Dharmakīrti’s Statement of Consequence (prasaṅga) in the Third Chapter of the Pramāṇaviniścaya

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At the time of Dharmakīrti (7th c.), a statement of consequence, or prasaṅga, generally consisted of [1] the tentative acceptance of the other’s thesis as a premise, and [2] the indication of unwanted consequences derived from this premise. For instance, Dignāga (5th–6th c.) adduces the following prasaṅga reasoning from Vaiśeṣika’s refutation of the Mīmāṃsaka’s proof of permanent sound: ¹)

(Vaiśeṣika’s thesis) Sound is impermanent.
(Tentative acceptance of the Mīmāṃsaka’s thesis) Sound is permanent because it has no form.
(Consequences) It follows (*prasaṅgāt) that action and so forth, which have no form, would be permanent or it follows that one would hear sound at all times.

Although this reasoning verifies the proponent’s thesis that sound is impermanent, it is, in Dignāga’s view, not a formal inference-for-others (pararthānumāna) to prove the proponent’s own thesis, but the mere refutation of the opponent’s thesis, ²) because it is not deduced by the logical reason (hetu) that fulfills the three conditions (trīrūpa) of a valid reason.

In his PVin 3, Dharmakīrti also adduces a hypothetical prasaṅga formula composed of [1] the tentative acceptance of the opponent’s proposition and [2] its consequence: “If it were so, then it would also follow that . . . ; or both would be impossible” (yady evam idam api syān na vobhayam, PVin 3: 5, 7). In the beginning of his discussion, however, Dharmakīrti formulates a prasaṅga reasoning in a different way as follows:

[A statement of] consequence is, on the contrary, ³) [formulated] by means of [the properties] constructed by the other. For instance:

[1] [Given that as you say] that which presents in a multitude were single, [2] it would not
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unite with another [substance] in a different place, etc., [3] because it lacks another self-existence that is not precluded by the unification with a single substance restricted to a particular place, time and state, [4] for it is contradictory that that which has such a [single] self-existence unites with [another thing in] a different place, etc.

[5] The [statement of consequence] aims to show that when one property is accepted, the other property is [necessarily] accepted. And when the [latter] is not accepted, both are negated, because they cannot be separated from each other. This is because one is substantially bound to the other.


Here appears neither the conjunctive yadi nor the optative syāt. Why did Dharmakirti give this rather unusual example of a prasaṅga statement? This paper aims to reinterpret his words in this statement and clarify Dharmakirti’s underlying ideas about the prasanga reasoning.4)

1. Reinterpreting the Statement

This Dharmakirti’s prasanga statement has been widely adopted by his successors, including Tibetan interpreters, as a critique of the notion of the universal (sāmānya) that the majority of non-Buddhists consider to be single and present in many things, although Dharmakirti himself does not specify the subject as the universal. The reasoning is comprised of four parts:

[1] Tentative acceptance of the properties being present in a multitude (anekavrśtitva, P1: property 1), and being single (ekatvā, P2: property 2), attributed to the same subject by the opponent;

[2] Consequence: the subject cannot be ununified with another thing in a different place, etc. (~P1: the opposite of property 1);

[3] Logical reason: because that which is single lacks any self-existence other than itself (P2’: the property synonymous with property 2);

[4] Indication of contradiction between (P1) and (P2’), i.e., (P1) and (P2).

Thereafter, he states [5] the purpose of presenting prasanga reasoning. The following is my analysis of each part.

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[1] The properties constructed by the opponent appear in the form of two genitives anekavṛtti ekasya (P1 and P2). According to him, there exists something single as well as present in many things. It is the subject of this prasaṅga reasoning.3)

[2] Accepting the opponent's assertion that that which presents in many things is single, the unwanted consequence (-P1) for the opponent would follow that it could not unite with another substance that is located in a different place, time, and state once it unites with one substance that is located in a particular place, time, and state. This consequence contradicts the property (P1). Therefore, when the opponent accepts the consequence (-P1), he negates his own assertion.

[3] The logical reason, "because it lacks another self-existence that is not precluded by unification with a single substance restricted to a particular place, time, and state," describes singularity (ekatva). In other words, the state of being single (ekatva) is to be defined as such. The property of being single (P2) is established for the opponent, so the proponent uses this property (P2') synonymous with P2 as a logical reason which he expects the opponent to accept.6) The term svabhāvāntara should not be interpreted as a different property (dharma) from the singularity such as plurality (anekatva). Svabhāva here refers to a substantial self-existence or entity itself. A single entity has no other self-existence than itself, and hence it cannot unite with more than one thing in one place, as an apple on a plate cannot be on another plate because it has no other self-existence than itself to sit on another plate.7)

[4] If the opponent accepts this property (P2') in accordance of his own assertion of (P2), he must also accept the consequence (-P1) that negates his assertion (P1). In this way, the consequence leads to a revelation of the contradiction between the properties (P1) and (P2). As a result, the opponent has no other choice than to abandon his thesis that something present in a multitude (P1) is single (P2).

[5] This statement of consequence thus serves to refute the opponent's thesis by presenting a necessary connection of the two properties (P2') and (-P1), i.e., (P2) and (-P1), in the form of both positive and negative concomitants (anvayavatireka). In the end, Dharmakīrti states that these two properties are substantially, or by virtue of a real entity (vastutaḥ), bound to each other.8) Although the subject, "that which is present in a multitude and single" (anekavṛtti ekasya), cannot exist for Buddhists, it holds true in reality that a single entity resides in one place, one time and one state,
since it has no other self-existence (svabhāva) than itself to reside in a different place, and so forth. For the non-Buddhist opponent, in turn, it follows that his subject does not hold in reality, because such a single entity is substantially unable to pervade many things.

At this point, one may speculate that Dharmakīrti intentionally avoided a hypothetical expression like the optative syāt, for the consequence is drawn based on its connection with the logical reason in reality. The idea of grounding the consequence on substantial reality seems innovative in the history of prasaṅga. His prasaṅga reasoning is not completely hypothetical, but rather it is based on the nature of real existence.

2. Logical Reason (hetu) in the Statement of Consequence

For the statement of consequence or prasaṅga in general, the proponent presents a subject and its properties which he borrows from the other’s thesis as a premise in a conditional clause like “if it were so” (yady evam, yadi . . . iti cet). A logical reason is not stated separately from the premise. Even though one could render it into the clause, “because it is so,” this is not a proper logical reason because it is not established for the proponent as the property qualifying the subject (pakṣadharma).

It is Dharmakīrti’s challenge to introduce into the statement of prasaṅga a logical reason (hetu). This logical reason must be set forth separate from the premise and independent of the subject. Insofar as one defines singularity (P2) as the property qualifying the subject (pakṣadharma) that is present in a multitude (P1), it is hypothetical and not established for the Buddhist proponent. Separately from or independently of the subject, however, the singularity or the nature of being single should be established for both proponent and opponent; that is, in Dharmakīrti’s words, the nature of lacking another self-existence (svabhāvantara) than itself (P2'). From Dharmakīrti’s viewpoint, the opponent cannot but accept this nature with regard to his subject, because he propounds the subject’s singularity, and because this nature is established by valid cognition (pramāṇa), that is, presumably, a direct perception (pratyakṣa). If it is not established by valid cognition, one cannot adduce it as a logical reason. Dharmakīrti’s logical reason is, therefore, said to be that which is understood or cognized by the proponent himself (svadṛṣṭārtha), although it is not the property qualifying the subject (pakṣadharma).
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A valid logical reason can create in the opponent’s mind the acceptance of the consequence by virtue of rational argument (yuktikṛta), as will be seen below. If the opponent accepts that his subject lacks another self-existence than itself (P2’) because it is single (P2), he also accepts that it cannot unite with another thing in a different place, and so forth (−P1). I think that Dharmakīrti has an innovative idea in supplying to a prasaṅga formula a logical reason independent of the opponent’s subject.

Dharmakīrti does not add any explanation to the logical reason he employs in his own prasaṅga statement, so my interpretation is mainly based on his discussion as follows, where he argues the issue in detail for the purpose of eliminating the logical reason’s fault of being non-established (asiddha):

1. [The logical reason’s fault of] being non-established and so on does not occur [with regard to prasaṅga reasoning], because it shows the relation between two properties by [the formula], “If it were so, then it would also follow that . . . ; or both would be impossible.” This fault would occur if one fully approves one of [the two properties].
2. And (vā), when a logical reason is present, [this fault does] not [occur], because whatever is obtained by a rational argument necessarily deserves to be fully approved. We will also say that the acceptance [of any dogmatic position] is not capable of invalidating the rational argument. One who accepts one property necessarily accepts another [property], [for] it is created by a rational argument.
3. When a logical reason is not present, however, this [prasaṅga formula] provides a manner of proving the relation between the pervading and pervaded properties to a logical reason that roots [in the proponent’s own understanding]. This is not a proof of the opposite [of the opponent’s thesis], because [in this case] any logical reason is not established by a valid cognition.

(PVin 3: 5, 7–6, 1: (1) nāpy asiddhādayaḥ, yady evam idam api syān na vobhayam iti dharmāyoh sambandhopadarśanāt. ekāntaparigrahe syād eṣa doṣaḥ. (2) na vā sati hetau, yuktirāptasyāvaśyaṃ parigrahaḥārhatvāt. na cābhuyupagamo yuktibādhane samartha iti vaksyāmaḥ. abhyupaga-taikadharmaṇo 'vaśyaṃ aparābhuyupagamo yuktikṛta iti. (3) asati tu hetau maulasya hetor vyāpyavyāpakabhāvasādhaṃ anapraṅkāra eṣaḥ, na viparyayasaṭhānam, hetor apramāṇatvāt.)

Here, Dharmakīrti opposes the notion of parigraha to that of abhyupagama; parigraha means full approval or affirmation of the object’s establishment, whereas abhyupagama is tentative or dogmatic acceptance. Segment (1) handles the hypothetical statement of prasaṅga cited in the beginning of this paper. Although no independent logical reason is given here, it would violate the rule of paksadharmaṇa if one takes the conditioning property as a logical reason. Ruling out this fault, Dharmakīrti appeals to the original

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purpose of a *prasaṅga* statement to show the connection between the two properties. The proponent does not affirm any property borrowed from the opponent as his own position. This is a general rule for making a hypothetical statement of *prasaṅga*. However, I should like to note that this formula, *yady evam idam api syān na vobhayam*, also entails Dharmakirti’s ingenious idea. By adding the negative clause, *na vobhayam*, he makes it explicit that the necessary connection should be stated in the form not only of positive but also of negative concomitants (*anvayavyatireka*).

Segment (2) speaks of the case wherein a logical reason is given apart from the premise and consequence. It provides the rationality for the argument, so the opponent must approve the derived consequence given that a rational argument (*yukti*) is stronger than any dogmatic acceptance.

Segment (3) deals with the function of the hypothetical formula, *yady evam idam api syān na vobhayam* in case no logical reason is supplied. The following is my tentative interpretation: Without an independent logical reason, this *prasaṅga* formula cannot rationally create in the opponent’s mind the acceptance of the consequence. This only shows, as mentioned above, the connection of the two properties in the form of positive and negative concomitants. In other words, it shows the manner (*prakāra*) of how to prove (*sādhana*) the relation between the pervaded (*vyāpya*) and pervading (*vyāpaka*) properties or pervasion (*vyāpti*) of *vyāpaka* by *vyāpya*. The pervasion should be proven in the manner of both positive and negative concomitants. When the proponent forms a complete *prasaṅga* statement endowed with an independent logical reason that roots in his own understanding (i.e., *maulahetu*) in the same way as Dharmakirti himself does in his statement, the hypothetical formula, *yady evam idam api syān na vobhayam*, serves to indicate that the relation holds between the logical reason and the consequence in a bilateral manner. I do not think it is necessary to confuse the reference of the term *maulahetu* to the *hetu* of *prasaṅgaviparyaya*. It seems to refer to a valid logical reason rooted in the understanding of the opponent himself (*svadṛṭa*) if it does not fulfill the condition of *pakṣadharmatā*. As I have argued above, I speculate that for Dharmakirti the logical reason of a *prasaṅga* statement is also understood by the proponent himself, so my reading is that by the adjective *maula*, Dharmakirti would specify the *hetu* as the property that the proponent understands or cognizes, distinguishing it from the property borrowed from and constructed by the opponent (*paraparikalpita*). This *hetu* is

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also able to prove the opposite of the opponent’s thesis (viparyayasādhana).

Concluding Remarks

Dharmakīrti presents a statement of prāsaṅga reasoning that is endowed with a logical reason, and that a consequence is rationally derived (yuktikṛta) from the logical reason which is established by valid cognition (pramāṇa) and understood by the proponent himself (svadṛṣṭa). The pervasion of the consequence by the logical reason should, moreover, be grounded in reality (vastutaḥ) and should be shown in the form of positive and negative concomitants. This is, I think, an ideal prāsaṅga statement for Dharmakīrti that he himself sets forth. He seems to have attempted to change the statement of consequence, or prāsaṅga, from a purely hypothetical argument into a reality-bound logical means in the framework of his system of inference-for-others (parārthānumāna). It was unconventional at that time and aroused discussion among his successors as well. 10 Nonetheless, this statement of Dharmakīrti has been employed by later logicians as the model of prāsaṅga reasoning. Later Tibetan scholars note that most Buddhist logicians adopt the prāsaṅga reasoning whose pervasion (vyāpti) is established in reality and in which the pakṣadharmaṇā, or the logical reason’s being the quality of the subject, is temporarily refer to this Dharmakīrti’s prāsaṅga statement.

Notes

1) PSV (Kitagawa 1973: 485) cited and summarized in Yoshimizu 2013: 434. For other prāsaṅga reasonings that Dignāga employs, see Katsura 2005.


3) Commenting on the definition of the inference-for-others stated in PS 3.1ab as well as in his own PVin 3.1ab, Dharmakīrti refutes the possible objection that a logical reason that is understood by others (parāṛṣṭa) is a means of proof (sādhana). In this regard, the logical reason in the Sāṃkhya’s inferential proof, “Pleasure and so forth and (vā) intellect are not mental phenomena, because they arise and are impermanent, like form and so forth” (acetanāḥ sukhādāyo buddhir vā, utpatte anityatvād vā rūpādīvat), is not tenable, for it is not accepted by the proponent himself. A statement of consequence is, on the contrary, formulated by the conceptual constructs by the other. See PVin 3: 1–4; cf. Iwata 1993: 20; cf. also the parallel discussion in PV 4 translated and analyzed in Tillemans 2000: 9–24.

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4) Dharmakīrti's discussion of prāsaṅga reasoning in his PVin 3 has been intensively discussed by Tani Tadashi and Iwata Takashi on the basis of its Tibetan translation and Dharmottara's commentary. Referring to their studies, this paper focuses on Dharmakīrti's own thought by using the Sanskrit edition of the PVin edited by Pascale Hugon and Tomabechi Toru. My deepest thanks are due to Watanabe Toshikazu for providing me his tentative edition of the Sanskrit manuscript of Dharmottara's PVinT and valuable suggestions concerning the reading of both texts of the PVin and PVinT.

5) Cf. PVin 3: 6, 6–7: ekasya tu yathoktavabhāvāntaravirahopamād eva bhinnadesādibhir yogāḥvāh. Here the subject is specified as that which is single.

6) However, the opponent does not maintain that a single universal is restricted to existing in a single place and time.

7) This accords with the Sautrāntika's ontological view that a real entity exists, being restricted to one place, time and state (deśakālavasthāniyama). Cf. Yoshimizu 2007.

8) It can also be said that the connection takes place by virtue of a real entity (vastubalapravṛtta). Cf. Tillemans 2000: 12.


10) Dharmottara takes this Dharmakīrti's prāsaṅga statement to present an inference in the form of prāsaṅgavitaparyaya, whereas he formulates the following prāsaṅga: yady evam anekaratītavam, idam api anekatvam api (PVinT: Ms. 9a5). Cf. Iwata 1993: 40–42. For Prajñākaragupta's criticism of Dharmottara's interpretation, cf. also Iwata 1993: 63 infra.


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Key words prasāṅga, parārthānumāna, Pramāṇaviniścaya, Dharmakīrti, consequence (Professor, University of Tsukuba, Dr. Phil.)