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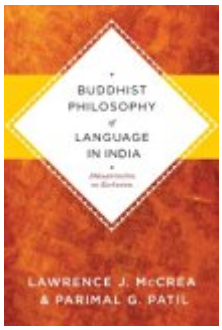

Lawrence J. McCrea, and Parimal G. Patil. *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India: Jnanasrimitra on Exclusion.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. 216 pp. $82.50, cloth, ISBN 978-0-231-15094-1.

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The theory of *apoha* ("exclusion") represents one of the Buddhist epistemologists' most significant contributions to Indian and, indeed, world philosophy. Introduced by Dignāga (fifth-sixth century CE?), the doctrine was originally meant to solve difficulties in the theory of inference; in the hands of Dignāga's successor Dharmakīrti (sixth century?), it became the heart of Buddhist philosophy. Answering Uddyotakara and Kumārila's objections to Dignāga's formulation, Dharmakīrti turned the theory into a system of human knowledge, language, and practice (anchoring all of them in an ontology), providing the Buddhist "two truths" with a sound philosophical foundation. Since Erich Frauwallner's unsurpassed work of the 1930s on Dharmakīrti and Dharmottara's versions of *apoha*, little has been done toward understanding this complex doctrine *from within*--a task necessarily advanced by editing, translating, and studying notoriously difficult texts in their entirety. Things are, however, rapidly changing for the better, and Lawrence J. McCrea and Parimal G. Patil's *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India* is a masterly contribution to recently renewed textually based interest in the *apoha* theory. Their study of the influential *Apohaprakaraṇa* ("Monograph on Exclusion") of Jñānaśrīmitra (*floruit* 975-1025) is a milestone in every respect: of a very difficult Sanskrit text, it provides a careful and reliable translation meant to set new standards of readability and accessibility; it locates Jñānaśrīmitra's version of *apoha* in the history of Buddhist linguistic and epistemological ideas (with special emphasis on his creative indebtedness to Dharmottara); and it constitutes a lucid and accessible introduction to Buddhist epistemology as a whole. Moreover, the book abounds in felicitous English renderings of Sanskrit technical terms and in useful conceptual distinctions.

In addition to an English translation and a partially new edition of the *Apohaprakaraṇa*, the book comprises a substantial introduction, a very useful topical outline of the text, and a bibliography and general index; there are some forty-five pages of endnotes to the introduction, translation, and edition. The authors' preface expresses a wel-

come plea for the significance of philologically based ***philosophical*** studies in the American academic environment, "despite the very strong institutional pressures against philological (and collaborative) work." The following statement is certainly worth repeating: "We have become increasingly convinced of the need to break down the divide between exegetical and analytical work in Sanskrit studies. It has become clear to us that it is simply impossible to properly explain, translate, or even edit Sanskrit philosophical texts without a sustained analysis of their arguments and a broad and far-ranging exploration of their historical and intellectual contexts. By the same token, responsible historical and philosophical analysis necessitates systematic engagement with philological and textual details" (p. ix). There can be little doubt that the authors have succeeded in writing a study that elegantly combines philological acumen, historical sensitivity, and a high degree of philosophical penetration--qualities that are indeed required for understanding relatively late strata of a literature that generally lacks both indigenous commentaries and Tibetan translations, and that presuppose more than four centuries of philosophical development and controversy.

The introduction issues a strong invitation to go beyond the translation practices inspired by a too-rigidly interpreted philological model. Together with "the linguistic and conceptual complexity of the works in question and ... the widespread resistance among those educated in the Euro-American philosophical tradition to acknowledge works from outside this tradition as being properly philosophical," these practices have, in the authors' opinion, "contributed to the neglect of the [Buddhist epistemological] tradition in broader Euro-American intellectual culture" (p. 34). If this rich literature is to be made more broadly accessible, McCrea and Patil urge, "we must produce translations and studies of Sanskrit philosophical texts that can be read and understood by those with no knowledge of Sanskrit and with little or no previous exposure to the philosophical traditions to which they belong." Their strategies for producing "accurate yet readable translations" involve such things as avoidance of brackets "to supply material that is taken to be implied by the context"; explicit mention of the antecedents of pronouns and substantivized adjectives, of the unstated agents of actions, and of the names of authors or texts quoted; segmentation of long Sanskrit sentences into several shorter English sentences; and refusal of any rigid commitment to lexical regularity (p. 35). In this reviewer's opinion, the authors have through such strategies succeeded in producing a highly readable, stylistically fluent, and terminologically consistent translation of the ***Apohaprakaraṇa***. (However, the question whether this laudable effort will ever make such works accessible to a broader educated audience remains open--after all, if it is true that certain translation practices will hamper the readability of Aristotle's ***Metaphysics***, one can reasonably doubt whether any amount of translational transparency will succeed in making it an accessible work.)

Before turning to a systematic presentation of Jñānaśrīmitra's version of ***apoha*** and its indebtedness to Dharmottara, the authors' introduction offers a short but often illuminating depiction of the history, nature, methods, and topics of Buddhist epistemology, and also of Jñānaśrīmitra's institutional and doctrinal environment. A few points in this excellent introduction are debatable. The authors are certainly right in describing the "intellectual and textual practices of Sanskrit philosophers" as a form of scholasticism; the "discursive practice of Sanskrit philosophy" does indeed involve a strong "commentarial orientation" that enables the scholiasts to "elaborate, extend, and revise," and at times even "radically transform" the texts' positions and arguments (pp. 6-7). But the authors' concept of "scholasticism" is too narrowly restricted to textual practices, and would gain from an extension so as to include the properly religio-philosophical meaning (***fides quaerens intellectum***) and institutional aspects of scholasti-

cism; most if not all classical and early medieval "Sanskrit philosophers" are monastics or Brahmins who elaborated on and defended, mostly by means of highly innovative methodologies, truth-claims in canonical or paracanonical text corpuses that predated them. Also debatable is the conclusion that the Buddhist epistemologists' work is "directed as much toward criticizing rival Buddhist philosophers working within the Dharmakīrtian text tradition as it is toward non-Buddhists" (p. 4). While it is true that this text tradition is replete with intramural polemics, this dimension does not exceed, say, 10 to 15 percent of the polemical endeavors as they appear in our sources. From Dignāga onward, the Buddhist epistemologists' main opponents are the orthodox Brahmanical schools of Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā--this is certainly true of the *Apohaprakaraṇa* itself, with Jñānaśrīmitra polemicizing against Naiyāyikas (Trilocana, Vācaspatimiśra, Bhāsarvajña) and "Kaumārilas" (i.e., Mīmāṃsaka followers of Kumārila) much more frequently than against fellow Buddhists.

Regarding the substance of the *Apohaprakaraṇa* itself, we see that the principal aim of the text is to elaborate an unambiguously negative answer to the question: Did the Buddhist epistemologists *really* claim, as their Brahmanical opponents insisted, that the content of verbal, conceptual, and inferential awareness is purely negative, consisting only of "exclusion of what is other" (*anyāpoha*)? Arguing his point, Jñānaśrīmitra devises "a new and powerful tool for satisfying ... the need to be both philosophically correct and exegetically faithful to the tradition's foundational texts": the exegetic-philosophical device of the "conditionally adopted position" (*vyavasthā*), which represents (according to McCrea and Patil) "a kind of 'white lie,' a statement that is not, strictly speaking, true but contains at least an element of truth and whose use is indexed to an appropriate purpose" (pp. 34, 29-30). Consider the statement "*A person will experience the karmic results of actions that he now performs*"; although it relies on just "a little bit of the truth" (as a Buddhist, Jñānaśrīmitra of course holds that there is no really existent "person"), this statement can be justified by its purpose (that of correcting or dismissing annihilationism). Similarly, the fact that "exclusion" is what is revealed by words and conceptual/inferential constructs is really a conditionally adopted position based on the "partial truth ... that language and inference cannot effectively direct us toward the proper objects of our activities without relying on exclusion" (p. 31). In other words, "while we can act only toward positive entities, it is only through exclusion that we can pick out the appropriate objects for activity by distinguishing them from those that are inappropriate" (p. 28). Although experience (*anubhava*) suggests that what primarily appears in awareness is something positive (*vidhi*), this conditionally adopted position "serves as a corrective to the mistaken view that positive entities alone are expressed or inferred," as realists have it (p. 31). (Jñānaśrīmitra takes Dharmakīrti's causal account of *apoha* as a tacit presupposition, a point that, in this reviewer's opinion, would have been worth mentioning in the introduction. According to Dharmakīrti, it is merely because of the commonality of their effects that certain real entities, though irreducibly distinct from one another, indirectly give rise to conceptually constructed universals and class properties; conceptual constructs are the indirect results of shared functional differences, hence "exclusions." For Dharmakīrti, it is on account of this indirect link to real, "pragmatically efficient" entities that our conceptual constructs facilitate interaction with empirical reality despite the ultimately unreal character of such constructs.)

According to Jñānaśrīmitra, two kinds of things might conventionally be taken as the positive "semantic value" of a word: the (putative) external object (this is semantic value on the basis of "determination," *adhyavasāya*), or the mental image that is the basis of the exclusion itself (semantic value according to "appearance," *ābhāsa*). As

McCrea and Patil clearly demonstrate, this version of the doctrine presupposes Dharmottara's "epistemological revolution"; like Dharmottara, Jñānaśrīmitra "repeatedly claims that each mode of valid awareness must have two objects, one grasped and one determined" (pp.16, 21). Thus, while perception has a bare, uninterpreted particular for its "grasped" object and a universal for its "determined" object, inference conversely has the universal for its grasped object and the particular for its determined object. This follows Dharmottara, for whom "an episode of valid awareness, whether perceptual or inferential, is ... not a single event but a process made up of two stages: in the first stage, an object is grasped; that is, its image is directly presented to awareness. In the second stage, we determine a second and distinct object that can be attained, that is, an object on which one may act" (p. 17). While the notion of "appearance" raises no particular problem here, McCrea and Patil explain that "'determination' is generally applied to cases in which one treats a mental image as if it were an object that we could act on" (p. 32). In other words, "determination" consists in the mistaken (but irreplaceably useful) apprehension of a purely fictitious mental construct as a real object of activity.

What words reveal, then, is either the (putatively external) object as qualified by exclusion, which is "actionable" (p. 28), does not appear in consciousness, and is the semantic value according to determination; or the mental image that appears in awareness, which is not actionable and is the semantic value according to appearance. These are both conditionally adopted positions. On the conventional level, Jñānaśrīmitra's position is that "first of all, it is an external object that is primarily expressed by words. This being the case, exclusion is understood as an element of that" (p. 51). In other words, Jñānaśrīmitra admits that verbal, conceptual, and inferential awareness events have some positive content--but says that there is "synthetically" added to this a negative side accruing to it as a qualification (*viśeṣaṇa*), a subsidiary feature, or an "element" (*guṇa*, a term that receives no fewer than six interpretations in the *Apohaprakaraṇa*; see pp. 52-60). Jñānaśrīmitra's position is thus neither "negativist" (*pratiṣedhavādin*) nor "positivist" (*vidhivādin*), but "synthetist" (pp. 28, 145n98). According to him, "as far as the practically oriented person (*sāṃvyavahārika*) is concerned, it is the appearance that is excluded from what is other, together with determination, that leads us to the belief that a really knowable object is the object of awareness.... For a mere appearance ... which is devoid of determination ... is not capable of establishing, for the person desirous of activity, that something is an object.... Nor is mere determination detached from an appearance capable.... Therefore, given that the establishment of something as an object is pervaded by suitability for activity, it is vitiated by the absence of a pervading factor if either appearance or determination is absent." But Jñānaśrīmitra emphasizes that "the idea that things can be expressed either merely by determination or merely by appearance is just a conditionally adopted position made with another purpose in mind" (p. 94).

How, though, are language and conceptuality to be accounted for on the ultimate level? Jñānaśrīmitra's position is unambiguous: "One object is adopted as expressed on the basis of determination, another on the basis of appearance. But really nothing at all is expressed by words" (p. 51; see also p. 28). Or again: "But neither of these [two conditionally adopted positions] is said for the purpose of finally settling on the position that there is objecthood in either the external object or the image itself" (p. 94). At the end of his *Apohaprakaraṇa*, he explains: "If the question is, 'Why are the mental image, or the particular, or the contingent features not expressed?' these questions are dispensed with in order by saying, 'This is because of the absence of determination, the absence of appearance, and the absence of both'" (p. 96). In other words, neither the particular that lacks appearance, nor the mental image

that has no mind-independent counterpart, nor universals *in re(bus)* qualify as the ultimate referents of words; to repeat from the first of the foregoing quotations, "really nothing at all is expressed by words."

This conclusion recapitulates the *Apohaprakaraṇa*'s opening statement that the *apoha* doctrine is here elaborated "in order to demonstrate that all properties are inexpressible" (p. 49). The Sanskrit original of this statement is *sādhyate sarvadharmāṇām avācyatvaprasiddhaye*; elsewhere, Jñānaśrīmitra makes use of the synonymous expressions *sarvadharmānabhilāpyatva* (pp. 101, 127) and *sarvadharmānabhilāpyatā* (pp. 106, 126). Expressions like these are Mahāyānistic topoi expressing the core of Yogācāra teachings on the scope and operation of language. Jñānaśrīmitra's use of these is certainly no coincidence, and sheds interesting light on both the continuity of the Yogācāra analysis of language and the fundamental aims of the *apoha* theory. To that extent, it is regrettable that nothing is said about this important dimension in either the introduction or the endnotes. Moreover, read against this traditional background, *dharma* is better rendered as "(real) thing/factor (of existence)" than as "property" (cf. pp. 147-148n2).

McCrea and Patil's translation is nearly immaculate, testifying to the translators' deep philological and philosophical understanding of a difficult Sanskrit text. Being unduly punctilious if not pedantic, one may notice that *vastuni* (pp. 100, 29) is left untranslated (p. 49); that *abhimate gośabdanivṛttau* (pp. 102, 21-22) hardly qualifies as a locative absolute (as rendered at p. 54); and that "someone who accepts external objects as a conditionally adopted position" (p. 94) is perhaps too superficial a translation for *bahirviṣayīkaraṇam ... vyavasthānamātraṃ gṛhṇataḥ* (pp. 128, 13-14). More interesting is maybe the translators' treatment of *āha*, generally rendered as "I said" (pp. 51, 60) or "I say" (p. 87), but also as "the author replies" (p. 52). Obviously, this has a bearing on the modalities of this text's authorship; does the *textus receptus* of the *Apohaprakaraṇa* reflect Jñānaśrīmitra's own (written) composition, or does it consist of (doubtlessly carefully edited) notes taken by a given segment of the audience of his teaching? (Regarding such issues, we can look forward to the results of Helmut Krasser's ongoing and potentially revolutionary research.) Also noteworthy is Jñānaśrīmitra's use of the term *vyākhyātṛ* (pp. 102, 11-13: *tāvatā ca gotve tadvati vā saṅketa iti vyākhyātṝṇāṃ siddhāntānuvāda eṣaḥ, na tu saṅketakartṝṇām upadeśakramas tādṛk*...), which the authors (correctly!) translate thus: "And insofar as this is the case, the statement that 'a conventional association is made with respect to the universal 'cow-ness' or with respect to what possesses it' is a commentators' gloss on the empirically established fact. But this is not the way that those who impart those conventions teach them" (p. 53). In this reviewer's opinion, Jñānaśrīmitra's *vyākhyātāraḥ* ("commentators") likely echoes *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti*, where Dharmakīrti sharply contrasts *vyākhyātṛ* and *vyavahartṛ*--i.e., "theoreticians" and people engaged in (pretheoretical) ordinary practice.[1] Such passages illuminate the ways in which philosophers like Dharmakīrti and Jñānaśrīmitra represented themselves, bringing into relief the distinction between philosophical theory and worldly practice.

In this reviewer's opinion, the book presents only two (harmless) weaknesses. First, it lacks an *index locorum*, which could usefully list at least all the (duly identified and discussed) quotations appearing in the *Apohaprakaraṇa* (most notably those from Dharmakīrti's works). This would have been useful to those interested in the reception of Dharmakīrti's ideas, as well as those working on other treatises dedicated to *apoha* (whose authors often rely on a fairly similar stock of quotations). Second, one may regret the number of typos left in the edition of the Sanskrit text (and the bibliog-

raphy)--which, to be sure, are trivial and do not affect the meaning in any way.

To conclude, McCrea and Patil's study represents a brilliant contribution to Buddhist epistemology in general and the historiography of ***apoha*** in particular. The authors exhibit vast command, both with respect to doctrine and relevant philology, of this and other philosophical traditions presupposed and engaged by Jñānaśrīmitra's ***Apohaprakaraṇa***. Their translation, as well as the explicitly formulated principles guiding it, set new standards of intelligibility-cum-accuracy. There can be no doubt that this book will prove extremely useful to all those interested in ancient Indian linguistics, ontology and psychology, as well as to those dealing with later Brahmanical critiques of the Buddhist ***apoha*** theory.

Note

[1]. Dharmakīrti makes this distinction in his autocommentary to chapter 1 of the ***Pramāṇavārttika***; see Raniero Gnoli, ed., ***The Pramāṇavārttikam of Dharmakīrti: The First Chapter with the Autocommentary: Text and Critical Notes*** (Rome: Istituto Italiano Per il Medeo ed Estremo Oriente, 1960), 39, lines 5-6.