ON PRAMĀNASAMUCCAYAVRĪTI 6AB AGAIN

In a previous issue of this journal, Dr. Zhihua Yao has published a highly original, though methodologically somewhat wanting paper on Dignāga and the four types of perception. In this paper he argued that according to Dignāga self-awareness (or “self-cognition”) is the internal awareness of mental consciousness (manojñāna) only. In other words, sense perception is not, properly speaking, self-cognizant; rather, the so-called self-cognition is a distinct cognition which arises at the same time as sense perception. Furthermore, Yao attributes the doctrine that sense perception is never self-cognizant also to Dharmakīrti, and in view of the obvious contradiction of this doctrine with Dharmakīrti’s well-known statement in Nyāyabindu 1.10 (sarvacittacaitītānām ātmasaṃvedanam) “suspects” that this statement is a pūrvapakṣa statement.

My purpose here is not to engage in a detailed controversy with Dr. Yao, but to discuss shortly an emendation he suggests to the text of Pramāṇasamuccayavṛti 6ab as reconstructed by Hattori. Before entering this issue, however, let me disclaim a few opinions that Yao inadvertently attributes to me in his paper. I did not claim that Alex Wayman is the only person who holds the view that Dignāga accepts four types of perception. I did not conduct an opinion poll and therefore have no idea of everyone’s opinion on this point. My arguments were directed at Wayman because we had an ongoing controversy on pratyakṣābhāsa. As for my alleged opinion that Dignāga accepted three types of perception, it is difficult for me to see how anyone could misinterpret my words in this way. Actually,

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1 Cf. Journal of Indian Philosophy 32, 2004: 57–79.
2 Ibid. p. 70: “Sense perception, the primary type of perception, can be self-cognizant, if it is understood as accompanied by mental consciousness. But it is not self-cognizant if the mental consciousness arises after it.”
3 Ibid. p. 70, n. 49.
4 Detailed criticism and comments have been communicated to him privately and may be taken into consideration in his forthcoming monograph on svasaṃvedana.
5 Ibid. p. 57 and passim.
I was arguing against reading a “typology” of perception into Dignāga’s text. I wrote: “However, even by arguing for three against four types of perception, we are already caught in Dharmakīrti’s web.” I then pointed out Dignāga’s explicit statement, which reads in Hattori’s translation: “Here our distinguishing (various kinds of perception) is in response to the view of others.” Finally, to my knowledge I did not state anywhere that mental perception has two functions. Nor do I know where I confused mental perception with mental consciousness, as claimed by Yao.

But let us come to the crux of the matter. My suggestion that Dignāga refers to svāsamvedana as a subspecies of mānasapratyakṣa is based on Dignāga’s statement in Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti 6ab, rāgādiṣu ca svāsamvedanam indriyānekeṣatvān mānasam pratyakṣam, which reads in Hattori’s translation (p. 27): “The self-awareness (svāsamvedana) of desire, anger, ignorance, pleasure, pain etc., is (also considered as) mental perception because it is not dependent on any sense-organ.” Yao himself says that “judging from the Sanskrit text, this is a fine translation,” but argues that Hattori’s reconstruction of the Sanskrit text, which is based on a fragment from the Pramāṇavārttikabhaṣya, is incorrect because the Tibetan translation of this sentence has no equivalent to the word mānasam. I agree with Yao that the Tibetan translation should not be emended to conform to the Sanskrit fragment, and I said so myself in the above-mentioned paper. However, this does not settle the question about Dignāga’s original Sanskrit text. It seems obvious to me, as was already to Hattori, that the Sanskrit fragment represents the lectio difficilior and should, as such, be preferred. More explicitly, one should ask: Is it more probable that the word mānasam appeared in Dignāga’s original text and was dropped inadvertently or on purpose, or that the word mānasam was absent in Dignāga’s text and inadvertently or on purpose added to it in the course of transmission (or at the time of its translation into Tibetan)?

It is, I think, out of the question that the word mānasam was added on purpose to the text, in order to create thereby a clear inconsistency between Dignāga’s and Dharmakīrti’s views on perception. It is also difficult to imagine a scribal error such as aberratio ocult, to account for an accidental addition of mānasam to the Sanskrit text in the present context. On the other hand, it is easily imaginable that a scribe may have skipped a word when copying the text. However, I do not believe that the disappearance of mānasam was accidental. I think rather that the word mānasam was intentionally deleted, or not copied (or not translated), from a manuscript. Some attentive copyist or reader (or translator) must have realized that Dignāga’s text, as it stood, was incompatible with Dharmakīrti’s statements on perception, and that by simply eliminating the word mānasam a harmony between the two could be achieved.

Furthermore, the reading mānasam has now been confirmed by a newly discovered Sanskrit manuscript of the Pramāṇasamuccayatikā which unfortunately Yao was unable to consult: indriyānapekṣatvād iti. ... yasya mana evāsrayo na rūpindriyam, tan mānasam abhisamhitam. Immediately after this statement we find the following sequence of question and answer: ... teṣām [rāgādnām] svāsamvedanam katham mānasam pratyakṣam? svāsamvitānāmānyena tajjātyatvat. “Why is the self-awareness of [desire, etc.] a mental perception? Because it belongs to that species (i.e., the species of mental perception) owing to the general property of [being] self-awareness.”

If we thus remain disinclined to modify Dignāga’s text according to Yao’s whim, we are bound to dismiss his interpretation of Dignāga’s four types of perception as unfounded.

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8 Ibid. p. 63.

9 Ibid. p. 61.

10 At the present the above statement appears on p. 56.9f. However, the pagination in the printed edition may still change. I would like to thank my friends H. Krasser, H. Lasic and E. Steinkellner for allowing me to consult their forthcoming edition of chapter one of the Pramāṇasamuccayatikā.