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Carving out Conventional Worlds:  
The Work of Apoha in Early Dharmakīrtian Buddhism and Pratyabhijñā Śaivism

By  
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Doctor of Philosophy  
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An abstract of  
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## Abstract

### Carving out Conventional Worlds: The Work of Apoha in Early Dharmakīrtian Buddhism and Pratyabhijñā Śaivism By Catherine Elaine Prueitt

This dissertation engages two medieval Indian philosophical traditions on the question of how humans construct and experience their worlds. Both Dharmakīrtian Buddhism (7<sup>th</sup> century onward) and Pratyabhijñā Śaivism (10<sup>th</sup> century onward) define themselves through dialogical encounters. The problematics of the earlier Buddhist views that Dharmakīrti inherits fundamentally shape his famous theory that concepts refer merely to the exclusion of what is other, and that these concepts guide successful activity in the everyday world despite not being ultimately real. While his thought generally proceeds as if the Abhidharma ontology of ultimately real particulars were correct, at key moments he rejects the idea that any kind of diversity—from spatial extension to the mere differentiation of a moment of awareness into subject and object—could be ultimately real. Following Vasubandhu (4<sup>th</sup> century), Dharmakīrti finally affirms that, ultimately, the appearance of a dualistically structured world is nothing but a cognitive error created by beginningless karmic imprints. The question of whether or not Dharmakīrti's final ontology supports his account of ordinary experience inspires the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva critique of his ideas. Although Utpaladeva (10<sup>th</sup> century) and Abhinavagupta (10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century) avail themselves of Dharmakīrti's account of concept formation, they claim that Dharmakīrti's reliance on beginningless karmic imprints cannot bridge the gap between nondual ultimate consciousness and the everyday world of mutually opposed subjects and objects. Moreover, in contrast to Dharmakīrti's general refusal to provide an ultimate grounding for the conventional world, these Śaivas claim that a successful ontology can and must address this question. Their sophisticated adaptation of Dharmakīrti's theories allows them to account for the transition from their own articulation of ultimate reality as Śiva's nonconceptual self-realization to the conventional worlds that we ordinarily experience. For these Śaivas, the diversity we experience within the conventional world cannot be purely the result of an error. Rather, it is an expression of the nondual differentiation inherent to ultimate consciousness itself. While this consciousness always exceeds the limited realities of various types of sentient beings, these realities themselves are nothing but Śiva's play of manifesting himself in diverse forms for the sheer joy of partaking in different experiences.

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*General: If I'm not mistaken, you're the one who bet that leprechauns weren't real. So why do you care what happens?*

*Kyle: Because I— [catches himself] I... Um... because I think... they are real. It's all real. Think about it. Haven't Luke Skywalker and Santa Claus affected your lives more than most real people in this room? I mean, whether Jesus is real or not, he... he's had a bigger impact on the world than any of us have. And the same could be said of Bugs Bunny and, a-and Superman and Harry Potter. They've changed my life, changed the way I act on the Earth. Doesn't that make them kind of "real." They might be imaginary, but, but they're more important than most of us here. And they're all gonna be around long after we're dead. So in a way, those things are more realer than any of us.*

—Kyle Broflovski, trying to convince a Pentagon general not to nuke humanity's collective imagination

## INTRODUCTION

A question as simple as it is perplexing animates this dissertation: why do we see solid objects? After all, they don't exist—or, at least, they don't ultimately exist according to the two traditions on which I focus, Dharmakīrtian Buddhism and Pratyabhijñā Śaivism. There are many signs that something about the way we perceive the world does not tell the whole story about how things really are. Quantum physics informs us that the building blocks of the seemingly stable objects of our everyday life only occupy a determinate location when they are observed or otherwise measured (Gribbin 1984, 155–76). Studies of color perception in the fields of neuroscience and cognitive theory demonstrate that color simply does not exist in the external world (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 23–26). Problems posed by the fact that we see objects only from certain perspectives, and not in their entirety, have wrecked havoc on attempts to propose that

there's something inherent about a thing—or at least our concept of a thing—that allows us to reliably identify it as the same across multiple instances (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 94–100). Space and time themselves, those most basic structures through which our experiences manifest, are relative (Einstein 1961). In these ways and many more, our best empirical science shows that there is nothing automatic or given about our human ability to parse our experience into discrete, enduring, and functional objects. This ability, though, is essential to how we function in the everyday world. So, how do we do that?

There are many ways of addressing this question. I propose to examine it through the debate between two epistemological traditions from medieval India: Dharmakīrtian Buddhism (7<sup>th</sup> century onward) and Pratyabhijñā Śaivism (10<sup>th</sup> century onward). These traditions' approach to the question of how conventional reality works—that is, how we as humans engage in successful practical activity both in relation to our own individual goals and in our interactions with others—is fundamentally shaped by dialogical encounters both within and between traditions. Building on a foundation laid by Dignāga (5<sup>th</sup> century), Dharmakīrti ushered in a revolution in the ways in which classical Indian philosophers conceived of language, logic, and ontology. Despite being controversial in his own time, Dharmakīrti's work was so influential that it became the standard from which subsequent Buddhists in multiple traditions argued, and against which Brahmanical traditions sought to demonstrate their superiority (Eltschinger 2010, 432–33). Utpaladeva (10<sup>th</sup> century) and Abhinavagupta (10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century) represent one such Brahmanical tradition, Pratyabhijñā Śaivism, that adopted some of Dharmakīrti's views as its own while adamantly critiquing others. Unfortunately, a full intellectual history of Dharmakīrti's theories is well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Rather than

attempting such a quixotic task, this dissertation examines these two fascinating moments in classical Indian debates about the nature of human experience: Dharmakīrti's initial articulation of how practical activity within the conventional world works, and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas' complex critique and adaptation of these ideas. As I will argue, the rich insights emerging out of this debate amply deserve to be considered alongside contemporary theories of human experience in the everyday world.

This introduction will proceed in two parts. First, I will provide an overview of this dissertation's contents by delimiting the traditions I will study, providing a summary of the debate between them, and presenting an outline of my chapters. Second, I will address broader questions of the rationale and methodology for my study. I engage these traditions in a comparative philosophical study in order to understand and articulate their insights for integration into contemporary discussions. I conclude that Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory—particularly as recontextualized by the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas—provides a compelling way to understand how humans create and inhabit the malleable realities of everyday life.

### **Part I: Two Approaches to Understanding the Conventional World**

I approach the question of how human experience within the conventional world works through close textual analysis and translation of relevant Sanskrit texts, which I will specify below, in the two traditions on which I focus. Various translations of all or part of these works have been published. When I cite a passage, if I use a published translation, I will clearly mark the source before giving the Sanskrit in a footnote. If I use my own translation, I will just give the Sanskrit. If I reference other translations but adapt them, I

will note this influence in the relevant footnote. It goes without saying that any and all mistakes in the translations, transliterations, or interpretations are wholly my own.

As I will explore, the crux of the debate between these traditions centers on the relationship between ultimate and conventional reality. In my first chapter, I will explore each tradition's respective ontologies in order to frame the question of why each would consider human experience within conventional reality to be fundamentally erroneous. The second chapter will present Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory of concept formation, which provides his response to the problem of how sentient beings seem to interact with stable objects even though these objects do not exist. The third chapter will detail a number of contemporary critiques of Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory and argue that these critiques do not sufficiently take Dharmakīrti's Yogācārin background into account. The final chapter explores the Pratyabhijñā critique of this same theory—which, unlike contemporary critiques, is well-grounded in a full appreciation of Dharmakīrti's traditional context—and presents their resultant account of how the basic structures and content of conventional experience arise from ultimate reality.

#### *Delimitation of Texts and Traditions*

On the Buddhist side of my project, I focus somewhat narrowly on Dharmakīrti's *Pramānavārttika* (*Explanation of the Means of Trustworthy Awareness*, henceforth PV), and especially his autocommentary (*Svavṛtti*) on the first chapter, henceforth the PVSV. I use Raniero Gnoli's excellent critical edition of the PVSV (Dharmakīrti 1960). While there is no complete published translation of this work, I have benefitted enormously from working through many passages of the PVSV with my advisor, John Dunne, as well as from his generously sharing an unpublished preliminary translation of the vast

majority of this text. I was also very fortunate to work with Vincent Eltschinger on PVSV 1.40-1.42, 1.56-1.64, and 1.76-91, all with Karṇakagomin's subcommentary. While Gnoli's edition of the PVSV is clearly the gold standard for this text, the other chapters of the PV have multiple editions. For Chapter Three of the PV, I use Tōsaki's two volume edition (Dharmakīrti 1979; 1985). I use the rendering of the verses embedded in the edition containing Manorathanandin's commentary (Manorathanandin 1938) only when I cite verses in Chapter Two. I have standardized the verse and chapter numbers across editions.<sup>1</sup>

For the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas I look primarily at Utpaladeva's *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* (*Verses on the Recognition of the Lord*, henceforth ĪPK), his short commentary thereon (the *Vṛtti*, henceforth ĪPKV), and Abhinavagupta's two commentaries, the *Vimarśinī* (*Reflections*, henceforth ĪPV) and the *Vivṛtivismarśinī* (*Reflections on the Long Commentary*, henceforth ĪPVV). I use Torella's pioneering edition and translation of the ĪPK and Utpaladeva's *Vṛtti* (Utpaladeva 1994). For Abhinavagupta's commentaries, I use the editions in the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies (Abhinavagupta 1918; Abhinavagupta 1938). Abhinavagupta's ĪPVV is a commentary on Utpaladeva's own long autocommentary, the *Vivṛti*, which is unfortunately lost except for a few fragments recently discovered, edited, and published by Torella (2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2007d; 2012). I am very grateful to Isabelle Ratié for reading Abhinava's ĪPV on I.3.6-I.3.7 and the entirety of I.6 with me.

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<sup>1</sup> This is most relevant in relation to Sāṅkrītyāyana's edition of Manorathanandin's commentary, which switches the order of the chapters and misnumbers some of the verses. I have provided page number references for this commentary but used the standard verse and chapter numbers.

My selection of these texts raises the question of how I delimit the traditions I study. The notion of a ‘school’ or a ‘tradition’ as used by contemporary scholars of classical Indian philosophy is useful in some senses and misleading in others. To the extent that either of these terms is used to speak about self-identified lineages that draw authority from common texts, they are useful. Indian traditions speak about themselves and others in these terms. For the purposes of my present discussions, then, a “tradition” will refer to a lineage, particularly a commentarial lineage, that self-identifies as accepting a common final position based on the exposition of certain foundational texts.

While talking about traditions is useful to the extent that it reflects the way in which various thinkers in India grouped themselves and others into certain lineages, it can also be misleading when contemporary scholars create designations of their own that are not reflected in the original sources. These designations often implicitly claim a sweeping authority for one’s chosen texts by presenting them as representing the final, coherent position of an enormous swath of thought. The label “Kaśmir(i) Śaivism” is a prime example of this confusion. “Kaśmir Śaivism” is normally used to refer to an inchoate grouping of various monistic or nondual tantric traditions that are associated with Abhinavagupta, his teachers, and his followers. Such an entity has never existed under that name; further, the name is actively confusing if one wants to understand either medieval Śaivism in Kashmir or the history of Abhinavagupta’s own thought (Sanderson 2005).

Mādhava’s 14th century doxographical text, the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* (*Compendium of all Views*), makes no mention of “Kaśmir Śaivism.” Somānanda, Utpaladeva, and Abhinavagupta are identified as constituting the main exponents of the

Pratyabhijñā tradition (Mādhava 1978, 126–38). While the Pratyabhijñā tradition credits Somānanda’s *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* (*Vision of Śiva*) as its own foundation, the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* itself is very much an insider text aimed at a small elite of courtly tantric practitioners.<sup>2</sup> Somānanda’s student Utpaladeva systematized Somānanda’s insights and presented them in terms of the pan-classical-Indian rubric of *pramāṇa* theory in his *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*. Since this dissertation is likewise concerned with the cross-traditional articulation of these Śaivas’ theory of human experience, I will primarily engage with ĪPK and the commentaries thereon by both Utpaladeva and his brilliant grand-student Abhinavagupta.

In my final chapter, I will also reference Abhinavagupta’s *Mālinīślokaṽrttika* (*Explanation of the Verses of the Mālinī [Tantra]*, henceforth MŚV), a philosophically oriented commentary on a tantric ritual text which includes Somānanda and Utpaladeva in its list of relevant gurus. I include this text because Abhinavagupta provides a particularly detailed account of the Pratyabhijñā view of the connection between time and manifest reality in the MŚV. As I will explore in detail in this final chapter, the question of the source and nature of time is intimately related to these Śaivas’ critique of Dharmakīrti’s account of the (lack of a) relationship between ultimate nondual consciousness and the diversity of experience in the conventional world.

My use of the MŚV indirectly brings up another point: the inextricable intertwining of philosophy and soteriology in many classical Indian traditions, including those of Dharmakīrti and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas. This connection is immediately evident in Pratyabhijñā works; from the first verse to the very title of the *Verses on the Recognition of the Lord*, Utpaladeva clearly indicates the soteriological orientation of his

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<sup>2</sup> I will discuss this topic at length in Chapter I.



work.<sup>3</sup> While this connection is less obvious in Dharmakīrti's works<sup>4</sup> many contemporary scholars emphasize the soteriological purpose of Dharmakīrti's texts.<sup>5 6</sup> One way this

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<sup>3</sup> As ĪPK 1.1.1 reads: "Having in some way attained the state of servant of Maheśvara and wishing to offer assistance also to the whole of mankind, I shall—by giving it logical justification—make possible the awakening of the recognition of the Lord, which brings about the achievement of all success." Translation in Torella (2013, 85). *kathaṃcid āsādyā maheśvarasya dāsyam janasyāpy upakāram icchan / samastasampat samavāptihetuṃ tatpratyaabhijñām upapādayāmi*, (Utpaladeva 1994, 1).

<sup>4</sup> Compare the beginning of the PVSV, where Dharmakīrti claims that he writes for his own pleasure, even though others are too stupid to understand: "I bow to the universally virtuous whose splendor shines everywhere and in whose profound and lofty bodies the web of thought has been rent. Most people are devoted to vulgarity and dimwitted; not only are they uninterested in intelligent discourse, but filled with envy's offal, they hate it. Hence, I believe that this text will not be helpful to others, but my mind has the urge to [compose] it because it has grown fond of such things due to long study of intelligent discourse," *vidhūtakalpanājālagambhīrodāramūrtaye / namaḥ samantabhadrāya samantaspharaṇatviṣe // prāyaḥ prākṛtasaktir apratibalaprajñō janaḥ kevalam nānarthy eva subhāṣitaiḥ parigato vidveṣṭy apīrṣyāmalaiḥ / tenāyam na paropakāra iti naś cintāpi cetaś ciraṃ sūktābhyāsavivardhitavyasanam ity atrānubaddhasprham //* (Dharmakīrti 1960, 1). John Dunne's translation in Dunne (1996, 2).

<sup>5</sup> The debate within Western scholarship about whether or not Buddhist logic is purely secular traces back at least to Stcherbatsky's 1930 claim that Buddhist logic "had apparently no special connection with Buddhism as a religion, i.e., as the teaching of a path towards Salvation" (Stcherbatsky 1962, 2). As Helmut Krasser notes, a long line of scholars beginning with Ernst Steinkellner (1982) have critiqued this position (Krasser 2004, 129). Krasser agrees with Steinkellner et. al., and admirably grounds this position in Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's own texts. Inverting Stcherbatsky's claim, he summarizes: "it is clear that in the intention of the promoters of *pramāṇa* studies this system apparently had a strong connection with Buddhism as a religion, i.e., as a teaching of a path toward salvation, and that they never considered themselves to be non-Buddhistic" (2004, 146). For a particularly powerful and thorough recent exploration of the connection between Buddhist epistemology and apologetics, see Eltschinger (2014). See also Eltschinger (2005; 2007; 2013) and Eltschinger and Ratié (2013). For a broader perspective on the relationship between logic and religion in Dharmakīrtian traditions, see the contributions to Krasser et al. (2011). For the relationship between epistemology and contemplative practices, see in particular Dunne (2006), Kapstein (2013), and Tillemans (2013).

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, an explicit analysis of the connection between ritual and philosophy in Dharmakīrti's and Pratyabhijñā Śaiva thought is beyond the scope of this dissertation—at least, if "ritual" is understood narrowly as referring only to practices involving, for example, meditation, visualization, the recitation of mantras, or other tantric practices. There are many ways in which philosophy and ritual are not two separate domains, but rather are equally concerned with transforming the practitioner. The close connection

purpose manifests is in terms of Dharmakīrti's use of what Sara McClintock has termed "sliding scales of analysis" (McClintock 2002, 139–42). This technique, which I will explore at length in Chapter I, involves provisionally affirming certain ontological positions that will eventually be rejected. Dharmakīrti seems to argue in this way in order to connect with the broadest possible Buddhist audience, thereby allowing him to guide a broad swath of his mistaken co-religionists to the proper (if deeply counterintuitive) understanding of reality.

Dharmakīrti's use of various, often incompatible, levels of analysis complicates naming his tradition since he only refers to himself as a "Bauddha" and seems to endorse positions associated with disparate traditions at various times. Much of contemporary scholarship, particularly when written from the perspective of scholars of Brahmanical traditions that critique Dharmakīrti's positions,<sup>7</sup> does in fact simply refer to the tradition of Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and his commentators as "Buddhist." I find this unsatisfactory because it creates an impression that "Buddhism" is a monolithic entity that has always held certain well-defined positions. Moreover, it obscures the pervasive influence of one particular Buddhist thinker on Dharmakīrti's work: Vasubandhu. Referring to Dharmakīrti as a Buddhist in general may thereby obscure the important ways in which

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between soteriology and philosophy in these traditions itself indicates that drawing a stark division between practice and theory is not tenable. However, including explicit ritual discussions in this dissertation is problematic for two reasons: first, while Abhinavagupta in particular literally wrote volumes on this topic, Dharmakīrti did not. The analysis would therefore be very lopsided. Second, given how much Abhinava wrote on ritual, the constraints of time and space simply make it impossible to consider all of the relevant works in this dissertation. However, my understanding of the importance of the soteriological motivations of both traditions' philosophies is reflected in my ongoing focus on audience, purpose, and doctrinal context in these works.

<sup>7</sup> For a few representative instances of this trend, see Lawrence (1999), Watson (2006), and Taber (2010).

Dharmakīrti ultimately affirms a specifically Yogācārin position. Indeed, Mādhava refers to Dharmakīrti as a Yogācārin (Mādhava 1978, 24), and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas consistently use Dharmakīrti’s work as representative of Vijñānavāda.

While I occasionally follow these Śaivas’ use of Vijñānavāda to name the post-Dharmakīrtian tradition they critique, referring to Dharmakīrti himself as a Vijñānavādin is somewhat problematic. For one thing, it seems too reductive. Moreover, while subsequent (especially non-Buddhist) traditions consistently identified Dharmakīrti as a Yogācārin/Vijñānavādin, there are certain places in Dharmakīrti’s work that may indicate that he ultimately came closer to a Mādhyamika position.<sup>8</sup> Although I am not happy with this solution, I have generally adopted the practice of referring to Dharmakīrti himself in the singular when I discuss his work. This is vexing because it will frequently sound as if I am attributing a position that expresses a single, coherent authorial intention to a historical person himself. In a clear example of how little control an author has over what is expressed by her work, this is certainly not *my* intention: I do not make any claims about the motivations of some theoretical person named Dharmakīrti who probably lived somewhere in India sometime in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century. Nor do I hold that his texts express a single, objective meaning. Rather, I use “Dharmakīrti”—and, in parallel, “Pratyabhijñā Śaivism”—as a metonym for the blended space expressed by my engagement with these texts. I will explain my use of blended spaces and address issues of interpretation later in this introduction; for now, I turn to a brief summary of this dissertation’s contents.

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<sup>8</sup> I will discuss this in Chapters I and IV.

*A Summary of the Debate*

Dharmakīrti's primary contribution to understanding practical activity within the conventional world is his theory that concepts refer merely to the exclusion of what is other (*anyāpoha*). This theory attempts to account for how sentient beings successfully use concepts to refer to objects that seem to instantiate a commonality if the universals generally posited to account for this commonality do not actually exist. He presents the vast majority of this theory from a perspective that affirms the Abhidharma ontology of causally specific, ultimately real particulars. Dharmakīrti's theory of *apoha* claims that the causal basis for the formation of a successful concept is not a universal, but rather arises from a combination of both objective and subjective factors, both of which are expressions of unique momentary particulars. These factors are causally specific in that each momentary particle gives rise to only its causal descendent in the subsequent moment. The objective factors are the causal specificity of these various particulars. The subjective factors are the habits, goals, and desires of sentient beings that lead them to ignore the fact that all particulars are unique, instead focusing only on the ways in which some different things seem to fulfill the same goal.

The ontology underlying this theory is fundamentally shaped by the problematics of earlier Buddhist views that Dharmakīrti inherits. Although Dharmakīrti generally seems to accept the Abhidharma ontology of ultimately real particulars that have different causal capacities, at key moments he rejects the idea that any kind of diversity—from spatial extension to the mere differentiation of a moment of awareness into subject and object—could be ultimately real. Following the 4<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Vasubandhu, Dharmakīrti finally affirms that only nondual consciousness is ultimately real: in reality, the appearance of a dualistically structured world is merely a cognitive error created by

beginningless karmic imprints. This error is, in fact, nothing but an error—we are simply wrong about the reality we attribute to things and people in the conventional world. None of the differences we experience in the conventional world have any grounding in ultimate reality. Indeed, in the few places where Dharmakīrti gestures toward his final ontology, ultimate reality is generally characterized through negation, as precisely the lack of the structures of conventional experience.<sup>9</sup>

The question of whether or not Dharmakīrti's final ontology actually supports his account of our ordinary experience of the world inspires the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva critique of his ideas. Although these Śaivas avail themselves of Dharmakīrti's account of concept formation, they claim that Dharmakīrti's reliance on beginningless karmic imprints cannot actually bridge the gap between nondual ultimate consciousness and the everyday world of mutually opposed subjects and objects. Moreover, in contrast to Dharmakīrti's general refusal to provide an ultimate grounding for the conventional world, these Śaivas claim that a successful ontology can and must address this question. Their sophisticated adaptation of Dharmakīrti's theories allows them to account for the transition from their own articulation of ultimate reality as Śiva's nonconceptual self-realization to the conventional worlds that we ordinarily experience. For these Śaivas, the diversity we experience within the conventional world cannot be purely the result of an error. Rather, it is an expression of the nondual differentiation inherent to ultimate consciousness itself. While this consciousness always exceeds the limited realities of various types of sentient beings, these realities themselves are nothing but Śiva's play of manifesting himself in diverse forms for the sheer joy of partaking in different experiences.

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<sup>9</sup> As I will discuss in Chapters I and IV, there may be an additional, Madhyamaka level of analysis beyond the Yogācāra level.

The key insight animating both these traditions is that the mutual construction of self and world is fundamental to what we mean by reality, and that this construction is driven by desire. Where they differ is on the implications of the relationship between concept formation and subject/object duality for the nature of this desire: is desire the expression of ignorance that fuels our entrapment in *samsāra*, the painful cycle of repeated death and rebirth? Or rather, is desire an inherent part of ultimate consciousness in the form of the agency that drives Śiva’s self-realization? How do these different understandings of desire impact what we experience as real, both as subjects in the everyday world and in terms of the realization of ultimate consciousness, which is beyond the duality of subject and object? Alas, this dissertation does not comprehend a final answer to these questions. However, introducing the idea that there is no such thing as *the* conventional world—that rather, the various realities sentient beings inhabit are ongoing constructions defined by intersubjective coherence, not by a simple reflection of a single objective world—could contribute to furthering these inquiries.

### *Chapter Outline*

Along these lines, this dissertation documents the ways in which each tradition accounts for the experience of conventional worlds that appear to be so at odds with what really exists. It proceeds in four chapters through close textual analysis and translation of salient portions of Sanskrit works, always with an eye to their relevance to contemporary discussions.

Chapter I, “The Ontological Problem with Conventional Experience,” establishes why the entities we perceive as real in the conventional world are ontologically suspect for each tradition. Dharmakīrti engages this question from two distinct perspectives. First,

in line with the broadly accepted Ābhidharmika ontology of his time, he generally identifies the primary problem with conventional experience as being the tendency of sentient beings to think that real universals exist and that these universals account for all types of continuity in the conventional world. In contrast to this naïve view of ordinary persons, Dharmakīrti holds that only momentary, causally efficacious particulars are real. However, at certain key moments Dharmakīrti rejects this ontology in favor of a Yogācāra position that holds that the only ultimate reality is nondual consciousness, which is the utterly pure and undifferentiated capacity for manifestation (*prakāśa*).<sup>10</sup> At this level, the true problem with conventional experience is that it presents the world as reified into the dualistic structures of subject and object.

The Pratyabhijñā Śaivas agree with Dharmakīrti's Yogācāra stance that nondual consciousness is all that is ultimately real, but, unlike Dharmakīrti, they posit that the diversity observed in the conventional world must be somehow inherent in the ultimate itself. They express the ways in which the ultimate enfolds all conventional realities through a complex adaptation of the Sāṅkhyan *tattvas* and the introduction of *vimarśa* (realization) as an additional necessary attribute of ultimate consciousness. Finally, they align this *vimarśa* with the Grammarian Bhartṛhari's postulation that some type of language in the form of the various levels of *vāc* is inherent to ultimate consciousness.

Chapter II, “*Apoha* and the Creation of the Objects of Practical Activity for Dharmakīrti,” provides an in-depth exploration of Dharmakīrti's theory of how

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<sup>10</sup> I follow Lyne Bansat-Boudon's suggestion here in translating *prakāśa* with “manifestation” as opposed to the more common translations of “light” or “luminosity.” For a detailed discussion of the difficulty of balancing a metaphor implicit in a Sanskrit term with preserving the straight-forward philosophical import of said term, see Bansat-Boudon (2014).

successful activity is possible within the conventional world. Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory is the key to his response. Dharmakīrti critiques the idea that universals are ultimately real through a detailed articulation of why they are not causally efficacious. Rather, the apparent utility of concepts derives from the causal specificity of the particulars upon which sentient beings construct them. Sentient beings perform this construction based on their goals, habits, and desires, which lead them to selectively ignore certain parts of their experiences.

Given the complexity of this theory and the variety of ways in which it has been interpreted, this chapter focuses rather narrowly on Dharmakīrti's most thorough exploration of *apoha* in portions of his autocommentary in his magnum opus, the PVSV. Presenting Dharmakīrti's articulation of this theory in this way will provide a basis for investigating various contemporary and medieval critiques of his theory. These critiques, as well as Dharmakīrti's potential responses, will be the subjects of the following chapters.

Chapter III, "*Vāsanā* and the Creation of the Worlds of Conventional Experience," will explore major contemporary critiques of *apoha* and examine the possible ways in which Dharmakīrti's use of beginningless karmic imprints (*anādivāsanā*) could respond to these critiques. Following the main line of contemporary scholarship, I focus on critiques of whether or not Dharmakīrti's ontology of unique particulars allows him to account for the judgment of sameness (*ekapratyavamarśajñāna*) that is central to his *apoha* theory. Mark Siderits initiates an early line of inquiry into whether or not the process of *apoha* may be formalized in terms of two different types of negation (Siderits 1982). This approach has inspired a number of follow-ups, which ultimately shed doubt



on whether or not the tools of analytical philosophy can provide a successful defense of the judgment of sameness. Stepping aside from an analytical framework, Dan Arnold provides a transcendental critique of whether or not *apoha* can account for the initial setting of a convention. He contends that it cannot (Arnold 2013).

While these critiques bring up compelling points, I argue that the specifically Yogācāra context of Dharmakīrti's use of beginningless karmic imprints (*anādivāsanā*) may provide additional resources for thinking through Dharmakīrti's understanding of why conventional worlds appear in certain ways to certain sentient beings. Later classical Indian traditions, including the Pratyabhijñā, understood this Yogācāra context as a key part of Dharmakīrti's theory, and some of their most salient critiques were addressed precisely to the question of whether or not beginningless karmic imprints can account for the diversity manifest in the conventional world *if* the diversity of these imprints has no grounding whatsoever in ultimate consciousness.

Chapter IV, "*Apoha* and the Creation of the Worlds of Conventional Experience in Pratyabhijñā Śaiva Thought," explores the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva critique and appropriation of Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory. A key aspect of these Śaivas' critique of Dharmakīrti's theories focuses on the question of the relationship between nondual ultimate consciousness and the diversity manifest within conventional experience. This relationship itself hinges on the nature of time: for Dharmakīrti, ultimate consciousness is absolutely pure and undifferentiated, and the diversity of the conventional world is merely an error attributable to beginningless ignorance. In contrast, for these Śaivas, the diversity of the conventional world is an expression of a nondual differentiation inherent

to ultimate consciousness itself, and beginningless time is the manifestation of this differentiation within conventional worlds.

Having critiqued the idea that the diversity of conventional experience could be due to a beginningless karmic imprint that is not inherent to ultimate consciousness, these Śaivas adapt Dharmakīrti's own *apoha* theory to account for the formation of conventional worlds consisting of limited subject/object pairs. A key move in this articulation is the alignment of the error of subject/object duality with conceptuality. These Śaivas identify the act of carving out limited worlds of experience with an inherent expression of Śiva's ultimate freedom. Within these conventional worlds, the causal expression of the preconceptual universals (*sāmānya*) inherent to the ultimate as the nondual strands of different appearances (*ābhāsa*) serves to delimit the perception of a specific object by a specific subject.

This dissertation ends with broader reflections on what it means for something to be real and by sketching a possible site for a particularly productive contemporary conversation: Alan Allport's theory of attention as an emergent phenomenon. I do not claim that either these reflections or my engagement with Allport are comprehensive; rather, they are indications of future directions in a comparative philosophy of human experience rooted in classical Indian texts.

## **Part II: On the Methods and Merits of Talking with Dead Strangers**

My dissertation will differ from and build on previous studies through my sustained focus on the interplay between Dharmakīrti and Abhinavagupta's philosophical works with an eye toward contemporary discussions. In this, I align myself with a growing emphasis on

the contemporary relevance of classical Indian thought. For example, the currently active Routledge Hindu Studies Series defines its goal as follows:

The Series seeks to promote excellent scholarship and, in relation to it, an open and critical conversation among scholars and the wider audience of interested readers. Though contemporary in its purpose, the Series recognizes the importance of retrieving the classic texts and ideas, beliefs and practices, of Hindu traditions, so that the great intellectuals of these traditions may as it were become conversation partners in the conversations of today. (Taber 2005, front matter)

These potential conversation partners are, of course, not limited to Hindu traditions. The emerging field of Buddhist philosophy within the American academy documents the merits of talking with dead South Asian Buddhists, as well. There are, however, a number of methodological questions such a task invites. To wit: is such a conversation even possible, especially if one wants to talk to dead strangers who are distant in place, culture, and assumptions as well as in time? Moreover, what would be the point of such a conversation? Finally, even if such a conversation is possible and useful, what is the best way to go about having it?

In hopes that this dissertation is not an exercise in futility, I offer a defense of the methods and merits of engaging classical Indian thinkers in comparative philosophical analysis. For reasons that I will explore below, I consider any act of interpreting two or more texts in light of each other to be a comparative project. Therefore, I will examine both the conversation I create between Dharmakīrti and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas and my own attempts to bring their insights into contemporary conversations as comparative acts.

*On the Merits of Comparison*

Given the complexity of accurately presenting even one of the thinkers on whom I focus, an obvious question arises about the scope of this project: why write about three thinkers in two distinct traditions, as opposed to focusing on just one? I posit two considerations, one Indological and one philosophical, that justify this approach. In short, I hold that a comparative approach allows for a better understanding of both the texts themselves and the wider applicability of insights drawn from them.

The first consideration is relatively straightforward. As mentioned above, the texts on which I focus are themselves dialogical. A full appreciation of the arguments of the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas in particular is difficult to achieve without taking Dharmakīrti's work into account. While many scholars have noted this fact, scholarship to date tends to take these Śaivas' presentation of Dharmakīrti's ideas at face value.<sup>11</sup> While I am certainly sympathetic to this move, examining Dharmakīrti's own articulation may reveal ways in which these Śaivas (intentionally or otherwise) alter key ideas. This is most relevant in relation to the concept of a concept (*vikalpa*) itself, which undergoes a subtle but significant shift from Dharmakīrti to these Śaivas. Moreover, viewing Dharmakīrti's works in light of other traditions' critiques and appropriations of his ideas highlights certain issues—and potential responses to these issues—that are not immediately

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<sup>11</sup> David Lawrence's *Rediscovering God with Transcendental Argument* is a prime example. In his chapter titled "The Challenge of the Buddhist Opponents," Lawrence remarks in passing, "For the sake of manageability, the presentation will largely be based on the Śaivas' own interpretation of the Buddhist challenge" (Lawrence 1999, 71). While Isabelle Ratié's work engages Dharmakīrti (as well as the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva texts themselves) with considerably more care, she also tends to focus on the Pratyabhijñā presentation of Buddhist ideas. See in particular Ratié (2007; 2010; 2014a) for examples of this approach. Raffaele Torella's explorations of the influence of Dharmakīrtian Buddhism on Pratyabhijñā thought also take this approach. For some examples, see Torella (1992; 2007a; 2013).

apparent through looking at his works in isolation. In particular, the importance of Dharmakīrti's Yogācāra background saliently emerges based on the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva critique of his use of beginningless karmic imprints (*anādivāsanā*) to account for the appearance of differentiation in the conventional world. In this way, simply attempting to understand the texts themselves—even without any regard for the broader applicability of their insights—benefits from a comparative approach.

Second, carefully constructed comparisons allow for the emergence of insights not reducible to either of the compared traditions alone. Comparison thereby becomes a powerful tool for articulating questions and responses that are relevant beyond the confines of the traditions themselves. This explicitly comparative aspect of my project is the reason why I engage classical Indian texts in the first place.

My focus on the irreducibility of comparative insights emerges from my engagement with theories of comparison within religious studies. Comparative approaches have not always received the most favorable evaluation. Even Jonathan Z. Smith, a major practitioner of the comparative history of religions, launched an early attack against the “embarrassments” of comparative methodologies that mistake subjective evaluations of similarity for real, objective sameness present in the outside world. In Smith's account, comparativists thereby engage in “magical” thinking as opposed to basing themselves on sound “scientific” principles that would reflect the true state of the phenomena they study (Smith 1982). As Smith reiterates in his short response ending the 2000 edited volume *A Magic Still Dwells*, which responds to various critiques of comparison in religious studies beginning with Smith's, the primary problem with comparison as it historically has been deployed in the academy is that it buries difference

under an imperialist, ideological, and teleological quest to find sameness underlying all human expressions—a sameness which is then used to justify positing post-Enlightenment Western Man as the paradigm for humanity.

As Wendy Doniger describes, postmodernist and postcolonialist critiques of comparison similarly focus on the illegitimacy of making the Other into the same and emphasize the epistemological violence wrought on non-hegemonic subjects by Western scholars who attempt to engage works from cultures other than their own. Indeed, many early scholars of comparative religion did posit strict hierarchies between various traditions, with their own Protestant Christianity unsurprisingly coming out on top. However, Doniger emphasizes that an obsessive focus on difference can be just as subject to ideological and political manipulation as a focus on sameness. As she notes:

Either similarity or difference may lead to a form of paralyzing reductionism and demeaning essentialism, and thence into an area where “difference” itself can be politically harmful. For, where extreme universalism means that the other is exactly like you, extreme nominalism means that the other may not be human at all... Essentialized difference can become an instrument of dominance; European colonialism was supported by a discourse of difference. (Doniger 2000, 66)

By definition, discourses of absolute difference deny that two phenomena—individuals, cultures, texts, ideas—have anything at all in common, and therefore deny that there is any basis for communication between them. As Doniger puts it, “If we start with the assumption of absolute difference, there can be no conversation, and we find ourselves trapped in the self-reflexive garden of a Looking-Glass ghetto, forever meeting ourselves walking back in through the cultural door through which we are trying to escape” (2000,

65). Taken to its extreme, the focus on difference in the contemporary academy results in an essentialist understanding of who is allowed to engage certain topics: no one born outside of a given group has any right to speak about that group, and the ideas of different groups have nothing to say to each other.

If it were true that different cultures are incommensurable, then not only my attempt to bring certain classical Indian thinkers into contemporary conversations, but the mere fact that I am a white American studying Indian texts would be an oppressive exercise in epistemological violence that only serves to further Western imperialist power structures. I fully recognize that the history of Indology is not an innocent one and that the act of comparison has political consequences. However, I also agree with Doniger that the most powerful response to marginalization and oppression of non-Western voices in the contemporary academy is not to “close the comparativist shop,” but rather to engage in careful study that allows these underrepresented views to change the contemporary conversation (2000, 66). As Doniger notes, “the usual alternative to appropriating a foreign text (however inadequate, or exploitative, or projective that appropriation may be) can be even worse: ignoring it or scorning it” (2000, 67). The study of Indian philosophy in particular in the contemporary academy suffers far more from the idea that Indians, being so different from us and so caught up in religion, didn’t even have philosophy than from the idea that Indian philosophers are so similar to us that they have nothing new to add to Western discourses.

The key consideration, then, becomes not the *possibility* of comparison, but its purpose. Indeed, even as Smith himself critiques comparative enterprises that focus on sameness, he still recognizes that “comparison, the bringing together of two or more

objects for the purpose of nothing either similarity or dissimilarity, is the omnipresent substructure of human thought. Without it, we could not speak, perceive, learn, or reason... That comparison has, at times, led us astray there can be no doubt; that comparison remains *the* method of scholarship is likewise beyond question” (cited in Holdrege 2000, 77). Smith identifies “the ‘end’ of comparison” as “the redescription of the exempla (each in light of the other) and a rectification of the academic categories in relation to which they have been imagined” (Smith 2000, 239). Smith’s focus here on scholarly self-awareness and openness to change is well taken. As Doniger and many other comparativists emphasize, one of the salient functions of comparisons is to make us better scholars: more attentive to difference, more aware of our own limitations, less naïve about the impossibility of our interpretations being objective.

However, the purpose of my comparative project goes farther than just changing academic categories. Simply put, I believe there is something powerfully and meaningfully true in Dharmakīrti’s and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas’ accounts of how human experience works—not least in their sophisticated understanding of what it even means for something to *be* true. As I will explore, the truth of conventional worlds is not something present in an objective reality independent of human awareness. Realities are constructed, and the shared world of human experience is precisely an expression of this construction. There are still things that are true and false for humans even if an experience of something’s truth or falsity is rooted as much in subjective factors as in an objective reality. The shared and idiosyncratic aspects of our experiences depend on each other; neither complete sameness nor total difference characterizes the realities of human experience.



### *Comparison and Philosophy*

This question of sameness and diversity feeds directly from comparative studies in general into the narrower field of comparative philosophy. In this subfield, too, comparison has something of a bad name. In his most recent remarks on the methods of engaging Buddhist philosophy, Jay Garfield indicates:

Philosophy is, after all, the reflexive discipline: just what it is to practice philosophy in the company of texts from multiple cultural traditions is itself a philosophical problem. One approach to this practice... is *comparative philosophy*. We needed comparative philosophy at an earlier stage of cultural globalization when it was necessary to juxtapose different philosophical traditions in order to gain entrée and in order to learn how to read alien traditions as philosophical. But now we can safely say, “been there, done that.” I therefore take for granted that the days when “comparative philosophy” was the task are over, and a different methodology is necessary at this stage of philosophical practice.

Garfield prefers the term “cross-cultural philosophy” to describe what he does. Contrasting his designation to Mark Siderits’ idea of fusion philosophy, Garfield states that he aims “not to fuse philosophical traditions, but rather, while respecting their distinct heritages and horizons, to put them in dialogue with each other, recognizing enough commonality of purpose, concern and even method that conversation is possible, but still enough difference in outlook that conversation is both necessary and informative” (Garfield 2015, 3). “Cross-cultural philosophy” seems to be rapidly overtaking “comparative philosophy” to name the sub-discipline concerned with generating insights into philosophical questions through engagement with texts from non-Western traditions.

Why, then, do I hold on to this outdated moniker of comparative philosophy? I have no particular beef with cross-cultural philosophy. In fact, I think it describes the best aspects of comparative enterprises quite well and does dodge the earlier associations of comparison with imperialist essentializing. However, Garfield (most likely intentionally) presents a rather simplistic view of the purpose of comparison here. As many of the contributors to *A Magic Still Dwells* testify, neither the quest for sameness nor mere juxtaposition are the goals of comparative inquiry in the contemporary academy. Rather, comparison is “a playing across the ‘gap’ of differences, for the purpose of gaining intellectual insight” (Patton and Ray 2000, 4). As Diana Eck wryly notes, “‘Comparative’ and ‘historical’ are not the reifying approaches they are often described as being” (Eck 2000, 132). Perhaps comparison has been more slandered than justly found wanting; rebranding the enterprise might not be necessary.

A somewhat more substantial reason, however, also motivates my continued defense of comparison. The power of comparative analysis is not limited to cross-cultural engagements. Comparative philosophy does not have a special problem that ‘normal’ philosophy can ignore. Rather, to again quote Holdrege quoting Smith, comparison is “the omnipresent substructure of human thought” and “*the* method of scholarship” (Holdrege 2000, 77). All human scholarship is comparative because human thought is comparative. As Holdrege contends, comparative analysis is “an inextricable component of the process through which we construct and apply our scholarly categories and models” (2000, 83). If, as Garfield claims, “philosophy is the reflexive discipline,” then comparative philosophy is philosophy *par excellence*. Rather than running from this designation, owning comparative philosophy as a field of inquiry may lead to a

particularly productive opening onto the ways in which we make sense of our worlds—both our everyday worlds of experience and the interpretive worlds we construct through our engagement with texts, cultures, and ideas.

Emphasizing that the interpretive questions brought up by studying classical Indian texts are not unique to the sub-field of comparative philosophy opens up opportunities to engage in broader reflections about the purpose of studying dead philosophers full-stop. If a scholar in the contemporary academy wants to hold that talking with dead people is a worthwhile philosophical venture, it is difficult to avoid passing through the problems posed by Richard Rorty's method of rational reconstruction. This method has been rather flatly rejected, and with good reason. Rorty assumes with a great deal of hubris that "we" contemporary philosophers (by which Rorty actually means himself and those who agree with him) simply know better than "the mighty dead" on a host of important philosophical questions. The benefits of providing a rational reconstruction of a dead philosopher's work, then, have nothing to do with advancing or changing our own understandings, but rather represent an exercise in "assur[ing] ourselves that there has been rational progress in the course of recorded history—that we differ from our ancestors on grounds which our ancestors could be led to accept" (Rorty 1984, 51). Rorty thereby aims to "re-educate" dead philosophers such that "in philosophy as in science, the mighty mistaken dead look down from heaven at our recent successes, and are happy to find that their mistakes have been corrected" (1984, 51). Frankly, I could not care less about what Dharmakīrti thinks about us as he looks down from (Tuṣita?) heaven. Since rational reconstruction as Rorty describes it assumes that "we" already know best, I do not engage in rational reconstruction in his sense.

However, I also do not intend the opposite: I am not interested in using classical Indian philosophers to prove us moderns wrong, or in claiming that the great sages of India figured everything out millennia ago. The merits of comparative philosophy come not in proving one side or the other right—a task that is likely impossible since it would necessarily privilege what it means to be “right” according to one side or the other—but rather in generating insights not reducible to either tradition alone. In this spirit, I contend that the perspectives offered by Dharmakīrti and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas are so salient *precisely because* their worldviews, aims, and assumptions differ from our own. Their distinctive responses to the question of how human experience works could help guide contemporary debates in new directions.

Recent scholarship in the growing field of Indian philosophy strongly attests this claim. Christian Coseru makes a particularly powerful case for the merits of considering Buddhist philosophy alongside contemporary theories on perception in his excellent book *Perceiving Reality* (2012). While Coseru works from a specifically philosophical standpoint, he emphasizes the importance of considering all available evidence—including empirical evidence from various branches of neuro- and cognitive science—if one wants to understand human experience. In this, he self-consciously echoes Lakoff and Johnson’s call for an “empirically responsible philosophy.” As Lakoff and Johnson describe, such a philosophy is “informed by an ongoing critical engagement with the best empirical science available” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 552). With all three of these thinkers, I agree that “empirical responsibility in philosophy is important because it makes better self-understanding possible. It gives us deeper insight into who we are and what it means to be human” (1999, 552).

Lakoff and Johnson also point out that the dialogue between philosophy and cognitive science needs to go both ways. They explain what philosophy has to offer to contemporary scientific inquiry:

Philosophical sophistication is necessary if we are to keep science honest. Science cannot maintain a self-critical stance without a serious familiarity with philosophy and alternative philosophies. Scientists need to be aware of how hidden a priori philosophical assumptions can determine their scientific results. This is an important lesson to be drawn from the history of first-generation cognitive science, where we saw how much analytic philosophy intruded into the initial conception of what cognitive science was to be. (1999, 552)

Philosophically responsible science, then, is just as necessary as empirically responsible philosophy.

Yet, as Coseru also notes, even once an interested contemporary community has agreed that the insights of medieval Indian philosophers belong in current debates, the question of how exactly one goes about making the dead speak still remains. As critiques of the impossibility of translation or uncovering the original intention of the author within the Western philosophical canon demonstrate, this is not a problem limited to scholars of Indian philosophy. However, the particular history of Orientalism, the still-present bias against “anything East of the Suez”<sup>12</sup> in contemporary philosophy departments, and the

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<sup>12</sup> This is a reference to Anthony Flew’s infamous remark dismissing the existence of “Eastern Philosophy”: “Philosophy, as the word is understood here, is concerned first, last, and all the time with argument. It is, incidentally, because most of what is labeled *Eastern Philosophy* is not so concerned—rather than any reason of European parochialism—that this book draws no material from any source east of the Suez,” quoted in Coseru (2012, 19).

sheer complexity of both the language and context of classical Sanskrit philosophy make this problem particularly acute. In an important sense, the most powerful argument against denigrations of the specific possibility of a Western academic discipline of Indian philosophy is empirical: careful studies of Indian philosophy that are both well-grounded in primary texts and clearly indicate that these texts “are doing philosophy” have been and continue to be produced. Moreover, the construction of a careful and self-conscious comparative space hopefully helps to minimize the drawbacks and maximize the benefits of such a comparative approach.

*Blended Spaces and the Structure of Comparison*

I draw on Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner’s articulation of blended spaces for the specific structure of my comparative project. The merits of conceptualizing my comparison as a blend will come to the fore in my Conclusion in particular, where I will provide a case study for the ways in which insights drawn from exploring these traditions in relation to each other can contribute to contemporary debates. One of the most useful methodological resources found in conceptual blending theory is its description of the development of emergent structure in blended spaces. As Fauconnier and Turner describe: “The blend develops emergent structure that is not in the inputs. First, *composition* of elements from the inputs makes relations available in the blend that do not exist in the separate inputs... Second, *completion* brings additional structure to the blend... Third, by means of *completion*, this familiar structure is recruited into the blended space. At this point, the blend is integrated” (Fauconnier and Turner 42-43). Integrated blends allow types of thought and problem-solving not possible outside of the blend.

Fauconnier and Turner describe some of the essential aspects of blending as follows. At least four mental spaces are needed to create a blend: two inputs, a generic space, and blend. These spaces connect through a “conceptual integration network” (2003, 47). In the conceptual integration network, partial matching occurs between certain elements in the input spaces. Fauconnier and Turner term these matches “counterpart connections,” which can be of many kinds. The counterpart connections form a “generic space” where “the structure that inputs seem to share is captured” (2003, 47). This generic space “maps onto each of the inputs” (2003, 47). The generic space holds together the elements that are counterparts in the inputs. A blended space arises in relation to this generic space. As Fauconnier and Turner describe, “In blending, structure from two input mental spaces is projected to a new space, the blend. Generic spaces and blended spaces are related: blends contain generic structure captured in the generic space but also contain more specific structure, and they can contain structure that is impossible for the inputs” (2003, 47). Within the blend, thoughts not reducible to any individual input can arise.

The structure of my blend is modeled after the “Debate with Kant Network” that Fauconnier and Turner use as one of their examples. In this example, a contemporary philosopher says, “I claim that reason is a self-developing capacity. Kant disagrees with me on this point. He says it’s innate, but I answer that that’s begging the question, to which he counters, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, that only innate ideas have power. But I say to that, What about neuronal group selection? And he gives no answer” (2003, 60). They provide a diagram for the “Debate with Kant”:

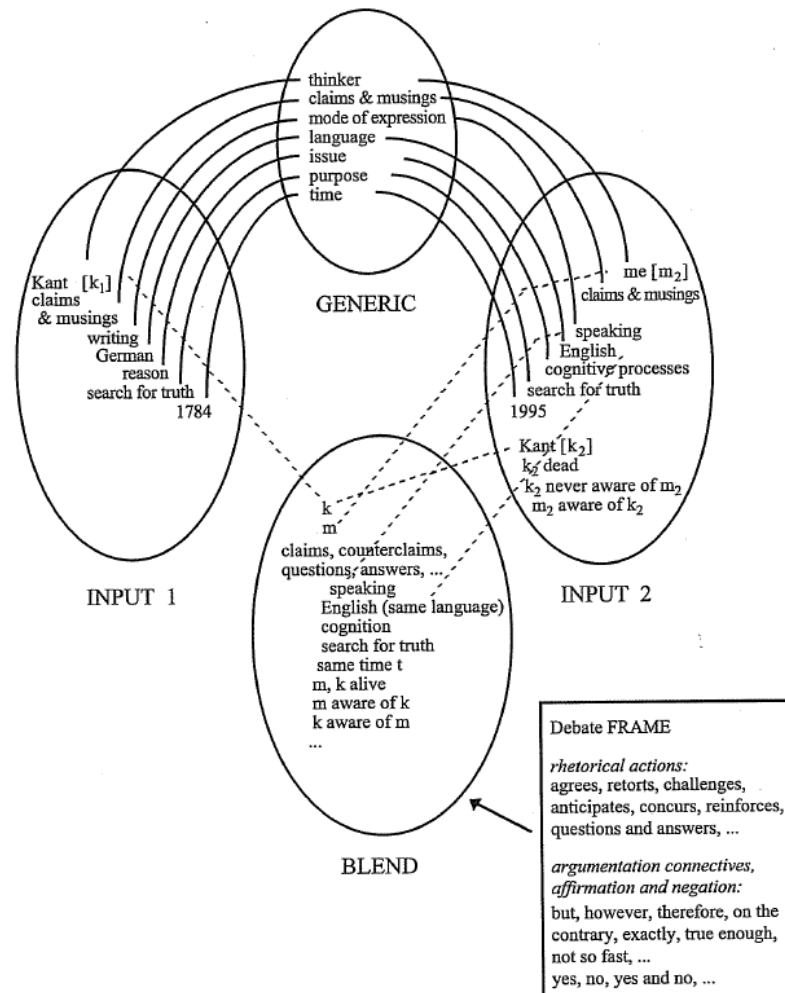


FIGURE 4.1 THE DEBATE WITH KANT NETWORK

Fauconnier and Turner (62).

This diagram gives a very concrete feel for the complexity involved even in a simple blend. In particular, it indicates that the debate frame is something that emerges in the blend. This is so even though both thinkers in their own input spaces understand themselves to be part of a larger lineage of philosophical argumentation that proceeds based on debates. In each input, there is one person. In the blend, there are two; the debate is an emergent structure that could not occur outside of the blend.



There is a large difference between the blend I employ in this dissertation and the “Debate with Kant.” My blend will actually have three input spaces. I am the third input. My input is both the most and the least important one. The blend could not happen without me; I create its structure and decide what to bring in and what to leave behind. Even more, the exponents of the two traditions who debate in my blend are my animations—and I am an imperfect necromancer at best. While my explicit voice will remain invisible throughout most of my work, and I will give as detailed and accurate account as possible of these traditions’ positions, in a real sense I will be the only one talking. But this is what is interesting about blends. While blends foreground the fact that they are imaginative creations—no one thinks the above-mentioned philosopher really thinks that he’s actually talking to Kant—they also allow for a kind of perspective switching that can valuably open up the possibilities for thinking something through. With all this in mind, I turn now to these traditions’ articulation of the ontological problem with conventional experience.

## CHAPTER I: THE ONTOLOGICAL PROBLEM WITH CONVENTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Dharmakīrti, Utpaladeva, and Abhinavagupta all developed their accounts of how conventional experience works within specific soteriological frameworks. Their respective traditional affiliations shaped their articulation of both the problem with the everyday world and the solution to this problem. Even as they worked within the constraints of their traditions to develop strikingly original theories, they retained certain basic commitments. Perhaps the most fundamental of these commitments is the idea that the ultimate nature of reality is not the same as how reality appears in everyday life. Humans both see things that do not really exist and fail to see what is really there. Both traditions develop complex ontologies that attempt to account for how things appear to be and how they really are. Both wrestle with a basic problem: if, as they claim, everything is really nondual consciousness, then why do external objects seem to appear to people—including ourselves—who experience themselves as distinct subjects enduring in time and space? This chapter will articulate what each tradition considers to be the ontological basis for conventional reality. The subsequent chapters will address how each tradition explains the ways in which conventional experience appears given that this experience is so different from what really exists.

This chapter will proceed in two parts. Part I will explore Dharmakīrti's ontology in terms of its External Realist and Epistemic Idealist phases. In this section, I will pay particular attention to the pervasive influence of Vasubandhu on all levels of Dharmakīrti's thought, including in the pedagogical motivations supporting his complex ontology. Part II will examine the Pratyabhijñā ontology in terms of its adaptation of the

Sāṅkhyan *tattvas* and the alignment of manifestation (*prakāśa*), realization (*vimarśa*), and *vāc*.

### **Part I: Dharmakīrti's Ontologies**

Dharmakīrti's alignment with a post-Vasubandhu strand of the Mahāyāna leads him to a complex, multi-staged ontology. Throughout most of his analyses, he speaks from a perspective that affirms the existence of real external objects (*bāhyārtha*). Like Vasubandhu before him, Dharmakīrti affirms earlier Ābhidharmika commitments to causality (*kāryakāraṇabhāva*) and simplicity (*ekatva*) as the marks of what is ultimately real (*paramārthasat*). Further in line with Vasubandhu, Dharmakīrti pushes these commitments to eventually deny the reality of external objects on the grounds that external objects are both causally irrelevant to the production of a moment of awareness and logically incoherent because they cannot withstand mereological reduction. Dharmakīrti's ontology thereby passes through what John Dunne has termed an External Realist perspective, which was broadly shared by Buddhists in his time, to a more refined Epistemic Idealist perspective that specifically bases itself on Vasubandhu's Yogācāra positions (Dunne 2004, 66–67).<sup>13</sup> Dharmakīrti presents his final ontology by critiquing

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<sup>13</sup> Dunne's articulation of these "sliding scales of analysis" is based off of McClintock's (2002, 139–45) earlier use of this terminology. McClintock herself modifies Dreyfus' identification of "ascending scales of analysis" in Dharmakīrti's thought, noting that while "each level of analysis supersedes the previous level in terms of its accuracy, I think it is important to emphasize that a person with a higher level of understanding can (and indeed *should*) descend to a lower level of analysis for the purposes of debate" (2002, 163, fn 53).

the apparent differentiation of a cognition into subject, object, and awareness. At this highest level, only nondual reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*, *svasaṃvitti*) remains.<sup>14</sup>

### *Dharmakīrti's External Realist Ontology*

As Dunne has hypothesized, part of Dharmakīrti's goal seems to be to develop an account of conventional experience that could be broadly shared among his Buddhist co-religionists. To this end, most of his theories are presented from an “External Realist” level of analysis, which Dunne describes as “the theory of external things as unique, momentary particulars” (2004, 58). A particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) is a momentary, utterly unique, and ultimately real entity. Dharmakīrti, following Vasubandhu, asserts that the ultimately real must be irreducible (2004, 81). At this level of analysis, real external particulars causally produce a phenomenal form (*ākāra*) within awareness. Practical activity (*vyavahāra*) within the world proceeds on the basis of these phenomenal forms, which are a means of trustworthy awareness (*pramāṇa*) if, once conceptualized through the *apoha* process, they produce a determination (*niścaya*) that leads to the attainment of the perceiver's object (*arthakriyā*).

At this level, Dharmakīrti presents his ontology in terms of the two objects that can be known by a trustworthy awareness (*pramāṇa*): the universal (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) and the particular (*svalakṣaṇa*). Although both of these objects are real (*sat*), they are not real in the same way. As he states in PV 3.3: “In this regard, that which is capable of causal efficacy is ultimately real; the other is said to be conventionally real. They are the

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<sup>14</sup> As I will discuss briefly below, Dharmakīrti's complex account of causality and ultimate reality could indicate that there is an additional Madhyamaka level beyond even the Epistemic Idealist.

particular and the universal.”<sup>15</sup> Both universals and particulars are real because each is the object of its own distinctive type of trustworthy awareness; universals are known through inference (*anumāna*) and particulars are known through perception (*pratyakṣa*). However, Dharmakīrti’s focus on causality as the mark of what is ultimately real leads him to reject the ultimate reality of universals. Since causality requires change and universals cannot change, only particulars are ultimately real. The world, then, consists in a variety of real things (variously referred to as *dharma*, *bhāva*, or *vastu*) that, while themselves constantly changing, causally give rise to perceptions that are incorrectly interpreted by a perceiver as referring to permanent entities.

Dharmakīrti’s definition of a particular as that which is capable of causal efficacy (*arthakriyāsamartha*) in PV 3.3 echoes his earlier emphasis on the importance of causality to determining what is ultimately real. Earlier, Dharmakīrti makes this same point in PV 1.166ab: “only that which is capable of causal efficacy is an ultimately real thing.”<sup>16</sup> Interpretation of the term *arthakriyā* is complicated by the ambiguity of *artha* in Sanskrit. Among the possible meanings of the Sanskrit term *artha*, the two most salient in this context are its meanings of “purpose” and of “thing.” *Arthakriyā*, then, could refer either to purposeful action toward a certain thing, or simply to the causal activity of a thing itself. Slightly disagreeing with earlier scholarship, Dunne emphasizes that, while both senses of *artha* are certainly operative in Dharmakīrti’s works, the causal sense is primary because “in at least one context—that of reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*)—the notion of *arthakriyā* may be applicable only in terms of sheer causal efficiency, since

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<sup>15</sup> *arthakriyāsamarthaṃ yat tad atra paramārthasat / anyat saṃvṛtisat proktaṃ te svasāmānyalakṣaṇe*, (Dharmakīrti 1979, 61), also translated in Dunne (2004, 392).

<sup>16</sup> *sa pāramāthiko bhāvo ya evārthakriyākṣamaḥ* (Dharmakīrti 1960, 84).

it is difficult to see how practical action (*vyavahāra*) makes sense within this context” (2004, 260).<sup>17</sup> While it tends to remain connected to the idea of a human purpose (*puruṣārtha*), *arthakriyā* primarily refers to the mere causal efficacy of a particular.

Given the importance of causality to Dharmakīrti’s accounts of perception and concept formation, however, it is striking that he immediately undermines even this claim. Indeed, the highly cryptic verse that follows may evince yet another level of analysis beyond even the Epistemic Idealist. Here, Dharmakīrti moves into an argument that is reminiscent of a Madhyamaka critique: “If someone objects that everything is incapable, [we respond that] this capacity is observed in the case of sprouts arising from seeds, and so on. If someone objects that that [capacity] is understood as conventional, then let it be just like that.”<sup>18</sup> Here, Dharmakīrti first rejects the idea that nothing is causally efficacious based on an appeal to causality as observed in the conventional world. However, the objector then points out that all Dharmakīrti has done is claim that causality is conventionally applicable; this does not support his claim in the previous verse that causality is the mark of something ultimately real. Dharmakīrti refuses to respond to this objection. Even more, he nominally agrees with his objector! At this point in the *Pramāṇavārttika*, Dharmakīrti seems to need his audience to accept the idea that causal

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<sup>17</sup> Here, Dunne refers to the fact that *svasaṃvedana* is considered to be a *pramāṇa* in relation to the mere sense of being conscious. Since this mere sense of awareness is not itself directed toward an object, its causal efficacy cannot be construed in terms of object-oriented action (Dunne 2004, 276). Rather, “reflexive awareness is reliable in that it reveals the mere fact of experience, which is the same as saying that it reveals the mere causal efficiency (*arthakriyā*) of awareness” (2004, 276).

<sup>18</sup> *aśaktaṃ sarvaṃ iti ced bījāder aṅkurādiṣu / dr̥ṣṭā śaktiḥ matā sā cet saṃvṛtyā ’stu yathā tathā*, PV 3.4 (Dharmakīrti 1979, 62), also translated in Dunne (2004, 392).

efficacy can be used to differentiate between what is real and what is unreal, and so he avoids addressing a final level of analysis that would call causality into question.<sup>19</sup>

Examining Dharmakīrti's reliance on Vasubandhu's works may help clarify both Dharmakīrti's use of causality to determine what is ultimately real and his somewhat conflicted attitude toward the status of causality itself. Summarizing Vasubandhu's arguments in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, Jonathan Gold indicates that “for Vasubandhu, to say that an entity *exists* means that it is actively engaged in causal relations with other entities. It makes no sense to imagine an existent entity that *fails* to produce its causal result, because in such a situation an entity is not an existent” (Gold 2014, 57). As Gold further points out, however, Vasubandhu's claim that what is real is only what is currently engaged in causal relationships does not enshrine causality itself as an ultimate

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<sup>19</sup> For an extended reading of this passage that questions whether or not Dharmakīrti's theories hold up in light of this apparent rejection of causality as ultimate, see Arnold (2013, 217–35). Arnold concludes that Dharmakīrti is not actually entitled to this rejection, which is only appropriate given a full Mādhyamika embrace of a supposedly ineliminably intentional aspect of conventional experience (Arnold 2013, 222). I will discuss Arnold's critique of Dharmakīrti in detail in Chapter III. Whether or not this passage should be understood to evince a full additional level of analysis beyond the Epistemic Idealist—that is, whether or not Dharmakīrti should ultimately be understood as a Mādhyamika rather than a Yogācārin—is a particularly complex question. This is in no small part because of the diverse ways in which Dharmakīrti's thought was received and interpreted by later Buddhist and Brahmanical traditions. In particular, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's hybrid Yogācāra-Madhyamaka supported reading Dharmakīrti's thought as ultimately compatible with Madhyamaka. For a number of different perspectives on the complex relationship between Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, see Garfield and Westerhoff (2015). However, while Buddhists from a number of subsequent traditions claimed Dharmakīrti as their own, Brahmanical traditions such as the Mīmāṃsā and Pratyabhijñā Śaivism tended to view him as the paradigmatic exponent of Vijñānavāda, their designation for the epistemological branch of Yogācāra. Since this dissertation is concerned with reading Dharmakīrti along side the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva critique and appropriation of his thought, I will primarily limit myself to discussing Dharmakīrti's Yogācārin context as his highest view. For more on the Brahmanical understanding of Dharmakīrti as a Yogācārin, see Ratié (2014a), discussed at length in Chapter IV.

reality. In the context of explaining Vasubandhu’s distinctive use of causality to refute the Sarvāstivāda doctrine of the reality of the three times, Gold reflects:

How can causal activity be real, if the entities that make up a causal series—at least those that are past and future—are unreal? The short answer is that, for Vasubandhu, causality itself is *not* substantially real, and is *not* a *dharma*... What makes one set of entities a “cause” is not something about its inherent nature, but rather a conceptual construction that we formulate by observing multiple entities’ behavior through time. Thus, whereas causality is what determines the presence, and the reality of an entity, *causality itself* is not a reality that may be affirmed, over and above the behavior of distinct entities. For this reason, while the determination of causality is how *we judge* what is real and what is not, causality itself is only a conceptual construction. (2014, 58)

Following Vasubandhu’s focus on causality, then, allows Dharmakīrti to differentiate between particulars, which he is content to at least provisionally accept as ultimately real, and universals, which, since they are not causally efficacious, are real only conventionally. Dharmakīrti further develops this distinction through arguments about why only particulars are ultimately real.

Dharmakīrti specifies that particulars, as opposed to universals, are causally efficacious because “an object that is fit for causal efficacy is not distributed.”<sup>20</sup> In maintaining that what is ultimately real cannot be distributed, Dharmakīrti follows both Vasubandhu’s stipulation that an ultimately real thing must be partless and Dignāga’s position that such a thing must be inexpressible (Dunne 2004, 79–80). As Dunne has

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<sup>20</sup> *arthakriyāyogyo ’rthaḥ nānveti*, PVSV ad 1.166 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 84).



pointed out, the combination of these two positions amounts to the claim that “the ultimately real is utterly unique. That is, each ultimately real entity is, as Dharmakīrti puts it, completely excluded or distinct from every other entity (*sarvato bhinna, sarvato vyāvṛtta, ekāntavyāvṛtta*, etc.)” (2004, 80–81). It is not distributed spatially, temporally, or linguistically. However, Dharmakīrti does at times seem to treat spatially extended objects, such as a pot, as if the entire thing were a particular. Dunne chalks this slippage up to Dharmakīrti’s rhetorical strategies and proposes that the causal efficacy of a spatially extended thing arises from the fact that this thing is made up of particulars (2004, 83).

Since Dharmakīrti treats perception as a causal process, his claim that only particulars are causally efficacious has an interesting corollary: only particulars are the objects of a perception. Dunne sketches out this argument: “first, a perception is the effect of its object. Second, only ultimately real entities produce effects. Therefore, only ultimately real entities—particulars—can be the objects of perception, for only ultimately real entities—particulars—produce effects” (2004, 85). For Dharmakīrti, the minimum causal criterion for something’s reality is that the thing be able to produce a phenomenal form (*ākāra*) of itself in a moment of awareness.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in Dharmakīrti’s early discussion of non-perception (*anupalabdhi*), he concisely states: “existence is just perception.”<sup>22</sup> However, how strongly this and similar statements should be read is a matter of some debate, both within and beyond the post-Dharmakīrtian tradition. It is clear that Dharmakīrti considers a causally efficacious particular to be the only object of a

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<sup>21</sup>See Dunne (2004, 275). See also Kyuma (2007, 476).

<sup>22</sup>*sattvam upalabdhir eva*, PVSV ad 1.3 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 4). For additional discussions of this passage, see Steinkellner (1994) and Dunne (2004, 85)

perception. Does he also reject the idea that an unperceived external object could be real? As I will explore in the next section, closely following both the content and style of Vasubandhu's arguments establishing that all things are merely representations of consciousness (*vijñāptimātra*), Dharmakīrti makes precisely this move.

### *Dharmakīrti's Epistemic Idealist Ontology*

While the External Realist level of analysis goes a long way toward explaining successful action within the everyday world, it is not the final step. Even within the External Realist level of analysis itself, Dharmakīrti's focus on causality leads him to chip away at the idea of external objects. First, he contends that the minimum criterion for something being causally efficacious is that it is able to project an image of itself into a moment of awareness (Dunne 2004, 85). Later, he points out that an external object is causally irrelevant to the production of a moment of awareness. Dharmakīrti's commentators indicate that Vasubandhu's mereological arguments provide additional proof that an external object is entirely impossible, and not just causally irrelevant. This gestures toward Dharmakīrti's final level of analysis: Epistemic Idealism informed by a broader Vijñānavādin context.

The last level of analysis rejects the idea that a moment of awareness could actually be variegated in any form. At this level, Dharmakīrti claims that the division of a moment of awareness into a phenomenal form of an object (*grāhyākāra*) as opposed to the phenomenal form of a subject (*grāhakākāra*), as well as any distinction based on this faulty appearance, is simply a produce of ignorance (Dunne 2004, 59). Dharmakīrti specifically rejects the existence of external objects through a neither-one-nor-many analysis (*ekānekavicāra*) of a moment of cognition itself. Here, since the division of a

moment of cognition into subject, object, and awareness fails a neither-one-nor-many critique, both the divisions themselves and any distinctions based thereon are not ultimately real.

The idea that Dharmakīrti employs multiple levels of analysis is somewhat controversial. Dunne's contention that Dharmakīrti consistently uses a neither-one-nor-many style of argumentation (*ekānekavicāra*) to lead a judicious person through ever more subtle levels of analysis has received the strong criticism. In particular, Birgit Kellner (2011) has challenged the idea that mereological arguments are Dharmakīrti's most important tool. From another angle, in a paper at the Fifth International Dharmakīrti Conference in Heidelberg, Lawrence McCrea (2014) questioned whether or not the different explanatory levels are in fact incompatible. On his argument, the articulation of a different level does not automatically require the abandonment of the previous level. Dan Arnold (2008) makes a similar argument when he claims that idealism with respect to what can be known, which is how he interprets Dunne's Epistemic Idealist level, is in fact exactly what Sautrāntikas and Yogācārin share.

A failure to take the larger context of Buddhist styles of argumentation into account may be a contributing factor to this controversy. Dharmakīrti is hardly the only Buddhist thinker to lean on the Buddha's articulation of the importance of employing skillful means (*upāya*) to carefully lead sentient beings from their current state of delusion to understanding reality in all of its counter-intuitive complexity. In a set of incisive analyses, Jonardon Ganeri (2007, 39–59, 97-123) links the protreptic function of the Buddha's teachings in the Nikāyas to later Mādhyamika hermeneutical strategies. Under this line of interpretation, the Buddha's discourses do not aim to formalize an

absolute truth that can be expressed and defended in the same terms in just any context.

As Ganeri explains:

The point is that the value of the truth is *internal* to a stage of life. The value of the truth is internal and conditional, but not for that reason instrumental... In and of itself, the truth is of indeterminate value; when it comes to have a definite value it is not as a means to some end but as one value among others, whose internal relationship with one another decides what it is for a given life to make sense to the person living it. (2007, 55–56)

Commenting on the beginning of the *Snake Sutta*, an oft-quoted episode in the Majjhima Nikāya in which the Buddha likens his own teachings to a poisonous snake, Ganeri proposes that “we must understand the ‘indirectness’ in the Buddha’s words—he is skillfully using his assertions in a way calculated to be the most effective method for shaking his audience out of their misconceptions, rather than asserting the whole of a truth which, though nuanced, would fail to hit home” (2007, 41).

While Ganeri focuses primarily on the Mādhyamika tradition’s use of these techniques, Dharmakīrti also quite explicitly links himself to a similar line of thought. At a crucial point in his transition from External Realism to Epistemic Idealism, Dharmakīrti states:

The ultimate nature of the cognitive content [in perception] is not known by any [ordinary beings] whose vision is not supreme; they do not know that ultimate nature because it is impossible for them to experience that content without the error (*viplava*) of subject and object. Therefore, [the buddhas], ignoring the

ultimate (*upekṣitatattvārtha*), close one eye like an elephant and propagate theories that involve external objects merely in accord with worldly conceptions.<sup>23</sup>

Dharmakīrti's use of sliding scales, then, is neither inexplicable nor even an anomaly within his tradition. Rather, he links to well-established pedagogical techniques in order to allow his ideas to influence a larger audience. Further embedding Dharmakīrti within a specifically Yogācārin context, Dharmakīrti closely follows Vasubandhu in both the content and style of his arguments.

Long before Dharmakīrti wrote his own ontologically complex works, Vasubandhu served as a brilliant proponent of a number of different, seemingly contradictory traditions. Gold notes that Vasubandhu “can be labeled with three distinct scholastic identities—Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, and Yogācāra—none of which applies to the full body of his work. What's more, his contribution to each was unique” (Gold 2014, 2). Both recent scholarship and traditional biographies have tried to make sense of Vasubandhu's complex positions by either bifurcating the man himself or positing that his works were primarily aimed at creating good textbooks (2014, 3–4). Gold dismisses Frauwallner's “two Vasubandhus” hypothesis, wherein the Vasubandhu who authored Śrāvaka works was the younger brother of an older Vasubandhu who wrote on the Mahāyāna (2014, 6–18). Gold's attitude toward the traditional account of the phases of Vasubandhu's career—wherein a contentious relationship with the dominant Kashmiri Vaibhāṣika tradition explains the tensions within Vasubandhu's Śrāvaka works, and a

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<sup>23</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 410). *asaṃviditattvā ca sā sarvāparadarśanaiḥ / asambhavād vinā teṣāṃ grāhyagrāhakaviplavaiḥ // tad upekṣitatattvārthaiḥ kṛtvā gajanimīlanam / kevalaṃ lokabuddhyaiva bāhyacintā pratanyate //*, PV 3.218-3.219 (Dharmakīrti 1979, 316).

conversion to the Mahāyāna at the behest of his older brother Asaṅga explains the Yogācāra works—is somewhat more complex. While Gold finds such a situation historically plausible, he also emphasizes that “to suggest that Vasubandhu was merely setting out a doctrinal structure for easy digestion is to entirely ignore his unique contributions to each system, and his vibrant philosophical voice” (2014, 4). Gold argues that the thread that unifies Vasubandhu’s thought—and in turn allowed Vasubandhu’s thought to serve as a “unifying Buddhist philosophy,” as the subtitle of his book claims—comes not from his doctrinal affiliation but from distinctive forms of argument and interpretation (2014, 4–5). Gold identifies Vasubandhu’s consistent use of causality to determine what is ultimately real as the defining argumentative line spanning Vasubandhu’s works.

As we have seen, this focus on the connection between causality and reality also defines Dharmakīrti’s works. Moreover, like Vasubandhu in his Yogācāra works, Dharmakīrti uses causal arguments as a segue to his eventual rejection of the existence of external objects. Commenting on the beginning stages of Vasubandhu’s *Viṃśikā*, Gold notes that the first objection to the idea that everything is “appearance only” hinges on the necessity of external objects to establish causal regularity. Vasubandhu’s first move is simply to provide counter-examples to the objection that mere appearances cannot account for the kind of causal regularity and effects observed in the everyday world. As Gold points out, “the positive argument that ordinary experience is in fact illusory comes later and takes the form of an argument to the best explanation. Before an explanation can be the best, though, it must be a possibility” (2014, 140). For Dharmakīrti too, while a demonstration that external objects are not necessary to account for a determinate

cognition is a crucial step toward the rejection of external objects, it is not the final step. Kellner and Arnold's respective critiques of Dunne's version of the sliding scales argument falter precisely in seeing the arguments from causal irrelevance as an independent stopping point as opposed to a stage in a pedagogically-motivated demonstration that moves an audience from an acceptance of external objects to a denial of any reality other than nondual consciousness. Rather than leaving the mere possibility of the existence of external objects intact, Dharmakīrti avails himself of Vasubandhu's mereological arguments against both the logical coherence of the idea of a partless particle, and the further application of a neither-one-nor-many argument to the cognitive image itself. On both these fronts, Dharmakīrti and Vasubandhu directly refute the existence of external objects and the idea that consciousness could actually be structured into subject, object, and awareness.

Kellner's critique of Dunne's sliding scales model focuses specifically on the question of the arguments Dharmakīrti employs to refute the existence of external objects. She claims first that, contrary to Dunne's position, the verses at PV 3.194-3.224 do not actually contain a neither-one-nor-many argument to this effect (Kellner 2011, 293). Attempting to identify other arguments that Dharmakīrti uses to disprove the existence of external objects, Kellner focuses instead on PV 3.301-3.366 (and the corresponding PV in 1.34-1.57), the section on the nature of the result of a trustworthy awareness (*pramāṇaphala*). She points out that this section focuses more on epistemological than ontological concerns and specifies that "when I speak of an 'externalist' theory, I am not referring to any philosophical theory that posits external objects of perception, but specifically to the theory that Dharmakīrti first adopts and then abandons: that external

objects produce a perception which has their form (*ākāra*), or which resembles them” (2011, 294). The arguments in this section certainly raise serious doubts about the existence of external objects. However, as Kellner points out, they do not in and of themselves necessarily refute the *existence* of external objects without relying on mereological analysis.<sup>24</sup>

In particular, both the *samanantarapratyaya* (immediately preceding cognition) argument and the argument from incongruity that Kellner draws from this passage merely demonstrate that external objects are causally irrelevant to the production of a perception (2011, 295). The *samanantarapratyaya* argument responds to the idea that the cognition of a specific object arises directly from (*utpatti*) an external object and is similar to (*sārūpya*) this object. Dharmakīrti claims that these criteria would also apply to the immediately preceding cognition, and so it is possible to have a causally restricted

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<sup>24</sup> In another critique of Dunne’s sliding scales model, Dan Arnold also emphasizes that the arguments in this section, comprising for him “roughly verses 321-353,” are not immediately ontologically committed. He thereby argues that they do not provide a justification for Dunne’s distinction between External Realism and Epistemic Idealism because “*the epistemology is the same either way*” (Arnold 2008, 5). Arnold re-affirms his position in (2013, 162). Arnold’s point that Dharmakīrti begins this section with an epistemology that may be broadly shared by various Buddhist traditions is compelling. Indeed, Dunne also contends that the sliding scales work precisely by beginning with a broadly acceptable position and then critiquing certain parts of that position in order to move to a higher level. However, Arnold’s reading is weakened by the fact that he does not address the arguments in the following verses, which seem designed precisely to lead to the rejection of external objects. The last verse Arnold claims to address clearly indicates that the argument moves in this direction: “Even though the nature of a cognition is undivided, those with distorted vision characterize it as if it possessed the divisions of subject, object, and awareness,” *avibhāgo ’pi buddhyātmā viparyāsitarśanaḥ / grāhyagrāhakaśamvittibhedavān iva lakṣyate //*, PV 3.353 (Dharmakīrti 1985, 41). A few verses later, Dharmakīrti explicitly states that “Its form by which things are perceived does not exist in reality since a form which is either singular or multiple does not occur for them,” *bhāvā yena nirūpyante tadrūpaṃ nāsti tattvataḥ / yasmād ekam anekam vā rūpaṃ teṣāṃ na vidyate //*, PV 3.359 (Dharmakīrti 1985, 46). I will discuss these verses in more detail below.



cognition without relying on an external object (Kellner 2011, 295). Further, the argument from incongruity contends that not only is it not necessary for an external object to cause a phenomenal form, it is not even possible because the external object is a collection of particles, but the phenomenal form is singular. As Kellner states, “What has one form in perception cannot in external reality be many (*bāhulya*)” (2011, 295). Setting aside for a moment that this argument from incongruity seems like a paradigmatic neither-one-nor-many analysis, at least the *samanantarapratyaya* argument seems to question the causal relevance of external objects without relying on a mereological style of argumentation. Given Dharmakīrti’s insistence that an ultimately real object is causally efficacious, a denial of the causal efficacy of external objects comes very close to a full-scale denial of their existence.

However, Dharmakīrti does not explicitly take this step at this point. Rather, he responds to a direct question about whether or not a cognition could still be of an external object, even if that object does not directly cause a phenomenal form:

But if an external object is experienced, what is the problem? There’s none at all. [However], why would one say just this: an external object is experienced? If a cognition has a phenomenal form of something, it is worthy of analysis whether or not that which depends on a phenomenal form comes from an external object, or rather from something else.<sup>25</sup>

He goes on to state that such a phenomenal form could indeed come from something else, namely from the awakening of an internal karmic imprint; it does not depend on an

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<sup>25</sup> *yadi bāhyo ’nubhūyeta ko doṣo naiva kaścana/ idam eva kim uktaṃ syāt sa bāhyo ’rtho ’nubhūyeta // yadi buddhis tadākārā sāsti ākāraniveśinī / sā bāhyād anyato veti vicāram idam arhati //*, PV 3.333-3.334 (Dharmakīrti 1985, 17–18).

external object.<sup>26</sup> Kellner seems to take this as the endpoint of both the *samanantarapratyaya* argument and the argument from incongruity since she does not address any further verses. However, to this point, Dharmakīrti has not explicitly refuted the existence of external objects. He has only claimed that the restriction of a cognition to a specific object might just as well come from something internal as something external.

Interestingly, Manorathanandin explicitly flags the fact that this argument is not meant to directly reject the existence of external objects. As he indicates:

If [the Sautrāntika opponent] were to [object:] “No: even so, [i.e.] even if there is no argument proving (*sādhaka*) [the existence of] an imperceptible external [object, nonetheless, you] have not demonstrated the nonexistence (*abhāva*) [of this external object],” [we would answer the following.] Because [we] demonstrate [our] opinion through this only and nothing else (*tāvataiva*): “cognition is manifest, whereas an external [entity] is not manifest at all,” we have not taken the trouble of refuting the external object which behaves like a demon (*piśācāyamāna*) [and] which is devoid of any argument proving [its existence] (*sādhaka*). Nonetheless, if the [opponent’s] obstinacy (*nirbandha*) in [demanding] the refutation of this [external object] is very heavy, one must make

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<sup>26</sup> *kasyacit kiṃcid evāntarvāsanāyāḥ prabodhakam / tato dhiyām viniyamo na bāhyārthavyapekṣayā //*, “For a certain [awareness], there is only something that causes the awakening of an internal karmic imprint. Therefore, the restriction in a cognition does not depend on an external object,” PV 3.336 (Dharmakīrti 1985, 20). I will discuss the crucial role of karmic imprints for Dharmakīrti’s account of the conventional world in Chapter III.

[him] examine the master's refutation of atoms according to whether one supposes that [the external object] has parts or not.<sup>27 28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Ratié's translation and amended Sanskrit in Ratié (2014a, 358–59): *na, tathāpi parokṣasya bāhyasya sādhakasyābhāve 'pi nābhāvasthitir iti cet, pratibhāsamānaṃ jñānaṃ bāhyaṃ tu na pratibhāsata eveti tāvataivābhimatasiddheḥ, sādhakapramāṇarahitapiśācāyamānabahirarthanīṣedhe nāsmākam\* ādaraḥ. yadi tu tanniṣedhanirbandho garīyān sāmśatvānaṃśatvakalpanayā paramāṇupratiṣedha\*\* ācāryīyaḥ paryeṣitavyaḥ. [\*-niṣedhe nāsmākam conj.: -niṣedhenāsmākam Ed. \*\*paramāṇupratiṣedha corr.: paramāṇupratiṣedhe Ed.], PVV 3.336. For a detailed discussion of this passage, including the import of the example of the ghost, see Ratié (2014a, 358–62). For an additional discussion of this passage, see Kachru (2015, 314–15).*

<sup>28</sup> Given the diversity of interpretive traditions stemming from Dharmakīrti's works, I am well aware that one must take care in relying on commentaries to establish Dharmakīrti's intentions. This is particularly true in the case of Manorathanandin since he is an obscure commentator who was not widely cited by later thinkers in the materials currently known to us. Commentaries are useful, however, for drawing out potential implications of a text. I use Manorathanandin here primarily to this effect, and also because his interpretation of these verses has been the topic of a number of recent articles. Arnold reads Manorathanandin as unambiguously supporting a distinction between epistemological arguments that merely establish an external object's causal irrelevancy and mereological arguments that demonstrate its ontological impossibility. On his reading, then, if one bases one's interpretation solely on this passage and disregards other places where Dharmakīrti explicitly challenges the idea that something unable to cause an image of itself in awareness exists, one may coherently maintain both that an external object is causally irrelevant to the production of any awareness and that such an object nonetheless exists (Arnold 2008, 5–6). Ratié challenges this idea on the basis of Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta's interpretation of these arguments. As she states, "According to these nondualist Śaivas, the argument showing that there is no epistemic access whatsoever to the external object is also the argument *par excellence* for a 'metaphysical' or ontologically committed idealism, because an object that cannot even be conceptualized can have no existence" (Ratié 2014a, 368–69). As Ratié is careful to note, however, Manorathanandin's comments here are ambiguous, and the fact that the Śaivas place more weight on the argument that whatever is fundamentally unmanifest cannot exist does not mean that Dharmakīrti himself did the same. However, even if Arnold's reading of this passage is correct in that it proposes two logically distinguishable arguments, since Dharmakīrti does not seem to employ the causal irrelevancy argument without shortly moving into a mereological critique, it is perhaps better to view this argument as a step on the way to the eventual full rejection of external objects, and not as an independent stopping point. Moreover, as quoted earlier, during a discussion of nonperception (*anupalabdhi*), Dharmakīrti himself indicates that the minimal criteria of anything being considered real is that it be perceived. As he states in PVSV ad 1.3ab, "Existence is just perception" (*sattvam upalabdhir eva*). For a detailed discussion of this passage, see

At least one of Dharmakīrti's commentators regards anyone who would cling to the existence of a causally irrelevant external object with a good deal of scorn. However, he also seems to recognize that further mereological arguments are necessary at least for people who are unable to draw out the full implications of this argument on their own. For these people, simply demonstrating the causal irrelevance of external objects may not be enough; Vasubandhu's classic neither-one-nor-many refutation is the argument that directly and incontrovertibly demonstrates their nonexistence.

Given that Kellner defines "externalism" as the position claiming that "external objects produce a perception which has their form (*ākāra*), or which resembles them," she is not wrong to say that, at least with the *samanantarapratyaya* argument, Dharmakīrti rejects an externalist position in these verses without employing a neither-one-nor-many argument (Kellner 2011, 294). However, at least if one follows Manorathanandin's interpretation and considers the verses that follow, these arguments alone do not present a refutation of a *bāhyārthavāda* position in its fullest sense because additional neither-one-nor-many argumentation is necessary to directly refute the existence of external objects. Even setting Manorathanandin's interpretation aside, it is hard to argue that Dharmakīrti fully eschews mereological style arguments in this section, particularly if one addresses all of the verses in the *pramāṇaphala* section, which runs up to 3.366. While Kellner nominally includes these verses in her scope, she does not directly discuss them.

The crucial neither-one-nor-many arguments in this section are in fact the same ones that Dunne cites as providing the transition between External Realism and Epistemic

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Dunne (2004, 85 fn 52). For a general discussion of nonperception in Dharmakīrti's thought, see Kellner (2003).

Idealism. Dharmakīrti's reliance on Vasubandhu-style critiques of supposedly partless particles is only the first step in this transition. Rather, like Vasubandhu himself, Dharmakīrti turns the analysis on a moment of awareness itself. Dharmakīrti leads into this critique by stating: "Even though the nature of a cognition is undivided, those with distorted vision characterize it as if it possessed the divisions of subject, object, and awareness."<sup>29</sup> A few verses later, Dharmakīrti explicitly identifies mereological concerns as refuting the idea that external objects might be perceived by means of their form: "The form in which things are perceived does not exist in reality since they do not have a form which is either singular or multiple."<sup>30</sup> Dharmakīrti develops this line of reasoning at length in PV 3.194-3.224, the passage that Dunne claims represents the most important instance of Dharmakīrti's deployment of the neither-one-nor-many critique in the shift to Epistemic Idealism.<sup>31 32</sup> As Dunne points out:

The erroneous belief in the existence of extra-mental matter is eliminated through the realization that the subject/object duality apparent in awareness is actually due to the influence of ignorance (*avidyā*). As such, that duality is erroneous, and any determination based upon it, such as the notion that the cause of the objective

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<sup>29</sup> *avibhāgo 'pi buddyātmā viparyāsītadarśanaḥ / grāhyagrāhakasaṃvittibhedavān iva lakṣyate //*, PV 3.353 (Dharmakīrti 1985, 41).

<sup>30</sup> *bhāvā yena nirūpyante tadrūpaṃ nāsti tattvataḥ / yasmād ekam anekaṃ vā rūpaṃ teṣāṃ na vidyate //*, PV 3.359 (Dharmakīrti 1985, 46).

<sup>31</sup> In a somewhat unclear footnote, Arnold seems to equate PV 3.194-3.224 with PV 3.321-3.353, the same passages Kellner discusses. He notes that "Dharmakīrti explicitly adopts a Yogācāra perspective, according to Dunne, 'at the end of the third chapter, starting with the prologue at vv. 194ff,'" but then also states, "The section Dunne identifies comprises the passages chiefly to be considered in the present essay, which span roughly verses 321-353" (Arnold 5, fn. 6). Like Kellner's, Arnold's objections to Dunne's formulation of the division between External Realism and Epistemic Idealism somewhat miss the mark since they do not actually address the passage Dunne cites.

<sup>32</sup> For an interesting interpretation of these verses according to Prajñākara Gupta, see (Inami 2011).

appearance in sensory awareness is due to extra-mental particles, is also false.

(Dunne 2004, 59)

The target at this level of analysis is the question of whether or not a *cognition itself*, irrespective of the object (internal or external) to which it might refer, could actually be divided into subject and object. In short, the transition between External Realism and Epistemic Idealism depends precisely on the nature of subject/object duality. Further, as Dunne claims, it proceeds on the basis of neither-one-nor-many argumentation.

Dharmakīrti begins this crucial passage by attacking the Nyāya position that a single universal can account for the perception of a variegated color, such as the color of a butterfly’s wing. After mocking the position that the “multicolor is a single real color,” Dharmakīrti seems to resolve the question by positing that the unity of the cognitive image, not some supposed unity in the external object, accounts for the perception of a single multicolored object. However, immediately after he states this position, he presents a possible objection: “If singularity is not possible in the case of objects [such as a butterfly’s wing] that have a variegated appearance, then how can there be a single cognition whose cognitive appearance is variegation?”<sup>33</sup> The opponent here basically objects that, following Dharmakīrti’s own reasoning, it does not make sense for a single thing to have a multiple nature. Whether that thing is a universal or a cognitive image, if it fails a neither-one-nor-many test, it must be rejected as illogical.

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<sup>33</sup> Translation in (Dunne 2004, 401). *citrāvabhāseṣu artheṣu yady ekatvaṃ na yujyate / saiva tāvat katham buddhir ekā citrāvabhāsinī //*, PV 3.208 (Dharmakīrti 1979, 309).

Strikingly, Dharmakīrti does not attempt to defend the position that a single cognition can have a variegated image.<sup>34</sup> Rather, he somewhat cryptically responds: “The wise speak of what is attained through the force of real things: the way in which objects are considered is the way in which they disappear. How could that variegation exist in [a cognition] that is one? It should not exist in that cognition, either. But if this [presentation] of objects is itself pleasing, who are we [to object] to that?”<sup>35</sup> The next verse definitively clarifies that Dharmakīrti has deployed a neither-one-nor-many argument: “Therefore, there is no extended appearance in relation to either the objects or the awareness. Since that kind of nature has been refuted in the case of what is one, it is also not possible in the case of what is many.”<sup>36</sup> Devendrabuddhi’s lead-in to the verse clarifies the motivation behind this statement: “This criticism applies to one who maintains that the image is ultimate, but it does not apply to me because I do not accept

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<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, at least one of Dharmakīrti’s later Śaiva opponents ascribes the position that a single cognition can have a variegated object to Dharmakīrti. As Alex Watson demonstrates in his book *The Self’s Awareness of Itself: Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha’s Arguments Against the Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self*, Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha responds to a Buddhist objection that an unchanging *ātman* cannot have different objects of awareness at different times by claiming that this temporal variegation is not philosophically different from spatial variegation within a single cognition. Since, according to Rāmakaṇṭha, Buddhists accept the later, they must also accept the former (Watson 2006, 333–48). This opens up intriguing questions about how Dharmakīrti’s works were interpreted both within and outside of his tradition in Kashmir in the centuries when Pratyabhijñā was developing. Was Rāmakaṇṭha’s position an isolated misreading, or was it more widespread? This remains an open question.

<sup>35</sup> *idaṃ vastubalāyātaṃ yad vadanti vipaścitaḥ / yathā yathārthāś cintyante viśīryante tathā tathā // kiṃ syāt sā citrataikasyāṃ na syāt tasyāṃ matāv api / yadīdaṃ svayam arthānāṃ rocate tatra ke vayasam //*, PV 3.209-3.210, (Dharmakīrti 1979, 309–11). My interpretation of this passage differs from that of Inami, who bases his translation off of Prajñākaragupta (Inami 2011, 178).

<sup>36</sup> *tasmān nārtheṣu na jñāne sthūlābhāsas tadātmanaḥ / ekatra pratiṣiddhatvād bahuṣv api na sambhavaḥ //*, PV 3.211 (Dharmakīrti 1979, 312).

that the image exists in that fashion” (Dunne 2004, 401).<sup>37</sup> Here, Dharmakīrti again transitions between ontologies. His statement in the previous verse that “a single [cognition] that has various objects should be established to occur”<sup>38</sup> is based on accepting the External Realist ontology that assumes the objects creating a cognitive image are real. Once this commitment is challenged on the basis that it also does not withstand a neither-one-nor-many critique, Dharmakīrti (somewhat obliquely) acknowledges that this acceptance was merely provisional. Precisely because a single cognition with a variegated image presents an ontological contradiction, it is not ultimately real.

Devendrabuddhi explains that, in addition to ruling out variegation within a single image, the application of a neither-one-nor-many critique to the cognitive image also rules out the existence of an external object which might cause the image. Commenting on PV 3.208, he explains, “...*the way in which they think of objects*; that is, when one rationally analyzes them as either singular or multiple, they *disappear*—they are devoid of existing—in that way, i.e., in that fashion [as either singular or multiple]. In other words, they cannot be established in terms of any essential nature whatsoever” (Dunne 2004, 402).<sup>39</sup> Devendrabuddhi further clarifies that a critique of the image also undermines the potential existence of an external object by pointing out that “other than a different or nondifferent cognitive image, there is ultimately no other basis for the establishment of something as one or many” (Dunne 2004, 402–3).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Dunne’s translation from the Tibetan.

<sup>38</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 400). *nānārthaikā bhavet*, PV 3.207a (Dharmakīrti 1979, 306).

<sup>39</sup> Dunne’s translation from the Tibetan.

<sup>40</sup> Dunne’s translation from the Tibetan.



Rather than asserting that a single cognition can have a variegated image, in these verses Dharmakīrti addresses the problem of spatial extension within a single image by claiming that both the appearance of a singular cognition and its apparently multiform object are erroneous. In the next verse, alluding to his earlier critique of spatially extended wholes through a mereological reduction, Dharmakīrti states: “Therefore, there is no extended appearance in relation to either the objects or the awareness. Since that kind of nature has been refuted in the case of what is one, it is also not possible in the case of what is many.”<sup>41</sup> Dharmakīrti here rejects that even the simplest variegation, namely, mere spatial extension, could exist as a singular entity. Since even a uniform perception (say, a perception of the center of a pure blue sky) is still variegated because it has directional parts, an explicitly variegated image certainly cannot be considered singular. Devendrabuddhi further notes that such spatially extended objects are just as illogical when considered as cognitive images as when they are external objects: “in other words, that which appears with a spatially extended cognitive image does not exist either externally or internally” (Dunne 2004, 404).<sup>42</sup>

Foreshadowing this stage of the argument in his earlier comments on PV 3.209-3.210, Śākyabuddhi clarifies the nature of this erroneous distinction:

... *the way in which they think of objects* refers to external blue, yellow and so on.

He says “object” (*artha*) to refute the notion that it is distinct from consciousness itself; he is not refuting the notion that consciousness is by nature *paratantra*...

*The way in which they disappear* means they are not established as either singular

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<sup>41</sup> *tasmān nārtheṣu na jñāne sthūlabhāsas tadātmanāḥ / ekatra pratiṣiddhatvād bahuṣv apī na sambhavaḥ //*, PV 3.211 (Dharmakīrti 1979, 312).

<sup>42</sup> Dunne’s translation from the Tibetan.

or multiple. [When Devendrabuddhi says] *in terms of any essential nature whatsoever*, he means that the object cannot be established as external, nor can it be established as having the nature of consciousness. In other words, they are not established as appearing separately. (Dunne 2004, 402)<sup>43</sup>

In addition to refuting that a variegated object can produce a singular image, Dharmakīrti argues that since the object does not withstand a mereological critique, neither does the subject; since subject and object depend on each other, if one is not ultimately real, neither is the other. Dharmakīrti here rejects the ultimate existence of anything that appears based on subject/object duality in favor of what Śākyabuddhi describes as “mere reflexive awareness devoid of conceptually constructed subject and object” (Dunne 2004, 402).<sup>44</sup>

Dharmakīrti makes his rejection of the ultimate reality of subject/object duality explicit in PV 3.212-PV 3.215. Here, Dharmakīrti rejects the mere division of a single cognition into subject and object:

There is an internal division [and] there is this other part which is located as if external. Indeed, the appearance of difference for an awareness that is nondifferent is a distortion. Here, the two are also refuted by even the nonexistence of one. Therefore, just that which is the emptiness of duality is the suchness of that [awareness]. Further, the arrangement of things as different is based on that distinction. When that is a distortion, their difference is also a distortion. Moreover, there is no defining characteristic [of things] outside of the

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<sup>43</sup> Dunne’s translation from the Tibetan.

<sup>44</sup> Dunne’s translation from the Tibetan.

phenomenal forms of subject and object. Since they are empty of a defining characteristic, they are shown to be essenceless.<sup>45 46</sup>

These verses apply the neither-one-nor-many argument to the cognitive event as a whole. Conventionally, a moment of cognition can be divided into a subject and an object. However, a single cognition cannot ultimately encompass both a subject and an object; if it did so, it would be both one and two at the same time. Since the difference between subject and object with respect to awareness itself does not withstand analysis, it is not ultimately real. This argument holds regardless of whether or not the subject and/or object is singular or multiple, internal or external.

Dharmakīrti's use of the idea that "since even one does not exist, the two are also refuted" closely parallels Vasubandhu's commentary on Maitreya/Asaṅga's *Madhyāntavibhāga* (MAV). Verse 1.6 of this text states: "Depending upon perception, non-perception occurs; depending upon non-perception, non-perception occurs."<sup>47</sup> Vasubandhu clarifies: "Due to the perception of representation-only, there is no perception of objects. Due to the non-perception of objects, there is not even the

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<sup>45</sup> *paricchedo 'ntar anyo 'yaṃ bhāgo bahir iva sthitaḥ / jñānasyābhedino bhedapratibhāso hy upaplavaḥ // tatraikasyāpy abhāvena dvayam apy avahīyate / tasmāt tad eva tasyāpi tattvaṃ yā dvayaśūnyatā // tadbhedāśrayiṇī ceyaṃ bhāvānāṃ bhedasamsthitiḥ / tadupaplavabhāve ca teṣāṃ bhedo 'py upaplavaḥ // na grāhyagrāhakākārabāhyam asti ca lakṣaṇam // ato lakṣaṇaśūnyatvān niḥsvabhāvāḥ prakāśitāḥ //*, PV 3.212-3.215 (Dharmakīrti 1979, 313–14).

<sup>46</sup> While Coseru makes a number of compelling observations about the nature of intentionality in Buddhist epistemology, passages from the PV such as this one show that his claims to the effect that "Every state of cognitive awareness, according to Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their followers has this dual aspect: that of a self-apprehensive intentional act (*grāhakākāra*) and that of a world-directed intentional object (*grāhyākāra*)" are overstatements (Cosuru 2015, 231; emphasis added).

<sup>47</sup> Translation in D'Amato, Maitreyaṅga, and Vasubandhu (2012, 121). *upalabdhiṃ samāśritya nopalabdhiḥ prajāyate / nopalabdhiṃ samāśritya nopalabdhiḥ prajāyate*, MAV I.6 (Vasubandhu 2005a, 426).

perception of representation-only. In this way, one realizes the characteristic of the non-existence of subject and object.”<sup>48</sup> Vasubandhu makes the same point again in the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* (TSN): “As a result of perception of only mind, there is no perception of knowable things. As a result of no perception of knowable things, there can be no perception of mind.”<sup>49</sup> Dharmakīrti’s next claim that “the emptiness of duality is the suchness of even that [awareness]” further follows Vasubandhu’s line of argumentation in these two texts. As Gold sums up the argument in the TSN:

The Yogācāra causal story of liberation is here depicted as a successive release from the “grasped” and the “grasper”: first, eliminate the false conception of perceptible objects (“grasped”): then, the perception of mind (“grasper”) will fall away. The result of the elimination of both (the nonexistence of grasper and grasped) is the attainment of liberation. (Gold 2014, 170)

Here, the existence of the subject is clearly refuted as a consequence of the refutation of the object. Like Vasubandhu’s Yogācāra on which it is based, Dharmakīrti’s Epistemic Idealism does not end with an affirmation of the ultimate reality of the subjective mind. Against a tendency in both Tibetan and modern scholarship to claim that Yogācāra is in fact this kind of reduction to subjectivity, Gold bluntly states: “duality is two things, and external objects (or mental objects) make up just one of the two things being denied. Also to be denied is internal reality, the mind itself as subject” (2014, 169).

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<sup>48</sup> Translation in D’Amato, Maitreyanātha, and Vasubandhu (2012, 121). *vijñaptimātropalabdhiṃ niśrityārthānupalabdhir jāyate. arthānupalabdhiṃ niśritya vijñaptimātrasyāpy anupalabdhir jāyate. evam asallakṣaṇaṃ grāhyagrāhakayoḥ praviśati*, MAVBh ad I.6 (Vasubandhu 2005a, 426).

<sup>49</sup> Translation in Gold (2014, 169–70). *cittamātropalambhena jñeyārthānupalambhatā / jñeyārthānupalambhena syāc cittānupalambhatā //*, TSN 36 (Vasubandhu 2005b, 466).

Śākyabuddhi lucidly explains why this rejection of the ultimate reality of subject/object duality is neither a collapse of the objective world into the subject nor a nihilistic rejection of the existence of everything whatsoever:

With the word “subject” we do not mean to express reflexive awareness—the internal cognition that arises in various forms such as the pleasant and the unpleasant—such that by expressing it with the term “subject” we would be saying that it does not exist. Rather, we mean the following. Cognitive appearances such as blue seem to be external to awareness, but when one analyzes whether those appearances are singular or plural, they are unable to withstand that analysis; hence, they are not suchness. Therefore, there is ultimately no object that is distinct from awareness itself, and since that object does not exist, we say, “the subject does not exist”: in saying this we mean the “subject” that occurs in expressions or concepts that are constructed in dependence on the [apparently external object], as in “This is the real entity that is the subject which apprehends that object, which is the real entity that it cognizes...” The expression “subject” does not express mere reflexive awareness, which is the essential nature of cognition itself. (Dunne 2004, 407)<sup>50</sup>

Vasubandhu’s influence here could not be clearer.

While Dharmakīrti generally avoids directly speaking about the nature of ultimate consciousness, one of the few times he does so involves language lifted almost verbatim from the *Madhyāntavibhāḡabhāṣya*. In PV 2.208cd, Dharmakīrti describes reflexive awareness: “This consciousness is naturally luminosity (*prabhāsvara*); flaws are

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<sup>50</sup> Dunne’s translation from the Tibetan.

adventitious.”<sup>51</sup> One of the final passages in the first chapter of the MAVB describes consciousness using precisely the same terms: “That [emptiness] is neither afflicted nor nonafflicted, neither pure nor impure. How is it neither afflicted nor impure? By its very nature, because consciousness is luminosity. How is it neither unafflicted nor pure? Because there are adventitious defilements.”<sup>52</sup> Dharmakīrti thereby is left with an ontology in which only nondual reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) ultimately remains. Strikingly, at this point Dharmakīrti inverts the expected outcome of his application of neither-one-nor-many analysis. In previous levels, he rejects the existence of the one in favor of the existence of the many. Paradigmatically, this occurs in his rejection of universals and affirmation of particulars. However, when confronted with the dilemma of whether a moment of awareness itself is either one or many, Dharmakīrti rejects the many in favor of the one. In this, he brings himself into line with Vasubandhu's articulation of the nature of ultimate reality as pure manifestation. This complicates his account of the problem with conventional experience. The problem now is not just that humans tend to see non-momentary entities, but rather that they also ontologize divisions between subject and object that are, in reality, merely adventitious defilements that are not ultimately real.

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<sup>51</sup> *prabhāsvaram idaṃ cittam prakṛtyāgantavo malāḥ* // PV 2.208cd (Manorathanandin 1938, 82).

<sup>52</sup> *na kliṣṭā nāpi cākilṣṭā śuddhāśuddhā na caiva sā / katham na kliṣṭā nāpi cāśuddhā prakṛtyaiva prabhāsvaratvāc cittasya / katham nākliṣṭā na śuddhā kleśasyāgantukatvataḥ*, MAVB ad 1.22 (Vasubandhu 2005a, 431).

## Part II: The Pratyabhijñā Śaiva Ontology

The contention that the reification of the distinction between subject and object is a fundamental flaw in the way that humans experience the world provides a common link between the post-Dharmakīrtian tradition and Pratyabhijñā Śaivism. As Isabelle Ratié has pointed out, these Śaivas systematically emphasize this link and use Dharmakīrtian arguments to refute external realists of all kinds, be they Buddhist or Brahmanical (Ratié 2014a; Ratié 2010). While these traditions share a diagnosis of the fundamental problem with conventional experience, their underlying ontologies provide important points of disagreement as well as continuity.

These Śaivas defend an ontology in which Śiva is the Supreme Self (*paramātmān*) who underlies all beings as their true nature. They have two main paradigms under which they discuss the nature of reality, both of which are adapted from earlier traditions. To make what is most likely a gross oversimplification, these Śaivas adopt a significantly expanded version of the Sāṅkhyan *tattvas* to explain *how* reality must be in order to account for our experiences in the conventional world; moreover, they expand the 5<sup>th</sup> century Grammarian Bhartṛhari's exposition of the Vedic identity between *brahman* and *vāc* to explain *what* this reality actually is. These Śaivas' addition of new *tattvas* to the Sāṅkhyan ones allows these Śaivas to account for the creation of limited subjects who appear to be different from Śiva, each other, and objective reality, while still maintaining an overarching nondualism. Somewhat loosely following Bhartṛhari, they further describe the nature of this nondual consciousness as a unitary luminous manifestation (*prakāśa*) that is nevertheless not different from realization (*vimarśa*), which they equate with a subtle form of *vāc*, a term which, for lack of a better way of

discussing it, I will designate as having something to do with language.<sup>53</sup> The combination of these two paradigms, which are normally used for distinct purposes rather than systematically conjoined, forms the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva vision of the nature of reality.

*A Nondualist Adaptation of the Sāṅkhyan Tattvas*

The Pratyabhijñā Śaiva ontology alters and appropriates the Sāṅkhyan picture of the universe as real transformation (*pariṇāma*) of two ontologically distinct realities: insentient material nature (*prakṛti*) and a certain type of pure consciousness (*puruṣa*). *Prakṛti* encompasses the entirety of the conventional world of change, including the structures of thought and sensation. It has two primary modalities: manifest (*sthūla*) and unmanifest (*sūkṣma*). In its unmanifest state, *prakṛti* contains the seeds of all the structures of manifest reality within itself in latent form. *Puruṣa* is pure, contentless consciousness. It is eternal, unchanging, immaterial, and does not act; however, it is the witness (*sākṣin*) of the fluctuations of the intellect (*buddhi*) and provides the illumination necessary to create experience. There are an infinite number of individual *puruṣas*. Every human being has his or her own which has somehow become entangled with *prakṛti* and forgotten itself in the process. Although *puruṣa* is unchanging and therefore never acts, *prakṛti* is somehow influenced by *puruṣa* and, due to this influence, manifests the structures of reality in increasingly gross forms. These structures, plus *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* themselves, are enumerated as the twenty-five *tattvas* or elements of reality: the internal organs that constitute the mind (the *buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra*, and *manas*), the five sense-

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<sup>53</sup>I will discuss the difficulties with translating this term, as well as my decision to leave it untranslated, below.



capacities (*buddhīndriyas*), the five action capacities (*karmendriyas*), the five subtle elements (*tanmātras*), and finally the five gross elements (*mahābhūtas*).<sup>54</sup>

The Pratyabhijñā Śaivas' adaptation of the Sāṅkhyan *tattvas* provides a paradigm for expressing the idea that the manifest diversity of the universe is the result of a progressive unfolding of an ultimate reality that is itself beyond the categories of one and many. These Śaivas accept this basic account of the *tattvas* with two significant alterations. First, they add eleven additional *tattvas* to the twenty-five Sāṅkhyan principles, resulting in thirty-six (Flood 1989, 227). The additional *tattvas* are higher orders of reality that encompass and exceed the Sāṅkhyan ones. All of these *tattvas* occur within the body of Parameśvara, who represents consciousness in its absolute, nondual form that contains and exceeds any possible limitation. Parameśvara is also sometimes referred to as a thirty-seventh *tattva* who encompasses and exceeds all the rest (Torella 2013, 189). Second, in their articulation of the relationship between the *tattvas*, these Śaivas deny that *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* are ontologically distinct realities.

These Śaivas justify both of these alterations through their linked claims that the manifestation of the universe is a kind of action and that action is only possible through the will of a conscious agent who is not ontologically distinct from the products that are observed to change. As Utpaladeva describes, “The differentiation of a unitary entity is action, occurring in temporal succession. In this way we necessarily return to our thesis of an agent subject, as being that which becomes modified in the various forms.”<sup>55</sup>

Utpaladeva continues to state that such a differentiation of a unitary entity is not possible

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<sup>54</sup> For a basic overview of the Sāṅkhya cosmology, see Bartley (2011, 82–88). For a more detailed examination, see Burley (2007).

<sup>55</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 185). *ekātmano vibhedaś ca kriyā kālakramānugā / tathā syāt kartr̥taivaivaṃ tathāpariṇamattayā //*, ĪPK 2.4.18 (Utpaladeva 1994, 60).

for an insentient object because this would entail a contradiction between the object being both one and many. Rather, “it is possible in the case of a conscious unitary reality.”<sup>56</sup> In his autocommentary, Utpaladeva explains: “This is not possible for an insentient reality, because its nature which is single would conflict with its appearing in differentiated forms. On the contrary, it is possible for an absolutely limpid, unitary, conscious reality, because there is no conflict here between its unity and its capacity to receive manifold reflections.”<sup>57</sup> These Śaivas thereby reject any kind of ontological division between a creative consciousness and what it creates.

While this verse seems to affirm the idea that ultimate reality is purely unitary, the next verse corrects against such a reading. “Even if the unity of consciousness is maintained to be the only ultimate reality,” it states, “there cannot be action for two entities divided as regards the nature of their manifestation, without a preliminary act of thought which grasps and establishes the unity, characterized by the desire to act.”<sup>58</sup> Torella reads this verse as directed against the Śāntabrahmavādins who claim that ultimate consciousness is devoid of any kind of action or desire (Torella 2013, 186, fn 33). As Torella explains, “Action, the bridge between the one and the many, must necessarily contain as a precondition an awareness of the not absolute otherness of the two terms, in order that these may play the roles—which are distinct yet intimately coordinated—for example, of *kartr* and *karma*” (2013, 186, fn 34). Contrasting his vision

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<sup>56</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 186). *na ca yuktaṃ jaḍasyaivaṃ bhedābedhavirodhataḥ / ābhāsabhedād ekatra cidātmani tu yujyate //*, ĪPK 2.4.19 (Utpaladeva 1994, 60).

<sup>57</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 186). *jaḍasya abhinnātmano bhedenāvasthiter virodhād ayuktam, svacche cidātmany ekasminn evam anekapratibimbadhāraṇenāvirodhād yujyate*, ĪPKV ad 2.4.19 (Utpaladeva 1994, 60).

<sup>58</sup> Translation in Torella (Torella 2013, 187). *vāstave 'pi cidekatve na syād ābhāsabhinnayoḥ / cikīrṣālakṣanaikatvapaparāmarśaṃ vinā kriyā //*, ĪPK 2.4.20 (Utpaladeva 1994, 60).

of ultimate consciousness to an articulation of ultimate reality as consciousness devoid of action, Utpaladeva spells out the relationship between consciousness, action, and desire: “If, however, [consciousness] renders externally manifest through an act of determinate thought combined with a desire to act in this way, then action is possible.”<sup>59</sup> In order to further substantiate his description of consciousness as holding together the one and the many through a progressive manifestation of the universe, Utpaladeva turns to a modified version of the Sāṅkhyan *tattvas* in the next section of his *Kārikā*.

The section on revelation immediately follows the section on action. Utpaladeva begins by affirming that “action, which consists of an internal and external level, subject to temporal succession, pertains to the knowing subject alone: therefore cognition and action are inseparable from one another.”<sup>60</sup> This verse launches a detailed exploration of the nature of the *tattvas* and the beings who experience them. Gavin Flood provides a highly instructive chart laying out Abhinavagupta’s articulation of the *tattvas*, which closely follows Utpaladeva’s:

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<sup>59</sup> Translation in (Torella 2013, 187) *yadā tu sa cidātmā tathācīkīrṣayā parāmṛśan bahir ābhāsayati tadā tad upapadyate*, ĪPKV ad 2.4.20 (Utpaladeva 1994, 60).

<sup>60</sup> Translation in (Torella 2013, 189) *evam antarbahirvṛttiḥ kriyā kālakramānugā / mātur eva tad anyonyāvīyukte jñānakarmaṇī //*, ĪPK 3.1.1 (Utpaladeva 1994, 62).

Transcendent Paramaśiva, the body of consciousness.

ANḌA	TATTVA	ŚAKTI	EXPERIENT
	(1) Śiva (2) Śakti	Cit Ānanda	Śiva
Śakti (ruled by Īśvara)	(3) Sadāśiva (4) Īśvara (5) Śuddhavidyā	Icchā Jñāna Kriyā	Mantramahēśvara Mantrēśvara Mantra
Māyā (ruled by Rudra)	(6) Māyā (mala-s of āṇava, māyīya, kārma)		Vijñānakala Pralayakala
	(7) kalā (8) vidyā (9) rāga (10) kāla (11) niyati	(12) puruṣa	Sakala
Prakṛti (ruled by Viṣṇu)	(13) prakṛti (14) buddhi (15) ahamkāra (16) manas (17)-(21) jñānendriya-s (ears, skin, eyes, tongue, nose) (22)-(26) karmendriya-s (speech, hands, feet, anus, reproductive organs) (27)-(31) tanmātra-s (sound, touch, form, taste, smell) (32)-(35) bhūta-s (space, air, fire, water,)		
Pṛthivī (ruled by Brahmā)	(36) earth		

Fig. 1. Śaiva cosmology according to the *Mālinīvijayottara Tantra* (2.36-58) and Abhinavagupta's *Paramārthasāra*.

Abhinavagupta divides up the *tattvas* into realms (*aṇḍa*) governed by different deities and experienced by different types of perceivers. As consciousness moves down the hierarchy of *tattvas*, its own nature as nondual self-awareness becomes progressively obscured. At the lowest levels, it appears as completely insentient (*jaḍa*). The five *kañcukas* or ‘cuirasses’ in Torella’s term (numbers 7-11 on Flood’s chart) are the lowest *tattvas* added by these Śaivas to the traditional Sāṅkhyan twenty-five (Torella 1998). They constitute the individual sentient being (*puruṣa*) and represent the limiting factors that cause consciousness to constrain itself into a limited subject capable of experiencing limited objects. Torella sums up the nature of the *kañcukas*, also called *dhāraṇas* by Abhinavagupta: “the *dhāraṇas* cause the Lord to cause things to exist, or in other words, to cause things to (seem to) need an impulse from another in order to be, to shine. Thus the Lord makes things appear as *idam*, and in so doing, precisely through the *kañcukas*, he transforms himself into the empirical subject” (Torella 1998, 75).

The *māyā tattva* is the remaining *tattva* these Śaivas add to the Sāṅkhyan ones. This integration serves to ensure that the means by which Śiva creates limited realities is itself contained within ultimate consciousness: *māyā* has a real existence as one of the powers of the Lord. This focus on *māyā* as a power of the Lord stands in contradistinction to opponents they identify as Śāntabrahmavādins such as Śaṅkara. According to these Śaivas, these Śāntabrahmavādins hold that ignorance (*avidyā*) and illusion (*māyā*) are merely conventional and have no ultimate existence (Abhinavagupta and Yogarāja 2010, 56–58). The inclusion of *māyā* among the *tattvas* ensures that *māyā* itself is not an entity separate from Śiva.

As Flood further explains, the *tattvas* themselves are also equated with the different sensory spheres (*viṣaya*) of each type of perceiver. Somewhat unusually, *viṣaya* here has a wider connotation than its normal use within classical Indian philosophy:

The term *viṣaya* is often rendered ‘object’ or ‘sense object’ and though this is a correct designation I would argue that the term in the context of Śaiva cosmology has a wider connotation in that it implies not only sense-object but also sphere or range of perception and body. Indeed this variability of meaning is dependent upon which level of the cosmos it refers to. From an absolute perspective *viṣaya* refers to the entire universe as the object or body of pure consciousness, from the perspective of a higher deity it refers to his/her sphere of influence or power, while for the bound experient or particularized consciousness it refers to his/her limited perceptual field. (Flood 1989, 231)

This alignment between what is real and what is perceived is another hallmark of the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva ontology. The *tattvas* provide these Śaivas a way to discuss the idea that, while the entirety of the universe is always Śiva, certain beings will perceive more or less limited segments of this reality (Torella 1998, 71–72). This, in turn, leaves ontological space for the seeming contradiction between their position that everything is Śiva, who creates the universe as an expression of his ultimate freedom, and the everyday human experiences of bondage, finitude, and limitation (Torella 1998, 74–75). I will address the details of the process of the creation of limited subjects and objects in Chapter IV.

A question remains, however: what does it mean for absolute consciousness to experience itself as having a body that is the entirety of the universe? This question cuts

to the heart of Pratyabhijñā ontology because the more or less limited experiences of lower orders of perceivers are made possible by the fact that they are contained within the ultimate's own experience of itself. As Isabelle Ratié documents, one of the key ontological issues concerns the ultimate status of the apparent separation (*vicchedana*) between limited subjects and objects, as well as the distinction between one subject and another or one object or another. On Ratié's convincing reading, in the course of a discussion of the ultimate status of separation, Abhinavagupta states, "this [separation] is not unreal (*apāramāṛthika*); since it is precisely the ultimate reality of whatever is created" (Ratié 2014b, 387). As she explains:

Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta insist that although reality is a unitary consciousness, it is not a static absence of differences, but a dynamic unity capable of encompassing all differences without losing its fundamental oneness. Even though the Pratyabhijñā philosophers defend a full-fledged non-dualism, they consider that differences are not illusory, because they see reality as constituted by this unique consciousness that is first and foremost a power to manifest (literally, a "light", *prakāśa*) and because according to them, the differentiated universe is nothing but consciousness manifesting itself in a differentiated form. This means that whatever is manifest—including all the phenomenal differences—partakes in the ultimate reality (*paramārtha*), the essence of which is manifestation. (Ratié 2014b, 388)

While their adaptation of the Sāṅkhyan *tattvas* provides these Śaivas with a way to describe the stops along the way as Parameśvara manifests himself as the differentiated universe, these Śaivas still require an account of what consciousness itself actually is.

Like Dharmakīrti, they describe the nature of consciousness as a luminous manifestation (*prakāśa*). However, while *prakāśa* accounts for the unity of consciousness, these Śaivas' claim that consciousness encompasses both unity and difference leads them to articulate the nature of consciousness in terms of a type differentiating self-aware realization (*vimarśa*). They further identify this realization with a modified form of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Grammarian Bhartṛhari's *vāc*.

### *Alignment of Realization and Vāc*

As presented thus far, the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva ontology encompasses a series of apparent contradictions. Ultimate consciousness is free, but individual sentient beings experience bondage. Differentiation is not ultimately unreal, but the reified dualities experienced within the everyday world are errors. Consciousness' nature as realization (*vimarśa*) ties these contradictions together to present a gradient of progressively larger or smaller realities defined by the perceivers and objects of perception populating each world. My use of the somewhat unusual translation of *vimarśa* as “realization” here requires some explanation. The attempt to find a satisfying English translation for *pratyavamarśa*, *vimarśa*, and other more or less synonymous derivatives of the verbal root *mṛś* in Pratyabhijñā texts has a long history. Already in his 1987 article “*Svabhāvam avabhāsasya vimarśam*: Judgment as a Transcendental Category in Utpaladeva's Śaiva Theology,” Harvey Alper references a continuing debate about how to translate this term (Alper 1987, 184–88). Translations have ranged from Alper's own “judgment” to David Peter Lawrence's 1999 “recognitive apprehension” to Raffaele Torella's long-standing translation of “reflective awareness,” with many stops in between.



The difficulty I find with these translations is that they tend to only encompass the dualistic aspect of *vimarśa*. Torella’s “reflective awareness” is the strongest of these translations and works very well whenever a conceptual *vimarśa* is being discussed. However, as I will explore at length in Chapter IV, the presence of realization at all levels of consciousness means that realization has both dualistic and nondualistic forms, which these Śaivas will also identify with conceptual and nonconceptual awarenesses. Given the close link between reflection and introspection, wherein a subject takes itself as an object, Torella’s translation may be slightly misleading in the context of a nondual *vimarśa*. Nevertheless, when I cite Torella’s translations, I retain his terminology. Kerry Skora’s (2007) focus on the etymological sense of *vimarśa* as “touch” provides a useful corrective to this emphasis on the conceptual aspect of *vimarśa*, but this focus tends to obscure the cognitive aspect of *vimarśa*. Further, Skora’s decision to translate *vimarśa* as “recollection” reintroduces a conceptual focus and links *vimarśa* directly to memory, which requires a temporality that is not appropriate in the Pratyabhijñā context. Paul Eduardo Muller-Ortega’s 1989 gloss of *vimarśa* as “the self-referential capacity of consciousness” is not inaccurate, but leaves aside the fact that *vimarśa* is not just a capacity because *vimarśa* refers to an awareness itself in addition to the capacity to produce an awareness (Muller-Ortega 1989, 96). Ratié’s (2010) translation as “grasp” seems more appropriate and links to the wide-spread use of metaphors of grasping, denoted by the verbal root *grah*, in Indian epistemology. Her recent suggestion of “realization”, which I adopt here, has the additional benefit of connoting both a moment of nonconceptual insight and the subsequent conceptual content of that awareness. It also

captures something of the play between ontology and epistemology that is so widespread in these texts.

Realization remains an essential feature of consciousness at all stages of perception and linguistic expression, from the highest nondual state to conventional judgments (Torella 2001, 867; 2013, 125). Indeed, realization is more than just a feature, for these Śaivas equate it with manifestation as the nature of consciousness itself. As Utpaladeva famously states at ĪPK 1.5.11, “[The wise] know that the nature of manifestation is a grasp (*vimarśa*); otherwise, the manifesting consciousness (*prakāśa*), while being coloured by objects, would be similar to an inert entity (*jaḍa*) such as a crystal or [any other reflective object].”<sup>61</sup> In his autocommentary, Utpaladeva explains that “In the absence of this reflective awareness, light, though objects make it assume different forms, would merely be ‘limpid’, but not sentient, because there is no ‘savoring.’”<sup>62</sup> Realization thereby represents both consciousness’ capacity to meaningfully experience itself and the awareness which is this experience. In typically nondual Śaiva fashion, the expression of this self-realization is equated with wonder (*camatkṛti*), the emotion that Abhinavagupta identifies as being at the center of all aesthetic experience.<sup>63</sup>

Further highlighting the aesthetic aspects of the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva discussion of consciousness and realization, Ratié examines Abhinavagupta’s extensive use of the

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<sup>61</sup> Ratié’s translation in Ratié (2010, 465). *svabhāvam avabhāsasya vimarśam vidur anyathā / prakāśo ’rthoparakto ’pi sphaṭikāḍijadopamaḥ //*, ĪPK 1.5.11 (Utpaladeva 1994, 20). For a detailed analysis of this famous passage, see Alper (1987).

<sup>62</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 118). *taṃ vinā arthabheditākārasyāpy asya svacchatāmātraṃ na tv ajāḍyam camatkṛter abhāvāt*, ĪPKV ad 1.5.11 (Utpaladeva 1994, 20-21).

<sup>63</sup> For a very insightful discussion of the relationship between religious and aesthetic experience for Abhinavagupta, see Gnoli (1968).

metaphor of a painting and its background to describe the simultaneous unity and diversity of consciousness. As Ratié explains, these Śaivas use the metaphor of the various colors of a painting (*citra*) and the background (*bhitti*) on which they appear as a way of discussing how both diversity and identity are simultaneously necessary to account for experience within the conventional world. She summarizes:

Apprehending a variety implies the synthetic grasp of diverse elements: as long as the various colours of a painting are apprehended separately from each other, they are only ‘yellow’, ‘blue’, or ‘red’, and their respective differences, which constitute the painting, cannot be manifest. The awareness of the painting only arises when the various colours are grasped together, and they can be thus grasped only if a background unites them without dissolving their differences. (Ratié 2014b, 394)

In the same way that the various colors of a painting combine to create a unitary work of art, the inherent differentiation of ultimate consciousness allows the expression of diversified realities that are never anything other than itself.

This focus on the importance of an active, differentiated element that constitutes consciousness even at the highest levels is closely tied to these Śaivas further alignment of realization and *vāc*, a polysemic term with Vedic roots that points to the fundamental interconnection between the basic structures of awareness and the capacity of language to shape and communicate experience. The translation of *vāc* poses an even larger problem than the translation of *vimarśa*. I have yet to find any satisfying translation for this term because, while its basic connotation has to do with language, *vāc* has both conceptual *and* nonconceptual forms. Common translations include “the word,” either capitalized

(Padoux 1990) or uncapitalized (Torella 2001; Ratié 2010), and “Speech” (Bansat-Boudon 2014). However, as Abhinavagupta frequently emphasizes, *vāc* encapsulates much more than spoken words. “Language,” which has a broader connotation than either “the word” or “speech,” seems more satisfying. However, the fact that the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas speak of *both* conceptual *and* nonconceptual forms of *vāc* complicates any effort at translation, for the idea of nonconceptual language (or, for that matter, of a nonconceptual word or speech) sounds at best oxymoronic in English. Even so, it seems to be precisely the fact that *vāc* has both conceptual and nonconceptual forms that makes it so attractive to these Śaivas. Making full use of this distinction, they present the difference between ultimate self-awareness and conventional self-awareness in terms of the different levels of *vāc*. For these reasons, unlike all other Sanskrit terms in this dissertation, I will always leave *vāc* untranslated.

While speculation about *vāc* reaches back to the Ṛg Veda, the most important source for the Pratyabhijñā understanding of this term is the works of Bhartṛhari. In the beginning verses of his *Vākyapadīya*, Bhartṛhari discusses *brahman*, *vāc* and the structures of manifestation. As Bhartṛhari states:

1. The Brahman who is without beginning or end, whose very essence is the Word, who is the cause of the manifested phonemes, who appears as the objects, from whom the creation of the world proceeds,
2. Who has been taught as the One appearing as many due to the multiplicity of his powers, who, though not different from his powers, seems to be so,

3. Depending on whose Time-power to which (though one) differentiation is attributed, the six transformations, birth etc. become the cause of all variety in Being.
4. Of which one that is the seed of all, there is this state of multiplicity, that of the enjoyer, the enjoyed and enjoyment.<sup>64</sup>

Here, *brahman* is *vāc*. Reality is fundamentally linguistic and objects emerge out of the powers of language, which are not different from *brahman* itself. Bhartṛhari considers language itself to be the key to *brahman*'s ability to transcend the duality between the ultimate's lack of differentiation and the multiplicity of the manifest world. He goes on to describe the process of the manifestation of the universe in terms of three progressively more differentiated levels of *vāc*.

The eventual whole-hearted embrace of Bhartṛhari by the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva tradition comes at the end of a complex relationship between Bhartṛhari and Pratyabhijñā thinkers. Somānanda, the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century Śaiva who is credited with founding the Pratyabhijñā tradition, attacks in his *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* a number of aspects of Bhartṛhari's thought with a good deal of vitriol (Torella 2008). Surprisingly, Utpaladeva quietly reverses his teacher's attitude toward Bhartṛhari. In the ĪPK, Utpaladeva proceeds to adopt much of Bhartṛhari's theory of the inextricable relationship between language and awareness as a cornerstone of his own systematization of Somānanda's thought (Torella 2008, 521).

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<sup>64</sup> Iyer's translation in Iyer and Bhartṛhari (1965, 1–5). *anādinidhanaṃ brahma śabdatattvaṃ yad akṣaram / vivartate 'rthabhāvena prakriyā jagato yataḥ // ekam eva yad āmnātaṃ bhinnasaktivyapāśrayāt / aprthaktve 'pi śaktibhyaḥ pṛthaktvene va vartate // adhyāhitakalāṃ yasya kālaśaktim upāśritāḥ / janmādayoḥ vikārāḥ ṣaḍ bhāvabhedasya yonayaḥ // ekasya sarvabījasya yasya ceyam anekadhā / bhokṛḥbhoktavyarūpeṇa bhogarūpeṇa ca sthitiḥ //*, VP 1.1-4 (Iyer and Bhartṛhari 1969, 428). Iyer (1969, 98–146) gives a detailed description of Bhartṛhari's metaphysics.

Utpaladeva, and even more so Abhinavagupta, draw heavily on a slightly modified version of Bhartṛhari's account of the levels of *vāc* to describe the process of perception (Torella 2001, 857). As Torella and others have explained, after Somānanda's scathing critique of Bhartṛhari's tripartite description of the levels of *vāc*, Utpaladeva re-appropriates a revised, four-fold version of the levels of *vāc* and reclaims Bhartṛhari as a major ally (Torella 2008; Nemeč 2005; Nemeč 2011, 59–67).

The reasons for this shift are complex and somewhat obscure. Torella has argued that Somānanda's insufficient familiarity with Bhartṛhari's works, particularly evident in the fact that Somānanda only quotes from the first chapter of the *Vākyapadīya* and does not mention the *Vṛtti* thereon,<sup>65</sup> led him to misinterpret the Grammarian's thought (Torella 2013, XXVI). Utpaladeva's re-appropriation, then, may represent an ingenious corrective to his teacher's overly polemical attitude. Both Torella and Nemeč have noted that Somānanda's context and motivations likely influenced his decision to treat Bhartṛhari so harshly: Somānanda was concerned with establishing his own particular brand of nonduality in contradistinction to influential near rivals such as Bhartṛhari's Grammarian tradition (Torella 2008, 345; Nemeč 2011, 59–62). Conversely, Utpaladeva's aim of defending his Śaiva tradition against Buddhist Vijñānavādins may explain his expanded use of Bhartṛhari's theories as support against a mutual rival (Torella 2008, 347–48).

Torella sums up Utpaladeva's appropriation of Bhartṛhari's epistemology against the Vijñānavādins:

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<sup>65</sup> While the authorship of the *Vṛtti* is contested, the Pratyabhijñā tradition from Utpaladeva onwards considers it Bhartṛhari's own work. For a discussion of the merits of this position, see Nemeč (2011, 59).

In order to undermine the discontinuous universe of the Buddhists he [Utpaladeva] decides to avail himself precisely of the latter doctrine, the language-imbued nature of knowledge, which is meant to demolish its main foundation stone, the unsurpassable gulf between the moment of sensation and that of conceptual elaboration, representing, as it were, the very archetype of the Buddhist segmented reality... What Utpaladeva needed was a shared, if controversial, strong ‘philosophical’ argument. The omnipervadence of language is an epistemological version of the omnipervadence of Śiva, and at the same time calls for the integration into the spiritually dynamic Śaiva universe. (Torella 2008, 350–51)

In Bhartṛhari’s articulation of the levels of *vāc*, then, Pratyabhijñā Śaivas from Utpaladeva onward found a powerful paradigm for expressing their distinctive vision of Śiva. In order to harmonize this vision with Somānanda’s thought, they add an additional, supreme level of *vāc* to the three articulated by Bhartṛhari.

The four levels of *vāc* encompass everything from spoken sentences to the ultimate nature of consciousness itself. *Vāc* is not limited to everyday spoken and written language; according to Abhinavagupta, even a baby’s nonverbal cognitions are possible because of a subtle capacity for linguistic apprehension present in any and all experiences. Although *vāc* encapsulates the conventional use of written and spoken words, it goes far beyond both articulate language use and beyond mere concept use as well. Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta connect two conceptual levels of *vāc*—corresponding approximately to 1) fully articulated language use (*vaikharī*); and 2) mere concept use (*madhyamā*)—to two increasingly subtle nonconceptual levels, *paśyantī* and *parā*. These nonconceptual

levels are not transcendent entities, but rather are embedded within every moment of awareness.

The subtlest level of *vāc*, *parāvāc*, does not involve the articulate sounds that might normally be referred to as ‘language.’ These Śaivas align *parāvāc* with the nature of consciousness itself.<sup>66</sup> *Parāvāc* does not describe a transcendent level separate from the capacities that give rise to normal language, but rather is the essential potency that must be present for the undifferentiated luminosity of consciousness (*prakāśa*) to give rise to linguistically expressible manifold perceptions (Torella 2004, 178–79). As André Padoux concisely states, “In effect, for words or objects to exist, it is not only necessary that they should be first, undifferentiatedly, in *parā*, but also that *parā* should actually be present in them” (Padoux 1990, 175). While a subtle form of differentiation, generally expressed through metaphors of flashing or vibration (*sphurattā*, *spanda*), exists at this level, *parāvāc* is nonconceptual (*nirvikalapaka*).

*Paśyantī*, the next level of *vāc*, is also still nonconceptual. It is not yet qualified by space, time, or subject/object structure (Torella 2001, 861). Abhinavagupta comments that while there is a subtle form of differentiation present at this level, it is unclear (*asphuṭa*) and still highly contracted (*saṃvṛtta*) (Torella 2013, 154). Padoux explains that *paśyantī* is “the initial, undifferentiated moment of consciousness which precedes dualistic cognitive awareness, a moment when what expresses and what is expressed is not yet divided” (Padoux 1990, 190). The Pratyabhijñā Śaivas therefore agree with

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<sup>66</sup> See, for example, ĪPK 1.5.13: “Consciousness has as its essential nature reflective awareness (*pratyavamarśa*); it is the supreme Word (*parāvāk*) that arises freely. It is freedom in the absolute sense, the sovereignty (*aiśvarya*) of the supreme Self,” *citiḥ pratyavamarśātmā parāvāk svarasoditā / svātantryam etan mukhyaṃ tad aiśvaryaṃ paramātmanaḥ* //, ĪPK 1.5.13 (Utpaladeva 1994, 23). Torella’s translation in (2013, 120).



Dharmakīrti that perception is nonconceptual, but because even a nonconceptual moment of awareness is always associated with *vāc* in the form of both *paśyantī* and *parā*, some type of language permeates all levels of awareness.

An awareness becomes conceptual on the plane of *madhyamāvāc*. Here, the everyday distinction between subject and object is fully evident (Torella 2001, 858). *Vāc* occurs as a form of internal discourse (*antarabhilāpa*) that distinguishes between signifier and signified but does not express this distinction verbally. The process of *apoha* occurs at this level as concepts (*vikalpa*) are formed through the exclusion of a counterpart (*pratiyogin*). A full description of the precise relationship between the process of *apoha* and the levels of *vāc* is unfortunately beyond the scope of this dissertation.<sup>67</sup> However, I will examine the ways in which these Śaivas adapt Dharmakīrti's theory of *apoha* to account for the transition between nonconceptual and conceptual forms of self-realization in Chapter IV.

The stage of *vaikharī* is the explicit external verbalization of the concepts that have been formed internally. *Vaikharī* is the everyday level of speech. It is connected to the material supports of language, such as air and the breath. At this stage, the meaning

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<sup>67</sup>The primary difficulty with explaining the precise connection between *apoha* and the levels of *vāc* is this: *apoha* most clearly occurs at the *madhyamā* level of *vāc*, which is where the structures of subject and object fully resolve into a duality. However, this leaves the precise nature of the error inherent in *paśyantī* unclear. Somānanda famously indicated that the mere name of this level implies a duality between subject and object since the verb "to see" (*paś*) is transitive. Torella and Nemeč have pointed out that perhaps the most significant shift that occurs in Pratyabhijñā thought from Somānanda to Utpaladeva concerns the re-evaluation of Bhartṛhari's articulation of the levels of *vāc*. I have yet to find a place where Abhinavagupta or Utpaladeva explicitly resolve the tension between Somānanda's claim that there is a subject/object duality present in *paśyantī* and these later Pratyabhijñā thinkers' stance that 1) subject/object duality is conceptual; 2) *paśyantī* is nonconceptual; and 3) *paśyantī* is still erroneous because it involves subject/object duality. I happily welcome any further research on this area.

to be expressed (*vācyā*) and the phonetic sound that expresses it (*vācaka*) are, in Padoux’s words, “totally distinct” (Padoux 1990, 220). At this stage, the relationship between word and thing is arbitrary (*saṃketaka*). As in *madhyamā*, words take on particular meanings through a process of exclusion (*apohana*) and therefore seem to lose their original inherent connection to reality. All of conventional spoken language, from the most simple single-word utterances to hearing the most complex series of sentences, occurs in *vaikharī* (Torella 2001, 858).

While the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas follow Bhartṛhari in naming the level of conventional language *vaikharī*, their description of how language communicates meaning at this stage differs from Bhartṛhari’s. These Śaivas reject Bhartṛhari’s *sphoṭa* model wherein the meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence comes in a “flash” of insight and expresses something that transcends the individual linguistic parts out of which an expression is formed. At least in his extant works, Utpaladeva does not provide an alternate theory for how conventional language communicates meaning (Torella 2001, 351). Abhinavagupta, however, explains the nature of the linguistic signifier (*vācaka*) in terms of the Mīmāṃsā theory of the eternity of the Sanskrit phonemes (*varṇa*) (Torella 2004, 174). As Torella explains, “To this old problem—what is the *vācaka*?—quite unexpectedly Abhinavagupta furnishes the oldest of the solutions, that of the Mīmāṃsā: ‘Ultimately, the power of verbal signification, consisting in the identification with meaning, only pertains to phonemes’<sup>68</sup>” (2004, 174). For Abhinavagupta, the phonemes are the stuff of consciousness that allows consciousness to express itself in various forms while remaining unitary.

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<sup>68</sup>Torella here quotes from the *Parātrīśikavivarāṇa* and gives the Sanskrit as follows: *varṇānām eva ca paramārthato ’rthatādātmyalakṣaṇaṃ vācakatvam*, PTV p. 191 1.9.

The phonemes' inherent ability to communicate meaning is closely connected to their ontological status. The phonemes themselves never lose their differentiated identity, even within the highest nondual levels of *parāvāc*. As Torella states, "The phonemes are the only reality which is not swallowed by supreme consciousness; they never lose their own essential identity and nature regardless of the ontological level in which they act; they run freely through Vaikharī, Madhyamā, Paśyantī, and Parā" (2004, 178). He continues that this is the case "simply because they are not a content of consciousness but consciousness itself, amounting to its energetic, cognitive aspect" (2004, 178). Language in the everyday world depends on the process of *apoha*, by which these phonemes lose their inherent connection to what they express (2004, 180). As Torella summarizes Abhinava's position:

The phonemes have as their essential nature 'sonority' (*śruti*; PTV p. 249 1.20), which presupposes difference (without difference in sonority no articulation of phonemes is possible). For the difference to be possible an inner unity is necessary; however, this unity, represented by supreme Consciousness or Parā Vāc, does not cancel difference, but acts as the inner background on which more and more interiorized forms of difference rest. (2004, 174)

Like realization, *vāc* also serves as the "background" of the manifestation of the universe, a background whose unity is made possible only by the different elements composing it. With *vāc* and *vimarśa*, then, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas express their position that ultimate consciousness inherently contains the elements necessary for the expression of both unity and diversity.

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided a basic sketch of what each tradition considers to be the ontological foundation of conventional reality. For both traditions, the normal perceptions of sentient beings in their everyday lives do not fully accord with what really exists. Both also posit that the most fundamental error inherent in our normal perceptions is the error of subject/object duality itself: ultimately, all that is real is a particular form of self-aware consciousness (*svasaṃvedana*), which both traditions align with luminosity (*prakāśa*, *prabhāsvara*). This luminosity is the mere capacity for manifestation. Dharmakīrti claims that it is utterly beyond duality, and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas claim that it exceeds but also inherently contains any expression of duality.

For Dharmakīrti, the question of the ontological basis for conventional reality is additionally complicated by the level of analysis from which he speaks. At his External Realist level, Dharmakīrti considers causally efficacious particulars to be ultimately real. These particulars may exist external to the mind of any perceiver. However, at his Epistemic Idealist level, Dharmakīrti rejects the idea that extra-mental particles exist. Instead, the only ultimately real thing is pure, nondual *svasaṃvedana*, untouched by the flaws of subject and object. There are, then, two things that Dharmakīrti feels obliged to explain in order to account for the everyday world (*vyavahāra*). First, how do unique, momentary particulars give rise to the experience of seemingly permanent (or at least temporally and spatially distributed) objects? Second, if external objects aren't real, why do we seem to experience things external to our minds? I will address Dharmakīrti's responses to these questions in Chapter II. I will then present a number of contemporary

critiques to his theories in Chapter III, as well as indicate ways in which Dharmakīrti's larger Yogācāra background may be able to address them.

For the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas, Parameśvara (or Śiva) is the only reality, though he contains within himself all the differentiation of any possible experience. He is manifestation (*prakāśa*), the nature of which is both realization (*vimarśa*) and *vāc*. Everything, including seemingly insentient objects, in fact always participates in the creative freedom of Śiva's will. Moreover, in contrast to the apparent arbitrariness of conventional language, ultimately, the signifier and what it signifies are inherently identical, and the "mass of sounds" (*śabdarāśi*) of all the phonemes is identical to the totality of consciousness itself (Torella 2004, 178). The counterintuitive nature of this ontology is quite apparent. These Śaivas must explain how ultimate consciousness, itself totally free, binds itself into apparently limited dualities, and how this process connects to their thesis supporting the identity of consciousness and *vāc*. A crucial departure point for them is their critique of Dharmakīrti's position that beginningless karmic traces (*anādivāsanā*) may account for the appearance of external objects, even if these objects do not exist. Chapter IV will explore this critique and present these Śaivas' own view of how ultimate consciousness gives rise to the limited structures of everyday experience.

## CHAPTER II: APOHA AND THE CREATION OF THE OBJECTS OF PRACTICAL ACTIVITY FOR DHARMAKĪRTI

As described in the previous chapter, at the level of analysis from which he presents most of his theories, Dharmakīrti posits that unique particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) are ultimately real because they have causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*). These particulars causally interact with each other to produce a perception, which manifests as a phenomenal form (*ākāra*) in the awareness of a given perceiver. Interestingly, however, Dharmakīrti presents his most detailed discussion of how perceivers engage with the contents of their awareness not in his chapter on perception (*pratyakṣa*), but in his chapter on inference (*anumāna*). He does this because he holds that people only act when they have formed a conceptual determination (*niścaya*) about the contents of their awareness. The content of this determination is not the particular object which produced the perception, but rather a universal (*sāmānya*) or concept (*vikalpa*), terms Dharmakīrti equates. Although this universal is not itself ultimately real, it is conventionally real to the extent that it effectively guides action in the everyday world. Its ability to do so rests on a series of errors by which people take the momentary contents of their inner awareness to refer to enduring external objects.

This chapter will address Dharmakīrti's account of how people who are engaged in practical activities (*vyavahartr*) form concepts that enable them to act as though these concepts refer to enduring external objects that instantiate universals, even though such universals do not ultimately exist. Since Dharmakīrti's thought on these points is quite complicated and has been the subject of varied interpretations across the centuries, this chapter will engage in considerable detail with the PVSV, which contains Dharmakīrti's

own most sustained treatment of *apoha*. This approach builds in particular on the work of John Dunne (1996; 2004; 2011), Birgit Kellner (2004a), and Vincent Eltschinger (2010; 2014). It contrasts with some other recent scholarship on *apoha*, which tends to read Dharmakīrti in one of three ways: (i) backwards through the lens of his relationship to Dignāga's views; (ii) forwards in relation to various subsequent Indian and Tibetan commentators; or (iii) sidewise through the application of either analytical or transcendental frameworks. This scholarship is extremely valuable and I will engage with it more widely in relation to the key problem of the judgment of sameness in the next chapter. However, the purpose of the present chapter is somewhat different. By presenting a sustained engagement with the PVSV, I hope to provide a grounding in Dharmakīrti's relatively coherent presentation of *apoha* that can serve as a basis for future discussions of the Pratyabhijñā appropriation and critique of this theory.

This chapter will proceed in three parts. First, I will examine Dharmakīrti's arguments for why universals do not ultimately exist. Consideration of objections that arise based on this position, particularly in relation to how inference could work without universals, leads Dharmakīrti to articulate his theory of *apoha*. Second, I will examine Dharmakīrti's use of *apoha* to account for the causal grounding for the construction of certain universals based on a unique particular which has produced a perception. Third, I will describe Dharmakīrti's account of how people act as though the concept they have produced refers to a real, enduring external object. They do so based on practical considerations supported by certain cognitive errors. A set of fundamental karmic imprints (*vāsanā*) enables these cognitive errors. The precise nature of these karmic

imprints, as well as the ways Dharmakīrti's use of these imprints may address prominent contemporary critiques of *apoha*, will be the subject of the next chapter.

### **Part I: Why Universals Do Not Exist**

As I will substantiate in this section, Dharmakīrti denies the ultimate reality of universals on the basis of both their logical incoherence and the causal irrelevance. For Dharmakīrti, a universal cannot simultaneously be one in the sense that it has a singular, uniform nature *and* many in the sense that it is distributed over multiple particulars. A universal must be either one thing or many things. If it is one thing it cannot be distributed over multiple particulars, and therefore cannot serve as the commonality that links them. If it is many things, it lacks a consistent nature, and therefore cannot be what is common between particulars in that case, either. On this basis, then, Dharmakīrti concludes that a universal is not a real thing because it fails a neither-one-nor-many analysis. Dharmakīrti also attacks the ultimate reality of universals by claiming that they do not contribute causally to the production of a perception. In a moment of awareness, one only perceives one thing—the particular—not the conjunction of a particular and a universal. Moreover, the universal itself plays no role in the causal efficacy of an individual object, either. The mere idea of a fire, or a universal essence of fire-ness, does not cook food or warm one's hands: only a particular fire can do this. I will explore each of these arguments in turn.

#### *Universals are Logically Incoherent because They Fail a Neither-one-nor-many Analysis*

As I discussed in Chapter I, Dharmakīrti, following Vasubandhu, relies on a neither-one-nor-many analysis to reject the existence of external objects. He employs the same style of argumentation in his rejection of the ultimate reality of universals. For Dharmakīrti,



the existence of real universals would undermine the singularity of both the particular associated with one or more universals *and* the universal itself in terms of its distribution over multiple particulars.

Dharmakīrti expresses two ways in which an association between a particular and a real universal would violate the unity required of any real thing: “Since the nature of a real thing is unitary, from what could a cognition that has different forms arise? Alternately, there are not two sensory spheres for a unitary object, one of which instantiates a unitary [universal] and one of which excludes [it].”<sup>69</sup> The first objection focuses on the fact that the perception of a single object may be conceptualized according to different criteria. If the various universals reflecting these concepts were real things, then the object would have to have multiple real things as its nature. The second is based on the fact that all particulars are unique. As such, it is not possible for them to have a universal in common with another particular. I will examine each of these problems in more detail.

Dharmakīrti claims that accepting the existence of real universals would entail the problem that it would not be possible for a single object to have multiple universals associated with it. However, nearly all of the objects of our everyday experience do indeed seem to be associated with multiple universals. In Sanskrit grammatical analysis, this is referred to as the problem of co-instantiation (*sāmānādhikarāṇya*), wherein two words (and the universals they are or denote) equally apply to the same object. The classic example is that of a blue lotus (*nīlotpala*), which is both “blue” and a “lotus” at

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<sup>69</sup> *ekatvād vasturūpasya bhinnarūpā matiḥ kutaḥ / anvayavyatirekau vā naikasyaikārthagocarau*, PV 1.135 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 65), (Dunne 1996, 140). I have closely consulted John Dunne’s (1996) unpublished translation of the PVSV in the course of preparing translations for this chapter.

the same time. Dharmakīrti rejects the idea that co-instantiation could be accounted for by the existence of multiple real universals within a single object because real things simply cannot occur within each other while maintaining both their singularity and mutual difference at the same time. Dharmakīrti succinctly expresses this problem as follows: “Since objects are mutually exclusive, a single [thing] does not occur within two objects. Therefore, this co-instantiation, etc., could not exist.”<sup>70</sup> If the expressions “blue” and “lotus” both refer to real universals, then a real thing could either be blue or it could be a lotus, but it could not be both.

Moreover, the very idea that there is anything in common between particulars is contradictory. As Dharmakīrti explains, “Because it is a contradiction, it also does not make sense for something that is one and has the nature of a real thing to both occur and not occur in precisely [the same] locus.”<sup>71</sup> If a real thing has a singular nature, and a particular is associated with a universal, then the particular and the universal must have the same nature. However, since another particular associated with that universal would also have the same nature, the particulars would be identical. In order for the particulars to retain their difference, it would be necessary for them to not be associated with a universal. In this way, a universal would have to both exist and not exist in each of its instances, which is contradictory.

Continuing along this same vein, Dharmakīrti also refutes an objection that a universal could appear in each instance of a particular, which itself occurs only once. The

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<sup>70</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 141). *tad ayam anyonyārthaparihāreṇaikaviṣayayor vṛtyabhāvāt sāmānādhikaranyādir na syāt*, PVSV ad 1.135 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 65–66).

<sup>71</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 141). *na ca vastvātmana ekasya tatraiva vṛttir avṛttiś ca yuktā vyāghātāt*, PVSV ad 1.135 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 66).

objector claims: “The universal occurs [in each instance], not the particular.”<sup>72</sup>

Dharmakīrti responds:

No, because [a real thing] is not differentiated. Indeed, that which has a singular nature must be either a universal or a particular. Indeed, if it does not have a differentiated nature, its having divisions does not make sense. Or rather, if it does have [a differentiated nature], it should not be non-distinct; this has been stated. Therefore, does this partless thing occur or not occur? It certainly cannot be something that both occurs and does not occur.<sup>73</sup>

The universal and the particular cannot be the same, for if they were one real thing would have multiple natures. They also cannot be different, for if two real things are different, they are different in every respect.

As Dharmakīrti straight-forwardly explains later in the PVSV: “If there is a difference between them in terms of the nature through which a certain thing is identified as a universal or as a particular, then they are just different.”<sup>74</sup> His commentary further clarifies the idea that if two things are different by their very natures, then they are simply different, full stop:

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<sup>72</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 141). *sāmānyasya vṛttir na viśeṣasyeti cet*, PVSV ad 1.135 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 66).

<sup>73</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 141). *na. bhedābhāvāt. tad dhy ekarūpaṃ sāmānyam vā bhāvet viśeṣo vā. na hy asati rūpabhede 'yaṃ pravibhāgo yuktaḥ sati vāvyatireko na syād ity uktam. tad ayam avibhāgo 'nviyād vā na vā. na punar ananvayo 'nvayī ca*, PVSV ad 1.135 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 66).

<sup>74</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 181). *yenātmanā tayoh / bhedaḥ sāmānyam ity etad yadi bhedas tadātmanā // bheda eva*, PV 1.177b-1.178a (Dharmakīrti 1960, 88).

If the difference between the universal and the particular is based on the nature through which they are established as being a universal or a particular, then they are just different. This is so because if the two essential natures of those two are distinct, then they are just different, because the universal and the particular are different in terms of their essential natures. For indeed, a real thing is [nothing but its] essential nature.<sup>75</sup>

Two different real things cannot share the same nature, and one real thing cannot have two different natures. This use of a neither-one-nor-many analysis to determine whether or not an object is ultimately real is a familiar strategy from Dharmakīrti. On this basis, he denies the ultimate reality of universals. He also argues against universals' ultimate reality on the basis of their lack of causal efficacy.

#### *Universals are not Causally Efficacious*

In a crucial and much-discussed passage on *apoha*, Dharmakīrti rejects the idea that the capacity of different things to cause the same effect could be attributed to the presence of a common universal in all of them. As he summarily dismisses this idea, “The universal **is without distinction. Therefore, the universal is not** that which performs that function... Also, the universal is not what performs functions **because**, since the universal **is constant, it cannot causally support anything.**”<sup>76</sup> The idea that universals

<sup>75</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 181–82). *yadi sāmānyaviśeṣayor yam ātmānam āśritya sāmānyam viśeṣa iti sthitis tenātmanā bhedas tadā bheda eva. yasmāt tau hi tayoh svātmānau tau ced vyatirekiṇau vyatireka eva sāmānya viśeṣayoh svabhāvabhedāt. svabhāva hi bhāva iti*, PVSV ad 1.177b-1.178a (Dharmakīrti 1960, 88).

<sup>76</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 345–46). *aviśeṣān sāmānyasya na sāmānyam tatkāryakṛt ... dhrauvyūc ca sāmānyasya anupakārataḥ*, PVSV ad 1.75a...1.75d (Dharmakīrti 1960,

are causally irrelevant is crucial to Dharmakīrti's justification for the necessity of taking an exclusion to be the object of a universal, but in this passage he does not go into the details of why universals cannot themselves produce effects. Rather, Dharmakīrti presents one of his clearest explanations of why universals are not causally efficacious—and therefore not ultimately real—in PVSV verses 1.162-1.166. His arguments here hinge on the idea that a permanent universal cannot sometimes produce its effects and sometimes not: if a universal were causally relevant, it would have to always produce its effects all at once, or not produce them at all. This section leads directly into a discussion of how a concept that is a mere exclusion avoids the pitfalls associated with the now-discredited position that real universals account for the commonality between different instances of what are judged to be the same thing. Since this particular set of verses has not received extensive treatment in contemporary scholarship, I will examine it in detail, with occasional reference to other passages where Dharmakīrti treats similar topics.

Dharmakīrti begins this section with an objection that two things must both possess a common nature if they are to produce the same effect. This objection is presented against Dharmakīrti's own position, which I will examine in the following section of this chapter, that what is common between particulars is actually a mere exclusion, and not a real universal. The objection is straight-forward: “Disregarding a negation, if there is nothing else that is continuous among things, the effect of one thing would not be [the effect] of another because they are completely and utterly different.”<sup>77</sup>

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41–42). I will discuss the broader context of this passage and a number of contemporary interpretations of it in the next chapter.

<sup>77</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 170). *na nirvṛttiṃ viḥāyāsti yadi bhāvānvayo 'paraḥ / ekasya kāryam anyasya na syād atyantabhedataḥ*, PV 1.163 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 82).

In his autocommentary, Dharmakīrti expands on this objection and invokes the principle that only a real thing can produce an effect. Since an exclusion is not a real thing,<sup>78</sup> it cannot produce an effect. Therefore, the only way to account for two things producing the same effect is to postulate that the two share a real essential nature. This essential nature itself is, therefore, the universal shared by two particulars.<sup>79</sup>

Dharmakīrti begins to address this objection by pointing out that a real universal could not, by itself, play the role of producing a certain effect. This is so because the production of an effect depends on additional supporting causes and conditions. However, if a universal by its nature were to produce a particular effect, then it would always produce that effect, regardless of whether or not the additional supporting causes were in place. As he asserts, “If multiple causes produce a single effect because they have the same nature, then that nature is present even just within one of them. So, the supporting causes would be useless.”<sup>80</sup> If a causally efficacious universal were equally present in all of its instances, then all of its instances would always produce all of its effects at the same time, regardless of whether or not the other conditions necessary for the production

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<sup>78</sup> An exclusion is not a real thing because it is merely a negation. Negations have no nature, and so they cannot produce effects. See, for instance, PVSV ad 1.169ab: “**A negation has no nature; hence, once cannot conceive of it as having ‘perdurance’ or ‘non-perdurance.’** That is, there is no such thing at all as an ‘other-exclusion.’ And concepts of that exclusions’ perduring or ceasing by its nature, which would follow from it having a nature, do not make sense,” *nivṛtter niḥsvabhāvatvān na sthānāsthānakalpanā / na hy anyāpoho nāma kiṃcit tasya ca svabhāvānuṣaṅgiṇyaḥ svabhāvasthitipracyutikalpanā na kalpante*, PVSV ad 1.169ab. Translation and Sanskrit in Dunne (2004, 127).

<sup>79</sup> See PVSV ad 1.163 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 82–83).

<sup>80</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 171). *yady ekātmatayānekaḥ kāryasyaikasya kāraḥ / ātmaikatṛpī so ’stīti vyarthāḥ syuḥ sahakāriṇaḥ*, PV 1.164 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 83).

of an effect were present.<sup>81</sup> To bring in some common examples, if the nature of a seed is to produce a sprout, then all seeds would produce sprouts all the time; likewise, if a pot is by nature visible, then all pots would always be visible. Additional conditions such as soil and water, or the presence of a sentient being with the appropriate sensory faculties and light, would be irrelevant.

The next verse expands on the idea that if possessing a common nature is what accounts for the ability of various particulars to produce the same effect, then the existence of only one of those particulars would produce the effect even in the absence of the other causally necessary particulars. Dharmakīrti emphasizes that since the presence of a real shared nature would not depend on the existence of any given particular, the particulars could disappear while their common effect remains: “Their non-different nature does not perish, but the particulars themselves might perish.”<sup>82</sup> He explains: “Indeed, that nondifferent nature does not have a particular instantiation in [each] other object. If it were particular, its nondifference would be abandoned. Further, that [nondifferent nature] is present even within that [particular], and so if even one occurs, that [nondifferent nature] does not perish.”<sup>83</sup> In his earlier discussion of the nature of the causal relationship between the terms of an inference, Dharmakīrti asserts that what one actually infers is not a single particular, say the mere existence of the particular “fire” from the evidence “smoke,” but rather the causal complex (*sāmagrī*) of all things

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<sup>81</sup> See PVSV ad 1.164 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 83).

<sup>82</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 171). *nāpaity abhinnaṃ tadrūpaṃ viśeṣāḥ khalv apāyinaḥ* /, PV 1.165ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 83).

<sup>83</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 171). *na hi tasyābhinnasvabhāvasyārthāntare viśeṣo 'sti. viśeṣe 'bhedahāneḥ. sa ca tatrāpi astīti naikasthitāv api tasyāpāyo 'sti*, PVSV ad 1.165ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 83).

necessary for the production of smoke.<sup>84</sup> He leverages this claim in his current discussion of the causal irrelevance of universals: if additional supporting causes are necessary for the production of an effect, then the universal must be present in all these supporting causes. However, if it produces its effect by its nature, then the universal's presence in one cause or condition should be enough to produce the effect even if the particular instantiation of the object under consideration is absent: to draw again on a common example, the mere presence of sensory organs able to perceive a pot should always perceive a pot, even if no pot is present!

Dharmakīrti drives home the point that only a set of unique causes and conditions has the capacity to produce a particular effect at a certain time and place: “Because the effect does not exist when [even] one is missing, it arises from particulars.”<sup>85</sup> An effect arises from a collection of supporting causes and conditions. Universals lack causal capacity because their presence in even one of these causes or conditions would cause the production of the effect, and this is not what is observed in the everyday world. Dharmakīrti here segues from his attack on the causal capacity of universals to the related claim that only particulars are causally efficacious. First, foreshadowing his definition of the ultimate reality of a particular as opposed to the merely conventional reality of a universal, he continues: “Therefore, only particulars, not a universal, are producers. Thus, only they are real, since **only that which is capable of causal efficacy is an ultimately real thing**. Indeed, precisely this is the defining characteristic of what is real and what is unreal: that which is suitable for causal efficacy and that which is not suitable, as I will

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<sup>84</sup>See PVSV ad 1.36-1.37 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 23).

<sup>85</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 172). *ekāpāye phalābhāvād viśeṣebhyas tadudbhavaḥ* /, PV 1.165cd (Dharmakīrti 1960, 83).



explain.”<sup>86</sup> He then reiterates the idea that a distributed entity cannot produce an effect: “**Moreover, that object that is capable of causal efficacy is not distributed. It is not possible for an effect [to arise] from something that is distributed.**”<sup>87</sup> Finally, he explicitly states that, based on their causal roles, universals are not real things, but particulars are: “Therefore, all universals are unreal because they lack the capacity for causal efficacy. In contrast, only a particular is real precisely because [one’s objects] are accomplished through it.”<sup>88</sup>

I will turn now to Dharmakīrti’s account of how the difference of a real thing from all other real things provides the warrant for a judgment that these real things share certain causes and effects. Dharmakīrti enters into these questions through his formulation of a theory of inference that accepts that the terms of an inference must be connected through their essential nature, but denies that a positive universal instantiated in each term can fill this role. He provides this account through his theory of *apoha*, which holds that it is precisely the fact that all real things are unique that allows perceivers to treat them as though they share some causal properties.

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<sup>86</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 172). *tasmād viśeṣā eva janakā na sāmānyam. tatas ta eva vastu. yasmāt sa pāramārthiko bhāvo ya evārthakriyākṣamaḥ / idam eva hi vastvavastunor lakṣaṇam yad arthakriyāyogyatā ’yogyatā ceti vakṣyāmaḥ*, PVSV ad 1.166ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 84).

<sup>87</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 172). *sa ca arthakriyāyogyo ’rthaḥ nānveti yo ’nveti na tasmāt kāryasaṃbhavaḥ //* PVSV ad 1.166cd (Dharmakīrti 1960, 84).

<sup>88</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 172). *tasmāt sarvaṃ sāmānyam anarthakriyāyogyatvād avastu. vastu tu viśeṣa eva tata eva tanniṣpatteḥ*, PVSV ad 1.166cd (Dharmakīrti 1960, 84).

## Part II: Inference without Universals and the Causal Warrant for Forming a Concept

In a remarkably clear set of verses, Dharmakīrti summarizes his theory of how inference only functions in relation to exclusions, not in relation to positive universals:

A single expression or inferential mark operates in relation to the removal of ambiguity about a single object. In that case, the distinct entity that is denoted could not at all be a real thing, the cognition of which [would arise] in its entirety from a denotation which is capable [of expressing] that real thing. Hence, a word that has a singular [object] as its basis has various results.<sup>89</sup>

Here, Dharmakīrti emphasizes that the role of inference is to remove erroneous determinations about a real thing under consideration.<sup>90</sup> For Dharmakīrti, the terms of an inference must be related through their essential nature. In many traditions of classical Indian philosophy, the role of connecting two terms in an inference is fulfilled by a positive universal: two terms are connected because they share a certain universal property, which is put forth as the evidence for their connection.<sup>91</sup> However, the fact that

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<sup>89</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 137). *ekārthaśleṣaviccheda eko vyāpriyate dhvaniḥ / liṅgam vā tatra vicchinnaṃ vācyaṃ vastu na kiṃcana // yasyābhidhānato vastusāmarthyād akhile gatiḥ / bhaven nānāphalaḥ śabda ekādhāro bhavaty ataḥ //*, PV 1.129-1.130 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 64).

<sup>90</sup> Eltschinger emphasizes the relevance of this function of removing ignorance to Dharmakīrti's soteriological project: "Correcting erroneous superimpositions of all kinds and substituting them with true/validated intellectual contents is the basic task of inference. Far from being a means of investigating the world and improving knowledge, inference aims first and foremost at discarding the erroneous superimpositions that nescience is ultimately responsible for" (Eltchinger 2014, 299). For more on the primary role of inference being to remove error, see Kellner (2004a, 4–9).

<sup>91</sup> For an overview of different conceptions of universals in classical Indian philosophy, see Matilal (1986, 379–425). For a discussion on the Nyāya conception of the importance of universals for establishing a causal relationship in an inference, see Dravid (1972, 20–25).

the terms of an inference must be related through their essential natures immediately raises a problem for Dharmakīrti: if a real thing is partless, and therefore perceived in its entirety all at once, then how is an inference anything other than a tautology? On the flip side, how is it possible to divide up a partless real thing into various concepts which seemingly indicate different aspects of its nature?

Dharmakīrti formulates his theory of *apoha* in relation to these questions, and then generalizes the role of exclusion to account for the functioning of any kind of universal, not just for the connection between the terms of an inference. In this section, I will first examine Dharmakīrti's theory of inference in order to show why the terms of an inference must be connected through their essential natures. Then, I will address how, perhaps counter-intuitively, a particular's difference from everything else fulfills the role of providing a connection between the essential nature of a thing and multiple concepts that may be constructed on its basis.

### *The Essential Nature of a Real Thing Connects the Terms of an Inference*

A consideration of the nature of the relationship between the terms of an inference leads Dharmakīrti into his most detailed discussion of *apoha*. In line with other Classical Indian *pramāṇa* theorists, Dharmakīrti understands the basic structure of an inference as follows: a subject (*pakṣa*, *sādhyadharmin*) is qualified by a predicate (*sādhyadharma*) because it has another quality that is being adduced as evidence (*hetu*, *liṅga*) (Dunne 2004, 26–27). In order for a certain piece of evidence to demonstrate an invariable relationship between a subject and a predicate, Dharmakīrti holds that this evidence must

be either causal (*tadutpatti*)<sup>92</sup> or based on identity (*tadbhāva, tādātmya*).<sup>93</sup> As he explains, these types of relationships function as limiting factors: “The restriction of unaccompanied non-arising [arises] from a restriction which is either a causal relationship or the nature [of the things].”<sup>94</sup> Things connected through either causal or identity evidence have a necessary relationship to each other, and therefore serve as invariable indicators of their co-presence.<sup>95</sup> Both of these types of evidence must be based on a connection between the inherent natures (*svabhāvapratibandha*) of the terms they purport to evince, for otherwise an inference based on this evidence would be subject to doubt. Since Dunne (2004, 145–222) has already provided a comprehensive analysis of *svabhāvapratibandha* that includes extensive reference to other contemporary scholarship,<sup>96</sup> I will limit myself in this section to providing a summary of this topic with an eye to demonstrating why the problem of the relationship between the terms of an inference leads Dharmakīrti to his most comprehensive discussion of *apoha*.

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<sup>92</sup> For a critical account, using the tools of contemporary analytical philosophy, of Dharmakīrti’s use of causal evidence, see Gillon (2011b).

<sup>93</sup> *tasmāt svabhāvapratibandhād eva hetuḥ sādhyam gamayati. sa ca tadbhāvalakṣaṇas tadutpattilakṣaṇo vā*, “Therefore, the evidence indicates what is to be proven only on the basis of a connection to its inherent nature. Moreover, that [evidence] is characterized as either identity or causal,” PVSV ad 1.25 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 17).

<sup>94</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 43). *kāryakāraṇabhāvād vā svabhāvād vā niyāmakāt / avinābhāvanīyamo*, PV 1.31ac (Dharmakīrti 1960, 20).

<sup>95</sup> It is important to note here that Dharmakīrti clarifies that causal evidence allows one to infer from the presence of the effect to the presence of the cause, but not the other way around. See, for example, PVSV ad 1.33cd: “Nor does an effect necessarily arise from a cause,” *phalasyāpi nāvaśyaṃ hetau bhāvaḥ* (Dharmakīrti 1960, 21).

<sup>96</sup> Dunne engages in particular with Steinkellner’s (1974; 1984; 1991b; 1991a; 1993; 1996; 2003) works.

According to Dharmakīrti, merely observing that the evidence is present in similar cases and absent in dissimilar cases is not enough to establish a causal connection.<sup>97</sup> As he states:

That rule is not determined from not seeing the evidence in heterogeneous cases and seeing it in homologous cases. Otherwise, how could one arrive at the rule that one thing, namely a cause, necessarily exists because certain others, which are the effects, exist? Or how could one arrive at that principle if an attribute that has the nature of the evidence has a cause that is different from the evidence's cause? This would be like inferring that something is red because it is a cloth.<sup>98</sup>

Here, Dharmakīrti addresses the well-known logical problem of induction: simply observing various phenomena is not enough to make certain determinations about the nature of those phenomena because it is always possible that a future observation could

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<sup>97</sup> Horst Lasic admirably summarizes this process: “Seeing that using observations made unmethodically, regardless of how many there are, can never satisfy the desire for certainty, Dharmakīrti replaces the quantity of observations with the quality of the observational procedure, as he has explained it. This quality results from a predetermined sequence of a restricted number of observations. But of course even observations made in a systematic way cannot themselves yield any information about what has not been observed by them. To gain the required additional information Dharmakīrti again brings into play his beliefs about how the world functions, especially his belief that each thing is what and how it is because of the complex of the causes involved in its production, and that it could not be what and how it is if the complex of its production were not exactly the way it is. He argues that if smoke were not, in general, an effect of fire, then it could not even once originate from it, and that if one instance of smoke, another instance of which we know as being an effect of fire, were to originate without fire, then smoke would have no cause at all” (Lasic 2003, 186).

<sup>98</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 149, fn 14). *'darśanān na na darśanāt // avaśyambhāvanīyamaḥ kaḥ parasyānyathā paraiḥ / arthāntaranimitte vā dharme vāsasi rāgavat //*, PV 1.31d-1.32 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 20).

contradict what one has seen thus far.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, without some essential connection between the two terms, one may merely be observing a correlation, and not a necessary relationship. In order to invariably indicate that the presence of one thing entails the presence of another, the two things must be essentially linked either in terms of their own nature or in terms of a causal relationship. To flesh out his example, even if all of the cloths that a given person has seen are red, this person is not justified in inferring that being a cloth is an invariable indicator of being red. The relationship between being red and being a cloth here is accidental; the two are not connected causally or in terms of their essential nature.

Dharmakīrti discusses the nature of identity-evidence in terms of the common example that the presence of a *śimśapā*, a certain type of tree, is an invariable indicator of the presence of a tree. He also provides another more soteriologically significant example, and his discussion of this example leads directly to his discussion of *apoha*. The example is an inference establishing that sound is impermanent because it is created. It allows Dharmakīrti to both clarify the nature of the essential connection between the terms of an inference and establish the pan-Buddhist position that all created things are momentary.<sup>100 101</sup> He explains this inference as follows:

The means of trustworthy awareness is demonstrated through the example: “That which produces a thing with the nature of being constructed also produces a thing with the nature of being impermanent.” Otherwise, there would be no principle

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<sup>99</sup> For more on Dharmakīrti’s response to the problem of induction, including an analysis of Nyāya views, see Matilal (1998, 108–26). See also Inami (1999, esp. 137-138).

<sup>100</sup> For more on the soteriological implications of the inference demonstrating momentariness, see Arnold (2013, 22–23).

<sup>101</sup> For an overview of Dharmakīrti’s approach to the inference of momentariness, see Eltschinger (2010, 423–24).

that one thing must be present because some other thing exists. Hence, one would suspect that the proof might mislead one about the thing to be proven. This means of trustworthy awareness shows that the thing to be proven is invariably connected to the mere presence of the [evidence].<sup>102</sup>

This inference rests on the fact that being impermanent and being created are essentially the same thing. As Dharmakīrti explains a bit later, “That is, when one says that that which is constructed is impermanent, then, given that the objects are not different, it is clearly the case that this [impermanence] is the nature of that [which is constructed].”<sup>103</sup> This invariable connection provides the justification for inferring from the fact that a thing is constructed to the fact that it is impermanent. Since the two things are not really different, one cannot be misled in thinking that the presence of one entails the presence of the other.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 39). *yaḥ kṛtakam svabhāvam janayati so 'nityasvabhāvam santam janayatīti pramāṇam dṛṣṭāntenopadarśyate. anyathaikadharmasadbhāvāt tadanyenāpi bhavitavyam iti niyamābhāvāt sādhanasya sādhyavyabhicārāṅkā syāt. tena ca pramāṇena sādhyadharmasya tanmātrānubandhaḥ khyāpyate*, PVSV ad 1.27a-c (Dharmakīrti 1960, 17–18).

<sup>103</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 40). *tathā hi yat kṛtakam tad anītyam ity ukte 'narthāntarabhāve vyaktam ayam asya svabhāvas*, PVSV ad 1.28 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 18).

<sup>104</sup> Iwata usefully emphasizes Dharmakīrti’s reliance on the idea that two things related through a *tādātmyapratibandha*, or “identity connection,” arise from the same causes. Because of this, one cannot be misled about the presence of the thing to be proven based on the proposed proof because all the causal factors necessary for the presence of the thing to be proven are already present in the mere presence of the proof. As he explains: “When the *sādhana* is related to the *sādhyā* through the *tādātmya*-connection, the *sādhyā* arises from the same cause which also brings forth the *sādhana*” (Iwata 2003, 65). However, he then seems to push this connection too far by arguing that the presence of the thing to be proven is sufficient to demonstrate the presence of the proof: “The *sādhana*, in its turn, arises from its own material cause which also brings forth the *sādhyā*, and hence does not depend upon any other causes; therefore, the *sādhana*, possessing the *tādātmya*-connection with the *sādhyā*, is not dependent upon any other causes to be coexistent with the *sādhyā*” (2003, 65). Iwata makes another comment to the

As many contemporary scholars, beginning with Steinkellner (Steinkellner 1971), have noted, however, in passages such as these Dharmakīrti seems to rely on two different senses of the relationship between a *svabhāva*, which I have translated as “nature,” and a real thing (*bhāva*, *artha*). On the one hand, as shown most vividly by his statement in PVSV that “a real thing is [nothing but] its essential nature,”<sup>105</sup> at times Dharmakīrti simply equates the two. However, in his discussions of why a given particular may be conceptualized in various ways, he relies on an idea of *svabhāva* as something more like an essential property, for it seems that a given particular may have

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effect that the existence of the proof always indicates the existence of the thing to be proven, in addition to the other way around: “according to his description of the *tādātmya*-connection, as will be shown later, he accepts the commutation of the *sādhana* and *sādhya*, that is, he states that the *sādhya* is the essence of the *sādhana* and the *sādhana* is the essence of the *sādhya*” (2003, 71). The first of these relationships, which Dharmakīrti clearly supports, would be tantamount to saying “This is a tree because it is an oak”; the second, however, would entail that “This is an oak because it is a tree,” which is clearly false and which (at least one would hope) Dharmakīrti does not accept. Dunne takes issue with Iwata’s claim that the relationship between the subject and a predicate in an inference is interchangeable for Dharmakīrti (Dunne 2004, 209–10). Dunne focuses on his difference with Iwata about the function of “*mātra*” in Dharmakīrti’s explanation of *tādātmya* evidence: “Also, a *svabhāva* is evidence for a *svabhāva* that is invariably consequent from its mere (*mātra*) presence [PV1.2cd]” (2004, 209). For Iwata, this *mātra* does not serve a logical role, but simply indicates the ontological identity between the two terms. Dunne, however, argues that “the term ‘mere’ does indeed have a ‘logical’ function, in the sense that it restricts the evidence to the predicate by preventing both overextension (*atiprasaṅga*) and under-extension (*nyūnatā*)” (2004, 209). Dunne’s reading here is convincing. Dunne further links this disagreement to the interpretation of the compound *tatsvabhāva* and its synonymous forms, which are often used by Dharmakīrti when discussing the shared nature of the terms of an inference. Against both Iwata and Steinkellner in numerous works, Dunne argues that this compound should be interpreted not as saying that “the evidence *is* the predicate’s nature-*svabhāva*,” but rather as saying that “the evidence *has* the predicate as its nature-*svabhāva*” (2004, 211–12). Here again, since Dunne’s interpretation is both philologically accurate and avoids attributing a glaring philosophical error to Dharmakīrti, it is convincing. For Dunne’s full examination of this problem, including some lingering issues with even the most charitable reading of Dharmakīrti’s understanding of identity evidence, see (2004, 203–22).

<sup>105</sup> *svabhāva hi bhāva iti*, PVSV ad 1.177b-1.178a (Dharmakīrti 1960, 88).



multiple natures. This distinction led Steinkellner and, following him, Dunne, to specify in translations if each instance of the term *svabhāva* refers to a nature or to a property.

Basing himself on Collett Cox's exploration of *dharma* in the Abhidharma literature (Cox 2004), Katsura recently weighed in on this debate to note: "Having gone through those passages of Dharmakīrti that contain *svabhāva*, I realized that there was no reason to contradict the above observation of Steinkellner's. I would just like to suggest that the two distinct meanings of *svabhāva* of Dharmakīrti are in line with the two distinct applications of the term *svabhāva* in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma mentioned above" (Katsura 2011, 275). Rather than seeing this usage as something distinctive to Dharmakīrti, Katsura thereby links Dharmakīrti's use of the two senses of *svabhāva* to the tradition that Dharmakīrti inherits.

Katsura summarizes his understanding of the connection, noting that in the Abhidharma *dharma*s display a similar two-fold characteristic:

*Svabhāva* as causal efficacy is the intrinsic nature of a real object (*artha/vastu*) that is capable of producing an effect... Each particular is characterized by its own unique causal efficacy. *Svabhāva* as causal efficacy, though different in the details, corresponds somewhat with the intrinsic nature of the individual *dharma*s in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma. *Svabhāva* as concept/property, such as 'impermanence (*anityatā*) or product-ness (*kṛtakatva*), is also the intrinsic nature of a real object. Unlike *svabhāva* as causal efficacy, it is shared by many real objects. It corresponds with the intrinsic nature shared by the group of *dharma*s and generic characteristics (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma. Dharmakīrti too calls it 'generic characteristic' and regards it as 'conventional

existence' (*saṃvṛtisat*). In short, according to Dharmakīrti, a real object, i.e., a unique particular, is characterized by its unique causal efficacy as well as multiple intrinsic natures, i.e., general characteristics. (2011, 275–76)

The connection Katsura makes between Dharmakīrti's understanding of *svabhāva* and earlier Ābhidharmic understandings provides a compelling way for further refining Steinkellner and Dunne's model since he links Dharmakīrti's usage to the earlier tradition. This opens up the possibility for reading Dharmakīrti's multiple uses of *svabhāva* in line with his more general pedagogical strategy of speaking to the tradition he inherits for as long as possible, even if it means occasionally using concepts and categories that he would not strictly support. Katsura's suggestion that these two uses of *svabhāva* are better viewed in terms of a "loose application" and a "strict application" than as being truly two different senses of the term is therefore compelling (2011, 274). Reflecting this position that the two meanings of *svabhāva* in Dharmakīrti's works have more to do with pedagogical context than with a real acceptance of the idea that a particular may have multiple *svabhāvas*, I have decided not to adopt Steinkellner and Dunne's technique of specifying which sense Dharmakīrti employs in a given passage. Rather, when possible, I consistently render *svabhāva* with "nature" or, for emphasis, "essential nature."

Even as Dharmakīrti makes the point that the relationship between the terms of an inference are related through their essential nature, he also hints toward the fact that the relationship between being created and being impermanent—more broadly, the relationship between the subject and the predicate of any inference—is a bit more complicated. As he notes, "Nor is it the case that there is some other impermanence which arises later. I will explain the reason why they are expressed differently as the

subject and the predicate [of an inference] even though impermanence, which is the momentary thing, is precisely that thing itself.”<sup>106</sup> Dharmakīrti here foreshadows two related problems that he will address head-on in the section on *apoha*: 1) If the subject and the predicate of an inference must be connected in terms of their inherent natures, then the inference is tautological and does not actually prove anything; and 2) why would the same thing sometimes be referred to as impermanent and sometimes as created?

For Dharmakīrti, the only way to avoid these faults is to assert that universals function through exclusions, not through positive terms. Inference cannot operate by connecting some parts or properties of a real thing to other parts or properties. Since a real thing is singular and unique, it has no parts, and any perception of this real thing must perceive all of it at once: “it is not possible to see a partless thing in only one respect.”<sup>107</sup> This same logic applies to the properties of a real thing, too, since a real thing and its properties are not different. As Dharmakīrti states, “when a real thing is grasped through inference, if there is the determination of one property, all properties are grasped.”<sup>108</sup> In this way, if one accepts the idea that a real thing is unique, then inferences cannot function by connecting two unique real things precisely because real things are confined only to themselves. In reality, they are not connected to anything else. All one could do in an inference is state that the essential nature of a real thing is its essential nature because of its essential nature. Clearly, this is less than useful. In his *apoha* theory,

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<sup>106</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 44). *na vai kācid anyā 'nityatā nāma yā paścān niṣpadyeta. sa eva hi bhāvaḥ kṣaṇasthitidharmā 'nityatā vacanabhede 'pi dharmidharmatayā nimittam vakṣyāmaḥ*, PVSV ad 1.33ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 21).

<sup>107</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 60). *anaṃśasya caikadeśena darśanāyogāt*, PVSV ad 1.44 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 27)

<sup>108</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 60). *vastugrahe 'numānāc ca dharmasyaikasya niścaye / sarvadharmagraho*, PV 1.46ac (Dharmakīrti 1960, 46).

Dharmakīrti addresses how a real thing's difference from everything else provides the necessary grounding for the construction of and connections between multiple concepts without violating that real thing's unitary nature.

*A Real Thing's Difference from Everything Else as the Warrant for Forming a Concept*

Dharmakīrti introduces his first verse on *apoha* with an objection about tautology, referred to in Sanskrit as the fault (*doṣa*) that the evidence would be part of the object of the thesis (*pratijñārthaikadeśa*). Drawing again on the example inference of sound being impermanent because it is created, Śākyabuddhi lucidly clarifies the nature of this objection: “In other words, in saying that sound is impermanent because it is created, one may as well say that sound is impermanent because it is impermanent.”<sup>109</sup> <sup>110</sup> Rejecting the idea that this fault applies to his argument, Dharmakīrti contends:

All entities, because they are delimited in their own inherent nature, naturally participate in exclusions from homogeneous and heterogeneous entities. Therefore, different types are conceived based on whichever [thing] from which there is the exclusion of objects, which highlight their particular differences. Therefore, the particular difference that is known through a certain property cannot be understood through another. Therefore, the delimitation is different.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Dunne's translation from the Tibetan in Dunne (1996, 55).

<sup>110</sup> For more on Dharmakīrti's possible problems with inference and tautology, see Dunne (2004, 204–5).

<sup>111</sup> *sarve bhāvāḥ svabhāvena svasvabhāvavyavasthiteḥ / svabhāvaparabhāvābhyām yasmād vyāvṛttibhāgiṇaḥ // tasmād yato yato 'rthānām vyāvṛttis tannibandhanāḥ / jātibhedāḥ prakalpyante tadviśeṣāvagāhinaḥ // tasmād yo yena dharmeṇa viśeṣaḥ sampratīyate / na sa śākyas tato 'nyena tena bhinnā vyavasthitiḥ*, PV 1.40–42. I would like to thank Vincent Eltschinger for generously working with me on these verses and their commentaries. Eltschinger also discusses PV 1.40 in (2014, 259–60). See also

Commenting on this passage, Georges Dreyfus succinctly notes: “It is because things abide in their own nature that we can exclude them from the classes they do not belong to. It is this connection that is ignored when his theory is accused of providing an account of thought and language as arbitrary projections onto the real world” (Dreyfus 2011, 215). The causal properties of real things account for the ability of concepts to successfully refer to particulars. The nature of the particulars themselves is what allows the formation of these concepts.

Dharmakīrti here relies on a principle that is central to his ontology: something that is ultimately real is unique. Dharmakīrti expresses a real thing’s uniqueness through the metaphor that real things are not mixed. As he begins his autocommentary on these verses: “Indeed, all things are established in their own respective natures. They do not mix themselves with another because an unacceptable consequence that [the other thing] would not be other would follow.”<sup>112</sup> A real thing’s nature is precisely what that thing is. If two things were to share the same nature, they would be the same thing. In this way, Dharmakīrti holds that it does not make sense for a universal and a particular to share the same nature, for then any instantiation of a given universal would have to be precisely identical to all other such instantiations: all books would be the same book, all people the

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Dunne’s (2004, 159, fn 28) translation and Ishida’s (2011) translation and analysis in (Ishida 2011). Both Dunne (2004, 131–33) and Ishida (2011, 198–200) note that Śākyabuddhi’s commentary on PV 1.40 develops the position that there are three kinds of *anyāpoha*: the particular which is excluded (*vyāvṛtta*) from what is other; the mere excluding of what is other (*anyavyavacchedamātra*) which is the exclusion itself (*vyāvṛtti*); and the appearance in a conceptual cognition (*vikalpa buddhipratibhāsa*) which is the means through which others are excluded (Ishida’s reconstruction: *anyo ’pohyate ’nena*). For a further explanation of these three kinds of *apoha*, see Katsura (2011, 125–28).

<sup>112</sup> *sarva eva hi bhāvāḥ svarūpashitayaḥ. te nātmānaṃ pareṇa miśrayanti. tasyāparatvaprasaṅgāt*, PVSV ad 1.40-42 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 25).

same person, and so on. Another way of conceptualizing the fact that a real thing is unique is that a real thing is different from all other real things. Dharmakīrti expresses this in terms of a real thing's participation in exclusions from all other things: "one thing has as many exclusions as there are [things] with different natures, in dependence on which [those exclusions are made]."<sup>113</sup> In these ways, it is precisely the singularity of a real thing that implies its association with an infinite number of exclusions from all other real things.

*Apoha* itself enters into this discussion because the content of the judgment that both terms are capable of producing is not a positive universal, but rather is merely a negation formed through the exclusion of those judgments not relevant to a perceiver's goals in a given moment. As we have seen, the content of this judgment cannot be a real universal because this would require the natures of the universal and the particular to be mixed, and real things are not mixed. The fact that a particular is unique means that it is excluded from everything else. It is therefore possible to associate an infinite number of exclusions with any real thing, for there are an infinite number of other real things from which it is excluded. The formation of a certain concept through a focus on one set of exclusions as opposed to another is guided by practical concerns: "there are just as many expressions as there are exclusions, which [are formed] through the rejection of what does not have those causes and effects in order to engage in practical activity."<sup>114</sup> Depending on how a perceiver carves up these exclusions, this perceiver may form a judgment about the particular in question that associates it with other particulars which

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<sup>113</sup> *ekasya bhāvasya yāvanti pararūpāṇi tāvatyas tadapekṣayā vyāvṛttayaḥ*, PVSV ad 1.40-1.42 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 25).

<sup>114</sup> *yāvatyas ca vyāvṛttayas tāvatyaḥ śrutayo 'tatkāryakāraṇaparihāreṇa vyavahārārthāḥ*, PVSV ad 1.40-1.42 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 25).

also participate in some of the same exclusions. Even though a perceiver may judge that two particulars are the same by focusing only on certain exclusions that the two seem to share in relation to accomplishing a particular goal, since these exclusions are not real things, the particulars do not in fact share anything. Dharmakīrti thereby claims that he has addressed the original objection: “Therefore, although their inherent natures are not different, that object which is named by whatever property is cognized as different; it cannot be cognized by another. Thus, all words do not have the same meanings. It is not the case that the reason is part of the content of the thesis.”<sup>115</sup>

Saying that a unique particular shares nothing with anything else, and yet can be judged to share certain things with others, seems like a classic case of having one’s cake and eating it, too. Dharmakīrti presents an objection along these lines: “But how could there be a universal in real things that have the nature of being excluded in every possible way, because they are not mixed and there is no other real thing?”<sup>116</sup> He responds:

The kind of universal that they share has been stated: [consider a group of things, *a, b, c, ...n*] that do not [in reality] participate in each other; [although actually distinct, one ignores their distinction and instead notices that they all] do not participate in certain other things; [thus, *a, b, c, ...n* are considered to be] distinct

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<sup>115</sup> *tasmāt svabhāvābhede ’pi yena yena dharmeṇa nāmnā yo viśeṣo bhedaḥ pratīyate na sa śakyo ’nyena pratyāyayitum iti naikārtthāḥ sarvaśabdāḥ. tan na pratijñārthaikadeśo hetur iti*, PVSV ad 1.40-1.42 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 25).

<sup>116</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 85). *kathaṃ tarhīdānīm ekāntavyāvṛttarūpeṣu bhāveṣu sāmānyam nāma. teṣām asaṃsargād anyasya cābhāvāt*, PVSV ad 1.67 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 38).

from those other things. This non-participation [of *a, b, c...n*] in those other things is [what we mean when we say that *a, b, c, ...n* are all] the same.<sup>117</sup>

Along the same lines, Dharmakīrti straight-forwardly states: “Objects are not the same in terms of any essence present in all of them, whether it be distinct or not distinct from each thing that instantiates it. Therefore the apprehension of those things in that way is just a false conceptual cognition.”<sup>118</sup> He continues to clarify that the role of concepts is not to point to some real, positive universal, the real existence of which he has already demonstrated is impossible. Rather, “The seed of this conceptual cognition is each object’s difference from this and that other object; one engages in the formation of linguistic conventions (*saṃjñā*) for the purpose of knowing that difference.”<sup>119</sup> In this way, Dharmakīrti leverages a real thing’s real difference from everything else to claim that concepts may be constructed based on the differences that two real things seem to share in relation to a specific perceiver’s goal.

This idea that what is common among a certain group of particulars is their difference from everything else is behind the common oversimplification that a concept formed via exclusion boils down to a double negation. Reflecting this trend, the Preface to a recent volume on *apoha* states: “The basic idea of the *apoha* theory is that a general term like ‘cow’ refers to all those things that are not non-cows” (Siderits, Tillemans, and

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<sup>117</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 85). *uktam yādṛśam sāmānyam asaṃśṛṣṭānām ekāsaṃsargas tadvyatikekiṇām samānateti*, (Dharmakīrti 1960, 38). I have followed Dunne’s suggestion in expanding this passage in order to clarify it.

<sup>118</sup> Translation in (Dunne 2004, 343). *na hy arthā vyatiriktenāvyatiriktena vā kenacid ātmanā samānāḥ. tathaiṣāṃ grahaṇam mithyāvikalpa eva*, PVSV ad 1.72ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 40).

<sup>119</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 89). *itaretarabhedo ’sya bījam saṃjñā yadarthikā*, PV 1.72cd (Dharmakīrti 1960, 40).



Chakrabarti 2011, VII).<sup>120</sup> In his chapter in this same volume, Tom Tillemans notes that such a “top-down” presentation of *apoha* has dominated both Western scholarship on and classical Indian critiques of this theory. As Tillemans describes:

By “top-down” I mean a position that would somehow maintain that it is because of some specific—and perhaps even very ingenious—features of the logical operators of negation in the exclusion that the *apoha* does pertain to particular things, even though it does not have the ontological baggage of a real universal. In short, on a top-down approach the *apoha* would behave like a property, a sense, or a meaning, which belongs to the conceptual scheme but nonetheless qualifies and thus serves to pick out the real particulars in the world; because of some feature of double negation, we are spared commitment to real universals in addition to real particulars. (Tillemans 2011, 53)

Tillemans sees some merit in describing Dignāga’s own account of *apoha* as top-down in the sense that Dignāga speaks of “facets” (*aṃśa*) of real things that are expressed through concepts which, although fictions, accurately depict the nature of the real thing because they have the form of a double negation: a cow may consistently have the property of being not a non-cow “simply because of the logical features of its double negation and not because it is a positive feature that would be present in the particulars themselves” (2011, 54). In line with this understanding of *apoha*, a good deal of scholarship, both contemporary and classical, has focused on understanding the nature of these negations

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<sup>120</sup> The continued prevalence of this particular formulation is evident in Arnold (2013, 119). It is noteworthy that Arnold’s account of *apoha* is explicitly influenced by Mīmāṃsā critiques of this theory.

and the question of whether or not they are helpful in creating a theory of meaning that does not rely on positive universals.

However, Tillemans also notes that Dharmakīrti's description of how *apoha* works is very different. Tillemans names Dharmakīrti's approach a "bottom-up" one and notes that Dharmakīrti's use of causality to connect the particular and the universal constitutes a major change between Dharmakīrti's theory and Dignāga's (2011, 54–55). Tillemans considers Dharmakīrti's use of causality to be a "substantial evolution" of Dignāga's theory in that it provides a compelling way to bridge the apparent gap between ineffable particulars and the universals that refer to them (2011, 55). As he states, "for the *apoha* theorist there actually *is* an important connection between thought, language, and particulars via a complex causality, even if in our subjective representations of that causal process we might invariably distort and misapprehend many of its key features" (2011, 57).

Connected to but slightly different from Dharmakīrti's use of causality in his account of *apoha*, there is yet another reason, touched on but not elaborated by Tillemans,<sup>121</sup> why the "top-down" double-negation model of *apoha* does not accurately reflect Dharmakīrti's thought. It is not the case that there is some entity, a "non-cow," that a perceiver negates in order to arrive at a determination that the entity being perceived is a cow. Rather, the determinations of both "cow" and "non-cow" would be

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<sup>121</sup> Tillemans sees Dharmakīrti's bottom-up approach as avoiding a problem in Dignāga's top-down approach, namely, that Dignāga's account amounts to anything more than a logical trick. Tillemans mentions the idea that the simultaneity of the construction of the concepts "cow" and "non-cow" is supposed to rescue Dignāga's "top-down" approach, but expresses doubts as to whether or not this strategy is successful (Tillemans 2011, 58–59). He then seems to equate the simultaneous construction of the concept and its negation with the "ingenious double negation" which accounts for the sameness of unique things via some kind of logical trick.

formed simultaneously based on how a perceiver parses the infinite exclusions associated with a given particular. This is not a logical operation that a perceiver performs on a pre-existing negation such that Dharmakīrti's *apoha* could accurately be described as consisting in a double negation, or could be left open to charges of circularity.<sup>122</sup> Both the concepts “cow” and “non-cow” are equally unreal from the perspective that they are not causally efficacious particulars. The extent to which they are conventionally real is connected to whether or not they can effectively guide practical activity such that the person employing them connects with a particular that allows him or her to reach his or her goal.

Dharmakīrti extensively discusses the nature of the exclusions that certain particulars may be judged to share. He explains that a single entity has multiple exclusions “because of its difference from that for which its causes and effects are impossible.”<sup>123</sup> He clarifies:

It has already been explained that the natures of things (*bhāva*) do not overlap, and that a cognition of them in which the cognitive image presents a thing as if its nature overlapped with other things is an error. However, those distinct things indirectly (*krameṇa*) become the causes for concepts; as such, by their nature they produce a conceptual cognition in which they seem to overlap. Moreover, this is called their “nondifferent difference”— namely, their exclusion (*viveka*) from other things that by nature do not cause that effect; they are understood to be

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<sup>122</sup> I will address contemporary formulations of this objection in the next chapter.

<sup>123</sup> *tadasaṃbhāvīkāryakāraṇasya tadbhedāt*, PVSV ad 1.40-1.42 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 24).

excluded in this fashion because they cause some same effect, such as a cognition [containing an image that leads to the same judgment].<sup>124</sup>

For Dharmakīrti, the primary reason why a perceiver would be able to judge that two things are, in some meaningful way, the same is because these two things have similar causes and effects. As he states, “The nature (*prakṛti*) of things is such that although they are different, by their nature (*svabhāva*) some of them are restricted to the accomplishment of the same telos (*artha*) such as inducing the same judgment (*ekapratyavamarśajñāna*) or producing an awareness of an object; the sense faculties and so on are an example.”<sup>125</sup> <sup>126</sup> At the most basic level, two things may be judged to be the same because they *look* the same to a certain perceiver: a combination of the things’ causal capacities, the perceptual organs, and the goals of a perceiver leads this perceiver to gloss over the differences between two real things and creates an awareness in which the two appear as the same.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 122–23). *niveditam etad yathā na bhāvānāṃ svabhāvasaṃsargo ’stīti. tatra saṃsṛṣṭākārā buddhir bhrāntir eva. tāṃ tu bhedināḥ padārthāḥ krameṇa vikalpahetavo bhavanto janayanti svabhāvata iti ca. sa tv eṣāṃ abhinno bheda ity ucyate jñānādeḥ kasyacid ekasya karaṇād atatkārisvabhāvavivekaḥ*, PVSV ad 1.109 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 56).

<sup>125</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 344). *prakṛtir eṣā bhāvānāṃ yad ekapratyavamarśārthajñānādyekārthasādhane / bhede ’pi niyatāḥ kecit svabhāvenendriyādivat //*, PVSV ad 1.73 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 40).

<sup>126</sup> For an additional discussion of this passage, see (Eltschinger 2014, 261).

<sup>127</sup> Arnold also emphasizes the importance of the perceptual image in the creation of a judgment of sameness: “While the particulars that seem to us to be represented in cognition are in fact irreducibly unique, he thus allows that there is at least *phenomenal* similarity in the mental representations thereof—representations, he here emphasizes, that are themselves a function of ‘latent dispositions’ (*vāsanā*) that are ‘deposited’ (*āhita*) in our mental continua by our initial, causally describable encounters with particulars” (Arnold 2013, 137). I will discuss Arnold’s evaluation of the success of Dharmakīrti’s account of the judgment of sameness in the next chapter.

The exclusion shared by various particulars, then, is not some kind of ingenious double negation, but rather the result of practical concerns in the everyday world. Far from an abstract logical entity, a universal *qua* an exclusion is eminently embodied and pragmatic.<sup>128</sup> Dharmakīrti provides a concise statement of how a perceiver may judge that two real things are the same, even if in reality they do not share anything:

Having seen that things (*arthas*), although different, accomplish the same telic function (*arthakriyā*) such as the production of consciousness, one conjoins those things with expressions that take as their object the difference from things that are other than those which accomplish the aforementioned telos. Having done so, one can then recognize that some thing is the same as the aforementioned things, even when one sees another previously unexperienced thing of the same type.<sup>129 130</sup>

The recognition that one thing is the same as another thing is based not on the two things actually sharing the same nature, but rather on a perceiver's experience that they have the same effect in relation to a certain goal. This awareness is erroneous because it glosses over (*samsṛṣṭa*) the differences between particulars in favor of the incorrect—but useful—judgment that two things which fulfill the same goal are in fact the same.

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<sup>128</sup> In drawing a basic comparison between Dharmakīrti's theories and contemporary naturalized epistemology, Dunne also emphasizes the importance of Dharmakīrti's focus on embodied, empirical cognitive and psychological processes (Dunne 2011, 86). This approach strongly contrasts with the line of interpretation, begun in Siderits (1982), that attempts to account for *apoha* in terms of the formal features of different types of negation. For a sustained critique of the project of naturalized epistemology, including the claim that Dharmakīrti is subject to critiques drawn from opponents of this paradigm, see Arnold (2013). I will address the works of Siderits, Arnold, and Dunne in the context of evaluations of the role of embodied factors in *apoha* in the next chapter.

<sup>129</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 134, fn 131). *jñānādyarthakriyām tām tām drṣṭvā bhede 'pi kurvataḥ / arthāms tadanyaviśeṣaviṣayair dhvanibhiḥ saha // samyojya pratyabhijñānam kuryād apy anyadarśane*, PV 1.98-1.99ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 49).

<sup>130</sup> Dunne also discusses this passage in (2011, 91–92).

Dharmakīrti repeatedly returns to the idea that this judgment, although erroneous, occurs naturally through the force of those real things' own essential nature. As he comments, "Precisely those things that naturally have the same causal efficacy cause, through experience, the conceptual imprints which result in cognitive error. Hence, those things themselves are the cause [of cognitive error]."<sup>131</sup> This indirect but causally grounded connection between a concept and a real thing's nature is essential to Dharmakīrti's ability to account for why some concepts, although themselves erroneous, are able to successfully guide practical activity in the everyday world.

### **Part III: Conflation of the Concept and the Object Guides Practical Activity**

Once Dharmakīrti has established that unique particulars by their nature may cause a judgment of sameness in the mind of a certain perceiver, he still has to account for how this judgment—now disconnected from the real particular that was its cause—could successfully guide practical activity in the everyday world. As he explains, this construction and use of concepts is motivated by practical concerns. A person employs concepts in order to communicate and facilitate the achievement of his or her goals:

One forms linguistic conventions in order to have a cognition of a certain type of difference such that, having known that things which have nondifferent effects are different from those which do not have those effects, persons who understand those conventions act by avoiding those things that do not have the aforementioned effect. This difference from this and that is the seed for the false

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<sup>131</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 108). *ta eva bhāvās tadekārthakāriṇo 'nubhavadvāreṇa prakṛtyā vibhramaphalāyā vikalpavāsanāyā hetutvān nimittam*, PVSV ad 1.98-1.99ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 50).

conceptual cognition in which those things appear to have a single essence. Having apprehended that difference that those things seem to share, the conceptual cognition appears in that way due to the nature of the imprint for it.<sup>132</sup>

This section will look in detail at how people employ concepts in relation to practical concerns. First, I will present Dharmakīrti's statements about the importance of causal efficacy in determining the reality of an object within the conventional world. Then, I will examine his account of the cognitive error that leads a person involved in practical activity to act as though the internally-formed concept is actually an external object.

#### *Concern for Practical Activity Governs Concept Creation and Use*

Even at the very beginning of the PVSV, Dharmakīrti highlights practical concerns as being the primary motivating factor for his treatise: "Because distinguishing between what is useful and what is useless is based on inference [and] because there are divergent opinions about [inference], I speak in order to define it."<sup>133</sup> <sup>134</sup> This concern for

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<sup>132</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 344). *yasya pratyāyanārtham samketaḥ kriyate abhinnaśādhyān bhāvān atatsādhyebhyo bhedenā jñātvā tatparihāreṇa pravarteteti so 'yam itaretarabhedas tasyaikātmatāpratibhāsino mithyāvikalpasya bījam. tam eva gr̥hṇan eṣa vikalpaḥ svavāsanāprakṛter evaṃ pratibhāti*, PVSV ad 1.72cd (Dharmakīrti 1960, 40).

<sup>133</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 2). *arthānarthavivecanasyānumānāśrayatvāt tadvipratipattes tadvyavasthāpanāyāha*, PVSV ad 1.0 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 1).

<sup>134</sup> The benedictory verse of the PV itself famously contains an homage to Mañjuśrī immediately followed by Dharmakīrti's statement that he writes only for his own sake because other people are too stupid and envious to understand him. The first line of the PVSV, then, could be interpreted either as Dharmakīrti only considering his own practical aims, or it could evince that Dharmakīrti does want to target a larger audience after all. For more on the importance of "practical rationality" for Dharmakīrti, especially as interpreted through Kamalaśīla's works, see Eltschinger (2007).

accomplishing one's goals is never far removed from Dharmakīrti's discussions.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, as we have seen, Dharmakīrti enshrines causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*) as the defining mark of what is ultimately real, and only particulars are real because only particulars actually produce effects. However, Dharmakīrti recognizes that people do not act based on particulars themselves. Rather, they act because of a judgment they have formed, in relation to a certain goal, about the contents of their awareness.<sup>136</sup> The simplest form of such a judgment is the recognition that one thing is the same as another previously experienced thing. This recognition is expressed through the use of a concept to refer to both things.

Rejecting the possibilities that either people use concepts for no reason at all, or that concepts naturally signify without human agency, Dharmakīrti proposes: "A person applies expressions to something with some purpose in mind. That is, if different things are useful for one telic function, persons concerned with that function definitely (*avaśyam*) should express that efficacy of those things with regard to that function."<sup>137</sup> Practically, it would be impossible and useless for a person to develop a unique concept in relation to each unique particular he or she experiences.<sup>138</sup> What's more, a person would have no reason to act toward something experienced as unique, for one's desires

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<sup>135</sup> Eltschinger (2010, 405–6) also emphasizes this focus on practical human activity in his excellent overview of Dharmakīrti's works.

<sup>136</sup> For an additional discussion of the relationship between conception and perception as a problem for Dharmakīrti, see Arnold (2013, 120–23). I will treat this topic at length in the next chapter.

<sup>137</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 354). *kenacit prayojanena kecic chabdāḥ kvacin niveśyante. tatra yady anekam ekatropayujyeta tad avaśyaṃ tatra codanīyaṃ*, PVSV ad 1.137-1.142 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 67).

<sup>138</sup> See PVSV ad 1.139-1.142. For an additional discussion of this passage, see Arnold (2013, 152–57). I will discuss Arnold's critiques of *apoha* based on the idea that Dharmakīrti cannot account for the initial setting of a convention in the next chapter.



are constituted by past experiences. The primary function of a concept is to identify two things as being the same based on a perceiver's previous experiences that things of that type produce the same effect in relation to the perceiver's goals. Therefore, Dharmakīrti holds that "that person using language or concepts should just express those objects that are capable of that function."<sup>139</sup> Language use is pragmatic: its role is to successfully direct practical activity in line with the goals of the person employing it.

Dharmakīrti further explains the role of goal-oriented behavior through a discussion of why a person might focus on only certain effects that a real thing is capable of producing, and not others. As he notes, while a cow and a horse might be judged to be the same in some aspects, depending on what a person wants to accomplish, the two may be judged to be different as well:

Therefore, [a desirous person proceeds] inquiring if this object that has been brought up by a word such as "cow", etc., is different or not different [from what is desired]... Therefore, having decided to attend to (*puraskṛtya*) that which is its nature that is not shared with anything else, a person who is intent on accomplishing a particular goal acts, like in the case of [acting toward] a cow in order [to achieve getting] milk, transportation, and so on.<sup>140</sup>

Construing a given object as a cow, as a means of transportation, as a potential source of milk, or even as a mere substance depends on the goals of the perceiver. Depending on

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<sup>139</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 354). *kevalam anena tatra योग्यास ते 'rthāś codanīyāḥ*, PVSV ad 1.139-1.142 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 67).

<sup>140</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 183–84). *tad ayam gavādiśabdapratyupasthāpitam arthaṃ bhinnam abhinnaṃ vā pṛcchann... tasmād yo 'syātmā 'nanyasādhāraṇo yaṃ puraskṛtya puruṣo viśiṣṭārthakriyārthī pravartate yathā gor vāhadohādaḥ*, PVSV ad 1.179-1.182 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 89).

these goals, a perceiver may construct different concepts to apply to the object in question. A person who is only concerned with whether or not the object is a mammal could equally apply the concept “mammal” to either a horse or a cow, and in that respect judge them to be the same. However, a person who wants bovine milk will construct a different concept, which may be successfully applied to a cow but not to a horse.<sup>141</sup>

According to Dharmakīrti, that these concepts are formed based on the inherent difference of a real thing from everything else, and not on the presence of a real universal instantiated in multiple real things, is critical to a person’s ability to construct various concepts in relation to one real thing. A real thing has a singular nature, and the trustworthiness of a concept is based on whether or not the concept leads a person to something that fulfills the causal role expected of the real thing. If a cow and a horse could both be determined to be mammals because their essential nature instantiated the real universal “mammal-ness,” then their natures must be the same in all respects, and

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<sup>141</sup> Using the example of “fire”, Dunne provides a parallel summary account of how practical concerns guide the creation of a given concept: “In the case of the concept *fire*, some set of interests—such as the desire for warmth—or other such dispositions prompt us to construe the phenomenal form in question as distinct from entities that do not have the causal characteristics expected of what we call ‘fire.’ At the same time, we ignore other criteria, such as having the causal characteristics expected of that which is ‘smoky’ or ‘fragrant,’ because these are not part of what we desire to know, so as to accomplish our goals... Both the current phenomenal form and the form that arose in the previous experience exclude all forms that we would *not* call ‘fire’; but suppose that the current fire is smoky, while the previously experienced fire was not. Indeed, from Dharmakīrti’s ontological perspective the two fires really are not the same at all, but our desire to achieve a goal—such as warming our hands—that is accomplished by fire creates a context that compels us to *ignore these differences*. And since we have ignored the differences between those two phenomenal forms—the current one and the one that caused the imprint—we can construe both of them as mutually qualified by a negation, namely, their difference from phenomenal forms that do not activate the imprints for the concept *fire*. That mutual difference, which Dharmakīrti calls an ‘exclusion’ (*vyāvṛtti*), thus becomes their nondifference” (Dunne 2011, 93–94).

therefore they should not have any differences in their causal properties. Dharmakīrti somewhat mockingly inquires:

But if two things are not different in terms of their own natures, someone intent upon the causal efficacy connected to that nature should also act the same toward both of them. Even one would produce that causal efficacy because it has the nature of the [other] one. It would be the same for the other one, too, and so why wouldn't that [other one] work, too?<sup>142</sup>

In this way, a universal shared between multiple particulars cannot be the object that fulfills a given perceiver's goal, for if two things shared any one universal as their essential nature, then they would have to share the entirety of their essential natures, and therefore it would not be possible for things to be the same in some respects (such as a cow and a horse both being mammals) and different in others (such as a cow, but not a horse, being capable of giving cow milk).

Here, Dharmakīrti relies on his position, discussed at length earlier in the PVSV, that real things by their nature may produce a judgment that they share the same effects, even though they do not actually share anything. This position that it is possible for a mere exclusion to account for the apparent similarity between distinct real things remains at the core of Dharmakīrti's contention that a perceiver may judge two things to be the same on the basis of their effects. Since a real thing's causal capacities are a direct expression of its essential nature, if a perceiver's judgment that two things are the same is

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<sup>142</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 184). *svātmanaivābhede tu tatsvabhāvanibandhanārthakriyārthī samam dvayor api pravarteta. eko 'pi tām arthakriyām tatsvabhāvatvād eva karoti. tadanyasyāpi tat tulyam iti so 'pi kiṃ na karoti*, PVSV ad 1.179-1.180 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 89).

based on the causal capacities of these two things, then the perceiver’s judgment—even though it is actually erroneous—connects to the real things in question.

Dharmakīrti recognizes, however, that this appeal the nature of the object is not enough to explain why a subject would make a particular judgment of sameness, for a real thing can be understood through an infinite number of exclusions. Each of these exclusions represent a particular way of delimiting its difference from everything else. Dharmakīrti states that additional factors related to the subject performing an exclusion lead to a certain subset of these exclusions being ignored.<sup>143</sup> Dharmakīrti describes the crucial factor that allows such a partial determination to occur: the karmic conditioning of the subject performing the exclusion. He states:

Even if an entity is experienced that is partless and has the nature of being different from everything, even then there is no determination of all of its different [aspects] just by that much, because it relies on other causes. For indeed, even when a form that is seen is not different, an experience produces determinate cognitions in accord with a habituation for concepts, as in the case of the concepts ‘corpse,’ ‘desirable woman,’ and ‘food’ [that arise for an ascetic, a lustful man, and a dog in accord with their respective desires]. In that case, the acuity of the cognition, habituation to the karmic imprint for that, the context, etc., are

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<sup>143</sup> See, for instance, PV 1.58: “Even when a particular object that is devoid of parts is grasped through perception, that supporting condition which exists in relation to the determination of a specific [aspect] is cognized,” *pratyakṣeṇa gṛhīte ’pi viśeṣe ’mśavivarjite / yadvīśeṣāvasāye ’sti pratyayaḥ sa pratīyate //*, (Dharmakīrti 1960, 32).

supporting conditions for the arising of a particular determination from the experience.<sup>144</sup>

While a concept's trustworthiness depends on whether or not it tracks some aspect of the causal capacity of the object on the basis of which it was formed, the actual form of the concept depends on subjective factors.

Dharmakīrti's next example further highlights how subjective factors influence one's experience. He specifies that some conditions will come to the fore based on differences "in terms of proximity, salience, and so on, just like how, having seen one's father approaching, even though there is no difference between his being a teacher and his being a progenitor and so on, [one thinks] 'My father is coming!,' not that a teacher [is coming]."<sup>145</sup> While the example of the dead body focuses on how different perceivers see the same object in different ways, this example shows how even the same subject will experience an object differently depending on the context. Further, some concepts will arise more readily than others depending on the strength of the subjective factors that support their formation. Since effective practical activity within the everyday world is the measure of the trustworthiness of a concept, the extent to which different perceivers

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<sup>144</sup> *yady apy aṃśarahitaḥ sarvato bhinnasvabhāvo bhāvo 'nubhūtas tathāpi na sarvabhedeṣu tāvatā niścayo bhavati. kāraṇāntarāpekṣatvāt. anubhavo hi yathāvikalpābhyāsaṃ niścayapratyayān janayati. yathā rūpadarśanāvīśeṣe 'pi kuṇapakāminībhakṣyavikalpāḥ. tatra buddhipāṭavaṃ tadvāsanābhyāsaḥ prakaraṇam ityādayo 'nubhavād bhedaniścayotpattisahakāriṇaḥ*, PVSV ad 1.58 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 32). For an insightful discussion of this passage see Kellner (2004, 19-32). I have consulted her translation of part of this passage on p. 19 of this article in the course of preparing my own.

<sup>145</sup> *pratyāsattitāratamyādibhedāt paurvāparyam. yathā janakatvādhyāpakatvāvīśeṣe 'pi pitaram āyāntaṃ dṛṣṭvā pitā me āgacchati nopādhyāya iti*, PVSV ad 1.58 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 32).

experience themselves as part of the same world depends on the concepts they deploy. These concepts arise due to karmic imprints.

In this context, Dharmakīrti reiterates that although a conceptual cognition has an unreal universal, not a real particular, as its object, it may still be trustworthy. He asserts: “Those mentally experienced objects [i.e., the images that come about through the particulars] are apprehended as ‘the same’ by virtue of that universal because they appear in terms of an exclusion from some other things. But a particular is not what is apprehended as the same because it does not appear to a conceptual awareness.”<sup>146</sup> He then explains how such conceptual awarenesses may be nonetheless trustworthy: “all of these and other such conventions are erroneous (*viplava*) in that they are constructed through the imprints left by experiences of particulars. Thus, conceptual cognitions whose production is connected to those real things by way of imprints are trustworthy with regard to a real thing, even though the real thing in question does not appear in those conceptual cognitions.”<sup>147</sup> Although itself unreal, a concept may successfully guide practical activity as long as it tracks the actual causal capacities of the real thing on which it is based. Kellner lucidly sums up how an erroneous concept may still lead to the accomplishment of one’s goal, provided that it does accurately track the real causal capacities of the thing: “some conceptual cognitions are correct in the sense that they identify seen reality correctly and serve as a solid basis for successful action, whereas others are false because they misidentify it and lead people astray—identifying mother-

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<sup>146</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 347). *te ’rthā buddhiniveśinas tena samānā iti grhyante kutaścid vyāvṛtṭyā pratibhāsanāt na svalakṣaṇam tatrāpratibhāsanāt*, PVSV ad 1.75d (Dharmakīrti 1960, 42).

<sup>147</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 347). *sarvaś cāyaṃ svalakṣaṇānām eva darśanāhitavāsanākṛto viplava iti tatpratibaddhajanmanām vikalpānām atatpratibhāsitve ’pi vastuny*, PVSV ad 1.75d (Dharmakīrti 1960, 43).

of-pearl as mother-of-pearl is in this sense correct, whereas identifying it as silver is false” (Kellner 2004a, 2).

Dharmakīrti further explains this idea through an analysis of a classic example of the apparent perception of a jewel based on a perception of its glimmer. This cognition may or may not be erroneous depending on its actual cause:

An example is the erroneous cognition of a jewel when one sees the glimmer of the jewel. Other cognitions are not trustworthy because, even though they also arise from a distinction of the real thing, these other cognitions fail to determine the distinctive qualities of the thing in accord with the way in which it was experienced through the senses; having failed to make that determination, they impute some other distinction onto the thing by apprehending some slight (*kiṃcit*) similarity. An example is the cognition of a jewel when one sees lamplight.<sup>148</sup>

Say a person looking for a jewel glances into a dark room and notices a small flash of light. Thinking that this flash comes from the jewel itself, the person determines that what s/he is seeing is a jewel and moves toward it. Upon reaching the source of the flash, s/he may find that there is a jewel there, and thereby may confirm the earlier judgment. However, s/he might also find that the flash came from the flicker of a lamp, not from a jewel. In this case, the initial judgment that s/he was seeing a jewel was not trustworthy because it did not conform to the causal properties of the real thing that produced this

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<sup>148</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 347–48). *maṇiprabhāyām iva maṇibhrānteḥ nānyeṣāṃ tadbhedaprabhave saty api yathādr̥ṣṭaviśeṣānūsaraṇaṃ parityajya kiṃcitsāmānyagrahaṇena viśeṣāntarasamāropād dīpaprabhāyām iva maṇibuddheḥ*, PVSV ad 1.75d (Dharmakīrti 1960, 43).

judgment: the concept “jewel” was inappropriately applied to what was actually only lamplight.<sup>149</sup>

This example brings up another important consequence of Dharmakīrti’s use of causal efficacy to determine what is real: while a cognition is inherently trustworthy with regard to its own occurrence, in most cases,<sup>150</sup> its trustworthiness in relation to an external object must be verified by a subsequent cognition.<sup>151</sup> Dharmakīrti articulates this link in the context of defining a means of trustworthy awareness (*pramāṇa*). As he states: “A means of trustworthy awareness is an awareness that is not misleading. ‘Not misleading’ means that it instantiates causal efficacy.”<sup>152</sup> Quoting a snippet from Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, Devendrabuddhi comments on this verse: “As for that trustworthiness, ‘having determined the object, when one then acts upon it (PVin ad 1.1),’ that thing’s causal capacity is established; hence, [in one sense] the trustworthiness is that that thing has the kind of nature which it is asserted to have.”<sup>153</sup> Devendrabuddhi expands on the nature of the contents of a trustworthy awareness, stating that such an awareness occurs when “one has a cognition of the accomplishing of the aim that is to be accomplished by the object that one has determined through the instrumental

<sup>149</sup> For a brief discussion of this passage, see also Matilal (1986, 327–28).

<sup>150</sup> Although it is somewhat problematic, the exception here seems to be an awareness that directly presents the accomplishment of one’s goal, such as the awareness of warmth when one has sought a fire to warm one’s hands. The other exception is reflexive awareness, which is intrinsically trustworthy. For a further discussion of this problem, see Dunne (2004, 274–78).

<sup>151</sup> For a useful overview of different Indian and Tibetan Buddhist views on when a cognition is intrinsically trustworthy (*svataḥprāmāṇya*) and when it must be verified by something other (*parataḥ*), see Krasser (2003). For an excellent discussion of the broader context of the *svataḥ*- vs. *parataḥ-prāmāṇya* debate that takes Brahmanical traditions into account, see Ram-Prasad (2007, 51–99).

<sup>152</sup> *pramāṇam avisaṃvādi jñānam arthakriyāsthitiḥ / avisaṃvādanam*, PV 2.1ac.

<sup>153</sup> Translation from the Tibetan in Dunne (2004, 374–75), PVP ad 2.1a



cognition.”<sup>154</sup> Both perception and inference can serve to verify the trustworthiness of a previous awareness. Perception does this by immediately encountering the accomplishment of one’s goal: a perception of fire, for instance, is trustworthy if one experiences the fire’s warmth. An inference does this by eliminating doubt or confusion about the object of a perception through the establishment of an invariable relationship between the uncertain object and something that is clearly perceived: a cognition of smoke determines the trustworthiness of a possible cognition of fire.<sup>155 156</sup> In both cases, the identity of the object is confirmed through an awareness that leaves no doubt as to the causal capacities of the object in question.

This account of how the trustworthiness of a perception depends on a cognition of its causal efficacy seems to require the continued existence of the external object in question; however, according to Dharmakīrti’s own position that all things are momentary, by the time one could act to verify one’s awareness, the particular that produced it would already be gone.<sup>157</sup> Dharmakīrti proposes that a necessary error guides

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<sup>154</sup> Translation from the Tibetan in Dunne (2004, 376), PVP ad 2.1b.

<sup>155</sup> Translation from Tibetan in Dunne (2004, 376), PVP ad 2.1b.

<sup>156</sup> Interestingly, although the object of a perception is ultimately real and the object of an inference is merely conventionally real, inferences are always intrinsically trustworthy whereas perceptions sometimes require external verification (Dunne 2004, 376-377). For more on Dharmakīrti on inference and induction, see Matilal (1998, 108–26). For an excellent overview of the role of inference in removing doubt in classical Indian traditions, see Ganeri (2007, 7-41).

<sup>157</sup> Dunne provides a useful summary: “To the extent that any causally efficient entities appear to endure over time, they are actually a series of momentary entities that are causally related to each other in such a way that one moment in the sequence acts as the primary cause for the next moment in the sequence. Thus, if one is observing a patch of blue, the matter that constitutes that patch actually endures for only an instant; nevertheless, the patch appears to endure longer because the matter constituting the patch occurs in a sequence of moments of that matter, each instance of which arises from the previous moment of matter and perishes as it produces the next moment” (Dunne 2011, 86).

people engaged in practical activity to treat the particular that produced a perception and its causal descendent that could verify that perception's trustworthiness as the same thing:

It has been previously stated that a cognition in which the difference between the internal and the external [objects] has been glossed over takes its own appearance to be capable of causal efficacy and the object of practical activity. In that same way, the superimposition leads to the object of the word. And these words [occur] precisely with regard to that [superimposition]. Through various causes of error, something appears as if it had a mixed nature.<sup>158 159</sup>

Successful action in the everyday world, then, is animated both by the essential nature of real things and by a cognitive error that leads people engaged in practical activity to treat distinct but causally related particulars as if they were an enduring object. As the beginning of this passage notes, another crucial error contributes to efficient practical activity: a person engaged in practical activity equates the concept s/he has formed with

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<sup>158</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 136–37). *uktaṃ prāg yathā saṃsṛṣṭabāhyādhyātmikabhedā buddhiḥ svam evābhāsaṃ vyavahāraṇiṣayam\* [\*corr.: vyavahāraṇiṣāyam] arthakriyāyogyam adhyavasāya śabdārtham upanayatīti. tatraiva ca te śabdās tais tair bhrāntikāraṇaiḥ saṃsṛṣṭarūpa ivābhāti*, PVSV ad 1.129-1.130 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 64).

<sup>159</sup> Commenting on PV 2.1, Devendrabuddhi makes a similar point while appealing to the importance of practical concerns in determining the nature of an object of awareness: “Beings engaged in practical action (*vyavahartṛ*) act on those two objects without differentiating them. Hence, in accord with such practical action, we say that, beings act on objects that occur in temporal sequence as if those objects were a single thing. In reality, the former and latter objects are distinct. However, the real thing that is the object of the latter instrumental cognition would not exist if the object of the former instrumental cognition had not been existent. Hence, we metaphorically say that the latter awareness has as its object just that object of the former awareness. Therefore, since the real thing toward which one acted was established prior [to the cognition in which its telic function appeared], that initial cognition is instrumental because through it the latter awareness engages with the telic function.” Translation from Tibetan in Dunne (2004, 379).

an external object. Perceivers therefore act by proceeding as if they were perceiving an external world, while in reality all they see is their own awareness.

*The Cognitive Error of the Fusion of the Concept and the External Object*

As explored in the previous chapter, Dharmakīrti's rejection of both the causal efficacy and the logical coherence of external objects provides the transition between the External Realist and Epistemic Idealist phases of his ontology. While his position that all perceivers ever perceive is the phenomenal form of their own awareness is most clearly articulated at his Epistemic Idealist level,<sup>160</sup> this idea in fact animates his discussion of how concepts guide practical activity in the everyday world as well. Even though perceivers are only aware of their own awareness, they must act as if the concepts formed internally are in fact external objects or they would never accomplish their goals with regard to these external objects. As Dunne notes, "Since the phenomenal form is construed in terms of a beginningless imprint that makes one mistake it for the actual object to which it refers, a conceptual cognition can provoke one to act on an object in the world, even though the phenomenal form that is actually appearing in the cognition is not actually that object" (Dunne 2011, 103). The basic mistake of taking the contents of one's own awareness to be an external world, then, forms the basis for a perceiver's sense of what is and is not real. I will turn to the nature of the "beginningless imprint" that causes

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<sup>160</sup> See, for instance, Dharmakīrti's *sahopalambhaniyama* verses: "That which is being cognized immediately necessarily [occurs] along with the cognition. Therefore, by what form is difference from the object established?" *sakṛt-saṃvedyamānasya niyamena dhiyā saha / viśayasya tato 'nyatvaṃ kenākāreṇa sidhyati // PV 3.387* (Dharmakīrti 1985, p. 70). Also: "Because they necessarily arise together, there is no difference between blue and its cognition," *sahopalambhaniyamād abhedo nīlataddhiyor/ PVin, Pratyakṣapariccheda 54ab*. For more on *sahopalambhaniyama* in Dharmakīrti's works, see Iwata (1991).

a perceiver to fuse the concept and the object in the next chapter. For now, I will explore the manifestation of this error itself.

Contrasting people engaged in practical activity with people who understand reality as it is, Dharmakīrti describes how people driven by practical concerns mistake their concepts for external objects:

Those who are analyzing universals distinguish [the conceptually constructed image from the object], but people engaged in practical action (*vyavahartṛ*) do not. Thinking that their percept is capable of telic function, those engaged in practical action unify the visible object with the conceptual object, and having done so, they act. It is in terms of the intention of persons engaged in practical action that the relationship between universals and particulars is explained in this way—i.e., such that particulars which, by virtue of producing the [desired] effect, are different from those that do not produce that effect, are made known as such by an expression [whose direct object is necessarily a universal]. But those who ponder reality do not consider the universal and the particular to be nondifferent because particulars have distinct cognitive images [in perceptual awareness] and so on.<sup>161</sup>

Dharmakīrti introduces this passage with an objection that a concept, being internal, could never connect to an external object. Moreover, since only the momentary particular is causally efficacious, a concept has no causal power on its own: concepts should not be

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<sup>161</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 341) *vyākhyātāraḥ khalv evaṃ vivecayanti na vyavahartāraḥ. te tu svāmbanā evārthakriyāyogyam manyamānā drśyavikalpyāv arthāv ekīkr̥tya pravartante. tadabhiprāyavaśād evam ucyate tatkāritayā 'tatkāribhyo bhinnāms tathā śabdena pratipādayantīti. pratibhāsabhedādibhyas tu tattvacintakā nābhedam anumanyante*, PVSV ad 1.70 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 39).

able to lead to successful action. In response, Dharmakīrti relies again on the influence of a perceiver's goals on his or her interpretation of the surrounding world. Although a correct understanding of reality dictates that the particular and the concept are distinct, people simply act as though they were not.

Dharmakīrti repeatedly underlines the role of the desire to attain or avoid a causally efficacious object in determining one's experience. While the concept is not real, if it lacked any connection to the desired causally efficacious object, then there would be no reason for a desire-laden person to construct it at all. Dharmakīrti drives this point home in striking terms:

Through distinguishing the propositions that the thing in question is “real” and that it is “unreal,” those who do not deny the utility of an expression's meaning analyze the real thing itself, for the production of an effect depends upon that real thing. Why would those who seek the goal in question bother to analyze something that is incapable of accomplishing that goal? Why would a lustful woman bother to see whether a eunuch is beautiful or not?<sup>162</sup>

In his autocommentary, Dharmakīrti further explains that a person's desire for a particular object will lead that person to ignore anything that is not capable of fulfilling that desire. This desire is so overwhelming that it leads the person to ignore even the fact that the concept motivating one's actions is itself not capable of fulfilling one's desires. The desirous person ignores the difference between the concept motivating his or her

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<sup>162</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 310–11), *sadasatpakṣabhedena śabdārthānapavādibhiḥ / vastv eva cintyate hy atra pratibaddhaḥ phalodayaḥ // arthakriyā 'samarthasya vicāraiḥ kiṃ tadarthinām ṣaṅdhasya rūpavairūpye kāmīnyāḥ kiṃ parīkṣayā*, PV 1.210-1.211 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 106).

action and the real thing that is his or her goal. As Dharmakīrti pointedly observes, “Therefore, a person, when inquiring into the reality or unreality (*sadasat*) of the thing in question, always ignores the conceptual appearance and takes as the focus of his inquiry just that real thing...And it does not make sense for a person who seeks to accomplish some aim to exert himself toward something that is not capable of accomplishing it. Indeed, why would a sexually aroused woman strive to see whether a eunuch is beautiful or not?”<sup>163</sup> Since a well-formed concept does in fact lead to one’s goal, there is simply no reason for a person engaged in practical activity to notice the difference between the contents of his or her awareness and the object he or she seeks.

While this fusion of the conceptualized image and the object is an error, it is a highly useful one. In one of his clearest statements to this effect, Dharmakīrti explains:

The image which appears to the conceptual cognition seems to be external, singular, and capable of telic function, even though it is not capable of telic function. It appears that way because persons engaged in practical activity proceed by imagining that an aspect of a conceptual cognition is that way [i.e., external, etc.]. Otherwise, it would not be possible for them to engage in practical activity.<sup>164</sup>

Dharmakīrti’s point here is intuitive: it would be very difficult for a sentient being to identify one thing as, for instance, food and another as poison if that being was never able

<sup>163</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 311), *tad ayam pravartamānaḥ sarvadā sadasaccintāyām avadhīritavikalpapratibhāso vastv evādhiṣṭhānīkaroti... tad ayam arthakriyārthī tadasamarthaṃ prati dattānuयोगo bhavitum na yuktaḥ. na hi vṛṣasyantī ṣaṅghasya rūpavairūpyaparīkṣāyām avadhatte*, PVSV ad 1.210-1.211 (Dharmakīrti 1960, 107).

<sup>164</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 347), *tatra yo ’rthākāraḥ pratibhāti bāhya ivaika ivānarthakriyākārya api tattkāṛīva vyavahāriṇām tathādhyavasāya pravṛtteḥ anyathā pravṛtṭiyogāt*, PVSV ad 1.75d (Dharmakīrti 1960, 42).

to form a concept based on previous experiences with things judged to be sufficiently similar to have the same effect as the ones in question.

The final step in Dharmakīrti's appeal to goal-oriented behavior is precisely his reliance on the idea that previous experiences of real things leave karmic imprints (*vāsanā*) in the minds of perceivers, and these imprints are responsible for a sentient being's ability to judge that two distinct things are the same. These imprints are also the link between causally efficacious real things and the habituated conceptual judgments that motivate practical activity. As Dharmakīrti explains about a conceptualized awareness:

This type of awareness arises in dependence on imprints that have been left by perceptual experience, which apprehends the nature of real things. The awareness that arises in this fashion is conceptual; as such, even though it does not have those real, extra-mental particulars as its object, conceptual cognition seems to have them as its object. In other words, being conceptual, that cognition has a nature such that its object is imagined (*adhyavasita*) to have that nature [i.e., the nature of being an extra mental particular]. Conceptual cognition operates in that fashion because it is by nature produced by imprints that have been placed in the mind by experiences of those particulars [i.e., the ones that prompt the concept in question]. And since conceptual cognition is [indirectly] produced by objects (*padārthas*) that have nondifferent effects, it has an aspect that is ultimately the same for all those objects—namely, the difference from objects or cognitions that are other than those [that have the expected effect]. Having that aspect, each such

cognition seems to apprehend an [external] object that is not different [than other objects of the same class].<sup>165</sup>

Dharmakīrti's heavy reliance on the idea of karmic imprints to address the most difficult problems arising from his *apoha* theory is clearly evident. Many critics, both ancient and modern, have focused on whether or not Dharmakīrti's ontology, coupled with his appeal to previous experiences, can support the judgment of sameness and the fusion of the concept and the external object. These critiques, as well as the broader context for Dharmakīrti's use of the idea of karmic imprints, will be the subject of the next chapter.

## Conclusion

In a wonderfully clear summary of his arguments, Dharmakīrti says:

An expression produces a false cognition which arises through a superimposition of that [single nature] onto objects that are devoid of a single nature. Because the appearance is false, even though it cannot produce those effects, it is imagined as producing the effect of those [things]. [This false cognition] has as its seed only real things whose natures are distinct, [but] imaginatively determines them to be the same. However, because it is a factor that contributes to avoiding what is other

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<sup>165</sup> Translation in Dunne (2004, 346–47), *yad etaj jñānaṃ vastusvabhāvagrāhiṇānubhavenāhitāṃ vāsanām āśrītya vikalpakam utpadyate 'tadviśayam api tadviśayam iva tadanubhavāhitavāsanāprabhavaprakṛter adhyavasitatadbhāvasvarūpam abhinnakāryapadārthaprasūter abhinnārthagrahīva tadanyabhedaparamārthasamānākāram*, (Dharmakīrti 1960, 42).



than that [real thing], ultimately, it is said to be not misleading about the real things that are distinguished from it.<sup>166</sup>

Eltschinger insightfully discusses the fact that such conceptual cognitions, constituted by a useful but erroneous judgment that what are in reality unique particulars are the same, constitute conventional reality because they are the primary form of ignorance that conceals ultimate reality. As he explains: “This judgment is of a determinat(iv)e character and has for one of its properties the display of a unitary image of irreducibly diverse particulars. At this stage, however, nescience has already stepped into the process: As Dharmakīrti insists, this conceptual construct covers or conceals (*saṃVR*) the bare particulars’ diversity with its own unitary aspect. Whereas this cognition is considered to be *saṃvṛti* itself, its pseudo-objects are *saṃvṛtisat* or conventionally existing things with no counterpart in reality” (Eltschinger 2014, 261). For Dharmakīrti, then, the creation and use of concepts does not simply *express* the conventional world: it *is* the conventional world. Such a world of enduring objects with shared properties does not exist outside of its construction by a sentient being guided by his or her own goals and desires.

Another way of stating this dependence of the conventional world on the sentient beings constructing it is that concept formation requires the existence of a desiring subject. Desire for a certain object is a prerequisite for the formation of a concept identifying the object of a past experience with the contents of one’s current awareness. However, how to understand this foundational role of desire while still denying that there

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<sup>166</sup> Translation made in consultation with Dunne (1996, 123). *ekasvabhāvarahiteṣv artheṣu tam adhyāropyotpadyamānām mithyāpratibhāsivād akāryakāriṇam api tatkāryakāriṇam ivādhyavasāntīm vastupṛthagbhāvamātrabījāṃ samānādhyavasāyām mithyābuddhiṃ śrutir janayanty api tadanyaparihārāṅgabhāvāt paramārthatas tadvyatirekiṣu padārtheṣu na viśaṃvādikety ucyate*, PVSV ad 1.113ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 58).

is a permanent self directing the formation of a concept becomes a tricky subject for Dharmakīrti. As we have seen, Dharmakīrti relies on the idea of karmic imprints (*vāsanā*) at key moments in his explanation of how unique particulars may be judged to share some common property. The next chapter will take a closer look at the multiple ways in which Dharmakīrti relies on karmic imprints to address the objection that his *apoha* theory is fatally flawed because it cannot account for the judgment of sameness on which it depends.

### CHAPTER III: VĀSANĀ AND THE CREATION OF THE WORLDS OF CONVENTIONAL EXPERIENCE

As we saw in the previous chapter, at key moments in his articulation of *apoha*, Dharmakīrti relies on the idea that karmic traces (*vāsanā*) underlie two remarkable abilities of sentient beings: the ability to judge unique, momentary particulars to be the same as previously experienced objects and the ability to act as though the internally-formed concept that is the result of this judgment is a causally efficacious external particular. Even though these *vāsanās* are invested with such explanatory significance, however, Dharmakīrti does not give a detailed account of his understanding of what they are or the overall model of mind and world that they presuppose. This gap becomes particularly salient in light of a number of critiques, both medieval and contemporary, of Dharmakīrti's ability to actually account for the nature of human experience in the conventional world given an ontology that denies the existence of universals. Although Dharmakīrti himself does not explain *vāsanās* in detail, other Yogācāra Buddhist thinkers do provide such explanations. Drawing on their works to flesh out Dharmakīrti's usage of *vāsanās* may help to address some of the objections raised by *apoha*'s critics.

Dharmakīrti relies on *vāsanās* to explain a number of different aspects of human experience. Although he does not explicitly identify different levels of *vāsanās*, Dharmakīrti's multiple uses of *vāsanās* may be understood to form two distinct constellations. The first concerns the formation and content of the particular experiences of certain types of sentient beings within certain types of worlds. The second concerns the basic structures of samsaric experience that are common to all sentient beings. Unlike the *vāsanās* in the first constellation, which are learned in the sense that they differ

between both various individual sentient beings and various types of sentient beings based on those beings' respective karmic histories, the *vāsanās* in this second set are innate because they are the prerequisite for any type of samsaric experience.

The first level, which I explored in the previous chapter, is relatively straightforward and clearly discussed in a number of passages: Dharmakīrti relies on the karmic habituation of sentient beings to direct the creation of a specific concept. Here, the goals, desires, and habits of sentient beings—all of which are both expressions of past *vāsanās* and productive of future ones—lead them to make a particular determination. At this level, Dharmakīrti is vulnerable to objections about whether or not these karmic imprints can perform the work necessary to account for a sentient being's ability to judge unique particulars to instantiate some kind of commonality.

As we will see, Dharmakīrti's ability to address these objections relies on the second use of *vāsanās* to describe the creation of conventional worlds of mutually-constituting subjects and their environments. This second use is far less frequently discussed and considerably more complicated. It has its roots in traditional Buddhist cosmology as developed through Vasubandhu's Abhidharma and Yogācāra thought. Here, karmic imprints for beginningless ignorance give rise to the root defilement (*kleśa*) that produces samsaric experience. Dharmakīrti seems to equate this beginningless ignorance with a nonconceptual error in the form of the subject/object duality that forms the basic cognitive structure of any sentient being within *samsāra*. He also claims that two other innate imprints, one that accounts for a sentient being's ability to judge that two particulars have the same effects and one that allows the being to experience an internal phenomenal form as an external object, also underlie the process of concept formation.

Part I of this chapter addresses contemporary objections centered around the *ekapratyavamarśajñāna* and whether or not Dharmakīrti's appeal to a subject's habits and dispositions is sufficient to account for it. Part II will take a close look at an aspect of Dharmakīrti's thought that is generally overlooked by these critiques: his use of traditional Buddhist (and especially Yogācāra) understandings of the nature of the conventional world to account for the arising of mutually constructive subject/object pairs. I argue that drawing on these traditional resources allows Dharmakīrti to address objections surrounding his account of the judgment of sameness that occurs once the structures of subject and object are already in place. However, this second use of *vāsanās* leaves him open to questions about whether or not these beginningless karmic traces, which are not inherent to ultimate consciousness, could produce the structures and content of everyday experience. The Pratyabhijñā critique of *apoha* begins with precisely this point. The next chapter will detail this critique and the resultant Pratyabhijñā account of *apoha* and the formation of conventional worlds.

**Part I: Contemporary Critiques of the Dharmakīrti's Ability to Account for the Judgment of Sameness (*Ekapratyavamarśajñāna*)**

Many contemporary critiques of Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory focus on the question of whether or not Dharmakīrti's ontology, even as supported by his account of *vāsanās*, can actually account for a sentient being's ability to judge that unique particulars share the same causes and effects in relation to a specific goal. Since this is a particularly controversial topic in debates within subsequent Indian traditions as well, engaging individually with critiques from the Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya traditions is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. I will, therefore, engage two main streams of critique within

contemporary scholarship, which are themselves motivated to various degrees by understandings of traditional critiques. Perhaps the most long-standing line of inquiry, based off of multiple works by Mark Siderits (1982; 1985; 1991; 1999; 2003; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2011), attempts to use the tools of contemporary analytical philosophy to address the logical structure of *apoha*, with particular focus on the nature of the double negation that is supposedly constitutive of a concept. Arnold (2013) engages a second and closely related line of critique that is grounded in formulations from the Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya traditions and involves whether or not *apoha* could account for the initial setting of a convention.

#### *Objections Focusing on the Model of Apoha as a Double Negation*

A long-standing line of critique claims that if a concept is merely an exclusion formed by a double negation—for example, if a cow is not a non-cow—then this double negation is logically equivalent to the assertion of a positive entity. Since the role of an exclusion is to account for what seems to be shared between particulars, if a double negation is equivalent to something positive, then *apoha* theory does not avoid reference to positive universals. Moreover, even if a particular may be identified as the exclusion of all things other than itself, the negation of this exclusion would simply lead back to the particular itself, and therefore fail to account for the human ability to see certain things as sharing common properties. The detour through a double negation therefore becomes unnecessary, counterproductive, and fails to account for what is actually common among particulars.

Mark Siderits provides an early attempt to rescue *apoha* from these charges in his extended review of Raja Ram Dravid's 1972 book *The Problem of Universals in Indian*

*Philosophy*. While Siderits sees much of value in Dravid's work, he also indicates that it has a crucial methodological flaw: it fails to see the potential usefulness of Indian theories of universals to advance contemporary understandings. As Siderits contends, "it is not clear that Dravid feels that there is much, if anything, which we can learn about the problem from the examination of these materials. I wish to suggest that a study of the Indian debate on the question of universals can play an important role in our attempts at understanding this issue" (1982, 187). Siderits' attempt to address Dravid's overwhelming rejection of the coherence of *apoha* stems directly from this laudable concern—unusual at the time but now shared by many in the academy—with demonstrating the relevance of debates within Indian philosophical traditions to contemporary concerns. The fact that a well-developed and growing field of Buddhist Philosophy exists within the American academy is due in no small part to Siderits' early and sustained investment in this area.

*Apoha* provides Siderits with a particularly compelling ground for philosophical engagement, as it seems to provide a solution to an intractable problem in contemporary philosophy of language: is it possible to develop a consistent nominalism? As Siderits remarks, "it is generally accepted in the modern Western tradition that a consistent radical nominalism is unattainable" (1982, 188). He further notes that modern nominalisms "are variations on the theme of the resemblance theory" and contrasts this to what he terms the "Yogācāra-Sautrāntika school's" development of "an extreme nominalism which makes do without the relation of resemblance" (1982, 188). Siderits describes his understanding of this theory using the tools of contemporary analytical philosophy.

The motivation Siderits expresses for his engagement is compelling. However, it is less clear that his formalization of what he takes to be the double negation structure of a concept formed through exclusion is successful in defending the *apoha* theory. Indeed, while Siderits has not disavowed his interpretation of *apoha* as consisting in a double negation, his own recent presentation of the theory in Siderits (2011) pays considerably more attention to the role of subjective factors. Since Siderits has refined his ideas about *apoha* through a series of publications over a period of about thirty years, I will focus here on his initial articulation of the nature of *apoha*'s double negation (1982) and his most recent exploration of this understanding in his concluding contribution to a recent edited volume on *apoha* (2011). While Siderits presents his most recent understanding of *apoha* as emerging out of phenomenally rich concerns, he still relies on the idea that the special features of two different types of negation provide a logical structure that can account for an organism's ability to judge that unique particulars have something in common.

In his initial defense of the logical structure of *apoha*, Siderits introduces a distinction, previously discussed by Matilal (1971, 162–65), between two kinds of negation recognized by Indian grammarians: verbally bound negation (*prasajyapraṭiṣedha*) and nominally bound negation (*paryudāsapraṭiṣedha*) (Siderits 1982, 196). While there is no evidence that Dharmakīrti himself employed these two kinds of negations, many of his later commentators explicitly used them to explain how *apoha* works. Siderits bases his own presentation off of the works of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, although historically their presentation appears to largely replicate that of their predecessor, Śākyabuddhi. The primary difference between these two categories for



Siderits' purposes is that the two types of negations exclude different things, and so, unlike in classical theories of negation where negating the negation of a given term is equivalent to a positive assertion of this term, the combination of nominally and verbally bound negations results in something other than the original term. As he states, using '∼' to stand in for verbally bound negation and '−' for nominally bound, "Indeed the whole point of the distinction between *prasajya-pratiṣedha apoha* and *pariyudāsa apoha* is to ensure that  $\sim - p_n$  is not the same as  $p_n$ " (1982, 202). The combination of these two different types of negation yields something other than the original term because only the verbally bound negation obeys the law of the excluded middle (the nominally bound negation does not) and because verbally bound negation does not entail an ontological commitment to a negated entity, but nominally bound negation does. In this way, Siderits believes that the nominal negation of a real particular can serve as the basis for a verbal negation that, while itself not a real thing, may refer to what is shared between all particulars that are not capable of being referred to as not-that-particular. The supposed utility of this mechanism is that since it claims that what is shared between particulars judged to be the same is not a real thing, but rather merely a negation, it serves the role of a universal without a universal's ontological baggage.

This formulation immediately seems to present a number of problems, or at least calls out for additional clarification. One path that Siderits takes relies on the intermediary position of a perceptual image (*pratibhāsa*) between the particular and the concept. It is the perceptual image, not the particular, which is the locus for the first of the two negations. This negation is then negated in a non-implicative manner, resulting in a concept whose extension is all things that are not non-p's. As he describes: "The

meaning of a ‘cow’ is not a non-cow. The key to this analysis lies, I believe, in the fact that the mental content ‘not non-cow’ is constructed with the use of two different types of *apoha*: the prefix ‘non-’ representing a *paryudāsa apoha* on *pratibhāsa*, and the particle ‘not’ representing a *prasajya-pratiṣedha apoha* on the former *apoha*” (1982, 200).

This characterization, however, seems to necessarily take for granted the ability of a sentient being to decide what is included in the exclusion class for any given perceptual image. In short, if  $p_1$ ,  $p_2$ , and  $p_3$  are all equally different from  $\{p_4, p_5, p_6\}$  because of their difference from everything, and not because of some common property they all share, then why, for example, are  $p_2$  and  $p_3$  not members of  $p_1$ ’s exclusion class? Why would  $p_1$ ’s exclusion class *only* contain  $p_4$ ,  $p_5$ , and  $p_6$ , and thereby be equivalent to the exclusion classes of  $p_2$  and  $p_3$ ? Until one accounts for this ability of a sentient being to form an exclusion class that excludes some perceptual images, but not others, whether or not the combination of this exclusion class with a verbally bound negation could produce a functional concept is somewhat beside the point.

Even staying within an analytical framework, Bob Hale identifies a number of problems with the double negation model of *apoha* expressed by Siderits. The most damaging of these has to do with whether or not the double negation—even in its most refined form as expressed by Siderits’ (2006) paradigm image interpretation—actually does anything, or rather is simply a positive universal in another guise. As Hale indicates:

If, by associating with a particular object  $n$  a certain paradigm image, we can ensure that the negative term *non- $n$*  applies, not to everything in the universe other than  $n$  itself, but only to some of the objects distinct from  $n$ —all the noncrows, say—then what is to prevent us from directly introducing a nonnegative general

term  $n +$  with the stipulation that it is to be true of exactly those objects that are compatible with the paradigm image  $pn$  associated with  $n$ ? The play with the not non- $n$  construction is just an idle wheel—all the real work is done by the paradigm-image maneuver. (Hale 2011, 267)

If what is expressed by a concept is simply those things that are not incompatible with the paradigm image associated with that concept, then this property of “not being incompatible with the paradigm image” could just as well be designated as a positive trait shared by all things able to be expressed by a concept. The fact that it is initially expressed as a double negation is not logically relevant.

This in and of itself seems to be a fatal blow to the ability of abstract logic to express what happens during *apoha*. Indeed, working within the same paradigm, Brendan Gillon is even more direct about the failure of classical semantics to provide support for the logic of *apoha*. As Gillon summarizes his aim and conclusion: “The aim of this paper is to show that the two most obvious candidates from contemporary logic that one might use to explicate the *apoha-vādin*’s notions of exclusion (*apoha*) and difference (*anya*), namely internal and external negation, do not provide the *apoha-vādins* with the *ersatz* universals they were looking for” (Gillon 2011a, 274). Something beyond formal features of two types of negation seems to be necessary to account for the judgment of sameness.

Indeed, even in his initial 1982 article, Siderits ends up having to appeal to some kind of unspecified “psychological machinery” to respond to a set of objections, which he traces to Kumārila, that “the theory must fall victim to circularity or else stand convicted of assuming the existence of a universal” (Siderits 1982, 206, 204). Siderits recognizes that *apoha* may covertly rely on the existence of a universal in two ways: assuming the

existence of a positive universal to serve as the basis for the initial negation, or assuming the existence of a universal in terms of what all things that are excluded by a given particular share. The first objection is both more straightforward and more easily addressed. On the one hand, many critics have argued that if, for example, the concept “cow” actually refers to what is not a non-cow, then this concept depends on the positive existence of a cow to be negated. Dharmakīrti’s account of the role of subjective factors in the formation of a concept seems to effectively address this particular formulation of the circularity objection. Siderits’ appeal to “psychological machinery” reflects this move. On this reading, it is not that a subject acting within the conventional world requires a positive “cowness” to start the process. Rather, an appeal to the combination of the specific causal capacities of the particulars and the subject’s specific karmic conditioning allows Dharmakīrti to say that a concept merely ignores some differences rather than reflects some real commonality. To return to my initial typology, Dharmakīrti’s first constellation of *vāsanās*, the expression of which accounts for the karmically specific conditions of individuals and lifeworlds, addresses this objection.

However, Siderits indicates that this same “psychological machinery” can also neutralize the second circularity objection, effectively denying the need for the second constellation of innate *vāsanās*, which for Dharmakīrti are the necessary preconditions for the existence of any kind of conventional world. Hale’s further critique of Siderits’ use of the paradigm compatibility model brings this problem into sharp relief. An appeal to compatibility with a paradigm image still relies on there being multiple things that are alike in that they are not compatible with the object in question. As Hale explains: “Another way to put this point is that non-n will differ in extension from  $\neq n$  only if the

term to which “non-” is prefixed applies to more objects than just n itself, and so is already (functioning as) a general term. If so, we don’t need the doctrine that meaning of a kind term is the exclusion of the other to get general terms without universals” (Hale 2011, 267). As I understand it, Hale’s additional point here is that the double negation model of *apoha* relies on the fact that some, but not all, particulars are excluded by the image of the desired object. However, this raises the question of why certain particulars, which are after all just as unique as the particulars that are excluded, would not fall into the class of things excluded by the relevant particular. If there is a purely logical reason why some—but *not all*—particulars are excluded by a given image, then this reason is a positive property shared by *only* these excluded particulars, and not the others that are not excluded by the image. Since this relevant property would apply to only some particulars, the mere fact of a real thing’s difference from everything else cannot serve this role precisely because each particular is equally different from each other particular.

Take the example of the formation of the concept “cow.” For Dharmakīrti, the particulars to which this concept ostensibly refers do not actually have anything in common. Sentient beings are just able to treat them as being the same because they want certain things and they think that using this concept will allow them to get those things. But these sentient beings also find that there are many other things that they *cannot* successfully treat as cows. Horses, bazookas, jet fuel, twenty-sided dice—none of these are things that these beings can treat as being cows. But why not? Why is it that all these other things share the fact that they cannot be as cows? Why is it equally true of horses and bazookas that conceptualizing them as cows will not lead to a desired cow-specific outcome, such as obtaining bovine milk? Even if there is nothing in common between

particulars called cows, it seems that there would have to be something in common between horses and bazookas such that they *cannot* be called cows. This reason seems to be a positive property shared by *only* these excluded things, but not the others that are not excluded. In short, the selective exclusion of some particulars, but not others, would rely on a universal shared by the particulars that are excluded.

What is common among the things that are *excluded*, rather than what is common to the things that are *included*, becomes the problem. In short, the selective exclusion of some particulars, but not others, would rely on a universal shared by the particulars that are excluded. The capacity of a sentient being to selectively ignore the right particulars and thereby form a successful concept would in turn rely on this universal shared by those things that are not able to be conceptualized as compatible with the paradigm image caused by the particular being conceptualized. This ability cannot be reduced to the “psychological machinery” of the sentient being, for it presupposes that certain particulars are or are not capable of fulfilling the sentient being’s desires *before* the sentient being begins to conceptualize them. No matter what mental tricks a person might play on a horse, a bazooka, some jet fuel, or a twenty-sided die, for as long as that person attempts to engage in successful practical activity with other humans, that person cannot sell cow milk obtained from any of them. These things are all alike in that they simply do not have the capacity to be conceptualized by humans as a cow.<sup>167</sup> Dharmakīrti’s frequent

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<sup>167</sup> The question of the mental tricks that a person or a group of people might play *on themselves* becomes very interesting here. It is possible that a psychotic individual might have an experience of successfully milking a bazooka and consider his or her goal accomplished. Cases of mass hallucination would also seem to indicate that it is possible for a group of individuals to act in concert around what would be considered an illusion to humanity at large. While the example of milking the bazooka makes it more difficult to think of an instance where all individuals of another type of being could agree that this is

references to the idea, discussed in Chapter II, that things “by their nature” (*prakṛtyā*) have the capacity to produce specific effects indicates that he was aware that causal specificity on the object’s side is just as necessary as the karmic conditioning on the subject’s side to account for the successful formation of a concept. The question becomes: is the input of a sentient being’s goals and desires enough to account for the apparent commonality among things that do not fulfill that desire, if such a commonality does not actually exist?<sup>168</sup>

Hale’s final doubt concerns exactly this point, and offers a bridge to understanding how Dharmakīrti’s own formulation of *apoha* may contain resources that are simply lost in the analytical attempt to formalize his thought. Hale doubts whether or not desire can actually be considered foundational enough that it could account for the mere ability to recognize an object as something previously experienced, which, after all, is what *apoha* is paradigmatically meant to do (Hale 2011, 270). After drawing parallels to Quine’s idea (and concomitant example of the desire for a sloop) that what counts for satisfying a desire is simply relief from the experience of not having the desired thing, Hale indicates that “one would expect sentences like ‘this is a sloop and I own it’ and ‘this is crow pie and I am eating it’ to come well before sentences like ‘I want a sloop’

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possible, it is certainly possible that different types of beings could agree among themselves about the correct application of a concept, even if this application contradicts the accepted application of this concept by other types of beings. Since these questions most directly concern what it means to be a certain type of being who exists in/is constituted by a certain type of world, I will delay discussion of them until later in this chapter.

<sup>168</sup> As I will discuss below, Dharmakīrti seems to think that this is a pointless question, equivalent to asking why the nature of fire is to burn. I do not, and neither do a number of his critics, both medieval and contemporary. Further, as I hope to show, although Dharmakīrti denies the legitimacy of this question when it is directly posed, his appeal to the second, innate set of *vāsanās* may address it.

(with the relief from slooplessness meaning) and ‘I want some crow pie’” (2011, 270). For Hale, a subject’s ability to desire a particular object is dependent upon that subject’s prior experience of the object. One simply cannot desire a sloop if one has no idea what a sloop is, and if one’s understanding of what a sloop is comes from whether or not a certain thing fulfills one’s desire for a sloop, then one could never develop an understanding of a sloop that would allow one to desire it in the first place.

In these ways, if one understands *apoha* as a particular kind of logical function performed by a pre-existing subject on a world of independently existing objects, then *apoha* fails. There simply does not seem to be any way to rescue the double negation model within a purely formal logic. This is so even if—as the *apoha* theorist claims—what allows only a certain subset of particulars to be excluded by a certain mental image is merely a subjective construction with no basis in objective reality. Even this formulation does not succeed because it relies on giving desire a constitutive role in the formation of objects. If there is a nonconceptual world of objects out there that produces experiences within a subject, and these experiences also start out as being nonconceptual, only to be subsequently conceptualized based on the goals and desires of the subject, then it does not seem that a subject could ever develop the kinds of goals and desires for certain things that would allow the formation of a concept in relation to things deemed to have the same effects in relation to that goal.

But does Dharmakīrti really accept an ontology that would leave him open to this kind of objection? In particular, does his understanding of what it means to be a subject living in a world defined by the experience of certain kinds of objects give him space to introduce factors that *could* place limits on what particulars are excluded by any given



perceptual image? Here, Dharmakīrti's location within his Buddhist tradition, particularly as shaped by Vasubandhu, may provide resources that are simply not available if one takes a abstracted view of the work of *apoha* that eschews serious engagement with the tradition itself.<sup>169</sup> As I will explore in Part II of this chapter, in line with the tradition he inherits, Dharmakīrti considers even the mere division of a moment of awareness into defined structures of subject and object to be a distortion shaped by beginningless karmic imprints. While this initial moment of awareness is nonconceptual, the experience of a certain world is always already shaped by the previous actions of sentient beings trapped within the web of *samsāra*, in a process driven by ignorance.

It is notable that Siderits himself has increasingly taken into account the necessity of reading the logical structure of *apoha* in relation to a specific, embodied subject. In his most recent work on *apoha*, he describes the way in which his two negations would

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<sup>169</sup> In emphasizing the importance of taking traditional Buddhist cosmological theories seriously as examples of real worlds, I strongly agree with Sonam Kachru's exploration of the example of the wardens in hell in Vasubandhu's *Vimśikā*. Kachru indicates that failing to consider these as real possible beings risks losing the philosophical import of the example, and therefore leads to misunderstanding Vasubandhu's larger point about the co-creation of individuals and their worlds. As Kachru elegantly states, taking this example seriously does not mean that we must affirm the actual existence of Buddhist hells specifically, but rather that we recognize that Vasubandhu is dealing with a conception of a world that is not limited to an anthropocentric awareness of pre-constituted external objects: "I am not interested in arguing whether Vasubandhu *thought* that there are real environments in which beings experience suffering commensurate to the moral quality of their actions in the past. I think he did, with the caveat that *The Twenty Verses* has a lot to say concerning our conception of what it is to speak of environments and minds. But this is not to the point. I am interested, instead, in arguing that we ought to take Vasubandhu's examples as *examples of real worlds* if we are to grasp the *conceptual point* he is making about the connection between mind and world through the Buddhist account of habituation to patterns of activity. It is this conceptual connection between forms of life and world-directed thought I wish to save, not the belief in real hells" (Kachru 2015, 266). My engagement with the resources available to Dharmakīrti through his engagement with traditional Buddhist cosmology should be taken in this same spirit.

function in relation to the experience of an embodied subject. He gives the example of an organism that develops the ability to overlook certain differences between the tastes of different edibles based on whether or not these edibles contain molecules that bind with certain receptors on the organism's tongue. These molecules need not be the same as long as they have the same effect of binding with the same receptors and thereby producing a particular experience, say the experience of a bitter taste. If this bitter taste has negative effects, the organism will learn to avoid anything that produces this taste. The question of how the organism develops the ability to judge the different molecules to produce the same taste falls back to the dispositions of the organism. Siderits concludes that these dispositions are central to the ability of the organism to judge that these unique tastes, and therefore that the particulars that caused these tastes are the same (2011, 286–88). This depiction makes strong moves toward recognizing the limitations of a purely abstract model of *apoha*.

However, Siderits rather blithely contends that the work done by karmic imprints for Dharmakīrti can be reduced to ideas about dispositions arising from evolutionary biology, thereby making this theory more palatable (because less Buddhist) for a contemporary audience.<sup>170 171</sup> Siderits ends his presentation in terms that seem designed

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<sup>170</sup> Although she rightly emphasizes that Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory should not be considered a theory of correspondence, Laura Guerrero makes this same move in her discussion of *vāsanā*: "In more modern and secular parlance, we can understand innate *vāsanās* in terms of evolutionarily acquired dispositions that a sentient being has in virtue of being the kind of being that it is" (Guerrero 2015, 202).

<sup>171</sup> It is telling that in his book *Buddhism as Philosophy*, Siderits regularly presents what he terms "the doctrine of karma and rebirth" as a paradigmatic example of what may be considered an (irrational) belief within an otherwise philosophically-oriented tradition. The following example, presented in the course of a discussion on non-self, is representative: "This is how the Buddhist defends the doctrine of karma and rebirth against the charge that it is incompatible with non-self. Of course, you might think that

to fit neatly into the assumptions of contemporary Westerners. Speaking of the origin of a disposition to judge different things as bitter, he states:

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karma and rebirth are implausible beliefs that a reasonable Buddhist would abandon. The point here is just that the theory of two truths and the claim that persons are conventionally real may be used to show that rebirth and non-self are not incompatible. If Buddhists ought to stop believing in rebirth, it is not because that belief is inconsistent with their central tenet that there is no self” (Siderits 2007, 67). Questions of karma, rebirth, and cosmology are paradigmatically the kinds of things that Siderits seems to think are not useful in philosophical inquiry. In his discussion of Vasubandhu’s *Twenty Verses*, Siderits does admit that karma plays a crucial role in Vasubandhu’s argument for establishing that all things are only mind. However, he quickly tries to find alternate explanations, again seeming to dismiss the idea that karma itself could be worth serious consideration: “Does [Vasubandhu’s] argument work? Here is one of those places where it does seem to make a difference whether or not one accepts the theory of karma and rebirth. Vasubandhu’s explanation of sensory experience requires that there be karmic seeds and karmic causal laws. So if we have little or no reason to accept that idea, then it might seem that his argument from lightness won’t work. Are there any alternatives that a modern impressions-only theorist might use instead?” (2007, 158). Moreover, Siderits isn’t the only person to disparage the philosophical coherence of Buddhist ideas about karma and rebirth. For instance, as early as 1982, Paul Griffiths devotes an entire article to vociferously condemning the idea that karma makes any philosophical (or moral) sense (Griffiths 1982). This approach has, however, begun to receive pushback in recent years. I will discuss Matthew MacKenzie’s (2013) compelling exploration of karma in light of contemporary enactment theories in philosophical psychology and phenomenology in Part II of this chapter. Even here, though, it is notable that MacKenzie limits his use of karma to only a “general theory” that “concerns the relations between one’s actions and one’s well-being and character in one life” as opposed to the “special theory” that “concerns relations between successive lives of the same individual (of mental continuum). He further contends, “The two theories are logically independent and the general theory does not require belief in rebirth” (2013, 195). I am less certain that the theory of *karma* can be so neatly divided. For other perspectives on this debate, see in particular Prebish, Keown, and Wright (2007) and Cho (2014). Kachru’s exploration of these issues, which includes reference to the passage in Siderits (2007) cited above, provides an additional discussion of objections to assimilating Buddhist theories of karma and habituation to Darwinian ideas about evolutionary adaptation. Kachru contends that this comparison is misleading because 1) “The forms of life are not open-ended, but a stable and fixed set of possibilities of dispositions living beings can exhibit over several life-times”; and 2) Buddhist cosmology lacks an equivalent to natural selection (since “the sequences of change which in part constitute individuals, and which are responsible for what I am calling ‘adaptations’, enjoy a teleological directedness intrinsically”) (Kachru 2015, 282, fn 38). Kachru’s approach to the role of cosmology in Vasubandhu’s *Twenty Verses*, discussed above in fn 1, is particularly elegant.

[The organism] has such a disposition because its immediate ancestors did. Its immediate ancestors had such a disposition because one of their remote ancestors happened to acquire the trait through mutation, transcription error, or some other process of genetic recombination, and this trait conferred greater reproductive success on the organism in its typical environment: organisms possessing an innate similarity space with respect to this class of taste-bud triggerings were better able to learn to avoid ingesting toxic substances. And this despite the fact that (1) there is nothing common to the shapes of the different molecules that bind with the receptor in question; and (2) there is nothing common to the perceptions actually triggered by such bindings. Thus the apoha theorist claims to have accounted for the organism's possessing the protoconcept of bitterness without making use of universals. (2011, 287–88)

I contend, however, that this move robs Dharmakīrti of a necessary component of his theory of the formation of conventional worlds: it ignores the fact that, for Dharmakīrti as for Vasubandhu, it does not seem that the world of subjects and objects is just simply something that *exists*, pre-made and in the same way for everyone. Karmic imprints are not the same as evolutionary dispositions because evolutionary dispositions do not create the limited reality of conventional worlds within which subjects act. Although Siderits does not precisely define what an evolutionary disposition is, his description of such a disposition being passed down from one generation of a species to another seems to indicate that these species exist in and adapt to an external world in particular ways, not that these dispositions could be responsible for the creation of the species' world. To use my earlier typology, while evolutionary dispositions seem to be a good way to talk about

the first constellation of *vāsanās* that direct the formation of experience *within* any given conventional world, they do not touch on the second constellation of *vāsanās*, which are the necessary prerequisite for the first because they constitute the basic structures of samsaric experience. Evolutionary dispositions are learned: they are the inherited products of previous experiences. *Vāsanās* responsible for specific content are also learned, but these learned *vāsanās* are not the only ones to which Dharmakīrti appeals. His understanding of the conventional world also relies on innate *vāsanās* responsible for the most basic structures of experience.

Siderits immediately notes that his evolutionary account is open to dispute. As he explains, “One might for instance wonder how one can speak of a given receptor’s being triggered by distinct molecules if the receptor does not retain certain features from one triggering episode to another” (2011, 288). This is, in effect, the same problem that Siderits’ original double negation model faced: what could be the grounds for a sentient being’s ability to selectively focus on only some differences, and ignore others? While Siderits’ new exploration of the theory has a much more sophisticated sense of how Dharmakīrti could respond, by over-hastily assimilating the characteristically Buddhist part of Dharmakīrti’s theory to a more acceptable Western analogue, Siderits blocks Dharmakīrti’s path before it is possible to determine if this path could ultimately reach the goal of justifying the judgment of sameness.

Pascale Hugon provides a productive way forward by moving the discussion of whether or not *apoha* is circular back to debates present within the Indian tradition itself. She discusses Dharmakīrti’s presentation, in PVSV 1.113c-1.121, of Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā objections to the effect that *apoha* cannot account for the initial setting of a

convention because it is circular. This section of the PVSV concerns whether or not it is possible to set a convention “cow” based on the negation of “non-cow,” which is how the opponents here present the workings of *apoha*. She notes that in this section, Dharmakīrti does not respond directly to the objection that *apoha* is circular, but rather indicates that the realist would have the same problem (Hugon 2011). While Hugon is certainly correct in indicating that Dharmakīrti does not fully justify his own solution to this problem in these verses, as she also notes (2011, 117), Dharmakīrti’s arguments throughout the PVSV about the unique causal capacities of particulars serve to address this problem for him. This shifts the force of the critique from circularity per se “back to the more fundamental question of how the apohavādin can account for our acquisition of the basic ability to grasp as similar things that are in reality different” (2011, 121). Hugon also sees subjective factors as Dharmakīrti’s last recourse for accounting for the judgment of sameness, and thereby addressing the objection that *apoha* cannot account for the initial setting of conventions (2011, 116). While Hugon herself leaves open the question of whether or not Dharmakīrti himself is successful in this regard (2011, 120–21), her focus on the initial setting of conventions reflects a powerful line of additional critique.

### *Can Apoha Account for the Initial Setting of Conventions?*

Another line of critique, with adherents both traditional and contemporary, focuses on the possibility of setting an initial linguistic convention within the *apoha* framework. These objections are closely related to concerns expressed by scholars inspired by contemporary analytical philosophy that *apoha* is circular. One trenchant difference between these lines of critique concerns whether or not the critique engages the problem of circularity in terms of abstract logical structures or in terms of an embodied event. Scholars who

engage *apoha* from the perspective of an ongoing series of embodied actions have recourse to the role of subjective factors in determining the judgment of sameness whereas scholars who engage only objective logical structures do not. As discussed at the end of the last chapter, subjective factors in the form of various kinds of *vāsanās* are critical to Dharmakīrti's account of *apoha*. Failing to take subjective factors into account eliminates a crucial explanatory piece of Dharmakīrti's theory; it is therefore not surprising that attempts to account for *apoha* only in terms of formal features of two different kinds of negation have not met with much success. As we have seen, however, contemporary scholars are increasingly realizing the importance of taking into account embodied features of Dharmakīrti's *apoha*, and this move has enriched the treatment of *apoha* even from within the analytical paradigm.

Following the lead of certain traditional Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā critiques of *apoha*, some contemporary scholars have focused on the problem of circularity within the context of an embodied event: the formation of initial linguistic conventions among a given community of sentient beings. Dan Arnold presents the most sustained critique of Dharmakīrti's ability to account for this initial setting of conventions in his book *Brains, Buddhas, and Believing*. Using transcendental arguments inspired by Mīmāṃsā critiques, Arnold flatly denies that the Buddhist *apoha* theory can explain key features of language use and what he terms the constitutively intentional nature of consciousness. Arnold's arguments move beyond questioning if Dharmakīrti can account for the ability of a sentient being to form this or that particular concept in a particular circumstance. Rather, he questions whether or not Dharmakīrti's theory can account for meaningful experience, full stop. For Arnold, there is no such thing as meaningful experience without

intentionality, and *apoha* cannot explain the constitutively intentional character of consciousness. Therefore, according to Arnold, *apoha* fails to account for human experience.

Arnold's book presents a sustained critique of the idea that Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory is successful in accounting for what Arnold takes to be the constitutively intentional character of consciousness. Arnold engages in a complex comparative program, arguing that Dharmakīrti's concern with using causal efficacy as a determinate of what is real leaves him open to transcendental critiques of contemporary physicalism, which also uses causality in this way. Aligning Dharmakīrti's focus on causality with contemporary cognitive scientific programs, Arnold claims that Dharmakīrti cannot account for the arising of intentional content out of a nonconceptual ground:

[T]here is a case for thinking of intentionality as essentially involving *conceptual* capacities... Particularly insofar as there are good reasons for holding such a view, Dharmakīrti may be at pains to account for intentionality; owing, indeed, to his characteristic focus on causal explanation, he may be vulnerable to arguments, pressed by critics both Brahmanical and Buddhist, whose basic logic is comparable to [Arnold's book's] chapter 3's argument against physicalism: the argument that an *intentional* level of description, in the sense developed there, is ineliminable from any complete account of the mental just insofar as such a level of description necessarily figures in the making of any argument that could be advanced on the topic. (Arnold 2013, 119)

The point Arnold presses against Dharmakīrti is that it is not possible for Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory to bridge the gap between an initial nonconceptual awareness and a



subsequent conceptualized judgment. This is analogous to the objection that Siderits' formulation of the double negation model is supposed to address: both focus on the question of how Dharmakīrti could move from an initial awareness in which there is no grouping of particulars such that some are similar to others to a judgment that some are the same with respect to their effects. However, Arnold takes the critique a step deeper by asking not just about the formation of a specific concept, but about the mere possibility of concept formation at all if concepts are inherently disconnected from what is real.

Arnold's critique is strengthened by his clear awareness that Dharmakīrti relies on more than just the causal capacities of the object in his account of the judgment of sameness. Comparing Dharmakīrti to the contemporary philosopher Jerry Fodor on this point, Arnold summarizes: "Dharmakīrti similarly suggests that if there is any 'sameness' involved in the individuation of real existents as coming under concepts, it is explicable simply in terms of subjectively occurrent dispositions to respond similarly to such particulars as are capable of causing comparable effects" (2013, 138). For Arnold, while this combination of subjective and objective factors provides a compelling account of how one might come to experience two things as having the same effect, it does not touch on the root problem: what it could possibly mean for anything to be "the same" in a world of unique particulars. Referencing Dharmakīrti's example of medicinal plants that share the same effect of reducing fever despite not actually being the same plant, Arnold notes that "while the causal or pragmatic efficacy of the things to which we are directed by discourse may very well constitute good evidence of our *having understood* what was meant, it gives us no purchase on the conceptually prior question of *what is understood*

by utterances in virtue of which we found some particular plants in the first place” (2013, 139).

Arnold further argues that, in the end, since Dharmakīrti must have recourse to subjective factors to account for the judgment of sameness, “Dharmakīrti’s account of the reference of words is thus finally based in something eminently subjective” (2013, 140). It seems that, for Arnold, if subjective factors have a necessary role to play in the production of a judgment of sameness, then the supposed causal specificity of the particulars which produce the mental image that leads to this judgment does not, in fact, have any role to play. He contends: “If, in other words, particular mental events (‘aspects’) are causally relatable to the particulars they represent, we are entitled to ask how *these* causally describable particulars can, exceptionally, be capable of giving rise to the kinds of ‘judgments’ whose resistance to causal explanation is just what is at issue” (2013, 141). However, Arnold goes too far in his claim that, for Dharmakīrti, “the conceptual order is here to be explained in terms of the intrinsic workings of individual minds, whose contents are ultimately intelligible without reference to anything external to them” (2013, 140). *Both* subjective *and* objective factors are necessary for Dharmakīrti’s account of the judgment of sameness; Dharmakīrti’s final ontology does not privilege the subjective side of this duality any more than the objective one. Part of what Arnold seems to miss here is that, for Dharmakīrti, it is not the case that an individual subject exists before the experience of an external world. Subject and object arise together for Dharmakīrti; neither can be reduced to the other. Subject/object duality itself is the expression of a beginningless karmic imprint which must be in place before the process of *apoha* can begin. Arnold, however, seems to think that *apoha* itself must account for

intentional structures, or else have no way to explain how subjective and objective factors could interact to produce meaningful experiences.

Arnold's understanding of the constitutive role of subjective factors in the judgment of sameness leads him to focus on the initial setting of a linguistic convention as a particularly problematic moment for Dharmakīrti. In this critique, Arnold blends Wilfrid Sellars' and John McDowell's idea that consciousness is irreducibly intentional with Mīmāṃsā conceptions of the eternity of language, reading both as affirming that "language is a condition of the possibility of mind, not a product thereof. Among [the Mīmāṃsakas'] most interesting arguments to this effect is one that can be generalized as concerning the ineliminable nature of an intentional level of description" (2013, 13). In this key move, Arnold argues that since intentionality and language are inherently linked, an argument that either one is ineliminable establishes that both are.<sup>172</sup> For Arnold, then, one of the most difficult questions that Dharmakīrti must face is the question of how it is possible to move from an initial nonintentional/nonconceptual awareness to a subsequent meaningful, linguistically and intentionally structured awareness.

This problem is most acute in Dharmakīrti's discussions of the "time of convention" (*saṃketakāla*) when a merely conventional word is used to refer to an object. He notes that Dharmakīrti's discussion of the time of convention can refer to both "the time of the *creating* of any convention and the time of any subject's *learning* some

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<sup>172</sup> Interestingly, while, as noted in Chapter I of this dissertation, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas adopt the Mīmāṃsā idea that language is eternal, they also hold that the subject/object structure of mental or sensory perception is *not* constitutive of consciousness. The question of the relationship between the eternity of language and the intentional structures of consciousness is unfortunately beyond the scope of this dissertation. I hope to explore how the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas blend the Mīmāṃsā theory with their broader positions on the erroneous nature of subject/object duality at a later date.

already created convention,” and further claims: “The important question is whether these moments—the one that is “the time of the convention” (*saṃketakāla*), and the one consisting in the *memory* thereof—will themselves admit of a nonintentional description” (2013, 146–47). Noting that concept use for Dharmakīrti is dependent on memory because one superimposes a previously experienced object onto the unique particular that is currently being cognized, Arnold indicates that in the moment of learning an already created convention is dependent on the initial creation of that convention. It is this initial moment, then, that Dharmakīrti must explain (2013, 146–48). However, what Dharmakīrti actually explains is only the derivative *use* of concepts, not the initial creation of meaningful linguistic items from a non-linguistic source.

Arnold contends that Dharmakīrti’s recourse to the time of setting a convention to explain a sentient being’s ability to use that convention merely defers the problem. Arnold quotes Dharmakīrti’s discussion of the initial setting of a convention in the PVSV: “The same expression (*samā śrutih*)—[pertaining] to different [things] whose effect is the same, based on the exclusion of what does not have that effect—was created by forbearers in order to show the effects of these [different particulars] (*tatkāryaparicodane... kṛtā vṛddhair*); [forbearers did this] because of the impossibility (owing to the excessive difficulty) and the pointlessness of naming [each] different [thing]” (2013, 153; Arnold’s translation). Arnold contends that passages such as this one “do not so much explain as *presuppose* that we know how meaning is thus conferred,” and then asserts that “it is, then, important to ask whether there is a way to explain this bygone ‘creation’ of expressions by the ‘forbearers’ here invoked; can we imagine, in nonintentional terms, what *they* did?” (2013, 153). Arnold’s critique boils down to the

idea that Dharmakīrti simply cannot account for the human ability to find language meaningful by appealing to a group of humans, no matter how august, who supposedly first devised this meaningfulness without themselves already being able to understand language as meaningful.<sup>173</sup> As he summarizes, “On my reading, what is presupposed by Dharmakīrti’s recurrently expressed thought in this regard—the thought that *creating* linguistic conventions is as readily intelligible as *using* them—is just what the proponent of *apoha* most needs to explain. Dharmakīrti’s recurrent appeal to a bygone *saṃketakāla* does not ‘resolve the question of meaning itself’” (2013, 156).

In this way, Arnold presents a more sophisticated version of the circularity problem discussed by Siderits: if *apoha* is to successfully account for human concept use, Dharmakīrti must address the basic capacity of humans to find their world meaningful. However, Arnold does not fully take into account that while Dharmakīrti does not address the problem in his discussion of *apoha*, in other places, Dharmakīrti *does* explore the division of a moment of awareness into subject and object as being the foundational structure that constitutes various conventional worlds. *Apoha* relies on there being a world of differentiated, causally specific subjects and objects; the theory itself is not meant to explain this differentiation. This work is done by Dharmakīrti’s use of beginningless karmic imprints to account for the basic structures of *saṃsāra*. If Dharmakīrti has some other way to account for the emergence of the apparently differentiated world of subjects and objects from nondual ultimate consciousness, then maybe he can achieve the kind of grounding for his *apoha* theory that his critics

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<sup>173</sup> I will discuss Dharmakīrti’s insistence on the beginninglessness of the conventional world in detail in the next chapter. In line with his stance that the conventional world is beginningless, Dharmakīrti denies that the question of how linguistic meaning was first produced is an intelligible one.

demand—or, at least, perhaps he can coherently maintain that his opponent’s questions about why it is that we experience certain things as the same miss the mark.<sup>174</sup>

Given Dharmakīrti’s specific understanding of subject/object duality as a nonconceptual error that must be in place before the *apoha* process can begin, the question of how this structure arises if the only ultimate reality is pure undifferentiated consciousness becomes critical to the overall defensibility of *apoha*. It seems that if we grant Dharmakīrti the conventional world—that is, if we grant that there are differentiated unique objects (internal or external), and that there are different subjects constituted by unique karmic histories—then *apoha* has a real shot as a candidate for

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<sup>174</sup> In pursuing the question of potential resources open to Dharmakīrti that would support certain aspects of his thought even if Dharmakīrti himself does not spell them out, I follow parts of Jay Garfield’s defense of the use of rational arguments to interpret Mādhyamika texts. As my critique of the use of formal logic to explain *apoha* earlier in this chapter indicates, I do think that contemporary scholars sometimes go too far in attempting to shoehorn Indian arguments into Western analogues. However, I think it is equally problematic to move too quickly to a claim that, when their cards are really on the table, many Indian philosophers simply reject reason. Garfield elaborates a defense of rational interpretation in response to an earlier article by Huntington (Huntington 2007), where Huntington claims that Garfield and others illegitimately ascribe rational arguments to Nāgārjuna even though Nāgārjuna explicitly rejects that he makes such arguments. I discuss the question of Buddhism as philosophy and many of the points Garfield makes in this essay in detail in my Introduction. Here, I would like highlight an additional point: simply because Dharmakīrti denies at times that he engages in metaphysical speculation does not mean that he does not do so. As Garfield states of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti: “Finally, even if we *grant* Huntington’s own reading of the purport of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, and agree that Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti are irrationalists, we must be open to the possibility their self-understanding may be erroneous. Insofar as we follow Huntington’s own admonitions to take texts on their own terms, and to abandon the quest of chimerical authorial intent, all admonitions I am happy to endorse, we must be open to the possibility that even if Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti themselves assert that they reject logic and reason, they are simply wrong about this—that they in fact present reasons for these views, and that their arguments conform to a canon of logic” (Garfield 2008, 516). Like Garfield, I am motivated by an affiliation to the principle of charity in the interpretation of philosophical texts. I believe that the strongest possible reading of Dharmakīrti’s works takes account of both his strategic refusal to address the question of the nature of things in the conventional world, and his broader use of Yogācāra ideas to describe how the conventional world arises.

describing how practical activity works within this conventional world. In this way, Dharmakīrti's account of a sentient being's ability to erroneously judge two unique particulars to be the same rests on his account of the manifestation of subject/object duality itself. Once this structure is in place, Dharmakīrti's appeal to the goal-oriented activity of a habituated subject operating within in a world of causally efficacious objects is compelling—particularly since Dharmakīrti fully admits that there is no need for a concept itself to be real in order for it to be able to lead to successful action. If Dharmakīrti is able to account for the emergence of this structure, then his articulation of the ability of a subject to selectively focus on certain exclusions based on that subject's habits, goals, desires, and context is quite rich.

As I will discuss in the next section, Dharmakīrti appeals to a beginningless karmic imprint to produce this fundamental dualistic structure, which for him precedes and grounds any further experiences of sameness or diversity. In an inversion of the problem that Dharmakīrti faces in light of the necessity of a judgment of sameness to create a concept—namely, the problem of how to get oneness out of diversity—the success or failure of Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory turns out to hinge on the more fundamental question of how to get the dualistic structures of awareness and the differentiated content they seem to possess out of ultimate consciousness, which is itself undifferentiated. At least according to his opponents, Dharmakīrti needs to account for both the differentiation of objects in terms of the existence of a world of particulars with unique causal capacities, and the differentiation among subjects such that these subjects would have different karmic histories that lead them to overlook some of these

differences and not others. The question is: can he do this while preserving a Yogācāra ontology of the ultimate reality only of undifferentiated consciousness?

## **Part II: *Anādivāsanā* and the Creation of Conventional Worlds**

This section will take a broader look at Dharmakīrti's likely sources for his understanding of *vāsanās* and their role in creating the various life-worlds inhabited by different types of sentient beings. Given the multiple ontologies and streams of argument present in Dharmakīrti's thought, the question of his sources is highly complex. In this section, I offer an initial exploration of Dharmakīrti's likely assumptions based on positions widely shared within his tradition. Considerable additional research is necessary to pin down Dharmakīrti's sources more precisely. To anticipate: Dharmakīrti's understanding of the role of karmic imprints in constituting a given sentient being's experience of the conventional world is highly consistent with Vasubandhu's exploration of these same issues, which in turn is based on articulations in Yogācāra *sūtras* and links to earlier Buddhist cosmology.

Although both Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti will eventually articulate an ontology that is at odds with many of their Buddhist co-religionists, their focus on the constitutive role of karma in the creation of varying types of conventional reality is itself deeply rooted in traditional Buddhist cosmology. The pan-Buddhist model of the three realms (*tridhātu*) envisions *samsāra* as consisting of various more or less exclusive worlds defined by the psychophysical capacities of the beings who inhabit them. Yogācāra theorists refined this account of the realms of the conventional world through a model of mind that relies on the central role of the base consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*),



which consists of *vāsanās* as causal streams shaping and shaped by ongoing action. It is this conception of the joint constitution of self and world that undergirds Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory. I will address early Buddhist cosmology, Yogācāra refinements, and Dharmakīrti's adoption of *anādivāsanās* to account for the basic subject/object structure of conventional experience each in turn.

### *Early Buddhist Cosmology*

The idea that the cyclic world of *saṃsāra* is created by the actions of reincarnating sentient beings pervades early Buddhist thought. Rupert Gethin's work has been particularly instrumental in bringing the importance of this idea to light within contemporary scholarship.<sup>175</sup> For Gethin, the defining feature of these early Buddhist accounts of the universe in the Nikāyas and the Abhidharma is their alignment of cosmology and psychology. As he summarizes, "Indian Buddhist thought is in unanimous agreement that ultimately the particular world each of us experiences is something that we individually and collectively have created by our thoughts. The parallel that exists in Buddhist thought between cosmology and psychology is simply a reflection of this basic fact of the Abhidharma understanding of the nature of existence" (Gethin 1997, 212). Moreover, he notes that this conception of the universe is closely related to meditation theory: as a Buddhist practitioner advances into successively higher meditation states, that practitioner actually moves through the different realms of the cosmos. The alignment between psychology and cosmology, then, is reflected in significant ways both in terms of the worlds sentient beings experience within a single life and the common worlds of *saṃsāra* constructed through beginningless reincarnations.

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<sup>175</sup> See especially Gethin (1997) and (1998, 112–32).

Gethin points out another characteristic feature of early Buddhist cosmologies which has particular salience for Dharmakīrti's use of *vāsanās* on two distinct levels:

A point of particular significance that emerges from this is that, from the perspective of Abhidharma, to shift from talk about levels of existence to talk about levels of the mind is to continue to talk about the same thing but on a different scale. What is involved in moving from the psychological order (the hierarchy of consciousness) to the cosmological order (the hierarchy of beings) is essentially a shift in time scales. (1997, 195)

This “shift in time scales” refers to the difference between the mind's freedom to move rapidly through levels of the cosmos in transitioning between various stages of meditation and the relative stability of a sentient being's particular embodiment within a certain realm. While an advanced practitioner might move through the form realms (*rūpadhātu*) and into the formless (*ārūpyadhātu*) in the course of a single session, a being born into the highest of the formless realms will remain there for approximately 84,000 aeons (Gethin 1997, 195; 1998, 116). Early Buddhist cosmologies, then, posit that self and world are co-created through *karma* on two distinct levels: horizontally, so to speak, in terms of the large-scale structures of *samsāra* and vertically in terms of the experiences of individual sentient beings.

Gethin further indicates that the earliest Buddhist articulation of the process of *karma* in terms of the twelve links of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) itself displays precisely this bivalence:

The fact that what we are talking about here is a change of scale is exactly brought out by the Abhidharma treatment of “dependent arising” (*pratītyasamutpāda*). This law that governs the process of things, whether the workings of the mind or the process of rebirth, is always the same. Thus the Abhidharma illustrates the operation of the twelve links of dependent arising either by reference to the way in which beings progress from life to life or by reference to the progress of consciousness from moment to moment: from one perspective we are born, live, and die over a period of, say, eighty years; from another we are born, live, and die in every moment. (1997, 195)

In this way, a moment of experience within *saṃsāra* is not an encounter between a pre-formed subject and an independent world of external objects. Rather, just as the universe inhabited by sentient beings arises according to their actions in a beginningless causal stream, sentient beings create and are created by their worlds moment by moment.

Drawing parallels between early Buddhist articulations of *karma* and contemporary enactment theory, Matthew MacKenzie similarly emphasizes the fact that dependent origination does not occur within a pre-made world, but rather is the ongoing process by which sentient beings enact themselves and their worlds (MacKenzie 2013, 194). He stresses that “self, world, and action are taken to be three interdependent aspects of an ontologically and phenomenologically more basic and universal process of dependent co-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*)” (2013, 198). If I understand him correctly, this process is ontologically basic in that it creates the reality within which it occurs and phenomenologically basic in that the very structures of experience—that is, both the modes of subjectivity and the objects available to a certain type of subject—are

continually produced within this process. In terms that have striking resonances with Dharmakīrti's description of *apoha*, MacKenzie summarizes: "We do not merely perceive an object. Rather, the object is given in its sensory-affective salience and against the background of one's associations, habits, impulses, and motivations. Indeed, what we have here is a process in which each aspect conditions and is conditioned by the others" (2013, 205). Not only are the judgments of sentient beings shaped by their ongoing habits, expectations, and desires, but the simple availability of a certain world of objects to these sentient beings is also created by karma. In this way, "the term *loka* does not denote an absolutely objective world of entities whose existence and properties can be specified independently of a subject; rather, a *loka* is a world of experience, activity, and meaning—that is, a *lifeworld (Lebenswelt)*" (2013, 204).

From a different perspective, William Waldron finds precursors to the Yogācāra conception of the *ālayavijñāna* in early Pāli Buddhist descriptions of two of the links of dependent origination: karmic formations (*sankhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Waldron notes a bivalence in the use of *viññāṇa* that mirrors both Gethin's description of the psychological and cosmological aspects of karma and Dharmakīrti's articulation of the mutually conditioning types of *vāsanā*. *Viññāṇa* can occur either with or without objects. When *viññāṇa* occurs without objects, it "is consciousness per se, the basic sentience necessary for all animate life, which in Buddhist thought is always dependent upon supporting conditions and perpetuated by karmic activities" (Waldron 2003, 20). Waldron follows O.H. de A. Wijesekera in terming this type of objectless *viññāṇa* "samsaric *viññāṇa*" (2003, 20). In contrast, *viññāṇa* with an object refers to the various kinds of mental and sensory cognitions. Waldron repeatedly emphasizes that a complex

feedback loop between the two types of *viññāṇa*, embodied in karmic formations and supported by latent tendencies (*anusaya*), constitutes a given sentient being's position within *samsāra*. As he concludes, "Buddhist analysis of mind, therefore, even at this early stage, is no simple empiricism in which some autonomous cognitive faculty cognizes external objects pre-existing 'out there' in time and space. Rather, the theory of dependent arising suggests that mind and object dependently arise" (2003, 43).

Waldron argues at length that the bivalence of *viññāṇa* in early Buddhist sources created problems for the Abhidharma's focus on the synchronic aspect of experience. This focus made it difficult for the Abhidharma to account for latent mental factors that do not produce their effects immediately. The most salient of these factors are the underlying tendencies (*anusāya*) that are reflections of the root afflictions (*kleśa*) that drive the process of *samsāra*. As many scholars have pointed out, the type of karma that leads a sentient being to a particular rebirth is mental: it is defined by intention (*cetanā*).<sup>176</sup> Waldron emphasizes the close connection between these ideas: "*It is these two factors – intentional actions (karma) and the affective, afflictive powers (kilesa, S. kleśa) which inform them – that generate the energies propelling consciousness and perpetuating cyclic existence*" (2003, 26; italics in the original). Waldron cites a famous passage in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* that demonstrates the "astoundingly important cosmogonic role" of the afflictions in producing the karma that produces the world: "It is said [AKBh IV 1] that the world in its variety arises from action (*karma*). It is because of the underlying dispositions that actions accumulate (*upacita*); but without the underlying dispositions they are not capable of giving rise to a new existence. Thus,

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<sup>176</sup> For a particularly detailed and cogent exploration of the relationship between action and intention in Buddhaghosa's thought, see Heim (2013).

the underlying dispositions should be known as the root of existence (*mūlaṃ bhava*)” (2003, 68; Waldron's translation). Without the underlying afflictions, actions would fail to have significance for the creation of future births.

This conception of the universe as created by the afflictive intentional actions of sentient beings seems to lead naturally to the signature Cīttamātra idea that these three realms are mind-only, and indeed Waldron sees the development of the concept of the *ālayavijñāna* as a way of systematically working out the reciprocal influences among actions, various types of consciousness, and the world. Gethin and MacKenzie also note the idealist flavor of this account of self and world, even within early traditions that affirm the existence of external objects. Gethin posits “a loosely ‘idealist’ tendency to all Indian Buddhist thought” reflected in “a general, underlying orientation, which tends to locate reality in the mind and its processes rather than something ‘out there’ which is other than the mind” (Gethin 1997, 211). MacKenzie pushes at the philosophical ramifications of this idea. As he states:

Now, on the face of it, the idea that the arising and passing away of the world is fundamentally linked to the karmic process may strike one as a particularly outrageous form of subjective idealism. I think that interpretation would be a mistake. However, a subjective idealist interpretation of the Buddhist theory of karma will be hard to resist if one assumes a strictly *objectivist* conception of the term *loka* (‘world’). But in my interpretation, the Buddhist theory of karma is in fact a central component of an ontological alternative to the duality of subject and world that is so deeply entrenched in the Western tradition and from which both objectivism and subjectivism arise. (MacKenzie 2013, 203)

Holding this idea that the cosmology available to Buddhists from the early stages of the tradition could lead to ways to account for the experiences of sentient beings that do not depend on the independent existence of mutually distinct subjects and objects, I will turn to the ways in which this model was refined by Yogācāra thinkers.

*Yogācāra Refinements on the Co-Creation of Self and World*

In the lead-in to the verse four of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, cited above in Waldron's translation, Vasubandhu emphasizes the idea that sentient beings create their worlds through intentional action:

Now, concerning what was discussed earlier—the extensive variety of the worlds consisting in the life-worlds of living beings, and the physical receptacle in which they dwell—[we might ask]: by whom was this made? It is certainly not the case that it was made by a single agent possessed of prior thought [consisting in the intent to create the world]; rather, it is that THE CONSTITUTIVE VARIETY OF WORLDS IS THE RESULT OF ACTION (4.1a-b) on the part of sentient beings.<sup>177</sup>

The key refinement Vasubandhu makes in his Yogācāra works has to do not with the idea that sentient beings create their worlds full stop, for, as we have seen, this idea is already present and affirmed by earlier streams of the Buddhist tradition. Rather, Vasubandhu's Yogācāra contribution comes in his formulation of the idea that since the karma that produces these worlds is mental, the results are mental, too. Yogācāra theorists further

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<sup>177</sup> Sanskrit and translation in Kachru (2015, 276). *atha yad etat sattvabhājanalokasya bahudhā vaicitryam uktaṃ tat kena kṛtam? na khalu kenacid buddhipūrvakaṃ kṛtam; kiṃ tarhi sattvānāṃ karmajaṃ lokavaicitryaṃ*, AKBh ad 4.1a

expressed this new cosmological model by postulating that a deep layer of consciousness, the *ālayavijñāna*, contains the seeds (*bīja*) of samsaric experience in the form of karmic impressions (*vāsanā*).<sup>178</sup>

Like Waldron, Johannes Bronkhorst emphasizes how this position arises out of Vasubandhu's engagement with the Abhidharma (Bronkhorst 2000, 57). Abhidharmic traditions tended to accept that intentional mental action drives the process and nature of rebirth. However, accepting the existence of external worlds into which these beings are born would seem to allow mental actions to cause non-mental results. In the *Viṃśikā*, Vasubandhu draws on the idea that since intentional actions encoded in *vāsanās* produce the various worlds of sentient beings, these worlds are best understood as modifications of consciousness: "The impression (*vāsanā*) of a deed enters into the series (*santāna*) of consciousness, and nowhere else. Why don't you accept that the fruit [comes about] right there where the impression is, and is [therefore] a corresponding modification of consciousness? What is the reason that you imagine the fruition of an impression [to

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<sup>178</sup> There has been some controversy surrounding whether or not Dharmakīrti accepts the *ālayavijñāna*. Franco has argued, against Schmithausen, that "Dharmakīrti accepted a multi-layered series of cognition, and that consequently the often repeated claim that the *ālayavijñāna* (or for that matter the *kliṣṭamanas*) was not admitted by Dharmakīrti, is not very likely" (Franco 1994, 368). I find his analysis convincing and see no reason to deny that Dharmakīrti would have accepted the *ālaya* given his clear acceptance of other specifically Yogācāra ideas, including the *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, which will be discussed below. Indeed, it is difficult to see what could be transformed in the transformation of the basis if not the *ālaya*. For a comprehensive treatment of the *ālaya* with a special focus on identifying the earliest usage of this term, see Schmithausen (1987). For an excellent and more recent analysis, see Waldron (2003). Additional support for the position that Dharmakīrti accepts the existence of the *ālaya* comes from PV 3.335-337, which are discussed at length in Chapter I. According to Dunne, Śākyabuddhi glosses the key term *antarvāsanā* with *kun gzhi rnam par shes pa la gnas pa'i nus pa = ālayavijñānasthitaśakti*. While Śākyabuddhi's ideas should not be uncritically accepted as reflecting Dharmakīrti's, there seems to be no reason to see this particular interpretation as unwarranted.



come about] there, where the impression is not?”<sup>179</sup> This verse encapsulates the idea that if it is possible for there to be stable, intersubjective experiences of common worlds among various types of sentient beings that are in fact the product of the intentional actions of those beings, then there is no reason to posit the existence of causal factors beyond the mutual influence of the streams themselves. Crucially, this account means that neither the subjects nor the objects experienced as constituting a world exist before this ongoing activity of construction.

Vasubandhu builds up to this assertion through deploying different examples that each serve to further refine and justify the idea that external objects are not necessary to account for the differentiated experiences of sentient beings. As noted in Chapter I, both the content and the course of his arguments in the *Viṃśikā* heavily influenced Dharmakīrti’s presentation of why the division of a moment of awareness into subject and object must be erroneous. Both proceed within a framework that 1) affirms that sentient beings causally construct their worlds; 2) claims that there are at least some instances where this construction may be accounted for in all its causal specificity without appeal to external objects; 3) additionally claims that such objects are themselves incoherent based on a mereological analysis; and 4) concludes that both subjects and objects are specific manifestations of underlying patterns of habituation that constitute the worlds of conventional experience.

Kachru’s (2015) compelling reading of Vasubandhu’s *Twenty Verses* clarifies the details of how this process works. Kachru describes one of Vasubandhu’s key insights:

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<sup>179</sup> Sanskrit and translation from the *Viṃśikā* verse 7 in Bronkhorst (2000, 57). *karmaṇo vāsanā... vijñānasantānasanniviṣṭā, nānyatra / yatraiva ca vāsanā, tatraiva tasyāḥ phalaṃ tādrśo vijñānapariṇāmaḥ kiṃ neṣyate / yatra vāsanā nāsti tatra tasyāḥ phalaṃ kalpyate—iti kim atra kāraṇam?*

Vasubandhu, for one, saw a close link between the individuation of fundamentally different ways of being minded and the subject of life-worlds, if I may use the term for now to track the category of *sattva-loka*, meaning the existential and phenomenological differences between fundamentally different classes of sentient beings. It is not enough to say that there are different ways in which a world is experienced. Beings constitute different worlds. (2015, 197)

However, this fact that beings constitute different worlds, rather than simply have different perspectives on a common external world, does not mean that Vasubandhu irreducibly privileges the first-person experiences of a solitary subject to give the measure of what is real. It is not the case that a certain kind of subject constructs a certain kind of world. Rather, intentionality itself is a function of habitual patterns of action that constrain subjects in terms of the objects that are potentially available for them to experience. People do not see a cup and agree about what it is; people are *people*, and not another type of being, because their karmic dispositions support the creation of a world within which a cup is available to their experience. As Kachru summarizes, “That feature of intersubjective experience important to experiences of the world is not an achievement of consent based on the reliability of our references to the public character of objects. It is given to us through the notion of a being of a particular type” (Kachru 2015, 211, fn 72).

Moreover, being a particular type of being is a function of “habituation to actions,” to use Kachru’s felicitous phrase expressing the mutually constructing nature of actions, habits, and worlds. As he indicates, “Perceptual uptake of the world is in some sense the culmination of a process of habituation to action which accounts for our having available to us anything to take up as content: in other words, it is a single process which accounts

for our being able to have a world in view as the kinds of living beings we are constituted by habituation to be” (Kachru 2015, 311). It is precisely this model of the world as constituted by habituated patterns of action that I contend Dharmakīrti has recourse to in explaining why a given sentient being would be able to selectively ignore the differences between some particulars, but not others. Under this model, precisely what it means to be a certain kind of being is that a being of this sort habitually tends toward different aspects of a causal environment, with both the being and the available content shaped by karmic imprints. This understanding of the conventional world may address Arnold’s critique of *apoha* by providing an account of the structures and content of experience that necessarily underlie conceptual awarenesses.

My reliance on Kachru’s description of Vasubandhu may seem surprising given that Kachru is at pains in a number of places to differentiate Vasubandhu from Dharmakīrti—to Dharmakīrti’s disadvantage. If I understand him correctly, Kachru’s reading of Dharmakīrti’s opposition to Vasubandhu is influenced by Arnold’s understanding that Dharmakīrti can be termed a “methodological solipsist.”<sup>180</sup> As briefly indicated earlier in this chapter, Arnold sees Dharmakīrti’s partial reliance on subjective factors in determining the content of a concept, coupled with Dharmakīrti’s affirmation of reflexive awareness as the only ultimately trustworthy *pramāṇa*, as indicating that Dharmakīrti grounds knowledge about the empirical world in first-person experiences, which are held to be incontrovertible. Kachru describes his own critique, which seems to take Arnold’s analysis for granted: “Vasubandhu, unlike Dharmakīrti, does not believe it is possible to restrict an individual to the solitary deliverances of perceptual acquaintance

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<sup>180</sup> For Arnold’s elaboration of this critique, see Arnold (2013, 158–98).

while claiming for such acquaintance the status of knowledge” (Kachru 2015, 518–19). Kachru’s point here revolves around his claim that the subject-image (*grāhakākāra*) is just as erroneous as the object-image (*grāhyākāra*) for Vasubandhu—but, according to Kachru, not for Dharmakīrti. Kachru’s reading indicates that, unlike for Dharmakīrti, for Vasubandhu first-personal awareness in the form of perceptual acquaintance with one’s own perceptual images does not give one any privileged knowledge of the conventional world because the first-personal perspective is itself erroneous. Under this reading, it is not surprising that Kachru would draw a stark line between Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti. If Dharmakīrti is a methodological solipsist, he would be making precisely the mistake commonly leveled against Vasubandhu: the idea that the world can be reduced to *my* experience, without regard for the constitutively intersubjective nature of experience. Such a mistake effectively denies that subject and object are mutually constituted by claiming that the experience of a subject comes first, and determines the nature of the objects experienced within the conventional world.

I argue, however, that it is not correct to regard Dharmakīrti as a methodological solipsist in this way. While it is true that Dharmakīrti affirms that only reflexive awareness is ultimately non-erroneous, the key question is what this particular type of awareness actually is right about. Given Dharmakīrti’s rejection of the ultimate reality of the division between subject, object, and awareness, discussed in Chapter I, reflexive awareness as a *pramāṇa* for the ultimate has nothing to do with any kind of conventional world. It does not ground empirical experience. In fact, it shows that all empirical experience is profoundly incorrect in that empirical experience is necessarily contaminated by the reification of the structure of subject and object. Precisely the failure

to grasp reflexive awareness as the pure, undifferentiated capacity for manifestation itself is what leads to the experience of the conventional worlds constituted by subjects and objects, which are equally erroneous with respect to the ultimate.<sup>181</sup> In this, I read Dharmakīrti as espousing a conception of the relationship between subject, object, and world that closely aligns with that of Vasubandhu. Dharmakīrti thereby has recourse to the idea that neither subjects nor objects are independent entities, but rather that certain types of karmic imprints create conventional worlds defined by the habituated patterns with which particular types of subjects experience content available to them by virtue of the mutually constituting relationship of self and world. This is precisely the type of account of what it means to exist within a world that may allow Dharmakīrti to fully address objections to the effect that *apoha* is circular. Dharmakīrti develops this position in his account of the formation of subject/object structure by means of beginningless karmic imprints.

*Vāsanā and the Creation of Subject/Object Structure in Dharmakīrti's Thought*

*Vāsanās* have an even deeper significance than has been brought to light in relation to the previous chapter's discussion of the role of habituation in justifying a sentient being's judgment that two distinct particulars are the same. A particular constellation of *anādivāsanās* express an additional layer of nonconceptual error that must be in place before the process of *apoha* can even begin. The most important of these is the error of

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<sup>181</sup> Śākyabuddhi insightfully comments on this point: "Even though the essential nature of awareness is apprehended as partless by reflexive awareness, as a result of its connection with the seeds of error, that reflexive awareness does not produce a subsequent definitive determination of the nature of cognition as nondual in the way that it has been perceived. Therefore, even though reflexive awareness has already apprehended the nondual nature of cognition, it is as if it had not been apprehended," Dunne's translation from the Tibetan in (2004, 408).

subject/object structure itself as it emerges out of Dharmakīrti's final articulation of ultimate reality as pure, undifferentiated nondual consciousness. Surprisingly, even though Dharmakīrti repeatedly associates conceptuality with the error of positing that one object could be many or that many objects could be one,<sup>182</sup> he still claims that the division between subject and object—which, as discussed in Chapter I, he has shown is erroneous based on a neither-one-nor-many argument—is not conceptual. Following Dignāga, at his External Realist level of analysis, Dharmakīrti posits that dualistic sensory perception is both nonconceptual and undistorted. However, at his Epistemic Idealist level of analysis Dharmakīrti maintains that dualistic sensory perception is still nonconceptual, but drops the claim that it is undistorted. Instead, subject/object structure itself is ultimately a nonconceptual error, termed the *antarupaplava* (internal distortion), that warps the experience of consciousness as it really is. This warpage constitutes conventional reality.

Dharmakīrti identifies four basic types of perceptual error, three of which he claims are conceptual, and one of which is nonconceptual. As he states: “There are four types of spurious perception: three types are conceptual awarenesses and one, which

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<sup>182</sup> While concept formation for Dharmakīrti is paradigmatically associated with the problem of treating many particulars as if they instantiate one universal, he also speaks of concepts as splitting up what is actually one into many different aspects. For these two aspects of concept formation, see, for example, PVSV ad 151cd: *iyam artheṣv ekarūpā pratītir vikalpavāsanāsamutthitā bhrāntir eva*, “This cognition, arisen through the karmic imprint of concepts, which has a single form in relation to many objects, is precisely an error,” and PV 1.58: *pratyakṣeṇa grhīte 'pi viśeṣe 'mśavivarjite / yadvīśeṣāvasāye 'sti pratyayaḥ sa pratīyate //*, “Even when a particular object that is devoid of parts is grasped through perception, that supporting condition which exists in relation to the determination of a specific [aspect] is cognized.”

arises from a distortion in the basis, is nonconceptual.”<sup>183</sup> Manorathanandin provides a useful clarification of the nature of the nonconceptual form of perceptual error. He equates the distortion of the basis (*āśraya*) with that of a sensory organ and further specifies the impairment of ocular floaters as the paradigmatic instance of such a distortion.<sup>184</sup> Manorathanandin here uses Dharmakīrti’s own standard example of a nonconceptual error, which Dharmakīrti mentions a few verses later. In this verse, Dharmakīrti clarifies the nature of the fourth type of perceptual error, which, unlike the others, is nonconceptual: “In this regard, the fourth [type of error] is an exceptional case. It is said to be that which arises from an impairment. In that case, an ocular floater is merely representative of [such] an impairment.”<sup>185</sup> Dharmakīrti points out that some types of perceptual errors, such as the perception of hairs by a person with ocular floaters, are in fact nonconceptual because they do not depend on a judgment of sameness based on supposedly previously observed similarities. He discusses nonconceptual error in terms of commonplace perceptual errors wherein the phenomenal content of a given perception inherently lacks the causal capacity to produce a reliable perceptual

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<sup>183</sup> *trividhaṃ kalpanājñānam āśrayopaplavodbhavam / avikalpakam ekaṃ ca pratyakṣābhaṃ caturvidham //*, PV 3.288 (Dharmakīrti 1979, 383).

<sup>184</sup> *āśrayasyendriyasyopaplavas timirādyupaghātas*, PVV ad 3.288 (Manorathanandin 1938, 205).

<sup>185</sup> *apavādaś caturtho ’tra tenoktam upaghātajam / kevalaṃ tatra timiram upaghātopalakṣaṇam //*, PV 3.293 (Dharmakīrti 1979, 387). Schmithausen also briefly discusses this passage in (1965, 215). Franco notes a debate between Hattori (Hattori 1965; 1968, 95–97) and Wayman (Wayman 1978) about whether or not Dharmakīrti’s stance that there are nonconceptual errors is faithful to Dignāga’s (Franco 1986). Franco strongly agrees with Hattori that it is not: Dignāga only accepted three kinds of *pratyakṣābhāsa*, all of which are conceptual (Franco 1986, 82–83).

judgment.<sup>186</sup> Some of these errors involve deficient organs while others occur simply by virtue of the way any human's perceptual organs function.

Dharmakīrti relies on and further clarifies the nature of nonconceptual error in the course of his critique of subject/object structure in the *pramāṇaphala* section of the PV. Here, he specifically brings together the idea of nonconceptual error, paradigmatically represented by the error of seeing hairs by someone with ocular floaters, with the distortion of subject/object structure: “Just as [a cognition containing] the distortion of the phenomenal forms of subject and object as having distinct characteristics is observed through errors, this structure is created in the same way. [It is] like the distinction in an awareness of hairs, etc.”<sup>187</sup> A bit later, still using the language of distortion (*viplava*, *upaplava*, *upapluta*, etc.), Dharmakīrti provides some additional examples of nonconceptual error, and again ties them explicitly to the apparent distinction in a moment of cognition between subject, object, and awareness:

For example, clay shards and such appear otherwise to those whose eyes are distorted by mantras, etc., even though these [shards] do not have that nature because they do not appear in just that way to those whose eyes are not distorted. So too, something is seen to be big from a distance in deserts even though it is small. Likewise, even though it does not exist, the arrangement of object, subject,

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<sup>186</sup> In his book *Twelve Examples of Illusion*, Jan Westerhoff rightly points out that the example of ocular floaters serves to provide an example of nonconceptual error that the majority of the population has experienced. Unlike cataracts or jaundice, ocular floaters are very common. That these hairs appear so frequently makes them a salient example: if one wants to see what a nonconceptual error looks like, most likely all one has to do is stare at a relatively homogenous visual field, blink a few times, and watch the hairs seem to fall in front of one's eyes (Westerhoff 2010, 41–55).

<sup>187</sup> *yathā bhrāntair nirīkṣyate // vibhaktalakṣaṇagrāhyagrāhakākāravīplavā / tathā kṛtavyavastheyam keśādijñānabhedavat //*, PV 3.330d-3.331 (Dharmakīrti 1985, 15).



and awareness as the object of awareness, the means of awareness, and the result is created in accord with [samsaric] experience.<sup>188</sup>

In all of these cases, one cannot fix the error simply by interpreting one's perception differently. To use a different example, even if one understands that the moon will appear larger closer to the horizon and smaller higher in the sky, one still cannot help but see the moon in this way.

The key to nonconceptual errors is that they are given in the cognitive image itself: they appear as such before the combination of the image and an exclusion formed through *apoha* create a concept based on supposed similarity with previous experiences. Dharmakīrti presents the appearance of external objects as a nonconceptual error and therefore parries an External Realist objection that one could never conceptualize externality unless external objects were real. Dharmakīrti presents the objection: "Indeed, because of seeing similarity, error arises in the world through the imposition of identity onto what does not have that nature. [Objection:] That is not so in this case because not even one thing having that nature is seen in this world."<sup>189</sup> In effect, the objector here claims errors arise because an individual incorrectly conceptualizes one thing as another previously experienced object. However, if one never experienced externality at all, one

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<sup>188</sup> *mantrādyupaplutākṣāṇām yathā mṛcchakalādayaḥ / anyathaivāvabhāsante tadrūparahitā api // tathaivādarśanāt teṣām anupaplutacakṣuṣām / dūre yathā vā maruṣu mahān alpo 'pi dṛśyate // yathānudarśanaṃ ceyaṃ meyamānaphalasthitiḥ / kriyate 'vidyamānā 'pi grāhyagrāhakaśamvidām // PV 3.354-356 (Dharmakīrti 1985, 42–43). For an interpretation of this passage according to Prajñākaragupta, see (Schmithausen 1965, 214).*

<sup>189</sup> *sādharmyadarśanāl loke bhrāntir nāmapajāyate / atadātmani tādātmyavyavasāyena neha tat // adarśanāj jagaty asminn ekasyāpi tadātmanaḥ / PV 3.360-3.361ab (Dharmakīrti 1985, 46).*

could not form the concept based on a previous perception of the similarity between seemingly external things.

In response to this objection, Dharmakīrti again points out that some errors do not depend on concepts in the Ābhidharmic sense: “This [kind of error] exists, but there is also one that naturally possesses an erroneous appearance, which arises from a flaw, originating from an internal distortion, without relying on the sight of similarity, etc., as in the case of one who has ocular floaters.”<sup>190</sup> As he has consistently done, Dharmakīrti here uses the language of distortion to refer to a nonconceptual error. This “internal distortion” is responsible for the false appearance of subject/object duality. Such an error is given with normal human perception in the same way that a person with ocular floaters cannot help but see apparently external hairs floating in the air. The hairs appear immediately, without the need for a subsequent judgment of sameness. The error involved here consists of the fact that, although these hairs appear to be real external objects, if one attempts to act on this perception, the hairs will not function as expected: no matter how hard one tries to wave away the hairs, an external hand cannot affect what are actually internal distortions caused by ocular floaters.<sup>191</sup>

Dharmakīrti also clarifies the distinction between conceptual and nonconceptual errors in his *Svavṛtti* on PV 1.98-1.99ab.<sup>192</sup> In this passage, he addresses an objector who claims that real universals must exist in order to account for conceptual error, which

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<sup>190</sup> *astīyam api yā tv antarupaplavasamudbhavā // doṣodbhavā prakṛtyā sāvithapratibhāsinī / anapekṣitasādharmyadrgādis taimirādivat // PV 3.361cd-3.362* (Dharmakīrti 1985, 47).

<sup>191</sup> For an insightful discussion on the distinction between conceptual and nonconceptual errors drawing on Kamalaśīla and Śāntarakṣita’s views, see Coseru (2012, 182–91). For more on Kamalaśīla’s take on the non-erroneous status of perception, see Funayama (1999).

<sup>192</sup> For an additional discussion of this passage, see Eltschinger (2005, 158–60).

occurs when similarity between two things causes a perceiver to mistake one for the other. Foreshadowing his discussion in Chapter Three, Dharmakīrti responds by pointing out that conceptual errors depend on subjective factors, not just on the object: “Nor do errors only depend what is external. Rather, [they arise] also from an internal distortion, as in the case of confusion in relation to hairs, etc.”<sup>193</sup> The objector points out that this account of conceptual error seems to make perception itself subject to ignorance and confusion: “Because they arise from ignorance, it would follow that visual cognitions, etc., are also erroneous.”<sup>194</sup> At this level of analysis, Dharmakīrti categorically rejects this claim and somewhat dogmatically reiterates that this cannot be the case. “No,” he responds, “because its [ignorance’s] defining feature is conceptuality. Indeed, ignorance is precisely conceptuality. It is misleading by its very nature. Therefore, it is not the case that sensory cognitions are conceptual.”<sup>195</sup> <sup>196</sup>

Pivoting from the External Realist to the Epistemic Idealist level of analysis, Dharmakīrti drops the claim that dualistic sensory perceptions are undistorted. “Alternately,” he states, “this fault does not apply to them, either, because of the appearance of duality of what is nondual. I will explain this [in the third chapter].”<sup>197</sup> <sup>198</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> *na vai bāhyāpekṣā eva bhrāntayo bhavanti. kiṃ tu viplavād āntarād api keśādīvibhramavat.* PVSV ad 1.98-1.99ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 50).

<sup>194</sup> *avidyodbhavād viplavatve cakṣurvijñānādiṣv api prasaṅgaḥ.* PVSV ad 1.98-1.99ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 50).

<sup>195</sup> *na. tasyā vikalpalakṣaṇatvāt. vikalpa eva hy avidyā. sā svabhāvenaiva viparyasyati. naivam indriyajñānāni vikalpakāni.* PVSV ad 1.98-1.99ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 50–51).

<sup>196</sup> For an additional translation and discussion of this portion of this passage, see Eltschinger (2014, 265).

<sup>197</sup> *na vā teṣv apy eṣa doṣo ’dvayānām dvayanirbhāsād iti vakṣyāmaḥ.* PVSV ad 1.98-1.99ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 51). For a French translation of this passage, see Eltschinger (2005, 159).

Following Śākyabuddhi, Karṇakagomin clearly marks that Dharmakīrti shifts levels here: “[The nature of error] has been stated according to the External Realist position. Now, he explains it in terms of Epistemic Idealism [in the section] beginning with ‘Alternately...’”<sup>199</sup> Shifting from External Realism to Epistemic Idealism allows Dharmakīrti to agree that, indeed, perception is nonconceptual and undistorted. However, by ‘perception’ he now means nondual reflexive awareness, not the dualistic appearance of subject and object. While dualistic perception is still nonconceptual, reflexive awareness alone is fully undistorted. Dharmakīrti indicates that normal perception remains nonconceptual, but since the error of duality still appears therein, it is not ultimately non-erroneous. Further linking this presentation to Vasubandhu’s mereological arguments, Karṇakagomin specifies that normal sensory perception is distorted “because it is unable to endure a neither-one-nor-many analysis,” and concludes that, therefore, “it is not ultimately real.”<sup>200</sup> In this way, there is a level of error even deeper than the one expressed through *apoha*. All samsaric perceptions are contaminated by this beginningless affliction of ignorance.

However, Dharmakīrti recognizes that, within the everyday world, it is necessary to treat some cognitions as if they were not erroneous. As he says, “Even though everything is an error, there is a delimitation between trustworthy awarenesses and those that merely seem to be so because of an agreement, which lasts up until the

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<sup>198</sup> For a note marking a possible divergence between Dharmakīrti and Prajñākara on the question of whether or not there are nonconceptual errors in perception, see Hattori (1968, 92).

<sup>199</sup> *bāhyārthanayenoktādhunāntarjñeyanayenāha, na \*vety ādi*, PVSVT ad 1.98-1.99ab (Karṇakagomin 1982, 210). I have corrected *\*cety ādi* to *\*vety ādi* to agree with the text of the *Svavṛtti*. As usual, Karṇakagomin closely follows Śākyabuddhi in this section.

<sup>200</sup> *ekānekavicārākṣamatayā na paramārthasat*, PVSVT ad 1.98-1.99ab (Karṇakagomin 1982, 210).

transformation of the basis, about their intended capacity for causal efficacy.”<sup>201</sup> Dharmakīrti’s own reference here to the “transformation of the basis” (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) solidifies the fact that he is speaking from a position informed by a broader Yogācāra context at this point.<sup>202</sup> This passage also usefully clarifies why, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Dharmakīrti is not a solipsist: trustworthiness within the conventional world is not grounded by a first-person acquaintance with ultimate reality in the form of *svasaṃvedana*. In a parallel passage at the very end of the first chapter of the *Pramāṇavinīścaya*, Dharmakīrti explicitly lays out a distinction between ultimate (*pāramārthika*) and conventional (*sāṃvyavahārika*) *pramāṇas*. Here, he emphasizes that, because it is based in stable or enduring karmic imprint (*dr̥ḍhavāsanā*), a trustworthy awareness in the everyday world may be considered nonerroneous for as long as *saṃsāra* endures. However, ultimately, only the nondual knowledge born of contemplation (*cintāmayīprajñā*)<sup>203</sup> is truly trustworthy.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>201</sup> *sarveṣāṃ viplave ’pi pramānatadābhāsavyavasthā ā āśrayaparāvṛtter arthakriyāyogyābhimatasaṃvādanāt*, PVSV 1.98-1.99ab (Dharmakīrti 1960, 51).

<sup>202</sup> For more on Dharmakīrti’s soteriological use of Yogācāra categories, including especially the *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, see Eltschinger (2005) and (2014, 299, 315-317). Eltschinger reads these passages in light of Dharmakīrti’s affirmation of “the mind’s natural radiance” as indicating “perception before and after the *āśrayaparivṛtti* to be one and the same with regard to its content and operation” (2014, 315–16). While Eltschinger’s arguments are compelling, it is important to emphasize that phrasing in terms of the ultimate *content* of awareness may be misleading. Ultimately, consciousness is pure, nondual luminosity. It has no contents in any way analogous to the idea of an “object” of a perception: it is not intentionally structured.

<sup>203</sup> For a detailed discussion of the role of *cintāmayīprajñā* in Dharmakīrti’s thought, see Eltschinger (2014, 318-28).

<sup>204</sup> *so ’pi katham sarvajñānānām viṣayaṃ vyatirecayann upaplavetarayoḥ pramāṇetaratām brūyād viśeṣābhāvāt. upaplavavāsanāvisandhidoṣād aprabuddhasyāpy anāśvāsikam vyavahāram utpaśyann ekam apramāṇam ācakṣītāparam ā saṃsāram aviśiṣṭānubandham dr̥ḍhavāsanatvād iha vyavahārāvisamvādāpekṣayā pramāṇam. sāṃvyavahārikasya caitat pramāṇasya rūpam uktam atrāpi pare mūḍhā viśamvādayanti lokam iti. cintāmayīm eva tu prajñām anuśīlayanto vibhramavivekanirmalam anapāyi*

In these ways, Dharmakīrti clearly distinguishes between conceptual and nonconceptual error. It seems that, for Dharmakīrti, the type of error that divides a moment of nondual awareness into two is fundamentally different from the type of error that posits an enduring unity connecting multiple objects across different moments of time.<sup>205</sup> The deeper nonconceptual error is Dharmakīrti's target in his final level of analysis. As he states directly before giving the examples of the magician and the man in the desert, "Even though the nature of cognition is not divided, those with distorted vision characterize it as if it contains difference in terms of subject, object, and awareness."<sup>206</sup> Dharmakīrti presents dualistic awareness as the same type of error as seeing nonexistent hairs or being fooled by a magic trick. Crucially, this type of error must be in place *before* the process of *apoha* can conceptualize the already-dualistic contents of a moment

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*pāramārthikapramāṇam abhimukhīkurvanti. tad api leśataḥ sūcitam eveti*, PVin ad I.58cd (Dharmakīrti 2007, 43–44). Krasser (2004) provides an excellent analysis of this passage in the larger context of the relationship between Buddhist *pramāṇavāda* and soteriology. His translation is as follows: "[Question:] Inasmuch as he claims the object of every cognition to be lacking (*vyatirecayan*), how can he assert that a disturbed cognition (*upaplava*) and [its] opposite are a means of correct cognition and [its] opposite, since there is no difference [between them]? [Answer:] When seeing an action that is untrustworthy, due to the deficiency of the imprints of a disturbed cognition not being connected [to the desired result], even to he who is not awakened, [he who is asked in this manner] could declare the one [cognition] to be *apramāṇa*. The other [cognition], which, as long as *samsāra* endures, has an uninterrupted connection [with the result] because its imprints are firm, [could be declared] here [in this world], dependent on its reliability in actions, to be a *pramāṇa*. And it is this nature of the conventional means of valid cognition that has been explained. [Not only with regard to the ultimate means of valid cognition, but] also with regard to this [conventional cognition], others who are confused lead the world astray. Those, however, who cultivate the very wisdom born of reflection realize the ultimate *pramāṇa*, which due to its being devoid of error is immaculate [and] without return. Indeed, this too has been explained to some extent," (2004, 143).

<sup>205</sup> For more on the trans-temporal aspect of conceptual awarenesses, see Arnold (2013, 146–52).

<sup>206</sup> *avibhāgo 'pi buddhyātmā viparyāsitarśanaḥ / grāhyagrāhakaśamvittibhedavān iva lakṣyate* // PV 3.353, (Dharmakīrti 1985, 41).

of conventional awareness. This idea that the creation of subject/object structure is the foundational form of ignorance which is either equated with or from which all the afflictions that keep a sentient being trapped within *saṃsāra* arise is most likely closely related to Dharmakīrti's discussions of the innate (*sahaja*) form of the personalistic false view (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*), discussed at length by Eltschinger.<sup>207</sup> Unfortunately, a detailed analysis of the relationship of Dharmakīrti's epistemological account of the nonconceptual error of the division of a moment of awareness into subject and object and his discussion of the *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi* is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

A good deal of the complexity of pinning down the precise nature of subject/object error in light of larger soteriological questions for Dharmakīrti comes from the broader use of the term *vikalpa* in Yogācāra *sūtras*. Legeia Lugli addresses the particular role of language in constituting conventional worlds as articulated in various Yogācāra *sūtras*. She contends that these *sūtras* posit that language is the fundamental driving force behind *saṃsāra*. This seems to contradict Dharmakīrti's position that subject/object duality must be in place before conceptual processes may occur. Lugli's paraphrase of what she identifies as the crucial passage for understanding language in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, however, points to the difficulty inherent in this position: “*Parikalpitasvabhāva* is first projected on reality the moment people pay attention to verbal expression” (Lugli 2011, 117). The key point, here, is that *people pay attention to*

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<sup>207</sup> See especially Eltschinger (2014, 266–98). Eltschinger notes that Dharmakīrti sometimes identifies ignorance with *vikalpa* and sometimes with *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi* or *ātmasneha*, and that the relationship between these categories sits uneasily both within Dharmakīrti's own thought and in relation to orthodox Abhidharmic analyses. *Satkāyadr̥ṣṭi* itself has multiple forms, one of which is the theory of a permanent Self espoused by some Brahmanical traditions and the other of which is a foundational type of clinging that divides the world of any sentient being into “I” and “mine.”

something, and then that something (verbal expression) is projected onto the dependent nature. This seems to presuppose the existence of at least a subject/object structure before verbal expression can occur.

Based as it is on a comprehensive analysis of multiple Yogācāra *sūtras*, Lugli's argument that conceptual processes of differentiation fuel *saṃsāra* is compelling, and I do not intend to contradict her findings here. The apparent contrast between Dharmakīrti's statements on nonconceptual error and these *sūtras*' repeated claim that the conventional world is due to *vikalpa* likely reflects a shift in the meaning of *vikalpa* from Ābhidharmic to Yogācāra sources rather than a real tension. Within the Abhidharma, *vikalpa* refers to a concept that is constructed based on a nonconceptual perception. This is the sense in which Dharmakīrti generally uses *vikalpa*. Indeed, the nearly universal affirmation within Buddhist philosophical traditions that perception is nonconceptual would seem to make it difficult for Dharmakīrti to endorse the *sūtras*' statements about language constituting reality full stop while staying within an Ābhidharmic framework. However, Dharmakīrti's discussion of the relationship between ignorance and conceptuality in PVSV 1.98-1.99cd indicates that he shifts the meaning of *vikalpa* at his final level of analysis to include subject/object structure itself. If I correctly understand Kachru's arguments about Vasubandhu and Lugli's analysis of many Yogācāra *sūtras*, Yogācārin works contain a similar affirmation of the foundational status of the division between subject and object in constituting what might be available in the construction of a world.



## Conclusion

As discussed in Chapter I, Dharmakīrti's final ontology aligns with Vasubandhu's Yogācāra conception of reality as nondual consciousness devoid of the structures of subject and object. His solution to the problem of how this nondual consciousness could manifest dualistic structures also aligns with Vasubandhu's position that beginningless karmic imprints create worlds of mutually dependent subjects and objects. Viewed in this light, *apoha* is not meant to account for the fact that different sentient beings will form different exclusion classes based on their respective desires. Rather, *apoha* presupposes both the existence of such conditioned subjects and the existence of the seeming variegated, causally-specific world of external objects. Objections that focus on the inability of *apoha* to account for how (a certain subset of) many different things could be judged to be the same without taking Dharmakīrti's Yogācāra context into account therefore miss the mark. Critics of *apoha*, both contemporary and modern, are quite right to indicate that there is no logical way for the *apoha* theory itself to account for a sentient being's ability to ignore some differences, but not others. However, *apoha* itself was never meant to do this. This work is performed by Dharmakīrti's understanding of conventional worlds as karmically constituted realms of mutually arising subjects and objects. This position has deep roots within his Buddhist tradition.

It is this question of whether or not Dharmakīrti is justified in his contention that a beginningless karmic imprint can account for the *divisions* present within awareness, not the sameness, that forms the crux of the most salient Pratyabhijñā critique of his *apoha* theory. With full appreciation of Dharmakīrti's doctrinal background, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas question whether or not a beginningless karmic imprint (*anādivāsanā*) could

account for the differentiation observed within the conventional world to begin with. Their critique of Dharmakīrti on this point advances a number of their distinctive ontological claims, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

#### CHAPTER IV: APOHA AND THE CREATION OF THE WORLDS OF CONVENTIONAL EXPERIENCE IN PRATYABHIJÑĀ ŚAIVA THOUGHT

The previous chapter explored some common critiques leveled against Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory focusing on whether or not Dharmakīrti's ontology can ultimately account for the judgment of sameness so crucial to the formation of a concept. Drawing on traditional Buddhist cosmologies, Dharmakīrti seems to address this problem by positing the existence of a foundational error in the form of the subject/object structure of conventional experience. This error undergirds the process of concept formation, and concept formation cannot occur without the already-given differentiation inherent in a world of conventional subjects and objects. This error is the expression of beginningless ignorance, and therefore not subject to further scrutiny on Dharmakīrti's part. However, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas do not accept the idea that a beginningless karmic imprint (*anādivāsanā*) is sufficient to account for the differentiation within a moment of cognition in *saṃsāra*. Their critique of the post-Dharmakīrtian Vijñānavāda tradition on this point opens the way for their distinctive articulation of the nature of ultimate consciousness and the process by which this consciousness manifests as conventional worlds. Most strikingly, these Śaivas claim that the beginningless time through which *saṃsāra* manifests is the expression of the nondual variegation inherent to ultimate consciousness, and that this expression is driven by the freedom (*svātantrya*) of consciousness to will the creation of any possible world.

This chapter will proceed in two parts. First, I will detail the Pratyabhijñā critique of the Vijñānavādin use of *anādivāsanā* to account for the differentiation experienced within a moment of cognition in the conventional world. These Śaivas argue that the

postulation of *anādivāsanā* does not allow the Vijñānavādin to dodge the charge that the diversity of these karmic imprints would imply an infinite regress if this diversity is not inherent to ultimate consciousness itself. Second, I will examine these Śaivas' own response to the problem of how subject/object structure emerges from nondual ultimate consciousness. Unlike Dharmakīrti, these Śaivas claim that the mere differentiation of a moment of awareness into subject and object is already conceptual and formed through *apoha*. This further allows them to claim that since the creation of a concept requires desire, a kind of desire not reducible to conventional subjectivity must be inherent in ultimate consciousness itself. The manifestation of this desire leads to the creation of trustworthy awareness (*pramāṇa*) within the conventional world.

### **Part I: The Pratyabhijñā Critique of *Anādivāsanā* and the Appearance of Diversity**

Part I will engage the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva critique of Dharmakīrti's deeper use of *vāsanā* to account for the emergence of any kind of differentiated content within awareness given his ultimate ontology. These Śaivas do not object to the idea that *vāsanās* in the form of a given sentient being's habituation to various types of actions direct the process of concept formation. Rather, they object to the idea that an *anādivāsanā*, understood as an error that is not inherent to ultimate consciousness, could account for the basic differentiation experienced within the conventional world. The crux of this debate centers around whether or not it is possible to identify a root cause for the differentiation of *vāsanās* which themselves produce the differentiation experienced in the conventional world. Dharmakīrti's postulation that these *vāsanās* are beginningless serves precisely to indicate that this question cannot be answered: since a beginningless process has no root

cause, it is not subject to a circularity objection. These Śaivas reject this position and claim that the differentiation of *vāsanās* does indeed require a root cause. Even as they affirm that *samsāra* itself is beginningless, they claim that the source of the beginningless time through which it is experienced both can and must be accounted for. For these Śaivas, rather than beginningless time being the necessary prerequisite for the manifest diversity of the conventional world, the nondual differentiation inherent in ultimate reality is itself the source of time.

*Differentiation Cannot Come from a Beginningless Karmic Imprint*

The Pratyabhijñā Śaivas hold that the manifestation of differentiated experiences in the conventional world cannot come solely from error, but rather must in some sense be continuous with ultimate consciousness because the conventional is actually nothing but a particular slice of the ultimate. Their critique of the Vijñānavādin position that this differentiation is an expression of previous karmic imprints comes in the context of their exploration of what the nature of ultimate consciousness must be if it is to account for ordinary differentiated experiences. Utpaladeva addresses the question of what could cause a certain experience to arise at a certain time in the beginning of Chapter Five in the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*. He begins by laying out his position in summary form: “If light were undifferentiated [in itself] and differentiated [from objects], then objective reality would be confused. The object that is illuminated must itself be light; that which is not light cannot be established.”<sup>208</sup> This famous verse articulates a Pratyabhijñā position that will be widely cited and defended: there is nothing beyond the light of ultimate

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<sup>208</sup> Torella’s translation in (2013, 112). *bhinne prakāśe cābhinne samkaro viṣayasya tat / prakāśātmā prakāśyo ’rtho nāprakāśaś ca sidhyati //*, ĪPK I.5.3 (Utpaladeva 1994, 19).

consciousness, which itself contains all possible differentiation in the form of preconceptual appearances (*ābhāsa*).

In a detailed and insightful examination of these passages, Isabelle Ratié points out that Utpaladeva here rejects two theories about the relationship between sensory objects and consciousness. The first is that a sensory object could be totally distinct from consciousness. The second is that consciousness could be entirely undifferentiated in and of itself. In the following verses, Utpaladeva takes a Buddhist External Realist (*bāhyārthavādin*) and a Vijñānavādin as respectively representing each of these faulty theories. He then uses arguments from these two Buddhist traditions to refute each other and thereby support his own claim: sensory objects are not different from consciousness, and consciousness is inherently variegated (Ratié 2010b).

Specifically, Utpaladeva uses Vijñānavādin arguments to reject the idea that external objects must be inferred to account for the variety of experience, but then also uses External Realist arguments to point out that karmic imprints (*vāsanā*) alone cannot account for this variety, either. Utpaladeva presents an External Realist objection to the position that objects are of the nature of manifestation: “[Objection] Since consciousness-light (*bodhasya*) being undifferentiated cannot be the cause of a multiform manifestation, all this various manifestation lacking in an apparent cause (*ākasmika*) leads to the inference of an external object [as its only possible cause].”<sup>209</sup> The External Realist then precludes the standard Vijñānavādin response that karmic imprints alone can account for this variety: “Not even a varied reawakening of the karmic residual traces can be taken to

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<sup>209</sup> Torella’s translation in (2013, 112-113). *tattadākasmikābhāso bāhyaṃ ced anumāpayet / na hy abhinnaśya bodhasya vicitrābhāśaheturā //*, ĪPK I.5.4 (Utpaladeva 1994, 20).

be the cause [of the multiform manifestations], for in that case a new question would arise: what is the cause of the variety of such a reawakening?”<sup>210</sup> Here, despite the Vijñānavādin postulation that the karmic imprints responsible for the basic structures of experience in the conventional world are beginningless, Utpaladeva claims that their causes must be accounted for.

These Śaivas are well aware of the Vijñānavādin position concerning the role of beginningless karmic imprints. Ratié cites a passage where Abhinavagupta lays out the Pratyabhijñā understanding of the Vijñānavādin position on how beginningless karmic imprints give rise to the differentiated experiences of the conventional world:

There is a varied (*vicitra*) awakening (*prabodha*) of impregnations (*vāsanā*) that are [beginningless (*anādi*), i.e. that] do not occur for the first time [at a particular moment], [and] that are powers (*śakti*) of bringing to existence phenomena (*ābhāsa*)—such as blue and so on—that are new (*abhinava*) [and not remembered]. It is this [varied awakening of impregnations] that initially constitutes the cause of the variety (*vaicitrya*) of phenomena that occur consecutively; and then [only], the awakening of these [impregnations] which consist of residual traces (*saṃskāra*) becomes the cause of manifestation [in such cognitions as] concepts, memories and so on. Such is the hypothesis formulated by the Vijñānavādin.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>210</sup>Torella’s translation in (2013, 113-114). *na vāsanāprabodho ’tra vicitro hetutām iyāt / tasyāpi tatprabodhasya vaicitrye kiṃ nibandhanam //*, ĪPK I.5.5 (Utpaladeva 1994, 20).

<sup>211</sup> Translation and Sanskrit text in Ratié (2010, 454). *vāsanānām anādikālopanatānām abhinavanīlādyābhāsothāpanaśaktīnām yo vicitraḥ prabodhaḥ sa evātra kramikābhāsavaicitrye hetutām eti prathamataḥ; caramaṃ tu saṃskārātmanām prabodho vikalpanasmarāṇādyābhāsanāhetutām etīti saṃbhāvayate vijñānavādī.*

Abhinavagupta here accurately represents the Vijñānavādin position: the variety of experience arises not from varied external objects, but from the varied awakening of karmic imprints.

Ratié notes that this is a common understanding of the Vijñānavādin position on how differentiated experiences manifest in the conventional world. Her quotation of Kumāriḷa's presentation of this position in his *Ślokavārttika* is particularly illuminating since Kumāriḷa specifically identifies the beginningless flaw manifest within conventional experience with subject/object structure itself:

According to my [the Vijñānavādin's] doctrine, although the essence of cognition is in fact pure, nonetheless, in the endless (*anādi*) cycle of rebirths, because of a confusion due to the impregnations (*vāsanā*) that were born from previous cognitions [and] that are varied (*citra*), because they have causes that are [themselves] varied, the blue or [any other objective aspect taken on by the cognition,] stained by [the distinction between] the apprehended [object] and the apprehending [subject], arises while being seemingly differentiated in conformity [with its cause]; it does not require any other object [that would be external to the cognition]. And this relation of mutual causality (*anyonyaheturā*) between the cognition and the power (*śakti*) [that constitutes the impregnation] is beginningless (*anādika*).<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Translation and Sanskrit text in Ratié (2010, 455). *matpakṣe yady api svaccho jñānātmā paramārthataḥ / tathāpy anādau saṃsāre pūrvajñānaprasūtibhiḥ // citrābhiś citrahetutvād vāsanābhir upaplavāt / svānurūpyeṇa nīlādi grāhyagrāhakarūṣitam // pravibhaktam ivotpannaṃ nānyam artham apekṣate / anyonyaheturā caiva jñānaśaktyor anādikā //*



Kumāriila here accurately presents the Vijñānavādin denial that it is necessary to account for the initial cause of variegated karmic imprints. Differentiation does not actually have a root cause: cognitions contaminated by ignorance merely seem to be differentiated because they arise dependent on the beginningless error of subject/object duality.

Kumāriila brings up another important point here: according to him, the Vijñānavādin claims that the relationship between *vāsanās* and cognitions represents a logically acceptable case of mutual causality (*anyonyaheturā*), not a problematic circularity. This is the kind of causality typified in classical Indian philosophy by the example of the seed and the sprout. The precise reason why mutual causality is acceptable in this case is that the relationship between the *vāsanā* and the cognition, like the relationship between the seed and the sprout, is beginningless.

However, as Ratié indicates, the Vijñānavādin attempt to account for the differentiation manifest in the conventional world through an appeal to beginningless karmic imprints was as widely critiqued as it was well-known in medieval Indian philosophical circles. While Utpaladeva himself frames the critique as coming from a fellow Buddhist, Ratié points out that Naiyāyikas and Mīmāṃsakas are similarly skeptical (Ratié 2010, 460, fn 65-66). While there is some variation among these critiques, they all revolve around the question of what the nature of *vāsanās* could be such that they could have the causal capacities attributed to them while still remaining nothing but consciousness. This question is particularly sticky since, according to these critiques, Vijñānavādins claim that ultimate consciousness is nothing but pure manifestation, and is therefore totally undifferentiated. Such an absolutely undifferentiated entity cannot itself directly be the cause of differentiation. If it were, everything should be caused all at the

same time because a single undifferentiated entity would always have one and the same effect. However, if pure ultimate consciousness is not itself the cause of differentiated *vāsanās*, then the cause must either be something other than consciousness (in which case the Vijñānavādin would merely be another externalist), or something that is less than ultimately real, in which case the Vijñānavādin must explain how something unreal could be causally efficacious (Ratié 2010, 456–58).

Utpaladeva grants the External Realist point that the Vijñānavādin cannot rely only on the idea of karmic imprints to cause the variety of experience, for the variety of these traces also must be given a cause. However, he still partially rehabilitates the Vijñānavādin position by claiming that the external object fares no better because such an object is neither necessary to account for everyday experience nor logically coherent in and of itself: “That may be (*syād etat*). [But] seeing that ordinary worldly activity can be accomplished on the basis of such ‘manifestations’ alone, what sense is there in wanting to resort to an external reality other [than consciousness], which is not supported by reason?”<sup>213</sup> Solidifying his debt to the Vijñānavādins, in his *Vṛtti*, Utpaladeva appeals to Vasubandhu’s mereological argument to show that an external object is nonsensical: “Furthermore, the external object is contradicted by the criteria of right cognition (*pramāṇabādhitaḥ*): this is so if it is considered as having parts, since this would result in attributing to it contrasting qualities etc.; if it is considered as devoid of parts it is still contradicted in various ways (*bahuśaḥ*), because it is simultaneously in contact with the

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<sup>213</sup> Torella’s translation in (2013, 114). *syād etad avabhāseṣu teṣv evāvasite sati / vyavahāre kim anyena bāhyenānupapattinā //*, ĪPK I.5.6 (Utpaladeva 1994, 20).

six directions of space, etc.”<sup>214</sup> As Ratié indicates, Abhinavagupta also frequently references Dharmakīrti’s own arguments for disproving the existence of external objects, including Dharmakīrti’s *sahopalambhaniyama* argument.<sup>215</sup>

Having pit his two main opponents against each other, Utpaladeva presents his own position as the only possible alternative. The causal basis for the variety of experiences cannot come from something inessential to consciousness, whether that thing be an external object or an “adventitious defilement” that is left behind in the ultimate experience of *svasaṃvedana*. As Ratié lucidly summarizes these Śaivas’ arguments:

Whether phenomena exist in an absolute sense or not, they must have a real cause. Therefore, impregnations, insofar as they must cause the phenomenal variety, must exist in an absolute sense—that is, independently of consciousness. But then the Vijñānavāda is nothing but a “disguised” (*pracchanna*) externalism, since in order to explain phenomena, it must acknowledge the existence of entities outside of consciousness. If, on the other hand, the Vijñānavādin considers that these impregnations only have a relative reality, he cannot maintain that they are causes, for only a real entity can produce any effect; and even if he contends that while having no independent existence, these impregnations are indeed real insofar as they are ultimately nothing but consciousness, then they are real only insofar as they are absolutely undifferentiated, since this is the nature of

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<sup>214</sup> Torella’s translation in (2013, 114-115). *bāhyaś cārthaḥ pramāṇabādhitaḥ sāvayavo viruddhadharmādhyāsāder niravayavaś ca dikṣaṭkayogāder bahuśaḥ*, ĪPKV ad I.5.6 (Utpaladeva 1994, 21).

<sup>215</sup> Interestingly, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas have a strong reading of the *sahopalambhaniyama* argument as itself directly refuting the existence of external objects, not just being a step in such a refutation. See Chapter I for a discussion of Dharmakīrti’s arguments against external objects. For more on these Śaivas’ particular interpretation, see Ratié (2014a).

consciousness according to the Vijñānavādin. Therefore their variety cannot be real, so that they cannot be the causes of phenomenal variety. (Ratié 2010, 457–58)

Adopting the widespread critique of the Vijñānavādin idea that beginningless karmic imprints could account for the diversity of the manifest world if ultimate consciousness is purely undifferentiated, these Śaivas posit that the differentiation expressed in the conventional world must have its cause in real differentiation inherent to ultimate consciousness.

As Ratié's summary of these Śaivas' arguments indicate, these Śaivas hold closely to the idea that the specific content of an awareness must have a real cause if this content (and the contents of subsequent moments for which it in turn serves as a cause) is to be non-random. If ultimate consciousness is purely undifferentiated, it cannot serve this role because it is not the nature of something undifferentiated to produce differentiated effects. Having already rejected the idea that something external to consciousness can be inferred to account for differentiated effects, these Śaivas claim that variegation must be nonconceptually inherent to consciousness itself.

The basic form of the argument can be represented as follows: 1) We observe causally-specific differentiation in the everyday world. 2) Something that is causally specific must be the effect of a specific real cause. 3) Each real cause produces only the effects that are in accord with its nature. 4) Such causes must be either internal or external to consciousness. 5) These causes cannot be external to consciousness because, per Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti, external objects are irrelevant and logically incoherent. 6) These causes therefore must be internal to consciousness. 7) It is not the nature of

something undifferentiated to produce different effects. For example, a cognition of blue has the causal capacity to produce only a subsequent cognition of blue, not a cognition of yellow. 8) Consciousness cannot be totally undifferentiated and produce different effects. 9) Consciousness must be inherently differentiated if it is to account for the differentiated awarenesses observed in the conventional world. Conclusion: Since there is no other viable candidate for the cause of this differentiation, the nature of reality is ultimate consciousness that inherently contains the capacity for the expression of all differentiated awarenesses.

The Pratyabhijñā Śaivas here focus their critique around the same basic question that Arnold levels at Dharmakīrti: what is the connection between individual, meaningful experiences in the conventional world and the consciousness from which they arise? As we saw in the previous chapter, Dharmakīrti's reliance on Yogācāra cosmology allows him to step back from this objection: *apoha* does not account for the basic structures of experience; rather, it presupposes them. Pursuing this line of critique, then, depends not on looking directly at the nature of *apoha*, but rather in examining whether or not Dharmakīrti's Yogācāra model of beginningless karmic imprints is sufficient to account for the relationship between conventional and ultimate reality. As we have seen, the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva critique claims that it is not.

While these Śaivas' objections are more damaging than Arnold's are, a closer look at Dharmakīrti's responses to objections about the relationship between the natures things seem to have in the conventional world and what is ultimately real indicates that Dharmakīrti would not accept a key premise of these Śaivas' argument. For Dharmakīrti, things in the conventional world do not have to have real, ultimate causes. In a discussion

of the judgment of sameness in Dharmakīrti's works, Dunne (2004, 121–26) proposes that Dharmakīrti's refusal to discuss why things have the nature they do is an intentional strategy aimed at avoiding irrelevant, incoherent, and counterproductive discussions. He summarizes his earlier work in his contribution to the recent *Apoha* volume (Siderits, Tillemans, and Chakrabarti 2011). Here, Dunne presents his favorable reading of Dharmakīrti's refusal to engage in metaphysical speculation:

If one is hoping for an ultimately defensible metaphysical reason, then Dharmakīrti's answer to the problem of sameness is dissatisfying. On the other hand, one might suppose that we are engaged in a frustrating and fruitless enterprise when we yearn to specify in precise terms the metaphysical warrant for our use of the term “fire.” In that case, Dharmakīrti's answer is quite satisfactory, or perhaps even liberating. (Dunne 2011, 99)<sup>216</sup>

This move parallels Dharmakīrti's striking refusal to disagree with an objector who, in response to Dharmakīrti's articulation of causality as the mark of what is ultimately real, protests that causality is merely conventional. As discussed in Chapter I, Dharmakīrti merely responds: “If someone objects that that [causal capacity] is understood as conventional, then let it be just like that.”<sup>217</sup> Conventional causality is precisely that—conventional. Conventional causes can account for conventional effects; there does not need to be any deeper reality that grounds them. Conventional reality's causal specificity is like the causal specificity in a dream: dreams proceed in determinate ways even though

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<sup>216</sup> With the substitution of “fire” for “red”, this passage is repeated from Dunne (2004, 125–26), where it forms part of a larger discussion of these same issues.

<sup>217</sup> *matā sā cet samvṛtyā 'stu yathā tathā*, PV 3.4cd (Dharmakīrti 1979, 62), also translated in Dunne (2004, 392).

the causes for why dreams proceed the way they do are real only within the mind of the individual dreamer.

Maintaining this position relies on a strict parameterization of conventional and ultimate reality. Conventional reality merely *seems* real; ultimate reality is *actually* real. Therefore, it does not matter that an undifferentiated ultimate reality is incapable of producing differentiated effects. Such differentiation is never *actually* produced; it merely *seems* phenomenally to exist to deluded sentient beings. The reason why it is not necessary to account for the ultimate causal basis of conventional differentiation is that this differentiation is beginningless. Like seeds that produce sprouts that produce seeds, all phenomena in the conventional world rely on their own previous causes and produce their own specific effects in a process without ultimate origin or grounding.

Tom Tillemans draws on this reading and expands it in relation to the discussions that emerged out of the conference in Lausanne on which the *Apoha* volume was based. Tillemans notes that his position assumes Dunne's earlier analysis of the (lack of) ultimate grounding for the problem of sameness in *apoha* (Dunne 2004, 121–126; cited in Tillemans 2011, 62, fn 12). Drawing on this interpretation, Tillemans doubts whether or not this appeal is ultimately successful, but, also following Dunne, he gives a positive evaluation of this failure: for these two scholars, Dharmakīrti's refusal to give an ultimate account of the grounding of concepts represents an “enlightened refusal”<sup>218</sup> to engage in pointless ontological speculation (Tillemans 2011, 61). In the end, Tillemans sees Dharmakīrti eschewing any attempt to truly justify this judgment and instead simply

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<sup>218</sup> While Dunne does not use this phrase in his published works, he has indicated in personal communication that this phrasing developed out of his interactions with Tillemans at the *apoha* conference in Lausanne.

engaging in “a strategic refusal to justify metaphysically sameness that we do in fact recognize” (2011, 60). In this way, according to Tillemans’ terminology, Dharmakīrti offers an *analysis* of the correspondence between scheme and content that takes a certain judgment of sameness as a primitive fact that is not in need of further justification; he does not, however, provide an *account* that would fully justify this sameness (2011, 60).

As Tillemans concludes, “The interesting feature of this version of bottom-up Apohavāda, if the theory is carried out consistently, would be Dharmakīrti’s enlightened refusal to play a metaphysician’s game that was best put aside” (2011, 61). Dunne cites Dharmakīrti’s explicit denial of the legitimacy of questioning how particulars may be judged to produce the same effect in support of his position that Dharmakīrti refuses to engage in metaphysical speculation. Dharmakīrti states in PVSV ad 1.167ab: “Indeed, it is not correct (*na... arhati*) to question (*paryanuyoga*) the nature of things, as in ‘Why does fire burn? Why is it hot, and water is not?’ One should just ask this much, ‘From what cause does a thing with this nature come?’”<sup>219</sup> Dharmakīrti’s focus here on causality clearly indicates that he is comfortable providing a conventional explanation, but not an ultimate one. In this way, both of these scholars fully admit that Dharmakīrti’s appeal to the causal capacities of an object, combined with subjective factors, cannot ultimately account for the judgment of sameness. Yet, for them, this supposed failure is not actually a failure, but a recognition of the inherent limitations of any attempt to ground the conventional in the ultimate.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Dunne’s translation in (2004, 125, fn 114). *na hi svabhāvā bhāvānām paryanuyogam arhanti kim agnir dahaty uṣṇo vā nodakam iti / etāvat tu syāt kuto ’yaṃ svabhāva iti*, (Dharmakīrti 1960, 84).

<sup>220</sup> It is important to note that Dharmakīrti’s refusal to provide an ultimate explanation for conventional reality does not indicate that there is no such thing as ultimate reality for



In their assertion that manifest things must have real causes, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas reject the idea that conventional reality is not grounded in ultimate reality. As I will explore in detail in Part II of this chapter, the differences between various conventional realities and ultimate reality itself is not that they are real in different ways, but that they are real to different extents. Conventional realities are partial expressions carved out of ultimate reality through a process of exclusion driven by desire. The “reality” in both conventional and ultimate reality is the same reality. This seems to contrast strongly with Dharmakīrti’s apparent position that ultimate reality does not have to causally ground conventional reality because conventional reality is a different sort of reality altogether. Indeed, in the end, it seems that conventional reality may not even be real at all for Dharmakīrti. As explored in Chapters I and III, the differentiation observed

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him, or that it does not matter if ultimate reality does or does not exist. As my analysis of his Epistemic Idealist ontology in Chapter I indicates, Dharmakīrti does indeed discuss ultimate reality. Moreover, following Dunne’s articulation of the sliding scales, it seems that the rejection of any kind of differentiation within ultimate consciousness is *the* point of Dharmakīrti’s whole enterprise. Only this realization of how things ultimately are finally ends the ignorance that keeps sentient beings trapped within *samsāra*. Here, I disagree with Koji Tanaka, who presents Dharmakīrti as unconcerned with ontological questions. According to Tanaka, “Dharmakīrti was an epistemologist and logician. He wasn’t an original thinker with respect to metaphysics and ontology. Dharmakīrti’s ontology is a variant of that of the Abhidharma (as depicted in texts such as Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa*). His innovations can be found in the fields of epistemology and logic. The primary aim of Dharmakīrti’s philosophy was to explain the possibility of knowledge (to use Kant’s phraseology) based on Abhidharma ontology, which is an ontology of particulars” (Tanaka 2009, 103). As discussed in Chapter I of this dissertation, however, the External Realist ontology of Abhidharma particulars is not Dharmakīrti’s only or final ontology. Moreover, there are different ways of understanding what the “primary aim” of a work may be. Dharmakīrti does spend more time arguing from an Ābhidharmika standpoint than from a Yogācārin one, so in that sense Tanaka is not wrong to say that detailing how trustworthy awarenesses work from this perspective is Dharmakīrti’s primary aim. However, it is not his *final* aim: this is only accomplished in the “transformation of the basis” (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) which ends ignorance and suffering in *samsāra*.

in or that constitutes conventional reality is an error. From the perspective of ultimate reality, it is simply not real. It has no root cause.

Are these Śaivas, then, simply asking Dharmakīrti to do the impossible by specifying the beginning of beginningless *saṃsāra*? One crucial point here is that the Pratyabhijñā critique of *anādivāsanā* in these passages does not explicitly concern the origin of *saṃsāra* itself. Rather, they closely follow Dharmakīrti in first considering the differentiation of any given moment of awareness. The problem is not the beginninglessness of *saṃsāra* itself, but rather the connection between ultimate reality and conventional experience in any given moment: how does a differentiated experience arise out of a nondual ground? Linking this discussion back to Gethin's exploration of dependent origination, the question here is with psychological origination, not cosmological.

Both Dharmakīrti and these Śaivas will quickly move to the claim that this differentiation comes from *karma*, and that it does not make sense to talk about *karma* having a specific beginning in space and time. In both traditions, the psychological and the cosmological become intertwined because, as detailed for the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas in Chapter I and Yogācāra Buddhists in Chapter III, both theorize that the creation of a certain type of subject/object pair constitutes a given level of conventional reality. However, while Dharmakīrti's reliance on *anādivāsanā* effectively constitutes a refusal to explain how this structure could arise, moment to moment, from ultimate nondual consciousness itself without any adventitious defilements, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas use Dharmakīrti's own *apoha* theory to describe how the duality of subject and object emerges from nondual consciousness.

As we have seen, then, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas follow a number of other classical Indian philosophical traditions in 1) fully acknowledging that Vijñānavādins claim to account for the diversity manifest in the conventional world through an appeal to beginningless karmic imprints; and 2) utterly rejecting that this solution avoids circularity. A Buddhist such as Dharmakīrti or Vasubandhu, however, would likely be rather displeased with this situation, for it may seem that such critiques are either entirely missing the point or simply do not understand the Vijñānavādin solution. Dharmakīrti is not shy about indicating that it is pointless to ask about why something has the nature it does. There is no actual differentiation, but merely erroneous apparent differences. It seems Dharmakīrti would avow that he never meant to provide an ultimate grounding for the diversity of conventional experience, and so he would have no problem affirming that such diversity merely comes from an error. Moreover, if that error is itself beginningless, then there is no sense in continuing to ask how it begins! It seems as if there is some level on which these traditions are talking past each other. An exploration of the concept of beginninglessness itself, which is far from unambiguous, may provide some insight into the sticking point of this debate.

*Differentiation, Causality, and Beginninglessness in Classical Indian Philosophy*

Dharmakīrti is hardly the only classical Indian thinker to propose that *samsāra* is beginningless. Moreover, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas themselves affirm that ultimate reality is beyond time. Pinning down their precise objection, then, will require an analysis of both the Pratyabhijñā conception of time and broader ideas about beginninglessness in classical Indian philosophy. I will examine the broader context of beginninglessness in this section and move to the Pratyabhijñā conception of time in the next.

In an early article, Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti document the ways in which many classical Indian traditions appeal to the idea that the worlds experienced within *saṃsāra* are beginningless (Tola and Dragonetti 1980). They note that their exploration is partial and invite further work along these lines (1980, 1). In particular, while they delve in detail into a number of Brahmanical lines of thought, they only briefly discuss “Buddhism” as a whole. As we have seen, the position that *saṃsāra* is beginningless is widely affirmed by Buddhist traditions from the Nikāyas onward. Here, I will take account of the larger Brahmanical context and then flesh out some early Buddhist uses of beginninglessness.

Tola and Dragonetti identify the source of speculation about beginninglessness in post-Vedic traditions with the Upaniṣadic postulation of “two entities, *Brahman* and *ātman*, who exist *in se et per se*, without an element in them of relativity or conditionality” (1980, 2). In addition to being characterized as *anādi*, the Vedas frequently refer to both *brahman* and *ātman* as unborn (*aja*). Later philosophical traditions also refer to these entities as *nitya*, “eternal” (1980, 2–3). As Tola and Dragonetti note, the type of beginninglessness attributed to these ultimate realities differs from the beginninglessness of *saṃsāra* in that “the Supreme Principle cannot be abolished, whilst the empirical reality can be abolished” (1980, 2). Even in these early formulations, the specific type of beginninglessness manifested as *saṃsāra* stands in contrast to that of ultimate reality. The beginninglessness of ultimate reality is absolute, and equally entails an endlessness. The beginninglessness of *saṃsāra*, however, does not entail that *saṃsāra* too in all of its aspects is endless. If this were so, liberation would be impossible.

Steve Collins' exploration of the narrative function of *nirvāṇa* suggests a strong parallel in early Buddhist conceptions of the different types of beginninglessness represented by *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra*. As Collins indicates, the timelessness of *nirvāṇa* contrasts to time within the conventional world. Time in the conventional world is characterized as a concept referring to the mutual dependence of the various *dharmas* that form sequences: "The sequence of the three times is thus secondary, generated by and in the process by which conditioned Existents, which are also Conditioning Factors, give rise to more of the same" (Collins 2010, 35). Time is a concept abstracted by the apparent changes in sequences of *dharmas*. The particular relationship between time and the process of conditioning comes to the foreground in discussions of *nirvāṇa* because, as the ceasing of conditioning, *nirvāṇa* is also the end of time. As Collins explains, "The process of conditioning, and so of time, can self-destruct, so that time ceases to exist, at least for an individual" (2010, 38). In this way, *nirvāṇa*, unlike all conditioned phenomena, "has a relation to the past, but not to the future" (2010, 38). This relation to the past is a conventional designation referring to the fact that a person constituted by a particular karmic stream seems to "nirvanize," to use Collins' verbal form, at a certain time, but "the temporal event denoted by such terms is not anything directly occurring in or to nirvana, but rather the ending-moment of the conditioned process" (2010, 38). This supposedly temporal event foregrounds *nirvāṇa*'s own atemporality through embodying the paradox of using finite verbal forms to refer to a state to which the process of conditioning entailed by such verbs simply does not apply.

The link between time and conditioning brought out by this contrast with timeless and unconditioned *nirvāṇa* indicates that the type of beginninglessness attributed to

*samsāra* has to do with the impossibility of a causal process having an absolute beginning. Causality and time are intimately linked: for something to be a cause means it produces a subsequent effect, and in turn for something to be an effect means that it was produced by an earlier cause. Cause and effect are relative terms. The idea of a cause as an absolute beginning makes no sense because the specific characteristics of any cause come from the characteristics of the cause that in turn produced it. In contemporary parlance, the acknowledgement that a causal sequence cannot have an absolute beginning *in* time (as opposed to a beginning *of* time itself), is the problem of the chicken and the egg. From within the perspective of a causal stream itself, asking for the beginning of *karma* is as futile as asking which came first: the chicken or the egg?

On the other hand, however, the incoherence of this question does not also mean that it is incoherent to ask what the nature of the chicken is such that it is capable of producing eggs. Depending on the direction and depth of one's analysis, one might find, for instance, that the chicken is composed of some kind of ultimate atemporal stuff, and that the categories of time and space that seem to define conventional experience are not absolute, but rather relative. Along these lines, as Tola and Dragonetti demonstrate, many Indian traditions accepted the two different types of beginninglessness that respectively characterize ultimate reality and *samsāra*: one that affirms a reality to which the categories of time simply do not apply, and one that affirms that it makes no sense to ask for the beginning of a temporal process.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> As may be expected from a time-traveling alien who famously described the “wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey” nature of reality constituted by cause and effect, the Doctor expresses an acute awareness of these different ways of understanding a possibly timeless reality in “The Impossible Planet” and “The Satan Pit” episodes of the BBC’s own seemingly eternal *Doctor Who*. Here, a primordial evil who claims that he “has woven

The idea that *karma* is beginningless plays an important role in ethical speculation in these traditions. Given the role of *karma* in determining both an individual's current status and future events that will befall him or her, analyses of causal action are never far removed from ethics in classical India.<sup>222</sup> As Tola and Dragonetti emphasize, the

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himself in the fabric of your life since the dawn of time” threatens to escape the prison built for him when the “Disciples of the Light rose up against me and chained me in the pit for all eternity” (“The Impossible Planet”; “The Satan Pit”). The Doctor incredulously asks, “When was this?,” and the demon (speaking through the Ood, an alien race whose psychic field he has colonized), replies: “Before time.” The Doctor does not accept this as a possible answer:

DOCTOR: What does that mean?

OOD: Before time.

DOCTOR: What does before time mean?

OOD: Before light and time and space and matter. Before the cataclysm. Before this universe was created.

DOCTOR: That's impossible. No life could have existed back then.

OOD: Is that your religion?

DOCTOR: It's a belief.

Later, the Doctor and a crewmate named Ida face almost certain death, with no choice but for one of them to descend into the pit. As he is about to make a leap into the unknown, the Doctor pauses and asks Ida a rather unusual and out-of-character question: “I didn't ask. Have you got any sort of faith?” Ida responds that she “was brought up Neo Classical Congregational, because of my mum... But no, I never believed.” Ida then asks the Doctor if he has a faith. In what is, to my knowledge, the Doctor's only explicit statement of his religious beliefs, the Doctor responds: “I believe, I believe I haven't seen everything, I don't know. It's funny, isn't it? The things you make up. The rules. If that thing had said it came from beyond the universe, I'd believe it, but before the universe? Impossible. Doesn't fit my rule. Still, that's why I keep travelling. To be proved wrong.” The Doctor then thanks Ida and releases himself into the pit. What pushes the limits of the Doctor's understanding is the idea that there could be such a thing as *before* time, even if there could be something *beyond* time. An entity that exists in a way completely removed from time: maybe. Such an entity, beyond all the categories of our universe, could neither be known nor unknown, and so the Doctor, realizing the limits of his own knowledge, could believe in the possibility of such a thing. This is equivalent to the timelessness of ultimate reality: such categories simply do not apply. That an entity could exist *before* time, however, would seem to affirm that there is some sense in talking about the beginning of the type of timelessness contained within the conditioned world. Like classical Indian philosophers, the Doctor simply flat-out rejects that such a proposition could make any sense at all (Strong 2006a; Strong 2006b).

<sup>222</sup> For an excellent comprehensive recent study of questions of *karma*, agency, and ethics with a focus on the debate surrounding free will, see (Meyers 2010). See also (Gold 2014,

widespread use of beginninglessness in classical India was partially motivated by ethical concerns. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which contains what is most likely the earliest articulation of *karma* as the means of accounting for why and how certain people have certain fates, Yājñavalkya presents the idea that:

What a man turns out to be depends on how he acts and on how he conducts himself. If his actions are good, he will turn into something good. If his actions are bad, he will turn into something bad. A man turns into something good by good action and something bad by bad action. And so people say: ‘A person here consists simply of desire.’ A man resolves in accordance with his desire, acts in accordance with his resolve, and turns out to be in accordance with his action.<sup>223</sup>

Jonardon Ganeri emphasizes that Yājñavalkya’s articulation of *karma* serves to counter positions that would rob human action of any moral significance (Ganeri 2007, 224–25). By introducing the idea that “there is such a thing as deliberative action, action governed by reason and reflection,” the doctrine of *karma* allows one to believe that “the moral status of one’s actions is a salient and relevant consideration” if one would like to maximize one’s happiness in this life and the next (2007, 225). Importantly, however, assent to the doctrine of *karma* requires affirmation that all sentient beings *already* exist

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176–213) for an exploration of these questions in relation to Vasubandhu’s understanding of *karma* and volition (*cetanā*). See also (Heim 2013) for an analysis focusing on Abhidharma understandings of *cetanā* through the lens of Buddhaghosa’s interpretations.

<sup>223</sup> Translation in Olivelle (1996, 65). *yathākārī yathācārī tathā bhavati / sādhu-kārī sādhu bhavati / pāpakārī pāpo bhavati / puṇyaḥ puṇyena karmaṇā pāpaḥ pāpena / atho khalv āhuḥ kāmamaya evāyaṃ puruṣa iti / sa yathākāmo bhavati tatkratur bhavati / yatkratur bhavati tat karma kurute / yat karma kurute tad abhisampadyate //*, BU 4.4.5 (Olivelle 1998, 120)



shaped by their previous actions, for otherwise there would be no way to account for why various individuals currently find themselves in different forms and states.

This concern is clearly present in the *Aggaññasutta*, the discourse on the “Origin of Things” in the Pāli Nikāyas that accounts for the differentiated *karma* of sentient beings by denying that this *karma* has any absolute origin. Some of the Buddha’s newer students are distressed by Brahmins claiming that only Brahmins are good, since only Brahmins emerged from the mouth of the cosmic giant, whereas the other castes emerged from less pure locations. In response, the Buddha tells a story in which the good and bad actions of sentient beings determines who is a “true Brahmin,” not some accident of birth or cosmology. As discussed in Chapter III, this *Sutta* states in part that the various worlds of *samsāra* are the result of the actions of sentient beings in the Radiant realm between the cycles of the contraction of the world (Gethin 2008, 120). This idea that a residue remains between the periodic contractions of the world, and that it is this subtle form of sentience that eventually begins to act, causing the various types of beings to emerge, serves to deny an absolute origin since these subtle beings themselves only end up in the Radiant realm once the world within which they previously existed contracts. As the Buddha explains, people in our world are not good or bad, Brahmins or non-Brahmins, because they trace their origin to particular parts of Brahmā himself. Rather, it is only one’s actions that make one good or bad in an ongoing process without beginning (2008, 118). Both the tone and content of this discourse serve to dismiss the idea that there is a non-karmic origin that would account for the fates of various sentient beings.

According to Tola and Dragonetti, even theists such as Rāmānuja who postulate that God has created the universe use the idea of beginninglessness to remove

responsibility for the vicissitudes of *karma* from God. Beginninglessness accounts for the origin of an individual's inherently mixed *karma*, which includes both good and bad elements, without rendering God arbitrary and capricious. As Tola and Dragonetti summarize Rāmānuja's position:

If *ātman* be created in some moment by God, the happinesses and sufferings, which he would happen to experience in the human condition in which he may be born, would not have antecedents of causes, which could explain and justify them; they would be gratuitous happinesses and sufferings and, as all the *ātman*s thus created would not receive the same and identical fate, good or bad, this fact would mean an unequal treatment by God, would mean an injustice committed by Him; and the sufferings experienced by *ātman*s thus created would be a capricious manifestation of cruelty by God, because those sufferings are not the consequence of actions done before by the *ātman*s and deserving such a punishment. (1980, 4)

For Rāmānuja, the moral aspects of the different fates of beings in *saṃsāra* is the primary problem addressed by the idea that *saṃsāra* itself is beginningless. The fate of an *ātman* in *saṃsāra* is led by the various karmic trajectories that accrue around each individual *ātman* based on previous actions. If an *ātman*'s *karma* were to have a cause in the original state of the *ātman*, then God would have had to create unequal *ātman*s to account for the different karmic trajectories of beings within *saṃsāra*. However, if the question of the origin of different karmic trajectories simply does not make sense, then there is no need to claim that God unfairly rewards some and punishes others. As for Dharmakīrti, the question may be put aside as itself nonsensical.

Seen in light of these larger discussions on beginninglessness, both the non-theistic Upaniṣads' and Dharmakīrti's use of *anāditva* could potentially be considered as something like an atheistic articulation of and response to what is known as the problem of evil in Abrahamic traditions: given an ultimate reality (God, brahman, pure nondual reflexive awareness) to which we do not directly want to attribute the origin of the existence of suffering in the everyday world, how are we to account for this suffering? This question becomes relevant precisely for traditions that wish to preserve the absolute purity (morally or ontologically) of ultimate reality. If one does not care to maintain such purity, then one can simply say, for example, that injustice is part of God's plan, or that the universe doesn't care about morality, or that differentiation is ultimately real, meaning that impurity is as much a part of God as is purity.

However, if appealing to the ultimate cannot directly account for the different conditions of various sentient beings, prodding from opponents may make it necessary to find some other way to address this question. One way is to deny the legitimacy of the question altogether. Pointing out that many temporal causal processes have no beginning is a powerful way of doing this. This highlights the distinctive relationship between the postulation that *samsāra* is beginningless and the affirmation that ultimate reality is absolutely pure. What is at stake in saying that *karma* is beginningless, then, is not whether the universe has an origin, but whether or not the ultimate is pure.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> As I address in Chapter III, the question of beginninglessness also addresses how a sentient being could develop a cognitive habit that is not learned. My comments here on preserving the purity of the ultimate look at the problem of beginningless from a wider lens motivated by Dharmakīrti's refusal to provide any grounding for beginningless karmic imprints in ultimate reality itself.

While ethical questions such as these, combined with a philosophically well-founded rejection of the coherence of questions about the beginning of a causal process, deeply shape classical Indian conceptions of the beginninglessness of *samsāra*, Dharmakīrti's move to align the formation of the subject/object structure within a given moment of awareness with such beginningless ignorance subtly shifts the location of the debate. In effect, Dharmakīrti appeals to the well-respected view that the *karma* of sentient beings is part of a beginningless temporal process in order to respond to an objection that, while closely related, is actually targeting a different type of differentiation. The Pratyabhijñā concern with an original source of differentiation seeks to address why and how there could be differentiated stuff capable of entering into causal relations in the first place. Dharmakīrti's account of beginningless karmic imprints addresses how a causal sequence operates given that there is causally specific content capable of influencing subsequent moments. These Śaivas do not object to this account of causality; rather, they question what the nature of the stuff entering into causal relations must be in order to support causal regularity in the conventional world. This ends up being the question of how a single moment—any moment—could contain differentiated content at all. If this variety of content has no basis in ultimate reality, then, as we have seen, according to these Śaivas, it has no basis at all because an effect must have a real cause and something purely undifferentiated cannot cause differentiated effects.

An alternate explanation for the differentiation present within a single moment of experience (which, as we will see, is the one adopted by the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas) would be to claim that this differentiation is rooted in ultimate reality itself. This would tap in to the other type of beginninglessness widely accepted by classical Indian philosophers: the

idea that ultimate reality is beginningless because it is beyond time. This option, however, is not available to Dharmakīrti since he claims that these divisions are not ultimately real and have no continuity with pure nondual consciousness. Another possible solution could be to deny that there is any continuity whatsoever between the conventional world and ultimate reality. This may be the solution offered by some Mādhyamikas<sup>225</sup> and possibly by some Advaita Vedāntins.<sup>226</sup> At first glance it seems promising for Dharmakīrti. However, at least as long as he remains in a Vijñānavādin mode, Dharmakīrti could not avail himself of this solution, either, because he *does* at least seem to imply that there is something present in both conventional and ultimate realities: reflexive awareness itself participates in both realities because it is what is left over once one has recognized that the divisions between subject, object and awareness are merely erroneous.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> A number of contemporary scholars argue that Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka rejects the idea that there is any relationship between the conventional and the ultimate for the simple reason that there is no ultimate truth, and so no basis for the relationship. For a recent summary of this idea, as well as some references to earlier scholarship, see Priest (2013). It is important to note that, at least for Garfield, this denial that anything is ultimately real is not a denial of reason as such, but rather a denial that it is reasonable to expect an answer to the question of what is ultimately real.

<sup>226</sup> This would be one way of reading the distinctive Advaita Vedāntin claim that the relationship between *brahman* and *saṃsāra* is inexplicable (*anirvacanīya*). Similar to Garfield's reading of Candrakīrti, this position would deny the need for explaining why pure nondual brahman would manifest as *saṃsāra* because *saṃsāra* does not exist; there is no way to explain a relationship with something that does not exist because a relationship requires two terms to be related. For a particularly salient exploration of Vācaspati's take on these ideas, see Ram-Prasad (2002, 93–130).

<sup>227</sup> This is a good thing for a *pramāṇavādin* because a tradition that denies any kind of connection whatsoever between the conventional and the ultimate would be forced to deny that the existence of ultimate reality can be demonstrated, experienced (at least in anything like our normal understanding of experience), or affirmed in any capacity. Such an ultimate, utterly divorced from conventional experience, would certainly fare no better than the external objects Dharmakīrti rejects because there is no way to experience their existence. Such a tradition would be left with scripture (*āgama*) as its only means of supporting its own claims. Dharmakīrti seems to want a more robust way of supporting his position than this. Moreover, he does claim that there is a connection between

To sum up the Śaiva critique: a Vijñānavādin cannot avoid the question of what causes the diversity of experiences in the conventional world by appealing to beginningless causal processes because these processes themselves require the existence of some kind of real stuff that has the capacity to manifest in diverse forms. These Śaivas thereby argue that the question of how the variegation of a specific moment of awareness arises *if no part of this variegation—including the variegation of the causes that produce it—is inherent to what is ultimately real* is philosophically appropriate. Moreover, this question cannot be addressed simply by an appeal to beginningless ignorance. Another way of putting this problem is this: based on the standards and assumptions widely shared by classical Indian philosophers, Dharmakīrti’s use of *anādivāsanā* is perfectly sufficient to account for the differences between various karmic streams within the conventional world. However, according to at least some traditions, it is *not* sufficient to account for the mere fact that there is differentiated stuff capable of entering into causal relations. The Pratyabhijñā Śaivas offer a complex and distinctive solution to this problem: while they affirm that ultimate reality is beginningless in the sense that it is beyond time, they also claim that time itself has a “beginning” in the expression of the nondual differentiation inherent to the ultimate itself.

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ultimate and conventional reality in the form of *svasaṃvitti* itself. For an exploration of Dharmakīrti’s rejection of the Mīmāṃsā position that the Vedas provide unique knowledge of *dharma*, see Eltschinger, Krasser, and Taber (2012). For a discussion of Dharmakīrti’s reduction of *āgama* to inference, see Dunne (2004, 231–52). Even so, it is possible that Dharmakīrti’s “enlightened refusal” to engage in metaphysical speculation, discussed in the previous chapter, does in fact move his thought beyond the *pramāṇavāda* framework, or at least deny that this framework is appropriate when asking about the ultimate itself. This interpretation would align Dharmakīrti with thinkers who posit that reason must be used to move one beyond reason: at some point in the quest to understand ultimate reality, reason itself must be abandoned.

*Abhinavagupta on Time, Differentiation, and the Relationship between Conventional Worlds and Ultimate Nonduality*

In his fascinating hybrid ritual-philosophical work, the *Mālinīślokovārttika* (MŚV),<sup>228</sup> Abhinavagupta lays out the Pratyabhijñā understanding of the relationship between time, differentiation, and the expression of the ultimate as conventional worlds. As discussed in Chapter I, time (*kāla*) has a specific place in the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas' reformulation of the Sāṅkhyan *tattvas*. Here, it is one of the five *kañcukas* that serve to individuate the various distinct subjects in the conventional world; in other words, part of what individuates a particular subject is that subject's temporal location. Abhinavagupta mentions this restricted role in the MŚV, but also speaks extensively about time in a broader sense. Abhinavagupta's exploration of time here is quite complex and involves an extended back-and-forth with an objector. According to Abhinavagupta, although the beginning of a temporal causal process within the conventional world cannot be identified, time itself has a "beginning" in the sense that it is the expression of an ultimate source that is itself beyond time. As an expression of ultimate reality, however, this "beginning" never quite loses its own connection to that which is beyond time—it is a beginningless beginning that emerges moment by moment from the play of nondual consciousness. From the perspective of the ultimate, time never emerges for a first time. I will now explore these ideas in some depth.

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<sup>228</sup> For a very interesting analysis of how Abhinavagupta reads his own nondualism into the *Mālinīvijayottara*, see Sanderson (1992). Sanderson (1986) also addresses the ritual aspects of this and other Trika texts. For a broader perspective on the relationship between ritual and understanding in various types of tantras, see Sanderson (1995).

The overall point of the MŚV is to provide grounding and explanation for the Trika<sup>229</sup> position that their *śāstras* provide unique guidance because, as embodiments of Śiva’s knowledge, they are expressions of ultimate reality itself and all other teachings develop as partial manifestations of them. As Abhinava explains:

The vast knowledge that is produced in the beginning (*prāk*) from the limitless reality (*sadbhāva*) that alone is identical with the world (*bhāva*) and that is the pervading nature (*vaibhava*) of the mass of the moon’s (*tad*) rays has spread, [still] of the same nature (*tādṛk*), free from things to be accepted or shunned that are created by its own creative power (*māyā*), and diversified merely by its own expanding manifoldness of rays. This [knowledge] whose nature is articulation is the heart of the highest Lord.<sup>230</sup>

Abhinava goes on to emphasize Śiva’s essential unity even though Śiva is thus the source of diversity. All *śāstras*, articulated within language, contain an element of truth since they are aspects of Śiva’s own self-revelation, but Abhinava’s own Trika *śāstra* contains the most comprehensive articulation of truth possible.

An opponent, however, poses the following objection: “If [Śiva is] thus undivided and the self of the world, then how can there be—as the possibility of contraction is

<sup>229</sup> “Trika” is Abhinavagupta’s name for his own ritual system, which focuses on the trio of goddesses Parā, Parāpara, and Aparā. The Trika is highly influenced by Krama and Kālīkula ritual, and also incorporates Pratyabhijñā exegesis. For a description of the texts and tenants of Trika Śaivism, see Sanderson (2007, 370–81). For the historical context of the Trika (and other medieval tantric traditions), see Sanderson (1985; 1988; 2001; 2007; 2009).

<sup>230</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 61). I use Hanneder’s pioneering critical edition and translation of this text. *aniyantritasadbhāvād bhāvābhedaikabhāginah / yat prāg jātam mahājñānaṃ tadraśmibharavaibhavam // tataṃ tādṛk svamāyīyaheyopādeyavarjitam / vitatībhāvanācitraraśmitāmātrabheditam // abhimarśasvabhāvaṃ tad dhṛdayaṃ parameśituḥ /*, MŚV 15-17ab (Hanneder 1998, 60).



excluded—the riches of the Śāstras etc. which are rooted in the formation of differential thought?”<sup>231</sup> Abhinava gives the standard Pratyabhijñā response that the unity of ultimate consciousness consists in the fact that the common element in all awareness is merely the capacity for manifestation: “We teach that all knowledge is part of the light of consciousness and nothing but being aware of consciousness [itself], as it is [logically] connected to the nature of light. Here ‘being aware’ means the inherent quality of the light to shine [i.e. to become manifest].”<sup>232</sup> Abhinava then paraphrases the famous verse ĪPK I.5.11<sup>233</sup> to the effect that the nature of consciousness is not only to reflect an object, but also to have a self-aware realization of this object. Bringing all this together, he claims that the process of the manifestation of an awareness begins within “the sphere of the experience of consciousness” and “becomes therefore (*tadā*) perceptible as soon as it appears as resting [inwardly] in this awareness; and it only later becomes a clearly perceptible [outward object].”<sup>234</sup> Abhinavagupta then explains how Bhairava (the horrific form of Śiva who is the focus of tantric ritual in the Trika) places limits on his own knowledge through his own free will, thereby creating the differentiated forms of experience of the conventional world. As he sums up, “Even in this state, the conjunction and separation of constituent endless things become innumerable by combination (*saṃdhāna*) with the division of the earlier state. Only by virtue of these limiting adjuncts

<sup>231</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 63). *nanu cedṛṣi viśvātmabhūte saṃkocavarjanāt // vikalpakalpanāmūlāḥ katham śāstradisampadaḥ /*, MŚV 24cd-25ab (Hanneder 1998, 62).

<sup>232</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 63). *ucyate sarva evāyaṃ bodhaḥ saṃvitprabhāmayāḥ // prakāśarūpatāyogāc cidāmarśaghanātmakaḥ / tatrāmarśasvabhāvo 'yaṃ yaḥ prakāśaḥ prakāśate //*, MŚV 25cd-26 (Hanneder 1998, 62).

<sup>233</sup> See Chapter I for a discussion and translation of this verse.

<sup>234</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 65). *kimca yaḥ kaścanāmarśaś ciccamatkārāgocaraḥ... tadāsau bhavati sphuṭaḥ // tadvimarśāntarāmbasamucchalanayogataḥ // paścāt susphuṭatām eti*, MŚV 30-32a (Hanneder 1998, 64).

the various riches (*vibhūti*) of action and knowledge in the Śāstra give up the state of knowing consciousness [inwardly] to spread [in an objective form].”<sup>235</sup>

These passages are exceedingly dense and present nearly all of the Pratyabhijñā’s most important doctrines. One could imagine many objections that Abhinava could pose in order to direct his further explanations. The objection he chooses to foreground is telling and points to the important role time plays as the expression of the differentiation inherent to ultimate consciousness:

[Opp]: Then it would follow that divisions caused by space, time and [limited] power of action are not possible in this collection [of primary realities]. [A]: We certainly do agree, for there the *tattva* [called] ‘time’ is not known even by name. Although she pervades everything, the great goddess of time (*mahākālī*) does not manifest here. [Opp]: Then why do you accept the use of the words ‘then’, ‘again’, ‘when’, and ‘afterwards’ with reference to [something that is] undivided and complete in itself?<sup>236</sup>

The opponent here rightly points out that Abhinavagupta’s entire description of how ultimate consciousness produces limited objects of awareness is suffused with temporal language. As we have seen, Abhinava begins his explanation of the unity of the *śāstras* by referring to “this vast knowledge that is produced in the beginning...” If the ultimate

<sup>235</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 67). *atrāpy anantabhāvāṃśasaṃyojanaviyojane / prāgdaśābhedasamdhānād asaṃkhyatvam upāsrīte // tadupādhivaśād eva saṃvijñānapadojjhitāḥ / tāyante vividhāḥ śāstrakriyājñānavibhūtayah //*, MŚV 48-49 (Hanneder 1998, 66).

<sup>236</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 67). *nanv etāvati sandarbhe deśakālakalākṛtāḥ / bheda na saṃbhavanty eva bāḍham om iti vacmahe // na hy atra kālatattvasya nāmamātram vibhāvyaṭe / vaibhavy api mahākālī śaktir nātra vijṛmbhate // tarhy abhinne svasaṃpūrṇe tadā paścāt punar yadā parataś ceti ko nv eṣa vācoyuktiparigrahaḥ //*, MŚV 52-52 (Hanneder 1998, 66).

is undivided, temporal distinctions have no place in relation to it. Therefore, there should be no “in the beginning” in relation to ultimate awareness.

Abhinava responds by not only granting that the ultimate is beyond time, but by affirming that since time is nothing but a particular expression of the ultimate, there is a sense in which time itself is beyond time! As he states: “We say that this is correct, but in reality these concepts of earlier and later do not exist for knowledge, even if the creation of *tattvas* has manifested perceptibly and time has unfolded.”<sup>237</sup> The key point, which Abhinava will go on to emphasize again and again, is that the limitations experienced within the conventional world, including temporal divisions, are both *part of* the ultimate because there is nothing that is not part of the ultimate, and unable to truly limit the ultimate because the ultimate exceeds any duality. He contends: “Therefore time is unable to cause differentiation in consciousness, nor is this time capable of becoming a differentiator [i.e. a differentiating quality] of the object of perception. For the universe does not exist outside of knowledge, otherwise it (*tad*) would not appear.”<sup>238</sup> In short, the mere fact of differentiated appearances means that these appearances are somehow inherent to ultimate reality, even though they are experienced through limiting adjuncts such as time. Time itself cannot cause differences. Rather, it is an expression of differentiation in the ultimate.

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<sup>237</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 69). *atra brūmaḥ satyam eva vastutas tu sphuṭātmani / jṛmbhite tattvasarge 'pi kāle 'py unmiṣitātmani // bodhasya naiva santy etāḥ pūrvāparavikalpanāḥ / kālo viśeṣaṇatvena yasmād bhavati bhedakaḥ //*, MŚV 55-56 (Hanneder 1998, 68).

<sup>238</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 69). *tasmāt kālo na bodhasya bhedakatvāya kalpate / nāpi vedyasya kālo 'sau bhedakībhavitum kṣamaḥ // viśvaṃ hi bodhābhinnaṃ tad atathātve na bhāsate /*, MŚV 61-62ab (Hanneder 1998, 68).

Abhinava goes on to explicitly identify time with the expression of the differentiation of the ultimate: “It is only by causing the appearance of diversity that the Lord manifests time. This manifestation of diversity is termed ‘the power of time’. Thus it is because of our (*āsmākīnāt*) accordance (*anurodhataḥ*) with Śiva’s (*etat*) power of time manifesting that qualifications [of time referred to by words] like ‘then’ etc. exist.”<sup>239</sup> In this way, Abhinava closely links time to the nondual differentiation that is inherent to ultimate reality. He continues to remind his opponent that, while their expression is constitutive of conventional worlds, both time and differentiation equally exist within the ultimate: “It is not [the case], that [time] does not exist in [Śiva] at all, [for] how can anything exist except in him. It could spread in another reality [and] would still be dependent on light.”<sup>240</sup> His opponent then objects that this presence of time within the ultimate would mean that there is no difference between the two, since an impure element would exist within the supposedly pure ultimate. Abhinava responds: “We dance out of joy now! What we would have had to explain laboriously, is already present in your mind. The distinction between pure and impure has no place in discussions of the highest reality. But caused by the [necessities] of those [discussions], it is entrenched in the mind of the ignorant.”<sup>241</sup> After another fascinating exchange about nonduality,

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<sup>239</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 75). *vaictryabhāsanām kurvan kālām bhāsayati prabhuḥ // vaictryabhāsanaiveyaṃ kālaśaktir udāhṛtā / tato 'vabhāsamānaitatkālaśaktyanurodhataḥ // āsmākīnāt tadetyādir uparāgaḥ pravartate /*, MŚV 99cd-101ab (Hanneder 1998, 74).

<sup>240</sup> Translation in (Hanneder 1998, 75). *na cāsau tatra nasy eva tatra yan nāsti tat kutaḥ // anyatra tanyatām nāma tat prakāśavaśaṃ sthitam /*, MŚV 101cd-102cd (Hanneder 1998, 74).

<sup>241</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 75). *narīnṛyāmahe hanta yatnād vyākhyeyam eva naḥ / āyūṣmato yad dhṛdaye svayaṃ viparivartate // śuddhāśuddhavibhedo hi paramārthakathāsu no / sa tu tatkrta evāste mūḍhāṇām dhiyi niścalaḥ //*, MŚV 104-105 (Hanneder 1998, 74).

Abhinava sums up the main point about time: “it has been said (*kila*) that as much as (*yathā tathā*) the highest Lord causes the construction of plurality to appear, indeed also time appears. But still he is never divided in the real sense. For, [as] he is consciousness, he simultaneously appears manifold [because of his autonomy].”<sup>242</sup> Time, then, is the expression of the inherent differentiation of the ultimate in terms of the experiences of limited subjects and objects.

Abhinava again aligns time with the appearance of the conventional world in the context of reversing the process of manifestation through the Krama ritual centered on *Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī*, the goddess who devours time.<sup>243</sup> He describes the end state of this ritual as one in which “neither past nor future is divided from the present.”<sup>244</sup> This process of moving outside of the divisions of time results in the yogin becoming “one who moves in the void [of consciousness] (*khecarah*),” who “has annihilated one’s individual (*nija*) existence and relishes (*carvaṇām labhate*) only the vibrant experience [of the nectar] of one’s own immortality [i.e., the transcendence of time], [in which] flows an abundance (*saṃdoha*) of ambrosia that is the highest bliss.”<sup>245</sup> However, Abhinava still emphasizes that the absence as well as the appearance of the world is not other than time:

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<sup>242</sup> Translation in (Hanneder 1998, 79). *parameśaḥ kila bhedakalpanām / prakāṭīkurute yathā tathā nanu kālo ’pi vijṛmbhate tathā // na tathāpi ca yāti bhinnatām paramārthena kadācid eva saḥ / yugapat sa hi saṃvidātmakah \*svātantryād bahudhā prakāśate //*, MŚV 125b-126 (Hanneder 1998, 78). Hanneder indicates that *svātantryād* is unmetrical but attested in all of his manuscripts.

<sup>243</sup> For a detailed explanation of the various forms of tantric Śaivism present in medieval Kashmir, including the Krama and Kālīkula, see Sanderson (2007).

<sup>244</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 83). *na bhūtaṃ na bhaviṣyac ca vartamānād vibhajyate*, MŚV 151ab (Hanneder 1998, 82).

<sup>245</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 83). *tan nijāmṛtavispārācamatkāraikacarvaṇām / labhate paramānandasudhāsandohavāhinīm //*, MŚV 144 (Hanneder 1998, 82).

For it is taught that time, which is the appearance of the world, is (*yaḥ... sa*) the vibration (*saṃsphārah*) of the rays of one's own consciousness that is projecting (*kalana*) [the world]. The absence of the world is [also] it [i.e., time], it is nothing else... But in the manner described [above], restraint, appearance, devouring etc. *appear*. And there is no other reality in the world than appearance in this way.<sup>246</sup>

Here, the manipulation of time is aligned with whether or not an individual experiences him or herself as existing as an independent subject in a world defined by the experience of time. This technique is effective precisely because time is both the expression of the conventional world *and* inherently present even in the still moment of realization that seems to transcend time.

In the context of his exposition of the nature of *karma* and the apparent limitations of agency expressed thereby, Abhinava draws on the idea that the “beginning” of conventional worlds is a beginning *of* time, not a beginning *within* time. However, Abhinava flips this use of beginninglessness on its head: instead of denying any connection between the karmic conditions of various sentient beings and ultimate reality, Abhinava claims that all actions are the expression of Śiva's will. He affirms that *karma* is the reason why beings experience good and bad effects, and that the existence of *karma* is the result of ignorance. In response to an objector who claims that the postulation that all agents are but limited expressions of Śiva's own agency would demolish the distinctions between agents in the conventional world, Abhinava states: “You are right,

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<sup>246</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 85). *uktaṃ hi bhāvābhāso yaḥ kālaḥ sa kalanātmakaḥ // svasaṃvidraśmisaṃsphāro bhāvābhāvaḥ sa nāparaḥ /... kiṃtūktanīyā saṃrodhasphāragrāsādi bhāsate / na tathābhāsanāc cānyad vastu viśvatra kiṃcana //*, MŚV 153cd-154ab, 158 (Hanneder 1998).

Sir! For you should know that there is never any effect, which is produced by good or bad [actions]. But those who do not understand it in this way experience [the effects] without [ever] realizing this. For what is called *karma* is [actually] an impurity (*mala*), which has ignorance as its source.”<sup>247</sup> *Karma* is indeed the reason why individuals experience themselves as existing within a particular world, and this experience is an error. Moreover, the cycles of worlds created in this way are beginningless: “Here [in our system] exists this great creation of Śiva which is replete and inside of which all other [cycles] of creation and resorption take place. It is not proper to say that this is the *first* creation, for how could something be first etc. in a reality that is without space or time.”<sup>248</sup> Rather than using this beginninglessness of causal processes to claim that there is no need to provide an ultimately real root cause for diversity, Abhinava uses it to point to the inherent connection between the ultimate and the diverse worlds of conventional experience.

As Ratié points out, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas claim that their position that ultimate reality is the source of both difference and identity in the conventional world allows them to avoid the contradiction which they accuse Dharmakīrti of falling into (Ratié 2014b). As we have seen, these Śaivas argue that beginningless karmic imprints that are not inherent in ultimate reality cannot account for the diversity experienced in the conventional world. This critique hinges on the idea that something undifferentiated

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<sup>247</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 111). *evam evaitad āyusmaṃs tathāhy evaṃ vijānatām / na kiṃ cana phalaṃ kvāpi śubhāśubhasamudbhavam // itthaṃ ye tu na jānanti bhuñjante te 'vipaścitaḥ / tad eva karmasaṃjñam tu malam ajñānamūlakam //*, MŚV 314-315 (Hanneder 1998, 108).

<sup>248</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 117). *pūrṇeyaṃ paramēśasya mahāsrṣṭir iha sthitā // yasyām saṃhārasrṣṭyaṃśā viśve te madhyavartinaḥ / sā cādyā srṣṭir ity eva naiva vaktum bhavet kṣamam // adeśakāle tattve hi katham ādyādisaṃbhavaḥ /*, MŚV 366cd-368ab (Hanneder 1998, 116).

cannot cause differentiation because it is contradictory for a thing with a purely unitary nature to cause different effects. However, for these Śaivas, it is not contradictory for ultimate consciousness to be the cause of both unity and diversity in the conventional world because ultimate consciousness inherently contains both.

These Śaivas thereby claim that it is not contradictory for sentient beings to perceive both unity and diversity within the conventional world since both unity and diversity are equally expressions of ultimate nonduality. Ratié quotes a passage from Abhinavagupta's ĪPV:

In this [world], one cannot say about an entity that is manifest both while conforming (*anuvṛtta*) [to similar entities] and while being excluded (*vyāvṛtta*) [from entities that are different from it] that it is real in one of these forms only; because nothing contradicts any of these two [forms]. For if [one of them] really contradicted the other, then, when the one [supposedly contradicting the other] arises, this precise aspect [supposedly contradicted,] being deprived of the capacity to appear again, should vanish as a flash of lightning vanishes—but it is not the case. For this very reason, some, who consider that the contradiction between difference and identity is impossible to justify—[i.e.,] that it is inexplicable (*anirvācyā*) since it consists of nescience (*avidyā*)—, and others, who talk about [its] 'relative truth' (*sāṃvṛtatva*) because it entirely rests on appearances (*ābhāsa*), have fooled themselves as well as the others. Rather, both of them, [identity and difference], are manifest [insofar as] they rest on consciousness, by virtue of consciousness's freedom (*svātantrya*). For even water and fire, since they receive unity [insofar as] they rest inside consciousness, are



not contradictory: this is established by [mere] self-consciousness for all—even for an animal.<sup>249</sup>

In this passage, Abhinavagupta emphasizes that sentient beings within the conventional world are simultaneously aware of both identity and difference in relation to each object they perceive. When someone perceives a pot, this person is aware of it both as a pot that is the same as other pots and as being different from all other things. This attribution of both identity and difference to a single object, however, is not contradictory because both are partial manifestations of ultimate consciousness, which contains the capacity for and the expression of both identity and difference within itself.<sup>250</sup>

To bring all of this together: time is the expression of the differentiation inherent in ultimate reality by its very nature. This expression manifests as the karmically conditioned experiences of limited subjects. Perceived, so to speak, from their own sides, both time and ultimate reality are beginningless, but in different ways. The beginninglessness of time is the fact that a first cause of a causal process unfolding in time cannot be identified. The beginninglessness of ultimate reality consists in the fact that it is beyond time since time is a limited manifestation of its inherent differentiation. Ultimate consciousness is both the source of time and always exceeds its own temporal

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<sup>249</sup> Translation and Sanskrit in Ratié (2014b, 390–391). *ihānuvṛttam vyāvṛttam ca cakāśad vastv ekatareṇa vapuṣā na satyam ucyatām ubhayatrāpi bādhakābhāvāt; satyato hi yadi bādhaka evaikatarasya syāt tat tadudaye sa eva bhāgaḥ punarunmajjanasahiṣṇutārahito vidyudvilāyaṃ vilīyeta, na caivam. ata eva bhedābhedayor virodhaṃ duḥsamartham abhimanyamānair ekair avidyātvenānirvācyatvam, aparaiś cābhāsālagnatayā sāmṛtatvam abhidhadbhir ātmā paraś ca vañcitaḥ saṃvedanaviśrāntaṃ tu dvayam api bhāti saṃvedanasya svātantryāt. sarvasya hi tiraśco 'py etat svasaṃvedanasiddhaṃ yat saṃvidantarviśrāntam ekatām āpādyamānaṃ jalajvalanaṃ apy aviruddham.*

<sup>250</sup> For more on how these Śaivas attribute both identity and difference to ultimate consciousness, see Chapter I.

expressions. This connection between the ultimate and the conventional in terms of the expression of time is important because it accounts for the way in which it is possible for diversity to manifest at all. The fact that the ultimate and the conventional are thus connected is essential to Abhinava's soteriological project in which the individual realizes that the diversity manifest within the conventional world—and particularly one's own sense of being a limited agent—is nothing but an expression of the nondual differentiation inherent to the ultimate.

In their critique of Dharmakīrti's position that a beginningless karmic imprint is sufficient to account for the diversity experienced within the conventional world, these Śaivas do not deny that 1) differentiation among *vāsanās* is the immediate cause for differentiated experiences; 2) that the causal processes expressed by these *vāsanās* are beginningless; or 3) that it is not possible to identify a root cause for a temporal process from within this process itself. The root cause of differentiation does not come from an origin, such as an original seed producing all subsequent seeds and sprouts. Rather, the root cause of diversity must be an expression of the nature of the ultimate stuff that itself constitutes causal processes because otherwise causality would be random and there would be no way to account for the limited realities of various conventional worlds.

In short, according to these Śaivas, rather than rendering the question of the causes of diversity irrelevant, it is precisely the fact that causal processes are beginningless that means that they must be an expression of the differentiation inherent in ultimate reality itself. Even if one cannot identify an initial cause for the string of cause and effect within the conventional world, one must account for the reality of the stuff involved in these causal processes. A purely undifferentiated entity cannot produce

different effects. The beginninglessness of *karma* does not allow the preservation of a completely pure, undifferentiated ultimate reality. To the extent that Dharmakīrti relies on beginningless karmic imprints to account for the diversity of the conventional world, he cannot simultaneously maintain that ultimate reality is purely undifferentiated without entering into a contradiction. These Śaivas address this problem by moving the location of a seeming contradiction from the relationship between the conventional and the ultimate to the ultimate itself. If diversity and identity in the conventional world are both equally expressions of the nondual differentiation inherent in ultimate reality, then contradiction simply does not apply at this level.

In effect, there seems to be a point at which Dharmakīrti admits that his system no longer supports rational inquiry: there is no way to account for the relationship between conventional reality and ultimate reality because they are simply different kinds of reality that actually have no real relationship. At this point, Dharmakīrti refuses to play the metaphysician's game—perhaps for enlightened reasons, or perhaps because it is a game he cannot win. The Pratyabhijñā Śaivas, however, quite famously love to play. Indeed, they see the entire universe as the play of ultimate consciousness itself, a reality in which pure and impure, good and bad, real and unreal are equally expressions of Śiva's will to experience himself in diverse forms.

This love of play should not obscure the fact that these Śaivas are quite aware that the ultimate is beyond concepts and the dualistic structures of ordinary experience. For them, rational inquiry does not invalidate itself upon reaching its limit. Rather, in affirming its own limitations, rational thought also affirms its own truths. Abhinavagupta

describes his soteriological technique for moving a practitioner beyond duality and back again:

Moreover this Śāstra teaches the Yoga of Śiva (*bhagavad*) thoroughly (*samyag*). This Yoga of Śiva is said to be non-dualistic and beyond dichotomies. Instruction in this [Yoga] is given in this way: if [something] is imagined to have a certain amount (*yāvat*) of division, it is explained by analyzing it again and again. For there is no practice (*ābhyāsikī sthitiḥ*) for entering into and remaining in (*upaveśa*) the pervading Bhairava who is without duality, as both [entering and remaining] are completely dependent on duality. Therefore all the efforts made by teachers and disciples serve only to remove the duality they imagine. It is for this reason that everything [taught] in [this Śāstra] (*iha*) is unfolded by supposing duality again and again. But (*tu*) by supposing it one's whole life (*yāvadgati*), one never becomes indifferent to it [as the Vedāntin attempts to become]. For if duality does not become conscious, absolute consciousness (*cidbrahma*) [remains] as the one existent. Then there would be no use for an enumeration, construction and determination of *tattvas*. Why would the thirty-five *tattvas* [below Śiva] then be considered? Therefore having accepted (*graham kṛtvā*) duality, which exists (*sthiti*) as division, all one's life, one should become free from inhibitions only (*yas... tena*) through rejecting it.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 77). *kiṃca śāstram idaṃ samyag bhagavadyogadeśakam // bhagavadyogam advaitam nirdvandvaṃ ca pracakṣate/ tasyopadeśa itthaṃ syād yadi yāvad vibhedavat // sambhāvyate tan nirbhajya nirbhajyaiva nirūpyate/ advaite bhairavavibhau yat praveśopaveśayoḥ // ābhyāsikī sthitiḥ nāsti tau hi bhedaikajīvitau/ ataḥ sambhāvyanikhiladvaitaśaṅkāvyapohane // gurūnāṃ ca śiśūnāṃ ca yatnaḥ sarvo vijṛmbhate / ato dvaitam ihāśaṅkyāśaṅkya sarvaṃ pratanyate // tad yāvadgati sambhāvya na tu kutrāpy udāsyate / tathā hi yadi nāmṛṣṭaṃ dvaitam tarhy*

One should never entirely forsake duality since “even duality is not impossible in the non-dual reality. For the supreme non-duality [is not the absence of duality, but] exists, when (*yat*) there is neither rejection nor acceptance of duality.”<sup>252</sup> Here, Abhinavagupta states that since the existence of duality is necessary to account for his tradition’s soteriology, this duality must ultimately be neither rejected nor affirmed.

In a rather contemplative moment in the immediately following this comment that duality is “not impossible” within nondual reality and therefore should neither be rejected nor grasped, Abhinavagupta remarks: “But [in the sphere] of duality of all things, I think, the firmness of their own individual natures will automatically (*rasāt*) cause the word ‘non-dual’ to become something dual.”<sup>253</sup> This personal reflection seems to indicate Abhinavagupta’s keen awareness of the problem with holding any one idea—including even the idea of nonduality itself—as the sole, highest formulation of truth. However, just as no truth is the whole truth, no truth is ever entirely false, either. If the problem with duality is the reification of opposed realities, the solution can’t be a reduction to only one of those realities, or even something that simply subsumes both, but rather a movement that is not stuck in either. Every time their inquiry seems to reach a conclusion, these Śaivas seem to insist on plugging another quarter into the machine and hitting “continue” rather than letting the game end.

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*ekam eva sat // cidbrahma tad alaṃ tattvasaṃkhyākālpānānirṇayaiḥ / pañcatriṃśatitā kasmāt tattvānāṃ tan nirūpyate // tasmād dvaitasya bhedaṭmashiter yāvadgati graham kṛtvā yas tatpratikṣepas tena niḥśaṅkatā bhavet //*, MŚV 110cd-117 (Hanneder 1998, 76).

<sup>252</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 79). *advaye tattve bhedo 'pi na na yujyate./ idaṃ hi tat parādvaitaṃ bhedyāgagrahau na yat//*, (Hanneder 1998, 78).

<sup>253</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 79). *bhede tu viśvabhāvānāṃ svasvabhāvavyavasthiteḥ / abheda iti śabdo 'yaṃ manye bhedayate rasāt //*, MŚV 1.124 (Hanneder 1998, 78).

If metaphysical speculation, then, is limited to a type of game that attempts to make true propositions about what exists, these Śaivas may perhaps best be thought of as selective metagamers.<sup>254</sup> They are not afraid to use the privileged information they draw from their understanding of what goes beyond any given imagined world—including, of course, our own human world—to give themselves an advantage within this world. Perhaps these Śaivas' biggest advantage comes precisely from their ability to affirm the truth of *any* proposition while simultaneously holding that the truth expressed by their own propositions is more true than their opponents' truths in the sense that their own truths come the closest to a full expression of ultimate reality. In effect, if Dharmakīrti's understanding that ultimate reality is beyond language leads him to apophatic denials and refusals to speak, the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva affirmation of the same idea leads them to affirm *everything*, since everything that is said (and even what is not said!) is Śiva. This is explicitly what Abhinava attempts to accomplish in claiming that all scriptures are expressions of Śiva's knowledge, but that the Trika *śāstras* contain the most complete possible articulation. I will now turn to these Śaivas' articulation of how it is that the various worlds of conventional experience arise. As we will see, these Śaivas appropriate Dharmakīrti's own theory of *apoha*, but claim that this theory is finally satisfactory only within a Śaiva context.

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<sup>254</sup> Metagaming refers to the practice of placing oneself outside of the rules and context of the world of a game in order to gain some kind of advantage. However, as any good Dungeons & Dragons player knows, metagaming kills the joy of the campaign for everyone else. Perhaps this is why Abhinavagupta in particular can seem so annoying to other traditions: he's breaking the rules and laughing about it, all the while playing the game better than anyone else.

## Part II: The Creation of Conventional Worlds through the Alignment of *Apoha* and Subject/Object Duality in Pratyabhijñā Thought

Although the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas agree in part with Dharmakīrti's description of consciousness as luminosity that is ultimately devoid of subject/object duality, they have a very different account of the nature of subject/object error because they hold that this error is an expression of the differentiation inherent to ultimate consciousness itself. Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta use *apoha* to account for how a limited subject could arise dependent on a particular object if everything always participates in ultimate consciousness' freedom (*svātantrya*) to manifest as anything at all. For these Śaivas, the defining line between a concept and what is not a concept is whether or not a thing is defined through the exclusion of its counterpart (*pratiyogin*). Since subject and object in normal sensory perception depend on each other, they are conceptual.

The idea that subject and object necessarily arise together (*sahopalambhaniyama*) is, of course, clearly stated by Dharmakīrti himself in a number of influential verses, including the following in the Third Chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*: “That which is being cognized immediately necessarily [occurs] along with the cognition. Therefore, by what form is difference from the object established?” and in the *Pramāṇaviniścaya*: “Because they necessarily arise together, there is no difference between blue and its cognition.”<sup>255</sup> <sup>256</sup> However, for these Śaivas, but not for Dharmakīrti, this dependence alone makes them conceptual. Like Dharmakīrti, these Śaivas contend that conventional worlds are defined by mutually constructive pairs of subjects and objects. However, since

<sup>255</sup> *sakṛtsamvedyamānasya niyamena dhiyā saha / viśayasya tato 'nyatvaṃ kenākāreṇa siddhyati //*, PV 3.387. Also: *sahopalambhaniyamād abhedo nīlataddhiyor/* PVin, *Pratyakṣaparichheda* 54ab (Dharmakīrti 2007, 39).

<sup>256</sup> For more on *sahopalambhaniyama* in Dharmakīrti's works, see Arnold (2013, 175–183) and Iwata (1991).

these Śaivas also claim, contra Dharmakīrti, that the emergence of subject/object structure from nondual consciousness is the result of *apoha*, for them, *apoha* is fundamentally responsible for the creation of any and all conventional worlds. With this in mind, I now will explore the ways in which these Śaivas both adopt and alter Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory through their articulation of the ultimate and conventional forms of the realization "I," and then explore the delimitation of specific worlds in relation to specific perceivers.

*Conceptual and Nonconceptual Forms of the Realization "I"*

As I explore in Chapter I, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas adopt the 5<sup>th</sup> century linguist Bhartṛhari's thesis that all awareness is permeated by a subtle form of *vāc* as one way of expressing the differentiation inherent in ultimate reality. Bhartṛhari's account of the conceptual and nonconceptual forms of *vāc* is crucial for the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva account of the nature of the error of subject/object duality, especially as it manifests in terms of the realization "I" (*aḥampratyavamarśa*). The realization "I" can occur on two distinct levels.<sup>257</sup> Conventionally, it refers to a subject's awareness of him or herself in relation to his or her particular embodiment. Ultimately, it refers to Śiva's own self-awareness. According to these Śaivas, while awareness is always connected to *vāc*, only the conventional sense of subjectivity in the form of the impure realization "I" is conceptual. The ultimate *aḥampratyavamarśa* is nonconceptual. They thereby draw a clear distinction between the normal, limited sense of subjectivity that is the object of the

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<sup>257</sup> For a discussion of the two types of *aḥampratyavamarśa* and translations of some relevant passages in French, see Ratié (2011, 204–208, 229–237).



conventional realization “I”—which is a concept—and consciousness’ ultimate nondual realization “I”—which is both devoid of limited subjectivity and not a concept.

In this way, these Śaivas hold that it is possible for consciousness to experience itself both conceptually and nonconceptually, all the while remaining connected to language in terms of consciousness’ mere capacity for self-awareness. Indeed, these Śaivas go so far as to equate *vāc* with realization itself, and further tie both to consciousness’ freedom. As Utpaladeva states, “Consciousness has as its essential nature reflective awareness (*pratyavamarśa*); it is the supreme Word (*parāvāk*) that arises freely. It is freedom in the absolute sense, the sovereignty (*aiśvaryam*) of the supreme Self.”<sup>258</sup> While a concept is necessarily dependent on its counterpart, an alignment of self-awareness, freedom, and a nonconceptual form of *vāc* characterize consciousness on the highest level. Here, there is no counterpart.

Along these lines, Abhinavagupta introduces the *apoha* chapter in Utpaladeva’s *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* with an objection to the idea that ultimate consciousness, which is by definition nonconceptual, could be connected with language. The objector contends: “Moreover, realization [arises] through a connection with discourse. Further, that [discourse] inevitably leads to conceptuality. What’s more, that [conceptuality] is proper to the realm of samsaric *māyā*. How could it exist within the Lord?”<sup>259</sup> The phrase “*abhilāpayojanā*” (connected with discourse) echoes Dharmakīrti’s definition of a concept in *Pramāṇaviniścaya* I.4 and *Nyāyabindu* 1.5: “A concept is a cognition which

<sup>258</sup> Torella’s translation in (2013, 120). *citiḥ pratyavamarśātmā parāvāk svarasoditā / svātantryam etan mukhyaṃ tad aiśvaryaṃ paramātmanaḥ //*, ĪPK 1.5.13 (Utpaladeva 1994, 23).

<sup>259</sup> *vimarśaś cābhilāpayojanayā, sa cāvaśyaṃ vikalpatvam āpādayati, tac ca sāmśārikamāyāpadocitaṃ bhagavati katham syāt*, ĪPVV ad 1.6.0 (Abhinavagupta 1938, 62: 273).

has an appearance that is capable of being conjoined with discourse (*abhilāpasamsargayogya*).<sup>260</sup> <sup>261</sup> The objector here, in strong Dharmakīrtian fashion, challenges the idea that such a thing as a nonconceptual language could exist. If Śīva's own self-awareness is nonconceptual, then it cannot be connected with language in any way.

Utpaladeva's response in this verse involves a subtle shift in Dharmakīrti's definition of a concept as it relates to subject/object duality. As he states: "The reflective awareness 'I', which is the very essence of light, is not a mental construct (*vikalpa*), although it is informed by the word (*vāgvapuḥ*). For a *vikalpa* is an act of ascertainment (*vinīścayaḥ*) presenting a duality (*dvayākṣepī*)."<sup>262</sup> Utpaladeva refocuses on the mere presentation of a duality as the defining feature of a concept. In the case of a concept, Abhinavagupta expands, "there always must be a duality with the form of that and not that."<sup>263</sup> He clarifies that the nature of the ultimate *aḥampratyavamarśa* is quite different from that of the conventional: "The realization which [occurs] in relation to the self is of manifestation. It is neither the 'this' of the object to be known, like blue, etc., nor the 'I' in relation to the conceptualized knowing subject, like in the body, etc."<sup>264</sup> While the

<sup>260</sup> *abhilāpasamsargayogyapratibhāsā pratītiḥ kalpanā, Pramāṇaviniścaya* I.4 (Dharmakīrti 2007, 7). This definition is repeated in the *Nyāyabindu* at verse I.5.

<sup>261</sup> Hattori (1968, 82–85) cites these verses and discusses the difference between Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's respective ideas about *vikalpa*. Taber also expands on Hattori's reading of PS 1.1.3d, noting possible divergences between Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's views on the nature of a concept (Taber 2005, 207–208, fn 14).

<sup>262</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 128). *aḥampratyavamarśe yaḥ prakāśātmāpi vāgvapuḥ / nāsau vikalpaḥ sa hy ukto dvayākṣepī vinīścayaḥ. //, ĪPK I.6.1* (Utpaladeva 1994, 27).

<sup>263</sup> *atra ca sarvatrāvaśyaṃ tadatadrūpadvayena bhavitavyam, ĪPVV ad I.6.1* (Abhinavagupta 1938, 62: 274).

<sup>264</sup> *ātmani yaḥ pratyavamarśaḥ prakāśasya na nīlāder iva vedyasya idam iti, nāpi śarīrāder iva vikalpītapramāṭrbhāvasyāham iti. ĪPVV ad I.6.1* (Abhinavagupta 1938, 62: 274).

conventional *ahampratyavamarśa* exists only in relation to its object (and is therefore conceptual), the ultimate *ahampratyavamarśa* lacks a counterpart that could be negated, and is therefore nonconceptual.

After presenting arguments to justify his contention that the pure *ahampratyavamarśa* cannot be conceptual,<sup>265</sup> Utpaladeva turns to the conventional *ahampratyavamarśa* in verses I.6.4-I.6.5. Here, he states: “Having left the plane of Consciousness because of the influence of *māyā*, that reflective awareness ‘I’ which addresses differentiated realities—e.g. the body, the intellect, the vital breath or that imagined entity, similar to ether—understood as the knowing subject, that reflective awareness, excluding what is other than its object, is a *vikalpa*.”<sup>266</sup> In a remarkably clear passage in his short commentary, Abhinavagupta explains:

There are two types of the realization “I”: the pure and the *māyic*. With regard to these [two], the pure is in relation to mere consciousness which is not different from all things, or in relation to the limpid self that is shot through with the

<sup>265</sup> These arguments are complex, but they hinge on the idea that it is not possible for manifestation to have a counterpart that could be negated: “In fact, the manifestation of two opposite realities is possible in the case of ‘jar’ and ‘non-jar’. On the contrary, the manifestation of a reality that is other and differentiable from light, on the same plane (*iva*), is not possible,” *bhinnayor avabhāso hi syād ghaṭāghaṭayor dvayoḥ / prakāśasyeva nānyasya bhedinas tv avabhāsanam //*, ĪPK I.6.2 (Utpaladeva 1994, 27). Translation in Torella (2013, 129-130).

<sup>266</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 131-132). *cittattvaṃ māyayā hitvā bhinna evābhāti yaḥ / dehe buddhāv atha prāṇe kalpīte nabhasīva vā // pramāṭṛtvenāham iti vimarśo ’nyavyapohanāt / vikalpa eva sa parapratiyogyavabhāsajaḥ //*, ĪPK I.6.4-I.6.5 (Utpaladeva 1994, 28). For an additional discussion of the nature of these different perceivers, see (Ratié 2011, 206, fn 75).

reflections of all things. On the other hand, the impure is in relation to the body, etc., which has the form of the object to be known.<sup>267</sup>

Here, Abhinavagupta provides a cogent description of the nature of ultimate consciousness and how it differs from conventional first-person experience. Importantly, and in contrast to Dharmakīrti's rejection of the idea that consciousness is ultimately variegated, Abhinavagupta here describes the pure *ahampratyavamarśa* as both "mere consciousness" *and* as inherently variegated in that it "is not different from all things" and "is shot through with the reflections of all things." This is why there is no need for something beyond ultimate consciousness to account for differentiation in the conventional world. While the ultimate *ahampratyavamarśa* occurs in relation to all things, the conventional occurs only in relation to a specific object. Abhinavagupta contrasts this nonconceptual pure *ahampratyavamarśa* to the impure one, which is a concept: "But the impure one in relation to the body, which has form of the object to be known, existing as that which has been cut off from what is other than it, such as the body and so on and the pot and so on, is precisely a concept—this is the meaning of the statement."<sup>268</sup>

Abhinavagupta further clarifies this distinction by summarizing the arguments presented in the previous two verses about why the pure *ahampratyavamarśa* is not a concept: "There, in relation to the pure realization 'I,' a counterpart which is to be excluded is not at all possible because even a pot, etc., cannot be excluded. [This is so]

<sup>267</sup> *aham ity avamarśo dvidhā śuddho māyīyaś ca. tatra śuddho yaḥ samvinmātre viśvābhinne viśvacchāyācchuritasvacchātmani vā. aśuddhas tu vedyarūpe śarīrādau*, ĪPV ad I.6.4-I.6.5 (Abhinavagupta 1918, vol. I, 247-248). Ratié also provides a French translation of this passage in Ratié (2011, 205).

<sup>268</sup> *aśuddhas tu vedyarūpe śarīrādau anyasmād dehāder ghaṭādeś ca vyavacchedena bhavan vikalpa eveti vākyārthaḥ*, ĪPV ad 1.6.4-5 (Abhinavagupta 1918, vol. I, 248).

because, since its nature is only manifestation, it does not have a counterpart. So, since there is nothing to be excluded, how is there the form of a concept there?”<sup>269</sup> Ultimately, even the variegation contained in consciousness in the form of the “reflections of all things” is not conceptual because, like the ultimate itself, all things actually have the nature of manifestation. However, conventionally, different types of perceivers carve away various slices of the ultimate to generate concepts. The error involved in conventional awareness, then, is not that the conventional concepts of subject and object are simply fabrications with no basis in what is ultimately real. Rather, conventional awarenesses are erroneous in that they only present part of the truth: they ignore the fact that every moment of awareness is rooted in the infinite variegation of consciousness.<sup>270</sup>

In line with Dharmakīrti’s emphasis on beginningless ignorance as creating conventional worlds, for these Śaivas this type of error actually constitutes the possibility of truth within a certain intersubjective context. However, there is a subtle difference between Dharmakīrti’s understanding of ignorance in the form of the false view of the self and the Pratyabhijñā understanding of the “great error” within which nondual consciousness hides itself from itself.

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<sup>269</sup> *tatra śuddhe ’haṃpratyavamarśe pratiyogī na kaścid apohitavyaḥ saṃbhavati. ghaṭāder api prakāśasāratvenāpratiyogitvenānapohyatvāt ity apohyatvābhāve katham tatra vikalparūpatā*, ĪPV ad I.6.4-I.6.5 (Abhinavagupta 1918, vol. I, 248).

<sup>270</sup> Although it does not address the chapter on *apoha*, Nemeč provides an insightful broader discussion of the evolution of Pratyabhijñā theories of error in Nemeč (2012). While this topic requires more research, there are compelling parallels between Nemeč’s description of the distinction between *mahābhrānti* and *bhrānti* with the first and second types of impure *ahaṃpratyavamarśa*. For an additional early take on Abhinavagupta’s theory of error (cited by Nemeč as well), see Rastogi (1986).

*World-Constituting Error and the False Conception of Self*

Even though the extension of conceptuality to account for mere subject/object duality differs from Dharmakīrti's own use, these Śaivas do not explicitly present themselves as challenging Dharmakīrti's mere definition of a concept. A shift has occurred, but it has done so covertly: these Śaivas present their focus on the connection between conceptuality and duality as a natural continuation of Dharmakīrti's own account. Even Utpaladeva's presentation of the Buddhist *pūrvapakṣa* in Chapter Two frames the Buddhist's own definition of a concept in terms quite compatible with his presentation of the conventional *aḥampratyaavamarśa* as a concept in Chapter Six. In the first verse of Chapter Two, Utpaladeva presents the well-known Buddhist position that there are two types of cognitions, one conceptual and one not, and further identifies the conceptual form of awareness with, among other things, the cognition "I" (*aḥampratīti*) in relation to the body, etc.<sup>271</sup> Utpaladeva here references the Buddhist notion of what Eltschinger and Ratié have translated as the "personalistic false view" (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*, *ātmadarśana*, etc.).

Eltschinger and Ratié extensively discuss the connection between Dharmakīrti's description of ignorance, conceptuality, and the personalistic false view. While Yogācārins will posit that the more general error of dualistic consciousness underlies this particular error, both Yogācārins and Sautrāntikas identify the sense of oneself as an enduring entity as an important manifestation of ignorance. As Eltschinger and Ratié summarize the common doctrinal basis of this view: "According to Yogācāra and

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<sup>271</sup> "[Objection] There is one type of cognition in which the particular reality (*svalakṣaṇa*) appears and another type of cognition, called mental elaboration (*vikalpa*), inseparably connected with discourse (*sābhilāpam*), which appears in manifold forms... Also the notion of 'I' (*aḥampratītiḥ*) has in reality as referent the body etc..." *nanu svalakṣaṇābhāsaṃ jñānam ekaṃ paraṃ punaḥ / sābhilāpaṃ vikalpākhyam bahudhā... aḥampratītir apy eṣā śarīrādāv avasāyinī*, ĪPK 1.2.1a-c, 1.2.2c-d (Utpaladeva 1994, 5). Translation in Torella (2013, 89-90).

Sautrāntika definitions, the personalistic belief consists in regarding the five constituents to which one clings (*upādānaskandha*) as either a self (*ātmataḥ*) or as one's own (*ātmīyataḥ*, i.e., as belonging to the self). People who are deluded by this false view hold a basically transient (*sat<sīdati*) collection or cluster to be both permanent (*nityasañjñā*) and unitary (*piṇḍasañjñā*)” (Eltschinger and Ratié 2013, 7). The false view of the self is a superimposition of a lasting entity onto a perception of what is actually momentary. It is the basis for the story sentient beings construct about themselves and others, and it leads these beings to continue to be reborn in *saṃsāra* (2013, 11–16).<sup>272</sup> Torella summarizes Utpaladeva's understanding of the Buddhist *aḥampratīti*: “this notion of ‘I’ does not reveal a permanent subject but refers to the series of distinct moments of cognition (*jñānasantāna*) and of body (*śarīrasantāna*) on which apparent personal identity is based” (Torella 2013, 90).

This idea that the conventional sense of oneself as a subject in relation to a specific body is a concept seems quite close to these Śaivas' own articulation of the impure form of the *aḥampratītyavamarśa*. Here, a further distinction comes into play, for these Śaivas claim that the two different forms of the *aḥampratītyavamarśa* are themselves twofold depending on whether or not they occur within a single moment of awareness or are the product of a synthesis. As Abhinavagupta explains, the most basic type of the conventional form of the *aḥampratītyavamarśa* begins with the mere existence of subject/object structure within a single moment of awareness. A second type accounts for the synthesized sense of oneself as a subject enduring over time.<sup>273</sup> Although only the

<sup>272</sup> For an additional discussion of *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*, see Eltschinger (2014, 266–298).

<sup>273</sup> “Moreover, this twofold cognition of “I” is also twofold: the one that has the form of mere experience and the one that has the nature of synthesis,” *dvividho 'pi cāyam*

second of these forms involves the error of mistaking many things for one thing, both of these forms are concepts.<sup>274</sup> Dharmakīrti's elaboration of the conventional sense of subjectivity as a concept corresponds to the second of these two forms, but not to the first: the synthesis of various perceptions that constitutes one's understanding of oneself as a permanent, enduring subject is conceptual, but the phenomenal form of the subject (*grāhakākāra*) within a moment of perception is not. As we have seen, for Dharmakīrti the mere presentation of subject/object duality is a nonconceptual error. This reflects an additional level of ignorance accepted by Yogācārin, but not by External Realists.

Interestingly, and as a further mark of the distance of these Śaivas' understanding of a concept from Dharmakīrti's, they consider the conceptual status of the *second* type of impure *aḥapratyavamarśa*, which involves a synthesis, to be more suspect than the first, which occurs in relation to a single moment. Abhinavagupta references Utpaladeva's theory of error, which contends that error is constituted by the non-appearance of non-difference (*abhedākhyāti*). If that is the case, then one could think that the conventional *aḥapratyavamarśa* which has the form of a synthesis is non-erroneous because of the appearance of the nondifference of one's sense of self. Abhinavagupta notes that Utpaladeva in fact addresses his next verse to clarifying this point:

In the case of the pure one, it has been said that its having the nature of a concept is entirely unfounded, but in the case of the impure one that has the nature of experience, its conceptuality has been demonstrated. However, even in the case of the impure one, since it has the nature of synthesis, someone could object that it is

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*aḥapratyayo dvidhā anubhavamātrarūpaś cānusaṃdhānātmā ca*, ĪPV ad 1.6.5 (Abhinavagupta 1918, Vol. 1, 254–255).

<sup>274</sup> See ĪPV ad 1.6.5-1.6.6 (Abhinavagupta 1918, Vol. 1, 255–256), translated and discussed below.



nonconceptual because of the appearance of non-difference (*abheda*). To exclude this confusion, [Utpaladeva] says: ‘**In relation to the appearance [of a body, etc.] that is occasional, the association of previous appearances, etc., from an impression, is also declared to be a mental construction. It also regards [a body] that has a differentiated appearance**’ [ĪPK 1.6.6]. The body, etc., is to be supplied from the previous verse (*varṭate*). With regard to an appearance that is occasional, which means one that exists sometimes, which has a restricted time, place, and form, of a body, etc., that has the form of a particular, the association with a previous [appearance, such as the appearance of the body when a child, etc., there is the synthesis: ‘That “I” which was previously a child is a youth.’ With ‘and so on’, he includes the association with a later manifestation in the future, ‘I will be old.’ All these associations are constructions (*kalpanā*), which means precisely concepts, but not the pure realization.<sup>275</sup>

For Dharmakīrti, the synthesis of various experiences of oneself is clearly conceptual. It is also conceptual for these Śaivas, but since this synthesis is not as clearly defined by a counterpart, its conceptual status requires further explanation.

<sup>275</sup> *tatra śuddhe vikalparūpatvam apratiṣṭham evety uktam. aśuddhe tv anubhavarūpe vikalpatvam upapāditam. aśuddhe ’pi tv anusaṃdhānātmakatayābhedasya prasphuraṇāt kaścīd avikalpakatvaṃ śaṅketa. tasya vyāmohaṃ vyapohayitum āha. kādācitkābhāse yā pūrvābhāsādiyojanā / saṃskārāt kalpanā proktā sāpi bhinnābhāsini // deha ityādi varṭate. kādācitkaḥ kādācidbhavo \*niyatadeśakālākāro ’vabhāso yasya dehādeḥ svalakṣaṇarūpasya tatra yā pūrvābhāseṇa bālādīsarīrāvabhāseṇa yojanā yo ’haṃ bālaḥ sa evādyā yuvety anusaṃdhānam. ādigrahaṇād uttaraṇa bhāvinābhāseṇa saha yojanā sthaviro bhavitāsmīti sā yojanā sarvā kalpanā \*vikalpa eva na tu śuddhaḥ pratyavamarśaḥ, ĪPV ad 1.6.5-1.6.6 (Abhinavagupta 1918, Vol. 1, 255–256). ’niyata- has been corrected to *niyata-* and *kalpanāvikalpa* has been corrected to *kalpanā vikalpa*. I would like to thank Isabelle Ratié for pointing out necessary corrections in the KSTS edition based on manuscripts in her possession. Ratié provides a French translation and discussion of this passage in Ratié (2011, 230–231).*

For these Śaivas, then, since anything formed through the negation of a counterpart is a concept, when a perception arises structured by subject and object, it is already conceptual. In contrast, Dharmakīrti's description of nonconceptual error indicates that he does *not* hold that *any and all* cognitions involving dualities are conceptual. This is the key point at which the definition of a concept utilized by Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta extends beyond Dharmakīrti's original scope. These Śaivas affirm that the error of subject/object duality presented within a single moment of awareness is both conceptual and the manifestation of a power that is fundamentally continuous with the nature of consciousness itself. They thereby invert Dharmakīrti's understanding of these same issues: as we have seen, Dharmakīrti claims both that subject/object duality is *not* conceptual and the human propensity to view the world as structured by subject and object is the result of an internal distortion that is not inherent to ultimate *svasaṃvedana*.

One point of clarification: just because these Śaivas hold that a perception structured by subject and object is conceptual, this does not mean that *perception itself* is always conceptual. Like Dharmakīrti, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas hold that each moment of awareness begins in nondual, nonconceptual consciousness. Drawing upon Bhartṛhari's famous dictum that there is no awareness without *vāc*, explored in Chapter I, they discuss this in terms of the necessity for the presence of *vimarśa* in any cognition. Every experience is rooted in ultimate nondual consciousness; there is no conventional reality separate from the ultimate. The division of a moment of awareness into subject and object is conceptual, but this conceptual determination arises precisely by carving away aspects of ultimate consciousness that are not deemed relevant to one's goals and desires.

This carving happens at a number of levels and people within the conventional world are by and large not aware of the initial nondual impulse animating even the most mundane experiences. At certain limit points, however, and with certain training, it is possible to recapture this moment and directly experience the omnipresence of the ultimate in all experiences. These Śaivas explain this movement from the ultimate to the conventional in terms of the expression of Śiva's free will.

*The Creation of the Worlds of Conventional Experience through Śiva's Free Will*

In order to make its inherent variegation manifest, consciousness must also have the desire to do so. As Utpaladeva states, "Indeed, the Conscious Being, God, like the yogin, independently of material causes, in virtue of His volition alone, renders externally manifest the multitude of objects that reside within Him."<sup>276</sup> Ratié explores these Śaivas' use of the metaphor of the yogin, as opposed to the Vijñānavādin metaphor of a dreamer, to account for the existence of the conventional world. As she sums up this difference:

According to the dream model, the diversity of appearances that constitute the world can be attributed to a mechanism of residual traces over which consciousness has no control. By way of contrast, for the Pratyabhijñā philosophers, the variety of the universe is not the outcome of an unconscious and impersonal mechanism—the sovereign freedom (*svātantrya*) of consciousness or its free will (*icchā*) is the only cause for this diversity, just as a yogin supposedly creates by virtue of his free will and without depending on any external cause. (Ratié 2010b, 462–463)

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<sup>276</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 116). *cidātmaiva hi devo 'ntaḥsthitam icchāvaśād bahiḥ / yogīva nirupādānam arthajātaṃ prakāśayet //*, ĪPK I.5.7, (Utpaladeva 1994, 21).

As we have seen, Dharmakīrti partially accounts for conventional experience by positing that certain errors, most importantly the error of subject/object duality, are the result of a beginningless karmic imprint. Since this imprint is beginningless, there is no need for an agent who causes it. It is simply ignorance, an adventitious defilement to be abandoned upon reaching liberation. For these Śaivas, however, the creation of subject/object duality requires that will (*icchā*) be inherent to consciousness itself. If, as they argue, the existence of limited subjects and objects depends on the mutual exclusion of one from another, then subject and object are concepts formed through *apoha*. An exclusion only occurs on the basis of a specific desire informed by the habits, expectations, and conditioning of the one doing the excluding.<sup>277</sup> Therefore, if subject and object are concepts, they must have been formed on the basis of a desire that goes beyond limited subjectivity, and is thus inherent to consciousness itself. For Dharmakīrti, desire comes into play only after the structures of subject and object are in place. In short, for Dharmakīrti, desire requires duality; for the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas, duality requires desire.

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<sup>277</sup> As we have seen, of course, Dharmakīrti himself talks about the necessity for subjective factors in the delimitation of a specific concept in, among other places, his autocommentary on PV 1.58: *yady apy aṃśarahitaḥ sarvato bhinnasvabhāvo bhāvo 'nubhūtas tathāpi na sarvabhedeṣu tāvatā niścayo bhavati. kāraṇāntarāpekṣatvāt. anubhavo hi yathāvikalpābhyāsaṃ niścayapratyayān janayati. yathā rūpadarśanāviśeṣe 'pi kuṇapakāminībhakṣyavikalpāḥ. tatra buddhipāṭavaṃ tadvāsanābhyāsaḥ prakaraṇam ityādayo 'nubhavād bhedanīścayotpattisahakāriṇaḥ*, “Even if an entity is experienced that is partless and has the nature of being different from everything, even then a determination does not occur to the extent that it would relate to all of the differences, because it relies on other causes. For indeed, an experience produces determinate cognitions in accord with a habituation through concepts, as in the case of the concepts ‘corpse,’ ‘desirable woman,’ and ‘food’ [that arise for an ascetic, a lustful man, and a dog in accord with their respective desires] even when the form that is seen is not different. In that case, the acuity of the cognition, habituation through its imprints, the context, etc., are supporting conditions for the arising of a particular determination from the experience” (PVSV ad 1.58). For an insightful discussion of this passage see Kellner (2004, 19–32). I have consulted her translation of part of this passage in the course of preparing my own. I discuss this passage in more detail in Chapter II.

Abhinavagupta also comments on the constitutive role that desire plays in the formation of conventional worlds in a number of places in the MŚV. As we have seen, he frequently speaks of the manifestation of conventional worlds through time as being the result of ultimate consciousness' desire to experience itself in manifold forms. In an extended passage, he strongly emphasizes the constitutive role of desire in creating the world:

For (*yataḥ*) the power of consciousness (*citi*), which appears through the light of the power (*kalā*) of its own desire, affects everything by its natural passion. For [through being] manifest he will affect everything and manifestation is due to his nature... Desire is the wish to appropriate. With [desire] as a cover the desirous attains everything, for this [world] is the reality of desire.<sup>278</sup>

Just as in his discussion of time, Abhinava both recognizes that desire (*rāga*) has a specific place within the scheme of the *tattvas* that seems to preclude its presence in the ultimate, and yet it is present there all the same. The role of the *rāgatattva*, which occurs just before the *kālatattva* in the progressive manifestation of differentiated worlds, is linked to the selection of a specific object. An objector presses Abhinava on precisely this point: “But does consciousness (*sā*), through the force of its own determination (*niyati*), thus flow into certain [objects] only? [If it does so,] then its form is that of the *tattva* ‘desire’ (*rāga*).” Abhinava grants this objection: “[I concede that] it may bear an appearance of *rāga* in this manner. There may be some kind of *rāga* in the conscious self,

<sup>278</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 103–105). *svakautukakalālokād ucchalanty eva yā citiḥ // saiva svabhāvarāgeṇa viśvaṃ rañjayate yataḥ / vyakto hi rañjayed viśvaṃ vyaktiś cāsya svarūpataḥ // ... kāmāḥ svīkartum icchaiva tadācchādanayogataḥ / viśvaṃ sādhyate kāmī kāmātattvam idaṃ yataḥ //*, MŚV 276cd-277, 281 (Hanneder 1998, 102–4).

in the form of being colored by another.”<sup>279</sup> Here again, the inherent presence of desire within the ultimate is the reason why ultimate consciousness is able to select out certain aspects of its inherent differentiation and form particular concepts.

Tying the importance of both will and the inherent variegation of consciousness to the *apoha* theory itself, Abhinavagupta picks up on this conception of Śiva as the one who creates the universe from within himself in his benedictory verse to Chapter Six: “We praise Śiva, the sculptor of variety, who—by his mere will—using the chisel of exclusion, carves out objective entities, which are the mass that is not different from his own self.”<sup>280</sup> These Śaivas frequently return to the idea that Śiva contains the shadows or reflections (*chāyā*) of all objects within himself even at the highest level. As quoted above, precisely when Abhinavagupta describes the two types of *ahampratyavamarśa*, he describes the pure realization “I” as occurring “either in relation to mere consciousness, or in relation to the limpid self that is not different from all things, and that is shot through with the reflections of all things.”<sup>281</sup> This inherent variegation provides the basis for the experience of things as different even though, ultimately, they are not different in the way they appear to be. On the basis of Śiva’s will, certain pieces of this totality are carved away, giving rise to the limited, conceptual experiences of conventional subjects and objects.

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<sup>279</sup> Translation in Hanneder (1998, 99). *nanu kiṃ kāṃścid evetthaṃ saiṣā svaniyater balāt // itthaṃ dhāvati tac cāsyā rāgatattvātmakaṃ vapuḥ / tatrāpi ca tathā rāgābhāsa eva sa dhāryatām // cidātmani tu rāgo ’stu ko ’py anyārūṣaṇātmakaḥ /*, MŚV 246cd-248ab (Hanneder 1998, 98).

<sup>280</sup> *svātmābhedaḥganān bhāvāṃs tadapohanaṭaṅkataḥ / cindan yaḥ svecchayā citrarūpakṛt taṃ stumaḥ śivam //*, ĪPV ad I.6.0 (Abhinavagupta 1918, Vol. 1, 237).

<sup>281</sup> *tatra śuddho yaḥ saṃvinmātre viśvābhinne viśvacchāyācchuritasvacchātmani vā*, ĪPV ad I.6.4-I.6.5 (Abhinavagupta 1918, Vol. 1, 247).

An additional passage from Abhinavagupta's short commentary helps to illuminate the striking differences between the Pratyabhijñā account of *apoha* and that of Dharmakīrti. Drawing on the tantric metaphor of Śiva as complete (*pūrṇa*) in the sense that he encompasses all phenomena, Abhinava emphasizes the essential non-difference between even an insentient object and ultimate consciousness:

In its nonconceptual state, this pot has the nature of consciousness. Precisely like consciousness, it is complete [and] embodies the entire universe. However, no practical activities at all [occur] through it. Even though it is complete, the one who is inciting the activity of *māyā* splits off an objective entity. This produces the negation, which is the exclusion of the non-pot, [namely] the self and the cloth, etc. Having relied precisely on that exclusion, the determination of the pot is expressed as “only the pot.” The meaning of the word “only” consists in a negation of something else that is being imagined as a possibility; this precisely is the carving out, because it is similar to a chisel, which is cutting away from all sides.<sup>282</sup>

While the influence of Dharmakīrtian Buddhism on Pratyabhijñā Śaivism is profound, it is also clear that Pratyabhijñā is not merely a derivative system. Rather, as Ratié points out, “Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta are not unknowingly or unwittingly influenced by

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<sup>282</sup> *tad avikalpadaśāyāṃ citśvabhāvo 'sau ghaṭas cidvad eva viśvaśarīraḥ pūrṇaḥ, na ca tena kecid vyavahārāḥ; tan māyāvyāpāram ullāsayan pūrṇam api khaṇḍayati bhāvam, tenāghaṭasyātmanāḥ paṭādeś cāpohanam kriyate niṣedhanarūpam. tad eva vyapohanam āśrītya tasya ghaṭasya niścayanam ucyate ghaṭa evety evārthasya saṃbhāvyamānāparavastuniṣedharūpatvāt. eṣa eva paritas chedāt takṣaṇakalpāt paricchedaḥ, ĪPV ad I.6.3 (Abhinavagupta 1918, Vol. 1, 244). Ratié also discusses this passage in Ratié (2014b, 397–398, fn 39-41) and I have consulted her translation in the course of preparing mine.*

their Buddhist opponents: they systematically emphasize this influence, thus taking full responsibility for appropriating their rivals' concepts. Moreover, they highlight their fundamental divergence regarding the way consciousness manifests a seemingly external and diverse universe" (Ratié 2010b, 437).

*How an Awareness is a Pramāṇa in Relation to a Specific Object*

As noted in Chapter I, within Indian philosophy, debates about how the content of a given perception arises and whether or not this content is accurate took place under the rubric of *pramāṇa* theory. To review: a *pramāṇa* is a means of trustworthy awareness. Although many thinkers' understanding of the reality accessed by a *pramāṇa* is complex, something known by means of a *pramāṇa* is necessarily real. Utpaladeva explores what makes an awareness trustworthy in the second part of the ĪPK, the section on action. For Utpaladeva, the status of something as a *pramāṇa* is intimately linked to its content coming into focus as a determinate object. He defines a means of trustworthy awareness in part as "that thanks to which the object is situated within its own confines, 'this thing, with these characteristics.'"<sup>283</sup> This manifestation of the object constitutes an episode of trustworthy awareness (*pramiti*)—that is, an awareness on the basis of which a subject can reliably act to achieve a desired goal—so long as it is not invalidated by a subsequent trustworthy awareness.<sup>284</sup> For example, the perceptual image of a pencil is a *pramāṇa*,

<sup>283</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 161). *idam etādr̥g ityevaṃ yadvaśād vyavatiṣṭhate/ vastu pramāṇaṃ tat*, ĪPK 2.3.1ac (Utpaladeva 1994, 47).

<sup>284</sup> Utpaladeva's focus on an episode of awareness as being a *pramiti* only if it is stable and not invalidated by another means of trustworthy awareness highlights the fact that the trustworthiness of a given awareness is contingent on the particular time at which it occurs. This trustworthiness is the result of a definite causal necessity brought about by the causal capacities of the individual *ābhāsas* that contribute to the formation of the determinate awareness (it is *niyata* based on the individual *ābhāsas*' *svārthakriyā*).



and the episode of awareness that it constitutes is a *pramiti*, if, when I reach for the pencil intending to write, I am able to do so.

Utpaladeva continues to specify the way in which a single object is selected. First, the awareness of a single object is the result of an integration (*anusamdhāna*) of various appearances (*ābhāsa*). An appearance is a current within the stream of consciousness that can contribute certain elements, but not others, to the determinate perception (*niścaya*) of a specific object. For example, the appearance of ‘blue’ has the capacity to contribute to a determinate perception of a blue object but not of a yellow object. Because a universal (*sāmānya*) also traditionally plays the role of accounting for the content shared between various perceptions of the same thing (i.e., the blue in the sky and the blue on the Facebook app logo), Utpaladeva equates an appearance with a universal (*sāmānya*). In this way, an *ābhāsa/sāmānya* plays the same role as a *dharma/svalakṣaṇa* in Dharmakīrti’s account of perception. Both are the pre-conceptual causal inputs that restrict the content of a particular awareness by their very nature. An appearance is able to function as a universal because it is not yet restricted to a particular space and time. Integration with space and time—which are themselves also appearances—allows the universals to appear to specific perceivers as being present in multiple locations. Thus, any determinate perception of a particular blue object is the result of the integration of the appearance of blue with other appearances. The most fundamental of these appearances

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However, since the *ābhāsas* that contribute to a determinate awareness change at every moment, whether or not the judgment made from them is a *pramiti* also will need to be reconfirmed at every moment. This addition of the importance of an awareness not being invalidated by a subsequent *pramāṇa* differs slightly from Dharmakīrti’s understanding and reflects the influence of Mīmāṃsā traditions.

are the appearances of space and time, which provide the background for an experience of a shared world.<sup>285</sup>

As Utpaladeva states, “Things possess a determinate causal efficiency (*niyatārthakriyā*) depending on the variety of the manifestations they are composed of; and, on the contrary (*punaḥ*), [a different] one based on their appearing as unitary realities owing to a common substratum (*sāmānādhikarānyena*).”<sup>286</sup> What is at stake here is the notion that things are knowable in a non-random way in both specific and general terms. This means that, on the one hand, there must be a warrant for differences in perceptions (i.e., a reason why the sky is blue and not yellow). The warrant for this difference is the fact that appearances have different causal capacities. At the same time, because a specific appearance can be instantiated in multiple spatiotemporal instances, it accounts for the common aspects of the perception of various objects (i.e., sky-blue and Facebook-blue). The presence or absence of the appearance of blue to a different subject will also account for whether or not the two subjects agree on the nature of the object (i.e., whether or not the sky is blue). Utpaladeva’s account of the appearance of a determinate object to a particular subject via an integration of appearances which each have their own causal capacities thereby allows him to account for both the similarities and the differences between various perceptions.

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<sup>285</sup> As Torella notes in his discussion of this passage: “The knowledge of the particular is the result of the subsequent unification of the group of single *ābhāsas*, among which those of time and space have a particular individualizing power” (Torella 2013, 163, fn 5).

<sup>286</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 166). *ābhāśabhedādvastūnām niyatārthakriyā punaḥ / sāmānādhikarānyena pratibhāsād abhedinām //*, ĪPK 2.3.6 (Utpaladeva 1994, 50).

Utpaladeva further specifies that this delimitation of the object produces not only the object's various attributes, but its "mere being" itself.<sup>287</sup> A particular object, then, does not exist before the awareness which constitutes its manifestation to a particular subject. A subject selects certain appearances as opposed to others based on "inclinations, practical requirements, and specific experiences."<sup>288</sup> Utpaladeva gives the example of a pot which has an appearance of 'existing' that is common with all other objects which are perceived to exist, but also appears as 'made of gold,' a qualification not shared by a clay pot, to a person who is interested in the makeup of the pot.<sup>289</sup> The content of a given awareness therefore depends on constraints imposed both on the object's side (as the causal capacities of various appearances available to the subject) and on the subject's side (as the specific desires animating the exclusion of some of these appearances). As Torella points out, in this focus on the role of practical concerns in leading a subject to select certain causally efficacious inputs which are subsequently deemed to constitute a single, spatiotemporally extended object, Utpaladeva closely follows Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory (Torella 2013, 163–164, fn 7).

However, as we have seen, Utpaladeva's full treatment of how a given awareness arises extends Dharmakīrti's description of how an object comes into focus to include the process by which a subject comes into focus as well. By bringing together Dharmakīrti's position that subject and object necessarily arise together with the fact that the emergence of a specific object happens in accord with a particular desire, Utpaladeva claims that the

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<sup>287</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 161). *sattāmātra-*, ĪPKV ad 2.3.1-2 (Utpaladeva 1994, 50).

<sup>288</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 163). Utpaladeva lists these as *yathārucci*, *yathārthitvaṃ*, and *yathāvvyutpatti* in the beginning of ĪPK 2.3.3ab (Utpaladeva 1994, 48).

<sup>289</sup> See ĪPK ad 2.3.4-5, translation in Torella (2013, 165).

subject also emerges according to a specific desire. In a further clarification of the two different types of erroneous *ahampratyavamarśa* discussed in the chapter on *apoha*, Utpaladeva points out that the empirical sense of personal continuity is also simply another appearance, not different in type from the appearances that constitute an object. Speaking about the appearance of a person named Caitra (a standard name in Indian philosophical examples), he states: “The appearance ‘Caitra’ common to the different stages of childhood, etc., is devoid of place and so on; and what has been said above applies to this, too.”<sup>290</sup> Just as there is an appearance that underlies all instances of the perception of ‘blue’, there is an appearance that, when integrated with other relevant appearances, has the causal capacity to produce a determinate perception concerning a person named Caitra. This appearance ‘Caitra’ is present in all determinate perceptions involving Caitra (including in perceptions that Caitra has about himself), and is not present in perceptions involving Steve. Like the determinate perception of an object, a determinate perception of a subject also arises through a selective integration driven by particular desires.

This qualification that the limited subject also emerges through an integration of appearances is crucial to Utpaladeva’s full account of the emergence of a specific perception. In relation to both subjects and objects, while the causal capacities of various universals are responsible for restricting the content of a given perception, this content itself only comes into focus as a single, determinate awareness based on a unifying judgment which selects certain appearances as opposed to others. As we have seen, the ultimate source for this ability is Śiva’s own free will, which is able to chose to integrate

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<sup>290</sup> Translation in Torella (2013, 165–66). *caitra iti bālyādisādhāraṇe deśādirahitas tathaiva ca*, ĪPKV ad 1.3.4-5 (Utpaladeva 1994, 50).

various appearances in relation to his manifold desires. Utpaladeva is thereby able to use Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory to argue for one of the key positions separating the two thinkers: whether or not ultimate consciousness, before the construction of limited empirical subjects, is agentive. For Utpaladeva, the fact that subject and object arise together means that the construction of both are driven by particular desires that guide the process of excluding some appearances as opposed to others. Therefore, desire itself must in some sense be inherently linked to the nature of the stream of consciousness before this consciousness is divided into subjects and objects.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas adopt Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory to account for the workings of conventional experience. However, in contrast to Dharmakīrti's usage, the theory of *apoha* that they employ extends to the presentation of the division between subject and object. They claim that even the most basic subject/object structure of normal sensory perception is conceptual since even this type of awareness involves a duality in the form of 'that' and 'not that,' and is therefore dependent on the negation of a counterpart. While these Śaivas preface their own exploration of the source of the division of a moment of awareness into subject and object with an explicit critique of the Vijñānavādin use of *anādivāsanā* to account for this structure, it is unclear whether or not they themselves explicitly contrasted their understanding of *vikalpa* to that of Dharmakīrti. There has clearly been a shift in the understanding of the relationship between concepts and subject/object duality from Dharmakīrti's works to Utpaladeva's, but the extent to which this marks a *uniquely* Śaiva contribution to *apoha* theory remains

an open question. At the time of this writing, the history of the definition of a concept from Dharmakīrti's time up through 11<sup>th</sup> century Kashmir is by no means clear. It is quite possible that, in his claim that subject/object structure is itself conceptual, Utpaladeva picked up on strands within the post-Dharmakīrtian tradition itself. Indeed, passages of Prajñākaragupta's commentary on the *Pramāṇavārttika* are suggestive of this shift.<sup>291</sup> Moreover, the fact that these Śaivas do not explicitly state that they understand *vikalpa* differently from Dharmakīrti seems to indicate that they were unaware of this shift in the Buddhist tradition.

What is clear is that this reformulation of the nature of a concept performs significant philosophical work for these Śaivas. These Śaivas claim that *any* awareness involving a duality is conceptual, and this allows them to maintain that ultimate consciousness must 1) remain conjoined with a nonconceptual form of *vāc* in order to provide the positive initial input to the *apoha* process in the form of preconceptual universals; and 2) be agentive so that it has the capacity to will the creation of limited subjects and objects. In short, it necessitates that ultimate consciousness must be Śiva. This process is but one example of the radical transformations that may occur when traditions formed through mutual debate refashion each other's ideas in their own image. The Conclusion to this dissertation will begin to explore some possible ways in which the debate about the nature of human experience in the conventional world embodied these traditions may continue in contemporary times.

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<sup>291</sup> Prajñākaragupta's comments on PV 3.331-3.332 deserve particular attention here.

## CONCLUSION

Let's try a thought experiment. Dharmakīrti and Abhinavagupta walk into an arcade. They see an awesome new game called "Imaginationland" and slide up to it. Dharmakīrti tries it out first. It turns out that Dharmakīrti is really good at this game—so good, in fact, that he makes it to the final monster on his first try. He enters into battle with great anticipation, marshaling his weapons and techniques to put an end to Imaginationland once and for all. However, something strange happens. Every time it seems like the monster should die, he comes back to life. No matter how many times Dharmakīrti attempts to finish him off, he gets right back up. It seems that the game is rigged. There is simply no way to win. All a player can do is die; playing just leads to more playing with no way out. Dharmakīrti backs away from the console in disgust. Why would anyone waste their time and money on such a stupid game? He does the only rational thing to do in such a situation: he leaves.

Abhinava, however, remains curious. After all, why would someone design a game that is bound to only end in frustration? He decides to make a go at it. In part because he's just watched Dharmakīrti play, Abhinava is also really, really good at the game. In fact, he ends up being even better at playing than Dharmakīrti was, discovering a couple of hidden treasure chests that Dharmakīrti missed and some new, even deadlier weapons. Abhinava makes it to the final challenge. Just like what happened during Dharmakīrti's final battle, the monster simply refuses to die. Abhinava, however, is a bit more stubborn than Dharmakīrti, and he keeps on playing the game far past where any sane person would have relinquished the joystick. Something strange begins to happen. The monster's behavior starts to change. Slowly, Abhinava realizes that he's no longer

just controlling his own character. His moves are dictating the monster's actions, too. He keeps playing. His control becomes more pronounced. It occurs to him that since he's playing both sides of the battle now, it's not so much that he can't win, but rather that he can't really lose. No matter which side defeats the other, as long as he keeps playing, he remains victorious. He grins. The game is his now. As he continues to play, he finds that he can manipulate not just the characters, but their environment, too. Imaginationland becomes the product of his own imagination, expressing itself without being bound to the rules that bind other gamers. It's true that the game never stops, but now the game is joy and Abhinava has no desire to ever leave it behind.

It would seem that Abhinava is the better gamer here. However, who actually has the better play depends on the answer to a crucial question: is the game really rigged? Is Abhinava's experience of being able to hack the game and control its expression merely a sleep-deprived hallucination resulting from spending far too long slumped over a console? Was Dharmakīrti right to walk away? In short, if metaphysics is a game, is it a game that you can't win for losing, or one that you can't lose for winning? Also, what does it matter? If the world of the game is simply imaginary, why should anyone care what happens in and to it? Is there a way in which the game matters even if it's not real? Or a way in which the game *is* real—and maybe the reason why it's hackable is that the game and the player share the same reality?

### **Comparing Realities**

In a seminar on theories of comparison with Laurie Patton at Emory in the Fall of 2010, I remember remarking on how something as simple as the order in which theories are



presented can provide an implicit argument about their relative value. Scholars of Indian philosophy are quite familiar with this dynamic: argumentation proceeds by presenting previous positions, which are then sequentially knocked down until one arrives at the tradition's own final position, all the stronger for having emerged from this battle. The structure of this dissertation could easily be read in such a way. First, I present Dharmakīrti's views, then various critiques of them, culminating in the Pratyabhijñā critique and the articulation of these Śaivas' own position. Was my intention all along, then, to set Dharmakīrti up only to knock him down? No, it wasn't. First, Dharmakīrti's articulation of *apoha* and the tensions within his inherited tradition that this theory addresses provide a uniquely rich window into the nature of human experience within the conventional world. Second, the Pratyabhijñā Śaiva position has its own set of potential incoherencies that, when subjected to more finely grained scrutiny, could very well render the ontology supporting their theories untenable. To return to my earlier metaphor, it could be that the only reason why Abhinava is good at the game is because he uses Dharmakīrti's techniques, and moreover that Abhinava is just fooling himself when he thinks he can control the game.

While fully adjudicating between these two traditions on the nature of reality is beyond the scope of this dissertation, there seem to be two different basic approaches to reality that may be productively compared. Both Dharmakīrti and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas employ a complex model of what it means for something to be real. For them, something that is true with reference to one level of reality may not be true in light of another. However, there is slight, but I believe crucial, difference between the way these models are formulated. For Dharmakīrti, things are more or less false. For the Pratyabhijñā

Śaivas, things are more or less true. Dharmakīrti's method proceeds by progressively eliminating various models of reality until he is able to show that all normal perceptions are distorted; having shown that subject/object structuring itself is an error, he seems to uphold reflexive awareness as ultimately real by virtue of the fact that it's all that's left. In contrast, these Śaivas focus on demonstrating how any experience, no matter how distorted, actually partakes in ultimate reality. For them, reality is a question of degree. Erroneous awarenesses aren't wrong. They're just incomplete.

An important consequence follows from these methods: while these Śaivas seem to unambiguously affirm that the reality manifest as various conventional worlds is the same reality that constitutes what is ultimately real, for Dharmakīrti the type of reality contained within conventional worlds may not be reality at all. As John Dunne bluntly stated in a 2011 seminar on reflexive awareness, "Conventionally true is another word for false." There are at least two ways of reading such a strictly *alīkākaravāda* view, one that preserves the simplicity of the concept of reality and one that bifurcates it. First, it could be that when Dharmakīrti says that the conventional world is an error, he really means it. Conventional reality is just wrong. In effect, ultimately, the phrase "conventional reality" is oxymoronic. The second would be to hold that there are two entirely different ways in which something can be real: a conventional way and an ultimate way. When we talk about "conventional reality," we are not talking about ultimate reality. The "reality" in question is different. On either of these interpretations, Dharmakīrti would not be caught in a contradiction when he simultaneously posits that ultimate reality is entirely undifferentiated and the conventional world contains various causally specific real things. Either way, since the ultimate is actually real and the conventional seems real, they are

not logically contradictory. The hinge between these two interpretations would be if one emphasizes the *actual* vs. *seeming*, in effect claiming that they are two different modes of existence, or if one emphasizes that the contrast between these two types of reality really means that the conventional is false.

I find the idea that conventional reality is simply false to be philosophically unproductive. On this, of course, I could be utterly wrong, and my wrongheadedness could be what continues to obscure from me what really matters: *nirvāṇa* as the cessation of all conditioned phenomena. While I understand that a tradition whose goal is to lead a practitioner to a complete escape from *samsāra* could quite legitimately argue from such a position, I do not know how to make sense of the claim that all diversity is simply false. It is difficult to see how there could be non-scriptural evidence for such a claim. This does *not* mean that there is no evidence that our worlds are not real in precisely the way we think they are. Rather than throwing away the reality of phenomenal content in the conventional world, I believe that an account of how our experiences work should take into account the varying extents to which different perceivers experience different worlds as true and false.

If one cares about understanding the conventional world, an interpretation of Dharmakīrti's thought that holds that the conventional and the ultimate are real in different ways (one phenomenal and one ontological, but both *real*) seems considerably more promising. I have offered a reading of Dharmakīrti in this dissertation that claims 1) that the conventional world is fundamentally an error; and 2) that this error *constitutes*, rather than *denies*, conventional truth. As I argued in Chapter III, such an interpretation would further open up the possibilities of bringing together Dharmakīrti's thought and the

larger Yogācāra tradition's complex understanding of the conventional world. The question of the nature of conventional reality within various branches of Yogācāra thought is a fascinating and productive one. Much more research is necessary to understand how the relationship between ultimate and conventional reality played out in both pre- and post-Dharmakīrtian traditions.

The Pratyabhijñā Śaivas offer another way of understanding the partial realities of conventional worlds that I find even more promising than a phenomenal vs. ontological model of truth. As discussed in Chapters I and IV, for these Śaivas, to the extent that anything manifests, it is real, because manifestation is the nature of reality itself. Phenomenal and ontological reality are not two different things: seeming is not something different than being. Śiva's own self-realization is fully real because everything that is or was or potentially could be manifest is contained within it. While less real in the sense that they do not comprehend the totality of nondual consciousness, the various worlds of everyday life are still meaningfully real.

Moreover—and here is where I identify the single most useful contribution of these Śaivas' theories—various levels of reality can and do interact because they are all carved out of the same body of consciousness. Although the deeply ingrained patterns that shape our embodiments make it seem as though there is one world, our human world, that is uniquely real, this world is in fact continuously open to other realms of reality. When fiction moves us to tears, or laughter, or disgust, it does so because we enter into the limited realities of the work of art—and those realities *are real*. Not only do they influence us when we are directly engrossed in them, but fictional worlds continue to exist when we've returned to our everyday lives. It is true that Frodo has hairy feet, and

false that he is six feet tall. We can even say that some fictional realities are more real than others: if I claim that Jayne Poole, not Sansa Stark, married Ramsey Bolton, then I'm evaluating the *Song of Ice and Fire* books as more real than the *Game of Thrones* TV show. Access to fictional worlds is also shared. I can debate with a friend if Obi Wan lied when he told Luke that Darth Vader killed Luke's father—and we can have this debate because the nuances of truth, falsehood, and identity embodied in Luke's story are equally available to both of us. While it is true that I (thankfully) won't run into Voldemort walking down the street, the mere fact that a friend and I can shiver at the terror of watching his resurrection in a graveyard attests to the connections between all three of our realities—mine, hers, and Voldemort's. An all-or-nothing view of what it means to be real has a great deal of difficulty accounting for such connections between degrees of reality. The Pratyabhijñā Śaiva account of how ultimate reality manifests as various limited worlds provides a compelling way of understanding these interactions between realities.

Although these Śaivas theorize connections between levels of reality much more explicitly than Dharmakīrti does, depending on the line of interpretation taken on Dharmakīrti's understanding of conventional and ultimate reality, it is very possible that his thought could also support a complex understanding of the ways in which various level of reality interact. As even early Buddhist cosmologies indicate, the idea that there are different realms of reality defined by the types of sentient beings within them is deeply woven into the fabric of Buddhist traditions. Moreover, links between meditative states and levels of reality clearly indicate that it is possible to move between worlds. The question in relation to Dharmakīrti's works, then, seems to be not so much if his theories

support the interaction between different conventional realities, but rather if his account of ultimate reality so thoroughly devalues the reality of the conventional that the notion of conventional reality itself becomes suspect.

As we have seen, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas mine the philosophical implications of the alignment of conceptuality and subject/object duality in order to support their account of the connection between ultimate and conventional realities. However, at this point, it is unclear when and where this alignment of the errors of subject/object duality and conceptuality arose. There is reason to suspect that it may have happened within post-Dharmakīrtian traditions before Utpaladeva's works used this alignment to such stunning philosophical effect. The history of the concept of a concept in medieval Kashmir, particularly as reflected in the influential works of Dharmottara, Prajñākaragupta, and Śāṅkaranandana (all of whom are specifically cited by the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas), is a topic that requires further study. In my mind at least, until there is a greater understanding of how the post-Dharmakīrtian tradition worked through these questions, any attempt to evaluate the final coherence and philosophical merit of their respective ontologies is premature.

Indeed, another question that arises out of this inter-traditional analysis is the issue of whether or not it is even productive to pit traditions against each other in a strict us-vs.-them model, wherein one ends up the victor and the other is vanquished. While both Buddhist and Śaiva traditions resolutely affirmed that their path alone offers the fullest true insight into reality, these traditions were also acutely aware that any position articulated through language within the conventional world is merely that—conventional. Language use is guided by contexts, desires, goals, and habits; the articulation of even the

highest teaching will always be relative to the specific circumstances of the sentient beings with whom it emerged. Understanding these circumstances is crucial. One will miss the most salient insights of these traditions if one fails to take into account what is Buddhist about Dharmakīrti and what is Śaiva about the Pratyabhijñā.

However, these contexts are not the same ones within which I write, nor even the same ones within which this dissertation will be read. Rather than see this as a hindrance to philosophical engagement, I see it as an opportunity. The enterprise of comparative philosophy is dialogical, not reductive. New insights, not reducible to any one tradition, may emerge in the blend. In this spirit, I would like to offer an initial overture toward the kinds of conversations that could arise through interdisciplinary engagements with the insights articulated by these medieval Indian traditions.

### **Some Potential Contributions: On Attention and Consciousness**

As we have seen, in Dharmakīrti's and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas' works, human experience emerges as a complex interplay between and within subjects and their environments. While participation in shared causal environments provides a basis for intersubjective agreement, the diversity of human experience cannot be reduced to a single nonperspectival truth. This foundational insight—that the mutual construction of self and world is fundamental to what we mean by reality, and that this construction is a malleable, ongoing process—is perhaps the most compelling piece of Dharmakīrti's theories, and the one taken up most stunningly by these Śaivas. The fact that Dharmakīrti provides a specific and logically rigorous account of how this ongoing construction of subject and

object happens could provide a significant contribution to contemporary theories of human experience.

One such salient point of intervention emerges in relation to theories of attention that see attention as the emergent result of a whole-body relationship between an organism and its environment. According to these theories, attention is not a series of processes that create a bottleneck in relation to the information about an object that the brain is able to process. Rather, attention—and therefore focus on a discrete object—is the resultant of the integration of various cognitive processes. For instance, Alan Allport argues that attention should be understood “as neither a causal process nor constraint but, rather, as resultant—that is, as an *emergent* property of psychological processing” (Allport 2011, 24). Contrasting his theory to a number of other currently dominant models of attention, Allport states that attention is “the outcome of the integration or binding process. A better way of stating the idea is, perhaps, that dynamic binding—both the integration and the segregation of ongoing neural activity—is the relevant *causal process*, and attentional phenomena, including attentional limitations (behavioral bottlenecks, limited processing capacity) are its manifest behavioral consequences” (2011, 32).

Allport moreover emphasizes that attentional phenomena, understood in this way as the outcome rather than the input for the formation of a determinate perception of an object, manifest via the selective integration and segregation of various neural networks. As he summarizes his argument:

“Spotlights,” “bottlenecks,” “limited capacity,” and the like are not the names of identifiable causal mechanisms, but the names of phenomena that manifest as the



consequence of these neural interactions. And central to these interactions are processes of dynamic binding by synchrony, linking together coalitions of active units, and segregating them from others. If a separable causal mechanism (or set of mechanisms) is sought, whose *outcome* is conscious attention, there is much to favor in the view that this critical, causal mechanism is some form of dynamic binding, via phase-locking in multiple frequency bands. (2011, 49)

On this view, attention depends on a simultaneous suppression of some neural networks while others fire in unison.

Which networks are thereby activated or suppressed depends on a complex interaction between “top-down” and “bottom-up” factors. “Bottom-up” factors consist of the causal limitations placed on the objective content of a factor. “Top-down” factors are the ways in which the habits and preoccupations of a subject shape how he or she perceives this objective content. As Allport indicates, “All models of attention acknowledge that attentional orienting can be pulled by events in the sensory environment, as well as being pushed by currently active plans, goals, and other aspects of the ongoing behavioral context. These are commonly referred to as ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ attentional control, respectively” (2011, 41). However, Allport emphasizes that these different forms of “bias signals” in fact do not operate independently, but rather cue each other in complex cycles (2011, 42).

This articulation of attention as an emergent phenomenon involving a whole-body relationship between an organism and its environment has clear parallels to Dharmakīrti’s account of the necessary contribution of both subjective and objective factors to the formation of a concept. Moreover, as Allport indicates, the integration of various sensory

inputs depends on a simultaneous segregation of neural networks representing competing phenomena. Dharmakīrti's account of how a judgment of sameness produces a determinate awareness through the exclusion of perceptual information irrelevant to a subject's goals provides a compelling way of thinking through how integration and segregation could concurrently work together to produce a determinate awareness.

Dharmakīrti's theories contribute a further refinement of how exactly this process occurs, addressing a number of lacunae in contemporary theories. As Allport indicates, one of the most prevalent of these explanatory gaps concerns how exactly different top-down and bottom-up bias signals interact and come to prominence, resulting in the appearance of an "executive control" guiding the selection of an object (2011, 36). The nature and mechanisms of this executive control, however, remain "an embarrassing zone of almost total ignorance," as Allport quotes Stephen Monsell's appraisal of the situation (2011, 36). An interesting path forward here could focus on the role of exclusion in producing the experience of a narrative subject who seems to actively control his or her actions. As we have seen, although for Dharmakīrti the mere division of a moment of awareness into subjective and objective content is nonconceptual, the illusion of oneself as an enduring, agentive subject is just as much a conceptual construction as the illusion of an enduring external world within which one acts. Both of these phenomena are the result of patterns of habituation based on an individual's past experiences; these patterns further dictate not only the moment-to-moment goals that superficially guide concept formation, but also themselves constitute and limit potential experiential worlds.

One of Allport's final statements about the nature of attention brings to the fore a place in which the tensions between Dharmakīrti's own articulation of subject/object

duality as nonconceptual and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas' reformulation of this same structure as conceptual could provide further insight into different ways in which attention functions as an emergent phenomenon. Allport states:

The first and core meaning of “attending”—“to attend to something”—... refers to a behavioral, dispositional state of inter-relatedness between a person (or animal) and the attended object, external or internal. Underlying or *embodying* this dispositional state is a transient, integrated brain state, often—though not necessarily—accompanied by overt postural orienting. The behavioral property of attending, like all such whole-organism behavioral states, is an emergent property (a “resultant”) of the underlying brain state, interrelating brain, body, and world. (2011, 50)

While, of course, neither Dharmakīrti nor the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas spoke of “brain states,” this view of attention as an emergent property relating an individual and his or her environment seems to be something both traditions could affirm. Allport’s passage here subtly brings another issue into play: does the orientation of a subject toward his or her world merely *underlie* attentional phenomena, or rather does it *embody* these phenomena? I read this distinction as parallel to the question of whether or not subject/object structure itself is formed through an interplay of desire and causal environment. As we have seen, this is one of the key differences between Dharmakīrti’s full account of perceptual processes and that of the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas. Further analysis of the implications of this difference could provide resources to help clarify precisely when and how an awareness becomes determinate.

Allport's theory also raises a number of questions as to the relationship between attention and consciousness. Against a number of other theorists, Allport aligns attention and consciousness (2011, 49). If attention is a determinate phenomenon, then this alignment of attention and consciousness would seem to strongly contradict both Dharmakīrti's and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas' insistence that consciousness itself is not constitutively conceptual. However, a closer examination of each tradition shows that there are two fundamentally different senses of "consciousness" employed here. In much of contemporary Western philosophy and cognitive science, consciousness denotes a state in which one is conscious of one's own awareness of some object, be that object external (like a chair) or internal (like an emotion). In line with this use of the term consciousness, for example, in discussions of phenomena such as blindsight, a distinction is often drawn between the first-order perception of the blindsight subject and the subject's lack of a second-order consciousness of that perception (Smithies 2011, 5–6). Consciousness is therefore often presented as an intentional state wherein one knows that one knows something and can report on this knowledge.

Dharmakīrti and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas think about consciousness in a very different way. Most fundamentally, consciousness (*cit*) is the non-intentional stream out of which limited subject/object structured perceptions arise. Far from being second-order and intentional, it is actually the ground for first-order cognitions and unstructured by subject/object duality. The precise correlate in these traditions of the contemporary use of "consciousness" as denoting a state of awareness wherein a subject can report on the contents of his or her awareness is somewhat unclear at this point, and may differ between Dharmakīrti and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas. It is most likely closely related to

mental perception (*mānasapratyakṣa*), which is the type of awareness that arises when a subject specifically takes the contents of his or her own awareness as an object. However, while not itself always determinate, reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) fulfills the role of ensuring that it is possible for one to subsequently report on the contents of one's awareness, regardless of whether or not the subject introspected at the time of a perception itself. The picture is further complicated by the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas' insistence that mere subject/object structure is determinate, and yet there is a nonconceptual moment of awareness that proceeds all such dualistically structured perceptions. It seems, then, that there may be instances of what contemporary theorists would deem unconscious perceptions that, at least for these Śaivas, would be considered conscious.

Regardless of the precise point at which Dharmakīrti and these Śaivas would claim that it is possible to report on the contents of one's experience, their contention that nondual consciousness underlies all phenomena of the conventional world—including the external objects that seem to exist independent of awareness—clearly indicates that they push the notion of “consciousness” far deeper than its usage in much of contemporary cognitive theory. This point of divergence may provide a philosophical opportunity. It seems that for Dharmakīrti and these Śaivas, consciousness is not an all-or-nothing state. We are aware of various objects to varying degrees, and we form determinate perceptions based on only some aspects of our awareness. While attention to a determinate object is an emergent phenomenon, consciousness itself is not. Consciousness is not an epiphenomenal state whose origination must be accounted for at a certain moment in perceptual processes. Consciousness has been there all along; its limitation, not its arising, is what characterizes a determinate awareness.

While the technical use of consciousness to denote a state in which a subject can report on the contents of his or her experience is widely prevalent in contemporary discourse, it is certainly not the only model of consciousness present within contemporary debates. The question of the nature of consciousness, and how it connects with various aspects of our experience, is hotly contested in a number of fields. While a full engagement with this literature is beyond the scope of my dissertation, I hope that my initial exploration of the nature of attention begins to demonstrate ways in which Dharmakīrti's and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas' ideas could potentially contribute to this debate.

### **A Concluding Reflection**

In the Introduction to this dissertation, I claimed that all human thought is comparative. There's a bit more to it than this. Human thought is also narrative: our worlds exist how they do because of the stories we tell ourselves and others; these stories form the basis of our agreement on not just the plot, but the very elements of our realities. This dissertation itself has proceeded as a story. We began by noticing that there's a problem with our normal way of understanding reality. We see things that aren't there (for Dharmakīrti and the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas, external objects) and fail to see what really exists (nondual consciousness). We then explored Dharmakīrti's compelling account of how we could operate in a world that is actually quite divorced from what really exists. Perhaps, along with Dharmakīrti, we can affirm that there is a way in which our ordinary experiences of stable objects in the external world work for us, even if they are merely errors. And yet, the postulation that our erroneous (but useful) apprehensions of seemingly causally

efficacious objects are simply fabrications led us to a deeper questioning of what it even means to exist in a world. We found that the broader Yogācārin backdrop to Dharmakīrti's thought envisions a world as an ongoing mutual construction, informed in equal parts by the subjects jointly constructing it and the objective content available to them. In this account of the mutual construction of self and world, we found much that is valuable and insightful. However, the Pratyabhijñā Śaivas also inspired us to push deeper, and ask what the relationship between the world-constituting error of subject/object duality and ultimate reality itself might be. We found that these Śaivas raise powerful objections to the idea that the ultimate and the conventional could be truly divorced. We saw a vision of reality in which everything participates in the play of ultimate consciousness. We stepped back for a moment, recognizing both the rich potential of these traditions' insights to enrich our understanding of human experience, and how much additional work is needed to realize this potential. The end of this dissertation, then, is far from a final conclusion. If it has achieved its goal, it ends with an opening to further inquiry. Our worlds do not exist in the way we think they do. Even so, it is possible to advance our understanding of ourselves, our worlds, and the larger play of realities in which we live.

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