‘Nonerroneous’ in Dharmakīrti’s Definition of Perception

Kazuhiko Yamamoto

I Dignāga defined perception (*pratyakṣa*) as “free from conceptual construction” (*kalpanāpoḍha*; NM 15ab, PS I-3c). This definition is the same as Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārttika*. But in the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* and the *Nyāyabindu*, Dharmakīrti defined perception as “free from conceptual construction and nonerroneous” (*kalpanāpoḍham abhrāntam*; PVin I-4, NB I-4). The annotators of Dharmakīrti have discussed the difference between Dharmakīrti’s definition of perception as expanded in the PVin and the NB, and that of Dignāga as put forward in the *Nyāyamukha* and the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. I intend to study the meaning of ‘nonerroneous’ and the epistemological difference between Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.

II This term ‘nonerroneous’ (*abhrānta*) isn’t an original idea of Dharmakīrti. We can find mention of it as ‘*avibhrānta*’ in the *Yogācārabhūmi*. Also, in the *Nyāyasūtra* (I-1-4), ‘*avyabhicārin*’ is used as the same meaning as ‘*abhrānta*’. The definition of perception in the YBhū is closer to the Pvin and the NB than the NM and the PS. But as the YBhū states that perception has conceptual construction, YBhū is quite different from the Pvin, the NB, the NM and the PS. The definition of perception in the YBhū is close to the NS, because perception in the NS entails conception. Dignāga makes no mention of ‘nonerroneous’ in his definition of perception, not because he doesn’t think that perception entails conception but that there is no error in his theory of self-cognition (*svasaṃvedana*). He considers that all cognition is self-cognition. An object of cognition isn’t the reality of the empirical world but of self-knowledge. The Naiyāyika uses ‘nonerroneous’ (*avyabhicārin*; NS I-1-4) in his definition of perception. Dignāga, in the PS, criticizes the use of ‘nonerroneous’ (*avyabhicārin*), because he considers this word isn’t necessary. According to Dignāga, perception is knowledge i. e. without

being able to name it, one can have knowledge of an object. Also, direct perception doesn't entail conception. Since we can understand it as an error or not after an object gets a name, Dignāga says 'nonerroneous' (avyabhicārin) isn't necessary in the definition of perception. Still this isn't the only reason that Dignāga doesn't define 'nonerroneous' in his definition of perception.

III Dharmakīrti doesn't formulate conception within perception the same way as Dignāga. He considers that the reality has 'causal efficiency' (arthakriyā). This idea differs from Dignāga. This epistemology of Dharmakīrti is an idea of Sautrāntika. Dharmakīrti defines true knowledge (pramāṇa) as "knowledge that doesn't contradict [the real object]" (avisaṃvādi jñānam). "Not contradicting [the real object] is based on the usefull action" (arthakriyā-sthiti; PV II-3). For Dharmakīrti, the relation with knowledge and the reality of the outside world is an important problem. An object which attains one's purpose is a reality. Dharmakīrti considers that the means of obtaining true knowledge are perception (pratyakṣa) and inference (anumāna). Perception is 'free from conceptual construction' (kalpanāpoḍha) and 'nonerroneous' (abhrānta) in the PVin and the NB. The 'erroneous' (bhrānta) is where the sense organs (indriya) are affected by eye trouble, a rapid motion, travelling on a boat bad physical condition or other causes (NB I-6). The sense organs which are affected by these erroneous influences, can't perceive an object correctly. Therefore, knowledge which is produced by erroneous influence doesn't correspond with an object. An object of erroneous knowledge doesn't have causal efficiency (arthakriyā).

'Nonerroneous' (abhrānti) is where A is perceived as non-A (PVin II-1cd). When a non-object takes an illusionary 'form' (pratibhāsa) and one apprehends that 'object', this is 'erroneous' (bhrānti). However, the connection with knowledge and an object is 'nonerroneous' (avyabhicāra). This is true knowledge (pramāṇa; PVin II-1comm.). 'Erroneous' means non-correspondence with knowledge and the form of the object. Since an object of inference isn't the object itself but the conceptual object, inference is 'erroneous' (bhrānti). Though inference doesn't perceive the object itself, in case that inference accomplishes a human purpose viz. inference entailing 'useful action' (arthakriyā), inference is pramāṇa. An object of perception isn't the conceptual object but the form (pratibhāsa; NB

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I-13) of the object. Even though perception hasn't conception, it may be that one doesn't perceive the object correctly by erroneous influence on the sense organs thereby producing erroneous knowledge (PV III-293~299). To get rid of such knowledge of the object which doesn't entail arthakriyā, Dharmakīrti defined 'nonerroneous' (abhrānta).

IV Dharmakīrti followed Dignāga's thought in that (1) perception doesn't entail conception (kalpanāpoḍha), (2) an object of perception is a particular real object (svalakṣaṇa) and (3) knowledge is self-cognitive knowledge (svasamivedana). But Dharmakīrti didn't think that all self-cognitive knowledge is certain knowledge, as Dignāga thought, but that reality has causal efficiency (arthakriyā) and knowledge which corresponds with its real object is true knowledge. Since Dignāga considers that an object is knowledge itself and that there is no room for knowledge to contradict the object, there isn't 'erroneous knowledge' (bhrāntijñāna) namely knowledge which contradicts the object. Consequently Dignāga needs not define 'nonerroneous' (abhrānta). Still, the epistemology of Dharmakīrti differs from Dignāga. Dharmakīrti's problem is the relation between the empirical world and knowledge and so, because true knowledge is knowledge which corresponds with the reality of the empirical world which has causal efficiency (arthakriyā), there is knowledge which contradicts an object even without conception (kalpanāpoḍha). Dharmakīrti defines 'nonerroneous' (abhrānta) to get rid of knowledge that contradicts the object. Dharmakīrti didn't think that this 'nonerroneous' (abhrānta) is used only in case of an exception of perception like eye trouble (timira). Dharmakīrti says 'erroneous' (bhrānta) refers to the organ senses being erroneously influenced by eye trouble, a rapid motion, travelling on a boat, bad physical condition or other causes. However, though eye trouble is an exceptional case, the other situations are common occurrences. Therefore if there is no definition such as 'nonerroneous' (abhrānta), more than half of directly perceived knowledge will be erroneous knowledge. Consequently Dharmakīrti defined 'nonerroneous' (abhrānta) in his definition of perception.

⟨Key Words⟩ abhrānta, Dignāga, Pramāṇavārttika

(Graduate Student, Ōtani University)