Bhāviveka's View of the Conventional World: An External Object (*bāhyārtha*) and a Conceptual Cognition (*vikalpa*)

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0. The purpose of this paper is to show how Bhāviveka views the conventional world (*vyavahāra*). For this purpose, I will consider the arguments developed by him in his *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* (MHK) V 51-56, in which he refutes two theories constructed by the Yogācāra school: the theory termed *asallakṣaṇānupraveśopāya* that the apprehension of *cittamātra* 'mere mind' is the basis for apprehending that there does not exist the duality of the grasper and the grasped (*grāhyagrāhakadvayābhāva*)¹⁾ and the theory termed *parikalpitasvabhāva* that the grasper and the grasped are conceptual constructs and hence unreal (*parikalpitasvabhāva*).

In the Yogācāra school, the duality in question is accepted as the conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*). This means that, in this school, what is accepted as the conventional truth is a conceptual construct and hence absolutely unreal. According to Bhāviveka, however, it is not tenable that what is conceptually grasped is absolutely unreal. It will be shown that his position necessarily follows from his view of the conventional world.

1. Bhāviveka begins his arguments against the *asallakṣaṇānupraveśopāya*-theory by saying the following:

MHK V 51: *svabhāvato'py ajātatvād adravyatvād vināśataḥ / rūpādiśūnyaṃ māyāvad ity abhyāsād asaṅgitā //*

“[Thesis:] An entity such as form is empty [of an essential nature] ; [Reason:] Because it does not arise as something that arises with its own nature (*svabhāvato'jātatvāt*); because it is not a reality (*adravyatvāt*); because it is what perishes (*vināśataḥ*); [Example:] Like an illusion created by a magician. Therefore, it is through repeated [nonapprehension of an essential nature] (*abhyāsa*) that one becomes free from attachment [to such an entity] (*asaṅgitā*).”

Attachment to a certain thing presupposes the conceptualization of the thing. In MHK V 51 Bhāviveka presents an argument to prove that an entity such as form, which is believed, at the conventional level, to have its own essential nature (*svabhāva*), does not have

it at the ultimate level. Therefore, in his view, the attachment to such an entity is broken by eliminating the conceptualization of the entity's own essential nature. This elimination, which leads to the removal of the attachment to the entity, is carried out through repeated nonapprehension of the essential nature (*abhyāsa, śūnyatādarśanābhyāsa*²⁾).

Now, according to Yogācāras, by the apprehension of *cittamātra*, there is the non-apprehension of a cognized object (*grāhya*); by non-apprehending a cognized object, mind (*grāhaka*) also is nonapprehended. The apprehension of *cittamātra* implicates the denial of external objects (*bāhyārtha*). Therefore Bhāviveka has to say the following:

MHK V 52: *sadbhāve 'pi ca rūpāder yathābhūtābodbhataḥ / vyāvartate hy asadgrāhas tadabhāve na* [read: *tadabhāvena*³⁾] *kiṃ tadā //*

"In addition, even if an entity such as form exists [externally], attachment to the nonexistent (*asad-grāha*) is indeed removed by means of understanding it as it really is (*yathābhūtābodbha*). In that case, what is the use of assuming that there does not exist such an entity externally?"

According to Bhāviveka, form exists externally as what is dependently originated (*pratītyasamutpanna*). Therefore, even on the assumption that there exists form externally, if one cognizes the form in the way that one does not cognize its own essential nature, one can get rid of the conceptualization of the essential nature. Accordingly, there is no use in denying the external existence of the form to eliminate its conceptualization.

In the following verse Bhāviveka adduces the reason that the Yogācāras cannot arrive at the elimination of the conceptualization of form merely by resorting to the denial of its external existence.

MHK V 53: *naiva dvayavikalpaś ca cittacaitasagocaraḥ / pratiṣiddhe 'pi rūpādaḥ na pravartitum arhati //*

"Furthermore, [in the view of Yogācāras,] the conceptual construction of the duality [of the grasper and the grasped] (*dvayavikalpa*) arises within the realm of mind (*citta*) and mind concomitants (*caitasa*). [Therefore,] even if they deny [the external existence of] entities such as form (*rūpa*), they can never argue that [there is a stage where] such a conceptual construction cannot occur."

The point is that the Yogācāras can say that there does not exist an external object independently of the mind, but they cannot say that there does not exist the mind. In their view, the conceptualization of form occurs within the realm of the mind.

In the above manner Bhāviveka has shown that the apprehension of *cittamātra* does not serve to eliminate the conceptualization of form and to remove the attachment to it. He concludes the arguments about the Yogācāras' *asallakṣaṇānupraveśopāya*-theory by say-

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ing the following:

MHK V 54: *tannirāsāya ced iṣṭo vidhyantaraparigrahaḥ / prakṣālanād dhi pañkasya dūrād asparśanam varam //*

“If you wish to adopt a different method in order to negate that [conceptual construction of the duality of the grasper and the grasped], it is indeed better to stay away from mud [in the form of the doctrine of ‘mere mind’] so as not to touch it than to wash it away.”⁴⁾

The *asallakṣaṇānupraveśopāya*-theory has difficulty in accounting for the removal of attachment to things in the empirical world. Bhāviveka suggests that one should start with accepting the empirical world as it is. In the empirical world everything is believed to have its own essential nature.

2. For Bhāviveka, what is to be denied is the existence of an essential nature and not that of an entity on which the essential nature is superimposed. He has to accept that with reference to an external object a conceptual cognition arises. Therefore, he has to criticize the following view set forth by the Yogācāras: whatever is conceptually grasped is unreal (*parikalpitasvabhāva*). Bhāviveka says the following:

MHK V 55: *neṣṭam bhujagavac cāsat kalpitam kalpitatvataḥ* / rajjvātmanā hy anekāntāt pratitirvāpi** bādhiḥ //* (*Hoornaert [2001] ; *neṣṭo bhujagavac cāsan saṃkalpaḥ kalpitatvataḥ* Lindtner ed., **Hoornaert [2001] ; *api* Lindtner ed.)

“(Yogācāra) [Thesis:] What is grasped by a conceptual cognition (*kalpita*) is nonexistent (*asat*); [Reason;] Because what is grasped by a conceptual cognition has the property of being conceptually grasped (*kalpitatvataḥ*); [Example:] Like the snake [which is grasped by a conceptual cognition].

(Bhāviveka) This argument is not accepted as sound. For the reason used here is inconclusive (*anekānta*) because of the presence of the rope [which is existent and which has the property of being conceptually grasped]. Or, common sense (*prafīti*) contradicts the thesis in question.”

Bhāviveka points out that the argument presented by Yogācāras has *hetvābhāsa* ‘fallacious reason’ and *pakṣābhāsa* ‘fallacious thesis’. According to him, as with reference to a snake which does not exist externally, a conceptual cognition does occur, so, with reference to a rope which exists externally, a conceptual cognition can occur. In addition, common sense contradicts the thesis that what is conceptually grasped is nonexistent. Common sense suggests that, with reference to a rope which exists externally, the conceptual cognition ‘this is a rope’, which is considered to be valid, occurs.

It is important to note that Bhāviveka here distinguishes two types of conceptual cognition: valid and invalid. Therefore, he has to say the following:

MHK V 56: *tadaṃśadr̥ṣṭer na bhrāntir anekāṃśā hi sā yataḥ / sarvathārthanīṣedhāt te syāc ca vastvapavāditā //*

“Indeed, [the conceptual cognition ‘this is a rope’ which occurs in the situation where only a rope is present in the visual field] is not an erroneous cognition (*bhrānti*) since [through this cognition] one perceives the part of the rope (*tadaṃśa*). For [the object which is erroneously cognized (*bhrānti*) [i.e., the rope]] has more than one part.⁵⁾ And, it would follow that you commit the fault of the denial of realities (*vastvapavāditā*) since you absolutely deny [the reality of] an object [conceptually grasped].”

The point is that an object of a conceptual cognition has two parts: the part which is erroneously grasped (*'khrul pa*, **bhrānta*) and the one which is grasped as it really is (*yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhin*, **yathābhūta*). With reference to a rope that exists externally, when the conceptual cognition ‘this is a rope’ occurs, this conceptual cognition is considered to cognize the real aspect of the rope, while, when the conceptual cognition ‘this is a snake’ occurs, this conceptual cognition is considered to cognize the unreal aspect of the rope. In Bhāviveka's view, accordingly, it is proper to say that a conceptual cognition is not absolutely an erroneous cognition and what is grasped by a conceptual cognition is not absolutely nonexistent. Therefore it would follow that the Yogācāras, who absolutely deny the reality of an object of a conceptual cognition, commit the fault of the denial of realities.

3. We have seen how Bhāviveka refutes the Yogācāras' *asallakṣaṇānupraveśopāya*- and *parikalpitasvābhāva* theories advocated by the Yogācāras. Two points are made by Bhāviveka: one is that the denial of the existence of the external world does not serve to remove the attachment to the empirical world and the other is that a valid conceptual cognition can occur with reference to an external object. It is important that, for Bhāviveka, even if the validity of a conceptual cognition is demonstrated, it is assessed only at the conventional level. Even if the conceptual cognition ‘this is a rope’ with reference to a rope which exists externally is valid at the conventional level, this cognition cognizes the rope as having the essential nature of being a rope.

*My special thanks are due to Professor Brendan S. Gillon for correcting my English.

Notes

1) See MVBh I 6.

2) MHK I 18cd: *śūnyatādarśanābhyāsāt kleśavṛttyupaghātataḥ //*

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3) TJ ad MHK V 52 [D213b7; P237a4]: ... *khyed kyis* [D; *kyi P*] *so so'i skye bo de nyid shes pa ma skyes pa dag la dang po kho nar gzugs la sogs pa phyi rol gyi yul med par btags pas don ci zhiḡ grub par 'gyur* / [D; om. P] 4) We can find a parallel passage in the *Prajñāpradīpa*.

PPr [D247a1; P309b6-7]: *gzhan yang rnam par rig pa nye bar blang ba yang byas nas gal te / de yongs su gtong bar yang 'dod na ni 'di ltar 'dam rdzab 'khrul bas mi reg par thag bsring ba bzang ngo* // “Eckel [1985]: Moreover, if you think that you first accept (*abhyupagama*) ideation (*viññapti*), then abandon it, you would do better to avoid the mud altogether than to have wash it away.”

5) TJ ad MHK V 56ab [D214b5-7; P238a6-b1]: *kun brtags* [D; *btags P*] *pa'i ngo bo nyid de ni pha rol po dag gis brtags* [D; *btags P*] *pa ltar gcig tu 'khrul pa nyid ma yin te / gang gi phyir zhe na / thag pa la sbrul du mthong ba bzhin no* [D; add. // P] *zhes bya ba'i dpe de la du ma'i cha yod pa de mthong ba'i phyir te / sngon 'khrul bas thag pa la 'di ni sbrul yin no snyam du nges pa la legs par brtags na 'di ni thag pa yin gyi* [conj.; *gyis D,P*] / [D; om. P] *sbrul ma yin no snyam du thag pa'i rang gi ngo bo yang dag pa nyid la dmigs pa'i blo skyes pa na des sbrul gyi cha btang ste / thag pa'i rang gi ngo bo'i cha mthong ba'i phyir dpe la 'khrul pa dang yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhin nyid kyi cha gnyi ga yod pas gcig tu 'khrul pa nyid ma yin pa'i phyir* / “It is not the case that, as the opponents assume, what consists in being conceptually grasped (*kun brtags pa'i ngo bo nyid*, **parikalpitasvabhāva*) is absolutely what is erroneously grasped (*'khrul pa*, **bhrānta*). Why? Because, in the instance expressed by saying ‘just as one perceives a rope as a snake’, one perceives it, i.e., that which has more than one part. One first determines, through an erroneous cognition, the rope as ‘this is a snake’ and then, examining it further, determines it as ‘this is a rope and not a snake’; when there arises a cognition which cognizes the rope as it really is [lit. the real essence of the rope], one, through this cognition, abandons the part of the snake and perceives the part of the essence of the rope. Therefore, in the instance in which one perceives a rope as a snake, there are two parts in an object of a conceptual cognition: the part which is erroneously grasped (*'khrul pa*, **bhrānta*) and the one which is grasped as it really is (*yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhin*, **yathābhūta*). Accordingly, what consists in being conceptually grasped is not absolutely what is erroneously grasped.”

Abbreviations: Eckel [1985]: “Bhāvaviveka's Critique of Yogācāra Philosophy in Chapter XXV of the *Prajñāpradīpa*.” In *Miscellanea Buddhica*, ed. Chr. Lindtner. Copenhagen : Akademisk Forlag. Hoornaert [2001]: “An Annotated Translation of *Madhyamakahrdayakārika/Tarkajvālā* V.55-68.” *Religion and Culture* 13: 13-47. MHK: *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā*, ed. Chr. Lindtner, Chennai, 2001. MVBh: *Madhyāntavibhāḡabhāṣya*, ed. G. Nagao, Tokyo, 1974. PPr: *Prajñāpradīpa*, D3853, P5253. TJ: *Tarkajvālā*, D3856, P5256.

〈Key words〉 Bhāviveka, Yogācāra, *saṃvṛti*, *bāhyārtha*, *vikalpa*

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