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Michael Rolig
Macalester College

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Demonstratives in Dignāga's Theory of Meaning

Michael Rolig²

Explaining how language conveys meaning is a major theme in the philosophy of language. The aim of this paper is to examine the theory of meaning put forward by the sixth century Indian Buddhist philosopher Dignāga⁹⁵ in light of the debate concerning how best to account for demonstratives (“this,” “that,” “here,” “now,” etc.) within his theory.

The novelty of Dignāga's theory, known as *apohavāda*, is that he holds that words are meaningful on the basis of exclusion (*apoha*). A word like “cow” functions by excluding those things that are not cows, rather than conveying some essential cow-ness. Debate has arisen arguing that demonstratives are not included in this exclusionary theory of meaning. I put forward the thesis that Dignāga is most coherent if demonstratives are explained through *apoha*, rather than through a separate theory of meaning.

The essay is broken into four sections: 1) an introduction to Dignāga; 2) following the introduction of Dignāga, I give three interpretations of Dignāga from contemporary philosophers; 3) In answer to these interpretations I give original arguments; 4) To complete the essay, I provide a reconstruction of Dignāga's theory.

²I owe many thanks to Joy Laine, who has provided me more of her time, research materials, and support than I could have ever expected.

⁹⁵Others often spell the name Dīṇnāga.

Introduction to Dignāga

Dignāga was a Buddhist philosopher of the sixth century C.E. in India. His works, the most prominent being the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, focused on perception, inference, and his theory of meaning [p1]. He marks the beginning of the Buddhist epistemology (*pramāṇa*) school that lasts through the eleventh century C.E. and includes the philosophers Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, Jñānaśrimitra, and Ratnakīrti. His influential predecessors include Māhāyāna and Abhidharma Buddhists and Bhartṛhari, an orthodox (thus non-Buddhist) grammarian.

In general, Indian Buddhist philosophy is based upon a phenomenalist anti-realist metaphysic, ranging from the completely “mind-only” Yogācāra school to more realist philosophies, granting external existence to phenomena. Dignāga does not come out in a clear position in opposition to or in affinity to the Yogācāra.

The Māhāyāna philosophers were critical of their Abhidharma predecessors, who had constructed an elaborate atomistic theory of phenomena to accompany their phenomenal metaphysics. They constructed large systems of phenomenal categories to explain the complex objects in the world, classifying these atoms and their functions, etc. Nāgārjuna, a philosopher of the Mādhyamaka school, heavily criticized the systems of the Abhidharma and left behind a skeptical theory, the middle way, half way between being and non-being[p262].

The Yogācāra school developed a mind-only idealist system⁹⁶ [p306], while Dignāga and Dharmakīrti developed a phenomenalism, although much of Dignāga's work, especially the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* is not especially committed to one view or the other.

The momentary nature of the world is an important foundation for Indian Buddhist philosophy. Objects do not exist as stable entities persisting from moment to moment, rather they are constantly reborn as different objects. The supporting argument is an empirical one: if we watch objects over time, they are constantly changing. A clay pot gradually deteriorates. To explain this deterioration we must ask at what point does the pot become a different thing? The Buddhists answer with the extreme response that the pot is constantly different from moment to moment. Objects⁹⁷ exist across moments only in so far as there is a causal chain of pots, one pot causing the next. Thus, language hides the nature of the world, it imposes similarity and sameness where it is not present.

Dignāga holds that what exists are the phenomena themselves, not any objects or atoms whose appearance is perceived. Two verses from Dignāga's *Ālambanaparīkṣā* are especially illuminating here:

Even if atoms⁹⁸ are the material cause of the sensory phenomenon, the atoms are not its field of operation, because the phenomenon no more has the appearance of atoms than it has the appearance of

⁹⁶Dignāga is often placed within the Yogācāra school.

⁹⁷Conceptual objects, not "real" objects. We cannot constrain ourselves to a position that holds that discrete objects exist in reality as discrete objects, these may merely be a product of conceptual construction.

⁹⁸This refers to the atomism of the Abhidharma philosophers.

the sense-faculty. [autocommentary omitted] the phenomenon does not come from that whose appearance it has.[p175]

This expression of Dignāga's phenomenalism has a similar basis as Hume's skepticism of causation. To word it according to modern scientific theory, it makes no sense to say that the phenomena are the cow's appearance rather than the light's appearance. All we perceive is the phenomenon of the light. We have no mechanism to attribute the appearance to any object, rather we have the appearance itself. The phenomena are all that we have, not objects with appearance.

Further, in Dignāga's theory of perception, given in the first chapter of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, he holds that human perception grasps the phenomena of the world unerringly, exactly as they are. Perception is unerring because error comes only with judgment, and perception is free from judgment. For instance, upon seeing a mirage on the horizon, there is nothing errant in perception, one sees what one sees. It is only when one judges that there is water on the horizon that error is introduced.

The term *svalakṣana* (own-appearance) is used to describe a moment of perceptual awareness. Though usage in the literature varies, *svalakṣana* is always used to describe pre-conceptual (that is perceptual) awareness. Interpretations vary from holding a *svalakṣana* to including all perceptual awareness at a single moment, to limiting it to a perceptual moment in relation to a single object. The crux of the debate is whether the phrase *cow svalakṣana* makes sense, or if a *svalakṣana* necessarily includes the entire perceptual field and thus the "cow" is only a conceptual construction.

A crucial result of the Buddhists' metaphysics, especially the idea of a momentary world, is that the Buddhists could not follow the orthodox philosophy that holds the existence of a permanent *jāti* (cow-ness) which is present in all cows. For such a universal to be coherent, it requires permanence in the world, which goes against the basic notion of momentary existence. The *jāti* also require sameness in *svalakṣaṇa*, but they are completely unique and dissimilar.

Bronkhorst offers speculation that Dignāga developed *apohavāda* in order to solve problems posed by Nāgārjuna. Nāgārjuna held a correspondence principle, that language corresponds to the things it describes. This has problems, however, when explaining a sentence like "He is making a jar." The term jar cannot be corresponding to a jar, because it hasn't been made yet. Thus, according to Bronkhorst, Dignāga is concerned with explaining how language can be meaningful in this case.

With this groundwork for Dignāga's theory of meaning, the following section will introduce contemporary interpretations of Dignāga's *apoha* theory of meaning. Following these interpretations, I will attempt to construct a more complete and consistent theory based upon Dignāga's work, but without strict adherence to the texts.

Hattori's Interpretation

Masaaki Hattori provided the first English translation of an entire chapter of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* in 1968 and significantly influenced the study

of Dignāga's works. The translation of the first chapter of the *Prāṇasamuccaya* appears in *Dignāga on Perception* and Hattori discusses *apoha* in more depth in his later article "Apoha and Pratibhā."

Hattori bases much of his interpretation of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* on the interpretation by Dignāga's prominent successor Dharmakīrti. Radhika Herzberger criticizes Hattori for his acceptance of Dharmakīrti's work as a faithful continuation of Dignāga's work. Hayes follows Herzberger in the criticism of Hattori, as he holds that Dharmakīrti was a vehement apologist for the Buddhist position, but Dignāga was less concerned with an apologetic and defensive philosophy. Hayes holds that Dignāga was less concerned with convincing others through an apologetic fashion and more concerned with his philosophy as a part of his path to *nirvāna* [ch1].

Hattori's translation of the opening of chapter five of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (the *apoha* chapter) provides a good introduction to the *apoha* theory of meaning:

That [mean of cognition] which is based on word is not an [independent] means of cognition other than inference. Because [the words as the basis of] it expresses its own object through the exclusion of the other [things], just as [the inferential mark] 'kr takatva' or like [establishes the object to be proved through the exclusion of what is not a possessor of that inferential mark]. [p61]

The characteristic mark of the *apoha* theory is that words work like logical signs do in inference, that is by exclusion (*apoha*). This requires examining Dignāga's view of inference.

The canonical example of inference in the Indian logical tradition is the inference of the presence of fire upon a hill from the sign of smoke upon the hill. Dignāga's explanation of inference is that upon seeing smoke, we infer the presence of fire. However, we do not infer the presence of any *particular* fire. We can say nothing of the color, heat, size, etc of this particular fire, all that we can infer is the presence of fire in general. However, as noted in the previous section, the universal fire is not a real entity. What we know from experience is that smoke does not arise from things other than fire, like water, earth, etc. What is inferred on the basis of smoke, is the absence of non-fire. Thus smoke indicates fire on the basis of excluding non-fire. Of course, we do not draw these conclusions out of thin air, it isn't a matter of wondering the earth and finding that non-fire never produces smoke, but there is also the important aspect of having encountered fire and smoke together as well [p61].

Hattori characterizes word meaning in the introduction to *Dignāga on Perception*:

Dignāga expounds his theory that a word indicates an object merely through the exclusion of other objects (*anyāpoha*, *-vyāvṛtti*). For example, the word "cow" simply means that the object is not a non-cow. As such, a word cannot denote anything real, whether it be an individual (*vyakti*), a universal (*jāti*), or any other thing. The apprehension of any object by means of the exclusion of other objects is nothing but an inference.[p12]

It is for the same reason as in the inference from smoke to a fire particular that the inference from the linguistic sign “smoke” to a smoke particular is unsuccessful. The result of the inference is not knowledge of a smoke particular, only the exclusion of non-smoke. Knowledge of the smoke particular is a matter of perception alone.

Hattori’s presentation emphasizes an extreme dualism between the perceptual awareness and conceptual awareness in Dignāga. Perception is held to be perfect and have unerring access to particulars (*svalakṣana*), but language can never have access to particulars. That is the *svalakṣana* is ineffable. After reading Hattori, one is left with the feeling that language is left to itself, describing a world completely isolated from the perceptual realm we experience.

The focus of Hattori’s “*Apoha and Pratibhā*”, as indicated by the title, includes *pratibhā*. Dignāga borrowed heavily from Bhartṛhari in this theory, which holds the sentence is the basic unit of meaning. The principle is that a listener is struck with a sudden, complete “insight” (*pratibhā*) upon hearing a sentence. This insight is greater than merely the sum of the all words in the sentence.

To continue consistent application of the *apoha* theory, Dignāga does add to the theory, beyond Bhartṛhari. He holds that the entire sentence conveys meaning via *apoha* as well. Thus each sentence is meaningful because of the sentences which it excludes.

Dignāga’s successors in the Buddhist tradition appear to use *pratibhā* as justification for holding that words can also have a positive aspect that plays a part in meaning. If an entire sentence can be meaningful in a

moment of intuition, then words could also have some positive aspect of meaning that is immediately apparent to the hearer.

Herzberger's Interpretation

Radhika Herzberger critiques Hattori's interpretation of Dignāga. In *Bhartṛhari and the Buddhists* Herzberger argues that language is not isolated from the perceptual realm, that is language is descriptive of the perceptual world. She wants to remove the dualism of the perceptual and conceptual, that is "the same object possesses both *sāmānyalakṣana* (universal) and *svalakṣana* (particular)" [p113, 115].

The basis of Herzberger's interpretation is to view Dignāga's work from the perspective of his grammarian predecessor Bhartṛhari. Hattori also acknowledged the great extent to which Dignāga drew his ideas from Bhartṛhari. However, whereas Hattori drew heavily on Dharmakīrti's and other successors for direction, Herzberger has attempted to draw upon Bhartṛhari's thought as a guide. She also argues that Dignāga's goal was to be faithful to Kātyāyana's requirements for a theory of meaning.

Herzberger gives Kātyāyana's requirements for a theory of meaning, which at first glance appear to be good common sense requirements to give for a theory of meaning. These are:

1. "Names are atomic: not related to other names.
2. Names are given to things on the basis of a quality (*guṇa*) they possess.

3. Names do not exceed over their bearers' quality." [Error! Reference source not found.p127]

Here "names" should be read as universals, these apply to general/genus terms like "cow."

Of particular confusion is the phrase "name do not exceed over their bearers' quality," which Herzberger uses continually. From the commentary accompanying her translation of fragments of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* [155] and Hayes' translation of the same verse I have ferreted out an interpretation: *names* convey no qualities or properties of the objects themselves. The qualities of the particular can be known only by direct perception. Herzberger says: "... the word conveys its objects on the basis of that quality alone which does not exceed over its object, not on the basis of qualities *belonging to the words*." (emphasis mine). Hayes translates "A word ... does not make its object known through the fact that significant sound is a quality and other such properties." These two passages support my conclusion, because they seem to emphasize that the sounds are not providing qualities of the object itself.

Unfortunately, my interpretation appears to conflict with some of the usage of Herzberger, but it is unclear to me that she uses the idea of "exceeding over" consistently throughout her work.

On the basis of Kātyāyana's limits, Herzberger proposes that the *apoha* operation exists to erase the excess of names. By using the double negative Herzberger claims that *apoha* removes any existential commitment to the universals [p127] and to individuals within the class signified by the universal [p168].

In explaining how names are given on the basis of a shared quality, Herzberger appears to commit to the existence of qualities in the *svalakṣaṇa*. Given that a name is given on the basis of particular qualities, if the *svalakṣaṇa* does contain the qualities for which a name is given. This requires a commitment to real similarity between objects, on the bases of qualities present in the *svalakṣaṇa*. This seems to contradiction the Buddhist framework of a momentary world where similarity is not possible.

A further significant aspect of Herzberger's argument for language's application to the perceptual world is that demonstratives can directly describe particulars. This is opposed to universals which operate via the *apoha* operation. Of special importance to her argument is the interpretation of a verse of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*:

pratyakṣam anumānaṃ ca pramāṇe

...yasmād

lakṣaṇadvayam/

prameyam

*na hi svasāmānyalakṣaṇābhyām anyat prameyam asti / svalakṣaṇaviṣ
ayam hi pratyakṣam sāmānyalakṣaṇaviṣayam anumānam iti pratipādayiṣ
yāmaḥ/*

which Hattori translates as

the means of cognition are [immediate and mediate, namely,] perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*).

They are only two, because

the object to be cognized has [only] two aspects.

Apart from the particular (*sva-lakṣaṇa*) and the universal (*sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*) there is no other object to be cognized, and we shall prove that perception has *only* the particular for its object and inference *only* the universal (emphasis Herzberger).

Whereas Herzberger reads it as:

... there is no other object to be cognized, *for* we shall prove that perception has the particular for its object and inference the universal.[p115]

This interpretation leaves her some ground to argue that it is not only through inference (that is *apoha* in the linguistic case) that the *svalakṣaṇa* can be cognized.

Dignāga's conceptual process is crucial at this point. Hattori's interpretation relies on the premise that perceptual cognition accurately presents phenomena. Any conceptual cognition is the product of conceptual construction, and language exists only within the realm of conceptual construction. That is language has as its object conceptual entities, not perceptual ones. Error is not possible in the perceptual realm, because error is a matter of judgment, which comes only at the conceptual level, shaped by desires.

Herzberger's basic explanation of cognition is a four step process: 1) perceive an individual (*svalakṣaṇa*) "this" 2) learn the genus/name "this is a cow" 3) remember name "cow" 4) apply to new individual "this is a cow". She claims that the demonstrative, "this" is always referring directly to the perceptual object at hand. The "own object" in the passage above, is then represented by the demonstrative [p119].

The fundamental assumption Herzberger makes is that the objects of the conceptual realm are the same objects as the perceptual. Upon combining her arguments I have concluded her interpretation implies languages works as follows:

1. Qualities are present in phenomena.
2. Perception cognizes qualities.
3. Based upon the multiplicity of objects with shared qualities, universals are established conceptually. These universals consist of shared qualities.
4. After knowing a name, upon perceiving an object presence of the qualities of a universal are the basis of the application of a universal.
5. A sentence may be uttered, such as
"This is a cow."
6. The hearer is directly aware of the particular ("this"), and attributes the absence of non-cowness to that particular on the basis of exclusion (*apoha*).

Before offering my criticism of Herzberger's interpretation I will present the views of Chien-Hsing Ho, who attempts to show that Dignāga's system can be expressive of the world without relying on extra-*apoha* explanation of demonstratives.

Chien-Hsing Ho's Interpretation

In "How Not to Avoid Speaking" Chien-Hsing Ho offers an interpretation and application of Dignāga's *apohavāda*, with no claims of "hermeneutic accuracy". The central argument, explicated most in the introduction and conclusion, is that the *apoha* theory itself sufficiently explains meaning such that no separate "bridge" is necessary to connect perceptual and cognitive realities.

His argument includes a critique of Herzberger's interpretation of Dignāga's *apohavāda*. Herzberger's argument implies that *apoha* alone is not sufficient for a complete theory of meaning, demonstratives are required to have completely meaningful sentences. Chien-Hsing Ho's position that *apoha* is a sufficient theory, requires a theory of

demonstrative meaning that includes it in those words explained by *apoha*.

The argument is based on two key points: 1) demonstratives are linguistic, and thus acting in the conceptual realm. 2) demonstratives work like proper names (arbitrary words), and the proposition that Dignāga includes these in the *apoha* theory.

In his first argument Chien-Hsing Ho, like Hattori, relies on a dualistic interpretation of perception and cognition in Dignāga. Following this distinction, there is a perceptual cognition that has perfect knowledge of the world as it is, and a conceptual cognition that is imperfect. If conceptual construction is “the association of a name (*nāman*), genus (*jāti*), etc.”^{99 100}, then it seems most sensible to interpret this as “anything verbal or linguistic is part of conceptual construction by definition.” Thus expression by any name, proper or demonstrative, ought to be included in conceptual cognition. However, this relies purely on one’s interpretation of the breadth of “*nāman*, *jāti*, etc.”. For this reason, I think more arguments (given below) are necessary to bolster Chien-Hsing Ho’s position on demonstratives.

The second argument, that demonstratives work like proper names, is also weakened, because it relies on the interpretation of the passage

⁹⁹PS1.3 - Hattori p25

¹⁰⁰As Hattori’s notes reveal, interpretation of this within the Buddhist canon became in issue almost immediately. Many successors of Dignāga wanted to include everything under the category of common names, to avoid any commitment to existent universals. I am more inclined to read Dignāga as referring to grammatic categories here, not ontological ones.

above, to include demonstratives with arbitrary names, as Chien-Hsing Ho claims.

The product of his interpretation, however, is a system of demonstrative-*apoha*. He explains the meaning of “this”, for example, as excluding “that.” Thus a sentence like “this is a cow” would be meaningful only in contrast to a sentence like “that is not a cow.”

Original Arguments

The focus of my argument is Herzberger’s view that demonstratives can “directly” signify their object. I hope to show that a philosophy based on Dignāga’s theory is most coherent if direct signification by demonstratives is rejected and Chien-Hsing Ho’s demonstrative *apoha* is used. I will take as my starting point a portion of Dignāga and Bhartṛhari’s philosophy that is apparently ignored by Herzberger, and given only brief attention from Chien-Hsing Ho, this is *pratibhā*, the primacy of meaning at the sentential level.

I want to argue that describing demonstratives as working “directly” is meaningless in itself. I believe there are three ways to interpret “direct” expression:

1. the perceptions of the speaker reproduce the signified phenomenon exactly in the hearer.
2. The hearer can reproduce the exact phenomenon signified upon hearing the word, free from ambiguity.
3. The hearer, upon hearing the demonstrative, recognizes (from memory) some phenomenon on the basis of inference (i.e. ambiguity is possible).

The first of these would be necessary if we assume *svalakṣana*'s are private. For a hearer to gain knowledge of the speaker's experience (of some phenomenon), the word must somehow carry with it the phenomenon. This is clearly absurd, no one will claim that the sound "this" carries with it the phenomenon signified so that the hearer directly perceives the phenomenon herself.

The second case is one where we hold that *svalakṣana*'s are public, that is it is possible for more than one person to perceive the same phenomenon, but I insist on adhering to the momentary nature of phenomena, such that it is not possible to have the same perception at different times. If multiple people can perceive the same *svalakṣana* it might then be possible for a word to refer to the *svalakṣana* without transmitting it. However, this cannot be the case that demonstratives work this way. Imagine a situation where two people are in a room with a cow, which can be seen only (it has no smell, is silent, and too far away to touch). These people also close their eyes compulsively. At no point do both people have their eyes open at the same time. The two people can still converse freely about the cow in the room using a demonstrative. Given this situation, the two never experience any common phenomenon of the cow. It cannot be the case that the hearer of a sentence has the identical phenomenon as the speaker, the two cannot believe the demonstrative to refer to the exact same phenomenon, because they don't have the experience of any phenomena in common. The second case cannot be acceptable, because it make little sense of the word to refer directly, if the referent is different in each person's mind.

In the third case we have lost all semblance of directness. The term “direct” is meaningless. Herzberger is claiming that demonstratives work “directly” in contrast to inferentially. Inference is the basis of Dignāga’s *apoha*, to follow this third explanation of the function of demonstratives we cannot hold that the words function outside *apoha*.

As a further example of usage of “this is a cow” where “direct” signification is absurd, take the case of looking at a picture of a cow. If I utter “fetch me this cow”, the demonstrative is referring to a cow that is not even necessarily known to either party. What sense does it make for “this” to refer directly. Pragmatically, if we must explain the usage of demonstratives in these cases via some form of *apoha* why not use this in all places.

Hattori describes the point that Dignāga took from Bhartṛhari’s philosophy that the primary unit of meaning is the sentence. *Pratibhā* is the meaning of the sentence which strikes the hearer “without reference to the external object” [p65].

Now, if we apply our notion of *pratibhā* to “this is a cow” we must realize that we cannot treat each word independently when explaining the meaning. The meaning of the sentence goes beyond the words alone. We must recognize that the word “cow” informs the meaning of “this” in the sentence “this is a cow”. The referent of “this” is not clear without the rest of the sentence “is a cow”. If pointing in the same direction all of the following would make sense “this is a cow”, “this is an ear”, “this is a field”, etc. Clearly “this” is the same in all of these sentences. We can only understand the meaning of the demonstrative in terms of the rest of

the sentence. The universal used in the sentence forms our conception of what “this” refers to. In “I want this cow,” the sentence gets its meaning in contrast to “I want that cow” and to “I want this horse”. Without the universal it can easily be unclear what “this” refers to, perhaps the speaker wants the farm, or maybe the cow bell around the neck.

Reconstruction

At this point I want to turn to the task of constructing a philosophically coherent theory of meaning based upon Dignāga’s philosophy. I draw heavily upon the interpretations of Chien-Hsing Ho and upon Richard Hayes’ *Dignāga on the Interpretation of Signs*.

A critical point at which I depart from Herzberger is *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1: 3:

Among these [two means of cognition]
perception (*pratyakṣa*) is free from conceptual construction
(*kalpanā*);

The cognition in which there is no conceptual construction is perception. What, then, is this conceptual construction?

the association of name (*nāman*), genus (*jāti*), etc. [with a thing perceived, which results in verbal designation of the thing.][p25]

I take this to mean conceptual construction is, by definition, the association of name, genus word, adjective, verb, or substance word. (This is where Chien-Hsing Ho includes demonstratives as falling under the category of name.) The bottom line of my interpretation is that Hattori’s dualism is correct, the perceptual and conceptual are different. Names are the conceptual object, the line Herzberger argues, that the

perceptual and conceptual have the same object must be false, as conceptual objects are not perceptual, they are linguistic.

Now I will attempt outline a cognitive process resulting in linguistic expression that I believe is consistent with Dignāga's philosophy.

1. Phenomena of a moment are perceived as an undifferentiated whole, *svalakṣana*.
2. Under the influence of desires of the perceiver, she constructs conceptual objects manifest as words.
3. Upon hearing a sentence such as "Bring me a cow," the hearer is instilled with a desire to get a "cow." Knowing this, the cow fetcher knows the object to be brought must not be non-cow.
4. In a field, under the desire to get a cow, the cow fetcher will construct conceptual objects from the perceptual field. Upon conceptualizing an object devoid of non-cowness, the person can fetch it.

This rough outline ought to provide a clear picture of the interaction of the perceptual and conceptual field. Like Hayes, I conclude that the conceptual is not capable of fully describing, or taking account of the particulars, but that language remains useful as cognitive objects are constructed from perception[p311]. It is because of the particularity and dissimilarity of each moment (*svalakṣana*) that language (which used identically across moments) is unable to positively describe particulars on the basis of their qualities. By working negatively, that is via exclusion, words like "cow" are able to signify particulars, because signification is a matter of inference on the part of the hearer. "Cow" signifies nothing if a hearer cannot infer what sort of object to expect. And inference works by excluding what is not possible, thus words work by excluding what is not signified.

Bronkhorst's example gives us an even better example to illustrate the necessity of the exclusionary approach: consider "Devadatta makes a jar" [p19]. "Jar" cannot be functioning by indicating some particular jar, as no such jar exists yet. "Jar" must be functioning by means of excluding non-jars. The product of Devadatta's work will not be a non-jar.

This remains consistent with the overall view of Buddhism that *nirvāṇa* is ineffable. Perception alone is capable of knowing the world as it is. The linguistic activities may prove useful in directing the actions of people, but ultimately it is incapable of describing the world. Language is able to describe the world as our conceptual apparatus constructs it, but it cannot reach the particularity of the constantly changing world. Like a raft to cross a river, language is a tool to help live one's life, but you must not remain so attached that you carry it on your back after crossing the river.

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