

54. *Viśeśacintabrahma-pariprechā*, trans. by Kumārajīva (402).  
 55. Opening chapter.  
 56. T. 52, p. 229z 29 - b16.  
 57. The *Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* seems to continue an ascetic tradition that goes the hardship in the arhant's self-help career; one better the *Lotus Sūtra* rose more out of a popular *stupa* cult worshipping the Buddha jewel. But since these traditions are complex, I would shy away from that historical correlation at the moment.  
 58. T. 52, p. 229c 5 - 15.  
 59. See, for example, last chapter (no. 100) of the *Ta-chih-tu-lun*.  
 60. In English, see Liebethal trans. *Chao-lun*, pp. 118 - 123. For Kumārajīva's view see Leon Hurvitz, "Daijō daigisho no okeru ijō to sanjō no mondai ni tsuite," *Ēon Kenkyū* (Kyoto: Kyoto University, 1962) II, pp. 169 - 194.  
 61. Manava is offered in the Japanese translation's notes; see Tsukamoto et al. ed., *Jōron Kenkyū*, p. 76; Liebethal offers Sumedha. Also known as Megha elsewhere.  
 62. T. 45, p. 159c 17 - 23.  
 63. From the *Lotus Sūtra*, parable of the burning house.  
 64. T. 45, p. 159c 25 - 160a 8.  
 65. And the interest in the metaphor of shortening was initiated earlier in the Yaos' exchange when Yao Sung criticized Yao Hsing over *wu-wei*.  
 66. At the conference on Sudden Enlightenment at the Institute for Trans-cultural Studies, Los Angeles, 1981.  
 67. T. 45, p. 160a 11 - 17. Liebethal's translation is unnecessarily confusing once he reads *wu-wei* as *asamskrta*.  
 68. T. 45, p. 160a 21 - 25.  
 69. T. 45, p. 160b 9 - 11.  
 70. Cited by T-ang Yung-t-ung, *Fo-chiao-shih*, pp. 671 - 672.  
 71. T. 45, p. 160b 20 - 24.  
 72. Edward Conze, *A Short History of Buddhism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980), p. 70, states the Indian position on the two as being continuous.  
 73. For background on the trends, I am indebted to Ōchō Enichi's essay, "Kyōsō hanyaku no genshi keisei" in his *Chūgoku Bukkyō nokenkyū*, vol. II (Kyoto: Heirakuji, 1971), pp. 141 - 161 and an English draft translation made by Robert Rhodes (in Kyoto), but it should be noted that Ōchō attributes Kumārajīva's translation opportunity to relative peace under Yao Hsing (see his essay on Kumārajīva's translations, *op. cit.*, pp. 86 - 118, esp. 107 - 108.)

Shlomo Biderman

An ancient Indian parable tells of a traveller who lost his way in a dense forest. Trying to find his way out he encountered a wild elephant which charged at him, trunk upraised. Terrified, the traveller looked for refuge. As the parable concludes, he finds himself hanging on a clump of reeds growing from the wall of an old well, while two mice are busily gnawing the roots of the reeds. Waiting patiently at the bottom of the well were many snakes. Among them, a huge python, its mouth wide open, ready to catch the miserable traveller when the mice had finished their meal.<sup>1</sup>

The purport of this story is to teach the highest value of Indian religion. The traveller is the human soul and his journey through the forest is *samsāra* - the endless and painful chain of suffering and misery which can not be terminated as long as man chooses to see himself as part of phenomenal existence. The only way to stop this suffering is by detaching oneself from this mode of phenomenal existence and by acquiring a right philosophical knowledge about the world. When these are finally achieved, man attains the long-desired state of release (*mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa*).

There is no doubt that the notion of release - that is to say, the assumptions concerning the existence of *nirvāṇa* and the possibility of attaining it - is the most fundamental notion of the majority of the philosophical and religious schools of India. However, among the six main philosophical schools that form what is commonly defined as 'Hindu philosophy', Jaimini, the founder of the Mīmāṃsā school, was the only thinker in whose writings *nirvāṇa* is not even mentioned. Indeed, one searches Jaimini's writings in vain for any attempt at preaching an ultimate release from everyday existence. Returning to the parable quoted above, it thus seems to me that it is not coincidental that the only detail kept in Indian tradition about the life of Jaimini is his unfortunate death, as a result of a savage attack by a wild elephant. Within a cultural tradition that regarded *nirvāṇa* to be the highest value for man, the Mīmāṃsā school is therefore quite exceptional. It is for this reason that it has aroused little interest among scholars and researchers of Indian philosophy and religion. A substantial number of books and articles devoted to Hinduism as a religion and a way of life do not even mention the Mīmāṃsā. And among historical studies of Indian Philosophy there are instances of outright scorn and contempt directed towards it.<sup>2</sup>

My firm conviction is that such attitude towards the Mīmāṃsā school cannot be justified. Moreover, I believe that one can find in the religious position of ancient Mīmāṃsā some promising possibilities for a new appreciation of the religious phenomenon as well as some sophisticated arguments which are relevant to current studies in the philosophy of religion. Within the framework of the present paper I will deal primarily with one aspect of ancient Mīmāṃsā - its standpoint concerning the status of religious language. The position of the Mīmāṃsā on this issue may be familiar to anyone who is acquainted with certain contemporary philosophies of religion. However, my method in the present paper will not be explicitly comparative. Rather, I will confine myself to the examination of the primary sources of ancient Mīmāṃsā, and even when using some Western terms, I will try my best not to distort or misinterpret the ideas conveyed in these ancient Indian

texts.

It seems appropriate to begin with a short historical description of the development of the Mīmāṃsā school. Hindu philosophy in India evolved in six major forms. They are known as *darśanas*, or the six classical schools of Hinduism. The Mīmāṃsā school is considered to be one of the most ancient of these schools and it is not implausible to suggest that it is perhaps the most ancient of all the *darśanas*. The oldest text of the Mīmāṃsā known to us today is the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* which, according to Indian tradition, was written by the somewhat mysterious Jaimini. It was, probably, composed in the third or second centuries B. C. However, there is room to suppose that the actual beginnings of the Mīmāṃsā school can be dated even earlier; there exists sufficient evidence of the activity of several Mīmāṃsā thinkers, before Jaimini, whose writings have not survived. The *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* is, in all probability, a systematic summary of some religious conceptions that existed in India up to the time of Jaimini. Several commentaries were written on the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, and the most important one known to us today is that of Śābara. According to most scholars this commentary was written in the first or second centuries A. D., that is, about five hundred years after Jaimini's lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

The term 'Mīmāṃsā' can be found in some ancient Indian texts prior to Jaimini. It is derived from the Sanskrit root '*man*' meaning, 'to know', and can be translated as 'desire for knowledge', or, less literally, as 'inquiry'. The subject of that inquiry are the Vedas - the most ancient part of Indian *śruti*. The *śruti* - 'heard' scriptures - are considered to be infallible and to possess eternal, absolute authority. *Śruti*, as its meaning testifies, originated in the oral tradition. Its most ancient and sacred parts are the four Vedas, which are supposed to have originated around 1000 B.C. One of the Vedas is made up primarily of hymns in praise of the gods; a second, which contains the same hymns, records how they should be chanted; a third is composed of prayers to accompany the rituals of sacrifice; and a fourth has spells and magic incantations. The religion of the Vedas is predominantly polytheistic, but some of its later hymns imply or state other conceptions which tend to be more monotheistic and even monistic. To each of the Vedas there are attached other writings, also classified as *śruti*. One such *śruti*, the Brāhmaṇas, plays a major role in the Mīmāṃsā religion. The aim of the Brāhmaṇas is to explain the Vedic hymns and rituals, stating many detailed rules and regulations concerning the performance of the religious practices. Whenever the Mīmāṃsā refers to the Veda, it also includes the Brāhmaṇas within this term. In the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, Jaimini's purpose was to offer a systematic explanation of the Vedic ritualistic religion. It is, in fact, the largest work in all the *sūtra*-literature in India and it consists of about 2,700 *sūtras*.

The main purpose of the Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra is presented in the opening *sūtra*. A literal translation of it runs as follows: "Now, therefore, an inquiry into duty".<sup>4</sup> The key-notion of this verse is of course the term 'duty', which is the translation of the Sanskrit term '*dharma*'. *Dharma* was widely used by different schools of Indian philosophy and, consequently, it has more than one meaning. As such, one should be aware not to confuse the meaning

of *dharma* in other schools with its meaning in the Mīmāṃsā system. I have chosen to translate '*dharma*' (within the framework of the Mīmāṃsā) as 'duty', and my reasons will, I hope, become clear as I proceed.

The subject-matter of the Mīmāṃsā is thus the examination of 'duty'. Even at first glance this statement invites several questions: What is the nature of this duty? How is it expressed? By whom is it commanded? The second *sūtra* of the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* defines the nature of duty unequivocally. Duty consists of a total obedience to all the injunctions that can be found in the Vedas.<sup>5</sup> Expressed generally, duty is presented as a set of laws, injunctions and regulations, to which the believer must strictly adhere, both in the positive sense of 'do' and in the negative sense of 'do not.' Thus, the religious verses that appear in the Vedas have a single and unified purpose: to instruct man in the permitted paths of action, and to block off those paths that are forbidden him. It follows that *dharma* or duty is not dependent either on some abstract articles of faith or on the existence of some mental state. In other words, religion obliges the believer only as a set of injunctions, that is, only insofar as religion impinges on his actions. Religion is not therefore intended to provide man with historical, cosmological, psychological or moral precepts; it certainly does not claim to preach a spiritual method of release by which man can attain the absolute Being. The sole legitimate aim of religion is to oblige man to perform certain activities and to refrain from others. If I may rephrase the last sentence in more familiar philosophical terminology, it is clear that to the Mīmāṃsā religious language is a prescriptive language which consists of imperatives. Any attempt to reduce the religious imperatives to indicatives will be rejected by the Mīmāṃsā as a distortion both of religion and the role and function of religious language. The uniqueness of religious language lies in the fact that it does not describe any particular state of affairs; it does not tell the believer that something is the case, but rather obliges him to act in certain ways so as to make something the case. If we adopt the terminology widely used in contemporary philosophy of religion, we can state that in the debate held between philosophers who claim that religious language should consist of indicatives and have a cognitive meaning, and those who claim that religious expressions are not cognitive, the Mīmāṃsā would have associated itself with the latter position.

The characterization of religious language as a prescriptive language is for the Mīmāṃsā the starting-point for lengthy discussions concerning the nature of religious imperatives and the appropriate way to understand them. As I have already pointed out, a basic distinction drawn by the Mīmāṃsā is between 'positive' imperatives and 'negative' imperatives; that is, between commands that oblige the believer to act in a certain way and those which proscribe the believer from performing certain other actions. Indeed, Jaimini suggests many classifications of various religious imperatives. At this stage, however, it will be enough to mention only one of these classifications. Jaimini argues that in order for a command to be considered religious (and, hence, obligatory), it must contain a *novelty*. The existence of novelty serves as a necessary condition for regarding any command as authoritative and binding. In other words, religious imperatives are not intended to command an action, the performance of which is necessary, nor are they meant to authorize an action which would have been carried out by most

people as a matter of inclination, habit, custom, etc. To give a hypothetical example, if the *Mīmāṃsā* had come across a command which calls upon man to "enjoy life with a woman you love all the days of your allotted span here under the sun," it would not regard its primary meaning as religious. The enjoyment of life with the beloved woman (whatever the meaning of that may be) is desired by most human beings anyway, and, therefore, does not require a religious imperative to command it. Thus one would expect the *Mīmāṃsā* to explain the verse quoted above (as it had actually done in similar cases) as having some secondary, non-literal meaning. Similarly, religious imperatives are not meant to command the performance of impossible actions. Thus, when Śābara, the commentator on the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, encounters the Vedic injunction which forbids the kindling of fire in the sky, he is anxious to emphasize that this Vedic injunction should not be understood as conveying its literal meaning, but rather in terms of its relation to another injunction whose execution is possible.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of these interpretations, Jaimini declares in several places throughout the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* that the meaning of religious language does not differ from that of ordinary, everyday language. He even goes so far as stating explicitly that the two must be regarded as conveying the same meaning, since, if it were not so, religious commands would be incomprehensible and, consequently, useless.<sup>7</sup> However, neither Jaimini nor Śābara remain entirely faithful to this dictum, on occasions finding it necessary to modify and even to neglect it completely. Thus Jaimini offers a tripartite classification of the Vedic sentences, as follows: (i) *vidhi*-sentences which consist of all explicit injunctions and prohibitions that appear in the Vedas; (ii) *artha*-sentences which embrace the indicative sentences in the Vedas, describing primarily the nature and function of the gods; (iii) *mantra*-sentences which are basically spells and chants uttered during the religious rituals and sacrificial ceremonies. As I have already pointed out, the *Mīmāṃsā* sees the injunctions, i.e., the *vidhi*-sentences, as the sole constituent of religious language. At the same time it takes the Vedas as a whole to be infallible and to possess an absolute authority. Given that the Vedas include many descriptive passages, these two statements appear incompatible. It must, therefore, follow that either religious language is not totally injunctive or that not all that can be found in the Vedas is equally authoritative. Jaimini is well aware of this apparent incompatibility and presents it explicitly as an argument put forward by the *Mīmāṃsā*'s opponents. This argument concludes that since the purpose of the Vedas is to command actions, those parts of it which do not serve that purpose are of no use and so should be regarded as unauthoritative.<sup>8</sup> Śābara goes even further and supplies the opponents with many examples by which they attempt to undermine the injunctive standpoint of the *Mīmāṃsā*. In one place the Vedas tell about a god who sheds tears. How are we to explain this passage? Should we see it as commanding the believers to shed tears too?<sup>9</sup> In the same vein the opponents ask: How should we understand all the Vedic passages which stand in overt contradiction to our simple, everyday experience? To give but one example: How should we understand the Vedic declaration that during daytime one can see only the smoke of a fire but not the fire itself?<sup>10</sup>

Jaimini presents one general answer to all these questions. According to

him, the indicative sentences in the Vedas must be seen as auxiliaries, put forward to explain and clarify the religious imperatives. Their aim is to praise the religious injunctions, thereby convincing the believer to carry them out correctly.<sup>11</sup> In such cases, therefore, it is necessary to interpret the descriptive passages as conveying some secondary, non-literal meaning.<sup>12</sup> It is in this way that, throughout his commentary, Śābara interprets many Vedic passages. Let me cite but one example in this context - that of the god who sheds tears. Śābara argues that the description of the crying god is really meant to serve as means for understanding the Vedic injunction that prohibits the use of silver in one of the rituals (for at the end of the description it is noted that the tears of the god turned into drops of silver).<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the way from the myth about the crying god to the laconic prohibition against using silver in some ritual is not short, and is achieved by a series of verbal acrobatics which any professional casuist would have been proud of. It is not my intention to follow the line of casuistry. Rather it is to emphasize that, according to the *Mīmāṃsā*, religious language does not possess any indicative meaning. Thus the *Mīmāṃsā* will make every attempt - within the bounds of common sense and sometimes beyond - to disconnect any scriptural sentence from its descriptive meaning and interpret it as supplementary clause to the injunctive sentences. Similarly, the *Mīmāṃsā* attributes only marginal significance to *mantra*-sentences and sees their main purpose as aiding the performer of the ritual to remember what is required of him.<sup>14</sup>

*Dharma*, then, is expressed by the set of laws and injunctions which are presented to the believer in the Vedic scriptures. Obviously, the infallibility of these scriptures is a necessary condition for accepting the religious imperatives as authoritative and binding. In other words, in order that the religious commands would be regarded as obligatory, the validity of the Vedas should be acknowledged beyond any reasonable doubt. Establishing the authority of the scriptures is therefore the central task of the theologian or the religious philosopher. However, the question of the authority of the scriptural texts has been almost totally neglected in recent discussions in the philosophy of religion. This neglect seems to me very unfortunate. The significance of the scriptures to the religious institution is, I think, no less crucial than the significance of the existence of God. The prevailing opinion often sees scriptural authority as derived from the existence of God, who, in this sense, serves as the validator of scripture. It seems to me, however, that a close scrutiny will reveal that sometimes the existence of God, far from being the source of the scriptures, is actually dependent on a prior acceptance of them as authoritative and infallible. The *Mīmāṃsā* is, in fact, one example of a religion in which the question of the existence of God is totally dependent on the assumption of the scriptures as absolutely valid (Judaism being, I think, another case).

Accepting the notion of scripture (*śruti*) to be the backbone of religion, Jaimini does not hesitate to draw the extreme conclusion that from the notion of scriptural validity one can posit the *non*-existence of God. First and foremost, the *Mīmāṃsā* argues that the scriptures - being authoritative, that is, everlasting, unchangeable and infallible - do not stem from any external source, either divine or human.<sup>15</sup> In this context, regarding the scriptures as

being handed down by God would clash with their external nature, thereby weakening their validity. As van Buitenen puts it,

Revelation is by no means God's word - because, paradoxically, if it were to derive from a divine person, its credibility would be impugned. It is held to be authorless, for if a person, human or divine, has authored it, it would be vulnerable to the defects inherent in such a person. It is axiomatic that revelation is infallible, and this infallibility can be defended only if it is authorless.<sup>16</sup>

The authority of the scriptures is absolute precisely because they were never composed. They cannot, therefore, be subject to falsification. More generally, God understood as the legislator or validator of religious injunctions will make the injunctions appear, not as ends-in-themselves, but rather as a means achieving the will of God. As we shall see, such an assumption would deal a serious blow to the very foundations of the Mīmāṃsā religion, for it would undermine the constitutive status of the religious injunctions. We can premise the Mīmāṃsā religion on the maxim 'In the beginning was the Injunction'. A consistent, even though not necessary, implication of this maxim would be the complete denial of the existence of God. If religion is nothing more than a set of obligations and prohibitions found in the scriptures, and if God has no status within these obligations and prohibitions, it is difficult to imagine just what significance can be attributed to his existence. It is consequently not surprising that the Mīmāṃsā flatly denies God's existence, both as the cause of the world (i.e., its creator and preserver), and as the highest authority before whom man is accountable for his actions. The Mīmāṃsā is, then, an outstanding example of an atheist creed. Indeed, a thousand years after Jaimini's lifetime we hear Kumārila (one of the most important philosophers of the Mīmāṃsā school) complaining that the Mīmāṃsā religion was commonly regarded in India as *lokāyata*, i.e., atheistic, and promising to refute this charge.<sup>17</sup> However, as far as the existence of God is concerned, Kumārila's promise remains unfulfilled; in fact he himself contributes some arguments aimed at rejecting the existence of God while at the same time attempting to refute the charge of atheism by affirming the possibility of release (*mokṣa*). If we bear in mind that the Mīmāṃsā is considered as one of the solid cornerstones of Hindu religious orthodoxy, we will realize that a religious orthodoxy is not necessarily identical with a firm and dogmatic belief in God. On the contrary, the belief in God, with all its intellectual and emotional faces, is considered by the Mīmāṃsā to be a degenerative element in religion which undermines the constitutive structure of the imperatives. The latter are understood, therefore, as the alpha and omega of religion.

The atheistic conclusion of the Mīmāṃsā may come as a surprise to anyone who restricts himself to a cursory glance through the pages of the Vedas. Such a reader will undoubtedly discover several passages primarily devoted to the description of the power and glory of various gods. Such passages however leave the Mīmāṃsā unperturbed, and this for two reasons. First, because the Vedas present a polytheistic religion that is much more restricted than at first appears. By this I mean that the status of gods is quite limited. They are not regarded as the creators of the set of injunctions, but as subject to it. Second, the Mīmāṃsā claims that whenever in the Vedas we come

across hymns of praise to the might of one god or another, we are not meant to accept them literally, but rather to see them as auxiliaries to the imperatives. Following this approach, Śābara suggests an interesting explanation for the mutual relationship that exists between the religious activity on the one hand and the Vedic gods on the other hand. He compares this relationship to the grammatical relations existing between the designator in a sentence and its designatum.<sup>18</sup> By way of an example he considers the sentence 'The prince's servant should be honoured.'<sup>19</sup> It is clear that the subject of the sentence is the designatum (the servant) and not the designator (the prince). The word 'prince' has a limited role, namely to aid in the identification of the person upon whom honour and respect should be bestowed. Similarly, the Vedic gods are nothing but the designators of the religious activity. Their names are used merely as means for clarifying the exact nature of the injunctions. Thus, Śābara argues, the concept of the gods does not logically precede the concept of religious duty but, on the contrary, the latter logically precedes the former.<sup>20</sup> The gods are seen as nothing but fictitious verbal entities made to serve the religious activities on two levels - a technical-narrow one and psychological-broader one. On the narrow level the gods are verbal designators, helping to differentiate one religious activity from all others. (Śābara states explicitly that the gods do not help to perform the religious rituals in their material form but rather in their verbal form, that is, by their names.<sup>21</sup>) On the broader level, the gods can be described as the recipients of the various sacrifices, prayers and chants - thus answering the psychological inclination of all those naive believers who find it difficult to understand that religious duty does not serve any external purpose beyond itself.

The emphasis laid by the Mīmāṃsā on the injunctive character of religious language brings Śābara to a bold conclusion concerning the truth-value of all the stories which are to be found in the Vedas. Among other things, these stories mention some biographical details on the life of certain persons from the past. It may, consequently, appear that the Vedas were composed at a definite time which is later than the lifetime of these persons. Hence the Vedas could not be regarded as eternal and infallible.<sup>22</sup> Confronting this difficulty, Śābara does not hesitate to adopt an extreme conclusion - one which would certainly have been regarded as heresy in other religions. He claims that the occurrences portrayed in the Vedic stories, in fact, never happened.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, he interprets the names of these persons allegorically and uses once again all his casuistic skills to present them as verbal means only for the performance of religious duties.

At this stage I would like to dwell upon some of the philosophical implications of the Mīmāṃsā position. As I have pointed out, the Mīmāṃsā reduces religious language to the imperative mood only, and thus religion is presented as a closed system of commands which do not stem from any external source and do not serve any transcendent purpose. Many scholars of Indian philosophy found this rigid conception of religion unsatisfactory. Radhakrishnan, for example, described the Mīmāṃsā religion as "mechanical" and "unsound", lamenting that "there is little in such a religion to touch the heart and make it glow."<sup>24</sup> The religious position of Jaimini and Śābara was

often presented in similar ways. It was seen as an authoritarian approach that does not try to supply any justification whatsoever for its demand for unconditional obedience. The Mīmāṃsā believer was pictured as a trained soldier whose only task is to blindly obey orders - fulfilling his duties exactly as he was told.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, it appears as if the believer is prohibited from reflecting upon the reasons for his actions which, by definition, are devoid of any purpose beyond themselves. In short, the common criticism of the Mīmāṃsā religion is that it is a military-like religion and as such valueless.

This line of criticism seems to me to be based on a conceptual confusion. As I have said, the Mīmāṃsā's critics drew a parallel between religious imperatives and military orders. The latter, it is true, are usually expressed in the imperative mood but, in my opinion, they differ considerably from religious commands. Since I consider this difference to be important in the understanding of the Mīmāṃsā religion I shall dwell on it in some detail.

One of the components that makes a military order obligatory and binding has nothing to do with its grammatical form. A military order is considered as obligatory when it is given by a recognized source of authority. In other words, an utterance will be regarded as a military order if and only if it is commanded by someone who is properly authorized to do so according to the rules of the military institution. Moreover, an essential characteristic of a military order is that its source of authority must be *directly* and *positively* defined by the rules of the military institution; military commands will become ambiguous if and when their source is not so determined.

The issue is quite different when we turn from military orders to the religious injunctions of the Mīmāṃsā. As stated above the Mīmāṃsā asserts that the injunctions do not stem from any external source. They are not granted their authority by virtue of being handed down by some divine power. On the contrary, they are authoritative precisely because they were *not* given by such a power. As such, the authority of the scriptures is defined by using a *double negation*: 'One should obey the injunctions because they were not given by any unauthorized source.'

The distinction between military orders and religious commands lies in the difference between two distinct definitions of the source of authority for these imperatives. It may appear, at first glance, that this difference is merely a matter of terminology, for certainly, from a logical point of view, the equation 'P =  $\neg$  ( $\neg$ P)' is a tautology. However, if judged from a religious point of view, the difference between direct and affirmative language on the one hand and a 'double negation' language on the other hand is not incidental. Consider, for example, that instead of asserting that a military order should be obeyed because it was given by an authorized person A, we will say that it must be obeyed because it was *not* given by *unauthorized* persons B, C, or D. Defining the source of military authority via a double negation would in fact undermine that source and consequently deal a serious blow to the effectiveness of the military commands. For military orders usually serve as a means for achieving certain aims and, so far as I know, any same commander will not regard them as ends-in-themselves (even most extreme military regimes which may claim the army to be an end-in-itself, do not hesitate, when necessary, to rely on its weapons). It follows that any attempt

to define the source of authority of military orders must take into account that these orders are intended to achieve certain aims, the existence of which is independent of the orders themselves. To put it differently, military commands regulate an independently existing set of objectives. Using the double negation in order to define their source of authority will not, to say the least, contribute towards the achievement of these objectives.

Matters are quite different when one considers the religious position of the Mīmāṃsā. As I have argued, the Mīmāṃsā refrains from any direct answer to the question concerning the reasons for obeying the religious imperatives or, to put it more generally, the reasons for belief. Instead it expresses its answer in purely negative terms. I think that by doing so the Mīmāṃsā, far from being evasive, outlines a fundamental feature of its doctrine. Religious laws stand in direct contradiction, not to say confrontation, to all regulative laws according to which many social institutions operate. Thus religion does not intend to gratify human needs, nor does it intend to provide man with any kind of information. Instead, religious laws are presented as ends-in-themselves and the observance of the injunctions is not a means of attaining a goal, but itself constitutes the goal. Since the Mīmāṃsā is well aware of the fact that for most people religion is a way in which they express their inner states of mind as well as a means by which they hope to achieve their aims, it is evident that the crux of the Mīmāṃsā religion is an alternative to all these popular conceptions of religion.

The Mīmāṃsā, then, establishes religion as a constitutive institution. How did Jaimini and Śābara come to this conclusion? In my opinion, a brief answer to that question can be summarized in the following formula: 'religious institution = linguistic institution'. In order to understand the meaning of the formula we must carefully examine the fifth *sūtra* of the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, in which Jaimini says, among other things:

The connection between a word and its meaning is natural. The (Vedic) injunctions are, therefore, the only means of knowing duty (*dharma*).<sup>26</sup>

In the first sentence of the above *sūtra* Jaimini suggests the basis for a theory of meaning which will be accepted, almost without exception, by all the Mīmāṃsā philosophers. The crux of this theory lies in the Sanskrit term *autpatika*, which I have translated as 'natural' and which can also be translated as 'inborn' or 'innate'. In his commentary on this *sūtra* Śābara explains clearly the core of Jaimini's conception of meaning: the meaning of language, he argues, is not a result of some implicit accord or convention between the users of language, but rather a 'natural' or 'innate' idea. The ways we use language and our ability to make connection between a word and its meaning are due to the existence of an inborn linguistic capacity which enables us to follow the rules of meaning and thus to use language in everyday life. As I have hinted above, this approach of Jaimini was later adopted by philosophers of the Mīmāṃsā school and served as a starting-point for discussions in the field of philosophy of language. At first sight it would appear that we are confronted with a respectable philosophical theory of meaning which may exist in its own right. However, it is not inappropriate to ask whether Jaimini's intention was purely philosophical. The answer, I think, is in the negative.

I believe that one should not disregard the fact that Jaimini's conception

of meaning was offered within a religious context. This fact is explicitly presented in the *sūtra* quoted above, where the injunctive character of religious duty (stated in the second sentence of the *sūtra*) is directly derived from the 'innate' nature of language (stated in the first sentence). It is surprising that this connection between the Mīmāṃsā's theory of meaning and its approach to religion was ignored in recent discussions of Indian philosophy of language.

What is the meaning of the equation between language and religion? It should be remembered that according to Jaimini, the understanding of the nature of religion is entirely dependent upon an understanding of the nature of language. To put it crudely, the structure of religion is identical to the structure of language. Language is characterized as stemming from an inborn capacity which determines the relation between words and their meanings. Thus, language cannot be explained only as a means for achieving certain external goals (such as communication), or as a set of rules which regulates some pre-existing activity. On the contrary, the rules of language constitute the linguistic activity and the latter is therefore logically dependent on linguistic rules. Religious imperatives are constitutive in the same way; they command activities which can be defined and explained only by means of the imperatives themselves. Such a religion has no place either for a personal God or for a non-personal ultimate Being. Presenting the idea of Transcendence through the front-door of the religious institution or smuggling it through its back-door will inevitably reduce religious worship to the minor role of a means for achieving God's grace or for attaining some mystical union with the ultimate Being. In that case, the imperatives would have to be regarded as rules which regulate the religious activities towards achieving those transcendent goals. The Mīmāṃsā finds such a religion totally unacceptable and thus insists that religion should be devoid of any transcendent entity whatever. The scriptures, it is true, are regarded as eternal and infallible, but as they have no author or validator, the imperatives contained therein have no purpose beyond themselves. The injunctions are 'eternal' in the same structural way as the meaning of the words are 'innate'; by which I mean that neither language nor religion can be explained or justified by using the terms and concepts belonging to another institution. The injunctive character of the religious language is, according to the Mīmāṃsā, a clear demonstration of the totality of religion.

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## NOTES

1. See *Samaraiicca-Kaha*, II. 55 ff.
2. See for example, S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, London, 1963, p. 405.
3. For a Sanskrit edition of Jaimini's *sūtras* and Śābara's commentary, see: *Mīmāṃsādarśana with the Commentary of Śābara*, (ed. R. G. Bhatta), 2 Vols., Benares, 1910. The *sūtras*, without the commentary, were edited and translated by M. L. Sandal, *The Mīmāṃsā Sūtras of Jaimini*, Sacred Books of the Hindus, Vol. 27, 1925 (reprinted by AMS Press, New York, 1973). An English translation of Jaimini's *sūtras* and Śābara's commentary was made by G. Jha (tr.), *Śābara-Bhāṣya*, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Vols. LXVI, LXX, LXXIII, Baroda, 1933 - 1936.
4. *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra* (=M.S.0 I.1.1.: "athāto dharma jijñāsā."
5. *M. S. I.1.2.*: "codanā lakṣano artho dharmah".
6. See for example Śābara's commentary on *M.S. I.2.18*.
7. *M. S. I.3.30*: "prayogacodanābhāvāt arthaikatvam abibhāgāt".
8. *M.S. I.2.1.*: "amnāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyam atadarthānām; tasmat anityam iti ucyate."
9. See Śābara's commentary on *M.S. I.2.1*.
10. *Op. cit.*, 1.2.2 - 1.2.3.
11. *M.S. I.2.7*: "vidhinā tvekaṅkyatvāt stutyarthena vidhīnam syuḥ". See also *M.S. I.2.8 - 1.2.18*.
12. See *M.S. I.2.10*. Jaimini uses the term *guṇavādaḥ* - meaning a figurative or allegorical way of speech.
13. See Śābara's commentary on *M.S. I.2.10*.
14. See for example *M.S. II.1.30 - II.1.31* and Śābara's commentary.
15. See *M.S. I.1.18 ff.*: I.1.27 - I.1.32 and Śābara's commentary. See also *Sarva-Darśana-Samgraha* (tr. E. B. Cowell and A. E. Gough), Delhi, 1976, pp. 187 - 195.
16. E. Deutsch and J. A. B. van Buitenen, *A Source Book of Advaita Vedānta*, Honolulu, 1971, p. 5.
17. "prayena iva hi mīmāṃsā lokāyatīkṛta; tāmāstikythe kīrumayam yatnah krto maya" (Kumārila's *Śloka-vārtika*, 1.10, ed. K. D. Sastri, Trivandrum, 1926).
18. See Śābara's commentary on *M.S. VIII.1.34*.
19. *Op. cit.*: "rajapupusah pūjyah".
20. See for example, Śābara's commentary on *M.S. X.4.23*.
21. *ibid*.
22. See Śābara's commentary on *M.S. I.2.5*.
23. *Op. cit* on *M.S. I.1.31*.
24. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, London, 1931, pp. 428 - 429.
25. See for example, K. H. Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*, New York, 1963, p. 250.

26. *M.S. I.1.5.: "autpatikastu śabdasyārthena sambandhah; tasya jñānam upadeśaḥ avyatirekaḥ ca arthe anupalabdhe.*