

神戸市外国語大学 学術情報リポジトリ

The Three Objects of Buddhist Epistemology

メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2014-03-01 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Gawa Matsushita, Thupten メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://kobe-cufs.repo.nii.ac.jp/records/1954

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 International License.



The Three Objects of Buddhist Epistemology

Thupten Gawa Matsushita

Kokoro Research Center, Kyoto University

1. Introduction

During the ancient period, plenty of scriptures of Buddhist logic were scattered. Ācārya Dignāga (Slob dpon phyogs kyi glang po, 5th century), an ancient Indian Buddhist master and philosopher, collected and unified most of the scriptures and composed his principal work “Compendium of valid cognition” (Skt. *Pramāṇa-samuccaya*, *Tshad ma kun las btus pa*), a general commentary composed of six chapters on the preceding texts of Buddhist logic.

After Dignāga, the well-known Indian logician Dharmakīrti (Chos kyi grags pa, 7th century) studied the *Pramāṇa-samuccaya* three times with the Indian master Ācārya *Dbang phyug sde*, a specialist of Buddhist logical science. After receiving his acknowledgement and permission to compose, Dharmakīrti composed the seven treatises, which are a commentary on *Pramāṇa-samuccaya*. Among the seven treatises, his extensive “Commentary on the compendium of valid cognition” (Skt. *Pramāṇa-vārttika*, *Tshad ma rnam 'grel*) is regarded as an indispensable treatise on valid cognition.

The Tibetan Buddhist master, Sakya Pandit Kunga Gyaltsen (Sa skya paṇḍita kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 1182-1251) composed the “Treasure on the science of valid cognition” (*Tshad ma rigs gter*). During this period, there appeared many Tibetan great scholars who composed important treatises on Buddhist logic. Among the scholars, the Sakya master Jetsun Rendawa (rJe btsun red mda' ba, 1349-1412) is worthy of remark as the first Tibetan thinker who combined the philosophy of “the Middle way” (Skt. *Madhyamaka*, *Dbu ma*) with “Logical science” (Skt. *Pramāṇa*, *Tshad ma*).

His direct disciple, Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419, born in Amdo region) has been praised by Tibetan people and been given the honorific title “Je Rinpoche”. Tsongkhapa approached Rendawa and extensively studied with him for eleven months, especially on *Pramāṇa-vārttika* and its commentaries. He later established the Gelugpa (*Dge lugs pa*) school, one of the four main Buddhist schools in Tibet. Although he did not compose large scriptures

on logic, but several notes on his teachings, written by his main two disciples, are still available. One of the two disciples, Gyaltsab Darma Rinchen (rGyal tshab dar ma rin chen, 1364-1432) authored “Clarifier of the path to liberation” (*Thar lam gsal byed*), mainly based on the commentaries of *Pramāṇa-vārttika*.

The spiritual master, Jetsun Choskyi Gyaltsan (rJe btsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1469-1544) was one of the most distinguished and knowledgeable scholars in the history of Sera Jey Monastic University. He extensively wrote many volumes on philosophical studies and authored a critical commentary on the first chapter of *Pramāṇa-vārttika*.

Thus, thinkers in the three major Gelug monasteries (Sera, Drepung and Ganden), as well as thinkers in other schools, focused on the texts of Buddhist logic and deeply understood the profound and exact meaning of the philosophical theories of former Indian and Tibetan Buddhist scholars. How did they understand and explain Buddhist logic? This paper aims to introduce the theory of the epistemological object as a basis of Buddhist logic.

2. Epistemological object (Skt. prameya, Tib.gzhal bya)

The object of knowledge is cognized by valid cognition, which is divided into two, “direct perception” and “inferential cognition”.

The former, the “direct perception” has ability to cognize something without conceptual thoughts and unmistaken awareness. It is divided into four types. (1) Sense perception (*indriya-pratyakṣa*) directly cognizes sensory objects such as form through the condition of sense organ. (2) Mental perception (*mānasa-pratyakṣa*) cognizes the object of a previous moment of sense perception. (3) Self-knowing perception (*svasaṃvedanā-pratyakṣa*) is a subjective aspect which is awareness of the perceiver of its own nature, such as object grasped from merely internal perspective mind. Each perception also has a substantially identical concomitant perception that perceives it. The third direct perception is only accepted by *Sautrāntika* thinkers, Śāntarakṣita, who was proponent of *Yogācāra mādhyamika* tenet system, and Kamalaśīla, both of whom had identical view of self-knower consciousness accepted by *Cittamātra* (mind only) school. (4) Yogic direct perception (*yogi-pratyakṣa*) directly realizes the four noble truths, e.g. selflessness, and is brought into being by the meditative concentration which is a union of 'calmness' (*śamathā*) and 'insight' (*vipaśyanā*).

Second, the natural state of “inferential cognition” is a mistaken concept of

mind and is not clearly discernible like a water and milk which are inseparable when mixed together. Therefore, it should be established by correct logical proof and reason. According to Buddhist logicians, there are three types of “reasoning” (*hetu, rtags*) as follows:

(i) “Correct reason of result” (*kārya-hetu, 'bras bu'i rtags yang dag*). Something must be established by its relationship to the resultant reasons. Wherever there is an effect, there must be a cause. For example, relationships of causality between seed and sprout, fire and smoke, and so on.

(ii) “Correct reason of the same nature” (*svabhāva-hetu, rang bzhin gyi rtags yang dag*). Something must be established depending on the same relationship of its own nature. For example, impermanence of sound. Dharmakīrti asserts that the relation of causality and that of essential identity are the only two necessary relations.

(iii) “Correct reason of non-observation” (*anupalabdhi-hetu, ma dmigs pa'i rtags yang dag*) is a correct negative reason which is established by non-observation.

Obscure objects are realized only by any of the above-mentioned three reasonings. Following is the four-line verse of Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇa-vārttika*:

*mngon sum lkog tu gyur pa las /
gzhäl bya gzhän ni yod ma yin /
de phyir gzhäl bya gnyis nyid kyis /
tshad ma gnyis su bzhed pa dang /¹*

Third object of valid cognition is not available. Therefore I accepted two kinds of valid cognition, because of having two objects of valid cognition.

He explains that, all phenomena are classified into two: manifest object and obscure object. The obscure object is further subdivided into two: the slightly obscure one and extremely obscure one. We can therefore say that all the objects of knowledge are classified into three in total and established through any of three types of valid cognition.

¹ *Pramāṇa-vārttika, Tshad ma rnam 'grel*: (p.121 a 1)

3. Manifest object (Skt. abhimukhi, Tib.mngon gyur)

Manifest object or phenomenon is accessible through one's own power of ordinary direct perception. Generally, those two objects are not contradicted to each other. But they become contradict depending on individual person. Manifest object is recognized for the first time by the ordinary person without depending on any logical proof or reasoning of others. For example, our five types of consciousness can cognize its objects directly without any logical reason. Visual object can be observed by our naked eyes, sound heard by ears, scent smelt by nose, taste felt by tongue, and tangible object touched by (physical) body.

In general, the five types of sensory cognition exist only at the present moment of perception because present perceivers are unable to visualize objects of past and future. What reminds of the previous objects at later times by the power of awakening the experienced mindfulness is included in the sixth mental consciousness.

Here, the material form (*rūpa*) is divided into two categories: the perceptible form (*vijñapti-rūpa*) and imperceptible form (*avijñapti-rūpa*). They are explained in the Vasubandhu's "Treasury of Knowledge" (*Abhidharma-kośa*, *Chos mngon pa'i mdzod*):

*gzugs ni dngos po lnga dang don /
lnga dang rnam rig byed min nyid /*²

Form is the five organs, five objects, and imperceptible itself.³

This verse says, form is of two types, perceptible and imperceptible, and numbers eleven, including imperceptible form accepted in the philosophical system of *Vaibhāṣika* school. "Five organs" are the five sense faculties or powers (*pañca-indriya*, *dbang po lnga*) as the reliance. "Five objects" are their five objects (*pañca-viṣaya*, *don lnga*) as the external bases of observation. The perceptible form can be perceived by the five senses' own power of personal experiences of cognition. On the other hand, imperceptible form can not be perceived by the five types of sensory cognition. The nature of all material things are atomically established as the subtlest atoms of the eight substances.

Generally, the Buddhist thought and the modern scientists have equal point of

² *Abhidharma-kośa*, *Chos mngon pa mdzod*: (p. 2 a 4)

³ *Abhidarmakośbhāṣyam*, vol. 1: (p. 63)

view on the formation of external things which are composed of subtle atoms. They both have accepted the finest subtle atoms. However, they have different ideas concerning the source of material things. Buddhist system admits the existence of the indivisible sub-atom particle. On the other hand, modern scientists have been studying for the past hundred years merely external things which manifest to five types of sense awareness.

The modern scientists recently started to focus on the existence of invisible side of the object as well as its visible side. There are various types of investigation conducted by them and they come to a conclusion after making a complete analysis. Everybody knows that the result of all established studies gives great benefit for the people's livelihood in this world. However, at the same time, we can see a lot of destruction and difficulties in this world. All of them are created directly or indirectly by human beings themselves.

The modern scientist conducts investigations mainly based on the external object which is directly visible to eye, audible to ear and touchable by the body, but not much examine the inner state of mind. Therefore, they give only external comfort, not internal. They mainly research visible objects by using different types of machinery which bring short-term pleasant feelings but not long-term inner happiness or mental peace. In any case, some objects are unable to be realized by our five types of sensory cognition. For example, very distant objects, which are easily observed by other creatures like eagle, are not to be seen by our naked eyes. Dharmakīrti says:

*gal te ring mthong tshad yin na /
tshur shog bya rgod brten par gyis /*⁴

It explains that vulture has a super-sensible visual ability which enables it to see distant objects, invisible for ordinary beings. It is due to the ability of their visual perception. For human beings, such distant objects can be grasped by depending on the other certain reason. It is explained in *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (*Sa bcu pa'i mdo*):

*du ba las ni me shes dang /
chu rkyal las ni chu shes ltar /*

⁴ *Pramāṇa-vārttika, Tshad ma rnam 'grel*: (p.108 b 6-7)

*byang chub sems dpa' blo ldan gyis /
rigs ni mshan ma dag las shes /*⁵

Just as one infers the presence of fire by seeing smoke,
and the presence of water by seeing aquatic birds,
the presence of the intelligent bodhisattva's disposition
can be understood from certain signs.

Therefore, those distant objects which are obscure phenomena cannot be established without reasons by ordinary human beings.

4. Slightly obscure object (Skt. *kiṃcid-parokṣa*, Tib. *cung zad lkog gyur*)

Here, slightly hidden object is what is established through the evidence and the logical reasoning for ordinary beings, such as liberation and omniscience, selflessness of the person, and so forth.

To understand the slightly obscure object, firstly, ordinary or common beings roughly imagine the object in their mind and thereafter it is followed by correct logical reason to clarify it. Finally, inferential valid cognition to understand those objects gradually arises in their mind. The inferential valid cognition does not remain for a long period. Therefore it changes to “subsequent cognition” (*paricchinnañāna*, *bcad shes*). One who has completed the practice on mental image of conceptual thought's continuum, the person will then realize the object directly.

There are two types of object, gross and subtle. The gross can be realized by our five sense cognitions like breaking the glass and plates. The subtle has two types of instants: “smallest unit of time” (*dus mtha'i skad cig ma*) and “final moment or phase when an action is completed” (*bya rdzogs kyi skad cig ma*). The arising and cessation of all things takes place in smallest unit of time. Thus, it is the final time without separation of former times and later times. The other type of subtle means a time taken during a snap of finger of a healthy person, which is further divided into sixty five times.

We easily understand the smallest moment of ultimately subtle nature in which an action can be completed. This corresponds with the phrase below quoted from Chandrakīrti's “Commentary on Āryadeva's Four Hundred Verse Treatise on the

⁵ Not identified, but very popular phrase among Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

yogic deeds of Bodhisattvas” (Skt. *Bodhisattva-yogācārya-catuhśataka-ṭīkā*):

*gang la cha'i dbye ba brtags pa mi srid pa de ni dus kyi mthar thug pa ste
skad cig ma zhes bya'o /*⁶

We need to understand that it is not the subtle in reality. Whatever object which may look solid, stable, unchangeable and permanent like stones, rocks, mountains etc, it keeps changing momentarily all the time, because of its impermanent nature. We do not have an ability to realize it by five sense consciousnesses. Therefore a sūtra says:

*mig dang rna ba sna yang tshad ma min /*⁷
It means that the sensory organs like eye,
ear and nose are not the valid cognition.

5. Extremely obscure object (Skt. *atyanta-parokṣa*, Tib. *shin tu lkog gyur*)

Extremely obscure object is “an object of inference through belief” (*āptānumāna*). This is hidden phenomena which are accessible to inference only through belief. Ordinary beings are impossible to know them by the logical analysis. For example, the generous action produces the prosperity. Their analysis should rely on the threefold purity teachings of Buddha’s words. The method of following the Buddha’s teaching by three types of analysis should be without any harm by three valid cognitions. Thereafter, one can prove that Buddha’s words are not deceitful. Therefore, Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇa-vārttika* explains:

*mthong dang ma mthong dngos po yi /
don de dag la mngon sum dang /
rjes su dpag rnam gnyis kyis kyang /
gnod med 'di ni mi bslu ba'o /*⁸

This four-line verse clearly shows the proof of the correct reason for the believable extremely obscure object. Furthermore, if the scriptures are studied

⁶ *Bodhisattva-yogācārya-catuhśataka-ṭīkā*: in *Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad dgongs pa rab gsal gyi dka' gnad gsal bar byed pa skal bzang mgul rgyan* (p.107) by Jetsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan

⁷ Not identified, but very popular phrase among Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

through three types of analyses, it clearly shows that their expressions are without deceit. When there is no contextual contradiction between the expressions of Buddha, then all of his scriptures can be established as consistent. The following verse is quoted from Śāntideva's *Bodhisattva-caryāvatāra* (*Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa*):

*las tshul bsam gyis mi khyab ste /
thams cad mkhyen pa kho nas mkhyen /*⁹

Only the omniscient One knows the inconceivable course of action.

The most subtle connection of karma, action and its effect, is extremely obscure phenomena, in other words, the subtle way of positive and negative actions leads to achievement of the higher and lower realms in a future life. Therefore, ordinary beings cannot be established by individual power and any other reasonings. On the other hand, we can recognize the karmic connection through power of correct reason based on belief in Buddha's teaching.

All these objects are beyond the method of reasoning logically. So, how do we prove that the correct reason can be believed? The response is that someone with mistaken awareness initially misunderstood and later converts the misunderstanding to suspicion after analysis of the extremely obscure objects. If it is investigated and examined properly, the facts will be realized correctly in the mind. Thereafter, it will gradually emerge from confused state of mind.

So, it is important to follow the above mentioned steps to avoid confusion while engaging in any obscure objects. Such an investigation and analysis can help us understand the obscure object clearly and correctly without any confusion. Whatever methods of investigation we follow, if it does not accord with Buddha's thought, it is impossible to engage properly in positive action. This is explained in the Sūtra:

*dge slong dag gam mkhas rnam kyis /
bsregs bcad brdar ba'i gser bzhin du /
legs par brtags la nga yi bka' /
blang bar bya yi gus phyir min //*¹⁰

⁸ *Pramāṇa-vārttika, Tshad ma rnam 'grel*: (p.102 b 6-7)

⁹ Śāntideva's fourth chapter of *Bodhisattva-caryāvatāra*:

Monks and scholars should accept what I said,
not out of veneration for me but only after they well investigate my words,
like testing gold well by burning, cutting and rubbing.

All properties in front of us are manifestation of visible object. So, it is not necessary to analyze its existence by reasoning. But the other two types of objects, such as impermanence (*anitya*) and selflessness (*anātman*) are slightly obscure objects which have to be substantiated through the reason for others, and due to power of one's own experience. The third object, like a very subtle nature of the karmic connections, is not required to be proved by the logical reasons. It has to be accepted through the faith on Buddha's words.

How very hidden objects are understood? They must not be believed or accepted merely based on the experiment. Whatever Buddha's teachings are, we need to study, think and analyze logically to realize the truth. The reason to believe Buddha's teaching is purified by the three types of analyse: (i) Visible manifest objects are not disturbed by direct valid cognition. (ii) Slightly obscure objects is not disturbed by conceptual inferential cognition. (iii) Extremely obscure objects is not contradictory to two propositions of scripture's words. Then, how do we know the reliability and perfection of Buddha? It is explained in Tsong kha pa's *rTsa shes tik chen rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*:

*bjod bya rtogs pa'i bstan pa tshad mas grub pa'i sgo nas brjod byed lung
gi bstan pa skyon med par grub ba yin la / de skyon med par grub pa na /
de'i rtags kyis ston pa tshad ma'i skyes bur grub pa yin no //*¹¹

Teaching whose meaning is understood is established by valid cognition, and thereby teaching of scripture as expression is established as faultless. If it is established as faultless, then, Buddha is completely established as an "authoritative person" (*tshad ma'i skyes bu*).

For example, when one needs to know whether reliable or not, they must analyze carefully the inside meaning of his or her words to know whether the person is reliable or not. Thereafter, one know him or her well. "Praise of Dependent

¹⁰ This verse appears in many texts. For example, Tsongkhapa quoted this verse from the sutra in his *Drang nges legs bshad snying po*.

¹¹ Tsongkhapa's text of Ocean of reasoning a great commentary: (p.113)

Arising” (*Rten 'brel bstod pa*) says:

*bstan pa'i ngang tshul shes nas ston pa la /
yid ches rnyed pas rtag tu gang bar shog //*¹²

With faith in Buddha gained from understanding their essential nature,
may they pervade forever.

The quotation shows that the Buddha certainly understands the real meaning of dependent origination which is free from “two extremes” (externalism and nihilism). Through the understanding, whoever wishes to be liberated, must understand the above-mentioned reasons in order to visualize Lord Buddha clearly.

We should start out from investigating the expressed meaning of Buddha's scripture. After the investigation, finally we trust and rely on him. Simultaneously, we will obtain strong faith in Buddha through his teachings.

There are two types of Buddha's teachings: (1) interpretable sūtra (*neyārtha sūtra, drang don*), Buddha's teachings which are not to be agreed as they are and require interpretation, and (2) definitive sūtra (*nītartha sūtra, nges don*), Buddha's teachings which are to be accepted without any interpretation.

6. Conclusion

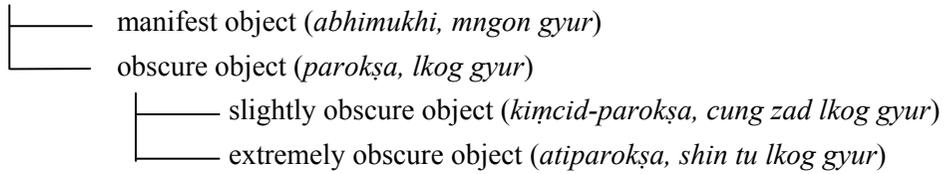
All sentient beings including the smallest insects pursue happiness and try to avoid suffering. According to Buddhist teachings, although human beings are superior to other sentient creatures in terms of intelligence, we do not know how to overcome our sufferings and fulfill our desire due to ignorance and lack of understanding. I have explained in this paper the three types of valid cognitive objects. This paper is presented to share my studies in Sera Jey Monastic University, and to interact with all people who participated in the 3rd International Seminar of Young Tibetologists in Kobe 2012.

¹² A praise of Dependent arising: (pp. 242-243)

Appendix

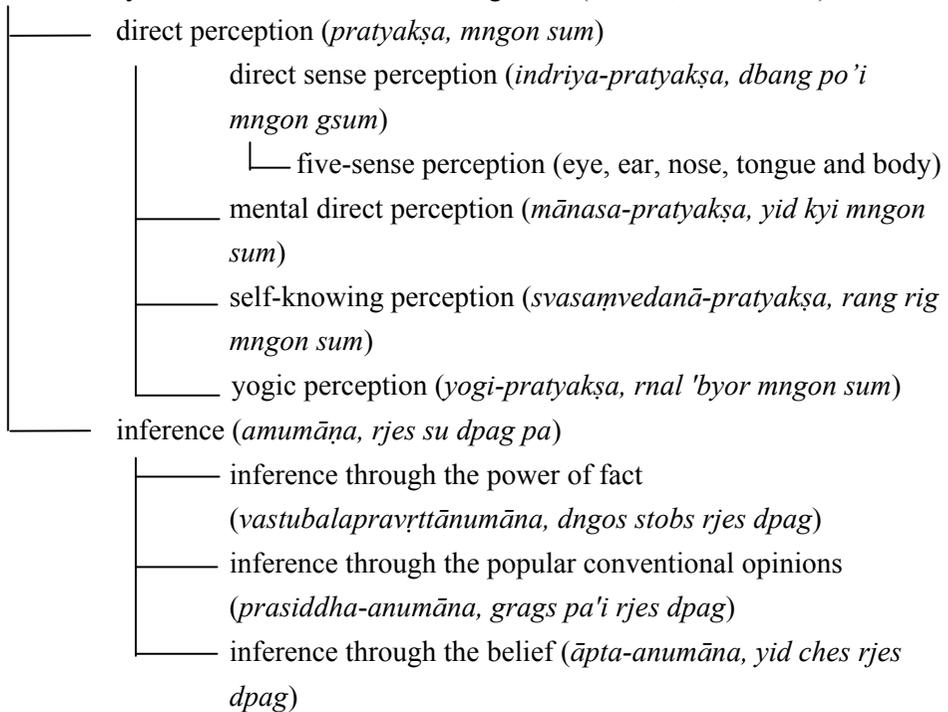
1. Classification system of the main object of comprehension

Object of comprehension (*prameya, gzhal bya*)



2. Epistemology and logical basis of the study of true

Classification system of the two main valid cognition (*Pramāṇa, tshad ma*)



Bibliography

- Chos kyi grags pa (Dharmakīrti) *Pramāṇa-vārttika (Tshad ma rnam 'grel)*
Toyo-Bunko (Toh. 4210)
- Vasubandhu (Dbyig gnyen) *Abhidharma-kośa (Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi tshig
le'ur byas pa)* Toyo-Bunko (Toh. 4089)
- Chandrakriti (Zla ba grags pa) *Budhisattva-yogācārya-catuśataka-tīkā (Dbu ma bzhi
brgya pa'i 'brel bshad)* in *Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad dgongs pa rab gsal
gyi dka' gnad gsal bar byed pa skal bzang mgul rgyan* By Jetsun chos kyi
rgyal mtshan. Mysore: Sera Je Library Computer Project, 2004.
- Śāntideva (Zhi ba lha) *Bodhisattva-caryāvatāra (Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la
'jug pa)* Peking edition, no.5272.
- Tsong-kha-pa-Lo-sang-drak-pa (Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa) “A great commentary
on Nāgārjuna's Treatise on the Middle” (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā-prajñā*): (*rtsa
tshes tik chen rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*) Sarnath, India: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings
Printing Press, n.d. P6153, vol.156.

Secondary source

Gavin Kilty

- 2001 “The Splendor of an Autumn Moon: translated the devotional verse of
Tsongkhapa”. Wisdom Publications.

Geshe Ngawang Samten and Jay L.Garfield

- 2006 “Ocean of reasoning a great commentary” (*Rtsa shes Tik chen rigs pa'i
rgya mtsho*) on Nagarjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Oxford
University Press.

Louis de La Vallee Poussin.

- English translated by Leo M. Pruden (1988-1990)
(*Abhidarmakośbhāṣyam* vol. 1). Asian Humanities Press.