Validity of Cognition and Authority of Scripture

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Classification of cognition  Adopting the framework of the vr̥ttikāra (Frauwallner’s ed., 26.7–21, 34.19–36.5), Kumārila presupposes the following classification of cognition. First it is classified into two groups, pramāṇa (valid cognition) and apramāṇa. The latter is further classified into three\(^1\): non-cognition (ajñāna/jñānabhāva/buddhyanuttara), doubt (saṃśaya) and error (mithyājñāna).\(^2\) The last, i.e. error, is identified as such and is negated (bādhya) when one finds faults in its cause (hetūthadoṣa/kāraṇadoṣa),\(^3\) or when one finds that its object does not exist in the manner that one has cognized it (arthānyathātvajñānabādhya).\(^4\)

1. pramāṇa/samyakpratyaya
2. apramāṇa
   a. ajñāna/jñānabhāva/buddhyanuttara
   b. saṃśaya
   c. mithyājñāna
      i. *hetūthadoṣajñānabādhya
      ii. *arthānyathātvajñānabādhya

Mechanism of cognition  Kumārila regards validity of cognition (prāmāṇya) as a kind of capacity (śakti).\(^5\) This identification implies that validity, for Kumārila, has various features attributed to capacity in general.\(^6\) Most importantly, in this context, it should innately exist in its locus. In other words, a cognition is valid from itself (svatah), not from something else (paratah) such as good qualities (guṇa). Therefore when a cognition arises, its validity, i.e. the capacity for a cognition to operate, arises simultaneously.\(^7\) Considering that a characteristic feature of a capacity (śakti) is that it is an adṛśta to be postulated by arthāpatti, one must conclude that validity

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is not grasped by its locus, i.e. cognition itself, but only postulated from the result of cognition.\(^8\) Although it exists in a cognition innately and basically (\textit{utsargāt}), it is exceptionally (*\textit{apavādena}) cancelled when invalidity (\textit{aprāmāṇya}) is brought about by a bad quality (\textit{doṣa}) of a cause of a cognition. This point, which could be one of the weakest in his \textit{prāmāṇya}-theory, is not expanded on much by Kumārila. But we can guess from the general characteristics of capacity that validity at this moment only conceals itself temporarily. A bad quality is removed by means of a good quality (\textit{guṇa}) which also belongs to the same cause of a cognition. Then invalidity disappears and innate validity is secured (v. 65). But it is not the case that a good quality directly causes validity (vv. 47ab, 64cd).

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node (a) at (0,0) {\textit{guṇa} \Rightarrow \textit{doṣa}};
\node (b) at (2,0) {\textit{aprāmāṇya/prāmāṇya}};
\node (c) at (4,0) {\textit{tathātva}};
\node (d) at (0,-0.5) {\textit{kāraṇa} \Rightarrow \textit{jñāna}};
\node (e) at (4,-0.5) {\textit{artha}};
\node (f) at (0,-1) {\textit{aprāmāṇya}};

\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Methods for negating an erroneous cognition  From the \textit{vṛttikāra} onwards, the two methods mentioned above are formulated to discover and negate an error (*\textit{mithyājñāna}). When one finds a bad quality (\textit{doṣa}) in a cause of a cognition, one can know indirectly (\textit{arthāt}) its invalidity (\textit{aprāmāṇya}) and negate a preceding wrong cognition (v. 58). Or when one discovers that an object is otherwise than he has cognized, he directly knows the invalidity of a preceding cognition and negates it (v. 57ab). These two kinds of cognitions are called “negating cognition” (\textit{bādhakapratyaya/bādhakajñāna}). But following the \textit{vṛttikāra}, it is common to use the term “negation” (\textit{bādha}) to refer specifically to the latter process.\(^9\)

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node (a) at (0,0) {\textit{jñāna} \Rightarrow \textit{mithyājñāna}};
\node (b) at (4,0) {\textit{artha}};
\node (c) at (0,-0.5) {\textit{kāraṇa} \Rightarrow \textit{mithyājñāna}};
\node (d) at (4,-0.5) {\textit{bādhakajñāna}};
\node (e) at (0,-1) {\textit{doṣa}};
\node (f) at (4,-1) {\textit{atathābhava}};

\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}
Mechanism of validity and invalidity in verbal cognition  In the context of verbal cognition, a good quality (guṇa) or a bad quality (doṣa) of a speaker (vaktr) determines a good or a bad quality of speech (śabda), which is in turn the direct cause of a hearer’s cognition (v. 62). To explain, speech ceases to be a means of valid cognition (pramāṇa) when a bad quality of a speaker is transferred into it (saṁkrānti). Conversely, speech keeps its status as a means of valid cognition when a good quality removes a bad quality and wards off its undesirable transference (v. 63ab).

The remaining mechanisms are the same as those of cognition in general. A good quality of a speaker removes a bad quality. Then speech is no longer regarded as an invalid means of knowledge (apramāṇa) and stands as a means of valid cognition (pramāṇa). Then invalidity of a verbal cognition is removed and innate validity stands (v. 65).

| guṇa ⇒ doṣa | apramāṇata/pramāṇata | apramāṇya/pramāṇya |
| vāktr | śabda | jñāna |

As we may suppose from Kumārila’s work (vv. 22ab, 23, 102cd–110ab), good qualities of speech, derived from good qualities of the speaker, are of two kinds: the fact that it deals with an object that is known through another means of valid cognition (*pramāṇāntaradṛṣṭārthavisayatva), and the fact that it has been uttered by an honest man (*āptoktavā). The former condition guarantees the correspondence between an object and a preceding means of valid cognition, while the latter guarantees that between an acquired information and speech.10)

Securing validity in the case of a Vedic injunction  The Vedas, being authorless, lack the only possible source of a bad quality, and therefore never themselves have a bad quality, though they do not have a good quality either.11) But, because there is no possible source of a bad quality, they do not require a good quality from the beginning, which in the case of worldly statements (laukikam. vācaṃ) is required in order to guarantee the validity of verbal cognition. In consequence, the condition of not being a means
of valid cognition (*apramāṇatva*) never accrues to the Vedas, because they do not have the undesirable transference (*saṁkrānti*) of a bad quality (v. 68). Thus they keep their innate characteristic, i.e. being a means of valid cognition (*pramāṇata*). Therefore a cognition from a Vedic injunction never touches invalidity (*aprāmaṇa*) derived from a bad quality. Thus the innate characteristic of validity (*pramaṇya*) remains in the cognition, without being cancelled.

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gun. a——– ⇒ 
dos.a——– 
apramāṇata/pramāṇata ————/pramāṇa
|| |
vaktv.——– ⇒ veda —⇒ jñāna
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**Impossibility of negating a cognition from a Vedic injunction** It has become clear why a cognition from a Vedic injunction is ontologically faultless. A Vedic injunction is always a means of valid cognition (*codanā pramāṇam eva*). This is why eternality (*nityatā*), or not being made by sentient beings (*apaurusēyatā*), is required for protecting the authority of the Vedas (vv. 100cd–101a). However, as I mentioned above, one can deny an erroneous cognition by means of a later negating cognition (*bādha ṇa pratyaya*), even though one could not point out a fault in its cause. For that one would need to show that a dharma, more concretely the relationship between cause and effect, e.g., *yāga* and *svarga*, is otherwise (*atathābhava*) than a Vedic injunction teaches. But the domain of dharma is specifically allowed only to the Vedas, never to be approached by human perception. For perception and Vedic injunction, the two independent, primary and direct means of valid cognition, keep separate functional divisions. With regard to a dharma only a Vedic injunction is a means of valid cognition (*codanaiva pramāṇam*) (v. 4ab). This is why Kumārila (vv. 110cd–155) is so eager to deny an omniscient being, who could even grasp a dharma. We human beings, according to the Mīmāṁsā system, can never obtain knowledge of a dharma without the teaching of the Vedas, just as a person blind from birth can never obtain knowledge of a particular color without the teaching of a non-blind person.
Therefore it is impossible to deny a Vedic teaching by means of perception. As for the dependent, secondary and indirect means of valid cognition such as inference, because these are dependent on perception (Frauwallner’s ed., 24.21: tanmālatvāt; 22.19: pratyakṣapūrvakatvāt), they cannot overcome the limitations of perception.

1) Ślokavārttika codanā (=ŚVc), v. 54ab.
2) As D’Sa (Francis X. D’Sa, 1980. Śabdaprāmāṇya in Sabara and Kumārila. Vienna, 181) correctly points out, each word of the pramāṇa-definition in verse 80 excludes a corresponding apramāṇa. But the text he gives (n. 1) of v. 80b nāpi saṃvādam rcchati, most probably there following Dvārikadāsa Śāstri’s edition, should be corrected to na visaṃvādam rcchati, as he correctly translates on p. 180, probably there following the Madras edition (tasmād drīḍhaṃ yad utpannaṃ na visaṃvādam rcchati/ jñānāntareṇa vijñānaṃ tat pramāṇaṃ pratiyatatam/). Sucarita Miśra (Kaśikā 74.3–4) also enumerates two other kinds of invalid cognition, smarana (recollection) and saṃvāda (later cognition which agrees with and therefore validates the preceding cognition). Kumārila, too, in the pramāṇa-definition in the Br.ḥat.ṭīkā (see below, note 9), in particular by the phrase apūrvārthavijñānam, seems to exclude these two from being kinds of pramāṇa. But as far as the Ślokavārttika is concerned, as we may see from the pramāṇa-definition in verse 80 in particular, Kumārila does not presuppose these two as kinds of apramāṇa.

3) In Ratnakūrti’s text hetūktadosa (Thakur’s first edition, 105.10, 106.1; Katsumi Mimaki, 1976. La réfutation bouddhique de la permanence des choses (Sthirasiddhiśaṇḍha) et la preuve de la momentanéité des choses (Kaṣaṇabhauigaśidhi). Paris, 84.8, 86.14) should be emended to hetūthadoṣa. And Mimaki’s note (n. 295) thereon, which associates hetūktadoṣa with the five conditions (pañcarūpa) of a proper reason, is irrelevant.

4) ŚVc v. 53: tasmād bodhātmakatvena prāptā buddheḥ pramaṇatā/ arthānyathātva-hetūthadoṣajñānād apodyate/ D’Sa (op. cit. 182) is wrong in interpreting arthānyathātva as a synonym of mithyātva.

5) ŚVc v. 47cd.


8) Kumārila accepts that a valid cognition (pramāṇa) itself is apprehended only by another cognition (v. 83), namely, arthāpatti (ŚV śāṇya, v. 182).

9) The following example of bādha in the Br.ḥat.ṭīkā clearly refers only to the latter process of negation. Ratnakūrtinibandhāvalī 113.10–12: tathā bhṛṭṭikāpi — tatrāpūrvārtha-
vijñānāṁ niścitāṁ bādhavarjitaṁ/ adusṭakāraṇāraabhdhaṁ pramāṇāṁ lokasammatam//


12) ŚVc v. 4ab.

13) Śābarabhāṣya ad 1.1.2: naivamjātīyakeṣv artheṣu puruṣavacanaṁ prāmāṇyaṁ upaiti, jātyandhānāṁ iva vacanaṁ rūpaśeṣeṣu. Frauwallner’s ed., 18.7–8.