

The Yogācāra Philosophy of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti

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Introduction

We would like in this article to examine one of the most difficult points in Dharmakīrti's thought, his presentation of the result of valid cognition (*pramāṇa-phala*, *tshad ma 'i 'bras bu*). This part of Dharmakīrti's work has been mostly ignored by modern scholars. The source of this neglect is not difficult to understand, having to do both with the difficulty of the relevant passages¹ and the bizarre feature of the position that Dignāga and Dharmakīrti adopt. We are convinced, however, that these passages are quite important for understanding Dignāga's *Pramāṇa-Samuccaya* (*PS*) and Dharmakīrti's two main works, the *Pramāṇa-Vārttika* (*PV*) and the *Pramāṇa-Viniścaya* (*PVin*), as products of a unified intention.

Up to this date, Dharmakīrti has often been understood in a piecemeal fashion. We think that it is time to attempt to understand not only his interesting views on epistemology, logic, and philosophy of language, but also to take a look at Dharmakīrti as an author of texts expressing a unified thought. From this perspective, some of the most relevant passages in the *corpus* of Dharmakīrti's works concern the result of valid cognition. It is clear that we do not intend within such a short space to give a complete explanation of Dharmakīrti's difficult thought on the subject. Hattori and Vetter have already done good preliminary work concerning Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's treatment of this subject,² but we shall nevertheless have to take some of their presuppositions and results up for revision.

We will not attempt to provide a complete explanation of the presentation of the result of valid cognition (*pramāṇa-phala*). Rather, we will focus on a single issue that we see as being crucial for the understanding of Dharmakīrti as an individual philosopher: in other words we will consider the Yogācāra content of Dharmakīrti's work on the topic of the result of valid cognition.

¹ Edited and translated by Vetter (1966), pp. 78–101, and Hattori (1968), pp. 28–30. Here we will follow Frauwallner's presentation of the order of the chapters, which is also the order proposed by the classical commentatorial tradition of Devendrabuddhi and Śākyamati, etc. Thus, the chapter on direct perception will be the third.

² Hattori (1968), and Vetter (1964). Vetter, *op. cit.*, p. 66, says: "Das führt zum gleichen Ziel wie die Übung des Yoga ('Yogācāra'), wobei das Denken durch eine Resorption der Sinne zur Ruhe kommt, was nicht der Weg Dharmakīrti's ist. Daß das Problemdenken in der Mystik endete, ist fast unbeabsichtigt."

Hattori and Vetter have understood the Yogācāra position that both Dharmakīrti and his predecessor Dignāga express in their presentations of the result of valid cognition. By ignoring the importance of Yogācāra idealism in these philosophers' thoughts, however, they have, we think, failed to show how these philosophical developments on the result of valid cognition are intended as *indirect ways to defend Yogācāra philosophy*. For Hattori and Vetter, the Yogācāra character of the passages on the result of valid cognition is of little consequence to their actual meaning. Hattori says that in these passages “Dignāga takes the Yogācāra doctrine for his theoretical basis”,³ as if this fact were merely incidental. Thus, one might believe, if one were to follow Hattori and Vetter's otherwise excellent works, that it is a matter of sheer coincidence that Dignāga and Dharmakīrti have expressed Yogācāra views in these chapters.

Our thesis takes, as said, the significantly different view that these chapters are essentially intended as a contribution to the establishment of a sound Yogācāra system. Thus, expressing an idealist position is no coincidence but plays a vital role in these passages. We would even go further and state that, as a whole, the works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti have to be understood as a defence of the Yogācāra system. Although it is not possible here to fully elaborate this point, we do assert that the real intention of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's works has often been missed. For example, these two thinkers are normally viewed as quasi-professional philosophers for whom religion or spirituality is a side-issue. This anachronistic view⁴ completely ignores the context in which the efforts of these two thinkers were taking place.

In his recent valuable contribution to our understanding of Buddhist philosophy⁵ Hayes sees Dignāga as a “skeptic”, a Buddhist Pyrrho, as it were, taking an attitude of *αφαισια* (indifference) eventually leading him to *αταραχια* (detachment).⁶ Although this view is not without any support, like virtually all other interpretations of Dignāga beginning with Satis Chandra Vidyabhusana's,⁷ it suffers decisively from overlooking the proper context of Dignāga's epistemology, viz. the Yogācāra concern and background. In our view, the “positive scope” of Dignāga's epistemological concern is the establishment of Yogācāra in its Sākāravāda form.⁸ Once this is recognized, the differences pointed out between Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's attitude

³ Hattori, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁴ Professional philosophy as a branch of knowledge distinct from science and religion was introduced in the West at the end of the XVIIIth century by Kant and elaborated by his followers. Earlier thinkers, such as Descartes, Locke, etc., did not see themselves as philosophers but as contributors to the development of mathematics and mechanics, as well as liberating intellectual life from the shackle of ecclesiastical institutions. See Rosty (1979), p. 131.

⁵ Hayes (1988).

⁶ Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁷ See Hayes, *op. cit.*, for an overview of the *Forschungsgeschichte*.

⁸ One of the few works concerning the question of Sākāravāda is Kajiyama (1965), pp. 26–37. However, this article deals with a later period and can only offer limited help in our task.

toward the *apoha* problem become of secondary significance. (Hayes, incidentally, makes the same mistake, when he regards Nāgārjuna as having “no more confidence in scriptural tradition than in anything else”,⁹ and the Mādhyamaka [*sic!*] school as a form of “skeptical rationalism”. As in the case of Dignāga, Hayes entirely neglects the “religious”, or “metaphysical”, context, which is clearly present in, for example, Nāgārjuna’s *Ratnāvalī*. Again, to describe Vasubandhu’s philosophy merely as “a form of thoroughgoing nominalism” or “phenomenalism” is one-sided. That Vasubandhu thought of himself as proposing the doctrine of mind-only (*cittamātra*) and could be regarded as a Nirākāravādin does not seem to occur to Hayes.)

Dignāga and Dharmakīrti out of Context

One of Hayes’ leading motives in interpretation is the difference that he perceives between Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. Hayes thus says:

I do not, however, believe that Dignāga’s interest in epistemology is motivated by quite the same considerations as is Dharmakīrti’s. Dharmakīrti is undeniably a polemicist with a strong interest in demonstrating the truth of the Buddhist position through rational argument. He is first and foremost a Buddhist apologist. But it is not, I shall argue, Dignāga’s purpose to demonstrate that anything is the case; his chief motivations were not, in other words, polemical in nature. Rather, I shall argue, his writings on logic and epistemology should be regarded as the contents of his own meditations directed at attaining *nirvāṇa* directly instead of merely arguing about how *nirvāṇa* is to be attained.¹⁰

We can agree with this only to a very limited extent. We will certainly not go as far as Conze, who clearly goes too far when he says that logic was studied “in order to vanquish one’s adversaries in controversy, and thereby to increase the monetary resources of the Order”.¹¹ Nor will we follow Conze’s opinion that only a minority of Buddhists took Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s works very seriously. A cursory glance at the language of later Buddhist authors is enough to show the enormous influence of these works on other Buddhist thinkers. It seems to us that the problem in Hayes’ work is that he has taken Dignāga out of context, thereby depriving his works of their clear religious significance. It is hard to see from Hayes’ book that Dignāga was a Buddhist!

Moreover, Hayes has also systematically over-emphasised the differences between Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. We will not deny that there are differences between these two thinkers. The traditional account, which represents

⁹ Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹⁰ Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹¹ Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Dharmakīrti as a mere continuator of Dignāga is clearly not satisfactory. Nor is the complete identity of views depicted by the Tibetan tradition very credible.¹² It is clear that the religious significance of these two figures made the identification between their views stronger than it really was. However, the differences between these two authors seem to us to be secondary in regard to their overwhelming unity of intention. Dharmakīrti clearly saw himself as an interpreter as well as a defender of Dignāga. This fundamental unity in intention is unmistakable in their presentation of *pramāṇa-phala*, where we will see Dharmakīrti basically following Dignāga's text, only adding here and there a few elements to strengthen the arguments. Here again the consideration of the relation of these thinkers to their context together with a careful comparison of their respective texts will yield a significantly different perspective on both of them.

Another recent contribution is Radhika Herzberger's *Bhartṛhari and the Buddhists*.¹³ The greatest merit of this book is that it attempts to restore the lost dialogue between Bhartṛhari and Dignāga. However, we cannot agree with the one-sided conclusion reached, viz. that Dignāga's logical rules are designed to ensure that in using language one is not committed to a belief in fictional entities. Herzberger fails to recognize the Yogācāra background, and, partly for that reason, she over-emphasises the importance of Dharmakīrti's deviation from Dignāga. The reader can also only regret that she did not undertake the very important task of systematically studying the influence of some of Bhartṛhari's terminology (*sārūpya*, *ākāra*, *savyāpara*, etc.) on Dignāga.

Dignāga and Dharmakīrti in Context

We shall not be able to understand Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's texts unless we pose the question of their scope or their authors' interests. What were their authors trying to do when they were writing these texts? In order to understand this we have to understand their places within their own tradition. Dignāga and Dharmakīrti are first of all members of Buddhist tradition. The fundamental views of Buddhism, like the Four Noble Truths, etc., are basic elements of their world-view that are not really open to discussion. Logic and epistemology are, without doubt, and no matter what they themselves might say, *ancilla religionis* for them. The law of *karma*, *saṃsāra*, *mokṣa* is never questioned. To take Dignāga and Dharmakīrti as proponents of "free inquiry" in the modern sense of the word is simply to miss the context within which their texts are to be understood. For them, epistemology and dialectics (rather than logic) do *not* deal with what is good and bad, but with how we attain and avoid what we already know to be good or bad, respectively.

¹² See, e.g., Obermiller (1932), II, pp. 149–55.

¹³ Herzberger (1986).

These thinkers have a strong sense of belonging to a school. They know who their adversaries are and are aware of who belong to “their own group” (*svayūthya*). No conciliation is possible with the non-Buddhist groups. It is a question of the life and death of the tradition they belong to. This basic attitude accounts for their different attitudes towards Buddhists and non-Buddhists: when they criticize their Buddhist comrades they do so as diplomatically as possible, not wanting to show internal disagreements to outsiders who would, if they could, take advantage of any detectable internal split. In regard to outsiders, the rules of debate and logic cannot be disregarded, but apart from that there is no demand to disclose one’s true motives. It was common practice in ancient India, especially in the days of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, to hide one’s deeper thoughts and reveal them only to one’s closest disciples.

The style of the so-called Buddhist logicians is often characterized by a certain lack of ease, a deliberate obscurity, ambiguities, etc. All of this is the result of a desire to defend one’s own position and attack that of the opponent without exposing one’s own vulnerability. There is no real incentive to present outsiders with a complete, “objective” account of one’s own standpoint. This would, perhaps, be reserved for a few of one’s own reliable students; but otherwise these matters are “business secrets”.

All this means that to read Dignāga and Dharmakīrti at their face value will lead to one-sided, or even absurd, results. It is true that their own writings are our primary documents, but outside their historical context (the reconstruction of which, alas, is to some extent a matter of speculation) they are incomprehensible. They did not write to “share” their views with others, but to promote their own views and refute those of others.¹⁴

Dignāga and Dharmakīrti as Yogācāra Thinkers

Although it is not immediately easy to state what Dignāga’s and Dharmakīrti’s true intentions were,¹⁵ the study of their texts in relation to their contexts seems to suggest the following picture: Dignāga’s system was created at a time when the appearance of Yogācāra philosophy was making a profound impression in the minds of various contemporary Indian thinkers. Yogācāra idealism represented a powerful metaphysical system which was perceived as a dangerous adversary and rival by Brahmanical thinkers such as Śābara, Kumārila, Vātsyāyana, Uddyotakara, and others. Within the Buddhist tradition, Yogācāra became the target of intense criticism from Madhyamika thinkers including Bhavya, Candrakīrti, etc. Dignāga’s philosophy was conceived as a new way of defending the Yogācāra philosophy

¹⁴ This is clearly reflected in the somewhat abusive language often used.

¹⁵ We possess very little evidence independent of the texts that these authors have produced.

propounded earlier by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu against these powerful challenges.

Instead of advocating an ontological defence of the doctrine of mind-only (*cittamātra*, *sems tsam*) as Asaṅga and Vasubandhu had attempted, Dignāga conceived of a new way of propounding the same doctrine of mind-only without having to face the problems that these thinkers had encountered. Dignāga's idea was to propose a view that has come to be known as one which supports the existence of [the cognitive] aspects in cognition itself (*sākāravāda*). This new view differs from Vasubandhu's older doctrine, which denies the reality of [the cognitive] aspect (*nirākāravāda*) through its acceptance of the conventional validity of aspected cognitions. Dignāga attempted to avoid the paradoxical nature of some of the Yogācāra arguments. For example, one of the favourite early Yogācāra lines of argumentation equated dream cognition with our ordinary perceptions, arguing that neither type of awareness requires the support of an external object. The antinomical consequences of this Yogācāra position were used effectively by the opponents of the Yogācāra view, who supported their criticism with arguments based on common-sense realism.

We can find some of the arguments offered against Vasubandhu's older Yogācāra system in the works of Bhavya. In his *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa*, Bhavya criticizes the Nirākāravāda position.¹⁶ Quoting the initial stanza from Vasubandhu's *Viṃśatikā*, Bhavya argues against the position that since the appearance of the object (*viśayākāra*) is false, only cognition (*jñāna*) really exists. If the objective aspect is false, so is the subjective one. It is easy to see that the Nirākāravāda position, as depicted by Bhavya, leads to strong paradoxical consequences. If the subjective aspect of cognition is also false, how will one be able to make any valid differentiation! How does one establish, for example, that one's argument is right?

Much to the same effect is an argument seen in the *Hastavālaprakaraṇa*, perhaps rightly regarded as a work of Dignāga's youth by Frauwallner.¹⁷ An opponent argues that it may be an error to mistake a rope for a snake, but certainly the mistaken cognition as such must be real, or true. But Dignāga does not accept this argument. The error must have its source in some sort of impurity of mind. An impure mind, according to Dignāga, cannot be said really to exist. The idea of the real mind perceiving unreal things is unacceptable to Dignāga. In this argument against Buddhist Nirākāravāda we may be permitted to identify the seeds of Sākāravāra.

A brief and elegant argument against Nirākāravāda is supplied by Dharmakīrti, cf. *infra*: the opponent argues that our cognitions are based on experiences created by some object that is, however, never directly available to us. In that sense, the opponent here seems to assume, it may be said that

¹⁶ Lindtner (1986), p. 251.

¹⁷ Frauwallner (1968), p. 831.

all our cognitions are cognitions of something unreal. Dharmakīrti's reply is simple: How can we be sure that such experiences are based on objects, these alleged objects never being directly available to us? Without the objects we can never claim that we entertain an experience of these objects. In other words, how can we say that an experience is an effect of a cause that we know nothing about? No relationship can be established. This argument of Dharmakīrti's, we may add, would indeed pose serious difficulties for any modern philosopher trying to refute the claim of philosophers of the Bishop Berkeley cast on a purely *argumentum ad hominem* basis. Much discussed is, finally, a passage found in Śābara's *Bhāṣya* I, 4¹⁸ (and somehow closely related to the critique of Vijñānavāda found in *Brahmasūtra* II, 2.28–32).¹⁹ The opponent claims that, like in a dream, our cognitions arise without the support of an external object. Like many others (e.g., Bhavya in his *Tarkajvālā*) Śābara attacks the analogy: it is inconsistent. Cognition in a dream may be false, certainly, but only on the assumption that our "normal" everyday cognitions are true—an assumption that the Yogācāra is not prepared to admit without serious reservations. The opponent further argues that cognition is "empty" of an external object, in other words that the image (*ākāra*) of the two is the same. Against this argument—which reflects Nirākāravāda on the verge of Sākāravāda—Śābara objects that cognitions always have external objects, not cognitions, as their objects. It is the objects, not cognitions, that invest our cognitions with their images. It will be noticed that there is some terminological confusion here, as often when the Buddhists are criticized by their opponents. A more extensive refutation of Vijñānavāda is to be found in the works of Kumārila and his commentators.

Dignāga's philosophy was an attempt to answer these difficulties in order to defend the same basic doctrine of mind-only by putting a strong emphasis on the conventional validity of everyday perception. Dharmakīrti continued the work of his predecessor in the same direction. We can see quite clearly in his works the same strategy at work: on the one hand he very strongly asserts the conventional validity of empirical perceptions, while on the other hand he denies their validity on the ultimate level.

Although this view is expressed in several of Dharmakīrti's works, the clearest expression of this particular Yogācāra strategy is found in the presentation of *pramāṇa-phala*. This is the reason why this topic should receive particular attention from students of Dharmakīrti's thought. As said, there is no pretension to be exhaustive in this brief article. Our work will be nothing more than a preliminary exploration of largely uncharted territory.

¹⁸ Frauwallner (1968), pp. 26–8; Schayer (1988), p. 521; Strauss (1983), p. 414.

¹⁹ *nābhāva upalabdheḥ; vaidharmyāc ca na svapnādivat; na bhāvo 'nupalabdheḥ; kṣaṇikatvāc ca; sarvathānupapattēś ca.*

Pramāṇa and Phala

The most characteristic position of both Dignāga and Dharmakīrti on the subject of *pramāṇa* and *phala* is their assertion of an essential identity between valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) and its result (*phala*). This surprising view provokes from the very beginning the polemical talents of scholars. Kumāriḷa, for example, unleashes his attacks and sarcasm on Dignāga’s presentation of this topic.²⁰ His argument is common-sensical: how can *pramāṇa* and *phala* be essentially the same, since the former is the cause and the latter the result? In the same way that the cutting of the *khadira* tree is not the same as its result (the cut tree), *pramāṇa* and its *phala* must be different. Kumāriḷa’s point is well taken and quite hard to refute, although this is precisely what Dharmakīrti attempts to do. Let us notice for the time being that the ambiguity of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s position does not concern only *phala* (the result) of valid cognition but bears directly on the subject of *pramāṇa* itself.

In Sanskrit the common root used for words for knowledge is *jñā(na)* which means to be aware, to cognize. The more technical word for knowledge is *pramā* which is derived from the root *mā*, to measure or cognize, and from the prefix *pra* which indicates pre-eminence or excellence²¹. The usage of the word *pramā* is identical with that of *jñā(na)*. Neither word refers to an enduring quality possessed by the knower as does our word “knowledge”, but, rather, refers to a mental event that cognizes the object. Once this mental state has vanished, the person is left with the traces of this knowledge-event, which corresponds to our idea of memory.²²

The adjunction of the suffix *ana* gives, of course, the noun *pramāṇa*, which is generally understood to signify the means or instrument that brings about a knowledge-event (*pramā*). The Naiyāyika philosopher Vātsyāyana gives the following etymology of *pramāṇa*: “The word *pramāṇa* signifies the instrument, because [it is derived as] ‘by this is [rightly] known’ (*pramīyate*

²⁰ *Ślokaṁvārttika* IV. 74–78.

²¹ Monier-Williams gives “before, forward, in front”. Incidentally, several Tibetan authors have interpreted this suffix *pra* differently; thus, rGyal-tshab defines valid cognition as “a cognition that is newly free from contradiction”, and, therefore, seems to take *pra* as meaning “first” (rGyal-tshab, *rNam-’grel thar-lam gsal-byed*, 1.229.14). dGe-’dun-grub similarly says, “[*Question*:] ‘Why is it called “valid cognition”?’ [*Answer*:] “The Sanskrit etymology of valid cognition is *pramāṇa*. [The word] *pra* means first, and *māna*, to measure”” (*Tshad-mai bstan-bcos chen-po rigs-pa’i rgyan*, 18).

This idea was suggested to these authors by their reading of the sixth stanza of Dharmakīrti’s *PV*. mKhas-grub disagrees with their readings and does not take *pra* to mean “first” but to mean “excellent”. It is often hard to assess the relevance of these late reflections on Dharmakīrti’s original text. Based on a translation and having lost the contact with the original milieu, their interpretations sometimes differ from the original thought. However, these differences often reflect the different interpretations that were adopted by Indian commentators. For example, here rGyal-tshab’s interpretation relies on Dharmottara’s assertion that the object of a valid cognition is always new (*Pramāṇa-Viniścaya-tikā*, D. 4229, 9.b1–2).

²² See Matilal (1986), pp. 101–7.

anena).²³ Hattori remarks that according to Pāṇini²⁴ the suffix *-ana* signifies *kaṛaṇa*, the instrument or the predominant cause.²⁵

These few remarks reveal that for the Indian philosophers *pramāṇa* refers more to an instrument of knowledge than to the act or content of knowledge itself. For them, *pramāṇa* means both the dominant cause and the evidence (the right measure) that allows us to assert that we have knowledge.²⁶ Let us, to make it clear, take the example of the visual perception of a pot, and let us say, for the sake of simplicity, that according to the Nyāya system the visual sense in contact with the object is the *pramāṇa*. The visual sense is then a valid means of knowledge because it is the most reliable source of knowledge in this situation. It is the means that allows us to rightly evaluate the pot as a pot and thus produces knowledge of the pot (the *pramiti*), which is the result (*phala*) of the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*).

Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's view on *pramāṇa* is quite different from the above-mentioned view. For both of them, *pramāṇa* is not the instrument of knowledge but knowledge itself. Dharmakīrti, for example, defines *pramāṇa* as “the cognition that is free from contradiction (*avisamvādi, mi slu ba*).²⁷ For him, the visual consciousness perceiving the pot is the *pramāṇa*. Dharmakīrti does not differentiate *pramāṇa* and *pramiti*, as for example, Vātsyāyana does.²⁸ Although Dharmakīrti is followed by a few Brahmanical authors (Prabhākara), his position is peculiar in view of the generally accepted instrumental sense of *pramāṇa*. This oddness is in line with his even more odd position on the topic of the result of valid cognition.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the reasons for these unusual positions. Why did Dignāga and Dharmakīrti adopt such counter-intuitive views on these topics? This is what we intend to explain in the next few pages.

Let us start our analysis with a translation of the pertinent documents in Sanskrit (fragments) and the Tibetan version (ed. Hattori and Vetter). Hattori and Vetter's translations are excellent first attempts, but, as such, they are in need of revision and correction. Vetter's edition (1966) must be supplemented by Steinkellner (1972) and Lindtner (1984).

²³ Gangopadhyaya (1982), p. 12. This is a translation of the *Nyāya-Sūtra*, with Vātsyāyana's *Nyāyabhāṣya*.

²⁴ Pāṇini, I, IV, 42.

²⁵ Hattori, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

²⁶ Let us notice that the same ambiguity is found in the word *hetu*, which means both cause and reason or ground. These two senses are reflected in the two Tibetan translations of the word (*rgyu* and *gtan tshigs*). Incidentally, the same ambiguity is found in the Greek *aita*. For Aristotle, a “cause” is both a cause in the modern sense of the term and a justificatory ground.

²⁷ PV, II.1.

²⁸ Gangopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, 1.

TRANSLATION

Dignāga and Dharmakīrti
on the Identity of Pramāṇa and Phala
 A. DIGNĀGA, PS. I, 8cd–11ab
 (ed. Hattori (1968), 4.14–5.16)

8cd. *The means of cognition (pramāṇa) is really exactly [the same as its] result (phala), because [it is merely] an assumption that any differentiating activity is involved (savyāpāra).*

Unlike our opponents we, here [in Yogācāra] do not [really believe] that the result (*phala*) is an [external] object (*artha*) different from the means of cognition (*pramāṇa*). [Conventionally, of course] there is cognition (*jñāna*) in the form of result (*phalabhūta*). But this just refers to the *pramāṇa* after we have imposed (*upacārya*) upon it the assumption that it has obtained the object-aspect (*viśayākāra*), and that a differentiating activity is involved. But [truly speaking] no differentiating activity is involved. For example, in case of an effect that resembles its cause we [figuratively] say that it has “*taken*” the form of its cause. But, of course, no differentiating activity [such as taking] is involved. It is exactly the same here [in Yogācāra, when we say that nothing differentiates *phala* from *pramāṇa*].

9a. *Here [in Yogācāra], in other words, the result (phala) [is simply the state where cognition] is aware of itself [as if it had an object].*

Obviously [—we shall explain more below—] cognition arises with a double image (*ābhāsa*), i.e. an image of itself (*svābhāsa*) and an image of its content (*viśayābhāsa*). The “result” (*phala*) is simply [a term for] the self-awareness that cognition (*vijñāna*) has when it has these two images. [How can this be so?]

9b. *Because the cognition of [what opponents call an external] object (artha) has such a nature [i.e. the nature of self-cognition].*

When cognition (*jñāna*) is something internal (*saviśayārtha*) then it conceives what is agreeable or not agreeable in accordance with [its own] self-cognition; but if [the opponent thinks] that what can be cognized [by *pramāṇa*] (*prameya*) is actually an external object then [we do not agree, because]

9cd. *[What serves as] pramāṇa for this [prameya] is simply that it [i.e. the pramāṇa] is object-aspect (viśayākāra).*

So when (the opponent claims that the *prameya* is an external object, we do not agree,) for cognition, though [really only] self-knowing [as shown above], nevertheless may neglect its proper nature [as self-knowing]. It then is *pramāṇa* of that [*prameya*] simply by appearing as “object” (*arthābhāsātā*). This is because this “object” (*artha*)...

9d. *is measured* [“made up”, “known”] by the [*pramāṇa*].

[To explain:] Whenever an aspect (*ākāra*) of an “object” (*artha*) appears, e.g., as white in cognition (*jñāna*), then the content (*viśaya*) [of cognition] is believed actually to be so. [In other words:] Whenever we assume that cognition is aware of various [“external objects”] what actually happens is that we impose upon *pramāṇa* that it is *prameya*. [We mistake the subject for object.] [In fact, the two are the same] because [as said above] no *dharma* is involved in differentiating activity. So, to sum up:

10. *The prameya is simply whatever image it may be. The pramāṇa is [to use an old Yogācāra term] the subject-aspect (grāhakākāra), and the phala is [self-]awareness. Hence these three [cannot really be] set apart [in Yogācāra].*

[Opponent: You just said, “Obviously, cognition arises with a double image,” etc.], but *how* can it be known [for certain] that cognition (*vijñāna*) must be twofold [*rūpa = ābhāsa*]?

[Reply:]

11ab. *It appears with a double image because there is a difference between the cognition of an object and the cognition of that [cognition of that object].*

When there is a cognition of an object such as form, etc., this [cognition] reflects itself as object (*svābhāsa*), but the cognition of the object (*viśaya*) reflects the cognition corresponding to the object, *and* it reflects itself. Otherwise, i.e. if the cognition of the object (*viśayajñāna*) could be reduced either to the object-aspect (*arthākāra*) itself, or to its own aspect (*svākāra*), well, then the cognition of the cognition of the object could not be distinguished from it. [But actually we must make this distinction, at least conventionally.] ...²⁹

²⁹ This is Dignāga’s main argument for identifying *pramāṇa* and *phala*. Dharmakīrti leaves this argument aside but retains the thesis.

B. DHARMAKĪRTI, *PVin.* I, 34–59
 (ed. Vetter (1966), 78.12–100.26,
 suppl. by Steinkellner (1972) and Lindtner (1984))

Moreover, what is the *phala* of this [empirical *pramāṇa*]? [The *phala* is] the understanding of the *prameya*. [How so?] Because [the understanding of the *prameya*] is both a *jñāna* and a *phala*. Now, what is *pramāṇa*? The [*pramāṇa*] is that by means of which the empirical understanding of the *prameya* immediately [i.e. without distinction between the two]³⁰ is established to be what it is.

34. Surely, apart from a given image of an artha, nothing connects itself with an artha! Therefore the *pramāṇa* for understanding a *prameya* [is simply] the image of a [pra]meya.

Surely, the fact that [a *pramāṇa*] is instrumental of an action does not [mean] that it *always* is instrumental of an [action]. On the contrary, [a *pramāṇa* is only instrumental of an action] that it actually completes. [One can only make a distinction *after* the action has been completed.] Under these circumstances *jñāna* —which apparently is pure awareness (*anubhava*)—must, whenever active, have such a character that [two] respective functions can be assigned [to it], “this of that” [i.e. *jñāna* is the *pramāṇa* of that *prameya*]. [But really, they are not different; there is only *jñāna* or *anubhava*.] [Why is *jñāna* not really divided?] Yes, based on causes such as the contact between the senses and the objects, etc., it [viz. *jñāna*] *seems* to be differentiated, but really it is not. [Such a differentiation merely] based on different functions [as *pramāṇa* and *phala*] does not necessarily differentiate [*jñāna*], the nature of which remains undifferentiated. [The doubleness we thus impose upon *jñāna* is not real] because to be a cause [the *pramāṇa*] necessarily depends on there being an effect [i.e. a *phala*]. This is because the [effect] cannot be specified independently when the [cause] cannot be specified independently. [Again, a cause is only a cause in relation to an effect] because alternatively [i.e. if a cause could be a cause without an effect] it would not really be the [cause] of the [effect]—though [this effect might] exist—because [such a cause] would not at all be related to the [effect]. [In other words: the two would be entirely independent, and thus, neither cause nor effect.]

So, [to sum up what I mean by saying that *pramāṇa*] is the instrument [of an action, or effect:] it is that by which there is a given assignment of a function to a given [action], i.e. by splitting itself up so that there is a given understanding [i.e. *phala*] belonging to a given [*pramāṇa*],

³⁰ In other words, *artha* is simply cognition (*jñāna*) when cognition looks like an *artha* (*artharūpatā* = *arthasārūpya*). In that case only do we speak of *pramāṇa* and *prameya*. For Dharmakīrti these are not two different “things”, just two “modes” or “functions” of the same *jñāna*. This *jñāna* is called *pramāṇa* when it has modified itself into a *prameya*.

Moreover, the only way *jñāna* is in contact with *artha* is through the similarity (*sārūpya*) of an *artha* [that is not there]. [This is so] because, although the sense organs, etc., particularize [*jñāna*] due to their being themselves clear or unclear, etc., still they are not in contact with *artha* simply because they are not closely bound to that [*artha*].

[Opponent; Nirākāravāda:] But a particular *anubhava* through which [we form] a given conventional knowledge (*pratīti*) *must* be produced by an *artha*. [Our cognition] cannot be due to a [mere] similarity to an *artha*.

[Reply:] But then why not right away admit that the form [reflecting the *artha*] belongs to an [*artha*] that actually exists?

[Opponent:] It is not possible to represent this [form] as it actually is. [We only know the thing as some form that appears to us.]

[Reply:] This [Buddhist opponent] is trying to show that things have a nature that cannot be communicated. [I must say] that he establishes things just beautifully when saying that “this [image] belongs to that [*artha*], not this”.³¹

[The following three] verses are inserted [to sum up this point before continuing]:

35. *Therefore [the only] means of understanding the prameya is [the jñāna] in the role of [pra]meya. If [one attempts to assume] any other means, a connection between this [jñāna or pramāṇa] and its action [or result, the phala] cannot be established.*

36-7. *Moreover, this [meyarūpatā] is the only true nature of the [jñāna or pramāṇa]. Therefore the phala [as Dignāga says in his commentary to PS, I.8ab] is not something different [from the pramāṇa]. So when the [pramāṇa] exhibits the [meyarūpatā] in itself through a differentiating activity that [at the same time] is an understanding of the artha [or phala], it [viz. the pramāṇa] does seem to involve a differentiating activity directed towards itself. However, [the pramāṇa or jñāna] in itself is not active, because [it simply establishes itself, i.e.] it is settled by itself.*

[Let me now, before discussing this further, refute various alternative opinions about the nature of *pramāṇa*.] By the above [argument I] have also

³¹ This discussion with a Buddhist opponent, a Nirākāravādin such as Vasubandhu, etc., clearly shows the difference between the two sides. For Dharmakīrti there is no external object, only cognition that looks like an object. Cognition, in other words, contains and accounts for the object (*sākāra-jñāna*). The opponent says that cognition contains an image (*rūpa*) of the object, *artha*, not the *artha* itself. But how can we know something to be an image unless we say that it is an image of *something*, which must, therefore, exist. The Nirākāravādin is thereby brought into an untenable position. He cannot explain what the image is an image of, thereby contradicting the common-sensical point that an image must be an image of something different from itself.

excluded that the contact of senses [*indriyasamnikarṣa*] [with objects], reflection of objects [*arthālocana*], and a distinguishing cognition [*viśeṣaṇajñāna*] [can be considered *pramāṇa*, as they are, in fact by Uddyotakara, Kumārila and Praśastapāda, etc., respectively]. [None of these can define *pramāṇa*] because they cannot establish the connection (*sambandha*) [between the *pramāṇa*] and its function, or objects (*karma*). This is because [in all three cases] there is something intermediate between [*pramāṇa* and its object]. [It is clear that there is a “wall”] because the agent [in this case] cannot be established specifically [in its own right]. [This is] because even if all [other] factors are employed to [produce] an effect, [then, still,] it is only the final differentiating [or: final decisive] factor [cognition] that is the most efficient factor (*sādhakatama*). [Without it, there is no cognition.]

a. Even though one has [unimpaired] sense-organs [these themselves] do not differentiate their objects. What does, however, differentiate such [objects, *viśaya*] is the agent [or cognition]. The sense-organs are never a distinguishing factor, because [if they were] they would always produce cognition [but obviously they do not].

b. Again, “reflection of an object” [as Kumārila claims, is not a proper conception of *pramāṇa*], because unless [cognition] has the nature of the [object] [or: is identical with the object, as I maintain,] it can never be proved to reflect the object in question.³²

c. Likewise, a distinguishing cognition [cannot be *pramāṇa*], because unless it has [already itself] been distinguished by its object, one cannot distinguish between a distinguishing cognition and a cognition that has that distinction. Also [a *viśeṣaṇajñāna* is not a *pramāṇa*] because it cannot be proved to settle anything, and, finally, because it is a contradiction [to say] that an effect (*kriyā*) and the means [of that effect] have different objects (*viśaya*) [in case of cognition]. [Let me explain why *pramāṇa* and *phala* are the same:] If [i.e. since] they do not have different objects (*viśaya*) it is not meaningful to [speak of them] as two [different things]. It has already been refuted [in *PV*] that [things] with the same causes arise after one another. As they arise simultaneously one cannot [distinguish] between an effect and the means [or cause, of that effect. For practical reasons, however, the distinction between] effect and a means [or instrument of that effect] is valid; but this is only based on the assumption that cognition (*jñāna*) has parts (*aṃsa*). [Truly speaking, cognition has no parts.]

[Opponent:] Is it not contradictory to speak of an effect and a means [of something] if that thing cannot be differentiated?

[Reply:] Not at all! Because we admit [in a relative sense] that phenomena differ. This way of speaking (*vyavaharo* ‘*yam*’) is not based on real facts. It is

³² Much the same argument as against Nirākāravāda. Those who say that cognition has to do with images or reflections of objects always face the same problem: how can they say something is an image or reflection of an object which they admit that they have no idea about? To establish a *śaṣṭhī*-relationship, two independent factors must be given.

based on the common experience that, even if the thing [itself] is not differentiated, its modes [or functions (*vyavasthā*)] differ when its power changes (*śaktibheda*). [The thing as such remains the same.]

And, [finally] “contact”³³ (*saṃbandha!*) cannot be a *pramāṇa*, because even if there is a complete and total contact between [cognition and its object] still only some of the attributes of [the objects] would be cognized.

[So to conclude:] Even though there is no difference [between *pramāṇa* and its *phala*] still this [apparent] difference is created by a mental image (*ābhāsa*), and therefore [this image, the *arthasārūpya*, etc.,] is the *pramāṇa*, nothing else.

Next point. The *phala* of the *pramāṇa* [referred to above]: what sort of *arthasaṃvid* is it? It is a cognition of the *pratyakṣa-sort*. For what reason [can one claim] that the *artha* of such an actual experience (*anubhava*) is [a sort of] cognition? [These are two reasons for saying that an *artha* is simple cognition:] Because it is born from it, and because it is similar to it. In other words, a cognition similar to a *viśaya* immediately becomes a *viśaya*. But [when there is no *artha* apart from cognition] *what*, exactly, does the [cognition] experience [as an object? A good question!] for is this not precisely what I am trying to figure out?³⁴ Surely, when someone has a definite knowledge about something visible he has seen, or something audible he has heard, then such [cognitions] are an experience of his. If [we ask] how these [“things”] become [part of] one’s experience [the answer is simple:] surely, one is aware of their sheer presence. [In other words,] the certainty which the experiencing person has depends on [his] being associated with these [“things”]. When they are not there they are not [experienced] as such [viz. being present]. [In other words: *esse est percipi!*]

[I just said that the “object” is created by and resembles cognition, but this is, strictly speaking, not quite true. This point has been discussed by Dignāga in his *Ālambanaparīkṣā*:³⁵] Cognition (*vijñāna*) does not [really] *resemble* the *viśaya* that is because the gross image in the [*vijñāna*] is not to be found in each of the atoms [normally held to make up an external object]. Just because a given fact [appears as] one to cognition it still does not follow that the bunch of various things [i.e. the “external objects”] actually looks like that [i.e. as one, or as a unit. In other words, things are not what they appear to be] because a unitary nature (*ekasvabhāva*) is incompatible with a manifold [nature (*svabhāva*)].

[Let me now prove that there is not a single external object that reflects itself in cognition:]

³³ This additional discussion of “contact” (*saṃbandha* = *saṃnikarṣa*) is supplementary to the initial refutation of Uddyotakara, etc., given above (otherwise Vetter n. 53, p. 106).

³⁴ Here, then, Dharmakīrti’s ultimate motive is clear: he wants to establish the Vijñānavāda belief that there is no object apart from cognition.

³⁵ Now, *sārūpya* does not mean resemblance to an object, but looking like an object, playing the role of an object, replacement, or substitution, of the “object”.

One whole³⁶ gross object [first of all] does not reflect itself as such [in cognition], because then all the limbs would seem to move when [actually] only one limb is moving. If, on the other hand, [all of them as a whole] do not move it follows that the [parts that] move and [the parts that] do not move exist separately [and then the object is not *one* whole]. [These would be *two* things] like wool and water. And if one [part] were hidden, all of them [i.e. the entire thing] would necessarily have to be hidden, because they are not distinguished (*abheda*). Alternatively, one would see [all parts as a whole] completely [unhidden] if just one [part] is not hidden.

[Opponent:] Surely, one part can be hidden, whereas the [whole] that has these parts is not [hidden].

[Reply:] No, for if one half were hidden it would follow that one could see the [other half] because this is not covered; just as above [there would not be one whole, but two].

[Opponent:] One can only see the [entire thing as a whole] by seeing one of [its parts]. Therefore one does not understand [or see] the [entire thing as a whole] as long as [at least one] part is not seen.

[Reply:] No [this is wrong] because—since a [whole by definition] cannot be split up—it would follow that [the one whole] would not be understood [or seen] at all. Also, it follows that one would never see the [thing as a whole] because one can never see *all* the [many] parts at the same time. But if [alternatively, the whole thing] were seen [when] just a certain number of parts [are seen], one would accordingly see the [entire] gross [object as one whole] by seeing just one tiny little part! Also, if one [part] were coloured, the entire [thing as a whole] would either have to be seen as coloured or not [at all] coloured. Also, if [just one] part is coloured and the [whole] having the parts [is held] not to be coloured it would follow [that one and the same thing] is coloured and not coloured!

To sum up: There is not one single thing (*artha*) [in the world] that imposes its likeness upon cognition (*jñāna*). Therefore:

38. *No independent [external object] can be experienced by cognition (buddhi = jñāna). Such a [cognition] has no experience apart [from that of itself]. Since [cognition] is [really] deprived of subject and object, it must, as such, be self-illuminating.*

[I have now] refuted [any attempt at] defining the content of [cognition as an external object]. Therefore there is no experience (*anubhava*) of anything [apart from cognition itself]. So since [cognition] is deprived of the marks of subject and object [as often stated in earlier Yogācāra texts], therefore experience (*anubhava*) must be the only true nature of cognition (*buddhi*), and such a [cognition cannot be the cognition] of anything else [/other than

³⁶ We translate *eka* as “one whole”.

itself]. [One can] also [say] that the true nature [or “purpose”] of such a [cognition] is to know itself as such directly.³⁷

Since such a [cognition] has such a nature it must also illuminate [or know] itself [by itself]. Therefore it is said [in various Yogācāra texts] to be self-illuminating, just like a light. Even when speaking of the experience of blue, etc., the true nature of such a [thing as blue] is simply experience (*anubhava*).

Here are [two] intermediate verses [to sum up before we go on]:³⁸

39-40. *When such a [buddhi, though really] without subject-object aspect, nevertheless is understood superficially the way fools consider it, i.e. as a confusion of a clearly distinguishable object and subject—as in the case of a distinct cognition of [unreal] hair, etc.—then [I] shall not complain if [you] describe [mind in terms of] subject and object. [But, as said, it cannot really be split up.]*

[Let me now explain why Dignāga was right when he identified *phala* with *svasaṃvid* in *PS*, I, 9a! When mind only *seems* to be divided into subject and object:]

41ab. *Then, since there is not cognition of anything [apart from mind itself], self-cognition is considered [by us to be the same as] the phala.*

For those who [like us] assign the aspects (*ākāra*) of object and subject to mind (*buddhi*) only, *svasaṃvid* and *phala* are the same, because there is nothing to be known [apart from cognition itself]. This is because the nature of such [self-cognition simply] is to understand an object (*arthādhiḡati*). Even if such an experience [without an external object] takes on a pleasant aspect, or takes on an unpleasant aspect (*ākāra*), it is still only directly aware of that pleasant or unpleasant content (*viṣaya*). Even if [we for the sake of argument assume] that an external object exists, such a [*svasaṃvid*] must still be the *phala*, since the “object” (*artha*) [can only] be established as *svasaṃvid*. The true nature (*svabhāva*) of an “object” (*artha*) can never represent its form (*ākāra*) as it really is, for that would imply that *all* cognitions had the same form [in the minds of all people at the same time]. [One given] form (*ākāra*) is in fact represented in many ways, for it is a matter of common experience (*darśana*) that the same “object” (*svabhāva*) appears pleasant to one [person] and unpleasant to another.³⁹

[Our opponent does not agree:]

³⁷ In other words, *yogipratyakṣajñāna* is an *advayajñāna* of itself.

³⁸ As above the purpose of *antaraśloka* in *Dharmakīrti* is to sum up something before going on with further aspects of the same topic. A *saṃgrahaśloka*, on the other hand, sums up and completes a discussion before going on to an entirely new topic. (One is a “comma”, the other a “full stop”.) This distinction is not made quite clear in Mimaki’s paper (1980) on this subject.

³⁹ This is the old argument found, e.g., in *Asaṅga*, *Vasubandhu*, etc. See *Mahāyānasamgraha*, *Ālokaṃālā*, *passim*, with ref.

41cd. *A pleasant or unpleasant image is something that one imagines conceptually, it is an object of direct perception!*

[Hence your argument is wrong!]

[Reply:] No! For in the case of delirium⁴⁰ and other [abnormal states we observe that what we experience] has no connection with (*asaṃdhāna*) [external objects]. Also, it is a fact that the same particular sound, smell or taste causes pleasure to some people's senses, displeasure [to those of others]. [In other words, no external object is needed to account for a given experience.] Therefore, [as said above,] *arthādhigati* simply has the nature of *svasaṃvid*.

What effects such an [*arthādhigati* or *svasaṃvid*] is the *viṣayākāra*, because this [self-cognition] appears in such a form [i.e. as *viṣayākāra*]. The status of an *artha* is simply *svasaṃvedana*. Therefore self-cognition, taken as *phala*, can also be regarded as object-cognition.

42a. *Therefore there is no difference of object*⁴¹

in the case of *pramāṇa* and *phala*.

42bcd. *The phala is said [by Dignāga] to be self-cognition, for when one considers the nature of [self-cognition] it is identical with cognition of an "object".*

43. *Whatever the cause of a corresponding cognition, be it this or that, it is the phala. Therefore we maintain: to be an artha is to be a prameya.*

44. *True, it is a question of how in the world one can grasp [or conceive] an artha behind its image apart from the reflection of the artha. I do not know how to answer either.*

These were intermediate verses [before going on to the next relevant point:]

[Opponent:] If [you are right] about there being no external object (*bāhyārtha*) then how can you form an opinion about *pramāṇa*, *prameya* and *phala*?

[Reply:] Well, here [in Yogācāra] we say that this rule has to do with appearances, it has nothing to do with reality.⁴² It is a fact that a certain *viṣayākāra* and an internal grasping [subject] are to be noticed [in a conventional sense] when they occur in a state of self-cognition. Under these

⁴⁰ Tib. 'chi las—Manoratha mentions *kāmala*, etc., i.e. jaundice.

⁴¹ For this verse see Lindtner (1984), p. 164.

⁴² Clearly Dharmakīrti accepts the traditional doctrine of the two truths, but he carefully avoids the terminology of *samvṛti*- and *paramārtha-satya*—probably for various historical reasons, such as the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka controversy, Dharmāpala vs. Bhavya. A very sensitive issue in the days of Dharmakīrti.

circumstances [to come back to your question] we have an opinion about *pramāṇa*, *prameya* and *phala*, but [as said] it is only something we observe.

Here are [ten] intermediate verses [also taken over from my earlier work, the *Pramāṇavārttika*:]

45. *The true nature of mind (buddhi) cannot be divided into two. Nevertheless people with perverted vision observe it as being divided into object, subject and [self-?] cognition.*⁴³

46. *[Let me give an example.] For people whose senses have been spellbound by mantras etc., potsherds appear otherwise [than they do to normal people]. They are not as they seem to be.*

47. *For those whose eyes have not been spellbound do not see [these phantasmata]. They do, however, see something huge far away or in the desert as if it were small.*

48. *Likewise this empirical ordinance about pramāṇa, prameya and phala is strictly phenomenal. It works for those who are aware of subject and object, but it does not really exist.*

49. *Otherwise [i.e. if things really were what they seem to be], how could all variously appearing aspects (ākāra) of one single thing be true [at the same time? They cannot], for then it would lose its nature as one whole.*

50. *And any other thing would also lose its status as being different. On the other hand [this does not mean] that [a whole exists] without differences; for then we would not see any material forms [but we actually do]. Obviously, when mind sees an object without parts it simply judges it to be partless. [But this is wrong:]*

51. *Things do not really have the nature which we think they have. [Why not?] Because [when we analyse further] their nature is neither one nor more than one.*

52-3. *[Opponent:] Normally a so-called error comes into being when one experiences a similarity [between certain things], i.e. when one confounds something with something that it is not. But this is not [how you can explain error] here [in Yogācāra], for there is [in your opinion] not a single thing in the entire world that really exists. [Hence you cannot explain error, and therefore you cannot distinguish appearance and reality.] [Reply:] Certainly, there is [such a kind of “empirical” error] but [there is also another kind of error, i.e.] the one that arises from internal confusion.*

⁴³ Compare Lindtner (1984), ref. to *Ālokaṃālā*, ed. Lindtner (1985), v. 84. Cf. also v. 48, below, for the compound.

54. *Such an [error] is by nature due to deficiency (doṣa); it manifests itself as something unreal,⁴⁴ it does so independently of seeing and [mistaking] similarities, just as [some people see] darkness, etc.*

[Opponent:] If this [empirical world] is sheer *vijñaptimātra*, how can you prove your suggestion about *pramāṇa* [*prameya* and *phala*], if they only exist empirically [and not ultimately]?

[Reply:] Well, here [in Yogācāra] we say [that everything is mind-only] because [cognition cannot really] be defined as object and subject.

Moreover,

55ab. *There [really] is no difference between something blue and the idea of this [blue thing] because [the "two"] must be perceived simultaneously.*

Though, of course, it *appears* to exist apart [from cognition], still something blue has no other nature, i.e. as an independent object, apart from being experience (*anubhava*). This is because [both] necessarily are perceived together, as two moons, for example. Obviously, when one [of these "two"] is not perceived, neither is the other perceived. And this would not have been the case had they had [two] different natures, for then [subject and object] could never be linked together. [So perception can only be accounted for when we assume the identity of subject and object.]

[On the other hand,] there *is* a connection between colour and light. [This connection] consists in the [mutual] ability to engender knowledge about them[selves], or rather of enabling the senses to do so. Hence colour-form cannot be perceived without light. That is because the effect [in this case, cognition of colour] can never dispense with its cause [viz. light]. [Sometimes light] is perceived, since [in such cases] it has the character of being perceivable [or: observable] together with a colour indistinguishable from light. On the other hand, light [sometimes] is also perceived alone [without colour] and certain creatures are able to see colours without light [in darkness, etc.]. Hence these two [viz. light and colour] do not necessarily have to be perceived together; sometimes blue (*nīlākāra*) and the cognition [of that blue] must necessarily [be perceived together, though]. If they were different this would not be possible, as in the case of blue and yellow.

[Opponent: This is absurd!] It must be due to the proximity of an [external] object (*viṣaya*) that one first takes up [that object] and then, subsequently, cognizes it.

[Reply:] [No, because]

⁴⁴ In standard Yogācāra terminology: *paratantrasvabhāva* (= *citta* and *caitta*) appears as *parikalpitasvabhāva*, i.e. *paratantrasvabhāva* is *abhūtaparikalpa*. The term *doṣa* may here refer to the disturbance of the "three humours" as well, i.e. it is probably not just a synonym of *bhrānti*, *upaplava*, etc.

55cd. [If you do] not [accept that only] perception is perceived, the perception of an [external] object can never be proved.⁴⁵

The fact that an object (*viṣaya*) exists does not mean that it is perceived. On the contrary, it is [perceived] by its perception! So [the existence of an object] does not I provide us] with valid cognition; nevertheless it does not bar transactions related to [its] existence. The [transactions, or “common usage”,] cannot be conventionally established unless the object (*viṣaya*) is conventionally established. And that would mean the elimination of all such [common usages]. Obviously, nothing can be treated as existent—even if it actually exists—unless it is perceived [to exist]. Therefore, if no cognition is perceived [by anything else than itself], there is certainly no cognizing subject at all.

[Opponent:] You say that all cognition is self-cognition] but can a [given] cognition not be cognized by another [act of cognition]?

[Reply: No!] First of all: [you suggest that the cognition of an object] is not established as long as [the cognition] itself cognizes an object, because there is nothing to establish it [yet]. [You further say that cognition can only] be perceived when another [subsequent cognition] perceives [the first cognition, i.e. the cognition of the object]. But how silly to say that something that was not there then [i.e. to begin with] later on can be proved to have been there [without our knowing it]! [There is] also [another problem when you suggest that one cognition is perceived by another cognition:] when [the first] cognition is perceived by another [cognition] then the [latter] cannot be established because [the latter] needs another to perceive [itself]. This means, first of all, that a person faced with an infinite regress of perceptions would never [come to the point] of perceiving anything at all, for if one [perception] is not established no [perception] at all is established. If, on the other hand, *all* the perceptions occurred, there would be no end to them, and the world would [soon] go blind and deaf.

No matter which [perception] one stops at [cognition] itself and the *viṣayā-kara* are perceived together [at the same time]. This is so in all cases because there is no reason for making a distinction. Therefore it is proved that [e.g., blue and the idea of blue] necessarily are perceived simultaneously. It would be impossible to have sequential activity in [something, e.g., cognition, that is a self-contained] unit, because such a thing [by definition] cannot be differentiated.

Next point: Cognition manifests itself as such, simply because it is its nature to do so. There is not the slightest [thing] apart from it, as in the case of self-cognition. This also means that such a [cognition] is not a cognition apart from (*anyathā*) an “object”. There is no [“blue object”] apart from the experience of blue, etc. So, [we] experience blue, etc., because [blue, etc.] appears that way; this being the blue nature of such [self-cognition].

⁴⁵ Dharmakīrti “proves” that an “external object” exists (in a relative sense) in 59cd, q.v.

If [things] appear as they do because it is their nature to do so, this means [that cognition not only] manifests itself but also [other things],⁴⁶ as does light.

Therefore [we, here in Yogācāra,] maintain that the *grāhakākāra* is a *sādhaka* for self-cognition. This is because the [*grāhakākāra*] regulates the mode (*bhāva*) of the [self-cognition].

Here are three intermediate verses [to sum up before going on to the next related point:]

56. *So, this [empirical] axiom about pramāṇa, prameya and phala is to be applied universally⁴⁷ when cognition has itself as object, and also when one feels desire, etc.*

57. *As far as these [feelings etc.] are concerned, they are also liable to cognize themselves because they are, by nature, experience. Therefore [one can define] pramāṇa as such as an ability, prameya as the [things] themselves, and phala [the “outcome”] as self-cognition.*

58. *The ability to determine itself is just another term for grāhakākāra. This is a tendency that [cognition] has, and therefore one can say that pramāṇa is self-cognition.*

[With regard to Dignāga’s idea that cognition is two-fold:]

59ab. *Therefore, even if one assumes the existence of an external object, the apparent object and the cognition [of it] are not different.*

Perception and cognition being simultaneous, it follows, even if one assumes that external objects exist, that the image of blue, etc., and the cognition of it cannot be established as being different.

59c. *Therefore mind has a double form.*

Therefore, through the very nature of an object (*viṣaya*) and cognition, mind is established as having two forms.

[Opponent:] But if [you claim] that the aspect (*ākāra*) of the object (*viṣaya*) that appears is not different from mind, how can one know that [external objects exist] outside [mind]?

[Reply: External objects do not really exist...]

59d. *But [you] may establish [them] by arguing from the contrary supposition. [But they have an apparent existence.]*

⁴⁶ Cf. above, Vetter, *op. cit.*, 84, 1.3, ... *skyes pa daft 'dra ba dag gis so*.

⁴⁷ Here *sarvatra* = *vijñaptināye*, according to Manorathanandin *ad PV II.365*. However, *sarvatra* is often used, e.g., by Bhavya, in the sense of “in a relative and in an absolute sense”, and that is probably also how Dharmakīrti here uses *sarvatra*, *mutatis mutandis*, of course.

When a resulting cognition does not arise even though [all] other efficient causes are present, this indicates that a further cause is missing. You can call that “an external object” [if you wish]. If someone here [in Yogācāra, however,] says that blue is no “result” [apart from cognition itself] because there is no specific material cause [i.e. atoms etc.], let please him do so!

[Opponent:] such a person [i.e. a Yogācāra] refutes the [existence] of objects [outside] mind, how can he speak [i.e. distinguish] false and the opposite [i.e. true] for there is no difference [when everything is mind]?⁴⁸

[Reply: Here in Yogācāra we accept two kinds of reality:]

Seeing that a certain transaction (*vyavahāra*) is not satisfactory due to the deception of the impressions of delusion, one can inform an unenlightened [person] that it is not reliable. Another one, though, may be reliable in terms of not being contradicted by any transaction here [in *saṃsāra*]. This is because its impressions are made firm by an unseparated continuity that lasts as long as *saṃsāra* does. In any case, this nature is said to apply to a *pramāṇa* that is relative (*sāṃvyavahārika*). [I mention this] because our stupid opponents create confusion in society about this point also. [As opposed to this there is an absolute cognition:] By cultivating an insight of a rational sort [yogis] can visualize a *pramāṇa*. It is pure in the absence of error; it does not vanish, it is absolute (*pāramārthika*). Only a little has been said about this [here in this book].⁴⁹

Conclusion

These passages from Dignāga and Dharmakīrti show beyond any doubt that these two Buddhist philosophers are “idealists” who consider the empirical world ultimately to be *viññaptimātra*. They argue that strictly speaking no external objects exist. Cognition falsely appears with a subjective and an objective aspect, i.e. as a “subject” cognizing an “object”. However, ultimately mind cognizing itself is the only reality. Mind knows nothing apart from itself.

This double-aspected consciousness results in the understanding of empirical objects that we experience in our daily life. This is the result (*phala*, ‘*bras bu*) of the means of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*, *tshad ma*). We saw the ambiguity that both Dignāga and Dharmakīrti invested in the word “*ākāra*” (*rnam pa*), which means aspect, and also form or quality. The aspect is on the one hand the reflection of the object in consciousness, and on the other that consciousness which sees that reflection. Such an *ākāra* is the aspect

⁴⁸ Actually Dharmakīrti has discussed the two kinds of error above, i.e. an “empirical” and a “transcendental”.

⁴⁹ This final passage on the two truths has been discussed by Lindtner (1984), pp. 156–7.

of the object in the consciousness as well as the aspected consciousness itself. This ambiguity is a way for our two thinkers to introduce their own version of Yogācāra, according to which the perceptual act can be described as perception perceiving itself. This double sense acquires its full meaning when one considers that all that is involved in cognition is a self-luminous consciousness. Objects are mere reflections awakened by the propensities left on consciousness by past experiences, and consciousness is the mere apprehension of this reflection which is nothing but itself!

How then, does this idea fit in with the other tenets that traditionally define Yogācāra? The most characteristic feature of Yogācāra apart from *viññaptimātra* would be the doctrine of the three “natures” (*svabhāva*). They are discussed by Dignāga in his *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha*.⁵⁰ Here (vv. 24ff) Dignāga maintains that the teaching in the *Prajñāpāramita* is based on the three natures, i.e. *parikalpita*-, *paratantra*- and *pariniṣpanna*-*svabhāva*. The first of these is the imagined nature. It does not really exist; it has to do with names and language. Any *ākāra* that is knowable (*jñeya*) is considered *parikalpita-svabhāva*.⁵¹ This idea, incidentally, is beautifully supported by a well-known fragment from Dignāga’s *Hetumukha*: *sarva evāyam anumānānumeyavyavahāro buddhyāruḍhenaiva dharmadharmibhedena na bahiḥ sadasattvam apekṣate*. From this it is immediately obvious, when we turn to the “epistemological” side of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, that their concept of the second *pramāṇa*, viz. *anumāna*, is rooted in their notion of *parikalpita-svabhāva*. At this level we are not dealing with “real things”, but only with language. And, indeed, this is also the context where the theory of *apoha* has to be assessed. The “scope” of the *apoha* theory is simply to explain how we can differentiate meaning without any basis in “real things”. The second nature, the *paratantra-svabhāva*, exists, but always appears quite different from what it really is, i.e. as *parikalpita-svabhāva*. Again, in terms of epistemology, it is the immediate experience of “perception” (*pratyakṣa*) that is free from *kalpanā*, i.e. *parikalpita-svabhāva*, and cannot be expressed in language. At the highest level of perception no distinction can be made between subject and object. This is a *jñāna* that is *advaya*, in other words, it is *pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*. When discussing the absolute nature in his *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha*, Dignāga speaks of the four kinds of purification, *vyavadāna*, an old Yogācāra doctrine familiar to us from *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*, *Madhyāntavibhāga*, etc. These observations permit us to assume with a high degree of certainty that Dignāga developed his epistemology—the theory of two *pramāṇas*, etc.—on the basis of the Yogācāra doctrine of three natures. His purpose was simply to “prove” the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*’s teaching of *viññaptimātra* in a more convincing way than Vasubandhu had done in his “Nirākāravāda philosophy”. Indeed, even for his epistemology he

⁵⁰ Edited in Frauwallner (1968), pp. 816–20.

⁵¹ See v. 26cd: *sarvo jñeyatayārūḍha ākāraḥ kalpito matau*.

was, as has been pointed out, able to draw inspiration from earlier Yogācāra sources.⁵²

No picture of the edifice of Yogācāra is complete without certain other elements. Though the evidence to be gathered from the extant writings of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti is quite scanty, it is, nevertheless, sufficient to establish that they endorsed some sort of fully fledged Yogācāra. Thus, in his *PV* and *Samtānāntarasiddhi*, Dharmakīrti refers to *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, and the *maṅgalaśloka* of the *PV* presupposes a doctrine of at least two (probably three) *kāyas*.⁵³ In addition, a single reference to *ālaya* (*PV* III, 522) and scattered mentions of *bīja* and *vāsanā* are sufficient to substantiate that he accepts the notion of *ālayavijñāna* in some sense. There are also references to the notion of a “pure mind” of the sort found in the Maitreya tradition, though.

Of particular intricacy is the role of the two truths in Yogācāra in general. We have seen, above, that Dharmakīrti not only speaks of two *pramāṇas*—*pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*—but also speaks of two “degrees” of cognition, viz. *sāmvyavahārika*- and *pāramārthika*-*pramāṇa*. From this it seems that he is a Sautrāntika on a “relative” level, a Vijñaptimātravādin on the “absolute” level. What makes the difference between these two truths, or realities, is the presence of a certain “confusion” (*upaplava*, *viplava*, *bhrānti*) due to the power of *vāsanā*. This confusion, the arising of *samsāra* and duality, subsists until the moment of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. Dharmakīrti is quite explicit that the shift of basis takes place when a yogin has practised *bhāvanā*, overcomes the dichotomy of *grāhaka-gāhya*, and achieves a pure and clear intuition of the “absolute” (probably the *dharmakāya*, *pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*, etc.) free from *kalpanā*. It is perception in its most developed and sublime form.⁵⁴ We have no good reason to assume that Dignāga would not agree to the Yogācāra philosophy of Dharmakīrti no matter how modest our sources are.

So, to sum up, the achievement peculiar to Sākāravāda consists in providing the old Yogācāra dogma of three natures with a new foundation by introducing epistemology—the theory of the two *pramāṇas*—within time-honoured, but threatened, frames.

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⁵² Such as the *Yogācārabhūmi*, see Lindtner (1984), p. 152.

⁵³ For further references, see Lindtner (1984).

⁵⁴ A true “revolution”! For references and further details, see Lindtner (1984).

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