

LANGUAGE AND REALITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN BETWEEN HEIDEGGER AND BHARTṚHARI*

BAISHALI MAJUMDAR

There are various ways in answering the question: Why does language matter to philosophy? However, the most prominent one is that language matters to philosophy because language reveals reality or ontology for us. However, there we witness a divergence of opinions about the nature of language and reality. Linguistic philosophers over the years have engaged in a serious philosophical debate regarding the nature of language and also the nature of reality. Language, for them, may be either ordinary language or artificial language. The nature of reality again finds different interpretations in different linguistic philosophers. According to Locke, reality is the totality of experience¹; for Strawson reality is the totality of particulars²; for early Wittgenstein reality is the totality of facts³; for Quine reality is what there is⁴ and for Heidegger reality is the totality of equipment⁵. Accordingly, the relationship between language and reality takes different interpretations in different linguistic philosophers. Even though linguistic philosophers, over the years, have given different interpretations of the term 'reality', but from broader perspective we can classify reality into two categories, such as, empirical reality and metaphysical reality. According to some linguistic philosophers, particularly those belonging to Semantics, language is not relevant for knowing metaphysical reality because for them language in true sense would be ineffable to reach up to metaphysical reality. Thus, for them,

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¹ Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (ed.) P. Nidditch, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975: III, ii, I.

² Strawson, P.F. *Individuals: an Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, London, Methuen, 1959, p.20.

³ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. E. Pears & B.F. McGuinness, London and New York, 1995, p.5.

⁴ Quine, W.V. 'On What There Is', *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol.II,1948, P.21-38.

⁵ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time, tr.*, J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, New York: Harper and Row, 1962, p.68.

language matters to philosophy because language reveals empirical reality for us.

The other important observation is that those who confine themselves within empirical reality would consider language and reality as independent entities. For them language is a tool or instrument for the medium of communication and reality has its own existence apart from language. For them the function of language is external. For example, according to the referential theorist, the meaning of a sentence would be determined on the basis of the reference of the sentence under consideration. If the sentence enables to refer something other than the sentence itself and there exists a referential connection between the sentence and what it refers to, this would in turn ensure the meaning of the sentence. In short, it can be said that the referential connection constitutes the meaning of the sentence under consideration. Even the pragmatists have given due importance on the *external* use of language. Strawson, for example, has emphasized on successful communication between the speaker and the hearers in knowing particulars. According to Strawson, successful communication between the speaker and the hearers is made possible if the hearers can perfectly identify the particulars being referred to by the speaker. Here Strawson gives importance on the external uses of language. What we can say here is that both the pragmatists as well as the semantists have given emphasised more on the external uses of language and for them language and reality, whatever their nature may be, are independent with each other.

Interestingly, Martin Heidegger in the West and Bhartṛhari in the East have attempted to revive the relevance of metaphysical reality by means of language. Reality, for Heidegger, is Being and language, for Heidegger, is poetic in nature. Reality, for Bhartṛhari, is *Brahman* and language for Bhartṛhari is *Śabda*. While developing the relationship between language and reality both Heidegger and Bhartṛhari have emphasised not only on the metaphysical reality but they also have conceived that language and reality are

same. Both of them have agreed that even though language reveals reality but language is reality and reality is language. Language and reality are not distinct entities. The *Śabdabrahman* of Bhartṛhari is a case in point. Similar to this, Heidegger remarks that ‘language is the house of Being’. The important resemblances between Heidegger and Bhartṛhari are as follows:

- a. Both of them have engaged in showing the relevance of metaphysical reality that has been completely forfeited by the semantists as well as the pragmatists.
- b. Both of them have shared the view that language reveals reality and language *is* reality. Both language and reality are inseparable and mutually correlated with each other. Reality is not independent from language. This again is an important deviation from the earlier linguistic tradition. Linguistic philosophers have claimed that language and reality are independent with each other and language can be used extra-linguistically to map or to picture or to hook or to represent reality having independent existence.
- c. The ontological status of Being of Heidegger and *Brahman* of Bhartṛhari has remained the same. Both of them have emphasised on inner revelation of man.

Relationship between language and reality:

On the basis of the perceptions stated above, let us examine the relationship between language and reality after Heidegger and Bhartṛhari. We think that the question of Reality, Being and language are closely inter-related in the philosophies of Bhartṛhari and Heidegger. Bhartṛhari intuitively grasps reality along with his thinking of language just like as Heidegger reveals the question of Being along with his understanding of language. Both of them have attempted to transcend the periphery of human existence and thereby moved towards universality of thinking in the process of confirming the universality of human concerns. Their approaches, of course, are different. The approach of Bhartṛhari is *mokṣa-oriented* that springs from the practical interest of leading

man out of *duḥkha* into a state of bliss, from inauthentic to authentic existence, from absorption in the object to self-realisation. Heidegger claims that through *Dasein* one can transcend from being to *Being* by way of thinking. Being (*Sein*) as being is always sought for in Metaphysics and one can transcend being in the light of its Being.

According to Bhartṛhari, everyday life is inauthentic. One has to transcend it through the process of self-realisation. Very similar way, Heidegger also expresses his dissatisfaction over the ‘thrown fallenness’ of everyday life. For Heidegger, *Dasein* understands its own being in terms of the beings to which it attends and eventually transcends towards Being. Likewise, Bhartṛhari’s man through action gets involved and absorbed into the objects of everyday reality. Bhartṛhari, in this regard, claims that human condition as a fundamental alteration of attitude actually facilitates *awareness* of everyday life. This awareness eventually assists a man to realise the loopholes of everyday life and helps him to move forward from inauthentic to authentic life. Thus, it has been claimed by saying that Heidegger in rediscovering for the West man’s belongingness to *Ereignis* i.e. comes closer to Bhartṛhari’s man who dissociates himself from untruth through *Vāgyoga* and achieves union with the real, what Bhartṛhari termed as *Śabdatattva*. According to Heidegger ‘man is the neighbour of Being’ in the sense that ‘man of all beings stands in a privilege relation to Being’. Likewise, Bhartṛhari claims that an analysis and reflection on the nature of the self is a means of knowing Brahman, the *Śabdatattva*.

Thus, we think that the Being (Reality) of Heidegger is at par with the *Śabdatattva* of Bhartṛhari. According to Heidegger, the question of Being is authentic and we can come to the discovery of Being through the understanding of There-being (*Dasein*). Even though There-being is not man as such but that ‘place’ where the essence of man has its abiding ground, i.e. the ultimate source out of which man comes-to-presence as man. Thus, in the real sense, *Dasein* has a relation to its Being because *Da-sein* is gifted with

awareness of its own Being. Therefore, he is the *Da* of *Sein*, i.e. the *Da* where Being (*Sein*) shines forth. *Dasein*'s 'essence' lies in its existence, in its 'drive-to-be' (*Zu-sein*)⁶ According to Heidegger, the Being of beings is not something that is just 'out there' all by itself, or even 'out there' in beings, rather it implies the meaningful relatedness and the intelligible presentness of things for man understood as *Dasein*. Accordingly, the question of *Dasein*, Heidegger considers is a prologue to the question of Being. To make this standpoint more sharpen, Heidegger in his "The Way back into the ground of Metaphysics" says, "To characterise with single term both the involvement of Being in human nature and the essential relation of man to the openness ('there') of Being as such, the name of 'being there' (*Dasein*) was chosen for that sphere of Being in which man as man stands."⁷ Man as a questioning of being is the way to the questioning of Being. Thus, Being (reality) for Heidegger is always Being as it enters into *Dasein*'s understanding of Being. Being is understood in terms of *Dasein* and there is Being only insofar as it is understood by *Dasein*⁸ Thus, *Dasein*, for Heidegger, is the place of disclosure of Being.

Like Heidegger, Bhartṛhari characterises *Śabdatattva* as Being distinguishes from all beings. According to Bhartṛhari, Being is not one object amongst others; rather it is that in the light of which everything else is manifested and which is itself self-manifesting. In this regard, Bhartṛhari conceives existence (*sattā*) as a universal substance (*dravya*), a timeless, simple substance underlying in all things and permitting them to borrow their existence claims from their 'association' with it. Thus, Bhartṛhari interprets the nature of *Brahman* in terms of *Dravya*. *Dravya* or substance, for Bhartṛhari, is the universal in particular things which is at par with *Brahman* as existence. *Brahman* as substance is also called *tattva* (*thatness*) which is

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.67.

⁷ Heidegger, Martin. "The Way back into the ground of Metaphysics", tr., W. Kaufmann in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Satre*, ed. W. Kaufmann, NY: World-Meridian, 1956, p.213.

⁸ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, op.cit.p.225.

further referred to as *para* (the highest one).⁹ The *tattva* of *Śabdatattva* actually means eternal existence and it is made known to us through non-existent forms (*ākāra*). As an eternal existent or the highest one the *tattva* of *Śabdatattva* transcends or excels all spatial and temporal determinations, differentiations based on the concepts like identity. Thus, like Heidegger, Bhartṛhari equally envisages transcendental and immanent aspects of reality by emphasizing on the fact that *Brahman* as the basis of differentiated aspects is of the nature of *Śabda* which Bhartṛhari calls *Śabdatattva*, one undifferentiated reality, the whole. Such undifferentiated reality, the Absolute whole, the eternal existence whom Bhartṛhari considers as the great universal (*Mahāsāmānya*), the great Being (*Mahāsattā*) expresses itself in all words.

Both Heidegger and Bhartṛhari hold that reality (*Brahman* in Bhartṛhari and Being in Heidegger) is one. In his book *Being and Time*, Heidegger conceives Being (reality) in terms of Time. Likewise, Bhartṛhari construes *Brahman* (reality) in terms of *Kāla*. According to Bhartṛhari, all objects and the whole cosmos are manifested from *Brahman* and according to Heidegger, all beings are manifested from Being. Being is self-reveller just as *Brahman* is self-reveller. Thus, the ontological locus of Being of Heidegger and *Brahman* of Bhartṛhari remains the same. The power of Being as a reveller of other beings and also as a self-reveller requires energy just as *Brahman* as the manifesting agent of all objects and the whole cosmos requires *Śakti*. Bhartṛhari treats *kālaśakti* as the supreme of all the powers of the Absolute *Brahman* because it controls all the powers of *Śabdattava* by permitting them in a particular temporal order. Just like *śakti* or *kālaśakti* of Bhartṛhari, Heidegger also brings the relevance of Time as a power of Being. According to Bhartṛhari *kāla* which he termed as *kālaśakti*, is not different from *Brahman* and it is very similar to Heidegger who claims that Time is not different from Being. According to both Heidegger and Bhartṛhari, time or

⁹ Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya*, III.I.20.

Kāla is a manifestation in the sequence of coming into being. The journey from being to Being is a process of becoming, the manifestation or revealing Being (*Brahman*) through beings. It is an upward sequence that can be measured with regard to time (Heidegger) or *kāla* (Bhartṛhari). This does not, however, make sense to say that Time of Heidegger and *kāla* of Bhartṛhari limits Being or *Brahman*; rather the eternal timeless appears as changing in view of the working of time factor.¹⁰ Being and Time, says Heidegger, determine each other reciprocally in such a manner that neither can be the former or later than the other. Being is determined, as presence, by Time and therefore, Being and Time, Heidegger opines, are inseparable. Being and Time belong together just as *kāla* and *Brahman* belong together. As Being and Time are only there and given in *Ereignis*, it is this event that brings man in to his own as that being which grows aware of being by standing in genuine Time.

The other notable similarity between Bhartṛhari and Heidegger is that the *Brahman* or the Being is revealed through language. According to Bhartṛhari, *Brahman* (Reality) transforms or manifests itself into speech without affecting the true essence of reality. That is why, Bhartṛhari uses the term *Śabdabrahman*. *Śabda* (speech) is Brahman. Here the verb 'is' is used in the sense of Identity. *Śabda* is One; *Brahman* is One. There is oneness relationship between the *Śabda* (Om) and the Brahman. Very similar to Bhartṛhari, Heidegger claims that 'language is the house of Being', Being dwells in language. However, language does not affect Being. Being is the guardian of language, Being takes care of language because Being is manifested by means of language, passing its time in the language as a house. According to Bhartṛhari, all knowledge intertwined with *Śabda*¹¹. In this sense, the object is not different from the word because it is the word which has become the object. Similarly, all activity of consciousness has *śabda* as its medium. Bhartṛhari, in this regard, brings the concept of *Vāgyoga* as a kind of

¹⁰ Raja, K. *Indian Theories of Meaning*, The Adyar Library and Research Centre, Adyar, Madras, 20: 1963, p.146 -147.

¹¹ Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya*, I.123.

meditation which ultimate objective is to raise the level of the consciousness of words to the highest stage of the Word-Principle. The *Vāgyoga* demands a kind of *Śabdasaṃskāra*, i.e. the purification of words consists in discarding the corrupt words (*apabhraṃsa*) and this in turn adherence to correct words (*sādhuśabda*) which eventually culminates the attainment of the ultimate reality what Bhartṛhari has termed as *Śabdabrahman*. Thus, Bhartṛhari does not rule out the purification of words. If we carefully examine the language of Heidegger, there we observe a similar sort of purification of language. When Heidegger talks about language, he thereby means a kind of language which is creative in nature. Language, for Heidegger, is creative. Creativity is the essence of language. Not all language fulfils this criterion. In this regard, Heidegger calls for poetic language which according to him is creative in nature. The *Da* in *Dasein* is being itself revealed or brought out of concealment into disclosure by means of creative language. For Heidegger, *Dasein* is the truth of Being; it is the place of the truth of Being. Heidegger says, There (presence) of Being; human existence is, in the final analysis, the openness to Being, “the standing in the lighting process of Being.”¹² For Heidegger, the human being dwells in the light of Being and the lighting process actually paves the way to grant ‘the nearness to Being’¹³ The light of Being is poetic language where Being dwells. It is Being’s house and the fundamental feature of this house is that it is creative in nature.

Concluding Remarks:

In this sequel I myself primarily deal with the questions, such as, why this paper deserves worthy of philosophical consideration and why the philosophical community would be interested to read this paper. I think this paper is worthy of philosophical consideration on two important accounts. First, it engages in exploring the metaphysical relevance of the relationship between language and reality which I think has been boiled down by the

¹² Heidegger, Martin, ‘the Letter on Humanism’, *Basic Writings*, edit., D. F. Krell, New York: Harper Collins 1993, p. 229.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.223

linguistic philosophers. Secondly, it attempts to make an East-West comparative study with reference to two great original thinkers, namely, Heidegger and Bhartṛhari. In one respect, this paper brings a different message to the linguistic philosophers who have engaged themselves in exploring the relationship between language and reality by conceiving both language and reality as separated entities. Contrary to the earlier tradition, both Bhartṛhari and Heidegger, I think, have conceived language at par with reality. For them language is reality. The other important aspect that needs to be taken care of at this juncture is that linguistic philosophers, in general, have given importance on the external uses of language. Contrary to this, both Bhartṛhari and Heidegger have given emphasised on the internal uses of language, i.e. the essence of language. Both of them have adhered to the view that the essence of language is all about of reality. We think that from an ontological perspective, *Brahman* stands for true Reality (Being). *Brahman* as true Being makes the truth of the world possible. Thus, a reflection of the reality of *Brahman* eventually brings us closer to Heidegger's concept of Being. It is non-being as Radhakrishnan has pointed out. It is not the being which we attribute to the world of experience. That is why, Heidegger considers Being as the groundless ground and Abyss of all human understanding. When Heidegger calls man the 'shepherd of Being', he wants to indicate the special relation There-being has to Being. From Bhartṛhari's point of view we can say that man alone is endowed with the capacity to envision *Brahman* and thus upswings beyond all living creatures.

The other important aspect that I can mention here is that Bhartṛhari denies the causal nexus between *Brahman* and the world on the ground that the effect, i.e., the world is a mere appearance (*vivarta*) of the cause. Heidegger also rejects the thought of Being as the cause of the world. Heidegger holds that cause and effect are entwined just like as Being and Time are entwined together. Likewise, Bhartṛhari holds that *kāla* and *Brahman* are entwined together.

Both Bhartṛhari and Heidegger hold that language is reality or language itself is reality. I think that the reality of Bhartṛhari (i.e. *Brahman*) and the reality of Heidegger (i.e. Being) are very much same or alike. However, I have a little bit of reservation regarding their understanding of language is concerned. According to Bhartṛhari, language (word) is One that has been created within; but according to Heidegger language would be poetic in nature and the fundamental feature of language is that it would be creative. Creativity is the hallmark of language. Thus, we think that Heidegger was more specific than Bhartṛhari regarding the interpretation of language is concerned. Having said this, it is language or word through which reality is revealed and revealed not as a separate entity but as an integral part of language. In this sense, both Bhartṛhari and Heidegger have claimed that language is reality. However, Bhartṛhari elsewhere in his *Vākyapadīya* talks about *speech-potency* as an essential trait of human consciousness which perhaps would be cognitive in nature. Speech-potency as an essential trait of human consciousness exists within. Very similar way, Heidegger claims that language becomes the concrete presence of Being rather than mere articulation. Language, for Heidegger, is the foundation of human being. The essential function of language is the *Sage*. It shows. In short, language as Saying is the mode of commandeering (*Ereignis*). Language, for Heidegger, is not a mere tool rather language grants the possibility to stand in the midst of the openness of beings. We find ourselves in the midst of language. Thus, we can conclude by saying that the metaphysical interpretation of the relationship between language and reality as expounded by both Heidegger and Bhartṛhari not only opens up a new dimension in the philosophical arena, but at the same time it shapes the concept of language and reality as a unified and non-dualistic manner which eventually nullifies or boils down the *problem of surrogacy* in the domain of linguistic philosophy.