

Contradiction in Bhedābheda Vedānta:

A Paraconsistent and Glut-Theoretic Approach to Jīva's Acintya Bhedābheda Theology¹

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Abstract: Bhedābheda refers to a family of Vedānta traditions that assert that ultimate reality, Brahman, is both different (bheda) and non-different (abheda) from the world and individual selves. At first glance, this seems like a contradictory statement. However, most Bhedābheda thinkers, such as Bhāskara (8th-9th Century), Nimbārka (13th Century?) and Vijñānabhikṣu (16th Century), attempt to reconcile the contradiction, asserting, for example, that Brahman is different from the world and individual selves in one sense, yet non-different in another, distinct sense of “difference.” A notable exception seems to be Jīva Gosvāmī (16th Century), a leading theologian of the Caitanya (15th-16th Century) Vaiṣṇava school. According to a widely accepted interpretation, Jīva accepts the contradiction, adding that it is inconceivable (acintya). Despite textual evidence supporting this view, evidence from Jīva's writings and subsequent commentaries suggests his theology might also be reconstructed using the more traditional contradiction-avoiding approach. The purpose of this paper is to offer an integrated interpretation of Jīva's Acintya Bhedābheda Vedānta, one that synthesizes both interpretations while staying true to the key elements of his ontology. This will be based on a version of Graham Priest's Logic of Paradox (LP), which I refer to as a Logic of Partial Truth (LPT). The result is a paraconsistent and glut-theoretic approach to Jīva's theology.

Keywords: Bhedābheda Vedānta, Jīva Gosvāmī, Partial truth, Logic of paradox, Paraconsistent and glut-theoretic theology

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Introduction

Several Indian religious traditions associated with Vedānta offer conflicting descriptions of ultimate reality, Brahman. A prominent example is found in the Bhedābheda Vedānta tradition, which posits that Brahman is both different (bheda) and non-different (abheda) from the world and individual selves. At first glance, this seems like a contradictory statement. However, most Bhedābheda Vedānta thinkers, such as Bhāskara (8th-9th Century), Nimbārka (13th Century?) and Vijñānabhikṣu (16th Century), attempt to reconcile the contradiction, asserting, for example, that Brahman is different from the world and individual selves in one sense, yet non-different in another, distinct sense of “difference.”

A notable exception seems to be Jīva Gosvāmī (16th Century), a leading theologian of the Caitanya (15th-16th Century) Vaiṣṇava school. According to a widely accepted interpretation, Jīva accepts the contradiction, adding that it is inconceivable (acintya). He coined the term that names his school: Acintya Bhedābheda. Despite textual evidence supporting this view, other evidence from Jīva’s writings and subsequent commentaries suggests his theology might be reconstructed using the more traditional contradiction-avoiding approach. This raises some important theological issues.

The purpose of this paper is to offer an integrated interpretation of Jīva’s Bhedābheda Vedānta, one that synthesizes both interpretations while staying true to the key elements of his ontology. This will be based on a version of Graham Priest’s Logic of Paradox (LP), which I refer to as a Logic of Partial Truth (LPT). The result is a paraconsistent and glut-theoretic approach to Jīva’s Bhedābheda Vedānta theology.

Bhedābheda Vedānta

Vedānta is one of the six classical schools of Indian philosophy. Qualifying a tradition as Vedānta means that it primarily focuses on the exegesis of the Vedānta texts—Vedānta referring to the culminating knowledge of the Vedas, presented through a corpus of canonical texts, typically the early Upaniṣads, Brahma-sūtra, and Bhagavad-gītā. Vedānta schools primarily focus on the nature of ultimate reality and its relationship with the world and individual selves. Among Vedānta’s key schools, Advaita Vedānta, founded by Śaṅkara in the 8th century, posits that ultimate reality is impersonal, all-encompassing, and identical with everything. In contrast, Dvaita Vedānta, articulated by Madhva in the 13th century, presents ultimate reality as a personal God that is fundamentally distinct from both the world and individual selves. In between these two, there exists a lesser-known but highly influential family of traditions, particularly in Indian philosophical and theological circles, called Bhedābheda

Vedānta. These schools assert that Brahman is simultaneously both different (bheda) and non-different (abheda) from the world and individual selves. For the purposes of this discussion, I will refer to this dual assertion as the *bhedābheda claim*.

Bhedābheda Vedānta traditions are realist in that they assert that both the world and (the individuality of) individual selves are real, as opposed to being illusory, as defended by Advaita Vedānta. These traditions strongly rely on the doctrine of *Pariṇāmavāda*, which states that the world is a real transformation (*pariṇāma*) of Brahman. In this view, Brahman is both the efficient and material cause of the world. *Pariṇāmavāda* is a particular form of *Satkaryavāda*, the theory of causation that posits that the effect preexists in its cause. As the *Brahma-sūtra* (2.1.14–15) states, the effect is not fundamentally different from its cause. Just as the essence of clay remains unchanged when transformed into a pot, the world, despite its many different forms, retains the same essence as its ultimate cause, Brahman. In this sense, there is a oneness, or non-difference, between Brahman and the world, reflecting a kind of ontological continuity that extends from Brahman to the world.

Although individual selves are also typically understood as transformations of Brahman, their relationship to Brahman is usually seen by *bhedābheda* traditions as that of a whole to its parts. The *Brahma Sutra* (2.3.43) affirms that the individual soul is a part (*aṁśa*) of Brahman and, as such, is both different and non-different from Brahman. Common analogies used to illustrate this part-whole relationship include the fire and its sparks and light, the sun and its rays, and the ocean and its waves. Although one is a part of the other, fire and its light, the sun and its rays, and the ocean and its waves are fundamentally one. There is an ontological continuity that extends from the fire to its light, from the sun to its rays, and from the ocean to its waves. The light arises from the fire and shares its essence; the same is true for the sun and its rays, as well as the ocean and its waves—in a sense the waves arise from the ocean, being an inseparable part of it. Similarly, despite diverse and different, because individual souls are parts of Brahman, there is an ontological oneness or non-difference between Brahman and individual selves.

The way this relationship of difference and non-difference between Brahman and the world and individual selves is explained varies across different schools and thinkers. While the *bhedābheda* claim that Brahman is both different and non-different from the world and individual selves looks like a contradiction, most *bhedābheda* thinkers address it by offering explanations that resolve or mitigate the contradiction. According to Bhāskara (8th-9th Century), while the individual self, for example, is essentially non-different from Brahman, it is only accidentally and temporarily different, due to limiting conditions (*upādhis*). Just as a pure diamond appears red when placed next to a red flower, Brahman

appears finite when transformed by these limiting conditions. To Nimbārka (13th Century?), both difference and non-difference are essential, or absolutely real. However, the world and individual selves are non-different from Brahman in the special sense of ontologically depending on it: they do not have an existence and activity separate from Brahman. He accounts for that by employing the common bhedābheda relations of part-whole and cause-effect, but also the relation of power (śakti) and possessor of power (śaktimān).²

This strategy of avoiding contradiction is clearly described by Andrew Nicholson (2010) in his account of Vijñānabhikṣu (16th Century). Vijñānabhikṣu's basic explanatory move is to interpret difference in terms of mutual absence (anyonyābhāva)—in Naiyāyika terminology, “ x and y are mutually absent” basically means that x is not (reciprocally) identical to y —and non-difference in terms of non-separation (avibhāga). While individual selves and Brahman are in a permanent state of mutual absence, they nonetheless share a fundamental relationship of non-separation. Nicholson thus defends his claim that “it is clearly a misunderstanding to accuse Bhedābheda of holding that p and not- p can simultaneously be true” (Nicholson 2010, 40) in the context of Vijñānabhikṣu's thought as follows:

Vijñānabhikṣu never attempts to uphold a statement in the form “ d and not- d .” Instead, he understands “difference and non-difference” to be a case of “ d_1 and not- d_2 .” “ D_1 ” might stand for “difference” in one sense, such as mutual absence, while in “not- d_2 ,” d_2 refers to “difference” as separation. By mixing the different definitions of difference and non-difference in such ways, Vijñānabhikṣu can avoid logical contradiction entirely. (Nicholson 2010, 46)

Assuming that “ x is non-different from y ” is equivalent to “it is not the case that x is different from y ”, the bhedābheda claim can be stated as:

(B) Brahman is different from the world and individual selves, and *it is not the case that* Brahman is different from the world and individual selves.

Vijñānabhikṣu's strategy is to interpret the word “different” in the two parts of B in distinct ways. Because of that, although the two conjuncts have the same grammatical form—Brahman is different from the world and individual selves—, they express two *distinct propositions*. Therefore, instead of being an

² For an overview of Bhedābheda traditions see (Agrawal 1992), (Nakamura 2004) and (Nicholson 2010). For Bhāskara and Nimbārka see, respectively, (Ingalls 1967) and (Satyanand 1997).

instance of a sentence of the form $\alpha \wedge \neg \alpha$, which itself is a contradiction, B is a sentence of the form $\beta \wedge \neg \phi$, which is not a (formal) contradiction.³

Jīva Gosvāmī and the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta school known as Acintya Bhedābheda seem to be a notable exception to this trend. The standard interpretation of Jīva's theology is that it involves an actual contradiction (Kapoor 1962) (Graheli 2007, 183-184) (Gupta 2007) (Nicholson 2010, 35) (Okita 2014, 82, 91) (Taneja 2022) (Uskokov 2022). Despite clear statements from commentators and textual evidence supporting this view, there is also compelling evidence, both in Jīva's writings and in commentaries, that his theology can be reconstructed in line with this standard, contradiction-avoiding strategy, raising intriguing theological issues. I now turn to an exploration of Jīva and the Caitanya Acintya Bhedābheda school.

Jīva's Bhedābheda Vedānta

There are several aspects that distinguish Jīva's Acintya Bhedābheda Vedānta from other Bhedābheda schools. Aligning with Madhva and other Bhedābheda thinkers, Jīva assigns a strong personal character to ultimate reality, allowing one to say that his concept of ultimate reality is, ultimately, a concept of God. This, however, is multifaceted.

Key to Jīva's concept of God is a verse from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (1.2.11) that says that knowers of ultimate reality say that ultimate reality (tattva) is non-dual (advaya) consciousness referred to as "Brahman," "Paramātmān," and "Bhagavān." Although these three terms—"Brahman," "Paramātmān," and "Bhagavān"—are often seen as referring to different aspects of the same ultimate reality, the distinction between them is more epistemic and conceptual than ontological. They represent varying ways in which the divine might be understood and experienced, rather than signifying separate realities. As the verse unambiguously states, they refer to the same nondual ultimate reality.

Bhagavān is the complete and fullest manifestation of ultimate reality. In him, all kinds of śakti—divine powers, glories and attributes, especially personhood—are fully manifest. Depending on the extent to which these kinds of śakti are non-manifest, ultimate reality is known as either Brahman or Paramātmān. When the

³ From a syntactical perspective, a formal contradiction is any sentence of the form $a \wedge \neg a$, where a is itself a sentence ($\wedge$ and $\neg$ are the logical symbols of conjunction and negation, respectively.) A contradiction can thus be understood as either a formal contradiction or any sentence that entails a formal contradiction. Syntactical approaches are a common way to understand contradictions. W. V. O. Quine (1959, 9), for example, says that to "deny a statement is to affirm another statement, known as the negation or contradictory of the first." Susan Haack (1978, 244) defines contradictions as statements of the form "A and not A"; Graeme Forbes (1994, 102) says that "two formulae are explicitly contradictory if and only if one is of the form q and the other of the form $\sim q$, that is, if one is the negation of the other." For further discussion on this, see Grim (2004).

varieties of śakti are completely, or almost completely unmanifest, ultimate reality is referred to as Brahman: a formless, undifferentiated and impersonal nondual consciousness.⁴ Brahman is Bhagavān, but with the splendor and glory unmanifest; it is ultimate reality experienced and understood in its ‘ontologically purest,’ almost featureless or śakti-less essence. When śakti becomes partially manifest, particularly in relation to the world and individual selves, ultimate reality is known as Paramātmān: the inner controller (antaryami) of all individual beings, the support and the efficient cause of the world, and the guiding force behind the world’s functioning.

This account of ultimate reality entails something extremely important for Jīva and the Caitanya school. It establishes a hierarchy among the different manifestations of ultimate reality: Bhagavān is at the top, Brahman is at the bottom, and Paramātmān occupies the middle. As a result, Bhagavān, as the full and personal manifestation of ultimate reality, is the real foundation of Jīva’s ontology.

It is important to highlight the hermeneutic role played by Jīva’s assumption that these three terms—“Brahman,” “Paramātmān,” and “Bhagavān”—refer to the same ultimate reality. First, because these terms are central to Vedānta texts, Jīva is able to interpret many passages in the Upaniṣads, for example, as aligning with his theological views by using them interchangeably (Gupta 2007). Second, although these terms are widely used in Vedānta texts and by commentators from other schools, Jīva offers a unique interpretation based on his own ontology, which does not necessarily align with those of other schools. For instance, “Brahman” in his framework does not denote ultimate reality in a general sense, as it typically does in most Vedānta schools. Rather, it refers to a specific mode in which ultimate reality—designated by the term “*tattva*”—is realized.

A central element of this model of God is the concept of śakti.⁵ Bhagavān, or God, possesses several kinds of śakti, being therefore known as śaktiman, the possessor of śakti. God’s śakti is intrinsic to God’s very nature. Just as fire and its light are inseparable, with light naturally emanating from fire, God’s several kinds of śakti are equally inseparable from God: they ontologically depend on God, arising from God’s own nature. Commenting on this analogy, Ravi Gupta (2007, 40) writes as follows:

⁴ Elsewhere—specifically in the Bhagavat-sandarbhā, which Jīva refers to as containing the Brahma-sandarbhā—Jīva states that sat (existence), cit (consciousness), and ānanda (bliss) are considered Brahman’s qualities. Thus, Jīva’s concept of Brahman appears to be saguna, or with qualities. I am grateful to Alan Herbert for bringing this to my attention.

⁵ For a complete account of Jīva’s concept of God and the corresponding concept of śakti see (Kapoor 1962, 90–100), (Gupta 2007, 33–39), (Taneja 2022), (Uskokov 2022), and (Herbert; Silvestre 2024). The account I give here to the tripartite distinction between Brahman, Paramātmān and Bhagavān is closer to the one of (Gupta 2007) and (Uskokov 2022) than to the one of (Herbert; Silvestre 2024).

First and foremost, the analogy is used to argue for the innate (svābhāvika) nature of Bhagavān's śakti. [...] In Jīva Gosvāmī's writings, we find a persistent emphasis on the naturalness of the Lord's śakti, for his concern here—even more than in the threefold Godhead doctrine—is to preserve the unity and simplicity of the Supreme. The most important scriptural proof-text in this regard comes from the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, which says, "It is known that [his] śakti is supreme, manifold, and part of his very nature."

The term "śakti" has been translated into English in numerous ways, including power, energy and potency. In the context of Jīva and other theologians of the Caitanya school, the term covers a large range of things, including God's divine attributes and realm, individual selves, and the world and its manifold parts.⁶ All these are God's śakti. In fact, with exception to God himself, everything is God's śakti. This, combined with the inherent nature of God's śakti and its consequent ontological dependence on God, supports Vedānta's monistic principle that ultimate reality is one.

It is not at all clear how entities typically regarded as substances (things that are supposed to exist in themselves, independently of anything else)—such as individual selves, the objects that populate the world, and the material stuff of which the world is composed—can be understood as God's śakti in this sense. The simplest, though not without its challenges, explanation is to consider that "In themselves, they are substances, but in relation to God, they are [like] attributes because their existence is contingent on him as their locus and because they manifest the features that constitute God as a qualified unit and a person." (Uskokov 2022, 708).

God's śakti is divided into three categories. First, the internal (antaraṅga or svarūpa) śakti, which includes God's attributes and the spiritual realm in which God resides and carries out His divine activities (līlā). Second, the marginal (taṭastha) śakti, which consists of the individual selves who exist in this world; following the Brahma Sutra and the Vedānta tradition, Jīva regards these individual selves as parts (amśa) of God. Third, the external (bahiraṅga) śakti, also known as māyā śakti, which encompasses the material stuff that transforms into the world. In Jīva's Bhedābheda Vedānta, the world is a transformation of ultimate reality only in an indirect sense. Through the external śakti, God sets the world into motion, yet remains aloof from its activities. Jīva's doctrine of creation is thus referred to as Śaktipariṇāmavāda.

Jīva offers another analogy to clarify this threefold division of śakti. The sun gives rise to (1) the fiery radiance within its orb, (2) the rays that extend outward from it, and (3) the sun's reflection on the surface of the water, for example. In

⁶ It is important to note that a similar use of the word "śakti" is already found in earlier Bhedābheda thinkers, such as Bhāskara and Nimbārka, who also considered the world and individual selves as Brahman's śakti.

this analogy, the sun represents God, while (1) corresponds to the internal śakti, (2) to the marginal śakti, and (3) to the external, māyā śakti. A key point in the analogy is that, while (1)-(3) all proceed from and ontologically depend on the sun, their relationship to it varies in terms of proximity and connection. In particular, although (3) is caused by the sun and ontologically dependent on it, the fluctuations of the reflection on the water do not disturb the sun itself. Similarly, the imperfections and evils present in the world, though arising from God's māyā śakti, do not touch God. But in all cases, there is an ontological continuity that extends from God to śakti. This is particularly relevant in relation to māyā śakti and the world. Despite its external and distant nature, the sun's reflection on the water is still caused by the sun, which, according to the principle of Satkaryavāda, implies that the reflection somehow preexists in the sun. As māyā śakti remains a śakti of God, and as the world is a transformation of māyā śakti, there is an ontological continuity that extends from God to māyā śakti, and then from māyā śakti to the world.

It is this ontological continuity that extends from God to God's śakti, or from śaktimān to śakti that underpins Jīva's Bhedābheda doctrine. Despite Jīva's repeated claim that the world and the individual selves are different and non-different from God, this claim subsumes under a more general claim about śakti and śaktimān. In the same way that there is difference and non-difference between fire and its light—fire and its light are inseparable, with light naturally emanating from fire and sharing the same nature as fire—, śakti and śaktimān are both different and non-different from each other.

Acintya Bhedābheda Vedānta: A Contradictory Theology

Another distinguishing feature of Jīva's Acintya Bhedābheda Vedānta is its use of the word "acintya" (inconceivable) to qualify the relation of difference and non-difference that is supposed to exist between śakti and śaktimān. To Jīva, śakti and śaktimān are inconceivably different and non-different from each other. Jīva's bhedābheda claim therefore amounts to two claims:

(S) *Śakti/śaktimān claim*: Śakti and śaktimān are different and non-different from each other.

(A) *Acintya claim*: S is inconceivable (acintya).

Oddly enough, the expression "acintya bhedābheda" appears only twice in Jīva's works. In his Sarva-saṁvādinī—a commentary on the first four volumes of his masterpiece, the Ṣaṭ-sandarbhā—, while commenting on Paramātmā-sandarbhā 77, Jīva reviews a couple of positions regarding the issue of difference and non-difference and states his own view as being one of acintya bhedābheda,

inconceivable difference and non-difference. A bit later he says that his acceptance of acintya bhedābheda is due to the fact that God's śakti is acintya. Among other things, God's śakti makes the impossible possible, being thus very difficult to grasp or conceive. This highlights a crucial connection between God's śakti and Jīva's bhedābheda doctrine. According to Jīva, since God's śakti is acintya, the relationship of difference and non-difference between śakti and śaktimān is also acintya.

The role played by the concept of acintya in Jīva's theology has had significant implications for the appraisal and understanding of the Caitanya Acintya Bhedābheda school. First, it has been at least partially responsible for the standard interpretation of Jīva's school as involving an actual contradiction (Kapoor 1962) (Graheli 2007, 183-184) (Gupta 2007) (Nicholson 2010, 35) (Okita 2014, 82;91) (Taneja 2022) (Uskokov 2022). Ravi Gupta (2007, 45–46), for example, writes:

The relationship between Bhagavān and his energies is bhedābheda, simultaneous difference and non-difference. [...] This, of course, is inconceivable to the human mind, and so the relation of bhedābheda is called acintya, inconceivable [...] Now, this derivation of acintya rests on an important assumption [...] that all scriptural statements about Brahman—those affirming difference and those affirming non-difference—must be given equal weight and taken in their direct sense. Even the contradictions arising from reasoning about the nature of Brahman [...] are dependent on scripture, for it is scripture that tells us that Brahman must have all these opposing qualities.

In his turn, O. B. L. Kapoor (1962, 153) states as follows:

In his Bhagavat-sandarbha, Śrī Jīva defines Acintya as the power which can reconcile the impossible [...] commenting on Viṣṇu-purāṇa verses I.VI.1-3, he interprets the word Acintya as that which [...] is [...] incomprehensible on account of the contradictory notions of identity and difference it involves [...] Simultaneous existence of identity and difference is acintya, or inconceivable, because it is contradictory.

These authors follow what appears to be the standard scholarly interpretation of Jīva's use of the term "acintya," understanding it in its conventional sense of inconceivable or beyond thought.⁷ Even those who question this interpretation generally connect whatever meaning they attribute to "acintya" with the

⁷ Edward Dimock, for example, translates "acintya" as "incomprehensible" (Dimock 1963, 110) and "logically inconceivable" (Dimock 1989, 162); Aleksandar Uskokov (2022, 708) translates it as "inconceivable"; and Leena Taneja (2022, 14), translates it as "inconceivable, beyond the power of comprehension."

understanding that the tradition does involve some form of contradiction. For example, Alessandro Graheli (2007, 183 –184) writes as follows:

The solution elaborated by Caitanya and his followers is “paradoxical difference and non-difference” (*acintyabhedābheda*). Paradoxical, and not inconceivable, because they do not negate conceivability altogether, rather they deny the possibility of conceivability by means of humanly instruments of knowledge, i.e. perception and inference: “Only the Veda, whose language is ultra-mundane, is a means of knowledge for us who desire to know that thing which is beyond everything, the support of everything, not conceivable by anyone and having a marvellous nature” (TSan 10). In short, *acintyabhedābheda* is the mind-boggling coexistence of two contradictory qualities in the person of God. This doctrine stands as an axiomatic key of interpretation of most tenets in Gaudīya religion.

Second, Jīva’s use of the word “*acintya*” is usually thought as reconciling the two main conflicting Vedānta positions on the relation between ultimate reality on one hand and the world and individual selves on the other. Leena Taneja (2022, 15), for example, writes as follows:

Śrī Jīva employed the *śakti/śaktiman* distinction to show, against Śāṅkara, that differences are real, not illusions or *māyā*. But he had to ensure that by making such an assertion he was not divesting Bhagavān of his supreme unity. He solved this problem by inserting that the relation between *śakti* and *śaktiman* was inconceivable or *acintya*, that is, beyond human comprehension. [...] He strategically juxtaposes the principles of identity and difference by resituating their incompatibility in the incomprehensible space of *acintya*, thus by passing or at least resolving to not resolve the paradox inherent in their simultaneous relation.

But this comes at a cost, which is the obvious result of qualifying anything as inconceivable. As Andrew Nicholson (2010, 35) aptly states, qualifying the relation that supposedly holds between *śakti* and *śaktiman* as *acintya* can be problematic:

Caitanya was also a Vaiṣṇava theologian, famous for a school of thought known as *Acintyabhedābheda* (Inconceivable Difference and Non-difference) [...] This system’s notion of “inconceivability” (*acintyatva*) is a central concept used to reconcile [...] contradictory notions, such as [...] the difference and non-difference of God and his powers. This notion has also led some philosophers to accuse all *Bhedābheda*vādins of being irrationalists.

The accusation of the *acintya* *bhedābheda* position as ‘irrationalist’ has, of course, to do with both its *śakti/śaktimān* claim (S) and its *acintya* claim (A), but

also with the supposed fact that it disrespects the law of non-contradiction. And as Kapoor (1962, 155–157) aptly states, these three things are intimately related:

The inconceivability of the relation is evident from the contradiction it involves [...] The acintya is that which is illogical, but we have to accept on the basis of the holy texts [...] The concept of acintya is born out of respect for scriptural authority, which ignores the law of contradiction.

According to this interpretation, the śakti/śaktimān claim is an actual contradiction—and not an apparent one that could be resolved through some semantic maneuver—that, as such, disrespects the law of non-contradiction. For that to be the case, the word “different” must have the same meaning in the two components of the conjunction S. Assuming again that “ x is non-different from y ” is equivalent to “it is not the case that x is different from y ”, where the sense of “different” is fixed, Jīva’s bhedābheda claim can be restated as the two claims below:

- (Sc) Śakti and śaktimān are different from each other, and *it is not the case* that śakti and śaktimān are different from each other.
 (Ac)Sc is inconceivable.

Letting β be the sentence “śakti and śaktiman are different from each other”, Sc amounts to the following claim:

$$(Sc) \beta \wedge \neg \beta.$$

Needless to say, Sc is a contradiction. But there is more. Assuming, first, the following (strong) semantic version of the law of non-contradiction

- (LNC) *Law of Non-Contradiction*: There cannot be a sentence α such that $\alpha \wedge \neg \alpha$ is true, or, equivalently, there cannot be true contradictions, or still, true contradictions are logically impossible.⁸

and, second, that logical impossibility entails inconceivability (which Kapoor seems to assume), we have that Ac follows from Sc.

⁸ This is a semantic modal formulation of the law of non-contradiction, with the modal aspect making it a ‘strong’ version of the law. There are at least two main ways of semantically forbidding contradictions: with or without modality. While Aristotle’s famous formulation—“... the most indisputable of all beliefs is that contradictory statements are not at the same time true.” (Aristotle c.350 bc)—is an exemplar of the latter, Arthur Prior’s is an exemplar of the former (as it is LNC): “The law of contradiction asserts that a statement and its direct denial cannot be true together (‘not both p and not- p ’) ...” (Prior 1967, 461). For a discussion of the various ways the law of non-contradiction can be formulated, see Grim (2004).

Despite its wide acceptance, this interpretation of Jīva's Acintya Bhedābheda school conflicts with another, equally reasonable interpretation of Jīva's theology, proposed by some of the very commentators who defend the contradictory view. I now turn to that second interpretation.

Acintya Bhedābheda Vedānta: A Standard, Non-Contradictory Theology

Some commentators, in discussing Jīva's thought, employ an expanded vocabulary that significantly alters the interpretation mentioned above. This vocabulary includes terms such as "absolute identity," "absolute difference," "total difference," and "absolute monism."

For instance, when discussing Jīva's use of the sun-sunray analogy, particularly in the context where one points to a ray of sunlight entering through a hole and says, "This is the sun," Gupta (2007, 43) offers the following explanation (with the italics added by me):

Jīva Goswāmī uses the jīva-ray analogy in a more restricted way in the Tattva-sandarbhā [...] This parable describes the pedagogical method used by the Upaniṣads to reveal the nature of Brahman. They point to the jīva [the individual self] and say, "This is Brahman." Phrases such as "tat tvam asi" should not be taken as statements of *absolute identity*, but only as indications of similar natures.

Taneja (2022, 16) says that "The Gauḍīya tradition states that since the jīva-ātman [the individual self] derives its origin from Bhagavān, it is not *totally different* from Bhagavān." A bit later, when commenting on the fire-spark analogy, she says that "the spark is neither *totally different* from nor *absolutely identical* with the fire, which is its source." Kiyokazu Okita (2014, 76) states that "One way [...] in which Jīva distinguishes himself from Śrīdhara [14th Century?], is his strong rejection of *absolute monism* (kevalādvaitavāda) [...]"

Perhaps the clearest and most comprehensive example of this approach is found in Kapoor (1962, 154), who writes as follows:

Just as there is neither absolute identity nor absolute difference between fire and its power, there is neither absolute identity nor absolute difference between Brahman and his Śakti.

The reason for that is twofold. First,

Absolute identity would mean absolute identity between Brahman and the individual souls and between Brahman and the world. The faults of the jīvas [the individual souls] and the world would then be the faults of Brahman. To keep

Brahman free from these faults, it would be necessary to regard the Jīvas and the world as illusory [which is the position of Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta.]

Second,

If Brahman and his Śakti were regarded as absolutely different, that would give rise to dualism [which is the position of the Dvaita Vedānta of Madhva] and the principle of oneness of all things (advayatva) stressed by the Śāstras [specifically, the Vedānta texts] and implied by logical thinking would be contradicted.

Underlying the explanation above is the recognition of an ambiguity in the interpretation of the terms “difference” and “identity” (which, following Jīva's standard terminology, I replace with the term “non-difference.”) While these terms can be understood as referring to “absolute difference” and “absolute non-difference,” Kapoor argues that this is not the correct way to understand Jīva's śakti/śaktimān claim. If interpreted in this way, it would lead to the claim that

(S_{M-S}) Śakti and śaktimān are absolutely different and absolutely non-different from each other,

which is rejected by Kapoor, as it would align with the positions of Śaṅkara and Madhva, which Jīva argues against (particularly Śaṅkara's). As illustrated in the analogy provided by Kapoor, there is neither absolute difference nor absolute non-difference between fire and its light. However, as Jīva and other members of the acintya bhedābheda school use the analogy, because the light shares the nature of the fire, fire and its light are both different and non-different from each other. Yet, since they are neither absolutely different nor absolutely non-different, they are therefore partially different and partially non-different from each other. This seems in fact to be a commonsensical understanding of the relation between fire and its light.

Similarly, since śakti and śaktimān are both different and non-different from each other, but neither absolutely different nor absolutely non-different, it follows that, due to their shared nature, they are partially different and partially non-different from each other. Therefore, according to this interpretation, the proper way to state the śakti/śaktimān claim is:

(S_K) Śakti and śaktimān are partially different and partially non-different from each other.

But S_K is not a contradiction. “*x* is partially non-different from *y*” is not equivalent to “it is not the case that *x* is partially different from *y*.” Instead, it is

equivalent to “it is not the case that x is *absolutely* different from y .” Therefore, S_K can be stated as

(S_K) Śakti and śaktimān are partially different from each other, and *it is not the case* that śakti and śaktimān are absolutely different from each other.

Again, S_K is not contradictory, as its two parts—“Śakti and śaktimān are partially different from each other.” and “Śakti and śaktimān are absolutely different from each other.”—express two distinct propositions. Letting α be the sentence “Śakti and śaktimān are partially different from each other.” and φ the sentence “Śakti and śaktimān are absolutely different from each other.”, S_K would be formally represented as

(S_K) $\alpha \wedge \neg \varphi$

which is clearly not a formal contradiction.

We have thus the same classical move made by Vijñānabhikṣu and other bhedābheda theologians of interpreting in distinct ways the word “different” in the two parts of the bhedābheda claim. While the first occurrence of “different” stands for “partial difference”, the second one stands for “absolute difference,” thus resolving the contradiction.⁹

A Theological Problem

According to the first, contradictory interpretation, Jīva’s bhedābheda claim amounts to the following two claims:

(S_c) [Śakti and śaktimān are different from each other] and it is not the case that [śakti and śaktimān are different from each other].

(A_c) S_c is inconceivable.

where “different” has the same meaning in the two parts of S_c . On the other hand, according to the second, non-contradictory interpretation, Jīva’s bhedābheda claim amounts to the two claims below:

⁹ This approach is also present in the commentaries and popular books of practitioners within the tradition. For example, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami employs the terms “qualitative oneness” and “quantitative difference” to describe the relation between Bhagavān and individual selves. According to him, “In the Bhagavad-gītā Kṛṣṇa clearly says, ‘All living entities are My parts and parcels. Qualitatively they are one with Me, but quantitatively they are different.’ So we are simultaneously one with and different from God. That is our relationship” (Bhaktivedanta 1994, 310).

(S_K) [Śakti and śaktimān are partially different from each other] and it is not the case that [śakti and śaktimān are absolutely different from each other].

(A_K)S_K is inconceivable (acintya).

There are several issues that arise from these two interpretations. First, the obvious problem is that the two interpretations are in conflict with each other.

Second, the first interpretation seems to conflict with the analogies that play such a crucial role in Jīva's theology. From a commonsensical perspective, there is no contradiction in the claim that fire and its light are both different and non-different from each other. For example, one only needs to understand "different" in terms of partial difference, as the second interpretation does.

Third, the acceptance of a contradiction such as S_c implies a weakening of the law of non-contradiction, a position that does not align with Jīva's writings. Throughout his work, Jīva often seems to employ the law of non-contradiction, or something very close to it, in his arguments. When critiquing opposing views, for example, he frequently concludes that they are contradictory, which provides sufficient grounds for him to reject them. He also offers several defenses against accusations that some positions aligned with his theology are contradictory.

Fourth, there is the issue of coupling the first interpretation with the challenge that it transforms Jīva's Bhedābheda Vedānta into a contradictory theology. This problem is closely tied to the law of non-contradiction. LNC asserts that true contradictions cannot exist, entailing that any contradiction is a priori false. This, in turn, entails that any theology containing or leading to a contradiction is also a priori false. Furthermore, if the contradiction pertains to the theology's concept of God, as is the case with Jīva's theology, it follows that it is a priori false there is an object that falls under such a concept of God. Therefore, one could conclude a priori that Jīva's God, so to speak, does not exist.

Moreover, another formulation of the law of non-contradiction, known as the principle of explosion or *ex contradictione sequitur quodlibet*, states that anything follows from a contradiction:

(PE) *Principle of Explosion*: If α is a contradiction, then for any sentence β , α entails β .¹⁰

¹⁰ A more general formulation of the PE, framed in terms of contradictory sets of sentences rather than individual sentences, can be stated as follows: if Γ is contradictory set of sentences, then for any sentence β , Γ entails β . A set of sentences Γ is contradictory if, for some sentence α , Γ entails both α and $\neg\alpha$; $\{\alpha, \neg\alpha\}$ is the minimal instance of a contradictory set. The reason PE is considered a formulation of the law of non-contradiction is simple: to the extent that trivial theories—sentences or sets of sentences from which everything follows—are to be avoided, PE inferentially forbids contradictions (Restall 2004, 75).

As a result, anything follows from a contradictory theology. However, reasoning about a theology—or any theory, for that matter—requires the ability to distinguish between sentences that logically follow from it and those that do not, as well as the capacity to identify sentences that are not (or cannot be) true if the theology is true. If everything follows from such a theology, this task is unachievable. Therefore, coherent reasoning about a contradictory theology is practically unfeasible. This problem is maximized if the contradictory component of the theology concerns its concept of God, as is the case with Jīva's theology.¹¹

Fifth, regarding the non-contradictory interpretation, Jīva's terminology is restricted to "difference," "non-difference," and equivalent terms. There are no terms in Jīva's vocabulary that can be directly translated as "absolute difference," "absolute non-difference," or "partial difference" and "partial non-difference," for example.

Finally, in this second interpretation, there is the challenge of making sense of A_K . S_K seems entirely conceivable. It is both conceivable and commonsensical to hold that two things can be partially different, but not completely different from each other. Numerous ordinary examples illustrate this, including the fire and its light, or the sun, the radiance within its orb, its rays, and the sun's reflection on water. No one would dispute, for example, that the fire is partially different from its light, but not absolutely different. This seems to be the whole point of using such analogies. Although the analogy fits well with this interpretation, it renders the second part of Jīva's *bhedābheda* claim, namely A_K , quite implausible.

From now on, I will attempt to present an account of Jīva's *bhedābheda* claim that integrates and synthesizes both approaches. This account remains faithful to the key aspects of Jīva's ontology, while also addressing the aforementioned issues.

A Logic of Partial Truth

My account of Jīva's *bhedābheda* claim is based on a version of Graham Priest's (1979) Logic of Paradox (LP). LP challenges the law of non-contradiction in two key ways. First, it does not satisfy PE, which classifies it as a paraconsistent logic—a logic is paraconsistent when it does not satisfy PE, or equivalently, when it is able to accommodate non-trivial contradictory theories (a trivial theory is one from which everything follows). Second, to the extent that LP allows true contradictions or *dialetheias*, it challenges the law of non-contradiction, thus aligning with *dialetheism* and *glut-theoretic* approaches.

For my purposes here, I define a *glut-theoretic* approach as one that introduces truth-value gluts, with a truth-value glut being a value assigned to sentences that

¹¹ See (Silvestre 2025) for an account of how LNC and PE challenge the tenability of a given contradictory concept of God.

have more than one truth-value simultaneously, typically true and false. Assuming that the negation of a sentence α is equivalent to its falsity, glut-theoretic approaches incorporate the thesis that there might be a sentence α such that $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ is true, or that true contradictions might exist, thus challenging LNC. I will call this thesis the *glutty thesis*.¹²

LP was originally presented as a three-valued logic, which is perhaps the simplest way of generating a paraconsistent logic. From a classical viewpoint, there are exactly two truth-values: true and false. The three-valued approach drops this classical assumption and allows a third truth-value, which in LP is ρ , ρ standing for *paradoxical*. A sentence α is ρ when α is both true and false, with ρ thus being a truth-value glut. (In more recent presentations of LP, ρ is usually replaced by b , which stands for *both*.)

The version of LP I propose here introduces *partially true*—represented by the symbol τ —as its third truth-value. In this logic, which I call a *logic of partial truth* (LPT), sentences can be true (T), partially true (τ) or false (F).¹³ I will leave the notion of partial truth undefined. For my purposes, partial truth can be tentatively understood as something between truth and falsity, bearing an ontological weight that suggests the existence of an actual state of affairs underlying a sentence's partial truth. I will return to this issue in the concluding section, where I will also address the question of whether or not τ is a truth-value glut.

From a formal standpoint, LP and LPT are the same logic: the only thing that differentiates them is the semantic reading of the third truth-value. Because of that, instead of referring to LPT as a 'version' of LP, it would be more accurate to say that LPT is a specific interpretation of LP, one that interprets the third value as *partially true* rather than *both true and false*. However, although this change of interpretation may seem small, it carries important philosophical implications that significantly differentiate LPT from LP. Certainly, the idea that there are partially true sentences is not as radical a proposal as the claim that there are

¹² Dialetheism is traditionally understood as the thesis that there are true contradictions (Priest 1987, 4) (Priest 1998, 416). Less predominantly, it is seen as the thesis that there can be true contradictions (Grim 2004, 50) (Mares 2004, 269). Some authors take issue with this use of the term and prefer the expression "glut theoretic approaches" to describe approaches that introduce truth-value gluts. This preference stems mainly from the association of dialetheism with the argument from semantic closure of language (Priest 1987), which challenges the necessity of metalanguages (Beall 2022). This is particularly important because Priest's 1979 paper where LP was first introduced contains what can be seen as an early version of the argument from semantic closure. However, this argument is completely irrelevant to my use of LP in the context of Jīva's theology. Because of these considerations, I will avoid the term "dialetheism" and stick to the 'glutty' terminology, which seems to be more general and neutral.

¹³ In his 1979 paper Priest characterizes the other two truth-values of LP as *true only* and *false only*: α is true only when α is true and not false, and α is false only when α is false and not true. Following this, it would perhaps be more accurate to say that, in LPT, the other two truth-values are *absolutely true* and *absolutely false*, instead of simply true and false.

sentences that are both true and false. Despite this, almost everything I discuss in this section about LPT applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to LP.

The truth-tables of LPT are the same as Priest's LP, and consequently, the same as Kleene's and Łukasiewicz's three-valued logics (in which the third value is indeterminate or *neither*; a sentence α is *neither* when α is neither true nor false). Below are the truth-tables for negation, disjunction and conjunction:

α	$\neg\alpha$	α	β	$\alpha\vee\beta$	α	β	$\alpha\wedge\beta$
V	F	V	V	V	V	V	V
τ	τ	V	F	V	V	F	F
F	V	V	τ	τ	V	τ	τ
		F	V	V	F	V	F
		F	F	F	F	F	F
		F	τ	τ	F	τ	F
		τ	V	τ	τ	V	τ
		τ	F	τ	τ	F	F
		τ	τ	τ	τ	τ	τ

As in LP, LPT has two designated truth-values: T and τ . The reason for this the same one as in LP: both T and τ are the values of true sentences. A designated truth-value is one that is preserved in the logic's inference rules. (In classical two-valued logic, as well as in Kleene's and Łukasiewicz's three-valued logics, only T is designated.) This means that for an inference rule to be valid, both T and τ must be preserved. If, in any given inference rule, there is a scenario where the premises are designated but the conclusion is false, the rule is considered invalid.¹⁴

To understand the importance of this, let's examine how PE arises in classical logic. From an inferential perspective, PE results from the interaction of three inference rules: conjunction elimination (which says that $\alpha\wedge\beta$ entails α), disjunction introduction (which says that α entails $\alpha\vee\beta$), and disjunctive syllogism (which says that $\alpha\vee\beta$ and $\neg\alpha$ entail β). The steps below illustrate how, from $\alpha\wedge\neg\alpha$, one can infer any arbitrary sentence β :

1. $\alpha\wedge\neg\alpha$ (premise)
2. α (follows from the conjunction elimination rule applied to 1)
3. $\alpha\vee\beta$ (follows from the disjunction introduction rule applied to 2)
4. $\neg\alpha$ (follows from the conjunction elimination rule applied to 1)

¹⁴ Needless to say, LPT's consequence relation is defined in the same way as LP's (Priest 1979, 228).

5. β (follows from the disjunctive syllogism rule applied to 3 and 4)

In LPT, the disjunctive syllogism rule is not valid. To see why, consider a situation where α is τ and β is F. Since $\alpha \vee \beta$ and $\neg\alpha$ are both τ , and β is F, the disjunctive syllogism rule fails to hold. As a result, PE also fails to hold, as it relies on the disjunctive syllogism. In LPT, it is not the case that from $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ anything follows. Therefore, LPT is paraconsistent.¹⁵

As for LNC, it remains a valid principle in LPT, since in LPT there cannot be a sentence α such that $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ is T. However, if we interpret “true” in S-LNC to include both T and τ , then LNC is no longer valid, as there can be a sentence α such that $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ is partially true (τ). In other words, while the following weak version of LNC is still valid in LPT

(W-LNC) There cannot be a sentence α such that $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ is T,

the following stronger version is not valid:

(S-LNC) There cannot be a sentence α such that $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ is either T or τ .

In this way, LPT incorporates a weak version of the glutty thesis.

A Paraconsistent and Glut-theoretic Account to Acintya Bhedābheda Vedānta

Here is how LPT might be applied to Jīva’s Bhedābheda Vedānta. The idea is straightforward. I will assume the first, contradictory interpretation of Jīva’s theology and assess Jīva’s bhedābheda claim within LPT’s three-valued semantic framework.

According to this interpretation, Jīva’s bhedābheda claim amounts to the following two claims:

(Sc) [Śakti and śaktimān are different from each other] and it is not the case that [śakti and śaktimān are different from each other].

(Ac)Sc is inconceivable.

Once again, letting β be the sentence “Śakti and śaktimān are different from each other.”, this is equivalent to:

¹⁵ That PE is invalid in LPT can also be seen by noting that the vacuity which makes PE valid in classical logic no longer holds in LPT. From a semantic perspective, PE is valid in classical logic because there is no situation in which its premise is true. This ensures that there is no scenario where the premise of PE is true and its conclusion is false, turning it, by vacuity, into a valid inference rule. However, in LPT, $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ might be partially true (τ). Thus, there is a situation where the premise of PE is partially true, but its conclusion is false, rendering PE invalid.

(S_c) $\beta \wedge \neg\beta$.

(A_c) S_c is inconceivable.

The key move is to assign τ as β 's truth-value. Instead of assuming that "Śakti and śaktimān are different from each other." is true, as the first interpretation does, I treat it as partially true. As a consequence of that, $\neg\beta$ —the sentence "It is not the case that śakti and śaktimān are different from each other." or, equivalently, "Śakti and śaktimān are non-different from each other."—is also partially true. And because β and $\neg\beta$ are partially true, $\beta \wedge \neg\beta$ is also partially true. Therefore, rather than being regarded as true, Jīva's śakti/śaktimān claim (S_c) is only partially true in this account.

This aligns with the core idea of Jīva's Bhedābheda Vedānta, which, as we have seen, emphasizes an ontological continuity extending from śaktimān to śakti. As noted, it is this continuity what supports both difference and non-difference claims of S_c. I claim that the most effective way to explain this—that this continuity supports both difference and non-difference claims of S_c—is to assert that it makes the statements "Śakti and śaktimān are different from each other." and "Śakti and śaktimān are non-different from each other." partially true. Furthermore, if we accept the tentative characterization I proposed for partial truth—as something existing between truth and falsity, carrying an ontological weight that suggests the existence of an actual state of affairs underlying a sentence's partial truth—this state of affairs would be understood as precisely that ontological continuity that extends from śaktimān to śakti.

But see that this move also incorporates the second, non-contradictory interpretation. According to the non-contradictory interpretation, śakti and śaktimān are partially different from each other, which seems to be equivalent to the claim that β is partially true. On the other hand, this (non-contradictory) interpretation holds that śakti and śaktimān are partially non-different from each other, which seems to be equivalent to the claim that $\neg\beta$ is partially true. From a logical point of view, while the first, contradictory interpretation is incorporated at the level of the logical language, the second, non-contradictory interpretation is incorporated at the semantic level. Thus, the two interpretations are integrated into the same approach, which I take as solving the first issue mentioned in the section entitled "A Theological Problem."

Regarding the second issue—the conflict between the first interpretation and the analogies—the semantic level of my account can easily incorporate the analogies. It seems uncontroversial to view the claim that fire and its light are different from each other, as well as the claim that they are non-different, as being partially true.

The third issue, which also concerns the first interpretation, is that Jīva employs something very close to the law of non-contradiction in his arguments, so that its rejection is at odds with his theology. This is not a problem for my account, as the weaker version of LNC, the one which says that there cannot be a sentence α such that $\alpha \wedge \neg \alpha$ is T, is still valid in LPT. When it comes to truth, LPT adheres to the law of non-contradiction and all other classical logical principles. It is non-classical only in relation to partial truth.

For the fourth issue, which concerns the problems with (traditional) contradictory theologies, it is resolved through LPT's paraconsistency and its adherence to a weak version of the glutty thesis. First, the claim that $\beta \wedge \neg \beta$ is partially true does not render Jīva's theology a priori false, as S-LNC—the principle that there cannot be a sentence α such that $\alpha \wedge \neg \alpha$ is either T or τ —does not hold in LPT. Second, since LPT does not accept PE, particularly when it pertains to τ , it does not follow that anything can be inferred from the claim that $\beta \wedge \neg \beta$ is partially true, which allows us to reason coherently about Jīva's theology or any of its components

Regarding the fifth issue, which concerns the second, non-contradictory interpretation being at odds with Jīva's standard terminology, this is not a problem in my account. On the level of the logical language, it strictly adheres to the difference/non-difference terminology.

The last issue is a bit more complex. It concerns making sense of the acintya claim in the second interpretation (A_K), as S_K does not seem inconceivable. However, the same could be said about my account. In my framework, $\beta \wedge \neg \beta$ (S_C) is partially true. But given everything we have discussed about LPT, this is not inconceivable at all! On the contrary, the partial truth of $\beta \wedge \neg \beta$ follows from the semantic rules once we define β as partially true. Therefore, similar to the two-valued version of the non-contradictory interpretation, the claim that $\beta \wedge \neg \beta$ is inconceivable (A_C) does not seem to hold true in this LPT account either.

But is A_C false in my account? This question is important because, in LPT, the fact that a sentence is not true does not automatically mean it is false, as there is a third option: it can be partially true. I argue that, in my account, it is more reasonable to conclude that A_C is partially true than false. The argument is quite simple. A_C asserts that $\beta \wedge \neg \beta$ is inconceivable. However, as T and τ are the values of true sentences, A_C is ambiguous. It might be read either as (1) "It is inconceivable that $\beta \wedge \neg \beta$ is *true*.", or as (2) "It is inconceivable that $\beta \wedge \neg \beta$ is *partially true*." Assuming the rationale behind the first, contradictory interpretation—that any contradictory claim is inconceivable because it is contradictory—, while (1) is true, (2) is false. Thus, because of this ambiguity and the truth-values associated with it, we might conclude that S_C is neither true nor false, but partially true. In other words, in my account, both A_C and S_C are partially true, which solves this last issue.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, I would like to address some potential criticisms against my approach. First of all, one might point out the limitations of LPT as a formal logical system. For example, if we follow Priest (1979, 232) and define $\alpha \rightarrow \beta$ (if α then β) as $\neg\alpha \vee \beta$, similarly to LP, LPT does not validate traditional inference rules such as *modus ponens*, *modus tollens* and *reductio ad absurdum*.¹⁶ Since these are essentially the same inferential issues as in LP, my response would be to simply repeat Priest's response (1979, 231-237), where he suggests, for example, introducing a more suitable conditional connective or permitting a controlled use of these inferences, as they still remain quasi-valid in the sense that they preserve truth when only T is considered.¹⁷ Furthermore, it is important to remember that while issues like these are significant and do impact the viability of my approach, what truly matters in the reconstruction of Jīva's theology I am presenting here is the semantic aspect of LPT, particularly the concept of partial truth and its role in the truth-functional properties of the logical connectives.

A more specific and potentially more serious criticism concerns the concept of partial truth. First, given the semantic properties of τ , particularly those related to the truth-table of negation, we can say that "partial truth" is equivalent to "partial falsity." α being partially true is equivalent to $\neg\alpha$ being partially true ($\neg\alpha = \tau$ if and only if $\alpha = \tau$), which seems to be same as α being partially false. This might be a problem, as it means that partial falsity would be one of the designated truth-values, which are traditionally more closely associated with truth than with falsity.

In response to that, I first note that this equivalence of partial truth and partial falsity is compatible with Priest's generalization of LP (Priest 2002, 307), where $T = 1$, $F = 0$, $\rho = 0.5$, and the true-tables are as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} v(\neg\alpha) &= 1 - v(\alpha); \\ v(\alpha \wedge \beta) &= \min\{v(\alpha), v(\beta)\}; \\ v(\alpha \vee \beta) &= \max\{v(\alpha), v(\beta)\}, \end{aligned}$$

where $v(\alpha)$ is the truth-value of α , and $\min$ and $\max$ are two functions that return the minimum and maximum of two given values, respectively. Translating this into LPT, $\tau = 0.5$, which can be seen as saying that partial truth is equivalent to 'half-truth,' which in turn is equivalent to 'half-falsity,' or partial falsity. Another way to state this is to say that α is τ when α is *both partially true and partially false*.

¹⁶ For example, a situation where α is partially true and β is false—resulting in both α and $\alpha \rightarrow \beta$ being partially true while β is false—provides a counterexample to *modus ponens*.

¹⁷ See Tennant (2019) for further discussion on the inferential issues related to LP.

This is important because, in this framework, the second designated value, which is τ , is in fact equidistant from both truth and falsity.¹⁸ While there is no inherent issue with a logic in which one of the designated truth-values is more associated with falsity than with truth, that is not the case with τ . It is also important because it answers the question posed earlier of whether τ is a truth-value glut. The answer is “yes.” When considered as ‘both partially true and partially false,’ τ does assign multiple truth-values to sentences, specifically (what might be considered as) weak forms of truth and falsity.

Putting aside these logical issues, one might argue that the equivalence of partial truth and partial falsity poses a problem for my theological application. For instance, it entails that both claims, “Śakti and śaktimān are different from each other” and “Śakti and śaktimān are non-different from each other,” are partially false. A first response to this objection is that it is not necessarily a problem, because, despite its name, partial falsity is not closer to falsity than to truth. As noted earlier, it is equidistant from both truth and falsity. A second response is connected to the answer I will provide to what seems to be the most serious criticism against my approach to partial truth: namely, that I left it undefined.

Regarding this criticism, it is important to note that, from a logical standpoint, it is not uncommon for key philosophical concepts to remain undefined. For instance, logicians routinely work with concepts such as truth, proposition, possible worlds, and so on, without necessarily providing detailed characterizations of them. One might argue, for example, that it is up to philosophers working on theories of truth to define what it means for a sentence to be true. Whether one subscribes to a deflationist, semantic, correspondist, coherentist or constructivist theory of truth is largely irrelevant to most logical systems.

Here is where we encounter an important asymmetry between LPT and LP. It could be argued that LP does not necessarily need to explain what its third truth-value means. Since p is characterized as both true and false, one could simply adhere to one’s preferred theory of truth—which is typically also a theory of falsity—and interpret p accordingly. It is an argument along these lines that underlies the claim that dialetheism is not inherently committed to any specific conception of truth (Priest 2006, 299). However, in LPT, I introduced a somewhat new notion that seems to require some form of explanation. Furthermore, one might argue that, from the perspective of the philosophical reconstruction I am

¹⁸ Although the strategy of leaving the concept of partial truth undefined allows me to avoid comparisons with various philosophical accounts found in the literature—particularly in the philosophy of science—such as quasi-truth, partial truth, and truthlikeness (or verisimilitude), this point is significant because it clearly distinguishes my notion of partial truth from these other concepts, which typically lean more towards truth than falsity.

offering of Acintya Bhedābheda Vedānta, it is crucial to clarify what is meant by “partial truth.”

To that I would reply that this depends on the philosophical approach we take to our religious language—in the broadest sense of the term, not limited to the logical language but also encompassing the semantic language. More specifically, I argue that there is a third interpretation of Jīva’s bhedābheda claim—one not yet explored by scholars—focusing on the role of the analogies in his theology that may provide a rationale for leaving the concept of partial truth undefined.

As should be evident by now, analogies play a central role in Bhedābheda traditions. Jīva, in particular, relies heavily on analogies such as the relationship between fire and its light, and the sun, the radiance within its orb, its rays, and the sun’s reflection on the water, to describe the relationship of difference and non-difference between śakti and śaktimān. But how exactly should we understand the function of analogies in Jīva’s theology?

There is an old approach in the philosophy of religion, which experienced renewed interest in the 20th century, that posits that God can only be known and described analogically. This view is linked to the concept of analogical language and has deep roots in Christian theological thought. It emphasizes that because God is radically different from the world, human language cannot describe God in a univocal or direct manner; instead, it can only approach God through analogies. For instance, Aquinas argues that God’s essence is so distinct from that of creatures that humans cannot speak of God in the same way we speak of finite beings. Rather, we must rely on analogy.

Applied to the context of Jīva’s theology and my reconstruction of it, we can say that there is no univocal way to describe the relation of difference and non-difference between śakti and śaktimān. We are left with no choice but to rely on analogies to express this relationship. And one thing the analogies teach us is that, just as it is partially true (and partially false) that fire is both different and non-different from its light, similarly, it is partially true as well as partially false that śakti and śaktimān are both different and non-different from each other. However, we cannot go beyond this. The limitations of analogical language prevent us from providing a clear, univocal definition of the concept of partial truth. See that this still aligns with the tentative characterization I proposed earlier for partial truth as something existing between truth and falsity, carrying an ontological weight that suggests the existence of an actual state of affairs underlying a sentence’s partial truth.

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