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DID DIGNĀGA ACCEPT FOUR TYPES OF PERCEPTION?

In a previous paper¹ I argued that Dignāga's doctrine of *pratyakṣā-bhāsa* was misinterpreted by M. Hattori and A. Wayman, and suggested yet a third interpretation. One of the arguments against Wayman's interpretation challenges his scheme of correspondences between the four types of perception, the four types of error and the four types of *pratyakṣābhāsa* on several grounds, one of which is based on his taking for granted that Dignāga accepted four types of perception. This assumption, I claimed, is highly doubtful, and it is not supported by Dignāga's own words, but only by Dharmakīrti's reshuffle of them.² This claim has been recently criticized, in its turn, by Wayman in his study of "Dharmakīrti and the Yogācāra Theory of *bīja*"³:

One reader, Eli Franco, . . . alludes to this very verse portion [6ab in Hattori's enumeration] to conclude that Dignāga did not recognize *svaśamvedana* as a separate *pramāṇa* (sic.)⁴ to total four such, hence that he recognized only three. Granted that Hattori's presentation of the verse itself — and not reading more widely — might lend itself to such an interpretation as Franco made. Even so, in this case, it seems that Franco did not do enough research, or had poor advice.

My purpose here is not to reopen the controversy on *pratyakṣābhāsa*. If the above point is the only part of my argumentation which is not acceptable to Wayman, the issue is closed indeed. However, since most scholars seem to agree with Wayman that Dignāga accepted four types of perception, a few words of clarification on this subject may not be unwarranted here.

First, a word on the "poor advice," which presumably refers to Professor Schmithausen's counsel. While gladly acknowledging his help and advice, it goes without saying that he bears no responsibility for whatever errors may have occurred in my paper. (Incidentally, the point on the three types of perception was reached by both of us independently.)

Second, concerning my lack of sufficient research. Granted that one

never does enough research (or at least I never do), I am not quite sure what Wayman has in mind. If he refers to the post-Dignāga period, there is no shortage of texts in the Dharmakīrti-tradition, which claim that Dignāga meant exactly what Dharmakīrti says he meant. My whole point, however, was that we have to read Dignāga's text independently of his so-called "Great Commentator." And unfortunately we do not have any other commentatorial tradition except that of Dharmakīrti and his followers.⁵ If, on the other hand, Wayman has in mind some pre-Dignāga or even pre-Dharmakīrti text, which sheds a new light on the problem of fourfold perception, I fail to see why he does not share with us the results of his wide reading, or even give us a clue as to the identity of this text.

Or perhaps by 'not doing enough research' Wayman means that I was not familiar with his own, at that time future, interpretation of Dignāga's verse. This interpretation is quite ingenious, and deserves a place of honor in the best tradition of commentatorial tricky devices, and it certainly deserves a closer look here.

What Wayman suggests is a slight emendation of Dignāga's verse, to be read: *mānasam cārtha[m] rāgādisvasaṃvittir akalpikā*.⁶ As far as I can see Wayman's only justification for this emendation is: "Of course, my addition of the *anusvara* (sic.) in brackets can be understood by everyone who has worked with Sanskrit manuscripts — that it is frequently necessary to add this."⁷ He then proceeds to explain how the verse should be read: "Grammatically, it (?) is a series with the term *akalpika* agreeing in gender with the last member of the series, namely *svasaṃvittir*; and *akalpika* therefore goes with both members of the series."⁸ Grammatically, "it" in the above sentence would have to refer to *anusvāra*, which is nonsense; or by *upacāra* it would refer to *artha[m]*, which is equally wrong, since a word cannot be a series. Working backwards from the translation, one must conclude that what Wayman must have meant is that the sentence contains a series and *akalpikā* although agreeing in gender only with the last member of that series, has to be related to the first member as well.

Wayman's translation runs as follows: "Also the mental (sense) having the object-entity (*artha*), and self-intuition of passion (*rāga*), etc. are without constructive thought." Why Wayman supplements — against both Hattori and Nagatomi — "mental (sense)" rather than

“mental (perception)” remains unexplained, but this does not seem to be relevant to the question whether the emendation of the text should be accepted. Concerning this question, the most obvious problem is that if we take *artha* outside the compound, it cannot mean “having the object-entity” (my emphasis). Furthermore, the reading *mānasam ca-arthaṃ* or *mānasam ca-arthaṃ . . . akalpikā* cannot be construed meaningfully, as *arthaṃ* would have to be a masculine noun in the accusative case without a governing verb. Nevertheless, we could still save Wayman’s translation by reading *ca-ārthaṃ*. The advantage of such a translation, if accepted, is that it avoids the somewhat awkward analysis of the compound *artharāgādisvasaṃvitti* into *arthasaṃvitti* and *rāgādisvasaṃvitti*.⁹

However, there is one serious trouble with Wayman’s interpretation of the verse: It goes against Dignāga’s own commentary on it, the second part of which reads: *rāgadveṣamohasukhādiṣu svasaṃvedanam indriyānapekṣatvān mānasam pratyakṣam*.¹⁰ Thus, no matter whether one follows Hattori or Nagatomi,¹¹ it is clear that Dignāga calls the self-apprehension of desire etc., *mental* perception. Consequently, Wayman’s, or for that matter Dharmakīrti’s, reading of four types of perception into the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* collapses. Unfortunately, Wayman does not explain how his translation could be made compatible with Dignāga’s own commentary. As far as I can see, he could argue in one of two ways. He could claim that the two are incompatible indeed, and that Dignāga had changed his mind in the time between writing the *kārikās* and the *Vṛtti*. This, however, would not solve Wayman’s problem, for Dignāga’s final position would still take the self-apprehension of desire, etc., as mental perception. Had I been in Wayman’s place, I would have argued that the *Vṛtti* as reconstructed by Hattori, and as quoted above, should also be emended to conform with the Tibetan translation, that is, the word *mānasam* should be dropped. This modification is indeed supported by both Kanakavarman’s and Vasudhararakṣita’s translations, none of which has any equivalent to *mānasam*. Hattori’s edition of Kanakavarman (p. 181, Db) is indeed misleading, for he replaces *ran rig pa’i* with *yid kyi* against all Tibetan recensions. By deleting *mānasam*, one may achieve an almost perfect harmony between Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. But in this case one would have to adduce some cogent reason to explain

why Prajñākaragupta (*PVBh* 305.17–18) should have interpolated the word *mānasam* into his quotation of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. Until Wayman comes up with any such reason, his modification of the verse and his new ingenious translation must remain unacceptable; all the more so since we have an alternative and much more probable explanation, namely, that Dignāga's text has been tampered with (probably before the Tibetan translation was undertaken) under Dharmakīrti's influence in order to make it conform to the latter's point of view,¹² just as Wayman did.

It seems, therefore, that in spite of Wayman's efforts to the contrary, one can still make a strong case for reading only three types of perception in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. However, even by arguing for three against four types of perception, we are already caught in Dharmakīrti's web. For by doing so we already presuppose that Dignāga was typologizing different types of perception. A less biased reading of Dignāga does not seem to warrant such a presupposition. Reading the text independently of Dharmakīrti, one should probably maintain that for Dignāga there is only one type of perception, that is, a cognition which is free from conceptual construction. Or better still, that Dignāga was not at all concerned with types of perception. The text yields more easily to the following interpretation: After analyzing the term *pratyakṣa*, claiming that the senses are the special cause of perception (Daa-1 in Hattori's division of the text) and explaining the compatibility of his definition with the Abhidharma (Daa-2 f.), Dignāga proceeds to show that the term applies also to certain, perhaps more controversial cases, in which the cognitions are not produced by the five senses. But there is nothing in the text to indicate that these cases form different types, or different species of one genus. In the introduction to k. 6ab Dignāga says that "Here our distinguishing [various kinds of perception] is in response to the view of others."¹³ I see no reason why we should not take this statement at its face value.

NOTES

¹ Cf. *JIPh* 14, 1986, pp. 79–97.

² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 81.

³ In *Studies in the Buddhist Epistemological tradition*, ed. E. Steinkellner, Wien 1991, pp. 419–430, at p. 423, n. 17.

⁴ What I claimed, of course, is that it is not a separate *pratyakṣa*.

⁵ Consequently, I used the same method as that followed by scholars like Frauwallner, Hattori (to some extent), Hayes *et al.*, namely, to read Dignāga not in view of his successors, but of his predecessors like Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Bhartṛhari, *et al.* This does not mean, of course, that by following the same method we all reach the same results. For instance, the relationship between Dignāga and Nāgārjuna seems to be non-existing according to Frauwallner, and is interpreted in diametrically opposed ways by Hayes and myself.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Cf. Hattori, *Dignāga, On Perception*. Cambridge 1968, p. 92, n. 1.45.

¹⁰ Cf. the quotation in *Pramāṇavārttikabhāṣya* (ed. R. Sāṅkṛityāyana, Patna 1953) p. 315.17–18, Hattori, *op. cit.*, p. 94, Franco, *op. cit.*, p. 95, n. 7.

¹¹ Cf. “*Mānasa-pratyakṣa: A Conundrum in the Buddhist Pramāṇa System*,” in *Sanskrit and Indian Studies*, ed. M. Nagatomi *et al.* Dordrecht 1979, pp. 243–260, at p. 254.

¹² Cf. Franco, *op. cit.*, n. 7.

¹³ Hattori’s translation p. 27; Kanakavarman (p. 181.7): *gṣan gyi ḥdod pa la ltos nas ḥdir khyad par du byas pa yin gyi* . . . Vasudhararakṣita (180.7): *gṣan gyi ḥdod pa la brien nas ḥdir khyad par byas pa ste*.