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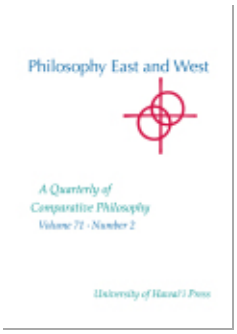

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TEN MOONS: CONSCIOUSNESS AND INTENTIONALITY IN THE *ĀLAMBANAPARĪKṢĀ* AND ITS COMMENTARIES

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In the *Ālambanaparīkṣā*, Dignāga (480–540) deploys the familiar simile of a double moon to illustrate something that appears to exist, and appears to be the cause of perception, but which is not substantially real. The example serves in the initial argument as a *dṛṣṭānta*, or example of concomitance, but, as we shall see, it also functions as a broader simile to illustrate a variety of specific positions both in Dignāga's autocommentary and in the subsequent commentarial literature, and in particular in the context of the commentary on verse 6, as opposed to verse 2 where the example is introduced:

> It does not come from that of which it has the appearance
> Because that is not substantially real, like a double moon. (2ab)[1]

In what follows, I shall explore five different uses of the two moons simile that arise in Dignāga's own text and in its Indian and Tibetan commentaries. We shall see that it is used as a vehicle not only for articulating idealism but also to explore cognitive illusion, the perceptual process, and even ethics. This exploration will give us some sense of the richness of commentarial practice as a way of using texts as sources of philosophical insight beyond what their authors may have intended, and even sometimes to make points with which the author of the root text would have disagreed. Commentary is a vehicle not only for the preservation and clarification of ideas, but also for philosophical progress.

I. Dignāga on His Own Simile

There appears to be no real mystery about what this simile is meant to illustrate. Dignāga himself explains the point pretty directly in the autocommentary:

> When a person sees a double moon because of defective sense faculties, there may be an appearance of that, but it is not the object of that cognition. In the same way, a collection is not a percept because it is not substantially real and, for that reason, is not a cause. (p. 42)

Dignāga in the first three verses of the *Ālambanaparīkṣā* considers two possible accounts of a percept (*ālambana*) proposed by those who think the

percept is external: it could be individual fundamental particles, or it could be a collection of them:

> Even if sensory cognition were caused by fundamental particles,
> It would not have fundamental particles as its object.
> Because they do not appear to cognition,
> Any more than the sense faculties do. (1)
>
> It does not come from that of which [it] has the appearance
> Because, like a double moon, collections are not substantially real.
> Thus, neither kind of external object
> Makes sense as an object of cognition. (2) (p. 151)[2]

The percept must satisfy two conditions: it must be what appears in perception and it must be the cause of perception.[3] Here he argues that a collection of fundamental particles cannot be the percept because it cannot be the cause of perception; it cannot be the cause because it is not substantially real, and the example of the double moon is brought in to make that point. When I see a double moon, because I am either drunk or cross-eyed, while a double moon appears in perception, no double moon is the cause of perception, simply because there is no real double moon.

One might think that any discussion of this example would stop here. The author himself tells us how to understand it, and does so in very clear terms. But one would be wrong. The Indian and Tibetan commentarial tradition grounded in this text comprises commentaries by Dharmapāla (sixth century), Vinītadeva (645–715), the third Gungtang Rinpoche (1762–1823), Ngawang Dendar (1759–1840), and Yeshes Thabkhas (1932–).[4] Each reads the double moon differently, particularly in the context of their respective discussions of verse 6. Their distinct readings help us to see just how much philosophy is happening in the eight verses this text comprises. In the present essay I compare these readings and reflect on what they can tell us about intentionality. This series of interpretations demonstrates the fecundity of the commentarial genre and of the scholastic approach to philosophy. In particular, I hope that this tour through the uses of this analogy, as a simile for cognition in the series of commentaries, each occurring in the context of the commentary to the sixth verse (not the second in which the figure occurs as the *dṛṣṭānta*)—

> An internal cognitive object,
> Which appears to be external, is the object
> Because it is cognition itself,
> And because it is its condition. . . .

—will show that the genre of commentary need not be understood as a recovery of the intent of the author of the original text (and then judged for its faithfulness to that intent), but rather can be understood as creative

philosophical dialogue with that text and with others in the commentarial tradition. That, after all, is how philosophical literature develops in *any* tradition, including that of contemporary Buddhist Studies. Were we to do nothing but speculate on Dignāga's intent, there would be little purpose in studying the *Ālambanaparīkṣā*, and the same is true of its Indian and Tibetan commentators.[5]

II. Vinītadeva: An Analogy for Idealism

Vinītadeva reads Dignāga's text as a direct argument for idealism. He writes:

> Therefore, because this treatise is composed in order to refute the existence of external objects and prove the existence of internal ones, by implication the purpose is precisely these refutations and proofs. (p. 79)

So, when he comes to interpret the two moons as a simile in verse 6, he reads it as an argument for idealism. While in the commentary to verse 2 Vinītadeva follows Dignāga closely,[6] he returns to this simile in the context of his commentary on verse 6,[7] a context in which subsequent commentators also discuss the simile:

> The phrase "appears to be external" means "it manifests as if it were external; that is, as if it were separate from cognition." A condition of its appearance in that way is the appearance of space. Space appears to cognition as if it were separate from cognition, and so it reveals the apprehended object. For example, when a reflection of the moon appears on the surface of a mirror, it appears as if it were separate, as though it were in a well, by virtue of a reflection of space. (p. 95)

Vinītadeva is imagining the second moon as the reflection of the moon in the mirror. That moon appears to exist in space; space itself appears to be reflected in the mirror. But of course there is no space in the mirror—only a flat, polished surface. The moon's spatiality is illusory. The reflected moon here is the simile for the percept. What we perceive appears to be in space, just as the mirrored moon does. But just as in that case something can appear to be spatially located, behind the mirror, or at the bottom of a well, when it is not, our own percepts can appear to be in space, even when they are not.

While we might have thought that the simile merely indicates that the causes of perception and the appearances in perception can come apart, Vinītadeva shows that it can also be recruited to show that the appearance of externality is no guarantee of externality, and indeed that nothing that appears to us can by itself give us any reason to believe that it is external.

III. Gungtang: Cognitive Illusion

The third commentator was an able Geluk exegete, and also a bit of a prodigy. He composed his *Ornament for Dignāga's Thought Regarding Investigation of the Percept* (*dMigs pa brtag pa'i 'grel pa phyogs glang dgongs rgyan*) when he was only twenty-three years old. His commentary is very brief, and he presents it just as a set of notes, but it addresses some difficult questions in Dignāga's text, including the relationship between mind and matter, the nature of consciousness, and the structure of intentionality (see Duckworth et al. 2016).

Gungtang is concerned in his commentary not only to explain Dignāga's own argument from the standpoint of the Yogācāra school into which Geluk doxography slots him, but also to show how his arguments can be useful to a Mādhyamika. He presents a charitable reading of the text, and mines it for insights, rather than taking it as a target for Madhyamaka attack. One of the points of dispute between Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, according to the Geluk reading, is whether cognition is necessarily reflexive (*rang rig*, a term that translates the Sanskrit *svasaṃvedanā*). Yogācāra philosophers, including Dignāga, argue that it is, although there is considerable disagreement among them regarding the nature of that reflexivity (as well as considerable meta-disagreement among Tibetan and Western commentators about each of the positions (Coseru 2012; Thompson 2011; Williams 1997). According to Candrakīrti as well as Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Geluk school, and all of his followers, no Mādhyamika accepts the reflexivity of awareness (Garfield 2006, 2015, 2016; Jinpa 2002).

Gungtang introduces the double moon analogy as a response to an anticipated question: how can we understand the nature of consciousness in the absence of reflexivity. This question reflects an interest in using Dignāga's text as a basis for exploring Geluk epistemology, as well as a willingness to read Dignāga against himself, using his own analogy to undermine the theory of reflexivity that Dignāga himself introduced:

> "What is the percept?" It is defined as follows: it is nothing other than a self-presenting internal apprehension—an entity that is a cognitive object.
>
> Suppose someone asks: "Because reflexive action is inconsistent, how could it appear?" The representation does not appear as it exists. For example, when an image of the moon appears in a mirror, spatiality also appears. The moon appears to be different from its [the mirror's] action of reflecting. Although it [the moon] is apprehended with an appearance of externality, the object is that which exists internally. (p. 115)

Let us examine this terse passage with care. Gungtang begins by presenting a Geluk definition of the percept (*dmigs pa*) as understood in the Yogācāra

system. The percept is a cognitive object (*shes bya'i dngos po*). That is, it is the intentional content of perception, an object of knowledge. It is also defined as a self-presenting internal apprehension (*nang gi rdzin pa'i rang mdangs*). Gungtang, following Geluk doxography, would agree that according to any Yogācāra the percept is internal—that is, that perception is mediated by representations, and that the immediate object of perception is cognitively constructed. So he would agree that the percept in this system is the immediate object of awareness, not a distal object. Moreover, on this point, Geluk epistemology is in agreement with Yogācāra as Geluk doxographers read it, inasmuch as they adopt a representational theory of perceptual awareness.[8] The problem arises with the idea that that the percept is self-presenting (*rang mdangs*).

No Geluk could accept that this is a correct analysis of the percept, for, following Tsongkhapa, Gelukpa epistemology rejects the cogency of the doctrine of reflexive awareness (Garfield 2006). Here Gungtang is interested not only in explicating Dignāga's view, but in getting an accurate account of perceptual consciousness, an account that draws on what he sees as correct about Yogācāra, but which eschews the commitment to reflexivity. So, in response to the imagined query about how one explains consciousness in the absence of reflexivity, Gungtang deploys the double moon, this time not only to *defend* Dignāga's view that representations are deceptive regarding the externality of objects, but also to *criticize* the Yogācāra position that our representations are in another sense self-revealing, that we are immediately aware of them *as the representations they are*. He first asserts that the representation does *not* appear as it exists (*ji ltar gnas pa'i rnam pa'i snang ba ma yin te*). To exist in one way and to appear in another is the very definition of a deceptive phenomenon. So, representations, Gungtang is asserting, are deceptive, not simply in the sense that they may represent objects that do not exist as they are represented (as a distortion in the case of a hallucination, or for an idealist the case of apparent externality), but in the stronger sense that the representations themselves do not exist as they appear. The mind, that is, is opaque: its own contents do not exist as they appear.

This doctrine of the opacity of mind, familiar in the West since the work of Sellars (1963) and articulated most forcefully by Churchland (1978) and Carruthers (2011) was defended by Tsongkhapa in Tibet. It is a stark rejection of the view that the mind is immediately present to itself. And this is where Gungtang uses the simile of the two moons. The central line is that "the moon appears to be different from its action of reflecting" (*shar bas byed pa las zla ba rgyang ste*).

This spells out the precise respect in which the structure of consciousness is opaque, and it is an elegant point. When we see the moon in the mirror, it appears that we see two things: the mirror and the moon reflected

in the mirror. That duality of act and object seems to be built into the very structure of intentionality, and is captured in Brentano's metaphor of intentional inexistence, with its roots in the account of mental acts common to Berkeley and Descartes (see Sellars 1977): the cognitive act is one thing, and the object of the act another. But, Gungtang claims, this gets things wrong. The reflected moon and the reflecting mirror are not two different things, despite appearing to be so. There is only the mirror and its act of reflection; there is no second moon in the mirror.

To put this point in more contemporary terms, when we say that I imagine a tree, the word "tree" appears in the *internal* accusative case. That is, the relation of intentional verbs to their objects is akin to the relation of "to dance" to its object, and not to that of "to kick" with its object. When I kick a ball, there is a difference between the act of kicking and the ball: they are two distinct things, and the word *ball* appears in the external accusative case. When I dance a jig, on the other hand, there are not two things, the dancing and the jig; rather, I dance jig-wise. The word *jig* appears in the *internal* accusative case.

Similarly, when I imagine a tree, according to this view I imagine tree-wise, and when I see the moon I see moon-wise. Intentional verbs take internal accusative objects, not external accusative. This has come to be known as the adverbial theory of mental states. Gungtang uses the mirror analogy to point out that the fact that our minds appear to us in the guise of mental acts with mental objects does not mean that they are so. Self-presentation, he suggests, is therefore an illusion. Our mental states appear to us in one way—as acts directed toward distinct objects, but exist in another, as acts with a character defined by their ostensible objects. Dignāga's own metaphor has been delightfully turned against him, and the epistemological asymmetry between the inner and the outer that grounds idealism—immediate access to a self-presenting inner, as opposed to mediated access to a distant outer—has been rejected. Paradoxically, the fact that illusion extends even to the inner is a premise in the defense of realism; Gungtang hence offers us a way to understand Geluk realism about external objects through his presentation of a theory of consciousness: not a theory that *elevates* the epistemic status of the external, but one that articulates the epistemology of the inner as less secure than it might appear to be, hence establishing a parity between the inner and outer worlds.

IV. Ngawang Dendar and the Causes of Perception

Ngawang Dendar (ngag dbang bstan dar), a distinguished Mongolian scholar and monastic administrator, writes a masterful commentary on Dignāga's text, with yet another deployment of the two moons, also at odds with Dignāga's own use, and also in the service of an analysis of the

structure of intentionality, which he analyzes in terms of causation. Here is his discussion:

> A collection of many particles does not produce a sensory cognition in this way, because it is not substantially real. For example, when a person sees a double moon because of defective sense faculties—that is, because his senses have been damaged by an eye disease—it is just a single moon appearing to be double. But even though it is a single moon appearing as double to a sensory cognition, the single moon is not the *cause* of the sensory cognition; and, for that reason, it also is not the object that is called the percept condition of that cognition. (pp. 151–152)

Dendar begins with the point that Dignāga makes: collections are not substantially real, as they merely supervene on that which is real—the fundamental particles that constitute them. They therefore have no causal powers: all of the causality occurs at the most fundamental level, and there is no extra causality at higher levels. This is a familiar reductionist account of reality and of causation, common in Sautrāntrika Buddhism as well as in some corners of contemporary metaphysics and philosophy of science (Churchland 1978; Kim 1998).[9]

This is important because, as we saw at the beginning of this discussion, one of the two necessary conditions of a percept is that it is the cause perceptual experience. But this only introduces Dendar's concern, which is the actual cause of perceptual experience. Dignāga's critique of the two initial positions regarding the cause of perception suggests that each of them fails one of the criteria: wholes appear to, but do not cause, perceptual consciousness; fundamental particles cause, but do not appear to, perceptual consciousness. Dignāga's solution is that karmic predispositions—which Dendar argues must be located in the foundation consciousness—cause perceptual experience and themselves become appearances; the percept is thus in Dignāga's view always an internal transformation of consciousness.

Dendar argues instead that *neither* the particles *nor* the collection can cause perceptual experience. Because, as we are about to see, *contra* Dignāga, the fundamental particles are not the causes of perceptual experience; fundamental particles fail *both* tests for the percept, not only one; and collections are not caused to appear even by the fundamental particles that constitute them. And he takes the analogy of the two moons to show this. He will draw the further conclusion that while Dignāga may be right that the cause of perceptual experience is internal, to say that it is the ripening of a potential may be misleading.

Dendar emphasizes in his reading of the example that the cause of the perception of the double moon is neither a double moon nor a single moon, but rather that the subjects' "senses have been damaged by eye disease." Let's see how this goes. Suppose that you develop an eye disease as a consequence of which you experience double vision, or, perhaps to take a

more common case, you have a few too many drinks after a faculty meeting. You look up at the sky and see a double moon, and wonder why you are seeing two moons. How would you explain this to yourself? You would not, Dendar suggests, say "oh, I see a double moon because there are two moons in the sky" (unless you were doing more than just drinking); nor would you say "I see two moons because there is one moon." That wouldn't explain anything. Instead, you would say "I saw two moons because I had too much to drink."

This is what Dendar has in mind. It is the condition of your sense faculties, not anything in the external world, nor anything in your foundation consciousness, that causes you to see the two moons.[10] To understand perceptual consciousness, Dendar suggests, we should look neither to the distal object nor to our past karma, but rather to the sense organs, the sense faculties, and the structure of our minds that give rise to cognition. To understand the nature of the mind, in short, we should do cognitive science.

Note that this follows quite naturally from Gungtang's reading of the analogy. Gungtang emphasizes the fact that we cannot know our own minds just by looking; our cognitive states are deceptive phenomena. Dendar doubles down, pointing out that the causes of our sensory experience are the sense faculties themselves. This naturalism about perception extends the doctrine of the opacity of the mind, and provides further grounds to reject idealism. For we cannot pretend that the operations of the sense faculties are immediately present to us, or are even cognitively transparent. But our sense faculties are physical phenomena that operate through physical contact with distal objects to produce perceptual experience. So, once again, a Geluk exegete uses Dignāga's own example to explore more deeply the structure of consciousness. But when we follow through the implications of this exploration, we see that in the end it also undermines Dignāga's own epistemology of the inner and his idealist ontology.

V. Yeshes Thabkhas on Pramāṇa and Ethics

Geshe Yeshes Thabkhas is a contemporary Tibetan scholar. His specialty is Indian Buddhist philosophy, which he has taught for decades at the Central University of Tibetan Studies in Sarnath. He recently composed a commentary on the *Alambanaparīkṣā*, reflecting on all of the previous commentaries and drawing on the oral lineage preserved at Drepung Loseling Monastic University where he studied, first in Tibet and then in India. Yeshes Thabkhas' commentary is noteworthy both because of its explicit reference to so many previous commentaries and because it, alone among all of these commentarial texts, reads this text as having explicitly ethical import.

Yeshes Thabkhas' analysis of the two moons simile is quite complex, and we will take it step by step.

> Suppose someone asks: How should we explain the epistemic framework of object, intentional object, and percept with respect to a cognition apprehending a single moon as a double moon?
>
> The percept of a cognition that apprehends a double moon is the single moon, but from the perspective of that cognition the single moon does not exist as the percept. The object and intentional object that are apprehended by that cognition refer to a double moon, not to a single moon.[11] (p. 190)

At the beginning of his commentary, Yeshes Thabkhas discusses the differences in meaning between *don* (intentional object), *yul* (object, or referent) and *dmigs pa* (percept), pointing out that the text is in part aimed at clarifying the relationship between these three terms, which in other, looser contexts, might be treated as interchangeable. The *intentional object* is the content of thought as conceived, the object under the description through which it is engaged, whether that description is accurate or not. The *object* (referent) is the thing to which the thought or perceptual state refers, regardless of whether or not that referent is engaged correctly, and regardless of the description through which it is engaged. The *dmigs pa* is whatever satisfies the two criteria: that which appears and that which causes the perceptual consciousness.[12]

These three can easily come apart, particularly in cases of illusion, but even in veridical perception. Consider an example of perception as we would ordinarily understand it. My wife and I each see a blue pot. From a Geluk perspective—even if not from Dignāga's—our respective visual experiences share a referent. But I see it as a great example for an Indian philosophical argument, and take that as my intentional object, and she sees it as a superb bit of cobalt glazing, with an intentional object that only a potter could entertain. Being a bit colorblind, the percept I experience is like what I experience when I see the sky; hers, mediated by better vision, is quite distinct from what she would have in seeing the sky. Perceptual awareness, Yeshes Thabkhas emphasizes, is complex, and can only be understood through this rich set of conceptual distinctions present in Dignāga's text (although they are not so thematized by any previous written commentary, and although Dignāga would reject important features of the example, such as the external pot as a common referent; but this is beside the present point). The distinction has epistemological as well as phenomenological import, as Yeshes Thabkhas makes clear when he turns to the double moon:

> But, someone might continue, in the Sautrāntika system, because it distinguishes between the object and the percept, it is easy to differentiate between correct and incorrect with regard to cognitions. The object of cognition comprises such things as forms, sounds, scents, and tastes; and the percept refers to the representations of the objects that appear to those same cognitions. The cognition that apprehends a double moon is a mistaken cognition because

> although the percept of that cognition does not exist in the single moon, a double moon appears as though it exists in its object.
>
> Therefore, while a cognition that apprehends a single moon is correct, because a single moon appears in its percept, the single moon is also its object. (p. 190)

We can understand the difference between perceptual error and veridical perception from the Sautrāntika pespective, Yeshes Thabkhas argues, in terms of the congruence between percept and intentional object. When the intentional object is congruent with the percept, perceptual awareness is correct; when they are discordant, it is erroneous. That is, when the description under which I cognize the intentional object of perceptual experience is consistent with the perceptual appearance and the nature of the cause of the perceptual awareness, I can be said to correctly perceive; when it is inconsisent, error intrudes. The Sautrāntika are realists, and this realism is evident in this criterion. But when we abandon realism for idealism in Yogācāra, Yeshes Thabkhas continues, the epistemology must be formulated differently:

> In Dignāga's system, however, percept and intentional object do not refer to two different things. Because both are posited as stable predispositions internal to cognition, it would seem to be difficult to distinguish which might be erroneous with regard to cognition.
>
> So, in this system, how should we posit the difference between an erroneous cognition that apprehends a double moon and a correct cognition that apprehends a single moon?
>
> Irrespective of whether or not external objects exist, a single moon performs its function just as it is seen, whereas a double does not perform its function in terms of how it appears. We can therefore understand from this that the cognition apprehending a single moon is correct and the cognition apprehending a double moon is erroneous. (pp. 190–191)

> [I]n Dignāga's system, because percept and object are a single entity, from the perspective of a cognition that apprehends a double moon both the object and the percept condition are just that double moon. So the double moon is the cause that produces that cognition, and that cognition is also the cause that produces the representation of the double moon. Therefore, in this system a nonexistent phenomenon, a double moon, appears to be able to perform a function. So in what way is a cognition that apprehends a double moon deceptive? Why isn't it a veridical cognition? In this system, with regard to cognition, it is not possible to present a distinction between what is able or unable to perform a function in terms of whether the percept of a cognition and its object are similar or dissimilar. One might say: "Because there is no way to do this, it does not seem to be clear how one might posit a criterion for error with regard to cognition." (p. 192)

On Yeshes Thabkhas' reading, the consequence of Dignāga's denial that the percept is external is that the distinction between object, intentional object, and percept collapses. There is only one aspect to perceptual experience in

Dignāga's view, and that is the maturation of a potential for experience in the foundation consciousness. Nonethless, he points out, the Yogācāra must be able to distinguish between correct and incorrect perception. After all, Dignāga is the person who brings *pramāṇavāda* into Buddhist philosophy. And so, returning to the double moon, Yeshes Thabkhas argues that only a pragmatic criterion is available for distinguishing error from correctness. Acting on the basis of the perception of a single moon will be effective; acting on the basis of a double moon will not be. This pragmatism is forced, he argues, by the idealism. And once again, like Gungtang and Dendar, Yeshes Thabkhas will endorse the ensuing pragmatism, while he himself rejects the idealism to which he acknowledges Dignāga is committed, treating Dignāga's text as a source of insights into perceptual experience that are independent of the broader doctrinal position from which it emerges.

A bit later in his commentary on this passage, Yeshes Thabkhas, like his Geluk predecessors, asks what even a Mādhyamika can learn from this analysis. He points out that this pragamatism allows us to understand both the plurality of reasonable perspectives on a single object and the way that epistemology grounds ethical response:

> The single moon is able to perform a function just in the way one experiences a single moon. The experience of the single moon as a double moon, a hundred moons, and so forth cannot perform its function. This fact can be understood clearly from the way in which the six kinds of beings each see and experience things differently. In general, things such as forms and sounds are sentient beings' means of livelihood or resources. Depending on these resources, they encounter various sensations, either pleasant or unpleasant. From these pleasant and unpleasant sensations, various cognitions, such as desire and aversion, arise. (p. 192)

Shifting back to a Geluk Madhyamaka realist perspective, Yeshes Thabkhas retains the pragmatist epistemology demanded by Dignāga. For the realism that emerges at this level is a different kind of realism from that of Sautrāntika. The external world is taken for granted, but it is an external world the ontology of which depends upon conceptual imputation, and hence on the cognitive stuctures, purposes, and interests of the beings who inhabit it. According to this view, not only is truth determined pragmatically, but so is ontology. We can recover the analytical distinction between object, intentional object, and percept, but that distinction is to be used for the analysis of experience, not for epistemology; it is a descriptive, not a normative distinction. Epistemological assessment must remain pragmatic.

This is because different kinds of beings perceive the world very differently. My dog, whose consciousness and ontology is determined by the dominance of his brain by his olfactory bulb, inhabits a world I can barely imagine, and he has the same difficulty imagining my world, try as he might to do so.[13] The bee outside my window lives in a different world yet. We

may share some, but not all (referent) objects, but probably no intentional objects, and our percepts may vary widely. To make sense of these profound differences, these categories are necessary, but they tell us nothing about veridicality or deceptiveness. There is no Archimedean epistemic fulcrum that would allow any of us to say that our world is the real world, and that the others are deluded. Rather, correctness and error emerge for each of us—human being, dog, and bee—within the respective world of each, and can only be measured by the effectiveness of cognitive and perceptual states in guiding action.

But even within a single human world, there are ethical implications of this perceptual variation. Ethical cultivation, as both Candrakīrti and Śāntideva emphasize, is a matter of cultivating perceptual skills (Garfield 2010/2011, 2012, 2015). Later in his commentary, Yeshes Thabkhas points out that the same person may be seen by different subjects as a friend or as an enemy, that a situation may be seen as pleasant or as unpleasant, depending on one's state of mind, just as Dendar points out that it is the state of our perceptual systems that determines whether there are two moons or only one. So, he argues, if we ask, in these situations, what the correct perception is, we can't be asking for an independent standpoint from which to assess the qualities of the *object*. Instead, we have to ask a pragmatic question: in each case, we can ask what attitudes, what behaviors, are most adaptive and advance our ends. The criterion of truth is always pragmatic, and normativity enters the picture through pragmatic considerations as well. The suggestion, of course, is that there are ways of seeing and acting that are dysfunctional (*akuśala*) and ways of seeing and acting that are facilitative of benefit (*kuśala*). And only this pragmatic criterion makes any sense in ethics as well as in epistemology.

This recent commentary hence builds on its predecessors in using the double moon simile both phenomenolgically and epistemologically. But Yeshes Thabkhas takes the two moons in a very different direction than his predecessors, and so interprets the *Ālambanapariīkṣā* as an *ethical*, and not simply an epistemological text. That single object becomes very different intentional objects in the minds of its successive commentators.

VI. What Do We Learn from These Ten Moons?

Exploration of this commentarial history, a history of interpretation of a single simile deployed in a text comprising only eight verses, reveals just how rich such a simile can be when deployed in a scholastic tradition. One issue raised by the doxographic hierarchy constructed in the Tibetan tradition is how we should understand philosophical systems lower in the hierarchy than the Madhyamaka, often represented as the only correct view. The three Tibetan commentaries on the *Ālambanaparīkṣā* provide an answer

to this. They all agree with Vinītadeva that this is an idealist text, and so none of them would endorse its ontology. But, perhaps taking a hint from Śāntarakṣita, they each suggest that while the ontology of Yogācāra is to be rejected, the phenomenology and epistemology it deploys are to be taken very seriously.[14] Among the intriguing ideas that emerge from this exploration is that of the opacity of the mind and the possibility of cognitive as well as perceptual illusion; another is the need for the distinction between referent, intentional object, and percept in making sense of perceptual experience.

We also might find here a surprising lesson. The epistemology of the *pramāṇavāda* school is known for its insistence that there are only two *pramāṇa*s, namely *pratyakṣa* (perception) and *anumāṇa* (inference), and that the others endorsed by Nyāya, namely *upamāna* (analogy) and *śabda* (knowledge through language, or testimony), can be reduced to these two. Candrakīrti famously disagrees, and in the *Prasannapadā* endorses the full Nyāya set of four *pramāṇa*s. Here we might see him vindicated, and vindicated by a *pramāṇavāda* text and its commentaries. The simile of the double moon turns out to be a remarkable source of insight, and it, of course, as it is used in the literature we have been surveying, is a paradigm of *upamāna* (analogy): it is used by each of the commentators to give us knowledge about the unknown through its similarity in an important respect to the known. And its value only becomes evident through an extended commentarial tradition, a paradigm of *śabda*, or knowledge through linguistic activity, activity that it is hard to reduce to mere inference. So, Dignāga may have unwittingly given aid and comfort to a more liberal epistemology than his own.

We also find here confirmation of the view ably defended by Cabezón (1994 and 1998) regarding scholastic traditions. They are not conservative bulwarks against departure from classical texts. Instead they are progressive sequences of texts that draw increasingly sophisticated ideas from richly suggestive texts. To read the eight verses of Dignāga's root text is to see crude ore. Only the careful mining of that vein and patient smelting of that ore by a sequence of commentators reveals the gold it contains. And we may be surprised to find that some of what is of value in a text that appears only to investigate the nature of the percept in perception is in fact ethical.

This should not be all that surprising. After all, epistemology, phenomenology, and ethics are closely intertwined in Buddhist thought. We can only understand our moral life in the context of our cognitive lives, and so the investigation into perceptual consciousness that Dignāga initiates leads inevitably to questions about moral consciousness. When Yeshes Thabkhas moves from two moons to six realms, and then to moral perception, he is following a path blazed by Śāntideva. The most important cycling between the six realms is not the cosmological, but the psychological. When in the

animal realm of reactivity in anger, those around us may appear very differently from the way they do when we are in the relaxed *devaloka* of a beach vacation or in the neurotic state of a *preta*. To ask which set of percepts is the most *accurate*, which matches reality most perfectly, may be the wrong question. If Yeshes Thabkhas is correct, the better question to ask is how, in whatever state we find ourselves, we can most effectively engage. That may bring us back to humanity, and that route to human consciousness may be the path Dignāga indicates, even if that indication requires a bit of interpretation.

Notes

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1 – Duckworth et al. 2016, p. 42. All translations are from this work.

2 – For a detailed discussion of this argument see Duckworth et al. 2016, esp. chaps. 1 and 4.

3 – It is unclear what the origin of this twofold criterion is, but it is clear that by Dignāga's time it is taken for granted in Indian epistemology. And it makes perfectly good sense. After all, if my putative perceptual experience of a person is caused by the sight of a bear in the distance, we can't say that my percept is a person, since no person is the cause of that experience; moreover, the percept is not a bear, since even though the bear causes the experience, it does not appear. But when a bear causes the experience and a bear appears to my perceptual consciousness, it makes sense to say that the bear is the percept. At least at first pass. But only at first pass, for the epistemology of perception is tricky, and that is what motivates the *Ālambanaparīkṣā*.

4 – Dharmapāla's commentary is lost in Sanskrit and was never translated into Tibetan. It does exist in two Chinese translations. Vinītadeva's commentary exists in Tibetan. All extant Tibetan commentaries and translations into English are to be found in Duckworth et al. 2016.

5 – See Cabezón 1994 and 1998 for more on the nature of Tibetan scholasticism.

6 – Via Dharmapāla, on whose own commentary Vinītadeva is composing a subcommentary.

7 – An internal cognitive object/Which appears to be external, is the object/Because it is cognition itself,/And because it is its condition.

8 – Note that this does not entail idealism; so far, it is neutral between a representational and an idealist view of perception.

9 – It is also just as controversial in the Buddhist world as it is in the contemporary world.

10 – One might object at this point that Dendar is overlooking the distinction between an illusion and a hallucination, and that in the case of the double moon we have a case of illusion, in which the real single moon plays a crucial causal role. In this case, the argument can't succeed as an argument against the reality of the external world, since the external single moon is presupposed. But this would be to miss the point of Dendar's deployment of the simile.

Dendar is *not* an idealist; he is deploying the simile not to show that there are no external conditions for perceptual consciousness, but to show instead that the casually salient conditions for understanding the nature of our experience are internal cognitive processes. If we want to understand why we are seeing double, or why things appear differently to us than they do to a dog or to a bee, we do not look to the external world, but to the inner world. That is Dendar's point. He is not recapitulating Dignāga, but is making creative use of Dignāga's simile.

11 – Yeshes Thabkhas seems to be following Ngawang Dendar's lead on this point, but his interpretation is not uncontroversial. According to Dignāga, both singularity and multiplicity with regard to a percept are conceptual constructs. According to the Abhidharma, no wholes are substantially real. A single moon is neither really one nor many: from a Sautrāntika perspective, it is merely a representation perceived as singular, double, or multiple. A single moon is neither one nor many because it is not substantially real, and so it cannot serve as a percept.

According to the external realism of Sautrāntika, as it is understood in the Gelugpa doxographical system within which Gungtang, Dendar, and Yeshes Thabkhas are all working (which may not be an accurate representation of Indian Sautrāntika), the percept is ineffable particulars, not macro-objects extended in space and time. And according to Cittamātras, the percept of a double (or single) moon is a purely mental phenomenon that arises from internal predispositions, and so in this system it is also not substantially real. Yeshes Thabkhas may be interpreting Dignāga in terms of Gelukpa-Mādhyamika semi-realism—that is, the notion that conventionally real objects are *conceptually constructed percepts* of cognition.

12 – This set of distinctions, once again, is drawn within the framework of Gelugpa epistemology and doxography, and should not be read back uncritically into Dignāga. Once again, we have a case of creative philosophical theory in response to Dignāga's text, pursued through the medium of the commentary, not simply repetition of what Dignāga himself says.

13 – See Berns 2013 for a marvelous discussion of the neurophenomenology of dogs, and see Newland 2008 for a nice discussion of the implications of differences in sensory apparatus for ontology.

14 – See Garfield and Westerhoff 2015 for exploration of the relationship between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra and in particular for essays exploring the degree to which it is possible to reconcile the two positions in this way.

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