

The Fate of the Excluded Middle Between Truth and Nescience. Mantras and other Senseless Truths in Indian and Western Philosophies

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Abstract: In this paper we will focus on characteristics of language when a primordial truth is posited. We suggest that such a claim to a pristine origination necessarily implies an articulation of a corresponding pervasive nescience, which modifies/distorts the totality of all possible linguistic expressions. To explore such a pattern, we employ a method which maps key-concepts according to their contextual application, divided in two conceptual domains, the domain of the primordial truth, and that of its absence; each of them has to reflect and exclude the other. It is our view that these dependent exclusions show the problem attached any attempt to reconcile the delineated domains. We outline some possible ways to indicate truth, and we conclude our paper by pointing to the Indian use of mantras, which can be characterised as self-validating, necessary and essentially meaningless. This reveals a fundamental principle of originary speech beyond the scope of speakers, contents and communicative purposes.

Keywords: Heidegger, machination, nescience, excluded middle, language, mantras

Introduction

In this paper we continue the exploration of possible implications of an assertion of a primordial truth vis a vis a corresponding pervasive nescience, which we undertook in previous

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publications.² We will therefore briefly summarise the theme of these texts, in order to pinpoint particular implications in the field of philosophy of language, and relate these to the problem of agency: Who is the subject of the speech of nescience as well as that of truth?

The character of a primordial truth has to claim a validity beyond any form of actual meaningful articulation. We have evaluated the concept of an event of truth [*Ereignis*] proposed by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), which meant a rejection of any epistemological or metaphysical approach as foundation of truth. This in fact moved the question of truth back into the unknown, leading to questions regarding possible ways to overcome such a lack of meaningful representation of truth, that is, in the 'between' of, on one side a primordial truth of Being, and on the other side a dominant totality of concepts conditioned by the absence of truth. To highlight such a precarious position, we will apply a method which systematically collects opposing pairs of key-concepts, in order to shed some light on the problem of their 'excluded middle', and to suggest ways to express truth, which are not prone to the pitfalls of 'contaminated' language of beings.

The Being of Truth

We refer to Martin Heidegger's work *Contribution to philosophy (of the Event)* (original title *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*) (hereafter termed *Beiträge*),³ written between 1936 and 1938. We also consult an interesting text written by Heidegger in 1939: "Das Wort-Das Zeichen-Das Gespräch-Die Sprache"

² The present paper is intended to be a continuation of an earlier article concerning a primordial truth and its absence: Mikael Stamm, "The Truth of Nescience," *Prajñā Vihara* 25, no. 2 (2024): 41-68.

<https://assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/PrajnaVihara/article/view/8273/4061>. An extensive treatment of this cross-cultural project is to found in Mikael Stamm, *Indian Perspectives on Heidegger's 'Event'* (Motilal Banarsidass Publishing House, 2025).

³ Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*, vol. 65 (Vittorio Klostermann, 1989). English translation: *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz & Daniela Vallega-Neu (Indiana University Press, 2012).

published in *Zum Wesen der Sprache und Zur Frage nach der Kunst* (hereafter termed *Zum Wesen der Sprache*).⁴

The very purpose of *Beiträge* is to instate philosophy in the context of a transitional position between metaphysics and the thinking of a radical other Beyng [*seynsgeschichtliche denken*], a project which seems to present inherently problems of articulation.⁵ According to the *Beiträge* itself, it is not something to be read and intellectually understood, rather the reader of the text has "to be appropriated over to the appropriating event."⁶ Furthermore, it is emphasised that *Beiträge* does not belong to the author's imagination or personal expression, rather it belongs to the hints or signs [*Winke*] of the truth itself.⁷ We notice a certain exceptional and depersonalizing component of *Beiträge*'s message, and this correlates with a partial turning away from the language belonging to the phenomenological tradition.⁸ This unignorable presence of an anti-intellectualistic undercurrent has been acknowledged in the views of Peter Sloterdijk (1947): "Such a total regard for the appropriative event of opening cannot be learned according to discursive rules and can hardly be anchored in academic situations. By nature, it belongs to the realm of attunements rather than to that of statements."⁹

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Zum Wesen der Sprache und Zur Frage nach der Kunst*, vol 74 (Vittorio Klostermann, 2010). English translation: *On the Essence of Language and the Question of Art*, trans. Adam Knowles (Polity, 2022).

⁵ Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, 3.

⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁸ This makes the passages which expresses an 'authentic' understanding of death somewhat challenging, due to its inherently connection to the field of phenomenology.

⁹ Sloterdijk elaborates on the 'modernized wonder' of Heidegger: "a radicalized pre-rational wondering - that, which ignites in view of the non-datum that is the world. Such wonder, beyond the question concerning the reasons for what is discretely wondrous, bends over the abyss of 'the wonder of all wonders,' that beings are", Peter Sloterdijk, *Not Saved*, trans. Adam Knowles (Polity Press, 2017), 89. In German original: *Nicht Gerettet* (Suhrkamp, 2019).

With this peculiar concept of truth in mind, we notice what is considered to be the current condition of a self-concealment of the primordial Being in the *Beiträge*, that is, a movement of strengthening of non-cognition, manifesting as a seemingly sealed horizon of understanding, what Heidegger terms as the "confusion of the nonbeing" [*der Wirrnis des unseienden*].¹⁰ Thus a scheme can be laid out for us to map: We have selected from the *Beiträge* key-

Domain of Nescience	Domain of Truth
Machination [<i>Machenschaft</i>]	Clearing [<i>Lichtung</i>],
Representation [<i>Vorstellen</i>]	Transformation [<i>Verwandlung</i>]
Beings, objects [<i>unseiende, seiende</i>]	Beyng [<i>Sein</i>]
Abandonment of Beyng [<i>Seinsverlassenheit</i>]	Essential Truth [<i>Wesen</i>]
Distortion [<i>Unwesen</i>]	Saying [<i>Sagen</i>]
Proposition [<i>Satz</i>]	Human essential being [<i>Der-sein</i>]
Human being [<i>Menschen</i>]	Intimation [<i>Intimität</i>]
Lived experience [<i>Erlebnis</i>]	Appropriating Event [<i>Ereignis</i>]
Continuation [<i>Fortlaufen, Ewigkeit</i>]	Choice [<i>Wahl</i>]
	Decision [<i>Entscheidung</i>]

Table 1: Concepts of nescience and truth in *Beiträge*

primary difference.¹¹ In each row we have aligned two concepts which belong to approximate the same level of operation, e.g., Heidegger introduces the concept of ‘machination’ [*Machenschaft*], a kind of technological thinking, which points to a structural nescience, more than just a simple absence of truth, whereas the ‘Clearing’ is the essential illumination of the *Dasein* and the world. They are not symmetrical oppositions, but still belong to fundamental different viewpoints. Another example is the row in which ‘representation’ is shown in the left column, attached to the conventional way to designate and interact with objects; but seen in the light of the event of truth, a break with the representational scheme is necessary, through an unmediated ‘transformation’. Each of the pairs belong together as different viewpoints of the same local

concepts in Table 1, distribute across two domains, a domain of truth and that of nescience, that is, separated by a

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, 8 / Heidegger, *Contribution to Philosophy*, 9.

¹¹ The two tables referred to in this article has been selected (with small modifications) from Stamm, *Indian Perspectives on Heidegger's 'Event'* (Motilal Banarsidass Publishing House, 2025).

field, but only when put together as 'opposites' are they able to explain and reflect each other.

A particular interesting example for us is the opposition of 'Proposition' and 'Saying'. A philosophical proposition typically states something, which can be either true or false. The words refer to objects, qualities, relations, etc., and in philosophy we require that these words are used in well-formed sentences, which express or designate a state of matter. Sentences conveys meanings with which we can construct systematic explorations of a certain subject matter 'out there'. This is not the case of 'sayings of truth'; due to the nature of language, though having a potential for truth, it actually manifests as part of a distortion, the machination. A saying reflects a possible disclosure of the truth of Beyng, but has to carry this out in an evasion of the representational scheme, and therefore does not speak *about* Beyng, but *is* the immediate expression itself. Given the rejection of the representational scheme, we will refer to sayings as capturing an original speech, a realisation of an event as pure possibility (the radical 'other', not yet realised) and necessity (being the foundation of any actual articulation).

Obviously, there is no room for a 'middle' between the two domains, and given there is 'no foothold' for a conceptual frame of truth, these have to be formed from the viewpoint of the current state, nescience. This means that the nescience cannot *be* without the projected truth. But the exclusiveness of the domains has to be posited in order to evade the eroding of the integrity of the key-concepts into an infinity of relative differences and similarities. *Beiträge* has to insist on an 'excluded middle', which is closely connected to the text's self-referencing statements, that is, as hints from the truth itself. It is to be noted that the aforementioned transitional articulation is not a 'modified' type of language, which is a result of a mixture of two states; rather a product of strengthening of the condition of non-apprehension of truth within the present situation, which may give rise to its opposite: A strange anticipation of the other truth, only possible for those who are (somehow) receptive to the Other.¹²

¹² Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, 3 / Heidegger, *Contribution to Philosophy*, 7.

Name of the Speaker

If the operation of nescience or distortion of truth [*Machenschaft*] has been taken into account, some particular concepts of selves emerge, due to a differentiation between the manifestation of Being and beings, and the necessary complication of the role of agency, which is shown in **table 2** below. The question of the place of truth as well as that of the operation of nescience is here divided in three parts belonging to the two previously

Cause and effect of Nescience Ontological confusion of Being [<i>Sein</i>] and Non-being [<i>Nichtsein</i>]		
'Domain of nescience'		'Domain of truth'
'False' subject	Semi-subject	Beyond subjects
'I' mind, ego-sense	Self	Essential Self
<i>Ich</i>	<i>Selbst</i>	<i>Dasein</i>

Table 2- Differentiation of self in the presence of a liberating event

mentioned domains of nescience and truth, which highlight the question of selves in the *Beiträge*. The "I" is to be seen as an 'unconscious' attachment to the machination, and we can conclude that there has to be a movement, a transformation, from the dominance of the "I" (the constructed self) to the true Self (which points to its essence, *Dasein*) if a realisation of truth can occur. We notice that if the concept of a Self [*Selbst*] were *absent*, there will be no way to articulate a transformational event of truth, and hence no genuine agency of the same event; the "I" cannot partake due to its insentient product of machination, and the essential Self seems to be conscious, but has no capacity for actions or decisions, while the ambiguous Self can be touched by the truth of the essential *Dasein* and capable of a 'decisional action' of abandonment of the machination. Consequently, the 'excluded middle' (in terms of our mutual exclusive domains) becomes a problematic semi-subject (dominated by the constructed "I"), which *needs* to be connected to the rightmost part in order to truly *be*.

This question of agency resonates with the question of the authorship of the *Beiträge*, which attempts to reach a level of authentic sayings, or at least to cause the reader to articulate a

'reversive' understanding. In terms of sayings of the primordial truth, the name of the speaker (in *Beiträge*) has to be the *Dasein* (through a necessary expressive intonation of the ambiguous Self), which, having no individual existence, makes the concepts of a sender and receiver of messages meaningless, being essentially one and the same. The role of the "I" is not involved as such, submitted to the mechanism of machination, and thus has to be bypassed in order to reach the *Dasein*. The *actual* speech manifests the operation of nescience, and the articulation of a truth has to adopt alternative strategies of sayings to be able to evade the reign of machination.

Sound of Sayings

Thus, *Beiträge*'s multiple approaches to an articulation of the truth of Beyng (radically different from the that of beings) belong to mainly three categories of characteristic expressions: Rational argumentation, descriptive or persuasive formulations, and privileged sayings:

1) In regard to the *rational discourse* of philosophical argumentation in the *Beiträge*, obviously there is a danger of adaption to a reasoning which is more suitable for the calculative machination than an authentic thinking of Beyng. *Beiträge* explicitly states that philosophy as logical reasoning is inadequate to grasp the thinking of Beyng. While traditional philosophy is limited in scope, true philosophy is different: "in philosophical knowledge, in each case everything is transformed [*Verrückung*] at once [...] and because, accordingly, an immediate representation of something objectively present is never possible, philosophical thinking will always seem strange."¹³ An academic reasoning can never cause such a huge step that a fundamental dislodging implies, in which 'everything is transformed'. Surely, there occur passages in *Beiträge* in which such an argumentation is in fact employed, though mostly in negative formulations, but generally this approach is rejected, being involved in a representational nexus which distorts any conveyance of the thinking of Beyng.

¹³ Heidegger, *Contribution to Philosophy*, 13.

2) In regard to *persuasive formulations*, a direction is laid out: "That conditions a stratagem which within certain limits must always accommodate itself at first to the ordinary meaning and must proceed in company with that meaning for a while, in order then to call up at the right moment an inversion of thinking, though one still under the power of the same word."¹⁴ The 'accommodation' refers to a being situated in the state of nescience [*Machenschaft*] in which language reflects the dominance of beings, hence a metaphysically dependent philosophy. It is not revealed what actually causes this 'inversion of thinking' in 'the right moment', but a certain subversion of 'the ordinary meaning' is asserted. The problem here is that this seemingly middle or mixed position is in fact denied in other passages that do not admit of any such position; we have already referred to *Beiträge's* 'excluded middle', connected to its hints from the truth itself, and to its concept of a transitional stage, which rejects articulation as a mixture of two states united in a single form of articulation. Nevertheless, we observe that this approach is carried out, and this style of language, partly dependent on meanings under influence of nescience, comprises the largest part of the *Beiträge*, and therefore often relying on phenomenological descriptions appealing to the readers recognition, related, at least partially, to an approach adopted in an earlier work, *Being and Time*, carrying out an investigation of Being through a *hermeneutics* of the human essential self, the *Dasein*.¹⁵

3) The third category of characteristic articulations in the *Beiträge*, that of *privileged sayings*, that is, those expressions which supposed to possess a potential for causing a transformative event, above and beyond any persuasive technique or reverse understanding, and which entirely depend on a certain receptivity in regard to a such event. We assume that these sayings hold a potential for a transformatory truth transgressing subjectivity,

¹⁴ Heidegger, *Contribution to Philosophy*, 67 / Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, 83-4.

¹⁵ We have previously referred to the analysis of the phenomenon of death, but the extent of this approach is documented in numerous examples: Phenomena of decision, nothingness, silence, horror, abyss, lived experience, transformation, etc. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Basil Blackwell, 1985).

though separated by an abyss from any conventional significative propositions. When realised the expressions 'suddenly' makes sense, and precisely for this reason, when served their particular purpose, have to be abandoned altogether. The nature of their efficacy remains a mystery, and therefore can be described as '*has-not-yet-happened*' or '*has-already-happened*', but not to be understood in the present tense, due to their essentially temporal nature, and thus not to be mentally represented in mind or conceptually understood.

Now, we are able to identify two different types of articulations connected to the privileged sayings that might shed some light on their nature: *Firstly*, sentences which are actually employed in the *Beiträge* in order to raise an awareness of the primordial truth in the reader. *Secondly*, sentences which explicitly indicate 'something' about sayings.

Thus, firstly, focussing on the part of what is actually expressed in the *Beiträge* to cause an event of truth, from which we have extracted key-sentences to illustrate this alleged efficacy:¹⁶

a) Sentences of identities: 'The truth of beyng is the beyng of truth' [*Die Wahrheit des Seyns ist das Seyn der Wahrheit*].¹⁷ This may be considered to be a sentence of undivided identity, and so in this form the posited identity can be reversed without loss of the implied validity. We might interpret the sentence as articulating a transforming decision, and an actual appropriation would make the two sides identical in the moment of realization. Another example, though not an identity in a same strict sense, is 'Beyng is the appropriating event' [*Das Seyn ist das Er-eignis*].¹⁸ Another example concerns the 'essential' temporality of Beyng: 'the

¹⁶ We refer to the hermeneutics systemised in the Indian *Sarvajñātman's Pañcaprakriyā* (10th century) in order to facilitate a method of realisation of the enigmatic non-dual truth of the Great Sayings [*mahāvākyas*]. The principles of interpretation presented in *Pañcaprakriyā* may be applied to sentences in our examples. See Ivan Kocmarek, *Language and Release: Sarvajñātman's Pañcaprakriyā* (Motilal Banarsidass, 1985).

¹⁷ Heidegger, *Contribution to Philosophy*, 75 / Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, 95.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 369 / *Ibid.*, 470.

projection itself is the "essence" of beyng' [*der Entwurf selbst ist doch das »Wesen« des Seyns*].¹⁹

b) Examples of sentences comprising qualifications: 'Beyng essentially occurs as the event' [*Das Seyn west als das Ereignis*], can be understood as similar to what we know about timely occurrence of events *if* we abandon the objectifying perspective.²⁰ These expressions are connected to a second concept, which has to be reflected upon: 'Beyng is that which is required by the gods' [*Die Götter« brauchen das Seyn*].²¹ Here the second concept ('gods') receives the qualification of Beyng, and therefore has to be reinterpreted in this perspective. A modification of this involves a third concept (well, strictly speaking a fourth, *Dasein*): (in *Dasein*) 'the uniqueness of death correspond to the unusualness of beyng' [*Der Ungewöhnlichkeit des Seyns entspricht im Gründungsbereich seiner Wahrheit, d. h. im Da-sein, die Einzigkeit des Todes.*], in which both (death, Beyng) are qualified by 'similar' concepts, uniqueness/unusualness [*Ungewöhnlichkeit/Einzigkeit*].²² These few illustrations of what we may label as 'sayings' are collected from *Beiträge's* attempt to convey an understanding of a pre-metaphysical truth. There is no absolute method to differentiate them from the persuasive / descriptive passages, except for the concise and relatively direct form that distinguish them as core-sentences of the *Beiträge*. Accordingly, we notice that the process of change of meanings reflects a change of conceptual domains, from the domain of nescience to domain of truth, though, the *meanings* of the sentences, we are to believe, cannot be considered to be a causal factor of an event of a truth of Beyng.

Secondly, the category of sentences which explicitly indicate 'something' about sayings, are selected from the *Beiträge* and *Zum Wesen der Sprache*. We are told in the *Beiträge* that we are facing a problem of articulation when entering the conceptual domain of the 'radical other': "beyng is indeed never sayable definitively and

¹⁹ Ibid., 355 / Ibid., 451.

²⁰ Ibid., 204 / Ibid., 260.

²¹ Ibid., 346 / Ibid., 458.

²² Ibid., 181 / Ibid., 230.

therefore never even sayable in a merely 'provisional' way."²³ This statement indicates that sayings in any context of the prejudicial metaphysics is to be considered to be out of reach (though, the word 'definitively' [*endgültig*] has a mitigating modification), and only accessible in the *event* of truth itself. It is further stated: "the speaking is not something over and against what is to be said, but is this latter itself as the essential occurrence of beyng."²⁴ Thus, the truth speaks directly (without relying on significative meanings) and we are to believe that this *speech* necessarily precedes any actual statements of being true or false, and is to be considered as the condition of any such truth or falseness. Thus, in the *Zum Wesen der Sprache* it is stated: "The pure word is in no way the 'meaning' for meaning only constitutes the objectification of the referent [*Gemeinten*] in opining [*meinenden*] representation [...] The clearing is first made use of unwittingly by the 'meaning' of beings and 'signs' intended for beings."²⁵ Because we have a language that essentially takes place in a sphere of an originary speech event, this is *testified* (though unwittingly) in the actual spoken words, referred to in the citation as 'objectification of the referent'. But, still, we are not able to recognise it, that is, only through an exceptional event:

We are still without the inner law of the mantra [*Spruche*] for the saga [*Sage*] of the history of beyng. But the mantras have their only master [*Meisterin*] the necessity to say the self-same evermore inceptually each time, until at last, without even remotely trying to calculate this through comparisons, one word finally hits the mark [*glückt*], a word in which the voice of Beyng becomes attunement [*Stimmung*].²⁶

We assume that the privileged speech is empty for the unreceptive reader, and hence an event is not to be defined or explained, though, at a certain unique moment *everything changes*.

²³ Heidegger, *Contribution to Philosophy*, 362 / Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, 460.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁵ Heidegger, *On the Essence of Language*, 58.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

Again, we notice that the problem of the role of agency is apparent: The repetition of the 'self-same' is not a repetitive study of a determined individual, rather a voice of truth finds its way to be realised. And furthermore, we notice that the event is not about human communication, on the contrary: "It Is not for the sake of the human being that inceptual thinking contemplates the word; rather the inceptual thinking contemplates the word of gratitude of beyng [*dem Seyn zum Dank*].²⁷ This of course has to mark a fundamental insurmountable difference to the way we use language in the current situation; such an event is hardly even imaginable in its radical otherness. The resort to a new temporality in our conceptual 'domain of truth', has to be far from our current progressive planning and control, and can only *indicate* the possibility of a primordial truth of Beyng, that is, a movement seemingly only accomplished by a radical 'other', with a language infinitely displaced [*Verrückt*], rather than just creative use of what we are left with today.

We may summarise our points in regard to sayings: That they testify the presence of nescience as well as truth; that an originary (temporal) event can potentially be realised; that this event of truth has to be the ultimate source of any articulation; that they are sonically active (spoken, uttered); that this speech is not defined by individual origination; that they possess a certain potency (rather than conveying intentional meanings); that they are regarded somehow to cause an unmediated essential transformation that does not admit of any representational distance; and that everything (including the ontological difference) is affected by this change. In our terminology, the essential Self has to reflect the primordial truth itself, to account for the realisation, marked by as a transference of agency from the human sphere of activity, the 'I', to the primordial Being, which acts through, appropriates, the Self.

With a reference to the previous quote, 'the word of gratitude of beyng', it means that the sayings which indicate an event of truth indeed implies a spiritual and ethical perspective, that is, a profound *openness* and *listening* corresponding to the receptiveness

²⁷ Heidegger, *On the Essence of Language*, 95.

without which the potencies of sayings cannot exert their abyssal efficacy.

The Mantric Connection

We will here focus on a special application of verbal testimonies, generally known as *mantras*, due to the nature of this type of speech, which appears to have no straightforward cognitive or communicative purpose.²⁸ Here the mantra shows what a word can *do* apart from the function of primary or secondary meanings, or, as *Zum Wesen der Sprache* would put it: 'the objectification of the referent'. We provide an example of a well-known mantra, which exhibits some of the features that we have stated above:

*Oṃ bhūr bhuvah svah
tat savitur vareṇyam
bhargo devasya dhīmahi
dhiyo yo nah pracodayāt* ²⁹

It is found in the hymns of *Ṛgveda Samhitā*, later named 'Gāyatrī Mantra' from the oldest parts of the Veda, and the process of the eclipse of the vedic culture, and the simultaneous emerging Hindu culture, showed that the places and ways of worship changed, as well as the pantheon of goddess and gods, but still a strange continuity has persisted guided by a reverence of the spoken word, and in particular a preservation of mantras and hymns. The *Gāyatrī Mantra* has undergone slight modifications through the ages: The addition of the seed-mantra *Ōṃ*, and the '*bhūr bhuvah svah*' (the three worlds: Earthly, atmospheric, and celestial spheres). The rituals in which the *Gāyatrī Mantra* is performed varies according to which tradition the devotee belongs

²⁸ Regarding mantras, we refer to André Padoux, *Tantric Mantras* (Routledge, 2015). Furthermore, an extensive review of literature about mantras is provided by Harvey P. Alper, "A Working Bibliography for the Study of Mantras," in *Understanding Mantras*, ed. Harvey P. Alper (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2012), 327-445.

²⁹ Maṇḍala 3, Sūkta 62, *Ṛgveda Samhitā*, vol. 2, trans. H.H. Wilson (Parimal Publications, 2001), 243.

to, but the sonic performance of the mantra and the power inherent in this, persists independent of what the performer of the ritual thinks it means.

Now we mention three aspects concerning mantric expressions: non-discursivity, sonicallity, and repetitiveness.³⁰ *Non-discursivity* refers to the fact that essentially mantras are strictly one-way utterances, performed by a person with a general or specific purpose in mind, ultimately the final liberation, *mokṣa*. One may say that mantras are necessary and complete because no improvised alteration can occur. *Sonicallity* means that the mantric expression is always manifested in the form of sound (subtle or manifest) not a written formular. The written form of a mantra may be revealed in a text, but can only *exist* as sound form, constructed on the basis of syllables [*varṇas*]. The *repetitive* aspect refers to that the repetition is an essential part of a performance of mantras, which must be repeated a prescribed number of times with the same pronunciation. The rules which govern the number of repetitions varies according to the use and nature of the mantra.³¹ This understanding invoked by a ritual repetition, suppresses the semantical quality to let the sonic aspect come to the foreground: In repetition we understand differently, not ‘the same’.

The examples of vedic mantras uttered in a sacrifice can be said to be entirely devoid of meaning, and such a claim has been made by the Dutch researcher Frits Staal (1930 - 2012).³² His views are quite radical, stating not only are mantras not conventional statements, but additionally that they are not language at all. This

³⁰ The following characteristics are based on the previous chapters’ analysis of unique ‘sayings’ of an inexpressible truth, and the conceptual framework of André Padoux, in the previously mentioned Padoux, *Tantric Mantras*; and André Padoux. *Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras* (Sri Satguru Publication, 1992).

³¹ Padoux, *Tantric Mantras*, 24-53.

³² Frits Staal has brought forward a theory of the meaninglessness of mantras: Frits Staal, *Ritual and Mantras: Rules without Meaning* (Motilal Banarsidass 1996), and Vedic Mantras, in *Understanding Mantras*, ed. Harvey P. Alper (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2012), 48-95; and furthermore, Frits Staal, *Discovering the Vedas: Origins, Mantras, Rituals, Insights* (Penguin Books, 2008).

claim of essentially meaninglessness does have an interesting implication concerning the way the mantras are employed as opposed to language. Staal uses the *Gāyatrī Mantra* as an example of the presence of strict rules for how to remember and carry out complex ritual settings as well as their mantras, and rules for the proper performance in regard to time and places, as well as the number of repetitions prescribed, but no similar uniform procedure for transmittance of the meaning of *Gāyatrī*, simply because it is essentially for the performance of mantras that they preserve the sequence of the sound patterns so crucial for the efficacy of a sacrifice.³³ Staal contends that knowledge of language and how to use words in sentences has nothing to do with how to use mantras, which are more fundamental than any kind of semantical expression. And in this way the statement of meaninglessness is to be understood.

In our context we maintain that it is possible to hold that mantras can be considered as belonging to a separate category of verbalisation. Such a category reflects a use of language in which a sonic imitation and repetition are necessary for the intended causal efficiency, at the expense of fleeting or changing semantical significances. This means that sonic qualities may be seen as preceding any meaningful expression, and that we point to a general attention to the self-seclusion of mantras, which demands that even 'theories of mantras' has to be un-thought for them to be effective, as no afterthought is able to facilitate the rhythmic quality of pure sound, and thus to accomplish a certain abandonment of individuality (that we previously termed as an insentient "I"), and the hierarchy of meanings are attached to it.

Conclusion

The problem of the 'excluded middle' was highlighted by considerations of the possibility of sayings of a primordial truth, while at the same time acknowledging the inherent problems of such a truth, that is, without being degraded into a mixture of our two conceptual domains (of nescience and truth), which carries within it an extension of the condition of nescience. A radically

³³ Staal, *Discovering the Vedas*, 213-21.

different truth requires a thinking which excludes any *meaningful* language of the 'middle' reflecting what has only been indicated as a transformative event. This meant that alternative articulations had to be brought in, in this instance a mantric practice, as a way to point to a verbal expression that did not possess the characteristics of a conventional communicative function. A different approach that demonstrated ways to diminish semantical significative meanings, creating space for a reception of the voice of Being. Our attempt does not solve the problem of the excluded middle, but at least is indicated the possibility of an occurrence, beyond any known causality, of an originary 'linguistic event'.

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