

What is the goal one has in  
view while editing a  
philosophical work?

Elisa Freschi, Artemij Keidan  
(University “La Sapienza”, Rome, Italy)

# Summary

- Introduction: critical editions of non-literary texts
- An example: Jayanta's *Nyāyamañjarī*, book 5 (NM 5)
- NM 5 on the background of linguistic studies
- Conclusions: linguistic texts need linguistic understanding (and so on)

# Introduction

- *śāstras* have been written for experts and not for philologists
- they demand (at least: also) attention of scholars coming from within their own field

# Introduction

- thus, treatises in different sciences must be studied and edited by editors having good skills in the related fields
- for instance, treatises on astronomy must be studied with the collaboration of astronomers, treatises on mathematics with the collaboration of specialists, and not only by philologists
- with such an approach we are often able to discover some non-obvious features in the ancient thought

# Introduction

- an example from western tradition: the case of Archytas of Tarentum (428–347 BC)
- until recently, the works of this Ancient Greek mathematician that dealt with acoustics had not been understood correctly by modern philologists who considered naïve and clueless his writings within this field
- recently his work has been reconsidered under the viewpoint of our modern acoustics and thus it became clear that there were much more sense and brilliancy than it seemed before

# Introduction

- another example: W. D. Whitney's misunderstanding of Pāṇini's *kāraka* system
- Whitney considered the *kāraka* categories a useless and even dangerous method of sentence analysis and claimed that the case-endings were sufficient in such respect
- little did he know about the enormous development of this approach in the linguistics of the 20th century
- today we consider Pāṇini's syntactical theory a brilliant anticipation of Fillmore's Deep Cases theory or its later equivalents

# Introduction

- our point here is that language studies (linguistics and philosophy of language) are not an exception to this general principle
- linguistics is not a field that everyone could access intuitively only thanks to the fact that s/he knows a language
- therefore, one needs to have in view the modern developments in the philosophy of language in order to edit and study an ancient treatise in this field

# Jayanta's NM 5

- Jayanta lived in Kaśmīr in the 9th-10th c.
- His NM is an encyclopedic compendium about *pramāṇas* 'means of knowledge' and *prameyas* 'knowable objects'. 4 out of 12 books are dedicated to language
- it is important to note that language is seen both from a linguistic and from an epistemological point of view (*śabdapramāṇa*)



# Jayanta's NM 5

## On meaning and reference

Jayanta uses several terms which seem to be just synonyms, at first sight:

- *artha* 'meaning',
- *vyakti* 'individual',
- *vastu* 'thing' (also *vāstava* 'actual'),
- *piṇḍa* 'concrete thing',
- *bāhya* 'external' (also *bahir* 'outside').
- *jñānena* 'cognitively'
- *sattayā* 'ontologically'

# Jayanta's NM 5

## On meaning and reference

- are they really synonyms introduced for the sake of style only?
- or is there something else beyond the change in terminology?
- should we give up translating all these terms simply as synonyms of the naïve terms *word* and *meaning*?
- linguistics and philosophy of language can help us answering these points

# Meaning and reference

## Two modern approaches

- two different scholarly traditions have dealt with this issue: analytical philosophy and Saussurean general linguistics
- at the beginning they departed from two opposite positions: determinism and indeterminism
- eventually, both approaches led to the same result

# Meaning and reference

## Two modern approaches

- the lexicon of a language is a finite code, but it must be able to refer to an infinite set of real objects
- therefore, there is no deterministic relationship between lexemes (words) and things
- A lexeme points to a mental category (idea) being the “best guess” for describing a concrete item

# Meaning and reference

## Saussure's arbitrariness

- arbitrariness of language means that there is not necessarily link between certain elements of the language
- arbitrariness → no necessity → indeterminate relationship
- arbitrariness has to be observed at least at three levels:

# Meaning and reference

## Saussure's arbitrariness

1. a lexical meaning is arbitrary with respect to its phonological form (Engl. *dog* sounds different from Skt. श्वन् 'dog')
2. lexical meanings are arbitrarily chosen by every single language (Engl. distinguishes 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow' while Hindī has only कल for both meanings)
3. lexical meanings arbitrarily refer to reality (if I say *table* and there are two tables in front of me, you cannot be absolutely certain which one I am referring to)

# Meaning and reference

## Saussure's arbitrariness

- a communicative act consists in the “best guess” selection of lexemes (and grammatical categories) in order to match one's own mental representation of a perceived real-world state of affairs
- the reference is towards mental states, and is not strictly bound to the external reality (thus, we can call snake something which is not actually a snake, e.g. a rope etc.)

# Meaning and reference

## Formal languages

- formal languages, such as mathematics, were initially introduced into the philosophical analysis by G. Frege
- formal languages are considered totally determinate: the expressions unambiguously and necessarily refer to their referents
- no need for a distinction between real world and mental representations thereof: the referents are the mental categories of science, which are objective and independent



# Meaning and reference

## Formal languages

- still, different expressions can refer to one and the same entity, e.g.:
  - *Hesperus* and *Phosphorus* refer to the same astronomical object, i.e. “Venus”
  - *square root of 9* and *sum of 2 and 1* both refer to “3”
- Frege’s solution: the intension (or *Sinn* ‘sense’) is different with respect to its extension (or *Bedeutung* ‘referent’)
- there can be infinite senses referring to one and the same referent

# Meaning and reference

## Shift to ordinary language

- P. Strawson's distinction between the significancy of the "sentence type" vs. the truth valuableness of the "sentence token"
- P. Grice's "sentence meaning" vs. "utterer's meaning"
- W. Quine's "de re" vs. "de dicto" distinction
- K. Donnellan's "referential" vs. "attributive" use of the definite descriptions

# Meaning and reference

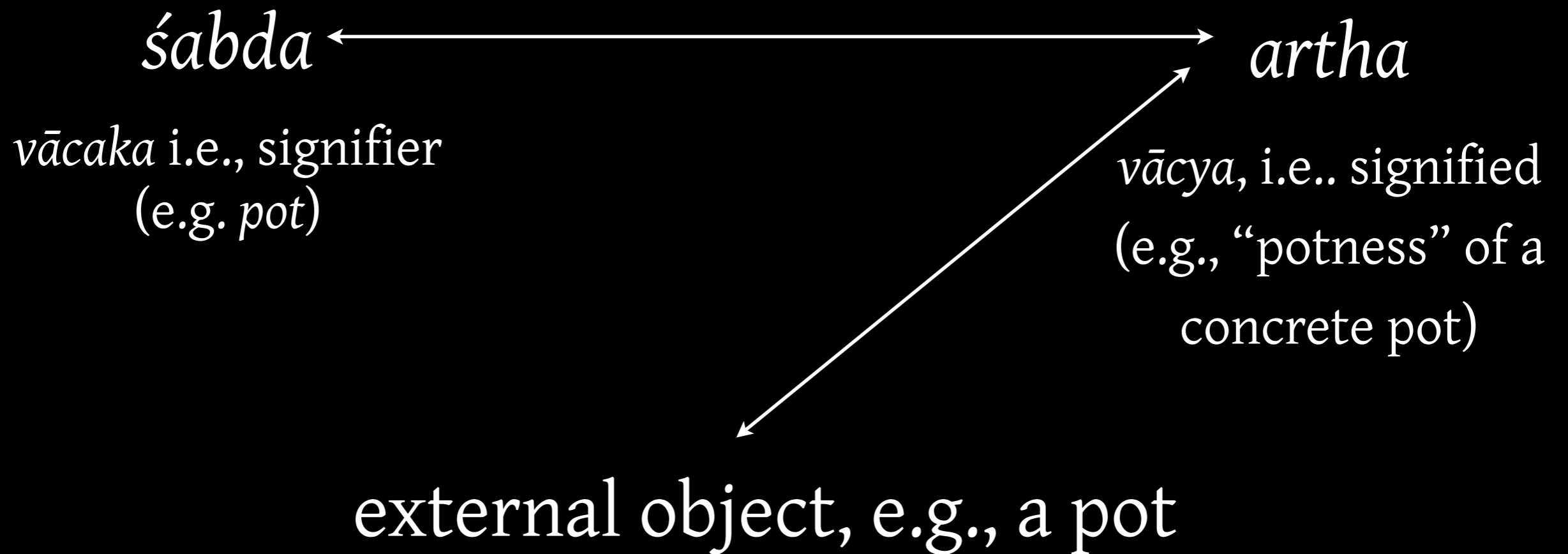
## Shift to ordinary language

- all these terminological and conceptual innovations point to one direction: the concrete reference of an utterance is partly unpredictable, i.e. vague
- in today's philosophical debate vagueness is one of the "hottest" topics even within the analytic framework
- in such a way, the analytic philosophy of language and Saussurean general linguistics have eventually reached the same conclusions

# Jayanta's approach

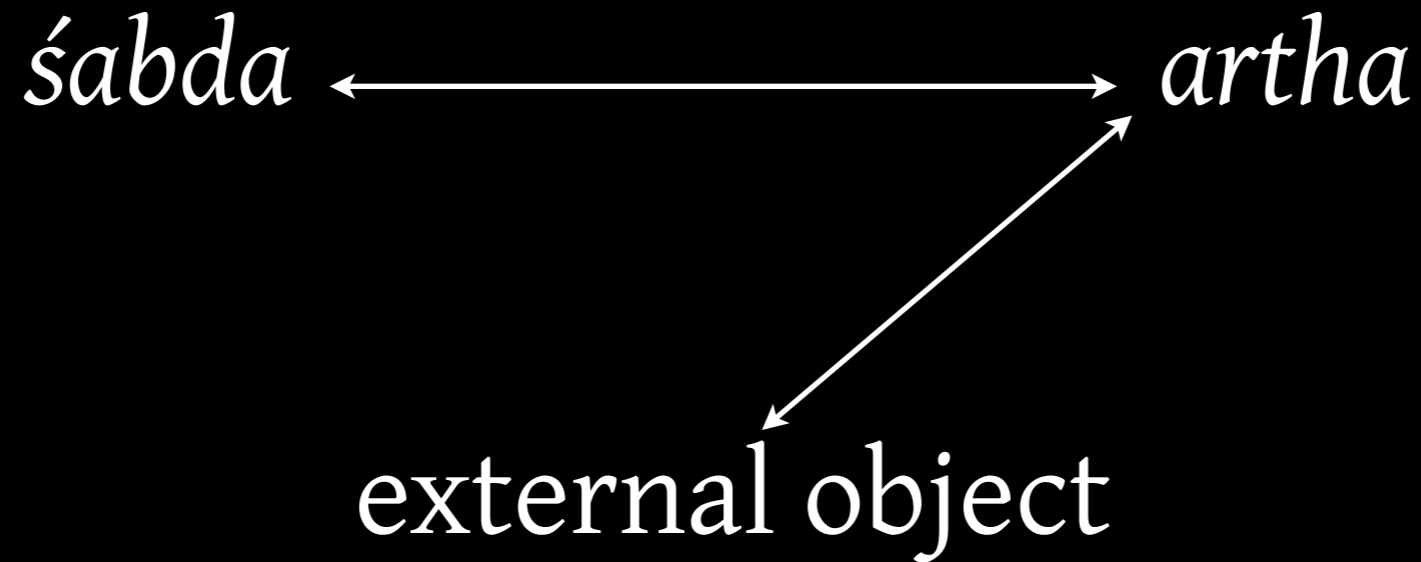
## Words, meanings and reality

- Let us now reconsider our problems with Jayanta's thought under the light of these conceptual tools



# Jayanta's approach

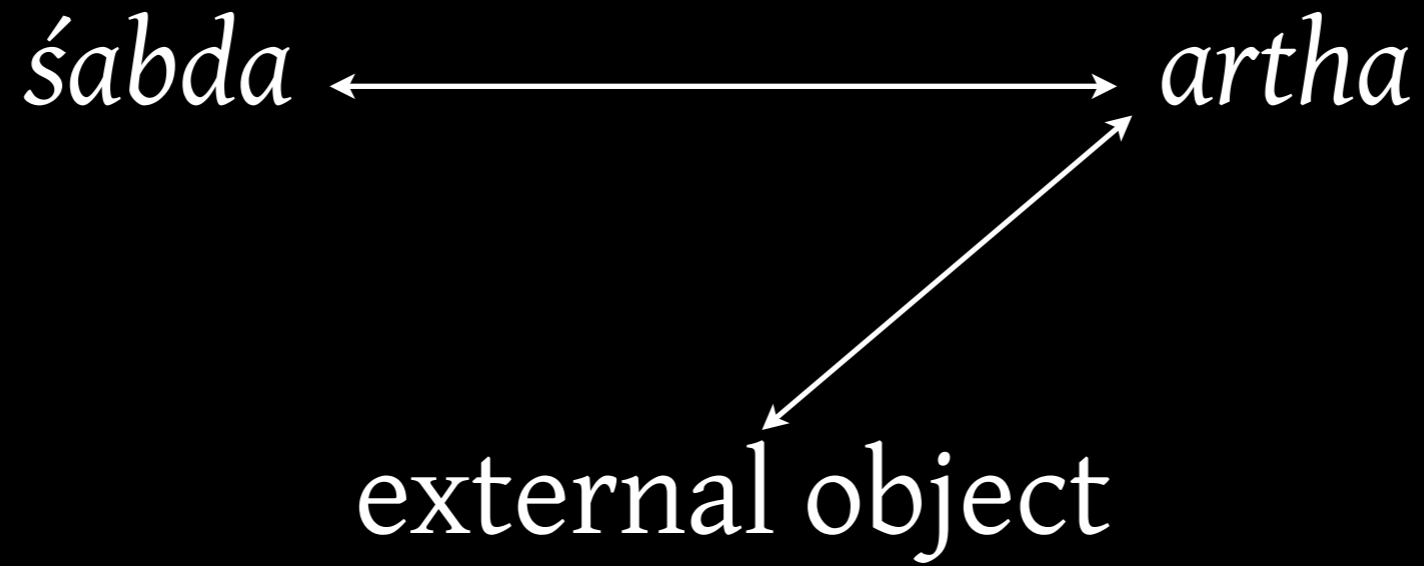
## Words, meanings and reality



- the arrows represent the fact that the items so marked deterministically refer to each other (cf. “extensionalism”)

# Jayanta's approach

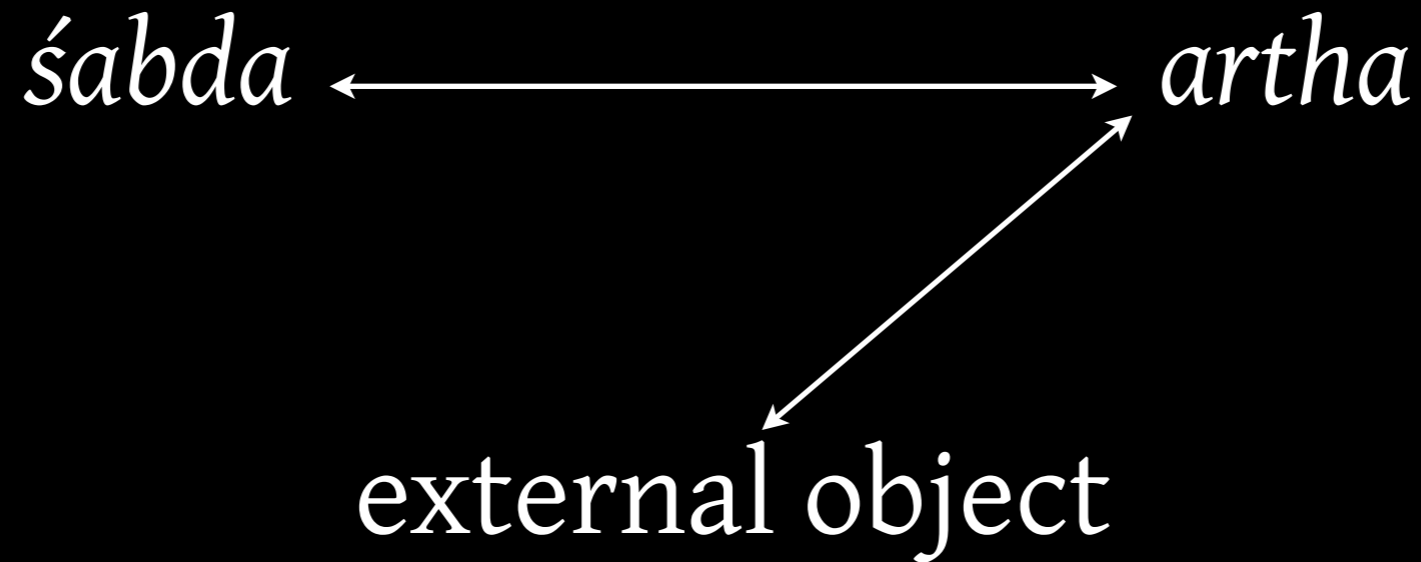
## Words, meanings and reality



- an increased awareness of the linguistic debate may also make us aware of the mental aspect of signification (*jñānena* vs. *sattayā*)

# Jayanta's approach

## Words, meanings and reality



- the external object might be referred to as *piṇḍa*, if one has in view a single concrete entity, whereas *vyakti* could refer to its logical role as distinguished from the *jāti*. Further, since linguistic communication is a means of knowledge, it must refer to a *vastu*, a real entity (Saussure's *signification*)

# Jayanta's approach

## Words, meanings and reality

1. Possible distinction between form (signifier) and meaning (signified) unseparably linked
2. But disregard of the vagueness of the language (similarly to Russell's "extensionalism")
3. Still, something remains unsaid (so, the "extensionalism" is not complete)
4. Awareness of ordinary vs. technical language distinction
5. Recognition of Saussure's 1st arbitrariness (different languages)



# Conclusions

Summing up, most probably Jayanta is not just using different terms to mean one and the same thing. Linguistic expressions (*śabda*) are bound to meanings (*artha*), and thus refer deterministically to external entities as tokens of general classes (*vyakti*), leaving behind the individual objects (*piṇḍa*). In this way, language can be a means of knowledge.

The grasping the theoretic depth of Jayanta's thought on language may significantly improve our ability to critically edit his texts.