

DID RATNAKĪRTI THINK DHARMAKĪRTI WAS AN AFFIRMATIONIST OR A NEGATIONIST?

PATRICK MC ALLISTER (PATRICK.MCALLISTER@UNIVIE.AC.AT)

It¹ has been observed that in *Ratnakīrti*'s definition of the word referent as "a positive entity qualified by the exclusion of others" both a positive and a negative element have equal weight. *Ratnakīrti* holds that these two components are simultaneously cognized, and that neither the view that only one of them is cognized nor the view that they are cognized in any sort of sequence can be correct.

In his description of these alternative views *Ratnakīrti* uses the terms *Vidhivādin* and *Pratiṣedhavadin*. There has been some dispute as to who is referred to with these names, but the consensus is that the former refers to *Śāntarakṣita* and *Kamalaśīla*. Who is meant by the latter is not quite certain. Although *Dignāga* and *Dharmakīrti* have been mentioned as candidates, this seems rather uncertain.

I would like to present some additional thoughts on this matter, especially concerning *Dharmakīrti*'s classification as either the one or the other.

Obviously, the distinction of affirmationists from negationists depends mainly on the respective epistemological framework, because either some positive entity or exclusion is taken to be the conceptual content in these two views. *Ratnakīrti*'s own ideas about conceptual content have been the subject of a few studies, and it is quite clear which epistemological functions the positive and negative component of conceptual content are dependent on. But, in my opinion, one element has not yet been duly stressed: that conceptual content is an effect that is produced by a group of causes, amongst which mnemonic functions figure rather prominently. It is important to describe this causal complex in order to see how the two elements of affirmation and negation work together in conceptual cognition.

Using the results from this analysis of the positive and negative aspects in the formation of concepts, I would like to consider some passages from the *Pramāṇavārtika*'s *Svārthānumāna* chapter where *Dharmakīrti* discusses concept formation. Given the three models of conceptual content, it should become possible to see which model best suits *Dharmakīrti*'s arguments, and therefore also which model *Dharmakīrti* might have endorsed. This in turn should provide a hint as to whether *Ratnakīrti* saw *Dharmakīrti* as an affirmationist, negationist, or neither of these.

¹Thematically this talk should best fit into subject area 11 "Philosophy", or 9 "Buddhist Studies."