. For these Buddhists, it does not matter whether the eternal entity is conceptualized as producing effects or transmuting into a variety of things. The basic problem remains the same: sequences require change and variegation requires multiplicity. As we will see, these core arguments are critical to the extensive refutation of *sphoṭa* later in the TS/P.

2.3 Awareness Is Nonlinguistic

Of course, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla have concerns that go beyond merely wanting to reject any theory that relies on an unchanging entity; they are also motivated to dismantle any claim that experience is necessarily bound up with language. This is in keeping with their general understanding of language and concepts as useful distortions that will ultimately be eliminated in the nonconceptual state of the full awakening of a Buddha. The notion that all forms of awareness are imbued with language also contradicts a fundamental tenet of their system, inherited from Dignāga and Dharmakīrti: namely, that perception (*pratyakṣa*) is always devoid of concepts (*kalpanāpoḍha*). Thus, it is not surprising that in the continuation of his commentary on TS 128, discussed above, Kamalaśīla cites another key verse from Bhartṛhari, here again with Matilal's translation:

There is no awareness in this world without its being intertwined with language. All cognitive awareness appears as if it is interpenetrated with language.²¹

Later, Kamalaśīla returns to this verse to dispute its fundamental claim, explaining that “when the eye is viewing a form while the mind has traveled elsewhere, one experiences a cognition of blue and so on that is simply not burdened with language.”²² Kamalaśīla does not defend this claim here but indicates that it will be explained extensively later on in the text (it is treated in the chapter on perception, the *pratyakṣalakṣaṇaparīkṣā*, among other places). But the fact remains that one fundamental objection that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla have to the idea of the eternal verbum is that it introduces a linguistic element where they see none. Their objection to *sphoṭa* is similar in eschewing what they see as an unnecessary metaphysical element to explain linguistic signification.

3 Refutation of *Sphoṭa*

The explicit refutation of *sphoṭa* in the TS/P occurs in the context of the investigation of scripture (*śrutiparīkṣā*). The term “scripture” here mainly indicates the Veda as conceived by the Mīmāṃsā tradition as understood by Kumārila. Thus, much of the chapter is concerned with refuting such ideas as the authorlessness of the Veda, the trustworthiness of scripture more generally, and the eternality and omnipresence of language in its various forms. With these last two qualities of language, we see similarities to the notion of the eternal verbum examined above. However, despite commonalities, the Mīmāṃsaka position differs from that of the Grammarians in several regards, including the crucial question of how language conveys meaning. Whereas the Grammarians assert a “trans-phonetic”²³ entity, *sphoṭa*, as the imperishable and indivisible mechanism serving as the cause for the cognition of meaning, the Mīmāṃsaka understands phonemes arranged in a particular order to perform this function. In this, Kumārila is in close accord with Buddhists like Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, and Kamalaśīla, all of whom we can label *varṇavādins*, or “proponents of the doctrine that phonemes are the conveyor of meaning.”²⁴ It is on the basis of this commonality that Śāntarakṣita directly deploys nine verses from Kumārila’s ŚV, where the opponent is understood to be the *sphoṭavādin* or “proponent of *sphoṭa*” despite the fact that the chapter on the whole is directed against Kumārila. We should not, however, conclude that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla are in perfect agreement with Kumārila when it comes to the question of how language conveys meaning. Significant differences remain. For example, for Kumārila, the phonemes that are arranged to convey meaning are themselves

eternal, as are the words into which the phonemes are arranged. For Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla these claims are both impossible and absurd.

3.1 Words Are Ephemeral—Mīmāṃsakas and Buddhists Agree

In the first part of this chapter, Kumārila is shown to be defending his notion that language is eternal and all-pervasive. This includes him responding to objections that center on contradictions that emerge when one considers that words, *as they are uttered and deployed*, are not eternal but are temporally structured in terms of the sequence of their components, the phonemes. An unnamed objector now urges an unwanted consequence on the Mīmāṃsaka in two verses:

And without sequentiality, phonemes are not known to be productive of meaning. Therefore there is the undesired consequence for the Mīmāṃsaka that words must possess sequence. But the conceptualization of language as eternal would be meaningful only for those for whom the word is separate from the phonemes and is devoid of sequence.²⁵

Here, in a somewhat roundabout fashion, the objector urges the Mīmāṃsaka to reconsider the doctrine that language expresses meaning through the articulation of words represented by phonemes and arranged in a particular order. The objector asks whether this can really be compatible with the doctrine that language is eternal (*śabdānityatva*). Implying that it cannot, he then suggests that the Grammarian's doctrine of *sphoṭa* is better suited as the mechanism for the conveyance of meaning for one who, like the Mīmāṃsaka, holds language to be eternal.²⁶ Since Kumārila roundly rejects the doctrine of *sphoṭa* as unnecessary, this is a galling challenge to the Mīmāṃsā position.

The longer passage within which this objection is situated includes an extended Mīmāṃsaka argument responding to the more general objection that (1) because words require a temporal sequencing of phonemes they cannot be eternal even if the phonemes themselves are granted to be eternal; and (2) that since words, not phonemes, are what signify meaning for the Mīmāṃsaka, the signification of meaning therefore also cannot be eternal unless one introduces another entity like *sphoṭa*, as do the Grammarians. We do not have space to take up this extended argument in detail, especially as it involves a dispute between the Mīmāṃsakas and the Grammarians. Our task involves seeing how the Buddhists Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla refute the *sphoṭa* doctrine. But this short foray into a challenge to the Mīmāṃsaka refutation of *sphoṭa* is nevertheless useful as it helps us to understand how and why these Buddhist authors rely on

Kumārila to help with their own refutation at this point despite their significant differences with the Brahmanical author on questions of the eternality of letters, words, and language in general.

3.2 From Phonemes to Meanings—Dharmakīrti

The section on the refutation of *sphoṭa* begins by recapping some key claims from Dharmakīrti about how meaning is conveyed through a process in which phonemes are spoken, heard, and remembered in sequence. Futoshi Ōmae nicely explains the theory as articulated by Dharmakīrti and restated by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla:

In the continuity of the mind (*saṃtāna*) of the speaker there arise *vivakṣās* (desires to utter) of *varṇas* (e.g., “s” “a” “r” “a” “ḥ”) in due order. Among them the *vivakṣā* of each precedent *varṇa* (e.g., *sa-kāra*) is considered to be an immediate condition (*samanantarapratyaya*) of the *vivakṣā* of the succeeding *varṇa* (i.e., *a-kāra*). Therefore, the *vivakṣā* of the precedent *varṇa* (i.e., *sa-kāra*) brings about its result (i.e., *sa-kāra*) as well as the *vivakṣā* of the succeeding *varṇa* (i.e., *a-kāra*). Thus *varṇas* are uttered in due order. In the continuity of the mind of the hearer each uttered *varṇa* (e.g., *a-kāra*) directly produces its direct cognition (*śruti*) with the help of its predecessor (e.g., direct cognition of *sa-kāra*) and indirectly brings about its recollection (*smṛti*) with the help of its predecessor (i.e., recollection of *sa-kāra*). Thus *varṇas* are grasped and recollected in due order. Then how is the understanding of the meaning from *varṇas* possible? After hearing the *varṇas* in due order there arises a cognition of all *varṇas* in the mind of the hearer. Then he obtains the notion of *pada* (the word “*saraḥ*”) from this cognition.²⁷

This succinct summary, which Ōmae helpfully further elucidates through a clever graphic illustration, presents the basic Buddhist theory, broadly shared by Kumārila, concerning how multiple phonemes work together to produce the cognition of a single word. As *varṇavādins*, both camps insist on the critical role of sequence in the presentation of phonemes for the production of meaning; otherwise, if sequence were not a factor, then two words with the same phonemes but in different orders (e.g., *latā* and *tāla*) would be indistinguishable. The problem of sequence, and its incompatibility with *sphoṭa*, will be tackled again shortly. But first, let us see how Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla introduce their explicit refutation of *sphoṭa*.

The opening section presents Dharmakīrti’s theory,²⁸ briefly sketched above, for how phonemes work together to produce a cognition of a word:

But the presumption that all phonemes are eternal has been refuted. For the cause of the cognition of meaning has been established in relation to that which is impermanent. A phoneme which has been produced from a subsequent intention to speak which follows after an initial intention to speak is heard immediately following that initial phoneme. The knowledge that is produced from the knowledge of the previous phoneme, heard not too quickly, subsequently produces the memory of itself in dependence on the memory of that previous phoneme. This succession of the phonemes, located in persons, is both the producer and the cause respectively in relation to the awarenesses that give rise to and grasp it. Thus, it is utterly clear that the phonemes differ with each word according to the difference in their sequence, as for example with the words *damah*, *madah*, *latā*, and *tāla*. It is through this kind of sequence that these words are indicators of distinct meanings.²⁹

It is helpful to notice here the emphasis on memory as a conditioning factor in the production of new knowledge. Later on, picking up the terminology used by Bhartṛhari in his VP, the authors speak of the conditioning (*saṃskāra*) of an awareness by a previous awareness. The notion that a single awareness can nevertheless be conditioned by previous awarenesses is one way that these authors attempt to overcome the problem of unity and multiplicity in linguistic cognitions. We will revisit this below.

Having first briefly sketched their theory for how phonemes work together to produce a cognition of a word, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla now introduce their refutation of *sphoṭa* with a curt dismissal:

And therefore the imagination of *sphoṭa* is also pointless here. For that *sphoṭa* is conceptualized by Grammarians to be for the sake of the comprehension of meaning. And the phonemes themselves have that capacity. Therefore the conceptualization of that *sphoṭa* is useless.³⁰

Here, in an application of something like Occam's razor, these Buddhists reject *sphoṭa* as unnecessary for the purpose of the production of a cognition of meaning. They now attack a key problem for the proponent of *sphoṭa*, namely, that *sphoṭa* is not perceived.

And it is determined that it does not exist because it, being perceptible, is not perceived. But if it were held to be imperceptible, then it could not be an indicator (*jñāpaka*) in the manner of an inferential sign.³¹

The Grammarian's idea that there is a trans-phonetic entity, *sphoṭa*, responsible for the production of meaning in the mind of the auditor begs the question of why we do not perceive or otherwise know of this entity. If the answer is that

the entity is imperceptible, then the Grammarian faces the problem of how such an imperceptible entity can serve as an indicator (*jñāpaka*) of meaning. Just as in an inference evidence can be an indicator of a property to be proved only if that evidence is itself perceptible, *sphoṭa* similarly can be an indicator of meaning only if it is perceptible. And according to Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, following Dharmakīrti, if an entity is perceptible in theory but is not perceived in a particular place, then that entity is absent from that place.

3.3 An Eternal Partless Entity Cannot Manifest Occasionally or Dependently

If *sphoṭa* is thought to function in a manner similar to a sense faculty such that it would be able to indicate meaning through its mere presence, then the Grammarian would face other conceptual problems, as Śāntarakṣita argues in the next two verses:

But if it is claimed that *sphoṭa* is an indicator of meaning through its mere existence—like the eye—since it is established as being the cause of the awareness of that meaning, then it would always be [functioning as an indicator of that meaning]; even when there was ignorance of the convention or when the phonemes were not heard, there would be an awareness of the meaning brought about by that due to the presence of the cause which is capable (*śakta*) of indicating meaning.³²

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla link this idea that *sphoṭa* functions through its mere presence to its purported eternity. With the following two verses, Śāntarakṣita brings us to the heart of the Buddhist critique: namely, that as an eternal entity, *sphoṭa* could not manifest intermittently or only occasionally, nor could it depend on another entity to provoke its occasional manifestation (as this would imply that it changes over time—a position incompatible with its eternity). Śāntarakṣita summarizes this argument succinctly:

That is, this *sphoṭa* is eternal, and it can have no dependency whatsoever. And there can be no manifestation of it by sounds, conventions, or letters, since such is not observed. For it has been said that awareness itself is manifestation, and we do not find awareness of that *sphoṭa*. Therefore, this imagination of *sphoṭa* manifesting is totally pointless.³³

The Buddhists here are attacking several ideas at once. First, they point out that if *sphoṭa* were real, we would observe it in our minds. Second, they argue that as a purportedly eternal entity, its occasional manifestation is simply impossible.

This is because as an eternal entity, it should not need any other contributing factor in order to come about. So either it should be manifest at all times or it should never manifest—in both cases, it would be useless.

Śāntarakṣita now allows the voice of the Grammarian to come in through a direct quotation from Bhartṛhari's VP:

[Proponent of *sphoṭa*:] When the seeds (*bīja*) that have been planted in cognition by sounds (*nāda*) become ripened through the repetition of the other phonemes along with the final vocalization (*dhvani*), language (*śabda*) appears.³⁴

Although at first glance this position looks similar to that of both the Mīmāṃsakas and the Buddhists, there are two important differences. The first is just that when Bhartṛhari uses the word “language” (*śabda*) here, he has in mind the special entity otherwise known as *sphoṭa*. The second is that Bhartṛhari does not seem to be advocating a theory in which the cognition of a meaning proceeds through a process whereby phonemes uttered in sequence leave traces in the mind of the hearer which collectively then appear in the form of a memory that aggregates the total to make the word. Rather, here, because *sphoṭa* is partless, the Grammarian holds that each phoneme possesses the full signifying power of *sphoṭa* such that hearing just one phoneme is theoretically sufficient to understand the meaning of the entire word (though in practice most people are not able to access *sphoṭa* so easily and they thus require the repetition of the *sphoṭa* through the pronunciation of the remaining phonemes).

The first distinction is dismissed quickly by Śāntarakṣita who again maligns *sphoṭa* by calling it a “baseless imagining,” reminding us that “one does not observe any *other* linguistic element appearing there [in awareness].”³⁵ That is, once again, the Buddhist feels there is no need to introduce a further entity beyond the phonemes to account for the production of meaning. Śāntarakṣita then moves to the second position distinguishing *sphoṭa* from the theories of the *varṇavādins*, namely, that it is partless and thus can have nothing to do with sequence of any kind. He points out:

But whether it is produced by sequenced vocalizations or whether it is manifested by them, there is still a contradiction for those who maintain sequence in *sphoṭa*. Given that *sphoṭa* is partless, neither its sequential production nor its sequential manifestation makes sense, since they [i.e., the production or manifestation] would occur at all times, due to not existing apart from the single nature [i.e., the *sphoṭa* itself].³⁶

The distinction in play here is between production (*jāti*) and manifestation (*vyakti*). For the Buddhists and the Mīmāṃsakas, meaning is *produced* in

cognition through the sequential presentation of the phonemes. But for the *sphoṭavādin*, meaning is *manifested*. This is a crucial difference because supposedly manifestation does not require change. The *sphoṭa*, which is eternal and partless, remains the same. The only difference is that it is now manifested in the mind of the hearer. However, for Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, this distinction does not avoid the problem of sequence for the Grammarian.

3.4 Postulating *Sphoṭa* as Having Parts Is Futile

Turning now to a hypothetical solution for the Grammarian, Śāntarakṣita considers whether the *sphoṭa* doctrine might be saved if it were granted to have parts after all. He says:

If that *sphoṭa* had parts, then, like the phonemes, the *sphoṭa* parts would not be expressive of meaning due to their sequentiality. But why would the *sphoṭa* parts not be expressive of meaning? Why should invisible parts be imagined?³⁷

Kamalaśīla supplies the implication of these rhetorical questions as follows: “If the *sphoṭa* parts are conceptualized to be signifiers, then it is better to allow the phoneme parts to be the signifiers.”³⁸ In other words, the solution of introducing parts to *sphoṭa* is no solution as words and sentences already contain parts (the phonemes and letters) which already serve as signifiers according to the *varṇavādins*. Although the commentary to this verse appears in one place to focus more on the *sphoṭa* of an entire sentence (*vākya*), as opposed to that of a word (*pada*), the theoretical problems remain largely the same. In the case of the expression of a word, the proponent of *sphoṭa* must contend with the sequentially arranged parts of the word, that is, the phonemes (*varṇa*). In the case of the sentence, the proponent of *sphoṭa* must contend with sequentially arranged individual words. For the Buddhists seeking to refute *sphoṭa*, whether we are dealing with phonemes or words is less important than the question of how we can conceptualize the appearance of a single meaning in the wake of a linguistic event that has parts.

3.5 Postulating a Gradual Manifestation of *Sphoṭa* Is Futile

Śāntarakṣita now allows the Grammarian to speak through two verses that closely mirror verses from Bhartṛhari’s VP:

[Proponent of *sphoṭa*:] Even though the production or manifestation of the *sphoṭa* is accomplished all at once by a single vocalization, the other phonemes are

performed for the sake of a more explicit manifestation. Since the fundamental nature of that *sphoṭa* is difficult to determine when it is done like that [i.e., through a single phoneme], it is performed to a greater degree through more phonemes possessing a common capacity.³⁹

The proponent of *sphoṭa* here seeks to avoid an unwanted consequence of the position that *sphoṭa* is partless: namely, if *sphoṭa* is partless, then it must be fully and equally present in all the components of speech that bring about its manifestation. If that is the case, then hearing just one phoneme of a word should be enough to provoke the full manifestation of *sphoṭa* in the mind of the listener. The Grammarian does not dispute this assessment, but nevertheless insists that most people are not capable of discerning the *sphoṭa* through just one phoneme or just one exposure to a verse. Predictably, this response does not impress the Buddhists. Śāntarakṣita replies by rhetorically wondering:

Well then, why is it not the case that when one phoneme or another phoneme is repeated again and again the manifestation does not repeat, since there is no distinction in that way that you have described above?⁴⁰

In other words, when the entire, partless *sphoṭa* is fully present in just one phoneme or any other single part of a linguistic expression, one should be able to provoke its manifestation simply by repeating that one phoneme or part again and again. The argument that the remaining parts have other causal capacities that are necessary for the manifestation of *sphoṭa* is likewise not tenable on the view that *sphoṭa* is partless.⁴¹

3.6 From Perception of Phonemes to Memory to Meanings

At this point, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla shift to a heavy reliance on arguments advanced by Kumāriḥ in his *Śloka-vārttika*. Kamalaśīla introduces this new section by indicating that the previous arguments had all been made having provisionally accepted that the manifestation of *sphoṭa* was in theory possible. Yet this leads to the following problem:

If something distinct, separate from the phonemes, which is the essence of language known as *sphoṭa*, were to appear, then its manifestation would be possible, since the nature of manifestation is to be perceived. Insofar as it does not appear, therefore, it is as previously presented [i.e., impossible].⁴²

This verse serves as a transition to a new section dedicated to a more positive pursuit, namely, to an explanation of how words convey meanings even

without the trans-phonetic special entity known as *sphoṭa*. We have already touched briefly on the Buddhist and Mīmāṃsaka theory of how this works. Śāntarakṣita now quotes six verses from the ŚV to more fully flesh out this theory:

Therefore, it is the final cognition of the collection of phonemes which have been previously perceived in sequential awarenesses that is the cause of the awareness of meaning.

For when there is the cognition of the final phoneme, a memory of all the phonemes which has been created by the conditioning of all [the previous phonemes] is simultaneously produced.

And this mental cumulative awareness (*samuccayajñāna*) with regard to all things is asserted by all disputants (*vādin*), even if it is produced sequentially.

And if one does not accept this, then there could not arise a cumulative vision with the form “one hundred” and so on even when [one hundred and so on items had been] seen sequentially.

Therefore, even if the previous awareness of phonemes is sequential, in terms of its being aural or being mental, later on there would still be a simultaneous memory.

Thus, since the phonemes taken up in that memory are not far from the understanding of a meaning, worldly beings proclaim the opinion that meaning comes from the word (*śabda*).⁴³

As these verses make clear, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla share with Kumāṛila a basic understanding of how the pronunciation of words functions as a cause for a cognition of meaning through a process of sequential enunciation of phonemes. What happens, as we have briefly discussed, is that when each subsequent phoneme in a word (or word in a sentence) is articulated, the perception of the sound makes an impression in the mind of the listener. The impressions remain so that after the vocalization of the final phoneme is complete, there is the production of a cognition consisting in the memory of the previously sequentially heard phonemes. This memory then becomes the vehicle for understanding the meaning of the word (or sentence). Although this theory is discussed with an understanding of language as an aural phenomenon, the same principle could probably be applied to written words as the eye takes in the diverse letters in sequence. The cultural cache of the spoken word at the time of these compositions accounts for the emphasis on the oral and aural elements of linguistic expression.

3.7 Phonemes Are Also Impermanent

After this long string of verses from the ŚV, Śāntarakṣita now inserts a few verses indicating some key differences between the Buddhist position and that of Kumāṛila. He first says:

And all this makes sense only if cognition has phenomenal content (*ākāra*). For otherwise, how could those destroyed phonemes appear in memory?⁴⁴

This verse raises a whole separate realm of discourse, one that concerns whether cognition must be endowed with a form, or what we can call “phenomenal content.”⁴⁵ Although we do not have space to consider this further here, it is important to note that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla want to emphasize that their agreement with Kumāṛila is not without qualifications.⁴⁶ Similarly, Śāntarakṣita now clarifies that the mechanism by which the previous phonemes condition the cumulative awareness that arises after the final phoneme is pronounced does not allow for eternal phonemes as the Mīmāṃsaka maintains. He says:

But it is emphatically not the case that the previously known phonemes which are being remembered abide in the cumulative awareness with a concealed manifestation, because of the undesired consequence that they would appear clearly [if they were there]. Abiding has been previously rejected. If the phonemes did abide, then memory would occur exactly at the time of the awareness of the experience of the phonemes, since there would be a single cause [for both the phonemes and the memory].⁴⁷

Again, Śāntarakṣita wants to combat any talk of manifestation, which is the mechanism by which the Grammarians try to reconcile the eternality and unchangeability of *sphoṭa* with its occasional and seemingly sequential appearance. But this statement is also addressed to the Mīmāṃsakas, who, unlike the Buddhists, hold that the phonemes are eternal and thus are always present, even if in hidden (*tirobhuta*) form in the final cumulative cognition. In a further nod to the Buddhist commitment to radical impermanence, Śāntarakṣita reminds his readers that any hypostasized abiding (*sthiti*) had already been disproven earlier.⁴⁸

3.8 The Apparent Unity of Words

With these differences from Kumāṛila’s position clarified, the final section of the explicit refutation of *sphoṭa* returns again to verses from the ŚV, this time

focusing on the purported single nature of *sphoṭa* and of meanings. Śāntarakṣita first sets out a response to a question attributed to the Grammarians as to how in the absence of the single *sphoṭa* there could be a singular phenomenal content in cognition upon hearing a word.⁴⁹

Śāntarakṣita follows Kumāṛila in responding:

But we emphatically do not refute the idea that the word “cow” (*gauḥ*) is single. There would be the idea of singleness in regard to a word due to the singleness of its object and its meaning.⁵⁰

In other words, no one is denying that there can be a single cow, at least conventionally speaking, and that this is also the single meaning of the word “cow” when uttered in the singular. But this is not in conflict with the idea that the awareness which knows this meaning is cumulative in nature, since the phonemes that collectively produce this cognition of the single meaning are multiple. While the word “cow” (in both English and Sanskrit) is quite short, an examination of longer words makes the phonetic multiplicity inherent in the word itself quite clear. Again, following Kumāṛila:

That idea of singleness might pertain in the case of the word “cow” due to the speed of pronunciation and due to the shortness of the interval between the first and last phoneme. But the division in words like “Devadatta” is clearly cognized.⁵¹

In other words, while the phenomenal content of a “cow” may be of a single cow, and the meaning of the word “cow” may be single, the final cognition of the meaning is nevertheless a cumulative awareness, which means that multiple phonemes uttered in sequence have all contributed to the production of the final cognition of meaning. With this statement, Śāntarakṣita completes his presentation of the refutation of *sphoṭa*.

3.9 Epilogue

Śāntarakṣita now summarizes the formal reasoning behind his arguments with two verses, the first one taken from the ŚV:

And that cognition of a meaning arises from phonemes, since it arises subsequent to the awareness of them. For whatever is like that [i.e., whatever arises subsequent to the awareness of something] arises from that previous thing, just like the cognition of fire arises from the awareness of smoke. No cognition of meaning is found consisting in a subsequent awareness of an appearance of a

word apart from its phonemes. Therefore there is no other linguistic element that is expressive of meaning.⁵²

Of course, this refutation leaves a host of unanswered questions regarding the nature of signification according to the Buddhist tradition. There are profound disagreements between these Buddhists and virtually all Brahmanical opponents. Since Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, like Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, reject universals, they are faced with difficult problems concerning how the same word (e.g., “cow”) can signify a wide range of individual cows. What is it that is same about the various cows such that a speaker can use a single word to refer to them all? The Grammarian tries to explain signification through a mysterious, partless, eternal entity called *sphoṭa* which could account for the sudden comprehension of meaning through the encounter with language. As Buddhists, any such entity would be immediately suspect. But a universal, such as was favored by Naiyāyikas and Mīmāṃsakas, would be equally problematic. As is well known, Buddhists developed the exclusion (*apoha*) theory of linguistic signification, a nominalist theory that Kumārila and others found great delight in ridiculing. Despite their temporary alliance with Kumārila, the battle over signification raged on in other sections of their respective works.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have considered Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla as *varṇavādins*, or proponents of the doctrine that meaning is conveyed through phonemes and not through a mysterious trans-phonetic eternal entity like *sphoṭa*. But unlike Kumārila, who also holds phonemes to be the key to the process of linguistic signification, these Buddhists also do not ascribe any special metaphysical status to phonemes or any other linguistic element. Nor do they claim any special, eternal status for the relationship between words and their meanings, as these relationships are always a matter of transactional agreement (*vyavahāra*). The question of whether words or sentences are the primary units of meaning is also not of the same grave concern as it is for Mīmāṃsakas, Naiyāyikas, and Vaiyākaraṇas. That is, while these thinkers hold that words produce meaning through the sequential utterance of phonemes, they also maintain that meaning takes place at the level of sentences.⁵³ Indeed, as Kamalaśīla attests in his introduction to the TSP, meaning can even be conveyed by whole treatises,

which he labels “mega-sentences” (*mahāvākya*).⁵⁴ Whatever the context, the principle is the same: meaning is conveyed through smaller linguistic units arranged sequentially, that is, phonemes arranged sequentially in words; words arranged sequentially in sentences; and sentences arranged sequentially in paragraphs and treatises. In every case, the smaller units produce awarenesses which condition subsequent awarenesses such that the later awarenesses contain the trace (*vāsanā*) of the previous ones in the form of a memory. An awareness of meaning can thus remain single, while nevertheless still being conditioned by a multitude of prior successive linguistic elements, all of which are understood as conditioning factors for the production of the final cognition of the meaning in the form of a single cumulative awareness (*samuccayajñāna*). In theory, these traces could be infinite, since Buddhists do not accept a beginning to time, but in no conceivable world can any element of language be partless and eternal.

That final cumulative awareness that arises from the sequence of phonemes that we call a word is said by Śāntarakṣita to be an exclusion (*apoha*) in the form of a reflection (*pratibimba*); it is also equated with the meaning of a word (*padārtha*) known as a mental flash (*pratibhā*).⁵⁵ Kamalaśīla adds the important specification that this reflection can equally be understood to be the meaning of a sentence.⁵⁶ However, before one becomes too comfortable, thinking that we now have grasped the essence of linguistic signification in the form of this reflection, we must take heed of Śāntarakṣita’s warning, voiced elsewhere, that neither the signifier nor the signified is, in any case, ultimately real.⁵⁷ (Interestingly, despite the *sphoṭa* doctrine, Bhartṛhari appears to hold a very similar position.)⁵⁸ The arguments against the ultimate reality of not only language but even of all that language is said to signify lie at the heart of both the TS/P and Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla’s explicitly Madhyamaka works. Like the arguments deployed against a single, partless, eternal *sphoṭa* standing in relation to diverse, sequential, transitory words, the more general arguments against language and its meanings—and indeed against all entities—rely on variations of mereological analysis to demonstrate the impossibility of any ultimate singleness or multiplicity in things. But as long as one does not probe too far, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla provisionally allow that words can produce meanings in the mind of a hearer through a cumulative mnemonic awareness conditioned by successive previous phonemes coming together in words, sentences, and even treatises. They thus uphold the possibility of the communication of meaning through language, all the while warning us not to imagine there to be anything fixed or permanent about any part of the process.

Notes

- 1 For an overview of the *sphoṭa* theory and its various stages of development, see Chapter 4 in this volume. Note that the bulk of the discussion in this contribution is negative, in the sense that we aim to reveal the arguments against the *sphoṭa* theory and not those that directly take up the Buddhist views on the nature of language and linguistic expression. For these topics, see Chapters 8 and 10 in this volume.
- 2 The arguments against *sphoṭa* are found mainly in two sections of the texts: the investigation of the eternal verbum, the *śabdabrahmaparīkṣā* (TS/P 128–52); and the refutation of the doctrine of *sphoṭa*, or the *sphoṭavādakhaṇḍana*, a section (TS/P 2698–732) of the investigation of scripture, the *śrutiparīkṣā* (TS/P 2084–809). Both the *śabdabrahmaparīkṣā* and the *sphoṭavādakhaṇḍana* have been critically edited by Paolo Giunta (2009), who also provides an Italian translation of the *śabdabrahmaparīkṣā*, and a thorough introduction clarifying the extant Sanskrit manuscripts and Tibetan translations. His work is extremely valuable given the poor state of the manuscripts and published editions for these sections. In this contribution, all readings from these sections follow Giunta's edition. My deepest thanks to Paolo Giunta for providing me with a copy of this work. Note that for all verses after TS 525, the 1926 Krishnamacharya edition appears as one number higher than the 1963 Shastri edition. This was due to an error by Krishnamacharya, who believed a verse had been elided from the manuscripts at this point. However, none of the Tibetan translations attest to the missing verse, and the current standard numbering follows Shastri. Our numbers correspond to Shastri throughout.
- 3 Although the topic recurs throughout the TS/P, the most important location for the sustained critique of the Mīmāṃsaka position on the eternity of the Veda is the lengthy chapter on scripture, the *śrutiparīkṣā*. For Kumārila's own views on language, see Chapters 9 and 15 in this volume.
- 4 Nine verses from the *sphoṭavāda* section of the ŚV appear directly in the *sphoṭavādakhaṇḍana* section of the *śrutiparīkṣā* with only slight modifications. The verses are ŚV *sphoṭa* 109, 112–16, 120–21, and 135; these correspond to TS 2719, 2720–24, 2728–29, and 2730. Thirteen other verses from the *sphoṭavāda* section of the ŚV are also included in an earlier section of the chapter at TS 2140–54; these verses correspond to ŚV *sphoṭa* 22, 32, 34, 28, 38–44, and 50–51. For an overview of the arguments and structure of the *śrutiparīkṣā*, see Verpoorten (1994).
- 5 See especially PVSV, 119,17–29; 126,24–129,21; and 134, 1–25. For analysis, see Eltschinger (2001, 2007). The latter contains a revised and condensed version of the former (Eltchinger 2007, 157–79) as well as a French translation of the relevant passages (Eltchinger 2007, 277–80; 319–33; and 353–57).

- 6 Jaini (1959) details the earlier Buddhist arguments, noting that neither Vasubandhu nor his commentator Yaśomitra refer to *sphoṭa* despite clear parallels with the Vaibhāṣika theories they refute. In contrast, the author of the *Abhidharmadīpa*, not only “refutes the Sautrāntika position” but also “makes pointed reference to the theories of (verbal) sounds held by the Mīmāṃsaka and Vaiśeṣika, and briefly examines the *sphoṭa* theory of the Grammarians” (Jaini 1959, 103). Kamalaśīla in passing also connects the notion of *sphoṭa* with the Vaibhāṣika theories at TSP ad TS 2713–14: *vaibhāṣikā hi kecit padakāryābhīdhānena vākyasphoṭam anityatvāḥ janyaṃ pratipannāḥ* /. See also Biardeau (1964, 390–400).
- 7 See Chapter 4 in this volume, Biardeau (1964) and Eltschinger (2001, 2007).
- 8 Matilal (1990, 95) makes clear the close relationship between *sphoṭa* and *śabdabrahman* for Bhartṛhari in particular: “Bhartṛhari’s philosophy of language is ultimately grounded in a monistic and idealistic metaphysical theory. He speaks of a transcendental word-essence (*śabdatattva*) as the first principle of the universe. His *sphoṭa* doctrine is finally aligned with the ultimate reality called *śabda-brahman*. A self-realized person attains unity with the word-principle—a man of perfect knowledge. There is no thought without language, no knowledge with word in it. Consciousness vibrates through words, and such vibrating consciousness or a particular cognitive mode motivates us to act and obtain results. Hence language offers the substratum upon which human activity is based. Language and meaning are not two separate realities such that one *conveys* the other. They are in essence the two sides of the same coin. The *sphoṭa* is this unitary principle where the symbol and what is signified are one. To understand each other’s speech and to communicate, we do separate the inseparable, the sound and its sense. This is only instrumental to our mutual understanding. At the ultimate level, they are one.” See also Bronkhorst (1991, 14–15).
- 9 TS, 128: *nāśotpādāsamālīḍhaṃ brahma śabdamayam param / yat tasya pariṇāmo ’yam bhāvagrāmaḥ pratīyate* //.
- 10 *anādinidhanaṃ brahma śabdatattvaṃ yad akṣaram / vivartate ’rthabhāvena prakriyā jagato yataḥ* // VP, I.1. Translation in Matilal (1990, 125). Cited in TSP ad TS 128.
- 11 In this volume Saito (Chapter 4, section 5), notes that while later thinkers, including Somānanda, equate *sphoṭa* with the highest level of language (*paśyanti*) and therefore also with *brahman*, the highest level of reality, neither Bhartṛhari nor Maṇḍana claim that *sphoṭa* or the word is unchangingly eternal. We should consider, however, that for Patañjali *sphoṭa* is understood to be the essence or “own form” (*svarūpa*) of language (*śabda*). Given that it is not a very far leap from *śabdasvarūpa* to the *śabdatattva* we see in Bhartṛhari’s VP, I.1, it is not unreasonable to consider the possibility of an equation between *sphoṭa* and *śabdabrahman*, at least in the works of Bhartṛhari or in the minds of his Buddhist

and Mīmāṃsaka critics. See also Eltschinger (2001, 248), who notes that Kamalaśīla frequently equates *śabdātman* with *sphoṭa* in the TSP.

- 12 TSP, ad TS 128: *pūrvāparādidigvibhāgarahitam anutpannam avināśi yac cchabdamayaṃ brahma [...]*. Giunta (2009, 143) notes parallel passages in Vṛsabhadeva's *Paddhati* commentary on VP.
- 13 On the authorlessness (*apauruṣeyatva*) of the Veda, see Chapter 2 in this volume.
- 14 TS, 2421cd: *nābhivvyaktikramaś cāsti nityatve vyaktyayogataḥ //*
- 15 TSP, ad TS 2421cd: *tathā hi na tāvad bījāṅkuralatādivat kālakṛtaḥ kramo yujyate nityatvena sarveṣāṃ samakālatvāt / nāpi pipīlikādīpaṅktivad deśakṛtaḥ / vyāpitvena sarveṣāṃ ekanabhodeśāvasthānāt / nāpy abhivvyaktikṛtaḥ / anādheyātīśayatvena nityasya vyakter ayogāt //* Cf. also TSP, ad TS 2761–2765, which states basically the same thing.
- 16 For an analysis of this argument as articulated by Dharmakīrti in PV and PVSṢ, see Eltschinger (2007, 189–96).
- 17 For the problem of sequence in the *sphoṭa* theory, see Saitō (2012).
- 18 TS, 136–137: *pratibhāvaṃ ca yady ekaḥ śabdātmābhinna iṣyate / sarveṣāṃ ekadeśatvam ekākārā ca vid bhavet // prativyakti tu bhede 'sya brahmāṇekaṃ prasajyate / vibhinnānekabhāvātmarūpatvād vyaktibhedavat //*
- 19 TS, 140: *athāpi kāryarūpeṇa śabdabrahmamayaṃ jagat / tathā 'pi nirvikāratvāt tato naiva kramodayaḥ //*
- 20 TSP, ad TS 140: *evam api śabdasya nityatvenāvikāritvāt tataḥ krameṇa kāryodayo na prāpnoti / sarveṣāṃ avikalāpratibaddhasāmarthyakāraṇād yugapad evotpādaḥ syāt / kāraṇavaikalyād dhi kāryāṇi parilambante / tac ced avikalaṃ / tat kim aparaṃ apekṣeraṇ / yena yugapan na bhaveyuh //*
- 21 VP, I.131: *na so 'sti pratyayo loke yaḥ śabdānugamād ṛte / anuviddham iva jñānaṃ sarvaṃ śabdena varttate //*. There is a slight variation in Kamalaśīla's citation of the verse as compared with the version as it comes down to us in the VP itself and on which Matilal's translation is based. In the stanza of the VP we read the final *pāda* as: *sarvaṃ śabdena bhāsate* / Translation in Matilal (1990, 127–28).
- 22 TSP, ad TS 147–48: *anyatra gatamānaso 'pi cakṣuṣā rūpaṃ īkṣamāṇo 'nāviṣṭābhilāpam eva nīlādīpratyayam anubhavatīti /*. Cf. also PV, 3.175.
- 23 This term is adapted from Eltschinger (2001, 249) “*le sphoṭa, le véhicule si j'ose dire 'trans-phonétique' de la signification.*”
- 24 Ōmae (1999) succinctly demonstrates how despite their rather different understandings of the nature of phonemes and language in general, both Kumāṛila and Dharmakīrti understand meaning to be produced through the utterance of phonemes in a particular sequence and thus both can be considered *varṇavādīns*. The same applies to Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, as Ōmae (1999, 299) also notes.
- 25 TS, 2281–82 = ŚV, *śabdānityatā* 281–82: *na ca kramād vinā varṇā nirjñātāḥ pratipādakāḥ / kramasyaivaṃ padatvaṃ ca tasmād evaṃ prasajyate //*

- padaṃ varṇātiriktaṃ tu yeṣāṃ syāt kramavarjitaṃ / teṣāṃ evārthavaty eṣā śabdanityatvakalpanā //* Note that there are minor variations between TS, 2282 and ŚV, *śabdanityatā* 282, which reads as follows: *na ca kramād vinā varṇā vijñātāḥ pratipādakāḥ / kramasyaiva padatvaṃ vaś tasmād evaṃ prasajyate //*
- 26 This interpretation of ŚV, *śabdanityatā* 282, reflected both in Jha's translation and in Sucarita Miśra's *Kāśikā* on the verse, is made clear by Kamalaśīla as well in TSP, ad TS 2283: *yeṣāṃ punas tu vaiyākaraṇānāṃ varṇavyatiriktaṃ sphoṭākhyam anavayavaṃ padaṃ vācakaṃ itīṣṭaṃ / teṣāṃ arthavaty eṣā śabdanityatvakalpanā //*
- 27 Ōmae (1999, 298). See also Eltschinger (2007, 204–12).
- 28 Cf. PV, I.302–03; French translation in Eltschinger (2007, 205–06), n. 55 and n. 56.
- 29 TS/P 2698–703ab: *nityatāyāṃ tu sarveṣāṃ arthāpattir apākṛtā / arthapratītihetutvaṃ anityeṣu hi sādhitam // yo yadvivakṣāsambhūṭavi vakṣāntaratas tataḥ / varṇa utpadyate tasya śrutis tansamanantaram //* *pūrvavarṇavidudbhūtasamvin nātidrutaśrutih / so 'pekṣya tatsmṛtiṃ paścāt kurute smṛtiṃ ātmani //* *tatsamutthāpakagrāhijñānāni prati janyatā / hetuṭā vānupūrvīyaṃ varṇeṣu puruṣāśrayā //* *ataḥ pratipadaṃ bhinnā varṇā iti parisphuṭam / damo mado latā tāla ityādikramabhedataḥ //* *īdrśena krameṇaite tv arthabhedopapādakāḥ /* Unfortunately, this section of the TSP manuscripts is quite corrupt. See Giunta (2009), 171–72 for extensive notes and a critical reconstruction based in part on the Tibetan translations as well as the reconstructions in the edition of Dvarikadasa Shastri (1968).
- 30 TS, 2703cd–04: *ata eva nirartheha sphoṭasyāpi prakalpanā // sa hy arthapratipattiyartham śābdikāḥ parikalpitaḥ / varṇā eva ca tacchaktā ity anarthāsya kalpanā //*
- 31 TS, 2705: *dṛśyasyādrṣṭitāś cāsyā nāstitādhyavasāyate / adrṣyatve tu naivāyaṃ liṇavaj jñāpakā bhavet //* Giunta (2009, 176) notes parallel passages in the *Pramāṇavārttika* and the *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛttiṭīkā*.
- 32 TS, 2706–07: *sattāmātreṇa tajjñānahetubhāvavyavasthiteḥ / tasya jñāpakateṣṭā cen netravat sarvadā bhavet //* *saṅketānavabodhe 'pi varṇānām aśrutāḥ api / tadbhāvyartheṣu vijñānaṃ śaktakāraṇasannidheḥ //* Giunta (2009, 176) notes parallel passages in the *Pramāṇavārttika* and the *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛttiṭīkā*.
- 33 TS, 2708–09: *tathā hi nityasattvo 'yaṃ na cāpekṣāsya kācana / dhvanisaṃketavarṇaiś ca tadvyaktir nāpy adarśanāt //* *jñānaṃ hi vyaktir ity āhus tajjñānaṃ na ca vidyate / tato nirarthakaivāsya vyañjakasyāpi kalpanā //* The citation of the phrase *jñānaṃ hi vyaktir* appears to be a reference to Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*. See Giunta (2009, 177), who cites PV, 3.440c: *jñānaṃ vyaktir*. Giunta (2009, 177) also notes parallel passages in the *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛttiṭīkā*.
- 34 TS 2710: *nādair āhitabījāyāṃ antyena dhvaninā saha / āvṛttaparipākāyāṃ buddhau śabdo 'vabhāsate //* This verse is nearly identical to VP, I.86, which reads

nādenāhitabījāyām antyena dhvaninā saha / āvṛttaparipākāyām buddhau śabdo 'vadhāryate // Kamalaśīla also cites this verse at TSP, ad TS 2311.

- 35 TS, 2711: *ity etad api tenātra nirnimittam prakalpitaṃ / tasyām api na śabdo 'nyo bhāsamāno hi lakṣyate //*
- 36 TS, 2712–13: *janyatām vyajyatām vāpi dhvanibhiḥ kramabhāvibhiḥ / ye 'pi sphoṭasya manyante kramas teṣāṃ virudhyate //* *na hi krameṇa yujyete vyaktijātī niraṃśake / ekarūpābahir bhāvāt te syātām sarvathaiva hi //* Giunta (2009, 178) notes a parallel passage with PVSV, 128, 21–25, which appears in a French translation in Eltschinger (2007, 327–28).
- 37 TS, 2714: *sāṃśatve 'pi yathā varṇāḥ krameṇāpratipādakāḥ / sphoṭāṃśā api kiṃ naivam kiṃ adṛṣṭāḥ prakalpitaḥ //* Reading *krameṇāpratipādakāḥ* with Giunta (2009), 178. Cf. also PV, 1.248–249 and Eltschinger's translation (Eltschinger 2007, 323–24). The TS/P verse and commentary both draw heavily from Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*.
- 38 TSP, ad TS 2714: *sati ca kalpate vācakatve varam varṇabhāgā eva santu vācakāḥ /*
- 39 TS, 2715–2716: *jātau vyaktau kṛtāyām ced ekena dhvaninā sakṛt / nitarām vyaktisiddhyartham varṇānānyān prayuñjate //* *yato duravadhārāsya prakṛtiḥ sā tathā kṛtā / samānaśaktikair varṇair bhūyo 'pi vyajyate paraiḥ //* Cf. VP, 1.84–85: *yathānūvākaḥ śloko vā sodhatvam upagacchati / āvṛtṭyā na tu sa granthaḥ pratyāvṛtti nirūpyate //* *pratyayair anupākhyeyair grahaṇānugūṇais tathā / dhvaniprakāśite śabde svarūpam avadhāryate //* Biardeau (1958, 37) translates these two verses, together with VP, 1.86 (cited by Śāntarakṣita at TS 2710 and translated above), as follows: “De même que l'on arrive à posséder (par cœur) une section védique ou un *śloka* par répétition, mais que le texte n'est pas bien élucidé par chacune des répétitions, de même, c'est par des connaissances indéfinissables mais qui sont ordonnées à son appréhension, que la forme propre d'une entité verbale mise en lumière par les sons est déterminée. Dans l'intellect, où les résonances ont déposé des germes et qui s'est mûri à chaque répétition, l'entité verbale est déterminée au moment du dernier son.”
- 40 TS, 2717: *tasyaivānyasya vaikasya kiṃ nāvṛttau punaḥ punaḥ / vyaktirāvartate tasya nanv evam aśeṣataḥ //*
- 41 TSP, ad TS 2717 spells this out: *tathā hi tadvyaktyāvartanamātraphalāny uttarottaravarṇotccāraṇāni samānaśaktikatvāt sarveṣāṃ / tac cāvartanam ekenaiva punaḥ punar āvarttyamānena kartum śakyata iti śeṣavarṇotccāraṇavaiyarthyaṃ / nāpy uttarottaravarṇānām bhinnaśaktikatvam abhyupagantavyam / niraṃśake viśeṣāntarasyādhātum aśakyatvād viśeṣāntarakaraṇāsambhave bhinnaśaktikalpanāvaiyarthya-prasaṅgāt //* “That is, the articulation of the subsequent phonemes has the effect of just repeating the manifestation of that *sphoṭa*, since all the phonemes have the same capacity. And the repetition of that manifestation can be accomplished by just one phoneme

being repeated again and again. Therefore, the articulation of the remaining phonemes is pointless. Nor can you postulate that the subsequent phonemes have diverse capacities, since one cannot add other qualities to that which has no parts. Therefore, since there can be no cause in the form of another quality, you would have the undesired consequence that conceptualizing diverse capacities is also pointless.”

- 42 TSP, ad 2718: *yadi hi varṇavyatirekenāparaḥ sphoṭākhyāḥ śabdātmābvabhāseta tato 'syābhivyaktiḥ sambhaved vyakter upalabdhirūpatvāt / yāvatā nāvabhāsata iti pūrvam āveditam //*
- 43 TS, 2719–24: *tasmāt pratyakṣataḥ pūrvam kramajñāneṣu yat param / samastavarṇavijñānam tadarthajñānakāraṇam // antyavarṇe hi vijñāte sarvasaṃskārakāritam / smaraṇam yaugapadyena sarvavarṇeṣu jāyate // sarveṣu caitadartheṣu mānaṣam sarvavādinām / iṣṭam samuccayajñānam kramajñāteṣu satsv api // na cet tadabhyupeyeta kramadṛṣṭeṣu naiva hi / śatādirūpam jāyeta tat samuccayadarśanam // tena śrotramanobhyām syāt kramād varṇeṣu yady api / pūrvajñānam parastāt tu yugapat smaraṇam bhavet // tadārūḍhās tato varṇā na dūrārthāvbodhanāt / śabdād atha matis tena laukikair abhidhīyate //* These verses correspond to ŚV, *sphoṭa* 109, 112–116. See the notes in Giunta (2009, 180–82) for minor variations between the verses as they appear in TS and in ŚV.
- 44 TS, 2725: *ākāravati vijñāne sarvam etac ca yujyate / anyathā hi vinaṣṭās te bhāseran smaraṇe katham //*
- 45 See McClintock (2014) for an argument that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla adopt various positions on the nature and status of phenomenal content depending on the rhetorical context of a particular argument. In the context of an argument with Mīmāṃsakas, where objects external to the mind are provisionally accepted, these Buddhists cleave to the *sākāravāda* (doctrine that awareness is endowed with phenomenal content) position while Kumārila holds awareness to be *nirākāra* (not endowed with phenomenal content).
- 46 TSP, ad TS 2725: *tataś ca yad etat / antyavarṇe hi vijñāte ityādinā kumārilenā sphoṭavādinām prati samuccayajñānam varṇitam / tad asman mata eva yujyate / na tu bhavatām mīmāṃsakānām nirākāravādinām mata ity uktam bhavati //*
 “And therefore the cumulative awareness that has been urged by Kumārila against the *sphoṭavādin* in the verse that begins ‘For when there is the cognition of the final phoneme [...]’ [TS, 2720 = ŚV, *sphoṭa* 112] makes sense in terms of just our opinion. But it does not [make sense] in terms of your Mīmāṃsaka opinion that holds that [cognition] is without phenomenal content. That is the idea here.”
- 47 TS, 2726–27: *atha varṇās tirobhūtavyaktayo viditāḥ purā / smaryante 'vasthitā eva na spaṣṭābhaprasaṅgataḥ // apāstā ca sthitiḥ pūrvam tat sthita smaraṇam bhavet / varṇānubhavavijñānakāla evaika hetutaḥ //*
- 48 Kamalaśīla supplies the location as the “investigation of the three times” (*traikālyaparīkṣā*), the twenty-first chapter of the TS/P.

- 49 TSP, ad TS 2728: *atra śābdikāś codayanti / yady eko nāsti sphoṭākhyah śabdātmā tat katham gaurityekākārā gośabde buddhir bhavātīti* / “Here the Grammarians object: But if there is no single essence of language known as *sphoṭa*, then how is it that cognition has the single form of ‘cow’ when the word ‘cow’ [is uttered]?”
- 50 TS, 2728 = ŚV, *sphoṭa* 120: *gaurityekamatitvaṃ tu naivāsmābhir nivāryate / tadgrāhyaikārthatābhyāṃ ca śabde syād ekatāmatih //*
- 51 TS, 2729 = ŚV, *sphoṭa* 121: *śaighryād alpāntaratvāc ca gośabde sā bhaved api / devadattādiśabdeṣu spaṣṭo bhedaḥ pratīyate //*
- 52 TS, 2730–2731 (TS, 2730 = ŚV, *sphoṭa* 135: *varṇotthā cārthadhīreṣā tajjñānāntarodbhavāt / yedṛṣī sā tadutthā hi dhūmāder iva vahnidhīḥ //* na varṇa-bhinnaśabdābhajñānāntarabhāvinī / arthadhīr vedyate tena nānyaḥ śabdo 'sti vācakah //)
- 53 For a study of earlier Mīmāṃsaka theories of sentence meaning, see Taber (1989).
- 54 See McClintock (2010, 47–48) for Kamalaśīla’s use of this term at TSP ad TS 1–6. For Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla’s approach to word and sentence meaning, see Siderits (1985).
- 55 TS, 1027: *pratibimbātmako 'pohaḥ padād apy upajāyate / pratibhākyo jhaṭity eva padārtho 'py ayam eva naḥ //* See Hattori (1980, 64) for Dignāga’s debt to Bhartṛhari’s theory of *pratibhā*. Hattori (1980, 69) also notes that Śāntarakṣita’s revision of Dignāga’s theory of *apoha* to include the positive entity that is the reflection (*pratibimba*) in awareness functions to rebut Kumārila’s objections to the Buddhist *apoha* theory.
- 56 TSP, ad TS 1027: *yasmāt padādapi pratibimbātmako 'poha utpadyata eva tenāsmākam ayam eva pratibimbātmako 'pohaḥ padārtho 'pi mato na kevalam vākyārtha ity apiśabdaḥ //* Reading *vākyārtha* instead of *bāhyārtha* in accord with the Tibetan.
- 57 TS, 1089: *na vācyaṃ vācakaṃ vāpi paramārthena kiñcana / kṣaṇabhaṅgiṣu bhāveṣu vyāpakatvaviyogataḥ //* See also TS 1032–33.
- 58 See Chapter 4 in this volume.

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