Prajñākaragupta’s Criticism of Theory of Whole (avayavin)

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0. Introduction

In the Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra (PVA) ad Dharmakīrti’s (ca. 600–660) Pramāṇavārttika (PV) 3.194–207, commenting on Dignāga’s (ca. 480–540) Pramāṇasamuccaya 1.4cd, Prajñākaragupta (ca. 750–810) replies to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika objection by demonstrating the consistency between Dignāga’s definition of perception and the Abhidharma doctrine. My previous study (Yokoyama 2018) pointed out that the object of his criticism can be classified into two parts, i.e., the criticisms of the prāpyakārin theory and the avayavin theory, and focused on the former theory. This paper aims to examine Prajñākaragupta’s criticism of the latter theory, i.e., the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika’s theory of the whole (avayavin).

1. Contradicted Properties of avayavin

Prajñākaragupta, following Dharmakīrti who accepted the Sautrāntika theory of atomism, advocates that the object of perception is the aggregation of atoms. Contrastingly, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika accepts that the object of perception is the whole (avayavin), which is generated from parts (avayava) and differs from mere parts. In order to criticize the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory, Vasubandhu has already indicated in his Abhidharmakośabhāṣya that the whole is mere assembled parts, with the example that cloth is not different from assembled strings (AKBh 189, 14–18).

According to Funayama (1990), the most important criticisms of the whole is Dharmakīrti’s indication of the contradiction involved in that theory. He points out in his PV II and the Pramāṇaviniścaya (PVin) I that the whole cannot possess contradicted various properties if the whole is a single substance with three examples. One of them is as follows:
Further, a single gross object (\textit{avayavin}) does not have such an appearance. [\ldots] And [even] if a part is colored red, we would see that [the whole] is red, or non-red. Or red and non-red would be seen [simultaneously] because the whole thing is not colored red while the parts are colored red. Therefore, there is no single object. (PV in I 34, 10–35, 6)

Dharmakīrti indicates that if the whole such as cloth is a single substance, it could not possess multiple contradicted properties such as red and non-red etc. In the PVA ad PV III 200–206, Prajñākaragupta further argues over the whole with a focus on the color of the whole.

\section{2. Variegated Color of Butterfly}

In the PV III 200 and the PVA, Dharmakīrti and Prajñākaragupta state as follows:

Or [if many things are not perceived simultaneously,] why do we see multiple colors of a variegated butterfly (\textit{citrapaṭaṅga}) etc.? If [you assert that] it [i.e., a variegated butterfly] still has a single variegated color, this [assertion] is more strange than that [i.e., a variegated color of butterfly]. (PV III 200)

If it is asserted that the whole is just a single [substance] because the color of a variegated butterfly cannot be grasped since multiple objects cannot be grasped simultaneously because the mind (\textit{manas}) functions on a certain [object], the assertion is more strange than the variety of variegated butterfly. (PVA 281, 20)

In this verse, the opponent assumes that a variegated butterfly (\textit{citrapaṭaṅga}) has a single color. This theory of variegated color is found in Uddyotakara’s \textit{Nyāyavārttika} (NV 1051, 2–7), in which he accepts that a cloth has the variegated color. Further, Bhāsarvajña, criticizing Prajñākaragupta, asserts that the color of the whole, generated form colors of parts, is the single variegated color, and not the multiple colors in his \textit{Nyāyabhūṣaṇa} (NBhūṣ 112, 13–113, 7). Thus, this Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of the single variegated color functions as a refutation of Dharmakīrti’s above-mentioned criticism. Against this refutation, Dharmakīrti and Prajñākaragupta attempt to demonstrate that a variegated butterfly does not have single color with some comparisons.

\subsection{2.1. Comparison with Color of Jewels}

In order to criticize the single variegated color, Dharmakīrti compares the variegated butterfly with manifold jewels as follows:
It is because the [color of the variegated butterfly] is variegated color [and] does not have a single
nature, just like the color of [manifold] jewels. (PV III 201ab)

Dharmakīrti indicates that the color of the butterfly is multiple just like the color of manifold jewels is multiple. Against this indication, in the PVA (281, 24–28), the opponent objects that the difference between the butterfly and the collection of jewels lies in whether or not it can be divided. In this portion of the PVA, however, Prajñākaragupta seems unable to make an effective criticism of the objection because he only claims that the butterfly can also be divided.

2.2. Comparison with Color of Artificial Butterfly

Next, Dharmakīrti and Prajñākaragupta mention an artificial variegated butterfly as an example of multiple objects as follows:

And, the distinction such as blue etc. is the same as in the case of variegated cloth etc. (PV III 201cd)

Regarding an artificial variegated butterfly etc. which have a collection of different kinds of string as their nature, the distinction such as blue etc., which works together without difference in terms of the sense of touch is just the same [as in the case of real variegated butterfly]. Therefore, how does the distinction arise between the case [of a real variegated butterfly] where the whole exists and the other case [of an artificial butterfly where the whole does not exist]? (PVA 282, 2–3)

Although an artificial variegated butterfly is mere the collection of many clothes, i.e., multiple objects, it is indistinguishable from a real variegated butterfly. Prajñākaragupta assumes the objection that it seems as if multiple colors are one single variegated color due to a subjective impression against his criticism (PVA 282, 9) and refutes it as follows:

A subjective impression of singleness [could be] a refuge in that case [i.e., the statement of the opponent]. However, that [impression] does exist regarding an artificial [butterfly etc.] even without the whole. As a result, the attempt [to admit the whole] completely collapsed. Therefore, [the assertion] that the whole has a variegated color is unreasonable because the perception and the inference do not establish [the whole]. (PVA 282, 10–12)

Prajñākaragupta indicates that multiple colors of an artificial variegated butterfly seem like a single variegated color due to a subjective impression, then similarly, multiple colors of a real butterfly can be considered single color due to subjective impression, and hence the opponent has no reason to accept the whole.
Conclusion

In this paper, the following points have become evident.

First, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of the variegated color functions as the objection to Dharmakīrti’s criticism in his PVin. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika advocates that the whole has a single variegated color in order to demonstrate the whole is a single substance.

Second, Prajñākaragupta criticizes the theory of variegated color with comparing a variegated butterfly to manifold jewels and an artificial butterfly. Although the opponent asserts that the whole such as the variegated butterfly is different from multiple objects such as manifold jewels in terms of whether or not it can be divided, Prajñākaragupta indicates that there is no difference between them by using the example of an artificial butterfly.

Abbreviations

AKBh Abhidharmakośabhāṣya (Vasubandhu). Abhidharmakośabhāṣya. Ed. Prahlad Pradhan. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1967.

NBhūṣ Nyāyabhūṣaṇa (Bhāsarvajña). Śrīmadācārya Bhāsarvajñapraṇītasya Nyāyasārasya sopajñām vyākhyaṇam Nyāyabhūṣaṇam. Ed. Svāmī Yogindrānandaḥ. Vārāṇasi: Caukhambh Vidyābhavan, 1968.

NV Nyāyavārttika (Uddyotakara). Nyāyadarśanam with Vātsyāyana’s Bhāṣya, Uddyotakara’s Vārttika, Viśvanāthā’s Vṛtti. Eds. Taranatha Nyaya-Tarkatirtha, Amarendramohan Tarkatirtha and Hemantakumar Tarkatirtha. 2 vols. Calcutta: Metropolitan Printing & Publishing House, 1936–1944. Reprint, Kyoto: Rinsen Book, 1982.

PV Pramāṇavārttika (Dharmakīrti). See Miyasaka 1971–1972.

PVA Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra (Prajñākaragupta). Pramāṇavārttikabhāṣyam or Vārtikālaṅkāraḥ of Prajñākaragupta (Being a Commentary on Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavārttika). Ed. Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1953.

PVIn Pramāṇaviniścaya (Dharmakīrti). Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇaviniścaya Chapter 1 and 2. Ed. Ernst Steinkellner. Sanskrit Texts from the Tibetan Autonomous Region 2. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press; Beijing: China Tibetology Publishing House, 2007.

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