The Configuration of Texts

A Way for Interpretation of the Text

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1. Introduction

We have a variety of ways or positions dealing with the reading of a text. Taking a familiar example, we can show two conflicting positions for reading a text: literalism and contextualism.[1] However, although there are various ways of reading a text, the main purpose in each way must be to understand what the text says. The question now arises whether our activities of understanding what the text says are concerned with 'decoding' or 'interpretation;' namely, the finding of the fixed meaning of the text or the production of a new meaning. Let us explore the question from a viewpoint of communication theory.[2]

Basic communication consists of four elements: a sender (an author), codes,[3] a message (a text), and a receiver (a reader). With these elements having relevance to each other, communication materializes. The sender symbolizes or converts his thought into a message while making reference to codes. The receiver then decodes the message while making reference to the codes, and understands the message (the thought of the sender). The ideal communication is that where both the sender and the receiver refer to the same codes. When a receiver reads a message by making reference to different codes, the receiver's understanding of the intended message would not be perfect, or, if worst comes to the worst, the receiver would not be able to decode the message at all. However, perfect of communication, which occurs in a case where both participants refer to the exact same codes, is rarely established. In most cases, the receiver infers (or guesses) the codes that the sender must be referring to from the context. The codes that the receiver refers to are nothing but approximations

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1 On the position of literalism and contextualism, see Recanati [2004].
2 On the communication theory, see Ikegami [1997 (1984): 39].
3 The term "code(s)" is defined as "a shared set of rules or CONVENTIONS by which SIGNS can be combined to permit a message to be communicated from one person to another;" On the definition of "code(s)," see Baldick [2001 (1990): 43].

of the codes referred to by the sender. We often come across such cases where both sender and receiver do not refer to the same codes, for example, there is a case where the receiver (the reader) comes across unintelligible sentences in classical foreign literature. This lack of understanding is often due to the fact that the receiver does not refer to the same codes that the sender (the author) did. A reason why this fact happens to the receiver is that there is more or less a gap of context between the receiver and the sender.[4] We are conscious of these temporal and spatial gaps of context when reading classical foreign literature. As mentioned above, the receiver infers (or guesses) the codes that the sender referred to from the context. In this case, the inferred context is not on the side of the receiver but on the side of the sender. Therefore, the activity of understanding the message forces the receiver into, in the first step, inferring the context on which the sender stood, and, in the second step, inferring the codes, which the sender referred to, on the basis on the inferred context. That is to say, the understanding of a message by the receiver is completed through a double inference of the context and the codes. In this way, from the viewpoint of communication theory, we can conclude with reference to the question as follows: we (the receiver, the reader) can only infer or guess the probable meaning of a text from the approximate codes. Therefore, as far as our activities of understanding what the text says are based on this inference, they are not regarded as a decoding which finds the fixed meaning of the text but as an interpretation which produces a new, albeit possibly similar, meaning for it. That is to say, the understanding of what the text says is then always subjective.[5]

Our activities involved in understanding what a text says are collectively 'interpretation'. Therefore, the first sentence in this introduction can be rephrased into the statement: we have a variety of ways or positions dealing with interpretation. However, it is not my present purpose to explore which of the ways of interpretation is the best way for reading a text. The present paper is written with the aim of introducing one way or position of interpretation, that is to say, "the configuration of texts," showing an effectiveness of the way, and indicating the possibility of interpretation of the Indian philosophic texts on the basis of this configuration of texts.

2. The Configuration of Texts

As a way of reading a text, we can take the position that any text constitutes its own

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4   The term "context" is defined as "those parts of a TEXT preceding and following any particular passage, giving it a meaning fuller or more identifiable than if it were read in isolation. The context of any statement may be understood to comprise immediately neighbouring SIGNS (including punctuation such as quotation marks), or any part of—or the whole of—the remaining text, or the biographical, social, cultural, and historical circumstances in which it is made (including the intended audience or reader)." On the definition of "context," see Baldick [2001: 50].

5   On the view regarding the question from a viewpoint of the communication theory, see Hirano [2003: 86–87].

special configuration. The constituents of the configuration are text, pre-text, inter-text, meta-text, and para-text. The relationship of the constituents is illustrated in Figure 1 below.
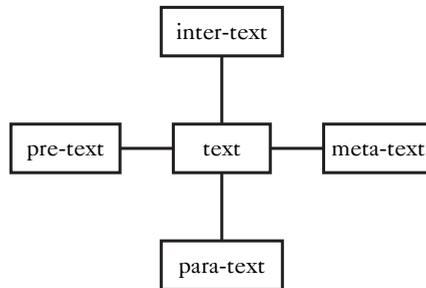

Figure 1

We shall discuss the concept of these five constituents respectively. 'Text' is a specific work chosen as the object of analysis and is an implement of communication with a unique system for informing effectively others of something.[6] 'Pre-text' is prerequisite for a text's existence, and plot, draft, proofs, and so on are elements of a pretext. 'Inter-text' stands for the whole text, which has a relation of quotation with the text in a broad sense. The relationship between the text and the inter-text then is 'inter-textuality'. 'Meta-text' is the interpretation assigned to the text, and, in our example from Indian philosophic texts, often takes the form of commentary. 'Para-text' is other texts by the same author. Also, if only some portion of a work is regarded as *the* text, the rest of the work is regarded as para-text.[7]

The lines in the above figure indicate relations with the text. In this way, any particular text can be viewed as the existence of a knot of the various relations tying together groups of other connected texts. This is our standpoint for reading the text. In order to proceed to a detailed discussion of this relationship between the text and the whole constitution in the configuration more simply, we must try to assign terms to both. I will use the term "Large Text (L-Text)" to refer to the totality of their configuration, and "Small Text (S-Text)" to refer to the particular text that is a specific work chosen as the object of analysis and is located in the center in Figure 1.

Now, what has to be noticed is that the configuration of texts, being the framework of considering the S-Text, is not constant but variable. That is to say, when text (B) is a commentary on text (A), the relationship of text (A) and text (B) is that of the S-Text and the meta-text. Then, when text (C) is a commentary on text (B), in this case, text (B) is regarded as the *S-Text*, and text (C) is regarded as the meta-text. Or if we notice that a meta-text has an aspect of quoting from the S-Text, we can point out the inter-textuality between text (B) and text (C). Moreover, when text (D) quotes from text (A), text (A) is regarded as the *inter-text* of text (D). Like this example shows, a particular text is not allotted to a particular constituent of the configuration of

6 On the definition of text, see Hirano [2003: 81].
7 On the concept of the constituents of the text and Figure, see Matsuzawa [2003: 27–28].

texts constantly.[8]

On reading the S-Text, there may be a view that the reader (the receiver) should concentrate on the S-Text (a message) only without considering the other texts, and information, which is brought by the other texts, is merely noise in the sense that such information has a possibility of distorting what the S-Text says. Although I acknowledge this view to be a way of reading the S-Text, among many possible ways, the view has difficulty in showing the reader the context that surrounded and gave an influence to the S-Text. While there is an explicit context in which the author (the sender) made the S-Text, there are also such implicit dimensions as tacit social, cultural, historical, etc. contexts.[9] That is to say, since the context is tacit for the author, the author makes the S-Text without realizing the influence of the tacit dimension on himself. Taking this tacit dimension that is also included in the context into consideration, we can say that the reader will not adequately understand what the S-Text says without knowing the tacit dimension. As stated above, the context, which is inferred by the reader, is on the side of the author and plays an important role in interpretation of the S-Text by the reader.

A clue, manifesting the tacit dimension that the author did not even realize, appears in the configuration of texts. By considering the S-Text in terms of the L-Text, the meanings of the S-Text, which are not realized in a case where the S-Text is analyzed in isolation, are manifested in front of the readers. If the reader interprets the S-Text on the basis of a pre-text, the reader can see a genesis of the S-Text as well as the source of the awareness of issues and rejected views which are not mentioned in the S-Text. And on the basis of the inter-text, the reader can obtain the historical view on which the S-Text relies. In this view, the originality of the S-Text is based on our consideration of how much it makes use of preceding views.[10] On the basis of the meta-text, the reader can understand the power of inducements of argument, which the S-Text is equipped with. Namely, by analyzing how the S-Text is used in the meta-text, either affirmatively or negatively, the reader can understand the influence of the S-Text on the following text (the meta-text). This analysis will show the reader the historical significance of the S-Text, which is certainly a meaning conveyed by the S-Text as well. Lastly, when the S-Text indicates only a part of a work, the rest of the work is regarded as the para-text. On the basis of the para-text, the reader can understand the location of the S-Text among the contents and the arguments in the work that is constituted of the S-Text and the para-text.

In this way, while the S-Text is analyzed in its manifold aspects, the reader obtains various information of the S-Text. If the reader concentrates on the S-Text only, such information is not provided. Standing on information provided by the configuration of texts viewpoint, the reader acceses the tacit dimension of the S-Text. Thus, configuration of texts offers a standpoint on which we (the receiver, the reader) can approach interpretation of the S-Text and gives us the opportunity of manifesting

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8   On the variability of the configuration of texts, see Matsuzawa [2003: 28–29].
9   On the tacit dimension, see Polanyi [1966].
10 On the study of the originality of the text from a viewpoint of the quotation theory, see Hirano [2004].

the tacit dimension which the author did not realize and on which we construct the meaning of the S-Text. This is an effectiveness that the configuration of texts, which is a way of interpretation of the S-Text, has.

3. On the Indian Philosophic Text

It is helpful to describe the genre of the Indian philosophic texts before moving on to applying them to the framework of the configuration of texts. As a character of Indian philosophy, it is said that each school of philosophy in ancient India preserved and handed down its traditional thoughts while commenting on the texts. In fact, a chain of commentaries, sub-commentaries, and sub-sub-commentaries on major texts is found in each school of philosophy without exception. For example, orthodox philosophical schools such as the Yoga, the Nyāya, the Vaiśeṣika, the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, and the Vedānta, have a basic text called the *Sūtra* that is attributed to the school founders.

The *Sūtra* consists of a set of brief and significant aphorisms that do not elaborate on the doctrines of the school. This brief expression in the *Sūtra* is suitable for memorization to those who had already had oral instruction on the doctrines. Besides having the function of helping in memorization of the doctrines, the *Sūtra* has authority as a sacred book of the school, and, when traditional thought is referred to, the thought of the *Sūtra* is indicated in these schools of philosophy. Therefore, scholars following after the founders paid high esteem and respect to the thought of the authoritative *Sūtra*.

On the other hand, the text genre called the *Bhāṣya* (commentary) contains explanation and interpretation of unclear meanings of statements in the *Sūtra*. Since the target audience of the *Sūtra* was those who had already been given oral instruction on the doctrines, the *Sūtra* is unintelligible without explanation and interpretation via commentary. Consequently, there arose the necessity of the *Bhāṣya*. While explaining the *Sūtra*, the *Bhāṣya* also provides answers to objections that opponents raised against a doctrine.

The text genre called the *Ṭīkā* (sub-commentary) then makes a detailed description of the *Bhāṣya*. That is to say, the *Ṭīkā* is a commentary on the commentary (the *Bhāṣya*). The main reason for the *Ṭīkā* being formed has a connection with the attacks by other rival schools on a doctrine. To establish the superiority of the doctrine to which the commentators adhered, they had to answer the objections that their opponents made against their doctrine and point out the defects in the thought of the rival school and prove the objections to be unfounded.[11]

Through the media of the text genres of *Sūtra*, *Bhāṣya*, and *Ṭīkā*, a particular doctrine, stemming from the *Sūtra*, was carried out from generation to generation in

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11 On the explanation of the *Sūtra*, the *Bhāṣya*, and the *Ṭīkā*, see Dasgupta [1997 (1922): 62–67], Chatterjee and Datta [1984 (1934): 10–12], Coward (ed.) [1996 (1983): 7–8], Raju [1985: 35–36], and Hirano [2003: 84–85].

each school. It must be noted here that although there is only one *Sūtra* for each school, there are more than one *Bhāṣya* and *Ṭīkā*.

I will take an example to show the chain of texts from the Nyāya school, which was mainly concerned with the study of logic. There is the *Nyāyasūtra*, which is attributed to Gautama (A.D. 200)[12] who is referred to as the founder of the Nyāya school. The *Nyāyasūtra* consists of five books (*adhyāya*), each books consists of chapters (*āhnikas*), and each chapters has a number of aphorisms (*sūtras*). The commentaries on the *Nyāyasūtra* are as follows:[13]

1. the *Nyāyabhāṣya* of Vātsyāyana (ca. 450–500),[14]
2. the *Nyāyamañjarī* of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (ca. 840–900),[15]
3. the *Nyāyakālikā* of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa,[16]
4. the unknown work of Sānātanī (ca. 900–960),[17]
5. the unknown work of Vittoka (ca. 950–1000),[18]
6. the *Vivaraṇapañjikā* of Aniruddha (ca. 1025–1075),[19]
7. the *Pañcaprasthānanyāyatarka* of Śrīkaṇṭha (ca. 1075–1125),[20]
8. the unknown work of Vallabha (ca. 1100–1150),[21] and
9. the *Nyāyālaṃkāra* of Abhayatilaka (ca. 1275–1325).[22]

Then, the commentaries on the *Nyāyabhāṣya* are as follows:[23]

1. the *Nyāyabhāṣyaṭīkā* of Bhāvivikta (ca. 520–580),[24]
2. the *Nyāyavārttika* of Uddyotakara (ca. 550–610),[25]
3. the *Nyāyabhāṣyaṭīkā* of Aviddhakarṇa (ca. 620–700),[26]
4. the *Nyāyabhāṣyaṭīkā* of Viśvarūpa (ca. 800–850),[27]

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12 On the dates of authors, see Potter (ed.) [1995 (1977): 9–12]. On the date of Gautama, see Potter (ed.) [1995: 220–221].
13 Depending on Potter (ed.) [1995], I show the *Bhāṣya* on the *Nyāyasūtra* up to the 14th century A.D.
14 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 239–274].
15 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 341–394].
16 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 394–395]. With regard to the text, there is an opinion that the text is a summary of the *Nyāyāmañjarī*.
17 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 424]. The text is lost.
18 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 484]. The text is lost and regarded as the commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra* or the *Nyāyabhāṣya*.
19 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 521].
20 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 612].
21 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 613]. The text is a commentary on the Fifth book of the *Nyāyasūtra* and lost.
22 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 668].
23 Depending on Potter (ed.) [1995], I show the *Ṭīkā* on the *Nyāyabhāṣya* up to the 14th century A.D.
24 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 281]. The text is lost. The Buddhist work mentions it only.
25 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 303–337].
26 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 338–340]. The text is lost. The Buddhist work mentions it only.
27 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 341]. The text is lost.

5. the *Nyāyabhāṣyaṭīkā* of Trilocana (ca. 870–930),[28]
6. the *Ruciṭīkā* of Adhyāyana (ca. 950–1000),[29]
7. the *Vivaraṇapañjikā* of Aniruddha,[30]
8. the *Pañcaprasthānanyāyatarka* of Śrīkaṇṭha,[31] and
9. the *Nyāyālaṃkāra* of Abhayatilaka.[32]

This example from the Nyāya school makes it clear that the commentary and the sub-commentary are plural while the *Sūtra* is one and that the doctrine was conveyed in the form of a chain of Texts.

4. The Application of Indian Philosophic Texts to the Configuration of Texts

We will select the *Nyāyabhāṣya* and the *Nyāyavārttika*, which are the *Bhāṣya* and the *Ṭīkā* respectively, from the commentaries on the *Nyāyasūtra* and the commentaries on the *Nyāyabhāṣya* introduced in the preceding chapter. Let us apply the *Nyāyasūtra*, the *Nyāyabhāṣya*, and the *Nyāyavārttika* to the configuration of texts as indicated in Figure 1. When the *Nyāyabhāṣya* is regarded as the S-Text, the relationship of the *Nyāyabhāṣya* to the *Nyāyasūtra* and to the *Nyāyavārttika* is indicated as follows:[33]
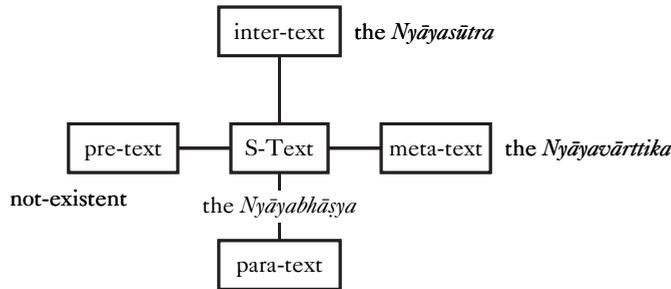
In case the S-Text is a part of the *Nyāyabhāṣya*,
the rest in the *Nyāyabhāṣya* is the para-text.

Figure 2

Regarding the pre-text in Figure 2, the plot, draft, and proofs etc. by Vātsyāyana, the author of the S-Text (the *Nyāyabhāṣya*), are not existent or preserved. Therefore the

28 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 396–398]. The text is lost and is identified with the *Nyāyamañjarī* of his work.
29 See Potter (ed.) [1995: 484]. The text is lost and probably a commentary on the *Nyāyabhāṣya*.
30 See fn. 19.
31 See fn. 20.
32 See fn. 22.
33 We have already applied the configuration of texts to the Indian Philosophy texts in Wada and Hirano [2007: 75–76]. However, in the paper, we do not mention the effect of the application on reading the text.

pre-text of the *Nyāyabhāṣya* is not mentioned in this case. Regarding the inter-text, since the *Nyāyabhāṣya* is the commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra,* it has some portions which are quoted from the *Nyāyasūtra*. Therefore, the *Nyāyasūtra* is regarded as the inter-text of the *Nyāyabhāṣya*. In addition, a particular text in which the objections in the *Nyāyabhāṣya* are mentioned is also held to be the inter-text. Most schools in Indian philosophy detailed their own thought through controversy with other schools. We can find this controversy between schools in the dialogic form in the Indian philosophic texts.[34] Therefore, if the objection in the *Nyāyabhāṣya* is identified with a particular text, the text is also added to the inter-text of the *Nyāyabhāṣya*. Regarding the meta-text, since the *Nyāyavārttika* is a commentary on the *Nyāyabhāṣya*, it is regarded as the meta-text of the *Nyāyabhāṣya*. Regarding the para-text, if Vātsyāyāna wrote other texts besides the *Nyāyabhāṣya*, these texts are held to be the para-text of the *Nyāyabhāṣya*. However, he did not write any texts besides the *Nyāyabhāṣya*. Or if only a part of the *Nyāyabhāṣya* were to be regarded as the S-Text, the remaining parts of the *Nyāyabhāṣya* would be regarded as the para-text of the S-Text.

Then, I have already emphasized the importance of a tacit dimension as a part of the context in the activity of interpretation of the S-Text. We can therefore add that tacit dimension to our picture as in Figure 3:
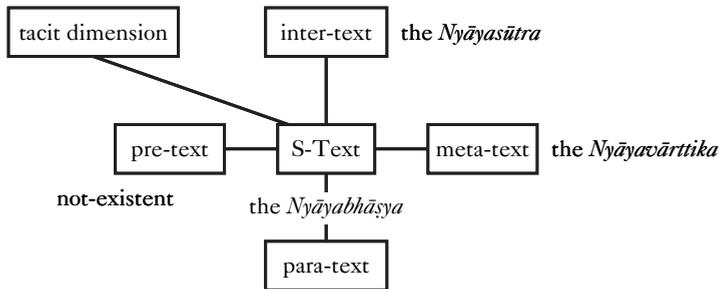
In case the S-Text is a part of the *Nyāyabhāṣya*, the rest in the *Nyāyabhāṣya* is the para-text.

Figure 3

It is often said that India has little historical material. That is to say, when we are eager to infer the context of a S-Text, it is often lamented that we do not have enough materials in order to reconstruct it. I would argue that the configuration of texts viewpoint, when reading the S-Text, will provide us information which is useful in the construction of this context.

5. Conclusion

We have a variety of ways or positions dealing with the reading of a text. Regarding a

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34 On the dialogic form found in the Indian philosophic texts, see Hirano [2003: 85–86].

way of reading the text, we discussed and concluded from the communication theory that our understanding of what the text says is subjective in the sense that the activities involved are not decoding but interpretation. This conclusion is equivalent to saying that the understanding of a particular text by a reader can be regarded as more or less unique. From this view one may say that to emphasize the difference between interpretations of a particular text by readers is not important. What matters is rather to pay attention to which viewpoint, way, or standpoint a reader uses to make an interpretation of the text. In other words, the readers must be conscious of the viewpoint which they utilize when undergoing interpretation.

A chosen way of interpretation by us is the configuration of texts. The primary feature of this method is that a particular text exists as a knot of various relationships tying together groups of other connected texts: pre-text, inter-text, meta-text, and para-text. Namely, a particular text, which is named the S-Text, acts as the nucleus for a configuration of texts, which is named the L-Text, with the pre-texts and so on. In our way of interpretation of the S-Text, the S-Text is not analyzed in isolation, but within the L-Text in order to manifest the context which is not referred to in the S-Text itself. The point of interpretation of the S-Text is to find the context in which the S-Text was made. However, the context has a tacit dimension, which even the author of the S-Text did not realize. The configuration of texts method gives the reader information for constructing this tacit dimension. This way may therefore be highly useful for interpreting Indian philosophic texts since we do not have enough existing contextual information with reference to these texts. In subsequent studies I will consider a part of the *Nyāyabhāṣya* as the S-Text, analyze the S-Text from the three standpoints of the inter-text, the meta-text, and the para-text of the *Nyāyabhāṣya*, and construct the tacit dimension in which *Nyāyabhāṣya* was made.

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