The Sequential Arising of *Vijñānas* in the Early Yogācāra and the Sarvāstivāda

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1. Introduction

The *Pañcavijñānakāyasamprajñātā bhūmiḥ* (PBh) and the *Manobhūmi* (MBh), the first two sections of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, present valuable materials for the study of early Yogācāra epistemology. Unfortunately, however, we have found some occasional, but serious, problems in the critically established Sanskrit text of these sections. In Takatsukasa [2014: 184], therefore, I reconsidered a problematic passage by verifying the readings of the single extant Sanskrit manuscript and then proposed an emendation to the edited text. According to the emended text, the MBh postulates that only one *vijñāna* can arise in one moment, though it does not explicitly mention whether a simultaneity of six *vijñānas* is possible or not. Instead, the MBh rather emphasizes the relative subsequence of *vijñānas*: any single sensory perception cannot arise sequentially in two moments.

On the other hand, as discussed below, the Sarvāstivāda, which also denies the possibility of a simultaneous arising of *vijñānas*, permits that a sensory perception can arise immediately after a sensory perception in the *Apidamo da piposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 (Skt. *Mahāvibhāṣā*, MVi). Previous studies on this topic only introduce or examine *Yuqie shi* 瑜伽師 in the MVi, and they do not compare the description directly with other texts, nor do they examine the distinction between the two theories. 11

In this paper, I would like to focus on the *Yogācārabhūmi* as the representative of the early Yogācāra and MVi as the representative of the Sarvāstivāda, in order to point out the different ways in which they expound the sequence of *vijñānas*, as well as a divergence concerning the possibility of a sequential arising of sensory perceptions.
2. The Early Yogācāra in the PBh and the MBh

The MBh explains the sequential arising of the six vijñānas as follows:

A pentad of sensory perceptions cannot arise sequentially in two moments. Nor can there be a mutual arising [of these five] immediately after each other [of these five]. Immediately after the pentad of sensory perceptions has arisen in one moment, mental consciousness arises necessarily. 2)

Thus, any of five sensory perceptions, whether the same kind of or a different kind of, cannot arise sequentially in two moments. Also a closely related passage from the PBh elaborates the case where we cognize a visual object as follows:

Then, in the case where visual perception has arisen, three minds are perceived. [They are] in order, (1) aupanipātika: the suddenly occurring [mind], (2) paryēsaka: the searching [mind], and (3) niścita: the determined [mind]. Of these, the first is nothing but visual perception, and the [other] two are mental consciousnesses. 3)

The PBh names each of the three minds according to the sequential process just as we usually suppose how we cognize an object. As for the mental consciousness immediately after the sensory perception in the above MBh, the PBh names it paryēsaka. That is to say, the early Yogācāra understands that once a sensory perception suddenly occurs, a searching mental consciousness necessarily arises immediately thereafter.

3. The Sarvāstivāda in the MVi

Next, we examine the MVi’s exposition. The MVi interprets the Apidamo fazhi lun 阿毘達磨發智論 passage 4) “How many pratyayas for a manaāyatana Y (yichu 意処), does a [given] manaāyatana X function as? It functions as [four pratyayas:] a hetu-pratyaya, a samanantara-, an ālambana-, and an adhipati-.“ And the interpretation continues as follows:

... And manaāyatana contains six kinds [of vijñānas]. That is to say, from a visual perception up to a mental consciousness. Among these [six vijñānas], a visual perception X functions as a hetu-pratyaya, a samanantara-, and an adhipati- for a visual perception Y, but does not function as an ālambana-. ... [To function as a] samanantarapratyaya means that a visual perception Y arises immediately after the visual perception X ... It is the same as where a visual perception X functions as [... a samanantarapratyaya ...] for a visual perception Y, that is to say, a visual perception functions as [a collection of pratyayas] for perceptions ranging from the auditory to
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The tactile.
A visual perception functions as a hetu-prataya, a samanantara-, an ālambana- and an adhipati-
for a mental consciousness . . . It is the same as where a visual perception functions as [ . . . a
samanantaraprataya . . . ] for six vijnānas, that is to say, perceptions ranging from the auditory to
the tactile [function as a collection of pratayyas] for six vijnānas . . . 5)

The interpretation continuously mentions and permits the sequential relationship of
the mental consciousness to a mental consciousness, and the sequential relationship of
the mental consciousness to five sensory perceptions, as well. The MVi, therefore,
permits that any kind of vijñāna can arise immediately after another vijnana, regardless
of type. As we confirmed above, the MBh does not permit the possibility of a sensory
perception arising sequentially in two moments. In regard to this point, therefore,
there is a clear distinction between these two texts. We also notice a further difference
about how to expound the sequence of the vijnānas. The MVi explains this in relation to
four pratayyas. In particular, samanantaraprataya (dengwujian yuan 等無間緣), defines
the sequence of two vijnānas. The PBh’s exposition proceeds as if associated with the
practical epistemic process just as we usually suppose how we cognize an object,
whereas the MVi, in contrast, only explains the relationship between any two vijnānas
giving the impression of a rather abstract and automatic explanation.

Further, the MVi continues its argument by considering the problem in the sequence
of sensory perception as follows:

Do five sensory, visual, etc., perceptions arise immediately after each other, or not? Yuqie shis
say “Five sensory, visual, etc., perceptions cannot arise immediately after each other because all
[perceptions] arise from a mental consciousness immediately after that.” Apidamo lunshis 阿毘達磨諸論師 say “The five sensory, visual, etc., perceptions can all arise immediately after each
other. Otherwise, it contradicts the theory in the Genyun 根蘊 [in the Apidamo fazhi lun]. As it
says ‘A duhkheṇḍriya X (kugen 苦根), functions as a hetu-prataya, a samanantara-, and an adhipati-
for a duhkheṇḍriya Y, but does not function as an ālambana-.’” 6)

Thus, the Yuqie shis assert that all perceptions arise from mental consciousness
immediately after its occurrence. That is to say, a sensory perception necessarily arises
immediately after the mental consciousness. On the other hand, the MBh has
emphasized that a mental consciousness necessarily arises immediately after the
pentad of sensory perceptions has arisen in one moment. Therefore it seems
appropriate to differentiate these standpoints, even though they do not both permit the sequential arising of sensory perceptions.

The Apidamo lunhis, on the other hand, permit the sequential arising of sensory perceptions. The basis they adduce is the theory in the Genyun in the Apidamo fazhi lun, and their standpoint is predicated on two points. One is the theory in the Genyun. A duḥkhendriya X functions as a samanantaraprātyaya for a duḥkhendriya Y, that is to say, a duḥkhendriya Y can arise immediately after a duḥkhendriya X. The other point is that a duḥkhendriya can be united (samprayukta) with nothing but five sensory perceptions. This is as is shown, for instance, in the Apidamo fayunzu lun 阿毘達磨法義足論, Apidamo jieshenzu lun 阿毘達磨義身足論, etc. Therefore their standpoint does not derives straightforwardly from a relation of vijñānas, but indirectly from a relation of Vedanā to Vedanā and Vedanā to vijñāna, as a result of the examination of dharma.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have compared the PBh, the MBh, and the MVi on the problem of the sequential arising of six vijñānas, and in so doing clarified the points summarized below. The early Yogaça (as represented in the PBh and the MBh) and the Sarvāstivāda (as represented in the MVi) hold contrary positions: while the PBh and the MBh deny the possibility of the sequential arising of sensory perceptions, the MVi permits that any kind of vijñāna can arise immediately after another vijñāna, regardless of type. Further, there is an obvious distinction between the means by which they expound the sequence of vijñānas. The early Yogaça in the PBh and the MBh expound a sequence of vijñānas that are associated with practical epistemic processes. The Sarvāstivāda in the MVi, on the other hand, only expound the rather abstract relationship between any two vijñānas. The standpoint of Apidamo lunshi derives from a relation of Vedanā to Vedanā and Vedanā to vijñāna. The distinction corresponds to the difference between the Yogaça, who consider the practice of Yoga important, and the Sarvāstivāda, who focus on thoroughly examining dharma and their systems.

Notes

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There is also an argument on the sequential arising of sensory perception in Wushi piposha lun 五事毘婆沙論 (T no. 1555, vol. 28, 992a25-b2) whose position and basis is the same as the MVi. However, Apidan baijandu lun 阿毘達磨八犍度論 (T no. 1543, vol. 26, 869c19), which is translated in 383 (earlier than Apidamo fazihi lun), says: "A duḥkhendriya is a hetu-prataya and an adhipati- for a duḥkhendriya, but is not a ālambana- and not a samanantara- [for a duḥkhendriya]." According to the Apidan baijandu lun, Apidamo lunshi lose their basis. If the passage is not misinterpretation, it means that the theory might have changed. 8) T no. 1537, vol. 26, 498b1-3. 9) T no. 1540, vol. 26, 616c23-24.

Abbreviations and Primary Sources

Ms Sanskrit manuscript (Its facsimile is preserved in the Göttingen State and University Library, no. Xc 14/28; and in the IsIao Library, Envelope no. 5-6/B).


Secondary Literatures


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