In a short article entitled ‘Did Dignāga accept four types of perception?’ published in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy* in 1993, Franco propounds the view that Dignāga (ca. 480–540) accepts only three types of perception, namely, sense, mental and yogic perception. As a matter of fact, he was not the first one to propagate this view. Those who agree with him include some eminent scholars in the field of Dignāga and Buddhist epistemological studies, such as Hattori, Nagatomi, Nagatomo, and Schmithausen. The only person that seemed to go against this prevailing view, according to Franco, was Wayman. In his article targeted by Franco, Wayman himself, however, does not provide any solid evidence that Dignāga actually accepts one more type of perception, i.e., self-cognition (*sva*ṣa-viṣadeṇā). Therefore, it seems that Franco and others have reached a convincing conclusion on this issue.

In the course of my study of Dignāga and his doctrine of self-cognition, however, I find some evidence supporting Wayman’s claim that Dignāga accepts four types of perception. The evidence is found in Dignāga’s own writings and in the commentatorial works of Kuiji 魯基 (632–682), a Chinese Yogācāra scholar. As we know, more than twenty works are ascribed to Dignāga. Among them, twelve are extant in Tibetan and six in Chinese. As far as the current issue is concerned, the following works are extremely important: the *Nyāyamukha* (hereafter NM), the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (hereafter PS), and its auto-commentary the *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti* (hereafter PSV). NM is an introductory work to Buddhist logic. It is only extant in Chinese and has been very influential among East Asian Buddhists. This work contains a small section discussing the concept of perception in the system of *pramāṇa* theory. PS

---

1 This article is based on part of the Chapter 5 of my dissertation (Yao, 2002).
3 Robbins (1992: 243) is another author who claims that there are four types of perception in Dignāga’s system, but he provides no evidence.
4 Pak (2000), for instance, lists the views of both Hattori and Wayman, but was convinced that Wayman’s interpretation was wrong.
and its auto-commentary PSV are later, and probably the last major work by Dignāga. Extant in its two Tibetan translations, this work rearranges and enlarges the perception section of NM into a full chapter on perception. Along with other chapters of PS, it presents us a systematic formulation of Buddhist logic and epistemology. In the following, I shall first argue against the popular view that Dignāga only accepts three types of perception with the support of this evidence, and then explain the reason that causes such a view to prevail among scholars.

1. FOUR TYPES OF PERCEPTION

Dignāga is the first to systematize the Buddhist theory of pramāṇa or means of cognition. He only accepts two means of cognition, i.e., perception (pratyakṣa) and inference (anumāṇa), as he states in his NM: “As regards one’s own understanding there are only two pramāṇas, i.e., perception and inference, since [the other pramānas admitted by] other schools such as verbal testimony (śabda), analogy (upamāṇa) and so forth are included in these two”. The reason that he admits only two means of cognition is that the object to be cognized has only two aspects, i.e., the particular (svalakṣaṇa) and the universal (sāmānyalakṣaṇa), which are, respectively, the objects of perception and inference. As it is pointed out in NM: “Besides these two [i.e., the particular and universal], there is no other object of cognition (prameya) which can be apprehended by a pramāṇa other than [perception and inference]”.

However, Dignāga is not the first Buddhist scholar to discuss this sort of issue. In the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, an encyclopedic work of the Sarvāstivādins, we already see extensive discussions of perception and inference in an Abhidharma framework. In his *Abhidharmasamayapradīpikā*, the Sarvāstivāda scholar Sāṃghabhadrā (ca. 4–5th centuries) expresses similar views with regard to the objects of the two means of cognition. He says: “However, it is admitted that there are two kinds of particles: one real, and the other conventional. What are their characteristics? The real refers to the particular characteristic of visual object, whose collection is perceived by perception. The conventional is known by inference, which is analytical”.

---

5. 為自開悟唯有現量及與比量。彼聲聞等就中故。Taishō shinshū daizōkyō (hereafter T), 1628: 3b.
6. 故唯二量。由此能了自共相故。非離此二別有所量為了知彼更立餘量。T1628: 3b.
7. 然許極微略有二種一實二假。其相云何。實謂極微色等自相。於和集位。現量所得。假由分析比量所知。T1563: 855b.
Dignāga defines perception as the cognition ‘that is free from conceptual construction’.

Conceptual construction, in turn, means ‘the association of name (nāma), genus (jāti), etc. [with a thing perceived, which results in verbal designation of the thing]’. So perception in his understanding should be inexpressible by words. Dharmakīrti (ca. 600–660) follows Dignāga’s definition in his Pramāṇavārttika III.123a, but he adds ‘non-erroneous’ (abhṛanta) to this definition in the Nyāyabindu I.4 and the Pramāṇaviniścaya. He says: “Perception is the awareness that is not affected by illusion produced through the darkness of eyes, rapid motion, traveling on a boat, a violent blow or other causes”. To define perception as non-erroneous did not start with Dharmakīrti. On the contrary, by introducing the term abhṛanta to the definition of perception, he falls back to an understanding of perception found in the early Yogācāra school.

In the Yogācārabhūmi, an encyclopedic work ascribed to Maitreyanātha (ca. 350–430) or Asaṅga (395–470), perception is defined as follows: “What is perception? It is not indirect, neither already inferred nor to be inferred, and not erroneous (avibhrānta)”. This text also mentions the first three illusory objects as singled out by Dharmakīrti.

According to Dharmakīrti, perception is classified into four types, i.e., sense perception, mental perception, the self-cognition of all mind and mental activities, and the yogic perception. It has been hotly debated among contemporary scholars whether Dignāga himself accepts four types of perception. Franco (1993) criticizes Wayman (1991) for imposing the later interpretation of Dharmakīrti on Dignāga. In Franco’s opinion, Dignāga only accepts three types of perception, namely, sense, mental and yogic perception. Prior to Franco, Hattori (1968) and Nagatomi (1979) express the same view by reducing self-cognition to an aspect of mental perception. All these scholars, except Wayman, share a common view that self-cognition is not a separate type of perception in Dignāga. I disagree

---

8 PS I.3c: kalpanāpodham ... I will cite the Sanskrit fragments of PS and PSV as numbered by Hattori (1968) when I do not have major disagreement with him. Otherwise, I will quote the Tibetan text.


10 Nyāyabindu I.6: timirāsubhramana-vācyānasāṃkṣobhādyāvibhramam jñānam pratyakṣam /


13 See, Nyāyabindu I.7–11: tat caturvādadham: indriya-jñānam: ... manovijñānam: ... sarva-citta-caittānām ātman-saṃvedanam: ... yogi-jñānaṁ ceti.
with this view. On the other hand, I do not think that Wayman’s argument for the four types of perception is legitimate because he uses Dharmakīrti’s interpretation to read Dignāga. Franco (1993: 296) has correctly pointed out that ‘we have to read Dignāga’s text independently of his so-called “Great Commentator”’, although he meanwhile regrets that ‘unfortunately we do not have any other commentatorial tradition except that of Dharmakīrti and his followers’.

It seems that none of these scholars have paid attention to the early works of Dignāga himself that are extant in Chinese and to the commentatorial tradition of Dharmapāla (530–561) and his Chinese counterparts. But it is exactly in Dignāga’s NM that we find evidence for his fourfold classification of perception, even before he wrote PS and PSV. In NM, after sense perception is introduced, he continues to say:

The mental realm (māṇasa), when occurring in the form of immediate experience [of objects], is also devoid of conceptual construction. Again, the self-cognition of desire and so forth, and the yogic [intuition] that is devoid of doctrinal conception, are both perception.14

The two Chinese translations by Xuanzang (600–664) and Yijing (635–713) are exactly the same except that Yijing adds ‘to explain’ to the beginning of the passage to indicate that it is an auto-commentary by Dignāga himself. Hattori (1968: 92 n.1.45) cites this passage without translating or explaining it, and thus fails to attract the attention of his Western readers. In this passage, the puzzling fusion between self-cognition and mental perception does not occur for they are separated by the particle ‘again’ (you 你). In the end of the passage, it explicitly states that the previously mentioned categories, namely, self-cognition of desire and so forth, and yogic intuition, are both perceptions. These two, plus the mental realm that is devoid of conceptual construction and the sense perception, make up the four types of perception for Dignāga.

Moreover, in his commentary to the Nyāyapraveśa, a work by one of Dignāga’s direct disciples, Śaṅkarasvāmin (ca. 500–560), Kuiji states even more explicitly that there are four types of perception. He says: “There are roughly four types of [perception] that are devoid of conceptual construction: 1) five consciousnesses; 2) the mental [consciousness] that accompanies the five [consciousnesses]; 3) self-cognition; 4) the yogic

14 意地亦有離諸分別唯識行轉，又於食等諸自證分，諸修定者離教分別，皆是現量。T1628: 3b. Hirakawa and Hirai, 1973–1978, 2: 16 has māṇasa for yi dī 費地，but Tucci, 1930: 50 has manobhāmi. The part on self-cognition can be translated literally as: “Again, for desire and so forth, their self-cognition, and . . . , are both perception”. 
[intuition].\textsuperscript{15} So we have evidence for four types of perception in the early work of Dignāga himself and in the commentatorial tradition apart from that of Dharmakīrti.

Even in PS and PSV, from which those scholars develop their argument against the four types of perception, I can also find evidence to support my view. To deny self-cognition as an independent type of perception, Hattori (1968: 27) squeezes it into a second \textit{kind} of mental perception. Nagatomi (1979: 254) emends it as the second \textit{aspect} of mental perception to be in conformity with the theory of the dual appearance of cognition discussed later in Dignāga’s text. Both scholars base their arguments on the Sanskrit passage cited in Prajñākaragupta’s \textit{Pramāṇavārttikabhāṣya}: “rāga-dveṣa-moha-sukha-duḥkha-dīṣu ca svāsaṃvedanām indriyānapekṣatvān mānasāṃ pratyakṣatvān”\textsuperscript{16}. Hattori translates this passage as follows: “The self-awareness (svāsaṃvedana) of desire, anger, ignorance, pleasure, pain, etc., is [also recognized as] \textit{mental perception} because it is not dependent on any sense organ”.\textsuperscript{17} Judging from the Sanskrit text, this is a fine translation. But the problem is that it does not match the Tibetan translation of PSV, which literally means: “As for desire, anger, ignorance, pleasure, pain, and so forth, on account of their independence on sense organ, [they can be regarded as] \textit{perception} [in terms] of cognizing themselves (rang rig pa’i mngon sum, svāsaṃvedanapratyakṣa)”.\textsuperscript{18} The Tibetan translation is consistent with the Chinese translation of NM cited above when it is literally put: “Again, for desire and so forth, their self-cognition, and . . . , are both \textit{perception}”.\textsuperscript{19} Both the Tibetan and Chinese texts indicate that self-cognition of desire is a type of \textit{perception}, but not a kind of \textit{mental perception} as shown in the Sanskrit text.

To be in conformity with Prajñākaragupta’s Sanskrit text, Hattori (1968: 181) changes rang rig pa’i (self-cognizant) in the Tibetan text into yid kyi (mental) and replaces ni with la yang rang rig pa. With these ille-
gitimate modifications against all Tibetan translations, he understands self-cognition as a kind of mental perception rather than a separate type of perception. Based on this understanding, Hattori (1968: 27) also interprets the verse PS I.6ab that this passage comments on as follows: “[T]here is also mental [perception, which is of two kinds:] awareness of an [external] object and self-awareness of [such subordinate mental activities as] desire and the like, [both of which are] free from conceptual construction”. This translation would be less problematic if we skip what Hattori fills in the brackets, for the rest part matches the Tibetan and the Sanskrit as cited by Prajñākaraṇagupta (ca. 8–9th centuries).

The Sanskrit verse PS I.6ab that is cited by Prajñākaraṇagupta again becomes a subject of debate. Franco (1993) and Wayman (1991) dispute on whether to put an anusvāra after artha. If there is the anusvāra, as Wayman suggests, then artha can be separated from the compound artha-rāgādī-sva-saṃvittī, and we can avoid the traditional reading arthasaṃvittī and rāgādīsvasaṃvittī, which is adopted by Hattori and Nagatomi. The verse would mean, as Wayman (1991: 423) translates: “Also the mental (sense) having the object-entity (artha) and self-intuition of passion (rāga), etc. are without constructive thought”. As pointed out by Franco, this translation is equally problematic because Wayman does not explain the insertion of the word ‘sense’ and he ungrammatically uses the word artha, which should be ārtha if without a governing verb. At this point, I do not think that the anusvāra here really matters much. As a matter of fact, I find that the anusvāra appears in the index to Rāhula Sāṅkrtyāyana’s edition of Prajñākaraṇagupta’s text, although it is not found in the text itself. Thus, I see this debate as provoked by an editorial error.

In sum, self-cognition is a separate type of perception and there are altogether four types of perception for Dignāga. This is evident in both his NM and PS, as well as in the commentatorial traditions of Dharmakīrti

---

20 Nagatomo (1993: 397–398) and Pak (2000: 919) notice the difference between the Tibetan translations and the Sanskrit text of Prajñākaraṇagupta, but they choose to follow the Sanskrit to interpret Dignāga.


23 See, Franco, 1993: 296–297. It seems to me that Wayman, when inserting the word ‘sense’, has in mind the Abhidharma concept of mental sense (manas).

24 See the 1957 edition of index to Pramāṇavārttikābhāṣya 692 and the 1953 edition of Pramāṇavārttikābhāṣya 305.
and Kuiji. Those who deny the independent status of self-cognition are influenced by the later commentaries of Prajñākaragupta.

2. SELF-COGNITION AND OTHER TYPES OF PERCEPTION

Those scholars, from Prajñākaragupta to Franco, who deny self-cognition as a separate type of perception, have misunderstood the relationship between self-cognition and mental perception. This in turn is because of their failure to apprehend the nature of mental perception. In their understanding, mental perception has two functions, namely, to externally experience object and to internally be aware of desire and so forth.25

But I understand mental perception solely as the experience of object.26 My understanding is supported by Dignāga’s own definition. In his NM, Dignāga defines mental perception as follows: “The mental realm (māṇasa), when occurring in the form of immediate experience [of object], is also devoid of conceptual construction”.27 My emendation ‘of object’ is supported by Dignāga in his PSV: “The mental (māṇasa) [perception] which, taking visual object, etc., for its object, occurs in the form of immediate experience (anubhava) is also free from conceptual construction”.28 The definition in PSV further specifies māṇasa as ‘taking visual object, etc., for its object’ (rūpādi-viṣayālambanam). These words, in turn, explain the word artha in the verse PS I.6ab: māṇasam cārtha-rāgādi-sva-samvittir akalpikā.

According to these definitions, mental perception is an aspect of the mental realm or mental consciousness, which sometimes occurs in the form of the immediate experience of sensory objects. Here the reference to sensory objects indicates that the immediate experience is externally directed. If this experience were directed internally, then it would become self-cognition. And if we admit that Dignāga, in contrast to his predecessors, elevates self-cognition to the status of a separate perception, then it has to be independent of mental perception.

Those who understand self-cognition as an aspect of mental perception must also have confused mental perception (māṇasa-pratyakṣa) with mental consciousness (manovijñāna). Mental perception is an aspect of mental consciousness.

26 Those who agree with me include Tillemans (1989: 70) and Funayama (2000b: 106).
27 意地亦有雜詫分別為識行轉。T1628: 3b. These Chinese words can be restored into Sanskrit as follows: māṇasam api avikalpakam anubhavākāra-pravṛttam.
28 PSV I Db: māṇasam api rūpādi-viṣayālambanam avikalpakam anubhavākāra-pravṛttanāy.
mental consciousness that experiences but does not conceptualize the sensory object. This concept indicates that Dignāga disagrees with the Sautrāntikas who hold that mental consciousness can never directly experience the sensory object because the object has already disappeared when the consciousness arises. Self-cognition, on the other hand, is the internal awareness of mental consciousness (not mental perception) and its associated mental activities such as desire and so forth. Yogic perception, the fourth type of perception, is again a specific state of mental consciousness. A yogi starts with inferential knowledge about the teaching of the Buddha, which is called the true object (bhūṭārtha). Through a meditative practice that visualizes repeatedly its object in mind, the object finally is perceived as clearly as though it were a small grain on the palm of his hand. At this point, yogic perception is devoid of conceptual construction.

In my understanding, Dignāga, when singling out various types of perception, does not go beyond the traditional classification of six consciousnesses. Five sense consciousnesses are no doubt perception. Mental consciousness, being the actual agent of conceptual construction, still can be perception when immediately experiencing the sensory object, internally being aware of itself and its mental activities, or concentrating on the object itself in a meditative state. The relationship between six consciousnesses and four types of perception can be illustrated with the following diagram.

Dignāga’s view that self-cognition is attributed to mental consciousness is further indicated in his discussion on whether conceptual awareness (kalpanā-jñāna) is perception. He addresses this issue in a dialogue with an opponent. The dialogue goes like this in NM:

[The opponent:] If the self-cognition of desire and so forth is also considered perception, why do you exclude conceptual awareness from perception?

[Dignāga:] I do not exclude the self-cognition of this conceptual awareness, because it is free from conceptual construction and thus is perception. But in the respect that this conceptual awareness apprehends other objects, it is not called perception.

---


31 Similar view on the correlation between six consciousnesses and four types of perception is found in Kamalaśīla (740–795). See the recent study of Funayama (2000b), who, despite the virtue of this innovative study, follows uncritically the Sanskrit reconstruction by Hattori (1968) when dealing with Dignāga. Thanks to the anonymous reviewer for pointing me to this piece of reference and to Funayama for kindly sending me this article along with many of his other works.

32 若於貪等諸自證分亦是現量。何故此中除分別智。不隨此中自證。現量無分別故。但於此中了餘境分不名現量。T16283b.
This dialogue is included and reformulated in PSV I Dd. In both texts, the opponent’s question provides us one more piece of evidence for self-cognition being an independent form of perception. This question makes sense if we put it in the context of early Yogācāra theory of perception. As we have discussed previously, the definition of perception in the Yogācārabhumi influenced Dharmakīrti. Its classification of perception also effects Dignāga at this point. In this text, perception is classified into four types, namely, perception of formal sense-organs (rūpāndriyapratyakṣa), perception of mental experience (manonubhavapratyakṣa), worldly perception (lokapratyakṣa), and pure perception (śuddhapratyakṣa). The first two are identical to the first two types of perception in Dignāga. These two are also called the worldly perception in contrast to the pure perception, which closely matches the yogic perception in Dignāga. So it seems to be a common view among early Yogācārins to accept three types of perception: sense, mental and yogic perception. Now, if Dignāga has come up with anything innovative, it is self-cognition. But it is exactly this self-cognition that causes controversy if we accept it as a type of perception. The opponent argues that, if self-cognition is perception, then conceptual awareness should also be

---

considered perception. In other words, self-cognition is conceptual, so it cannot be perception, if perception is understood as non-conceptual. In Dignāga’s view, however, conceptual awareness is perception when it is internally aware of itself, because in that case it is devoid of conceptual construction. Some scholars even classify the self-cognition of conceptual awareness (kalpanā-jñāna-svasamvitti) as a separate kind of perception. I do not think that it is necessary to single out the self-cognition of conceptual awareness as another type of perception, because Dignāga here is not talking about the typology of perception but replying to his opponent’s objection with regard to conceptual awareness. This discussion explicitly shows that self-cognition is a capacity of conceptual awareness that includes mental consciousness and mental activities such as desire and so forth. Both phrases, namely, ‘self-cognition of conceptual awareness’ and ‘self-cognition of desire and so forth’, indicate that self-cognition is of the mental consciousness that is primarily conceptual.

Having made it clear that self-cognition is the internal awareness of mental consciousness, and that mental perception and yogic perception are also different aspects of mental consciousness, now, how is self-cognition related to sense perception? Is sense perception self-cognizant? This remains a mystery in Dignāga’s own works. In PSV, he explicitly says that “As for desire, anger, ignorance, pleasure, pain, and so forth, on account of their independence on sense organ, [they can be regarded as] perception [in terms] of cognizing themselves (rang rig pa’i mgon sum, svasamvedanapratyakṣa).” This suggests, as concluded by Matilal, that self-cognition is ‘mental’. When defining sense perception, Dignāga mentions the following verse in both NM and PS:

A thing possessing many properties cannot be cognized in all its aspects by the sense. The object of the sense is the form which is to be cognized [simply] as it is and which is inexpressible.

34 Tosaki (1979: 381–382) takes this position to interpret Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavṛttika. In so doing, he omits sense perception. So there are still four types of perception in total: mental perception, self-cognition of desire and so forth, yogic perception, and self-cognition of conceptual awareness.

35 PSV I Db (Kanakavaran’s translation): ‘dod chags dang bza’ gnyen dang gti mug dang bde ba dang sdog bsgal la sogs pa ni dbang po la mi ltos pa’i phyir rang rig pa’i mgon sum mo /’. My emphasis.

36 Matilal, 1986: 150. But he is wrong in following Hattori and Nagatomi to say that self-cognition is a kind or aspect of mental perception.

Here the phrase ‘to be cognized simply as it is’ (svasamvedya) is worth noting. All the Chinese and Tibetan translators have carefully chosen alternatives to distinguish it from self-cognition (svasamvedana). The Chinese use nei zheng 内證 (internal cognition) instead of zi zheng 自證 (self-cognition). The Tibetans render it as rang rang rig bya or rang gi rig bya instead of rang rig. However, Dignāga himself interprets this word as ‘self-cognizable’ when refuting the Mīmāṃsaka theory of perception. He explains the last part of the verse as follows: “This [object of the sense] is, as it were, [a part of] the cognition itself, and [therefore] is self-cognizable.”38 This clearly indicates that he uses svasamvedya in a sense of self-cognizable to show that the object of sense perception is self-cognizable by the cognition because the object is actually the object-appearance (viṣayābhāsa) of the cognition itself. So, according to Dignāga, the cognition that acts as the basis for both sense perception and sense object is self-cognizant. But he does not speak of the self-cognition of sense perception itself.

Another way to explore this issue is to suppose that the Sautrāntika view that only mental consciousness is self-cognizant also stands in Dignāga’s system.39 If so, the key to determining whether sense consciousness is self-cognizant is to examine how the mental and sense consciousnesses are related to each other. If mental consciousness arises after sense consciousness, then sense consciousness cannot cognize itself. This is the position of the Sautrāntikas. If, however, we adopt the Yogācāra position that mental consciousness functions simultaneously with sense consciousness, then we can say that sense consciousness also cognizes itself, because it is always accompanied by mental consciousness, and they are to a great extent indistinguishable.

For the commentators of Dignāga, the relationship between mental and sense consciousnesses has been one of the most puzzling issues. This again has to do with the very nature of mental perception, which is an intermediate state between these two consciousnesses. If mental perception is understood as the experience of sensory objects, then how does it differ from sense perception? Why is it necessary? This confusion was actually

38 PSV VI Dc (Kanakavarman’s translation): shes pa’i rang gi bdag nyid bzhin du so’i bdag nyid rig pa yin no /. (Nasudhararakṣita’s translation) rang gi snang ba’i shes pa skyes pa de’i bdag nyid so sor rig par kyed de shes pa’i rang gi cha shas bzhin no /. Hattori’s translation.

39 The view that ‘mental consciousness is self-cognizant’ is found in the *Tattvasiddhi (T1646: 364b), a Sautrāntika work of Harivarman (ca. 310–390). In his view, sense consciousness is not self-cognizant because the mental consciousness that is capable of self-cognition has not arisen when sense consciousness is active. See the chapter 4 of Yao 2002 for further discussion.
caused by Dignāga himself who failed to define this concept clearly. As is pointed out by Jinendrabuddhi (ca. 8th century) in his commentary on PS, if mental perception perceives the same object as sense perception, mental perception cannot be recognized as a valid cognition (pramāṇa), because it does not offer any new knowledge. If, on the other hand, the object of mental perception is absolutely different from that of the sense perception, then even a blind person would be able to see things, because his mind is not defective.40

Dharmakīrti was aware of the exactly same problem, as he says: “If mental [perception] grasps [an object] perceived previously [by sense perception], then it is not a valid cognition (pramāṇa). If it grasps [an object] that has not been seen, then the blind should be able to see a [visual] object”.41 He takes the position that the object of mental perception is not the same as that of sense perception, but this object cooperates with sense perception. Mental perception, on the other hand, has to arise after sense perception, which acts as its immediately contiguous condition. This view is expressed in his classical definition of mental perception: “Mental consciousness [as perception] is the product of sense consciousness, which forms its immediately contiguous condition and which cooperates with the immediately succeeding facsimile of its proper object”.42 This position of Dharmakīrti is usually associated with the Sautrāntikas, who maintain that different moments of cognition have to arise successively. This is part of the reason that he was called a Sautrāntika-Yogācārin.43

However, in the Chinese Yogācāra school that closely follows Dharmapāla, we find an opposite position. Dharmapāla, when commenting on Dignāga’s Ālambanaparīkṣā, expresses a similar concern with regard to the relationship between mental and sense consciousnesses, that is, whether they arise simultaneously or successively, and whether they have

---

41 Pramāṇavārttika III 239: pūrvāṇubhūtagrahaṇe mānasasyāpramāṇatā / adṛṣṭagrahaṇe 'ndhāder api syād arthadarśanam //.
42 Nyāyabindu I.9: svavisayāntaraśayasyahakāринendriyajñāhena samanantaraprat-vayena jñitām tan manoviṣṭhānām //
43 It is a matter of dispute whether Dharmakīrti holds that sense and mental perceptions arise simultaneously or successively when some notions in his Pramāṇavārttika are taking into account. See, Franco, 1997: 77–81 and Funayama, 2000a: 321–329. But as far as this passage of Nyāyabindu is concerned, as pointed out by Scherbatsky, 1930–1932, 2: 312, Nagatomi, 1979: 256; Tillemans, 1989: 79–80 n.2, and Funayama, 2000b: 106, Dharmakīrti agrees with the traditional Sautrāntika view that different moments of cognition arise successively. This reflects the complicatedness of the thought of Dharmakīrti, who attempts to synthesize Sautrāntika and Yogācāra.
the same or different objects.44 In the Vijñaptimātraśāsiddhi, Dharmapāla offers a solution that mental consciousness must arise and function simultaneously with five sense consciousnesses. He says: “When five [sense] consciousnesses arise, there must arise a mental consciousness, which can give rise to the mental consciousness of the subsequent moment. Why does [this later mental consciousness] need the five [sense] consciousnesses as its immediately contiguous conditions (samanantarapratyaya)?”45 In his commentary to this passage, Kuiji traces this view to early Yogācāra writings, including the Samdhinirmocana-sūtra and Yogācārabhūmi. Most interestingly, he also attributes this position to Dignāga himself. He says:

It is said in [Dignāga’s] treatise of Pramāṇasamuccaya, etc., that there must be a mental consciousness to accompany five [sense] consciousnesses. It is this mental consciousness that gives rise to the seeking (vitarka) mental consciousness of the subsequent moment, which takes the previous mental consciousness of the same genre as its immediately contiguous condition. Why does it need the five [sense] consciousnesses [as its immediately contiguous conditions]?46

Here the mental consciousness that accompanies sense consciousness refers to the mental perception in Dignāga’s system. Later, it became an alternative name for this type of perception among East Asian Yogācārins. Kuiji believes not only that mental perception and sense consciousness arise simultaneously, but also that they share the same object. He says: “In the treatise of Pramāṇasamuccaya, etc., the mental consciousness that accompanies five [sense consciousnesses], being perception, must have the same object [as the sense perception].”47 For instance, when one listens to the preaching of a Master, the mental perception that accompanies one’s auditory consciousness can only perceive the sound but not the dharma that the Master preaches, which has to be apprehended by one’s mental consciousness in the subsequent moment.

It seems that both Dharmapāla and Kuiji are arguing against the Sautrāntika position held by Dharmakīrti. Their view represents a reading of Dignāga from the orthodox Yogācāra tradition, which accepts the Mahāsamghika view that two or multiple minds arise simultaneously. Kuiji acknowledges their Mahāsamghika influence in the following passage: “As for the Mahāsāṃghikas, etc., and the Mahāyānas, who hold that various consciousnesses are simultaneous, the mental perception that accompanies five [sense] consciousnesses is the same as these five consciousnesses.

---

45 聞起時必有意識能引後念意識令起- 何假五識為隔物依 T1585: 21a.
46 集量論等五識俱時必有意識- 即此意識能引第二尋求意識生- 即以前念自類意識為無間縫- 何假五識 T1830: 389a.
47 集量論等五聰意識定現量者- 必同緣故 T1830: 420c.
in the sense that neither of these two types of perception can explicitly construct [an external object]. Only the mental consciousness of the subsequent moment can conceptually construct what is called the external object”.\textsuperscript{48}

Therefore, if we follow Dharmakīrti and understand mental perception as arising after sense perception and taking a different object from that of sense perception, then we have to accept the Sautrāntika position that sense perception is not self-cognizant, and that self-cognition occurs in the subsequent moment when mental consciousness arises.\textsuperscript{49} However, if we follow Dharmapāla and Kuiji to understand mental perception as accompanying sense consciousness and taking the same object, then sense perception is self-cognizant. In their system, all the eight consciousnesses, namely, store-consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), mind (manus), mental consciousness (manovijñāna), and five sense consciousnesses, have four divisions. They are the seeing-portion (darśana-bhāga), the seen-portion (nimitta-bhāga), self-cognition (svasamvittti-bhāga) and the cognition of self-cognition (∗svasamvittti-samvitti-bhāga).\textsuperscript{50} This example shows that the cryptic text of Dignāga can be interpreted in different, even opposite, ways.

In sum, self-cognition, as a separate type of perception, is the internal awareness of mental consciousness, which is primarily conceptual. But mental consciousness can be devoid of conceptual construction when it directly experiences the sensory object or is in a meditative state. That produces the other two types of perception: mental perception and yogic perception. Sense perception, the primary type of perception, can be self-cognizant if it is understood as accompanied by mental consciousness. But it is not self-cognizant if the mental consciousness arises after it.

\textsuperscript{48} 若大眾部等。及大乘。諸識雖俱。然五識俱現量意識同於五識。此二現量不分明執。後時意識方分別執謂為外境。T1830: 493b.

\textsuperscript{49} The well-known statement from the Nyāyabindu I.10: “all mind and mental activities are self-cognizant” (sarva-citta-caittānām ātman-samvedanam) seems to suggest that sense perception should also be self-cognizant for Dharmakīrti. But I suspect that this is a direct quotation from Mahāsāṃghika sources and that he himself does not endorse such a view in his system. See the chapter 2 of Yao 2002 for further discussion.

\textsuperscript{50} The Sanskrit equivalent of zheng zi zheng fen 證自證分 is not found in extant Sanskrit materials. La Vallée Poussin (1928–1929: 133) reconstructs it as svasamvittti-samvitti-bhāga, but Sāṅkrtyāyana (1935–1936: 63) renders it as samvittissva-samvittti-bhāga.
Those who deny self-cognition as a separate type of perception also have misunderstood the relationship between self-cognition and the dual appearance (abhasa) of cognition. Nagatomi (1979: 254–255), for instance, interprets self-cognition as an ‘aspect’ of mental perception. In his understanding, this ‘self-cognizing aspect’, along with the ‘object-cognizing aspect’, constitutes the dual aspect or appearance of cognition that is discussed in the later context of PS. Therefore, self-cognition corresponds to the subjective aspect or the self-appearance (svabhasa) of cognition. He is not the only one who has puzzled on this issue. In her account of the Sautrantika view of self-cognition as presented by the dGe lugs pa tradition, Klein (1986: 113) also wonders how self-cognition is related to ‘the subjective apprehension aspect’ of cognition. If self-cognition is posited to explain the self-awareness of consciousness, she asks, then is the self-cognition generated in the self-appearance of consciousness? Why should one consciousness or factor of consciousness need to appear to another one? Does the self-cognition have to be known by yet another self-cognition?

Williams (1998: 31 n.17) remarks that these are the problems that the model of self-cognition as developed by Dignaga, which he calls ‘self-awareness (i)’, is potentially getting into, while they can be avoided in a reflexive model of self-cognition as presented by Santaraksita (725–788), which he calls ‘self-awareness (ii)’. Williams’ distinction between two models of self-cognition is helpful, but he ignores the fact that Dignaga, in developing the model of ‘the subjective aspect experiencing the objective aspect’, does not deviate from the reflexive model. The complexity and significance of Dignaga’s position lie exactly in the fact that he is not confined to either model.

The point that Klein finds troublesome has to do with Dignaga’s doctrine of the dual appearance of cognition. That the consciousness itself appears as subject and object is a principal doctrine of Yogacara, as is stated in the Madhyantavibhaga I.3 and the Mahayanasutralamkara XI.32. In both texts, the dual appearance of consciousness demonstrates the basic Yogacara tenet that all existents are consciousness-only. In PSV, Dignaga explains the dual appearance of cognition with the following words: “Every cognition is produced with a twofold appearance, namely, that of itself [as subject] (svabhasa) and that of the object (visayabhasa)”.

---

51 PSV I G: dvy-abhasam hi jnanam utpadyate svabhasma visayabhasa ca t.
This statement, as Hattori (1968: 106 n. 1.65) remarks, reflects Dignāga’s commitment to the Yogācāra idealism.

In Dignāga’s system, self-cognition is a third factor apart from the dual appearance of cognition. To most readers of Dignāga, it is especially hard to distinguish self-cognition from the self-appearance of cognition, as Klein wonders whether the former is generated from the latter. Williams (1998: 4–5 n.5) remarks that the dGe lugs understand self-cognition to be the self-appearance of cognition itself. For it is quite natural to assume that the apperceptive cognition is a secondary product of the subject of cognition, and has nothing to do with the object of cognition. Those who hold this view have committed themselves to a realistic presumption that the object of cognition is the external object independent of the cognition itself.

The way that Dignāga understands the relationship between self-cognition and the self-appearance of cognition, in brief, is that the former possesses the latter but not vice versa. The cognition of blue, for instance, has a twofold appearance, namely, the appearance of blue as object and the appearance of the cognition itself as subject. The cognition of this cognition of blue, i.e., its self-cognition, again, possesses a twofold appearance, namely, ‘[on one hand] the appearance of that cognition which is in conformity with the object and [on the other hand] the appearance of itself ’.52 A strict distinction between the cognition of an object and the self-cognition of this cognition helps maintain the dual appearance of cognition, as Dignāga says: “That cognition has two forms is [known] from the difference between the cognition of the object and cognition of that [cognition]”.53 Suppose that a cognition only has the object-appearance for its object, the self-cognition would have no choice but to have this object-appearance for its object. This will collapse the distinction between cognition and self-cognition. If, on the other hand, the cognition has only the self-appearance, then both cognition and self-cognition will be marked by the same subjective aspect, and no difference between them can be found.54

The threefold structure of cognition that consists of self-cognition, self-appearance and object-appearance is further illustrated in terms of the distinction between the means, object and result of cognition. Dignāga stresses that this distinction is only metaphorically valid, because all these factors are devoid of activity (vyāpāra) in their ultimate nature. But in his pramāṇa theory, he still assigns the roles of the means of cognition, object

---

52 PSV I Ha: tad arthānurūpa-jñānānabhāsam svabhāsam ca /. Hattori’s translation.
54 See, Matilal, 1986: 152.
of cognition, and result of cognition respectively to the self-appearance, object-appearance and self-cognition, as he expresses in the following famous verse:

Whatever the form in which it [viz., a cognition] appears, that [form] is [recognized as] the object of cognition \( (prameya) \). The means of cognition \( (pramāṇa) \) and [the cognition which is] its result \( (phala) \) are respectively the form of subject [in the cognition] and the cognition cognizing itself. Therefore, these three [factors of cognition] are not separate from one another.\(^{55}\)

This is a classical formulation of the threefold division of cognition. The last point that states the unity of three divisions is especially important in a Yogācāra point of view, because it confirms their idealistic position that all elements, including the object of cognition, are only appearance of consciousness. At this point, Dignāga criticizes the Sautrāntikas for their realistic position. Evidence shows that the Sautrāntikas share the Yogācāra view that self-cognition is the result of cognition, but they consider the external object to be the object of cognition, and the cognition having the image of object to be the object of cognition. This view is reported by Bhaṭṭombeka in his Ślokavārttikavyākhyā:

Those who maintain the Sautrāntika position, that the external object is the object of cognition \( (prameya) \), the cognition having the image of object is the means of cognition \( (pramāṇa) \), self-cognition is the result \( (phala) \) of [cognition] ... Now in the Yogācāra position also ... this is their position: There is no external object, the cognition having the image of object is the object of cognition, the self-form \( (svākāra) \) [of cognition] is the means of cognition, and self-cognition is the result of [cognition].\(^{56}\)

For those who are sympathetic to a realistic or common sense attitude, the Sautrāntika theory sounds like a better solution. They have the external object as object, the cognition having the image of object as subject, and the self-appearance of cognition as self-cognition. In this view, self-cognition only has to do with the cognition itself, and is identical to the self-appearance of cognition, as pointed out by Hattori (1968: 102–103 n.1.61): “[Ś]vabhāsa and sva-samvitti are understood by them [i.e., Sautrāntikas] as bearing the same meaning”. By doing so, however, they have overlooked the true nature of the cognition, which is to be cognized by itself. This is because “[i]nasmuch as the cognition is held to take an external thing for its object, it is improper to say that sva-samvitti is

\(^{55}\) PS I.10: \textit{yad-ābhāsam prameyaṁ tat pramāṇa-phaḷate punah / grāhakākara-saṁvitti trayaṁ nītaḥ pṛthak-kṛtam //}. Hattori’s translation.

the result of the cognitive process. Since *sva-samvitti* signifies that the cognition itself is the object of cognition*. Moreover, as pointed out by Kumārila, a seventh century Mīmāṃsaka, the Sautrāntika position suffers the problem that cognition and its result have different objects: the former has the external object as its object, while the latter the cognition itself.

Dignāga further proves the dual appearance of cognition and the existence of self-cognition by adopting the memory argument as developed by the Sautrāntikas. He agrees with the Sautrāntikas that memory plays an important role in cognition, as he also is concerned with how the object of preceding cognition is known by the succeeding cognition. This implies that this object of the preceding cognition has disappeared when the succeeding cognition arises. Meanwhile, this object has to be known by the succeeding cognition. Otherwise, cognition is impossible. This view can be demonstrated with the example of cognizing the word *devadatta* from four separate syllables *de-va-da-tta*. Dignāga observes that in the memory of a subsequent moment, ‘there occurs [to our mind] the recollection of our cognition as well as the recollection of the object’. So it stands that cognition has two appearances. Meanwhile, the recollection of past cognition also proves the existence of self-cognition at earlier time. Dignāga’s memory argument for self-cognition adds nothing new to that of the Sautrāntikas. He bases it on the same fact that memory is of things that have been experienced. Therefore, if one recollects an object at later time, he must have experienced it before. Dignāga seems not to accept the solution offered by Vasubandhu (ca. 400–480) who sees the object in memory as a manifestation of representative consciousness (*vijñapti*).

Understanding self-cognition as possessing a twofold appearance does run the risk of making self-cognition a separate cognition; thus it faces the difficulty of infinite regress. So the key to understanding Dignāga’s view is that self-cognition is an element of the threefold structure of cognition but not a separate cognition. As an element of cognition, self-cognition makes the self-awareness of cognition possible through the power of the cognition itself. If a cognition is not known by itself but by another cognition, there would be an infinite regress and the movement of thought from one object

---

57 Hattori, 1968: 105 n.1.64.
58 See, *Ślokavārttika*, IV.79ab; Hattori, 1968: 106 n.1.64.
59 For the memory argument of Sautrāntikas, see the *Tattvasiddhi* (T1646: 288b, 364b) of Harivarman and the *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* VI.73 of Candrakīrti (600–650).
60 PSV I He-1: *viṣaya iva jñāne smṛṭir utpadyate...* Hattori’s translation.
61 See the *Vinśatikā* 17ab: *uktam yatḥā tadābhāsā viṣṇaptaḥ smaraṇaṃ tatāḥ/* (It is held [in the Yogācāra] that memory is of the representative consciousness that appears as that [object]).
to another would be impossible. If so, no self-cognition would be possible at all. A cognition, therefore, has to be known by itself.

In sum, Dignāga holds that self-cognition is different from the twofold appearance of cognition. These three aspects of cognition, namely, self-cognition, the subjective appearance and objective appearance, constitute the totality of cognition. In this model of one mind with multiple aspects or divisions, self-cognition can function as a way of the subject experiencing the object, but it is still reflexive because only one mind is involved.

4. CONCLUSION

As we have shown, in Dignāga’s epistemological system, self-cognition is clearly distinguished from the other three types of perception and from the dual appearance of cognition. His own works do not support the allegation that he accepts only three types of perception, which is only found in the commentatorial works of Prajñākaragupta. But most contemporary scholars follow him to interpret Dignāga’s position on the typology of perception. This reflects a general tendency among scholars of Indian Buddhism, who give Sanskrit texts a higher preference despite the fact that the Sanskrit manuscripts we have today are usually dated quite late. In the case of Dignāga, none of his works survives in original Sanskrit, but many scholars still prefer to study him on the basis of the Sanskrit fragments found in later commentatorial works. When these Sanskrit fragments do not agree with the Tibetan or Chinese translations, they would disregard or emend the translations accordingly without hesitation. This is basically what happened in the current discussion on the typology of perception among scholars.

In dealing with the disagreements between the received Sanskrit text of the Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra and its early Chinese translation by Kumārajīva (344–413), Lancaster (1977: 149) finds that in many cases the Chinese translation is supported by the recently discovered Gilgit Sanskrit fragments. He concludes that the disagreements are not due to the deliberate alteration by the translators that scholars usually assume, but because the Sanskrit text underwent ‘constant and at times radical changes through the centuries’, therefore the Chinese translation is more valuable in terms of preserving the earlier format of the Sūtra. In the current case, I would argue that even if Dignāga’s works were available in their Sanskrit version, the value of their Chinese or Tibetan translations still cannot be dismissed, especially when they disagree with each other. Now since the Sanskrit texts do not survive, we have to follow the Chinese and Tibetan translations to conclude that Dignāga actually accepted four types of perception. As a
result, we have to dismiss the later Sanskrit commentatorial tradition of Prajñākāraṇa that alleges only three types of perception for Dignāga, a view followed by most contemporary scholars.

REFERENCES

Primary sources


Cheng wei shì lun *shū jī* of Kuiji. T1830.


Pramāṇasamuccaya of Dignāga. Tshad ma kun las btus pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa, trans. Vasudhararaks.ita and Seng rgyal. D4203.

Pramāṇasamuccayaṭīkā of Jenendrabuddhi. Yangs ba dang dri ma med pa dang ldan pa zhes bya ba tshad ma kun las btus pa'i 'grel bshad, trans. Dpal ldan Blo gros brtan pa. D4268.


Pramāṇasamuccayoavṛtti of Dignāga. Tshad ma kun las btus pa'i 'grel pa, trans. Kanakavarman and Dad pa'i shes rab. P5702.

Pramāṇasamuccayoavṛtti of Dignāga. Tshad ma kun las btus pa'i 'grel pa, trans. Vasudhararaks.ita and Seng rgyal. D4204; P5701.


Yin ming ru zheng li shuo 因明入正理論疏 of Kuji, T1840.
*Secondary sources*


DIGNĀGA AND FOUR TYPES OF PERCEPTION


Centre of Buddhist Studies
The University of Hong Kong