

On Simultaneous Perception of Multiple Objects:

Prajñākaragupta's Interpretation of Atomism

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0. Introduction

In the beginning of *Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra* (PVA) ad Dharmakīrti's (ca. 660–660) *Pramāṇavārttika* (PV) 3.194–230 commenting on Dignāga's (ca. 480–540) *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (PS) 1.4cd, Prajñākaragupta (ca. 750–810) introduces the opponent's objection that Dignāga's definition of perception contradicts the Abhidharma doctrine as follows:

In that case (=perception is defined as free from conceptual construction), why did [Dignāga] mention the following [statement]:

There [in the above-cited Abhidharma passages], the [perception], being caused by many objects [in aggregation], takes the *sāmānya* as its sphere of operation in respect to its own object. (PS 1.4cd. cf. Hattori 1968: 26)

Indeed, [a cognition], being free from conceptual construction, does not take the *sāmānya* as its sphere of operation because the assumption of the *sāmānya* contradicts the [definition that perception is free from conceptual construction]. (PVA 279.9)

In PVA ad PV 3.194–207 and PVA ad PV 3.223–230, Prajñākaragupta, following Dharmakīrti who accepted the Sautrāntika theory of atomism, attempts to explain how a sense-perception arises from aggregated atoms in order to prove that there is no such contradiction between Dignāga's theory and the Abhidharma doctrine (cf. AKBh 34.1–2). This explanation is closely related to Prajñākaragupta's famous *citrādvaita* theory established in PVA ad PV 3.208–222 (cf. Inami 2004, Oki 1973). As demonstrated in my study (Yokoyama 2018), the opponent's objection, in PVA ad PV 3.194–207, can be summarized into the following two points in accordance with Prajñākaragupta's explanation (PVA ad PV 3.197, 280.16–19): (A) A single perception cannot grasp multiple objects simultaneously; (B) The whole (*avayavin*) as the single substance should be accepted. Based on this previous inves-

tigation, this paper aims to examine the second part of Prajñākaragupta's discussion. (PVA ad PV 3.223–230)

1. The Theory of *atiśaya* and the Criticism of *avayavin*

First, in PVA ad PV 3.223, Prajñākaragupta refutes the opponent's objection by introducing Dharmakīrti's theory of the additional characteristic (*atiśaya*). Dharmakīrti briefly describes Buddhist atomism as follows:

Or what contradiction is there if many [atoms], in which the additional characteristic (*atiśaya*) has arisen, simultaneously become the cause of [single] cognition, just like the sense faculty and so on [also become the cause of single cognition]? (PV 3.223. *cf.* Dunne 2004: 411, Tosaki 1979: 319)

After mentioning that aggregated atoms are object of perception in PV 3.195–196, in this verse, Dharmakīrti, by introducing the theory of *atiśaya*, attempts to resolve the problem of why aggregated atoms that cannot be perceived individually become object of perception. Prajñākaragupta comments on this verse as follows:

(Objection:) Even though [atoms] are not eternal, what the additional characteristic (*atiśaya*) of atoms is there? For atoms do not become large (*mahat*, *i.e.* perceivable) even if [both] supporting conditions (= *indriya* and *manaskāra*) are present together. If, however, [atoms] do not abandon the subtleness (*sūkṣmatā*), how are they grasped?

(Reply:) It is also wrong. In this case (=aggregated atoms are object of perception), the additional characteristic is not largeness, rather the additional characteristic is ability. It is accepted that [atoms] are not the cause [of perception] due to non-ability, but not due to lack of largeness. (PVA 296.7–9)

Prajñākaragupta claims that the *atiśaya* is not largeness (*mahattā*) but ability. The large (*mahat*), a kind of dimension (*parimāṇa*) categorized into the quality (*guṇa*), is a condition of the object to be perceived in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika doctrine (*cf.* VS 4.1.6). They explain that imperceptible subtle atoms, when connecting with each other, generate a large whole (*avayavin*) as object of perception (*cf.* Yamakami 1996: 121–122, TBh 62.12–63.2). Namely, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika explains how imperceptible atoms become perceptible using the theory of *avayavin*, whereas Buddhists explain this process using the theory of *atiśaya* (*cf.* Funayama 1990: 610–611, NV 502.7, 1055.13–15). For Prajñākaragupta, therefore, it is necessary to reject the *avayavin* in order to justify Buddhist atomism. This is the reason he adds the criticism of the *mahat* to Dharmakīrti's explanation of *atiśaya* in PVA ad PV 3.223.

2. The Criticism of *avayavin* and the Proof of the Simultaneous Perception

Next, in PVA ad PV 3.225, Dharmakīrti and Prajñākaragupta criticize the opponent's view that the object of perception is not the part (*avayava*) as follows:

And if multiple [objects] were not grasped simultaneously, there would arise the following another fault in that case. [Dharmakīrti] says:

Or [if multiple objects could not be grasped simultaneously,] how is the whole (*avayavin*) grasped together with its own parts (*avayava*) simultaneously. (PV 3.225ab)

If [the opponent] says that [the whole] is not grasped [together with its own parts] at all, that is wrong.

Indeed, the cognition of cattle is not experienced unless [cattle's] dewlap (*sāsnā*) and so on are perceived. (PV 3.225cd) (PVA 296. 25–28)

In PVA ad PV 3.195–207, Prajñākaragupta criticizes the *avayavin* in order to reject objection: (B) The *avayavin* as the single substance should be accepted. Here, however, in this portion, his criticism of the *avayavin* functions as a refutation of objection: (A) A single perception cannot grasp multiple objects simultaneously.

In PVA ad PV 3.226–229, Prajñākaragupta points out the contradiction of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika doctrine that arises if they do not accept the simultaneous perception of multiple objects.

Further, in PV 3.230, Dharmakīrti mentions the Sāṃkhya doctrine in order to uphold the simultaneous perception as follows:

On the other hand, in the Sāṃkhya view,

Sound and so on are multiple. Therefore it is established that multiple things are grasped simultaneously. That is because if arranged [elements] are not grasped, the arrangement cannot be grasped. (PV 3.230) (PVA 297.22–24)

Interestingly enough, Prajñākaragupta mentions in his commentary on this verse that the objection to the theory of simultaneous perception has been already criticized above:

[In this manner,] a jar and so on are multiple, [and] if they are grasped, it is established that multiple [objects] are grasped. The remaining criticism is just as mentioned above. (PVA 297.31)

According to Jayanta, a commentator of PVA, Prajñākaragupta's word "remaining" refers

to the criticism of the opponent's swiftness (*lāghava*) theory' which functions as a refutation of objection (A) in PVA ad PV 3.197–198 (cf. J(D85b1, P98a1)). In this portion of PVA, Prajñākaragupta criticizes the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika objection based on their *lāghava* theory against simultaneous perception (cf. PVA 281.2–5, NV 105.6–7). As mentioned above, on the other hand, the criticism of the *avayavin* in PVA ad PV 3.225 is directed to the criticism of objection (A).

Conclusion

In the present paper, the following two points became evident: First, Prajñākaragupta adds his criticism of the large (*mahat*) to Dharmakīrti's explanation of the additional characteristic (*atiśaya*) in order to reject the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of whole (*avayavin*). Second, Prajñākaragupta's criticism of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika *avayavin* theory in PVA ad PV 3.225–230 is as a whole directed to the objection that multiple objects cannot be grasped simultaneously.

Abbreviations

- AKBh Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. Ed. Prahlad Pradhan. *Abhidharma Kośabhāṣya*. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1967.
- J Jayanta, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāraṭīkā*. Tibetan translation. D4222; P5720.
- NV Uddyotakara, *Nyāyavārttika*. Ed. Taranatha Nyaya-Tarkatirtha, Amarendramohan Tarkatirtha and Hemantakumar Tarkatirtha. *Nyāyadarśanam with Vātsyāyana's Bhāṣya, Uddyotakara's Vārttika, Vācaspati Miśra's Tātpariyaṭīkā & Viśvanātha's Vṛtti*. 2 vols. Calcutta: Metropolitan Printing & Publishing House, 1936–1944. Reprint, Kyoto: Rinsen Book, 1982.
- PS Dignāga, *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. Ed. Ernst Steinkellner, Helmut Krasser and Horst Lasic. *Jinendrabuddhi's Viśālamalavati Pramāṇasamuccayaṭīkā Chapter 1, Part I: Critical Edition*. Beijing-Vienna: China Tibetology Publishing House & Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2005.
- PV Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇavārttika*. Ed. Miyasaka Yūshō. "Pramāṇavārttika-kārikā (Sanskrit and Tibetan)." In *Acta Indologica II*, 2–41. Narita: Naritasan Shinshōji, 1971–1972.
- PVA Prajñākaragupta, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra*. Ed. Rāhula Sāṅkrtyāyana. *Pramāṇavārtikabhāṣyam or Vārtikālaṃkāraḥ of Prajñākaragupta (Being a Commentary on Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇavārtikam)*. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1953.
- TBh Keśavamiśra, *Tarkabhāṣā: Tarkabhāṣā of Keśavamiśra with the Commentary of Cinnamabhṭṭa*. Bombay Sanskrit and Prākṛit Series. 84. Poona: 1979.
- VS Kanāda, *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*. Ed. Muni Śrī Jambuvijayaji. *Vaiśeṣikasūtra of Kaṇāda with the Commentary of Candṛānanda*. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1982.

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