

gustav / September 23, 2010 10:29AM

[Judgment and Reality \[Dignāga's Nyāyamukha\]](#)

Judgment and Reality

The core problem is “what is the ontically real?”, and the path to the answer rests upon the problem “what's the relation between reality and knowledge (the act to know)?”^[1] However, the answer seems not to be a direct one to the “what” in the core problem. The “what” will become no matter – unless in a sense as a pure formal modification, like a world view unfolding a wider scope of life; in stead, the path leads to spiritual development, from nihilism to meaningfulness and from constraint to liberty at once. This is my main concern with and interest in Dignāga, as well as in the relation therefrom to Kant. As well, this is my perspective cutting in Nyāyamukha during the semester.

The method: with an established system of critical epistemology (CE) which is also a report of conducting the critical reflection along with accepting Dignāga's and Kant's methods and observations, on the one side, I try to continue the philosophical enquiry in both of them; on the other side, I sort of make an announcement that my responsibility in the inquiry is not to retell their theories piece by piece again but to understand their major issues (which we still have now) and solutions, and to sort them out in our own era.

With the concern to the core problem, the interpretations^[2] of Dignāga's logic treating it as Greek syllogism or as formal formulations seem very odd. The point is, we want to find the condition (means) of a valid judgment in observation of making the judgment itself^[3]. Katrsura points out (2007 Taipei Lecture 2) Dignāga's “logical epistemology” is integrated with the previous two traditions: (syllogistic, formal) logic in debate tradition and the pramāṇa-debates between Naiyayikas and Buddhists. With the same reason in Kant's own claiming that once the Aristotelian syllogism and categories are brought into the consideration of “the condition of all possible experience”, the logic steps into a different scope already, given how much content they share in common – I hereby also address that Dignāga's integrated logic has already a different role than the formulation role in the debate traditions.

Xuanzang's translation of NM begins with “為欲簡持能立能破義中真實故造斯論 (In order to concisely hold firmly in hand the true meaning and object of that-which-can-be-established and that-which-cannot-be-established, I make this book)”, this already entails that the book targeting no formulation, but the “condition” – that-which-can-be and that-which-cannot-be.

The established CE holds that the immediate means (perception/intuition) and the mediate means of cognition (inference/concept) are in immediate relation, which makes the condition of any possible cognition. Then, with the conformity or non-conformity between the conceptual construction as the condition of cognition which is immediately represented in space and time and the conceptual construction associated in the action of judgment, there is the value of truth and non-truth. Only then, Dignāga can establish his theory of proper inference. From “the observation of the smoke (liṅga 因) rising in the mountain” (hetu, 因), we can infer “that there is fire” (pakṣa 宗), together with the previous instances (dṛṣṭānta 喻) such as the fire in the kitchen is connected with smoke and with the previous instances such as the lake is not connected with smoke. Now the real experience is the observation of smoke in the mountain; with the knowledge induced from past experience (namely, the world, given cognized or to be cognized,) ^[4] we know that smoke can be caused by fire and nothing else so far, i.e., the smoke and the fire are two units whose relation is causally determined in our experiencing. Hence, the inference can be a proper one.

Yet, we have to make a remark here: the significance of such a theory of inference is not to assure the absolute truth value of this particular inference “there is fire in the mountain.” What is necessary is not the fire's being the cause of the existence of smoke; rather that all that can take place in the world must take place in causal networks is necessary. That is to say, the inference, though it is proper with the support we have so far, can be a mistake, as long as we find another stronger, more immediate support, for instance, a fairy's magic is making that happen to our own eyes and we can check that in our public community. The point is, there must be a truth, although all that exist are but representations.

Footnotes:

1. In India, the original Naiyayikas hold all that we can grasp is but representations and develop sophisticated epistemological treatises on “means” to knowledge, basically showing that the objects corresponding to our representations “out there” are indeed real, including the (four) means themselves (Sharma, 1997). The stand is refused by Nagārjuna who points out the contradiction to hold positive of both the reality of the means and the reality of the objects at once. Later Naiyayikas modify their own refined theories coping up with Nagārjuna, and we can find their impact upon the Abhidharma scholars (Hatorri, 吳汝鈞 trans., 2006). The development through the Abhidharma Vasubhandu to the Sautrāntika Vasubhandu coiled around determining the ontical status. Dignāga in his *Pramanasamuccaya* tries to deliver a common basis to Sautrāntika stand especially with regard to the theorem of *akārā*, namely, all that we know is but representations, suspending the decision of ontical status, and with his great effort on “Nyāya”-mukha we may smell something behind in his trying to go back to the center of the path (of knowing) to reality – smell the purpose of Naiyayikas' interest in finding “means” to valid and invalid cognitions.

2. Tucci, 1930.

3. This is a similar attempt we can find in Naiyayikas, perhaps in Sautrāntika as well. However, definitely we can find this attempt in Dignāga's *pramāṇavada*.

4. By this, we are not accused to mix ourselves with inductive logic. In order for induction to be possible, the logical condition in cognition must be satisfied first.

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[What is “Conceptual Construction?” - Re: Judgment and Reality \[Dignāga's Nyāyamukha\]](#)

In the fifth paragraph:

[quote=gustav]Then, with the conformity or non-conformity between the conceptual construction as the condition of cognition which is immediately represented in space and time and the conceptual construction associated in the action of judgment, there is the value of truth and non-truth.[/quote]

I known (or tend to think) the key points are the parts of "...as the condition of cognition which is immediately represented in space and time" and "...associated in the action of judgment." But I think I should better to know what conceptual construction means first.

I think the meaning behind "the conceptual construction as the condition of cognition which is immediately represented in space and time" and "the conceptual construction associated in the action of judgment" is very interesting; or, it means a lot.

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[Re: What is “Conceptual Construction?” - Re: Judgment and Reality \[Dignāga's Nyāyamukha\]](#)

Conceptual construction, roughly speaking, is the result of human thinking.