

Prapanca in the Prajnapradipa/-tika : Examples from the Commentary on Chapter 22, Verse 11

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Prapañca in the *Prajñāpradīpa/-ṭīkā*:

Examples from the Commentary on Chapter 22, Verse 11

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1. Introduction

Prapañca (戲論) is one of the most difficult concepts in Madhyamaka philosophy. One of the most well-known passages concerning this concept is found in the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* (MMK), chapter 18, verse 5 as follows:

Through the elimination of action (*karman*) and defilements (*kleśa*) there is *nirvāṇa*. Action and defilements arise from discrimination (*vikalpa*). Those arise from prolific conceptualization (*prapañca*). Prolific conceptualization is extinguished in emptiness (*śūnyatā*).¹⁾

As quoted above, Nāgārjuna explains that discrimination (*vikalpa*) gives rise to action (*karman*) and defilements (*kleśa*), and *prapañca* gives rise to discrimination. Furthermore, by examining the other examples of *prapañca* in the MMK and its commentaries, we may encounter examples where *prapañca* is to be ceased or to be tranquilized, so there is a tendency in scholarship *prapañca* with a primarily negative meaning.

Although *prapañca* in MMK 18.5 and its commentaries have been discussed by many scholars, there are not so many studies about the meaning of *prapañca* in the rest of the MMK. In this paper, I would like to show some examples of *prapañca* in the *Prajñāpradīpa* (PP), one of the best known commentaries on the MMK, by referring to the *Prajñāpradīpaṭīkā* (PPT), a commentary on the PP. In the context of PP/PPT, chapter 22, verse 11, we can find that the term *prapañca* is used not only with negative meanings but also with a positive connotation as well.

2. *Prapañca* in PP/PPT 22.11

Discussion 1 (**bold** = PP)

[The opponent] objects: “You (Mādhyamikas) admit that all *dharmas* are beyond *prapañca* or ‘concepts’; however, you conceive (**prapañcayasi*) that *dharmas* are empty. Therefore, you

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invalidate what you have admitted.”²⁾ . . .

As an answer to this, [Bhāviveka said as follows]: (a) **“That is true, however”** shows that all *dharma*s are beyond *prapañca*. [That means], it is true that there is no *prapañca* in “the supreme reality” (a tentative translation of *paramārtha*, for which see below); however, unless [the Buddha] teaches with *prapañca* that [all *dharma*s] are empty in verbal convention (*saṃvṛti*), [his] followers (**sādhaka*) do not realize the [emptiness of all *dharma*s]. Therefore, as a means to make realize the supreme reality, it is taught with *prapañca* in verbal activity (*vyavahāra*).³⁾ . . .

(b) . . . therefore, [in the preceding quotation from PP, Bhāviveka] means as follows: In order to make [the Buddha’s followers] accomplish both stock of merit (**puṇyasambhāra*) and that of knowledge (**jñānasambhāra*) and to wash off the pollution of bad views, there is no fault in conceiving and teaching in verbal convention (*saṃvṛti*) that [all *dharma*s] are (1) empty, (2) non-empty, (3) both empty and non-empty or (4) neither empty nor non-empty with the words of “emptiness,” etc.

Now, in order to explain the necessity of teaching emptiness, etc., in verbal convention, [Bhāviveka] says as follows: **“First, in order to remove a cataract (**paṭala*) of views, it should be taught that the object of cognition is empty. In order to remove the view of non-existence, it should also be taught that it is not empty of its illusory or mirage-like nature. Because it does not arise from itself in the supreme reality and is produced from its nature like those of illusion, etc., both [‘it is empty’ and ‘it is non-empty’] should also be taught. In order to make avoid falling into an extreme whatsoever, to remove the poison of fallacious view of both [emptiness and non-emptiness] in terms of the two truths, and to make realize the supreme reality, neither [‘it is empty’ nor ‘it is non-empty’] should also be taught.”**⁴⁾

Discussion 2 (bold = PP)

[The objection]: (i) **“If you say that because we (Mādhyamikas) conceive that it is neither [empty nor non-empty], we have not removed *prapañca* or ‘conceptualization’”** corresponds to the opponents’ words meaning that because (4) “it is neither [empty nor non-empty]” is also a concept, there is a fault that we invalidate what we have admitted.⁵⁾

As an answer to this, [Bhāviveka] said: (ii) **“Though you object as above, there is no fault [of *prapañca* or ‘conceptualization’] because we (Mādhyamikas) admit removing the other *prapañcas*.”** This is because we (Mādhyamikas) admit removing the other [*prapañcas*] than neither [“it is empty” nor “it is non-empty”], i.e., “it is empty” and “it is non-empty.”⁶⁾

From discussion 1, we find that *prapañca* is explained as a means to make realize the supreme reality (*paramārtha*) (a). The *prapañca*, i.e., it is (1) empty, (2) non-empty, (3) both empty and non-empty or (4) neither empty nor non-empty, is necessary to be taught in verbal convention, and *prapañca* (4) neither empty nor non-empty should be expressed to make realize supreme reality (b). From discussion 2, we also find that Mādhyamikas do not commit a fault of *prapañca* or “conceptualization” when they say “it is neither empty

nor non-empty,” because, in the supreme reality, they admit removing the other basic *prapañca* or “conceptualization,” i.e., “it is empty” and “it is non-empty” (ii).

As shown above, PP as well as PPT ad MMK 22.11 explains that some *prapañcas* are used with positive meanings since they are necessary in verbal convention in order to make realize the supreme reality. In this regard, let me examine how the means to realize the supreme reality is explained in PP. The clue is the interpretation of *paramārtha*.

3. *Paramārtha* and *Prapañca*

In accordance with some previous papers⁷⁾ which dealt with *paramārtha* in PP, chapter 24, verse 8, we confirm their outline here. The interpretation of *paramārtha* in PP has close relationship with the interpretation of the compound *paramārtha*. In PP, the interpretation of *paramārtha* is divided into three portions⁸⁾: (I) [*Karmadhāraya*] the supreme object/aim, (II) [*Tatpuruṣa*] the object of supreme [non-discriminative wisdom], (III-1) [*Bahuvrīhi*] non-discriminative wisdom (*nirvikalpajñāna*), (III-2) the teaching of “non-arising,” etc., and (III-3) the wisdom made from hearing, thinking and cultivation. And PPT explains the former two (I) (II) are supremely supreme truth (**pāramāṛthika-paramārthasatya*), and the other three (III-1, 2, 3) are conventionally supreme truth (**sāṃketika-paramārthasatya*). Moreover, according to PP, the last two (III-2, 3) correspond to a means (**upāya*) to realize *paramārtha*.

On the other hand, as we examined in above discussion 1, *prapañca* such as “emptiness,” etc., was taught in verbal convention as a means to make his followers realize *paramārtha*. Therefore, *prapañca* here approximately corresponds to the teaching of non-arising, etc. which is categorized as conventionally supreme truth in PPT. And from discussion 2, we found that *prapañca* (4) “it is neither empty nor non-empty” should be taught to make realize *paramārtha* without committing a fault of *prapañca* in its negative meaning, i.e., “conceptualization.” Although the word “means (**upāya*)” is not found in the passage, the *prapañca* here appears to be used with a positive meaning like a means to make realize the supreme object or purpose, i.e., *paramārtha*. In this way, some *prapañcas* in PP 22.11 are used not only in the negative meaning as something to be conquered, but also with a positive meaning corresponding to conventionally supreme truth.

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4. Conclusion

The present paper considered several examples of *prapañca* in the PP and its commentary PPT. Although *prapañca* is explained as the root of defilements by Nāgārjuna in MMK 18.5, we found that in the above-mentioned instances, *prapañca* is explained as a means to make realize supreme reality, and *prapañcas* such as (1) empty, (2) non-empty, (3) both empty and non-empty, and (4) neither empty nor non-empty are necessary to be taught in verbal convention in PP 22.11. However, the Mādhyamikas admit removing the *prapañca* of empty or non-empty, which, according to their claim, corresponds to the fourth choice, i.e., neither empty nor non-empty.

Consequently, the *prapañca* in a positive sense is not the same as that which lies in us as the root of defilements. The latter *prapañca* is often translated as “[prolific] conceptualization,” etc.; on the other hand, the former *prapañca* seems to have the meaning of “words” or “concepts” in general. Thus, as far as the PP and PPT are concerned, *prapañca* is used not only in a negative meaning but also in a positive sense. However, even if it carries such a positive meaning, *prapañca* must ultimately be overcome in the supreme reality (*paramārtha*) from the standpoint of Madhyamaka philosophy.

1) MMK 24.19–20.

2) PP (D) Tsha 216b1–2, PP (P) Tsha 271a8–271b1; PPT (D) Za 207a3, PPT (P) Za 248b4.

3) PP (D) Tsha 216b2, PP (P) Tsha 271b1; PPT (D) Za 207a4–5, PPT (P) Za 248b5–7.

4) PP (D) Tsha 216b4–6, PP (P) Tsha 271b4–7; PPT (D) Za 207a7–207b4, PPT (P) Za 249a1–7.

5) PP (D) Tsha 216b7–217a1, PP (P) Tsha 272a1–2; PPT (D) Za 208b4, PPT (P) Za 250b2–3.

6) PP (D) Tsha 217a1, PP (P) Tsha 272a2; PPT (D) Za 208b4–5, PPT (P) Za 250b3–4.

7) Saitō Akira 斎藤明, “Bāvivēka no shōgi kaishaku to sono shisōteki haikai” バーヴェーカの勝義解釈とその思想的背景 [Bhāviveka’s interpretation of *paramārtha* and its ideological background]. *Ronshū* 論集 (Mie University) 9 (1999), pp.66–81; Hayashima Satoshi 早島慧, “*Prajñāpradīpa* to *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya* ni okeru shōgi kaishaku” *Prajñāpradīpa* と *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya* における勝義解釈 [The interpretation of the absolute truth in the *Prajñāpradīpa* and the *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya*], *Ryūkoku Daigaku Daigakuin Bungaku Kenkyūka kiyō* 33 (2011), pp.1–16, etc.

8) There some discussions exist about whether to divide compound *paramārtha* into three or four portions in PP 24.8. Here, I do not afford to consider about this discussion in detail, I follow the standpoint of three. About this discussion, see Hayashima [2011], pp.3–4.

Texts and Abbreviations

MMK *Nāgārjuna Mūlamadhyamakakārikāḥ*. Ed. J. W. De Jong. Madras: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1977.

PP *Bhāviveka's Prajñāpradīpa*. D No.3853, P No.5253.

PPT *Avalokitavrata's Prajñāpradīpaṭīkā*. D No.3859, P No.5259.

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⟨Key words⟩ *prapañca, Prajñāpradīpa, Prajñāpradīpaṭīkā*

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