Sattva Prameyatva Abhidheyatva in the Nyāyavārttika

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0. Introduction

In PBh, it is well-known that Praśastapāda considers existence (astitva), expressibility (abhidheyatva) and cognizability (jñeyatva) as properties common to the six categories (padārtha). In NV, Uddyotakara, who was contemporary with Praśastapāda, also considers existence (sattva), knowability (meyatva or prameyatva), and expressibility (abhidheyatva) as properties common to eternal and non-eternal entities. On PBh, Halbfass [1992: 158] indicates that “The facts that he [Praśastapāda] coordinates them as common attributes (sādharmya) of the six categories does not necessarily mean that he considers them to be coextensive.” Halbfass means that the extension of existence may be narrower than that of expressibility, or cognizability. What about the interpretation of these properties in NV? The purpose of this paper is to clarify the extensions of these properties in NV by examining the relation among them.

1. Existence, knowability and expressibility in NV

NV on NS 1.1.5 objects to others who define inference as the “perception of x (nāntariyaka-artha) by one who knows that x cannot be without y” (nāntariyaka-artha-darśanam tad-vidah). According to NV, the definition does not make sense, even if one interprets the compound ‘nāntariyaka-artha’ constituting the compound ‘nāntariyaka-artha-darśana’ as ṣaṣṭhi-tatpuruṣa, or bahuvrihi, or karmadhāraya. Of these, the interpretation of ṣaṣṭhi-tatpuruṣa is as follows:

On the compound ['nāntariyaka-artha'], if it is ṣaṣṭhi-compound, which means ‘artha of
nantariyaka,' and let ‘nantariyaka’ be ⟨being produced⟩ (kṛtakatva), then, is artha of ⟨being produced⟩ a property (dharma) or purpose (prayojana)? If artha of ⟨being produced⟩ is a property, the inference will be one from existence, knowability or expressibility, and so on.⁴

NVTT further comments as follows: ⁵ According to others’ definition of inference, in which ‘nantariyaka-artha’ is supposed to be śaṣṭhī-tatpuruṣa and ‘artha’ is supposed to be a property, one could not infer non-eternity (anītyatva) from ⟨being produced⟩ which cannot be without non-eternity. On the other hand, one would infer non-eternity from existence, or knowability, or expressibility, which are properties of ⟨being produced⟩. But one cannot infer non-eternity from existence and so on validly, because eternity as well as non-eternity follows from existence, and so on. Therefore, we cannot interpret ‘nantariyaka-artha’ as śaṣṭhī-tatpuruṣa and ‘artha’ as a property.

NV thinks of knowability (premeyatva) as a property common to non-eternal and eternal entities in other places.⁶ And in this place, as mentioned above, NV seems to think of existence and expressibility together with knowability as properties common to non-eternal and eternal entities, that is, all entities. In order to clarify their extensions, I will investigate the relation between existence and knowability, and between existence and expressibility in the following sections.

2. The relation between existence and knowability

NBh defines truth (tattva) as the “existence (sadbhava) of an existent object (sat) and non-existence (asadbhava) of a non-existent object (asat)”. And it continues: “truth is that an existent object is taken as ‘existent’, correspondingly and truly, and a non-existent object is taken as ‘non-existent’, correspondingly and truly.”⁷ NV further comments as follows: Truth (tattva) means “its state (tasya bhāvaḥ),” according to PS 5.1.119, and ‘it’ (‘tat’) refers to an existent object and a non-existent object that are objects of knowledge (pramāṇa-viśaya).⁸ NV continues:

Its [existent object's and non-existent object's] state is existence (sattva) and non-existence
(asattva). [The state of an] existent object and non-existent object is knowability and its negation. The state of these existent object and non-existent object has two forms, that is, (being affirmed) (vidhiyamāna) and (being negated) (pratisidhyamāna).9

Truth or existence is the state of the existent object, that is, affirmed knowability of the existent object. Truth or non-existence is the state of the non-existent object, that is, negated knowability of the non-existent object. With reference to affirmation and negation, NV continues:

If x is affirmed in one place, x is negated in another place. For example, the earth is possessed of smell (gandhavat), and the water is not possessed of smell (agandha).10

We find a parallel in NV. NV comments on NBh 1.1.5 that “perception makes existent object its object and inference makes existent object and non-existent object its object,”11 in which NV considers the object of inference as a property (dharma), not as a substratum (dharmin), and says,

Properties fall into three kinds, (being affirmed) (vidhiyamāna), (being negated) (pratisidhyamāna) and independent (svatantra). Of these, affirmed property is (being possessor of smell) (gandhavattva) at the earth and negated [property] is (being possessor of smell) at non-earth.12

It is clear from these quotations that if property x is affirmed at y, then x is negated at non-y. We cannot affirm x at y and negate x at y at the same time. And we cannot negate x at non-y and affirm x at non-y at the same time. The property of (being possessor of smell) is affirmed at the earth and is negated at non-earth. In the same way, knowability is affirmed at an existent object and negated at a non-existent object.

Then how is knowability affirmed and negated? NBh states, “When an existent object is being taken (grhyamāne) through a source of knowledge, and x is not taken (na grhyate) like this existent object, x does not exist,” and “If x existed, x would be known (vijnāsyata). [But] there is not knowledge (vijnāna) [of x]. Therefore, x does
not exist." NV further comments:

When an existent object is being known (pramīyamāne) through a source of knowledge, another object of knowledge (prameya) that is of the same type as this [existent object] does not exist. If it existed, it would be known (amāsyate) like this. But it is not known (na prmiyate). There is not knowledge (māna) [of it]. Therefore, it does not exist.

Suppose that there is an empty vase in front of you. Perception of a vase will occur and knowability of the vase will be affirmed. And if perception of flowers does not occur, knowability of the flowers is negated. Existent object and non-existent object seem to fall into three types in NV: (1) an object that exists at all times in all places (dharmin), (2) an object that exists at all times in some places, and does not exist at all times in other places, and (3) an object that exists at some times in some places, and does not exist at other times in other places. In (1), knowability is affirmed at all times in all places. In (2), knowability is affirmed at all times in some places and negated at all times in other places. In (3), knowability is affirmed at some times in some places and negated at other times in other places. Of these, existence*, which means being of existent object, and affirmed knowability are coextensive; and non-existence*, which means non-being of non-existent object, and negated knowability are coextensive.

But we know that some objects do not exist. Suppose, again, that there is an empty vase in front of you. You will think, “If flowers existed in the vase, they would be perceived. But flowers are not perceived. Therefore, flowers do not exist.” You will know non-existence of flowers on the basis of the negated knowability of flowers. A non-existent object is also an object of knowledge. Thus, existence*+non-existence* and knowability are coextensive.

3. The relation between existence and expressibility

NV on NS 3.1.1 refutes the following inference, which proves the non-existence of ātman. [Proposition] Ātman does not exist (nāsty ātmā). [Reason] Because [ātman] is not born (ajātatvāt). [Instance] Like rabbit’s horn (saśaviśānāvat). On the inference,
NV states that it is fallacious because every constituent—the proposition, the reason and the instance—is fallacious. Of these, the proposition is considered to be self-contradictory. Then, how does the proposition contradict itself? According to NV,

The word ‘atman’ and the words ‘does not exist,’ which constitute the sentence “atman does not exist,” refer to the same object. And the former expresses existence of the referent, and the latter deny existence of it. Therefore the sentence contradicts itself. In the same way, the word ‘vase’ and the words ‘does not exist,’ which constitute the sentence “vase does not exist,” refer to the same object. But the former expresses existence of the referent at a time or in a place, and the latter deny existence of it at another time or in another place. So the sentence does not contradict itself.

Thus, words like ‘atman’ and ‘vase’ express an object and its existence. The words ‘does not exist’ express an object and its non-existence. Roughly speaking, existence* (or affirmed knowability) and affirmative expressibility are coextensive, and non-existence* (or negated knowability) and negative expressibility are coextensive.

4. Conclusion

Following on NBh’s definition of truth and the way of knowing a non-existent object, NV interprets existence as affirmed knowability and non-existence as negated knowability. As a result, first, existence* (being), affirmed knowability and affirmative expressibility are coextensive. Then, non-existence* (non-being), negated know-
ability and negative expressibility are coextensive. Therefore, existence*+non-existence*, knowability and expressibility are coextensive. But if existence (sattva), the first of three properties, means affirmed knowability of an existent object, then knowability, the second of them, seems superfluous. Either way, ontology, epistemology and semantics are directly connected in NV.

The definition of existence and non-existence in NV leads to the Kiranāvali of Udayana through the Nyāyakāndali of Śridhara. I am preparing a paper on this subject.

(References and Abbreviations)

(Notes)

(key words) Nyāyavrāttika, sattva, prameyatva, abhidheyatva

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