TAT TVAM ASI AS ADVAITIC METAPHOR

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One of the directions of the "new comparative philosophizing"[1] is to undertake the study of metaphor and to uncover the significant role it plays in the creation and extension of meaning. Metaphor is seen to provide a horizontal link between different speech communities as well as a method of creating meaning within a community. Karl H. Potter, in an essay titled "Metaphor as Key to Understanding the Thought of Other Speech Communities,"[2] argues that metaphorical links serve to designate new boundaries for a community's conceptual schemes. That is to say, any inquiry into a speech community's thought must focus on metaphor and its conceptual relations rather than simply accept the traditional boundaries of language or culture. Potter argues further that comparative philosophy is a good place to begin to determine these new boundaries and to interpret across them. He proposes a research program dedicated to the exploration of metaphors within particular speech communities and to the determination of conceptual schemes which are shared across traditional community boundaries.

This essay explores the *mahāvākya* ('great saying') *tat tvam asi* ('that thou art') in terms of Potter's research proposal. Construal of *tat tvam asi* as a metaphor of the type 'A is B' ('You are Brahman') clarifies the conceptual relations between Advaita Vedānta and other schools of Indian philosophy, particularly Dvaita Vedānta, the "Dualist" school. Analysis of *tat tvam asi* as a metaphor of religious knowledge also contributes to the conversation between Indian and Western philosophies, especially to the current discussion of realism and idealism. Construal of the *mahāvākyas* as metaphors shows to advantage the uniquely Advaitic contribution to a comparative model of religious knowledge.

Metaphors and Conceptual Schemes

Contemporary theories of metaphor attempt to examine metaphors in relation to one another and in relation to larger contexts. These larger contexts are variously called conceptual schemes, conceptual structures, and the like. Potter relies on the book *Metaphors We Live By* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in defining the relation of metaphor to conceptual scheme. Lakoff and Johnson analyze metaphors in contemporary English idiom. They give the following examples of literal expressions which, taken together, imply the conceptual metaphor "Argument is war":

> Your claims are *indefensible.*
> He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.
> His criticisms were *right on target.*
> I *demolished* his argument.

I've never *won* an argument with him.
You disagree? Okay, *shoot*!
If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*.
He *shot down* all of my arguments.[3]

Lakoff and Johnson argue that the "Argument is war" metaphor structures our concept of an argument:

> It is important to see that we don't just *talk* about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war.[4]

Lakoff and Johnson note that the "Argument is war" metaphor highlights certain aspects of argument, while hiding others. The cooperative aspect of argument, for example, may be lost in the heat of debate.

Potter uses the "A is B" structure of the conceptual metaphor "Argument is war" to raise a question within the Indian conceptual scheme. Does Advaita Vedānta use the same conceptual metaphor as the general Indian scheme, that is, that *jñāna* ('awareness', 'knowledge') is *kriyā* ('making', 'action')? In the general Indian scheme, *kriyā* (or *karman*) as 'making' implies a product made for many activities not normally so conceived in English—for example, perception. Potter also finds that awareness and knowledge are kinds of making in the Indian scheme. The viability of Potter's metaphor is shown by its coherence in the Indian scheme: what is made must become manifest now or in the future. If one lifetime is not enough, another lifetime must be posited. Hence, the metaphor '*karman* is making' informs the Indian doctrines of transmigration and rebirth.

When Śaṅkara denies that *jñāna* is *kriyā* and speaks instead of *jñāna* as *cit*, pure consciousness, is he simply substituting terms or is he changing metaphorical links? It will be shown that Śaṅkara's wide influence on subsequent philosophical and religious thinking was in part a product of linking this and the *tat tvam asi* metaphor to a new model in the Indian conceptual scheme.

Some Definitions
It will be useful to define metaphor, model, and conceptual scheme in order to place *tat tvam asi* as a metaphor within the Indian religious tradition. Metaphor, model, and conceptual scheme will also form the language of linkage between Advaita Vedānta and Western philosophy.

Metaphor may be defined, after I. A. Richards and Janet Soskice, as a figure of speech in which one speaks about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another.[5] The terms of suggestion are called

the *vehicle*; the idea suggested is called the *tenor*. For example, in the quotation

> A stubborn and unconquerable flame
> Creeps in his veins and drinks the streams of life

the tenor is the idea of the fever from which the man is suffering, and the vehicle for it is the description of the flame. Vehicle and tenor are not simply words in isolation; rather they represent semantic fields. As semantic fields, vehicle and tenor consist of a lexeme or a lexical set and a content domain. The lexeme or lexical set is the word or set of words actually appearing in the text or utterance; the content domain is the system of associated commonplaces in semantic relation to the lexeme.

In the example above, the semantic field 'flame' is represented by the lexeme 'flame' and a content domain made up of elements associated with flames: 'stubborn' (for example, an especially flammable substance), 'unconquerable' (a fire that cannot be put out), 'creeps' (a forest fire), and 'drinks' (evaporates water). The semantic field 'fever' is not represented by a lexeme, but its content domain is suggested by those elements associated with fever: 'stubborn' (fever will not go down), 'unconquerable' (unhelped by medicine), 'creeps' (progressive disease), 'drinks' (dehydrates, kills). Because the vehicle suggests the tenor, and because the tenor affects the meaning of the vehicle as well, the semantic fields are said to animate one another. Thus, metaphor is the interanimation of semantic fields.

A model may be defined as an explanatory device in which an object or state of affairs is viewed in terms of some other object or state of affairs. Model has a structural affinity to metaphor, but, unlike metaphor, model is not confined to figures of speech or linguistic phenomena. There are, for example, scale models. A model often consists in talking in a certain way, however. Models of this type may be called "models of explanation." Models of explanation are not merely heuristic devices or useful fictions, although they may be useful. Neither are they veritable pictures of reality. Models of explanation have a somewhat weakened power of reality depiction which constitutes their "moderate" realism. They must be contextualized in order to reach their full explanatory power. In science, for example, the complementary models of electrons as waves and electrons as particles cannot both be literally true. Yet each model exhibits great explanatory power within its context.

The context of the model is the conceptual scheme. The locus of the metaphor is the text or utterance; the locus of the conceptual scheme is the human person and his or her world. Thus, the conceptual scheme is a kind of *weltanschauung*, including both the 'world' and the 'view'. The model is subordinate to the conceptual scheme. The model becomes contextualized, and hence construed as realist, only in the presence of

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an ideal in the world view. The ideal is given by traditions of religion, culture, language, and so forth. It has a particular content which is suited, as *telos*, to the explanation sought by the model.

The analysis of religious phenomena of the Advaitic tradition into metaphor, model, and conceptual scheme is thus a form of epistemological inquiry into the relation between sacred text, explanation, and human practice. The analysis of actual forms of religious experience, if chosen carefully, can lay bare the epistemological underpinnings of a great world view.

Metaphor in Śaṅkara

Metaphor informs Śaṅkara's writings in many ways. Śaṅkara uses both live and dead metaphors.[6] He comments on the metaphors of others. He does not develop a theory of metaphor, however, in the modern sense or even in terms of the *lakṣaṇā* or *jahadajahallakṣaṇā* theories of the later Advaitins.[7] His exegeses of sacred texts do imply attitudes toward metaphor use, however. Śaṅkara's remarks on metaphorical utterances are consistent with some important insights from contemporary interanimation theory. Metaphor is, for example, "formal" in Śaṅkara, in the sense that it exhibits quantitative or structural relations. This formal aspect can be seen by comparing Śaṅkara's remarks on *tat tvam asi* ('that thou art') and *aham idam* ('I [am] this').[8]

Tat tvam asi and *aham idam* are remarkably similar sentences; 'I am this' can be taken as little more than a restatement of 'thou art that' in the first person. But it is not the meaning of the sentences in juxtaposition that is important; rather, it is the formal relations found in the contexts of their use. *Tat tvam asi* is the sentence spoken by Uddālaka in an attempt to bring his son to knowledge of Brahman in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad. Aham idam* is the sentence used by Śaṅkara in the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* to bring the reader to a recognition of the main stumbling block of human beings in the pursuit of the knowledge of Brahman, namely, the *ahaṃkāra* ('I-maker'). The content domains of the terms 'that' and 'this' in the two sentences are therefore remarkably opposite. The content domain of 'that' includes 'Brahman', 'being, consciousness, bliss' (*saccidānanda*), and so forth. The content domain of 'this' includes 'world' (*loka*), 'cycle of birth, death, and rebirth' (*saṃsāra*), 'pain' (*duḥkha*), and so forth.

The context of *tat tvam asi* is a story in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad.* Uddālaka asks his son,

> Śvetaketu, since you are now so conceited, think yourself well read, and are so arrogant, have you, my dear, ever asked for that instruction by which one hears the unhearable, by which one perceives the unperceivable, by which one knows the unknowable?[9]

Śvetaketu asks for the instruction.

It is apparent from the phrasing of the father's questions that something new (or amiss!) is taking place here, in terms of philosophical explanation. The questions do not make literal sense. It is impossible to know the unknowable, and so forth. The questions can be construed figuratively, however. Such a construal anticipates and makes sense of Uddālaka's great pronouncement to his son, *sa ātmā | tat tvam asi śvetaketo* ('That is the Self. That thou art, Śvetaketu'). The phrase 'what is unknowable' suggests associated ideas such as 'what is difficult to know', 'what remains hidden or unknown to the world', 'what cannot be known by Vedic ritual', or, especially, 'Brahman'. The lack of literal sense is resolved by the interanimation of semantic fields. The lexemes in juxtaposition are contradictory ('one knows', 'what is unknowable'), but the content domains are merely "in a rub." In the story, Śvetaketu (an item from the 'knower' field) comes to know Brahman (an item from the 'unknowable' field). Thus, Uddālaka's questions serve as rhetorical anticipations of the metaphorical answer '*tat tvam asi*', as jarrings of Śvetaketu's propensity to take things in an overly literal or pedestrian fashion.

The Dvaitin Critique

The Dvaitin critique of Śaṅkara is the contribution of Madhva (1238–1317 C.E.) and his followers, especially Viṣṇudāsa (ca. 1390–1440 C.E.). Madhva's criticism consists in the attempt to reparse the sentence. Instead of the traditional *sa ātmā | tat tvam asi* ('That is the Self. That thou art'), Madhva reads *sa ātmā | atat tvam asi* ('That is the Self. Not-that thou art').[10] Madhva's object is to retain the dualism between Brahman and the *jīva*, the individual soul. Sanskritist Edwin Gerow states that Madhva's reparsing "does not lend much credibility to the Dvaitin as text interpreter."[11]

Gerow shows, however, that later Dvaitins used more refined techniques. Viṣṇudāsa, for example, interprets the sentence in terms of an ongoing debate about *lakṣaṇā* ('metonymy', 'term substitution'). He finds four possible interpretations of *tat tvam asi* in terms of *lakṣaṇā*: (1) there is no metonymy; (2) there is metonymy of *tat* ('that'); (3) there is metonymy of *tvam* ('thou'); (4) there is metonymy of both *tat* and *tvam*. Both Dvaitic and Advaitic hermeneutical practices call for the attempt to give the literal reading first. But if a literal reading is not possible, a figurative reading must be given. It is assumed that the Vedas cannot be without meaning, an assumption which informs the figures of speech even as the figures of speech inform the world view.

The rule, then, is to give the most literal meaning possible. Interpretation number four is prima facie the least attractive, because each term is

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defined in terms of the other in a kind of contextual infinite regress. Viṣṇudāsa gives twenty readings of *tat tvam asi* in terms of interpretations one, two, and three. He imputes to the Advaitins interpretation four, in which Śvetaketu is allegedly substituted for *tvam* and Brahman is substituted for *tat*. The implications of this double metonymy are unacceptable, according to Viṣṇudāsa, in view of the many other possible readings.

Viṣṇudāsa's analysis, however, suffers on the whole from the same nearsightedness as Aristotelian analyses of metaphor in the West. Viṣṇudāsa conceives of *lakṣaṇā* as simple term substitution. Viṣṇudāsa's *lakṣaṇā* either is based on an antiquated theory of metaphor or is mere word metonymy. In either case, it does not get at the metaphoric meaning of *tat tvam asi*. But his twenty readings can be read, in contemporary terms, as explorations into the semantic fields of *tat tvam asi*. In his first reading, for example, he states: "... regarding the sentence 'that thou art', let there be metonymy [*lakṣaṇā*] (affecting) one word only; the meaning is thus obtained: 'thy origin is dependent on that'."[12]

In this reading, Viṣṇudāsa begins what may be called the explication of the content domain of the lexeme *tat*. What, for Viṣṇudāsa, is *tat*? *Tat* is what the origin of everything depends upon. Viṣṇudāsa's aim is to preserve the ultimate difference between *tat* and *tvam*: origin from *tat* is not the same as identification with *tat*.

The Advaitin, however, construes origination as one of Brahman's associated commonplaces, that is, as a member of Brahman's content domain. *Brahmasūtra* 1.1.2 raises the topic in the aphorism, "That from which the origin and so forth [that is to say, origin, sustentation, and destruction] of this (world proceeds)." Śaṅkara comments:

> Of this universe differentiated by name and form, which contains many agents and enjoyers, which is the abode of those who are definitely regulated in respect of time, action, and fruit; and the nature of whose design cannot even be conceived by mind, that omniscient and omnipotent cause whence there is origin, sustentation, and destruction: 'That is Brahman' is the import of the aphorism.[13]

Śaṅkara does not deny difference between Brahman and "this universe differentiated by name and form," but only ultimate difference. His interpretation makes possible the reading of *tat tvam asi* as a single metaphoric utterance. The metaphor states (in a stronger way than Viṣṇudāsa allows) the identification of Śvetaketu and Brahman, without dissociating Śvetaketu from the universe of name and form. Such a reading is possible because of the richness and variety of the content domain surrounding 'Śvetaketu', a reading precluded by Viṣṇudāsa's construal in this case of metonymy of *tat* only and not of *tvam*.

Viṣṇudāsa gives a metonymy for *tvam* in his second reading. Gerow glosses Viṣṇudāsa's Sanskrit example of the moon-branch, which "is diffi-cult to convey in English":[14]

> The illustration suggests that the identity here is one of proximity only. We are to presume that this is a father's answer to a child's innocent question: "which of these lights in the sky is the moon?" The father adopts the strategy of identifying the moon by means of something obvious and close to it: the tree branch against which the moon is now visible. He says: "see the tree branch: it's that one!" So here, noticing Śvetaketu's puzzlement as to what this 'Brahman' might be, Uddālaka says: "look within; it's the (one close to your) self."[15]

Here Gerow adopts Viṣṇudāsa's method. He attaches a dualist reading to the sentence immediately preceding *tat tvam asi*: '*sa ātmā*' ('That is the Self'). In Viṣṇudāsa's second reading, *tat tvam asi* is read 'Thou art (close to) that'. For Gerow, *sa ātmā* is given the reading 'That's the (one close to your) self'. So, instead of the Advaitic 'That is the Self. That thou art, Śvetaketu', the Dvaitins read 'That's the one close to yourself. Thou art close to that, Śvetaketu'.

It is difficult to concede to the Dvaitic criticism that the Advaitins take the sentences too figuratively, when the Dvaitins themselves give so many nonliteral interpretations. The preferred Dvaitin interpretation of single metonymy rather than double seems to break down when the terms are analyzed in the context of the sentences and the Upaniṣad as a whole. This breakdown is precisely what one would expect from analy-sis of the terms, rather than the sentence, as metaphor. The language of tenor and vehicle and the mechanism of interanimating semantic fields are far more effective exegetical tools than mere term substitution.

Viṣṇudāsa gives eighteen more readings. They include single meto-nymies of *tat*: 'Thou art (like) that'; 'Thou art (accompanied by) that'; 'Thou art (intelligent like) that'; and 'Thou art (intimate with) that'. He also applies a variety of interpretive techniques in addition to metonymy. He alters case endings: 'Thou art (located in) that' (= locative); 'Thou art (born from) that' (= ablative); 'Thou art (of) that' (= genitive). He reparses the sentence into two: *tat | tvam asi*, 'That is ... Thou art ...'. Finally, he gives Madhva's alternative sandhi: *sa ātmā | atat tvam asi śvetaketo!* 'That is the Self. Thou are[n't] that, Śvetaketu!'[16]

Gerow summarizes the Dvaitin project:

> Our interpretations, however, involve but a single *lakṣaṇā*. And of these, all but one, if I understand them rightly, involve taking '*tat*' [= Brahman] metonymically, in such a way that an underlying relationship between the '*tat*' and the '*tvam*' is suggested: origin, dependence, location, possession, association, etc. Laukika and śāstraic or vedic examples are given for each of these usages.[17]

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Gerow finds nine readings involving the metonymy of *tat*. The one metonymy of *tvam* is reading number two, in which Brahman is said to be (close to) Śvetaketu. The use of examples from everyday (*laukika*) and scriptural (*śāstraic* and *vedic*) usages is within the hermeneutic of historical Dvaitin/Advaitin debate. These examples give the debate much of its interest and also fill out the semantic fields associated with Brahman and with Śvetaketu.

Metaphor requires more than term substitution or the juxtaposition of isolated sentences. It requires interanimation of semantic fields within the context of a conceptual scheme. That is why the single-term metonymies of the Dvaitins fail to establish a satisfying sense for *tat tvam asi*. For Śaṅkara, the identification of Śvetaketu and Brahman is real, not imagined. He writes:

> If the knowledge of the oneness of Brahman and the Self were admitted to be of the nature of an imagined identification, then in the case of the sentences, 'that thou art', 'I am Brahman', 'this Self is Brahman', etc. violence would be done to the mutual connection (*samanvaya*) of words whose purport is to declare the fact of the oneness of Brahman and the Self.[18]

Śaṅkara's use of the term *samanvaya* ('mutual connection', 'harmony') anticipates the interanimation theory of metaphor in two important ways. First, it considers context. I. A. Richards' term the 'interinanimation of words' echoes Śaṅkara's use here of *padasamanvaya*, the 'mutual connectedness of words'. *Padasamanvaya* implies an effect greater than the exchange of individual terms.

Second, Śaṅkara ties *samanvaya* to the text. He speaks of *samanvaya* in conjunction with *pada* ('word', 'verse'), *vākya* ('sentence', 'text'), and *vedānta* ('upaniṣad', literally 'the end of the Vedas'). The fourth sūtra of the *Brahmasūtra*, for example, reads "*tat tu samanvayāt*" ('But that, because of mutual connection').[19] The Advaitin interprets this terse sūtra as a reference to the interconnectedness of the *mahāvākyas* ('great sentences') in the development of Brahman's associated commonplaces, or semantic fields. The term '*tat*' refers to Brahman and its associations (for example, *saccidānanda*). '*Samanvayāt*' refers to the mutual connectedness of the *mahāvākyas* as the sine qua non of the sacred texts. Finally, '*tu*' is a particle (= 'but') of refutation in response to those who hold that sacred texts are a collection of injunctions or prohibitions. Śaṅkara writes, "In all the *Upaniṣads*, the sentences are coherent (only) with reference to the teaching of this meaning: 'Dear one, *sat* alone was in the beginning'...."[20] Śaṅkara goes on to quote *mahāvākyas* from various *Upaniṣads*. For Śaṅkara, the *mahāvākyas* gleaned from these sources form a coherent system for gaining knowledge of Brahman. They are like musical notes, harmonized into the *Brahmasūtra*.

Śaṅkara uses a metaphor in the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* to explicate *samanvaya*. Responding to the objection that the *Brahmasūtra* can give knowledge of Brahman on the basis of inference from worldly causes alone, Śaṅkara writes, "No, because the *sūtras* are meant for stringing together the flowers of the Upaniṣadic sentences."[21] *Sūtra* is literally 'string' or 'thread'; hence, the metaphor of the garland (*mālā*) suggests the idea that the *mahāvākyas* are flowers, mutually connected and given purpose by their stringing together in the *Brahmasūtra*. Thus, Śaṅkara argues for a contextual reading of scripture, a reading in which the *mahāvākyas* cohere and interanimate as vehicles to occasion knowledge of the tenor Brahman.

Generating the Advaitic Model

 Mahāvākyas form the part of sacred text (*śruti*) in which knowledge of Brahman (*brahmajñāna*) is occasioned. Hence, that part of *śruti* dedicated to knowledge is called *jñānakāṇḍa*. Why are *mahāvākyas* not *karmakāṇḍa*, that is, pertaining to action or making, since they are so basic to the Advaitic model of religious practice? It is important to Śaṅkara to preserve the distinction between ritual action (*kriyā*) and practice of the kind displayed by Uddālaka's instruction of Śvetaketu. Ritual activity is enjoined activity, marked out by that portion of scripture giving instruction for sacrifice, injunctions for or against certain activities, and so forth. This portion of scripture is called *karmakāṇḍa* and has its precedents in Vedic sacrifice.

 Śaṅkara's practice, on the other hand, is Advaitic. It is inseparable from the project of knowing Brahman. For Śaṅkara, practice is a temporal event. It serves the negative purpose of eliminating ignorance (*avidyā*). *Avidyā* is eliminated at a certain time, namely, at the moment of attaining release (*mokṣa*). Then Brahman, which is eternal, is automatically revealed. The Advaitic religious model does contain practice, but it is in the form of instruction by *mahāvākya*. Release from ignorance is gained by the same instruction, and the knowledge of Brahman is revealed. Thus metaphor, which is the structural basis for *mahāvākyas*, is central to the Advaitic model in terms of both practice and knowledge.

 Mahāvākyas are pragmatic in the sense that they are efficacious without being strictly necessary. New *mahāvākyas* may be added; a *guru* may choose to use one *mahāvākyas* rather than another, or choose to teach without using words at all. Śaṅkara argues for the coherence of the *mahāvākyas* as a group, without arguing for the group's necessity. It is necessary to distance the *mahāvākyas* from knowledge of scripture as *śabda pramāṇa* (verbal authority), because the knowledge which is gained by *śabda pramāṇa* is grounded in the last resort on the mistake of superimposition (*adhyāsa*).

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Śaṅkara explains superimposition by way of a simile at the beginning of the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*:

> The sphere of the concepts 'thou' and 'I', the object and the subject, are by nature mutually opposed like darkness and light. The undemonstrability of their identification being established, still more is the identification of their attributes undemonstrable. Hence, the superimposition of the object, the conceptual sphere of 'thou' and of its attributes, on the subject, the intelligent self, the conceptual sphere of 'I', and conversely the superimposition of the subject and its attributes on the object, is properly regarded as false.[22]

For Śaṅkara, the conceptual spheres, or schemes, surrounding subjects and objects are so opposed that they are said to be "like darkness and light." The simile is apt because the nature of the opposition is taken to be grounded in reality, not simply in the definition of terms. It is also appropriate to use the vehicle of darkness for ignorance-laden objects and the vehicle of light for the luminous Ātman or Brahman. For Śaṅkara, the identification of the opposite schemes constitutes a serious epistemological, metaphysical, and religious mistake.

It is interesting to contemplate the senses in which the interanimation of semantic fields might itself constitute superimposition. The interanimation of semantic fields resembles superimposition in that "two ideas are given for one."[23] The interanimation of semantic fields signals an occurrence of metaphor, however, which is a figure of speech. Superimposition is an occurrence which cuts across all the valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇas*), linguistic and extralinguistic. For Śaṅkara, the *pramāṇas* perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), and verbal authority (*śabda*) are all grounded in superimposition.

Valid knowledge (*pramā*) includes the operations of the knower (*pramātṛ*), the object (*prameya*), and the means of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*). Thus, the very structure of valid knowledge presupposes an opposition between the *pramātṛ* and the *prameya*. *Śabda pramāṇas* also presupposes this opposition. Metaphor, as a figure of speech, must presuppose it *a fortiori*. But the identification made by the interanimation of semantic fields in the specific case of the *mahāvākyas* is different in kind from the identification made in superimposition. The identification made in the *mahāvākyas* is meant to collapse the distinction of *pramātṛ/prameya* which is established by the ordinary use of the *pramāṇas*. Śaṅkara calls the result of instruction by *mahāvākyas* 'vidyā' rather than *pramā*, and its opposite, *avidyā*, he equates with superimposition. *Tat tvam asi*, then, is a metaphor with a very special vehicle, a vehicle used to collapse the subject/object distinction in favor of knowledge of Brahman (*brahmavidyā, brahmajñāna*).

The *pramāṇas* are useful to to the point of *brahmavidyā* or *brahma-jñāna*; hence Śaṅkara's real-process idealism. He writes, "When there is

the realization of the nondual Self, which is to be neither rejected nor accepted, there can no longer be objects, knowing subjects, or means of valid knowledge."[24] Śaṅkara's realism lies in his acceptance of theory language surrounding Brahman up to the point of *brahmajñāna*. The content domain of Brahman as suggested by the metaphors is accepted as a real intimation into the nature of Brahman. The process of coming to know Brahman is real. Further, Brahman is taken to be a real object in that "Brahman, the object of the desire to know, is already existent; and on account of eternal existence, [Brahman] does not depend on human energy."[25] But Brahman is also an ideal given by tradition. Therefore, *śruti* in the form of *mahāvākyas* can provide the pragmatic mechanism to overcome the *pramātṛ/prameya* distinction and gain knowledge of Brahman.

We are now in a position to answer Potter's question, raised at the outset, namely: when Śaṅkara denies that *jñāna* is *kriyā* and speaks instead of *jñāna* as *cit*, is he simply substituting terms or is he changing metaphorical links? In the context of Śaṅkara's model of religious knowledge, with its emphasis on *jñānakāṇḍa*, a real change is being made. *Kriyā*, in the sense of ritual action, is denied a function in the quest for Brahman and, hence, a place in Śaṅkara's model. An understanding of metaphor in the context of *śabda pramāṇa* clarifies the traditional argument that Śaṅkara is an epistemological realist but a metaphysical idealist. The metaphors of the *mahāvākyas* are the nexus of Śaṅkara's real-process idealism, fulfilling both epistemological and metaphysical functions. The *mahāvākyas* give rise to a new kind of knowing (*cit, vidyā*) and a new kind of being (*sat*). For philosophy, the *mahāvākyas'* proper construal as metaphors constitutes a new relation of realism to idealism.

The ideal of the Advaitic world view is Brahman. Brahman is to be inquired into; Brahman is to be known.[26] Brahman is more than a cognitive ideal, however. Brahman is also emotive. The experience of Brahman is the highest bliss felt by the Advaitin. Such emotive components from religious experience force an extension of the cognitive model. No longer is the model solely a model of explanation, but it is also a model of what people feel and do, that is, practice. It is a distinctively *religious* model by virtue of the fact that it contains both functions, explanation and practice.

A model of scientific realism, isolated from the ideal of the world view, is explanation-heavy. It cannot account for the relation of human feelings to an ideal, religious or aesthetic. It is arguable that scientific realism has not provided a proper ideal at all. Nicholas Rescher argues that a strict scientific realism implies that "man is the measure," the *homo mensura* doctrine of Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things, of what is, that it is, of what is not, that it is not."[27] Rescher, however, argues on idealism's behalf:

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In any case, *homo mensura* realism is untenable. There is no good reason to resort to a hubris that sees our human reality as the only one there is. Neither astronomically nor otherwise are we the center around which all things resolve. A *homo mensura* realism that equates the 'that' and the 'what' of real existence with what is knowable by us humans is totally implausible. After all, humans have the capacity not only for knowledge but also for imagination.[28]

In terms of the religious model, an ideal is likely to be initially recognized by imagination or feeling. It is located in the world view, that is, the conceptual scheme of the human being. The description of Brahman as *saccidānanda* is an apt formulation of the religious ideal in terms of metaphor, model, and conceptual scheme. As a vehicle for the Brahman metaphor, it deepens and extends Brahman's associations: being, consciousness, bliss. It is also descriptive of Brahman's role in the Advaitic model because it provides a component for ontology (*sat*), epistemological explanation (*cit*), and imaginative feeling (*ānanda*). And, of course, it is the ideal to which the entire Advaitic world looks. It is the object of their *weltanschauung*, the *summum bonum* of their conceptual scheme.

The imaginative/feeling component is thus important in religious experience. The scientific and realist component cannot be dropped, however. A purely instrumental model, isolated from the realism of the scientific model, is practice-heavy. For the Advaitin, an instrumental model cannot provide a rational explanation for the process of gaining knowledge of Brahman (*brahmavidyā*) or even for the knowledge (*pramā*) given through the *pramāṇas*. Śaṅkara's realism is brought out by his attack on the instrumentalism of the Mīmāṃsaka theory of *kriyā*. Rescher, too, argues on realism's behalf:

In forsaking realism, we would lose any prospect of developing a naturalistic account of why the phenomena are as they are. And this is too great a price to pay. A weighty argument against a sceptical instrumentalism is that it immediately blocks any prospect of explaining why the phenomena are as they are—an explanation that must, in the nature of things, itself proceed in ultimately non-phenomenal terms.[29]

Rescher argues for a realist construal of theory language in contemporary science. But his argument is also applicable to Advaita Vedānta. The Advaitin gives a realist construal to *pramā*, *prameya*, and *pramāṇa*; to *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and *śabda*; and, of course, to Brahman.

Thus, Advaitic religious metaphors can be interpreted across the boundaries of history and culture to provide a comparative model including both explanation and practice. Such a model does not supersede scientific realism, but uses it as a function of explanation. Neither does it suspend religious idealism, but uses it as a goal of practice and a conceptual scheme in which to view the world.

NOTES

1 – The term is from Gerald J. Larson. See *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, ed. Gerald J. Larson and Eliot Deutsch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 18.

2 – Ibid., pp. 19–35.

3 – George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 4.

4 – Ibid., p. 4.

5 – See I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 89–138, and Janet Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 15.

6 – See below for examples. A dead metaphor may be defined as a metaphor with such common usage that it becomes literal or semi-literal—for example, the *leg* of a table.

7 – See below, "The Dvaitin Critique." *Lakṣaṇā* and *jahadajahallakṣaṇā* correspond roughly to 'metonymy' and 'metonymy which relinquishes a part and does not relinquish a part of the literal meaning' in Western poetics. For a fuller treatment of these theories, see K. K. Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning* (Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1963), pp. 229–273.

8 – Cf. *Chāndogyopaniṣadbhāṣya* VI.1–14 and *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, Introduction.

9 – *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.1.3, trans. S. Nikhilananda in *The Upaniṣads: Taittirīya and Chhāndogya* (New York: Harper, 1959), vol. 4, pp. 291–292.

10 – Cf. Edwin Gerow, "The Dvaitin as Deconstructionist: Viṣṇudāsācarya on 'tat tvam asi': Part 1," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107, no. 4 (October–December 1987): 561–579.

11 – Ibid., p. 561.

12 – Ibid., p. 567.

13 – *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1.2: "*asya jagato nāmarūpabhyām vyākṛtasyā-nekakartṛbhoktṛsaṃyuktasya pratiniyatadeśakālanimittakriyāphalā-śrayasya manasāpy acintyaracanārūpasya janmasthitibhaṃgam yataḥ sarvajñāt sarvaśakteḥ kāraṇādy bhavati tad brahma iti vākyaśeṣaḥ.*"

14 – Gerow, "The Dvaitin as Deconstructionist," p. 567 n. 47.

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15 – Ibid., p. 567 n. 47.

16 – Ibid., pp. 575–576.

17 – Ibid., p. 576. (emphasis deleted).

18 – *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1.4: "*saṃpadādirūpe hi brahmātmaikatvavi-jñāne 'bhyupagamyamāne tat tvam asi ahaṃ brahmāsmi ayamātmā brahma ity evam ādīnāṃ vākyānāṃ brahmātmaikatvavastupratipā-danaparaḥ padasamanvayaḥ pīḍyeta.*"

19 – *Brahmasūtra* 1.1.4.

20 – *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1.4: "*sarveṣu hi vedānteṣu vākyāni tātparyen-air tasyāthasya pratipādakatvena samanugatāni 'sadeva somyedam agra āsīt'....*"

21 – *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1.2: "*na. vedāntavākyakusumagrathanārthat-vāt sūtrānām.*"

22 – *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, Introduction: "*yuṣmad asmat pratyayagocara-yor viṣayaviṣayiṇoḥ tamaḥ prakāśavad viruddhasvabhāvayor itare-tarabhāvānupapattau siddhāyāṃ; taddharmāṇām api sutarām ita-retarabhāvānupapattiḥ, ity ato 'smat pratyayagocare viṣayiṇi cid ātmake yusmat pratyayagocarasya viṣayasya taddharmāṇāṃ cād-hyāsaḥ, tad viparyayeṇa viṣayiṇas taddharmāṇāṃ ca viṣaye 'dhyāso mithyeti bhavituṃ yuktam.*"

23 – Samuel Johnson's famous remark on metaphor.

24 – *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1.4: "*nahyaheyānupadeyādvaitātmāvagatau-satyāṃ nirviṣayāṇy apramātṛkāni ca pramāṇāni bhavitum arhantīti.*"

25 – *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1.1: "*iha tu bhūtam brahmajijñāsyam nityavṛt-tatvān na puruṣavyāpārat tantram.*"

26 – *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1.1.

27 – Cited in Nicholas Rescher, *Scientific Realism: A Critical Reappraisal* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1987), p. 151.

28 – Ibid., pp. 153–154. Rescher's use of the term 'knowledge' would cor-respond more closely with the Advaitic '*pramā*' rather than with '*vidyā*' or '*jñāna*'.

29 – Ibid., p. 33.